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## **Press Release**

### **Lifeline Ambulance Expands Internationally**

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Over the last 2 years, we have been working to create an air ambulance network offering rotor and fixed-wing services based on the West Indies Isle of Sint Maarten. We are in the very final steps of making this a reality for the region and Americans who need to return to the mainland in the event of a crisis. Currently, there are no same-day services available, and waits of days to weeks are not uncommon.

Lifeline intends to use its existing significant infrastructure to fill a gap created when its main partner, Global Air Response, went bankrupt in late 2007. We had worked with them for almost a decade, providing the ground ambulance services in Virginia. It was a perfect situation until Global's insurer imposed a 75% rate increase on the entire industry. Almost all of them vanished between that and a significant increase in fuel costs. Their risk industry was monopolized.

Lifeline has operated rotor services on a limited contract basis, mainly for NASCAR and other special events, for several years now. We have attempted fixed-wing services twice with local partners, but it never worked out in the end; it was easier to work with Global since it was all they did.

Our state-of-the-art computer-aided dispatch and billing systems can easily integrate this arrangement. We have already extended our communication to include local St. Maarten numbers in Christiansburg. With our extensive relationships with insurance companies, the complicated part is done. For example, we service the Veterans Administration in Virginia, and Puerto Rico has a large system that already services the Caribbean through a Caribbean Network. They cover transportation under their system nationwide. We would offer a one-stop contact for insurers and take it from there. They recognize that we are leaders in the critical care business

and want their customers returned to productivity sooner rather than later, so we move patients to the appropriate solutions for them 24/7.

This project gained traction after selling a few ambulances there through our related business and discovering the medical community in need. We then met Michael Huttenlocker and Churchill Marsdin of Windward Island Helicopters, who were considering the same idea. They offered tours, photography, and limited security work but recognized the need for the medical component. They also had local connections, with Marsdin soon to be retired as Police Chief.

A local casino operator introduced us all, and having a physician with an air permit in hand was all it took to move this forward. Everyone brought something to the table. After numerous restaurant gatherings, we formulated a plan. The local island government insurer, SZV, was interested because they currently send procedures to neighboring countries like Colombia and the Dominican Republic, where it is more cost-effective.

Marsdin was handling all those angles, and Huttenlocker, the pilot for their single helicopter, found a medevac helicopter coming off lease in Richmond, Virginia, already permitted for Virginia. All that was needed to complete the project was securing it. We have the rest of the medical equipment and personnel to manage the day-to-day medical component.

Homeland Security and FEMA were also on board; during Hurricane Katrina, we realized there was a significant shortage of air services. Since almost all hurricanes pass by the West Indies and aircraft must evacuate anyway, why not put them to use in the states? This plan just "clicked" together. Lifeline already had contracts, permits, and licenses in place. Dannaway Medical Center offered to provide medical direction and its permit, whether for rotor, jet, or both.

A local Lear Jet was sourced for the fixed-wing component, and Lifeline already sent down ambulances to transport patients between the local hospital and Princess Juliana Airport. With daily direct flights from several major airlines via Charlotte, Atlanta, and Miami, a paramedic could be flown down within 6 hours if one was not already there.

"It takes that long in the US to arrange a regular flight. We could pull a medic right off an ambulance at the airport if necessary." If needed, I can leave home at 6 AM and be there by 1-2 PM, and back within an hour with the patient.

The airlines were more than willing to lend a hand as well. With a Euro copter BO-105 coming off its first lease with the Virginia State Police readily available and already licensed in Virginia, all we needed was to complete the paperwork in Curacao, the territorial administration for the Dutch part of the West Indies, expected any day. We would rotate paramedics regularly if things took off.