

Statement By Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley Premier Of the Virgin Islands On The Publication Of The Law Enforcement Review Part Two

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Premier of the Virgin Islands

The Government of The Virgin Islands responds to the Publication of the Law Enforcement Review Part Two

April 14, 2025

The safety of our citizens is paramount. Equally, the legal and regulatory stability of our jurisdiction is at the heart of its appeal as a leading international finance centre.

As such, we are deeply committed to supporting the continued improvement of law enforcement in this territory. To that end, we have engaged with His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services through the inspection process in the spirit of collaboration and co-operation, and have reviewed the report with due seriousness within the House of Assembly. The report itself has

several practical, detailed suggestions and observations that we will consider. But it also has many that we must reject categorically.

More broadly, the Government of the Virgin Islands cannot accept its mischaracterisation of the situation on Island, nor the characterisation of our citizens' talents and capability.

Nor can it accept the lack of recognition for the dramatic progress the Territory has made to strengthen its governance and institutions, especially since the fieldwork for this report was undertaken in 2023. We have already taken significant steps forward in our ability to tackle crime, including financial crime, as part of the radical range of reforms we have undertaken at considerable cost, responding to both the Commission of Inquiry and the CFATF Mutual Evaluation Report.

Neither can it accept the overarching premise that we must cede more power to the UK Government, eroding our self-governance. The Governor already has constitutional responsibility for the security of the Territory, which is the subject of criticism in this report. To accept this premise would also represent submitting to colonial overreach, and represent a retrograde step for democracy in the British Virgin Islands.

We wish to work constructively alongside the UK Government and Governor, in a modern partnership, to drive progress. But we cannot compromise on our democratic and constitutional rights.

As a united House of Assembly, we will systematically assess the recommendations with due rigour, to determine which we will take forwards to the benefit of the British Virgin Islands, and which we formally reject. We will be making this position clear in our response to the Governor and the UK Government.