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BVI Wants Boaters to Report Suspicious Marine Activity to Authorities, Launches 'Operation Island Watch'

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Scenic view from Great Camanoe to Marina Cay in the British Virgin Islands, one of the most popular anchorages in the BVI sailing area. By. GETTY IMAGES

A new initiative in the British Virgin Islands will allow people to report suspicious activity at sea.

Operation Island Watch was launched last week, and provides an avenue for the anonymous reporting of suspected infractions.

“We are fortunate to have a number of persons within the marine industry who are passionate about protecting our waters from predators who engage in illegal fishing, illegal smuggling or

trafficking, illegal dumping, or any other unlawful use of the Territorial waters or shorelines," said Inspector Lesroy Simmons of the Royal Virgin Islands Police Force (RVIPF) Marine Branch. "By giving no more than a few details, law enforcement is provided with the information needed to respond quickly and apprehend potential suspects."

A QR code on Island Watch brochures will, when scanned, direct the user to a website where details of the suspicious activity can be submitted. "All we need is a line or two. No other information is required or requested," said Chief Inspector Louis Buckley, as he demonstrated how to use the portal. Mr. Simmons said this was by design in order to ensure people are as comfortable as possible sharing information that could assist the authorities.

Funded by the Marine Association of the BVI, Operation Island Watch is targeted towards those in the boating community. Virgin Islands Search & Rescue (VISR) Operations Manager Phil Aspinall welcomed the initiative, saying that the community must help to protect what they deem to be the "sailing capital of the world".

"I think I speak for many within the boating community when I say that I am happy to be part of this initiative and any such initiative that promotes safety and security in our waters," Aspinall continued.

Boaters can collect Island Watch brochures containing the QR code from the RVIPF Marine Base or from VISR offices.