

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Attorney General's Office Conducts Massive Verification Operation of V.I. Sexual Offenders

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ST. THOMAS -- A team of at least six special agents with the Department of Justice Bureau of Investigation conducted an operation last week in the St. Thomas/St. John district to verify important information, such as the work and home addresses, of registered sexual offenders, the V.I D.O.J. announced this afternoon.

"Under the law," Attorney General Claude Earl Walker said, "any person who is convicted of or adjudicated not guilty by reason of insanity of committing a sex offense, attempting to commit a sex offense or conspiring to commit a sex offense is required to register as a sexual offender with the DOJ."

Within three business days of arriving at a new location, a registered sexual offender must notify the DOJ of his/her name, residence, temporary lodging information, vehicle information, Internet identifiers, telephone numbers, school information and employment status, according to the D.O.J.

“Our records show that currently, there are 59 sex offenders in the St. Thomas/St. John district and 54 in the St. Croix district,” Mr. Walker said. “They are aware of the registration requirements, which they adhere to because they know that DOJ takes this task very seriously.”

According to the AG, special agents routinely perform the task of tracking registered sexual offenders.

“In this operation, we had all hands on deck to verify the contact information,” he said. “I have also revised an existing policy requiring that all sex offenders in the territory must now notify DOJ even when traveling inter-island, between St. Thomas and St. Croix, no matter how long the visit, and not just when travelling from the Virgin Islands to the U.S. mainland, and they have been so informed.”

In 1997, the Virgin Islands enacted its first sex offender registration statute and in 2006, the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006 was enacted by Congress. Title I of that Act is known as the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act or SORNA. This Act established a new baseline standard for states to track sex offenders, which required more unity and cooperation among jurisdictions in the registration and notification process. The purpose of SORNA is “to protect children from sexual exploitation and violent crime, to prevent child abuse and child pornography, to promote Internet safety, and to honor the memory of Adam Walsh and other child crime victims.”

On July 18, 2012, amendments were made to the local sex offender statute and the Sexual Offender Registration and Community Protection Act was signed into law in the Virgin Islands.

“These amendments in 2012 created the basis for the Territory’s efforts to substantially implement the SORNA requirements and have erased the misconception of the U.S. Virgin Islands being a safe haven with lax registration requirements,” Mr. Walker said.

Registered sexual offenders in the territory may be prosecuted for either failing to register or not keeping their registration current, as required by this law, and if convicted, the penalty is a fine of not less than \$3,000.00 nor more than \$5,000.00, or imprisonment for not less than three months nor more than two years, or both. The law also provides that it is an offense to assist a sex offender to evade the registration requirements, which carries a fine of not less than \$1,000.00 nor more than \$2,000.00, or imprisonment for not more than six months, or both.