

**REMARKS BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER OF NATIONAL SECURITY**

**OPENING CEREMONY OF THE WORKSHOP
PHASE II**

ON THE

**DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAHAMAS ANTI-DRUGS
PLAN**

SHERATON BRITISH COLONIAL HOTEL

³⁰TH JANUARY 2003.

THE TERM "DRUG PROBLEM" HAS BECOME A STANDARD PART OF THE BAHAMIAN VERNACULAR.

THIS IS NOT SURPRISING, SINCE WE HAVE HAD A PROBLEM WITH ILLEGAL DRUGS IN THE BAHAMAS, SINCE THE DECADE OF THE SEVENTIES.

IT IS NOT A PROBLEM THAT HAS ITS ROOTS IN THE BAHAMAS, SO WE ARE PRETTY MUCH POWERLESS TO ATTACK THE PROBLEM AT ITS SOURCE. AND EVEN IF WE WERE MINDED TO ATTACK THE PROBLEM AT ITS SOURCE, WE WOULD HAVE TO ADMIT THAT WE DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO MOUNT SUCH AN ATTACK.

BUT WHAT EXACTLY IS THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE BAHAMAS?

THE DRUG PROBLEM REFERS PRINCIPALLY TO THE PASSAGE OF ILLEGAL DRUGS THROUGH THE BAHAMAS ON ITS WAY TO THE UNITED STATES.

THE DRUGS INVOLVED, ARE IN THE MAIN, MARIJUANA AND COCAINE, BUT THERE ARE OTHERS, SUCH AS AMPHETAMINES AND THOSE CHEMICALS THAT ARE USED IN THE PRODUCTION OF DANGEROUS AND ILLEGAL DRUGS. THE PASSAGE THROUGH THE BAHAMAS IS ILLEGAL AND THE SMUGGLING INTO THE UNITED STATES IS ILLEGAL.

THOSE WHO PRODUCE THE ILLEGAL DRUGS ARE NOT BAHAMIAN NATIONALS. THEY THEREFORE NEED THE ASSISTANCE OF BAHAMIANS TO GIVE SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE OF THEIR ILLEGAL CARGO.

WE HAVE PEOPLE IN THE BAHAMAS, WHO, FOR MONEY, ARE PREPARED TO HELP THEM IN THESE CRIMES.

THEY IN TURN RECRUIT OTHERS TO THIS EVIL DEED. OVER TIME, WE HAVE DEVELOPED IN THE BAHAMAS, A SECTION OF OUR SOCIETY, WHOSE OCCUPATION IT IS TO SMUGGLE DRUGS THROUGH THE BAHAMAS.

THE DRUG PROBLEM, OVER TIME, TOOK ON ANOTHER DIMENSION. IT FOUND THE INNOCENT BAHAMIANS. MEN AND WOMEN, BOYS AND GIRLS, WHOSE ONLY FAULT IS THAT THEY WERE SILLY ENOUGH OR ADVENTUROUS ENOUGH TO SNIFF OR SMOKE THE POISON.

WE KNOW THAT THESE DRUGS DESTROY BOTH MIND AND BODY.

I
SO WE SOON CAME TO HAVE A SECTOR OF OUR SOCIETY OF
WHOM WE ARE SO ASHAMED, THAT WE HAVE INVENTED NEW NAMES
AND PHRASES TO IDENTIFY THEM.

DRUGGIES OR DRUG HEADS ARE AMONG THE MORE
RESPECTABLE OF THESE NAMES.

WHAT I WILL CALL THE THIRD DIMENSION OF THIS PROBLEM, CAME
HOME TO ROOST WITH A VENGEANCE IN THE 1980's AND THE 1990's AND
IS WITH US WITH A VENGEANCE TODAY.

CRIMES THAT WERE SUBJECTS OF SENSATIONAL NEWSPAPER
STORIES
AND FILMS CAME TO BE COMMITTED ON OUR STREETS AND IN OUR
HOMES
AND ELSEWHERE IN OUR COIMMUNITIES AND OTHER NEW TERMS WERE
ADDED TO OUR VOCABULARY, TERMS SUCH AS 'HIT" AND "EXECUTION".

THESE ARE ALL POLITE WAYS OF SPEAKING ABOUT MURDER MOST FOUL.

THE FOURTH DIMENSION OF THE PROBLEM IS INVISIBLE, BUT IS PERHAPS THE MOST EVIL OF THEM ALL.

IT IS FEAR: THE FEAR OF CRIME.

IT MANIFESTS ITSELF IN BURGULAR BARS AND SCREENS, IN ELECTRONIC ALARMS AND VICIOUS GUARD DOGS AND THE RELUCTANCE OF OUR PEOPLE TO VENTURE FROM THEIR HOMES.

MORE STARTLING EVEN, IT CAUSES US TO FEAR FOR OUR ECONOMY; BASED AS IT IS ON THE FRAGILE TOURISM INDUSTRY.

WHAT I HAVE ATTEMPTED TO DESCRIBE IN FOUR STAGES, IS THE EVOLUTION OF THE DRUG PROBLEM IN THE BAHAMAS.

IT CANNOT BE DENIED THAT IT HAS SPAWNED VIOLENCE AND LAWLESSNESS AND VISITED HAVOC AND DEATH UPON OUR PEOPLE.

BUT THERE ARE OTHER DIMENSIONS TO THIS PROBLEM.

SADLY, THE BAHAMAS IS NOT ALONE IN ITS EXPERIENCE WITH THE RISE OF SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES, THE RISE OF DRUG ABUSE IN ITS POPULATION AND THE RISE OF CRIME AND LAWLESSNESS IN ITS SOCIETY.

THESE PROBLEMS ARE BEING FELT WORLD-WIDE AND ARE BEING FELT ACUTELY IN THE CARIBBEAN. SO, WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

I BELIEVE THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT WE HAVE DONE, IS THAT WE HAVE OWNED THE PROBLEM.

WE HAVE ALLOCATED SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES TO OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES, TO THE POLICE, THE DEFENCE FORCE, THE CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT, THE IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT AND THE PRISON.

THESE RESOURCES ARE AIMED AT INTERDICTING ILLEGAL DRUGS, AT STOPPING THE FLOW OF DRUGS THROUGH OUR COUNTRY AND AT STOPPING THE SUPPLY OF DRUGS TO OUR PEOPLE.

IN THIS REGARD IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE GENERAL INTERDICTION OF CRIME IN A SOCIETY IS A POWERFUL BLOW AGAINST THE

DRUG TRADE. A SOCIETY THAT SUCCESSFULLY SUPPRESSES CRIME, BY

THAT ACTION, ALSO SUPPRESSES THE TRADE IN ILLEGAL NARCOTICS.

NOT ONLY HAVE WE EXPENDED SIGNIFICANT RESOURCES ON

THE

DIRECT FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS, BUT WE HAVE SPENT LARGE SUMS

THESE ARE ALL POLITE WAYS OF SPEAKING ABOUT MURDER MOST ON MODERNIZING OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, SO THAT THEIR ABILITY TO FIGHT CRIME IS INCREASED.

WE HAVE ALSO SPENT LARGE SUMS ON MODERNIZING OUR COURTS AND OUR LEGAL SYSTEM.

WE HAVE GIVEN ATTENTION TO THOSE LAWS THAT SERVE TO DISCOURAGE CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR AND TO PUNISH AND REMOVE THE HARDENED CRIMINALS FROM OUR MIDST.

OWNERSHIP OF THIIIS PROBLEM, HAS ALSO TAKEN US INTO THE REALM OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION.

THESE ARE ALL POLITE WAYS OF SPEAKING ABOUT MURDER MOST

OUR BILATERAL COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

IN THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS IS WITHOUT CONTRADICTION, LEGENDARY. WE WERE AT THE FOUNDING OF THE INTER- AMERICAN DRUG ABUSE CONTROL COMMISSION OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, THE BODY THAT IS CO-SPONSORING THIS WORKSHOP WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS, THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

WE ARE FULL PARTICIPANTS IN ALL INTERNATIONAL COOPERATIVE EFFORTS AND AS TESTAMENT TO THIS, ON MANY OCCASIONS, OUR OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES HAVE BEEN ASKED TO PLAY LEADING ROLES IN THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE AGENCIES.

THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF THIS, I AM HAPPY TO SAY, IS MR. PETER DEVEAUX-ISSACS, THE UNDER SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY, WHO IS OUR REPRESENTATIVE ON CICAD AND THE OFFICER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAHAMAS' ANTI-DRUGS PLAN. MR.DEVEAUX- ISSACS WAS INVITED BY CICAD TO PARTICIPATE IN WASHINGTON IN A PRESS BRIEFING ON THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM OF NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG PLANS.

THAT INVITATION TOOK HIM TO WASHINGTON AND BACK, IN ORDER TO BE WITH US IN THIS FINAL WORKSHOP, IN LESS THAN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. OUR PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL FORA ON COUNTER DRUG MEASURES, CALLS FOR THE EXPENDITURE OF A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY.

SO FAR, I HAVE ONLY GIVEN ATTENTION IN THESE REMARKS, TO THE SUPPLY SIDE OF THE WAR AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS.

THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS EQUATION IS THE DEMAND SIDE. THIS REFERS TO THE EFFORT TO GET OUR PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY OUR VERY YOUNG PEOPLE TO STOP TAKING DRUGS AND NEVER TO BEGIN THE ABOMINABLE HABIT.

IN MAY, 1984, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS APPOINTED A NATIONAL TASK FORCE TO DO A RAPID ASSESSMENT OF THE DRUG

SITUATION IN THE BAHAMAS AND TO RECOMMEND STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTION AND CONTROL.

THE TASK FORCE REPORTED IN JULY, 1984 AND CONFIRMED THAT THE BAHAMAS HAD A SEVERE COCAINE PROBLEM, WHICH, ALONG WITH THE WIDESPREAD ALCOHOL ABUSE, HAD A PROFOUND EFFECT ON ALL LEVELS OF BAHAMIAN SOCIETY.

THE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SET-UP A PERMANENT BODY TO ORGANIZE AND COORDINATE THE VARIOUS NATIONAL EFFORTS DEALING WITH THE PREVENTION, EDUCATION, AND TREATMENT OF DRUG ABUSE IN THE BAHAMAS.

IT RECOMMENDED THAT BODY SHOULD BE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY IN COMPOSITION AND SHOULD ADDRESS THE MULTI-FACETED PROBLEMS OF DRUG ABUSE, INCLUDING RESEARCH (PREVALENCE STUDIES) DRUG CONTROL (LAW ENFORCEMENT), CHURCH ACTIVITY, EDUCATION AND PREVENTION, ECONOMIC EFFECTS (BUSINESS), FAMILY ISLANDS ISSUES,

COORDINATION OF EXISTING PROGRAMMES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
NEW
PROJECTS.

ACCORDINGLY, THE BAHAMAS NATIONAL DRUG COUNCIL (BNDC)
WAS ESTABLISHED IN FEBRUARY 1985 BY THE CABINET OF THE
GOVERNMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS WITH THE
FOLLOWING MANDATE:

- DETERMINE AND MONITOR THE PREVALENCE OF DRUG
ABUSE.
2. EDUCATE, PARTICULARLY THE ADOLESCENT PUBLIC, ON THE
HAZARDS OF DRUG ABUSE
 3. REDUCE/ELIMINATE DRUG ABUSE VIA A COOPERATE EFFORT
BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.
 4. PROVIDE COUNSELLING AND AFTER-CARE SERVICES FOR
THE RECOVERING ADDICT.
 5. INITIATE FORA FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION
AND OPINIONS ON THE DANGERS OF DRUG DEPENDENCE AND DRUG
ABUSE.
- ACQUIRE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO IMPLEMENT THE
PROGRAMS IDENTIFIED.

A MOMENT'S REFLECTION WILL CONVINCING YOU THAT, ALTHOUGH NOT
AS
MUCH IS HEARD ABOUT THIS ASPECT OF THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS, ITS
CONTRIBUTION IS AS SIGNIFICANT AS THE LAW ENFORCEMENT
ASPECTS OF
THIS PROBLEM.

NOWHERE AND NO ONE IS ABLE TO SAY IN TRUTH, THAT THE
BAHAMAS HAS NOT DONE ALL THAT IT CAN IN BATTLING THIS SOCIAL
SCOURGE.

HOWEVER, WE HAVE COME LATELY TO BE CRITIZED BY CICAD FOR
NOT
MOVING SWIFTLY ENOUGH TO ADOPT THE NATIONAL ANTI-DRUG PLAN
MODEL
FOR THE EXAMINATION AND CONTROL OF THE COUNTER-NARCOTICS
EFFORT.

WE WERE OF THE OPINION THAT WE WERE MOVING AS
AGGRESSIVELY
AS WE COULD AFFORD AGAINST THE ILLICIT DRUG TRADE. HOWEVER,
WE

CAME TO THE DETERMINATION, THAT AS WE ARE A PART OF CICAD, WE
SHOULD FALL IN LINE WITH ITS DICTATE, THAT ALL MEMBER STATES
FORMULATE AN ANTI-DRUG PLAN.

ACCORDINGLY, WE REQUESTED FUNDING AND EXPERT GUIDANCE
IN THE FORMULATION OF AN ANTI-DRUG PLAN AND CICAD RESPONDED
POSITIVELY.

THIS EFFORT BEGAN JUST UNDER A YEAR AGO AND WE HAVE
MADE GOOD PROGRESS.

WE HAVE COME TO THIS SHORT WORKSHOP TO PUT THE
FINISHING TOUCHES ON THIS PROPOSAL.

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED YOUR WORK AND I FORMALLY RECEIVE THE PROPOSAL, I WILL PRESENT IT TO THE CABINET FOR ITS AGREEMENT AND THE PROPOSAL, CONSTRUCTED FROM YOUR COLLABORATION AND DISCUSSIONS, WILL BECOME, "THE BAHAMAS ANTI-DRUG PLAN".

IN CONNECTION WITH THE EFFORTS TO CONSTRUCT THIS ANTI-DRUG PLAN, I BELIEVE IT IS NECESSRY FOR ME TO COMMENT ON SOME CRITICISMS THAT HAVE BEEN PLACED IN THE PUBLIC DOMAIN, ABOUT THE EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS IN THE WAR ON ILLEGAL DRUGS. THOSE CRITICISMS HAVE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY BEEN LAID AT THE DOOR OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY, AMONGST OTHERS. THE CHARGES MADE WERE:

THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS WAS NOT DOING ENOUGH TO BRING THE ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE EFFECTIVELY INTO THE FIGHT AGAINST ILLEGAL DRUGS;

THAT THE RESPONSE OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY TO AN ALLEGATION OF CORRUPTION IN THE DEFENCE FORCE THAT TOOK PLACE IN 1992 WAS INADEQUATE;

THAT NOTHING HAS BEEN DONE TO ACCESS SUBSTANTIAL CONFISCATED DRUG FUNDS AND TO BRING THOSE FUNDS TO BEAR ON THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS.

OTHER CRITICISMS WERE LEVELLED AND I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT THE MINISTERS WHO HAVE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AREAS MENTIONED WILL, IN TIME, RESPOND.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY, HOWEVER, I WISH TO SAY GENERALLY THAT THESE CRITICISMS ARE WITHOUT FOUNDATION.

FIRSTLY, THE MINISTRY HAS BEEN AT GREAT PAINS TO ESTABLISH WHY THE ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE APPEARED TO BE THE SUBJECT OF DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES AND EXCLUSION IN THE COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES TO INTERDICT ILLEGAL DRUGS IN AND THROUGH THE BAHAMAS.

OUR EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD, BOTH FORMAL AND INFORMAL WERE EITHER MET WITH STONY SILENCE OR EQUIVOCATION.

THE REFERENCE TO THE 1992 INCIDENT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT A CONCRETE REFERENCE TO A SPECIFIC ACT HAD BEEN FORMALLY MENTIONED.

I WISH TO BE QUITE CLEAR, WITH REGARD TO THIS ALLEGATION. I DO NOT AND THE ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE DOES NOT WISH TO BE FORGIVEN.

I WILL CAUSE TO BE UNDERTAKEN, A FULL AND TRANSPARENT INVESTIGATION OF THIS MATTER AND IF THERE WAS WRONG-DOING, IT WILL BE DEALT WITH APPROPRIATELY.

I GIVE YOU MY ASSURANCE, THAT I HAVE THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BAHAMAS IN THIS. IT IS PATENTLY UNFAIR TO PAINT AS CORRUPT, A NATIONAL INSTITUTION AS IMPORTANT AS THE ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENCE FORCE, WITHOUT A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION INTO THE ALLEGATIONS LEVELLED AGAINST IT.

WITH REGARD TO BRINGING THE DEFENCE FORCE MORE EFFECTIVELY INTO THE WAR AGAINST DRUGS, I CAN ONLY SAY THAT THIS CRITICISM TURNS ON THE QUESTION OF RESOURCES.

WE HAVE MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT ALL OF THE STATES WHO ENGAGE DRUG TRAFFICKERS HAVE A MORAL OBLIGATION TO ENSURE, AS FAR AS THEIR RESOURCES PERMIT, THAT ILLEGAL DRUGS DO NOT GET INTO THE HANDS OF THEIR PEOPLE, NOR THROUGH THEIR TERRITORIES, INTO THE HANDS OF THE CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

I AM SATISFIED THAT THE ASSETS AND OPERATIONS OF THE DEFENCE FORCE AT THE PRESENT TIME, HEAVILY WEIGHS UPON THE BACKS OF THE BAHAMIAN PEOPLE.

THOSE WHO WOULD WISH US TO DO MORE, MUST FIND WAYS TO PUT US IN RESOURCES WITH WHICH TO DO MORE.

WITH REGARD TO ACCESSING CONFISCATED DRUG MONEY FOR EXPENDITURE ON DRUG INTERDICTION, IT IS A MATTER OF RECORD THAT MY MINISTRY AND OTHER MINISTRIES OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN IN HOT PURSUIT OF AN AGREEMENT ON THESE FUNDS FOR SOME TIME. OUR EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MET WITH SILENCE AND LACK OF RESOLUTION. THIS CRITICISM IS PARTICULARLY IRKSOME, AS ITS EFFECT RESULTS IN DECEPTION OF THE BAHAMIAN PUBLIC.

I ALSO WISH TO SAY, WITH REGARD TO THE SUGGESTION THAT A DRUG CZAR BE APPOINTED TO OVERSEE THE BAHAMAS' WAR ON ILLEGAL DRUGS, THAT WE WILL TAKE THIS SUGESTION INTO CONSIDERATION.

TO BE FAIR HOWEVER, I MUST ALSO SAY THAT IT IS NOT A RECOMMENDATION THAT FAVOURABLY COMMENDS ITSELF TO US.

YOU THE PARTICIPANTS, MUST NOT BE UNDER ANY MISGIVINGS. YOUR WORK IN THIS WORKSHOP AND IN THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP IS OF CRITICAL NATIONAL IMPORTANCE.

I WISH TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO GIVE OF YOUR VERY BEST. YOU WILL HAVE THE ETERNAL GRATITUDE OF YOUR COUNTRY AS YOUR REWARD.

THANK YOU AND GOOD MORNING.

THANK YOU AND GOOD MORNING.