

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mapp Tells Trump Territory Needs Up To \$750 Million To Rebuild After Hurricanes Irma And Maria

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ST. CROIX -- Governor Kenneth Mapp met President Donald Trump Tuesday on the USS Kearsarge, where the governor for the first time spoke in person with the president, first expressing gratitude for the federal help that has been so evident in the U.S. Virgin Islands, expressing condolences for the Las Vegas massacre, and also petitioning Mr. Trump on the USVI's behalf for funding to rebuild the territory's schools and hospitals, as four public schools have been condemned following the storms (two in St. Thomas and two on St. Croix), and both hospitals, according to the governor, need to be rebuilt.

The governor described the meeting as "very productive," and again hailed the federal response to the disasters in the U.S. Virgin Islands, stating, "We as Americans, we're

getting better at this process. It's not perfect, but we're getting better at it."

Aside from the important matters of rebuilding schools and hospitals, the governor said he spoke with the president about placing the territory's power distribution system underground, which would make for a faster recovery when another storm hits. And he expressed his frustration to the president about the slow pace with which the Blue Roof Project was moving.

Mr. Mapp said he told Mr. Trump that the territory would need between \$500 million to \$750 million to rebuild the USVI following the storms, although the governor added that a proper assessment was being conducted by both the local government and its federal partners, that will determine the true cost of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Puerto Rico's Hurricane Maria-related damage, according to Moody's Analytics, is \$95 billion. The White House is crafting a \$29 billion disaster aid package that it intends to send to Congress to shore up the federal flood insurance program, and \$13 billion in additional relief covering the entire hurricane and wildfire seasons, according to [Bloomberg](#).

Yet even after relaying his concerns, Mr. Mapp said the focus during the meeting was the immediate needs of the territory, which the governor said included over \$20 million in federal funds to the Virgin Islands Water and Power Authority for work on the territory's power restoration, which Mr. Mapp said had not been deposited to W.A.P.A.'s account as of Tuesday. The funds will be used pay hundreds of linemen from around the U.S., ship their equipment to the territory and buy materials needed to restore power. The governor did not say whether he spoke with Mr. Mapp about the territory's high cost of medicaid reimbursement compared to U.S. states.

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Mr. Trump told the governor that his request for up to \$750 million would need to be approved by Congress. The Consortium asked Mr. Mapp whether he was confident that the territory would receive the funds it needs, but the governor gave no certainties; he said his administration would lobby Congress and use its people in Washington to make the territory's case. The effort will include a lot of trips to nation's capital, Mr. Mapp said.

But with Puerto Rico's Maria-related damage estimated to be \$95 billion, and the Trump administration requesting from Congress only \$29 billion in additional funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to respond to crises -- \$16 billion of which will be for the FEMA's flood insurance program and \$13 billion for wildfire and hurricane disasters through the U.S. and the U.S. territories -- it remains to be seen whether the U.S. Virgin Islands will receive the amount of funding the governor estimates it needs.

As for the president's visit to the USVI, Mr. Mapp said Mr. Trump would visit the territory sooner than people expect.

Below are the other important details from Tuesday press briefing: