

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Hodge Fires Back At DLCA: 'Convolutd Report Tying WAPA To VITOL Can Only Be Described As Suspect'

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ST. CROIX -- The Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority's Executive Director, Hugo Hodge, Jr., wants nothing to do with a report from the Department of Licensing and Consumer Affairs (DLCA) claiming that based on investigative work done by the Department of Labor (DOL), VITOL, a company subcontracted by WAPA to perform propane conversion work, failed to post job openings with Labor, and instead hired outsiders to work on the project.

While Hodge did not deny DOL's investigation, he said the tying of WAPA to VITOL by DLCA is "truly unfortunate," according a press release issued this evening.

"The Water and Power Authority has been placed in a position of having to respond to a convoluted statement by DLCA that prominently associates the Authority with the violations and cites the Labor Department's investigative report but fails to ever identify the "subcontractor". The fact is, WAPA has no subcontractors for this project. Further, while WAPA was named throughout the news release in association with the violations and a suggestion was made by DLCA that the public utility is somehow responsible, WAPA has yet to have been afforded the final investigative report for review or response," Hodge said.

According to the DLCA report, the investigation focused on the behavior of the subcontractor employed by WAPA for the construction of the propane facilities in the territory. The DLCA release stated that VITOL failed to follow the regulations stated in Title 27, Section 303b of the Virgin Island Code that requires employers to register job vacancies with DOL.

By failing to register these job vacancies, as is alleged, the organization provided jobs for non-locals that should have been occupied by Virgin Islanders as required by the law. Hence, money that should have circulated and supported the Virgin Islands economy, likely did not.

But Hodge contended DCLS's claim, and said WAPA has no control over who VITOL chooses to hire.

"There is specific language in the contract between WAPA and VITOL that requires the company to comply with all local laws, which include labor laws. WAPA does not hire for VITOL nor does it regulate or oversee any aspect of its day to day operations. The attempt by the DLCA to place WAPA in a negative light with alleged violations committed by a subcontractor that clearly has no ties to the Authority is truly unfortunate and can at best be interpreted as suspect," Hodge said.

VI Consortium has investigated the issue of unlawful hiring practices by WAPA subcontractors extensively. The related stories are [here](#) and [here](#).