



**Statement to Parliament on the Zones of Special
Operations (Mount Salem and Denham Town)**

by

The Most Honourable Andrew Holness, Prime Minister

on

Tuesday, October 31, 2017

OPENING REMARKS

Mr. Speaker, as I stand here today; it is of grave concern to all Jamaicans, regardless of political persuasion that our murder rate is rising; and now stands at approximately 300 above the figure for the corresponding period last year. Mr. Speaker, the driving factors are well known; gang warfare compounded by extortion, lottery scamming, drugs and contract killings account for over 70% of murders committed with estimates as high as 80%. However, Mr. Speaker, there is still a very high level of murders driven by non-organized criminal activity; in other words by the inability to resolve conflicts peacefully. All of this is further compounded by a national crisis that has reached epidemic proportions, the prevalence and ease of access to guns and ammunition. The Government considers this to be a national emergency and will expand on the strategies to deal with this issue at a later date. Already some of the strategies we are employing are yielding greater results; we have recovered 726 firearms, including 62 rifles to date as compared to 515 firearms, including 32 rifles this time in 2016. In terms of ammunition for the corresponding period, the figures show an increase of almost three times that of the related period last year, moving to 20,491 rounds compared to 7,341 rounds. While

recovery has increased, we need to enforce greater control measures to ensure that we curb the flow of guns and ammunition into the country.

Mr. Speaker, the scourge of crime cannot be tackled with quick fixes, we must get to the root of the problems. The strategies must establish stability and long-lasting, transformational results. Mr. Speaker, the Zones of Special Operations is a whole of government response to crime in a strategic, coordinated and sustainable manner. The ultimate mandate of the Zone of Special Operations is to secure the right to life of ALL citizens.

Mr. Speaker, today I will give an overview of activities within Mount Salem and Denham Town and the next steps for both zones.

M O U N T S A L E M

Mr. Speaker, the declaration of the Mount Salem Zone community as the first Zone of Special Operations on September 1, 2017 was a landmark event in the history of Jamaica. The experience has produced innumerable lessons at various levels: operational, tactical and strategic. Some lessons have been specific to the way our

security forces operate, while others have been much broader and have guided policy decisions and revisions. Cumulatively, all lessons have added value through increased awareness and knowledge, and continue to inform best practices in nation building.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Mr. Speaker, during the sixty (60) days of security interventions in Mount Salem, the members of the Joint Force have been focussed, diligent and thorough and have largely reflected the exemplary professional ethos that is expected from all service members in the security force. During the *Clear* phase of the operation, the Joint Force used its special powers to saturate the area, removing the influence of gangs and disrupting criminal activity wherever it existed. During the *Hold* phase, the Force was tasked to focus on creating an environment in which the State's presence could be effectively re-established, thereby reducing the opportunity and capacity of criminals to commit crime.

In furtherance of their duties, the Joint Force executed a number of operations which had varied results. Through some of these operations and augmented by the

repackaged and relaunched 'Get the Guns' rewards programme, we have recovered several illegal weapons. It is also worthwhile to note that over the period, there were:

- no reported incidents between the citizens and the Joint Force;
- no incident of shooting, murder or serious crime in Mount Salem,
- and the citizens of the community have been able to replace fear and disquiet with safety and reassurance because of the actions of the State.

Mr. Speaker, to the extent that the preservation of life and the restoration of the community's confidence in legitimate state structures, were highlighted as being of utmost importance, the Mount Salem Zone should be considered as a successful endeavour. It is anticipated then, that the reassurance provided by the State must continue to be matched by responsible citizenry.

Mr. Speaker, already, there has been noted progress in the willingness of citizens to partner with the State to remove the presence of: violence producers, wanted persons, illegal firearms and even illegal immigrants from their

community. Additionally, citizens have understood the necessity of the overwhelming security presence and the countless special operations and check points that have affected their routines. In fact, I must especially commend the citizens of Mount Salem who have been the real engine behind the progress within the Zone. They have been supportive of the initiative and have displayed outstanding interest and ownership of their community. Where they have been satisfied, they have made this known, and where they have been discontented, frustrated or concerned, these articulations have been promptly addressed through consensus and partnership.

It is for this reason that the progress in Mount Salem must be continued in earnest. In 60 days much has been achieved but much more is yet to be done. With the efforts thus far largely focussed on clearing and holding the space, an additional 60 days is now necessary to give focus to the *Build* phase. Therefore, Mr. Speaker in accordance with Section 5 of the Act, the Prime Minister in Council, after consultation with the Joint Command may by order subject to affirmative resolution of the House of Representatives extend the period referred to in Section 4(3), for such further periods.

During this period, the Social Intervention Committee will be given the space to continue the work they have already commenced and are expected to increase their intensity and presence to improve social services and infrastructural investment while engaging citizens in the normalization of their community.

S O C I A L I N T E R V E N T I O N

Mr. Speaker, thus far, the social intervention framework applied to Mount Salem has utilized an integrated approach which is built on two pillars:

1. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (**CPTED**), which focusses on urban upgrading to the physical and environmental space to reduce opportunities for crime, *and*
2. Crime Prevention through Social Development (**CPTSD**), which focusses on:
 - Addressing the underlying human and social risk factors of crime and violence, *and*
 - Human Capital Development, that is, the identification of services, youth livelihood development via skills training and enterprise creation, capacity building of governance

structures including neighbourhood watch and youth recreation.

To that end, the Social Intervention Committee has undertaken a number of activities over the period. These have included various planning engagements with members of the Mount Salem community, the international donor community and the private sector. Early initiatives have included:

- The **hosting of a Community Fair**, at the Mount Salem Primary and Junior High School over the period 8-9 September 2017.
- The hosting of a **Community Action Workshop** with leaders from the Mount Salem community over the period 6-7 October 2017.
- The hosting of a **Community ID Fair** on 8 October 2017 focusing on the provision of Birth Certificates
- The launch of the **JCF led Community Safety Plan**. The primary features of this plan include:
 - Curfews for school children,

- Adding Mount Salem Primary and Junior High to the Safe Schools Programme, with police school resource officers being assigned to the school.
- Restarting the community consultative network, and;
- A Mentorship programme.

Another important initiative has been the launch of a **Community Clean-up Project**. This was announced on 14 October 2017 and will be a four weeks joint initiative led by the National Solid Waste Management Authority (NSWMA) and National Works Agency (NWA). Thus far the team's efforts have addressed environmental concerns through the removal of bulk waste and other material from the community. Additionally, however, there is a significant focus on Human and Community Development and Employment. To that end, on average of 60 persons have been engaged to do the initial clean up and repair activities within the community, and approximately twenty-five (25) will be permanently engaged as Environmental Wardens with the responsibilities to: maintain a state of cleanliness within the community, coordinate with agencies regarding environmental issues, maintain the collection points in the communities and;

ensure the proper disposal of solid waste within the community.

Further to this, community members will receive employment opportunities through the NWA for general maintenance work on drains and gullies.

The HOPE team and HEART Trust continues to engage community members through the Community Development Committee (CDC).

The Social Intervention Committee will also be spearheading the refurbishing of the Mount Salem Community Centre. It is intended that this facility will become a focal point and a critical social infrastructure for training, workshops and community meetings. To ensure community ownership in this regard, it is the members of the communities who will be employed to undertake the actual refurbishment work and it is anticipated that the engagement on the project will continue until the broader objectives are met.

Other endeavours during the *Build* phase will include the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch, and the

establishment of two (2) Youth Clubs in the community; one being revitalized and the other one new.

To continue the extensive, ambitious and promising work that must be carried out over the next 60 days, seven (7) Technical Working Groups (TWGS) have been established which are:

- The Physical Environment,
- Land Tenure,
- Community Safety,
- Human and Community Development and Employment,
- Business and Economic Development,
- Spiritual and Faith Based Intervention, and
- Leadership

This partnership in Mount Salem has been historic and impactful and will continue to be encouraged as a necessity in safeguarding the community from the return of criminal elements. Without question, the positive impact on the circumstances of this small but significant community of approximately 3,600 strong, continues to provide motivation and has propelled even greater enthusiasm towards achieving meaningful changes to the

lives of many Jamaicans. The community of Mount Salem has exemplified what can be achieved when citizens are engaged as partners; to guide the efforts of the state and to accept their roles as key stakeholders in the larger strategy to build the nation, one community at a time.

DENHAM TOWN

Mr. Speaker, I will now give an update on Denham Town. The declaration of the Denham Town community as the second Zone of Special Operations on 17 October 2017, signalled another bold move by the Government. This decision was guided by the provisions of the Law Reform (Zones of Special Operations) (Special Security and Community Development Measures) Act.

The Denham Town community is the birthplace of some of Jamaica's greatest success stories and cultural icons and continues to be the home of some of Jamaica's most promising prospects. Generations in Denham Town have however been victimized by the unacceptable level of violence that has stifled opportunities and curtailed liberties. Most unfortunate is the fact that this population of more than 8,000 residents is being exposed to such intolerable degrees of risk by a handful of deviants who have sought to traumatize their fellow citizens through rampant criminality.

Mr. Speaker, if we allow violence to become regularized, then the state of fear becomes normalized, and this will never be accepted as the reality for Jamaica's current

and future generations. The seventeen (17) murders in Denham Town in 2017, then, are seventeen (17) murders too many and constitute an environment which requires special focus. The ongoing gang warfare, rampant criminality, escalating violence and murder, and the threat to the rule of law in Denham Town are rejected by the Government and must be rejected by the residents of Denham Town.

While the declaration of the community as a Zone of Special Operations is not expected to be a miracle-fix, if the experience of Mount Salem should serve as an example of what can be achieved through this strategy in the preservation of life, then Mr. Speaker, the outlook for Denham Town is not only favourable, but promising for the entire West Kingston.

It is critical to reiterate that citizen support and partnership with the state must be paramount. Now more than ever, members of the community must seize the opportunity to shed negative stigmatization and counter any perception that they condone or support the very criminal elements that seek to destroy their community. The State has reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring public safety and security and will restore the trust and confidence that has

been eroded. This must be matched by an eagerness of the community to likewise build the partnership through positive interactions and an exercise of patience and understanding during the process, designed to achieve renewal.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

Mr. Speaker, the first 10 Days Report by the Joint Force, regarding activities in the Denham Town community has been promising. While there were expectedly varying views regarding the declaration, the overwhelming response from residents of the community has been positive. In addition to welcoming the initiative, many residents have further expressed relief, as they are now able to move freely within their community and pursue their livelihoods free of fear.

Since the declaration of the Zone there has been no incidents of murder or shootings and residents are being encouraged to continue to play their part in making the community completely violence free. This includes the necessary support to the Joint Force, to rid the community of violence producers, gangs and illegal weapons, ammunition and contraband.

Mr. Speaker, during the first 10 days in Denham Town, which is a bigger area with a greater need for population control. The forces have spent the first days establishing the Zone, and gaining control of the area, over 40,000 searches have been conducted and the focus is on building the relationship in the community. So far a shotgun and ammunition, several other weapons paraphernalia; a credit card “skimming” machine and seven known violent producers were arrested.

Mr. Speaker, thus far, the Joint Force has been engaging and responsive and have initiated a number of activities within the community. These have included:

- Community clean-up efforts,
- Public sensitization regarding operations within the Zone; meetings have been held with residents of the community, Justices of the Peace and the leadership of the Metcalfe Street Secure Juvenile Correctional Centre (MSSJC), regarding various issues affecting security,
- Community engagement regarding the ‘Get the Guns’ campaign, *and*
- Utility stakeholder engagements; a tour of the community by the Jamaica Public Service is being

scheduled and is aimed at improving lighting conditions in the community, as well as conducting repairs and maintenance work.

S O C I A L I N T E R V E N T I O N

Mr. Speaker, while a Social Intervention Committee has been gazetted to steer a series of initiatives in the *Build* phase of the Zone, it is noteworthy to highlight that the community of Denham Town is already currently benefitting from an integrated package of infrastructural and social interventions under the JSIF implemented Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP). This project has focussed on both physical and human capital development and the work of the Social Intervention Committee will build on the foundation that has already been laid in this regard.

Thus far, in the area of physical transformation, the following have been achieved:

- A project to have 931m of zinc fence removed and substituted with concrete walls has reached 90% completion, and
- A Solid Waste Infrastructure Project which focused on the construction and placement of enclosures

equipped with drums and skips for waste collection and recycling, along with Environmental Wardens to manage has been completed.

Projects which are planned and will be initiated include:

- **A Road Rehabilitation Project.** The aim of this will be the full pavement of approximately 2609 m² of roadway. (*Greenwich Street, Albert Street, Elgin Street, Milk Lane, Nelson Street, Bread Lane, Chestnut Lane, Pink Lane, Percy Street, Tulip Lane, King Street, Water Street, Rottael Street, Market Street, East Street, Metcalfe Street, Wellington Street, Bond Street, Blunt Street, Oxford Street, Rose Lane, Drummond Street, Hannah Street, Charles Street and Part North Street*).
- **A Water Supply Project.** This will aim to upgrade the supply and distribution pipelines within the community.
- **A Sewage Project,** which will focus on the cleaning of existing sewer pipes on Chestnut and Pink Lanes and installation of service laterals to lots.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of human capital development, there are several projects which are in progress and these will receive the additional support they require to achieve their stated objectives. These include:

▪ **The Youth Education and Recreation (YER) Programmes.** Initiatives under this project include:

- **GSAT Remedial Classes** at Denham Town Primary, St. Albans Primary and St. Anne's Primary. **Six Hundred and Thirteen (613) students** have participated to date.

- **Transition Seminars** delivered to support students progressing to high schools. Sessions focus on: adjusting to a new school environment with new rules and routines, challenges associated with building new peer relationships as well as the general emotional and physical changes associated with becoming adolescents. **One Hundred and Sixty (160) students** participated from Denham Town Primary and St. Anne's Primary.

- **Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education** – The Youth in Technology (YIT) initiative, contributes to the development of the next generation of coders, apps developers, gamers, website developers, platform managers, engineers and innovators. **Five (5) students** from Denham Town Primary participated in the **Pilot IT Boot Camp** held at the RESET School of Education.

- **School Capacity Building**, has been another area of focus aimed to support school safety and security through building the capacity of ancillary staff and teachers by facilitating Fire Safety Training, CPR and First Aid Training and training in Critical Incident Planning and Reporting. Additionally, in conjunction with the HEART NTA, the project will also support the training and certification of ancillary staff in the following areas: (Customer Service, Landscaping, Food Services, Janitorial and Security services) in the primary and high schools in Denham Town. **To date Eighty -Six (86) persons** have been trained.

- In the area of **Training, Certification and Internships**, the ICDP Alternative Livelihood and Skills Development programme seeks to increase the probability of employment and improved livelihood of skilled trainees through the acquisition of advanced and introductory level skills, certification and job readiness skills. The project seeks to certify at least 150 young people in Denham Town at level 2-3 HEART/NTA or provide equivalent qualification and for at least 150 to level 1-2. The young people in Denham Town are currently engaged through the skills of Film Production (UWI Film Project), Online Entrepreneurship (Internet Income), BPO (with placement guaranteed) and 3D Animation and Gaming (RE School of Education and Technology), and Customer Service.
- In the area of **Training and Employment**: Five (5) environmental wardens to support the NSWMA in the community for improved Waste management as well as 12 Zika Warriors to support the Ministry of Health have been engaged through employment.

- In the area of **Enterprise Development**, a programme will be launched to support new business and well as enhance existing businesses within the community.

- In the area of **Sport**, a programme will be launched to focus on:
 - a. increasing the reach to the large cohort of youths to facilitate needs assessments and service delivery
 - b. building social skills and comradery, and
 - c. exposing young persons to the business of sports, unearthing talent and tapping into the blue economy.

CALL TO ACTION

Mr. Speaker, extraordinary times require strategic, sustainable and coordinated measures. The Law Reform (Zones of Special Operations) (Special Security and Community Development Measures) Act is one such measure and is intended to pave the way for the restoration of public order in some of Jamaica's most vulnerable communities. While doing so, it is also intended to ensure that social development and economic growth is realised in these areas. The initiative, and its underlying theme of 'improving citizen security, public safety and

overall quality of life', must therefore be championed by all Jamaicans.

All law-abiding citizens of this country must embrace their roles as advocates of the Security Forces and nation builders in this country. In so doing, the great resolve, determination and perseverance that have always defined the Jamaican people, will positively shape the future state that is deserving of this nation. The task is great, but the resolve of the State is much greater.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident that we are developing the policies, strategies and coordinated action to bring meaningful transformation to communities stifled by crime; one by one; which will eventually have a national impact. Mr. Speaker, we estimate that there are approximately 20 communities which would qualify for this specific kind of intervention; we have gone two within the last two months; while we are constrained by resources, Mr. Speaker we are committed to taking back our communities from the criminals, one by one.