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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Investment in new JDF vessels will strengthen Jamaica's maritime border – Minister Chang**

The commissioning into service of three Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) Coast Guard vessels, will further strengthen the country's maritime border and protect her interest through enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness and Response capabilities, declared Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, the Hon. Dr. Horace Chang.

He was speaking at the commissioning ceremony of Her Majesty's Jamaican Ship (HMJS) Alexander Bustamante and naming of HMJS Samuel Sharpe and HMJS George William Gordon on Thursday, December 30, 2021.

**“The addition of Her Majesty's Jamaican Ship Alexander Bustamante will greatly assist the JDF Coast Guard in delivering its mandate to monitor and maintain law and order in Jamaica's maritime domain and provide a safe environment for establishing Jamaica's Blue Economy,”** Minister Chang said.

He stated that protecting Jamaica's maritime space is imperative for national security and sustainable development, adding, **“This is crucial to the emergence and viability of Jamaica's Blue Economy, which has the potential to be a significant contributor to our long-term economic growth prospects.”**

The occasion, according to the Minister symbolizes, in a tangible way, the necessary investments in the expansion of the JDF's fleet of offshore patrol vessels (OPV).

**“Our maritime security environment continues to be characterised by traditional, non-traditional and emerging threats. With this in mind, the government remains committed to the acquisition of new vessels, and has made significant investments to that end over the last four (4) years,”** he said.

The Minister also noted that given the growing influence of transnational threat networks, particularly illicit drugs and arms traffickers, the emergence of new trafficking routes by traffickers engaged in contraband and human trafficking, illicit migration, and illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, **“we must strengthen the JDF's capability to monitor and safeguard our maritime areas of responsibility which includes the maritime borders of the country”.**

The OPV provide the capability of maintaining a twenty-four-hour presence within the maritime space, where regular patrols on the Pedro Banks have increased the fight against poaching and illegal fishing in that area of Jamaica's Maritime Domain.

**“The acquisition of new offshore patrol vessels has enabled the JDF Coast Guard to know more, and do more,”** asserted Minister Chang.

Jamaica's national interests and international obligations within the maritime space covers over 500,000 square kilometres and through which cocaine and marijuana are trafficked.

Further, the addition of the HMJS Alexander Bustamante will assist the JDF Coast Guard in delivering its mandate to monitor and disrupt illicit activities along the country's maritime space. Minister Chang noted that the completion of the Coastal Radar System will consolidate the effect of the network of domain control, and create a safer and more effective framework for the development of the Blue Economy.

He reasoned that the integration of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) technology into the operation of its Offshore Patrol Vessel fleet, and the continued development and implementation of Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence (C4I) initiatives, are key aspects of the innovations within the Maritime Air and Cyber Command (MACC).

**“These cutting edge, advanced maritime surveillance technologies are being implemented as critical underpinnings of Jamaica's broader national security mandate,”** stated Minister Chang.

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