

Sectoral Debate 2004

Presentation by Dr. the Hon Peter Phillips, Minister of National Security, May 19-04

1. Salutations

Electoral Matters

Mister Speaker, before getting into my substantive presentation on national security, I wish to touch upon a number of issues relating to electoral matters.

We would all agree that the Electoral Advisory Committee, since its establishment has spearheaded a number of reforms that have substantially improved the electoral system and safeguarded our democracy.

Now, we are ready to take a further step to secure the independence and permanence of the organisation.

I restate that this government is committed to have the necessary legislation enacted and entrenched during the course of this calendar year to move the EAC to the status of an independent commission responsible for the registration of electors, maintaining the integrity of elections and the delineation of national constituency boundaries.

Mister Speaker, this matter has been under discussion for sometime as the recommendations for the transformation first came from the EAC in 1994. I am sure Members will agree that, in this the 25th year of the EAC, we must take the final step in creating an Electoral Commission as one of the critical institutions to safeguard the rights of the voter and the integrity of the electoral system.

Meanwhile, there are three other electoral matters that I wish to report on:

- The first is that the Electoral Office of Jamaica (EOJ) will establish a department and acquire the necessary computer hardware and software in the first half of this calendar year that will enable the Office to use the latest Global Positioning System technology for easy and accurate identification of constituency and polling division boundaries.
- Secondly, the EOJ is currently upgrading the technology that allows for the electronic identification of voters by fingerprints. Members may recall that the system, officially known as the **Automated Electronic Voter Identification and Ballot Issuing System (AEVIBS)** was first used in St. Andrew Eastern in the June 2003 Local Government election.

The objective of the upgrade is to acquire the equipment and licences necessary to put the EOJ in a position, by September this year, to use the system to conduct any by-election in any constituency in Jamaica and ultimately to be used in future national elections.

- Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, a national RESIDENCE RE-VERIFICATION exercise is scheduled to commence in October 2004 and end in November 2005. This exercise is necessary because the last such exercise was carried out in 1997. Since then, many persons have died or moved. Indeed the available

evidence suggests that as many as 20% of the electorate may have changed address.

At the end of the exercise the EOJ will have the empirical data necessary to enable a more accurate and equitable distribution of electors when the time comes for re-definition of constituency boundaries.

Mister Speaker I know I can count on the support of Members on both sides of the Chamber to continue to give their full backing to the work of the EAC and the EOJ.

Their work has justly earned high praise from the Jamaican voters and from international organisations that have closely monitored the conduct of elections around the world.

2. National Security—Overview

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to National Security and I begin by acknowledging that we continue to witness unacceptably high rates of murder and other violent crimes that negatively impact on all of us as individuals and as a nation.

All of us are scarred by the wounds, physical and emotional, that are inflicted directly on victims and survivors of violent crime. We share the sense of loss and bewilderment of families who are left without loved ones and, often, their means of economic support. We understand the anger of those who cry out for justice.

On top of the human cost we have the economic cost through temporary or permanent loss of valuable contributors to production. The need for Security

creates additional costs to business and becomes a disincentive to investment and job creation.

As the person charged with the portfolio responsibility for national security I know that an important part of the solution to this national problem is more effective crime fighting and law enforcement.

In this contribution to the Sectoral Debate I have three (3) major objectives:

- ***Inform*** Parliament and the nation about the crime-fighting and crime prevention strategies implemented by the Ministry and the Security Forces, over the past 12 months.
- ***Outline*** some new measures to strengthen the infrastructure of law enforcement. These are based on our assessment and analysis of the fundamental dimensions of the problem that confronts us; crime statistics; and the human and physical capabilities at our disposal.
- ***Invite*** the entire country to mobilize around the urgent need to rebuild the social order; and recommit to a core set of personal, family and community values that are the foundation of a peaceful and orderly society.

We are in no doubt that we have to improve the effectiveness of crime fighting and the infrastructure of law enforcement.

Mister Speaker, even though much more work needs to be done, in this regard, it is also true that combating the high rates of murder and violent crime cannot be left solely to policing policy or strategy.

Mister Speaker, as a country we are challenged by an explosive blend of international and local criminal enterprises, linked by the illegal trade in drugs and guns, and sustained by a social environment of poorly educated and jobless youth with access to guns, and with an inability to settle peacefully, normal conflicts which are a part of everyday life.

So while we have to get better at catching and convicting criminals, we also have to do more to reduce social and economic marginalisation, educate more of our children and educate them better; build a culture of respect for the law and an approach to solving domestic disputes without resorting to the gun and the knife.

3. Crime Fighting and Crime Prevention

Situation Analysis

Mister Speaker, the kind of criminality we are facing emerges and thrives in today's borderless, technologically driven world and, in a context where traditional values are under attack.

As a small country in an inter-connected global community, Jamaica faces:

- New threats of terrorism, trans-national organised crime, illicit drug trafficking, corruption, money laundering, illicit trafficking in persons, and cyber crimes;
- We are confronted with a cocaine trade that puts Jamaica (and other parts of the Caribbean) at the centre of a South-North flow: Cocaine

passes through Jamaica from South America to markets in North America and Europe. The reverse trade brings in the guns.

- The 'pass through' is facilitated by corruption at several levels including law enforcement personnel, state employees and 'businessmen', and enforced by men with guns that they have no qualms in using.
- The 'facilitators' make and spend a great deal of money—buying loyalty, recruiting enforcers and enticing new prospects into the nightmare of drug abuse.

One measure of the problem we face is that some 100-120 metric tons of cocaine are transshipped through Jamaica annually, that is, 20 % of US demand and 10 percent of the Columbian trade.

The second fundamental dimension of the problem is that a great deal of the violent behaviour exhibited so frequently in our society is rooted in our historical, social and cultural traditions in which violence has been systematically used to secure obedience.

They are also exacerbated by the strains that contemporary society put on traditional socialising institutions—family, school, church, and community. The role of these institutions in setting standards and maintaining social order has been weakening, over time.

The tendency towards the use of violence for settling disputes, and the general breakdown in the social order contribute directly to the high levels of criminal violence by creating conditions that are easily exploited by organised criminal networks.

The financial gains from drug-related criminal activities are large enough not only to maintain their networks but to shift the loyalty of large sections of some communities from the state to the criminal enterprises themselves.

We see this demonstrated repeatedly when residents block roads to protest against the arrest of individuals in connection with major drug offences.

We saw it recently in the small Clarendon community of Gimme-me-bit when some residents tried to block police recovery of cocaine in a major drug bust. We have seen similar demonstrations in front of Court premises.

Interestingly, Mister Speaker, the protests are never against denial of due process to persons accused: they are always based on the argument that the individuals are generous benefactors who provide food, school fees, sporting goods and other economic benefits.

I know that extreme poverty and social exclusion may lead some persons to the view that the Don is their only ticket to advancement or, in the language of the street, 'to eat a food'. But we cannot, as a society legitimise criminality on the basis of economic necessity.

Mister Speaker, I must make it clear that my concern is not only about what happens at the community level. I am equally concerned that the drug money connection is also corrupting some individuals in law enforcement and within the political system.

Most police men and women are honest, hard working and law abiding. But the reality is that the money from drug trade has been used to corrupt some members of the Force. We also know that other institutions are in danger when,

for instance, threats have been directed at members of the Judiciary and other public officials.

And I must also talk about the link with politics, both at the level of MPs and other layers. And here, I wish to speak bluntly.

I have said before and I say again: As national political leaders and Members of this Honourable House, we all have a duty to set the right example at all times. We need to demonstrate to our constituents that we do not need the support of so-called Dons, involved in violence, drugs, or worse.

We cannot send confusing or wrong signals to some of our constituents and the general public by having such relationships.

From where I am privileged to serve, I know that we will have absolutely no chance of de-linking Jamaica from the international narcotics trade if we in Parliament lose the moral authority to act against corruption, wherever it is found, especially those who are falling prey to the lure of big drug money.

Mister Speaker, we in the political system must resist the temptation of easy permissiveness, in the search for popularity.

We are all at grave risk and we must understand that the society will collapse if we who know better—inside and outside this House—do not do better.

Kidnappings

Mister Speaker, before reviewing the specific anti-crime measures we have been implementing over the past year, I would like to address an issue that has been widely discussed recently.

I am referring to highly publicised instances of kidnappings that have generated deep concerns, even fear, among sections of the public. The specific cases are still under investigation so I cannot go into details.

What I can report is that police investigations, so far, have determined that these incidents do not reflect a pattern. Investigation indicates that except for one case, the incidents were either drug-related or done as reprisal.

Mister Speaker, I wish to say how relieved we all were following the safe return of Mrs. English from her horrible ordeal a week ago.

Nevertheless, the government and the security forces are being pro-active so that we do not find ourselves facing an additional challenge in crime prevention.

As part of the police focus on organised crime I am announcing today that a special unit is being dedicated to focus on anti-kidnapping strategies. I also wish to inform the House that we have sought and received a commitment from the Scotland Yard to assist with the specialised training for this unit.

In the meantime Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security is offering a reward totalling J\$5 million through the Crime Stop Programme for information leading to the arrest and charge of persons responsible for the most recent kidnapping.

Anyone with information should call Crime Stop at 888-991 4000.

Mr. Speaker, we intend to leave no stone unturned in this matter because we are determined not to go the way of other regional territories faced with this problem of kidnapping.

The Anti-Crime Initiative

Mr. Speaker, I will now report on the anti-crime measures and then go on to talk about future plans.

Members will recall that in December 2002, faced with a major escalation in crime especially in some parts of the Corporate Area and St. Catherine, we announced the **Anti-Crime Initiative**. The major objectives were to:

- Apprehend criminals
- Break up gangs
- Improve relations between communities and security forces
- Put in social intervention measures in selected communities
- Seek greater public support for the drive against crime.

At the start of this sectoral debate last week, the Minister of Development reported on the social intervention measures for which he has portfolio responsibility so I will not go over them.

When we launched the initiative we declared Special Curfew Zones in Payne Avenue, Hannah Town, Denham Town, sections of Central Kingston and Mountain View Avenue.

Special operations were launched by the JDF and the Police in Hanna and Denham Towns while operations were carried out in Tivoli Gardens, Craig Town and Rema as the need arose.

Outside of these Special Curfew Zones, there were targeted operations and searches for wanted individuals, cordons of communities, roadblocks and other interventions elsewhere in the island.

- During the 12-month period to December 2003, the Anti-Crime Initiative produced some encouraging results. There was a sizable drop in five of the seven major crimes for which we keep figures.
- Compared to the previous 12 month period, Murder, Shooting, Robbery, Break-ins and Larceny all recorded significant declines.
- In the two other categories of major crimes, rape remained at the same level as the previous year and carnal abuse actually went up.

So, on balance, Mister Speaker calendar year 2003 was trending in the right direction – downward.

Trends in 2004

And so we come to the first four and a half months of 2004 and, quite frankly, Mister Speaker, major crime is on the rise. So far, the data shows that there have been increases in all seven categories of major crimes when compared with the corresponding period last year.

Unless the trend is quickly arrested and reversed we could end 2004 in a worse position than we were at the end of 2003.

We know that there will be peaks and troughs in crime statistics because, in the normal scheme of things, we will have some good months and some bad months. But what is clear is that the figures, especially for murder and shooting, are trending in the wrong direction and so we have to take measures to regain lost ground. I will go into details about these measures later.

Analysis of Crime Statistics

Mister Speaker, we are obviously concerned with increases in any and all of the major crimes but murder remains the most worrying of all.

And when we look behind the statistics, some patterns emerge clearly. The first is that a majority of the murders are occurring in a fairly limited geographic location.

- In the period between January 1- May 16, 2004, the Kingston Metropolitan Region (KMR), including St. Andrew and St. Catherine, was responsible for 64% (or 293) of murders, with St. Catherine accounting for 24% (108) of total murders.
- In rural Jamaica, with 36% share of murders, St. James contributes approximately one third of rural murders (45 out of 162), and Clarendon, with the second highest contribution to murder among rural parishes, represents 7% of total murders.

The second pattern we see is that far too many deaths occur in incidents where violence was used in the settlement of disputes. When we disaggregate the crime data, it shows clearly that the majority of murders being committed are a result of the inability of persons to resolve disputes without resorting to violence.

- So far this year, 242 persons have been killed as a result of reprisal actions or disputes that have been settled by violent means, accounting for fifty three percent of all murders.
- Reprisals account for 29% (132), and domestic disputes account for 24% (110) murders.
- However, the news was not entirely bad in all locations. There was significant decrease in murders in St. Andrew Central, down 36% (from 45 down to 29) and St. Elizabeth, down 67% (from 8 to 2).

But the statistics can only tell a part of the story. The tragic loss of lives, that we hear about everyday range from apparently casual killings, in some instances, to the most depraved disregard for human life in others.

- We have seen instances of men dealing with their problems with their wives or girlfriends by killing not only the women, but also any of their children that are around.
- There was the case where the bodies of the mother and daughter were found bound to their bed, with the mother suffering from multiple stab wounds while the daughter appeared to have been strangled.
- Or the taxi driver who chopped up a mother and her two daughters, or the father who chopped off his daughter's hand.

- We were horrified to hear about the mentally ill man who chopped and killed his three young nieces, including a four-month old baby, and injured three adults in March. But equally horrifying is the fact that he was then set upon and chopped to death by an angry mob in his own community.

So, Mister Speaker, there has been an unacceptable increase in major crimes this year. But we must not fool ourselves into believing that the answer is going to come from the police alone. It will require a united national effort, and I will have more to say on this later.

4. Disrupting the Drug Trade

Given the centrality of trafficking in illegal drugs and its relationship to violence and corruption we have placed particular focus on this issue both at the level of our own security forces and our cooperation agreements with regional and international governments and agencies.

Drug Interdiction

During the past year, efforts to disrupt the illegal drug trade have enjoyed tremendous success, resulting in the arrests of some 5844 persons for breaches of the Dangerous Drugs Act.

- Among these were eight individuals who have been the target of long-term investigations for their suspected roles as high-level drug traffickers in the international arena. These eight arrests precipitated the seizure of over twenty-five high value motor vehicles, and several other assets.

Some of these high profile cases are now going through the Courts and hence I do not intend to make any extensive comments on them except to make a few general observations:

- The first is that in the fight against organised crime there are no untouchables. Nobody is beyond the law whether they are in the drug trade or the so-called big men of violence at the community level. There are no political or ministerial restrictions on the Police to do their job under the law.
- Secondly, the arrests will help to dispel a public perception that some so-called big men are beyond the law either because of corruption in the police or connections to politics.
- Thirdly, part of the success in interdiction and arrests has been due to collaboration with other countries, notably, Colombia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- I will have more to say later about new and expanded areas of cooperation with other partners in the fight against drug trafficking and other areas of law enforcement.

Another area of positive achievement in the drive against illegal drugs has been the dramatic reduction in the use of 'swallowers' and others who have attempted to smuggle drugs on their person.

- With the installation of ionscan technology, we have significantly reduced the cocaine-smuggling trade using swallowers; moving from the arrests of 351 persons in 2002 to 88 in 2003. So far this year, we have arrested

32 swallows. Intelligence reports have indicated that the courier trade has been diverted to other countries in the region.

- Initial reports also indicate that interdiction efforts have substantially reduced the overall trans-shipment trade through Jamaica, and increases in the local price of cocaine support this view. But there is a lot that we still do not know about the drug trade.

That is why we have commissioned a major drug study to examine the scale and structure of the illegal drug trade and its impact on Jamaica. A team of local and international experts, headed by criminologists from Howard University who are currently in the island, have started a research project that will provide comprehensive data on all aspects of the trade, including patterns of drug abuse and the attitudes of Jamaicans towards the trade.

Seizure of assets

Mister Speaker, regarding the proceeds of this illegal trade, over the past year, over US \$2 Million in cash has been seized at the airports from persons subsequently charged with unlawful possession of property. These sums have been turned over to the State. Just yesterday, two cash couriers were convicted and sent to prison for possession of close to two hundred thousand United States Dollars. The Cabinet has approved the use of these funds for re-investment in law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Regional and International Cooperation

Mister Speaker, the globalized world also means globalized crime. If we are to successfully confront the problem, we must do so in cooperation with partners both inside and outside the region.

Within our region, CARICOM governments understand that the drug trade represents a pressing and urgent need for cooperation. We know that when part of the region makes a dent in the trade, the traffickers don't just go out of business; they seek another target.

We also know that with the impending launch of the CSME and the World Cup Cricket in 2007 we will have to allow for a much freer movement of people, capital and goods without jeopardising our security or surrendering our borders to criminal networks.

In recognition of our peculiar vulnerability to international crime networks, CARICOM Heads of Government established a Regional Task Force on Crime and Security back in 2001.

The Task Force has come up with a number of excellent recommendations and we are working on implementing the most critical ones such as:

- Strengthening border control measures.
- Strengthening measures to gather and share intelligence
- Operationalising a Rapid Response Mechanism (etc)

The Shiprider agreement with the US

Mister Speaker, one aspect of our international cooperation is the Shiprider with the United States of America.

This Agreement, known formally as The Jamaica/United States Maritime Counter-Narcotics (Shiprider) Agreement was extended in February 2004.

Among other things, the Agreement now provides that:

- Law enforcement officials of both countries may now operate from Third Party Platforms, that is, from vessels and aircraft of other States, under specific preconditions.
- It stresses that “All use of force by a Party shall be in strict accordance with the applicable laws of that Party, that is, **neither Party shall use force against civil aircraft in flight.**”

5. Modernising the Infrastructure of Law Enforcement

Mister Speaker, modernization of the infrastructure of law enforcement is at the heart of tackling the problems of crime and violence we face.

Even as we intensify our tactical responses against drug trafficking and organised crime, an important part of the solution to crime lies in a mixture of reform and refocusing of the security forces and the creation of the appropriate legislative framework for modern law enforcement.

Improving Police Crime Fighting Capability

Mister Speaker, the strengthening of the security forces, both in terms of the quality and quantity is part of our objectives.

The truth is, when compared to our Caribbean counterparts, we have much too small an establishment even as we have the greater problem.

In Trinidad for example, they have approximately the same number of police as we do and they have half the murder rate, which is still too high for them, so you can just imagine the extent of our problem.

The fact is, we have the lowest ratio of police to population in the Caribbean, and as I think all modern law enforcement doctrine makes the point, that a critical factor in crime prevention, crime detection and crime suppression, is really just a matter of numbers.

As a government therefore, we are going to continue recruiting, both for the JCF and the ISCF so as to increase the number of law enforcement and security personnel in the country;

Last year, we graduated over a thousand new recruits and so far this year we graduated another four hundred and forty four (443) officers, 130 new recruits have commenced training at the Jamaica Police Academy and another batch of 330 will commence training at Echo Village by the end of this month.

Mr. Speaker, we are committed to continue our drive until we achieve the establishment level of 8500, and then to seek to increase the ratio of police to population to a level more in keeping with the threats we face.

Welfare/Well-being of police personnel

The Police Force, like any organisation is as good as the quality of the people who serve in it at both the operational and managerial levels. This in turn, depends on issues such as conditions of service, compensation, training, human resource development and general welfare and well-being of police personnel.

We are a country of limited financial resources so this is not a question of just throwing money at the problem—it is a matter of effective and efficient use of what is available. Within those constraints, I wish to outline some of the things we are doing.

A majority of the more than 170 police stations across the country, need work ranging from minor repairs to complete rebuilding. We are addressing the problem:

- During the coming year, work will begin on the building of several new stations, including Falmouth, Port Maria, Bath and Alexandria.
- The contract for the refurbishing of the new facilities in May Pen will be signed in the coming days. Another 40 - 50 stations have been identified for repairs.
- The convalescent home for police officers in Black River will be commissioned shortly, thanks to a contribution of \$15 Million from the

National Commercial Bank. This facility is expected to be completed and ready for occupancy before the end of this year.

- In recognition of the trauma experienced by officers in the execution of their duties, a Psychologist is being engaged to supplement the services of the Chaplaincy unit.

Equipment

Mister Speaker, the mobility of the Police Force is being handicapped by a serious shortage of functioning motor vehicles and motorcycles. An order for some seventy (70) vehicles is being placed as I speak, at a cost of Forty Million Dollars. We will also be placing orders over the course of the next two months for another \$50 Million worth of motor vehicles, over and above the 70, especially for use in rural areas and rugged terrain.

In addition, we intend to spend another \$65 Million to acquire 100 motor cycles for more effective urban patrols and another \$60 Million to purchase six (6) marine crafts for the marine police to better secure our coastline.

Enhancing Professional Capability

But even as we seek to increase the numbers and mobility of the Police Force we also have to take other measures to improve professional competence and remove any taint of corruption stemming from the actions of a few.

Mr Speaker, as part of the JCF reform and modernization project, the Professional Standards Branch will be established to investigate internal and

external complaints of indiscipline, criminal activities, and corrupt practices among members of the JCF.

This new branch will seek to coordinate the activities of various internal divisions with current investigative responsibilities, and will move from a fragmented to a cohesive approach that will allow for uniformity and greater accountability.

The branch will operate under strict procedural guidelines in responding to, evaluating, and investigating all forms of police misconduct and will ensure that Force policies and procedures address anti-corruption issues and practices.

It will also be responsible for incorporating a human rights framework into policing, and will ensure that complaints are dealt with expeditiously, with transparency, and with due regard for the rights of both citizens and police personnel.

Performance Management System

Mr. Speaker, over the years several major studies and reports have commented on the management of law enforcement and recommended changes in order to improve effectiveness and accountability. Most recently, the Police Service Commission recommended to the Government that immediate action be taken to ensure that all police officers in the senior ranks, beginning with those above the rank of Senior Superintendent, be engaged on fixed term contracts, renewable on the basis of performance.

The Government has accepted this recommendation and has mandated the Police Service Commission to initiate negotiations on its behalf, with the officers.

MOU with United Kingdom

Mr. Speaker, in furtherance of the effort to enhance competence and remove the stain of corruption, I am pleased to report that on my recent visit to the UK, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Metropolitan Police Service (Scotland Yard) which will assist us in at least five key areas:

- Anti-corruption measures within the JCF;
- Improving forensic capability in relation to major investigations;
- Establishing a response to Organised Crime;
- Guidance to assist in the establishment of a regional counter terrorist response;
- Providing detective training to improve the capability of the JCF.

National Investigations Authority

Mister Speaker, Scotland Yard has also agreed to provide support for the establishment of a National Investigative Authority.

Members will recall that the Most Honourable Prime Minister announced that Government will establish a National Investigative Authority, separate from the JCF, with powers to investigate a range of complex felonies.

The new Authority is being created to:

- Respond to frequently expressed concerns about the administration of the justice system, reflected in the cry for "justice" which punctuates so many public demonstrations.

- Equally, we seek to ensure that the noble tradition of the justice system, defined by principles of impartiality and adherence to the rule of law is preserved.
- Improve the quality and integrity of the investigatory process which often comes under criticism in the face of mounting corruption, driven by financial largesse surrounding the drug trade and the underground economy.
- Respond to allegations regarding excesses /abuse of authority by some members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force

It is also in response to the fact that currently many agencies have investigative responsibility; as a result focus is diffused, and the process is often rendered impractical and inefficient.

The new "National Investigations Authority", independent in its operations, will bring under its control the investigative functions of the following agencies: Office of the Public Defender, The Political Ombudsman, The Electoral Advisory Committee, The Integrity Commission, The Department of Customs, The Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, The Revenue Authorities including the Financial Investigation Division, The Contractor General, and the Police Public Complaints Authority.

In accordance with the drafting instructions issued by Cabinet:

- The Authority will be directed by a Bureau comprising not less than five persons appointed by the Governor General after consultation with the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The Chairman will be a

retired Judge of the Supreme Court and its membership should include a minister of religion.

- Management will be the responsibility of a Director General, appointed by the Bureau. The appointment will reflect the status to be accorded the holder of the office and secure his/her independence.
- The tenure of the Bureau and the Director General will be clearly set out, with provisions for resignation. Removal from office for cause should be preceded by an inquiry in accordance with the rules of natural justice.

The structure will be clearly spelled out to identify areas of specialization, including:

- anti-corruption;
- abuse of power;
- abuse of public trust and
- protection of human and civil rights.

We will have further consultations among the various security agencies to determine what aspects of Financial Crimes are to be included in the work of the Authority.

Meanwhile, Mr. Speaker, I am happy to announce that during my recent visit to the United Kingdom, I received the commitment from Sir John Stevens, Head of Scotland Yard to assist with the setting up of the Authority and training assistance in areas of specialization.

New Firearms Policy

Mister Speaker, I now turn to another issue of major concern; the issuing of firearm licences.

Over the years, there have been continuing allegations of corruption in the issuing of firearm licences, including the issuing of licences to persons of questionable character.

To ensure transparency and reduce the potential for corruption in the issuance of firearm licences we have decided to establish a new Independent Firearm Licencing regime with the following main features:

- Applications will be made to an independent central licensing authority, comprised of a retired judge, a retired DPP (or senior member of that department) and a retired senior police officer;
- All applicants must be able to satisfy the competent authority that they are fit and proper persons to qualify for a licence and must demonstrate a genuine need to be armed;
- The regime will establish an inventory of all licences issued to private citizens and security firms and will combine information on both the weapon and the holder of the licence, through new and modern technology. The unique characteristic of each weapon will form part of the database.

Mister Speaker, with the proliferation of guns in the society, we must ensure that licenced firearms do not end up in the hands of unscrupulous persons.

6. Community Involvement in Crime Prevention

At the very beginning of this presentation, I said that violent crime was far too pervasive and has corroded too many communities and institutions to be a matter for the security forces alone. The financial, social and human costs are too great. Clearly, any attempt to address this issue must involve interventions that go beyond traditional law enforcement efforts.

National Consultative Committee

The need for community involvement in the fight against crime was at the heart of the deliberations of the National Consultative Committee in formulating their plan of action for this year.

Mr Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Committee for their tremendous effort over the past year.

The Committee recommended the following areas for priority action:

- Anti-extortion
- Targeting of criminal gangs
- Incentive programme to reward “at-risk” communities, which have maintained the peace
- Review of the effectiveness of the criminal justice system
- Parish Crime Prevention Programme.

Parish Crime Prevention Programme

Accordingly, we have embarked on a national effort to engage communities in a major crime prevention programme that will enable them to share the responsibility for maintaining their own security.

Mister Speaker, we will be launching shortly, a parish crime prevention programme aimed at developing specially targeted crime prevention initiatives in each parish. We will begin in Clarendon, which has the second highest number of murders in rural parishes, but which has also shown a high degree of community mobilization in dealing with the challenges of crime and violence.

The parish crime prevention programme will involve the participation of approximately 100 persons in each parish, representing all areas of civil society. Community members will be invited to participate in an open forum to identify critical areas of interventions and key priorities that are needed for their parishes and individual communities.

The programme will encourage community participation in crime prevention by allowing members of the communities to identify the issues that are of particular concern to them, develop solutions, and work towards implementation of their priority initiatives. The Ministry of National Security will seek to harness resources through the IDB –financed Citizen Security and Justice Programme, and through collaboration with other governmental agencies.

Peace Management Initiative

As part of the joint response of the State and Civil Society, we established the Peace Management Initiative, under the leadership of Bishop Hero Blair. In addition to its successful interventions in the Kingston Metropolitan Region and Rock Hall, the PMI is now active in Montego Bay and surrounding areas under the leadership of Bishop Charles Dufour.

Protection of Witnesses and Victim Support

As part of a process to encourage witnesses to give evidence in Court we have a protection of witnesses programme.

Under what we officially call the **Justice Protection Programme**, we are able to offer protection to witnesses through the provision of accommodation, financial assistance, counselling and emotional support. Under a 1999 CARICOM agreement, we are now vigorously pursuing a Regional Justice Protection Programme. In addition, a partnership between Jamaica and the UK has also been forged.

There is the related Victim Support Programme, now in its 6th year, with a mandate to help victims manage the emotional trauma associated with and caused by crime. Through partnerships with individuals and institutions—both governmental and non-governmental—the programme has trained 400 volunteers.

Police Youth Clubs

One major objective is to strengthen relationships between the police and citizens, and in particular the youth.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Police Youth Club movement, and is being celebrated under the theme “Youth Empowerment for Future Development.” A Membership drive has been launched to establish new clubs across the island and to recruit an additional five thousand members (currently almost 11,000).

As part of a funding programme to be provided by the European Union, we will be hosting a major re-socialization summer camp for 300 youth from at-risk communities across the island, covering areas ranging from anger management, and conflict resolution to building better parental relationships.

National Security Strategy

Mister Speaker, we are embarking on the development of a National Security Strategy.

This strategy is intended to forge stronger linkages between government Ministries, Departments and Agencies whose mandate and operations make them a part of the national security network.

Currently, The Jamaica Constabulary Force and the Jamaica Defence Force tend to be regarded as the only agencies responsible for security. But in reality, Mister Speaker, this overlooks the important roles of agencies such as Customs, Immigration, Registrar of Titles, Registrar of Companies, Tax Administration, just to name a few.

The need for such a strategy is influenced by the threats posed locally, regionally and internationally, including:

- Locally, threats posed by international trade in illegal narcotics, the proliferation of guns and ammunitions and the prevalence of money laundering;
- Internationally, threats posed by international terrorism in the post 9/11 era; illegal trafficking in human beings; trafficking in other forms of illegal

substances must be acknowledged. A vital part of our economy, the tourism sector, makes us an attractive “soft target;”

- Regionally, the advent of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME) with the requirement for the freer movement of people and goods will also pose some security challenges.

Mr. Speaker, the intent of the National Security Strategy is to raise the consciousness of the various agencies to their responsibilities as part of the national security apparatus and build a network for active collaboration in information gathering and sharing.

Role of the JDF in National Security

Mister Speaker, the JDF continues to be a vital component of the security apparatus of the country. In addition to its regular functions, the JDF has been a consistent component, in support of other security agencies, in crime fighting and law enforcement.

We are committed to making the necessary investment in order to ensure that the JDF can maintain its capacity to contribute to these efforts.

Over the past year, some 422 persons were enlisted as soldiers and another eighteen (18) commissioned as officers. In the coming year we intend to continue the recruiting drive, with the training of additional intakes towards achieving the established strength.

We have just signed an agreement to purchase three offshore patrol vessels and repair one of the existing fleet to enhance our maritime surveillance capabilities.

Further investments will be made in upgrading the buildings and equipment of the force in the coming year.

Joint operational and training exercises with our international partners continue to play a vital part in maintaining the capabilities of the force.

We are thankful for the continued support for our joint training exercise operational requirements provided by the USA, CANADA, UNITED KINGDOM and CARICOM Countries, to name a few, and we hope that this will continue well into the foreseeable future.

The National Security Strategy for Jamaica, mentioned earlier, will provide the framework for a Strategic Defence Review of the Jamaica Defence Force, designed to ensure that the organization achieves the correct structural integrity in order to carry out its missions and roles in the interest of the state.

Reform and Refocus of the ISCF

Mister Speaker, the mandate of the Island Special Constabulary Force has been substantially changed to enhance their capacity for the maintenance of public order. We have reformed the ISCF to make it more efficient and better integrated into the national security apparatus. We have recruited and trained a first batch of 137 who graduated last November. Approximately 150 more are in training.

Under its new mandate, we have expanded the role of the ISCF to include:

- Focus on the Downtown business district; illegal sand mining, petroleum sales, road traffic and praedial larceny and municipal wardens. Mister Speaker, they have had considerable success in the downtown Kingston business district as well as in other urban centres across the island.
- Their success has been assisted, in part, by the installation of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras in the downtown business district and its environs as part of a policy to help the police maintain and restore public order in public spaces. By September of 2004, we will have installed cameras in other parts of the island and established a National Operations Centre for monitoring the cameras.

Department of Correctional Services

Mister Speaker, I am pleased to report that there have been significant security improvements at the island's correctional facilities over the past year, evidenced by:

- Reduction in violent incidents by 64.7% from 105 to 37 in 2003
- Escapes reduced by 46%, with three recaptured, one shot and killed and one surrendered.
- Death of inmates decreased by 43% to 9, with 7 from natural causes and 2 from unnatural causes.
- In addition, there has been improvements to the infrastructure at Fort Augusta, Rio Cobre and Hill TOP Juvenile Centres and Tamarind Farm

Looking to the future, plans are being developed for the construction of a new, modern correctional facility to replace existing structures, long outdated and inadequate. Construction is expected to begin in 2005.

I know that some may question the use of scarce resources to build a new penal institution. The answer is that Corrections is not just about punishment. After serving their sentence inmates will return to society. We therefore have an obligation to provide safe humane punishment balanced with effective rehabilitation programmes so that inmates can be better equipped to contribute to the society when they return. The new prison, therefore, is an investment in people!!!

Review of the parole system

A major review of the parole system is currently underway. The objective is to improve the administration for the benefit of the society and the inmates.

Currently someone convicted of murder could be out on parole after serving only (seven) 7 years, because of the eligibility for parole after serving one third of the sentence. The intention is to have certain types of crimes demand the serving of a minimum sentence before eligibility for parole.

We have received reports that currently, even when inmates become eligible for parole, their files may not be brought forward. We will now stipulate that once an inmate becomes eligible the file must automatically be forwarded to the Commissioner who will check for completeness and then forward to the Board.

Mr. Speaker, I need to stress that the automatic forwarding of the file to the Commissioner upon eligibility does not guarantee an automatic right to parole. The granting of parole will be done at the discretion of the Board.

The main advantage will be efficiency in processing with a direct impact on relieving overcrowding. However, public safety will not be compromised.

Another aspect will be a phased release strategy based on risk assessment. So that instead of coming straight out of a maximum security institution onto the streets, an inmate would go from maximum to medium, to low, possibly to a half-way house in preparation for release.

Legislation

Mister Speaker, effective law enforcement must be supported by appropriate legislation.

In support of the policy direction and administrative changes I have outlined, there is an urgent need for several new pieces of legislation including:

- **The Finger Prints Bill** is currently before this Honourable House. Mister Speaker, we on this side are committed to its passage in the next session as we are convinced that it will enhance the investigative capability of the police force and lead to more convictions. Our justice administration system still relies too heavily on witness testimony. We must move to a greater reliance on new technologies to deal with the sophistication of the criminals.
- **Port Security Bill:** A bill has been drafted to provide the Ministry of National Security with the legislative authority to integrate all matters

related to port security and to better regulate and coordinate all security standards for the air and sea ports.

- **Forfeiture of Proceeds of Crime Act:** We recognize that the most effective way to disrupt the illegal drug trade is to take the profit out of it. We have now received a draft Bill that will enable the state to effectively target the proceeds of criminal lifestyles. The Bill is currently being reviewed, and will be sent to Parliament within the next few months.

CONCLUSION

Mister Speaker, the fight against organised crime is long, dangerous and difficult. The struggle to reverse an emerging culture of violence will be even longer and more complex.

I have given the House a comprehensive report of the tough challenges we face, including the unacceptably high levels of murder and other violent crimes, because I firmly believe that an informed society is best equipped to understand and support anti-crime initiatives. Despite the difficulties, I have no doubt that we will achieve significant reduction in crime rates from the law enforcement measures we are implementing.

- We are modernising our law enforcement infrastructure by increasing the numbers in the Police Force, taking a more professional approach to training and requiring higher levels of performance and accountability especially at the managerial level of the Force.

- We will shortly launch a parish crime prevention programme aimed at developing specially targeted crime prevention initiatives at the community level in each parish.
- We will continue to re-equip our security forces with more cars, motorcycles and patrol boats.
- We are seeking to improve working conditions by our commitment to build new police stations at Port Maria, Alexandria, Bath May Pen and Falmouth and repairing some 40 others.
- We will be opening a new Convalescent Home in Black River.
- We are establishing a special anti-kidnapping focus so that this type of crime does not emerge as a major problem for the society.
- We are stemming the flow of narcotic drugs through our ports and making it more dangerous and expensive for drug dealers to use Jamaica as a trans-shipment centre.
- We have bolstered our own intelligence gathering, with support from international partners, and this is showing impressive results with the recent arrests of major players in drug trafficking.
- We are not only going after the big men of the drug trade but we will also focus on so-called big men of violence at the community level.
- We are responding to the cries for 'justice' by getting help from Scotland Yard to establish the National Investigations Authority, which will have a major impact on corruption.

- We are removing a basis for corruption in the issuing of firearm licences and reducing the risk of licensed guns getting into the hands of unscrupulous characters by placing it in the hands of an independent agency.

While we press on with these and other law enforcement measures, we desperately need to come together as a society to find long-term solutions to social disorder and the emerging culture of violence. This will require sustained effort on several fronts, including:

- Sustained social interventions in depressed communities;
- Reform of the educational system to include civic and communitarian values;
- Providing more young people with the skills and knowledge required to function in the Information Age;
- Inculcating respect for values like tolerance for diversity of views and non-violent techniques for dispute resolution.

As a society, we must return to traditional values like responsible parenting, stable family structures, thrift, hard work, efficiency, and respect for law, which has come under severe threat. We have to turn back the tide.

Even as we do these things Mr. Speaker each of us as Jamaicans has to accept personal responsibility to put Jamaica and its interests first – Each of us has to be part of the moral rebirth.

- The M.P. in Parliament and our adherents must recognize it is not credible to hug up criminals in pursuit of power and then proclaim respect for the law after Election Day.

- Men and Women in the Police Force must recognize and accept that the country is worth more than the thirty pieces of silver the druggist will offer you for betraying your country and your families and generation of long suffering Jamaicans.
- The Youth men on the corner will have to learn that no – matter the depth of his suffering it can't be worth his life to kill his neighbour.
- We all want peace for Jamaica; we must accept however – every one of us - that it must begin with us.