



**Statement to Parliament by the Honourable Peter Bunting, MP
Minister of National Security
January 27, 2015**

Today I will briefly update Parliament on the crime statistics for 2014, our short term response to the January 2015 spike, and outline some of the strategic measures being taken to improve the long-term effectiveness of our policing strategy.

2014 Outturn

In 2014, there was an overall reduction of 16% in serious and violent crime. In what was a breakthrough year in the fight against crime; every category showed double digit reductions: murder down 16%; shooting by 12%; rape by 23%; and aggravated assault by 17%. Acquisitory crimes were also down by more than 10%.

A 16% across the board reduction in a single year is very significant and compares favourably with almost any other area of our social or economic life. It is the lowest murder figure recorded since 2003 and represents a 40% reduction over the last five years.

It is important to understand what contributed to this performance, and I will highlight a few areas.

The merger of the ISCF with the JCF eliminated the administrative duplication of a parallel command structure and freed up more personnel for operational duties. The strength of police presence we saw on the streets and in communities last year was in great measure due to the policy decision to merge the two Constabularies.

The new emphasis on the crime prevention work of the Ministry through the Unite for Change initiative, which recognizes that violence has multiple causes and therefore requires effectively coordinated responses from multiple sectors. The Unite for Change approach accepts that an important step in reversing an epidemic is changing group behaviour norms around the transmission of the disease, or specifically in our case of a violence epidemic, **changing the culture of violence and tolerance of criminals and criminal behaviour.**

As part of this initiative, significant energy was put into stakeholder building and public education efforts. The Ministry organized scores of events to educate and sensitize the citizenry and the police to the new approach. These events have taken various forms: media campaigns, presentations to MDAs, presentations to FBOs, NGOs, and community groups; peace marches, and school peace rallies. Just as important, we have partnered with parenting organizations to promote positive messaging and forged partnerships between churches and police leadership in various divisions.'

Change the paradigm of policing. While the police force is only one of the many actors in crime prevention, their role is critical to the outcomes we must achieve. So in 2014, we focused on changing the paradigm of policing. Specifically, we looked at reversing the approach of the paramilitary style of policing that had dominated for three decades and started a process of culture change to:

1. **Promote proximity policing** i.e. where police personnel are embedded in the community primarily on foot patrols, get to know and understand the residents, and develop relationships of trust. The police have been issued guidance to avoid arresting citizens for minor offenses, such as possession of small quantities of ganja, which only contribute to hostility towards the police and to overcrowding in lockups. This guidance resulted in 5,435 fewer arrests in for minor offences in 2014 vs. 2013.
2. Hold officers and men stringently accountable for the use of force and improving the planning of operations to minimize the likelihood of casualties, and;

3. Progressively civilianize the dress and appearance of the police, i.e. less blue denim, body armour, and assault rifles and more civilian dress.

As I pointed out in my New Year's Day letter of commendation to the JCF, I was particularly pleased with the 54% reduction in police fatal shootings, which reflected greater attention to the appropriate use of force. The virtual elimination of the use of curfews was another signal of increased concern with citizens' right to freedom of movement.

There are many communities previously plagued by violence, where the proximity policing and partnership approach advocated by the UFC initiative, are starting to have a transformative effect. As we lower the level of violence and other forms of crime to the point where the local police are no longer overwhelmed, policing becomes primarily preventative, rather than reactive. Then violence is no longer seen as normal, criminals are no longer seen as role models, and we can rebuild faith in law, order and justice. We are seeing the encouraging signs of this cultural re-engineering in communities like Gravel Heights, Granville, Dunkirk, Alma, and even Denham Town.

Swift Operational Response The final contributor to the crime reduction in 2014 I will highlight was the intelligence driven targeting of known violence producers and the application of anti-gang and anti-lottery scam legislation. The police and military responded with surge operations to quickly contain outbreaks of gang related violence.

The way forward for 2015

As we start 2015, the unfortunate rise in the murder rate reminds us that our considerable progress is fragile and we still have much work left to consolidate and improve on the gains. For the month so far, we have averaged 3.2 murders per day compared to 2.75 per day for all of 2014.

If this rate continues we could see the month ending with approximately 100 murders. However, let me point out that even in 2014 we had two months with murders above 100, which points to the randomness in how

these crimes occur and to demonstrate that we need not be unduly alarmed at this time.

The spike in murders can be attributed almost entirely to an increase in murders in the St. Catherine North Division. The security forces are responding operationally to the gang situation in St. Catherine North, and in so doing, we will employ the approaches that worked in 2014 namely: targeting violence producers, dominating critical hotspots, prioritizing forensic and investigative resources to this area, and drying up the funding sources for these criminal organizations. Social intervention strategies will follow once the situation is normalized.

I will now turn to the more strategic outlook for 2015...

In late 2014, the Ministry engaged Professor Anthony Clayton of the UWI, to conduct an organizational review of the JCF. The main recommendations in his report are aimed at consolidating the gains that we have made in recent years through improving the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in Jamaica.

One of the key recommendations of the report is to allocate more resources to preventative policing by reassigning resources from the non-geographical formations to the geographic divisions. The larger non-geographic formations comprise units such as: Mobile Reserve; Transnational Crime and Narcotics Division; Organized Crime Investigation Division (OCID); Flying Squad; Protective Services; and Motorized Patrol.

This reallocation of resources will be achieved through mergers and downsizing of some non-geographical units, a process that is currently in train. For example:

1. The amalgamation of OCID and Flying Squad came into effect on January 19, 2015. The mandate of the merged unit will include all the functions currently performed by the two entities individually, and will be extended to include counter terrorism investigation. The merger will release 30 police officers to operational policing.

2. Rationalization of Motorized Patrol has already resulted in 20 persons, formerly of the Street Crimes Unit, being sent to provide additional numbers for St. Catherine North. Additional personnel are being identified for transfer to St. James.
3. The merger of the Proactive Investigation Unit, Street Crime Unit and Divisional Fugitive Apprehension Team in each division is almost complete and is aimed at ensuring a more effective team. The new team, called the Proactive Investigative Team, will spearhead the enforcement of the anti-gang and anti-lottery scam legislation as well as to track wanted criminals.
4. Except for the Operational Support Team (OST) at Area 1 Headquarters, all Area OSTs (personnel and equipment) have been redeployed to geographic divisions within the respective Areas to provide additional police presence in the public spaces. The Area 1 OST has been retained since the divisions in Western Jamaica are far away from headquarters support.
5. A total of 65 officers have already identified from Mobile Reserve and Motorized Patrol for redeployment to St. James. Further assessments are being done to determine the additional numbers that can be released to operational policing in the geographic divisions.
6. The Kingston and St. Andrew Major Investigation Task Force (MIT) as well as the St. Catherine MIT will be merged and downsized significantly resulting in the redeployment of the majority of the detectives to geographic divisions in the Corporate Area and St. Catherine. The return of the murder investigators to geographic divisions, which will commence on February 1, 2015, is geared at significantly increasing divisional capacity to investigate and clear up murders.
7. A review is currently being done of the deployment of personnel at the VIP Protection Division. With a total of 544 personnel, the VIP

Protection Division is among the largest units in the JCF, assigning approximately 50 percent of its staff as Close Protection Officers (CPOs) to protect 172 officials, including cabinet ministers, parliamentarians, judges and magistrates and holders of some public offices. This significant deployment must be balanced against the reality that there are several police stations unable to adequately cover their police districts because fewer than ten officers staff them.

Over many years, the JCF has deviated from the criteria for the assignment of CPOs to VIPs, resulting in a considerable growth in the VIP Protection Division through one or a combination of the following scenarios in each case:

- a. Assignment of CPOs without the conduct of threat assessments
- b. Excessive number of CPOs assigned to individuals
- c. Automatic assignment of CPOs even when no security threat exists
- d. Retention of CPOs when threat levels have subsided
- e. Individuals who have demitted public offices retaining their CPOs
- f. CPOs assigned to private individuals who have the ability to engage private security
- g. CPOs engaged in a variety of roles that have nothing to do with security e.g. as drivers or to assist with a variety of domestic chores.

Currently, a review of the CPO assignments is underway and it is based primarily on security threat and risk assessments of the VIPs being protected. Several observations have been made, including that some VIPs are going to many events without their CPOs. On completion of the current risk/threat assessments, CPOs will be assigned based on need. Except for the Governor General, the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, the Leader of the Opposition and former prime ministers, all the assignment of CPOs will be based on recommendations informed by the threat assessment. Where it is revealed that threat levels are not significant, officers will be redeployed to augment the personnel at geographical divisions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe we are pursuing a sustainable set of policies to maintain the long-term downward trajectory of crime that we have seen over the last five years. We need to understand and accept that there will be setbacks from week-to-week or month-to-month and that available policy options are limited by fiscal constraints.

Nevertheless, we have a formula that is working. We have developed an approach that is informed by careful policy analysis and by a strategic partnership with all stakeholders.

We can and must maintain the momentum we have started! No one can beat a Jamaica that is united for change!

I call upon this Honourable House:

- to join in this movement to bring peace, safety, and stability to our communities and society;
- to support our security forces;
- to encourage our constituents to cooperate with the Police, and
- to be a part of the change we all wish to experience.

We must demonstrate the political will and the courage to follow the new strategies and this path upon which we have embarked. This Government will not rest until the nation has been rescued from the oppression of organized crime, violence, and corruption.

Peter Bunting, MP, 27 January 2014