

Office of the Director of Public Affairs &  
Communication  
Email:  
ministryofnationalecurity@mns.gov.jm  
Phone: (876)754-0030 | (876)564-5925



Ministry of National  
Security  
NCB North Tower  
2 Oxford Road  
Kingston 5  
Jamaica

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**PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Thursday, August 19, 2021

### **PICA Receives Document Forensic Lab**

More than 700 cases of forgery and fraud have been uncovered by the Passport Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA) during the past five years, says Andrew Wynter, Chief Executive Officer.

The revelation comes following this morning's official opening of the passport agency's Document Forensic Laboratory at its offices on West Kings House Road in St. Andrew. The recently installed forgery detection suite is valued at approximately \$22 million and is a donation to the Ministry of National Security from the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) to be used by the PICA.

**“This new lab will greatly help the Agency in its fight against criminal elements by improving PICA’s decision making process and the Agency’s overall efficiency and our intelligence gathering capabilities. It will also help us in determining the eligibility of passengers for entry and will allow for information sharing on new and emerging trends in fraudulent travel documents that are a threat to national security”,** Wynter explained.

According to Wynter, there is a growing incidence of identity fraud at the international level. He noted that PICA will improve its efficiency through the establishment of a central Document Forensic Laboratory and mini laboratories at the two main ports of entry. This will be done using reliable and competence assured scientific methods to identify, analyse, train, and provide evidence about suspicious or questionable documents presented to Immigration Officers.

**“Through their rigorous training, our Immigration Officers have been doing an excellent job in detecting fraudulent documents and this lab will enhance their capabilities significantly. We thank the British High Commission for their support and look forward to a long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship in the future”,** the CEO concluded.

Meanwhile, Minister without Portfolio in the Ministry of National Security, Senator the Hon. Matthew Samuda, emphasised the importance of bilateral relations and the significant role the UK's investment will play in strengthening Jamaica's border security.

**“The integrity of PICA’s systems is of paramount importance and an investment like this from our friends within the British Government speaks to the significance of these systems. This investment moves us, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and indicates to our partners and businesses locally who use passports to verify identity, that they can trust the systems that we [the Government] have in place”,** Minister Samuda said while delivering remarks.

Amy Johnson-Lynch, Head of Projects and Enterprise Risk Management at PICA, pointed out that the document forensic lab will facilitate re-engineered business processes while increasing capacity building.

**“We were relying heavily on human skills previously to examine the documents with basic tools [such as] magnifying glasses and UV lights to identify fraudulent documents. The new technology allows comparison between fraudulent or suspicious documents and what are known to be genuinely issued documents, enabling us to identify erasures and replacements as well as embedded features that the naked eye would not be able to see and this increases the integrity of our documents and systems. It also helps us to prepare our case management files to present stronger evidence in Court that would not allow the court system to cast any doubt on the evidence provided”,** added Johnson Lynch.

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