

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Even After All The Fuss, Mapp Purchases Ceremonial Vehicle

VIC News / **Published On November 14, 2016 10:10 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **November 14, 2016**



ST. CROIX -- Neatly parked near Fort Christianvaern on Friday during Veterans Day celebrations on this island, was a [black, sleek Cadillac XTS](#), with the license plate 1. It was, as has been confirmed by Property and Procurement Commissioner Randolph Bennett, Governor Kenneth Mapp's new ceremonial vehicle, which the governor said he badly needed, because the older fleet was constantly in need of repairs.

To be clear, Mr. Mapp has multiple vehicles that he's transported in, including [a black GMC Denali](#). But the ceremonial vehicle, Mr. Mapp has contended, is to be used for official purposes, including events such as [Veterans Day](#), and the upcoming Centennial celebrations in 2017.

Its cost? According to Mr. Bennett, \$88,000. Where did the money come from? Mr. Bennett said the funds were taken from the governor's budget, and not from the emergency vehicles funding [as first requested in August 2015](#). Mr. Bennett said he had yet to order a new ceremonial vehicle to be placed in St. Thomas on behalf of the governor, "but I'm strongly considering it."

The purchase follows months of back-and-forth between Government House and the 31st Legislature, who challenged the executive branch, urging the governor to abandon his desire for the new vehicles as the territory remained in a fiscal crisis, or go ahead and make the purchase with monies already allocated to his office as part of the government's fiscal budget.

"As I offer this amendment, I have one word: Fiat," Mrs. Millin Young, an ardent opponent of Mr. Mapp, [said in March](#); the notion being that the governor, in light of the territory's financial standing, should use vehicles already at Government House, or go a cheaper route. "I want the people of the Virgin Islands to know that this is no disrespect to the high offices of governor and lieutenant governor, but this territory has a lot of pressing needs, and we think its inordinate to spend \$300,000 on two cars." The governor had also asked for ceremonial vehicles for the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

"We have fifteen members of this Legislature and there's a big myth out there that we are assigned cars and we are not. At least for the last two Legislatures we have not been assigned cars; we drive our own vehicles. So when you tell me that there is a need for these ceremonial vehicles, maybe there is a want, but not a need," she said.

Mr. Violet, who had [offered an amendment](#) in the emergency vehicles bill that would still allow the governor to purchase the vehicles, albeit under another title -- from "ceremonial vehicles" to vehicles for "Office of the Governor and Office of the Lieutenant Governor" -- concurred with Mrs. Millin Young, stressing that the territory's financial status at the time -- [it's even more precarious now](#) -- called for belt-tightening.

"The time is just not right," Mr. Violet began. "We're hearing a tremendous outcry from the people of the Virgin Islands in reference to ceremonial vehicles, and the time isn't right. The time might be right at a future date, but right now, with the fiscal issues that we have, the time isn't right." Those comments were made back in March; Mr. Violet's current sentiments on the matter is unknown.

He added: "We're sending the wrong message on why we're purchasing ceremonial vehicles. It's not a disrespect to the Office of the Governor, but at this time the current fleet that they're utilizing, in terms of the SUVs that they have, need to be continued to be utilized. The time isn't right."

Mr. Bennett said the old fleet suffered with constant, multiple problems, and that the old ceremonial vehicle on St. Croix had partly caught on fire. And, showing a tinge of frustration, Mr. Bennett said the vehicles were not ceremonial or limousines, but rather "official" government vehicles.

"It ain't no damn limo," Mr. Bennett fired. "This vehicle belongs to the people of the Virgin Islands, to represent them well. I can't carry the governor around in a vehicle that had caught on fire."

Feature Image: Governor Kenneth Mapp's new ceremonial vehicle parked in Christiansted near Fort Christianvaern. (Credit: Ernice Gilbert, VIC)

© Viconsortium 2026