

The Virgin Islands Consortium

VI Inmate Shipped To Arizona Prison Has Died At The Facility; Cause Of Death Not Revealed To Family

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ST. CROIX -- A Virgin Islands prisoner who was shipped to the U.S. in March of 2016 by the V.I. Bureau of Corrections as part of the Mapp administration's efforts to fight crime, has died in the mainland facility where he was being held.

That's according to Senator Alicia Hansen, who received confirmation that the prisoner died over a week ago at the [Saguaro Correctional Center](#) in Arizona, which holds a total of 1,926 inmates. However, details surrounding the inmate's death were not released to the family; the family was only told that the inmate had died, according to Mrs. Hansen. The inmate was 1 of 67 V.I. prisoners [who were sent to the Arizona facility last year](#).

Mrs. Hansen expressed dismay that the family had yet to receive information as to how their relative passed. "We are paying hand over fist for this service, which I never agreed with to begin with," she said. The notice of the inmate's death came late, too, with the family being notified on Wednesday, despite the death occurring on Sunday.

In March of 2016, 105 inmates were sent from the Virgin Islands Golden Grove Correctional Facility to the mainland. Along with the 67 prisoners sent to Arizona, another 38 inmates were sent to the Citrus County Detention Facility in Florida.

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Mrs. Hansen said she made contact with B.O.C. Director Rick Mulgrav and was pleased with the manner in which he responded, although the senator did not say what exactly Mr. Mulgrav said. "I greatly appreciated the director taking the time to speak on the matter," stated Mrs. Hansen.

But the director did not reveal the cause of death to the senator, and the family has been given the runaround, according to Glendaly Felix, Mrs. Hansen's director of administration.

Mrs. Hansen expressed frustration at the incident, chiding B.O.C. for the lack of information on the inmate's death.

"It is our government's responsibility to protect our citizens, no matter the circumstance," she said. "It is unacceptable that we would have a person die under our watch while we are paying for the safe housing of our inmates, and not have an explanation why, up to that point. The family should not have to scramble to get information. It is high time we had some answers." Mrs. Hansen sympathized with the family.

When announcing the initiative last year, Mr. Mapp said it costs taxpayers \$150 daily to house inmates in the territory, and that's without additional medical costs that accumulate over the course of their incarceration. By contrast, Mr. Mapp said it would cost the local government \$82 to house the same prisoners in the chosen stateside facilities. At the time, the governor assailed Superior Court judges, stating that the court was not doing its job of hearing cases in a timely fashion, which he said had caused detainees to sit in prison for multiple years for simple charges.

"We have detainees sitting in Golden Grove, some for as high as seven years, waiting for a trial. Five years, three years — some of these persons are charged with aggravated assault, destruction of property, burglaries," Mr. Mapp said. "Yes, there are one or two that have been charged with murder; but at the end of the day, housing a detainee at a cost of \$150 a day at the Bureau of Corrections, and waiting as long as seven years and seven months for a trial, is totally unacceptable."

Mr. Mapp said his administration would accept some level of responsibility as work continues within the Department of Justice to improve resources and capacity, "but the reality is — and I've discussed this matter with the presiding judge — that the court simply is not moving on its dockets. We have judges who are being paid in the Superior Court, [and] some simply don't report to work on a regular basis; do not move their court calendar; cannot respond to simple motions to move the administration of justice forward," Mr. Mapp added.

The governor said while the Superior Court [continued to request additional resources for expansion](#), no favorable action would be taken on his part in support of the court's quest. "We have citizens in our community who are filing petitions for mandamus with the Supreme Court — which is simply asking the Superior Court judges to do their jobs — and having the Supreme Court act on those petitions to make a decision to move a trial forward."

"I am not prepared to support any additional resources to the court if the members of the Superior Court, the judiciary, is not prepared to move the court docket, and to make decisions regarding detainees in the territory," he said.

As for the initiative, Mr. Mullgrav said families of prisoners were not consulted before the move, and he was not sure when they would return to the territory. He said Golden Grove must be reconstructed before any such action could be taken, and was unable to provide a timeline for when construction would commence.