

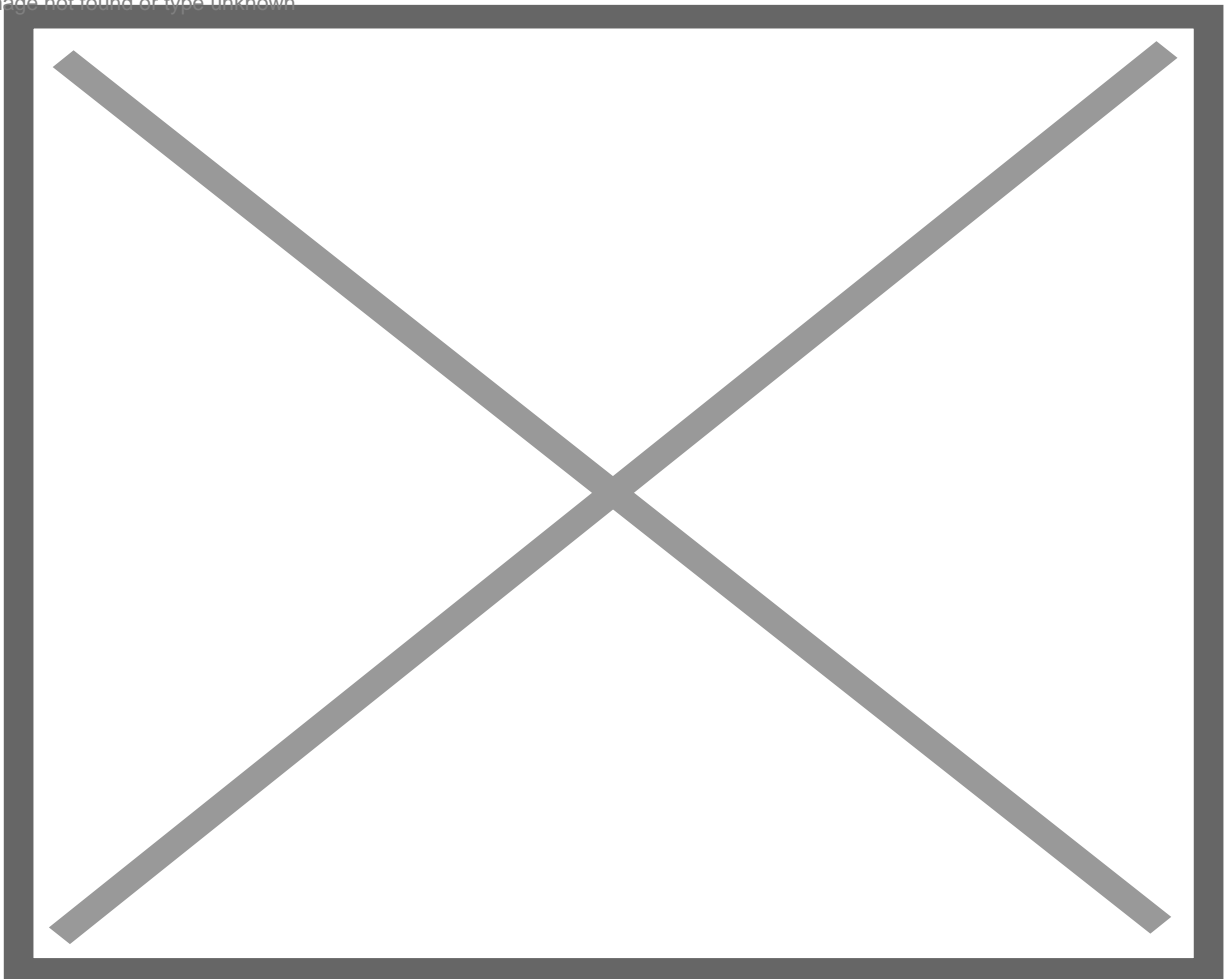
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Bryan Announces Travel Restrictions Between USVI and BVI, Expresses 'Grave Concern' As USVI Cases Jump to 124; Ten People Hospitalized in USVI, Two on Ventilators

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Ernice Gilbert **July 15, 2021**

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Road Town Ferry Dock, Tortola BVI. Governor Albert Bryan on Thursday announced travel restrictions between the USVI and BVI as the Covid crisis in the British territory grew worse. By. BVI TRAVELLER

Governor Albert Bryan during a short press briefing Thursday announced travel restrictions between the U.S. and British Virgin Islands, confirming the administration's concerns [at the growing crisis](#) facing the USVI neighbor as Covid-19 ravages the BVI.

As of Wednesday, the BVI — whose most populous island is Tortola with roughly 24,000 residents — had 1,559 active Covid cases, with over a dozen individuals hospitalized and more awaiting admittance in a triage center as of Sunday. Highlighting the dire situation in the BVI, Mr. Bryan drew comparison to the USVI's highest Covid surge. "The most active cases we've ever had in the [U.S.] Virgin Islands is around two hundred, and we are three times the size of the British Virgin Islands," Mr. Bryan said, adding that the USVI's positivity rate stood at 3 percent as of Thursday — which the governor said was not good.

The BVI Covid-19 positivity rate stood at 17 percent on Sunday, and has gone up since as the territory experienced another 267 cases through Wednesday for a total of 1,559 active cases.

Mr. Bryan said he had grave concerns about the growing situation not only in the BVI but the USVI as well. The British territory has reported five of its six total Covid-related deaths in the past week, and BVI health officials are predicting over 5,000 cases before the situation gets under control.

BVI's hospital is also overwhelmed, with roughly 100 of the facility's medical staff unable to administer care as they themselves have either tested positive or were under quarantine for coming into close contact with ill individuals, Governor Bryan said. The need for healthcare workers in the British territory is so great that the BVI Health Services Authority has issued an urgent call for retired healthcare workers who are experienced and trained to join its team, according to [BVI News](#).

Governor Bryan said his administration has extended support to the BVI government, and that he has been in discussions with federal partners to determine the extent of support that could be provided.

Even so, the governor said the USVI must take precautions to safeguard its own people, and he announced restrictions aimed at accomplishing this goal.

Mr. Bryan announced that effective Monday, anyone entering the USVI from the BVI must submit a negative Covid test within 24 hours of departure. USVI Health officials will also accept positive antibody tests. "We're going to be taking extra caution, and please don't try to game the system. We've already made one arrest and we'll make others for people trying to forge their way into the U.S. Virgin Islands," the governor said.

The governor also offered free vaccinations to "anyone who makes it to our shores."

Mr. Bryan said the administration gave thought to reducing the ferry load coming from the BVI, "but we thought better of it because all the people who are coming should have had a test within 48 hours of their departure," he explained.

For Virgin Islanders wanting to travel to the BVI, Mr. Bryan said, "We're not encouraging people to go over to that situation."

Mr. Bryan said the Covid situation in the USVI was not encouraging, and he issued a new plea aimed at residents experiencing Covid fatigue. "Right now our situation in the Virgin Islands is not optimal, and I know a lot of you have gotten used to having the virus and going about your regular business — not wearing your mask, not paying attention, hanging in places with people," he said. "We are against a new enemy with this Delta variant. Although I cannot confirm that it is in the territory, I cannot imagine that it is not with all that we're seeing going on in the BVI as well

as what is going on in the United States, as non-vaccinated people continue to contract this variant."

Mr. Bryan said five people were at the Juan F. Luis Hospital receiving care for Covid as of Thursday. "That is high," he said. At the Schneider Regional Medical Center, seven people were hospitalized with the illness as of Thursday, with two on ventilators, according to the governor.

The territory's leader said the goal has never been to eradicate Covid. "The goal has been to manage it and make sure that our hospitals and health resources are available to people who get sick," he said.

"Yet seven people are in the hospital already in St. Thomas, and over 120 cases today active in the Virgin Islands. We've got to work to drive that down. We got to work to get that under fifty for the entire territory," Mr. Bryan stressed.

The governor concluded, "Please, I am asking you, I am begging you for your cooperation so that we continue to enjoy the prosperity that we've had because we've managed the crisis well. Not just me, not just Health, not Just VITEMA, but us as a community managing to get through."

He encouraged residents of all faiths to pray for the British Virgin Islands. "It is not an easy thing to deal with," the governor said.

As of Thursday, there were 124 active Covid-19 cases in the U.S. Virgin Islands: 63 on St. Thomas, 57 on St. Croix, and 4 on St. John, according to [data](#) provided by the V.I Dept. of Health.