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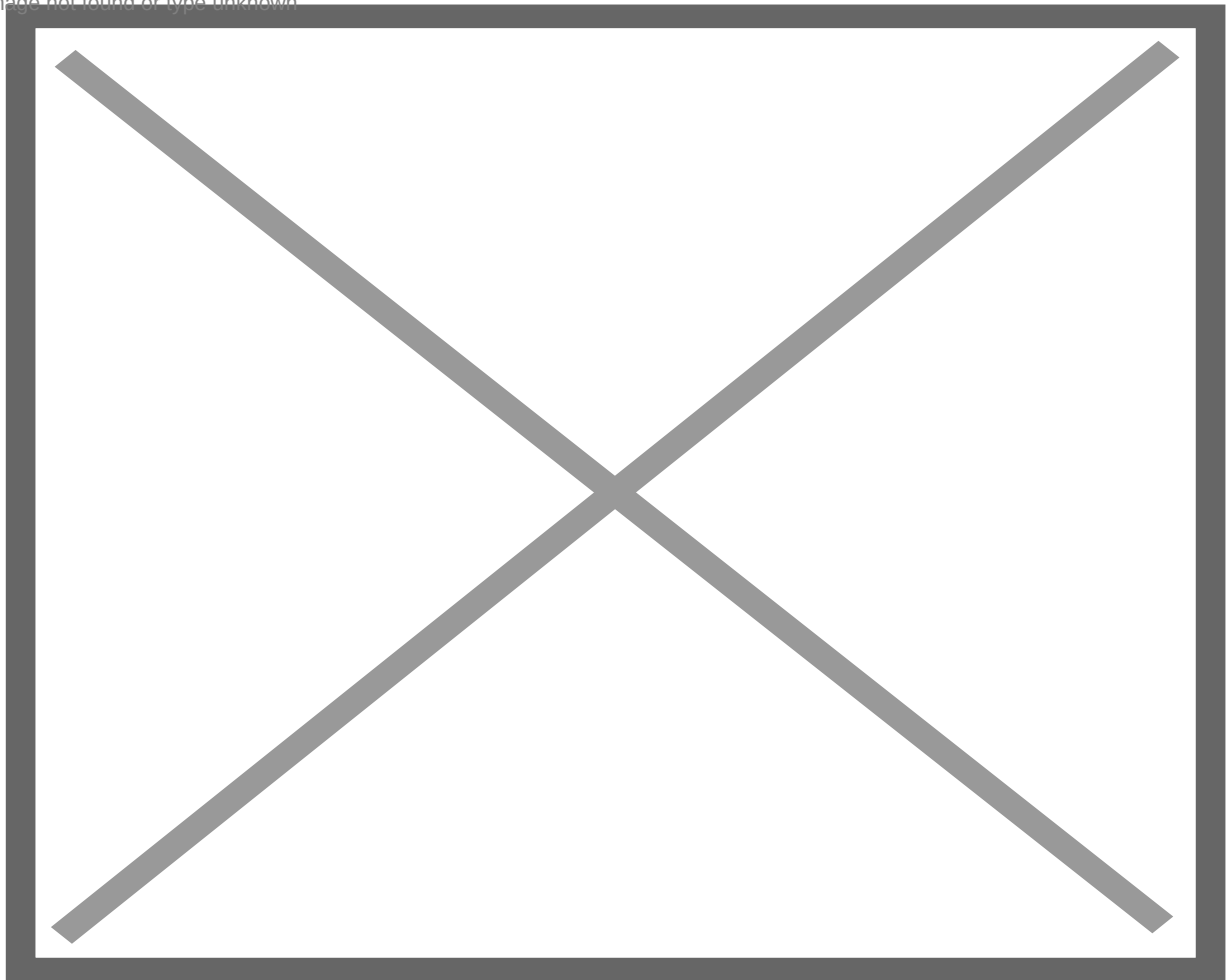
Legislature Honors Mapp, Pumpa, Ten Sleepless Knights, Willard John and Thomas Martin

Ten Sleepless Knights had Peter Carl Limpricht Park renamed in their honor, while Willard John was recognized for preserving moko jumbie traditions and Thomas Martin for military and public service, including his legacy as a Montford Point Marine in WWII.

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Nelcia Charlemagne **August 25, 2026**

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Former Governor Kenneth Ezra Mapp received the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor — the territory's highest recognition for public service — and had a major St. Croix roadway named in his honor Tuesday as the Legislature celebrated five honorees whose contributions span government, music, culture, youth development and military service.

Act 8873, sponsored by Senator Franklin Johnson, names Route 75 on St. Croix, beginning at the Bassin Triangle intersection at Route 70 in Estate Richmond and ending at Krausse's Lagune, the Gov. Kenneth E. Mapp Highway. The measure also bestows the Virgin Islands Medal of Honor on the former governor.

The legislation had been vetoed by Governor Albert Bryan Jr. before the 36th Legislature overrode the veto.

Sen. Johnson said Tuesday that the territory's highest public-service recognition "must never be reduced to politics, party affiliation, or the passion of a particular moment. It is awarded because of a grateful people recognizing a lifetime of service."

He recalled that Mr. Mapp's leadership was "tested" following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017 and said public figures should be recognized while they are still able to receive those expressions of appreciation.

"I believed then, as I believe now, that we should honor our leaders while they are alive, while they can hear us...and while future generation can learn from their accomplishment," Sen. Johnson stated.

"The road bearing your name is fitting-a road represents movement, connection, progress. It links community and carry people toward their destination," he added.

Mr. Mapp used his remarks to reflect on public service as part of a broader responsibility to contribute to the community.

"To whom much is given, much is required. I have always understood life in that spirit. Whatever we are given – opportunity, influence, resources, knowledge of the ability to help others – creates a responsibility to give something back. Public office was one expression of that responsibility, not its beginning or its end," Mr. Mapp said.

Mr. Mapp was among five honorees recognized during Tuesday's Perma Plaque Ceremony.

Senate President Milton Potter opened the event by emphasizing the different forms their contributions had taken.

"Five very different paths: culture, music, service, leadership, and youth. But every single one of them chose, in their own way, to give something of themselves to this place we all love so much," Sen. Potter said.

Pump to Receive Key to Territory

Dennis "Pumpa" Lennox Liburd Jr. was honored for his contributions to music and will receive the official key to the Territory. The main entrance of 6-Y Peter's Rest Road in Christiansted will also be named in his honor.

Senator Marise James, who presented Mr. Liburd's plaque, spoke about the significance of receiving recognition at home after achieving success beyond the Virgin Islands.

"There is something beautiful about that. You can travel the world, perform on the biggest stages, and accomplish things you once only dreamed about. But there should always be something at home that says we saw you, we appreciate you, and we remember where your journey began,"

Sen. James said.

Mr. Liburd said he was honored to be recognized alongside the other recipients and dedicated the moment to others involved in Virgin Islands music.

“This one is definitely for all the youngsters in the music industry that is present, and also the ones in the past,” he said.

Ten Sleepless Knights Park

The Legislature also honored the Ten Sleepless Knights, with Act 9053 renaming Peter Carl Limpricht Park as Ten Sleepless Knights Park in recognition of the legendary quelbe band.

The measure was also sponsored by Sen. James, who credited the group with preserving and passing down an important part of Virgin Islands culture.

“They have helped keep a tradition alive through performances, cultural education, scholarships, historical preservation and their involvement in our Christmas traditions—they have ensured that the music passed down to us does not disappear with one generation,” she stated.

“Today we have the opportunity to say thank you, not only for the music, but for more than five decades of protecting and passing forward a piece of who we are as Virgin Islanders,” Sen. James added.

Lauren Larsen, president of the Ten Sleepless Knights, thanked lawmakers and the wider community for supporting the group over the decades, particularly after quelbe faced criticism during its earlier years.

“It was not classical, it was not American. It was our music that we brought from Africa, and we hope to continue to preserve and promote this music until our young people can pick it up and do something better with it,” he said.

Willard John Honored for Culture and Youth Work

Sen. James also presented a plaque to Willard John for his contributions to Virgin Islands culture and youth, particularly his work preserving and teaching the moko jumbie tradition.

“Mr. John understood something very important: culture cannot survive if we do not teach it. For decades, he has dedicated himself not only to the art of moko jumbie, but to making sure another generation of Virgin Islanders understand where this tradition came from, what it represents, and why it must be preserved,” Sen. James declared.

Mr. John spoke about the African origins and spiritual significance of the tradition.

“This art form is important. It evolved out of Africa in a spiritual and religious context. These entities on stilts represented the powers of God,” Mr. John said. “It’s my distinct honor to be able to continue this tradition, and I will do so as long as I have life in my body.”

Thomas Martin Remember for Military and Public Service

Former Warden Thomas Martin was honored posthumously through a resolution sponsored by Senator Clifford Joseph recognizing his life, legacy and service.

The resolution commends Mr. Martin for his public service to the Virgin Islands, his military service as a Montford Point Marine during World War II and his posthumous receipt of the Congressional Gold Medal.

“It is an opportunity for us, as a territory, to pause and properly recognize the extraordinary life of a man who served his country, stood against injustice, dedicated himself to the people of the Virgin Islands, and left behind a legacy worthy of the highest respect,” Sen. Joseph said.

Sen. James, who also worked on the resolution, said the recognition would help ensure that Mr. Martin’s broader life story is remembered beyond his tenure at the Richmond Penitentiary.

“Today, we ensure that another generation of Virgin Islands know the name Thomas Martin not only as the warden of the Richmond Penitentiary, but as a boxer, a serviceman, a Monford Point Marine, a husband, a father, a grandfather, and a man who repeatedly answered the call to service,” she said.