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For Immediate Release

Minister of National Security urges JCF to foster culture of accountability

Minister of National Security, Hon. Robert Montague says the Jamaica Constabulary Force is now being asked to be more accountable by members of the public. He was speaking at the JCF Strategic Retreat held at the Riu Hotel in Mammee Bay on Saturday.

The Minister said as a result of increased investment in the national security architecture, to include the JCF, the public is requesting accountability for how their tax dollars are being spent.

He said the Capital A budget for national security this financial year is J4.4-billion dollars, the first time that such a significant amount has been requested for national security. The budget was previously J2.2-billion dollars and was doubled demonstrating the government's commitment to the fight against crime.

Minister Montague said some of the key investments will be in technology. This, he said will be used as a force multiplier.

Minister Montague identified his role as being responsible for policy. He however stated that this has to be supported by operations.

He urged the JCF officers at the retreat to look closely at increasing the conviction rate. ***“If we do not increase conviction rates, the policy direction will come to naught. The government is committed to investing in the force and that is why we have taken on technology,”*** he said.

The Minister encouraged the officers to wear their uniform with a sense of purpose and pride and build on community relations for effective policing. He also said all JCF members are ambassadors and this is part of what is needed to regain public trust.

“Accountability is the buzz word because someone is always watching you. Even when you think nobody is watching; behave as if someone is watching you. It only takes one police officer to cause negative public sentiments. Etiquette and professionalism should be your mantra because you are on display every day,” he urged.

In highlighting the importance of integrity, the Minister said, ***“This Minister will not call on you to do anything illegal. You encourage your members to do the same. In this Minister you will have full backative, as long as you are in the right.”***

The Minister also took the opportunity to answer questions from the officers. Responding to questions on the role of the Independent Commission of Investigations (INDECOM), the Minister said that the body is necessary. He however said the law governing the body needs to be reviewed. ***“INDECOM has done good work and if the JCF is doing nothing wrong then there is no need to fear.”***

The Minister said the Legal Defense Fund has also been replenished and the amount has been increased from J\$20-million to J\$107-million. The funds are currently with the Ministry and the matter is being discussed in Cabinet.

Present at the retreat were Permanent Secretary, Dianne McIntosh, as well as, Deputy Chief of the New York Police Department, Ruel Stephenson, Chair of Retired Police Officers in North America, Derrick Jones and NYPD Officer, Natalia Diaz, who were special guests of the Minister.

The NYPD Deputy Chief also addressed the retreat. He commended the Minister for his in depth knowledge of the police portfolio and congratulated the Minister for his words of motivation and encouragement to the police. He added that police members must see their supervisors on the streets doing what they do. This, he said, is a part of addressing crime.

The Strategic Retreat was held to provide an overarching direction for the JCF. The high ranking officers at the retreat discussed their operations and charted 2018/19 plans for the Force.

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(Front row seated) Minister of National Security, Hon. Robert Montague (centre) flanked by Acting Commissioner of Police, Clifford Blake (5th right), Deputy Chief of the New York Police Department, Ruel Stephenson (3rd right), Chair of Retired Police Officers in North America, Derrick Jones (left), DCP Selwin Hay, DCP Novelette Grant (Ret'd), Permanent Secretary, Dianne McIntosh and Chief Technical Director in the Ministry, Rohan Richards with other high ranking JCF officers at the retreat held last Saturday



Minister of National Security, Hon. Robert Montague addresses members of the audience at the JCF Strategic Retreat held at the Riu hotel in Mammee Bay last Saturday