



# MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

February 14, 2024

For Immediate Release

## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard confirms two vessels involved in oil spill incident**

**Port-of-Spain; February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024:** The Trinidad and Tobago Coast Guard (TTCG) has confirmed that at least two vessels were involved in the oil spill incident that has been engaging the attention of multiple agencies in Trinidad and Tobago. Even as investigations are continuing, video footage and other information, obtained by the TTCG, have confirmed that the two vessels are a tug boat and a barge.

1

The Ministry of National Security, in particular the TTCG, is collaborating with other local and regional agencies, including Caricom IMPACS, the Guyana Coast Guard (GCG), the Maritime Services Division, and IR Consilium, through consultant Dr Ian Ralby, to identify the vessels and their owners.

Investigations have thus far revealed that the vessels appear to have been bound for Guyana. However, the Guyanese authorities have confirmed that neither vessel arrived as anticipated. At this stage, it is not known whether any lives have been lost in the incident.

In recent days, a spill of black, oily deposits was identified in the waters spreading from the Scarborough area to Lowlands in Tobago, posing a serious threat to Tobago's biodiversity. The spill appeared to be emanating from a wrecked barge, which was discovered lodged on a reef in the vicinity. The TTCG is also examining video footage supplied by the GCG of the barge, as it appeared to be sinking. The TTCG is using certain distinctive markings of the barge, to confirm its identity.

The TTCG has also confirmed that the barge was being towed by a tug, the Solo Creed, from Panama, destined for Guyana. Satellite imagery also shows the Solo Creed towing an object on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. The National Coastal Surveillance Radar Centre (NCSRC) was able to use this information, to track the

tug in Trinidad and Tobago waters, towing an object. The NCSRC eventually lost radar contact with both vessels. The TTCG has also confirmed that neither the tug, nor the barge, have entered Guyana waters.

As part of the investigation, Caricom IMPACS contacted the authorities in Panama and Aruba, for photographs of the tug boat and the barge. The Dutch authorities in Aruba, provided images of the tug towing the barge, and these images were used to confirm the identity of both vessels.

Minister of National Security, the Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds said he appreciated the support being provided by the regional agencies.

“We have been working very closely with the Guyana Coast Guard on this critical matter and we appreciate their full-scale support. Similarly, I am appreciative of Caricom IMPACS and the work and support of our international partners in this matter. As Minister, I give the assurance that the TTCG will continue to work with other local and regional authorities in this investigation, and we look forward to a swift and successful resolution to all our benefit.”

**END**