

Address

By

Hon Robert Montague, MP
Minister of National Security
at the

Jamaica Police Federation Annual Conference
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Check Against Delivery

We Fully Support You

I wish to commence my address by saluting the thousands of Police men and women who are on the frontlines of our fight against crime and lawlessness in Jamaica. I am here to assure you that the Jamaica Constabulary Force has the fullest support

of the Ministry of National Security, the Government of Jamaica and of every law abiding citizen of this country as you lead the charge against criminals and offenders who by their selfish and cruel actions have made themselves enemies of the Jamaican people.

Our Condolences

This new administration, wishes to extend our condolences and support to those Policemen and women, who have been cut down in the line of duty. Equally, to those families, who have lost loved ones as a result of wrongful use of force, we mourn with you. May their souls rest in peace and light perpetual shine upon them.

Security Consultations

Since assuming the National Security portfolio, I have travelled across the island listening to the views of citizens in town hall meetings and having

conversations with members of the JCF at all levels and getting a firsthand look at your situation. It has been a very revealing experience.

Your Work and Conditions

I commend you for the work that you continue to do in very difficult circumstances. I was shocked at the conditions under which some of you have had to function; dilapidated buildings, inadequately furnished facilities, unreliable vehicles, malfunctioning equipment and poor working conditions have no place in a modern Police Force.

These conditions cannot be tolerated and I have been having discussions with the leadership of the JCF and the Ministry about how to correct this unacceptable state of affairs.

The job you have to do is a difficult and demanding one, many of you face dangerous and often life

threatening situations every day, you deserve better and should expect better and will get better. We as a government are committed to that.

Modern and Effective Police Force

As a Government we are committed to the building of a modern, effective and well-resourced Police Force that will earn the trust and confidence of the citizens of Jamaica. But this is not going to be easy.

Crime Symptom

Crime is a symptom of a deep rooted sickness in the society that needs more than an injection or bandages, it needs radical surgery.

We Need Partnerships/Reform

For us to tackle the root causes of crime, we need

partnerships that will take the radical, innovative and sometimes uncomfortable steps to reform. But reform we must. The police alone cannot solve crime. In reality the police force reacts to crime, but in that action many things sometimes go wrong and over the years we have accepted them. The time has come when we as a society must confront our reality and begin the process of reform. Let me warn you, It will not be easy, it will not be painless, but reform we must.

Crime Situation

Our problems did not start yesterday or last week, or after February 25....our problems started a long time ago, the problems of society, we must know, have been contributed to by the JLP, PNP, Civil society and many of us ordinary Jamaicans. We did not get here overnight and we certainly cannot get away from it overnight. It is going to take time. It is going to

take political will, it is going to take support from the media and help from our citizens.

The Police Force Is Also a Reflection of the Society

The Police Force is a reflection of the society, which in itself suffers from many of the issues that exist. We cannot ignore these manifestations or bury our heads in the sand and hope that things will get better. An example of this is the presence of corruption which is like a cancer eating out the very heart of the JCF.

Actions of A Few will Not Be Tolerated

The selfish and unethical actions of a few cannot be allowed to undermine the hard work of the thousands of honest and dedicated men and women who proudly wear the uniform. There is no place in the JCF for undisciplined and corrupt members and those who are guilty of accepting or soliciting bribes

and other corrupt practices. These individuals must be identified, punished and separated from the Force.

Members of the public who encourage and facilitate these practices are as guilty as the offending officers and their actions must be equally condemned and punished.

Change the Culture of Leadership

I challenge the leadership of the JCF and the men and women of the Force to create a culture of respect, fairness, professionalism and trust at all levels. One that ensures that performance, character and competence are rewarded and non-performance, laziness and incompetence and unprofessionalism are punished. We want a JCF where each and every one of you is motivated to

perform at your highest level in the interest of the citizens of our beloved country.

Police Promotion Policy

It is in this regard, that this administration is insisting on a promotion policy that is performance, merit and academically based. A promotion policy that is simple, transparent and understandable. From the day you graduate, officers must know and understand the policy of promotion.

Why it is that after a constable passes his Corporal exams and he is not promoted he has to resit the same exams? Yet nobody does formally call him in tell him why he did not make the grade? There must be a system where after you have passed your exams and you don't get promoted after a period, the person must be called in and told what are their faults or shortcomings. They must, in a

modern professional Force be given an opportunity to make the corrections and try again.

Somebody needs to tell me, why is it that after you have passed your exams and haven't been promoted after two years you are required to resit the entire exam? Are you telling me that you don't carry success forward? After you have passed you have passed! A refresher course yes; a new module yes; but not the whole exam.

But let us be equally clear, it is not everyone that passes the exam is going to be promoted! But everyone must be treated fairly and justly! Everyone must be given an equal opportunity to succeed.

Police Federation Leadership

We commend the leadership of the Jamaica Police Federation for your strong advocacy on behalf of your members. We value the partnership we have with the Federation as we share a common interest in ensuring that your welfare and interests are properly attended to.

JCF Safety and Security Options

The Ministry is actively reviewing our options in addressing your safety and security concerns, including transportation to and from work. We are also reviewing some measures, with a view to strengthening the legal defense fund in order to better assist officers brought before the courts on certain matters. These reviews will be concluded very shortly and positive action will be taken. But let me be equally clear, some of these actions will be

limited by the availability of resources. Nevertheless, positive actions will be taken this financial year.

National Police Academy

We are also looking at having the National Police Academy appropriately accredited in order to enhance the value to the students of the various levels of certification granted by the institution. We believe that graduates of the Academy should be on equal footing to their peers who have completed similar levels of training at other tertiary institutions.

In other words, we are looking at the various courses and want to determine, which courses are equivalent to a diploma, a degree or even a Masters so that when you leave the Force your qualifications and study can still serve you; whether here or aboard.

A Bold Stand against Criminality

As citizens of this great country we must all take a bold stand against criminality and declare for all to hear; that enough is enough.

It cannot be business as usual. It now must be business unusual! Why should coldblooded murderers and vicious criminals destroy the lives and livelihoods of our citizens and somehow feel that they can avoid facing the consequence of their actions? We must stand against not only the trigger men, but also those who finance them. Fighting crime and restoring the rule of law in our communities and across the country, is priority number one for the Ministry of National Security and the government of Jamaica. Hence our support is shown in a big increase in our capital budget this year; we will fast track critical legislation, increase

the use of technology and improve mobility. A significant portion of the budget will also be used to purchase bullet proof vests for JCF members.

Fight against Corruption

As the country invests in the JCF, we are in exchange demanding a sustained fight against corruption within the force. We seek the partnership of the Federation and every one of you here in the fight against corruption. Let's clean the yard before we dance abroad. I today on behalf of the citizens of Jamaica ask the Federation to pledge its support and take firm actions against corruption in the Force.

Corruption is not only taking a bribe, or looking the other way, it's also not promoting people who deserve it. It is also being involved in lotto scamming, it is also removing the registration on the tag off service vehicles and using it on your own

vehicle, corruption is also running your own illegal taxi while pressuring licensed taxi operators.

Corruption is also collecting a partner draw from illegal taxi operators but you never throw no hand inna de partner.

Corruption is one Officer assigning two service vehicles to themselves, while stations have none. Corruption, is falsifying claims, selling parts or using the service vehicles as private vehicles. Corruption is not serving the warrant on your Squaddie, not serving the maintenance order, yet your Squaddie reports for duty every day, yet he can't be "found". Too many policemen are being taken before the courts for maintenance orders.

The fight against corruption must be fulsome, total and unrelenting!

It is a priority that must be embraced by all Jamaicans if we are to remove the stranglehold of crime from the necks of our farmers, business persons workers, pensioners, parents, children, institutions and the very life of their country.

As a country we have fought long and hard to emancipate our people from the evil of slavery, the backwardness of colonialism and ills of political tribalism; we must draw on this same strength and resolve to emancipate ourselves from the scourge of crime that has entrenched itself in the society and the cancer of corruption that threatens the Force.

This has been a long, difficult and painful struggle, we have come a long way and have made significant strides, but we still have a way to go.

Jamaican Crime Situation

Major crimes are trending down, but the level of homicides is far too high, we continue to maintain an unenviable position as one of the countries with the highest murder rates in the world.

We cannot tip toe around this problem. Murderers must know that they will be caught, prosecuted and pay dearly for their vicious actions under the law.

As a country we can continue to have a lively debate about appropriate punishment and effectiveness of sanctions for those who take the lives of others. But there is no debating the urgent need to take concerted and united action as Government, as communities and as citizens to support the Police in going after murderers, financiers, criminal enforcers

and those intent on settling their differences with the gun.

We understand however, that crime must be dealt with in a holistic way. We must treat the cause and not the symptom. We must know that you, the members of the Police Force react to the acts of crime. We must acknowledge that to solve crime it's a long term issue and we must be united. Good people must unite, criminals do, we must. We have had many studies and recommendations in the past. We have reviewed some. We must implement as much of the recommendations as we can. The time for talk is over; it's action time.

5 Pillar Crime Fighting Approach

This administration, is going to tackle some of the issues, we are going implement some of the recommendations. We ask for patience and

cooperation. We know that we have to do things differently; we have to do the long, medium and short term solutions together. We will have to take unusual steps; we will have to challenge some things we will even have to upset some people and step on some toes.

But we ask for your cooperation and partnership, we ask for your support we ask for your information. We must be unified in treating with this problem.

The approach requires that all impediments to apprehending, prosecuting and effectively punishing offenders, particularly murderers, be eliminated with urgency. Those persons who have committed major crimes and those contemplating murders must

become convinced by our intentions and actions that justice will be served swiftly, justly and surely.

We will implement a 5 Pillar Crime Strategy:

1. Sure and swift justice processes is one of the five pillars of our crime fighting strategy, and ranks as a top priority for the Government. Delays in apprehension, prolonged prosecutions and diluted punishment increases the pain of the victims and their loved ones, discourages law enforcers, gives comfort to offenders and emboldens the criminally inclined.

In this regard, we are discussing with the Ministry of Justice measures to improve the conditions of service of our judges and prosecutors, in fast tracking cases, clearing the case backlog, utilization of and repairs to courthouses, and the use of technology in our courts. Laws must be amended,

trials must be concluded quicker but equally, cases must be presented properly.

2. Crime prevention through social development is another pillar of the strategy. It seeks to tackle some of the social factors that have been among the root causes of the growth of crime such as: poor housing leading to squatter settlements, inadequate family income, poor parent-child relations, poor educational outcomes and peer associations that encourage delinquency and joining of gangs. I would also like to point out that there is a national system of identification that will be rolled out very soon. We must tackle illiteracy, improve dispute resolution; too many issues that can be resolved amicably are left to create conflict. It is said that 37% of our murders are domestically based. We must tackle that.

3. Situational prevention is that pillar that refers to measures that reduce opportunities for particular crime problems through spatial intervention, which is core; new communities must be properly planned and older ones upgraded. Communities must have roads, so the police, ambulance, fire and garbage trucks can go in. People must have proper and specific addresses and names. We must survey these squatter settlements, freeze them and over time regulate them and ensure that the lands are paid for because nothing in life is free; and a police post established in housing schemes with over 400 units. Street lights must be fixed, water pipes repaired and people must stop tief light! It is an entry-level crime. We cannot on the one hand be telling our children not to lie, yet we are tiefing light! We have begun discussions with Local Government, the NWC and the NWA. We cannot deal with all the

problems all at once, but we intend to partner with other Ministries and treat with these issues.

4. Effective policing is a key pillar of the strategy and one which most directly relates to this conference. Our community based approach to policing is an essential part in the strategy. It requires and relies on the building of partnerships between the Police and the citizens that you serve. We are currently seeking to strengthen Parish Consultative committees where they exist and establish others where there are none. This administration intends to have a Consultative committee in every parish and in every Police district. We have already engaged the Custodes in each parish and we are working with them and members of the Lay Magistrates Association.

We intend to increase the number of police youth clubs and neighbourhood watches. Equally we know there will be the need for increased use of technology in policing and we intend to address this in this financial year.

We will be increasing mobility by purchasing used cars; we want to give at least a car and a bike to every station, but ideally we are looking at two vehicles and a bike for each station. We will publicly invite motor vehicle dealers to bid on supplying the vehicles, based on accepted published criteria, including a set percentage of the value in parts. We intend to regularly maintain these vehicles and at the end of a set period, we will offer them to you the members of the police force for purchase if you so desire.

Mobile stations, at least thirty, will be rolled out this year. District Constables will be increased and many of them will be sent back into their communities. A DC is a DC and must stay in the District, there will be need for some to do station duties and that also will continue.

This year also we will have two intakes of recruits, so that we can replace some who have left the force and have additional police personnel.

A program of repairs to Police stations and the upgrade of police barracks will be started. Training on the Lotto Scam Act will be done so that cases can be better prepared. The fight against lotto scamming is not for MOCA alone, but for all of us.

As a nation we cannot afford lotto scamming, there are too many broken families and communities, too much pain, too many guns and too many lost lives. We cannot afford it and we have to deal with it. Improved and continuous training in all aspects of police work will be a major feature going forward.

In that regard, I must urge all of you to be careful, as there seems to be an increased in criminal acts against you the members of the Force. Something's are happening that we are monitoring, criminal elements, it seems, have networked and are acting in concert to take on the state and agents of the state. We have noted some connections but as a country we will not surrender to them. We will keep you informed in the coming days. In the meantime time be aware at all times and encourage other officers to do the same.

We are going to insist that the discipline improves in the Force, superiors must be saluted, the established rules and regulations must be observed. We urge you to remind yourselves of the rules and regulations. Jamaicans have done much for the police; they have given up some of their rights in the fight against crime. They are now asking for interest on that investment. We must treat the public with respect, and they will give us more information. This Minister, will not be announcing many details of our problems, we do not intend to inform the criminals as to our plans.

This Minister cares about you and your welfare. The use of technology, better fleet management and maintenance, improved communications and enhanced laws, especially the road traffic act will be

rolled out shortly. We are encouraging you all to use the technology when we acquire it. Improved intelligence, sharing and analyzing and enhanced capabilities will drive strategy and operations.

In addition, we will be making an allocation to the Federations welfare fund to help in rehabilitate police officers who are injured while on duty. Also, we intend to improve pension calculation so that police officers don't have to wait forever to get their pensions after they retire.

5. Reducing reoffending is the fifth pillar. We are committed to a policy of rehabilitation and redemption that re-directs offenders from pursuing careers in crime to becoming productive law abiding citizens when they return to society. Our correctional services are an important player in our national fight

against crime. To that end, we will ensure that the audit of prisoners be completed quickly. Nobody must be lost in the system or held without just cause. We will improve the working conditions of the warders; we will reclassify prisoners, use electronic bracelets and community orders to help reduce the prison population. We will ensure that each prisoner learns to read and write. Skills training and proper mental medical attention will be improved. A better deportee registration centre with access to support services will be established soon.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, I have covered a lot of ground in our conversation today; I thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you. We have a great opportunity to serve the people of Jamaica

by providing them with the safety and security they need to live in peace and prosperity. We will work together to reduce corruption in the force, improve promotions, make the police more mobile, restart the police bus service, contribute to the legal and welfare funds, recruit more officers, support the Federation with increased officers so as to serve you better, improve training, recruit more, repair stations, improve working conditions, increase the use of technology, relaunch community policing activities, and improve our Intelligence network, start a comprehensive 5 pillar approach to tackle the causes of crime and over time treat with the issues and start more rehabilitation programmes. In taking these steps we will begin our time to change of crime picture and profile. A program of engaging the public will be launched so everyone will have an opportunity to help. And we will have a chance to

partner with them. Change and reform sometimes can be misunderstood.

It comes with great challenges, but I am confident that we have a Police Force that has the capacity in partnership with the citizens of Jamaica and with the full support of us to win this fight against crime. I am confident and positive that you are up to the task. You are still the most trained and best force in the region, indeed you are Jamaica's finest men and women in uniform, I am proud to be your Minister, and I am honoured to serve you, to protect you and to reassure you!

This is your Squaddie saying thank you and God bless you.
