

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Territory Remembers 9/11 Victims, Some Of Whom Were Virgin Islanders

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Ernice Gilbert **September 12, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- The Bolling Baldwin Rohlsen Hall in Christiansted was at capacity with standing room only, filled with residents, V.I. National Guard members, Red Cross, members of the America Legion District No. 10 who, along with the V.I. Veterans Affairs organized the event, and various other groups -- all of whom came out to pay homage to the memory of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, a tragedy that forever changed the world.

The gathering was the second half of what began as a march from the Basin Triangle all the way to the Rohlsen Hall. It included leaders such as Patrick Farrell, director of Veterans Affairs, Clifford Joseph, director of the V.I. Fire Service, Charles David,

commander of the American Legion Hall, District 10 and LTC Trevor J. Mann, G3, Virgin Islands National Guard.

As has become custom, all who spoke during the ceremony at the Rohlsen Hall recounted the life-changing events of 9/11; remembering not only the tragedy but also the heroism of many who placed their own lives on the line to save others -- some dying in the process.

But it was Mr. Farrell -- who attended last year's event and was dismayed at how poorly it was attended -- that expressed the most passion yesterday, foregoing a script and speaking from his heart. The director called on attendees to bring back to remembrance where they were when the strikes occurred, convinced that everyone in the room would be able to recollect.

"This should be a day that we should have to open a stadium to fill the seats with the amount of people that would be here to recognize this day," Mr. Farrell said. "Tuesday, September 11, 2001 changed not just the United States of America, but the world forever. And I will date my safe when I say this, but gone are the days when people would go to the airport 20 minutes before the flight, and get on Pan American World Airways, Eastern Airlines and AeroJet."

He acknowledged that some of the changes have been beneficial, including the creation of Homeland Security, which he credited for creating an abundance of new jobs.

But Mr. Farrell, lamenting the state of the territory relative to gun violence, said he sometimes wish that the day after 9/11 could be relieved. "September 12, 2001, everybody was living together. It didn't matter what race, what color, what creed -- we were all trying to do things together as one people. And I would do anything to get those days back because look at where we are today. Our small, little territory has so many homicides, ranking right there at the top across the nation; not good for us. So I ask you to think about that and think about what your contribution will be to give us back the mindset that we had on September 12, 2001," Mr. Farrell added.

Following the speeches and a memorial prayer by Chaplain Dion Christopher, the event proceeded outside the building for the laying of wreaths and ringing of bells; a rifle squad salute, taps, benediction and salute of colors -- a video of which can be viewed below.

Virgin Islands victims of 9/11 are SSG Maudlyn A. White, Felix "Bobby" Calixte, Claudia S. Sutton, William Henry, Jr., Christian Maltby and Chris M. Kirby. The Virgin Islands Red Cross was also involved in the emergency response to 9/11, sending representatives from the territory to join those already in New York, serving in multiple capacities.

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Feature Image: Surviving families of those of the territory who lost their lives during the attacks. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)