

THE UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS
OFFICE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS INSPECTOR GENERAL



**INVESTIGATION INTO
ALLEGED REMOVAL
OF GENERATOR FROM
IVANNA EUDORA KEAN HIGH SCHOOL**

**ILLEGAL OR WASTEFUL ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE REPORTED TO
THE OFFICE OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS INSPECTOR GENERAL BY:**

Calling:

(340) 774-3388

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STEVEN VAN BEVERHOUDT
V.I. INSPECTOR GENERAL

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OFFICE OF THE V. I. INSPECTOR GENERAL

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May 29, 2018

Honorable Kenneth E. Mapp
Governor of the Virgin Islands
Government House
21-22 Kongens Gade
Charlotte Amalie, Virgin Islands 00802

Honorable Myron D. Jackson
Senate President
32nd Legislature
Capital Building
Charlotte Amalie, Virgin Islands 00802

Dear Governor Mapp and Senate President Jackson:

The attached report contains the results of our investigation into the allegation that a generator located at the Ivannna Eudora Kean High School was moved to the home of the Commissioner of Education.

The investigation has confirmed that in fact the generator was moved to the Commissioner's home shortly after the passage of Hurricane Irma. It has since been relocated to a storage area at the Adelita Canryn Junior High School. The Commissioner stated it was moved for security reasons and that her home was used at times as a base of operations and thus felt that her utilization of the generator was justified.

As a result, we have concluded that: (i) the generator should not have been moved to the Commissioner's home, and more importantly it should not have been connected; (ii) the administration of Ivanna Eurdora Kean High School should have been notified of the move; and, (iii) it probably could have been used in some other capacity for the Department of Education or the Government.

If you require additional information, please call me at 774-3388.

Sincerely,

Steven van Beverhoudt, CFE, CGFM
V. I. Inspector General

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INTRODUCTION

ALLEGATIONS

An investigation was initiated in response to allegations that a generator, previously located at the Tilapia Farm at the Ivana Eudora Kean High School (Kean High), was moved to the home of the Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Education (Education) in the aftermath of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

BACKGROUND

Established in 2012, Kean High's Tilapia Farm is the physical component of the school's aquaponics program. Consisting of both a hydroponic vegetation farm and water tanks housing fish, it allows students to receive hands-on exposure to the various processes involved in the raising, sustaining, and harvesting of fish and the cultivation of vegetables and herbs through hydroponic methods. The Tilapia Farm is overseen and managed by a Teacher at the school, who reports to the school's Principal.

In order for the fish housed at the Tilapia Farm to survive, the water temperature in the tanks must be appropriately regulated and the farm's filtration system must be operational. When power outages occur at Kean High, the equipment necessary for such measures ceases to operate, and the fish can potentially die. Over the years, multiple power outages have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of fish. In order to rectify this issue, it was determined that an alternate source of power be acquired for the farm, and in 2016, a 16-kilowatt generator was installed at the Tilapia Farm.

On January 25, 2018, an individual called-in during a local talk-radio program and stated that, at some point after the recent hurricanes, the generator was moved to the home of the Commissioner of Education. It was further alleged that this generator was donated to the school by a private entity and that as a result of the generator's movement, all of the fish housed at the Tilapia Farm died. Based on these rumors, it was determined that an investigation be launched in order to validate or refute the allegations and to determine the location of the generator.

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INVESTIGATION

In response to the allegation that a generator was missing from Kean High's campus, we traveled to Kean High and made contact with the Acting Principal. When interviewed, the Acting Principal acknowledged that the generator was not on the school's campus. She indicated that she was initially unaware of its location until January 26th, when she was contacted by the Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner informed her that the generator was secured at a warehouse located in the auditorium of the Addelita Cancryn Junior High School (Cancryn School).

The Acting Principal directed us to the Teacher responsible for overseeing the Tilapia Farm for further information, and contact was made with him. The Teacher indicated that in 2016, he approached the Commissioner and requested that an alternative source of power be provided for the Tilapia Farm for instances of power outages. He stated that he acquired quotes for generators and solar panels from various establishments and submitted them to the Commissioner. Eventually, the generator was brought to the school and installed at the Tilapia Farm.

The structure of the Tilapia Farm was severely damaged from the impacts of Hurricane Irma and many of the fish were killed. This caused a fetid odor to emanate from the farm, and in order for the area to be cleaned, the Teacher stated that he gave the keys for the farm to Education's Assistant Director of Maintenance, who handled the cleanup of that area. The Teacher indicated that he did not have access to the Tilapia Farm for approximately two weeks after giving the keys to the Assistant Director of Maintenance and that at the time the generator was still at the Tilapia Farm. Sometime after the hurricanes, the staff of Kean High was asked to report to the campus in order to clean and assess their respective areas. During his inspection of the Tilapia Farm, the Teacher found that the generator was missing, and he informed the Principal of his discovery.

The Principal, who at the time of the investigation was out of the territory, was contacted via telephone. He stated that on September 18th, he held a meeting with his staff at Kean High and directed them to secure the school in preparation for the approaching Hurricane Maria. When getting ready to leave the campus, he was approached by a teacher who informed him that the generator at the Tilapia Farm was missing. However, as no one from Education had informed him that the generator was to be moved, he did not, at the time, believe that it was actually missing. He assumed that the teacher was mistaken, and did not check to confirm the teacher's claims. Sometime after Hurricane Maria, he returned to Kean High and then noticed that the generator was in fact not at the Tilapia Farm. He indicated that he was very surprised that the generator was missing. At a subsequent meeting of the administrative and managerial staff of Education in the St. Thomas/St. John District, the Principal brought up the matter of the missing generator, but he did not receive an explanation as to what happened to it. He pointed out that the Commissioner was not in the room at the time when he inquired about the missing generator; however the Insular Superintendent of the St. Thomas/St. John District was present. When asked, the Principal indicated that a generator would have been useful during the cleanup and

preparation efforts at Kean High after the hurricanes. Furthermore, he stated that he did not recall any instances of vandalism or break-ins on the campus, other than instances in which copper wire was reported stolen from Kean High's gym. However, these reports were made several weeks after school started at Kean High, on October 9th.

Contact was made with Education's Territorial Facilities Manager, who stated that the generator was purchased from a local company using Education funds. He confirmed that Education had set up a temporary warehouse in the auditorium of Cancryn School, but he indicated that he did not remember seeing a generator at that location nor was he aware that the generator was missing from Kean High in the first place.

Accompanied by the Territorial Facilities Manager, we traveled to Cancryn School to inspect the warehouse, where we located the generator. Contact was then made with the Warehouse Manager who stated that on either Saturday, January 20th or Sunday, January 21st, she was contacted by the Commissioner and told to expect the generator to be delivered to the warehouse for storage, and it arrived at the warehouse on Monday, January 22nd.

During the course of the investigation, we were contacted by the Commissioner who indicated that she wanted to clear up rumors accusing her of stealing the generator, and it was agreed that an interview be arranged. During the interview, the Commissioner acknowledged that she had the generator moved from Kean High to her private residence, but she did not remember exactly when it was moved and insisted that this was done in order to secure it. She also confirmed that the generator was purchased using funds from Education. The hurricanes severely damaged a vast number of government buildings, including areas used by Education for storage, and in the aftermath of the hurricanes, generators were being stolen throughout the territory. Due to this, the difficulty in finding a secure area to store the generator, and a lack of appropriate security personnel, the Commissioner determined that it would be best to secure the generator at her residence. She also stated that the theft of copper wire from Kean High's gym influenced her decision to have the generator moved. However, as previously indicated, reports of the copper wire theft at the gym were made weeks after school started on October 9th, and based on the statements of Kean High's Principal and the Teacher in charge of overseeing the Tilapia Farm, the generator was missing from the Tilapia Farm when they returned to assess Kean High after Hurricane Maria had passed in late September. The Commissioner could not explain this contradiction and maintained her position that the generator was exposed and unprotected at Kean High, so it was moved to her residence to be secured. She further stated that Education's Headquarters served as the primary point of operations for Education's hurricane recovery efforts. She had ice machines, washers, dryers, and a refrigerator moved, from other locations within Education, to the Headquarters in order to support the staff. A bed was also placed in her office, where she slept on multiple occasions.

The Commissioner repeatedly denied that she had the generator moved to her residence for the purpose of energizing her home while she was without city power. She stated that the generator was placed in the driveway of her residence in "plain sight" and that there was no attempt to conceal it. She further stated that she possessed two smaller generators for her personal use. However, the Commissioner acknowledged that she eventually had the generator connected to her home, but indicated that this was done after the generator was already on her

property for a period of time. She did not remember when city power was restored to her home, but she believed that it was at some point in December. She also stated that the warehouse at Cancryn School was established in early November and confirmed that she had the generator moved to that location, but was not sure exactly when it was moved. She stated that Education's Assistant Director of Maintenance moved the generator from Kean High to her residence and from her residence to the warehouse. She repeated that she was not sure of the dates in which these events occurred. She then checked her phone logs and confirmed that on Sunday, January 21st, she made a call to the Warehouse Manager regarding having the generator moved to the warehouse, and she then recalled that it was moved on the following day, Monday, January 22nd.

The Commissioner stated that to her knowledge, the generator could not have been utilized with the complex electrical grid of Kean High and that it was not powerful enough to energize any appliances at Kean High. She further stated that she believed that she acted within her authority by moving the generator in order to protect it. She accepted full responsibility for any potential wrongdoing on her part and stated that if anyone had informed her that the generator would have been useful in another capacity, she would have moved it accordingly.

In a subsequent interview, the Commissioner stated that, in addition to Education's Headquarters, her residence was a point of operations and that she frequently worked from her house. Due to this, she believed that her utilization of the generator was justified.

Contact was made with Education's Assistant Director of Maintenance. He confirmed that he transported the generator from Kean High to the Commissioner's residence and then eventually to the warehouse at Cancryn School, but he did not remember specifically when these events occurred. He stated that in the aftermath of either Hurricane Irma or Maria, as he could not recalled which one, he was on the campus of Kean High when he smelled a rancid odor emanating from the Tilapia Farm. He claimed that upon investigating the area, he noticed that several of the bolts holding the generator in place, on a concrete slab, appeared to be loose. While he could not confirm his suspicion, he believed that the generator was being tampered with and that it should be moved and secured. He stated that he attempted to find a suitable area to store the generator, but the locations that he considered were either compromised or lacked the appropriate security measures. He considered securing the generator at his home, but was advised against doing so by the Commissioner. He repeatedly claimed that he advised the Commissioner to have the generator moved from Kean High and that it was his idea to have the generator connected to the Commissioner's residence, because it was just "sitting there." He indicated that he would refill the generator with diesel when necessary and that he purchased the diesel with cash given to him by the Commissioner. He further stated that the Commissioner had two smaller generators at her home, which he maintained and refueled before the generator from Kean High was hooked up to her home. Additionally, he indicated that it was routine for the generator to be on only during certain hours of the day, in order to conserve fuel. He acknowledged that the generator could possibly have been used anywhere as long as it is configured appropriately.

In order to determine if the generator could have been utilized to energize portions of the administrative building on its campus, we traveled to Kean High. Accompanied by the Assistant Principal and an Electrician, we inspected a room that contained the electrical breaker boxes for

the administrative building. This room contained several large, three phase breaker boxes and one smaller breaker box. Given the specs of the generator and the breaker boxes, we were advised that, although it could be configured to work with the breaker boxes, the generator would not be powerful enough to provide sufficient electrical current to the three phase breaker boxes. However, the generator could possibly have provided sufficient electricity to the smaller breaker box, although it was not specifically known exactly what electrical appliances were regulated by the smaller breaker box. Furthermore, the Assistant Principal informed us that all of the bathroom facilities throughout Kean High, other than those within the school's gym, were hooked up to one central water pump. Upon learning of this information, the Electrician indicated that the generator would not have been powerful enough to energize a water pump of that size.

Conclusion

Based upon the results of the investigation, it is our conclusion that the Commissioner of Education acted inappropriately when she utilized the generator to energize her personal residence. While we cannot specifically determine whether or not the Commissioner had the generator moved solely for this purpose, we believe that the Commissioner should have used better judgement during the handling of this matter. Furthermore, the administrators of Kean High should have been explicitly informed that the generator was moved in an effort to avoid any confusion.

Although it may not have been powerful enough to provide sufficient electricity for areas of Kean High, we believe that the generator could have been utilized in another capacity to support hurricane recovery efforts within Education or at other government locations.

