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Security at One of the USVI's Busiest Cruise Ship Ports Inadequate as Potential Hires Reject Wage Level

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A cruise ship docked at WICO on Nov. 11, 2022. By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

The West Indian Company Limited (WICO) Dock in St. Thomas, historically the busiest port for cruise ship tourism in the U.S. Virgin Islands, is currently facing a manpower issue in its security department as potential hires continue to shun the current wage offering from WICO, company officials made known during a board meeting Monday.

WICO President and CEO Anthony Ottley said filling security guard positions continues to be a challenge because of the pay being offered, though an amount was never mentioned during the meeting.

“This continues to be a challenge at the current compensation level,” Mr. Ottley said, adding that six potential candidates had recently been interviewed for security positions and while two of these individuals had failed the test, the other four refused to accept the current pay rates.

The lack of manpower in the security department becomes more acute on cruise ship days when other WICO employees have to fill the gap, Mr. Ottley said.

Though no major incident at WICO has been reported where the inadequacy of security personnel led to costly failures, a future incident could be damaging to the port.

Board members agreed that the pay schedule for security employees needed to be adjusted.

Below are some of the duties of a port security officer:

- Conducting an initial comprehensive security survey of the Port Facility
- Ensuring the development and maintenance of the Port Facility Security Plan
- Implementing and exercising the Port Facility Security Plan
- Undertaking regular security inspections of the Port Facility
- Enhancing security awareness and vigilance of the Port Facility personnel
- Recommending and incorporating, as appropriate, modifications to the Port Facility Security Plan in order to correct deficiencies and to update the plan to take into account of relevant changes to the Port Facility
- Ensuring adequate training is provided to personnel responsible for the security of the Port Facility
- Reporting to the relevant authorities and maintaining records of occurrences that threaten the security of the Port Facility
- Coordinating implementation of the Port Facility Security Plan with the appropriate Company and Ship Security Officer(s)
- Assisting Ship Security Officers in confirming the identity of those seeking to board the ship when requested