



**PRESS RELEASE
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Cabinet approves new Public Officials Protection System Policy

The age-old practice of assigning members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) to provide close protection support for public officials is to be overhauled. This was outlined by Deputy Prime Minister and National Security Minister, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang when he addressed the Parliament earlier today (Wednesday, October 6, 2021).

Minister Chang stated that Cabinet has already examined and approved the Public Officials Protection System (POPS) Policy, which is intended to provide an objective, assessment-based framework for providing close protection support to public officials.

“This policy will allow for the repositioning of some experienced police officers to the frontline of crime-fighting, which is where they are most needed. Those who remain within the Protective Services Division will receive improved training in close protection work,” Minister Chang said.

The Minister noted that though well intentioned, the old practice is being done on an ad hoc basis and is devoid of an objective policy framework or documented protocol, the result of which, he said, has been the under-utilization of the skills of law enforcement officers, who are trained to combat crime. He pointed out the gradual ballooning over time of the officials, who are provided with close protection support.

“This system is untenable and not in the best interest of neither the police, the public official, nor the wider Jamaican society,” Minister Chang said.

The new Policy is designed to deliver a systematic, practical and transparent approach, by providing the requisite level of protection to public officials against threats perceived, received or detected as a consequence of the nature of the duties performed. Threats will be assessed and verified by the Threat Assessment Unit of the Protective Services Division (PSD) of the JCF, in conjunction with other intelligence agencies, and categorised within four (4) threat levels: Low, Moderate, Severe, or Extreme.

The Security Minister said based on an internal assessment carried out by the JCF in December 2020, the Protective Services Division ranks among the largest police divisions within the Force. At the time, five hundred and fifteen (515) police officers were assigned to the Protective Services Division, of which three hundred (300) were assigned to provide close protection support for public officials.

“In most instances however, this protective support does not need a trained, experienced police officer; it requires a trained close protection officer,” said Minister Chang.

He reasoned that while threats against public officials in Jamaica are low, **“the Government is however mindful of the ever evolving criminal landscape, and the fact that the duties**

carried out by some officials are critical to ensuring continuity of the people’s business and the smooth operations of the country”.

“We cannot continue to depend on a haphazard system of assigning police officers to carry out functions that would be better suited for an *adjutant*, in most cases,” Minister Chang said.

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