

The Virgin Islands Consortium

BREAKING: Female Guard Allegedly Rapes Incarcerated Female Minor

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An incarcerated female minor at the St. Croix Youth Rehabilitation Center (YRC) was allegedly raped three weeks ago by a female security guard, who is also employed as a guardswoman at the St. Croix National Guard.

The *VI Consortium* has learned through a source that the alleged rape victim told another security worker, Ms. Vasquez, that the suspect, Ms. Martin, had engaged in sexual intercourse with her. The minor claimed Vasquez did not report the incident to the authorities at YRC at the time the incident was made known to her, a decision that has caused Ms. Vasquez to be named as an accomplice in the crime after police interviewed the victim at the facility. Vasquez has denied the allegations against her.

Our sources confirmed that Evril Powell, superintendent at the Department of Human Services who specializes in juvenile justice, served both Vasquez and Martin with dismissal papers, stripped them of their badges and ordered them to leave the YRC premises on separate days after the alleged incident occurred.

In an interview today, Human Services Assistant Commissioner Carla Benjamin confirmed that her office received a report about the alleged incident when it took place three weeks ago. However, she said the department chose not to make a public statement until the ongoing investigation was completed.

"We don't like to create sensationalism and anything that would have a negative light on the work that we're trying to do," she said.

While Benjamin did not confirm nor deny the alleged rape, she clarified why workers alleged to be involved in such incidents would be removed from their jobs.

"Even in the situations where we remove persons who are alleged to have been involved in anything like that, they're not being removed because they're guilty or not guilty," she explained. "They're being removed for the purpose of protecting the people who [they're] while the investigation goes on."



Youth Rehabilitation Center, St. Croix

The *VI Consortium* was also granted an interview with Human Services Commissioner Chris Finch, who also confirmed Benjamin's stance that an allegation was made, the department has taken action and an investigation is ongoing.

"In any allegation, there are some steps that we would immediately take--separate the parties that were involved, to remove anybody involved from the work site, to inform other investigatory agencies that would need to know and carry out the investigation to cooperate fully," Finch said. "With all those, to do our own internal investigation while we're having outside investigations. In any allegation, those are the steps we take and we don't deviate from that."

When asked how long it would take for such an investigation to be completed, Finch said, "We stay on top of it," noting that the investigation does not last for a long period of time.

The *VI Consortium* attempted to speak with officials at YRC today, but was denied access to the facility. We will bring you more on this story as it unfolds.