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Denise George, USVI Attorney General, Slams Consortium's Reporting But Refuses to Answer Questions; Feds Have 'No Comment' On Investigation of WAPA Following Leak

Government / **Published On March 11, 2021 06:17 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **March 11, 2021**

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V.I. Attorney General Denise George

USVI Attorney General Denise George issued a seething statement against the Consortium Thursday, slamming the publication and this reporter for a story that [laid bare an internal WAPA audit alleging rampant corruption](#) within the authority, with longtime WAPA executive Gregory Rhymer at the center of the damning allegations.

Ms. George honed in on the publication's original reporting, which said that Cleve George, who was named in the audit as someone either working with or had ownership in ABC Concepts, as the brother of Ms. George. ABC Concepts was awarded a \$1.1 million contract in 2012 to perform cleanup and other work on a WAPA tank and dispose of the waste over another company, Tampa Tank, which WAPA had used multiple times in the past. Tampa Tank estimated the job at \$174,000.

Cleve George was named in the audit by Rupert Pelle, who has worked in a number of capacities at WAPA, most recently as chief administrative officer. Here's part of what Mr. Pelle told the auditor:

"Again in 2014 [Gregory] Rhymer was part of an Internal Audit investigation that was turned over to the Office of the Attorney General for further prosecution. That is a case where Mr. Rhymer allegedly received kickbacks from contracts SC-12-13, SC-22-13 and SC-24-13 at which time he was the Chief Operating Officer. These contracts ranged from scopes of converting the tanks from accepting No. 6 to No. 2 oils, to emergency contracts and tank cleaning. All of these contracts were awarded to the same contractor, Cleve George of ABC Concepts who was not qualified to do the work and who had previously been imprisoned by the Federal Government for falsifying environmental records."

The Consortium found online a case involving a Cleve-Allan George of St. Thomas, who was convicted in the District Court of the Virgin Islands on number of charges, including violations of the Clean Air Act, and other counts including violating 18 U.S.C. § 1001 (a) by knowingly and willfully transmitting twelve falsified air-monitoring reports to the Virgin Islands Housing Authority. Mr. George along with co-defendant Dylan C. Starnes appealed the case to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, but the Third Circuit [upheld the District Court's ruling](#).

Ms. George vehemently denies that her brother had anything to do with ABC Concepts. She said, "While I do have a brother of the same first and last name, my brother was not associated in any way with ABC Concepts, Inc., nor was he awarded any WAPA contracts for fuel tank conversion and cleaning services." Ms. George's brother's full name is Cleve-Allan George.

Additionally, in a release issued at 4:05 p.m. Thursday from the law office of Attorney Lee Rohn who represents Mr. Pelle, a statement from Mr. Pelle reads, "I confused the name Cleve George with William Koenig. But in the memo that was attached, it was clear that the person being referenced was not Cleve George, but William Koenig." Mr. Pelle added, "Larry Kupfer, the Internal Audit Director, Leslie Smith, Germane Plaskett of Internal Audit, all had full knowledge that the correct name was William Koenig. As such, I did not correct my memo, as they knew the correct name."

He further stated that WAPA was trying to put him in a bad light and said, "I did not know Cleve George, and never told anyone at any time, including anyone at Water and Power Authority, that Cleve George was related to Denise George."

But while Mr. Pelle said today he did not know Cleve George and that he called Mr. George's name in error, in the audit, Mr. Pelle didn't simply mention Mr. George's name, he went further and said Mr. George was convicted by the federal government on environmental violation charges. As we pointed out before, a Cleve-Allan George from St. Thomas [was indeed imprisoned](#) for falsifying government environmental records.

Furthermore, even as Mr. Pelle now says he misspoke, he mentioned the same Cleve George several more times in both the current audit and back in 2019 in a letter addressed to the WAPA

board. The letter, seen [here](#), was published in a March 2020 VIC story titled, "[WAPA Management Illegally Shipped FEMA-Provided Restoration Materials and Supplies to British Virgin Islands, Whistleblower Lawsuit Says](#)".

At 8:40 a.m. today the Consortium posed a number of questions to Ms. George, none of which has been answered. Of the questions, we asked whether her brother, named Cleve-Allan George, was convicted of environmental violations and imprisoned. We also sought to learn why Ms. George has allowed the case, brought to her desk in 2019, to sit dormant. The Consortium asked what action has Ms. George taken to determine that the Cleve-Allan George spoken of in the WAPA audit was in fact not her brother, and we queried what evidence she had gathered to unequivocally say that her brother was not involved. Additionally, the Consortium sought to learn whether Ms. George had contacted Mr. Pelle on any of these issues.

We had not received a single answer from the attorney general at time of writing, though she carved out time to slam the publication in a scathing statement that failed to address any of the aforementioned questions.

Federal involvement

The Consortium reached out to U.S. Attorney for the Virgin Islands, Gretchen Shappert for comment on the allegations made in the audit. Ms. Shappert stated, "I have no comment."