



**PRESS RELEASE
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Chopping down ganja plants is not a policy of the Government, Minister Chang says

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, commends the actions of members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) for their discretion, when confronted by men in a section of the Cockpit Country, home to the Accompong Maroons.

“The police stood down because they did not want a confrontation. There was no point in getting in an argument with farmers over ganja plant, where someone could be shot or hurt; that would not be good. I believe the officer who was in charge used his discretion well,” the Minister said, in response to allegations that the police violated Maroon sovereignty during an operation on Wednesday (August 11, 2021).

The Maroons say the Jamaican Government has no right to enforce laws within their territory of the Cockpit Country, which enjoys some amount of autonomy under the 1739 Treaty with Colonial Britain.

However, Minister Chang stated that there is nothing in the Jamaican law that prevents the police from operating inside the boundaries of the Maroon territory; stating it is not a policy of the Government to send the police into the countryside to **“chop down ganja plants”**.

“From the Ministry’s perspective, we are more focused on the exploitation of ganja in exchange for illegal weapons. Sending our police men and women to chop down marijuana plants throughout the country is not a national security policy that we are employing at this time,” the Minister said.

“What is of more concern to us is commercial operators, who are seeking to export high-grade ganja, by accumulating thousands of pounds, then taking the money generated to buy guns and shipping them back to the island,” the Security Minister added.

According to Minister Chang, the focus must be on interrupting and disrupting the channels, wherever they are, through which illegal activities are being perpetrated and to find, arrest and prosecute those involved.