

## **Meet the Troops**

**(Trinidad and Tobago Immigration Department- Tobago)**

**Date: Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011**

Good Morning ladies and Gentlemen, I am very pleased to be with you this morning.

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.

I feel it is necessary and important to meet my troops, as it were, at their places of work, and to interact with as many of you as possible, on a one-on-one basis.

I am here today officers because you form part of a team of men and women engaged in activities that are crucial to the security and stability of this nation.

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

This is my very first visit to the Immigration Division and I am very impressed with what I have seen.

Government's mandate is 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.

We will achieve this through effective law enforcement; amended and new legislation in specific areas and pro-societal and community-based partnerships.

The Government is also cognizant of the immense role that the Trinidad and Tobago Immigration Division plays in securing the safety of our Airports, by determining, as far as possible, that the people we let into our boundaries, will not taint, or disrupt or terrorise our nationals.

As the security landscape in the immigration environment changes, both nationally and internationally, our Ministry, over the years, has had to adopt more stringent measures to effectively monitor and control the traffic of persons through our borders. In this way, the demands of the job have become increasingly challenging not only for officers of the Immigration Division, but also for all officers of the Ministry of National Security.

The elevated level of crime now affecting our country has made it necessary for the various Divisions of the Ministry of National Security to reprioritize their work strategies so as to ensure an appropriate response to our country's growing security needs.

It is obvious that the Immigration Division has a very crucial role to play along with other security agencies, as guardians of the safety and security of our nation. After all, you are the literal *gatekeepers* of the portals of entry to Trinidad and Tobago! This is indeed a tremendous responsibility requiring a display of unquestionable integrity at all times, by those officers who hold these positions of trust.

Today, I wish to assure all of you that the operations and welfare of the Immigration Division are a top priority of the Government. Given Trinidad and Tobago's economic situation, it is critical that its immigration legislation, policies, rules and technology are adequate to effectively manage the increased movement of labour around the world.

On the down-side, open markets present the security challenges of the trade in illicit arms and drugs and trafficking in persons.

The Ministry is making every effort to provide the Division with the physical and technical resources, as well as the necessary manpower, to enable the Division to build capacity and remain up-to-date and relevant in the services it offers and the capabilities it possess.

**I am happy to note that from the period June to November 2010, 4,805 passports were issued by the Tobago branch of the Immigration Division and that the processing time for new passports is now down to five (5) days. This I know will gladly be welcomed by the population here in the sister isle and will provide much needed relief in the time lag from application to issuance of passports.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, given the dynamic nature of the immigration environment, and considering the fact that the existing legislation was implemented twenty-eight (28) years ago, amendment of the Immigration Act

and Regulations is imperative to ensure the effective management of immigration in Trinidad and Tobago.

The international environment is a constantly changing one and, consequently, our immigration laws are being revamped so as to become globally relevant. I assure you ladies and gentlemen of our Government's steadfast commitment to creating a better Trinidad and Tobago for all our citizens.

Currently, all issues pertaining to immigration and emigration in Trinidad and Tobago are subsumed within various pieces of legislation.

The Ministry of National Security has sought to develop a comprehensive Immigration Policy to address the changing migration patterns. The Policy seeks to update the migration management framework by addressing situations that have either developed over the years, or are anticipated to develop, and on which the provisions of policies of existing legislation are either silent or inadequate.

It will therefore inform the revision of the existing legislation and the development of an effective migratory management framework.

Ladies and Gentlemen, on behalf of our Government, the staff of the Ministry of National Security and on my own behalf, I wish to express our collective appreciation for the value you have brought to the Immigration Division.

I thank you.