

USVI Rep Secures Safe Return of Tuglife II Vessel After Puerto Rico Detention

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- The Government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, led by its Washington representative, made an important intervention this month to secure the safe return of the Tuglife II from Puerto Rico to St. John in September after months of uncertainty.

The vessel, which was unexpectedly detained in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico earlier this summer, was finally cleared by the U.S. Coast Guard and allowed to return home during the height of hurricane season — averting serious risks to its crew, cargo and the Virgin Islands business community.

Teri Helenese, Director of State-Federal Relations and Washington Representative for the Government, explained that swift and decisive action was required to navigate the complex process and ensure the safe return of the passenger and cargo vessel.

Advocacy began with detailed communications to Captain Luis Rodriguez, Commander of U.S. Coast Guard Sector San Juan, outlining the vessel's compliance, the extensive searches already performed, and drone surveillance confirming its safe condition. "I knew we were in the height of hurricane season, and that time was of the essence. My focus was ensuring Tuglife II could safely return to the Virgin Islands and that its crew and cargo were no longer exposed to unnecessary risk. I'm proud that through persistence and collaboration, we were able to bring this vessel home," she said.

For Global Marine, the local company that owns the vessel, the release was critical to survival. A small Virgin Islands business with 27 years of service, Global Marine faced mounting risks as the barge sat exposed offshore for no apparent reason. Owner Carmen Wesselhoft expressed gratitude for the intervention: "On behalf of the management and staff of Global Marine and the crew on Tuglife II, we would like to express our debt of gratitude to Ms. Helenese for her tenacity and her unwavering dedication and support in assisting us. (Her) letters and phone calls were



Teri Helenese

very instrumental.”

The safe return of Tuglife II underscores the strength of advocacy and the value of public-private collaboration during moments of uncertainty and heightened risk. It also highlights the critical role of the Virgin Islands Washington, DC office in advancing and safeguarding the Territory’s priorities at the federal level.

Tuglife II is a passenger and cargo vessel that primarily operates as a car barge, transporting vehicles, passengers and freight between St. Thomas and St. John.

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Tug Life II is back in the U.S. Virgin Islands.

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