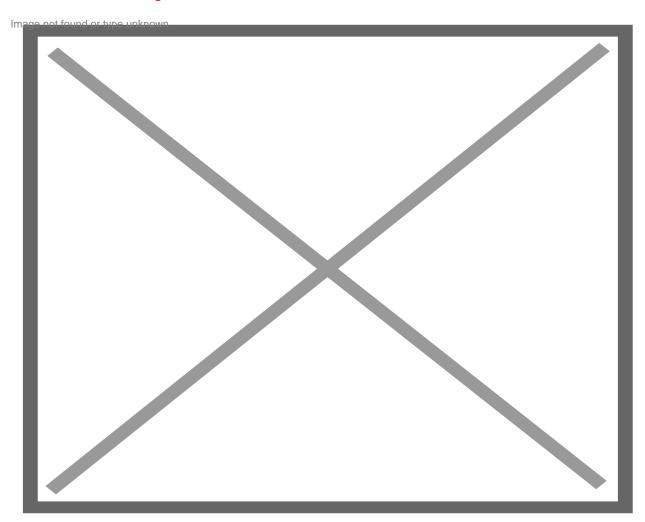# USVI Veterans to Benefit From Weekly Charter Flights to Puerto Rico For VA Medical Appointments

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Soon Virgin Islands veterans will benefit from an initiative announced by Veterans Affairs Caribbean Healthcare System Director, Carlos Escobar, that sees weekly charter flights being made available to veterans wanting to travel to Puerto Rico for VA medical appointments.

There will be one flight per week per district until the demand increases, according to a release from the V.I. Office of Veterans Affairs.

"The Office of Veterans Affairs has been advocating for this service for some time. I am happy to see it come to fruition," said V.I. Office of Veterans Affairs Director Patrick Farrell.

Mr. Escobar also announced the addition of a VA Patient Representative, which will be stationed locally but report directly to the executive director of the VA Caribbean Healthcare System.

The announcement of the new services came during a recent visit to the VA Caribbean Healthcare System headquarters in San Juan, PR by local officials, among them Governor Albert Bryan, Mr. Farrell and Health Commissioner Justa Encarnacion. They were joined virtually by Schneider Regional Medical Center Interim CEO Dr. Luis Amaro and Juan F. Luis Hospital Interim CEO Dyma Williams.

The VA Caribbean Healthcare System is the entity charged with direct oversight of VA medical care within the Caribbean islands to include Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The release stated that the visit by Mr. Bryan was the "very first time that any governor of the Virgin Islands has taken a vested interest in the facility responsible for the care of our 8 thousand plus Veterans in the territory."

"For the majority of our veterans in the territory, the VA hospital is their primary healthcare provider so making sure that they have seamless access to that care is a priority for me as governor," stated Mr. Bryan.

Veterans can continue to get up-to-date information on the Office of Veterans Affairs website at www.veterans.vi.gov calling the office @ (340) 774-8387, or by texting the word VIVets (no spaces) to 888-652-8387