

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Stolen AT&T Generator Mysteriously Appears At Tower Site; Fingerprint Evidence Left Behind As FBI Investigates

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Ernice Gilbert **September 26, 2017**



ST. CROIX -- The AT&T generator that was stolen last weekend mysteriously appeared at the very site where it was taken, according to Governor Kenneth Mapp, speaking during his Tuesday evening briefing at Government House. The Consortium [first reported on the robbery](#), which occurred at AT&T's Gallows Bay tower site.

On Friday morning, AT&T's service suddenly went down, leaving residents unable to communicate. First, the internet service went out, followed by cellphone communication. Some residents had surmised that the company had temporarily taken down its towers to

perform maintenance, and that AT&T would be back up to provide better service than the intermittent reception that followed Hurricane Maria. (Before and during Hurricane Maria, AT&T's service, both calls and internet, was almost spotless.)

But that summary was wrong; the generator was stolen, which eventually caused a domino effect that saw most — if not all — of St. Croix losing internet service first, then the ability to make calls on the company's network.

The governor did not say when exactly the generator was returned, but he said the person or persons who stole it and chose to return it, made one blunder: fingerprints were left on the machine. "The person who made it findable, you forget to get your fingerprints off the machine," the governor said.

And now, the Federal Bureau of Investigation -- with its abundance of resources and tools -- is investigating the crime, since crimes pertaining to communications fall under federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Mapp spoke with Joe York, president of AT&T Florida, Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands today, and was pleased with the conversation. He said Mr. York gave an "excellent" report on the communication company's cellphone service restoration efforts following Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the territory, with Mr. York stating that AT&T was prepared to ship in additional microwaves to the Virgin Islands to bring cellphone reception to an optimum.

The situation regarding the stolen generator has brought about the potential for better service as well, as Mr. Mapp said he would use upcoming discussions and meetings with Mr. York to discuss a path that would see all areas in the USVI receiving full cellphone reception.

During the last 24 to 35 hours, multiple AT&T technicians arrived in the territory and have been assessing the extent of the damage caused by the storms. As compensation for the unreliable service AT&T customers have experienced after the hurricanes, the company will credit customers from the time service became intermittent up until the time when the problem is fixed, the governor said.

Following the robbery of the AT&T generator, private citizens stepped in to help restore communication. David Goodrich, commander of the extrication unit at St. Croix Rescue, guarded the site for hours after Robert Armstrong, a member of the well-known Armstrong family and owner of multiple businesses, used his bobcat to transport one of his personal generators to the Gallows Bay tower. With help from Tom Schoenbohm, a communications tower expert, the generator was installed. Mr. Schoenbohm dried certain parts of the tower that had collected water, and turned it back on. The thieves damaged the automatic transfer switch in the process of stealing the generator, so Mr. Schoenbohm hardwired the replacement into the tower.

Yet, even after turning it back on, the tower did not work because it had lost linkage with an AT&T tower in La Grande Princesse. Mr. Schoenbohm found a workaround and linked that tower to AT&T's tower in Miami, and then went to the Cheese Burgers in Paradise tower, performed some maintenance, and turned it on as well.