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Attorney General Said Sunday She Hadn't Seen Audit, WAPA Audit Director Says Audit Was Resent to A.G.'s Office 'Within the Past Two Weeks'

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V.I. Attorney General Denise George

Attorney Denise George told the Consortium on Sunday, March 14 that she had no knowledge of the WAPA audit alleging damning accusations against longtime WAPA executive Gregory Rhymer, and that the audit was sent to the Dept. of Justice in 2014, which was before her tenure.

Here's what the attorney general told the Consortium within hours Sunday night:

"The only "WAPA audit" matter that was referred to my office or brought to my attention for investigation is the now public matter involving Niel Vanterpool, that I received in 2020, which

resulted in Vanterpool's arrest by DOJ earlier this year on criminal conflict of interest charges. If you read the correspondence you referred to in your story, that audit was referred to the AG office in "2014."

Three hours later, she said:

"The only WAPA related matter /audit received and brought to my attention in the AG office for investigation under my tenure and of which I have knowledge, was referred to this office in 2020, not 2019. This was related to the Niel Vanterpool matter which resulted in the recent investigation and arrest by DOJ, all of which is now a matter of the public court record. The 3/9/2021 letter you reported on referred to an obviously separate and different audit/investigation that it said occurred in 2014, of which I have no personal knowledge or involvement and no information as to its existence or its outcome. I was not AG in 2014. No further comment."

But during a marathon WAPA hearing Tuesday, WAPA Internal Audit Director, Leslie Smith, told senators that while the audit, which he said was not fully completed, was sent to the Attorney General's Office in 2014, it was resent to the A.G.'s Office "within the past two weeks."

"We sent it again recently," Mr. Leslie said. Asked when was recent by Senator Janelle Sarauw, Mr. Smith responded, "within the past two weeks."

Ms. George had levied [a seething rebuke](#) against the Consortium and this reporter, honing in on the publication's original reporting [on the WAPA audit](#), which said that Cleve George, who was named in the audit as someone either working with or had ownership in ABC Concepts, was the brother of Ms. George. Ms. George at the time had called for a correction, and the Consortium updated the story to reflect Ms. George's statement that the Cleve George mentioned in the audit was not her brother.

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.

"I am appalled by the shoddy journalism of the V.I. Consortium and outraged that Gilbert would print such information without taking the time to verify its accuracy," Ms. George fired.

"His flagrant disregard for the truth is a serious disservice to his readers and members of the public who rely upon the information he reports," Ms. George continued, assailing the publication for what she described as "yellow" journalism in her seething statement, and went on to say she hoped this reporter "would do some soul searching and muster up some degree of journalistic professionalism and integrity in the process."

With the level of pointed attacks levied at the publication by Ms. George in her statement, the Consortium hoped the attorney general would clarify a few simple questions. In the audit, Rupert Pelle referred multiple times, including in a letter sent to the WAPA board in 2019, to a Cleve George of ABC Concepts. Mr. Pelle also said Cleve George was convicted in federal court for falsifying federal environmental records.

Here's what Mr. Pelle said both in the letter and the WAPA audit: "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. Cleve-Allan 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](#).

The Consortium learned through multiple sources and through documents viewed that Ms. George's brother is named Cleve-Allan George. So since the attorney general so vehemently assailed this publication for what she said were falsehoods, we have been seeking clarity so as to clear the matter and, if necessary, issue a correction.

However on multiple occasions, including twice on Sunday night, the Consortium asked Ms. George whether her brother, named Cleve-Allan George, was convicted of environmental violations. We also asked what action did Ms. George take, if any, to determine that the Cleve-Allan George spoken of in the WAPA audit was in fact not her brother.

The attorney general twice ignored this question while answering one relative to her daughter, Kmisha Victoria Counts regarding a [no-bid contract Ms. Counts was awarded by the Dept. of Tourism](#), and about the WAPA audit, which she said was sent to the Dept. of Justice before her tenure.

We also asked Ms. George whether she had spoken to Mr. Pelle on the issues related to WAPA. She did not respond.

On Thursday afternoon at about 4:05, a statement from the law office of Attorney Lee Rohn who represents Mr. Pelle, said, "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 Thursday 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](#)".

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