



# **Bureau of Corrections Wins \$14.2 million FEMA Award to Rebuild Alva A. Swan Annex**



# BUREAU OF CORRECTIONS

Government of the Virgin Islands

*"Security, Custody, Control"*

Rural Route 1, Box 9909, Kingshill, VI 00850-9715

8201 Subbase, 1st Floor St. Thomas, USVI 00802-5813

Plot #1 Negro Bay – Williams D. Roebuck Park, Frederiksted, St Croix VI 00840

Phone: STX (340) 778-0400 – STT (340)-714-8300 - Fax: (340) 778-2929 – <https://boc.vi.gov>



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USVI- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (“FEMA”) announced last week that it has awarded the Bureau of Corrections (“BOC” or “Bureau”) \$14.2 million to replace the Alva A. Swan Correctional Annex (“Swan Annex”) on St. Thomas. The Swann Annex was destroyed by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017.

“This is a major accomplishment for the Bureau,” BOC Director Wynnie Testamark said. “FEMA’s first offer would have left us only \$3 million to repair – not replace – the Swan Annex. With the help of Witt O’Brien’s, we fought for more than a year to convince FEMA that the Annex needed to be completely replaced and brought up to code. Our fight has paid big dividends for the people of the Virgin Islands.” The final FEMA award is almost 500% more than initially offered.

BOC worked with Witt O’Brien’s, the V.I.’s disaster recovery experts, to become the first local agency to successfully complete the Independent Expert Panel review, which is used to challenge FEMA’s award decisions for losses caused by Hurricanes Irma and Maria. That challenge resulted in a total FEMA obligation to BOC of \$17.6 million. After cost-share and insurance deductions, BOC will receive \$14.2 million in federal funds to replace the Swan Annex. The Swan Annex served as the main pre-trial detention center on St. Thomas before it was destroyed by Hurricane Irma. It has been abandoned ever since.

Upon arriving at the Bureau in February 2019, Director Testamark was adamant that FEMA funds should be used to rebuild the Swan Annex, instead of merely repairing it, given the extensive hurricane damage. Testamark rejected the first 2 FEMA offers before accepting FEMA's \$14.2 million award.

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Contact: Winthrop Maduro, BOC Public Information Officer  
[winthrop.maduro@voc.vi.gov](mailto:winthrop.maduro@voc.vi.gov)  
(340) 201-1034