

Major General Cameron Ross (Report on Intelligence Agencies)

Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker,
before I commence having been advised that I was called earlier, I wish to apologise and indicate that it was no affront or disrespect to the Chair or any Member of honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to refer to the article in the Trinidad Guardian April 18, 2011 entitled, "How far will the NIA go?" In this article various opinions were expressed with the regard to the formation of new intelligence agency. In an effort to provide clarity and promote understanding, I would like to make the following brief comments.

The National Security sector in review of Trinidad and Tobago dated April 2009, conducted by a review team contracted by previous administration and led by Canadian Major General Cameron Ross, opined and I quote:

"There is considerable overlap in the collection, analysis, and distribution of intelligence among the security agencies. Having SAUTT, defence force intelligence, SIA, Special Branch, SSA and NSCS all involved is difficult to justify in a country as small as Trinidad and Tobago."

This report, Mr. Speaker, was accepted by the previous administration and the recommendations were being implemented when the People's Partnership Government was installed 11 months ago. The recommendations of the Ross report were accepted by Cabinet Minute 1923-2009/307/23 dated July 23, 2009 and confirmed on the July 30, 2009. The Ross led team recommended that the government amalgamate SSA, SIA and the national security portion or Special Branch into a new national intelligence agency. This recommendation was held to be constructive and useful and the advice of the Ross team was accepted and acted upon by this government. The result was the appointment of a steering committee to make recommendations for action consistent with the Ross report. The security sector review conducted by Major General Ross was a comprehensive exercise that laid bare many of the short-comings in the intelligence community that predated the arrival of this administration. There was a need definitive action to remedy these gaps. The formation of the national intelligence agency, the NIA, is one such action. The NIA is envisioned entity, it is not yet a reality and it is misleading to speak of it as if it already exists. This new agency will be the product of a rationalization process that will address deficiencies in security and criminal intelligence.
3.55 p.m.

In developing and integrated intelligence led National Security Model,

the NIA will be able to satisfy all the requirements of security intelligence as well as criminal intelligence. A vibrant National Intelligence Agency will ensure effective net working among local stakeholder agencies or regional neighbors and international partners. Further, a consolidated approach to intelligence gathering will be more efficient and cost effective. In this regard, it should be noted that there has been no interruption in the intelligence sharing relationship existing between Trinidad and Tobago and its regional and international partners in the realm of cross border criminal activity. Those who choose, Mr. Speaker, to perpetrate that inaccuracy are recognizably bent on being mischievous and nurturing discomfort with respect to the peace of mind and sense of security of our citizens and therefore, must desist from doing so. The recommendations made in the Ross Report are over arching and substantial. As Minister of National Security I see the benefit that will accrue when these recommendations are put into effect. There are many activities taking place in the National Security environment and they are held together by an overall plan, flavored to some extent by the recommendations of the Ross Report.

Mr. Speaker, matters of the National Security nature need to be treated with discretion. A lack of discretion can create alarm in the national community. When there is need to correct situations that may have gone awry, an appropriate approach is necessary. This brings me to the recent allegations with regards to IMPACS. This Government has taken note and I have been in touch with Dr. Cort, who is the Minister of National Security of Antigua/Barbuda and the Chair of the Council on Security and Law Enforcement (CONSLE). He is the one to whom the executive director IMPACS reports. In his capacity as Chairman and as a direct report for the executive director I called for his response to these allegations. He advised that there is a schedule of video conference meeting of the bureau of National Security Ministers, on April 29, 2011. The Bureau, Mr. Speaker, comprises: The National Security Ministers of Jamaica, Guyana, Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda and Trinidad and Tobago. It is at this session that the way forward on that matter will be determine. It is in the best interest of all, Mr. Speaker, as primary stakeholders in our safety and security both locally and regionally that we take issues of national security seriously. It does not help us if matters of national security are sensationalized. We need to marshal our resources in creating an executing effective solution at all times. It is the focus of the Ministry of National Security; it is the focus of our Government. Mr. Speaker, the People's Partnership Government remains committed to the diminishing of crime and criminal activity in Trinidad and Tobago.

In this regard and in the realm of law enforcement and suppression, we have increase our operations in the area of community policing and reports indicated that there is an increase in police presents on our streets and in our communities. The 21st Century policing approach introduced in the Western Division has been working well. At present the surveillance base on the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway are being laid and should become completed and introduce in a few weeks. In the prevention trust, Mr. Speaker, training of mentors for the National Mentoring Programme commences in the first week of May. To ensure that activities with mentees proceed as schedule, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add and accept all the commendation for the launch of the National Mentoring Programme. I will also hasten to add that it is not me. This came about because of the hard working and conscientious efforts of the public service officials in the Ministry off National Security and other Ministries that are partnering with us to ensure that this programme comes on stream in a timely manner. I

want to embrace this opportunity to commend them for their efforts. Concurrently the Ministry of National Security is in the planning stage of "our fathers bring your sons and come rally" to be held on Saturday June 18, the day before father's day. And again I make an appeal to all fathers to join us on this occasion. I call on all sons to encourage their fathers to bring them along. We are making an effort, Mr. Speaker, to nurture our young men to prevent them from gravitating to gangs and criminal activity. The intent of the People's Partnership Government with the help of every citizen and indeed with God's help, is to return piece, serenity and a crime free comfort to our beloved Trinidad and Tobago.

I thank you.