

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Release The Names Of Sapphire Bay Stabbing Victims And Off-Island Suspect Now To Soften Blowback

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ST. THOMAS – P.T. Barnum is supposed to have said that “there is no such thing as bad publicity.”

Virgin Islands Tourism officials will just have to hope that the American showman and circus owner Barnum’s famous quote is true.

Because newspapers and online news organizations as big as the London Daily Mail in the U.K. and as small as the Hilton Head Island Packet in South Carolina have carried the Associated Press account of an American couple who was stabbed to death in their luxury vacation villa during Carnival week.

At least 40 stories were online at ABC News, Fox News and many other major and minor news sites before 8 a.m. Tuesday.

Police officials are not releasing the name of the 73-year-old man or the name of his 67-year-old wife they say so that relatives can be notified first on the U.S. mainland.

But by delaying the release of the names, it means that the story of the brutal stabbing deaths at Sapphire Bay will have to be covered at least one more time by the national and international media when the victims are officially identified. And as people fill in the blanks of the void left by a lack of transparency, the usual suspects are in mind – unfairly so from what the *Virgin Islands Consortium* has been able to learn.

The first rule of public relations in a time of extremely bad news is to release as much information as is possible as soon as possible. Police and government leaders might need to re-examine their policy of not immediately releasing the names in high profile criminal cases that gain the attention and interest of the national and international media. Otherwise, the lingering doubt about who is to blame for this abominable double murder will linger on.

Virgin Island Police Commissioner Delroy Richards Sr. told the *Virgin Islands Consortium* Tuesday that the crime scene itself does not present like a burglary because the knife used in the murder was left behind in the vacation rental.

Authorities are apparently trying to contact a suspect who has fled the island, allegedly the son of the murdered couple – all the more reason why officials should release all the information they can that will not interfere with the murder investigation.

Richards would not confirm that information but did confirm that the couple's son was staying with them in their Sapphire Bay villa during Carnival week and is a "person of interest" who police want to talk to now.

In the absence of official information and the vacuum of speculation, many people on the U.S. mainland were assuming that it was a Virgin Islander or Virgin Islanders who committed this heinous violent act when all the covert information that the *Virgin Islands Consortium* has been able to gather points in a completely different direction.

Most people posting to the London Daily Mail about the incident typically said that the double homicide in American paradise merely shows that there is no place safe left in the world.

But to remove the pall of suspicion cast over the territory due to a lack of solid information, the *Virgin Islands Consortium's* Editorial Board urges authorities to name the suspect or suspects right now so the rampant speculation in the media can end – and the hunt for the murderer can officially begin.

— *VI Consortium's Editorial Board.*

Feature Image: Portions of Crystal Cove Resort in St. Thomas

Image Credit: Crystal Cove

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