

**PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT
BY
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DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY
FEBRUARY 2, 2021**

SECURING OUR CITIZENS

Madam Speaker,

Two days ago, every Jamaican citizen and friend of Jamaica witnessed firsthand the callous, brazen, irreverent, and heartless, character of violence producers in our country. The national shock and outrage that resulted from the horrendous manner in which Mrs. Lowe-Garwood's was gunned down signals that even in the face of these heinous crimes, the majority of Jamaicans are still a people of compassion, of respect for expression and freedom of expression of faith, and of genuine concern for our neighbours.

I wish to publicly express my heartfelt condolences to the loved-ones of Mrs. Lowe-Garwood for their loss, and in particular, her church family at the Agape Christian Fellowship church. May your faith in God give you solace during this difficult time.

This barbaric shooting on Sunday unfortunately reflects and increasing number of homicides perpetrated by killers who are hired by family members.

Interestingly, the 2019 report of the Jamaica National Crime Victimization Survey indicates that 70.1% of persons (on average) felt safe walking alone in their community at night, and approximately 90.0% felt safe in their homes.

The seeming paradox of this data provides much food for thought Madam Speaker. It tells us that our people feel safe in their homes and in their communities. It also confirms that the level of homicides and violence crimes that have plagued our society for decades is as a result of inter-gang conflict in which criminals are killing criminals.

While some members of our society seem to react only when the brutality and bloodletting hits close to home, this government will not allow this level of violence and mayhem to continue anywhere in our society. We will protect all Jamaicans. We will continue to invest in building police capacity and giving them the tools and resources to effectively and sustainably break the back of crime and violence in our society. We will also continue to pursue strategic social investments within the inner-city and vulnerable communities, in order to provide hope to these residents, and to our young men in particular.

I have also noted that the report from the Inter-American Development Bank ranks Jamaica as number one in homicides across the region. What is noticeable is that countries ranked below Jamaica have implemented special security measures that we

have not adopted. Our society has not yet signaled its readiness for those types of extreme measures, such as, extensive periods of incarceration, and other practices that restrict prisoner's rights. Jamaica still retains a system that provides enviable social support to incarcerated persons, and we continue to rank among the lowest in instances of abuse of children in state care.

Madam Speaker, the horror of Sunday's attack, and the murders committed over the month of January, have shaken our society. Notwithstanding, the data does not indicate a spike in homicides, year over year. The trend remains fairly flat when we compare the January 1 to 31, 2021 (131 murders) to January 1 to 31, 2020 (120 murders). In January 2019 there were 149 murders. These statistics for January 2021 are deeply concerning, but they do not indicate a spike.

Since 2018, we have been on a fairly stable path. However, in the face of these statistics we are even more driven to pursue Plan Secure Jamaica - the government's comprehensive and strategic security programme.

Plan secure Jamaica is the most coordinated, inclusive and enduring security programme that has ever been introduced in Jamaica. It is *"geared towards creating a safe, secure, cohesive and just society, thereby setting a key condition for increased and sustained growth and prosperity"*. In furtherance of this goal, the efforts are centred around ten (10) strategic focal areas, and supported by six (6) strategic objectives which we have delivered on. These include:

- 1) Strengthening the national security architecture
- 2) Strengthening the criminal justice system
- 3) Enhancing youth and community development
- 4) Protecting and securing borders, maritime space, and key sectors of the economy
- 5) Strengthening national integrity systems, and
- 6) Increasing and sustaining public support for law enforcement and public order.

The projected cost for implementing the Plan Secure Jamaica is J\$176 billion or US\$1.2 billion over the first seven years starting FY 2016/2017 to FY 2022/2023. Over the medium term Madam Speaker, we are projected to spend approximately U\$346.7 Million on the strengthening the national security architecture between 2016/17 and 2022/23. (In light of COVID-19, and the required budgetary reallocation, these figures may be revisited).

This is the first government to put in place such a robust security plan, with the necessary institutional arrangements to ensure a sustainable, whole-of-government approach to the social investment and social transformation component of crime fighting. This is being enhanced through the formation of the Citizen Security Business Group and the Citizen

Security Secretariat. The Citizen Security Governance Framework that we have implemented ensures accountability and sustainability of the Plan.

Our strategic investments since 2016/17 have significantly improved the efficiency of the police. Admittedly, there is no single tool that will reduce crime and violence overnight. Our approach has been to invest in the myriad of security measures, tools and resources that are required for crime fighting, and have done so in partnership and collaboration with different sectors and interest groups.

In this, we are delivering on our commitments to strengthening the national security architecture by:

- 1) Improving police communication
- 2) Renovating police stations and police facilities (project R.O.C.)
- 3) Jamaica eye cameras
- 4) New technology equipment
- 5) New forensics, ballistics and DNA lab (best in the Caribbean)
- 6) Rapid response teams
- 7) New fleet of modern, computerized vehicles
- 8) Modern SWOT team
- 9) Border control – boats, planes (off shore patrol vehicles)
- 10) More gangs before the courts (more gang leaders locked-up)
- 11) New police training facilities
- 12) Police Technology projects
- 13) Specialized police branches (PSTEB, IPROB, NIB, etc)
- 14) Police safety gear (ballistic plates, helmets, and ballistic vests)
- 15) Upgraded computer aided dispatch
- 16) Traffic ticket management system
- 17) Fleet management system
- 18) Data centre infrastructure

Madam Speaker, some of these are still a work in progress, but we must, and we will, complete them so that the police can continue disrupt gangs, intercept drugs, seize guns, apprehend criminals and bring them to justice.

As a result of these strategic investments, the people of Jamaica are beginning to see the significantly improved intelligence and investigative capacity of the force, and will continue to see reduced lag time between the committal of a criminal offence and police apprehension. Of note, the police had taken suspects into custody within 24 hours of the shooting on Sunday, and had apprehended suspect in the St. James hip strip shooting within 7 minutes, Phoenix avenue was less than 10 minutes.

With this reduced lag time we expect that there will be an increase in confrontation between the police and these criminals. The police are being equipped to confront and contain these heavily armed criminals.

Our officers are now benefiting from the use of advanced technology, integrated intelligence and the formation and strengthening of mission-oriented units. The JCF has implemented a modern Case Management System; they have increased their use and reliance on forensic science in case development and have redesigned their operational planning processes at the Divisional level.

A key requirement in the process to transform the JCF into a modern professional policing service is the development of a modern legislative framework. I have indicated the Ministry's priority legislation agenda for 2021 to the Crime Consensus Committee, and I have engaged in extensive discussion with the Minister of Justice and the Attorney General, with a view to expedite the legislative process.

This government has invested heavily, and without any hesitation, in putting in place a robust anti-corruption framework through the establishment of the Integrity Commission as well as the Major Organised Crime and Anti-Corruption Agency (MOCA). My recent announcement of the April 1st Appointed Date Notice for MOCA signals this government's uncompromising commitment to MOCA being a credible and highly specialized law enforcement agency.

Furthermore, the government's signing of the National Consensus on Crime signaled our commitment to a collaborative approach to addressing crime. An agreed position among the members of the Consensus is to *"support the use of the military, as permitted by law, in geographic areas where the homicide rate is above 32 per 100,000 (that is, 2 times the regional average), where the level of violence supersedes the capacity of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, and the Commissioner of Police along with the Chief of Defence Staff agree that it is necessary"*.

We all agreed that special security measures are needed in such instances in order to cut the homicide rate, and restore a sense of calm and control to these areas.

Social investment is taking place and will take time. Security investments and special security measures allow us to create a holding position necessary for social transformation.

As a people, our ire, our sense of repulsion, our collective action, should be targeted at the criminals who plague our society, not at the men and women of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, who daily stand on the frontline in our defence.

This government is making major investments through Plan Secure Jamaica to ensure that our security forces can create a safe environment in an attempt to **prevent** criminal

violence; to **respond** to unexpected criminal incidents; and **protect** the rights of our citizens at all times.

Our collective action Parliamentarians must be to support the efforts of the police; to support the measures that give additional powers to the work of the police; to approve bold and innovative laws, policies and regulations for improved security; and make the investment necessary for national security to overcome decades of neglect.

I invite my colleague Parliamentarians from the Opposition to join the government in implementing this comprehensive, coordinated, and integrative approach to fighting crime, which is Plan Secure Jamaica. No longer can we afford to politicize crime fighting. The people of Jamaica deserve better.