

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Letter To The Editor: Not Good Odds

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Staff **December 08, 2014**



Dear Editor,

It was reported to me by someone who had been at our casino that they saw 15 well-known people at the roulette table. Seven of these folks were from St. Croix, seven from St. Thomas and one from St. John. They were planning to push the pile of chips--consisting of all the cars and trucks, all the airport fuel, all our fuel for the gas stations or WAPA, and the life blood of St. Croix--across the table to No. 13.

It happened that the dealer at the roulette table was from Russia and he was urging them on. Now, it was noticed that they held back another pile of chips with St. Thomas on them for safety. With the agreement of the players and a nod from the house, they spun the

wheel. It was estimated it would spin till mid-December, when it would stop. The citizens in the gambling parlor were very anxious. They were worried that they could lose all they had worked for. Feeling that their fate was in the hands they had trusted to do what was best for them, they prayed, "Please, God, let them do the right thing".

Dear Reader,

It is as if this is how our future is to be decided. The vote will sink or float our island. We know we would like to get more from this deal with Hovensa, but it is suicide to say 'no'! According to the U.S. Department of Energy, we, in the USVI, use over 150,000 barrels of oil per day. This is for everything--gasoline, airplane fuel, WAPA, etc. Of this, St. Croix uses about half, let's say 75,000 barrels per day. WAPA pays for their shipment separately, but it's still our money. That means we need about one Panamax tanker ship every week or so. These ships carry approximately 500,000 barrels. There are 42 gallons of fuel per barrel of oil, so that is around 21 million gallons per delivery. At just \$3 per gallon at the rack that's over \$50,000,000. Yes, you're right--over \$50 million.

Now, these ships are not cursing outside our dock like a taxi waiting to be hailed. Arrangements must be made well in advance for them to come here. They also get paid in advance, no COD. So, how is the Government going to write this multi-million dollar check when it has trouble making existing payroll? In addition to the cost of experienced people to offload and store and fill tank trucks, to say nothing of the high cost of insurance to cover this dangerous job. Who will profit from this--not us.

So, you say just bring it in on tank trucks from Puerto Rico or St. Thomas. Great. Add in the extra cost for shipping the gas and the fact that if we have bad weather the small ferry can't get here, then we are out of fuel. It is estimated that the additional cost will add as much as a dollar to our already-high gas cost. That's one or two thousand additional dollars per year to our already-astronomical cost of energy. Why must we pay: For no good reason. Must we die just to satisfy the bruised egos of a few people?

So, here we sit on our beautiful St. Croix praying we don't go back to the days after Hugo when our world ended and people were siphoning gas out of abandoned cars so they had one last drop to get home. We cannot afford the risk of losing this offer to buy the refinery and keep us alive. The gamble of 'no' is not worth the risk, especially when you are risking our life and goods for some make-believe better deal.

Submitted by:

Bob White, St. Croix

The views and opinions expressed are solely those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the staff and management of the VI Consortium.