



OFFICE OF THE  
**PREMIER**  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

**Statement on crime initiatives to the LA**

**By Premier Hon. Alden McLaughlin, MBE, JP, MLA**

**March 2018**

Mr. Speaker, the events of the past week have once again heightened the public discourse around crime, particularly gun related crimes. The report from the RCIPS of two robberies and a subsequent murder and that they were looking for an individual who was armed and dangerous, and presumably willing to shoot if he felt at risk, caused alarm throughout our Islands, but especially in the Red Bay constituency, which I represent, and the Prospect constituency where I live. And rightly so – to be afraid to walk from your car at night to your front door or to visit an

entertainment establishment at night for fear of being robbed, or worse, is not the Caymanian way of life. And even if these incidents are not everyday occurrences but are only spikes in crime they must never come to be accepted as the norm.

I can say Mr. Speaker, that every single member of my Government - whether a Progressives candidate, a CDP candidate or an Independent candidate - campaigned and promised to work with the RCIPS to tackle crime, particularly gun related crimes. We take these promises seriously and during the recent budget session Government committed to various strategies to combat crime and keep our communities safe. Indeed some \$270 million has been allocated to National security over this budget cycle.

We committed to putting in place a dedicated Community Policing Programme and voted funds to provide the RCIPS with 75 new police officers over the next three years to help

accomplish this. I am pleased to say, as everyone in this House and the wider public would be aware, that Community Policing has become a reality and is being welcomed by the public as well as by those on the opposition benches.

As of February, 26 Community Police officers have been placed in East End, North Side, Prospect, South Sound, George Town, at the Waterfront, Seven Mile Beach and West Bay. Officers stationed on Cayman Brac and Little Cayman were already considered community officers. They are all working on differing shifts, depending on the demands of each area. These officers are embedded in the communities and there is a genuine commitment to make sure those officers are maintained in those areas for at least two years.

Mr. Speaker, community policing is still in its fledgling stages but I am certain that it will play a key role in not only keeping communities safer but also helping rebuild public trust in the

RCIPS and thus peoples' willingness to 'say something when they see something'.

I have also advised the Commissioner of Police that the Government will consider providing additional resources, such as more CCTV cameras in order to deter crime and improve detection.

I have asked the Deputy Governor to review the salaries of police officers (as well as other underpaid departments of government) with a view to making the RCIPS a more attractive employer. This will enable the Commissioner to attract and retain more qualified persons to the Police service.

So we are doing what we need to financially support the RCIPS and I am satisfied that under the leadership of the current Commissioner and his senior team that the RCIPS has taken seriously this Government's commitment to keeping our communities safe and reducing gun crime in the Cayman Islands.

Increasing Neighbourhood Watch programmes is another commitment that is being met and the RCIPS, through the Community Policing Programme, will assist communities put these in place. Neighbours know when something looks wrong and when someone looks out of place and can help raise an alarm if needed.

We also committed to improving border security and to merging the Customs and Immigration agencies into a single border force. The work on this has started and we have secured the assistance of Mr. Colin Brown who is head of the UK's Border Force National Targeting Centre to move this project forward as a matter of urgency. Mr. Brown arrived in January and has been working with the steering committee charged with the planning and eventual implementation of the merger. So again, this commitment is being met and when complete we will have a single border force agency with staff trained to better protect our

seaports and airports, focussed on preventing illicit drugs, guns and people landing illegally in the Cayman Islands.

Modern law enforcement and border protection agencies do not focus on searching suitcases and containers, instead they rely on intelligence as well as on modern investigative and targeting practices that are more successful than searches alone. This is where we are going, Mr. Speaker. Currently Immigration and Customs staff are undergoing cross training as well as participating in joint operations. Over the next six months we will start seeing a single uniform for some staff and a fully joined up Cayman Border Force should be in place for the start of the 2019 financial year. I will continue to provide this Honourable House with progress reports on the work being done in this area. But again, the commitment was made and work is ongoing and will become reality.

Another key element in border protection is our commitment to create a modern Cayman Islands Coast Guard with a multifaceted role, including search and rescue, patrolling our seas and helping keep illegal guns, people, and drugs from being smuggled into our islands. The Coast Guard will have the ability to board and search vessels in our waters and make arrests if needed. We have obtained the services of Mr. Phil Bostock, who is a commander in the UK's Maritime and Coast Guard Agency who has also been on the ground from January to assist in the development of the Coast Guard.

Neither the Coast Guard nor the border protection agents can be everywhere, so we will utilise technology to assist in the detection of boats entering our waters. It will be important Mr. Speaker, and I will ensure, that the Coast Guard will be as independent as possible with a local commander – who we are hoping will be a Caymanian. It will be properly resourced and we

will ensure that it will be structured in such a way so as not to have its resources poached for other law enforcement work.

Staff has already begun specialist joint operations and are undergoing training in enhanced search and rescue capabilities. We have the services of the consultant to the end of this year and we intend to put in place operational policies as well as any necessary legislation by year end. Major assets will be budgeted for in 2020. This is a major undertaking but we are moving as swiftly as we can and this too will be achieved.

But Mr. Speaker, there are other things that we are looking at to battle crime, including initiatives to prevent youngsters from entering lives of crime as well as more effective rehabilitation programmes – both for incarcerated prisoners and those who have served their time. If we can prevent re-offending and help people lead more productive lives then that is part of the battle won.

Improved policing is about dealing with crime now. In the longer term, the answer lies in stopping our people turning to crime in the first place. I believe the most significant contribution to long term crime reduction, besides a good education, will come from the early identification of young people at risk of offending behaviour, and implementing programmes to help them make better life choices – choices that will benefit them, their families and their communities.

As I reported during the Budget session, work on this commenced during the last administration and an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Youth Affairs has been established to serve as the coordinating and advisory body to implement plans in this area. The Department of Children and Family Services is playing an important role in the overall solution through social workers who specialize in family crises resolution and trauma. But they cannot do it alone. This requires work and cooperation across many ministries for there to be real success. Mr. Speaker, a Multi-

Agency Safeguarding Hub Team, or MASH, was created in 2016 where the Ministry of Community Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Children and Family Services, works with the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service, Education Department and Health Services to enhance the safety of our children.

These are important and part of a longer term solution that addresses the cause of crime.

But there is another issue that needs to be addressed; one that I believe needs our utmost attention. That Mr. Speaker is the need for the elected government to be allowed a greater role in national security matters. Our role needs to extend beyond merely voting funds for the police. The elected government needs a significant voice in strategic decision-making relating to national security matters. That was what was contemplated by the constitutional provision that created the National Security Council in the 2009 constitution, but that is not what has occurred in

practice. For national security to succeed it needs to become a shared responsibility of the Governor and the elected Government. It is too big and too important an issue to be the Governor's alone. The National Security Council needs to function in the way it was contemplated – as the National Security Cabinet of the Cayman Islands – and not merely as a talk-shop. Earlier Mr. Speaker I mentioned that Government is providing funding for resources to combat crime. All of us in this House are held accountable by the public for reducing crime, even though our main opportunities to do so rely on our control of the budget and on the views of the Commissioner at the time, and the Governor who has constitutional responsibility for all aspects of internal security, including the RCIPS. We get to vote money but we do not have real control of national security issues.

Mr. Speaker you may recall that during the Constitutional talks a decade ago that I raised this issue with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. As a compromise the UK agreed to create

the National Security Council a body that is charged under Section 58.4 of the Constitution with responsibility as follows:

*“The National Security Council shall advise the Governor on matters relating to internal security, with the exception of operational and staffing matters, and the Governor shall be obliged to act in accordance with the advice of the Council, unless he or she considers that giving effect to the advice would adversely affect Her Majesty’s interest (whether in respect of the United Kingdom or the Cayman Islands); and where the Governor has acted otherwise than in accordance with the advice of the Council, he or she shall report to the Council at its next meeting.”*

Mr. Speaker every Governor since 2009, presumably under the directions of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, has never accepted that the advice, by way of decisions given by the

National Security Council are really intended to be advice that was to be followed, but merely as 'suggestions' to be considered.

Because of this Mr. Speaker, you and the wider public would have heard me mention on several occasions that the UK needed to rethink the position of the Governor having full responsibility for the RCIPS and to consider a Police Authority whose role would be to allow for the sharing of authority between the Governor and elected members regarding strategic police matters.

During the Strategic Policy Statement last year I said the following: *“in line with my earlier point on creating a culture of delivery, we will not only provide additional resources to the RCIPS but we will also insist that resources are used as agreed and will hold the Commissioner to account for the results. This will mean creating new approaches that foster accountability and enhance the responsiveness of the RCIPS to the people’s concerns. Our proposal to accomplish this is the establishment of*

*a Cayman Islands Police Authority and we will discuss with Her Excellency, the Governor, how we can establish such a mechanism quickly”.*

During the Budget process in August last year I again noted:  
*“As we provide additional resources to the RCIPS we will insist that resources are used as agreed and hold the Commissioner to account for the results of those expenditures. We also intend to discuss with the UK the establishment of a Police Authority to help create new approaches in fostering accountability and enhance the responsiveness of the RCIPS to the people’s concerns.”*

And I was pleased that the Governor during her Throne speech noted the following: *“The Government has also indicated its eagerness to discuss the creation of a Police Authority with me and with Her Majesty’s Government. A Police Authority that would be devolved some authority for policing. Whilst no outcome to*

*these discussions can be pre-determined, I welcome the conversation.”*

Mr. Speaker, I mention this to provide some background and to remind the public and this House that this has been an issue for some time.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical juncture, where national security issues are increasingly a concern to the people of this country and those that visit. If we are to succeed in addressing these matters, the National Security Council, which is made up of the Governor, the Premier, the Deputy Governor, two ministers, the Leader of the Opposition, the Attorney General, the Commissioner of Police and two private sector representatives, must be permitted to function as the Constitution contemplated.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise that in my recent conversations with the Office of the Governor I have urged that going forward the National Security Council be operated as was envisaged when

the Constitution was written. That is, as a decision making body whose decisions or 'advice' on 'non-operational or staffing' matters regarding the RCIPS the Governor would be obligated to take. Where this advice is not followed then the Governor will be obliged to report this back to the NSC at the next meeting.

We also discussed the need to formalise the proceedings of the NSC with regular monthly meetings and with papers submitted by members for consideration, similar to the process followed in Cabinet. I would expect that the NSC agenda would be agreed jointly between me as Premier and the Governor. This should help the NSC become more focused on strategic and policy matters and take meaningful decisions. It will also provide elected members - I and the Leader of the Opposition as well as two Government ministers - with some real say into non-operational policing matters. It is through us the elected members and the private sector representatives on the NSC that the

security concerns of the everyday man, woman and business owner will be taken to the NSC meeting table for consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I am hopeful that we may get to a point swiftly to where these discussions become reality. I certainly am hopeful Mr. Speaker and I pray that nothing comes along to derail these considerations. With a new Governor arriving this is certainly an opportune time for a reset regarding the NSC and for the UK's representative and the elected members of the Legislative Assembly to share authority for internal security.

So Mr. Speaker I will close by saying to this honourable House that the Government's commitment to creating safer communities and tackling crime is not just talk – they are happening. These strategies will take time to work, but with the RCIPS properly resourced and trained, and with elected members having a say regarding policing strategies, and with much improved border security and a new Coast Guard service, I

believe we will win the battle with crime. The social issues are also important and these too are being tackled. We will not ever eliminate crime, but we can and must drastically reduce it and prevent its further escalation.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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