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PRESS RELEASE

JDF LAUNCHES NATIONAL SERVICE ENLISTMENT PROGRAM

The Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) is set to undergo a significant amendment to its employment and youth engagement strategy, with the recent Defence Board approval of its National Service Enlistment (NSE) Program. This program is geared towards diversifying the scope of the JDF's impact on the social and economic well being of the nation, in keeping with Prime Minister Andrew Holness' employment and engagement initiative termed LEGS. LEGS is aimed at increasing employment and engagement of young persons in a national service programme that allows them to Learn, Earn a living, Give back to society and Save (LEGS).

According to Major Basil Jarrett, Civil Military Cooperation Officer for the JDF, "the NSE is a new category of military service which will see approximately 1,000 persons aged 18-23, being enlisted in the JDF annually and trained over a one year period in military, vocational and broader life skills. At the end of their NSE training period, the majority of the participants will be accepted to join the JDF as regular Force soldiers, while others will be eligible candidates for employment in the private and public sectors."

During the training period, NSE recruits will undergo a modified version of the JDF's traditional basic military training program. They will also undergo on-the-job training in various aspects of the JDF's operational units (Coast Guard, Air Wing, Engineering Unit, etc), as well as training in conflict resolution, communication, critical thinking and general life skills, among others. Upon completion of the programme, participants will then be given the opportunity to continue on as soldiers in the JDF or join other government agencies such as the JCF or Correctional Services.

Jarrett noted that the benefits of the NSE go far beyond the tangible skills that participants will acquire. "The NSE will now serve as the JDF's normal recruitment point as this is the standard pool that regular JDF soldiers will be drawn from going forward. As a result, they will all be exposed to and imbued with the core values and positive characteristics that the military is known for, such as discipline, respect, honesty, integrity, strong work ethics, patriotism and being good productive citizens."

The eligibility for joining the NSE program will not be any different from the JDF's current minimum requirements, but Jarrett pointed out that the NSE service is different from service in the JDF Regular Force. "NSE participants will not engage in internal security duties nor conduct specific classification training that would for example bring them to a certain level of competence on weapons. They will however receive a stipend at a rate to be determined by the Defence Board and the Ministry of Finance and enrolled in a required savings plan consisting of a fixed percentage of net earnings for the duration of their service. This latter requirement is aimed at developing a healthy attitude towards saving and investing among NSE participants".

The NSE program is intended to begin with the batch of applicants being recruited under the current recruiting drive.

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