



MINISTRY BUDGET PRESS BRIEFING

The Hon. Renee Ming, JP, MP

Minister of National Security

March 4, 2021

Good morning,

I wish to provide a brief overview of some of the key focuses of the Ministry of National Security this upcoming fiscal year. Along with the Ministries of Health and Education, the Ministry of National Security received one of largest budget allocations for fiscal year 2021-22.

However, our Ministry budget has been prudently scaled back, as we recognize the fiscal challenges that have been caused by the pandemic. Like other Ministries this will be a particularly challenging year for us. But I can assure the public:

- that we are committed to ensuring that our residents are protected;
- that we are unwavering in our pledge in keeping our neighborhoods safe from violence; and
- that we are focused on ensuring that we have the right support in place to safeguard our community during times of national crises.

The total budget for the Ministry of National Security is around \$122.6 million. This represents a five (5) percent decrease from the previous year.

It's important to note that our Budget allocations are designed to help facilitate the promises we made in the Government's Throne Speech.

While our budget and our Ministry is intricate, complex, and encompasses some critical areas such as Police, the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service, Customs and Corrections – today I wish to highlight:

- The National Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation (DRRM) Unit
- The Royal Bermuda Regiment; and
- The Gang Violence Reduction Team (GVRT), as the Ministry of National Security has earmarked funds to support these sections in the upcoming fiscal year.

As the public is aware the DRRM Team have worked tirelessly to assess the national risks and effectively coordinate targeted and tiered emergency responses.

This year, the public can expect to see a formalization of the DRRM unit.

This will entail the introduction of Disaster Management Legislation and the establishment of the Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Section within the Ministry of National Security.

The legislation will set out the framework and lay the foundation for how disasters and national emergencies are declared and responded to in Bermuda.

It will also codify the Emergency Measures Organization and establish the DRRM Section as the coordinators for the emergency planning, training, exercising and response for all facets of the legislation.

Additionally, this will enable the DRRM Team to broaden its scope and mandate and work with our private and public sector partners to assess, advise and mitigate against threats and risks.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- 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.

Turning to the RBR, as the public is aware, the regiment is an all voluntary service, so we are very appreciative of the individuals who have chosen to serve.

This year, for our most recent recruitment camp, we had 48 men and women answer the call of duty.

Our current recruit numbers are up and retention remains high.

Regarding the Bermuda Coast Guard, despite the overall budget reductions, this budget funds our promise to establish a full time coast guard unit which was created to provide enhanced safety and security on and in Bermuda's waters.

We are seeking to hire an additional five (5) full time soldiers into the Coast Guard.

This added contingent in conjunction with more reserve personnel, ensures that the Unit can provide the coverage required to meet its international obligations and support other agencies who operate in our surrounding maritime area. Personnel working in the Coast Guard Unit are drawn from serving soldiers and those who are new to the military.

They are all skilled Bermudians who are mandated to pass rigorous tests examining their physical, mental, and nautical suitability.

Although the ultimate goal is to secure our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) with 24 full time Coast Guard personnel, the Unit will now have the resources to effectively manage inshore waters out to 12-plus nautical miles, which is where a number of safety and security concerns have been identified.

Finally, the Coast Guard Unit is in the process of seeking international accreditation, and has been working on strengthening its capabilities in conjunction with the Royal Navy and other external partners.

The ultimate goal is to work in collaboration in regional initiatives with our Overseas Territories partners.

Turning to the GVRT, our funding will go towards supporting those initiatives to help in reducing violence in our community.

This includes such initiatives such as:

- The GREAT Programme in our public schools which provides youth with education and awareness that teaches life-skills aimed at addressing anti-social behavior and crime;
- Hype Kings Programme, which has a goal to reduce risk factors, enhance protective factors, increase academic motivation and increase developmental factors in the young people participating;
- The Redemption Programme, which provides job placement as well as vocational skills training; and finally
- Work Placement and Mentoring Initiative which is a paid work experience providing selected at-risk young people with opportunities for career exploration and skills development

The GVRT continues to be an important force in tackling gang violence. The Team's goal is not only to bring peace and harmony within the various communities, but to assist with helping our vulnerable young people, individuals and families become thriving members of society.

Additionally, the Ministry of National Security continues to work to complete a Police Authority, which is in line with our Throne Speech initiatives.

As a final note, while we are disappointed that the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service and the Prison Officers Association did not accept the Government Austerity Measures, the Government has allocated funding for capital commitments such as:

- The BF&RS will see the purchase of a new Ambulance; and
- The Department of Corrections' phased approach to repair the long standing maintenance issues will be addressed with this year's budget.

Despite the reductions this budget keeps our promises and will deliver on our promises to the people of Bermuda.

Thank you.