

SECTORAL DEBATE 2004

PRESENTATION BY THE HON. DERRICK KELLIER, MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 2004

NATIONAL SECURITY – A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

Salutations...

Mr. Speaker, we live in an inter-connected global community which is being increasingly driven by the emergence of new technologies. While the technological revolution has heralded new and positive developments and efficiencies in all sectors of our national life... it has also brought new challenges for crime prevention, crime fighting and ultimately, the security of our nation.

We are now confronted with:

- Trans-border crimes such as drug trafficking, trading in guns and ammunition, trafficking in humans and money laundering, controlled by powerful international cartels
- The new and growing threat of terrorism and, within our own borders,
- An increasingly violent society in which murder, extortion and rampant criminality have become the order of the day, as well as,
- The growth of sophisticated criminal networks, which are accessing and utilizing modern technologies for their nefarious activities

The Government of Jamaica... through the Ministry of National Security, has adopted several strategies in its response to this national problem. The Minister of National Security has already presented the details of these strategies which include:

- Modernization of the infrastructure for crime-fighting through the acquisition of state-of-the-art surveillance and detection equipment
- A new focus on intelligence gathering
- Review and passage of appropriate legislation to address the changing crime profile
- Increasing the number of persons recruited into the Police Force and the Jamaica Defence Force
- Improving crime fighting capacity through specialist training for law enforcement personnel
- Establishing new and higher standards of performance among our security forces
- Collaboration with our regional partners in CARICOM and international crime-fighting organizations such as the British Metropolitan Police Service (Scotland Yard), INTERPOL and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

In my presentation this afternoon, I would like to focus on:

- Joint police/community interventions as part of the new approach to crime management and control
- The physical and legal infrastructure to support national security and
- Finally, the question of governance, as it relates to the Parliament

Rising Crime

Mr. Speaker, even as we move to adopt new anti-crime strategies, the latest police data indicates a continuing increase in serious crimes, in particular murder, over in the period January 1 to July 16, 2004, compared to the same period in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, the toll on human life and the devastating impact this has on our economy and the psyche of our people, especially the children of this country cannot be measured.

United Community Response

Given the magnitude of the crime problem, it is evident that the solution cannot rest solely with the Government and its security forces. Citizens and communities can... and must play a vital role in countering the activities of the criminals in our midst.

In recent years, we have seen and heard the gruesome reports of angry mobs in a growing number of communities taking the law into their own hands... and meting out “jungle” justice to criminals. Mr. Speaker, while we appreciate the circumstances that have motivated these acts, we cannot condone them.

Rather, when I speak of united community effort, it is with a vision for a structured, conscious and active collaboration among citizens and the police...working within the framework of the law to identify and bring criminals before the courts. At the wider national level, our major objective is:

- To strengthen relations between citizens, the police and our various law enforcement agencies
- To enhance the capabilities of our law enforcement officers in detecting and countering criminal activity, within the ambit of the law
- To identify long-term solutions to our crime problem, and
- To make Jamaica a safer place for residents, visitors and future generations.

In his sectoral presentation in May, the Honourable Minister of National Security announced plans to introduce a Parish Crime Prevention Programme, through which representatives of civil society will be engaged in a national partnership to address the challenges of crime and violence.

Admittedly, the success of this initiative and any other collaborative venture will demand re-socialization of our citizens and security forces to mend the deep rifts created by years of distrust... and, in some cases, animosity.

Mr. Speaker, I have every confidence that, through this intervention, we can begin to develop responses that are tailor-made to the needs of individual communities.

Anti-Crime Social Intervention

The Anti-Crime Social Intervention Programme, which is spearheaded by the Jamaica Constabulary Force Community Relations Branch, represents another novel and proactive approach to crime fighting.

The programme, which was introduced in the 2003-2004 financial year, with support from the CHASE Fund, is designed mainly to promote community development and mend relations between the police and citizens in “high-risk” communities across Jamaica. Initially, the programme targeted inner city communities in the Police Divisions of Kingston Central, Eastern and Western, and St. Andrew South. However, it is now being implemented in several other parishes.

The Police has worked with a range of social agencies in implementing the first phase of this initiative. Under the programme:

- Seven basic schools were refurbished in the Corporate Area and St. Catherine. Work, some of which was done by the police themselves, included roofing repairs, plumbing and electrical installation, provision of bathroom and kitchen facilities, repairs to fencing. Furniture, appliances and school supplies were also provided.
- Thirty students were awarded scholarships to attend high schools. These educational awards are aimed at countering delinquency and high illiteracy among many adolescents and young adults in these communities, many of whom are insufficiently socialized.
- Health fairs were organized in six police divisions, in partnership with the Ministry of Health.
- The Division assisted the Selassie Marching Band in Payne Avenue, South St. Andrew to procure musical instruments

- Multi-purpose sports complexes were constructed at Payne Avenue, in St. Andrew South, Jacques Road and Jarrett Lane in Kingston East, and Lime Hall, St. Ann. The facilities include basketball, netball and volleyball courts and were established to encourage teamwork and to promote greater unity among residents of the targeted communities.

Mr. Speaker, the new sports facilities are benefitting an estimated 10,000 households in the Payne Land, Jacques Road, Jarrett Lane and Lime Hall communities where approximately 60-70% of the residents are younger than 25 years old.

Under this major social intervention, the Police also initiated the Kingston Central Summer Youth Empowerment Programme, in which some 250 youngsters participated in 2003. During the two-week programme, participants were addressed on topics such as self esteem, conflict resolution, peer pressure, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Initiatives such as this support the wider organizational strategy of community based policing and operate on the principle of mutual cooperation. We are confident that, in the long term, they will help to curb social decay and improve the quality of life in communities islandwide.

Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Speaker, communities play an essential role in nation-building... and strong communities provide the foundation for strong nations. People have a

right to determine how their community is developed and to work together to build from within and create the framework for growth.

Since its inception, the Neighbourhood Watch Movement has provided another effective vehicle for cooperation among citizens and community mobilization in the fight against crime. Indeed, this has given practical meaning to the religious injunction “Be your brother’s keeper.”

Ironically, despite the increasing number of crimes, there has been a marked decline in the establishment of new groups over the past year. Between April 2003 and March 2004, only 7 groups were launched islandwide, bringing to just under 600 the total number currently in operation.

During this year, we intend to reevaluate and revive the Neighbourhood Watch Programme to take its place as a medium for the dissemination of core values and attitudes. I encourage citizens across Jamaica to take an active role in ensuring the security of their own community.

Youth Organizations

Organizations such as the Police Youth Club, Boys Scouts and Girls Guide Movements continue to build bridges of cooperation with young Jamaicans. They are aimed at instilling valuable life skills and developing the capabilities of our youth as worthwhile citizens of tomorrow... disciplined and well equipped to meet the challenges of the dynamic global environment.

This year's celebration of the Police Youth Club's 50th Anniversary provides a fitting backdrop for the 372 clubs island wide to evaluate its achievements and re-energise for the future. The Movement is now recruiting new members and enters its next phase with plans to sharpen its focus on education, training and development, entrepreneurship and sports.

Its plans for sustainable development include the introduction of a tertiary level scholarship programme for outstanding club members and leaders, as well as the establishment of a Skills Training and Entrepreneurial Centre.

I must emphasize once again, how important it is to engage more of our young people in organisations such as the Police Youth Clubs. This is critical in re-socializing our youth and reducing the antagonism which presently mars their inter-personal relationships...with their peers, other members of their community and with the police.

Mediation and Dispute Resolution

Mr. Speaker, Mediation and Dispute Resolution is another area in which citizens and the police can work together effectively.

Our crime statistics indicate the growing number of persons that are resorting to violence... by the gun... by the knife or other means, to resolve their differences. The frequent and tragic reports of domestic violence resulting in siblings maiming or killing each other, parents dying at the hands of their children and students committing murder in our schools are becoming almost commonplace.

These incidents have serious implications and consequences with respect to the social order in our nation. They also pose a tremendous challenge for our families, the educational sector, the Church, our communities and our law enforcement agencies.

In the face of the rising murder rate, it is a matter of concern that the Mediation and Dispute Resolution Unit, established by the Jamaica Constabulary Force as part of the national response to this challenge, continues to be under-utilized by the general populace.

- During the period April 2003 to March 2004, the Unit received reports of 48 disputes
- Of this number, 28 were amicably settled
- 17 remained deadlocked
- 3 cases were referred to the Courts for resolution

Among the reasons for the poor response by the public we believe, are the lack of awareness that this service is available free of cost and the conviction among many of our people that settling a score is the only way to go.

- Imagine a man losing his life in an argument over a bit of ice in a drink, or
- Someone being killed by his friend during a fight over small change...
or
- A girl being stabbed to death by her schoolmate during an argument over a nickname.

We must change this mindset and intolerance which are undermining our ability to function as rational beings, resulting in the senseless loss of life ... and ultimately, destroying the very fabric of our society.

There is some consolation in the fact that the Courts are relying increasingly on mediation, as this reduces the time allocated to disputes that can be resolved otherwise, thereby freeing the court system for more critical cases.

There are now some 671 JCF officers trained in mediation techniques.

Station Upgrades

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security is ever mindful of its responsibility to provide suitable physical accommodation to facilitate the work of the police.

As you know, many of the police stations across Jamaica are in a state of disrepair. We acknowledge the difficulties that this poses for the efficient operation of our policemen and women...

I would like to assure them that the Ministry is committed to correcting the situation and that we are undertaking a structured upgrading programme, as financial resources permit.

- On Friday, June 11, the contract was signed for refurbishing of the premises acquired for the relocation of the station in May pen, Clarendon. Work on the project began early this month and should be completed within six months.

- As at June 26, 2004, upgrading work was completed on the following stations: Seaforth and Port Morant in St. Thomas; Lucea in Hanover and
- General maintenance and refurbishing are currently underway at the Kingsvale, Sandy bay, Ramble and Green Island stations in Hanover, while tiling and painting is being done at the Mobile Reserve in Kingston and
- New stations will be constructed in Falmouth, Trelawny; Port Maria, St. Mary; Bath, St. Thomas and Alexandria, St. Ann during the coming year.
- The Ministry of National Security is now appointing professionals to carry out building surveys on all the stations identified for upgrading.

Legislation

An effective legal framework is essential to good governance and the administration of national security. Several pieces of legislation piloted by the Ministry of National Security are expected to be passed before the current session of Parliament ends in March 2005. These include:

- The Constable (District) (Amendment) Bill, to modernise the Act. The Draft Bill, approved by the Lower House of Parliament in 2002, is still to be passed in the Senate
- The Constable (Special) (Amendment) Bill to support the reform and rationalization of the Island Special Constabulary Force. The draft bill is now being reviewed by the Ministry

- The Finger Prints (Amendment) Bill providing for mandatory identification for certain scheduled offences, currently before a Joint Select Committee of Parliament
- The Firearms (Amendment) Bill to introduce a new regime for the granting of firearm licences, being drafted by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel
- The Forfeiture of Assets (Proceeds of Crime) Bill, now with the Ministry of National Security for consideration. This legislation provides for mandatory search and confiscation of the proceeds from illegal activities.
- The International Convention against Transnational Organised Crime and Protocols providing for the ratification of the Convention and its three protocols; as well as incorporation of the provisions of the Convention into our domestic law. Drafting instructions for this legislation was approved by Cabinet in September 2003.
- The Passport (Amendment) Bill, a draft of which is presently being considered by the Ministry of National Security
- The Port Security Bill which will grant the Ministry of National Security jurisdiction for security standards at Jamaica's sea ports and airports. The Draft Bill is now being reviewed by the Ministry.
- The Terrorism Prevention Bill, designed to suppress terrorism and the financing of terrorist activity. This legislation, which has sparked much controversy, is now being studied by a Joint Select Committee of Parliament.

Parliament Building

Mr. Speaker, as the Deputy Leader of Parliamentary Affairs in the House of Representatives, I am compelled to comment on certain matters that are pertinent to the efficient operation of this House.

The first has to do with the proposal for the construction of a new Parliament. The fact is that, financial constraints notwithstanding, the current facilities of Gordon House can no longer adequately serve the needs of members in the context of modern-day Jamaican society. Further, any attempt at reconfiguration of the structure at this time would be merely cosmetic.

I submit that this is a matter of utmost urgency, and cannot, therefore, remain on the “back burner,” given that this House is the seat of government and the source of governance for Jamaicans at home and in the diaspora. The broader vision must be, Mr. Speaker, to make this building a national monument and a true source of pride for all of us.

Parliamentary Procedure

As I just indicated, good governance emanates from the Parliament and the conduct of the nation’s business by some Members of this House militates against the effective implementation of the work before us.

- I must bring to your attention the high level of absenteeism on both sides of the House in Committee meetings.
- The premature departure by Members from the Chamber before the day’s proceedings are concluded

- The rampant breach of Standing Orders which, in some cases, reflects a lack of experience and knowledge:

Rules of Debate

Section 8

(1) (a) The House shall meet on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at 2:00 o'clock in the afternoon, and unless previously adjourned, shall sit until 7:30 o'clock in the evening.

Section 32

(1) A Member desiring to speak shall rise in his place and if called upon shall address his observations to the Speaker or Chairman. No Member shall speak unless called upon by the Speaker or Chairman.

Section 34

Subject to the provisions of Standing Orders 26, 38 and 39 a Member shall not interrupt another Member except—

- (a) by rising to a point of order, whereupon the Member speaking shall resume his seat and the Member interrupting shall simply direct attention to the point which he desires to bring to notice and submit it to the Speaker or Chairman for decision; or*
- (b) to elucidate some matter raised by that Member in the course of his speech, but only if the Member speaking is*

willing to “yield” or give way and resumes his seat and if the Member wishing to interrupt is called by the Chair.

Section 35

- (4) *It shall be out of order to use offensive and insulting language about Members of either Chamber.*
- (5) *No Member shall impute improper motives to any other Member of either Chamber.*
- (6) *No Member shall refer to any other Member by name.*

Section 40

A Member present in the House during a debate—

- (a) *shall maintain silence while another Member is speaking, and shall not interrupt, except in accordance with these Standing Orders; and*
- (b) *shall otherwise conduct himself in a fit and proper manner.*

Section 42

Whenever the Speaker or the Chairman rises during a Debate, any Member then speaking or offering to speak shall sit down, and the House or Committee shall be silent so that the Speaker may be heard without interruption.

- Mr. Speaker I recommend that, in addition to the basic orientation for members, it is time that we institute quarterly training sessions to reinforce the necessary procedures and ensure that members know what is expected of them.

- Committee meetings are a critical function of the Parliament... and the low priority some members accord to these meetings is cause for great concern. Members have to pay due regard to their obligation to their constituents and the nation by urgently addressing matters brought before committees of the House.

Above all, Mr. Speaker, the Parliament must maintain its stature as the beacon of civility in national life... Vigorous and passionate debating are quite acceptable... and the guidelines laid down in the Standing Orders are designed to ensure that members do not exceed the bounds of politeness. We should also not lose sight of the fact that members are expected to set the pre-eminent example for the wider society which takes a cue from its leaders. This is especially important in the context of the break-down in the social order and the crassness which is permeating so many aspects of our national life.

Acknowledgements

Finally, let me take this opportunity to commend the many persons who contribute to the smooth running of the Parliament...

- The Speaker and his Deputies for ably guiding the sittings of the House
- The Clerk and her staff for their consistent support, often under trying conditions. They are the backbone of the Parliament... providing professional clerical support for all meetings of the Upper and Lower Houses
- I also extend my appreciation to the Hansard writers

- Members of the Press
- The Security and Ancillary Staff

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of employees of the Ministry of National Security and its Agencies, as we continue to seek new and effective approaches to crime management and the administration of national security.

Conclusion

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken about collective responsibility at several levels...

- People working together in communities to fight crime
- Young people acquiring vital life skills in order to take their place as worthwhile citizens
- Individuals learning the art of negotiation and peaceful resolution of their differences
- Accountability among Parliamentarians

Any government can enact legislation and enforce regulations to guide how people behave in a civil, democratic society... But, in the final analysis, it is the willingness of each individual to recognize and accept his responsibility as a citizen... and the combined energies of the groups and organizations in our communities and nation that will determine the effectiveness of these measures.

We now need to pool our energies and resources to stem the tide of crime and violence in Jamaica, make the country safer for everyone and create an environment for strong social and economic growth.