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VIPD Reports Progress on Case Involving Eavesdropping of Gov't Offices; Devices Were Shipped to USVI Between October and March, Commissioner Says

Investigations / **Published On September 12, 2022 04:45 AM /**

Ernice Gilbert **September 12, 2022**

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The Office of Management and Budget Office in St. Thomas By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The V.I. Police Department and its federal partners have made some progress on the case involving the eavesdropping of government offices that [stunned the territory early August](#), Police Commissioner Ray Martinez has confirmed to the Consortium.

The matter involved devices inconspicuously placed at about a dozen government offices that law enforcement officials believe were for the purpose of illegally gathering sensitive office

information. The most visible investigation involved the V.I. Office of Management and Budget, with investigators both local and federal combing through OMB offices in St. Thomas on August 5th.

During an interview Saturday, the commissioner said some progress had been made, the most notable being investigators' success in tracking when the devices were purchased and shipped to the U.S. Virgin Islands.

"Thus far we've backtracked the devices to the manufacturers and in doing so what we have found is that a majority of the devices were shipped to the territory between October 2021 and March 2022," the commissioner said.

Other investigatory work, including poring over Wi-Fi and Internet logs, which Mr. Martinez said were in the thousands, is more painstaking and is progressing slower. "The FBI is taking a look at the Wi-Fi and Internet logs and I guess it's because you're talking about thousands of logs that they have to go through systematically, looking for specific incursions," he said, adding that the FBI's Digital Forensic Team has been assigned to assist the V.I.P.D., which along with the V.I. Dept. of Justice is leading the investigation.

The commissioner did not reveal the other offices where devices were placed, pointing to the sensitivity of the case. "Sometime down the line as the investigation progresses, I will divulge what government agencies they were found in, but for now in order to protect the investigation, I cannot divulge that," he said last month.

Also last month, Mr. Martinez condemned the eavesdropping and said law enforcement would utilize all their resources to bring the perpetrators to justice. "The individuals who placed these devices for nefarious reasons underestimated local law enforcement's ability to discover them," he said. "We will not idly stand by and allow these individuals to trample our civil rights and intentionally interfere with the effective and orderly operation of our government. They underestimated our dedication and access to advanced digital forensic capabilities. Make no mistake we have only just scratched the surface of this investigation."

The eavesdropping devices were first discovered when OMB Director Jenifer O'Neal informed the V.I. Police Department of suspicious devices in her St. Thomas office. The police department in turn requested support from federal partners, and FBI agents who specialize in digital forensics flew from Puerto Rico to aid in the operation.

A motive for the eavesdropping has not been established.