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Coast Guard Decision to Drawdown Presence on St. Croix Paused, Plaskett Says

Community Center / **Published On March 16, 2023 07:05 AM /**

Staff Consortium **March 16, 2023**

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A U.S. Coast Guard vessel in Christiansted, St. Croix By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett announced this week that a U.S. Coast Guard decision to minimize its presence on St. Croix has been paused, as the congresswoman advocates for a strong show of force in line with legislation she co-sponsored [aimed at blunting drug trafficking in U.S. territories](#).

According to a release from Ms. Plaskett's office issued Wednesday, last week the delegate met personally with Admiral Linda Fagan, Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, to discuss the Coast Guard Boat Forces Detachment (BFD) at St. Croix and the broader Coast Guard Presence in the Virgin Islands.

She said the Coast Guard had previously intended to draw down their boat forces on St. Croix, leaving only a land based Resident Inspection Station (RIO). The Coast Guard initially justified its planned draw down by suggesting the closure of Lime Tree Bay resulted in a lack of demand for dangerous cargo escort operations, the primary mission of BFD St. Croix.

“As we know the HOVENSA refinery closed over 10 years ago, and more recently, the Limetree Bay refinery was shut down over a little over a year ago and is working with the EPA, with the help of my office, to take steps towards re-opening,” said Ms. Plaskett. “During my conversation with Coast Guard Commandant Fagan, the Commandant agreed that the Coast Guard’s decision to draw down BFD St. Croix was not made with the appropriate consideration and process, and it will be paused.”

She added, “In the face of the ever-expanding threat of drug traffickers, people smugglers and other transnational criminal outfits, Commandant Fagan committed to me that the Coast Guard will reevaluate the priority of BFD St. Croix. St. Croix is the southernmost island of Virgin Islands, with superior access to the southern Caribbean. To protect the Caribbean corridor, St. Croix must remain a pillar of Coast Guard Force Laydown. BFD St. Croix will continue to operate Security Zone Enforcement, escorts of High-Capacity Passenger Vessels (HCPV) and escorts of vessels carrying Select Certain Dangerous Cargos (SCDC) in bulk for the foreseeable future. I will continue working with Commandant Fagan and Coast Guard Command to secure a robust future for the Coast Guard in the Virgin Islands.”

Appointed by President Biden, Admiral Fagan is the first female Commandant of the Coast Guard. Her prior flag assignments include Commander, Pacific Area, and Commander, Coast Guard Defense Force West; Deputy Commandant for Operations, Policy, and Capability; Commander, First Coast Guard District; and a joint assignment as Deputy Director of Operations for Headquarters, United States Northern Command.