

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Mobile Medical Units Sitting Unutilized At Juan F. Luis Hospital

Health / **Published On June 08, 2018 12:30 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **June 08, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- Take a quick glance at the Juan F. Luis Hospital's north parking lot when driving on the main road, and you'll notice mobile medical units. These units were received [in early April](#), and were expected to be put into use quickly.

But the units -- which are desperately needed because of the territory's great medical care inadequacy caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria, which damaged the hospitals -- have been sitting idly.

During a Wednesday Senate Committee on Finance hearing, Senator Kurt Vialet, who chairs the committee, gave some insight as to why the units have not yet been utilized.

Mr. Violet said the units were sitting unused because the Juan F. Luis board had failed to sign a contract. "They were placed there and infighting among the hospital board and the executives at the hospital resulted in a contract not being executed," the two-term Democrat said. The senator further revealed that a contract had been signed recently, nonetheless the length of time that the units have remained in the hospital's parking lot when they are in desperate need on St. Croix, begs the question as to "whether or not they're [the hospital board members] are following recommendations that are being made by our consultants, because you have modular units coming in, and you know it's coming in but you don't have a contract to set those units up," Mr. Violet said.

[In February](#), D.O.H. Commissioner Michelle Davis said the mobile medical units, more specifically the operating rooms, would be installed by March, although they came in April.

The information was divulged by Ms. Davis at Government House during one of Governor Kenneth Mapp's press briefings. There, the governor said 34 residents in need of medical care were airlifted to other U.S. jurisdictions in January. "If we get the modular units in and the hospitals up and functioning, then we will not have to do that and spend that level of dollars," Mr. Mapp said, referring to the expenses related to airlifting patients to the U.S. mainland for care.

Ms. Davis spoke of a three-phased plan that D.O.H. has in place to restore the territory's healthcare operations. The first phase involves installing mobile medical units offering critical services such as emergency and dialysis care. "Those mobile units would be a mobile emergency room, a mobile operating room, or a mobile dialysis trailer as well," she said. The hospitals have been negotiating with states with the necessary equipment, and representatives of some of these states have already visited the territory to determine whether the equipment they have meet the local need.

"It's a complex task that we're working to address at this time. There are many different variables that we've had to deal with," Ms. Davis said. As for a timeline, she said, "We're hoping within the next month we will have portable operating rooms, possibly portable emergency rooms, and portable dialysis units."

Phase two of D.O.H.'s plan involves installing the modular units at the hospitals, which are expected to be in place for multiple years. These units will have a labor and delivery operation, an emergency room, an operating room, a lab, and a pharmacy, according to Ms. Davis. "So they'll have everything that you're used to going to [at] the current structures," she said. The Myrah Keating Smith Community Health Center in St. John is expected to receive its modular units within three months, Ms. Davis said, because the facility's needs are much less complex than that of the two major hospitals. The modular units will be located at the hospitals' parking lots, according to Ms. Davis.

Modular units for D.O.H.'s Charles Harwood facility in Christiansted and the department's facility in St. Thomas, would receive their modular units within 3-4 months, Ms. Davis said. For Charles Harwood, the modular units will be installed immediately behind the complex, while the St. Thomas D.O.H. modular units will be installed on the grounds of the Schneider Regional Medical Center.