

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Seaborne Says It's Evaluating Legal Options For 'Unruly Passengers'

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ST. CROIX -- Seaborne Airlines has responded to an incident that occurred [on Saturday at its St. Croix seaplane terminal](#), which caused the airline to ultimately cancel a flight planned for St. Thomas. In a statement issued to The Consortium on Sunday, the company said it was seeking legal options for what it referred to as "unruly passengers," and gave several accounts of the incident that run contrary to what passengers of the canceled flight said.

(Full disclosure: Seaborne Airlines is an advertising partner of The Virgin Islands Consortium.)

In its statement, Seaborne said safety of its customers remains its number 1 priority, and its policy would "never be compromised." Seaborne then said that "passenger load" caused the plane to be overweight, which required the removal of "several passengers and bags for re-accommodation."

"As is normal procedure, we asked for volunteers in exchange for compensation, but several individuals became unruly with both employees and other customers. Ultimately, the passengers interfered with both our ground and flight crew, a violation of federal law which required Seaborne to request the involvement of authorities. Seaborne is evaluating legal options with regard to this incident, and will be providing compensation for entitled passengers that were adversely impacted," reads the statement.

But affected passengers on the scene of the incident at the St. Croix terminal on Saturday made it a point in letting the media know that Seaborne did not call the authorities; the affected passengers did. And the airline said the overweight forced it to remove passengers from the plane, but it never acknowledged that luggage of Seaborne customers not traveling on the overweight flight were on board the seaplane as well, and that the affected customers had suggested that Seaborne remove the luggage and allow the scheduled passengers to travel.

The incident has angered the community, with a video posted on [The Consortium's Facebook platform](#) being viewed by over 28,000 people at time of publishing of this story, with over 200 comments and 300 post shares. The story has also garnered strong attention on The Consortium's website.

[View the original embedded media](#)

According to an affected customer, who was headed to St. Thomas to attend the [Tarrus Riley concert](#), and asked not to be named, when the customers arrived to Seaborne on Saturday, employees notified those booked to travel that the plane was over its weight limit and therefore customers would not be allowed to bring along their checked luggage; only carry-on luggage would be allowed.

Customers then improvised, putting important items in the bag that they were allowed to carry, while leaving other items behind.

"After we did all of that, they then told us that they were still 210 pounds overweight, and that they needed somebody to get off the flight," the customer said. Seaborne said anyone who volunteered would get a one-way ticket, but no one took the offer because it was deemed insufficient for the inconvenience that the airline had caused.

Seaborne then said that if no one would volunteer, it would be forced to bump one of two customers that Seaborne said were the last two to board. "But really they weren't the last two," the customer said, explaining that three customers had checked in after one of the customers that Seaborne said had checked in last, and the other customer was waiting on a bag to pack items into, as per Seaborne's notification that the plane was overweight and customers would have to improvise.

The two affected customers, who had booked a car rental and hotel room in St. Thomas to attend the Tarrus Riley concert, said they would not stay on St. Croix; they were to meetup with another couple in St. Thomas, according to the customer.

“So that turned into, you know, people starting to speak loudly and all that kind of stuff,” the customer said. By then, two hours had already passed as the negotiations continued. Customers requested of Seaborne that they send some of the luggage that did not belong to the passengers set to make the trip but were loaded onto the plane anyway, through the airport. Seaborne turned down the suggestion, according to the customer.

As the debacle continued, Seaborne said that it would simply leave with the people already on the plane, but customers then moved to block the departure area and demanded that everyone be accommodated. Customers also called police to deal with the matter because of the escalation.

When a Consortium reporter arrived to the area, police had already deescalated the confrontation, and were mediating between a Seaborne operations manager and the affected travelers. The officer encouraged the involved parties to move away from the departure area and to the counter, where travel plans were to be changed. Seaborne cancelled the flight, citing safety risk as the reason. “But there were people who were here quietly and peacefully waiting to get on their flight, so now they’re going to be penalized for everybody else,” the customer said.

“I think one of the problems that we had was that they told us that they had weight restrictions so our luggage couldn’t go on. But we saw them putting on luggage of other people because we knew the luggage didn’t belong to us –that’s what caused people to be more upset: If our friend can’t fly, if our luggage can’t go, then how come other people’s luggage getting to go? And then they were refusing to remove the luggage so that we could all travel,” said the customer.