

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Government Spent \$46,500 For Private Jet Services In 11 Months, Mapp Says

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp has responded to a story published in the St. Croix Avis on Thursday that says his administration has expended, beginning even before he was sworn in as governor on January 5, 2015, \$87,000 in private jet services with Bohlke International Airways, calling the article "contrived," and adding that while it is "sprinkled with truth," it includes more falsehoods than actual facts.

"The Avis article is simply contrived and published so, with the full knowledge of its owner and editor," Mapp said. "While the article is sprinkled with some truth, the article is made up with more falsehoods and misstatements than facts."

According to the press release, issued late Thursday, for the fiscal year 2015 -- October 1, 2014 through September 10, 2015 -- the total obligation for air charter services by the Office of the Governor was \$46,500. This amount also includes payment for charter services incurred by the previous administration as well. In addition, charter services provided to the governor's office is provided on a twin propeller King Beech 8 passenger aircraft; not the luxury jet pictured on the front page of the local paper, according to the release.

"I have never seen this aircraft much less ridden in it," Mapp said.

He continued: "In addition, the Avis article noted payments for charter services provided to me and paid for by the Mapp-Potter campaign, but stated that I charged charters to the government before being sworn to office. I had no authority to obligate any funds of the Government of the Virgin Islands prior to 12:00 noon on January 5, 2015 and I did not obligate any.

"For the record, between October 2014 and January 5, 2015, the Mapp-Potter Campaign as well as the transition and the inaugural committees chartered and paid from their funds air services of Bohlke International Airways."

According to The Avis article, the documents were obtained under subpoena after the Mapp Administration refused to honor a Freedom of Information Act request, and makes available a plethora of information in regards to the governor's private travel expenses.

It says the government has paid up to \$1,100 for a one-way trip between this island and St. Thomas. The subpoena documents, according to the local paper, also reveals that Randy Knight, the governor's chief of staff, traveled on the private jet on June 18 for some \$1,100.

But governors in the territory have historically used private jet services, Mapp reminded. He said residents can attest to his use of local airlines for inter-island travel. And since he lives here, the territory's leader contended that his travels to St. Thomas, the territory's capital, are more frequent as compared to most other governors, who lived in St. Thomas.

"It is public knowledge that Governors have always used charter air service between the islands as regularly scheduled airline flights are often changed, delayed or cancelled. I use the charter services for reliable transportation when required for me and members of my cabinet to conduct the business of the government. Certainly, I live on St. Croix so my need for air transportation between the islands is greater than the past four Governors," Mapp said.

"Passengers using our airports and seaplane service can attest that I also use scheduled sea and air transportation services provided by inter island airlines," Mapp concluded.

The governor, however, gave no explanation for Knight's private travel on the government's dime.

Feature Image: A Beech Craft King Air 350, similar to the Bohlke Airways jet Governor Mapp charters. See details [here](#).

