

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Wants Naval Base Brought To St. Croix If Guantanamo Bay Base Closes

Business / **Published On March 05, 2015 10:23 PM /**

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The Guantanamo Bay Naval Base that houses the Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp may soon shut down operations in Cuba, and Governor Kenneth Mapp, speaking Thursday at the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce's annual meeting held at the Palms at Pelican Cove, said St. Croix would be the ideal location for the U.S. Navy to set up shop in order to retain its presence within the Caribbean region.

The governor made the remarks when highlighting the reopening of Cuba as a destination for business since President Obama last December moved to [begin normalizing relations between the communist nation and the U.S.](#) for the first time in more than 50 years.

"As you know, the president has moved to liberalize the U.S. relationship with Cuba. I will use [U.S.] Senator Mitch McCollum's language: "That is an irreversible trajectory, meaning it will happen," Mapp said.

He continued: "Cuba has already indicated its desire to have its asset at Guantanamo Bay returned to them. And if that facility is closed, and the training and all the issues that take place at Guantanamo Bay occurs, for all intents and purposes, the Department of Defense and the U.S. military will have little or no presence in this region."

Throughout his address, Mapp pushed spurring economic growth on St. Croix and he said he believes relocating the naval base to the island would help accomplish those goals.

"We believe that St. Croix is positioned very well to provide that location, and that the assets, the value, the jobs, and the security that could be brought to this territory, could be significant," Mapp said.

Governor Mapp did not specify where on St. Croix the naval base could be built; however, people briefed on the plans, who requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press, have told *VI Consortium* the facility would be built on St. Croix's east end, if it becomes a reality.

Mapp also noted that on a recent trip to Washington, DC, he presented the Obama administration with the possibility of [using the HOVENSA docks](#) for U.S. Department of Defense purposes.

The Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp is a U. S. military prison located within the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, which fronts on Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. The prison was established in January 2002 following the 9/11 attacks, and, according to former U.S. Defense Secretary Donald its duties are to house "extraordinarily dangerous persons, to interrogate detainees in an optimal setting, and to prosecute detainees for war crimes."

Correction: March 5, 2014

A previous version of this article stated that Governor Kenneth Mapp wanted to relocate Cuba's Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp facility to St. Croix, if or when it is shut down in Cuba. In fact, the governor's statement was that he would like to have St. Croix be where the U.S. Navy re-establishes a naval base in the Caribbean region if or when the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base is shuttered in Cuba. The story has been updated to reflect the correction.

Feature Image: L & R - An area on St. Croix's east end and Guantanamo Bay Detention Camp in Cuba.