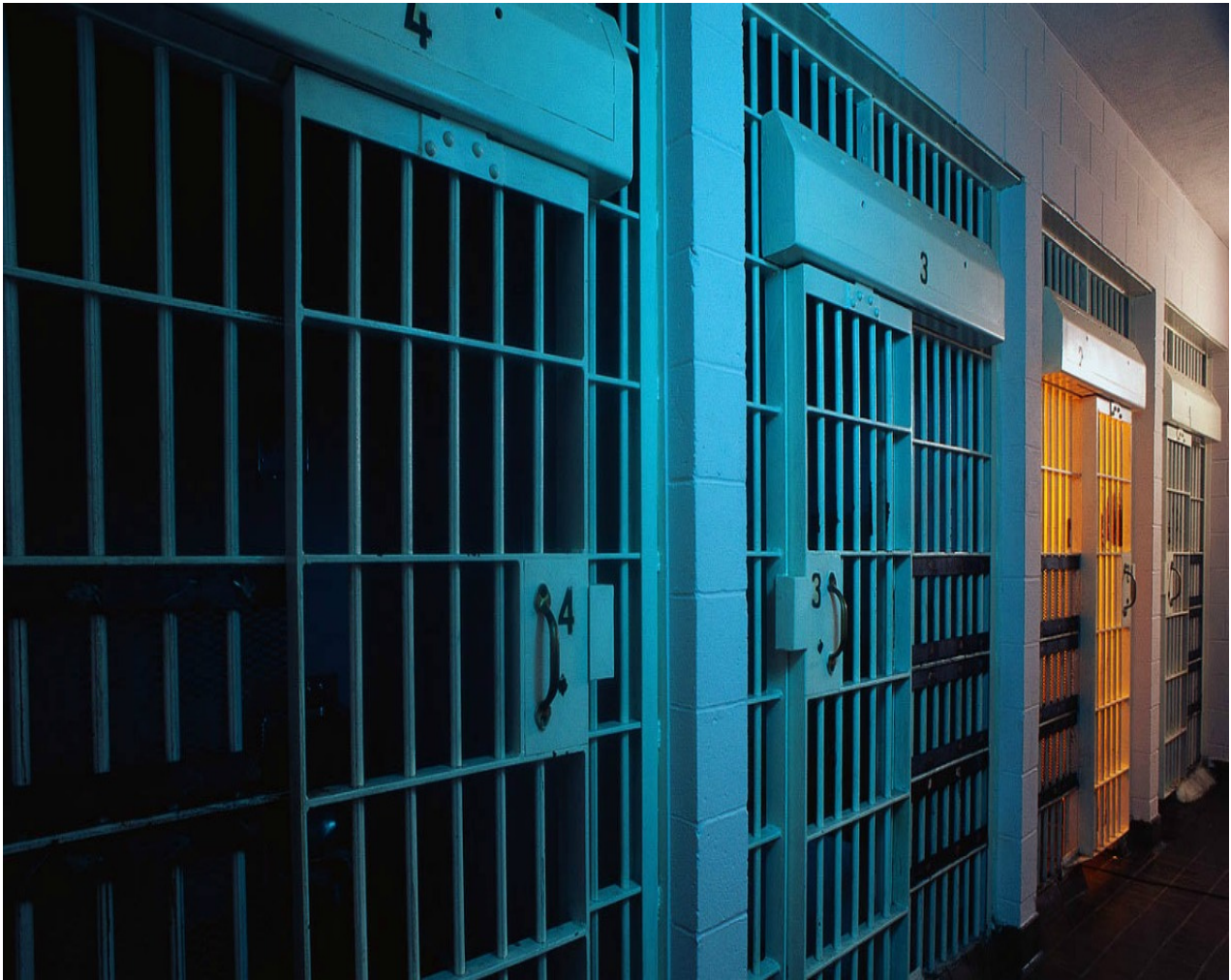


The Virgin Islands Consortium

These Are The U.S. Facilities Where VI Prisoners Were Sent

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Staff **October 04, 2014**



The *VI Consortium* reported earlier this week that the Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections (BOC) had suddenly shipped 78 Virgin Islands prisoners out of the territory to the mainland; however, the locations where the prisoners would be held were not disclosed. That information has now been made public.

According to a Government House press release, those prisoners joined other local prisoners already incarcerated on the mainland at three locations:

1. Citrus County Detention Facility, Florida – 109
2. Virginia Department of Corrections – 67

3. Sylmar Health and Rehabilitation Center, California – 7

The BOC has been taking steps to come into alignment with an agreement reached between the Bureau and the U.S. Justice Department, and the prisoner transfer is a critical part of coming into compliance.

"We continue to make enhancements to our operations, as highlighted in our 2015 Budget Hearing that will ensure a transformation at Golden Grove with respect to our operations, which were noted by the appointed monitor in his most recent report. During the visit, conducted with the U.S. Department of Justice, the experts and monitor stated that it was clearly evident that the staff has achieved some significant improvements at Golden Grove," Acting Director of BOC, Dwayne A. Benjamin, Sr. said at a Committee on Homeland Security, Public Safety and Justice hearing.

[Two months ago](#), the Territory and the Corrections Bureau were ordered to court by Chief Justice of the District Court of the Virgin Islands, Wilma Lewis, to explain why they should not be held in contempt for failing to abide by a court-monitored settlement agreement established to bring reforms to the Golden Grove prison on St. Croix.

"Despite nearly thirty years of litigation, multiple enforcement orders, and countless admonitions from this Court, the prisoners and staff at Golden Grove Adult Correctional and Detention Facility ("Golden Grove"), as well as people in the surrounding Virgin Islands community, continue to be at risk of serious harm from Defendants' ongoing failure to comply with court-ordered measures remedying unconstitutional conditions at the facility," the U.S. Justice Department's motion read.

Benjamin, acknowledging that there is still much work to be done, emphasized that progress had been made. He also highlighted the difficulties the prisons face because of reduced funding.

"We believe that we have turned a corner in terms of internal operations but also in our on-going relationships with the monitor and his team and with the U.S. Department of Justice," Benjamin said. "We continue to have some real challenges which require additional resources, both in funding and staffing, and inadequate resources in any one of these areas will impact our operations."

Benjamin went on to highlight the Bureau's recruiting efforts, a move he says "augmented" their operations at Golden Grove. He also said the transfer of prisoners was a necessary move to ensure safety of prisoners and the facility's employees.

"We are still recruiting for staff and working with the Office of Management and Budget to address overdue increases and salary adjustments which are paramount to achieving staffing levels that are appropriate to our inmate population," he said. "The recent addition of five Corrections Officers in the district of St. Croix has augmented our operations at Golden Grove, and we anticipate beginning a training class on St. Thomas in November with approximately 10 cadets."

He concluded: "While it is too early in the process to determine an accurate amount of savings, the relocation of inmates, in addition to the security concerns, will generate savings primarily with the reduction of overtime being expended, as we now have a much lower population to manage, and can consolidate our housing footprint to ensure better

coverage of the remaining inmate and detainee population.

To the extent we do realize a cost savings we intend to renovate and repair the facility infrastructure, and continue our installation of energy efficient systems at Golden Grove."

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