

The Virgin Islands Consortium

AECOM, Patriot, Cut Ties With Campbell Development; D.O.J. Launches Investigation Following Reports Of Abuse, Bounced Checks At Company

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Ernice Gilbert **November 01, 2018**



ST. CROIX -- Following the publishing of a VI Consortium video showing employees of Campbell Development alleging a number of abuses said to be perpetrated by company owner Julie Campbell, seen above, including lack of pay, bounced checks, arbitrary dismissals and abandonment, the companies under which Campbell Development received its contracts, AECOM and Patriot Response Group, LLC, have severed ties with the firm.

The video, shot Wednesday night at an apartment complex in Peter's Rest where Campbell Development employees reside, sees these employees laying bare their experiences with the beleaguered company.

"Currently right now I am three weeks behind on my pay, they are trying to take away my pay," said one employee, who took the lead in the conversation. "They promised us \$500 a day when we got here 9 weeks ago. They then cut that into \$250 a day. They then three weeks ago started bouncing all of their paychecks. They bounced 37 paychecks last week alone. We are currently all owed thousands and thousands of dollars. Some people have their trucks stuck in the shipping containers because none of them are paid for."

Another employee, who himself is a contractor with five employees, also said they were promised \$500 a day, but that while in transit, they were told that the pay would be cut to \$250 per day. Others spoke of leaving their families behind based on promises made by Mrs. Campbell, but met a different reality once they arrived on the island,

"I have a family and kids at home and I can't pay my rent tomorrow, because it's due tomorrow, because I wasn't paid what I was owed," another employee said on Tuesday night. These stories continued throughout the conversation, with another employee showing a check that included less money that he actually worked for. He said "\$250 a day doesn't equal a thousand dollars a week."

Meanwhile, as the tension between Campbell Development employees was brewing, Mrs. Campbell took a one-week vacation with her family to Disney Land.

Campbell Development was subcontracted by Patriot Response Group, LLC, which was hired by AECOM, to perform hurricane recovery work in the territory. In an interview with The Consortium on Wednesday, AECOM Public Relations Officer, Michael Chee, said the firm held no responsibility relative to nonpayment of Campbell Development employees, as it had paid Patriot Response Group funds in September that included funds to pay Campbell Development. Patriot Response Group also issued a statement on the matter: "Patriot Response Group, LLC has confirmed that the group of workers that have a grievance against Campbell Development never worked on any contracts that were under Patriot. Our work with AECOM ended several months ago and Campbell Development was released from any work under Patriot."

The companies are under pressure to address the unfolding crisis because the Attorney General's Office has launched an investigation. Attorney General Claude Walker told The Consortium Wednesday that issuing worthless checks is a criminal offense under U.S. Virgin Islands law. And he decried the grievances made by those in the video, stating that if true, such treatment should never be permissible and allowed to continue in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

As for Mrs. Campbell, she said both AECOM and Patriot owed her company money. She said she would be seeking to build new relationships with other companies offering subcontracting work in the territory, and maintained that her firm, contrary to what was alleged in the video, treats its employees fairly.

"We've been put in such a terrible position with these outrageous accusations," Mrs. Campbell said in an interview with The Consortium Wednesday. "I and my family, we've been here to provide help for the citizens of the Virgin Islands, to aid in repairing what's been lost in these storms."

APTIM, which was mentioned by the men in the video as the firm that gave Campbell Development the contract, has since said it had no dealings with Mrs. Campbell or her company, and that it had never provided Campbell Development with any contract.

The video has gone viral, with over 106,000 views in less than 24 hrs. It remains to be seen what will happen to Mrs. Campbell's company in the aftermath of the video's release, as she admitted that relationships she was nurturing to secure additional work contracts in the U.S.V.I. were rocked by the allegations.

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