

Governor Dakin's speech at TCI National Security Strategy launch: 22 January 2020

TCI now, for the first time, has a National Security Strategy. The need for TCI to have this was driven by the Premier and it became one of my first priorities, on arrival, to help her deliver it. It sat very well with my own initial priorities, outlined in my inauguration speech, around crime, illegal immigration and hurricane preparedness.

The most important line in the strategy we launch today is the last sentence of the introduction "In terms of the leadership needed to tackle National Security challenges the Premier's and the Governor's Office stand together". When it comes to the specifics of crime and policing, because national security is much more than crime, we also bring the Commissioner into this top team.

In these three roles we combine all the powers we need: funding through taxing and spending; democratic accountability; decisions around operational deployment; executive and emergency powers if needed; and the ability to reach beyond our own borders. If we were pulling against each other, or even working in parallel rather than together, none of us could deliver in the way the country rightly demands. But that's explicitly not the case.

All that I'm about to say would not have been possible without the Strategy we launch today – and the thinking that went onto it. The institutions that flow from it, help consolidate this 'top team relationship' so it's not personality dependent, but the way Government functions in the future to look after the safety and security of its people.

With one team at the top, we intend to create a 'one government team' around us to deal with these issues. The team you see with us today are among the top thirty officials in TCI Government and Policing that will execute the strategy. We are also grateful to be joined – as not disinterested observers – by the Commissioner of Montserrat, the Deputy Commissioner from Cayman and the Assistant Commissioner from Bermuda. We are strengthened by your presence Gentlemen.

All of us are presently involved in a one week training exercise run by the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst but we have taken an hour out of that course to be with you today. We are in a classroom learning – you are never too old to learn – and in learning, as much from each other – we are coming together as a team, sharing experiences, forming, storming and norming around one shared endeavour: to make this country safer.

All in this room agree that the fact this country is small should be our strength in terms of national security. Our communication and co-operation across Government should be straightforward. We should be agile. We should be

efficient. But let's be frank with each other, we are presently none of these things – so this week is important, indeed vital, in that process of change.

A public version of the strategy will be published but I suspect the public are interested today, not in what's written on paper, but what's happening as a result of the Strategy in the real world. That's what I intend to focus on. First, once you have the right strategy, you then need the right structures and the people with the right skills to implement it. So that's where I start:

- an already established National Security Council has been reimagined that can develop national capability and work at the strategic level and tackle wicked problems. That change has now occurred we are feeling the benefits. Bringing experts into the room, as required, has helped.
- since September a UK funded security advisor has been in place to help drive strategic change. The Premier and myself, and I suspect all who have come into contact with her, want to pay public tribute to Victoria for her detailed planning work. Much of what I'm about to describe, she has been instrumental in.
- I can announce today that a TCIG National Security Advisor (modelled on the role of the NSA in the UK) has been appointed who will work to both the Governor and Premier. This is a significant step forward in both tying together Government but also vesting more responsibility in Turks Islanders to manage national security. This will be Tito Lightbourne who will become the first Permanent Secretary National Security. This role will allow him to work across Government Departments with the authority of the Governor and Premier and he will co-ordinate to ensure proper cross-government working on National Security issues while being the focus for building long term national security capability.
- at the same time I can announce the promotion and appointment of two new Permanent Secretaries into the key Ministries involved in National Security. Mr Desmond Wilson will take over as PS Border Control and brings considerable experience with him as the former Director of Immigration. He also has a well-deserved reputation for action and delivery; qualities I admire.
- Ms Althea Been who moves from being a Deputy Secretary in Border Control, and will therefore be taking useful context about the challenges of that area of national security, will start as PS at Home Affairs on the 1st April. She also has a reputation for proactivity and delivery and that reassures us that she will be a first class member of the top team vital, for example, in redeveloping the Prison and all matters linked to that institution.

- funding of a National Security Secretariat, working to Tito Lightbourne has been agreed. The threats outlined in the Strategy will be managed by two senior 'Threat Leads' in the Secretariat; crucially that includes our resilience to, and recovery from, disasters. Placing that issue in the centre of Government, rather than on the side, is an important shift of emphasis.
- when we combine this NSA and Secretariat with the strong command and control function the Police have now developed at the operational level we will have a well-drilled national command structure for use in times of crisis at the strategic, operational and tactical levels. We will be rehearsing and refining this capability during the year.
- in terms of new and significant national capability we are in close touch with the UK Ministry of Defence, as you know we intend to generate a Turks and Caicos Regiment – our own Defence Force. We expect to be asking for expressions of interest for the Regiment's first Commanding Officer within weeks, followed by advertising for its regular Officer cadre shortly thereafter, before starting to recruit the 'Reserve Force' in the summer.

Looking further down into the strategy, I intend to use my remaining time today, to look at the two issues that are at the top of the public's agenda: Illegal Immigration and separately, because it's intellectually lazy to conflate the two, Serious Crime.

But before I do that I want to emphasise that the most pressing threat to our National Security – over a period of decades – is going to be natural disaster. The seas around us are warming. They provide the fuel for hurricanes, and we are in their path. You'll see in the strategy it's in the top two we must tackle – we have to move from a position where we focus on 'recovery' to one where much more effort is placed on 'resilience'. Countries in the Caribbean that don't, will go into perpetual decline, unable to recover properly between each natural disaster.

Worth also putting on record that, other than Natural Disaster, Illegal Immigration and Serious Crime, the other six issues the Strategy calls out as threats are: critical national infrastructure failure; serious public disorder; maritime sovereignty; food security and scarcity; cyber and, finally; terrorism, money laundering and financing of terrorism. Before moving onto crime let me start with what we are doing to reverse the seriously destabilising impact illegal immigration has on our society.

- without getting ahead of ourselves we now have the start of a good story to tell in terms of the interdiction of the traditional large sloops. I said shortly after my arrival in July that I intended to learn from failure and be accountable. We've studied trends, both success and failures. While ten landed in the first half of the year, from 30th August, only one large vessel has got through – and even then a number,

although not all, of its illegal passengers were arrested once they made land fall.

- the team we have on the front line protecting our maritime borders – led by Ennis Grant, Everet Warrican, Tito Forbes and Rodman Johnson are, to my mind, heroic. As a team we've been testing, adjusting and learning. Staffing at the radar has been increased, more efficient deployment of Maritime assets has been established and better cross-government working introduced.
- there's much more to do and a virtual team that pulls together the Maritime Branch, Radar and Immigration Task Force has started to take root. Linking them to the US Coastguard and Bahamian Defence Force in a wider international team, a game changer. And at this point I pay great tribute to our international partners. This is essential because we cannot be complacent: as we improve so do our opponents – Darwinian like – they evolve. We have to adapt our ways of working and capabilities rapidly; we are now starting to have the team work in place to make that happen.
- but stopping the sloops is attacking the symptom not the cause. The big change the Strategy calls out is the need to go after the under-pinning business model: prosecuting those, in TCI, and overseas if we can reach them, profiting from this trade in human cargo. To that end a significant investigation into people trafficking – led by the Police and drawing on contracted UK Police Officers – has commenced. This large investigation is working in tandem with Canadian, US and UK law enforcement. The recent arrest of 29 Sri Lankans – and congratulations to all involved in that particular success – has allowed us to look through an investigative keyhole at a global people trafficking ring. With international partners we intend to exploit that opportunity.
- with this ambition in mind – going after those profiting from the trade rather than just those trafficked – our intention is to build a secure and vetted capability on the Islands that can better collect, assess and then take action on intelligence we generate – or which is generated by our partners. Like the Defence Force, the UK are looking to support us in this and this will have strategic impact on all aspects of national security and serious crime.
- significant funding from Government to upgrade the radar has also been secured. Our intention is to make detection so likely we disincentivise travel across dangerous waters. As it is, 15 Haitians lost their lives in the waters off West Caicos last year, we assume many more in open seas. We mourn their and their family's loss while equally holding those who trafficked them, exploited them and profited from them, with contempt. They are now the targets of our criminal justice system.

- very significantly – because great efficiency and effectiveness can be delivered if we get this right – programmatic work has begun to establish a Border Force probably with different combined land and combined sea elements. The Premier has been keen on this type of reorganisation from the beginning and she was right to be so.
- funds have been secured to retrofit a seized fast vessel to strengthen the Maritime Branch that will be deployed on Grand Turk (seriously extending range).
- work has also begun with the US Coast Guard and the Bahamian Defence Force to significantly strengthen tri-lateral and bi-lateral co-operation. Lawyers are now involved in drafting future agreements. There has anyway been an immediate uptick in co-operation – some of that has been already described in the media – and we have been clear with all international parties that they shouldn't underestimate TCI's ambition. Our aim is to be a serious partner and player in the region.
- in terms of energy we have initially focussed on stemming the maritime threat, so we are excited by the appointment of Desmond Wilson who, drawing on guidance from his Minister (who of course is part of the NSC) can use the convening power provided by the PS National Security and deliver a proportionate whole of Government approach, to tackling Illegal Immigration through arresting those who overstay, or who entered illegally. There's a critical balance we must get right here in not alienating those who have every right to be here.

And now to crime:

- crime is rightly the hot topic so I will dwell on what, as Governor, Premier and Commissioner, we are doing to make a change. It's important though to recognise that while the Police take the burden of public scrutiny, Policing on its own isn't the answer. If you will indulge me to be clear, to the point of bluntness – the answer to the problem we are trying to solve won't be reached until future public co-operation is in line with present public outrage.
- policing by consent, which is our Policing model, can't succeed without public trust and public engagement. Policing can do far better on this – and recognising this fact is an important first step – so we now have a structured approach to delivering that change. But the public must meet us half way and if they don't, the investments we are making will fail. It's that important. In some ways it's that fragile.
- an increase in overall Police numbers by 20% has begun, recruits have started training and the overall uplift will be complete by March 2021.

The Commissioner tells us this increase will be a game changer; we can reinforce the very capable Tactical Unit, the Maritime Unit and crucially bring in proper Community Policing where the community gets to know their local officer through regular engagement.

- we already have 8 officers training in Barbados. The recruitment of a further 20 – also recruited from inside TCI – has been completed on schedule and they will train in the Bahamas. Recruiting the next tranche of 20 is due to begin which will include bringing in experienced overseas officers who can immediately reinforce our Tactical and Maritime Unit. Further recruitment can be fine-tuned dependent on need.
- as well as recruiting we must train existing staff – not least in terms of building a relationship with the public; our officers have been underinvested in for years. Funds for a significant uplift in Police Training have been agreed.
- a gun crime unit has been established and this has started to yield results. More guns were recovered in the two months before Christmas than in the previous two years.
- the use of a UK police officer, on island as part of the SIPT trial, but hugely experienced in murder investigations, has now been commissioned to review all murder cases. UK Police will review professional standards of conduct and performance in our Police force and separately review the structures and organisation of the Police's approach to homicide and will then remain in country to mentor. The Commissioner has other initiatives he is working on drawing on UK policing experience that we are not yet in a position to announce, but which will make an impact to the long term strength and health of the Force.
- outside of the National Security Strategy, but crucial to its success, the last Chief Justice, independently, pulled together the Justice sector (Judges, Chief Magistrate, AG, DPP, Commissioner, Prison Superintendent, Social Welfare, UK Justice Advisor) into a committee that could drive positive change in the overall Justice system. Cabinet has now been presented with a plan as to how Government can support much needed change in all aspects of justice other than Policing. This includes the like of Prison reform, parole, rehabilitation, the efficiency of the system in delivering justice and the physical environment in which justice is delivered.
- you will note from what I haven't said – and this is explicit in the Strategy – that we stay top level and we deliberately do not seek to drop down into operational policing decisions around the deployment of officers and the like. It's important that these decisions are the Commissioners, with his excellent Force Executive, so he can maintain

operational independence. What the strategy seeks to do is give him the resources, connectivity to both other parts of Government and overseas, and the context in which the Force can succeed.

Conclusion: I have spent previous press conferences expressing my heartfelt thoughts about the impact of crime. We rightly focus on murder but the truth is all crime corrodes our society and damages our people. Even new to these Islands I'd met the young man who had been simply introduced to me as 'Spooky', the DJ at the basketball games I attend.

And I'd met a previous victim of murder, Jeffrey, and thought what a convivial and engaging bar tender he was and what a great young father he must be. This is a small society where murder feels close because it is close. Not only do families grieve, but with each murder the country grieves. The most important thing I can do to honour their short lives, the most important thing we can do in this room is recognise we all have personal agency in this endeavour.

If you judge we are serious, the greatest thing you can do to honour those who have become victims is become equally serious yourself in playing your part. Many I know already feel this way. We need people actively building an ever healthier society, in whatever way they can, using whatever talent is at their disposal.

I'm not going to appeal for information (others better placed than me can do that, although I'd note it's the greatest contribution some could make) but I am – unapologetically – going to ask for national solidarity, for national unity, when it comes to national security.

I've been particularly grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for his thoughtful, measured and constructive advice, to me personally and in a more formal consultation, as we have developed this. As a national leader, but also as an ex-Police Officer, his instincts have not only been important but genuinely valuable. To the rest of you I say, given we can find so many ways to divide ourselves, this isn't one of the issues on which we need to seek division and we achieve great collective strength if we don't.

So I end with one of my favourite quotes, not biblical in this instance, but from Sun Tzu – one of history's great military philosophers: "Strategy without tactics" he wrote "is the slowest route to victory". "Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat."

TCI now has a strategy. Within it, I've just described some of the tactics we are already employing and capability we are building. I, the Premier, the Commissioner and all those in this room, representing every branch of Government involved in this shared enterprise, are committed to delivering a safe environment. I hope you can, in your own way, feel part of this because in truth you – the public – are without doubt our greatest national security asset. Extrapolating slightly from the Sun Tzu quote: national unity, around national security, would be the fastest route to success.

And with that, may God Bless these Turks and Caicos Islands.