



MINISTRY UPDATE PRESS BRIEFING

The Hon. Renee Ming, JP, MP

Minister of National Security

February 22, 2021

Good afternoon:

I wish to provide an overview of the ongoing work being done in the Ministry of National Security.

More specifically, I wish to highlight the work of the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation (DRRM) Unit and the Gang Violence Reduction Team (GVRT).

First the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation (DRRM) Team.

During these many months of uncertainty, particularly during the pandemic, hurricane season, the island-wide BELCO blackout, and most recently during the winter storms – our DRRM Team have worked tirelessly to assess the national risks and effectively coordinate targeted and tiered emergency responses.

The critical information they provide both to the Government and the Ministry allows us to make the right and necessary decisions to ensure that our residents are kept safe.

And with the lifting of the curfew, it's timely that I share some key updates with the public regarding some of the regulations that are still in effect.

Following the lifting of the curfew, we naturally expect that residents will want to move around the island more; this includes frequenting restaurants and bars and engaging in more social and recreational activities.

But I want to urge our community to continue to make responsible and sensible decisions.

While the curfew has ended, the pandemic hasn't.

And there is still a need for our residents to exercise caution to protect themselves, their families, their loved ones and friends.

In fact, I want to take this opportunity to commend the public for their cooperation during the curfew, as their compliance was a major reason as to why Bermuda's COVID-19 numbers declined following the surge last November.

That said, however, there are some restrictions that remain in place and they are as follows:

- While the curfew ended last Thursday on land, a curfew for recreational boating remains in effect.
- **All recreational boating must end at 8.00 pm.**

An important note regarding the regulations:

- Large Group Gatherings are still limited to 25 persons.
- For an indoor service or ceremony in a church or other religious establishment, the number of persons who can gather is limited to 25% of the indoor area's full capacity.
- For the number of persons at an outdoor service or ceremony (including weddings and funerals), the number cannot exceed 50 persons.

In addition to the regulations, the Ministry of National Security is not accepting large group applications for funeral wakes, wedding receptions, birthday parties and other such events, at this time.

We will however, review the policy on March 9.

As it relates to sports events, the Minister of Youth, Culture and Sport recently provided an update regarding the Return to Play Sports Guidance.

For our part the Ministry of National Security will consider applications for increased numbers of persons to participate in sports events such as road running races **only when PHASE 4** of the Return to Play Guidance has been implemented.

The DRRM Team continues to work with our private and public sector partners to assess, advise and mitigate against threats and risks.

This includes:

- Working with our partners at the L. F. Wade International Airport to update the contingency plans that are required at all commercial airports;
- Working with the Departments of Health, Marine and Ports, the Bermuda Tourism Authority (BTA) and the Ports Authorities to review the safest way to implement the return of cruise calls to Bermuda; and
- Reviewing and updating our cybersecurity protocols and best practices.

The DRRM also has oversight for the operation of the Emergency Broadcast Facility (100.1fm). I understand that several members of the public tune in to this station, as such, I wish to advise that the Broadcast Facility will shortly be relocated to the new Prospect Radio Tower. It is expected the radio station will be off air for two weeks at the end of February and the beginning of March whilst this move takes place. Once this is complete the public will be notified.

Turning to GVRT and the invaluable work being done by the team.

As a Ministry and a Government, we know there is still much work to be done in the area of reducing violence in our community.

We pledged in our Throne Speech that we will work towards bringing lasting calm to Bermuda's communities.

In order to do this, we have been utilizing our existing mechanisms to address gun, knife and gang violence – this includes continuing with initiatives such as:

- The GREAT Programme, which restarted with the resumption of schools last year; and
- The Redemption Programme which also restarted last year with a new cohort of trainees.

While the work of the GVRT is mostly done behind the scenes, the impact that they have in the lives of our young people, families and neighborhoods is unquantifiable.

What has been evident is that the Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant socio-economic challenges for a large portion of our community.

What we've come to understand is that social and financial instability leads to stress and added tension.

And added tensions can often lead to anti-social behavior and violence.

The GVRT continues to be an important force in tackling gang violence.

The Team's multi-pronged approach, strategies and methodologies have proven to be quite effective within the various communities.

Their proactive measures within the subcultures are very systematic.

As an example, the team first identifies the past, present and future challenges.

These could range from mental health issues, emotional trauma, or socio-economic challenges that have disadvantaged many in at risk families and vulnerable neighborhoods.

The team's overall objective is to assess and provide critical support to the valued individuals whom they engage with.

This involves, but is not limited to such measures as providing food and/or food vouchers, medical assistance, or shepherding them to the relevant organizations that can assist with meeting their various needs.

Through our Redemption Programme, the GVRT provides job placement as well as vocational skills training. The plan was to have 13 trainees in the program however, due to many of the jobs that we partnered with having to downsize their staff, they were unable to take many of our trainee's.

We currently have 8 individuals who are now taking part in the latest Redemption Programme training.

The outreach to the primary, middle and high schools is also an important focus for the GVRT.

In the primary schools we have implemented programmes that encourage our young people to express their thoughts and concerns while, at the same time, empowering them to have a positive view of themselves.

And the GVRT conduct innovative interventions focused on group dynamics as well as individual sessions in our schools.

I am also pleased to advise that in partnership with clinical, social and education professionals, the GVRT will embark on several pilot programmes to assist our young people.

These include initiatives that focus on anger management, cognitive therapy, mood therapy, behavioral therapy and parenting classes.

The GVRT also continues to conduct restorative justice forums in our schools and throughout the community.

The Team's goal is not only to bring peace and harmony within the various communities, but to assist with the development of specific plans to help our vulnerable young people, individuals and families so that they can be thriving members of society.

In closing, the GVRT have provided our affected communities with much needed emotional support, counselling and emergency services during these times of hardship.

For our part, the Ministry of National Security will continue its priority of supporting the GVRT in its efforts of tackling the root causes of crime and working towards reducing violence in our community.

We are also thankful for the work of the DRRM Team who have embraced their work under often, short timelines. As with the Gang Violence Reduction Team, the Ministry of National Security will continue to support the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team.

Thank you.