



Mr. Clayton Fernander, QPM

Commissioner of Police

Royal Bahamas Police Force

**Remarks at the
Swearing-in Ceremony of the
Commissioner of Police**

**Police Headquarters
East Street**

Tuesday 5th July, 2022

3:00 pm

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Your Excellency, I stand on the established protocol. Good afternoon.

Today, as I assume the Office of the Commissioner of Police, I stand here with an overwhelming sense of gratitude to my heavenly Father for His constant mercies on me. I am grateful also to the many of you gathered here today, others in spirit, and to the brave officers and leaders who have paved the way before me. I thank you! And I can truly attest to the fact that the race is not to the swift, but to those who endure to the end. The Executive Team and I worshipped with Bishop Ellis a few weeks ago and he delivered a powerful and timely sermon based on Psalm 40 which speaks to living in faith and waiting patiently for the Lord to reveal your path.

It was certainly a long journey from the *Jewel* known as San Salvador, to the inner city of Bain Town where my origins took root, to arrive in this space, in this place, in this moment in time with all of you here today, to make history on my appointment as the 9th Commissioner of Police in an Independent Commonwealth of The Bahamas. To God be the glory!

Whatever good there is in me, I attribute it all to my mother Minerva. She along with my late grandmother, Elvina Walker, raised me and my siblings with a firm hand, but loving heart.

And to my loving wife Christine, who is truly my better half. You have been here through thick and thin with your unwavering support and inspiring encouragement. And to our dynamic duo Jason and Gianna - all of you together bring peace, stability and joy into my life. Your love and support keep me grounded and I love you for that. Thank you!

My heart is heavy and full at the same time when I think of my two biggest supporters who I know are looking down from heaven in perfect peace - My brother Errol who died in 2020 and my father Wellington who we lost last year. During my career challenges in 2019, they were unrelenting with their encouraging words on a daily basis. So today, I can proudly and publicly say to my father and brother, ‘ALL – is – well!’, ‘ALL – is – well!’

I would like to thank all of my siblings for believing in me and I wish to extend a special thank you, to my family and friends on San Salvador, Cat Island and throughout the length and breadth of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas for your continued support.

Your Excellency, thank you for accepting my nomination and swearing me in as Commissioner of Police. Thank you Honourable Philip Davis, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas - and your Administration for the confidence entrusted and reposed in me to lead this noble Organization. I am humbled by your selection and I graciously accept this role. I pledge to serve this Country with distinction while upholding the ideals of “Courage, Integrity and Loyalty.”

And to my brother-in-arms, Commissioner Paul Rolle - It has been an honour to serve with you over the years. We have a mutual respect for each other particularly

after working together in the trenches for many years. I express deep gratitude to you for providing insight into the Commissioner's chair and the ease at which you are graciously handing over this mantle of leadership at such a critical juncture. As you demit office, and say farewell, I would like to publicly thank you for your navigational leadership of the Force during the corona virus pandemic and the aftermath of Hurricane Dorian. On behalf of the men and women of the Force, thank you for your service and may the Lord continue to bless you and your family into the future.

Your Excellency, the fight against crime remains high on our agenda and our focus will include a multi-agency approach at a regional and international level. We will continue to engage and include our law enforcement counterparts and partners in this fight against crime. We will trailblaze and make strategically bold crime fighting moves into the future in our endeavour to create safer communities. We will build from within and focus on ensuring that our officers are equipped with the requisite training, leadership and physical resources to effectively execute the overall mandate of the Force.

In recent times, the Bahamian public has become incensed by the loss of so many of our young men with the resurgence and proliferation of illegal firearms and gang related violence in our communities. To stem these criminal activities, we moved swiftly to establish Operation CEASEFIRE for immediate impact under the mantle of:

- Flooding our streets with saturated patrols, particularly in hotspot areas;
- Targeting and disrupting prolific gang members;
- Targeting and disrupting prolific drug peddlers within communities;

- Tracking down wanted suspects for serious crimes and hauling them before court; and
- Engaging in intelligence-led operations using on the ground optics as well as state of the art technology.

Based on the recent trends in the past 75 murders thus far for the year, 41 or 55% of those murder victims were suspects in murder cases that were granted bail by the Supreme Court. Our intelligence suggests that these individuals are being targeted by rival gangs. The loss of one life is too much. We are losing too many of our young men on both sides of the coin as victims and perpetrators.

As I speak, we are reviewing our intelligence unit to restructure our approach in this fight against crime. Today I can say to you that Operation CEASEFIRE is in full effect and it has been yielding successful results by removing drugs, firearms and ammunition off of our streets. Effective today's date, Operation CEASEFIRE shall function as a separate unit under the name CEASEFIRE UNIT to stem the activities of prolific offenders.

As the weeks and months unfold, our bold response to crime will become more evident and impactful. However, with immediate effect, I hereby commission the establishment of a special Anti-Gang and Firearms Unit, which will be situated at Police Headquarters. It will operate as a standalone Unit for a more focused approach to disrupt criminal activities involving firearms and ammunition.

Simultaneously, a request will be made to have a Court dedicated to fast tracking illegal firearms and ammunition cases for swift justice. Our research, statistics and intelligence is telling us that firearms are used in the commission of the most

serious crimes recorded, and therefore we must act swiftly to seal all avenues of this moral decay in our society by removing these offenders. In that vein, we want to review the laws to add tougher penalties in cases where persons are found in possession of an illegal weapon; and the use of a weapon in the commission of an offence. Tough times call for tough measures!

In addition, a Task Force was formed to function as an arm of the Anti-Gang and Firearms Unit to focus on gun smugglers and firearms trafficking with special attention to our borders and entry points. The Command Center for the Task Force is situated at Police Headquarters and two officers from different law enforcement agencies have been assigned and stationed to the Task Force.

Notably, the Task Force includes our partners from various local and international law enforcement agencies such as the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, the Bahamas Department of Correctional Services, Bahamas Customs Department, Department of Immigration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Department of Inland Revenue for regulation of couriers. The Task Force held its first meeting on June 10, 2022.

We have several other bold initiatives on the horizon which include:

- A monthly meeting with all law enforcement heads with a view of exchanging ideas and working in tandem in the fight against crime;
- We are implementing a stand-alone Domestic Violence Unit to include Social Services, religious leaders, and private entities.

- We are expanding our Public Relations Office to focus on timely press releases and updates on crime trends and investigations. Our goal is to bring structure, accountability and improved communication in this area;
- We are in the process of reviewing our community relations initiative to merge the tasks and responsibilities of our National Neighborhood Watch Council Program and the Urban Renewal Program to operate under one umbrella. We will be focusing on crime prevention initiatives and we want everyone involved to be effective, including community leaders, religious leaders, and private entities.

Over the past several weeks, I can report that hundreds of applicants have sat the Royal Bahamas Police Force's Entrance Examinations. While many were successful, there are many that were unsuccessful. However, we are reviewing the most recent unsuccessful applicants in order to provide them with an opportunity to continue their dreams. We have identified over 100 persons on the list and we will not allow them to fall by the wayside, or turn to a life of crime, simply because they did not pass the entrance exams. One of these same individuals may one day become the next Commissioner of Police.

We will work closely with these individuals to give them a fighting chance at a noble career. To that end, I have approved and established the Law Enforcement Empowerment and Preparedness Program (LEEAP) within the Urban Renewal Program. This program will assist potential recruits in realizing their goal of joining one of the law enforcement agencies in The Bahamas. It will assist individuals who are unable to pass the traditional entrance examinations with tutors

and special training that will provide a chance and put them in contention for consideration of recruitment.

The Urban Renewal Program has already engaged tutors from the Police Training College and trained teachers from the Ministry of Education to be a part of the program assisting our young people. The first cohort of individuals for the Law Enforcement Empowerment and Preparedness Program commenced on June 28, 2022. Sessions are held on Tuesdays between the hours of 6pm and 9pm at the Majorie Davis Institute for Special Education on Deveaux Street.

Considered by many as a global leadership guru, author James “Jim” Collins says, ***“Great leadership at the top doesn’t amount to much if you don’t have exceptional leadership at the unit level. That’s where great things can happen.”***

Today, as I fully embrace this new mantle of leadership as the Commissioner of Police for the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, I am cognizant of the fact that it will take synergy for us to be successful. From the Senior Executive Leadership Team level we must be in sync. Everyone must work together on the same page – including the men and women of all ranks, our police reserves, and our civilian staff. Thank you in advance for your dedication to duty and your continued sacrifices. Officers, yours is a thankless job and many times your work places you in dangerous situations. Notwithstanding, you adorn your uniform every day to provide service above self.

As citizens and residents of this great Country, we all have a part to play in creating safer communities. My Senior Executive Leadership Team and I, would like to canvass your help in solving crime, where there is intimate knowledge of a

crime that took place. At the same time we would like to ask for the public's continued support as we seek to fulfill our mandate to maintain law and order in The Bahamas.

To our law enforcement partners including those locally, regionally and internationally - I want to thank you in advance for all your continued support and we look forward to working with you in the future and strengthening these ties to stem crime.

I have every confidence that as a united organization with everyone working in congruence with the goals and objectives of the Force, we will remain steadfast in the execution of our duties and at the same time safeguard the public's trust.

To that end, there are three words that I must stress to my senior and junior officers. These words are Structure, Communication and Accountability. We, the Royal Bahamas Police Force, are answerable to the Bahamian people and we must accept responsibility for our actions.

Therefore, it is paramount for all of us to continue to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Force by adhering to existing and new departmental structures. I promise to be fair and honest with the public and my colleagues.

All my help comes from the Lord, and I pledge to remain true to my Oath of Office and to the people of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. God Bless the Royal Bahamas Police Force. Thank you!