

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Black Flag Suspect Identified As Alla Salem, Who Is Said To Be Mentally Ill

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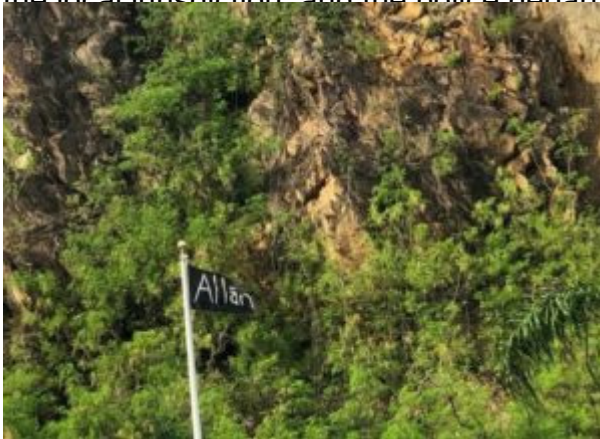
Ernice Gilbert **June 30, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- V.I.P.D. Commissioner Delroy Richards said at a press event at Government House this afternoon that the man who is believed to have removed U.S., U.S. Virgin Islands and nine other flags mounted high on a monument located at the entrance of the Cyril E. King Airport early Friday, was captured in the Sugar Estate area on St. Thomas the evening of the same day.

He was identified as Alla H. Salem, a 29-year-old Arabic male who lives with his family in St. Thomas. Mr. Salem, who had led officers on a short chase before being captured, was interviewed by the V.I.P.D. and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (F.B.I.), and it was determined that the incident did not constitute federal charges.

"The fact that there was not federal nexus simply means that it then falls right back into the local jurisdiction, and the police department moved forward in filing charges against



Black Flag bearing "Allah".

Mr. Salem was charged with conversion of government property, malicious mischief and petty larceny. He was remanded to the Bureau of Corrections, however, Mr. Richards said Mr. Salem's family "most likely" posted bail for his release pending the advisement hearing.

The commissioner moved to allay any fear caused by the incident, stating that the suspect had been suffering with "severe mental conditions within the last several weeks." The suspect, who also owns a business with a partner in St. Thomas, had his firearm confiscated by police. Mr. Salem's firearm license was also revoked, Mr. Richards said, and won't be reinstated until the commissioner convenes a meeting with the suspect "at the appropriate time."

The Arab community played a critical role in providing crucial information that led to the arrest of Mr. Salem. The V.I.P.D. was informed that Mr. Salem had approached a family member asking for help in removing the flags from the monument and replacing them with ones bearing the name "Allah" and other Arabic writings.

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As for why Mr. Salem was not detected by Virgin Islands Port Authority officers, the commissioner said the matter was discussed and concerns were raised, but he would not comment on the behalf of V.I.P.A. Mr. Richards did reveal that the authority had requested officers from the V.I.P.D.'s upcoming cadre of graduating police to fill critical vacancies. It also appeared that there were no functioning cameras, or non at all in the vicinity near the airport's entrance that could have aided the investigation in apprehending Mr. Salem.

The charges levied against the suspect will most likely not lead to jail time, but the commissioner said it would be prudent of the judge presiding over the case to ascertain that Mr. Salem can be monitored in light of his recent action.

"We were told by everybody that is around him that he's been acting strange for weeks," Mr. Richards said. "Obviously it concerns me, and whatever the motive is, he obviously knows. So we obviously can't just close the books and just simply forget about him."

"What we have to find out next is what's going to happen to him. Is he going to remain on the island and be treated? Because obviously we can't just have someone who requires certain treatment roaming this community. So we'll really have to take the lead and request whatever assistance we need -- whether it's from the local side or federal side -- to assist us in this matter," the commissioner concluded.

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