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Plaskett Slams Congressmen Who Issued Fallacy-Laden Letter Calling For WAPA Investigation, Calls Letter 'Propaganda'

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Ernice Gilbert **November 04, 2022**

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Wartsila Generator By. WARTSILAR

A letter from four Republican Congressmen that calls for an investigation into the V.I. Water and Power Authority's acquisition of four Wartsila generators has elicited a swift rebuke from Congresswoman Stacey Plaskett, who points out glaring errors in the letter and accuses the congressmen of having zero interest in the territory.

She also said the letter appears to be motivated "by the urging of special interest groups to assist those groups' pecuniary interests at the expense of the federal reputation of the people of the Virgin Islands."

The letter, seen [here](#), was jointly written by Congressmen Byron Donalds, Michael Cloud, Glenn Grothman and Bob Gibbs, all serving in the U.S. House of Representatives. These congressmen said in the letter addressed to the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development, that HUD Inspector General Rae Oliver Davis should "independently investigate" WAPA for "this potential waste of taxpayer's resources."

The congressmen appear to take issue with the four Wartsila generating units that were [procured by WAPA in 2020 through a \\$74.4 million HUD grant](#). The units arrived in St. Thomas in Nov. 2021, and WAPA said those units would not be online until February 2023. The units' protracted installation timeline at the Randolph Harley Power Plant was of concern to members of the V.I. Public Services Commission, and [WAPA attempted to explain why](#), pointing to the installation of several auxiliary facilities before the four units could come online.

The letter is replete with errors. It says the units were supposed to be online in 2022, when WAPA clearly gave a Feb. 2023 date. The letter further accuses WAPA of having no timeline regarding when the units are to come online, which is another inaccuracy. Additionally, the letter says the Randolph Harley Power Plant is on St. Croix, when said plant is located in St. Thomas.

"I find it concerning that these Members are requesting an investigation pertaining to WAPA's acquisition and installation of four Wartsila generators, particularly since none of them have shown any interest or concern regarding our territory at any point," Ms. Plaskett said. "If these colleagues of mine are as concerned as they expressed in the letter, which contained a number of glaring fallacies (i.e., the Randolph Harley power plant is actually on St. Thomas and not on St. Croix, as the letter incorrectly states), the House Oversight Committee, of which they are members, has specific processes in place to obtain necessary information and push agencies and recipients to use funds appropriately."

She added, "Additionally, the claim made in the letter that there is not an objective timeline of when the four generators will come online is false. Not only has WAPA's CEO, Andrew Smith made numerous public statements about the generators coming online in March of 2023, but the initial term sheet and timeline discussed for the integrated resource plan for these generators made during the previous administration (2019) estimated almost two years to integration, and that forecast did not account for the delays that were inevitably created by the pandemic."

The congresswoman stated that "special interest groups" are "assisting their own pecuniary interests by being destructive to the people of the Virgin Islands."

"I urge Virgin Islanders to do their own research on this issue and others in our community. Let us be certain that the information we acquire and share is fact-based and not perpetuated propaganda," Ms. Plaskett stated.

She took aim at unnamed individuals [in a post on Facebook](#), stating, "You think you're so smart that you haven't done your research and you're such a bitter hating keyboard video gansta that you've been used by white supremacist sympathizers. Well done."

In response to the letter, WAPA reiterated that the generators — which are 30 percent and 70 percent more efficient than the units they will displace — are scheduled to come online in February 2023, and could even be in operation by January 2023, though several gating factors need to be cleared to meet the accelerated timeline, according to the authority.

WAPA further stated that the V.I. Housing Finance Authority has overseen the Wartsila project from its inception and has worked closely with the authority "to overcome project-related

challenges and ensure timely delivery."

"All major milestones within the project timeline have also continued to be documented on both sides, per federal requirements, to show how funds are spent, tracked, and managed," WAPA said Thursday.

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