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Inmate Found Dead in Cell at Golden Grove Prison, Bureau of Corrections Remains Mum

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Aerial shot of the John A. Bell Correctional Facility Complex, widely known as the Golden Grove Correctional Facility on St. Croix. By. ERNICE GILBERT/VI CONSORTIUM

Update: The V.I. Bureau of Corrections Monday afternoon confirmed the incident.

ORIGINAL STORY: ST. CROIX — An inmate was found dead in his cell at the John A. Bell Correctional Facility Complex, widely known as the Golden Grove Correctional Facility, on Friday, and the Bureau of Corrections has refused to not only provide details, but even confirm that the death occurred.

The inmate, said to be a middle-aged man, was found in his cell on Friday, but it was unclear as to how long he had been dead. Also unclear was what caused his death.

On Friday, the Consortium sought comment from B.O.C. relative to why the Coroner's vehicle and the V.I.P.D. were at the Golden Grove facility. Kyza Callwood, B.O.C. chief strategist officer and acting public information officer, stated, "The Coroner's office and the Virgin Islands Police Department were at the John A. Bell Facility. Due to a pending investigation as per protocol, no information can be provided at this time."

V.I. Police Commissioner Ray Martinez on Sunday confirmed the death and said the V.I.P.D. responded early Friday. "Contact was made with us [V.I.P.D.] early on Friday, and our Major Crimes and Forensic Units responded and processed the scene," said the commissioner.

The Consortium on Friday received a number of complaints relative to the Golden Grove facility, including an image allegedly depicting unsanitary conditions. In response to the complaints, Mr. Callwood, who also serves as chairman of the V.I. Board of Education, stated, "The Bureau's facilities are cleaned everyday, including clearing of trash, cleaning bathrooms, etc. I would add on the issue of cleaning that a snapshot depicting an unsanitary condition that may have been caused by an inmate in a small area is not reflective of the overall level of cleaning and disinfection at the entire facility...."

Mr. Callwood said B.O.C. plans on being more forthcoming. "We will be inviting news media sources to our facility in the future to see firsthand the work we are continuously doing," he said. "The Bureau is moving towards best Correctional principles and practices. We stand ready to succeed.

How soon B.O.C. plans on opening its doors to the media was not clear.