Bryan Activates National Guard Civil Support Team, VITEMA Emergency Operation Center in Response to Odor Complaints on St. Croix

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ST. CROIX — Governor Albert Bryan has activated the V.I. National Guard and VITEMA's Emergency Operations Center in response to complaints by residents in Frederiksted of a noxious odor in the air, Government House has announced.

Governor Bryan made the announcement Friday during a press briefing with members of the media.

“We have been closely monitoring the reports from residents on the west end of St. Croix since Wednesday and are working to confirm the contaminant or contaminants as well as the source of the odor,” Mr. Bryan said. “Our primary concern is the health and well-being of our residents, and we are putting all of our available resources in honing in on the problem so that we can rectify it and ensure that whatever is causing this does not reoccur.”

According to Gov't House, the governor further explained Friday that while the areas of focus include the Limetree Bay Refinery, an asphalt plant, and the Anguilla landfill, the source of the odor and the contents of the odor are not yet confirmed.

“While we are focused on serval possible sources of the odor, we don’t yet have confirmation on what the odor is or exactly where it is coming from,” Mr. Bryan said. “Limetree issued a statement late Thursday notifying the public of a hydrocarbon release due to maintenance work underway at the refinery’s Coker unit. And while we appreciate them coming forward with that information, that information does not square with what the public is reporting. We have to be able to confirm whether this is the source of the odor, and more importantly, we have to be able to confirm that there isn’t something more harmful or detrimental to the health of St. Croix residents

being emitted."

The Department of Health and Department of Planning and Natural Resources (DPNR) began receiving reports of a noxious odor from residents in St. Croix late Wednesday afternoon, according to the administration.

The complaints come as D.P.N.R. and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is investigating a gas emissions release from Limetree Bay Refinery that occurred earlier this month.

The National Guard's civil support team will join D.P.N.R. and the E.P.A. in investigating and conducting tests to confirm the source of the odor and identify contaminants.

During Friday's briefing, D.O.H. Commissioner Justa Encarnacion reported that three people sought medical attention at the Emergency Room in the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital and Medical Center for headache and nausea related to the odor.

Ms. Encarnacion is encouraging individuals with respiratory ailments, including allergies, lung disease, or asthma, to consider taking protective actions such as staying indoors or temporarily relocating to areas less affected.

DPNR and the Department of Health will monitor this situation and advise the community accordingly. If you have any questions or concerns, call DPNR at (340) 773-1082 ext. 2221 or the Environmental Health Division at (340) 718-1311 ext. 3709.

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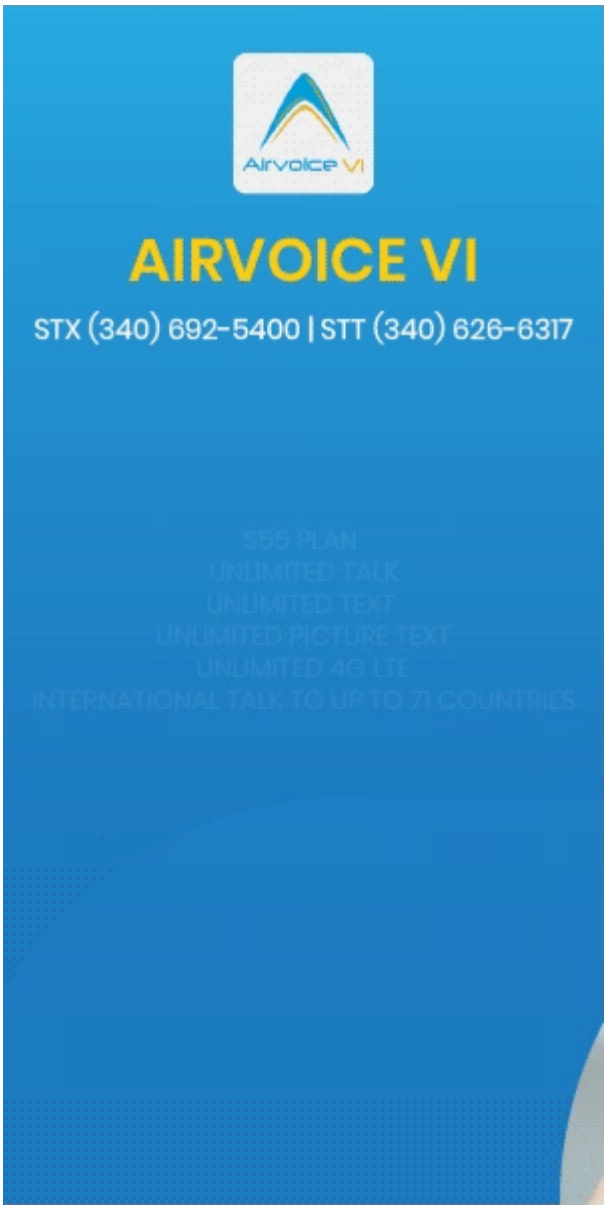
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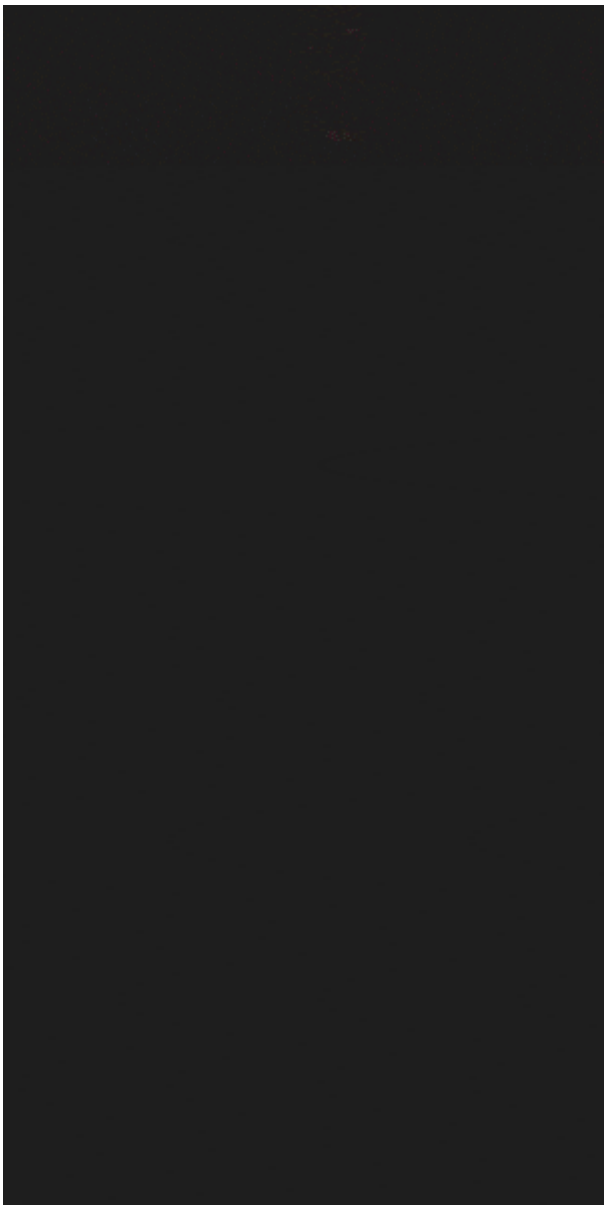

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