

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Judge Gomez 'Heartened' By Consent Decree Progress At Bureau Of Corrections

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ST. CROIX -- On Friday, Virgin Islands Bureau of Corrections (B.O.C.) officials appeared before Judge Curtis Gomez for their quarterly settlement agreement status hearing, relative to B.O.C.'s consent decree case, which turned out in favor of the bureau, according to a release issued Wednesday.

B.O.C. officials met four out of the six goals set for its latest quarter, according to the release. While noting that there was more work ahead, Judge Gomez was generally pleased with the gains made and the direction the bureau has taken.

"I am heartened by your improvements," Judge Gomez said. "Out of all the consent decree cases I have in front of me, this agency has done the most in the least amount of time."

Security Expert David Bogard also testified that B.O.C. had made significant steps toward compliance and explained to Judge Gomez why all of B.O.C.'s goals had not been met.

"It takes more than just policies and procedures," Mr. Bogard said. "Creating administrative directives and enforcing them are more difficult than it may appear. For many years officers and staff have done business in a particular way and it takes more than just a change of rules and regulations to change that. You are changing a culture. These changes cannot and will not happen overnight."

B.O.C. Director Mullgrav said that the Bureau was working hard to meet all of the court's directives.

"The changes being made at the Bureau of Corrections is territory-wide and are very challenging. It requires that the officers are retrained to meet new standards in performing their duties," he said. "This is not an easy task, however, many of the officers and staff have eagerly embraced the challenge. Progress has been made, not as rapidly as we would like it to be, but the hard work is being put forward. With all of the challenges that the staff and officers have to deal with on a day-to-day basis, whether it may be the physical plant or resources, I know this team is committed and doing an outstanding job, and I thank them for their relentless dedication."

Mr. Mullgrav also thanked B.O.C. Attorney Sharry D'Andrade, Assistant Director Everett Hansen, Ms. Bonnilyn Thomas, Ms. Kim Lyons, Warden Gilbert David, and other essential staff for their efforts, and said he was confident the B.O.C. team would continue to work diligently to make sure that the bureau continues moving towards compliance for next quarter.

Feature Image: Bureau of Corrections, St. Croix. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)