

REMARKS

The Hon. Dr. Horace Chang, CD, MP
Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of National Security
on the occasion of the
Declaration of a Zone of Special Operations in Westmoreland
January 16, 2022

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. Statistics indicate that homicides are moving ahead of 2021 in significant numbers at this time. Three parishes and four divisions account for this uptick: St James, Westmoreland and St Catherine (North and South division). Westmoreland has had the highest increased in 2021 over 2020. They have shown an increased propensity to severe violence, designed to kill, maim, and inspire fear. The Jamaica Constabulary Force is taking decisive action to not only curb the rise but restore order and public safety. Curfews, cordons, additional officers to the geographic divisions, and specialized units to apprehend perpetrators, have been sent to Westmoreland. There have been some success but more is required.

2. This morning's declaration of a Zone of Special Operation is yet another tool to focus on the most violent districts in the urban centre in Westmoreland. It will not only restore order in the limited geographical area, it is designed to disrupt the gangsters who operate from this area. Dispersing them shouldn't be a problem, but like rats scurrying from their hole they are easier to identify and apprehend. The officers are alert and active. The JCF with the support of the entire government is moving aggressively to attack the criminal elements on all fronts. We will examine what other law enforcement tools can be brought to bear on this issue, and how existing tools can be combined with the Zone of Special Operation to reduce violence, and restore peace and public order.

3. We recognize we are in a war with violent and heartless criminal elements - we will not relent, will win this war! We will

continue to strengthen the Westmoreland police division within the limited resources that are available, in the short term. Your government is making every effort, even in the face of the immediate post pandemic health crisis with its impact on the economy. We will ensure that the resources, human and technological, are made available to the brave men and women of the Jamaica Constabulary Force to overcome this cancer of violence, especially in Westmoreland.

Thank you.