The Virgin Islands Consortium

VING Officers Allegedly Stole Nearly $300,000 From Federal Government Under Guise of Rent Payments

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ST. CROIX – A Virgin Islands National Guard soldier pleaded not guilty in U.S. District Court in Estate Golden Rock today to charges of wire fraud, theft of government money and making false statements to the government.

U.S. Magistrate Judge George Cannon set a trial date of June 22 for 37-year-old VING Staff Sgt. Emmrie Edwards after indictments were handed down last week for Edwards and VING's strategic initiatives and plans division chief 45-year-old Lt. Col. Kenneth Alleyne. Alleyne was given the same trial date by Cannon on Wednesday and also pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

A federal grand jury last week Friday charged Alleyne, a top-ranking VING officer and Edwards, a non-commissioned officer, with stealing a combined total of $287,219.32 by allegedly forging official documents that purported to show that they were overseas on active military duty and thus eligible for a housing allowance, when in fact they were in the territory.

The charges call into question the leadership of VING Maj. Gen. Renaldo Rivera who is scheduled to resign this year as the adjutant general of the Virgin Islands National Guard. The widespread fraud charges cast a pall over Rivera's legacy as the leader of the VING. They represent the most serious charges leveled against VING members since guard members were accused of looting in the wake of Hurricane Hugo in 1989.

Rivera, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Defense have refused to release photographs of Alleyne and Edwards as matters of official policy. A Defense Department spokeswoman said the U.S. military only releases photos of officers accused of wrongdoing if they are wanted fugitives and the military needs the public's assistance in finding them.

Alleyne and Edwards face a maximum of 45 years in prison and fines up to $750,000 each if convicted of all the charges.

Court records indicate that the men controlled accounts that allowed them to make deposits from the VING into their personal checking accounts in the territory from 2010 to 2012.

According to the indictment, Alleyne received $207,771.11 in wire transfers from the VING into his account at the United Services Automobile Association from May 2010 to February 2012.

Edwards received $79,448.21 in his account at Banco Popular between May 2010 and March 2012, the indictment said.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christian Springer. Attorney Robert King of St. Thomas is defending Alleyne. Attorney Martial Webster of St. Croix is defending Edwards.

Alleyne and Edwards have each been released on unsecured $50,000 bonds.