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Ministry of National Security invests over US\$90 million in border security

Over 40 Million US Dollars has been allocated to the Ministry of National Security for the purchase of six helicopters and four airplanes for the Jamaica Defence Force.

The acquisition includes three new Bell 429 helicopters for passenger, troops and medical evacuation; one new Bell 412EPI helicopter to deal with heavy cargo and troop transfer; while two used Bell 206B3 helicopters and four DA40 CS airplanes have been purchased for training.

The acquisition comes as the Ministry continues to make significant investment in retooling and equipping the security forces.

The total cost for the helicopters as well as a five- year spares and support package; a five-year engine service package and ground support equipment and tools, is US\$ 47.4M.

The four DA40 CS airplanes cost US\$1.58 M, and the two used helicopters will be used for training only.

National Security Minister Hon. Robert Montague says the purchase of the planes and helicopters is part of the Ministry of National Security's project to secure Jamaica's borders, carry out search and rescue, monitor the island's fishing resources, and increase the capacity of the security forces.

"The current JDF helicopter fleet is nearly twenty years old, and industry standards recommend replacing a fleet anywhere between seven and ten years as the cost to maintain and replace equipment is prohibitively expensive", said Minister Montague.

The Bell helicopters will allow the JDF to fulfill its international obligations within Jamaica's extensive areas of maritime jurisdiction, as well as allow it to increase its response to local contingencies, including hurricanes.

As part of the Ministry's continued programme of providing resources to the security forces, last year two ships were acquired for the JDF Coast Guard at a cost of US\$26.4M.

A surveillance plane purchased at a cost of US\$16.9 million is now being outfitted with a suite of equipment, and will be commissioned into service later this year, bringing the total amount invested in border security to US\$92.8 million.

The National Security Minister noted that the purchase of the helicopters and airplanes is a part of the Ministry of National Security's Five Pillar Crime Reduction Strategy focused on Situational Prevention, which looks at reducing incidents of crime through the use of technology and other practical approaches.

The country's 145 illegal points of entry offer a gateway for guns, ammunition as well as uncustomed goods to enter the island.

“The investment is therefore to secure Jamaica’s borders, as is it is one of the first duties of a country to secure its borders”, noted Minister Montague

“This investment of US\$92.8 million or approximately 11 billion Jamaican dollars is money well spent to secure Jamaica’s borders, added the Minister.

He noted that the next phase under the programme is a coastal radar system.

Last year, the security forces seized over 850 illegal guns and nearly 22-thousand rounds of ammunition.