

The Virgin Islands Consortium

St. Croix Airport To Resume Commercial Flights Thursday; AT&T Reception To Start Seeing Improvements By The Middle Of Next Week

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Governor Kenneth Mapp announced at his Saturday press briefing that the Henry E. Rohlsen Airport on St. Croix will reopen for commercial flights on Thursday, another step in realizing normalcy in the territory following Hurricane Maria, which damaged the airport. Unlike St. Thomas, Mr. Mapp did not announce the airlines with flights scheduled for the island, but it is expected that some of the major players -- among them American and United Airlines, and Jetblue -- will have flights available. Inter-island travel has already commenced.

Vice President Mike Pence is confirmed for a Friday visit to the U.S. Virgin Islands, along with his wife, Karen Pence, according to Mr. Mapp. The governor said Mr. Pence will land on St. Croix and receive an aerial tour of the island to survey the damage caused by Hurricane Maria. Thereafter, the vice president will meet with victims of the storm and hear their stories, including their experience with the local government and the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) response.

The governor spoke with Mr. Pence and President Donald Trump in separate conversations today. He said the president expressed his commitment to provide support to the territory, and reaffirmed his planned visit. Mr. Trump intends to visit both Puerto Rico and the USVI in one day, the governor said.

The governor spoke with Joe York, president of AT&T Florida, Puerto Rico and the U. S. Virgin Islands today, who updated Mr. Mapp on AT&T's progress in cellphone coverage restoration territory-wide. Mr. York said a barge with microwaves and other equipment had arrived in the territory, and additional AT&T technicians and those from another firm, were to arrive on Sunday evening, with work set to begin on the towers on Monday. AT&T cellphone service should start improving by the middle of next week, Mr. York told the governor. AT&T is also shipping in generators that are to improve the durability of the towers until the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority (WAPA) is able to provide power to them.

There has been no update from Sprint, the other major cellphone carrier in the USVI.

The following are the other important updates from Saturday evening's press briefing, which lasted roughly 24 minutes: