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General Elections in BVI Will be Held Without UK Interference or Disruption, Appointed Governor Assures

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The United Kingdom's Thames River and House of Parliament at dusk. By. GETTY IMAGES

Governor of the British Virgin Islands John Rankin says the United Kingdom has no intentions of disrupting the impending general elections on the BVI.

“I have seen the speculation that, somehow or another, elections will be prevented by myself or by the United Kingdom government. Nothing could be further from the truth,” the governor said during a quarterly review update of the Commission of Inquiry (COI) press conference on Tuesday.

He added that any expressed concern that residents won't be able to vote for their leaders in the upcoming election "has no basis whatsoever" as far as he is concerned.

After the COI report was released, the United Kingdom drafted an Order in Council in Parliament which would suspend the constitutional order in the BVI and impose direct rule. The Order has been held in abeyance to allow the territory to attempt to implement agreed governance reforms.

Earlier this month, Premier Dr. Dr Natalio Wheatley met with Lord Zach Goldsmith, the UK's Overseas Territories Minister on the matter, and raised the possibility of lifting the Council's Order before reforms are completed. However, both Goldsmith and now Governor Rankin solidified the UK's position that the reforms need to be seen through before the threat of direct rule will be lifted.

Even so, that threat is not imminent, Mr. Rankin told local reporters. "There was no suggestion from Lord Goldsmith of an intention to trigger the Order in Council at this point, which would lead to a partial suspension of the Constitution," he said.

Despite the reassurance, the governor noted that some statutory boards have been hindering the reform process by not cooperating with reviewers.

"Jamal Smith and Sheila Brathwaite both reported non-cooperation from a number of key oards who failed to respond to requests for information, which has, in turn, impacted upon their ability to review some areas," he reported.

Governor Rankin said he was aware of which boards had not been forthcoming with information, but declined to disclose them to local journalists.

"Until such time as the report is tabled as necessary in Cabinet and then published, it'd be wrong of me to preempt, but yes, I am aware myself of those statutory boards," the governor stated.

Six months after the implementation process got underway, Mr. Wheatley, the BVI premier, announced that things were about 40 percent complete, with 15 of the 49 recommendations already finished and 33 in progress.

Mr. Rankin mentioned that a number of the recommendations which have been implemented fall under his duties as governor.