

The Virgin Islands Consortium

D.O.T. Reports 'Insightful' South Florida Mission

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The Department of Tourism is reporting an insightful mission to Miami and Fort Lauderdale earlier this month, including the territory's participation at Seatrade Global 2016, according to a press release D.O.T. issued late Wednesday.

D.O.T. Commissioner Beverly Nicholson-Doty reported strong interest in the ports of the Virgin Islands from dozens of cruise line executives as well as a renewed curiosity in the destination's offerings.

The commissioner, who accompanied Governor Kenneth Mapp to talks with a number of cruise line executives and industry experts, explored today's competitive landscape, including challenges and opportunities for improvements, such as the importance of new

water transportation options and elevating the cruise passenger experience, including Main Street on St. Thomas.

According to Mrs. Nicholson-Doty, meetings with cruise partners Carnival Corporation and Royal Caribbean International resulted in the reaffirmation of long term agreements with the West Indian Company (WICO) and the Virgin Islands Port Authority (VIPA) aimed at strengthening year-round cruise calls to the territory, including the island of St. Croix.

For the second consecutive year, unique Virgin Islands products were on display at the global cruise industry event, showcasing the artistic and creative talent of the Territory's entrepreneurs. "Our goal is to promote our entrepreneurs, establish new markets for these products, and encourage the lines to offer them for sale on the various ships which ply our waters," Mrs. Nicholson-Doty said.

Mr. Mapp and Commissioner Nicholson-Doty also interacted with members of the media to discuss new destination developments.

According to the release, during the visit the governor and commissioner were interviewed by The Miami Herald, Bloomberg Businessweek and Cruise Industry News among other media outlets. They provided writers with news about the Territory's cruise industry, as well as overall destination news, including airlift updates, hotel developments and infrastructure improvements, planned Centennial celebrations, as well as new developments on the island of St. Croix.

"Going to market to update our partners on what's new and exciting in the Territory is part and parcel of our integrated efforts to boost tourism to St. Croix, St. John and St. Thomas," said Mrs. Nicholson-Doty, who added that the exposure gained from the appointments helps to generate important exposure for the islands.

The commissioner noted that the South Florida mission comes on the heels of successful meetings in New York, Minneapolis, Atlanta and Chicago, where she connected with more than 100 journalists, editors, travel agents, meeting planners, airline officials and Virgin Islanders.

To date, the combined public relations value resulting from appointments with print and broadcast media in these markets totals approximately \$1.1 million. Additional coverage is anticipated over the next few months resulting from this activity.

Plans are in the works to take the message of the Virgin Islands to similar audiences across Washington DC, Virginia and Maryland, Houston and Dallas as the next phase of the Department's marketing strategy.