The Virgin Islands Consortium

Jury Finds Former P.F.A. Director And Two Others Not Guilty On All Charges

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ST. THOMAS -- A Jury here found Julito Francis, former director of Finance and Administration for the Virgin Islands Public Finance Authority under the former Governor John P. de Jongh administration, Gerard Castor, president and owner of Balbo Construction Corporation, and John Woods, co-principal of the architectural company Jaredian Design Group that worked on behalf of the V.I.P.F.A., not guilty on all 13 counts levied against them by the federal government.

The verdict came just after 8:00 p.m. on Friday.

In August, the three men were charged in a widely publicized case that draw the community's attention. According to the indictment, Mr. Castor provided more than $400,000 in improvements to Mr. Francis' personal residence, and over $10,000 in improvements to Mr. Woods' personal property. In return, Mr. Francis and Woods used their official positions to ensure that Balbo Construction was awarded construction contracts by the V.I.P.F.A. that were worth over $17 million, including a multi-million contract, and supplements thereto, to build the St. Thomas Regional Library. The indictment further alleged that the defendants attempted to conceal the bribery scheme by creating false documents that suggested Mr. Francis and Mr. Woods intended to pay Mr. Castor for the work performed.

But the federal government's case fell apart as it failed to convince jurors that the manner in which business was conducted among the three men was a sign that Mr. Francis and Mr. Woods intended not to pay Balbo Construction. And the federal government relied heavily on a set of events that it contended proved the men's corrupt dealings. However, with no witness to testify in the prosecution's favor, their case was enfeebled.