

Meet the Troops

(Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service- Tobago)

Date: Wednesday 18th January 2011

Good Morning ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased to be with you this morning, as part of my "Meet The Troops" initiative.

This is my third in a series of meetings with officers and personnel who comprise one arm or another of the Ministry of National Security.

All of my meetings are based out on the field, such as this one, because I felt it was necessary and important to meet my troops, as it were, at their places of work.

I felt it sufficiently important to be here today because you form part of a team of men and women engaged in activities that are crucial to the security of Trinidad and Tobago, and in this instance, especially of Tobago.

As a matter of fact, you are the first group of Fire Officers , with whom I am meeting. So, there should be no doubt in your minds, of the important role that you perform within the context of the national security landscape.

I am here because, as the person with the constitutional responsibility for the maintenance of that safety and stability, I hold the view that you, as a group, must be reassured of my support and commitment and my deep appreciation of the efforts and sacrifices you make on a daily basis.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Mission of your organization is very clear. It is to "provide efficient and effective public fire protection and emergency services to the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago."

Like you the Government's mandate is very clear. We must reduce crime and the fear of crime; diminish gang warfare; restrict the use of unlicensed firearms; improve road traffic management; improve customer service delivery; enhance public trust and confidence; engender community patriotism, reintroduce family values and virtues and focus on the development of our youth.

The Government of the Peoples' Partnership is also cognizant of the tremendous role that the Trinidad and Tobago Fire Service in the service of the people of Trinidad and Tobago. I salute you for your dedication and commitment. I know that in the execution of your duties you often place your lives at great risk. I commend and thank you for that. I am also confident that you will continue to serve the people of our beloved country with resolve and integrity.

Today's modern firefighter is required to be a versatile, multi-talented member of a team; able to utilize a wide range of skills in order to protect and enhance the safety of the community they serve. The ability to communicate effectively with members of the public from all walks of life, in order to educate and inform others about the dangers of fire and fire safety measures, is as much a part of the firefighter's role as the high-speed response to emergency calls.

I recognize that the responsibilities of the Fire Service are many, and am sure that this places onerous responsibility on each individual member of the organization. At times when the vast majority of our citizens are enjoying their leisure time, fire officers on duty remain constantly vigilant and ready to respond to calls of distress and disaster.

Our country's firefighters are sometimes face with immense adversity and remain calm in the execution of their duties, while being ever so faithful to their well-established pledge, which reads "***In the Service of the People***". As firefighters, you have consistently maintained this high standard of concentration and performance. Today I am here to remind you of your Government's commitment to provide the Fire Service with the necessary resources, it need to carry out its mandate effectively.

Let me deal with a few issues that concerns Fire Officers in Tobago specifically.

I am aware that the Chief Fire Officer has recommended that new Fire Stations be built at the following locations around Tobago:

- **Black Rock/Plymouth**
- **Charlotte/Speyside**
- **Moriah**
- **A new Divisional Headquarters to be located in Lower Tobago**

As it relates to Black Rock Fire area, which lies on the northwestern side of the island, this area is currently covered by the Scarborough Fire Station. A response from this station takes between 15-20 minutes. This area, I am informed, is rapidly expanding and developing, particularly in the area of tourism. Additionally, A concert venue, as well as, a housing estate are also being planned for this area. So as you can see there is great need for the construction of a new station at Black Rock/Plymouth.

Currently, the Tobago House of Assembly (THA) is undertaking a land use project in the Courland area for the construction of a new Fire Station and the Government awaits the allocation of a suitable piece of land by the THA for the process to commence.

In an effort to expand and improve the fire defense capabilities in the island, the construction of new Fire Stations in Charlotte/Speyside AND Moriah are also proposed.

In addition, General Repairs are to be carried out at Roxborough, Scarborough and Crownpoint fire stations.

As you can see, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Government continues to respond to your organizational needs, and to the development of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

I am sure that today's "Meet the Troops" exercise will provide us with even more information on how to assist you in carrying out your functions more efficiently.

I thank you.