

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Loses Temper When Questioned About Ritz-Carlton, New Cars

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp lost his temper during a press conference at Government House here on Wednesday following a question posed by this Consortium reporter, who was attempting to ask the governor about his spending habits, and whether he was setting a good example by buying multiple vehicles costing over \$600,000 (this figure includes four new Chevrolet Suburbans, two of which are seen [here](#), [a new ceremonial vehicle](#) as well as four new high-end Ford Explorers) at a time when the territory is struggling to meet its obligations, and considering [shortening the work hours of government employees](#).

But before this reporter could finish asking the question, Mr. Mapp cut him off, ostensibly being triggered by the mention of the governor's stay at the Ritz-Carlton resort in St. Thomas.

"Let's address reality here because the silly must end. I can't do silly, I don't do silly well at all," Mr. Mapp fired, his hand gestures and demeanor giving away his frustration. He said the territory has had governors since 1954, and that the governors' lodging has always been provided for by the Government of the Virgin Islands. Mr. Mapp pointed out that former Governor John P. de lived in his own home in St. Thomas, and that as the current governor, he lives in his home when on St. Croix.

"When I go to St. Thomas -- and I'm there on average two nights a week -- I stay in a hotel. Now we want to debate -- and we have a corporate rate, I believe, at the hotel -- you want to debate with me now whether I should stay in the Ritz-Carlton, or I should stay, I guess, in Windward Passage or Motel 6 or whatever it is. That's the conversation -- don't make up your face -- that's the conversation we're having," the governor said. For the record, this reporter was not "making up" his face, as the governor suggested.

On the new vehicles, Mr. Mapp said the GVI has been purchasing vehicles for governors from 1954, and that the last vehicles purchased for governors were in 2003 (that assertion is not true; Mr. Mapp was recently driving an executive branch-owned GMC Denali, the back end of which is seen [here](#), purchased during the de Jongh administration. Mr. Mapp's Senior Police Advisor, Frankie Johnson, confirmed this during a conversation with this reporter following the press conference).

The governor retold a story about a vehicle in St. Thomas used during his inauguration that broke down and caught on fire. Mr. Mapp then mentioned the ceremonial vehicle that was purchased late last year, and then lashed out at the reporter again. "You're still asking me nonsense," he asserted. "I'm just being candid because I'm tired of it."

The governor went on: "I don't know what you believe is appropriate, okay. The [Supreme Court justice was here](#), people are coming here all the time -- I don't know if you believe I should go down on a bicycle with a sidecar and then that would make you happy."

As if to relegate the price of vehicles and cost of stay at the Ritz-Carlton as irrelevant, Mr. Mapp said the real problem was the territory's deficit. The governor then mentioned [a measure he sent to the 31st Legislature](#), which would see the West Indian Company (WICO) paying to build a governor's mansion at [Catherineberg](#), that would permanently solve the residence problems for governors when in St. Thomas.

"You have six million dollars sitting in WICO that could solve that problem; you don't need six million dollars to build a home," he said.

The Legislature, Mr. Mapp added, hasn't acted on the measure.

"So I have to stay somewhere. And I'm not going to turn it into a reality TV show as to what you think, or the community thinks, is the best place for me to stay, alright? And when I go to St. Thomas, I'm going to stay where is appropriate and where I feel I am safe," the governor said.

He said the public retains the ability to force the Legislature to deal with the matter of residence for governors when in the capital. "Stop asking me about it; it's not my job. That's the Legislature's job, okay."

Relishing the governor's defiant response, Mr. Johnson said following the press conference, "That's my governor. You can quote me on that."

Watch the video below.

[View the original embedded media](#)

Correction: February 22, 2017

A previous version of this story named a wrong model vehicle that was purchased during the de Jongh administration. It was a GMC Denali, not a Chevrolet Suburban. The story has been updated to reflect the correct information.