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Gov't House Says VI Consortium Published 'Misleading and False' Headline on TSG Contract With Gov't House. You be the Judge.

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Government House, St. Croix

The Bryan administration has published a release stating that VI Consortium published a "false and misleading" headline on Thursday. The relevant part of the headline reads, "TSG, Gov't House, Engage in What Appears to Be Illegal Contract". The story was based on comments made by TSG CEO John Engerman and Property and Procurement Commissioner Anthony Thomas during Wednesday's Senate hearing. The video of the discussion is below, judge for yourself.

Senator Kurt Vialet on Wednesday questioned testifiers about a contract that TSG had with the Bryan administration for live-streaming Government House press briefings. The Public Finance Authority said it had no idea of such a contract, and Mr. Thomas, who said all government contracts — barring the semiautonomous entities — must go through P&P — said he was not aware of such a contract.

Mr. Engerman, however confirmed the contract. "TSG had a 6-month contract with the Government House office of communications that expired on June 30. It ran from January through June," he said during the hearing.

Asked if the Government House office of communications had the authority to execute a contract outside of P&P, Mr. Thomas said, "No, not directly, but they could engage in a discussion to create the contract." Mr. Vialet responded by telling Mr. Thomas that Mr. Engerman had just placed on the record that there was a 6-month contract with the communications office of Government House.

"I'm not speaking hypothetical," Mr. Vialet said. Mr. Thomas then responded, "No agency can execute a contract without my signature for the central government." Mr. Vialet then said, "But you just heard there was a contract, correct?" Mr. Thomas responded, "I just heard that it was stated on the record that there was a contract, yes."

Richard Motta, the Bryan administration's communications director, in a statement issued to the Consortium Thursday afternoon requesting a retraction of our headline and correction of the record, said Government House entered into a \$30,000 6-month contract with TSG for "print and digital marketing services," which covered the January 10-July 10 period.

"The total procurement was less than \$50,000 which ordinarily does not require a written contract under the provisions of Title 31 of the V.I. Code," Mr. Motta wrote. "Further, given competitive negotiations with 3 possible vendors and compliance with the procurement exemptions, a justification letter requesting authorization to procure the services of TSG was approved by Property and Procurement Commissioner Anthony Thomas on January 10, 2020."

The Consortium is seeking answers for 5 questions posed to the Gov't House communications director: 1) John Engerman said he was contracted by Gov't House for the 6-month job, but now Gov't House is saying something different. Was there a contract? 2) Who were the other two vendors considered? 3) Does "procurement exemptions" fall under protocols put in place under the State of Emergency Declaration? 4) What, exactly, did the contract with TSG entail? 5) Was the contract renewed? If not, is TSG working on an as-needed basis at Gov't House?