



**PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC
OF
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**REPORT
OF THE
Joint Select Committee
on
National Security**



**INQUIRY INTO THE
“TOTAL POLICING” INITIATIVE
ON MARCH 23, 2015**

Ordered to be printed with the Minutes of
Proceedings
and Notes of Evidence

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The Joint Select Committee on National Security

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REPORT

OF THE

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

ON AN

INQUIRY INTO THE
“TOTAL POLICING” INITIATIVE ON MARCH 23, 2015

Date Laid: HoR: _____

Senate: _____

THE COMMITTEE



Dr. Rolph Balgobin
CHAIRMAN



Mr. Colin Partap, MP
VICE-CHAIRMAN



Dr. Keith Rowley, MP
MEMBER



Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP
MEMBER



Mr. Faris Al-Rawi
MEMBER



Mr. Errol McLeod, MP
MEMBER



Mr. Kwasi Mutema
MEMBER



Ms. Donna Cox, MP
MEMBER



Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso
MEMBER



Mr. Brent Sancho
MEMBER

Committee Mandate and Establishment

1.1. On Friday November 07, 2014 the House of Representatives and December 09, 2014 the Senate, agreed to resolutions on the subject of the appointment of the Joint Standing Committees, the Joint Select Committee on National Security was one of them.

1.2. Standing Orders 93 and 103 of the Senate and the House of Representatives respectively, gives the Joint Select Committee on National Security

“the duty of considering from time to time and reporting, whenever necessary, on all matters related to the national security policy of Trinidad and Tobago.

In particular, the Committee shall be authorized to examine—

- a) the security, safety and protection of citizens;
- b) the working relationships between the various agencies involved in intelligence gathering, and how they collect, coordinate, analyse and disseminate information and how these functions might be enhanced; and
- c) the mechanisms to review the performance and activities of the various agencies involved in National Security and critical infrastructure.”.

Powers of the Joint Select Committee

1.3. Standing Orders 71B of the Senate and 111 of the House of Representatives delineate the core powers of the Committee which include *inter alia*:

- to send for persons, papers and records;
- to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the [Senate/House of Representatives];
- to adjourn from place to place;
- to report from time to time;
- to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not otherwise readily available, or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's or Sub-Committee's order of reference;
- to communicate with any Committee of Parliament on matters of common interest; and
- to meet concurrently with any other Committee for the purpose of deliberating, taking evidence or considering draft reports.

Chairmanship

1.4. In accordance with Standing Orders 97(3) of the House of Representatives and 87(3) of the Senate, the Committee at its first meeting held on Friday March 20, 2015, elected Dr. Rolph Balgobin as Chairman and Mr. Collin Partap as Vice-Chairman.

Secretariat Support

1.5. The following officers were assigned to assist the Committee:

- Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel - Secretary
- Ms. Sheranne Samuel - Assistant Secretary
- Mr. Johnson Greenidge - Assistant Secretary

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
ACP	Assistant Commissioner of Police
CID	Criminal Investigations Department, TTPS
CoP	Commissioner of Police
CPO	Central Personnel Officer
DCP	Deputy Commissioner of Police
EMR	Eastern Main Road
GEB	Guard and Emergency Branch
NOC	National Operations Centre
NSC	National Security Council
PBR	Priority Bus Route
PCA	Police Complaints Authority
PSC	Police Service Commission
SB	Special Branch, TTPS
SSA	Strategic Services Agency
TTPS	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
TTPSSWA	Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On March 23rd 2015, between 4 a.m. and 10 a.m. 21 roadblocks from 19 police stations across 6 of the 9 police divisions in Trinidad and Tobago were operated by members of the TTPS. These roadblocks had the effect of severely inconveniencing the public and costing the economy millions of dollars.

Given that salary negotiations between the TTPSSWA and the CPO appeared to have stalled, and having regard to the public utterances of senior members of the Association, many members of the public appeared to conclude that the roadblocks were not a crime fighting activity but were instead intended to signal the dissatisfaction of police officers.

The Joint Select Committee on National Security examined the matter and found that there was no advance warning of the exercises. Neither the TTPS Executive nor any other intelligence organization were aware of the planned activities on the day. The Committee also found no documentary evidence of divisional command authorisation.

The Committee found that the roadblocks constituted acts of ‘malicious obedience’ and that some measure of control was lost in the divisions in which the road block exercises occurred. The Committee concluded that a causal nexus probably exists between the actions taken by some police officers on March 23rd 2015 and the stalled salary negotiations between the CPO and the TTPSSWA.

When the road blocks occurred, communications within the TTPS did not appear to function well, and it took several hours and the personal intervention of divisional commanders to clear the road blocks and the massive traffic pile ups which resulted. By all accounts, a road block should be cleared within minutes of an order being given to stand down. This did not happen.

The Committee found a degree of reticence of senior police officers to ascertain what had happened, why it had happened, who was in charge and what steps needed to be taken to ensure that it did not happen again. The only alternative explanation – that the events were coincidental – was considered unlikely by several witnesses.

The Committee views the actions which took place on March 23rd 2015 as very serious.

The Committee was constrained by the impending prorogation of Parliament to close its examination and report to Parliament, however it makes several recommendations based on its observations and findings for further investigation and action by the appropriate bodies.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The TTPS should complete its investigation into the roadblock exercises conducted on March 23, 2015 and the findings of the investigation should be forwarded to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) to complete its own investigation as well as to the Police Service Commission (PSC);
- ii. The investigations should examine the role of the GEB in the roadblock activities of March 23rd 2015;
- iii. The relationship between the officers conducting the roadblock exercises and the TTPSSWA should be investigated;
- iv. The relationship between the officers conducting the roadblock exercises and those attending the TTPSSWA meeting of the 19th March 2015 at the offices of the GEB should be investigated.
- v. The role of Inspector Roger Alexander in the roadblock exercises should be further investigated.
- vi. The role of the TTPSSWA in the active management of the concerns of police officers within the TTPS should be examined.
- vii. The levels of awareness of ACP (Ag.) Garfield Moore and Snr. Supt. Joanne Archie of roadblock activities on March 23, 2015 should be further investigated.
- viii. The role of the GEB in relation to provision of security of the Parliament should be immediately reviewed.
- ix. Intelligence gathering as an area of law enforcement should be given extra attention and possibly enhanced in order to prevent similar occurrences like that of March 23, 2015.

- x. The quality of human intelligence resources which could detect internal threats should be examined and improved.
- xi. The PSC should examine the number of acting appointments in the TTPS and request that the Commissioner of Police (Ag.) seeks to rectify same.

INTRODUCTION

1.1. At its Second Meeting held on Friday April 17, 2015, The Committee agreed that the “Total Policing” initiative of March 23, 2015 and its consequences would be the subject of its first inquiry. In essence, the Committee was interested in determining the major facts/issues behind the operations of the twenty-one (21) roadblock exercises conducted on March 23, 2015 and identifying the perpetrators responsible for organizing these activities. The Committee was also interested in the proposed or potential solutions for addressing these issues.

1.2. To this end, the Committee held a public hearing with the Acting (Ag.) Commissioner of Police (CoP) and senior police officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) on Friday May 01, 2015. Subsequent to reviewing the oral submissions, the Committee sought and obtained written evidence based on certain aspects of the events of March 23, 2015. A series of public hearings with other police officers and members of the intelligence community were held on May 08, 15 and 29 respectively. The discussions at the hearings focused on, *inter alia*, the following areas:

- i. Policing Concepts: “Total Policing Day”, “Malicious Obedience”;
- ii. Responsibility for ordering the “Total Policing” day on March 23, 2015;
- iii. Resources utilized in the roadblock activities of March 23, 2015;
- iv. Events of Friday March 20, 2015;
- v. Communication channels within the TTPS;
- vi. Intelligence failures;
- vii. Activities of the Special Branch (SB) of the TTPS
- viii. Activities of the Guard and Emergency Branch (GEB)
- ix. Media Statements made by TTPS officials, i.e. Insp. Roger Alexander, ACP (Ag.) Garfield Moore, Ms. Ellen Lewis (Head – Corporate Communications, TTPS).
- x. Stalled salary negotiations between Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA) and the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO)
- xi. Relationship between the TTPSSWA and the GEB

1.3. An analysis of the oral and written evidence revealed that the TTPS and other stakeholders were confronted by various major challenges. The Committee has proffered recommendations to address some of the issues/shortcomings it has identified. These recommendations along with

associated findings are outlined on [Pages 42 and 43](#). We expect that the Parliament, the TTPS, the Ministry of National Security and other stakeholders would take into consideration the findings and recommendations of this report, with a view to improving the operations of the TTPS and prevent similar future occurrences of March 23, 2015.

Background of the Inquiry

1.4. On Monday 23rd March, 2015 between the hours of 4:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. officers of the TTPS embarked on a set of roadblock exercises which caused massive traffic congestion along the nation's roads¹. Citizens commuting to Port of Spain underwent gridlock traffic for hours. Commuters along the entire East/West corridor, in San Fernando and in Tobago were forced to disembark maxi taxis and taxis and journey by foot, some even returned to their homes. Citizens were unable to access medical treatment, missed flights and other appointments. Business activities were drastically affected. Many schools within Port of Spain and environs were shut down and students were deprived of sitting examinations. These roadblock exercises resulted in the loss of millions of dollars to the economy and severely inconvenienced the public.

1.5. Some police officers that participated in the nationwide roadblock exercises publicly indicated that it was a part of a “*Total Policing Day*” which was directed by the Police Executive. Alternatively, other officers described the activities as part of the *Police Crime Plan, 2015* which was initiated by the Ag. CoP.²

1.6. Citizens held a different view, and generally appeared to believe the roadblock exercises were a direct result of the stalled salary negotiations between police officers and the Chief Personnel Officer (CPO).³

1.7. At a public hearing of the Joint Select Committee on Municipal Corporations and Service Commissions, held on March 27, 2015, officials of the PSC advised that by letter dated March 25, 2015, the PSC wrote to Mrs. Alleyne-Daly, Ag. CoP at the time, and requested a report containing

¹ Report on “Total Policing Day” by ACP Vincel Edwards. Page 2

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

information on the nationwide roadblock exercises of March 23, 2015. An investigation was launched into the findings of the report, and a subsequent report on that investigation was submitted to the National Security Council (NSC). In his ministerial statement at the 27th Sitting of the House of Representatives on April 17, 2015, the Minister of National Security laid the “Report on the ‘*Total Policing*’ Initiative of March 23, 2015” (See [Appendix IV](#)) and the House agreed that the Report be referred to the Joint Select Committee on National Security for its consideration and report.

1.8. The maintenance of law and order is an essential public service. It is fundamental to the well-being and vitality of our communities and to the safety of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. Equally important is the need to maintain public confidence through efficient and effective policing. The TTPS does not appear to enjoy a positive reputation, and concerns were further amplified as citizens became suspicious of any further action which may be taken by officers in the days following March 23, 2015. The public still requires closure as regards the events of March 23, 2015.

1.9. Against this background and taking into account the mission of the TTPS and the role and functions of the CoP (See [Appendix III](#)), members of the JSC National Security were of the view that an inquiry into the events of the “*Total Policing*” Initiative of March 23, 2015 was warranted.

Objectives of the Inquiry

1.10. At a meeting held on April 17, 2015, the Committee agreed that the objectives of the inquiry will focus around the following:

- i. To determine the facts of the roadblock exercises;
- ii. To review the causes of the roadblock exercises and their viability as a form of Industrial Action by police officers;
- iii. To inquire into the methods of investigation into the roadblock exercises;
- iv. To determine the resources utilised to execute the initiatives of the Police Service during the “Total Policing Day”;
- v. To determine the agents responsible for the roadblock exercises;

- vi. To assess whether there were intelligence failures related to the early identification of the roadblock exercises; and
- vii. To inquire into the status of the findings and recommendations outlined in the “Report on the ‘Total Policing’ Initiative of March 23, 2015”.

Conduct of the Inquiry

1.11. On May 01, 08, 15 and 29, 2015 a series of public hearings were held with representatives of the TTPS inclusive of SB and the GEB, the TTPSSWA, the Strategic Services Agency (SSA) and the National Operations Centre (NOC) at which time the Committee questioned the officials on the various matters outlined in the *Inquiry Objectives*. The oral and written responses received from successive entities/individuals appearing before the Committee provided a frame of reference for the questions pursued at the subsequent hearings.

1.12. The government agencies/officials involved were represented by the following officials:

Name of Official	Portfolio
May 01, 2015	
OFFICIALS FROM THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE	
Mr. Stephen Williams	Commissioner of Police (Ag.)
Ms. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly	W/DCP, Administration (Ag.)
Mr. Glen Hackett	DCP, Crime and Support (Ag.)
Mr. Harold Phillip	DCP, Operations (Ag.)
Mr. Vincel Edwards	ACP, North West (Ag.)
Mr. Gary Gould	Snr. Supt., Special Branch
May 08, 2015	
STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY	

Mr. Bisnath Maharaj	Director
May 08, 2015	
OFFICIALS OF SPECIAL BRANCH - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE	
Mrs. Erla Christopher	ACP, Head of Special Branch
Mr. Wendell Williams	Superintendent
Mr. Raul Hercules	Assistant Superintendent –Production
Mr. Glenroy Phillip	Inspector
May 08, 2015	
OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE	
Mr. Garvin Heerah	Executive Director
Mr. Mervyn Richardson	MAC Group Coordinator
May 08, 2015	
OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE SOCIAL AND WELFARE ASSOCIATION	
Insp. Anand Ramesar	President
Insp. Michael Seales	Secretary
May 15, 2015	
OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE	
Mr. Garfield Moore	ACP (Ag.), Head of Tobago Division
Mr. Johnny Abraham	Senior Superintendent, Central Division

Mr. Roger Alexander	Inspector, North Eastern Division Task Force
May 29, 2015	
OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE	
Ms. Ellen Lewis	Head - Corporate Communications
Mr. John Richardson	Senior Superintendent - Guard and Emergency Branch

1.13. The **Minutes of the Meetings** during which the public hearings were held are attached as [Appendix I](#) and the **Verbatim Notes** as [Appendix II](#).

KEY ISSUES, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective (a): To determine the facts of the roadblock exercises

1.1. In reviewing the Report on the “Total Policing” Initiative of March 23, 2015 by ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards and other written and oral supporting evidence, the Committee became aware of the following events that preceded the roadblock exercises on the day in question:

- a. There were ongoing negotiations between the TTPSSWA and the CPO for the period 2010 to 2013;
- b. There was a breakdown of these negotiations on March 03, 2015 which resulted in a walkout of the meeting by the TTPSSWA⁴;
- c. The TTPSSWA refused to attend scheduled meetings with the CPO on the March 10 and 17, 2015;
- d. There was a meeting of the representatives of the TTPSSWA and police officers, including members of the GEB on March 19, 2015, at the offices of the GEB, during which it was reported that the Executive walked out;
- e. Officers of the GEB conducted a roadblock exercise on March 20, 2015 following information on criminal activity, claimed to have been made available to them. These exercises yielded one (1) arrest, another person was charged for driving a vehicle without a certificate of insurance, and several stop and search forms were filled out. This exercise appeared to have been a ‘dry run’ for the actions on March 23rd 2015;
- f. Officers of the GEB were identified as participating in the ‘sick-out’ remonstration on February 14, 2011⁵ as a part of a series of industrial action endorsed by the TTPSSWA which the media titled “Blue Flu”. During this remonstration, the

⁴ Trinidad Express Newspaper; “Police Association storms out of CPO meeting”; Published March 03, 2015 <http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Police-Association-storms-out-of-CPO-meeting-294931731.html>

⁵ Trinidad Express Newspaper; “Police Association storms out of CPO meeting”; Published March 03, 2015 http://newsday.co.tt/crime_and_court/0,136164.html

residences of both the Prime Minister and the Attorney General were left unguarded by the GEB⁶;

- g. Secretary of the TTPSSWA, Inspector Michael Seales, in a Trinidad Newsday article written by Carol Matoo, dated March 20, 2015 and carried on Page 16, was quoted as saying : “Asked if the country could expect another “Blue Flu” situation such as when earlier this month (March 09, 2015), members of the protective services, including the police, stayed away from the job for two days, Seales said it may be taken even further”;
- h. Some of the supervisors of the roadblock exercises on March 23, 2015 are either present members of, or previously were, members of the Central Committee of the TTPSSWA;
- i. The Heads of the TTPS, NOC and SSA were absent from the country on March 23, 2015. The Minister of National Security approved travel for the Director of the SSA, Mr. Bisnath Maharaj on February 25, 2015. The Cabinet approved official overseas travel for the Ag. CoP, Mr. Stephen Williams, on March 12, 2015. Finally, the Prime Minister approved official travel for Mr. Garvin Heerah, Executive Director of the NOC on March 20, 2015; and
- j. The roadblock exercises appeared to have taken the local intelligence community by surprise.

CIRCUMSTANCES AND TIMELINE OF EVENTS OF MARCH 23, 2015

1.2. The Committee researched in-depth the facts regarding the events of March 23, 2015. The factual information identified by the Committee is stated in paragraphs 1.3 through 1.12.

1.3. On the morning of March 23, 2015 at around 4:00 a.m. citizens of Trinidad and Tobago began their respective journeys on the nation’s roads towards work and school as on any ordinary day. Commuters travelled particularly to main cities and towns including; Port-of-Spain, San Fernando, Chaguanas and Scarborough. However at around the same time, officers of the GEB and the Roxborough and Charlotteville Police Station began the first of what would be a chain of roadblock activities, involving six (6) divisions. GEB activities were conducted in the vicinity of the

⁶ Ibid

Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway Flyover at Gasparillo and Roxborough and Charlotteville Police did the same at Windward Road Goodwood, Tobago.

1.4. The next set of exercises commenced at 5:00 a.m. Officers of both the Barataria and Morvant Police Stations conducted those exercises at the Corner of the Priority Bus Route (PBR) and Morvant Junction and the Eastern Main Road (EMR), Barataria respectively. Between 6:00 and 6:30 a.m. most of the morning's exercises commenced as TTPS officers belonging to various departments within the Northern, North-Eastern, Eastern, Western, Port-of-Spain and Tobago Divisions continued to cordon off main traffic arteries within the nation. Of particular note were the roadblocks conducted at various points of the EMR, the PBR, the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, the Uriah Butler Highway, the Audrey Jeffers Highway, the Western Main Road, Maraval Road, the Lady Young Road and the Claude Noel Highway.

1.5. The timeline submitted by the Ag. CoP coincided with the findings of the investigator ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards. The Committee was able to confirm that the simultaneous roadblock exercises were conducted, on average, between 4:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. A total of twenty-one (21) roadblock exercises were conducted simultaneously, involving nineteen (19) police stations, across six (6) police divisions, and including the CID and GEB special branches of the TTPS. Officials substantiated claims made by members of the public and media that some officers participating in the day's events were indeed armed during the exercises.

1.6. At 6:30 a.m. after receiving calls regarding the roadblocks, the Ag. CoP at the time, W/DCP Alleyne-Daly, indicated that she contacted the Divisional Commanders for them to instruct their officers to stand down. TTPS First Division officers, in particular John Richardson, Senior Superintendent of the GEB, stated that at around 6:00 – 6:30 a.m. he received and relayed the stand down order given to Divisional Commanders to the officer in charge of the GEB roadblock, Insp. Nobbee. However, the other officers identified as those that led or supervised roadblock activities reported that they only received the stand down order at 9:00 a.m.

1.7. ACP (Ag.) Garfield Moore who serves as Head of the Tobago Division, was initially made aware of the roadblocks by an affected citizen. He contacted Snr. Supt. Joanne Archie instructing her to dismantle the roadblocks. They both personally dismantled the roadblocks, by going physically to the site of the roadblocks, this was necessary in order to ensure that the roadblocks

were stopped and that traffic was flowing freely. This process was commenced prior to receiving the order from Deputy Commissioner (Ag.) Hackett to stand down. ACP (Ag.) Moore stated that Deputy Commissioner (Ag.) Hackett did not contact him directly, instead he contacted Snr. Supt. Archie. The Head of the Tobago Division indicated that no effort was made prior to going physically to the roadblock sites to communicate with the officers who were conducting the exercises to get them to stand down. No reason was given for this decision. The ACP (Ag.) indicated he became aware that similar exercises were taking place in Trinidad around 8:00 a.m. Both ACP (Ag.) Moore and Snr. Supt. Archie appeared in the media confirming that the roadblocks were planned. ACP (Ag.) Moore at the public hearing claimed not to recall making such a statement.

1.8. In the Central Division, no roadblock exercises were conducted. Senior Superintendent Johnny Abraham indicated that he had no prior knowledge of the roadblock exercises which occurred on March 23, 2015. He received calls concerning the traffic situation on the morning in question and contacted the Assistant Commissioner, Traffic Branch to inquire about any roadblocks or accidents on the highway. The response received was that no such activities were occurring. At around 11:00 a.m., approximately seven (7) hours after the start of the first roadblock (4:00 a.m.) and after the time that the final roadblock was cleared, Snr. Supt. Abraham was contacted by the Ag. CoP at the time, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly to determine whether there were any roadblocks in his Division. He indicated that he was surprised that the Ag. CoP at the time was unaware of the roadblock exercises which had taken place that morning and was of the view that such expansive efforts would have been planned and would require senior executive approval.

1.9. The intelligence community did not appear to have prior information pertaining to the roadblock activities of the TTPS. Mr. Bisnath Maharaj, the Director of the SSA, who has a direct line of communication with the Ag. CoP, Divisional Commanders and other senior police officers, was absent from the country on March 23, 2015. Deputy Director, Julie Browne was in charge in his absence. The Director reported that when he departed Piarco International Airport at 6:00 a.m. there were no signs of any roadblocks or disturbances on the road. He was made aware of the events verbally at approximately 2:00 p.m. He expressed serious concerns about the events of the day.

1.10. Executive Director of the NOC, Mr. Garvin Heerah, was also absent from the country on the said day but maintained command and control while he was out the country. However, Mr.

Mervyn Richardson coordinated activities of the NOC during this time. At approximately 5:00 a.m. during the process of its routine operations of monitoring radio communication, the NOC noted that there were police roadblocks. The totality of the exercises became apparent at approx. 7:00 a.m., two hours later. Enquiries were made to other key agencies to confirm that they too were receiving the similar kinds of information. Such confirmation was received from the ODPM, TTPS, Fire Service, Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority. Mr. Richardson stated that at roughly 7:00 a.m. he sent out a text message to the Minister of National Security, Heads of services and all other major agencies confirming that the NOC was aware of the presence of roadblocks which were causing massive traffic, and that the traffic situation was being monitored. The NOC helicopter was also activated to look at the situation and report back to the Centre. Mr. Richardson stated that at that time, the NOC was not aware that six (6) Divisions of the Police Service were involved in the exercises. The NOC only became aware of the official stand down order at approximately 9:00 a.m.

1.11. Meanwhile, an officer of the SB of the TTPS, Sgt. Waldropt, in uniform and alongside officers of the Sangre Grande Police Station, participated in a roadblock exercise at Ture Junction, Sangre Grande. The exercise commenced at 6:30 a.m. around the time the initial stand down order was issued. The Head of the SB, ACP Erla Christopher, indicated that the SB did not receive any information of a planned action on Monday March 23, 2015. ACP Christopher conceded that the officer in question may have had some information that was not shared with the rest of SB. The officer in question was informed that a roadblock exercise was going to be conducted because of the shooting of a police officer in the Sangre Grande area on Saturday March 21, 2015. ACP Christopher admitted that it is unusual for a SB officer to participate in a roadblock, especially given that:

- (i) no senior officer instructed the said officer to participate in the exercise;
- (ii) he did not report his actions to his senior officer;
- (iii) the exercise was conducted on a Monday for an incident which reportedly occurred on Saturday;
- (iv) Sgt. Waldropt was in uniform; and
- (v) the incident yielded no arrests.

1.12. The Head of Corporate Communications in the TTPS, Ms. Ellen Lewis reported that she only became aware of the events on the said day at around 6:15 a.m. after viewing news of the traffic

gridlock on television morning talk shows. She proceeded to communicate with senior officers of the TTPS to ascertain the facts of what was occurring and the actions being taken by the Service in anticipation of being contacted by the media. Ms. Lewis conducted her first media interview between 6:35 and 6:45 a.m. Without clarity on what was happening, and so as not to create panic, Ms. Lewis issued a “holding statement” which stated that the roadblocks had been planned (and presumably authorized) by the TTPS. She indicated that she gained a better understanding of the situation after liaising with W/DCP Alleyne-Daly at around 7:00 a.m. The “holding statement” was issued prior to communicating with the Ag. CoP at the time, Alleyne-Daly.

SIGNIFICANT FACTS OF THE ROADBLOCK EXERCISES

1.13. The Ag. CoP submitted to the Committee a comprehensive timeline of the roadblock activities that took place on March 23, 2015. The timeline was cross examined with the findings of the report by ACP (Ag.) Edwards and the resulting factual information is provided in the table below:

Table 1 – Start and End Times of the Roadblock Activities on March 23, 2015

Police Geographical Division and Police Station	Location of Activity	Start time	End time	Senior Officer on Site
EASTERN DIVISION				
Sangre Grande Police Station	Turure Junction	6:30 a.m.	8:00 a.m.	Insp. R. Thom
NORTH EASTERN DIVISION				
San Juan Police Station	Saddle Road, Santa Cruz	6:02 a.m.	10:30 a.m.	Ag. Insp. Ramlogan
Barataria Police Station	Cor. PBR and Morvant Junction	5:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Ag. Insp. Ramlogan
Morvant Police Station	EMR, Barataria	5:01 a.m.	8:30 a.m.	Cpl. Richards
NORTHERN DIVISION				
Piarco Police Station	Cor. Ch. Roos. H/Way and Piarco Traffic Lights	6:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. A. Moona
Pinto Police Station	Cor. Ch. Roos. H/Way and Pinto Road	6:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. C. Thomas
Cumuto Poilice Station	Cumuto Main Road	6:00 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	Ag. Cpl. S. Gordon
San Raphael Police Station	San Raphael Junction	5:30 a.m.	8:00 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. Williams
Maloney Police Station	PBR by Red Hill	6:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. K. Greene
La Horquetta and Arima Police Stations	Cor. De Freitas Boulevard and Ch. Roos. H/Way	5:30 a.m.	9:30 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. V. Waldropt
Arouca Police Station	Five Rivers Junction	6:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. R. Joseph
St. Joseph Police Station	PBR and EMR in the vicinity of TML Primary School	5:30 a.m.	8:45 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. S. Peters for Insp. Sewdass

PORT OF SPAIN DIVISION				
Central Police Station	Beetham H/Way by the Lighthouse	6:30 a.m.	9:20 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. Seepersad
WESTERN DIVISION				
Western Division Task Force	Western Division Main Road	5:30 a.m.	8:45 a.m.	Ag. Cpl. Nurse
TOBAGO DIVISION				
Roxborough and Charlotteville Police Station	Windward Road, Goodwood	4:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. Williams
Scarborough Police Station	Claude Noel H/Way, Orange Hill Road and Milford Road	6:00 a.m.	9:30 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. A. Alleyne; Ag. Cpl. A. Sebro
Moriah Police Station	Big River Hill	6:00 a.m.	10:15 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. George
Ole Grange	Auchenskeoch Road	6:10 a.m.	10:10 a.m.	Insp. Powder
GUARD AND EMERGENCY BRANCH (GEB)				
Guard and Emergency Branch	Gasparillo by the S. Hochoy H/Way Flyover	4:00 a.m.	7:11 a.m.	Ag. Sgt. Ogunsheye for Insp. Nobbee
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT (CID)				
Criminal Investigations Dept.	Independence Square South in the vicinity of the Cathedral	7:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	WPC Collette

1.14. W/DCP Alleyne-Daly testified that communication proved to be an issue. There was a delay in the order to stand down reaching the relevant officers and the situation returning to normalcy. DCP (Ag.), Glen Hackett further indicated that he had given the order for Division Commanders to personally go to the sites of the various roadblocks to issue the order to stand down.

1.15. The wireless system of the TTPS was not employed to give the order to stand down and it is unclear as to the extent to which cell phones were used to transmit instructions directly to officers conducting roadblocks.

1.16. ACP (Ag.) Edwards indicated that while roadblock exercises by the police are not uncommon and are in accordance with legislation and regulations, it was widely perceived by the public that the exercises on March 23, 2015 were in reality a form of industrial action brought about by a break down in the 2010 to 2013 salary negotiations. The media had also crystallised the action of the police as industrial action. As a result many members of the public condemned the actions of the TTPS on the day in question, deeming it an act of bullying towards the citizenry.

1.17. Consequently, the Ag. CoP at the time, W/DCP Alleyne-Daly, together with DCPs Mr. Harold Phillip and Glen Hackett held a news conference and apologised to the nation for the action of those officers involved in the roadblock exercises. However, Insp. Roger Alexander appeared on the television programme *Beyond the Tape* that evening and offered a contradictory viewpoint stating that the activities were planned in another interview he advised that motorists should carry their “breakfast, lunch and supper” and seemingly threatened further police roadblocks. He has since distanced himself from this position on appearing before the Committee.

1.18. The Ag. CoP mandated ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards to investigate and report on the roadblock exercises. ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards concluded, *inter alia*, that ***“The point to note is that for a brief moment that is between 4:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Monday 23rd March, 2015, the First Division Officers who were in charge of six Police Divisions and Second Division Officers who were in charge of Police Stations within the six named Police Divisions lost control of their Divisions and Stations respectively to a small group of Junior Officers. The small group of Junior Officers took control of six Police Divisions in Trinidad and Tobago and conducted their brand of malicious obedience to the Total Policing Day and the Police Visibility Patrol concepts.”***

1.19. The Committee noted that in his testimony, Ag. CoP Stephen Williams disagreed that the TTPS leadership had lost control of the divisions and stations in question. However, except for the description of the period 4am to 10am as ‘a brief moment’, the Committee found nothing in its examination that would lead it to differ from the conclusions of the report by ACP (Ag.) Edwards.

Objective (b): To review the causes of the roadblock exercises and their viability as a form of Industrial Action by police officers

Concept of ‘Total Policing Day’

2.2. “Total Policing Day” is a concept embedded in the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan of the TTPS. Officials indicated that operationally, the concept of the “Total Policing Day” dictates that at least once per week, a Divisional Commander will utilize all the resources at his disposal to assist in a high-visibility policing effort in his division. The Divisional Commander would usually give the directive and approve actions to be taken. On the day in question, the investigation revealed that Divisional Commanders did not issue the directive to conduct the exercises.

2.3. The concept of total policing as defined by the UK Metropolitan police is as follows:

“A total war on crime, total care for victims, and total professionalism from our staff.”

2.4. This does not reconcile with the interpretation of or actions by the officers participating in roadblocks on March 23rd 2015. This was confirmed by Snr. Supt. Johnny Abraham who suggested to the Committee:

“that is not total policing....that is roadblock!”

“Malicious Obedience”

2.5. The investigating officer, ACP (Ag.) Edwards indicated that he was unable to determine the reasons for officers’ actions on March 23, 2015, however he described those actions as a form of “malicious obedience”, meaning that actions were taken by authorised personnel using legitimate powers, TTPS equipment and manpower to achieve unintended and counterproductive ends.

2.6. The concept of “Malicious Obedience” was outlined by Mr. Edwards as follows:

Malicious Obedience

In conducting the roadblock exercises on that day the Police Officers who participated in those activities were **maliciously obedient** to the Laws and Regulations of Trinidad and Tobago. They were also **maliciously obedient to instructions** by following all Standing Orders, Departmental Orders, Rules, Policies and Procedures.

The reality is those Police Officers maliciously performed their duties based on the Total Policing Day concept and the Police Visibility Patrol concept without any regard or concern for the plight of the general public or even to maintain a relationship with the general public.

(Extract from the Report on the “Total Policing” Initiative of March 23, 2015, by ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards)

2.7. The Committee failed to find evidence that these actions were consistent with the Strategic Plan of the TTPS or that they fell within the concept of “total policing” as defined locally or globally. The Committee noted that the Ag. CoP, Mr. Stephen Williams, expressed reservations regarding the use of the phrase “malicious obedience” but was unable to provide a satisfactory alternative description.

2.8. The Committee understands that patrol officers under the law have authority to check vehicles on a daily basis. Specific instructions are not necessary. In the case of road-blocks, however, some departmental direction and guidance is necessary. The Committee was invited to believe by Snr. Supt. Richardson, ACP (Ag.) Moore, Insp. Ramesar, Insp. Seales, Insp. Alexander, Ag. CoP Williams and other members of the TTPS Executive that the same action - 21 roadblocks across 19 police stations in 6 divisions occurring simultaneously - was a coincidence. However, Director Maharaj (SSA), Snr. Supt. Abraham (TTPS, Central Division), ACP Christopher (SB), Executive Director, Garvin Heerah (NOC) did not appear to agree with this assessment, instead suggesting that such system-wide activities without the knowledge and consent of Divisional Commanders would be highly unusual.

2.9. The Committee has found that the events and the manner in which they occurred were unlikely to be a coincidence and finds no reason to contest the conclusion of the Edwards investigative report.

2.10. The Committee is of the view that the actions taken were highly effective as a negotiation tactic, and had the result of frustrating a large part of the population. This initial experience of malicious obedience, and the fog of uncertainty over what occurred and the reticence of those in charge to ascertain the truth of the events have assisted those responsible to remain obscured from general view or identification. There is still no clarity on who exactly was in charge overall of the men who participated in roadblock exercises.

Events of Friday March 20, 2015

2.11. The Committee inquired into a roadblock exercise conducted on Friday March 20, 2015 on the westbound lane of the Churchill Roosevelt Highway in the vicinity of Aranguetz and was advised that the Guard and Emergency Branch of the TTPS was responsible for carrying it out. The exercise caused significant congestion on the roadways and the Senior Superintendent of the Branch was given a directive by the Ag. CoP at the time to discontinue the exercise. Snr. Supt. Richardson was not informed of this exercise prior to its commencement the same is true of the roadblock exercise of Monday 23rd March 2015, also conducted by GEB officers.

2.12. None of the intelligence agencies appearing before the Committee had any information about the ‘dry run’ activities of March 20th or the broad spectrum efforts of March 23rd 2015. The Executive Officers of the TTPS who appeared before the Committee were not aware of whether there was a correlation between the events of March 20 and the “Total Policing” initiative of March 23.

Communication with the Minister of National Security

2.13. Communication between the Minister of National Security and the Ag. CoP at the time, Alleyne-Daly, regarding information on the roadblock exercises, was established at approximately 7:30 a.m. and were initiated by the Minister himself, acting on reports, the initial one received from a Cabinet colleague. The Minister sought clarification about what was happening and heard from Ag. CoP Alleyne-Daly that she was still uncertain and assessing the nature of the situation. In a subsequent conversation with the Minister, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly reported that the order had been given to stand down all exercises. There is no evidence to suggest that the Minister sought to take

operational control of the TTPS or to instruct them to cease their operations. The Minister did not receive any communication from the NOC or any other agency.

Objective (c): To inquire into the methods of investigation into the roadblock exercises

Report on the “Total Policing” Initiative of March 23, 2015

2.14. The Commissioner characterized the initial report produced by Mr. Edwards, which was subsequently laid in the House of Representatives on April 17, 2015, as a ‘preliminary’ report and further indicated that the investigator did not have sufficient time to complete a comprehensive report on the events of March 23, 2015. The Ag. CoP chose initially not to make the report public.

2.15. SSA Director, Mr. Maharaj, was primarily of the view that ACP (Ag.) Edwards was accurate in reporting that Divisional Commanders “lost control” of six (6) Divisions. He observed that if officers are going out on an exercise, it should follow that the relevant Divisional Commander is aware and in total control. He expressed the view that the investigating officer should have probed: whether Divisional Commanders were aware of the roadblocks; at what time did the roadblocks commence; and who commissioned them. Mr. Maharaj found it strange that the exercises were carried out at the same time across six (6) Divisions and senior officers were not aware. He stated that if that was the case then the events were purposefully orchestrated as publicly stated by Insp. Alexander, Snr. Supt Archie and TTPS Corporate Communications Head Ms. Ellen Lewis. As Head of TTPS Corporate Communications, Ms. Lewis indicated that in her experience, police action is deliberate and officers are dictated to act by commissioning officers prior to any activity. The Committee observed that the views of the Director, SSA and Head, Corporate Communications (TTPS) appear to support the finding of “Malicious Obedience” carried out by the officers who conducted the roadblock exercises.

Communication channels within in the TTPS

2.16. The Director, SSA, Mr. Bisnath Maharaj also found inconsistencies with reports by W/DCP Alleyne-Daly concerning communication problems on the day in question. He stated that a senior officer can at any time use the wireless communication system to clear all channels. Officers on patrol will usually have wireless communication. Mr. Maharaj admitted that it would be extraordinary

for there to be, at any given time, no form of electronic communication available to a senior officer to transmit instructions to any number of junior officers. Mr. Maharaj further indicated that he had no evidence that there was a physical breakdown in the communication system of the TTPS on the day in question. Several persons appearing before the Committee agreed that of wireless or cellular communication can be used to clear activities such as roadblocks in a matter of minutes. This was confirmed by Snr. Supt. Johnny Abrahams. In the case of March 23, 2015, this did not occur.

2.17. The lack of use of formal electronic channels for top to bottom communication on the day, and the mandate by DCP Hackett that divisional commanders appear physically at roadblock locations to assess what was happening, take control, stand the roadblocks down and clear traffic suggests that the senior ranks of the TTPS were unaware of why these events were happening and sought to reestablish control.

Investigations by the TTPS subsequent to March 23, 2015

2.18. The PCA is an independent, constitutional body that treats with matters of serious police misconduct. The Committee was advised that the PCA will be conducting an investigation into the “Total Policing” initiative. As a result of the investigations launched by the PCA, the Commissioner stated that he is ‘estopped’ from further investigation at this point in time. The Ag. CoP declared that the TTPS will pursue further action on the matter after the PCA completes its investigation and presents a report. Other branches of the TTPS identified as having members who participated in the day’s events have not conducted any investigation into such events. Additionally according to Ms. Ellen Lewis, no investigation was launched by the Executive of the TTPS in to claims made by Snr. Supt. Johnny Abraham regarding the role of the GEB in the events of March 20, 2015.

2.19. The Committee disagrees that the TTPS is ‘estopped’ from investigating the incident until the PCA investigation is completed. It was also gravely concerned by the general lack of interest by senior members of the TTPS to examine what happened and who was behind it. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to understand the basis for the assurance from the leadership of the TTPS that this would not happen again.

Special Branch

2.20. SB had no prior information of the exercises and was thus unable to forewarn the TTPS leadership.

2.21. ACP Christopher advised that since the episode of March 23, 2015, she has met with her Commanders and middle managers to enquire whether or not they were aware of any planned action. The SB provided the Committee with a report of its findings from a preliminary investigation into the certain aspects of March 23, 2015. The report was very useful in assisting the Committee with its deliberations and the SB should be encouraged to complete its investigative work into this matter.

National Operations Centre

2.22. The NOC has embarked on a review of how information is shared, with a view to improving response time and ensuring that those needing to have information quickly can be contacted and informed of developments as they occur. The Committee has received a report into the plans of the NOC in this regard.

Objective (d): To determine the resources utilised to execute the initiatives of the Police Service during the “Total Policing Day”

2.23. As previously stated, a total of twenty-one (21) roadblock exercises were conducted simultaneously, involving nineteen (19) police stations, across six (6) police divisions, inclusive of the CID and GEB of the TTPS. Officials substantiated claims by the public and media that some officers participating in the day’s events were indeed armed during the exercises.

2.24. The Committee was also made aware that in keeping with the concept of a “Total Policing Day”, officers utilized all the available resources at their disposal to enhance the policing efforts in each division. These resources would include various classes of vehicles, arms and ammunition and the multiple supplementary instruments necessary to conduct regular policing duties.

2.25. In accordance with the Committee's earlier finding regarding "Malicious Obedience" the Committee concludes that officers appeared to misuse state-provided resources to exact a misrepresentation of "Total Policing" which greatly inconvenienced the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago as a means of expressing dissatisfaction.

Objective (e): To determine the agents responsible for the roadblock exercises

Responsibility for ordering "total policing" day on March 23, 2015

2.26. The Committee noted with great concern that senior officials of the TTPS were unable to verify who gave the ultimate command that triggered the events of March 23rd 2015. Officers at the various public hearings indicated that in each division, different officers supervised the exercises or granted permission to conduct the exercises. SB had no prior knowledge of the exercises or who engineered the exercises. The same is true of intelligence agencies falling under the Ministry of National Security. The Director of the SSA, Mr. Maharaj was also unable to say who gave the order for the "day of total policing". He indicated that such an order might usually come from the Deputy Commissioner in charge of Operations. There is no evidence that DCP Phillip gave such an order. The NOC had no advanced knowledge that the day of "total policing" was going to occur. It also has no knowledge of who orchestrated the events of the said day.

2.27. When invited to speculate, Snr. Supt. Abraham suggested that the Snr. Supt. in charge of the GEB might have more information. Snr. Supt. Richardson was unhelpful in this regard, and had no information to share regarding the relationship between the GEB and the TTPSSWA (dating back to 2011 where GEB officers had a high rate of absenteeism and abandoned key posts as part of action to protest negotiation challenges) or of precursor events on March 20th 2015. He also denied that he directed the events of March 23, 2015. He acknowledged that the GEB held one roadblock on the day in question and it was conducted by Insp. Nobbee as a result of criminal information received. Snr. Supt. was informed of the exercise after it was already in progress. Insp. Ramesar and Alexander, likewise believed the events of March 23, 2015 to be a coincidence and as such no person or group of persons was responsible.

Comments made on “Beyond the Tape”

2.28. The Committee referenced comments made by Insp. Alexander on the television programme “Beyond the Tape” referring to the events of Monday March 23, 2015 as a coordinated exercise. Insp. Alexander stated that on the day in question he responded to questions to the best of his ability and based on his prior experience on how a roadblock is executed. Insp. Alexander stated he was not involved in the exercises which took place on the said day. He became aware of the exercises just before 8:00 a.m. The Committee sought to ascertain whether his comments in relation to citizens walking with their “breakfast, lunch and dinner” meant that more roadblocks had been intended. He explained that he was referring to depending on members of the community in assisting the police in fighting crime not referring to them being caught in further traffic jams.

2.29. The Committee finds it interesting that Insp. Alexander served as a spokesperson of sorts regarding the events of March 23, 2015, on various media platforms (television and radio), despite on appearing before the JSC, claiming no involvement and not becoming aware of the roadblock exercises until just before 8:00 a.m. approximately four (4) hours after the first roadblock exercise began.

Central Division, TTPS

2.30. Senior Superintendent Johnny Abraham indicated that he had no prior knowledge of the roadblock exercises which occurred on March 23, 2015. He indicated that he has been conducting roadblocks in his division since he took charge in 2014 on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday of each week. These roadblocks are done to combat the crime situation in the area. Since taking command of the Division there has been a twenty-two percent (22%) reduction in serious crimes. He indicated that roadblocks are conducted in a manner intended to minimize the disruption caused to the general public.

2.31. The Committee learned that the Snr. Supt. maintains a very close relationship with each member of his police force and civilian staff within the Division. As regards the events of March 23, 2015 the Snr. Supt. stated that if he or any of his officers and staff were made aware of the roadblocks prior, he would have informed the Executive of the TTPS. The Committee learned that he would have carried out roadblocks if the directive had come from a senior official providing that the roadblocks were not intended to cause disruptions. He also stated that a roadblock can be

dismantled in a matter of minutes. Snr. Supt. Abraham could not say why the roadblock situation lasted for as many hours as it did, and denied that what happened on March 23rd 2015 could be considered a day of total policing.

GEB and the TTPSSWA

2.32. The Committee has formed the view that the roadblock exercises conducted on March 23rd 2015 were mathematically unlikely to be an uncoordinated coincidence but appeared instead to be related to stalled negotiations. The manner in which some roadblocks were conducted appears to bear this out. The Committee is therefore of the view that the TTPSSWA appeared to have a role to play in the events of March 23rd and that this role was masked by staged activities (such as walk outs of formal meetings) designed to give the impression that whatever was done subsequently did not have the Association's sanction. The public pronouncements of senior officials of the TTPSSWA prior to March 23rd 2015 give some support to this conclusion.

2.33. The Committee identified a possible relationship between the GEB and the TTPSSWA as evidenced by intelligence provided to it and the public record of the heavy participation of GEB officers in 'sick out' action taken by the Association on or around February 14th 2011.

2.34. Snr. Supt. John Richardson, Head of the GEB, confirmed that a meeting involving the Association took place on March 19, 2015 at the offices of the GEB. However, Mr. Richardson indicated that he was not in possession of the attendance list of that meeting and recommended that the Association be contacted for said information ([See Appendix VII](#)).

2.35. It is unfortunate that the GEB, which is responsible for security of persons, materials and events of significant interest, did not have an account of the individuals who conducted the said meeting within its precincts. The meeting fell prior to an unplanned roadblock exercise conducted by GEB officers on March 20th where traffic was significantly interrupted and which was suspected to be a 'dry run' for the activities implemented on March 23, 2015.

2.36. The Committee notes the important role of the TTPSSWA in seeking the particular interests of police officers. However, the Committee has formed the view that disruptive action, either in the form of sick outs, industrial action or malicious obedience appear to be developing as permissible

features in the framework of actions open to officers when negotiations are underway or grievances are to be addressed. This is of serious concern.

2.37. In addition, officers of the GEB appear to have approached some officers in certain locations, including the Parliament, to solicit their participation in the disruptive activities of March 23rd 2015. The primary method of communication appears to be verbal and in-person. Electronic communications appear not to have been relied upon heavily, perhaps so as to evade detection.

Objective (f): To assess whether there were intelligence failures related to the early identification of the roadblock exercises

“Total Policing” Initiative – March 23, 2015

2.38. The Executive of the TTPS indicated that they were unaware that the events which occurred between 4:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. regarding twenty-one (21) simultaneous roadblock activities and involving nineteen (19) police stations, across six (6) police divisions, was going to be conducted. At 6:30 a.m. after receiving calls regarding the road blocks, the Ag. CoP at the time, W/DCP Alleyne-Daly, indicated that she contacted the Divisional Commanders to instruct their officers to stand down.

2.39. As previously stated W/DCP Alleyne-Daly specified that communication proved to be an issue and there was a delay in the order to stand down reaching the relevant officers and the situation returning to normalcy. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.), Glen Hackett further indicated that he had given the order for Division Commanders to physically go to the site of the various road blocks to issue the order. Officials confirmed that some officers were armed during the exercises. W/DCP Alleyne-Daly issued an apology to the nation prior to the investigation into the matter being initiated. Ag. CoP Williams assured the Committee that the events of March 23, 2015 will not reoccur during his tenure.

Timeframe for instructions reaching junior officers

2.40. The Ag. CoP indicated that in many instances instructions issued can reach officers on the road almost instantaneously. The Investigating Officer found no evidence that the lawful instructions of Mrs. Alleyne-Daly were disobeyed. However, the Ag. CoP at the time, W/DCP

Alleyne-Daly, declared that she was not satisfied with the length of time it took to clear the roadways. These delays may have been caused by no general stand-down order being broadcast and the requirement that divisional commanders attend and discontinue roadblocks personally.

Special Branch

2.41. The SB of the TTPS is responsible for intelligence gathering and the identification of domestic threats to peace and security. At the hearing the Ag. CoP reiterated his confidence in the intelligence arm of the TTPS. He, however, took issue with the performance of Special Branch on the day in question. The head of the SB revealed that the Unit had no information that any 'special activity' would take place on March 23, 2015, i.e. multiple roadblock exercises.

2.42. One SB officer based in the Eastern Division, Ag. Sgt. V. Waldropt, was involved in the exercises and was outfitted in uniform. Based on an inquiry launched by the ACP, SB and a resultant preliminary report, the Committee was informed that the officer participated in the exercise for ten (10) minutes and indicated to the Senior Superintendent that the roadblock was a result of recent shooting of a police officer in the district. The Officer had no instructions from his superiors to participate in the roadblock. The Committee has not been able to determine whether Sgt. Waldropt had information relating to the systemic nature of the exercises planned.

National Operations Centre and Strategic Services Agency

2.43. Officials stated that the NOC is not an intelligence gathering agency. It is a facilitative Unit which coordinates other Units across the country, inclusive of the TTPS. Therefore, the TTPS received no information from the NOC regarding planned roadblock exercises and the NOC itself was not aware of any such occurrences.

2.44. The SSA's remit does not extend to monitoring legitimate police activity and it therefore did not have any prior information about the activities planned for March 23rd 2015.

Intelligences Failures

2.45. The Committee acknowledges that it would have been very difficult to have forewarning of the initiative on March 23, 2015. There were, however, failures in the intelligence network and that

these systems can and should be improved to take preventative measures against a similar occurrence to the events of March 23, 2015.

2.46. Specifically, intelligence agencies should pay specific attention to protective services as it appears that insufficient monitoring and infiltration had been done.

Objective (g): To inquire into the status of the findings and recommendations outlined in the “Report on the ‘Total Policing’ Initiative of March 23, 2015”.

Recommendations of the Report

2.47. The Ag. CoP initially stated that some of the recommendations contained in the report produced by ACP (Ag.) Edwards could not be actioned by the TTPS, for instance the item in relation to a Commission of Inquiry on [Page 21](#) of the Edwards Report ([Appendix IV](#)). He noted, however, that the recommendation relating to a public apology by the TTPS Executive had been thoroughly carried out.

2.48. Subsequently, the Ag. CoP provided an update on each of the recommendations by letter dated May 12, 2015. This update containing the position of the TTPS on the recommendations of the Edwards Report is detailed below.

Table 2 – Responses from the CoP on Recommendations from Report on the events of March 23, 2015

	Office of the Commissioner of Police	2
<i>Recommendations from Report on the events of March 23rd 2015</i>	<i>Response from the Commissioner of Police</i>	
Recommendation 1	I have accepted this recommendation and have addressed the Divisional Commanders at two meetings. I have reminded them of their roles and responsibilities in leading and managing their divisions and the likely consequences to them for failure to perform those roles and responsibilities. However, I have not officially reprimanded them for any failure on their part for the events of Monday March 23rd 2015. Official reprimand is a regulatory sanction for breach of discipline and should only be imposed if no other sanction is envisaged for a breach. At this stage it is premature to reprimand the Divisional Commanders for any perceived failure that may have occurred on Monday 23rd March 2015.	
Recommendation 2	I have noted this recommendation and have undertaken to review the programme (“Beyond the Tape”) in order to improve its effectiveness as a channel for conveying information to the public and ultimately as the means of enhancing the police-community relationship. Inspector Alexander the co-host of the programme has done a very good job over the last year in assisting with the shaping of a positive image of the Police Service. However, his statements on the events of Monday March 23rd 2015 will be assessed to determine whether he has committed any breach of discipline.	
Recommendation 3	I have endorsed this recommendation and have conveyed complimentary remarks to the Divisional Commanders of the three (3) divisions – Central, Southern and South Western – for ensuring that the officers under their command did not participate in the events of Monday March 23rd 2015.	



Office of the Commissioner of Police

3

<i>Recommendations from Report on the events of March 23rd 2015</i>	<i>Response from the Commissioner of Police</i>
Recommendation 4	I do not support this recommendation as I believe that the Joint Select Committee on National Security can effectively enquire into the events of Monday March 23 rd 2015 in a speedier and less expensive way than a Commission of Enquiry.
Recommendation 5	This recommendation is relevant but the appropriate action to be taken against 12685 Acting Sergeant Waldropp will be determined in due course after the Police Complaints Authority completes its report.
Recommendation 6	This recommendation is accepted by me. I held a media briefing on April 8 th 2015 and apologised to the nation for the inconvenience caused to the public by the Police Service in the execution of road blocks on March 23 rd 2015.

(Extract from submission by the Ag. CoP to the JSC on National Security)

*Reference should be made to Recommendations set out in the Edwards in [Appendix IV](#) of this report.

FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE AGENTS/ENTITIES INTERVIEWED BETWEEN MAY 01 – 29, 2015

2.49. The Committee determined to give an outline of the testimony by each of the entities and individuals interviewed during its deliberations on the events of the “Total Policing” Initiative of March 23, 2015.

Public Hearing with the Executive Officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

2.50. We acknowledge the quality of the investigation performed by ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards, given the limited period of time specified for the production of the report. The Committee was satisfied with the willingness to cooperate displayed by the Ag. CoP and his Executive team. At each point of the Committee’s deliberations the Committee was met with all the information that was requested from the Ag. CoP’s office in a structured and timely manner. In this regard we congratulate the administrative services of the TTPS in its efficiency.

2.51. The Committee does not believe that the TTPS Executive was aware of the intended actions of March 23rd 2015 and are of the opinion that the investigation of the PCA should not in fact ‘estop’ the Ag. CoP from commissioning internal investigations and ensuring an expedited conclusion to this matter.

Public Hearing with the Officials of the National Operations Centre

2.52. The Committee noted that the NOC did not have prior notification of the roadblock activities. The Committee was encouraged by the continued response of the NOC in its attempts to reorient some of its systems to ensure better coverage in the event of similar recurrence.

Public Hearing with the Officials of the Strategic Services Centre

2.53. The Committee noted the remit of the SSA and that its participation in the internal monitoring of the TTPS is dependent upon whether assistance is requested by SB. The SSA was helpful to the Committee in its deliberations and provided useful guidance for further inquiry.

Public Hearing with the Officials of the Special Branch, TTPS

2.54. While the SB did not appear to have systemic knowledge of the roadblock exercises there was some knowledge by an individual officer within SB that roadblocks were taking place. The SB's subsequent reporting to the Committee was very useful.

Public Hearing with the Officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social Welfare Association

2.55. The Association attended the hearing without one invited witness, Insp. Roger Alexander. This was because they did not wish the Association to be directly associated with his comments on the *"Beyond the Tape"* television programme. The Committee noted, however, that Insp. Alexander is in fact a Vice President of the TTPSSWA and should have attended.

2.56. TTPSSWA representatives asserted that they had no prior knowledge of the events of March 23rd 2015. Insp. Ramesar and Insp. Seales indicated that they were not aware of any plan or who was in charge overall of the officers participating in the exercise. Insp. Ramesar suggested that the roadblocks, while simultaneous, were a coincidence.

2.57. Insp. Ramesar admitted to not having read the report of ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards. Insp. Seales stated that he has read the report.

2.58. Neither Insp. Ramesar nor Mr. Seales disclosed to the Committee, the meeting of March 19th 2015 between the TTPSSWA and members GEB at the Curt Lewis Conference Room which is located at the upper floor of the GEB/IATF Complex.

2.59. Neither Insp. Ramesar nor Mr. Seales said they were aware of any 'dry run' activity on March 20th 2015.

2.60. Neither Insp. Ramesar nor Mr. Seales disclosed to the Committee any correlation between officers participating in the roadblock exercises and current and former membership of the TTPSSWA Central Committee.

2.61. Correspondence was forwarded to the President of the TTPSSWA, Insp. Anand Ramesar, requesting a listing of the members of the Central Committee of the Association for the last ten (10) years. The TTPSSWA did not furnish the Committee with the information despite a stipulated deadline. The Association's President stated that the TTPSSWA was working toward completing the listing but could not commit to providing the information within the deadline requested by the Committee.

Public Hearing with the Officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

ACP (Ag.) Garfield Moore - Head of Tobago Division

2.62. The Committee was informed that ACP (Ag.) Moore gave only one interview to the media on March 23, 2015, to CNC3. In response to an inquiry into his media statements, ACP (Ag.) Moore stated that he could not recall saying that the exercise was coordinated, declaring, however, he had no evidence of such. He revealed further that it was not a coincidence and that he had no prior knowledge that the exercises were going to be carried out. Similarly, the Divisional Commander, Tobago Division was not aware that the exercises were going to be conducted. Both were featured in the media on the day and the latter was quoted as saying the exercises were 'planned'.

2.63. ACP (Ag.) Moore did not consider the events of March 23, 2015 to be a "total policing day". He admitted he was surprised by the outcome of roadblocks in terms of the massive traffic pile up which resulted. However, he was not surprised that most of the officers involved were Second Division officers and maintained that actions could have taken place without the knowledge of the Police Executive.

2.64. The ACP (Ag.) admitted that such an exercise without senior police involvement was unprecedented. Notwithstanding this, no action has been taken to ascertain why these exercises took place in his division.

Senior Superintendent Johnny Abraham – Central Division

2.65. The Committee noted the oral submissions of the Snr. Supt. and the fact that the Central Division was free of roadblocks on the day. Snr. Supt. Abraham confirmed that any instruction to

include the Central Division in the exercises of March 23, 2015 would have had to come from a senior police officer and that no such instruction ever came.

2.66. He was unaware of any plan to have system wide roadblocks on March 23rd 2015.

Inspector Roger Alexander – North Eastern Division Task Force

2.67. Efforts were made to communicate with Insp. Roger Alexander via telephone, email and written correspondence to the “Beyond the Tape” television programme and the office of the TTPSSWA. . The Committee after several attempts at communication with the Inspector and noted his absence from the May 08, 2015 public hearing at which other police officials attended. As a last resort, the Committee requested the presence of Insp. Alexander via correspondence directed through to the Ag. CoP.

2.68. At a public hearing held on May 15, 2015, Insp. Alexander indicated that he only heard of the previous request for him to appear before the Committee but claimed to have received no actual correspondence. He stated that he believed there is protocol involved in requesting his appearance and that the Committee ought to have first sought his attendance through the Ag. CoP. The Chairman of the Committee clarified that there is no requirement for the Committee’s request to go through the Ag. CoP. The Committee is empowered to “*send for persons, papers and records*” in accordance with Standing Order 111 and 71A(5) of the House of Representatives and the Senate respectively.

2.69. With regard to the request to appear made through the TTPSSWA, Insp. Alexander suggested that there may have been some miscommunication as he did not receive the invitation. The Committee noted Insp. Ramesar’s testimony that he (Ramesar) was fully aware of the request for Insp. Alexander to appear before the Committee and that the TTPSSWA had acted on same ([see item 2.51](#))

Senior Superintendent John Richardson – Guard and Emergency Branch

2.70. Snr. Supt. Richardson did not appear to be aware of any activity planned by his men for either March 20th or March 23rd 2015. The GEB, however, appeared to execute the ‘dry run’ and commenced the first roadblock exercise at 4 a.m.

2.71. The Committee was concerned that Snr. Supt. Richardson was not aware of the nature of the relationship between the TTPSSWA and members of the GEB, if any; was seemingly unaware of the participation of GEB officers in sick out action in 2011; and had not been informed in a timely manner about the unplanned roadblocks of the 20th or the 23rd March 2015.

2.72. Snr. Supt. Richardson was unaware that GEB officers vacated the precincts of the Parliament on Wednesday May 20, 2015 though the Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament were still in the building.

Ms. Ellen Lewis, Head - Corporate Communications, TTPS

2.73. The Head of Corporate Communications was unable to get clarity from senior officers on what was happening. This led to the release of a 'holding statement', prior to being briefed by the W/DCP Alleyne-Daly, that the roadblocks were part of a coordinated crime fighting effort. She advised that the TTPS is a deliberate organization and that such exercises would have been planned, organised and authorized. It did not appear to enter her contemplation that senior officers were not in control of the officers conducting the roadblocks and that her statements, while designed to avoid panic in the population might have been provably false.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. The Committee recommends that:
 - a. the TTPS complete its investigation into the roadblock exercises conducted on March 23, 2015; and
 - b. the findings of the investigation should be forwarded to the PCA to complete its own investigation as well as to the PSC.
- II. We advise that the investigations should examine the role of the GEB in the roadblock activities of March 23rd 2015.
- III. We further recommend that the relationship between the officers conducting the roadblock exercises and the TTPSSWA should be investigated. Particularly, the Committee advises that:
 - a. the membership of the TTPSSWA Central Committee for the last ten (10) years should be cross-examined with the list of officers that conducted the roadblock exercises to establish the nature of the relationship; and
- IV. The Committee recommends that the relationship between the officers conducting the roadblock exercises and those attending the TTPSSWA meeting of the 19th March 2015 at the offices of the GEB be investigated.
- V. Given his status as Vice President of the TTPSSWA and his public statements, the role of Inspector Roger Alexander in the roadblock exercises should be further investigated.
- VI. Given the suspicions surrounding the participation of the TTPSSWA in the activities of March 23, 2015, the Committee advises that the role of the TTPSSWA in the active management of the TTPS be examined.
- VII. Given their public statements and having regard to testimony to the Committee, the levels of awareness of ACP Garfield Moore and Snr. Supt. Joanne Archie of roadblock activities on March 23, 2015 should be further investigated.

- VIII. The role of the GEB in relation to provision of security of the Parliament should be immediately reviewed.
- IX. Intelligence gathering as an area of law enforcement should be given extra attention and possibly enhanced in order to prevent similar occurrences like that of March 23, 2015.
- X. We have formed the opinion that the quality of human intelligence resources which could detect internal threats should be examined and improved within the various agencies and departments responsible for matters of national security.
- XI. The PSC should examine the number of acting appointments in the TTPS and request that the Commissioner of Police (Ag.) seeks to rectify same..

CONCLUSION

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) is charged with: (i) the maintenance of law and order; (ii) the prevention and detection of crime; and (iii) the prosecution of offenders. The TTPS is both a civil and para-military body which functions in accordance with the Police Service Act Chapter 15:01., 2006. Over 6500 police officers in varying ranks and Special Reserved Police support the mandate of the Service. The TTPS is organised into 9 Divisions and 18 Branches, Squads and Units.

It is against this backdrop of information that one would find it alarming that significant divisional segments of the TTPS comprising; nineteen (19) police stations and two (2) specialist branches across six (6) police divisions participated in the highly disruptive activities of March 23, 2015. Evidence seems to support that these disruptive activities were coordinated and executed as a form of response to stalled salary negotiations. The Committee concurs with ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards in his findings that Second Division officers without the knowledge and support of the TTPS Executive, took control of their respective divisions and delivered their skewed interpretation of “Total Policing” in a display of “malicious obedience” to: (i) the CoP’s Strategic Crime Plan 2014-2016; (ii) the “Police Visibility Patrol” memo by DCP – Operations Mr. Harold Phillip; and the relevant legislation and regulations under which they operate.

On balance, the Committee concludes that some measure of control was lost in six (6) divisions of the TTPS and that the consequences were very distressing for citizens. It is also noted that, far greater damage could have been done if there were other intentions by the perpetrators.

The imminent dissolution of Parliament would have curtailed the Committee’s work in this matter. Notwithstanding this, certain progress has been made which would allow for conclusions to be drawn.

Your Committee respectfully submits its First Report for the consideration of the both Houses of Parliament.

Dr. Rolph Balgobin
Chairman

Mr. Colin Partap
Vice-Chairman

Dr. Keith Rowley, MP
Member

Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP
Member

Mr. Faris Al-Rawi
Member

Mr. Errol McLeod, MP
Member

Mr. Kwasi Mutema
Member

Ms. Donna Cox, MP
Member

Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso
Member

Mr. Brent Sancho
Member

June 08, 2015



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

**MINUTES OF THE THIRD MEETING HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM
(WEST), LEVEL 6, AND IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE
FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, IWFC,
#1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN ON FRIDAY MAY 01, 2015**

PRESENT

Committee Members

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP	Member
Dr. Keith Rowley, MP	Member
Ms. Donna Cox, MP	Member
Mr. Kwasi Mutema	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Brig. General Carl Alfonso	Member
Mr. Brent Sancho	Member

Secretariat

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Mr. Errol McLeod, MP	Member
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OFFICIALS FROM THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Stephen Williams	Commissioner of Police (Ag.)
Ms. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly	W/DCP, Administration (Ag.)
Mr. Glen Hackett	DCP, Crime and Support (Ag.)
Mr. Harold Phillip	DCP, Operations (Ag.)
Mr. Vincel Edwards	ACP, North West (Ag.)
Mr. Gary Gould	Snr. Supt., Special Branch

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

2nd Meeting held on Friday April 17, 2015

- 2.1 The Committee considered the Minutes of the 2nd Meeting held on April 17, 2015.
- 2.2 The motion for the confirmation of the Minutes was moved by Mr. Partap and seconded by Mr. Mutema.
- 2.3 The minutes were confirmed, without amendment.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 3.1 The Chairman referred to **paragraph 4.8** of the minutes and noted that the report into the “Total Policing” initiative of March 23rd, 2015 was circulated to Members via email on April 17, 2015.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: INQUIRY INTO THE "TOTAL POLICING" INITIATIVE ON MONDAY 23 MARCH, 2015

- 4.1 The Chairman indicated that links to newspaper and video news documentation concerning the “Total Policing Day” of March 23, 2015 was circulated to Members via email.
- 4.2 The list of attendees from the TTPS was also circulated and read out by the Chairman.
- 4.3 The Committee agreed that it will seek answers to the following questions/issues:
- What happened on the day in question?
 - What the TTPS is going to do about it?
 - the definition of “Total Policing”
 - Who was in charge?
 - “malicious obedience” to what end?
 - Whether there was a simulation exercise on Friday 20 March, 2015?
 - Why did it take so long for the exercises to come to an end?
- 4.4 It was agreed that the Chairman will lead off the questioning

SUSPENSION

- 5.1 The meeting was suspended at 10:35 a.m.

[Members exited the Arnold Thomasos Room (West) and proceeded to the J. Hamilton Maurice Room]

PUBLIC HEARING WITH THE COMMISSIONER OF POLICE (CoP) AND OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

- 6.1 The Chairman reconvened the public meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 10:44 a.m.
- 6.2 The Chairman welcomed officials of the TTPS and introductions were exchanged.
- 6.3 Detailed below are the issues raised and the responses which emanated from the discussions with the officials of the TTPS:
 - i. **“Malicious obedience”**
 - a. The investigating officer, Mr. Edwards was unable to determine the reasons for officers’ actions on March 23, 2015, which was described as “malicious obedience”. It was revealed that such actions did not fall within the concept of “total policing”.
 - b. The CoP (Ag.) expressed reservations regarding the use of the phrase “malicious obedience”. There was also reservation about the use of the phrase “loss of control”
 - ii. **Responsibility for ordering “total policing” day on March 23, 2015**
 - a. Officials were unable to verify who gave the ultimate order that triggered the events of the said day. In each division, different officers supervised the exercises or granted permission to conduct the exercises.
 - iii. **Police Complaints Authority**
 - a. PCA is an independent, constitutional body that treats with matters of serious police misconduct.
 - b. The PCA will be conducting an investigation into “Total Poling Day”. The report from this investigation is expected to be more comprehensive. The Commissioner characterized the initial report as a preliminary report.
 - c. The Commissioner of Police is estopped by the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) at this point in time. The CoP (Ag.) will take further action on the matter after the PCA completes its investigation and presents a report.
 - iv. **Events of Friday March 20, 2015**
 - a. The Guard and Emergency Branch of the TTPS carried out an exercise on Friday March 20, 2015. The exercise caused problems on the roadways and the Senior

Superintendent of the Branch was given a directive by the CoP (Ag.) to discontinue the exercise.

v. “Total Policing” day – March 23, 2015

- a. The executive of the TTPS were unaware that such an exercise was going to be undertaken.
- b. At 6:30 a.m. after receiving calls regarding the road blocks, the Acting Commissioner at the time W/DCP Alleyne-Daly, indicated that she contacted the Divisional Commanders to instruct their officers to stand down.
- c. Communication between the Minister of National Security and the W/DCP Alleyne-Daly was established at approximately 7:30 a.m.
- d. Communication proved to be an issue and there was a delay in the order to stand down reaching the relevant officers and the situation returning to normalcy. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Ag.), Glen Hackett gave the order for Divisional Commanders to physically go to the site of the various road blocks to issue the order.
- e. The Acting Commissioner at the time, confirmed that some officers were armed during the exercises.
- f. An apology was issued to the nation and an investigation into the matter was initiated.
- g. The CoP (Ag.) assured the Committee that the events of March 23, 2015 will not recur under his tenure.

vi. Duties of patrol officers

- a. Patrol officers under the law have authority to check vehicles on a daily basis. Specific instructions are not necessary. In the case of road blocks, some departmental direction and guidance is necessary.

viii. Concept of Total Policing Day

- a. Total policing day is a concept originating from the 2014-2016 Strategic Plan of the TTPS. The Total Policing Day involves at least once per week, a Divisional Commander using all the available resources at his disposal to assist in enhancing the policing effort in his division. The Divisional Commander gives the directive.
- b. On the day in question, the investigation revealed that the divisional commanders did not issue the directive to conduct the exercises.

ix. Timeframe for instructions reaching junior officers

- a. The CoP (Ag.) indicated that in many instances instructions issued can reach officers on the road almost instantaneously.

- b. The Investigating Officer found no evidence that the lawful instructions of Mrs. Alleyne-Daly were disobeyed.
 - c. The Acting Commissioner at the time, W/DCP Alleyne-Daly was not satisfied with the length of time it took to clear the roadways.
- x. **Special Branch**
 - a. The Special Branch of the TTPS is responsible for intelligence gathering. At the hearing the CoP (Ag.) reiterated his confidence in the intelligence arm of the TTPS. He, however, took issue with the performance of Special Branch on the day in question.
 - b. The official of Special Branch revealed that the unit had no information that any 'special activity' was going to take place on March 23, 2015, i.e. multiple roadblocks.
 - c. One Special Branch officer based in the Eastern Division was involved in the exercises, in uniform. Based on an inquiry and a resultant report, the Committee was told that the officer participated in the exercise for ten (10) minutes and indicated that the roadblock was the result of recent shootings in the district. The Officer had no instructions from his superiors to participate in the roadblock.
- xi. **National Operations Centre**
 - a. Officials stated that the NOC is not an intelligence gathering agency. It is a facilitative unit which coordinates units across the country, inclusive of the TTPS.
 - b. The TTPS received no information from the NOC of the planned roadblock exercises.
- xii. **"Total Policing Day" Report**
 - a. The CoP chose not to make the report public because he intended to deal with the matter fully before going public.
- xiii. **"Beyond the Tape" television programme**
 - a. In the interim, the TTPS continues to support the television programme "Beyond the Tape".
- xiv. **Recommendations of the Report**
 - a. Some of the recommendations contained in the report cannot be actioned by the TTPS, for instance the item in relation to a Commission of Inquiry.
 - b. The recommendation relating to an apology has been carried out.
- xv. **Clarification by the Minister of National Security**
 - a. The Minister of National Security referred to two newspaper reports and clarified that he did not order the police to stop the roadblocks, as it is not within his remit to order the TTPS on how to carry out its duty.

REQUESTED INFORMATION

- 7.1 The TTPS was asked to furnish the Committee with the following information:
- i. The actions which have been taken based on the recommendations contained in the Report on the Total Policing Day of March 23, 2015; and
 - ii. Any other information outside of the recommendations that the Commissioner of Police (Ag.) deems pertinent to the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

8.1 The Chairman thanked officials of the TTPS for attending and being forthcoming with their answers.

8.2 The adjournment was taken at 12:46 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

May 05, 2015

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

MINUTES OF THE FOURTH MEETING HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 6, AND IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, IWFC, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN ON FRIDAY MAY 08, 2015

PRESENT

Committee Members

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP	Member
Mr. Kwasi Mutema	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Brig. General Carl Alfonso	Member

Secretariat

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Mr. Errol McLeod, MP	Member
Dr. Keith Rowley, MP ⁷	Member
Ms. Donna Cox, MP	Member
Mr. Brent Sancho	Member

STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Bisnath Maharaj	Director
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OFFICIALS OF SPECIAL BRANCH - TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE

SERVICE

Mrs. Erla Christopher	ACP, Head of Special Branch
Mr. Wendell Williams	Superintendent
Mr. Raul Hercules	Assistant Superintendent – Production

⁷ Dr. Keith Rowley, MP was suspended from the House of Representatives on Wednesday 06 May, 2015.

Mr. Glenroy Phillip

Inspector

OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE

Mr. Garvin Heerah

Executive Director

Mr. Mervyn Richardson

MAC Group Coordinator

**OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE SOCIAL AND
WELFARE ASSOCIATION**

Insp. Anand Ramesar

President

Mr. Michael Seales

Secretary

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:09 a.m.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

3rd Meeting held on Friday May 01, 2015

- 2.1 The Committee considered the Minutes of the 3rd Meeting held on May 01, 2015.

- 2.2 The following amendments were proposed:

- i. Insert “(Ag.)” after “CoP” in all instances where it occurs.
- ii. Paragraph 6.3 (i) (b) (page 3): insert new sentence after “malicious obedience” “There was also issue with the phrase “lost control”.”
- iii. Paragraph 6.3 (v) (page 4): insert new c and re-letter accordingly – “Communication between the Minister of National Security and the Acting Commissioner of Police at the time was established at approx. 7:30 a.m. The Commissioner (Ag.) informed the Minister of National Security that she had already given instructions to her Deputy Commissioners to contact the Divisional Commanders.”
- iv. Paragraph 6.3 (v) (new d.) (page 4): replace “Division” with “Divisional”
- v. Paragraph 6.3 (v) (new e.) (page 4): Replace “Officials stated” with “The Acting Commissioner of Police at the time confirmed”
- vi. Paragraph 6.3 (v) (new g.) (page 4)” Replace “reoccur” with “recur”
- vii. Paragraph 6.3 (viii) (page 4): Delete “c. There is no provision for the Divisional Commanders to lose control of their men.”
- viii. Paragraph 6.3 (xi) (page 5): Replace “Center” with “Centre”

- 2.3 The motion for the confirmation of the Minutes was moved by Mr. Partap and seconded by Mr. Mutema.
- 2.3 The minutes were confirmed, with amendments.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: INQUIRY INTO THE "TOTAL POLICING" INITIATIVE ON MONDAY 23 MARCH, 2015

- 3.1 The Chairman indicated that the Committee will report before the end of the 10th Parliament. Today (May 08, 2015) will be the last day for hearings.
- 3.2 He confirmed that officials from the Strategic Services Agency (SSA), Special Branch, National Operations Centre (NOC) and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA) will be appearing before the Committee.
- 3.3 Efforts to secure the attendance of Insp. Roger Alexander proved futile. Officials of the TTPSSWA did not wish for the Inspector to appear with the Association because they did not want the statements of Insp. Alexander on "Beyond the Tape" to be associated with the TTPSSWA.
- 3.4 The Chairman requested that the comments of Insp. Alexander made on the television programme "Beyond the Tape" be transcribed and annexed to the Committee's Report.
- 3.5 Regarding the public hearing held on May 01, 2015, the Committee expressed concerns about:
- the lack of action taken by the leadership of the Police Service;
 - uncertainty about who ordered the exercises; and
 - the unwillingness to accept that there was a "loss of control"
- 3.6 The Committee agreed that it will seek answers to the following questions from the Director of SSA:
- Was there a dry run on Friday March 20, 2015?
 - Did he know? If no, why not?

NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for Friday May 15, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. to consider the draft report on the inquiry into the "Total Policing" initiative on Monday 23 March, 2015.

SUSPENSION

- 5.1 The meeting was suspended at 10:42 a.m.

[Members exited the Arnold Thomasos Room (West) and proceeded to the J. Hamilton Maurice Room]

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIAL OF THE STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY

- 6.1 The Chairman reconvened the (public) meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 10:48 a.m.
- 6.2 The Chairman welcomed the official of the Strategic Services Agency (SSA) and introductions were exchanged.
- 6.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

vii. Opening Statement

- a. Mr. Bisnath Maharaj, the Director of the SSA was out of the country on March 23, 2015. Deputy Director, Keron Ganpat was in charge in his absence. The Director departed Piarco International Airport at 6:00 a.m. There were no signs of any roadblock or disturbance on the road. He was made aware of the events verbally at approx. 2:00 p.m. He expressed concerns about the events of the day.

viii. Remit of the SSA

- b. The remit of the SSA is to gather electronic and human intelligence.
- c. The SSA stated they had no prior information regarding the events as they occurred on March 23, 2015.
- d. It is not within the remit of the Agency to control or investigate police officers carrying out their lawful duties. The Special Branch has the remit for intelligence in the Police Service. The SSA will assist if requested by Special Branch.

ix. Communication channels within in the TTPS

- d. A senior officer can at any time use the wireless system to clear channels.
- e. Officers on patrol will usually have wireless communication.
- f. Mr. Maharaj admitted that it would be strange for there to be no form of electronic communication at any given period from a senior officer to any number of junior officers.
- g. Mr. Maharaj had no evidence that there was a physical breakdown in the communication system of the TTPS on the day in question.

x. General Communication

- a. Mr. Maharaj has a direct line of communication with the CoP (Ag.), other heads of divisions and other senior police officers.

xi. Report into the events of Monday March 23, 2015

- b. Mr. Maharaj was of the view that the author of the report was not accurate in reporting that *Divisional Commanders lost control of six Divisions*. He stated that if officers are going out on an exercise, the Divisional Commander must have total control. He expressed the view that the investigating officer should have probed:
 - i. whether Divisional Commanders were aware of the roadblocks;
 - ii. at what time; and
 - iii. who instructed it?
 - c. After further questions were posed to him by Committee members, the Director recanted this statement. He indicated that he would tend to agree with the author of the report.
 - d. Mr. Maharaj found it strange that the exercises were carried out at the same time across six Divisions and senior officers were not aware. He stated that if that was the case then it was purposefully done.
- xii. “Total Policing” day – March 23, 2015**
- h. Mr. Maharaj was unable to say who gave the order for the “day of total policing”. He indicated that such an order usually comes from the Deputy Director in charge of operations.
 - i. Mr. Maharaj will be interested to know who gave the order.
- xiii. Events on Friday March 20, 2015**
- b. Mr. Maharaj did not know whether there was a dry run of the “total policing day” on Friday March 20, 2015 but he was aware that on that day there was a roadblock in the vicinity of Nestlé on the Churchill Roosevelt Highway. This roadblock appeared to be a normal roadblock.

SUSPENSION

- 7.1 The meeting was suspended at 11:24 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF SPECIAL BRANCH

- 8.1 The Chairman reconvened the public meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 11:31 a.m.
- 8.2 The Chairman welcomed officials of the Special Branch (SB) and introductions were exchanged.
- 8.3 The head of Special Branch, ACP Erla Christopher requested that proceedings not be carried live as SB is the foremost intelligence agency and she was uncertain of the nature of questioning.

SUSPENSION

9.1 The meeting was suspended at 11:36 a.m. to discuss the request of the Head of Special Branch.

HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF SPECIAL BRANCH (*in camera*)

10.1 The Chairman reconvened the meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 11:39 a.m. *in camera*.

10.2 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

i. Opening Statement

- a. SB has the mandate to provide reliable intelligence that may ensure the safety and security of citizens and the national interest. The Unit collects, processes and assesses information of subversive and potentially subversive organisations and persons. SB also advises the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security and the Minister of Foreign Affairs on all matters relating to protective security and the use of security intelligence. The CoP (Ag.) is advised on all matters that may negatively impact on national security.
- b. The SB indicated they did not receive any information of a planned action on Monday March 23, 2015. It is not uncommon for police officers to carry out roadblock duties. At no time officers under ACP Christopher's command found it necessary to channel information up to the Executive Branch concerning the roadblocks.

ii. Events of March 23, 2015

- a. ACP Christopher was unaware of who ordered the exercises of the said day. The exercises were not seen as anything other than a normal police exercise. The exercises were not planned.
- b. The SB does not know anything about the events of March 23, 2015 that is not already in the public domain.
- c. ACP Christopher does not think that this was an intelligence failure. She is convinced that the intelligence machinery works well and had her officers seen it necessary they would have reported on the roadblock exercises which took place.
- d. The Committee took issue with this statement especially considering the fact that a SB officer participated in the exercises.
- e. ACP Christopher conceded that the officer in question had some information that was not shared with the rest of SB. It is also not usual for a SB officer to participate in a roadblock. No one instructed the said officer to partake in the exercise, nor did he report his actions to his senior officer. An investigation into this is currently underway. The officer was told that a roadblock exercise was going to be conducted

because of the shooting of a police officer in the Sangre Grande area on Saturday March 21, 2015.

- f. ACP Christopher admitted that it is unusual to have a roadblock on a Monday for a shooting which took place on a Saturday.
 - g. ACP Christopher accepted that the length of time taken to stand down and the need for senior officers to be physically present in some instances, was not the usual and acceptable practice within the Police Service.
- iii. **Report on the events of Monday March 23, 2015**
 - a. ACP Christopher was notified on April 01, 2015 that the investigator requested information regarding the events of March 23, 2015 and that the Deputy Head of Special Branch was handling it. As such she did not see the need for her to deal with the matter further.
 - b. On April 02, 2015 ACP Vincel Edwards, the investigator, called ACP Christopher, but he ended the communication abruptly (duration of call - 53 seconds).
 - c. ACP Christopher thought it unfortunate that it was stated in the report that that she did not cooperate with the investigator.
- iv. **Actions taken since the events of Monday March 23, 2015**
 - a. Since the episode of March 23, 2015, ACP Christopher has met with her Commanders and middle managers to enquire whether or not they were aware of any planned action. No one had any planned information.
- v. **Report of Special Branch**
 - a. The SB is in the process of completing a report on certain aspects of the events on Monday March 23, 2015. It will be completed by Friday May 15, 2015.
 - b. ACP Christopher will be interested to know who gave the order for the roadblocks.
- vi. **Communication from Special Branch**
 - a. Brig. Gen. Alfonso member of the Committee and the Minister of National Security expressed disappointment in the SB regarding its lack of communication and the Unit having no intelligence on the events of March 23, 2015. This sentiment was echoed by the Committee.

10.3 The Chairman indicated that the Committee will examine the testimony of the SB and determine whether it will be made available to the public in a rebroadcast. He also gave a synopsis of the discussions held with the SB.

SUSPENSION

11.1 The meeting was suspended at 12:18 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE (NOC)

12.1 The Chairman reconvened the meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 12:21 p.m., in public.

12.2 The Chairman welcomed officials of the National Operations Centre (NOC) and introductions were exchanged.

12.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

i. Intelligence regarding the events of March 23, 2015

- a. The NOC stated had no advanced knowledge that the day of “total policing” was going to occur. It also has no knowledge of who orchestrated the events of the said day.
- b. At approx. 5:00 a.m. during the process of its routine operations of monitoring radio communication, the NOC noted that there were police roadblocks. The totality of the exercises became apparent at approx. 7:00 a.m.
- c. Enquiries were made to other key agencies to confirm that they were receiving the same kind of information. Confirmation was received from the ODPM, TTPS, Fire Service, Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority.

ii. National Operations Centre

- a. The NOC operates on a 24- hour basis. It has a reporting line to the Minister of National Security and other key stakeholders. Reporting occurs in the sense of information sharing and command.

iii. Events of Monday March 23, 2015

- a. Mr. Garvin Heerah, the Executive Director of the NOC was out of the country on March 23, 2015. Mr. Heerah maintained command and control while he was out the country, however, Mr. Mervyn Richardson was coordinating activities of the NOC during this time. He was informed of the events at approx. 6: 00 a.m. via text message on the day. The information received was that it was a normal police exercise.
- b. Mr. Richardson stated that at approx. 7:00 a.m. he sent out a text message to the Minister of National Security, Heads of services and all other major agencies that there were roadblocks causing traffic, and that the NOC was monitoring the traffic scene.

- c. The helicopter was also activated to look at the situation and report back to the Centre.
- d. Mr. Richardson stated that at that time, the NOC was not aware that six Divisions were involved in the exercises.
- e. The NOC became aware of an official stand down order at approx. 9:00 a.m.

iv. Actions taken since the events of Monday March 23, 2015

- a. The NOC has not submitted a report to the Minister of National Security on the events of Monday March 23, 2015. If a report is desired the NOC will be happy to facilitate such a request.
- b. The occurrences of the said day did cause concern for the NOC and the organisation has embarked on a review of how information is shared, and the accuracy and timeliness of the information. It also plans to put mechanisms in place to treat with a similar situation recurring, to ensure that it does not happen.
- c. The Committee requested to be advised in writing of the mechanisms proposed to be put in place and the authority under which such mechanisms will be instituted.
- d. The NOC plans to ensure that there is an alert system with various levels of alert depending on the situation taking place. There will be appropriate courses of action for various agencies.

SUSPENSION

13.1 The meeting was suspended at 12:51 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE SOCIAL AND WELFARE ASSOCIATION (TTPSSWA)

- 14.1 The Chairman reconvened the meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 12:54 p.m. in public.
- 14.2 The Chairman welcomed officials of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA) and introductions were exchanged.
- 14.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):
 - i. **Opening Statements**
 - a. Mr. Anand Ramesar, the President, TTPSSWA, assured they were present to assist the Committee in any way that they can. Mr. Ramesar acknowledged the Committee's request to see Insp. Roger Alexander, the Vice-President of the Association but felt that it would have been in relation to comments made on "Beyond the Tape" and the Association is not responsible for the television show. "Beyond

the Tape” is an arrangement between the Commissioner of Police, TV6 and Insp. Roger Alexander.

ii. Prior knowledge of the events of March 23, 2015

- a. The Association indicated it had no prior knowledge of the events of March 23, 2015.
- b. Mr. Ramesar was not aware of a “dry run” on the Friday prior to March 23, 2015.

iii. Statements made by Mr. Ramesar

- a. In reference to statements attributed to him and quoted in an article published in the *Trinidad Guardian* on March 04, 2015, Mr. Ramesar assured the Committee that there was no relationship between his statement regarding the stability of the Police Service and the events of March 23, 2015.
- b. His statement referred to issues such as the internal operations of the TTPS and promotion. He articulated the frustration and disenchantment of officers.

iv. Report on events of March 23, 2015

- a. Mr. Ramesar did not read the report but has been informed of its contents. Mr. Michael Seales, Secretary TTPSSWA, has read the report.
- b. The Association advised its Members to cooperate with the investigation into the “total policing” day on March 23, 2105.
- c. The organization is not a body that undertakes its own investigation into such matters. The Association has taken no step with its membership to ascertain how the events occurred.

v. Events of March 23, 2015

- a. Mr. Ramesar is not aware that any senior officer instructed the conduct of the exercises. He indicated that he was unable to agree that the simultaneous roadblocks were coincidental as he has not been in mainstream policing since 2010. He later conceded that they were coincidental.
- b. It his 15 years in the TTPS, Mr. Ramesar has not experienced a situation where 19 police stations carried out roadblock exercises simultaneously. It has caused him concern.
- c. He stated that the “total policing” initiative needed to be interrogated further by the managers and operational commanders of the Police Service to avoid the repercussions of the said day.

- d. Mr. Ramesar does not think that one person was responsible for the events of March 23, 2015. He thinks it is a case of a failed operation; the proper logistics were not in place.

vi. **TTPSSWA**

- a. The Association represents both First and Second Division officers, ranging from constable to Assistant Commissioner of Police.

REQUESTED INFORMATION

15.1 Various officials were asked to furnish the Committee with the following information in writing:

NOC

The plans and initiatives which the Director indicated that the NOC will implement to ensure that the events of Monday 23 March, 2015 will not recur as well as the authority under which the NOC will be able to undertake such plans and initiatives.

Special Branch

- i. The report of the Special Branch on the events of Monday 23 March, 2015 (relevant to *the Total Policing initiative*); and
- ii. A report on the action/s taken in relation to Acting Sergeant Waldropt, if any.

ADJOURNMENT

16.1 The adjournment was taken at 1:29 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

May 14, 2015

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

MINUTES OF THE FIFTH MEETING HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM (WEST), LEVEL 6, AND IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, IWFC, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN ON FRIDAY MAY 15, 2015

PRESENT

Committee Members

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP	Member
Mr. Kwasi Mutema	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Brig. General Carl Alfonso	Member
Mr. Errol McLeod, MP	Member

Secretariat

Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Dr. Keith Rowley, MP ⁸	Member
Ms. Donna Cox, MP	Member
Mr. Brent Sancho	Member

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Garfield Moore	ACP (Ag.), Head of Tobago
Division	
Mr. Johnny Abraham	Senior Superintendent
Mr. Roger Alexander	Inspector

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.1 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:13 a.m.

⁸ Dr. Keith Rowley, MP was suspended from the House of Representatives on Wednesday 06 May, 2015.

- 1.2 Apologies were given for Ms. Cox.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

4th Meeting held on Friday May 08, 2015

- 2.1 The Committee considered the Minutes of the 4th Meeting held on May 08, 2015.

- 2.2 The following amendments were proposed:

- ix. Paragraph 3.1 (page 3): replace “he will like” with “that”
- x. Paragraph 3.5 (page 3): insert “of the Police Service” after the word “leadership”
- xi. Paragraph 6.3 (ii) (b) (page 4): insert “stated they” after the acronym “SSA”
- xii. Paragraph 10.2 (i) (b) (page 6): insert “indicated they” after the acronym “SB”
- xiii. Paragraph 10.2 (iv) (a) (page 7): insert new sentence “No one had any information” at the end of the first sentence.
- xiv. Paragraph 10.2 (vi) (a) (page 7): insert “Brig. Gen. Alfonso member of the Committee and” at the beginning of sub paragraph “a”. Also insert new sentence “This sentiment was echoed by the Committee.” After the first sentence.
- xv. Paragraph 12.3 (i) (a) (page 8): insert “stated” after the acronym “NOC”.
- xvi. Paragraph 12.3 (iii) (page 9): delete e. “The Minister of National Security did not see the message from Mr. Richardson. He indicated that a call would have been preferable.”
- xvii. Paragraph 14.3 (ii) (a) (page 10): Insert “indicated” after the word “Association”.

- 2.3 The motion for the confirmation of the Minutes was moved by Mr. Partap and seconded by Mr. Mutema.

- 2.3 The minutes were confirmed, with amendments.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: INQUIRY INTO THE "TOTAL POLICING" INITIATIVE ON MONDAY 23 MARCH, 2015

- 3.1 The Committee viewed a video recording of Insp. Alexander on television programme “Beyond the Tape” on March 23, 2015, stating that the exercises were coordinated.
- 3.2 The Chairman informed the Committee that letters were sent to each officer in charge of the various roadblocks asking on whose authority the roadblocks were conducted. The written responses were circulated to Members and they were invited to briefly peruse the document.

- 3.3 The Chairman indicated that ACP (Ag.), Tobago Division, Snr. Supt. Johnny Abraham, Central Division and Insp. Roger Alexander of the North Eastern Division Task Force and host of "Beyond the Tape" will be appearing before the Committee.
- 3.4 Additional information received from the CoP (Ag.) on May 13, 2015 was circulated to members of the Committee via email on May 14, 2015. Additional information received from the National Operations Center was circulated to Members at the meeting.
- 3.5 The Committee was informed that the Head of Special Branch had requested an extension for the submission of information requested by the Committee.

NEXT MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled for Friday May 29, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. to consider the draft report on the inquiry into the "Total Policing" initiative on Monday 23 March, 2015.

SUSPENSION

- 5.1 The meeting was suspended at 10:42 a.m.

[Members exited the Arnold Thomasos Room (West) and proceeded to the J. Hamilton Maurice Room]

PUBLIC HEARING WITH ACP (Ag.) GARFIELD MOORE

- 6.1 The Chairman reconvened the (public) meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 10:45 a.m.
- 6.2 The Chairman welcomed the official, ACP (Ag.) Moore of the Tobago Division, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.
- 6.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

xiv. Opening Statement

- a. ACP (Ag.) Moore has been a police officer for 36 years and has never witnessed an event as occurred on March 23, 2015. He admitted that discretion was not used in the conduct of exercises on the day in question. It was indicated that it was not a normal occurrence.

xv. Events of March 23, 2015

- e. ACP (Ag.) Moore stated that he cannot recall saying the exercise was coordinated, declaring he has no evidence of such. He revealed further that it was not a coincidence and that he had no prior knowledge of the exercises were going to be carried out. Similarly, the Divisional Commander, Tobago Division was not aware that the exercises were going to be conducted.

- f. ACP (Ag.) Moore does not consider the events of March 23, 2015 to be a “total policing day”. He admitted he was surprised by the outcome of roadblocks in terms of the massive traffic pile up which resulted. However, he was not surprised that most of the officers involved were second division officers and maintained that actions could have taken place without the knowledge of the police executive. The ACP (Ag.) did concede that it has not happened before and that it has happened since.
 - g. ACP (Ag.) Moore denied that the executive lost control of the service on the day in question.
 - h. The Committee learned that entries were made at the Scarborough Police Station indicating officers that had gone on roadblocks.
 - i. Deputy Commissioner (Ag.) Hackett did not contact ACP (Ag.) Moore directly rather he contacted the Divisional Commander, Archie instructing her to dismantle the roadblocks. The ACP (Ag.) along with Divisional Commander personally dismantled the roadblocks. They commenced this process prior to receiving the order from Deputy Commissioner (Ag.) Hackett. The ACP (Ag.) indicated they were physically present to ensure that the roadblocks were stopped and that traffic was flowing freely.
 - j. No effort was made prior to going physically to the roadblock sites to communicate the officers who were conducting the exercises. No reason was given for this decision. No enquiries were made by ACP (Ag.) Moore to ascertain who authorized the roadblocks. He deferred to the investigating officer DCP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards.
 - k. It was revealed that instructions should have come from Deputy Commissioner Hackett (Ag.) to ACP (Ag.) Moore rather than to Divisional Commander Archie.
 - l. ACP (Ag.) Moore stated that Divisional Commander Archie did not authorize the roadblock exercises in her division.
 - m. The ACP (Ag.) indicated he became aware that similar exercises were taking place in Trinidad around 8:00 a.m.
 - n. The Committee was informed that ACP (Ag.) Moore gave only one interview to the media on March 23, 2015, to CNC3.
- xvi. **Conducting roadblocks**
 - h. Station Commanders can carry out exercises without instructions coming from the executive of the Police Service.
 - i. The ACP (Ag.) stated that sometimes there are snap roadblocks and in those instances the sergeant may not be aware but is made aware thereafter.
- xvii. **Communication of orders within the TTPS**

- a. The Committee was informed that orders are communicated in different ways within TTPS. For instance via wireless broadcast, phones and written correspondence.
- b. Officers who participated in the roadblock exercises on March 23, 2015 had access to wireless communication in their vehicles.

SUSPENSION

7.1 The meeting was suspended at 11:34 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT JOHNNY ABRAHAM

8.1 The Chairman reconvened the public meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 11:37 a.m.

8.2 The Chairman welcomed Snr. Supt. Johnny Abraham, Central Division, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

8.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

i. Central Division and the events of March 23, 2015

- c. Senior Superintendent Johnny Abraham had no prior knowledge of the roadblock exercises which occurred on March 23, 2015. He indicated that he has been conducting roadblocks in his division since he took charge in 2014 on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday each week. These roadblocks are done to combat the crime situation in the area. Since taking command of the Division there has a 22 per cent reduction in serious crimes. He indicated that roadblocks are conducted with the intention of minimizing the disruption caused to the general public.
- d. Snr. Supt. Abraham indicated that no officer in his Division can set up a roadblock without his knowledge.
- e. As regards the events of March 23, 2015 the Snr. Supt. stated that if he was made aware of the roadblocks prior he would have informed the senior officers. The Committee learned that he would have carried out roadblocks if the directive had come from a senior official providing that the roadblocks were not intended to cause disruptions.
- f. The official indicated that he received calls concerning the traffic and contacted the Assistant Commissioner, Traffic Branch to inquire about any roadblocks or accidents on the highway. The response was no. At around 11:00 a.m. Snr. Supt. Abraham was contacted by the Acting Commissioner of Police at the time, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly to determine whether there were any roadblocks in his Division.
- g. He indicated that he was surprised that the Ag. CoP at the time was unaware of the roadblock exercises.

- [illegible]

SUSPENSION

- 9.1 The meeting was suspended at 12:10 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH INPSECTOR ROGER ALEXANDER

- 10.1 The Chairman reconvened the public meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 12:13 p.m.
- 10.2 The Chairman welcomed Insp. Roger Alexander, Head of the North Eastern Division Task Force, Vice-President of the TTPSSWA and host of “Beyond the Tape”.

10.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

vi. Comments made on “Beyond the Tape”

- d. The Committee referenced comments made by Insp. Alexander on the television programme “Beyond the Tape” referring to the events of Monday March 23, 2015 as a coordinated exercise. Insp. Alexander stated that on the day in question he responded to questions to the best of his ability and based on his prior experience on how a roadblock is coordinated. He was expressing an opinion.

vii. Events of Monday March 23, 2015

- f. Insp. Alexander was unable to say who coordinated the roadblock exercises of the said day, stating that in many instances such exercises can take place at a moment’s notice. He indicated that he had no prior knowledge of the events which took place. Since the events he has been unable to pinpoint who was responsible. He suggested that the conduct of the roadblock exercises may have been a coincidence. The official recalled that in the past he has gone on operations and found another unit present. However, the Committee noted that it was not 6 divisions as occurred on March 23, 2015. He admitted that he has never experienced roadblock exercises of that magnitude before.
- g. The Committee learned that Insp. Alexander was not involved in the exercises which took place on the said day. He became aware of the exercises just before 8: 00 a.m.
- h. Insp. Alexander clarified comments made on the day in question regarding citizens walking with their “breakfast, lunch and dinner”. He informed the Committee that he was referring to depending on members of the community assisting the police in fighting crime not referring to them being caught in further traffic jams.
- i. The Insp. agreed that the events of March 23, 2015 caused serious inconvenience to the people of Trinidad and Tobago. He also admitted that the public confidence in the TTPS was affected to some extent.
- j. The Committee was informed that the official has no information that the events were coordinated by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association.
- k. Insp. Alexander stated that the exercises of March 23, 2015 was somewhat of a success in terms of policing. There was a level of control. He admitted re-strategization of the process was needed, given the level of discomfort experienced by citizens. He was surprised that the CoP (Ag.) at the time was not aware of the massive operation taking place.

viii. Report on the events of March 23, 2015

- e. The official admitted that he was confused by his inclusion in the recommendations of the Report by ACP (Ag.) Vincel Edwards, especially considering that he was not mentioned elsewhere in the report. He indicated that he was not interviewed by the investigator.

- f. The Committee learned that at present he is not assisting with any report into the matter.
- ix. **Prior request of the Committee for Insp. Alexander to appear before the JSC**
 - d. Insp Alexander indicated that he had only heard of the previous request for him to appear before the Committee, he received no actual correspondence. He stated that there is protocol involved in requesting his appearance. The Chairman of the Committee clarified that there is no requirement for the Committee's request to go through the CoP (Ag.). With regard to the request made through the TTPSSWA, he suggested that there may have been some miscommunication.

REQUESTED INFORMATION

11.1 ACP (Ag.) Moore was asked to furnish the Committee with the following information in writing:

- i. The records of who ordered the roadblocks in each police station falling under the Tobago Division.

ADJOURNMENT

12.1 The adjournment was taken at 1:10 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

May 28, 2015

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE SIXTH MEETING HELD IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM (EAST), LEVEL 6, AND IN THE J. HAMILTON MAURICE ROOM, MEZZANINE FLOOR, OFFICE OF THE PARLIAMENT, TOWER D, IWFC, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN ON FRIDAY MAY 29, 2015

PRESENT

Committee Members

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso	Member
Mr. Errol McLeod, MP	Member

Secretariat

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary

ABSENT

Dr. Keith Rowley, MP ⁹	Member
Ms. Donna Cox, MP	Member
Mr. Brent Sancho	Member
Mr. Kwasi Mutema	Member (excused)

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Ms. Ellen Lewis	Head, Corporate Communications
Mr. John Richardson	Senior Superintendent – Head, Guard and Emergency Branch

COMMENCEMENT

- 1.3 The Chairman called the meeting to order at 10:18 a.m.
- 1.4 Apologies were given for Mr. Mutema.

⁹ Dr. Keith Rowley, MP was suspended from the House of Representatives on Wednesday 06 May, 2015.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

5th Meeting held on Friday May 15, 2015

- 2.1 The Committee considered the Minutes of the 5th Meeting held on May 15, 2015.
- 2.2 The motion for the confirmation of the Minutes was moved by Mr. Partap and seconded by Mr. McLeod.
- 2.3 The minutes were confirmed, without amendments.

PRE-HEARING DISCUSSIONS RE: INQUIRY INTO THE "TOTAL POLICING" INITIATIVE ON MONDAY 23 MARCH, 2015

- 3.1 After discussions the Committee concluded that a strong relationship exists between the Guard and Emergency Branch (GEB) and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA). Clarification was sought on the existing relationship between the Parliament and the GEB.
- 3.2 The Committee decided that it has reached its limit re the inquiry into the “total policing” initiative on Monday 23 March, 2015 given the imminent dissolution of Parliament. The Committee acknowledged that it knows what happened but lacks the evidence and a confession. Recommendations will be made to the Police Complaints Authority (PCA) and the Police Service Commission (PSC).
- 3.3 The Chairman directed members to the report of the Special Branch, particularly the conclusion of the report and bullet point 4 on page 3.
- 3.4 The Committee learned that officials of the TTPSSWA had a meeting with the Minister of National Security to indicate that the Association will be accepting the CPO’s offer.
- 3.5 The Chairman informed the Committee that Ms. Ellen Lewis, Head – Corporate Communications at the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) and Snr. Supt. John Richardson, of the GEB will be appearing before the Committee.
- 3.6 The Committee listened to a recording of Ms. Ellen Lewis stating the exercises of March 23, 2015 was planned and scheduled.

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE

- 4.1 The Committee agreed that it will consider the Draft Report via email. It is the intention of the Committee to report to Parliament by June 10, 2015.

SUSPENSION

5.1 The meeting was suspended at 10:45 a.m.

[Members exited the Arnold Thomasos Room (East) and proceeded to the J. Hamilton Maurice Room]

PUBLIC HEARING WITH ELLEN LEWIS – HEAD, CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

6.1 The Chairman reconvened the (public) meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 10:51 a.m.

6.2 The Chairman welcomed the official, Ms. Ellen Lewis Head - Corporate Communications, TTPS.

6.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

xviii. Events of March 23, 2015

- o.** Ms. Lewis gave her first interview regarding the “total policing day” on March 23, 2015 between 6:35p.m. – 6:45 p.m. She became aware of the roadblock exercises via morning talk show programmes on television. Ms. Lewis proceeded to make enquiries of the ACP Mobile, DCP Operations, ACP South and the Snr. Supt. South, who were all unaware of what was taking place.
- p.** Ms. Lewis gave a holding statement in an attempt to allay public concern and assure the public that the inconvenience was short-term. She stated that the exercises were planned and scheduled based on her understanding that at operational and district command levels, everything is planned.
- q.** She admitted that at the time she was not of the opinion that there was cause for major concern. The official maintained that if she was to tell the truth regarding the roadblock exercises she would have caused concern among the public. Ms. Lewis stated she still does not regret her statements on the morning of March 23, 2015.
- r.** The Committee noted that the media would not have been aware that Ms. Lewis was issuing a holding statement. However, she maintained that this was a usual practice. The Committee further noted that Ms. Lewis was operating based on assumptions.
- s.** She still believes the exercises were planned and scheduled. Ms. Lewis does not believe that the events of Monday March 23, 2015 were a coincidence. However she does not know who is responsible for commissioning the exercises. Concern was expressed that the persons responsible have not yet been found. She stated that the onus was on the TTPS to determine the person(s) responsible.
- t.** Communication was established with the acting Commissioner of Police (Ag. CoP) at the time at approximately 7:00 a.m. and Ms. Lewis was able to gain a better understanding of the situation that was unfolding. She stated that she was surprised

by the events which were occurring. By this time the head of Corporate Communications had already given two interviews.

- u. The head of Corporate Communications was subsequently informed that the Snr. Supt. of the South Division had taken steps to have the roadblocks stopped in his Division.
- v. The official admitted that prior to the events of March 23, 2015 there were roadblock exercises on March 20, 2015, however, they were confined to a smaller area. Ms. Lewis was unwilling to define these events as a “precursor” to what occurred on March 23, 2015.

xix. Investigation into events of March 23, 2015

- a. Ms. Lewis stated that investigations were not yet complete, and made reference to the ongoing investigation of the PCA. She said that she was unsure of the rules governing internal investigations of the TTPS.
- b. She has not received any direction by way of a response to statements made by Snr. Supt. Johnny Abraham. She did reveal that she has not heard a similar view expressed and that she was surprised by the identification of a particular unit. No investigation has been launched regarding the claims made by Snr. Supt. Abraham and Ms. Lewis conceded that it would be surprising if it was not being investigated.
- c. She admitted that she is not familiar with the duties and responsibilities of the GEB.
- d. Ms. Lewis is new to her post, she entered the TTPS as a civilian in 2014. She is not of the opinion that she is being kept out of the TTPS inner circle. She indicated that while she has not yet been informed of matters it does not mean that nothing is being done.

xx. Post March 23, 2015

- a. The Committee learned that post March 23, 2015 Ms. Lewis has been instructed to do what is necessary to build public confidence and address the issue of police legitimacy with respect to how officers conduct their work. She has been engaging staff about how they go about policing and reducing crime.
- b. The Corporate Communications head stated that there is value to the television programme “Beyond the Tape”. It promotes community interaction. However, Ms. Lewis views the statements of Insp. Roger Alexander on the programme regarding the events of March 23, 2015 as highly unfortunate. She revealed that discussions have been held with the Inspector informing him that such statements ought not to have been made and reminding him of his roles and responsibilities.
- c. In a closing statement Ms. Lewis stated that events of March 23, 2015 represents a stain on the character of the TTPS but urged the public not to be swayed by one

incident. She, however, acknowledged that there were deficiencies in operations which allowed the events of the said day to occur.

SUSPENSION

7.1 The meeting was suspended at 11:50 a.m.

PUBLIC HEARING WITH SENIOR SUPERINTENDENT JOHN RICHARDSON

8.1 The Chairman reconvened the public meeting in the J. Hamilton Maurice Room at 11:58 a.m.

8.2 The Chairman welcomed Senior Superintendent John Richardson, GEB, TTPS.

8.3 Key points and responses (see Verbatim Notes attached):

x. Opening Statements

a. Snr. Supt. John Richardson has been the head of the GEB since February 27, 2015.

xi. Roadblock/Road check exercises conducted by the GEB

i. Since Snr. Supt. Richardson has assumed responsibility for the unit, the GEB has held roadblocks on its own. One roadblock has been conducted per week. The GEB officers wear distinguishing uniforms and are well armed. However, he stated that he did not give instructions for a roadblock to be held on March 23, 2015.

j. On March 23, 2015, personnel performed what was termed road check exercises in response to information received. These road checks were authorised by Insp. Nobbee. Snr. Supt. Richardson was informed of the exercises at approx. 6:15 a.m. He called Insp. Nobbee after receiving information from his line Assistant Commissioner, Alleyne to stand down. Snr. Supt. Richardson subsequently gave instructions to abort the exercises. The exercises were aborted at approx. 6:45 a.m. The officers returned to the station bet. 7:00 - 7:10 a.m.

k. The officers who took part in the road check exercises were not successful in apprehending the persons they were searching for.

l. Snr. Supt. Richardson is not troubled that he was informed after the exercise was already underway. The Committee was informed that there is a degree of autonomy and that the Insp. has used his discretion and conducted roadblocks/road checks previously. It is routine.

m. However, the Committee noted that despite Snr. Supt. Richardson's claims that he would be informed of an exercise as soon as possible, he was the one who contacted his junior officer after receiving information from his superior.

- n. A report has not been received regarding the road check exercises of March 23, 2015.
- o. The Snr. Supt. maintained that his men acted honourably on the day and were working towards the operations plan of the TTPS. He stated that the GEB was not responsible for the events of the “total policing” day and that statements to the contrary would be untrue.

xii. GEB on Wednesday 20 May, 2015

- a. When asked about the walk out of the GEB after a sitting of the House of Representatives on Wednesday 20 May, 2015 while the Prime Minister and other Members of Parliament were still present, Snr. Supt. Richardson stated that if it was true that it will be disturbing. He indicated that he will make an inquiry into the matter.

xiii. Events of March 20, 2015

- c. Snr. Supt. Richardson stated that he was unaware of a dry run on March 20, 2015 but said that the GEB did conduct an exercise on the said day. On this day 1 person was charged for driving a vehicle without a certificate of insurance, another person was arrested on an outstanding warrant and several stop and search forms were filled out.

xiv. Relationship between the GEB and TTPSSWA

- e. The Committee made reference to an intimate relationship between the GEB and the TTPSSWA spanning several years. Reference was made to GEB officers walking off the job and leaving the Prime Minister and Attorney General’s residences unguarded. It was described as a form of “industrial action”. The TTPSSWA protected the interests of these officers. The official claimed to not have information regarding this incident in 2011.
- f. Snr. Supt. Richardson admitted to a meeting between the GEB and officials of the TTPSSWA on March 19, 2015, but said that he was not part of the meeting and is unaware of who were the persons in attendance. The meeting was held in a conference room at GEB headquarters. The meeting started in the morning but he was unable to give a specific time.
- g. Snr. Supt. Richardson maintained that the GEB has not been involved in any action to bring harm or discomfort to members of the public. He further stated that the unit will not do anything to embarrass the government or the TTPS.

xv. General observations

- a. The Committee expressed concern about the attitude and demeanor of the witness.

- 8.4 Snr. Supt. Richardson was asked to supply the Committee with the names of the persons who were in attendance at the meeting between the officers of the GEB and the TTPSSWA.

ADJOURNMENT

- 9.1 The adjournment was taken at 12:51 p.m.

I certify that these Minutes are true and correct.

Chairman

Secretary

June 08, 2015

APPENDIX II

NOTES OF EVIDENCE

**EXCERPT OF UNREVISED VERBATIM NOTES OF THIRD MEETING
OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT APPOINTED
TO REPORT ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS
ROOM (WEST), SIXTH FLOOR, TOWER D, INTERNATIONAL
WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN,
ON FRIDAY, MAY 01, 2015 AT 10.10 A.M.**

PRESENT

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar	Member
Mr. Brent Sancho	Member
Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso	Member
Mr. Kwesi Mutema	Member
Dr. Keith Rowley	Member
Miss Donna Cox	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel	Clerk of the House
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Research Assistant
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Parliamentary Intern

ABSENT

Mr. Errol Mc Leod	Member
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**OFFICIALS FROM THE
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE**

Mr. Stephen Williams	Commissioner of Police (Ag.)
Ms. Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly	W/DCP, Administration (Ag.)
Mr. Glen Hackett	DCP, Crime and Support (Ag.)

Mr. Harold Phillip

DCP, Operations (Ag.)

Mr. Vincel Edwards

ACP, North West (Ag.)

Mr. Gary Gould

Snr. Supt., Special Branch

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Ladies and gentlemen, members, welcome to this public element of the meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security. Today we are treating with the report on Total Policing and we have with us some members of the police service hierarchy. So let me just invite the Acting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Stephen Williams, to introduce his team and then we can proceed with some questions.

Mr. Williams, welcome.

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): Thank you very much, Chairman Dr. Balgobin and to all the other members of the National Security Committee. It is in fact a privilege and honour to be here this morning to share with you on a matter of interest to the nation and to the Parliament. Present with me today is Acting Deputy Commissioner Alleyne-Daly, Acting Deputy Commissioner Harold Phillip, Acting Deputy Commissioner Glen Hackett. The officer who was assigned to investigate the matter, Acting Asst. Commissioner Vincel Edwards, and the operational head of the Special Branch Senior Superintendent Gary Gould.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Well welcome to you and your team. I will now ask the members of the Committee to briefly introduce themselves and I will start with MP Donna Cox.

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

10.45 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Now, that the introductions are out of the way, the Committee has before it a report that was laid in Parliament on total policing. The event described in the report relate to Monday, March 23, 2015. We will take the report as read and we note the presence, I believe, of the author of the report, Mr. Edwards, that is you.

And so, the first question I would like to pose to you and to the Acting Commissioner of Police, and it relates to your conclusion about malicious obedience. What I would like to ask is: if that is true, if it is true to say that the officers acted and their actions can be described as being maliciously obedient, why did they act that way, in pursuit of what end?

Mr. Edwards: Good morning to all. Why did they act? That is a very important and interesting question. My mandate was to find the cause and I looked at a number of factors, including the

so-called total policing day, including the concept that there was some industrial action. And I really did not find any evidence to identify the fact that it was industrial action. What I found is that the officers basically said that they were conducting a total policing day. That is what they said. And my conclusion was that they acted maliciously in conducting the total policing day concept. In reality, that is not how the concept work but that is how they acted.

Mr. Chairman: But why did they do that? Unless this is the most amazing of coincidences, you would conclude that they have acted maliciously, and you have, and so what I am asking is: why did they do so? You note a correlation between dissatisfaction with the progress of negotiations with the CPO.

Mr. Edwards: Yeah.

Mr. Chairman: Do you think that that is a potential reason for malicious obedience? Or is there—if not that, then what would cause officers to act this way?

Mr. Edwards: Well, it is unfortunate that they are acted in that manner, but I could not pinpoint the exact reason why they acted in that manner. What I found, as I said, is that they acted in that manner but I cannot say the reason why they acted. They claimed that they were conducting the whole concept about total policing day. When I looked at the concept, it really did not—their action did not fall totally within the concept.

Mr. Chairman: Is there anything, Commissioner, you want to add? Why do you think it—I am not asking for some definitive conclusion, what I am asking is: why do you think they did this?

Commissioner Williams (Ag): Thank you very much, Chairman. I have many, many thoughts on the matter but sometimes that is the difficulty with things. Posing your opinions on matters can be sometimes misleading and can create added conflict, confusion. As a trained attorney, I have views generally but I always rely on seeking out the evidence. As we work on a day-to-day basis, every time there is a murder—crime which is the greatest concern to this nation. Every time there is a murder, we have opinions.

We have opinions who would have caused the death of another citizen. Almost every single murder. But we cannot act on only those opinions, we have to act on the evidence, so we have to go searching for the evidence. In all fairness to the investigator, he was given two weeks to investigate this matter, and he did an excellent job for two weeks. I am not in a position to say what else he needed, but I am saying from my position, as head of the organization, if you give

somebody two weeks to investigate a matter like this and he would have done the work he did, he did an excellent job. Maybe more time could have given him the opportunity to find out more which would put us in the best position to give the Committee the answer to the question that the Committee has posed.

What we can do is that we can shape the factors of the environment and then the Committee might be free to form its own viewpoints and conclusions. But it is important for us to stick to facts—from my side, to stick to facts. I would like the opportunity to first put the entire situation by way of the background to issues like total policing because there may be perceptions formed and those perceptions can be reshaped if more information is made available to the Members of the Committee and generally to the public.

Dr. Rowley: Good morning, officers all. Welcome to the Committee and I trust that your presence here will assist us in further understanding what has happened. Let me focus specifically on the issue. On the day when that event took place, that kind of event did not take place the day before, the month before or the year before, to the best of my knowledge. I stand corrected. Since I have been in this country, especially in public administration, I am not aware that this particular type of operation has ever taken place. And the question I would like to ask is: who gave the order for it to have taken place on that day and at that time? Was the investigator able to determine where that order came from?

Also, you speak about evidence, evidence comes in a variety of forms and one aspect of the evidence that is available to the public is that the Police Service, Second Division in particular, were engaged in very aggressive representation of an industrial nature. And there was a particular spokesperson for the police Second Division, who spoke volumes about this event and its relationship to the industrial action. Would you consider that evidence in trying to find out what was the purpose of the malice to which you refer? I hope that was clear; you saw the questions in that.

I would like to put that to Mr. Vincel Edwards who was the investigator. Who gave the order? Were you able to determine who gave the order to trigger this at the time and on that day?

Mr. Edwards: Throughout the investigation, I interviewed a number of persons and there were a number of roadblocks throughout the East-West Corridor, and in each area there were different officers who supervised or granted permission to do those exercises, and I think I would have identified them in the document. The ultimate order in itself, I just could not find that ultimate

person. I found who gave the order for the varying areas and those I have identified.

Dr. Rowley: Are you satisfied that all these Divisions, scattered all over the country, just acted spontaneously on that day or are you of the view that a co-ordinating order would have come from somewhere?

Mr. Edwards: Well, as the Commissioner said, we all have views and certainly, I have my views about it. But again—

Dr. Rowley: Would you like to share those views with this Committee?

Mr. Edwards: Well, I stand by my report and all my views are written in the report. Personal views, I would not like to give personal views because I may not have evidence to reflect those personal views. As far as the actual so-called total policing day, I have identified who are the persons or persons involved and who are the persons who would have directed or supervised those—well, the varying roadblocks throughout the country.

Mr. Chairman: So, Mr. Edwards, just to sort of build on Dr. Rowley's question, your report concludes that what occurred is a manifestation of something called malicious obedience.

Mr. Edwards: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And therefore, your report implies heavily that this was not a coincidence but, in fact, the result of a co-ordinated action across six Divisions of the Police Service.

Mr. Edwards: Well, it is difficult to say it is a co-ordinated one but it is also difficult to say it is not. The point is—

Mr. Chairman: Well, let me refer to page 19, then, of your report which says:

“The point to note is that for a brief moment that is between 4.00 am and 10.00 am on Monday 23rd March, 2015, the First Division Officers who were in charge of six Police Divisions and Second Division Officers who were in charge of Police Stations within the six named Police Divisions”—bold and underline—“**lost control of their Divisions and Stations respectively to a small group of Junior Officers.**”

Mr. Edwards: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You then further state:

“This small group of Junior Officers took control of six Police Divisions in Trinidad and Tobago and conducted their brand of malicious obedience to the Total Policing Day...”

I am just following on from Dr. Rowley's question as I try to clarify, I try to reconcile your answers to him with what is written in your report. I will just leave you to think about that for a

moment. Mr. Al-Rawi.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Good morning to you, Mr. Chairman, good morning, gentlemen, from the TTPS. Thank you so much for coming forward in this very novel and first-at-work Committee of its kind. May I enquire whether there is a second more fulsome report insofar as your report suggests and states that you were not able to obtain information because of a dispute of seniority from the persons at Special Branch?

11.00 a.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And insofar as your report bears no reflection of the National Operations Centre, which is operating under the Office of the Prime Minister and which is in full coordination of some aspects of coordination, obviously the TTPS has its own autonomy. Just by way of my first question to you: is there a fulsome further report, insofar as this report is lacking in clarity as to some aspects?

ACP Edwards: It is difficult to say if there would be a second and fulsome report. The reason being, I was directed to submit my report on a particular day. I did that and I handed it over to the Commissioner. For me to continue, I have to await further direction from the Commissioner and to—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Al-Rawi: Perhaps, the Commissioner could answer that question then? This report stops at a certain point. It indicates where loopholes exist in the provision of information and it does not speak to the NOC operation, insofar as it may or may not have had intersection.

It also draws a conclusion in relation to whether the event of total policing amounts to industrial action, which is not an opinion of somebody experienced in industrial relations law. Certainly the Industrial Court has had numerous interpretations of what amounts to industrial action and it is not only a reflection upon a particular section of the Industrial Relations Act. So, to you, Acting Commissioner, will there be second report to deal with the gaps in information identified by the investigating officer?

Secondly, will there be any form of investigation in the industrial court as to this kind of action? Because I can tell you, I am well aware of situations like this which have gone to the industrial court for further opinion.

Commissioner Williams (Ag): Well I just want to share with the entire committee, that the investigator is not what I describe as the normal senior police officer in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. This investigator is a trained attorney with a Master's degree in law. He is not

one of the ordinary investigators. The issue of his viewpoints is shaped by his training. I wanted to put that on the record.

Now, as it relates to going forward with any additional report, the Commissioner is estopped by the Police Complaints Authority, which is the constitutional body, independent body, with responsibility for dealing with matters of serious police misconduct.

The Director of the Police Complaints Authority has written the Office of the Commissioner and has asked for a copy of this report and has indicated that the Police Complaints Authority will be conducting an investigation into this matter. We are cooperating fully. They have asked for all the documents relevant to the investigation. I have given the investigator directive to provide them with all the documents relevant to this investigation and he is complying. Whether there be another full report? I can share the viewpoint if the Police Complaints Authority is investigating this matter fully I expect that there will be another report, which will be a report much more comprehensive than the report which was presented by ACP Edwards.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Just for the benefit of the population, for explanation, thank you acting Commissioner. Would you please put on the record what the estoppel is in law, in relation to the Commissioner of Police, under the Constitution carrying out his own investigation which may have had shortcomings in a preliminary one? Could you please explain that to me, where the estoppel lies?

Commissioner Williams (Ag): I am estopped clearly by way of what I consider the constitutional position. In Trinidad and Tobago, whether that body is given all the authorities that it would want, the law provides—the Police Complaints Authority Act —that this independent body, the Police Complaints Authority, is responsible, not the Office of the Commissioner. The Police Complaints Authority is responsible for investigating matters of serious police misconduct.

When an incident like this occurs, the first issue is to make a determination: can we have some findings as to what has happened here? And in the first instance, at the point in time Mrs. Alleyne-Daly was acting as Commissioner of Police in my absence and she took the decision that, let me find out what has happened here. We have had a preliminary report. I call it preliminary because the officer was restricted and limited by way of time. So once you restrict him and limit him by way of time, he does not have that freedom to do that investigation to the full extent and he in fact committed in the report that he was limited by way of time. In those

circumstances, now that we have his report, now that we have the PCA Director stepping in and say: I am taking charge of this, in my opinion, and it is a shallow one, that is the context in which I say I am estopped.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you, Commissioner.

Mr. Ramadhar: Commissioner, the first of all let me congratulate your efforts over the last few years in really enhancing policing in the country and I know the efforts that you and your team would have made to enhance the image of the police force. March 23 would have been a really awful day, in terms of the damage that would have been done to the reputation of the police, as you are attempting to build.

What I find troubling, however, is I am hearing today that the Police Complaints Authority, because they have embarked that you believe that there is no further action that you or your team can take, in terms of unearthing evidence. We will need to really look at that to see. As you say if is a shallow opinion, but we need to explore that a bit further.

My real question at hand is this: there is a lot of talk that on Friday, prior to March 23, there were roadblocks mirroring, in a large part, what happened on that faithful Monday morning. Was there any investigation to see if there is a common thread, first of all, in relation to the location of those roadblocks, and secondly, the personnel who may have manned those roadblocks? If that is so, I truly appreciate the difference between information and evidence to prosecute but certainly those would be important findings, if there is a commonality there. So if we could just hear on that matter first, please.

Commissioner Williams (Ag): I just wanted to add something by way of clarity. When I speak about being estopped, I am speaking about being estopped at this point in time. I am not speaking about being estopped permanently. Coming out of an investigation by the Police Complaints Authority, part of that, most likely will go to the DPP and to the Commissioner of Police where further action will in fact be taken. So, when I speak about estop I want clarity around that, I am not saying at this point in time the police service is washing its hands on a matter because Police Complaints Authority is involved. I am saying at this temporary point in time, while the Police Complaints Authority is investigating, there is a hold off. I just want to clear that part.

As we look at the issue of the Friday before, I do not know if the investigator would have given any consideration to that, so he will answer whether he gave any consideration to that. But I can share with you, on my way to work a radio announcer contacted me by phone and shared with

me that there was this unnecessary problem on the roadway where there seemed to be some roadblock by the police and whether I am aware of it. I told the radio announcer that I was not aware of it but I surely will find out. I contacted Deputy Commissioner Hackett and asked him whether there was in fact any direction for any special roadblock on that Friday and he said no, he did not give any directive and he will in fact engage an assessment by way of contacting some key personnel, including the Assistant Commissioner with responsibility for mobile and by way of quick feedback the Senior Superintendent in charge of the Guard and Emergency Branch. He later contacted me and shared with me the Guard and Emergency Branch was carrying out an exercise and it was in fact causing problems on the roadway and he had given directive for that exercise to be cancelled. So that is my knowledge of what transpired on the Friday. But surely the other aspect, whether the investigator enquired in any form or fashion to that, I think the investigator will be able to share that with you.

Mr. Ramadhar: For the narrative to be a little bit more in-depth, could you tell us with certainty, if at all, when was it that the Police Service, under your remit, realize on that faithful March 23, that there was a major problem? When did it first realize, and when was it that action was effectively taken? How long was it between the time of ascertaining the problem to the time that the problem was actually dealt with as you proceed?

Commissioner Williams (Ag): Well, in that context I will have to defer to Acting Commissioner at the point in time, Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly. I was out of the country on the day in question. She was in charge. She would be in the best position to say when she would have realized, and the other members of the Executive.

W/DCP Alleyne-Daly (Ag): Good morning to all. I received my first phone call at about 6.15 a.m. on March 23, where someone indicated to me that there were some roadblocks taking place in Sangre Grande area and it was causing some inconvenience to members of the public. Initially, I must say, I thought we do these exercises and from time to time there could be some inconvenience. But I received a second call shortly thereafter and that caused me some concern. So immediately I contacted the Deputies to find out if they had given any instructions because my second phone call indicated that these roadblocks were in a number of areas and they indicated no.

So I began to call up the Divisional Commanders from the various Divisions. First I attempted to do so through the command centre but there was a lot of cross-communication taking place

on the system so I used my cell phone and contacted some of them. A couple of them said at the time that they themselves were stuck in the traffic jams, but I instructed them to contact their divisions and to give that order to whoever might be in the stations to halt, to go out and get in contact with the officers out there and to halt.

Mr. Chairman: At what time was that?

W/DCP Alleyne-Daly (Ag): That would have been about 6.30 a.m. because my first call was around 6.15 a.m. So between 6.15 and 6.30 I was on the phone speaking to officers, the divisional commanders, on this issue.

Now, what would have occurred by that time, and this is what I learned shortly after, there was already a major gridlock, in terms of the traffic and some of the officers actually had to park vehicles and walk to the specific areas to stop these roadblocks. That would have caused some time to go on, and as a result, because it was so widespread in a number of areas and divisions it took some time really to break the gridlock and to have traffic flowing again.

I must say that I met with the Commissioner on the Saturday before this event took place because he was about to leave the country and in our discussions there was no indication that this type of event would have been taking place. As I said before, this is not unusual for the police officers to embark on road exercises but clearly, by my second phone call I realized that this was not normal.

So, at the end of the day, having understood what would have occurred and the major inconvenience it would have brought to the members of the public, I was left with no other choice but to apologize to the nation, and also to ask for an investigation to find out exactly what occurred.

Brig. Alphonso: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the police team. Commissioner, I have some concerns. As you know, I come from an organization that is very similar to yours and rank, senior rank, senior executive run those organizations. When I spoke with the Acting Commissioner—just to back up a bit, up to 7 o'clock that morning—I got in my office about 7.00 or thereabout and everything seemed pretty normal.

11.15 a.m.

I had come from St. Ann's where I live, and no traffic build up, no roadblock nothing. Then I got a call from a Cabinet colleague, at about 7.15, saying that there was something happening in the Diego Martin area. It did not bother me too much, because it sounded like a police exercise,

a roadblock and so on but then I got a call from somebody in central, a similar thing was happening. It did not worry me too much either, because I understand there was an upsurge of crime in the central area, and police needed to step up their patrols. When I got a call from Tobago, that a similar thing was happening, it seemed to me that the whole exercise was well coordinated, so I did the next best thing. I called the head of the police service, the person of Ann Marie Alleyne-Daly, and—stop me if I am wrong, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly. When I asked what was happening, I got from you that you were not quite sure what was happening. Am I wrong so far?

Mrs. Alleyne-Daly: No Sir, you are not wrong.

Mr. Alfonso: Okay. So, here was I doing what I thought was the normal thing to do, it is a police exercise. It is a police operation. One person in the police service must know if it is as massive as it was sounding, and I thought that one person would have to be the Commissioner. If I were to see, for instance, a whole bunch of defence force personnel on the streets, conducting similar exercises, the Chief of Defence Staff would have to know. If he did not, then some sort of mutinous behaviour would have been taking place, or action. I do not want to say that it was a mutiny in the police service. It sounded strange to me, given my slight experience in another place, but here was an exercise being conducted, an operation being conducted, and the senior hierarchy of the police service did not seem to be totally aware. So there is one person, I assume it is one, I assume that person can be called the mastermind, who was able to pull all the resources together, and effectively conduct a massive operation that disrupted the whole society. I do not know who that one person is, but it seems to me that person clearly has strong leadership qualities, to be able to do that, and that one person was not the Commissioner. It is a bit frightening, and I do not want to sound as though, you know, I am panicking or anything. I do not panic easily. It sounded a little frightening that here was this junior person, it is not the Deputy Commissioner. It is not the acting Commissioner, this junior person whoever he or she is, was able to effectively pull off this exercise, that is something that we must, must be concerned about.

I do not know, but other people—I am very, very concerned that such a thing could have happened, and such a thing could happen again. That being said, what action do we take now against that person, or that small group of junior persons who were able to effectively shut down this country for quite a few hours? Mr. Edwards, I do not quite agree with your brief moment

of six hours. You said for a brief moment they lost control. Six hours is hardly considered brief in any part of the world, but some junior officers, as you referred to them, took control, that action in another place is called mutiny. I do not know what the police service will call it, but in another place it would be viewed on very, very suspiciously, as almost a—not criminal offence, but certainly an offence that needs to be addressed, and somebody needs to be punished.

Dr. Rowley: I expect that there would be a response from the police officers, but just to add to the sentiment of their enquiry as you progress, I just want to ask a question of Officer Alleyne-Daly or anybody who can tell me, has it been determined that any of the officers who were undertaking this exercise at any part in the country, if any of those officers were armed on location? Can anybody answer that now before I proceed? Were you able to determine whether any of those officers were bearing arms at the time?

Mr. Edwards: My information, some of them were bearing arms.

Dr. Rowley: Thanks. Notwithstanding the fact that you had constraints of time in producing this very urgent report, which you did an excellent job. I must commend you for the job you did. When you said that—and this to me is your most important part of your report—that persons who ought to have been in charge, lost control of their divisions, if those were the words “lost control over their divisions”. I want us to picture what is happening here. Armed personnel were holding up the public in an environment, where you have determined, that the competent authority had lost control of those divisions. There is no sugar coating to be put on this. This was a mutiny in the police service.

I want to ask, Officer Alleyne-Daly, let us get back to the timeline. When you sent that instruction out at 6.15, it must be determined, in any complete investigation, when that instruction got to the competent authority. At this Committee, I would want to know whether that instruction, when it was received coming from you through the competent authority, whether the identified and identifiable officers complied with the instructions? If that has not yet been determined, that is the matter to be determined, in the context of the authority of the Office of the Commissioner of Police, where the authority to discipline officers below the rank of commissioner and deputy commissioner, lies with the Office of Commissioner of Police. I would like us to go from there, please.

Miss Cox: I just want to add to the same point. I recognize in the report from page 5 onwards, there are some areas, some police stations where there were roadblocks, there is no one

authorized to give that roadblock. If you check it, from page 5, we have some—some we would see supervised by officers, but there is no—we have no information as to who authorized some of these roadblocks, there is no information.

Mr. Ramadhar: Chair, while they ruminate on that, with your leave, I—

Mr. Chairman: Can we just pause for one second, because we have had three sets of inputs here, and before we flatten the witnesses before use, I just want to give them the opportunity to response. If I could then invite you to follow on from that, if that is alright?

Mr. Ramadhar: Well, it is in relation to a question I had posed, the answer has not yet been given, and we are moving away from it. Whether there was a common thread from the Friday to the Monday, if there were commonalities in the police officers who would have manned those two?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, okay. So, taking that compound question into account, is there an answer or some comment that you could offer to us?

Com. Williams (Ag.): Well, I believe several persons will, in fact, have to contribute by way of answers. There are some things which are specific to Mrs. Alleyne-Daly, the Acting Deputy Commissioner, and there are some things which are specific for the investigator to highlight out of the several questions.

I want us to seek out an understanding of the police service. If we do not seek out an understanding of the police service, the statement that the hon. Minister of National Security made, is one such statement. There is a clear distinction between the police service today and its operations, and the Defence Force today, and its operations.

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service has totally changed the way we do policing; totally changed the way we do policing. Traditionally, in order for officers to go out, you have the parade and dispatch for every activity. Parade and dispatch, because officers are sitting in a station in a reactionary mode, they are waiting for some direction to go out there to do something. We have changed that. So every day, 24/7, officers come for duty, a large part of their duty is being out there. So they are dispatched from the station, and they are out there, in a highly mobile way. Those officers, under the law, have authority to check vehicles on a daily basis. They do not have to get specific instructions to check vehicles whilst they are out there, the law provides them with that. By way of organization though, if we are organizing a roadblock, there are some departmental directions and guidance, how you set up a roadblock, but stopping and

checking a vehicle is an activity that every, single one of our patrols have a clear directive that that is what they need to do on a daily basis; 24/7.

The issue of this total policing day, we have to throw our minds back to where this thing came from. Total policing day, as a concept, came out of our strategic plan. We launched a new strategic plan 2014 to 2016, and contained in that, as an effective initiative, is the concept of total policing day. Total policing day as a concept, simply put, is about a divisional commander once per week at least, taking all the available resources that are at his disposal to assist in driving the policing effort in his division to a new high. So he has motor vehicles, he has personnel, he has technology, he has to take all that is available to him, so the off-duty policeman becomes on duty. You pull him off his time off, and you bring all your resources to bear every week in a division, that is the mandate. But total policing as a concept is a mandate which the divisional commander has the authority to exercise. So it is the divisional commander's directive for you to go out there and do whatever, consistent with total policing.

From the investigation, it is obvious that the divisional commanders never gave any directive for total policing. So the concept of total policing is not relevant in the real context of things to the activities of that day. But officers do, in fact, have authority every single day to be out there on patrol, carrying out their functions. Generally when they leave the station, the senior person would have been the one to officially dispatch them. In some instances, some of the senior persons will go out to guide the operations; that is part of the background. If we do not look at background, and it is not the way that the Executive must now direct a patrol out there or a roadblock out there. The Executive team sitting at deputy commissioner level, commissioner level, assistant commissioner level is supposed to be sitting strategic. To develop the strategy, you engage the divisional commanders, you share what you want done, and you reinforce what you want done, and that is what the Deputy Commissioner, Operations would have done. In order for it to continue in 2015, he sent out a clear mandate to divisional commanders, "I want you to continue with this effort."

Total policing in 2014 was very successful for us. So in 2015, as early as January he again reminded them, "I want you to continue with this effort", consistent with the organization's plans, those are some of the things we need to understand. If we do not see it in that way, and we are looking at just, straightforward direction, how could officers be out there? Officers are out there every single day. While we are here now, engaging this discussion, we have officers

in the every single police division and district, two officers in a car, three officers in a vehicle, task force operation; that is happening on an ongoing basis. So the presence of the officers being out there, it is not in any form abnormal. It is normal setting. What is abnormal, is when officers are out there, and they, by way of their action, it stops the flow of traffic to back it up, to cause chaos in the society, and that is the area which is abnormal.

11.30 a.m.

So, in the first instance, at the executive level, you would not pick up that officers are out there, because they are out there every single day.

Dr. Rowley: Mr. Chairman, I crave your indulgence. I must thank the Commissioner for that very lucid background, but I think you have put your finger on the pulse of it. Everything that you said there make sense except that I want to ask you: is there any provision in all of that for the divisional commander to lose control of his men and women? That is the issue we are dealing with; the issue where it could have been determined by an investigation that there was a loss of control of these people.

And I would be surprised to find out that this total policing, as you put it, involves a situation or anticipates a situation where there would be a loss of control of the personnel carrying arms and accosting the population of Trinidad and Tobago. And because what has us here is the fact that it has been determined that there was a loss of control by the commanders of the divisions then we cannot, in any way, see this other than outside of any concept of total policing, unless you are prepared to tell us that total policing from time to time would or could result in a loss of control of the officers.

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): I think the question is posed directly to me, Sir.

Dr. Rowley: The question is: is there any expectation or provision for there to be a loss of control of the men who would carry out this total policing?

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): And there is none; there is none.

Dr. Rowley: So, now we know where we are. Something happened that ought not to have happened, and was not part of any divisional standing order, total policing mandate, strategic plan and all of that. It could not be. This is on its own in a situation where there was a loss of control by the division, and this brings me to the point, again, to ask Officer Alleyne-Daly: when that instruction went out to stand down at 6.15, when was it carried out? Was there any evidence from officer Edwards's investigations where any officer failed to carry out that instruction as

issued in a timely manner?

DCP Alleyne-Daly: There is no evidence in the report to say exactly when it all ended, but in giving my instructions, I also sought for feedback and, in some cases, where I found that feedback was slow in coming back to me, I re-contacted the divisional commanders, and some of them were actually on the streets telling me that they were trying to bring the situation back to normalcy, having the traffic flowing. In that regard, I would say that the command went out and they acted, but it definitely took some time to bring some normalcy back on the streets of Port of Spain.

Mr. Chairman: Let me ask a question to the Commissioner, please, Mr. Williams. As the leader of the organization, and we heard from the member of this Committee who is also the Minister of National Security talked about an organization which really has a chain of command. You are at the top of your organization's chain of command. How long would an instruction, an operational instruction take to filter from the person who is in the position of a Commissioner of Police to the person who is stood on the road—the officer stood on the road performing a function—how long would that take for that instruction to flow downward?

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): In many instances, it is almost instantaneous. You can issue an instruction and that instruction could reach the officer on the road almost instantaneously, in many instances.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. Deputy Commissioner Alleyne-Daly, if you gave the instruction at somewhere around 6.30 and the report says between four and 10: do you consider that to have been an acceptable lapse of time between your instruction being given and your instruction being carried out? What would account for that significant lag in time?

Mr. Ramadhar: It comes directly onto that, and I think the Leader of the Opposition hit the nail on the head which is the follow up question I had, in terms of whether your instruction was disobeyed and you said something very troubling, that as the Commissioner of Police you gave an instruction, but that senior officers had to physically walk to these roadblocks for them to stop.

I, in fact, had the good fortune a short week ago to have been in the presence of a senior officer who cleared the channels, because something was happening, and he said all communication, I want this channel clear. So to say that, you know, the channels were busy and that your communication could not get through, I find that, you know, a little troublesome. But the real

issue at hand: why was it necessary for officers, from what you have described, to physically walk to the roadblocks to get it stood down?

Mr. Chairman: So you have three questions there to answer. Why was it necessary? Are you satisfied with that degree of time that took from your instruction? Why did it take so long?

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman before—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: No, no. I find we are asking a lot of multi-barrelled questions, so I really want to give her a chance to respond and then we can pick up on it.

Miss Cox: My question was not answered.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so we will come back to it.

DCP Alleyne-Daly: Well, firstly, Sir, let me say no, I was not satisfied with the length of time it took to have the roadway cleared. As a police officer I could envision and based on the feedback that I received of the manner of the gridlock it had on the streets on the East-West corridor, that it would have taken some time to clear up the entire roadway, because we are talking about from Sangre Grande right down to Port of Spain and from in the west into Port of Spain where you had this gridlock. And, in some cases, as we recognized, the divisional commander who initially when I contacted some of them, did not even know that such was taking place in their division because they themselves were tied up in getting to where they work. They were not even aware that this was taking place in their division, and when they got there, they themselves decided because of the magnitude and not being aware of some of the officers who are at these various points, they had to drive to a point and actually go out physically to call a halt to the process.

Mr. Chairman: Radios do not work, cell phones do not work; business management by pony express is what you are saying? So your senior commanders had to stand there and physically order armed officers who were inconveniencing the public to stand down, and these officers were not taking your legitimate instruction by phone, radio, through your divisional commanders. They had to physically present themselves at these sites.

DCP Alleyne-Daly: In some cases, I must say Sir, yes. In some cases that occurred.

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, I crave your indulgence here. Is it that the Committee is being told that there is evidence of officers being given instructions to cease and desist and they disobeyed those instructions?

DCP Alleyne-Daly: Well, my instructions went to the divisional commanders.

Dr. Rowley: I am asking, maybe officer Edwards can help us. Is there any evidence at this time available that when the instruction went out at 6.30 and we here knowing that people were going through roadblocks at 9 o' clock, were any instances observed in the gathering of evidence so far that one or more officers may or may not be armed disobeyed an instruction to cease and desist? I am not here talking about unclogging the road. I am talking about accepting and responding to the instruction from the Commissioner (Ag).

ACP Edwards: From my investigation, I found no evidence to suggest that any officer had disobeyed the lawful instructions given to them by Mrs. Alleyne-Daly.

Dr. Rowley: So, there would have been instances where by 9 o' clock the instruction had not got to the roadblock?

ACP Edwards: It is possible that the instruction might not have reached the person out there because of the roadway. It was inaccessible by mobile.

Mr. Chairman: Could I ask a question? In your investigation, just to help you to answer that question: was the radio system down?

ACP Edwards: I have no evidence that it was down.

Mr. Chairman: Were officers involved in these exercises in possession of radios?

ACP Edwards: I am not certain, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Are the cars that they transport themselves in equipped with radios?

ACP Edwards: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Do we have evidence to suggest that these radios were not operational amass?

ACP Edwards: I have no evidence, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that some form of telecommunications would have been available to the officers who were undertaking the action?

ACP Edwards: It is possible.

Mr. Chairman: And, therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the Commissioner's instruction given by radio or by telephone would, in fact, have been conveyed system wide across all divisions?

ACP Edwards: Well, it would be difficult for me to say, because I was not there.

Mr. Chairman: Well let us ask her. Deputy Commission Alleyne-Daly, did you have as a reasonable expectation that your instructions would have been conveyed across all divisions in a timely manner and that the actions that you were being apprised of would have been stopped

immediately?

DCP Alleyne-Daly: Sir, I spoke to the divisional commanders via my cell phone. I attempted earlier to use the radio, but there was a lot of cross-communication. I felt more comfortable using the cell phone because I had their numbers. In doing so, I cannot say—what I would say is that in getting feedback from them, they indicated to me that in some cases they had to park and walk, because they were not aware of some of the areas exactly where this was taking place. They had to find out these things and then get there as quickly as possible.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Let me see if I can assist with the timings. I keep hearing 6.30, Mrs. Alleyne-Daly, but I want to suggest to you it could not be 6.30 because I spoke to you after seven, and I did not get to my office before seven. Yes?

DCP Alleyne-Daly: Yes, Sir. I agree with your time and the question you had asked me at that time and because I, myself, was not totally sure of what was taking place, I told you that I was not too sure.

Brig. Alfonso: We are on the same side, we are on the same team. We are trying to get to understand exactly what happened. But when you and the other two Deputies, Hackett and Phillip came to my office, I think by that time you would have issued those instructions or was it after?

DCP Alleyne-Daly: No, Sir. We came to your office long after we had given those instructions.

Brig. Alfonso: And those instructions had been passed.

DCP Alleyne-Daly: Pardon me, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Those instructions had been passed to the divisional commanders.

DCP Alleyne-Daly: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: I want to take up on the word that the Commissioner used “instantaneously”. In other words, you would have acted almost immediately. I would say 15 minutes to half an hour that message would have been conveyed to all and action would have been taken within that time frame. Am I wrong in assuming something like that?

11.45 a.m.

DCP (Ag.) Alleyne-Daly: Sir, in some situations when I contacted the divisional commanders, some of them had not reached their place of work as yet. They were tied up in the traffic. I asked them, I instructed them to make contact with the various police stations and to send out an order to halt these roadblocks. So some of them were not actually on site as yet when I first

spoke to them.

Brig. Alfonso: I am suggesting that they did not need to be. A phone call, radio message, whatever; I think all police vehicles have radios, or should have radios. A message from the Commissioner, from the boss, “Stand down immediately”—15 minutes, half an hour max.

DCP (Ag.) Alleyne-Daly: Sir, I would want to agree with you there, but we have to take it into context as to what was happening out there at the time.

In the divisions, some of the very said officers who function there, were not even aware that this was taking place in their divisions and, as a result, I would say that because of the heavy gridlock, it would have taken some time for that communication to really reach the various particular, actual spots or venues where it was occurring.

Mr. Chairman: Deputy Commissioner, I think what we are saying is that telecommunications beat traffic and, therefore, I think what the Committee is trying to understand is why were your instructions not followed within a very reasonable time in order for this activity to be brought to an immediate end. I think what you are saying is that in order for it to be brought to an end, the divisional commanders had to be physically on spot. Is that what you are in fact saying?

DCP (Ag.) Alleyne-Daly: Because I was uncertain as to who were the officers carrying out this exercise, I felt that the divisional commanders were the ones to actually take command of the situation. So I relied heavily on them to be there and to follow up on the instructions.

DCP (Ag.) Hackett: Chairman, sorry for the interruption. If you could allow me just a short period to assist the Committee with respect to the matters that were just posed.

Let me say that in the instant I usually get to office at 5.00 a.m., so I was not aware—or I did not meet any traffic on the way to office. However, on the instant that I received the information, I started to contact the divisional commanders to enquire of them what was happening in their divisions, the divisions that were identified where these roadblocks were taking place.

The hon. Minister of National Security, as a military person, would understand my position when I say that I took the position at its worst to give instruction until I was clear as to what was happening. So it was I who gave instructions to the divisional commanders to physically go and stop—not only stop, because not that the instruction from the Acting Commissioner at the time was not carried out. It was not that it was not carry out, it was that in carrying it out, when you say stand down I did not want an immediate withdrawal of the police officers on the sites that we had the roadblocks, but the mandate at that time, the remit at that time, was ensure, as Dr.

Rowley pointed out, to unclog the traffic.

So at its worst I said, “Listen, I do not know what is happening; I am not taking any chances that you will call them and tell them stand down and stop. I want you to go there, or cause senior officers to go to those different locations to ensure that the public is no longer experiencing what it was experiencing”; because as the information was coming in, it was only then I realized the intractable situation that was really taking place.

So it was I who gave the instruction to go and physically stop it, and ensure, not only stopping it and withdraw, but the said officers who were on the roadblocks did all that was humanly possible, or all that they were trained to do to ensure that we unclog, to use Dr. Rowley’s words, the traffic.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Let me just come back to member Cox who question I think remains unanswered.

Miss Cox: I asked who authorized. I realize that some of the roadblocks conducted by police stations, there is no authority. I would like the investigating officer to tell us what is the reason for this.

ACP (Ag.) Edwards: Because it was not practicable at the time given to do the enquiries to determine who actually authorized those areas that were left blank. Those that I put in, those are the officers I detected that authorized the exercise. The others, I recognize they supervised, but I could not have identified who authorized it at that time.

Mr. Partap: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to members of the TTPS.

I sat here and, after reading the report, it is really mind boggling to look at this report and to see 28 officers held this country to ransom for six hours. We are very lucky it was not 1,000 or 2,000 officers. I am saying that you all must look at this now. It has happened and we must look ahead. Your information gathering, your intelligence gathering, fell down that day. I think the reports speaks to it. It is very disheartening to hear that officers coming in were in traffic and they did not know what was going on.

I would like to hear from the Special Branch, Mr. Gould, what was Special Branch doing. Did you all not know, did you all not hear? I would tell you, on Friday after the first attempt on the Churchill Roosevelt Highway, I was in that traffic. I passed; I saw the big police bus, the officers were there, a few officers, and traffic gridlock going back to the east, to the south, people were calling in on the radio, “We have gone 30 minutes, one foot”, and that is what was going on at

that time.

I got a call from a Second Division Officer saying that they were planning a bigger one on Monday. It did not hit me until Monday what was happening, but you all must have some sort of information gathering. This is totally unacceptable.

So Commissioner, the question is: What are you going to do to make sure that this breakdown in command, breakdown in information, does not happen again?

Dr. Rowley: I would like to ask, before we get to the solutions arising out of member Partap's intervention, I think it is time we put a question to Officer Gould, Senior Superintendent, Special Branch. I take it that you are heading Special Branch. Sir, are you heading Special Branch?

Snr. Supt. Gould: I am the operational head, the deputy head of the Special Branch.

Dr. Rowley: Who is the head of Special Branch?

Snr. Supt. Gould: The head of the Special Branch is the Executive Officer, that is the Assistant Commissioner Erla Christopher.

Dr. Rowley: Is there any reason why she is not here this morning?

Snr. Supt. Gould: Miss Christopher was on some short leave, she was out of the country so she was not able to be here.

Dr. Rowley: Is that was or is I am hearing from you? Is she out of the country?

(Ag.) Commissioner Williams: She is out of the country. She is due back for duty on Monday, Sir.

Dr. Rowley: Okay, point taken.

Senior Superintendent Special Branch, could you tell this Committee what did Special Branch know about this development that took place on Monday 23, and when did you know it?

Snr. Supt. Gould: Special good morning to all.

I must say that Special Branch, from the onset, had no information of any special activity that was going to take place on that day. I say "special activity" in that multiple roadblocks taking place on that day. I learnt of the roadblocks because I was in the traffic on the morning. It was only when I heard on the radio that there were several roadblocks, I realized that something was wrong. .

I thought it was normal, because every morning coming from Chaguanas, I experience one to two hours of traffic to get into Port of Spain. However, I learnt after the fact from officers of the Special Branch, because we have officers based in six divisions, persons might have known of

roadblocks, or they view it as regular roadblocks because that is a regular occurrence in divisions. So I formed the opinion that they did not view it as any special activity taking place on that day. However, it was very unfortunate the gridlock that was caused due to the multiple roadblocks that took place on that day.

The Special Branch, I must identify, gathers information through informants, sources, open sources—by open sources I say the print media and the electronic media and also through social media. I must say that we had no information which would have pointed us to any activity of that nature, that is, multiple roadblocks that were taking place on that morning.

Dr. Rowley: Just a quick follow on. Did the Special Branch at any time come to the conclusion that there was or there were to be attempts at roadblocks for inconvenience?

Snr. Supt. Gould: No, Sir. I am of the view that at no time police officers carrying out their duties would have any intent on inconveniencing the public.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. We have some follow up questions. Let me recognize Mr. Mutema.

Mr. Mutema: Senior Superintendent Gould and Acting Commissioner. Senior Superintendent Gould, you are telling this Committee that Special Branch at no time had such information; however, we have just heard from a member of the Committee that since on the Friday he received some form of information. I know that following a very serious national occurrence 25 years ago, an attempted coup here, the nation received a commitment from the police that attention would have been paid to our level in terms of intelligence gathering and so on, that such an occurrence will not take place again. But here we are hearing on a matter like this, which may be considered of a lesser nature, to some extent, that our intelligence service had no information nor idea.

In terms of confidence, where our public is concerned, could be very damaging in terms of the confidence to our public. I would like to hear from the Acting Commissioner particularly, and maybe to some extent, Mr. Gould, in terms of how you see this and how could this happen, and how could this be addressed. This is a serious, serious matter.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Chairman, mine is spot on the same point, but very much a little more sharp. If you would permit me to put it this way. While we were waiting, Mr. Chairman, I had a look at the Police Complaints Authority legislation, in particular section 48 of that and section 21 of that. It says specifically in 48(1) that nothing is to stymie the powers of the Police Commissioner,

subject to 48(2) when a complaint is made on certain aspects.

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago in section 123A is very clear:

The Commissioner of Police shall have the complete power to manage the Police Service. .

Coming on the heels of what was just suggested by my colleague, may I hear from you, hon.

Acting Commissioner: What is the specific situation as regards the TTPS's discipline of officers identified in this mix? Because the complaint and the prosecution under the complaint for misconduct by the PCA cannot stand on its own.

As this relates to the going forward exercise and management of the TTPS, which you have responsibility for, how is the management of the TTPS going to deal with situations such as this specifically which also includes, according to the report of Mr. Edwards, a position where the Special Branch refused to give information to the investigating officer? May I ask for that, coming off of the back of Mr. Mutema's question?

12.00 noon

Mr. Chairman: Would you like to answer this? I will let you answer then—

(Ag.) CoP Williams: We will focus on the last question.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please.

(Ag.) CoP Williams: Just for my edification. Where in the Police Complaints Authority Act it speaks to the Commissioner “nothing will stymie the Commissioner”? [Crosstalk] I am asking the question in context because the PCA, Police Complaints Authority, is given particular authority, and coming out of their investigation the legislation specifically speaks about the PCA submitting whatever evidence they gather to the Commissioner to assist in the issue of investigation of disciplinary matters. It specifically speaks about that. So when they complete their investigation, they either send it to the DPP in particular instances or they send it to the Commissioner for him to further issues of investigation of disciplinary issues. So to the best of my knowledge and I will be appreciative for that guidance in order for me to appropriately respond to you. Where in the Act it says that—

Mr. Chairman: All right. Commissioner, let us not—listen.

Mr. Al-Rawi: We are actually on the same page and what I can say—I thank the honourable Commissioner. Section 48 is very clear that the complaint being investigated, in this instance, that must stand on its own—48(2). What I asked was, apart from that where the PCA deals with this particular complaint, the going forward situation which Mr. Mutema was speaking to is an

issue of the management by the Commissioner of Police under the Constitution—that is the going forward. How do we deal with the going forward element of avoiding these issues?

Mr. Chairman: Okay. But before we ask that because I think we have a number of questions coming from members of the Committee who are interested in, what do we do now? I would like to come to that in one or two questions down the road. I am still interested to engage—is it Deputy Commissioner Hackett on his impassioned contribution earlier, just to clarify in my mind. You required divisional commanders to present themselves on spot. Is that because you felt something was happening which required them to be—something untoward—which of course the report concludes. Is it that you had a sense that that was happening at the time you gave the instruction?

(Ag.) DCP Hackett: I gave the instruction, Chair, because at that point in time when I gave the instructions I had no clear indication as to exactly—I was aware that roadblocks were taking place simultaneously across the East-West Corridor down to Western Division, and without having any further information as to the whys and so on and so on, I took the decision, based on the training that I would have had, that in instances of uncertainty you step into the arena and take charge until you get wind or information as to exactly what is taking place. That is the reason that I told them to go on site and stop it and cause the officers to unclog the traffic.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Member Cox.

Miss Cox: My question was to the Commissioner and then go back to my colleague speaking about intelligence. I just wanted to know—I know that in the fight against crime, intelligence gathering is very important. I wanted to know if the Commissioner is comfortable with this situation concerning the breach in intelligence. Why I brought this up is because there is a newspaper article that I want to quote from the *Guardian* dated March 4 and it deals with the salary negotiations where the police and prisons bodies walked out. I want to quote the head of the Police Social and Welfare Association where Mr. Ramesar stated in a telephone interview with the *Trinidad and Tobago Guardian*, and I quote:

“Ramesar said a previous meeting with both Ministers of National Security and Finance was unsuccessful in settling their negotiations and now they had failed again with the CPO.”

I am quoting him now:

“I can say very clearly that the thread that keeps the stability in the police service is about to be broken...we will be meeting in a few days with our membership and I make it very clear that

this situation is volatile...”

I am saying that I saw this and I noted it. I would think that members of the police service or anyone involved in intelligence will note this statement and take it seriously and be aware that something might happen.

Also, I am aware that there are persons who knew before, who stayed at home Monday morning because they knew that this was going to happen. So, I wanted to know if you are comfortable with the whole intelligence system in the police service where your senior officers and Special Branch knew nothing about this total policing?

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very, very much. There are many, many questions that would have been posed that we have not had clear answers to. But in relation to Special Branch in the report is reflected a member of the Special Branch actually participated in a roadblock. Has the Special Branch interrogated that officer, separate and apart from Mr. Edward’s investigation to ascertain, first of all, the validity of his presence there? Two, what other information was culled from any interview that you may have had?

Snr. Supt. Gould: With respect to the officer from the Special Branch, he is an officer based in one of our sections in Sangre Grande—that is the Eastern Division. I learnt, after the fact, that the officer was involved in the exercise. It is very unfortunate in that I was told that he was in uniform. On hearing of his part of that exercise, his senior officer was immediately informed and a report was submitted and an inquiry was conducted and reports were submitted with respect to him being there. He indicated that he only spent 10 minutes out there. Also, the roadblock was as a result of the recent shootings that they had in the district, hence the reason he was out there.

Now, he had no permission to put on uniform to go out there. I cannot say whether he was a strategy used to find out what was happening or to see what was taking place out there, but that was the information that I received. However, he did not receive any instructions to go out there on the roadblock.

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, Chairman—

Mr. Ramadhar: Leader of the Opposition, could you just lend me this. So effectively we are hearing that he went undercover in uniform. *[Laughter]*

(Ag.) DCP Hackett: I am saying, I did not give any instructions and I cannot say that his senior officers gave him any instruction.

Mr. Chairman: Right. Let us—so, we hear you. We would not entertain that because we know that he was not gathering intelligence because he did not give you any. So, we know that. So if we could just invite the Commissioner to answer member Cox’s question, please.

(Ag.) CoP Williams: Well, I will try to answer all the questions that touched on the issue of intelligence and the implications for the Special Branch and whether I am comfortable with the intelligence arm of the police service in the first instance. For me, I would say yes, I am very comfortable with intelligence arm of the police service. I am so comfortable with the intelligence arm of the police service that I believe if there is alignment to matters as some raised by the Committee members, reflecting on issues such as attempted coup and events like those, I am very comfortable that the Special Branch will be on top of things by way of intelligence gathering.

Am I comfortable that the Special Branch was able to process in this particular instance where officers went out there and acted in a way which adversely impacted the citizens of the land? I am not comfortable that they did a good job on that issue. It is obvious to me that information would have been available to Special Branch because if one of the officers of Special Branch could have been actually on the roadblocks, Special Branch had information. So how Special Branch process that information is a different thing. But Special Branch had access to the information because in one particular instance one of their very said officer was out there on the roadblocks. That is established as a fact.

As it relates to intelligence generally in the country, there is a clear relationship established, organized relationship established between the Strategic Services Agency which is now the body with some key responsibility for some aspects of intelligence gathering and processing and the Special Branch. That relationship, I would have further facilitated in strengthening within recent times. So, I am very satisfied in the context where we are looking at—not officers in this particular instance—and I am hearing so many references to the issue of coup and those types of stuff, but there are some facts, and I shared at the early point that it is difficult to just express your view points. But one of the facts, one of the obvious facts, none of us will take away from that fact, one of the obvious facts is that over an entirely long period of time, the police association has been engaged in negotiations for improved terms and conditions with the CPO—fact.

Another issue of fact that the association may, in some instances, express viewpoints in relation

to action or inaction that they will take. I can share with you for the very said instance of Carnival there were expressed statements in relation to sick-outs and whatever. I personally met with the leadership of the association and addressed the matter in the context of the police service doing so much in relation to improving performance over recent times—issues like consideration of sick-out, officers “rest and reflect”, and all those set of matters can only adversely impact the police service and its image and its performance.

The association’s president and secretary went publicly with me to give the public the assurance that Carnival will run smoothly, total commitment of all the officers to work. They are supporting the effort—so that went. But we cannot just limit our viewpoints and just centre it on officers were out there on duty, and they were out there legally and lawfully. They were out on duty. One of the critical things is the outcome of that performance of their duty. That is why the terminology used by the investigator, “malicious obedience”, if I am the investigator, I will not use “malicious obedience”. But I am not the investigator. If I am the investigator, I will not use terms like “lost control” because in my opinion there are issues where the divisional commanders are responsible under the law for their commands. So whether we are talking 24/7, he is sleeping in his home, he is responsible for the command of his division. And in that context, if something happens, he is responsible for his divisional command. But strong words like “lost control” can trigger some considerations in the public domain that something far more than what may have been would have happened. That is why I am saying, if I am choosing words—and I am not the investigator—but I am saying, if I am choosing words, those words will not be chosen by me.

One of the things I want to do though is give the assurance—every time I reflect on my organization—and when I say my organization because I have been leading it for the past several years—every time I reflect on my organization, one of the things I am clear, crystal clear, is that we have committed police officers geared towards ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago is provided with the level of safety and security that the citizens require. Committed to the extent that they will continue to function staying on the side of law-abiding officers giving of their best on an everyday basis. That is what I am satisfied with. I am satisfied with to the extent of putting my neck on the block that a situation like what happened, where officers went out there and, I would say, irresponsibly functioned in a way which caused the citizens unnecessary, undue—if I could call it—hurt and harm, will not recur under my watch. I am totally 100 per cent satisfied.

12.15 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Excuse me one second, let me just take Brig. General.

Brig. Alfonso: One simple question Commissioner. You do not want to use the term “lost control”, who was in control between G04 and 10.00 that morning?

Ag. CoP Williams: Of divisions? The divisional commanders were in fact under control of their divisions, and I can advance so much evidence to support that. Every divisional commander was in control of his division. There are events which took place which would have been inconsistent with their management, and their leadership, and their direction. But, they were in control of their divisions across Trinidad and Tobago, and that is why I say I would not use the term “lose control”.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, but they have the responsibility for their division—

Ag. CoP Williams: Yes.

Mr. Chairman:—whether they in fact had active control of what was happening in their divisions, is an open question to for the committee. Not just based on the report, I think, but also based on some of the answers or the responses that we have received from your management. Now, let me just come to Dr. Rowley.

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, I do not think we have enough time to engage the Commissioner on the line that he is taking, but I want to ask the Commissioner, whether in fact he is aware that another arm of the intelligence gathering state unit—I am talking here about the National Operation Centre—has said publicly that they had information on this development.

And, I do not want to accuse the Commissioner of downplaying what in effect has been a very serious development, except to point out to him, that in West Africa, Staff Sergeant Doe took over the country. Staff Sergeant Doe carried out a coup, an effective coup, in a West African country. And when the country grinds to a halt and there is no movement available, and senior officers have to walk to a point to carry out instructions to people who should be carrying out instructions by telecommunication, I am not sharing the point of view that you are sharing with us, that the officer who investigated this matter over stated the case, or used language that is inflammatory.

And, in terms of you making a distinction between being in challenge and losing control, a motor car going over a cliff with the driver behind the wheel, the driver is responsible, but may not be in control. So, I want to ask you, are you aware that there is information available to us that this

senior officer or a senior officer in special branch did not cooperate with the investigator? And if that is so, if you are aware of that, as the person holding the office of Commissioner of Police, does that officer in special branch fall under your control for discipline? And what have you done about that situation where it has been reported that such a key officer in this very serious investigation, failed to cooperate with the investigating officer?

Ag. CoP Williams: Just for some clarity, if anything that I would have said would seem to point that the investigator would have used terms “inflammatory”, that was never my consideration, and I did not express that. I know Dr. Rowley made reference to inflammatory, but that was never my intention and it is not something which I intended to convey at all. So, I want to take out of the domain of this Committee any the issue of inflammatory.

The issue of the National Operation Centre as an intelligence gathering arm, by way of the mandate of the National Operation Centre, it is not an intelligence gathering arm. So, I want to put that out there, that the National Operation Centre, to the best of my knowledge, and as the head of the police service right now, National Operation Centre is not an intelligence gathering arm. So, any statement made by the head of the National Operation Centre that that is an intelligence gathering arm, it is not. I can tell you what units in the broad rubric are intelligence gather arms, but that is not an intelligence gathering arm. The National Operation Centre is a facilitative unit to treat with coordinating units across the country inclusive of the police service and any other, but it is not an intelligence gathering arm.

Dr. Rowley: So, if they found out that police officers of any rank had intentions to grind the country to a standstill, would they not have been duty bound or is it reasonable to assume that they would have communicated that to the police? And did they do so?

Ag. CoP Williams: Well, I cannot say what they communicated and did not communicated, somebody else would answer that. But, what I would say is that matters which come to their attention they generally share on an ongoing basis. So, they generally share on an ongoing basis anything which comes to the attention of the personnel of the National Operation Centre, they generally share. They share with me, they share with the Deputy Commissioners, they generally share.

Dr. Rowley: Did they share any information with any level of the police service management that this development was offing.

Ag. CoP Williams: I will ask the Deputy Commissioners to so answer, because I do not know

if any of them would have received information from National Operation Centre.

Miss Alleyne-Daly: No, Sir, we received no such information.

Mr. Chairman: Shall we poll the rest of the team? No, okay. So, nobody new anything? So, the National Operation Centre was aware and did not transmit the information to the police service.

Miss Cox: Mr. Chairman, the question was not answered concerning special branch. Was it answered, concerning disciplinary actions?

Mr. Chairman: No, I want to come back to, what have you done and what are you going to do once this question is finished?

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much. Now, the normal channel for information from NOC, would it go to special branch, because we are hearing that the head of special branch refused to cooperate in the investigation? But, have you taken further steps beyond that to ascertain whether that information was, in fact, communicated to anybody in special branch? The other issue that you have taken some criticism for, and I want to give you the opportunity—I have great respect for you, sir. When you chose to not make this report public, could you give us the reasons for that, please?

Ag. CoP Williams: I would quickly take the country back to what I call history, and something which even as a young officer I personally felt was wrong, and I still feel it was wrong.

There was a major investigation in Trinidad and Tobago, the Scott Drug Report, done, major investigation, a lot needed to be done beyond the revelation in Scott Drug Report. That was brought to Parliament, revealed to the public, the contents of Scott Drug Report, they quickly suspended several officers, and after a short while all the officers were reinstated and at the end of the day, if there would have been evidence to support, in the starting point, the issue of criminality, and we would have had criminals staying in the police service instead of appropriate action through continuous investigation, to get rid of those criminals from the police service.

That backdrop guided me, and whenever you are dealing with matters, you need to deal with fully before you go public with information. For me, that is the reason why I said I was not prepared to make the report public until we deal with the issues concerning what has been brought up from this investigation. At the particular instance we had a two-week investigation, the investigator, in my opinion, did not necessarily complete this investigation, and there should have been a continuation of the investigation. But, the Director of the Police Complaints

Authority, he has asked for all the reports, and in my opinion, he taken over the investigation. I await the outcome of the investigation by the PCA, and coming out of the outcome of that then we will take further action, quite consistent with what we get from the PCA and quite consistent with what has been triggered by the investigator in this particular instance.

Mr. Chairman: So, Sen. Al-Rawi.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I am just very concern, because the hon. Assistant Commissioner of Police said that is a stopped-in-law from dealing with the matter further. So, if you are a stopped-in-law and the investigator's report is not confidential, and the PCA has told us what it considers to be confidential or not confidential, it is on record in many other matters, I do not understand how that assists you in the explanation as to why this report, in the very example of the Scott Drug Report, why this report was not made public.

Because, if you are a stopped, the PCA now has to conduct an investigation, that investigation recommendation has to come back to the police to decide if the police will do anything—and we are talking about a serious incidence such as this. And by the way for the record, those of us who practice in court were told, by 8.30 do not come to court, court is cancelled. So that information went out instantaneously to all practitioners. So, I am very concerned that the report is not confidential, is not described in its terms to be, the PCA according to you has a stopped-you from acting on this particular matter, the Minister of National Security who is the Head of National Security was informed at 7.30 of a serious event which was known since 6.15. So, the lines of communications of authority would be assisted obviously in a report such as this being made public. And we are very intrigued to understand how come the Minister of National Security, the Head of National Security in law, was only told at 7.30—

Mr. Chairman: He made the call.

Mr. Al-Rawi:—when he made the called?

Dr. Rowley: Chairman, the Commissioner still has a question which I would like him to try to answer. The report which we have that the senior officer in charge of special branch did not cooperate with the investigation, is the Commissioner aware of that report? And what have you done about it? How have you responded to that information? Confirmed it, or it is not true, or if it confirmed, how do you proceed from there where the top of special branch would not have cooperated with this investigation? What has happened so far?

Ag. CoP Williams: I will answer that and just clear up two other matters. You have said that

you are a stopped-in-law. I have not made that statement here today. I said I am a stopped, I have not said I have been a stopped-in-law, and it is important—

Mr. Chairman: Just one second. I have let this thing run long enough. I am not interested in legal arguments here guys. All right, so let us stick to the answers to the questions and avoid a debate on points of law. This is the Parliament. This is a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament, and I do not wish to have this sought of debate on legal minutia continue, not for another second. So, let us focus on the answers to the questions and let us try to arrive at a positive outcome?

Dr. Rowley: Whose question are you on?

Mr. Chairman: Yours.

Dr. Rowley: Commissioner, I have a question on the Committee with regard to the special branch cooperating—

Ag. CoP Williams: I have great concern, I spoke to the investigator for bringing clarity around that issue of the cooperation of the special branch, but I have shared with the Committee here, that at this point in time I have given way to Police Complaints Authority to complete its investigation on the outcome of that investigation. I will take further action in relation to matters relevant to this report. So, I have given way to the Police Complaints Authority to complete its investigation, on its completion I will take further action in relation to all aspects of the report.

Mr. Ramadhar: Commissioner, there is a TV host of a programme where a senior officer is one of the hosts, and from statements he would have made, clearly it contradicted the very essence of what all of you have said today, with a promise that the events of that day, March 23, would have continued into the other day, have you all looked into that? And, if any disciplinary action is being taken in relation to that matter?

Ag. CoP Williams: Just too maybe add some clarity, we have not processed disciplinary action against any individual at this point in time. All the appropriate action as it relates to the report, and I share with you the investigator in fact in his very said opinion, have not exhausted that this investigation—he was limited by time, he did his best within that limitation, and he has not exhausted the investigation.

12.30 p.m.

At this point in time there are several issues which were raised, and I shared with the Committee, going beyond those issues which were raised on the completion of the Police Complaints

Authority's investigation and their report and their submission to me, which is the norm, I will in fact address all matters, pooling what has been raised by the investigator in his report and all that comes out of the PCA's investigation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so let me just ask some very quick short answer questions here, if I may. I think the first one coming off the member's, Member Ramadhar's question is, is it that for the time being the support of, and for the avoidance of doubt, is it for the time being that the support of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service to the on-air programme, "Beyond The Tape" will continue? That is a yes or no.

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): A straightforward yes.

Mr. Chairman: And the second question. A set of recommendations have been laid out in the report, have these recommendations been accepted fully and actioned or are we waiting for something else to happen, be it the PCA investigation or whatever?

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): Some of the recommendations cannot be actioned by us. For instance, a commission of enquiry, the Commissioner of Police has no control over that. Some of the recommendations can be actioned by us instantly and have been actioned, such as, issue of apology. In the first instance, Deputy Commissioner Alleyne-Daly was acting Commissioner at the point in time, apologized to the nation.

On the completion of the report, the day after I received the report, I received it the Tuesday, on the Wednesday I called a press conference and I apologized to the nation again. So we have, in fact, complied with aspects, and I am saying, additional aspects will be complied with in keeping with the timeline that I have set. On receiving whatever comes out with the PCA I will then take further action.

Mr. Chairman: So would you be able to furnish us, perhaps, with a written summation of what actions you have taken in relation to this report and recommendations therein? The Committee would be interested to know.

Just to take one last question from Member Cox and then I have one last question as well to pose to you.

Miss Cox: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It has to deal with Guard and Emergency Branch. In the report on Page 9, I understand that they conducted an exercise in Gasparillo and we are seeing that efforts were made to have a report from them and this has not been forthcoming. So again, what do you plan to do about this?

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): I plan to ensure that all the appropriate action that is necessary to be taken will be taken. There are numerous things which have not been basically dealt with. Some simple questions as verification of whether all the officers out there would have been armed, that has not been verified. The investigator went about a process of trying to get, within a two-week period, an investigation done and some of the basic stuff which normally would seek to gather were not there, but it is not, I would say not at a fault of the investigator. He was given a mandate, a timeline, he sought to ensure that he fulfil that mandate with the timeline and the demands of the society, because every single member of the society seemed to have been calling for the outcome of this report. So he moved on it. So I am just sharing that there is a lot still to be done and we intend to do as much as we can, but I just put the context in which it will be done.

Mr. Chairman: Just to—you have something you want to—

Dr. Rowley: Members of the police service—we are about to wrap up this session I presume, Mr. Chairman—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we are.

Dr. Rowley: Because we have a parliamentary session coming up. I just want to leave here with an understanding from the Commissioner and his team, what is the basis on which you have given us that assurance that this development is not going to be repeated?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, before you answer that, because that is actually my closing question. And so, I would like to frame it a little more based on the answers that we have received here today. I am sure the member would not mind. It seems that there is still a lot that we do not know a month after this has happened.

We do not know what the involvement of the Special Branch was. We know that they did not know as an organizational unit. We do not know what the Guard and Emergency Branch was really doing in Gasparillo and who authorized them to act. We do not know if there was a dry-run on the Friday previously, although there is some anecdotal evidence to suggest that there might have been. We do not know why this action took place on March 23, although there is considerable evidence, anecdotal, to suggest that it is related to the slow pace of negotiations. We do not know who ordered this action.

We do know that our response time was manifestly unsatisfactory. We do know that it appears to be that it took several hours to regain control of the situation. And that required the

intervention, over several hours, of the highest levels of the police service. So that, Members, would be a rough summation of what we know and what we do not know.

Given that there is so much we do not know, what is the basis for us saying, which comes to the members' question, it would not happen again? How do we say that to a Parliament or to a public which has been very seriously inconvenienced and have had to pay a very high price, financial and otherwise, for this action. So just framing it like that, what is our basis for saying that we can be assured this would not happen again? And that would be the question I would put. I do not know, Dr. Rowley, if that works for you.

Dr. Rowley: Very well.

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): As the head of the organization, having spent 36 years of policing in Trinidad and Tobago, almost a lifetime, and having spent the last several weeks meeting with the officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, we have had what we call "roll out meetings" with the police officers and members of staff on a continuous basis. Having met with them, having engaged with them, having gotten feedback, having had informal meetings with the members of staff, I have an exceptional relationship with all ranks in the police service, all ranks, from Constable, floor down, right up.

I am fully satisfied and that is why I am saying the backdrop to which I make my statement is on that which I just presented to you. I have spent the several weeks engaging with the officers. I have had formal and informal engagements. I have met with them, I have gotten feedback. At this point in time, I can say as the head that something like that will not happen again.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Commissioner Williams, members of the leadership of the police service it is never easy to have to appear in the Parliament before a Joint Select Committee and I want to thank you not just for coming but for doing your best to answer what must be very difficult questions.

I do not think that anyone here has any interest whatsoever in beating any of you up or in flogging the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I think this Joint Select Committee exists really to try to assist wherever possible in the development of agencies such as yours. And therefore that has to be taken into account, not just when we ask questions but when we develop our report to the Parliament. And I commend you for the answers you have given and try to give, in what must be very, you know, in talking about a very difficult set of circumstances.

I am grateful to all of you and so on behalf of the Committee, I extend my thanks and my

gratitude for your attendance, for your openness, for your willingness to engage and the Committee exists and is here to support you. We will have other questions and we may wish to see you again, but we are here to support you, and so we thank you for the service that you are giving and the work that you are doing and we look forward to hearing from you again as we try to deconstruct this matter and come to our own understanding of what has happened and how we can prevent it from happening again. So on behalf of all of us we thank you very much and we wish you a good day. This meeting is—

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): Before you close, just for clarity, I know you, in passing, spoke about submitting a written report. So, I just wanted for clarity, the written report on the action taken in relation to the recommendations made in the investigator's report, what timeline are you looking for and whether you would be setting any additional conditions for that written report?

Mr. Chairman: No, the Parliament would generally request it within a reasonable time frame, usually a week or two.

Dr. Rowley: I would like to say to the Commissioner, if there is anything else you think is pertinent to the Committee, outside of the specific recommendations I think that could form part of the report that you send to us.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, and remember that this Committee also has the authority to meet in camera and we can do so.

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): Thank you very much, Chairman and thank you very much, Dr. Rowley. I think the last point you made there is an extremely important point to us, sharing additional information.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please do not feel constraint by just the question we ask you in our letter.

Dr. Rowley: If only because it is a national security matter that we are dealing with, if you think that there is something you want to tell us in camera let us know before so that we do not end up here and you say well look I cannot tell you here. So if you need—anything that you need that you think we should know to assist all of us, Commissioner and the Committee, indicate and we will just be grateful for your assistance.

Commissioner Williams (Ag.): Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Let me just recognise ACP Alleyne-Daly for having to treat with what would have been an unprecedented situation. And also to recognise ACP Hackett for jumping all over it once he realized something was going awry. And finally, of course, I must note the quality of

the report which was [*Desk thumping*] done in a very short time and you have done well. You know, good reports are the ones that raise plenty questions. So I think that you have done very well.

ACP Edwards (Ag.): Thanks very much.

Mr. Chairman: So again Commissioner I mean there is no question that you have a team with some quality around you and it is really how do we ensure that we get the answers we need so that these kinds of things do not happen again. Is there—Minister—

Brig. Alfonso: There were two reports, one from the *Trinidad Guardian* and one from the *Trinidad Express* that stated that the Minister had ordered the police to stop the roadblocks. I think they were talking about this Minister, and there is no way I as Minister of National Security can or will order the police how to do their duty. But that was erroneously stated. I hope we have cleared that up now and I do not think the police would have gotten the impression that I was instructing them or ordering them to stop the roadblock. That decision came from, as I understood it then, I thought it was the acting Commissioner but it was really from the Deputy, Mr. Hackett. So you gave the instructions to stop it.

DCP Alleyne-Daly (Ag.): No, Sir, I did. As the acting Commissioner of Police I did. I had the assistance, of course, the two Deputy Commissioners as we continued to discuss the matter during the course of the day.

Brig. Alfonso: All right, I am glad you said that.

Mr. Chairman: All right, thank you very much and this meeting is now adjourned.

12.46 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

**EXCERPT OF VERBATIM NOTES OF FOURTH MEETING OF THE
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT APPOINTED TO
REPORT ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS
ROOM (WEST), , SIXTH FLOOR, AND J. HAMILTON ROOM, TOWER
D, INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON
ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON FRIDAY, MAY 08, 2015 AT 10.05 A.M.**

PRESENT

Dr. Rolph Balgobin Chairman

Mr. Collin Partap Vice-Chairman

Mr. Prakash Ramadhar Member

Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso Member

Mr. Kwesi Mutema Member

Mr. Faris Al-Rawi Member

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel Clerk of the House

Miss Sheranne Samuel Research Assistant

Mr. Johnson Greenidge Parliamentary Intern

ABSENT

Mr. Errol McLeod Member

Mr. Brent Sancho Member

Dr. Keith Rowley Member [*Excused*]

Miss Donna Cox Member [*Excused*]

STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Bisnath Maharaj Director

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Good day everyone and welcome to the Fourth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome each and every one of you, and our first witness this morning is from the Strategic Services Agency.

Let me remind you when speaking to please activate your microphone, once I have acknowledge you and ask you to go ahead.

Let me now ask the Committee to introduce itself to our witness and then we will ask the witness to introduce himself as well. Can we start with you Mr. Al-Rawi.

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

10.50 a.m.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, welcome, Mr. Maharaj. The rules of the road are fairly straightforward. All questions are run to you through the Chair, and we will just have you for a very short time today. As you know we are examining the issue of the day of total policing which I believe would have occurred on March 23. And so, before we begin, I would like to invite you to make any opening comments that you would like to share with us. And then we will just proceed straight into some questions.

Mr. Maharaj: The opening comments in regards to the day of total policing, on that morning of the day of total policing, March 23, I had left Trinidad and Tobago for Ottawa, Canada. And with regards to the actual situation in Trinidad, I was only made aware of that about 2.00 p.m. on the said day whilst in Toronto, Canada. That is as much as I can say until you ask any further questions.

Mr. Chairman: Oh! That is a nice brief opening statement. Let me just invite member Ramadhar to pose the first question.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, Mr. Maharaj. The Strategic Services Agency's remit really is to gather the intelligence mostly by electronic means. Is that correct?

Mr. Maharaj: Electronic and HUMINT and any other means.

Mr. Ramadhar: I see. The query we have for you, and I am sure my colleagues would have other questions, was there any human intelligence or electronic intelligence before that day, that such an occurrence would have indeed happened, and in fact, let me just draw your mind it was March 23, if I recall and the Friday before that, was there any intelligence that there was a build to March 23?

Mr. Maharaj: Sir, the strategic services had no information regarding to any actions to be taken by police to have the effect that it had on March 23. From time to time we would have information that police officers will be conducting roadblocks. I am aware of the total policing day, but no information to suggest that the roadblocks would be conducted in the way that it was conducted to cause such inconvenience to the members of the public.

Mr. Ramadhar: With your leave again, Chair, Mr. Maharaj I know your long history and

great reputation as a police officer before becoming director, could you help us in terms of communications within the police service, a directive from a senior officer to men on the ground would be done by electronic means, by radio communications, mostly. And there will be time when there is tremendous traffic on the channels, but a most senior officer could give instructions to clear the channels. Is that correct?

Mr. Maharaj: Definitely. A senior instructor at any time could use the wireless system to clear the channel.

Mr. Ramadhar: And for direct communication to go from the most senior officer to the most junior officer even.

Mr. Maharaj: Definitely. Because all officers on patrol will usually have the wireless communication, in addition, to any form of other communication like, cell phones or any other communications that they use.

Mr. Ramadhar: It would be more than strange then, that there could be no form of electronic communication on any given period from a most senior officer to any number of junior officers.

Mr. Maharaj: Definitely.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: Let me just recognise member Al-Rawi.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, good morning, Sir. And thank you for your attendance this morning on behalf of the agency which you head. May I inquire please, I am familiar, and this is now for the benefit of the public, whilst I am familiar with the legislation which governs you, which is the SSA Act—

Mr. Maharaj: Yes.

Mr. Al-Rawi: It is comprised of a particular structure. It is manned by a particular structure.

Mr. Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And that structure coordinates under the statute with a reporting authority.

Mr. Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: So it is safe to say that there is a structure involving an integration approach of the SSA in terms of its functions and its reporting.

Mr. Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I enquire please, and this is for the benefit of the public record, whether the SSA has in its fold structural elements which articulate with the Trinidad and Tobago Police

Service and, also, whether there has been a report issued from the SSA under its reporting requirements to the persons whom it must report to. Because this is an event which is a significant one.

Now I appreciate that you have said that you were out of the jurisdiction. Could you identify for us who was in charge of the SSA at that point? What reports were handed to you in respect of the day's events from that person with authority and charged with that responsibility? And what reports have gone further? Also would you identify, I know I am giving you quite a bit to identify but I am sure I am opening it up for you. Would you identify what steps have been taken to address the fact of not having had any human or electronic intelligence as you said in relation to this event?

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let me—because there are several questions there. So I would like you to start with: who was in charge? Have you received a report on the matter? And what articulation, if any, do you have with the police service?

Mr. Maharaj: First of all, thank you very much for the questions Minister. At the time of my absence Mr. Keron Ganpat, Deputy Director—*[Interruption]*

Hon. Member: Who?

Mr. Maharaj: Keron Ganpat.

Hon. Member: Ganpat?

Mr. Maharaj: Yeah. Deputy Director, he was in charge, okay. In terms of the police service, I have a direct line of communication with the Commissioner of Police and other heads of divisions like, head of the Criminal Gang Intelligence Unit, Organised Crime and Firearm Bureau (OCFB), and other senior police officers attached to the police service.

In terms of the report you say that, in what I would have received as a result of the total policing on March 23, what report I would have received from the person who was in charge at the time, I was just verbally informed of the situation and what was responsible for the situation. There was a roadblock exercise carried out by members of the police service throughout Trinidad and Tobago. That was the information I had received verbally.

The SSA does not have the remit to control police officers or to investigate police officers who are actually performing their duties. So if police officers are conducting their duties the SSA would not in any way interfere with that. If there is any way that it is done in a way to affect the citizens I guess the Special Branch has the remit for intelligence in the police service, they would

have conducted various exercise to find out prior to this incident. If there is anything cynical about the duties that the officers were about to perform, if for some reason they find out information that officers under the guise of a roadblock are going to conduct certain duties to cause mass mayhem or to cause confusion, or cause traffic pile up as had happened on the 23, and they need and assistance from the SSA regards to providing, to assisting with intelligence, then we would intervene. Other than that that is strictly under the remit of the Special Branch to deal with.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. You go ahead.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr.Chairman and forgive me. In the other place that I live, we are used to asking questions and answers in a series which helps the witness to give a story. So forgive me for having given so many questions in one. It was really intended to open up a narrative, it is not, most ideal of circumstances, if I can just apologize for that openly.

May I ask, Sir, we have had a statement on the last day which is an admission by the TTPS effectively, that for a few hours the TTPS lost control of certain junior officers, including, a Special Branch officer. We have had an admission that officers were potentially armed. We had a statement, yes they are armed, but they needed to be—verification of arming needed to happen but it was openly stated that we had police officers in a circumstance where control was lost who were armed engaging with the public. And we have Strategic Services Agency designed in law, creature of the statute to have a certain intelligence gathering capability.

I am very concerned, Sir, to understand that in light of the actual knowledge of what has happened, a loss of control in the TTPS including Special Branch officers participation, in that circumstance it is reasonable to say that Trinidad and Tobago may have avoided a very serious consequence. If there was any mutinous intention involve there, I am not saying that there was, but I am saying if there was one it certainly was fertile ground for events which would not have augured well for Trinidad and Tobago.

Are you saying to us that the SSA agrees to be confined in its approach to matters such as this to be only activated when Special Branch says that there is a problem? Because that is what I understood you to say, that when special branch has a problem, because you do not have a remit to investigate police officers in the lawful exercise of their duty. What happens in a situation where there is, in fact, a guise of lawfulness, but it is not lawful. Is the SSA confined and on this occasion and of total policing where there is an admission that the police lost control of their

rank and file, was your Deputy Director contacted? If so, at what time was he made aware, what measures were put in place to investigate whether something untoward was going on and whether a report was produced contemporaneously or soon after or one is required now?

Mr. Maharaj: First of all, if there was any covert intention to cause any problems, then obviously the SSA would have had information of that or we would have investigated that further. The SSA would not go on to investigate police officers who are going on the normal business of duties. They have their responsibilities, and we would not waste our time with looking at officers who are actually performing duties on the street. That is under the remit of the police service who have the respective ranks to supervise their junior officers.

I am not aware of the fact that police officers, as you say, would have lost control for a short while, because each division is headed by a Commander and junior officers to him will report every activity that takes place within that time. So if that roadblock had commenced at 6 o'clock I would expect that the persons who are in charge of the roadblock at 6 o'clock would have reported to their up line and their up line in turn to the divisional commander. If that was not done then there was a serious breakdown in the reporting of the junior officers to senior officers.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Chairman, last question for me. Have you read the report of the investigating officer?

Mr. Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And you note on page 19, the statement that in bold, "NB", the point to note is for a brief moment this is between 4.00 a.m. to 10.00 a.m. on Monday March 23, the first division officers who were in charge of six police divisions and the second division officers who were in charge of police stations within six named police division lost control of their divisions and stations respectively to a small group of junior officers. Is that something that the SSA is not concerned with?

11.05 a.m.

ACP Maharaj: I believe that the author of this report may have been not accurate in his reporting.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Why, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: Is that right?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Why would you say so?

Mr. Chairman: Now you have our attention. Could you expand on that?

ACP Maharaj: If you have a commander of a division—and it is six divisions you are speaking about here—if the divisional commander who is in charge of these police officers, if they are going out to work on a particular exercise, he must have total control. He must know what is going on. We cannot say that six divisions of the police service, all of the officers lost control of their divisions? In addition to that, we have up-line from Senior Superintendent to the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Deputy Commissioner of Police and Acting Commissioner. So to say that they have lost control of their officers for a short while, I do not think that the author of the report was being correct in that situation. He should have probed whether or not these officers were aware of the roadblocks that were taking place, and what time, and who instructed it. I did not see it in this report here.

Mr. Chairman: Let me just ask Brig. Gen. Alfonso to ask a follow-on question, and then Minister Ramadhar and then I will come back to you.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Mr. Maharaj, you are saying that you do not accept the statement made by Vincel Edwards, Assistant Commissioner of Police, who said—he did not make any bones about it. He said that senior officers lost control. He did not say it seemed that way, you know. It was a bold, definite statement that they lost control.

ACP Maharaj: Um-hm.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: And there were six divisions involved.

ACP Maharaj: Yes.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Now, it is reasonable to assume that a divisional commander will know what his division is doing. That is reasonable to assume.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: That is not always the case, of course, and I hope you understand that, or accept that. It is not always the case that the divisional commander will know all that is happening in his division.

ACP Maharaj: Something of this nature, Sir, I would expect—

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: I am coming to that. Here is a situation where six divisions are carrying out this total policing exercise—six divisions—at the same time, the senior people, senior to the divisional commanders, were not aware, that is to say the deputies—two of them, I think, and the acting commissioner—were not aware that these six divisions were carrying out this total policing exercise at the same time. Is that not a little strange or is that normal?

ACP Maharaj: That is very strange because when I looked at the persons who carried out the exercise, most of the officers were from sergeant and—

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Junior officers.

ACP Maharaj: Very junior officers. However, if a sergeant of police is carrying out an exercise, there is always an Inspector that is next in up-line, Assistant Superintendent and the Superintendent in charge. It is very difficult to believe that all these officers would not have had control of what is going on.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: I accept what you say. It is difficult to understand that, but here is a situation—well, you were not here so we are trying to paint the picture for you.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Here is a situation where six divisions put this operation in—they executed this plan, if you will—and there was a plan to execute this thing at the same time in six divisions, but their seniors did not know. Now, I am not saying that if a sergeant in Matelot, or wherever, decides to have a roadblock in the junction, he has to tell the Commissioner. I am not saying that at all. And you know the drill.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Your background is police and Special Branch.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: But here is a situation where this total policing, which is authorized by the Commissioner of Police—total policing—but the Commissioner and the immediate subordinates, that is to say, the deputy, had no idea of what was going on and had to try and find out from some of those divisional commanders who, I suspect, did not know either. So it seems. So here was a situation where junior officers: sergeants, corporal, I think there was a constable somewhere—that is strange, to say the least. So there must have been a time when some level of control was lost, and that is by the senior officers, because junior officers were carrying on with the exercise. So they were in charge. I am a little confused.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much. One has to be very careful, Mr. Maharaj, to go on the basis of what is expected as a routine or by training, to what have occurred. What happened on that day clearly was out of the ordinary and the Brigadier was quite clear on that.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Now, let us cut through all of the unessential matters. One—I am going to

ask you this—was there any breakdown in communication in the police service—I mean the electronic form—on that day, as far as you are aware?

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: There was a breakdown.

ACP Maharaj: There was a breakdown.

Mr. Ramadhar: What do you mean?

ACP Maharaj: Could I explain?

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes.

ACP Maharaj: If there is a situation like what—

Mr. Ramadhar: No, no, no. I am speaking in terms of technical. Let me be clear with you—

Mr. Chairman: Let me just intervene here. I think what he is asking is whether the electronic communication systems in the police service had broken down on that day.

ACP Maharaj: The actual system—

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, the physical system.

ACP Maharaj: I cannot say—

Mr. Ramadhar: So, you have no report that there was a breakdown.

ACP Maharaj: No, no report that there was a breakdown.

Mr. Ramadhar: Right. Good. Let us put total clarity on this matter now. We have the evidence or the statement from the Acting Commissioner that an instruction was relayed to stand down on these roadblocks by, for the latest, 7.30, but it continued until 10. Now, understand what is happening here. We also heard from the goodly Acting Commissioner that senior officers had to physically attend to the roadblocks, for the roadblocks to be stood down. So, to me, as a simple-minded person, an instruction from the Commissioner goes out at 7.30, there is no response until senior officers have to be on the ground with the men. How would you describe that?

ACP Maharaj: That is something that I cannot believe, because in all my—

Mr. Ramadhar: Whether you believe it or not, it happened.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir. In my 33 years of experience in the police service, if there is no—any senior officer could just go to the wireless; take up their wireless set and send out an instruction, and that will immediately go to all, throughout the police service. Those instructions will go out to all wireless systems, all divisions. So that instruction, if it was given—

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Maharaj, just to be clear, you have said this before.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So let me try to rephrase this a little bit because I am having some difficulty here. So it would be three people on the Committee who are now confused because I think Mr. Al-Rawi was also struggling with this issue. So let me see if I cannot put this another way.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: We have a report before us from an ACP in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service which says between 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. on Monday the 23rd of March, that control in six divisions and over about 19 police stations was ceded to a small group of junior officers. You have earlier in your discussion with us, disagreed with that conclusion.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And now we are circling around to that and we are saying the Commissioner of Police can give an instruction and have that instruction followed very quickly, and yet this set of circumstances persisted for six hours. You have no evidence from your organization that there was a breakdown in electronic communications, and we have evidence that the very senior leadership of the police service had to present itself at these various points of blockage to clear the logjam and to stop this action from taking place. And so, from where the Committee sits, it looks like control was lost, and I think this is what the Brigadier is having difficulty digesting. And while what you are saying is how it is supposed to work, the facts before us suggest that control was lost and in order to regain control, you actually had to send your most senior commanders in your divisions to go and be physically present, to ensure that the men stood down. And that, of course, would lead, in our view, any reasonable person to conclude that control has been lost. And, in fact, this is what ACP Vincel Edwards concluded on his own.

And so, your conclusion, of course, counters that and so we are inviting you to reconcile your view with the view that we have formed, based on what actually happened, not on what ought to happen.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So I think that is where—I do not know, Mr. Ramadhar, if I have got it—

Mr. Ramadhar: You could not have put it more clearly.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

ACP Maharaj: Well, now that you have further explained what was the Committee's view

on this, I would tend to agree now with the author of the report. However, in terms of saying that a senior officer had to physically be there to stop the action, that, to me, is very strange.

Mr. Chairman: What would something like that suggest to you? What would that set of circumstances imply to you, in your experience? Because you are also coming from that organization.

ACP Maharaj: Yes, Sir. That would mean that if that was the case, then there was a serious breakdown in communication between the junior officers and the senior officers on that day.

Mr. Chairman: Which would have resulted in a loss of control?

ACP Maharaj: Well, definitely, because prior to going out on the exercise of the roadblock there should have been radio communication with all the control departments, or the head of the division, because in each division you would have a control room where the senior person will report that he is on duty at this time with X amount of people and they are conducting a roadblock exercise, and the head of the control room at the time would inform the respective senior officers. You would have a duty inspector, a duty sergeant; you may have a duty SP, and the divisional commander, and that chain of reporting will go right up to the divisional commander. The divisional commander in turn will report to the commissioner or the deputy commissioner, as the case may be. So to say that communicational breakdown—if that was in that case, then it was purposely done.

Mr. Chairman: Tell me something. Since your organization would not have been aware beforehand that this has happened, I would like to know, for the benefit of the Committee and the wider public, what are you doing differently? But before I get to that, I would like to ask you, who ordered this day of total policing?

ACP Maharaj: I would not be in a position to say who ordered that because that normally comes from the deputy director of police who would be in charge of operations.

Mr. Chairman: You would not have known about it beforehand, so I am assuming that you would have done your level best to find out everything about it afterwards. Who would have given the instruction to go ahead with this? And are you aware that there might have been a dry run the Friday before?

ACP Maharaj: I do not know if that was a dry run, but I know that the Friday before there was a roadblock in the vicinity of Nestlé on the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, and it appeared to be a normal roadblock.

11.20 a.m.

You see, roadblock in terms of the police is a normal duty, and if anybody, normal travelling public should see police conducting an exercise of a roadblock nature, they would hardly think that it is done in a way that could cause the citizens to be affected in that way. They would look at it as normal. They might even go as far as to assist the police.

Mr. Chairman: But do you know who gave the instruction to go ahead with this activity on Monday, March 23, 2015?

ASP Maharaj: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Do you feel this is something you want to know?

ASP Maharaj: Definitely, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Mr, Mutema, you had a question? I will just take one last question after you because we have our next set of witnesses here.

Mr. Mutema: Mr. Maharaj, I just want to recap a bit. You left the country, is it on the 23rd itself?

ASP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: You mind telling us about what time you would have—[*Interruption*]

ASP Maharaj: I left around six—I departed Piarco Airport around 6.00 a.m. on Westjet for—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Mutema: All right, around 6.00?

ASP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: Did you on your way to Piarco, or before leaving, either observe anything unusual or received any call or anything like that? Anything unusual?

ASP Maharaj: No, Sir. On my way to Piarco there was no signs of any roadblock or any disturbance on the road.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. One more?

Mr. Mutema: I just want a follow-up. However, you stated that you received the call at 2.00 p.m. and you did see the report. You mentioned the question of roadblocks being a normal course of activity, however, did you not, or even your Deputy who was there, find there was an unusual nature of the situation? Because here you had a situation where obviously you had some type of coordinated activity where roadblocks were occurring all over the country, and from our last meeting with the hierarchy of the Commissioner, you had the then Acting Commissioner who

was DCP Alleyne-Daly raising concerns, the Acting Deputy Glenn Hackett also on the hearing—because they received phone calls and immediately were concerned—the Ministry of National Security after receiving two phone calls was concerned, but you are saying here after getting that call, and even reading the report, you seemed not to be overly concerned of this situation that seemed to be a unusual one.

ASP Maharaj: I am not sure how you come to that conclusion that I was overly unconcerned. I am very concerned.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let me just say that we are now short of time. There may be some questions that we would like to pose to you for written response just so that we do not have to take up too much of your time coming back.

ASP Maharaj: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: But I want to thank you very much for coming. You have a very challenging job. We know that, and our role here is really to try to provide some oversight and also assistance where necessary. I want to thank you and express my gratitude to you for coming and for doing your best to answer the questions that we have on this matter.

So, thank you so much on behalf of all of us, and I would like to suspend for just a few minutes while we change witnesses out.

Thank you, again.

ASP Maharaj: Chairman, I just want to thank you very much for inviting me. It was a great experience and I wish that on other occasions I will be invited to give my—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: I am sure we will see each other again.

ASP Maharaj: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: All the very best. Thank you.

ASP Maharaj: Thank you.

11.24 a.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

11.31 a.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

OFFICIALS FROM SPECIAL BRANCH

THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mrs. Erla Christopher

ACP Head of Special Branch

Mr. Wendell Williams

Superintendent

Mr. Raul Hercules

Assistant Superintendent – Production

Mr. Glenroy Phillip

Inspector

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Welcome. Welcome everyone. So we are reconvening and it my pleasure to welcome officials from the Special Branch to this Fourth Meeting to have Joint Select Committee on National Security. We will just very quickly introduce ourselves to you, starting on my left.

[Members of the Committee introduces themselves]

Mr. Chairman: And let me invite our guests to please introduce yourselves.

[Officials from Special Branch - Trinidad and Tobago Police Service introduces themselves]

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Welcome to you all. I assumed that you would have read the report that was tabled in the Parliament on the day of total policing which relates to police action taken on Monday, March 23, 2015? Yes?

Okay. What I am going to do is, we will try to have a short, concise discussion today. And so, I am just going to lead off with a question and then I will invite my other members of the Committee to voice any questions that they have, and before we do that, of course, it is my pleasure to invite you, Mrs. Christopher, to make some opening remarks.

ACP Christopher: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed a pleasure to appear before you this morning to deal with this matter that has caused so much uproar in the national community.

If I may, I am aware I may not be able to tell you, your line of questioning, but the Special Branch being the foremost intelligence agency, I am wondering, if it is possible, that this session not go live because of the nature of our—*[Interruption]*

Mr. Chairman: *[Discussion between Mr. Chairman and Miss Samuel]* Yes. Yes, we can. *[Interruption]* Sorry?

Mr. Ramadhar: Could I suggest that we do the—I appreciate what the good lady has said, but I think based on questions, if there is sensitivity in it at that point in time we could allude. We cannot assume upfront that there will be issues that will impact upon your operation ability.

Mr. Chairman: No.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Mr. Chairman, sorry, if I may as well? Normally, if I could just put it this way, this is not to cross my learned friend, Mr. Ramadhar, but this being a novel Committee dealing with national security, one of the confines of the Committee involves national security concerns. It is usual to have an in-caucus prior with members to express sensitivity first and then

we would know what parameters external.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Gentlemen, I have heard the views expressed. Given your request, we will suspend for a few minutes and we will treat with the matter in camera. Thank you.

This meeting is now suspended for just three minutes. Thank you.

11.36 a.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

11.39 a.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

Mr. Chairman: Ladies and gentlemen, okay, let us reassume. We are no longer on-air and we are going to have an in camera session of the Committee at your request. And so we are just asking that the room be cleared until the next witness is invited in, and, therefore, it would just be the Committee and the witnesses.

ACP Christopher: Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so we have the room cleared. We were just at the point of your opening remarks and we are now off camera. Let me invite you to speak.

ACP Christopher: Ladies and gentlemen, as I said, it is indeed pleasing to us to have this opportunity to get the perception of the Special Branch cleared in this national issue.

The Special Branch has a mandate to provide reliable intelligence, which may ensure the safety and security of citizens and the national interest. It is our responsibility to collect, process, assess information of subversive and potentially subversive organizations and personalities. We plan and conduct and advise on counter-subversive, espionage and sabotage operations. We advise the Prime Minister, the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Foreign Affairs on all matters relating to protective security and the use of security intelligence. We inform the Commissioner of Police on matters which may negatively impact on national security.

We develop intelligence to assist the operational activities of all divisions, branches and sections of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We collate, analyze and disseminate information intelligence of a criminal nature, which may have a political or subversive correlation. And I say this and I use this to introduce our discussion, because I know the issue is Special Branch was not aware of the planned as—what the country seemed to believe is a planned action. At no time did the Special Branch receive any information of a planned action. The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in its thrust to reduce crime and criminal activity has embarked on various aspects of policing. Important to the new developments is a high visibility of police officers.

It is not uncommon for police officers to carry out roadblock duties. At no point in time, I believe, officers under my command found it necessary or thought probably that it was something unnatural or something abnormal in the roadblock, so that they may not have found it necessary to channel information up to the Executive of the Branch. Thank you. Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so let me just ask you this. You have requested that we go off-air and that we meet privately and I assume that means that we can be free and frank in our engagement.

ACP Christopher: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I have two questions. The first: who ordered or orchestrated this activity?

ACP Christopher: Mr. Chairman, I am not in a position to say.

Mr. Chairman: Does that mean?

ACP Christopher: I do not know, no.

Mr. Chairman: Does that mean you do not know or does that mean you have a range of people you think might have done it?

ACP Christopher: No, Sir. I do not think of anything. There was nothing. The entire exercise was not seen as anything other than a normal policing exercise.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so I am going to change my second question. What do you know about this event that is not in the public domain?

ACP Christopher: Sir, there is nothing I know of the event that is not the public domain.

Mr. Chairman: Then why did—

ACP Christopher: I may have asked—because we are unaware of what angle your questions would have taken that is why I took the initiative to ask because I do not know. I cannot say exactly how your questioning would have gone.

Mr. Chairman: Last question from me and I would just open up for anybody else. You have described the public reaction as an uproar. The report on page 18 refers to you as not being helpful. Why did you not cooperate with the investigator who was acting on the remit of the Commissioner of Police?

ACP Christopher: Sir, that is not correct. It is unfortunate that the reporter would have used those words.

Mr. Chairman: Could you clarify then for the record?

ACP Christopher: I would surely do. On 1st of April, on my arrival at office, just after lunch I received a correspondence from the reporter requesting certain information. It was at that

time brought to my attention from my staff that the Deputy Head of Special Branch, who is also the Head of Operations, was already handling that issue. There was no need for me, at my level, to deal with it.

On the morning of the 2nd, on my way to work, I got a call from Mr. Edwards. I pulled aside my vehicle to answer the call and we started a discussion. Unfortunately he ended the communication abruptly. The duration of the call was 53 seconds. It is unfortunate that he should even indicate that I refused to hold discussions when he in fact ended the conversation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so you were not aware of any planned action?

ACP Christopher: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The action has manifested, the public is severely inconvenienced, the economy suffers millions and millions of dollars in losses. With the benefit of hindsight and a report, we are now aware that six divisions and 19 police stations were involved in the same activity at the same time.

ACP Christopher: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And, therefore, mathematically it is extremely unlikely that this would be a coincidence. A month has passed and you have not made an effort to ascertain what happened with a view to ensuring that we are forewarned should it happen again?

11.50a.m.

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, I do not think you can say that nothing has been done. Following the episode, I would have met with my commanders, my middle managers. I enquired from them whether or not they were aware of any planned action. None of them indicated that they were aware. All were of the opinion that it was just routine policing exercise.

Mr. Chairman: But seeing the totality of this thing, are you of the view that this is an intelligence failure?

Mrs. Christopher: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Why not?

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, I am convinced that the intelligence machinery works well. The Special Branch deals with intelligence of, more or less, a subversive nature, but additionally, within our own ranks, we do report on officers who may be involved in criminal activities or any sort of adverse behaviour. Had my officers seen it necessary, they would have indeed reported accordingly.

Mr. Chairman: But you have an officer who participated in the activities of the day, it is Sgt. Waldropt?

Mrs. Christopher: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: So, if the Special Branch did not know, he certainly did. He had the presence of mind to ensure that his uniform was clean and pressed and ready for wearing on the day.

Mrs. Christopher: Well, yes, it is obvious that he, in fact, had some information which was not effectively processed through the Special Branch.

Mr. Chairman: Did he share the information with the rest of the Special Branch?

Mrs. Christopher: No, he did not. I did discuss with him and let me please indicate, that an investigation is being conducted. However, it must be noted too that this officer is actually in the habit—would normally even—around the branch—it is not that having pressed and ready. It is the operational wear that people seem to love very well.

Mr. Chairman: But you said earlier there was no intelligence failure.

Mrs. Christopher: No, Sir, there was no intelligence failure.

Mr. Chairman: But he knew and he did not say.

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, I will not consider it a fail because had it been information that it is planned operation, then you would say the intelligence failed, but the intelligence did not fail, because it was not a plan.

Mr. Chairman: So you are saying that this happened in six divisions and 19 police stations by coincidence?

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, there is no evidence to show that it was planned.

Mr. Chairman: There is no evidence to suggest any other conclusion than a coincidence?

Mrs. Christopher: I would not say that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I am just trying to understand what you are saying. If it was not planned, then it was a coincidence.

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, it is my opinion that it is all dealing with total policing, the fact that officers are required to be out there, no longer in the stations, taking a proactive role. I am not of the opinion that—and I want to indicate here—haven spoken to my officer, he did say he enquired, he was told that a roadblock duty is going to be conducted, because of the shooting of a police officer in the Sangre Grande area on the Saturday night. He was informed by the inspector.

Mr. Chairman: It is usual to conduct a roadblock on the Monday morning for a shooting that took place on the Saturday night?

Mrs. Christopher: To me, it is not normal, Sir, but there is no reason—

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, Mrs. Christopher. I appreciate the difficulty that we are all faced with here today, but under you remit is the issue of the sabotage, it is?

Mrs. Christopher: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: We appreciate that whatever, whether by coincidence or otherwise, the economy and the free movement of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago were effectively sabotaged that morning of the 23rd.

Mrs. Christopher: Sabotage is a strong word, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes. In other words, flights were cancelled, businesses had to—thing, you know, factories stopped. The economy basically was severely affected on that morning.

Mrs. Christopher: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, for whatever reason, of course. Now, you must by now appreciate that an instruction went from the Commissioner, acting or otherwise, by about 7.30 that morning, for a stand down on these roadblocks.

Mrs. Christopher: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes. You would also appreciate that the roadblocks were not stood down until, maybe 10 o'clock. That is a matter of record from many different quarters, yes.

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, I am not in a position to say actually what time, because I would have travelled between—

Mr. Ramadhar: No, Mrs. Christopher, with all due respect, and I do not wish to be the lawyer here, [*Laughter*] it is not a personal issue, but in terms of your office, you must have appreciated that the roadblocks were not stood down until around 10 o'clock. To help you in the narrative, that was only possible where officers, senior officers had to physically attend at those roadblocks to have them stood down. In other words, the normal course of communication from a senior officer was attempted, but that did not lead to the stand down of the roadblocks. It required the physical presence of senior officers. You appreciate that?

Mrs. Christopher: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Would you consider that to be a normal and acceptable thing in the police service?

Mrs. Christopher: No, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: As a result of which you must certainly had been triggered to ascertain the real reason for the response time from a commissioner's instruction, to the physical requirement of senior officers to have it stood down. You must have investigated that at Special Branch.

Mrs. Christopher: To a point, Sir, yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: So that report is at hand now, as to why?

Mrs. Christopher: Not completed, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: When might you expect it to be completed, it has been more than a month?

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, we can have that report completed.

Mr. Ramadhar: Could you give me a time frame, please? Because I think that is the essential essence of what we are dealing with here, okay. So we would look forward to that. The other issue—could you give us date then, please?

Mr. Chairman: This Committee has to report to the Parliament. So this cannot go on ad infinitum. We require the—

Mrs. Christopher: Sir, can I say by next Friday? Next Friday, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Next Friday is fine.

Mr. Chairman: That is fine.

Mr. Ramadhar: Oh, thank you very much. Would it also be normal for a special branch officer to participate in a roadblock?

Mrs. Christopher: No, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: No. Did you make an enquiry? I understood that you—there is an enquiry in progress, but have we at this point in time ascertain who instructed or who authorized your special branch officer to participate in a roadblock?

Mrs. Christopher: No one instructed him, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: So it was spontaneous?

Mrs. Christopher: I spoke to him—

Mr. Ramadhar: On instructed? Did you ascertain on what basis he found himself participating in a roadblock, and if he did, whether he reported to his senior officer that he was participating in such a thing?

Mrs. Christopher: My information is that he did not.

Mr. Ramadhar: Sorry?

Mrs. Christopher: He did not.

Mr. Ramadhar: That he did not.

Mrs. Christopher: He did not report.

Mr. Ramadhar: Did you ascertain his reason for participating in something as you already admitted, does not fall within the normal remit of special branch officer?

Mrs. Christopher: Yes, I did.

Mr. Ramadhar: And that would form part of your record?

Mrs. Christopher: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you. Good morning, Mrs. Christopher, it is not easy to sit in the chair that you sit right now. We understand that wholeheartedly as people charged with responsibility ourselves. So, I want to offer you the understanding that we appreciate your position; wholeheartedly, all of us.

Permit me to break with the formality of what we are doing, and to lay the cards on the table. We are in a situation where Trinidad and Tobago has a serious issue of crime. We have an issue of detection and conviction rates, at record low levels, as a society, forget Government, Opposition whomever you wish to blame.

The fact is people have no confidence in coming forward to the police and, therefore, there is a reluctance for witness participation to a number of crimes. One of the reasons that we went off record at your request, was so that we as a newly established, first time Joint Select Committee for national security participating bipartisan as we are, because you notice we are all on the same page.

We want to send a message to the people in Special Branch and to protected services, that we are on same team, and that we respect the fact of confidence and national security, and we want you to feel comfort in telling us what you need to.

Now, we appreciate—let us call a spade a spade—that industrial action may have been a foot, that there was a coordinated event, which resulted in the shutdown of our country, that that may have constituted futile ground for some degree of sabotage, other than the action which happened.

Think about it, if counter intelligence was operating on that day, and somebody had an intention to blow up an oil field, or hurt some sabotage event, perfect time for it to happen,

because appliances cannot travel all back and forth in that kind of environment.

So this sets a dangerous precedent for us as a country, and our task as a joint select committee, so we can share it with you, it is not to name and shame people, but it is to make sure that the people in Trinidad and Tobago understand that their Parliament can assist special services in operation, and for that, we need to be full and frank, both ways.

So part of our role is going to be to assist you because you have a difficult situation in assisting yourself; non-cooperation, naming and shaming who is going to be the whistle blower, who fingered who, what reprisals happened for that. We do not suffer for that, because we are not you. We are the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago. We are Members of Parliament for the time being. We will come, and we will go. This committee will continue on for the life of the Parliament going forward.

But if your report, next Friday, has nothing to say, and is as vague as can be, then we would have gotten nowhere, because Trinidad and Tobago needs to have an example, that a repercussion for activities. Politicians suffer the same fate. Members of the Judiciary suffer the same fate. Lawyers suffer the same fate. So I am trying to set out to you an encouragement to assist us meaningfully, because this, if it goes wrong, this is the work of a committee. If this Committee's work is for naught, then the country understanding is that we all are a pack of jokers. I mean, we are in public seriously saying, that there is no evidence of a coordinated event on a day that everybody knows about it.

So we need to call a spade a spade, and sometime admission of breakdown, or be it that it has consequences, because you cannot really admit and, therefore, have this, but pretending that something did not happen, is equally bad in the minds of the public.

So how we now address this situation is important. You clearly have a situation where you have an errant officer, who has to be dealt with. The Commissioner of Police to assist you, said that he requested a report on that, and is going to deal with that. You have PCA that is going to operate on this matter, as it relates to the police, but you place have Special Branch in a report—the officer did not say—he used the word “refusal”, to engage in a discussion. You have provided some clarity to that, not the best of things to really have a 53 second conversation; I agree, but the fact is, we need to get somewhere into this.

My recommendation, after we map this out, is going to be that this Committee go live, that certain issues are put on the report for the public. For instance, that you have a report to be

produced. You are in active investigation mode. You will be investigating or are investigating the officer involved, that will be produced, and that you had a certain command of something, but it cannot be without repercussion and talking in circles completely. So this is just my own feeling about it, because the population wants to know—I have received about 200 text messages already, “why yuh went off air?”

So thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to indulge your time, but I really just do not want to see next Friday, a report that says nothing, most respectfully.

12.05 p.m.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Mrs. Christopher, good morning.

ACP Christopher: Good morning, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Given that the Special Branch is considered one of the elite units of the police service, I mean, it has been so for many years. I do not want to use the term prima donnas, but Special Branch was always the elite, and we expect so much from Special Branch to keep us focused on life in a general sense.

When this thing happened on March 23, one of the first thing that came to mind was: what Special Branch said? Have they given any information, any sort of intelligence, anything. I heard earlier when you said that the Special Branch would report to the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police. On that morning, I do not know if any Special Branch senior person reported to the Prime Minister or to the Commissioner of Police. What I can say is nobody from the Special Branch communicated with the Minister of National Security to this day.

So, here was I in my office at 0700 not knowing that anything was amiss and was getting information, well not intelligence, but information from all sorts of people and I was hoping—I could have picked up the phone and called Special Branch, but I say no, let me see how this thing works. I got this feeling that Special Branch and the SSA would have given me some sort of information so at least I could inform my Cabinet colleagues and the Prime Minister. As it turned out, that did not happen.

I clearly was disappointed, not in you as a person, but in the Special Branch and the SSA. It was not a good day for them, I could tell you that much. I am sure I am echoing the sentiments of many, many people in this country and people who do not even know about Special Branch would ask me: what Special Branch know? And then you keep hearing old talk that Special

Branch people knew because they had a dry run on Friday 20, and somewhere here says that this dry run thing, because it disrupted traffic and so on Friday 20th, it was stood down by some senior person in the police service. I did not know about the dry run. In fact, I was not even in the country.

But here is Special Branch on March 23 remaining very silent and some people want to know, how much the Special Branch know, and if it is that they knew anything at all, why did they not communicate that to somebody, the Prime Minister, for instance. When I spoke with the Prime Minister, she was hearing from all different sources as well. I guess she was hoping that one of her Special Branch people might have told her something. For whatever reason Special Branch—I do not know if they took a decision not to inform the three persons as I just mentioned. The Commissioner did not know.

When I spoke with Commissioner Alleyne, she said she would try to find out, because she was hearing to, and this was about 7.15 or 7.30 thereabout. So here was the senior person in the police service not knowing what was happening. The head of the Ministry, my good self, did not have a clue. The newspaper said I was clueless, which is true. I did not have a clue because nobody informed me. So, I felt uncomfortable. It has left a sour taste certainly in my mouth and in other people's mouth. I want to believe because of my history and where I come from that Special Branch is still or should still be regarded as the elite, and they must know everything about everything. It is probably difficult.

Special Branch is supposed to know and maybe that is why they call you "special". Special Branch is supposed to know and they are supposed to inform the public and they are supposed to inform the Minister and everybody else but that did not happen. So, it was a disappointment certainly from where I sit, and it might have disappointed other people.

My relationship with the Special Branch over the many, many, years has always been good. I hope it continues to be good. I can call some names that were there long before you all joined, Bennett and others and so on, and it was always a joy to work with the Special Branch and you could rely and depend on the Special Branch. They would point you in the right direction. That fateful day on March 23, I lost a little bit of love for the Special Branch, not totally, but I certainly lost a little bit of love, because as far as I was concerned they put me on a spot. They put me, as the Minister, on a spot, and I felt I was disorganized. I did not know what to tell my Cabinet Members, because they were asking question and I say: "Well, I doh know what going on", but

I was waiting on Special Branch to tell me: "Hey, Minister, hear what happening", so I was disappointed.

This Waldropt fellow, when I read what his part in the thing is, I hope he has been relieved. I hear he is being investigated. You could investigate after he is gone, but it seems to me that he, too, short-changed somebody, maybe the head of the Special Branch. He did not tell you. I do not think.

ACP Christopher: No.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: So, here is Waldropt taking part in the people thing and he is not telling you. So he is doing what could be considered his own thing for whatever reason. I am not the head of Special Branch, I never will be. I would have relieved him immediately, and then start to investigate. I do not want to sound angry, because I am not, but I was just a little disappointed.

ACP Christopher: And I understand fully, Sir. I want to assure you that the Special Branch would work very hard in regaining your love. But Sir, you have echoed my sentiments, because my officers can tell you, following the episode, I did indicate that Special Branch should know everything. I did request from them, asking them whether or not they were sympathetic towards the cause and people indicated that they just never saw it as anything else. Then you may say that yes intelligence failed in that regard.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let me thank you all for coming. I have to say I am a little concerned and disappointed that we do not know who ordered this, and we still do not know, yet everyone wants us to take comfort that it cannot happen again.

From where I sit, I have not received that clarity from you, although it has been somewhat amusing looking at how amused Supt. Williams has been by some of your responses and so, perhaps, next time we might just invite him to come and talk with us by himself.

And so, I am not interested in hearing from anyone that the entire country imagined the events of the 23rd, and I think that would be very discourteous of us to suggest to the national community as a potential explanation for what happened. I would be very concerned and I am sure this Committee would be, that no inkling was had about the plans which were afoot, but I would be even more concerned to have the events of that day explained away by the people who ought to have known.

For me, a fast recovery is the next best thing. I would have expected if we did not know, okay fine, but we found out everything that we needed to know. You have asked for us to go off

air so that we could presumably have a free and frank conversation, but really we have not got any further along, and so I am left a little concerned that the light at the end of the tunnel is yet to be seen.

I take note of your assurances to the Minister of National Security who is also a Member of this Committee, and we will continue to do our examination and look forward to your report which—I remember Mr. Al-Rawi has suggestion—ought to have some substance, and if the report is going to be a repetition of this, then I would suggest that it may not be as useful as we would like it to be, and we want it to be useful because we want ultimately to help, and to ensure that things like these do not happen again.

So, let me thank you for the courtesy you have shown the Parliament. I am grateful that you all could come. I am glad that at least one of you we kept entertained, and for all of you as a group, I will say that we will examine the testimony and decide whether it is something we want to televise or not. I do not think anything here that has been said requires secrecy. So we will examine that and see. Let me thank you again for coming and wish you a very good day. Thank you.

ACP Christopher: Thank you very much, Sir. I think my Superintendent would like to make a comment.

Mr. Chairman: We do not have the time though. It is okay. It is fine. It is okay. I am sorry. We will talk after. I have a number of other witnesses waiting and they are running way behind schedule. So, thank you again all and have a good day.

12.20 p.m.: Meeting resumed.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so the Joint Select Committee on National Security is back in session. We have just had an off-camera session with the Special Branch, we will be examining that testimony in due course, and making a determination as to whether to make that available to the public in a rebroadcast. We have asked for a report from them which they will present to us at the end of next week. So that will be Friday, May 15, and we will consider the contents therein and incorporate whatever we deem to be useful in the report.

For summation, the Special Branch did not appear to have advanced knowledge of the events of Monday 23, March, and has launched an investigation and is yet to make a final determination as to who was responsible. So, we have asked them for a copy of that report which we will receive next week, and we will incorporate that into our findings as necessary.

So, let me welcome now the members of the National Operations Centre, and we will just introduce ourselves very quickly as the Committee to you and then ask you to introduce yourselves to us. We will start on my left.

[Introductions made]

OFFICIALS OF THE NATIONAL OPERATIONS CENTRE

Mr. Garvin Heerah

Executive Director

Mr. Mervyn Richardson

MAC Group Coordinator

Mr. Chairman: Okay, welcome. Let me just invite the Executive Director of the National Operations Centre, Mr. Garvin Heerah, to make any opening remarks in relation to the matter before the Committee today. Is there anything you want to start with?

Mr. Heerah: Hon. Chair, thank you very much, distinguished Members. The National Operations Centre is positioned at this time to bear with whatever questions, enquires, and whatever information might be so dictated or designed, requested from the National Operations Centre pertaining to the subject at caption at this time, the matter before us, and the support of the National Operations Centre research, and the information that we have prepared, will hopefully support and supply you with the information that you so desire.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Well, thank you very much. Let me then get right into it. Two questions really, and then I will open up for the other Members. The first is, did the National Operations Centre have advanced knowledge that this day of “Total Policing” on March 23 was going to take place?

Mr. Heerah: The National Operations Centre did not have advanced knowledge that this was going to take place.

Mr. Chairman: Subsequent to—I mean, we have had the benefit of a month passing between then and now, who ordered or who orchestrated this day of “Total Policing”?

Mr. Heerah: The National Operations Centre does not have that information.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Honourable members, thank you very much for attending before us. I noticed you stressed that the National Operations Centre did not have advanced knowledge, may I ask what knowledge does the NOC have?

Mr. Heerah: Well, pertaining to this “total day of policing”, the National Operations Centre, in its course of its normal routine, were monitoring the radio communications, the wireless sets of the agencies of the Police Service, the Defence Force, Fire Service. It was during this process

of routine operations that the National Operations Centre recognized, by communications that was taking place, that there were police roadblocks.

Mr. Chairman: At what time did the NOC recognise that there was a coordinated set of roadblocks?

Mr. Heerah: I did not say coordinated. The National Operations Centre recognized by communications that there were police roadblocks being staged in different parts, which is a normal police routine. And this would have been around 5.00 a.m., thereabout. It was not before 5.00 a.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: At what point did the totality of the exercise and its impact become apparent to the NOC?

Mr. Heerah: The totality and the impact of the exercise became prevalent to the National Operations Centre around 7.00 a.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I enquire whether the NOC reported—as I believe it ought to—to the Minister of National Security? And if so, at what time?

Mr. Heerah: Sure. With the approval of the Chair and the members, I would also like to, in my answering, give way to Mr. Richardson who was actually involved in the practical information sharing and the updates. So, at this time, Mr. Richardson.

Mr. Richardson: Thank you. Thank you, again, Chairman, and ladies gentlemen. On March 23, 2015, I left home just before seven o'clock in the morning and I left to go to the workplace, that is at Mille Fleurs at Queen's Park East, but when I reached Arima—

Mr. Ramadhar: Knowsley.

Mr. Richardson: Knowsley. Knowsley. Sorry, I correct that to mean Knowsley. When I reached Arima it became difficult to traverse the road so I went on the back road, where it is normally easy passage, and there I met a lot of traffic, and at that stage it became apparent to me that something was wrong. So then I began to assess the information, calling different persons from the NOC, like Ms. Alfred, and other persons, who were also stuck in traffic. So it became apparent to me then that something was happening.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I ask, does the NOC operate on a 24-hour basis?

Mr. Heerah: Yes. The National Operations Centre is a 24/7/365 operations.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Who does it report to?

Mr. Heerah: The National Operations Centre has a reporting line to the Minister of National

Security, and, also, to various other key stakeholders. Reporting in the sense of information sharing and reporting, also, in the sense of command. Information sharing and updates and alerts are done with the various other heads of security, other operational heads of agencies, and as we are an organization, an agency that deals with facilitating and coordinating, it is apparent in us to ensure that all of our stakeholders are kept abreast and informed with accurate information.

Mr. Al-Rawi: What communications occurred, specifically, with the TTPS and the ODPM and other agencies, insofar as all the major arteries of Trinidad and Tobago were clogged at the same time, as it turns out, by an activity which involved 19 police stations over many, many hours?

Mr. Heerah: The communication that occurred was more or less enquires first to confirm that they were also experiencing, recognizing, and picking up the same type of information that we were picking up. So that information was sent out and we received confirmation, not only from the ODPM and the TTPS, but the Fire Service, and with Civil Aviation and Airports Authority with regard to access to the airports. At that time we recognized that—yes, there were police roadblocks but it was impacting now on a gridlock and causing some sort of severe traffic affecting commuters and affecting motorists and citizens of the country.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Were you in the country?

Mr. Heerah: No, I was not.

Mr. Al-Rawi: When did you find out?

Mr. Heerah: I found on around 0600, just after that on the normal brief that I would receive a text sent by Mr. Richardson, sent by the Centre, and relayed. That time, all I knew and picked up was that there were police roadblocks staged, which is a routine operation. I wish to advise, in the routine police exercise, also, the onus is not on the National Operations Centre to send information out into the public domain that a police operation is in progress. And the information at that time that we received, this was a normal police exercise.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Just let me just ask one quick question here. Who is in charge while you are away?

Mr. Heerah: Say again, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Who was in charge while you were away?

Mr. Heerah: Well, I am the Executive Director of the National Operations Centre. I maintained command and control, however, during that period the Strategic Coordinator, Mr.

Richardson, was coordinating the activities of the NOC.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Now, the NOC would report to various Ministers and you would share information with various agencies. You first became aware that there was roadblock activity at 5.00, you became aware of the totality of the situation by 7.00, at what point did you contact the Minister of National Security to advise him that there was something afoot?—that something was happening that was outside of the ordinary.

Mr. Richardson: As I indicated earlier in my opening statement, when I became stuck in the roadblock on the Arima Old Road, I, there and then, sent out a message on the phone to the hon. Minister, to the Head of the services, all the agencies, all the major agencies, who informed, at that time, that there is roadblock traffic—we are monitoring the traffic scene and it is causing a major disruption in the country at this time. I also indicated that the helicopter had been activated to look at the situation and to report back to the Centre. So, it is at that time the first message went out.

Mr. Al-Rawi: To whom, sorry?

Mr. Chairman: To whom was the message sent?

Mr. Richardson: It went out to the Minister of National Security, to the Commissioner of Police, to the Chief of Defence Staff, to the Head of the SSA, and—

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So, let me just recognize, what time was that? You said 7.30?

Mr. Richardson: After 7.00 in the morning.

Mr. Chairman: So, let me just recognize, Brig. General Alfonso.

Brig. Alfonso: Well, Commander, you and Mr. Richardson, thanks for coming. I got to my office at about 0700 that morning, up to then nothing was—things were normal. Coming from St. Ann's to Abercromby Street, pretty normal, no set of traffic, no police in sight, and I got my first call from, as I said, from a fellow Cabinet Member, at about 7.15.

12.35p.m.

Brig. Alfonso: He found that something was looking strange down in the west, and I said, “Well, no, everything in Port of Spain seem to be all right”, then I started getting calls like every two minutes from people all over the place stating that something—you used the word “wrong”. You said something was wrong, but nobody ever said it was wrong. They said something looked like something was happening; people thought that something was happening, but they did not say it was wrong. If I saw police on the road, for instance in roadblock situations, I would not

find that is wrong. I would find that the police doing what they are supposed to be doing, policing and so on.

Up to 7.30 I had not heard from NOC; I had not heard from Special Branch. I had not heard from the SSA. You said you sent a message on the phone?

Mr. Richardson: On the phone.

Brig. Alfonso: Probably that was where one of the challenges was, I may not have been reading messages. I would have been on the phone talking, getting information from all sorts of people. But it is interesting that the Police Commissioner, to whom a message was sent as well, did not know that roadblock exercises were as massive as they were, up to 7.15 and thereabouts.

Mr. Richardson: It could have been after 7.15.

Brig. Alfonso: When I called her she said she did not know what was happening, and she is going to find out. So here are two of those persons that you have just mentioned, the Minister of National Security and the Commissioner of Police, at about 7.15, 7.20 thereabout, had not yet received that information. Well, I cannot say it that way; I did not see it, because I did not read messages. I was listening to phone calls and making phone calls. But it is interesting, because I thought somebody might at least have called as opposed to sending a message. Maybe if somebody had called, somebody who was on top of the situation. We did not know what NOC was doing.

Of course I had to answer questions as to what is the National Operations Centre doing and, again, I felt a little strange that I could not give a total explanation as to what involvement there was by the NOC. I was hearing nothing from the person on the ground or the person in charge of the NOC at the time, and that seemed to be—Mr. Richardson was holding for you Commander?

Mr. Heerah: Yes, Sir. As I said, I was out of the country, although I maintained command of the NOC at that time, Mr. Richardson was coordinating the activities. We have been kept abreast.

What I would like to reiterate, hon. Minister, is that the only information that we had at that time was that there were police roadblocks. One has to understand that we had no other information whether these police roadblocks were being conducted accurately or inaccurately, or were being conducted with a specific purpose in mind.

It is normal that the National Operations Centre has information that there will be police

exercises, police roadblocks, police operations. Some of them we would get pre-hand knowledge, “We will be conducting an operation, an exposition” or whatever. Sometimes it is an FYI, “for your information”. In other instances it would be instances it would be information we would receive by our monitoring of the various frequencies.

At this time, the only information that would have come out of the NOC was that there were police roadblocks and they were causing traffic build up. Hence the reason Mr. Richardson took the decision to deploy the helicopters to get the confirmation that what we were receiving, based on calls coming in, civilians calling the system, the social media, even some of the bulletins that we had been hearing on the radio, were in fact true, that this thing was island wide and it was in fact causing a gridlock, because the main arteries into the country were being affected. So the information that was passed was specific only to traffic build-up based on police roadblocks.

Brig. Alfonso: So you are saying you did not know that the six divisions were taking part in this massive exercise?

Mr. Heerah: Not at that time, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Let me just sum where I think we are at. So you all did not know beforehand that anything was going to happen. When it did happen, it took a couple of hours to appreciate the totality of it, but the implications and the impact of that were viewed really in terms of traffic. So I am more or less on spot there.

I am now going to defer to member Al-Rawi with a follow-on question.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you. Gentlemen, I know it is difficult in questions and answers to convey your full thought, so please bear with the process, and I appreciate it.

The National Operations Centre, as I understand it, I do not have the full details of it, it has never really been fully explained, but it is a coordinating entity for a number of things. It is, by my estimation, the recipient of \$436 million in the last two years alone; \$80million last year for operations alone.

What operations were open to the NOC—I am very, very concerned that 19 police stations, six divisions went to work on a matter, orchestrated an exercise which resulted in flight cancellation, shut down of the courts, prisoners could not move, constitutional rights were therefore affected, businesses closed, schools closed and people were trapped in traffic for hours at a time, and we have a report here that says that there was a loss of control of the police, that senior officers had lost control of their divisions and seceded same to a small group of people.

That is a very serious statement for Trinidad and Tobago.

How does the NOC, the National Operations Centre, coordinate in these affairs? Why was it not aware? In the discharge of what you are doing, have you asked a question as to why you were not informed? Is there a report that is outstanding? Have you written a report to the Minister of National Security yet on this?

Mr. Heerah: No, we have not written a report to the Minister of National Security, and if a report is so desired we would be happy to facilitate one based on our role and function on that day, and the duties performed and who were informed, et cetera.

I understand the magnitude and the impact that this coordinated roadblock, as it is being titled on the table, would have caused. It did in fact cause concern for the National Operations Centre. As a matter of fact, it has caused us to review and to re-evaluate how information is shared, the accuracy and the timely way information is passed and to also put mechanisms and measures in place so that we can treat with any sort of situation similar to this reoccurring. We are presently reviewing processes so as to treat with that.

Mr. Mutema: Mr. Heerah, I am glad to hear your last statement, but there is a little concern that I have. I am not sure what is the full remit of your agency and maybe you could guide me there, but I know information is supposed to be a two-way affair. My concern is, what I am hearing is that from Mr. Richardson at the time, recognizing what was happening it alerted him to send out a lot of the information, in terms of the texts and so on. But in terms of feedback at the time—because this took place until ten o'clock, so you recognize the length of time the country is in this situation, and you are not speaking just of Trinidad, even Tobago would have been included. It must have raised some red flags, caused some concern. It must have been seen as an unusual situation.

With the remit of the agency, what is there in terms of the agency having a more proactive response in such a situation? Yes, I give information that this is happening, but the NOC holds a very important responsibility and, therefore, I would think that there should be some guidance there as to providing some way that you should have some kind of more proactive response.

Mr. Heerah: I am in total agreement with you, hon. Senator. People will tend to say, for instance, lessons learnt. The NOC is not saying that. We are saying it has changed; it has now changed. We have recognized that risk and threat for instance can emanate from an action that can appear to be official, can appear to be coordinated, can appear, for instance, to have been

conducted from an executive order. Because of that, we are not—and I repeat—not going to sit here, as the National Operations Centre, and allow something like that to happen again. We are taking it into a next level.

We are going to ensure that in the country, from a national perspective, there can be a national alert state that can tell us what are the levels of alert based on an action that is taking place, and that there will be a course of action, more so a reaction by various agencies.

So if an agency in Trinidad and Tobago who may, for instance, be an agency that carries arms and ammunition that will be able to pose a threat, that can provide itself from a camouflage to assume legal—it is positioning itself under the deems of doing something official, and our information is that there is a suspicion or that we are not comfortable, we, through our alert state and through the information, are going to ensure that the other agencies can move in and treat with this accordingly. This will never happen again.

We cannot afford to have a country being stopped or destabilized by an action. The National Operations Centre, and I speak this firmly from our position, has adopted a posture to ensure that from a moment's notice, based on our alert state, based on how people are informed, can regroup to treat with this. And that is both from a proactive approach to affect it happening, and even if it is being conducted or occurring, to move in and to treat with it from the agencies that would respond.

This information and our situation awareness will be passed, will be sent to us, an information aspect to the Minister of National Security, the National Security Council Secretariat, for instance, and also the other heads of agencies. Recognising now that we have an ability, as the National Operations Centre, based on our technology, based on our technology, based on our architecture, based on the interface that we would have integrated with all of the other systems, all of the other agencies, to be able to treat with it.

We are presently an agency that is providing situational awareness. When something happens we can give updates: the bush fires, the traffic, whatever. We are now taking another look at this, and assuming the position that you have so identified, that we are an agency that is supposed to be passing this information and treating with it, and we want to do same.

Mr. Chairman: Very good. Let us slow down here for a second.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Not a question, but a request of you, thank you Commander Heerah. I would be obliged if you could provide the Committee with how you intend to achieve what you just

said and under what constitutional authority or law you would be able to do that, because I am not aware of how you are structured, other than by way of resembling in law something which was removed already, which is the Special Anti-Crime Unit. I say resembling; I am not saying one for one.

But I would like to understand, one, by way of a report to the Committee or in writing, how you intend to achieve those things. Under what authority you will be able to do those things and, thirdly, I would certainly appreciate a report telling us what you know and what your report on this exercise has been, this total policing exercise. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: We have to stop here. Do you have something you want to say very quickly?

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Mr. Heerah. You are certainly, through Mr. Richardson, very aware of something wrong happening and, therefore, you wanted to see a result and response. What time did it become known to the NOC that official instructions were handed down to stand down these roadblocks and what time were they actually effected.

Mr. Richardson: Based on our talking and what we have, I would say anytime like after nine o'clock in the morning, nine to ten o'clock around there it became apparent, because we were told that things are happening now.

There was a conversation, gentlemen and ladies, that took place that morning, where we were seeking to clarify the state of the nation as it was. Because as the Director said, it is not common that when the police are having roadblocks—and I speak from a position, being a police officer for all my life—you just do not go and say, “Police having roadblock”, that is not the remit of the NOC. So we had to look at it, and supporting what is going on. But when we observed that the roads were at a virtual standstill, including myself then we—

Mr. Ramadhar: Mr. Richardson, we do have a time constraint.

12.50 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Okay we need—

Mr. Ramadhar: My question is, when did the NOC become aware there was an official stand down order and when was it actually effected?

Mr. Richardson: After nine. After nine in the morning.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let me—unfortunately we are pressed for time, and we have one other set of witnesses to see. But let me thank you, Mr. Richardson and Mr. Heerah for coming, for answering our questions as openly as you have tried to. This report that we are requesting of

you if we could have it by next Friday because we intend to report to Parliament very quickly. So, we will write you with—[Crosstalk]

Mr. Heerah: If I could just ask if I could get the accurate title of the report?

Mr. Chairman: We will write, we will write, the Committee will write you. So, let me thank you very much. I am heartened by one thing and that is that you clearly recognize that there is a need to do something differently to prevent recurrence, and I welcome that. We look forward to receiving your written submission and we will engage you further from there. So, thank you very much bother of you and have a good day.

Mr. Heerah: Thank you.

12.52 p.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

12.53 p.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE SOCIAL AND WELFARE ASSOCIATION

Insp. Anand Ramesar

President

Mr. Michael Seales

Secretary

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Good day everyone. Welcome again to the fourth meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security. We want to welcome the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association President, Inspector Anand Ramesar and Secretary Mr. Michael Seales. Welcome to you both. We will just introduce ourselves quickly then invite you to do the same.

[Introduction by members]

Insp. Ramesar: Mr. Chairman and other members, a pleasant good afternoon. I am Insp. Anand Ramesar, President of the Police Service Social and Welfare Association.

Insp. Seales: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman and other members of the Committee. I am Michael Seales. I am the Secretary of the Police Service Social and Welfare Association and Inspector of Police.

Mr. Chairman: Before we begin, it is our practise to invite the visiting president to make some opening remarks in relation to the matter before us which is the day of total policing on Monday, March 23, 2015.

Insp. Ramesar: Thank you very much. My comments?

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Insp. Ramesar: Let me say that myself and the secretary we are here to assist in every way we can that would inform the Committee in its mandate. We know that there was a request for Insp. Alexander to be here, but as I explained in other quarters that my understanding of Insp. Alexander's—the request was in relation to what was said on “Beyond the Tape” and for the association, we are not responsible for “Beyond the Tape”. So, I felt that the perception being created that “Beyond the Tape” is a product of the association, and for him to appear with us, it would carry forward that perception. It is in that context and mainly because that it is not part for an association operation that we have elected not to have Insp. Alexander with us at this particular time.

Mr. Chairman: But he is a vice-president?

Insp. Ramesar: He is the vice-president, but in the context in terms of what took place on March 23 and “Beyond the Tape”. Beyond the Tape is an arrangement between the Commissioner of Police, TV 6 and Insp. Roger Alexander. The association has nothing to do with it. He wears the cap of inspector and in no way does he wear the cap of vice-president on that programme.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Mr. Ramadhar.

Mr. Ramadhar: Gentlemen, we really appreciate your presence here. I am going to ask a very pointed question or questions. Did you, Sir, or your organization had any prior knowledge of the occurrence on March 23? Whether you had any participation with the planning or execution of what occurred on that day?

Insp. Ramesar: When you speak of my organization, I assume you are referring to the police association?

Mr. Ramadhar: You are so well known, forgive me. Yes of course.

Insp. Ramesar: In that context, we had no prior knowledge of the events of March 23.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Inspector, following on that question, there have been reports that there was a “dry run” on the 20th. Were you aware that there was a dry run?

Insp. Ramesar: I was not aware.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: What was referred to as a dry run?

Insp. Ramesar: I was not aware of any dry run in relation to what took place on March 23 or any activity that took place prior to March 23 that could have been said to be an act in preparation for March 23.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. Mutema.

Mr. Mutema: Inspector Ramesar, now just about 18, 19 days before that on March 04 in the *Trinidad Guardian* there was a statement attributed to you. Right. In the *Guardian* which I will quote. It was, as the *Guardian* stated—this was stated after a meeting with the Minister of National Security, the Minister of Finance and the Economy.

“Ramesar said a previous meeting with both Ministers of National Security and Minister of Finance was unsuccessful in settling their negotiations and now they had failed again with the CPO.”

And it follows and I quote:

“I can say very clearly that the thread that keeps the stability in the police service is about to be broken...we will be meeting in a few days with our membership and I make it very clear that this situation is very volatile...”

Now this is a very serious statement. It would have led to the perception, as was indicated by the public, that the incident, the activities of 23 March seemed to have had some relationship with negotiations. I would like you at this point, in terms relative to the statement to clarify whether that was so in terms of this statement that was made, whether there was any relationship to that. Well first, I would like you to answer that.

Insp. Ramesar: Well first let me say, there was and there is no relationship in relation to the statement made in relation to the stability of the police service coming out of talks that took place with the two Ministers.

Mr. Mutema: All right. Secondly, so that was not related to the events?

Insp. Ramesar: Not related.

Mr. Mutema: Right. Well you need to clarify then in terms of this statement, what really would have been meant by this? This:

“...clearly the thread that keeps the stability in the police service is about to be broken...”

That would indicate a time frame that may be not very far away. It is about to be broken. Right. So the perception is, that there is something that will soon happen. Right. You said you will be meeting in a few days and that the situation is volatile.

Insp. Ramesar: Well first let me say, nothing in that statement referred to what we call total policing which took place on March 23. It had to do with issues in relation to the internal

operations of the police service. It had to do with issues of promotion. It had to do with issues with disenchantment. It had to do with issues of frustration. As I would have said to the Minister on the occasion when we did meet with him that there was frustration coming out of the membership because we would have met with successive Ministers of National Security. We would have met starting from way back with Mr. Sandy right up to the current Minister, and nothing would have done in relation to the problems that we kept articulating and taking forward to the Minister of National Security.

I spoke about problems in relation to promotion from constable to corporal, from corporal to sergeant. The promotion fiasco with sergeant to inspector, and these are the areas that we have been going back and forth to the various Ministers of National Security. There are times that we would have the opportunity—and we did. We met with the Prime Minister. We met with Members of the Cabinet. We met with members of the National Security Council, and it is the frustration. It was my way of making a statement that could send a message in relation to the frustration in the police service. We talk about total policing, but what was taking place was total neglect when it comes to the internal aspect with the human capital.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Insp. Ramesar: And it is that frustration. That was my way of describing it. But it had nothing by way in terms of an action plan that took place on March 23.

Mr. Chairman: Are you sure? I mean, you have been previously been on record of saying that there will be no Carnival. You will stop Carnival and those kinds of things. I mean those kinds of statements come from yourself or from the association before.

Insp. Ramesar: I have also been on record in terms of joining with the Commissioner of Police and rallying the members to work for Carnival. As a matter of fact, there were rumours that police officers may not have worked for Borough Day. And the ACP called me and I had to inform him that the association had nothing to do with that. But nonetheless we took a position to inform the members to work with him.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. You have something else. Mr. Al-Rawi.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, inspectors both. Gentlemen, have you read the report produced by Mr. Edwards?

Insp. Ramesar: I have been informed of it. I have not read it personally, but I have been informed of its contents.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you think it important to read the report insofar as it is in the public domain that for several hours there was a loss of control, you know, of command in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I would recommend that it is an important record for you to read. It has been laid in Parliament. May I ask you, Sir, in light of your answers, seeing that the report said that there was a loss of control, that subordinate officers to senior officers took control for several hours of the police service in an exercise now named “total policing” which, by the way, I do not think describes what really happened.

1.05 p.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Bearing in mind that that has left a lot of room and fertility for mischief, because lots of things can piggy back on a complete shutdown of the country, does the association have a position on wanting to establish who did this? Who orchestrated 19 police stations under six divisions to go to work as they did? Who, as members of the association failed to take instructions live as they came—from the words of the Commissioner of Police and others, on electronic devices, who failed to take those instructions, and what kind of assurances the public is going to receive, that we will not see a repeat of this situation, because what it appears to be, for everybody who does not want to say it, it appears to have been an event of pseudo-industrial action on the part of people who have genuine problems and issues that have not been addressed.

Insp. Ramesar: Let me say that I agree with you that it would be important to identify if there was someone or some group of persons who would have led that particular action on March 23. What the association would have done in the past, is that when we became aware that Mr. Edwards was appointed investigator, we advised our members to make themselves available to the investigation, support it, let your actions be transparent, let your behaviour be subjected to accountability and scrutiny, and as an association, that is the role that we played in terms of assisting Trinidad and Tobago and by extension the Commissioner of Police first and by extension Trinidad and Tobago in terms of interrogating the behaviour on that day and looking at persons who may have information to assist, we called upon them and we encouraged them to provide the information.

Coming out of that, we would have hoped that the investigation would have brought more answers, unfortunately, the investigation, as it indicated, it was not able to identify a main person in terms of where that particular command could have commenced.

Mr. Chairman: I thought you said you did not read the report?

Insp. Ramesar: I said I was informed.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, he said he was aware of it, but he did not read it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, sorry.

Insp. Ramesar: Sure. I think I will have to stop there because you kind of threw me off.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, now, in your mind as a trained investigator yourself, the events of March 23 were not coincidental but clearly coordinated.

Insp. Ramesar: I think, now total policing as I may, I was not aware—

Mr. Ramadhar: Let me put it in context to help you. I may have been a bit too vague on that. There was no senior commander that was identifiable to have instructed this total policing for 19 spontaneous police station efforts with the roadblocks as they were throughout Trinidad and Tobago.

Insp. Ramesar: Well, I cannot speak to that, but what I can say—

Mr. Ramadhar: Well, as far as you are aware, there was no senior officer who instructed all of these things, as far as you are aware?

Insp. Ramesar: I am not aware of any officer.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you. Now, is it in your mind coincidental?

Insp. Ramesar: When I reflect upon total policing, and the secretary and I would have had meetings with the Commissioner prior to March 23 in relation to this particular initiative. So, it is not something that for the first time the police service was hearing about total policing. It was something in the thoughts and the mind of the commissioner, something that you wanted to roll out. In fact, I think there would have been efforts of it in previous times.

Mr. Ramadhar: We get that, let us deal with March 23.

Insp. Ramesar: Yes, but I am coming to March 23. If there was an effort, as I would have said to the Commissioner and other persons, clearly it would have been a situation where you would not have considered the repercussions of a total policing. And, for me, you really need to re-evaluate how you interpreted that particular plan.

Mr. Ramadhar: The question still remains, do you consider what happened on March 23 to be purely coincidental?

Insp. Ramesar: I cannot say if it is coincidental or otherwise. I have not been in mainstream policing since 2010 so I cannot say, because I have not been part of operations.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sorry, sorry, how long have you been in the TTPS, sir?

Insp. Ramesar: Fifteen years.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Fifteen years, and you are an inspector of the TTPS?

Insp. Ramesar: I am.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And you are involved in representing the interest of members of the association?

Insp. Ramesar: Since 2010.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes sir, but you are involved in representing the members of the TTPS who are in the association?

Insp. Ramesar: Yes.

Mr. Al-Rawi: In your 15 years as a police officer have you ever seen an incident where 19 police stations exercise an event of roadblocks simultaneously, all at the same time, on one day, following media coverage as we just heard read from my learned Senator opposite, have you ever in your 15 years of experience come across one singular event such as this, where not a person can be identified as having orchestrated it?

Insp. Ramesar: I have not.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Does that cause you concern?

Insp. Ramesar: It does.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you think that it is fertile grounds for great mischief for the people of Trinidad and Tobago to suffer?

Insp. Ramesar: I would not say that it is great mischief. What I am clear about—my thoughts in relation to that is that you have an initiative as the total policing and clearly you need to interrogate it more before you use it, or you should have interrogated it more before you transfer this information to a membership in terms of what is a particular strategy. It is no different from regular roadblocks. The issue with total policing is that you want it to be more widespread.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I ask you, when you say you want to interrogate it more, who to interrogate it more?

Insp. Ramesar: The managers at the police service, operational commanders. Because this is an initiative, you will say if the member would want to try it.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I ask you, the report having said that no operational commanders have

given the instructions for this, and in fact the report saying that, there was a loss of control by senior ranks over junior ranks, that having been established in a report, how could there have been a factor in relation to this? I am trying to get—I am interested in the word, I use the word “mischief” for Trinidad and Tobago.

Insp. Ramesar: Sure.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I do not wish to be pejorative but I want to understand this. Trinidad and Tobago was shutdown, prisoners were not brought to court, the Judiciary closed its doors, flights were cancelled, passengers missed their events, patients could not go to the hospital, children could not go to school. I do not know what consequential damages happened in terms of human life on that day. Fire trucks could not pass easily across roads, the police could not be assisted by the benefit of ambulances, et cetera, children stayed home from school, parents could not go to work because their children were home, Trinidad and Tobago was shutdown in an event, in your 15 years of policing, that you have never seen before. You are the head of an association of one of the most important and vital elements of Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

I would like to know, Sir, whether your association has had the benefit of a direction from you as the president, mandated as you are required to be, as to how you are going to get to the bottom of this, because we have now confirmed that this was not an event of total policing in the form that it comes from in the United Kingdom, and the idea that the Commissioner of Police had, this was not that. This was Trinidad and Tobago held to ransom by 19 police divisions of junior ranks, Second Division officers, which you have active involvement for and representation of, what are you doing about that?

Insp. Ramesar: Well, as I indicated earlier, we would have communicated to the general membership and we advised them to support the investigations, make themselves available. As I said, we support transparency, and we allow scrutiny of police behaviour. We were also aware in relation to the investigation being conducted by Mr. Edwards, and we would have committed ourselves to the findings. Mr. Edwards’ investigation could have been different, just for the sake of discussion. It could have been different. Either way, the association remains committed in terms of supporting and making itself committed to the outcome of that particular investigation. We are not a body that would appoint our own investigation into the matter. We are aware that the Police Complaints Authority does have a role and, again, we would commit ourselves to

stand by the findings of that body.

Mr. Chairman: All right. Let me just ask Mr. Ramadhar to pose a question.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Chairman. The term “malicious obedience” fits fully well then into the definition that you have assimilated in terms of the total policing, and you seem to have some discomfort with total policing that you attempted to deal with the commissioner on?

Insp. Ramesar: I have no discomfort with total policing. My position is that a plan of that particular nature, you need to interrogate it some more so that you could fine tune it in terms of avoiding the repercussions that you experienced on March 23.

Mr. Ramadhar: Under the total policing in your mind, there was malicious disobedience under the guise of total policing?

Insp. Ramesar: Not my mind, sir. I have never used that term before.

Mr. Ramadhar: You have heard of it before?

Insp. Ramesar: I have heard it. I know it comes out of the report.

Mr. Ramadhar: You understand what it means?

Insp. Ramesar: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Now, you are saying that—and I congratulate my friend for so well articulating the difficulties as surgeries too, had to be postponed and lives were imperilled, and you are leaving it up entirely to other institutions, and you yourself, your organization took no step to ascertain how this thing occurred?

Insp. Ramesar: We are not an investigative body.

Mr. Ramadhar: No I did not ask you that Sir. Did you take any step whatsoever, you being the president of an organization to whom you have responsibility for those officers who actually participated? No step whatsoever to ascertain how it occurred?

Insp. Ramesar: We have met with the Commissioner of Police.

Mr. Ramadhar: No, no. With all due respect—with your membership—

Insp. Ramesar: I am saying what steps I took.

Mr. Ramadhar: Could I just finish the question, with your membership, you have taken no step directly—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, let us let him answer.

Insp. Ramesar: I have taken no step directly with membership.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. I want to just make a few observations here. I know some of your may have questions and so on, but I feel compelled to make these observations on this point. I am disappointed to know that fully one month and a week or so after the events of that day, and some weeks after the publication of a report, that you have not read it. I am particularly disappointed and concerned about that, given that you were invited here to discuss this particular matter and a reference was made in our letter of invitation to you, about where the report could be found. The report is in the public domain. It is published, it is laid in the Parliament, it is referred in our letter to you about where you can find it. So, for you to appear before a Joint Select Committee and say that you have not bothered to read the report, would to my mind, be of grave concern.

I am also not persuaded by the argument that the times that you have treated to shutdown something or the other are assuaged in any way by the times you have supported the executive of the police service. And I am concerned about that, because it sounds sometimes to me as if you are setting up a parallel chain of command in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, and there are certain things that one can hold close to as fact or near fact, and one of those is that the findings of the report, which you have not read, appear to be pellucidly clear that no officer of the First Division participated in this day of total policing. And that the day of total policing was in fact conceptualized and executed entirely by Second Division members, all of whom fall under your purview, and therefore, one is invited—and I think the entire country has been invited to conclude that there is a nexus between the ongoing negotiations with the CPO and the actions of Monday, March 23.

And, if that is so, how could it not be of concern to you? How could your actions simply be to instruct people—which to my mind you do not have the authority to do—to cooperate with an investigation of the Commissioner of Police. Since, as long as you are members of the police service you must cooperate with the investigation, and requires no encouragement from you or anybody else, as far as I would be concerned, the Brigadier General could contradict me on this point if I am going wrong. And so, you are inviting me to conclude, as you have invited, I think, the public to conclude, that perhaps there is a relationship there between these stalled negotiations, or these slow negotiations, and the actions of that day. And I would think that this Joint Select Committee presents you with the opportunity the clarify that, and that a clarification has to go way beyond saying we had nothing to do with it. Because, what you are inviting me

then to conclude is that this is the work of someone very intelligent who gives themselves enough room for plausible deniability.

1.20 p.m.

So everything is organized, orchestrated, but then you stand to one side and say, this has nothing to do with me. And so you wipe the instrument clean so that forensically we cannot identify you, but for all intense and purposes I think the public has concluded that your association has a central role to play in this matter. And I would think as the President of the association you should be very concerned if the public thought that and you should take, as Mr.Al-Rawi has been suggesting, every available opportunity to ascertain the truth of the matter so that you can prevent your association from being maligned.

And so, this is the opportunity we were trying to present you with today, to say, okay, it was not us and we do not like it looking like it is us, so here is what we have done to ensure that the perpetrator has in fact been found. Because I do not think I was comfortable with your minimization of what happened, and I think that Mr. Al-Rawi really tried to explain it. But I would explain it differently, not that I contest his explanation, I would explain it differently. I would explain it and say, as a citizen of this country I would take grievous, grave objection to someone in whose arms I have put a gun abusing the authority to make a point in relation to a negotiation for wages.

And so that for me would be something that, in democratic terms, I would find utterly frightening. And I think that is where the country has reached in its conclusions and we are trying to ascertain whether there is something different. And so I am painting a door for you as it were, really where I am hoping, and I am sure this committee is hoping you walk through is to say, this is not us, this is who we think it is and this is what we are doing to ensure that our members do not participate in this kind of nonsense again.

So, if, I do not know how you would respond to something like that if I said that this is what you might consider doing and juxtapose that against what you actually have not yet done. Is this something you feel you want to do?

Insp. Ramesar: Yes, first let me say that the Association represents both the first and the second division. We do not represent second divisions only. Salary negotiations is for both the first and second division, it goes from the rank of Constable to Assistant Commissioner of Police. And so, for want to put it in context that what may have happened may have been connected to

salary negotiations and is all about second division. I think that in itself creates a wrong description of salary negotiations and the membership.

One of the things for me is that—the fact of the matter is that—the TTPS and the Association we share the same members. You have to be a police officer to be a member of the Association. So that if something happens in the police service it is in the backyard of the Association. If it happens in the Association it is in the backyard of the police service. Where we go a different road is where there is a perception, let me say, or there is a suspicion that there is one person responsible for March 23.

I have never incurred the thought that there is one person responsible for it. I consider it to be an operation that failed as far as policing is concerned. And that is where my thoughts have gone and my thoughts have not moved in terms of a blame game in the police service. I looked at how we do operations and in my consideration it is about remedying the operation and making it better. I have never for one considered that there is a policeman who would have been malicious, as the term used, maliciously obedient in carrying out his role and responsibility.

Mr. Chairman: May I just ask you two questions really quickly. The first is, did you or anyone in the Association have anything to do with the planning or execution of what happened on Monday March 23?

Insp. Ramesar: At the start of our interview we responded to that and our answer remains the same, no.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Second question. Are you inviting the Committee to conclude that this, to use your term, was a failed operation, the events of Monday March 23?

Insp. Ramesar: I am not seeking to prejudice the conclusion of the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: No, you just said that.

Insp. Ramesar: I know, but that is my opinion. But I am not seeking to prejudice the conclusion of the Committee.

Mr. Chairman: Well then, if it was a failed operation, who ordered it?

Insp. Ramesar: That is what I do not know and I have never considered that there was a person who ordered it. I am aware of what total policing is—

Mr. Chairman: So if it was not ordered by someone, was it a coincidence that 19 police stations across six divisions embarked on the same activity, because total policing involves lots of different activities, embarked on the same activity, at the same time, on the same day?

Insp. Ramesar: Are you inviting me to speculate on it, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Chairman: No, I am asking you if, what you are saying is, is it a coincidence?

Insp. Ramesar: I will be speculating if I respond.

Mr. Chairman: I would very much, I think we would like you very much to speculate.

Insp. Ramesar: Then I will have to speculate and say it is a coincidence.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So it is a coincidence.

Mr. Ramadhar: Chair, just one thing. You know the issue of total policing, of course, includes roadblock, but includes many other things. Correct?

Insp. Ramesar: Stop and search, I can add to that. And other things.

Mr. Ramadhar: And other things, yes. On that day, what we do know, the total policing was limited to what is known to us to roadblocks and no other thing.

Insp. Ramesar: I am not aware of that.

Mr. Ramadhar: Have you made any other enquiry?

Insp. Ramesar: I am not aware that it was limited to roadblocks and not—

Mr. Ramadhar: Have you made any enquiries, Sir?

Insp. Ramesar: I am aware that what took place on March 23 was not limited to roadblocks.

Mr. Ramadhar: So you made enquiries?

Insp. Ramesar: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well I want to just take this last question very quickly.

Brig. Alfonso: One question to Inspector Seales.

Mr. Chairman: We have one minute.

Brig. Alfonso: I know presidents are usually very busy people, but you as the secretary, Insp. Seales, have you read the report?

Insp. Seales: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: You have?

Insp. Seales: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Okay. Insp. Ramesar, you said that it was a failed operation. What was the intent? In the first place, why do you say it was a failed operation?

Insp. Ramesar: When you look at an operation you should have considered, have the right logistics in place. Clearly you did not have the right logistics place, one, to treat with persons

who are having an emergency, to avoid the unnecessary traffic congestion for persons who needed to go to the airport. When we looked at the complaints coming out of it, clearly we did not have the proper logistics in place and it is in that context I am saying that it was a failed operation.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, very good. We have to stop here because the cameras have to switch to the House, I am afraid. So let me apologize for abbreviating our conversation, but I want to thank you both for coming. I am very grateful, I am sure the Committee echoes my sentiment, we are very grateful for you coming and providing some clarification to us. The Committee does note that we invited Insp. Roger Alexander to appear before us and we have not been able to secure an audience with him yet, so we will seek to find him. We will write you for any further detail we need if that is all right—

Insp. Ramesar: Much obliged, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: And thank you very much again for coming. This meeting is now adjourned. Thank you.

1.29 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

EXCERPT OF VERBATIM NOTES OF FIFTH MEETING OF THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE OF PARLIAMENT APPOINTED TO REPORT ON NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE ARNOLD THOMASOS ROOM (WEST), SIXTH FLOOR, TOWER D, INTERNATIONAL WATERFRONT CENTRE, #1A WRIGHTSON ROAD, PORT OF SPAIN, ON FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2015 AT 10.10 A.M.

PRESENT

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar	Member
Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso	Member
Mr. Kwasi Mutema	Member
Mr. Errol Mc Leod	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Miss Sheranne Samuel	Research Assistant
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Parliamentary Intern

ABSENT

Mr. Brent Sancho	Member
Dr. Keith Rowley	Member
Miss Donna Cox	Member

OFFICIALS OF THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Garfield Moore	ACP (Ag.), Head of Tobago Division
Mr. Johnny Abraham	Senior Superintendent
Mr. Roger Alexander	Inspector

Mr. Chairman: Okay, morning everyone. Welcome to the Fifth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security. We have with us ACP Garfield Moore of the Tobago Division of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. We continue to examine the events around the day of total policing on Monday, March 23, 2015, and in relation to this, we have invited ACP Moore

to spend some time with us and to help us to understand better what might have happened on that day and how the events which unfolded managed to unfold the way it did. And so it is a great pleasure to have you ACP Moore.

ACP Moore: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairman: And let me, as is our custom, invite you to make some opening remarks.

ACP Moore: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chair and thank you to the other members of the Committee for having me here this morning to share with you the events on the island of Tobago which occurred on March 23, this year. My name is Garfield Moore, Acting Assistant Commissioner. I have been a police officer for 36 years, and prior to this date, as far as my knowledge would have served me, we have never seen an incident like this.

Yes, I am aware that the police officers have the authority to hold roadblocks in their various districts, but what I would view as maybe, discretion, I think discretion was not used in a manner that would have assisted the public to move freely from their various homes and business places that morning.

I am here to assist in whatever way I can, the Committee, so that they can bring a little more clarity to this entire matter that is before us this morning.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you for that. Does anybody want—yes, please.

Mr. Mutema: ACP Moore, I am Kwasi Mutema. Now, and I am glad that I heard you state that, saying that in your 36 years, you have not seen anything like this, all right. So therefore you will not consider that something normal.

ACP Moore: No, that was not normal on that morning.

Mr. Mutema: However, the *Trinidad Guardian* of Tuesday, March 24, have you quoted as saying:

“The police officers are out here in keeping with normal police practices.”—all right.

It said further:

“It was not all of a sudden, it was coordinated...”

Now, that is very instructive, right, as you stated there, because I will give you also the scenario.

It says that:

“...First Citizens Bank in Roxborough and Republic Bank’s”—is it Auchenskeoch?

ACP Moore: Auchenskeoch.

Mr. Mutema: “Auchenskeoch branch”—very challenging—“failed to open for business...”

Many schools on the island, including Roxborough Secondary, Goodwood High”—School—”Scarborough Secondary, Signal Hill Secondary, and the Scarborough RC...also had to dismiss...due to the low turnout of teachers, while...the Scarborough Magistrates’ Court had to be postponed.”

Certainly that is not normal.

ACP Moore: I agree, it is not normal.

Mr. Mutema: But you stated here, as I said very instructive that this exercise was coordinated.

ACP Moore: I cannot recall saying that the exercise was coordinated, because I think I had a copy of the tape and I cannot remember using the word “coordinated”. I think the question was asked about roadblocks, what is the purpose of the roadblocks, and I would have answered the reporter accordingly. But I did not say it was coordinated because I did not have that impression that it was coordinated. I could not have said that at that point in time.

10.50 a.m.

If I did, that might have been an error, but I could not have said that at the time because I did not know all the factors; I did not speak to all the people; I did not at the time when I made that statement.

Mr. Mutema: But did you say it was normal?

ACP Moore: I was not normal.

Mr. Mutema: So you are saying that you are wrongly quoted here, saying it was normal police practice and it was a coordinated exercise?

ACP Moore: I cannot remember using the word “coordinated”. I said it was—if I said it was normal police practice I am talking about the holding of roadblocks.

Mr. Mutema: You also said, “Officers took the initiative to conduct exercises in their area”.

ACP Moore: That is so, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: Now, is this the normal practice?

ACP Moore: It is the normal practice. Every commander or station commander is responsible for their station and district. They are the ones who police their station and district, based on directives and guidelines which are given by the Executive and maybe the divisional commander. We do not instruct them when to hold exercise, if they wish to. Sometimes the divisional commander would have an exercise across the island that she would be responsible for. That would be a coordinate and planned exercise, where all the stations and sections would be

involved. However, let us say a station at Roxborough, the sergeant in that station can determine that we are having issues in his station district and hold a road black. Or even though there are not issues, they can still hold a road block in their station district to ensure that they are compliant with the laws for Trinidad and Tobago from time to time.

Mr. Mutema: So therefore the commanders--

ACP Moore: The station commanders.

Mr. Mutema: -- would have to be informed of the exercise.

ACP Moore: Yes, supposed to be informed of the exercise. But at times they may not be informed because there are, what you call snap road blocks, where the sergeant in charge of the shift might see the need to hold a roadblock during the night or during the morning whilst their shift is on duty. The sergeant might not be at the station, but they have a responsibility to inform the sergeant thereafter the exercise.

Mr. Mutema: But it is very unlikely, ACP Moore, if you look at it, that you will have a number of police stations--19 as is on record--police stations and six divisions all having snap roadblocks at the same time.

ACP Moore: Well, I would not say it is---sometimes it may be a coincidence; it may not be a coincidence. But I “doh” have the evidence, it may be a coincidence; it may not be a coincidence.

Mr. Chairman: I just want to apologize. I do not think we have introduced ourselves and we have gone right into the question. So let me just, very quickly, get those formalities out of the way and I will start with Mr. McLeod. If we could just introduce ourselves to the witness.

Introductions made.

Mr. Alfonso: Good morning, Mr. Moore.

ACP Moore: A pleasant morning to you, Sir.

Mr. Alfonso: I was hoping to tell you congrats and when I heard them say, Assistant Commissioner, I was looking for the lap tabs on your collar. You are not yet Assistant Commissioner.

ACP Moore: No, that is not yet, Sir.

Mr. Alfonso: You are acting.

ACP Moore: Yes, Sir. I am acting at this point in time.

Mr. Alfonso: I know a lot of people have been asking a lot of questions. I am just trying to clear up this whole situation that took place on the 23rd of March. Now you are a veteran like

myself, 36 years' service, so you know the form; you know the drill firm. If you are going to conduct any sort of roadblock exercises or any sort of patrols in an extensive way, a senior person in that division, the divisional commander, if you will, will know if it is a massive thing. But if it is just one little roadblock down the road for 10 minutes, he may not necessarily know about it until it has happened. Yes?

ACP Moore: The protocol---something like that---should be informed.

Mr. Alfonso: Yes, he will be informed. So it was not surprising, or certainly the divisional commander in Tobago would have known of the roadblocks in Tobago. Somebody would have reported to him.

ACP Moore: Well, as far as I know when I spoke to the divisional commander early that morning, she was not aware.

Mr. Alfonso: What I think is surprising, ACP, and I think you are aware of that, this thing seemed to have been coordinated. The massive, extensive roadblock exercises in Trinidad and Tobago, clearly had to be. I mean, it cannot be just coincidental. Here in Trinidad and Tobago, nearly all the divisions and Tobago with its one division, all doing the same thing at the same time in the same timeframe. Now, that is, to me, a brilliant piece of work to coordinate that massive exercise. It might have been well-intended, I am sure, but it had some devastating effects eventually. But to coordinate that massive exercise had to be almost a work of art. It was a brilliant stroke to do that sort of coordination. Would you agree?

ACP Moore: I would not want to say it was coordinated because I do not have--

Mr. Alfonso: No, no, I am saying if it were coordinated, that would have been brilliant.

ACP Moore: If it were, it was well done--if it were.

Mr. Alfonso: But you are not aware that it was coordinated by any one.

ACP Moore: No, I am not aware it was coordinated.

Mr. Alfonso: So the Tobago division was carrying out its normal, total policing exercise.

ACP Moore: Well, the word "total"--people have been using the word "total policing". In fact, I was on vacation and I came off in January and then sometime in February I went to Tobago and then I was aware of the total policing day. And my understanding of the total policing day is where the divisional commander would have been responsible for organizing the troops in such a way--and it does not only entail roadblocks alone. It is a series of activities that take place across the division that will deal with social aspects, will deal with the preventing aspect

and even customer service and all these issues. That is what I consider being total policing day. I am really trying to stay away because I “doh” think it was total policing day.

Mr. Alfonso: Well, we have heard it is an initiative of the Commissioner of Police, and that is good. That is a good thing. I am not trying to be too negative here. What surprised a lot of us is that this total policing thing, which is an initiative of the Commission of Police—

ACP Moore: Yes, it was.

Mr. Alfonso:—took place—was executed the same time, same day, in six divisions. Did that surprise you at all?

ACP Moore: Well, the outcome surprised me, in that it created a massive traffic gridlock across Trinidad and Tobago. That surprised me in terms of---because normally we do not create that—although there is some discomfort sometimes when you have roadblock, but not to that extent.

Mr. Alfonso: I am asking you to speculate it. Do you think it was coordinated?

ACP Moore: I do not want to say it was coordinated, Sir. I do not have evidence to say that. I would have spoken to some of the people who were involved and they never indicated that it was coordinated.

Mr. Alfonso: But in your quieter moments you would have had some thoughts.

ACP Moore: Well, I have my opinion on what would have happened.

Mr. Alfonso: But you would not speculate.

ACP Moore: I would not speculate.

Mr. Alfonso: Thank you.

Mr. Partap: Acting Assistant Commissioner, good morning.

ACP Moore: Good morning, Sir.

Mr. Partap: Did it surprise you that most of the officers involved in the roadblock activities were second division officers?

ACP Moore: No.

Mr. Partap: Okay. My other question. Did you think that this coordination could have taken place without the knowledge, or any knowledge, or any information or authority from the police executive?

ACP Moore: Yes.

Mr. Partap: So something like this could have taken place—

ACP Moore: Could happen without the knowledge of the executive.

Mr. Partap: A follow-up to that question. So 19 stations carrying out roadblocks simultaneously, all second division officers, mostly—the majority—this could have taken place without the knowledge of the first division or the police executive. That is what you are saying.

ACP Moore: Yes, that is a possibility. It can happen.

Mr. Partap: Has it ever happened before?

ACP Moore: No, not to my knowledge. It never happened before.

Mr. Ramadhar: Now, following on from my friend's question, has it happened since?

ACP Moore: The 23rd?

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes.

ACP Moore: No, Sir. Because there were clear directives. In fact, there was some confusion as to---

Mr. Ramadhar: I appreciate that. So the first time in your knowledge as a police officer, such an occurrence did, in fact, happen on the 23rd where there were 19 police stations in six divisions with roadblocks at the same time.

ACP Moore: Well, let me say this. We have roadblocks similar to this--

Mr. Ramadhar: Sir, I appreciate what--

ACP Moore: Yes, okay.

Mr. Ramadhar: We want to make it very simple, very quick here.

ACP Moore: Very well.

Mr. Ramadhar: Are you aware of any other occasion in time or in place where you had 19 police stations involved in roadblocks simultaneously?

ACP Moore: Yes, we had more than 19 simultaneously before that.

Mr. Ramadhar: When was that?

ACP Moore: Over my years, we always—in fact—

Mr. Ramadhar: When was that?

ACP Moore:—this is a coordinate exercise where sometimes the deputy commissioner will send a message to hold roadblocks across the island between, let us say, 4.00 a.m. and---but without the executive, no.

Mr. Ramadhar: I am extremely grateful for your answer. So that the only time that you knew of such a wide-scale road blocking is a coordinated effort.

ACP Moore: Yes, up to that point in time.

Mr. Ramadhar: That is all I have for you.

Mr. Mc Leod: Very briefly, Chair. Thank you very much. ACP Moore, do you subscribe to one of the conclusions coming out of this investigation, that the executive, of which you are a part, lost control of the police service?

ACP Moore: No, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: You did not lose control?

ACP Moore: No, Sir, we did not lose control.

Mr. Mc Leod: Even in the face of the action that was taken on the 23rd of March and the consequences that flowed after?

ACP Moore: We did not lose control of the service during that period.

Mr. Mc Leod: I would come back to the point.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I thank you, Members. I thought that your answers have been very illuminating so far. I have a few questions for you, if I may. Just to clarify again—and let me just sort of put this in an itemized fashion so that you could understand that the quantum of our misbelief, as it were. You have 24 hours in a day and seven days in a week and six divisions, 19 police stations and 20-plus roadblocks happened on the same day at the same hour across six divisions, 19 police stations. What are we to conclude, that this is a coincidence? Is that what you are inviting you to--

ACP Moore: No, I did not say it was a coincidence.

Mr. Chairman: What was it then?

ACP Moore: What I said before is that each station commander is responsible for their station district and they can hold roadblocks based on the needs or what they see happening in their station districts. Nineteen stations out of 77 stations that we have in the entire service, which is less than a quarter—I know it had a very large impact on the population.

11.05 a.m.

So I am looking at it. I really cannot say it is a coincidence.

Mr. Chairman: So it is not a coincidence?

ACP Moore: I cannot say it was a coincidence.

Mr. Chairman: It is good that you would not say it is a coincidence because then that means there had to be some plan, and as we understand from these procedure, road blocking within divisions, even on this kind of scale, does not happen willy-nilly, or as we say in Trinidad by “vaps”—

ACP Moore: It is not normal.

Mr. Chairman:—and therefore, there are coordination meetings held beforehand and there are records kept, minutes and logs.

ACP Moore: Yes, there are records that are kept.

Mr. Chairman: The Committee will be inviting you to furnish us with the records of who ordered these roadblocks in each of the police stations under your care. But it is interesting that we are not sure if it is a coincidence or not, because I do not have a transcript of your interview—

ACP Moore: I do not have it here.

Mr. Chairman:—your interface with the media and it refers to these roadblocks being planned, and then I looked then—so you are featured in the media as saying this unless they are misquoting you, in which case this is the place to say that they have lied on you.

ACP Moore: No, I will not want to say they are misquoting me unless I have an appreciation to actually be viewing the video. I will not go there, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Then, of course, also on March 24th, which was the day after, the *Newsday*, one Kinnesha George is quoting, a Senior Superintendent Joanne Archie—she reports to you directly:

ACP Moore: Pardon me?

Mr. Chairman: Senior Superintendent Joanne Archie, who is that?

ACP Moore: That is the Divisional Commander in Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: And she reports to you?

ACP Moore: She reports to me.

Mr. Chairman: Directly?

ACP Moore: Directly.

Mr. Chairman: There is no intervening officer or portfolio?

ACP Moore: No. No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So that is good because a Senior Superintendent Joanne Archie is quoted in this newspaper article as follows:

“Although Archie apologized for the inconvenience caused, she defended the exercise and the conduct of the officers saying they were operating within the law.

‘The police officers are out here in keeping with normal police practices, it was not all of a sudden, it was coordinated....’”

This is what your direct report is saying in the *Newsday*, and then I refer you to—and we can provide, of course, the video link if you would like, to the show “Beyond The Tape”, which, of course, features a fellow police officer, again, using that word “coordinated” as opposed to “coincidence”, or “coincidental” and, of course, you yourself featured in the media in this regard. So, is it that you are recanting your earlier position?

ACP Moore: No, I am not recanting my earlier—what I said earlier is that I cannot recall using the word “coordinating”—

Mr. Chairman: Or planned.

ACP Moore:—or planned. I, Garfield Moore, Assistant Commissioner, cannot recall using those words, but if I am guided in terms of if I see it and I used it, then, but I cannot recall now using the word. What I can say is that on the morning in question, when I went out there my purpose with the Divisional Commander—in fact, I took her—because she had just arrived in Tobago three weeks prior to that and she was not familiar with the terrain. So I personally took her out there and we dismantled the roadblocks.

Mr. Chairman: Who instructed you to stand down?

ACP Moore: I had no instructions. In fact, the Divisional Commander subsequently indicated to me that she had gotten a phone call from Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Hackett, to dismantle the roadblocks.

Mr. Chairman: So Mr. Hackett did not contact you.

ACP Moore: He did not contact me directly, but he would have spoken to the Divisional Commander.

Mr. Chairman: Why did he not contact you directly?

ACP Moore: Well, I cannot say. I cannot say.

Mr. Chairman: Why did Divisional Commanders have to present themselves at these roadblocks to have them cleared?

ACP Moore: Well, as I said before, Tobago has a unique situation in terms of communication where we have very few walkie-talkies, handsets, and the majority of times the officers that go

out they do not go with the handset. When I came to work that morning, having seen what was happening there, I determined that, listen, instead of having the officers out there, you call them back and just leave the roadblocks, walk away and come back to the station. We went out to ensure that they stopped the roadblocks and also, in addition to stopping the roadblocks, to ensure that the traffic flow freely. So we remained at each point until the traffic began to flow freely and then we moved to another point. So the last point we got to was Auchenskeoch Junction and we unclogged the roadblock there.

Mr. Mc Leod: ACP Moore, on something that you just said, but let me first ask: how are orders passed on from the very top of your organization to members who are at lower ranks?

ACP Moore: Well there are different ways. Sometimes you have a wireless broadcast, sometimes you have people calling on phones and sometimes—well you have written correspondence, but in this case written was not applicable—written communication.

Mr. Mc Leod: Would instructions from Deputy Commissioner Hackett come to you before reaching your commander Archie? Should it not have come to you to be passed on to Archie?

ACP Moore: That should have been the normal practice, but on that morning that did not happen, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: So that morning things were not normal?

ACP Moore: That did not happen, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So you are saying that the media's reportage of your statements on the matter—

ACP Moore: Yes, the media reported on the statement I made after the roadblock.

Mr. Chairman: And you are saying that you did not say that these roadblocks were either coordinated or planned?

ACP Moore: I cannot recall saying it was coordinated or planned. I cannot recall saying that.

Mr. Chairman: We will endeavour to furnish you with the information and invite you to respond. Now keep in mind that there ought not to be a variance because you are—

ACP Moore: I am not going to change my answer. I just cannot recall saying it.

Mr. Chairman:—in the Parliament.

ACP Moore: Yes, I cannot recall saying it, but as I said if it shows that I said it, so be it.

Mr. Chairman: I just have one question for you before, and then I think Member Ramadhar wants to ask you something as well. Is it then that you had no prior knowledge of these roadblocks?

ACP Moore: I had no prior knowledge.

Mr. Chairman: Nobody discussed anything with you?

ACP Moore: Nobody called me and informed me about the roadblocks that morning. The first time I learnt about the roadblock, a civilian called me around 6.00 a.m. and told me he was going to the country, Speyside, and he was in a roadblock. That was the first time I knew there was an actual roadblock taking place.

Mr. Chairman: But you did not know, just to be clear?

ACP Moore: But I did not know the extent of the roadblock.

Mr. Chairman: You did not know that roadblocks were planned in Tobago?

ACP Moore: I did not know there were roadblocks taking place in Tobago at that moment.

Mr. Chairman: On that day at all?

ACP Moore: At all.

Mr. Chairman: So you had no prior knowledge?

ACP Moore: No knowledge at all.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

Mr. Ramadhar: Just to be clear and to be fair. Mr. Moore, you had no prior knowledge on that day or any time before that day?

ACP Moore: Any time before that day I had no knowledge.

Mr. Ramadhar: Are you saying as a fact that the officers who manned the roadblock did not have wireless communication available to them that day?

ACP Moore: They had wireless communication in the vehicle as far as I am aware.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

ACP Moore: All the vehicles have wireless.

Mr. Ramadhar: And I am grateful for that. So there would be police vehicles on the scene? Yes?

ACP Moore: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Would you tell us what time did it become obvious, or were you made aware that there was a stand down order to these roadblocks?

ACP Moore: Let me see if I could find out what time. That would have been whilst myself and Divisional Commander was out on actually dismantling the roadblock.

Mr. Ramadhar: So the first time you learnt that there was a stand down—

ACP Moore: That stand down was given actually when the Divisional Commander and myself were out on the roadblock.

Mr. Ramadhar: So did you first meet with her and then go to the roadblock?

ACP Moore: Okay. I arrived in office just after 8.00 a.m. and when I got there—I know normally she is there early also, and when I called she told me she was in a roadblock, but she came about five or 10 minutes after. We had a conversation and we decided that we were going to go out there to dismantle the roadblock.

Mr. Ramadhar: So let me understand this. When you first spoke with her she was at physically at the roadblock?

ACP Moore: Yes, she was in a roadblock. Let me correct myself.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes.

ACP Moore: I had spoken to her earlier. That is before she left home.

Mr. Chairman: At what time?

ACP Moore: That would have been after 6.00, minutes to seven that morning.

Mr. Ramadhar: What was the nature of that conversation?

ACP Moore: Pardon me?

Mr. Ramadhar: What was the nature of that conversation?

ACP Moore: Well I asked her about the roadblock because I got a call that a civilian was in the roadblock, so I asked her whether or not there was any roadblock.

Mr. Ramadhar: And you learned from her then that there was in fact a roadblock?

ACP Moore: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Did you enquire from her whether she authorized it?

ACP Moore: I did not ask her that question at that point in time.

Mr. Ramadhar: Did she indicate to you that it was authorized?

ACP Moore: She said she did not authorize it.

Mr. Ramadhar: She did not authorize it?

ACP Moore: She did not authorize it.

Mr. Ramadhar: We appreciate your consideration because you took the initiative to find out what was happening. Were you concerned as to who authorized the roadblock?

ACP Moore: Yes, Sir. When I got to the Scarborough Station that morning where my office is located, I went into the charge room because I wanted to know what was happening and I asked

questions about who authorized the roadblock and the officers in the charge room could not have assisted.

Mr. Chairman: So nobody could have advised you who authorized the roadblock—

ACP Moore: No—

Mr. Ramadhar:—even your Divisional Commander?

ACP Moore: Yes. My first thought was, okay, normally the commander will call and give instructions, and that was not the case because there is no record in the telephone message as to guide me as a result of that.

Mr. Ramadhar: Good. I am happy to go to that. So that every event, whether in or out of the police station, that involves official police duty would be logged?

ACP Moore: It is expected to be logged. It is supposed to be logged.

Mr. Ramadhar: Is expected to be logged, and therefore—now, having regard to what has transpired, as a very diligent officer, you would have made enquiry from any station diary or log to ascertain who authorized these blocks and at what time.

ACP Moore: Well, from what I saw there was not a who authorized it. The officers paraded and left for duty, and those were the senior officers that were actually on duty. So there would not be in the diary where ACP Moore authorized. What you have at the station is, Inspector so and so paraded and dispatched a group officers, or Inspector Moore and a party left on roadblock duty X, Y, Z.

Mr. Ramadhar: Was there such an entry that they left on roadblock.

ACP Moore: Well I did not check the Scarborough, but there are entries at the station that these officers would have left on roadblock activity.

Mr. Ramadhar: I want to be very fair and clear as I say. Did you see, up to today, any entry of officers leaving any station to go on roadblocks?

ACP Moore: No, Sir, I did not.

Mr. Ramadhar: And this is after you made enquiry?

ACP Moore: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: So there is no official record of an official police activity?

ACP Moore: No. I think I misunderstand you, Sir. What I am saying, I did not check the diary to see the entry that was made, but entries were in fact made at Scarborough. I am dealing with Scarborough because that is where my base is.

Mr. Ramadhar: All right. Now, you said that you physically went to stand down the roadblock.

ACP Moore: Yes, I did.

Mr. Ramadhar: How long from the time you first knew that there was a stand down order to the time you actually got to the roadblock?

ACP Moore: Well, it was not far because let us say—

Mr. Ramadhar: How long approximately?

ACP Moore: About five minutes between where I got the information to where the first roadblock area was.

Mr. Ramadhar: Five minutes.

ACP Moore: Five minutes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Did you make any effort before arriving there to communicate with those who would have been on the roadblock?

ACP Moore: No, I did not.

Mr. Ramadhar: Is there any reason you did not?

ACP Moore: No, there was not any reason I did not.

Mr. Ramadhar: Did you attempt then to ascertain having gone to the roadblock who authorized it?

ACP Moore: I did not ask who authorized the roadblock. I did not.

11.20 a.m.

Mr. Ramadhar: Is there any reason you did not ask who authorized it seeing that there was no—your Divisional Commander had no idea nor was there any log in anywhere as to the authorization for this roadblock?

ACP Moore: Well, I did not ask those questions. My main concern—

Mr. Ramadhar: I know, you said that. The question is: is there any reason that you did not ask?

ACP Moore: No, there was no reason why I did not.

Mr. Ramadhar: But you would have been interested because you enquired of your Divisional Commander. Did you not?

ACP Moore: Yes Sir, I did.

Mr. Ramadhar: So having gone to the roadblock itself, you never enquired of the senior officer present who authorized it?

ACP Moore: No, I did not, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: And there was no reason that you could put to us now as to why you did not ask?

ACP Moore: No, I just—no.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Mr. Moore.

Mr. Chairman: Did you enquire any time after? Because you see, the *Guardian* headline—let see here. This is by Casandra Thompson-Forbes on March 24, the *Guardian* says:

“Tobago grinds to a halt”

Presumably, that is not the objective of setting up roadblock exercises and you as the person in charge of police in Tobago would be very disturbed by this. So, just to follow on from the Member Ramadhar’s question: would you not be motivated to find out who ordered it since you did not and the Senior Superintendent Archie did not? But it had the—whoever did, it had the effect of grinding, the media’s words: “Tobago...to a halt”.

ACP Moore: Well, I did not try to ascertain given the reason the Acting Deputy Commissioner, by that time, later in the day on the 23rd, she had instructed Assistant Commissioner, Vincel Edwards to investigate the matter. Hence the reason I did not go into the matter to find out what would have really happened on that day to the extent of getting a report from the officers because that was being done at another level and I allowed that process to take place.

Mr. Chairman: Mr. McLeod—oh, I am sorry, I will come to you.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you. Good morning, Sir. Apologies, Mr. Chairman, I was in court and only just got released. Good morning, Sir.

ACP Moore: Good morning, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: We have had a discussion so far concerning the roadblock and what steps were taken, et cetera. Being in the position that you are in this Division, when you realized that Tobago had ground to a halt, you having taken it upon yourself to physically go and stop this roadblock, were you deeply concerned to understand why such a forceful exercise was undertaken and whether there was any threat to Tobago that was being investigated?

ACP Moore: I was concerned based on the outcome of what would have happened and even today, there are a lot of questions still to be answered and I am hoping that this thing never happens again because it really has—the public have really lost confidence in the police service—

Mr. Al-Rawi: On that day, you became aware that Trinidad was experiencing a serious exercise as well.

ACP Moore: Well, it is only after eight o'clock, I realized that was happening in Trinidad.

Mr. Al-Rawi: But on that day, that morning, you realized that Trinidad was also in lockdown as well?

ACP Moore: Yes, I realized that.

Mr. Al-Rawi: In your position with your seniority, bearing in mind that Trinidad was in gridlock lockdown and so too was Tobago, you having said that you received no knowledge of any order to this effect, were you concerned that there was something untoward going on in our nation which would have resulted in such a massive, coordinated, precise exercise of locking down Trinidad and Tobago? Were you afraid that something was happening?

ACP Moore: I was concerned about what would have happened. I was very concerned.

Mr. Al-Rawi: When you say concerned, in your years of being a veteran as my learned Brigadier has described you, and he quite properly, have you ever seen an exercise where 19 police stations, six Divisions, have coordinated a complete lockdown of Trinidad and Tobago?

ACP Moore: No, I have never seen that type of activity before.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Have you participated in states of emergencies?

ACP Moore: Yes, I have.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And it is safe to say that in a state of emergency, you have—and we have had several of them in Trinidad—you have lockdowns going down?

ACP Moore: Yes.

Mr. Al-Rawi: So there is a heightened awareness?

ACP Moore: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: So, bearing in mind your seniority and your experience, seeing Trinidad and Tobago locked down as it was, were you just merely concerned or deeply concerned that something very serious was going on?

ACP Moore: Well, I was deeply concerned that something was not normal.

Mr. Al-Rawi: With that said, what have you uncovered by way of your own investigations to assist the country?

ACP Moore: I did not do an investigation in the matter.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you think it appropriate that you should not have done one?

ACP Moore: Well, because the Acting Commissioner would have launched an investigation, if that was not done, then Tobago Division would have launched an investigation and then come up with the recommendations.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Did Tobago Division do an investigation?

ACP Moore: No, we did not because of the—

Mr. Chairman: Okay, because we have some other witnesses waiting for us, so let me just summarize. You had no prior knowledge—*[Interruption]*

ACP Moore: No, I did not.

Mr. Chairman:—of these roadblocks intended in Tobago?

ACP Moore: No, I did not, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You intervened personally to stop them?

ACP Moore: Yes, I did.

Mr. Chairman: You have made no effort to understand who might have ordered them subsequent to the day?

ACP Moore: I did not do an enquiry to find out who would have caused it.

Mr. Chairman: And you know nothing about them whatsoever?

ACP Moore: Nothing about? I did not know about the roadblocks.

Mr. Chairman: And you deny saying to the media that these roadblocks were either coordinated or planned?

ACP Moore: I said I cannot recall. I have not been—I said I cannot recall, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: How many media interviews did you give?

ACP Moore: Only one, CNC3.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Well, ACP Moore—unless you have a last question or comment.

Brig. Alfonso: ACP, we both acknowledge that the senior man, the Commissioner of Police, has operational control of the police service.

ACP Moore: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Right. And that senior person, the Commissioner, can coordinate and cause all nine Divisions and all police stations to participate in a massive exercise at the same time on the same day. He can do that? He or she? The Commissioner.

ACP Moore: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: What we saw on the 23rd was massive—six Divisions and plenty police stations,

so it must have been somebody in control. Seeing that the Commissioner has operational control and can do what I just outlined—[*Interruption*]

ACP Moore: Yes, the Commissioner has that authority.

Brig. Alfonso:—it came across to most of us, including your good self, I want to submit, that there was some form of coordination, somebody had operational control on that day to have caused all of this to happen at the same time. Would you accept that?

ACP Moore: Sir, I do not have the evidence to say that it was coordinated and I cannot say that.

Brig. Alfonso: No, but the Commissioner can do that. Yes? We agree?

ACP Moore: Yes, the Commissioner can.

Brig. Alfonso: And would have that sort of effect that we had on the 23rd.

ACP Moore: Yes.

Brig. Alfonso: Right. So somebody, some person, some senior person I would hope, could have done that on that day and, like the Commissione, would have had operational control. If that were to happen again, you would assume that it came from the senior man?

ACP Moore: It could come from the Deputy Commissioner as the case may be, delegated authority.

Brig. Alfonso: All right. When you found out that all six Divisions were involved, did it cross your mind that it was controlled by a senior person?

ACP Moore: I cannot say it was controlled by a senior person.

Brig. Alfonso: You did not assume that?

ACP Moore: No, I cannot say that.

Brig. Alfonso: But would you assume that if it were to happen again?

ACP Moore: No, I would not assume that also.

Brig. Alfonso: Well, you will take it for granted?

ACP Moore: No, I did not take it for granted.

Brig. Alfonso: No, what I am saying is if you have all of them participating, all nine Divisions in this massive exercise, would you not assume that it came from the top?

ACP Moore: Well, yes, Sir. That would have been my first assumption.

Brig. Alfonso: But you did not assume that for the six Divisions that were involved on that day?

ACP Moore: Pardon me?

Brig. Alfonso: You did not assume that that control came from the top on that particular day?

ACP Moore: Well, I did not assume. I was—based on my inquiry, it was not from the top.

Brig. Alfonso: Where was it from?

ACP Moore: The Commissioner or the executive.

Brig. Alfonso: But where was it from? It was not from the top.

ACP Moore: Well, I cannot say. But I know it was not from the Commissioner and the executive.

Brig. Alfonso: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, I have found this quite enlightening. Before we say goodbye, I would just like to read to you an extract from a report that I have before me from one Inspector Powder from the Old Grange Police Station in response to a request that we put to Inspector Powder and I quote. The Inspector says:

“Sometime prior to Monday 23rd March, 2015, I had discussions with personnel attached to the Old Grange Station and an initiative to conduct pre-Easter other road block/ traffic exercises to commence the Easter Season within the district; the first exercise was to be held, and was held on Monday 23rd March, 2015. On Monday 23rd 2015, between the period 5:15 am and 10:10 am I coordinated and supervised the first of an initiated roadblock exercise...”

So, there is evidence that it was planned and your Senior Superintendent is quoted in the media as saying it was planned as are you, and now we are to accept that it was not planned, that these things were done—the term used was snap. It was a snap activity. But your own Inspector is saying that it was planned. And so there is more to this, I suppose, than meets the eye.

ACP Moore: Well, Chairman, to be fair to Mr. Powder, Mr. Powder is talking about one station and that is Old Grange, and he has the responsibility to plan exercises within his station district. So if he said it is planned, that means he did plan it with his other subordinates to hold the exercise, from my understanding.

Mr. Chairman: Of course. Okay, let me thank you very much for coming and spending time with us. It has been illuminating. We will be sending, if you do not mind, just some further questions and dialogue, we may wish to engage in some dialogue with you again, but we certainly will be sending some follow-up questions to you. Could you please furnish us with the records in the police stations in the Tobago Division that conducted roadblocks exercises—
[Interruption]

ACP Moore: Surely.

Mr. Chairman:—on when these things were planned, who was involved in planning them? Since it was not planned at a senior executive level in either the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service or in the Tobago Division, then presumably the records are kept at a station or divisional level and should be easily accessed.

ACP Moore: The records are at the station but they can be had.

Mr. Chairman: If you could furnish us with those records, it would be quite useful.

ACP Moore: Yes, Mr. Chairman. And do you have a deadline by which—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, we would like them by next Friday.

ACP Moore: Next Friday, appreciate it.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, Mr. Moore, thank you very much for the courtesy of your attendance here with us. We are grateful that you could make the time.

ACP Moore: It is a pleasure being here and I look forward, maybe, if there is another occasion to come and dialogue with you because my thing is to say what would have happened, and I hope that I would have helped the Committee in some way in their deliberations to understand what happened on that day.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you. This Committee is now suspended for three minutes.

11.34 a.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

11.37 a.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

OFFICIAL OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Johnny Abraham Senior Superintendent

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so the Fifth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security will now resume. We have with us, we are pleased to welcome Senior Superintendent Johnny Abraham from the Central Division.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Thanks much.

Mr. Chairman: The members of Committee will now introduce themselves and then we ask you to introduce yourself as well. We would start on my left.

[Members of the Joint Select Committee introduced themselves]

Snr. Supt. Abraham: My name is Johnny Abraham. I am the Senior Superintendent in charge of Central Trinidad, which is centrally located in Trinidad and it is a flat place. It is called the plain and I usually speak plain. I am here at your request to answer any questions you may have for me.

Mr. Chairman: Welcome to you. As you know, we are looking into the matters in relation to the day of total policing as it is called, but the rest of the population experienced it as an extremely disruptive set of roadblocks on Monday, 23rd March, 2015. This is the matter that is before us. Before we begin, it is our custom to invite you to make some opening remarks, if you wish to, in relation to the subject before us.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: No, well at this time I would not make any opening remarks, I would just answer whatever questions are posed to me, to the best of my ability.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Snr. Supt. Abraham, you are in charge of the Central Division. The Central Division was noticeably absent from any of the disruptive actions which took place on Monday, 23rd March, 2015, by the police. And in fact in some quarters have been commended for not joining in what is generally viewed as a very unproductive display by members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and, therefore, it has been suggested that your Division demonstrated greater class credibility and discipline in the exercise of their powers than several other Divisions in the police service, and this is why we asked you to come before us, because we wanted to understand why your Division did not participate in the planned activities of Monday, 23rd March?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well Sir, if I may, I had no prior knowledge as to the situation that took place on 23rd March. However, I must say that I am in full control of my Division and with the assistance of my officers under my command we work to the letter of the police service. More than that, I have been having roadblocks in Central Trinidad since I took charge in 2014 and I usually do my roadblocks from Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday each week, every week per month.

To date, we have done 151 roadblocks in central Trinidad for the year and today is only 135 days for the year. Now, I could safely tell you that the people in central Trinidad cooperate so well with the police that they applaud us for being present on the roadway, and more than that, the reason why I choose to do my roadblocks different to other area commanders is because I look at the crime situation in central Trinidad and by doing roadblocks we will stop people from traversing from one area to another area with firearms, which is the weapon of choice that is causing havoc in this country, where murders are concerned. By doing that, we will also prevent criminals from entering my jurisdiction and I am very proud to be the leader of Central Division and I have the full support of my officers, both junior and senior officers.

For the year, I have done 12,000-plus stop and search and that sent a strong signal to the criminal element or persons who have intention of coming central to commit any crime, that the police will be present on the road outside. We would not cause disruption for persons who are going to and from work because I would do my roadblock in such a manner that we have officers way ahead of the roadblock to tell you which cars to pull aside to stop and which cars could pass straight. So that is how I command my division, how I man my division with the support of my subordinates.

Mr. Ramadhar: Chairman, thank you very much. Mr. Abraham, first of all, let me congratulate you on the tremendous job you have done throughout your service, but in particular what you have done in central. I understand that since you have taken command there has been a dramatic decrease in the level of crime. Could you give us a percentage decrease?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, at this time we have about 22 per cent reduction in serious crimes.

Mr. Ramadhar: From last year to this year?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: From last year the same period for the same period this year, a 22 per cent reduction.

Mr. Ramadhar: Excellent.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: I am looking to press on that further.

Mr. Ramadhar: We appreciate that. Mr. Abraham, very interestingly, so your roadblocks are basically, from what you described, a more direct one, not a sledgehammer approach, a surgical one?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Yes, I could say I base my roadblock on intelligence and then we look at the areas where people intend to drink and drive. So we cause roadblocks to be had in those areas as to minimize any fatality arising out of the drunken driving, and so on. So we just do not do roadblocks because we want to do roadblocks. We do it to keep down the crime and to send a message to the criminal elements that we are present out there and to reassure the public of the presence of the police officers.

Mr. Ramadhar: Now, Mr. Abraham, then I understand that you take an approach of policing to protect the civilian, yes, but at the same time to enhance the respect for the police officers in the way you conduct your business.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Yes, Sir, and you see coming out of that question, Sir, to date I have had about 10 town meetings in central Trinidad with the Commissioner and other Executive members

plus, I have about 35 community meetings with station councils, that is people from the Rotary Club, other areas in central, you name it, Cunupia, Las Lomas. I go to village after village on a regular basis to keep the people on the ground informed to work together with the people, and in that way we build a relationship where the people love Johnny Abraham.

Mr. Ramadhar: As a result of which, and tell me if I am wrong, you have, not just the love but, the cooperation and, therefore, information that leads to the solution of crime.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Yes, Sir. What happen, by going into these villages and interacting with the public you find they have confidence in me and I have confidence in them. When they give me information I would treat it with at the strictest confidentiality and I would give them feedback as to what I have done with the information and based on that, people would be calling me all time of the night, all ungodly hours, 12, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, you name it. And because the result they have been getting, they feel free to come into my office also. I have an open-door policy. My air condition unit is always blowing hot because the door is always opened. That is one of the things the people are comfortable with in central. They would share information with me and based on that, we would solve the crimes, we would keep down the crimes and other infractions of the law.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Partap: Senior Supt. congratulations, again because I am in central a lot and, you know, people only have good things to say about you and the way in which you carry about your division and the way in which you interact with people. What you are saying there is not made up, it is very true. I know that first hand. Let me ask you something, could any officer from any station in central set up a roadblock without your knowledge?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: That is an N with the biggest boldest letters NO, no! They will take directive from me, once I am in charge of central Trinidad, and they will do as I tell them to.

Mr. Partap: That is my only question, thank you.

Brig. Alfonso: Let me start by saying you look very different without your hat. Everybody knows Johnny with his hat, but you look just as good in your uniform.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Thanks much, Sir.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: Given what has happened on 23rd March, you have had time to reflect and time to think about it, were you a little surprised that all six divisions were mobilized to conduct these massive exercises, roadblocks, patrols, stop and search and whatever? Were you just a

little surprised?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Certainly, I was more surprised. The reason why they may not have asked me to participate with them is because they know the kind of person I am.

Brig. Alfonso: I rather suspect that is why they did not involve you.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: And probably if they had involved me, I would have communicated with the senior officers.

Brig. Alfonso: If you were invited to be involved and that invitation came from a senior person to yourself, you would have had complied?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, if I had instructions to carry out roadblocks, I would have carried out the roadblocks but if I knew for any other reasons besides the roadblock per se as to cause a disruption I would have been placed on a disciplinary charge today.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: But that instruction would have come from a senior person, like the Commissioner or his Deputy?

11.50 a.m.

Mr. Abraham: Well, Sir, if I get instructions from the Commissioner to carry out a roadblock, I will carry out the roadblock, but if I have further information that it is to cause a disruption, I would have been prepared to resign from the police service.

Brig. Alfonso: I do not think they are ready for your resignation yet, but that is another story. Now, I am trying to get to the point where you would have heard of the whole exercise. Did you assume that it came from a senior person; the instruction?

Mr. Abraham: Well, to be honest, when I started getting calls on my cell phone as to the traffic jam on the highway, I enquired from the Assistant Commissioner, Traffic Branch, Mr. Dulalchan, if he knew of any roadblock on the highway or if there was any fatal accident, and he indicated, no. So I was a bit worried if something was disrupting the free flow of traffic in Trinidad. So, I started calling the newspapers and calling around to find out what was happening. It was about a little while after, about eleven o'clock thereabout, I received a call from Ms. Alleyne, asking me if I knew of any roadblock in my division, and I told her, no. I sent out my officers, and we ensured that we had no roadblocks in central division.

Brig. Alfonso: And you would have been surprised that the person who was acting commissioner at the time, did not know of these roadblock exercises?

Mr. Abraham: Well, very much so, and apparently she was taken by surprise, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Would you say some level of control was lost by the senior people, not yourself, because you were separate and apart. You are in central. Would you say that some level of control was lost among the six divisions?

Mr. Abraham: Well, it appears to me that it was lost for a moment, until word got to the senior officers what was taking place on the ground, because she called me immediately, and asked me if I had any roadblocks in my division to cease it, and I told her I had no roadblocks.

Brig. Alfonso: So somebody other than the senior officers may have been in control?

Mr. Abraham: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: You would not want to hazard a guess, whom that might be?

Mr. Abraham: Well, no, it could be several persons. So I would not really venture there.

Brig. Alfonso: Thank you.

Mr. Partap: Senior Supt, if you are carrying out a roadblock, and you get instructions from your senior, from the Acting Commissioner of Police, how long would it take you to dismantle that roadblock?

Mr. Abraham: I could dismantle a roadblock in two minutes, just by the use of the wireless set. I call them and tell them stand down all action.

Mr. Partap: Once you tell your officers to stand down, they listen?

Mr. Abraham: They listen to me.

Mr. Partap: Well, I would just venture this piece of information to you. You know the acting, Acting Commissioner on the day, from about six o'clock to seven o'clock, was trying to get in contact with her senior officers in the divisions, and it took them about two hours to respond. Do you think that is normal?

Mr. Abraham: Well, I am not surprised because we, as the protective service, one of the protective service, the agency, dealing with safety and security in the country, we could, within a matter of one moment's notice, a minute, close down all activities that we want to close down, where police officers are concerned. If this was allowed to go on, on and on, you could well imagine the chaotic situation it would have had in Trinidad. If I make one call right now, sitting here, to give directive to central Trinidad, I could lock down the whole of central Trinidad right now, with my police vehicles at different points. If I lockdown central Trinidad now, that means Claxton Bay, Freeport, Caroni, you name it, I could also call one minute and have them removed, to have traffic flow.

I will give you an instance, just recently we had a gas spill in Point Lisas, and my evacuation plan worked well, because I was able to lockdown traffic coming in from Claxton Bay, and stop it by BC Roundabout and divert all the traffic, in one minute I got the call, I was able to do that. Then when we realized that the thing was under control, one minute again, we had the road flowing free. So that is how I operate in central with my officers under my command.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Good morning, senior superintendent, and may I too, also express my gratitude for the positive confidence that you bring, in the manner in which you discharge your duties to Trinidad and Tobago. Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Abraham: Thanks very much, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I ask you, who do you think orchestrated this event?

Mr. Abraham: Well, this would be hearsay evidence now, from what I gathered it was the Guard and Emergency Branch. I do not know where they got the directive from, but that is the information I have.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Did you read the report produced by Mr. Edwards?

Mr. Abraham: No, I did not read the report in its entirety, and time really did not permit me. I read certain parts and then, you know—I just keep running again.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sure. What do you think ought to be done in terms of remedy for this kind of situation?

Mr. Abraham: Well, firstly, the officers in charge of their divisions must have the respect of their subordinate officers; they must be able to work together on a daily basis, for the betterment of this country; they must be able to take charge of all situations, and more than that, they must have information from the officers on the ground, as to what is taking place. So that means, I am always on the ground with my officers. I do not look at the rank of senior superintendent and constables, SRP, you name it, even the civilian staff that I work with. Once information comes to hand with any illegal activities, these officers have so much confidence in me, they will come to my office and tell me what is going on in the division. So if something like this should ever think about happening in central, I am sure that I will get word of what is going to happen, and I will put a stop to it.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you think it was industrial action at work?

Mr. Abraham: Well, I really—I do not want to suggest that, and if it is so, I will be very—it will be a very sad thing if that is it.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I know I am asking you to volunteer a guess, I appreciate that you have said clearly that this is hearsay, and you are offering your opinion. I thank you for that. Do you think that the country should accept the now, almost constant repetition that this was a coincidental exercise?

Mr. Abraham: Well, then you see I have to answer that in “ah kinda” two ways, because you know, according to “de saying”, damn if you do, damn if you do not. If an accident should happen now on the highway, somebody will ask a question, where are the police officers? Somebody is speeding on the road causing drag racing, that could cause death, where are the police officers? Then again, if the public was so much inconvenienced, it was really a sad thing, because I understand millions of dollars may have been lost because of the action.

I always take into consideration when I am doing my exercises in my division, try as much as possible not to inconvenience the travelling public. I look at it that way, because that is why you see, I always send messages on the television and in the print media. If somebody wants to protest about bad roads or other facilities in this country, they must get a placard and stand on the pavement, and do not burn any tyres in my division, because sometimes you have people going to the hospital, you have people dying in vehicles heading to the hospital, and because of these roadblocks, it could cause death. So I am totally against causing too much inconvenience to the travelling public.

Mr. Chairman: So, just let me ask this question Senior Superintendent Abraham, do you feel that these roadblocks were intended to frustrate the public?

Mr. Abraham: Well, I really cannot say the intention, but apparently—[*Interruption*]

Mr. Chairman: No, I am not asking you to prove it, but you said earlier in your dialogue with us, that you received a lot of information, as you would. You are on the ground; a lot of people talk to you; they call you at all hours of the night. So you would have an understanding of what the intent of these activities might have been. What do you think was the intention?

Mr. Abraham: Well, having read the papers, and listening to the news and different opinions from people in the country, it seems to me that the intention was to send a message.

Mr. Chairman: And what was the message?

Mr. Abraham: I could only assume, it could be wage negotiation, and that is my assumption. I may be wrong. I do not know what information the officers had when they conducted these roadblocks.

Mr. Chairman: You know that wage negotiations had reached a sticking point, just a few days before?

Mr. Abraham: Well, yes, having read the papers—and the information—

Mr. Chairman: And that you had several angry pronouncements about that fact?

Mr. Abraham: Yeah, and then you look at it also, because we received a call about Day of Rest and Reflection, but people did not heed to that call, because that call came from the president, of the association, if I am correct, that people will get sick and stay home for two days, and rest and reflect. I did not suffer that fate in central division, just about six persons were sick, and as far as I am concerned, that is a normal thing on a daily basis. Added to that, if that call was also in respect to the negotiations, then it was not really heeded, but if the roadblock was a call because of the negotiation, well, then it is a sad day.

Mr. Chairman: But in your view, and from your information, these roadblocks were planned, they were not done just by “vaps”?

Mr. Abraham: Well, based on my experience in the police service, it had to be a planned exercise. It had to be a planned exercise.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, Mr. Al-Rawi, were you finished?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir. Thank you. I have received the most forthright answers of these entire five meetings, thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Which we have had for some time. Mr. Mc Leod?

Mr. Mc Leod: Thank you, Chairman. Senior Supt, I wish there were at least 12 other very senior police officers like yourself, in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Our people would be more at rest, more productive and more civil and social and so on; I really want to commend you. I have heard other officers, senior to you, junior to you, and none has assured me as you are assuring me, that the future bodes well for all of us in Trinidad and Tobago, because of the presence of persons like yourself, well, the presence of yourself. How long have you been in the police service?

Mr. Abraham: This year will make it 38 years.

Mr. Mc Leod: Thirty-eight years?

Mr. Abraham: Yes, Sir, and I thank you for your comments, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: And at the level of superintendent and senior superintendent, are there occasions when persons across the country in that rank of the service, would meet with the executive of

the service, and exchange views and ideas and so on, so that we can bring all of these very progressive thoughts and ideas together, so as to take a really frontal attack on the crime and criminal activity that is plaguing our society?

Mr. Abraham: Well, we meet every Tuesday with the Commissioner of Police and the deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and other senior officers, like myself, from each division, we meet on a Tuesday morning at the police headquarters to discuss plans and future plans for the police service, but everybody has their own styling.

When I joined this work, I joined this work to make people feel comfortable, safe—go about their business, without being molested, and I stick to that from then to now, and I will continue doing so once I am a police officer.

Mr. Mc Leod: Officer, do you consider yourself to be popular among your peers of that rank in the police service?

Mr. Abraham: Well, Sir, this might sound like a joke, but if I should put in a nomination paper for election, I think politicians will have a problem with me, because I am going to beat them going and coming, Sir. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Chairman: Okay. We just have a minute or two, but do you have any other questions you want—

Mr. Mc Leod: Just two small ones—no, I meant not among politicians, because I am ready to concede, eh. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Abraham: Sir, to be honest, I am well liked by all my officers. I am like a father to every officer in my division. They could come to me with personal problems and you know, long ago you tell somebody your personal problem, and then you hear it somewhere else, and they guarantee that it remains in my office. They will come to my home with problems, and I will assist them to the best of my ability, and based on that, people have a lot of love and respect for me. I will continue to keep these officers bonded together as a family.

Mr. Mc Leod: My last question is, do you feel confident in your thought or belief, that this thing, total policing on March 23, was really coordinated, spearheaded even by elements in the GEB?

12.05 p.m.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, yes Sir. Based on the information I have, I am confident that those are the officers that carried out this exercise.

Mr. Mc Leod: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Mr. Abraham.

Mr. Mutema: Well I, too, let me commend you on your forthrightness and your level of commitment. First, I want to ask: are you familiar with the concept of total policing?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, I do total policing in my division and, that is, when I have roadblocks, I would also have house searches to execute warrants on persons who did not attend court or who we had first instance warrant for, persons who we have arrest warrants for and we will search for narcotics. So, in that concept of total policing is a series of activities that will take place on one given day.

So, in total policing, as far as I understand it, and how I carry it out, is that if I say I am having a total policing today, Friday, that mean officers from the CID will carry out house searches; officers from the warrant section will carry out searches for persons who they have warrants for. The roadblock, we will be looking for persons who are traversing from point A to point B with firearm, ammunition or drunken driving on the road, and I call that my total policing. That is my understanding and that is how I operate in Central Trinidad.

Mr. Mutema: Thank you. The activities of the 23rd, coming from comments from one of the officers who were involved were attributed to total policing—they were involved in an exercise of total policing—do you share that opinion that those activities of the 23rd were, in truth and in fact, application of total policing?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: That is not my concept of total policing. That is roadblock. Total policing, as I explained before, is a series of activities taking place on any given day.

Mr. Mutema: Thank you for your clarity.

Mr. Ramadhar: Mr. Abraham, I understand you said you are in the service for 38 years.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: How much time do you have till your retirement and the loss to the police service?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, I was supposed to go on pre-retirement on November 30 this year, but because of my love for the country and my people in central, I took 14 days' vacation leave to take it into the Christmas period so that I could have my community in Central Trinidad feel free to shop and so on for Christmas. So, I will be proceeding in January 2016, God spare life.

Mr. Ramadhar: So, I am hearing that the population of Trinidad and Tobago will lose, as one of its serving officers, in January of 2016.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: And I am also hearing that people plan to protest, they really do not want me to go. So, whatever God has for me in the future, I will accept it with open arms. If I am asked to stay on longer, I will willingly do so, once I have breath in my body. I have seen people who are 65 years still working in fields and they are still active, so I feel I have a lot of years left in me.

Mr. Ramadhar: I just want to make a disclosure here. Mr. Abraham, my respect for you for the many years—I mean, you were in the police and I am defence counsel and, therefore, my respect for you has grown over the years. I wanted to disclose that and to congratulate you on the work that you have already done and to find it troubling that a very hearty and healthy looking man may have to depart the service of the police service. We must find a way to keep the best of the best.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, I thank you for your kind words and your thoughts Sir and I, myself, am praying to God if I could be of any assistance to this country and the people to make sure that they are safe and continue to be safe, I am willing to serve in whatever capacity that I am given, but I am trying my best also to keep healthy and to keep fit.

Mr. Chairman: Snr. Superintendent Abraham, just one last question. If there was somebody in the Guard and Emergency Branch that we should talk to about this, who should we talk to?

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, the person who is directly in charge of Guard and Emergency Branch.

Mr. Chairman: No, not the person who is in charge. I mean, who we should talk to about this day of total policing.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Well, I feel the best person to talk in the Guard and Emergency Branch is the Senior Superintendent. He will be in charge of the officers under his command.

Mr. Chairman: And he would be able to.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: He should be able to clarify everything that you need to find out.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Well, let me thank you very much for coming and spending time with us. It has been illuminating. The Committee has found your testimony refreshing, and we welcome and we thank you and we hope we have the opportunity to see you at some point again before you retire. Thank you very much for your service and for appearing before us.

Snr. Supt. Abraham: Thanks Mr. Chairman and other members of the Committee. It was a pleasure being here. I hope that I have enlightened you all with whatever you wanted to find

out, and I would pledge my support to continue working hard for this country and for the people of this country so that they could feel safe and we will have a better country in years to come. Thanks again.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you.

12.10 p.m.: *Meeting suspended.*

12.13 p.m.: *Meeting resumed.*

Official

Mr. Roger Alexander - Inspector of Police

Mr. Chairman: Welcome, again to the Fifth Meeting of the Joint Select Committee on National Security, and welcome to Inspector Roger Alexander. We would normally introduce ourselves and then ask you to introduce yourself.

[Introductions made]

Mr. Chairman: Okay, welcome Inspector Alexander. We are here to examine the events of Monday, March 23 where we had a day of total policing. In relation to that, we would normally invite our guests to make some opening remarks. So, I would leave it open to you now to just make some opening remarks and then we will ask the members to pose some questions to you.

Insp. Alexander: Sir, well my opening remarks are, thanks for having me.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, anything else on Monday, March 23 in terms of an opening remark.

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir, I will take the questions and try to answer them to the best of my ability.

Mr. Chairman: Very good. Let me start. In our private session we have viewed a tape of an episode of *Beyond The Tape* which is a very popular programme that you host very successfully, and in there you are quoted as saying that we have coordinated efforts to conduct these roadblocks and you said that as a means of explaining to the population why these exercises were necessary, and you were at pains to, I think, explain to the populace that there are inconveniences that are attendant to ensuring a safe society.

The Committee viewed that, and what we trying to establish now is the coordinating mechanism that would have operated for something of this scale to occur. We understand the mechanics of how it would happen at the level of a few cars or a station or even a division. So, we are just now trying to migrate our understanding to how this happens across so many police stations in so many divisions. The actual number is six divisions, 19 police stations and more than 20

roadblock exercises.

And so, I would like to invite you to shed some light on that aspect or element for us, and it is not you alone, so do not feel you are alone. There are a number of senior police officers who are quoted in the media as saying these were planned and these were coordinated. So what we are trying to understand now is how that coordinating mechanism works, how would it work for something like this to happen, because your position would have been that this is actually not an extraordinary event. And so, if that is so, then there must be a fairly robust mechanism to ensure that it takes place the way it is intended to take place. So what we are looking for is some illumination on that.

12.20 p.m.

Insp. Alexander: Sir, I heard you said that you would have used some recording from Beyond The Tape.

Mr. Chairman: Yes.

Insp. Alexander: Now, as I performed my duties on Beyond The Tape on that particular day I was treated with questions, or greeted with questions that I had to respond to and, at that time, I responded to the best of my ability, knowing from my experience how does one coordinate a roadblock exercise. So, I went to the explanation where if there was a robbery in progress in a particular division and communication took place, by whatever mean, immediately, without great notification, that persons could set up road check exercises in order to apprehend the offenders, and that is the angle which I took when I was speaking on Beyond The Tape.

Mr. Chairman: Well, okay, but you—I mean, I wrote it down, quote/unquote:

We coordinated efforts to conduct roadblocks.

So what you are saying now is that you were expressing an opinion of what would have occurred.

Insp. Alexander: And that is correct, and when I say “we”, I often refer to “we” as members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

Mr. Chairman: So, the police service would have coordinated these efforts?

Insp. Alexander: Most likely.

Mr. Chairman: If so, I mean, who in particular? I mean, this would have disrupted a lot of people. You would have a very rich source of information and data that come to you as a policeman that is out there. You are a police officer many, many people in this country know and respect. Who would coordinate something like this? Where would the coordination for this

lie? If not a person, you know, it does not—where would it lie? It certainly would not lie at the divisional level and it would not lie at the station level, so where would it rest its head?

Insp. Alexander: As a police officer I must ask the same question sometime as you, and I may be tempted to seek in the same direction that you are seeking to find, and I cannot say at this time. As I said before, on many occasions, these things happen just in a moment's notice because it is all about apprehension.

Mr. Chairman: So you did not know anything about it beforehand?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir, I did not.

Mr. Chairman: And in the month that has passed since you do not know who would have done something like this?

Insp. Alexander: I questioned because I saw all this activity taking place on national television, and all of that. So, I saw it and I say as an Inspector I probably would need to check, because you never know when somebody might pop the question on Beyond The Tape, and, up to date, I cannot seem to put my figure on any person or institution, really.

Mr. Chairman: So it is a coincidence then?

Insp. Alexander: If one was to look at it so it may just be, because, as I said before, when you mount things, when you put things together, normally you put things together, everybody in the division would have knowledge, but then when some people have and some people do not it could be just spontaneous, if one were to use those words.

Mr. Chairman: So, it spontaneously happened in six divisions and 19 police stations over 20 roadblocks on the same day and at the same time?

Insp. Alexander: Well, Sir, I cannot—I say, my guess is as good as yours. My guess is as good as yours.

Mr. Chairman: Yes, Brig. Alfonso.

Brig. Alfonso: Inspector—

Insp. Alexander: Sir.

Brig. Alfonso:—who has operational control of the police service?—total service.

Insp. Alexander: The Commissioner of Police.

Brig. Alfonso: Yeah. That exercise, that operation on March 23 was a massive and extensive one, would you agree?

Insp. Alexander: After we would have measured it, yes, Sir, it was.

Brig. Alfonso: Six divisions, and that would have taken some form of coordination from a person who has operational control?

Insp. Alexander: I would not want to agree with you too much, Sir, because if it was a person who had total control then all the divisions, all the sections, all the branches would have directly been involved.

Brig. Alfonso: All right, but six divisions were involved.

Insp. Alexander: Okay.

Brig. Alfonso: And you say it might have been a coincidence.

Insp. Alexander: My guess is as good as yours, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: If someone were to say—I am going to be very blunt—if someone were to say that Inspector Alexander was the person who pulled all this together, that person would not be telling the truth?

Insp. Alexander: I suggest that if somebody was to speak that at this hour—

Brig. Alfonso: If they were to say that—if they were to say Roger Alexander is the man that pulled this thing together.

Insp. Alexander: So, immediately after that statement was made they would stretch as if to just wake up from a dream.

Brig. Alfonso: But that would not be true?

Insp. Alexander: That would not be me, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: All right. I just wanted to get your position on it.

Insp. Alexander: Okay.

Brig. Alfonso: But, I want to go back to the person who is having operational control is the Commissioner?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Are you surprised that the Commissioner on that day did not have operational control?

Insp. Alexander: Again, Sir, I want to go back to what I said before, and with different divisions having operations at different times, that statement would not be totally right to make and I cannot support that statement.

Brig. Alfonso: At the same time, these six divisions at the same time on the same day performing the same exercise or operation, i.e. “Total Policing”. I think that is what everybody

is calling it, “Total Policing”. So these six divisions—I do not know why the other three were left out, but these six divisions, just by coincidence, decided, “We are going to do this thing on Monday morning at four o’clock”, with no coordination, how does that sound to you?

Insp. Alexander: Sir, I might have my doubts, as I said before, but then, as a person who have been in operation for a number of years, twenty-something years to be exact, I recall, on many occasions, I would have mount an exercise and go to a particular location only to find another division there, or even another operational unit there. Coincidence, eh?

Brig. Alfonso: Six of them.

Insp. Alexander: Well, I said two others. I did not say six, “eh”, so I am just showing you the coincidence.

Brig. Alfonso: I am going beyond two, I am going to six. Would it not seem a bit coincidental to you?

Insp. Alexander: Well, Chief, if two was there on my operation it was coincidental to me. So if six was there, well, then probably they had the same information at the same time.

Brig. Alfonso: Let me rest my case here for now.

Mr. Mutema: Inspector—

Insp. Alexander: Sir.

Mr. Mutema: All right. Now, from time to time, I myself view your programme, right, very informative, Beyond The Tape, you know, and I think it is—well, it is doing its job. I remember viewing that programme on the same day, the 23rd, the evening, and the question by Marlon Hopkinson, your co-host, all right, because you all were conducting the conversation, he was asking the questions, and so on, and in posing the question concerning the events of that day, the question in relation to “Total Policing”, and so on, you stated, well, it was the question of the “Total Policing”, and the objective of that, and so on. I heard you this morning stating the question could be coincidental, but you made the statement on the programme, on that evening, sort of indicating that this is an exercise that the public could expect to continue, right, and your statements then, and I quote, was that the criminals should leave their guns and at home, but in addressing you said, the law-abiding citizens must be prepared to walk with “yuh” breakfast, “yuh” lunch and “yuh” dinner. That was your term, that the law-abiding citizen should walk with their breakfast, lunch and dinner, indicating then that this is an exercise that could continue and, therefore, you all have to be prepared to remain in traffic jam for the whole day, right.

Breakfast is in the morning and dinner, I know, is in the evening, so be prepared to remain in traffic jam from morning to evening. Now, how do you explain such?

Insp. Alexander: First of all, Sir, let me correct you. I think that the informing that you have did not come from Beyond The Tape, it came from some other media house, to start with. And with respect to what I meant, as I said before, I did operations for more than 20-something years of my service, my physical health, well-being, and my emotions are all involved in policing. That is what I do. That is what I like. As a result of I doing operations, from time to time, I know that no police officer, no police institution cannot do this alone, and what I meant at that time was, just as I operate with the police officers, I depend on members of the community, the citizenry, to assist us to fight crime. And if we are out there fighting crime, because if you have a passion for what you do, and I know the Minister of National Security might share this with me, might understand this, if you have a passion for what you do, the hours mean nothing to you, you know. All it means is that you have to get the job done, and if it means staying out there all day together with the citizens, because we cannot fight alone, that is all it meant. If anybody took it out of context, well, a slip of the tongue.

Mr. Mutema: Now, Mr. Alexander, you said that the law-abiding citizens—you said the criminals to leave their guns at home when they are coming out, but, we, the people, for example, on that day who were caught in the traffic jam, right, in the morning for those hours from four to 10, and even at that time you had the talk circulating that it was going to be repeated in the afternoon at two o'clock. That was circulating amongst the people, all right, and on that programme, what you stated, you addressed the criminals, said, "You must leave your guns at home when you are coming out", right, but you said, "You, the law-abiding citizens—you and me and people like us, right—be prepared for such and make sure and walk with your breakfast, your lunch and your dinner". This is not the police officers; it is the citizens being addressed here.

Insp. Alexander: Okay. So, as I said before, if I am going out there to run operation that involves the removal of guns, wanted persons off the streets, Chief, you think I would go with the criminal elements? Obviously, I will go with the law-abiding citizen. Is those people that I want on my side, and those who I am referring to, not a situation where you were caught in traffic jam, you know. I wanted the law-abiding citizens on my side as we take a certain approach towards fighting crime, that is all it meant.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much. Mr. Alexander, first of all, let me congratulate you for the great work you have done—

Insp. Alexander: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar:—but I find it a bit curious in some of the statements referred here today from you. One, let me see if I have you right, you had no prior knowledge of what was going to happen on March 23?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: But you did say on record that it was coordinated, and you have given some explanation for it, but then you moved to a position that law-abiding citizens, as my brother, Kwesi, has indicated, brother, member, should walk with their breakfast, lunch and dinner; well, on what authority then were you making that statement? Had you been part of a coordination for a further effort for roadblocks?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir. No, Sir. And I just explained it, “eh”.

Mr. Ramadhar: No. No. No. With all due respect, you have given an account, but let us put this together, right, you had no prior knowledge from what you have told us here today—

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar:—but you did say it was coordinated, and you have given that explanation—

Insp. Alexander: All right. Okay, thanks.

Mr. Ramadhar:—to be fair to you. And, three, you put a further warning—

Insp. Alexander: What is the warning, Sir?

Mr. Ramadhar: Breakfast, lunch and dinner. Right? Let us put this in—the picture is now getting a little bit more wholesome, but, interesting in all this, your effort then in the warning is that you are going to have further roadblocks, correct? No?

Insp. Alexander: That is your opinion, Sir, I am—

Mr. Ramadhar: No. No. No. That is not my opinion. Mr. Alexander, with all due respect, I am asking you, when you warned that they should walk with breakfast, lunch and dinner, what?—that is to take to their work and make sure that you had a wholesome, healthy meal with you, or whilst you are in traffic.

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir, that is to fight alongside the police as we apprehend persons in the fight against crime. It is effort coordinated, not just by the police but also members of the public.

Mr. Ramadhar: We appreciate that. So what is the relevance of walking with food, breakfast,

lunch and dinner?

Insp. Alexander: Well, as I said before—

Mr. Ramadhar: For where? Where did you anticipate they should have this breakfast, lunch and dinner kept?

Insp. Alexander: We need to walk with food, Sir, because we are in it for the long haul—

Mr. Ramadhar: Who?

Insp. Alexander:—because we need to—

Mr. Ramadhar: Who?

Insp. Alexander: “Eh?”

Mr. Ramadhar: Who was in it for the long haul?

Insp. Alexander: The police and the law-abiding citizens.

Mr. Ramadhar: Right. Good. Why then would you interfere with one’s dietary needs in your long haul unless it was intended to be that you would be stuck out there, therefore you may not have access to breakfast, lunch and dinner?

Insp. Alexander: Sir, let me tell you something, if you understand operations—

Mr. Ramadhar: No. No. With all due respect, could you just focus so that we would be very quick and very clean and clear, what is the relevance of walking with breakfast, lunch and dinner unless it was that they could be interrupted in their free movement?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir. Sir, that is an opinion formed by persons who are not familiar with operations of the police and the operations out there.

Mr. Ramadhar: Right.

Insp. Alexander: I could understand that—

12.35 p.m.

Mr. Ramadhar: Let me put a little bit more colour into this from what you have said. The criminals should keep their guns at home. What were you looking for then by your warning that there is going to be further action, to keep the guns at home, that law-abiding citizens walk with breakfast, lunch and dinner?

Insp. Alexander: If the police are out in the streets and the guns are at home, probably it is easier for us to find them.

Mr. Ramadhar: But you warned them. I do not mean to interact as much as I have, probably it is a habit I developed in my other profession. But the relevance to that, if you are going to do

home searches, because that is where you told them to leave it, why would you tell the average law-abiding citizen to walk with breakfast, lunch and dinner?

Insp. Alexander: Because I told you before, Sir, we are out here for the long haul, both the police and the law-abiding citizens.

Mr. Ramadhar: We could go around in circles, Mr. Alexander, but you need to help us.

Mr. Chairman: I think, Insp. Alexander, the committee would appreciate a direct response to the question, because I think what is being asked, to assist member Ramadhar, is: Did you not mean that further roadblocks would occur—

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman:—let me finish please—and that drivers or occupants of a motor vehicle should appropriately provision for these excessive delays that are occasioned or triggered by these blanket roadblocks that are taking place all over the country?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir. It did not even cross my mind when I made the statement.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, we will have to draw our own conclusions from that.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Morning to you, Sir. May I compliment you as well on taking a role in society, which I view as endorsing police activity and trying to create confidence in the police by demystifying and uncloaking the interactions and sincerity of the police. Indeed the gentleman just before you is of equal fame in terms of his forthrightness.

Would you agree Sir that the events of the March 23 caused serious inconvenience for Trinidad and Tobago?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Would you agree in your 20 years-odd of policing that 19 police stations all at work in the same activity, for the same period across Trinidad and Tobago, seems more than coincidental?

Insp. Alexander: I would want to say yes, but I would want to say no at the same time, because it depends on the level of information you are working with at any particular time.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Were you aware on that day of any significant threat which would have caused immobilization of the type that was put into effect on that day?

Insp. Alexander: Sir, what I can tell you is this: information comes to the police daily. Some of the information we can share with the public and some we cannot. Some we have to keep and work on the operation. Let me just share this with you all.

A lot of persons talk about the big fish and who is the big fish and who is not the big fish. Then you are asking the police about information that comes before it and to share it, so then we are wondering now—I am not talking about your situation; I am talking holistically.

Mr. Al-Rawi: I did not mean for you to divulge; I just asked whether you were aware of something, not what it was.

Insp. Alexander: I understand, Sir, but holistically—I am just talking generally. We want the police to share with members of the public, and we must be careful. What I am saying is this: information does come to the police, daily and some of the information we can share and some we cannot, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Sp were you aware, yes or no, that there was any significant threat on that day that would have caused this kind of action?

Mr. Al-Rawi: I cannot say, Sir. Did you read the report produced by Mr. Edwards?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: There are some comments and reflections concerning you. Do you have anything to say about that?

Insp. Alexander: When I read the report I was confused. As I say confused, I could not understand from reading the report what would have prompted the investigator to reach to that level where I was involved in that way, when I saw no mention of me on a whole, the entire report, other than the recommendation.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Would you clear to clarify what that means? Did you have any conversations with the investigating officer?

Insp. Alexander: No one interviewed me, Sir; no one spoke to me; no one asked me a question and that is why I was a little taken aback as a result of what I have seen in the report.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you think that the confidence in the police service—you being someone that has taken an exceptional step to try to engender and create confidence in the police service in what you do publicly—do you think that the public confidence on that exercise on March 23 has been eroded by the activities there?

Insp. Alexander: There was some effect, Sir, I must say, but at the end of the day we often tell the members of the public this: policing is like going to the gym, where you do not go the first day and expect to be big and strong with muscle; however, it is a work in progress and eventually you will see the results of your hard work.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Insp. Alexander, if I may say that I understand very well when you are part of an organization, that you walk a delicate line. One cannot be seen in some circumstances to criticize the entity of which you are a part, but this Joint Select Committee is established here. One of the main exercises before us is to deal with what appears to have been a wage dispute, and an action by several members of police service, across 19 police stations, six divisions to lock down Trinidad and Tobago to prove a point. That is what it appears to be.

So we are looking at something that looks like a fish; it swims in water; it has gills and, most respectfully, the police are dancing around the issue. So whilst we respect that you have one form of responsibility to your superiors and to your institution, we are also looking to deal with public confidence right now.

Are you assisting in any way with any investigation, a further investigation perhaps, under the hand of the Assistant Commissioner into this matter, and also have you taken any step to write a report as to your concern that you have not been interviewed but yet reflections were made of you in that report?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir. With respect to the investigation, if ever information comes to me with respect to anything, even if it involves the conduct of the police officers of the day, I will share it with the other police officers or the investigator. With respect to me writing a report, as I said, I looked at the report and saw no basis for me to even respond because there was nothing in it that fingered me in any way, other than a recommendation.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Are there any other questions?

Mr. Mc Leod: Thank you, Chair. Insp. Alexander, how long have you been in the police service?

Insp. Alexander: 22 years, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: And you would have spent—and this is following on something you said earlier—I mean, one looks at you and one would immediately realize that you would spent a lot of time at the gym.

Insp. Alexander: I spend some time, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: And it takes a particular discipline, of course. You are employed in a service that depends, I would suggest, on absolute discipline for the service and, by extension, for the State of Trinidad and Tobago.

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: One might suggest further that in your discipline nothing, no other organization, whether we support such organizations or not, should take precedence over the State of Trinidad and Tobago. You agree with that?

Insp. Alexander: I agree with that, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: You are an officer of an organization in the police service representing police officers?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: Is it reasonable for an innocent bystander to assume perhaps to have the perception that there might have been a confusion as to your taking a position in support of the State, as against a position in support of your trade union organization?

Insp. Alexander: Could you repeat the question again, Sir. I fell off just at the last piece of it.

Mr. Mc Leod: I hope you are not confused by the fact that I myself had been a trade union officer for a long time.

Insp. Alexander: I think it could be that level of intimidation, Sir. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Mc Leod: I was you asking, do you think it is reasonable for an unassuming, innocent bystander to think that perhaps there had been a little bit of confusion in your mind as to stance that you ought to take. I am not trying to befuddle you or anything like that. I am dealing with the suggestion that the total policing activity on March 23, which had a dry run on March 20—and that is hardly mentioned, Friday, March 20, yes, and I know. There is the strong suggestion that that action had to do with your organization in furtherance of the wage negotiations. We are seeking to get information. I am not prosecuting. I will leave that for—*[Laughter]* I am seeking to get information, because I want to think that all of us—and it was said I think by Acting Commissioner of Police Stephen Williams—that such a situation never, never occurs again in Trinidad and Tobago, and I suspect that you subscribe to that too.

Insp. Alexander: I quite agree, Sir. What I could tell you is this, I have no information, none at all—even being the Vice-President of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Social and Welfare Association, that any type of that type of action was about to take place or was coordinated by the association. I do not have an office there, per se. I am the Vice-President but I am floating. At no time did information like that come to me at all, so I cannot support anybody making any statement that the association would have had anything to do with that.

Brig. Alfonso: Inspector, I just want to get back to this matter of control. Would you say that the exercise on March 23, the total policing exercise, was a successful operation in terms of policing?

Insp. Alexander: In terms of policing I would say that it was somewhat of a successful exercise. Can I just expound a little on it, because I want the members to understand that the police service do not just make an arrest. One of the things that we do is prevention which is an asset for us, because if we prevent the crime then the citizenry feels a sense of safety and security. So when we are measuring things we have to be careful as to how we measure things; if we measure it for success for the day or over a period. I am trying to understand from which angle you are coming.

Brig. Alfonso: I am speaking to you as one passionate person to another.

Insp. Alexander: And this I know, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: You are very passionate of the police service as I am about the military, so I am glad you said the operation was successfully carried out.

Insp. Alexander: As I said before, according to which angle we are measuring it. In terms of what happened obviously we need to go and re-strategize.

Brig. Alfonso: In terms of total policing, police on the road, they came out in full force, nobody stayed away, nobody stayed at home. Police came out in full force; the total policing exercise/operation was successful.

Insp. Alexander: If you look at it from that angle.

Brig. Alfonso: Well that is the angle I am looking at it from. It must have had some measure of control.

Insp. Alexander: So I suggest, yes.

Brig. Alfonso: Were you surprised to hear that the Commissioner was not aware that this massive operation was taking place?

Insp. Alexander: Somewhat yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: You were surprised?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, somewhat, because I want to say this too—

Brig. Alfonso: But we know that there would have been some level of control?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, with the statement that you just made, you would have an appreciation for this. With respect to roadblock exercises, Sir—and I must be open about this—

Brig. Alfonso: I want to stick to the word “control”.

Insp. Alexander: That is right, Sir. I am going down that road of control, Sir.

12.50 p.m.

Insp. Alexander: You see, and I can tell you this, I will be at the station today—I have five officers at my disposal, they are here, I tell them, I say let us walk to the rear of the station, to the front of the station on the roadway and conduct a road check exercise. I did not inform my senior superintendent, I did not inform anybody, and the strange thing about it is this, and as somebody called the programme and asked me, if the day of total policing had yield 256 AK47s; 9,000 grenades; persons who does not speak English in a bus; persons who are strange from some other place; would we be sitting here today and asking all these questions? And in my answer I fumbled somewhat. First time in my history I fumbled to answer, because I did not want to seem like I am applauding what happened, but at the same time we must not take away the fact that a road check or roadblock exercises are part of a police function.

Mr. Chairman: And nobody is—[Inaudible]

Mr. Chairman: Just one second, this is a Standing Committee of Parliament. This is a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament, and we are here to look into any and all matters relating to the operationalizing of policy of anything to do with national security. If I were you I would withdraw that inference. We are here to assess a particular matter, but we are empowered to assess the issue of how the police conduct their roadblocks at any time if they so wish.

Insp. Alexander: Okay, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So, I would not ascribe a motive to the actions of the Committee. The Committee has been very clear. We are looking here at something that caused an enormous amount of disruption, that the public has an interest in understanding the root causes of. That is all.

Insp. Alexander: Sir, with all due respect, that is why I mentioned that somebody asked the question and I was taken back to the response, because the person say—the same thing I was just saying, I am not accusing anyone of—

Mr. Chairman: Well, I am clarifying for you so that you would be able to have a better response, because I do not want to encourage you to go down the road as a witness before this Committee, that you can come before the Committee and suggest that the Committee is pursuing a matter, because it has absolutely decided to.

Insp. Alexander: If I indicated that, Sir, I apologize. I did not mean it anyway. I was just

responding to what somebody would have asked me.

Brig. Gen. Alfonso: I just want to get back to the control part of it. But I want to add, I think everybody in this room, including your good self, of course, would like this police service to be the best police service ever. Yes? We agree on that. We are not trying to see who get people into trouble and that sort of thing. We are trying to make it the best police service. You see, I am still concerned about the control of this massive operation on the 23rd, given that the police commissioner and the top executive, were not in control on that day, at that time between 04 and 10.00 hours, they were not in control. That is a given. We have heard that from everybody, including the commissioner herself. She did not know what was going on. Deputies Hackett, Phillip, those two, they were not sure what was happening either, but this thing was already in trained, this was already happening. So, somebody was in control, not the commissioner, not the deputies, and certainly not the ACPs. Somebody was in control, and it was “successful policing”.

It is not a little strange that it went so well. I do not want to look at it, but it went so well—and the top chart of the big boys, if you will, were unaware, were none the strange, how do you feel about it, as an aspiring Commissioner of Police yourself? How do you feel?

Insp. Alexander: Sir, while I want to share my opinion, you know, I often say this, I belong to an organization which discipline is about most important and there is a chain of command. I could only speak for me, and I would tell you this, while the—

Brig. Alfonso: Well, you can speak for the association too, you are the vice-president.

Insp. Alexander: Even as I speak, sometimes I could share no value to what the association has already said. So, I do not even want to go down that road with the association, but, as I said before, I would prefer to hold my opinion with respect to that. Not that anything—I am not about to say thing that would sound any different to what anybody has already said.

Brig. Alfonso: And that is not what I want to know. I just want to know how you felt knowing that the commissioner was not in control, and the top brass was not in control, but the thing went off well. How do you feel?

Insp. Alexander: Well, Sir, I could tell you—

Brig. Alfonso: How do you feel?

Insp. Alexander: I felt somewhat taken back if somebody was to say that for some reason he may not have been in control, but then when we are measuring control, sir, you would know and

I would know from being in the police and the army, sometimes you are at two different locations and you could still be in control. So, I guess is what angle of control you are looking at.

Brig. Alfonso: I was trying to keep it very simple, because that is how we are. We keep things very simple. A police sergeant in Matelot could put down a roadblock, he does not have to tell the commissioner. He already have the authority to do that, and he does not have to tell the commissioner I am putting a roadblock in the junction. He does not have to do that. But, we are not talking about that, you know. We are talking about six divisions, 19 police stations, plenty police on the road, and the commissioner, the deputy commissioner, the ACPs, did not have a clue.

Insp. Alexander: Well, sir, I cannot speak on their behalf.

Brig. Alfonso: I am telling you that they did not have a clue. They have said so. So, somebody had control, and what I am concerned about is who do you think, or how did you feel? Who do you think that person could have been or might have been? It is not you. You said it is not you. It was not you.

Insp. Alexander: I do not possess that power, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Nevertheless, that is not what we hear. You have quite a lot of power and influence. I think you know that.

Insp. Alexander: Thanks for the upliftment, but I am not sure—

Mr. Chairman: Hold on a second, let me just see if I can understand where you are trying to go here. The leadership of the police service has already come before us and say they do not know what happened and they do not know who did it. The only person who appeared to know something about it was you, because you were on the media saying, pack your lunch, pack our breakfast, pack you dinner. So, you would have intimated to the population that you had some insight into what had happened, what was happening and what was to happen. That is why you are here. That is why we invited you. We invited you because we wanted to understand what you understood.

Insp. Alexander: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: And I think that is where Member Alfonso is going. So, we are trying to get an understanding from you of who was in control of this.

Insp. Alexander: Sir, well I have no idea, and that is just being honest.

Mr. Chairman: So you would just have been speaking tongue in cheek or of the top of your

head when you said walk with your breakfast, and lunch, and dinner, that there is more to come and so on.

Insp. Alexander: I never said that, Sir. What I was thinking from the time was from an operational point of view with respect to my experience as a police officer.

Mr. Ramadhar: Mr. Alexander, you know, forgive me, but I was not there, but it is in the public domain that questions were asked to persons who were stuck about their diet, are you aware of that?

Asp. Alexander: Of what?

Mr. Ramadhar: About their diet, whether they had food and so.

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir, this is the first time I heard of it.

Mr. Ramadhar: Are you aware that police—in the public domain, as I repeat I was not aware—that police officers check the oil level in cars? That is in the public domain that that happened.

Insp. Alexander: Sir, if that in fact happened, I would have to see to believe.

Mr. Ramadhar: So would I, but it is in the public domain and you would find that odd it did in fact occurred.

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Bicycles themselves were stuck.

Insp. Alexander: Bicycles?

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes.

Insp. Alexander: That would not to be a strange activity to me, we oftentimes search persons on bicycle.

Mr. Ramadhar: I was telling you what I saw, that a police motorcycle, travelling at about 15 or 20 miles an hour on the highway, with the officer holding back traffic, there being no escort of any form or fashion, would that be odd and inappropriate?

Insp. Alexander: Well, it depends, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: On?

Insp. Alexander: It depends on what was ahead.

Mr. Ramadhar: Nothing.

Insp. Alexander: Well, in that case, Sir, I would have to—

Mr. Ramadhar: I was privy to this, and I am therefore to suggest that the efforts of March 23 was in anyway total policing, and really is, as has been described, malicious.

Insp. Alexander: I cannot say for this.

Mr. Ramadhar: I was just saying, put this to you, there is nothing ahead, a police motorcycle, there is nothing ahead on the Beetham, travelling at about 10 to 15 miles an hour, holding back the traffic with the hands out like this from time to time, that would not be in accordance with total policing would it?

Insp. Alexander: Well, sir, as I said before, if that was the case, no. To have information that nothing was ahead, it depends on where you would have been at the time. If someone else had to tell you, well, there is nothing ahead, but to make that statement—

Mr. Ramadhar: No, I was in the other lane coming—

Insp. Alexander: In the other lane?

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, and therefore I had the opportunity to observe there was nothing ahead of that traffic for at least half a mile.

Insp. Alexander: Well, in that case, Sir, I think you may have been right, something was wrong with it.

Mr. Ramadhar: So, we agree?

Insp. Alexander: Under that circumstances, yes, if it is in fact true.

Mr. Ramadhar: Well, all I can say is I have what I saw. I do not wish to be a witness in this, but this is what happened. Now, you have agreed that it could be coincidental?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: In your wide experience as a police officer, your many years as a very diligent—and I want to thank you for that, eh. I mean it is good to see people who have a sense of what their duty is about. Have you ever experienced a day in Trinidad and Tobago where that large number of police stations and roadblocks occurred simultaneously?

Insp. Alexander: Not in that magnitude.

Mr. Ramadhar: And therefore, there would have been other levels where there was a coordinated effort where you would have a large number of roadblocks, but not necessarily to that magnitude?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, because on many occasions, we get instructions to—

Mr. Ramadhar: I appreciate that. But those clearly would have to be coordinated by someone or group of persons saying, okay, what we are going to do at this place at this division and so and so, do these things at the same time. That is correct?

Insp. Alexander: Possibly.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, and just to be 100 per cent clear, you have never seen roadblocks of the magnitude of March 23 before?

Insp. Alexander: Well, I looked at it from—because I was conducting my—

Mr. Ramadhar: Remember what you have already said, you have never seen anything of that magnitude before.

Insp. Alexander: Not really. Remember when I answered the first time I said, sometimes we have roadblock exercises.

Mr. Ramadhar: And you put it down as being accidental. So that you have a coincidental level of road blocking that exceeds what you know when it is coordinated. Is that an accurate statement?

Insp. Alexander: It is possible. I do not want to say that is quite accurate, but it is possible.

Mr. Ramadhar: Well possible shall go into possibilities, because then there is no limit to that. Well we go into what is reasonable, and rational, and what can be deduced.

Insp. Alexander: It is about people's opinion too, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Absolutely. And there is an opinion we need to fix, because as many has indicated, what happened on that day, for whatever reason, the police service took a blow to its reputation, that you have been trying to build, and admirably so.

Insp. Alexander: And this is no pun, sir, and I want to be open, and that is why I would not sit here and knowing that there is something amidst that we can fix for the future, and sit here and do not speak about it. This much I can tell you.

Mr. Ramadhar: I here you have a team effort here for that. Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chairman: Well, let me thank you for coming. Just one last question before we wrap up. We had actually asked to see you last week, what happened?

Insp. Alexander: Sir, that is all I heard that persons were asking for me. But, somewhere along the line, I think it was more or less conversations from police officers and different people all over the place, whereas the hon. Minister of National Security would understand that there is a protocol involved in me being an officer of a low rank and need to come here, it is very simple that you just go through the Commissioner of Police and I get the instructions and I am here.

Mr. Chairman: No, but we do not have to go through anybody.

Insp. Alexander: Well, that is something that I—

Mr. Chairman: We are the Parliament, we can send for whom ever we wish.

Insp. Alexander: Okay.

Mr. Chairman: We do not have to ask anybody's permission for you to be here. We can just ask for you to attend. And we understood that you received our correspondence and, in fact, in our last session, the president of the Police Service Welfare Association, Inspector Ramesar indicated that a conscious decision was taken that you not attend.

Insp. Alexander: I think something is wrong with that communication, Sir, because I do not know what medium you used to communicate with me, but I received no documentation with respect to attendance here.

Mr. Chairman: So, neither he nor Mr. Seales or anyone else in the association would not have had a conversation with you about attending or not attending?

Insp. Alexander: What I understood is that the association was summoned here and the association have to sit in executive members who have an office and who sees about the association business, which is Mr. Seales and Mr. Ramesar, so the question was asked—

1.05 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: So it was they who decided that you should not attend?

Insp. Alexander: Well, if the Executive was coming, not that if Roger Alexander was summoned, Inspector Roger Alexander.

Mr. Chairman: No, we asked for you by name.

Insp. Alexander: Well, probably there was a miscommunication between who you requested in terms of the Association itself or Insp. Roger Alexander. I take it, maybe it was a miscommunication.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, so, are there any further questions? Yes, Mr. Mutema.

Mr. Mutema: Insp. Alexander, just one last thing I would like to find out. The activities of Monday 23, in terms of the total policing and the roadblocks, were you involved in the exercise?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: What time were you aware of what was taking place?

Insp. Alexander: What time?

Mr. Mutema: Yeah, were you aware of what was taking place in terms of the exercise?

Insp. Alexander: Sometime, about, when I was caught up, sometime about minutes after 7.00, minutes to 8.00.

Mr. Mutema: And what was your response?

Insp. Alexander: I started to call around to find out what was happening in terms of why I was still at a particular allocation when I ought to be somewhere else and I was told that the police are conducting operations on the streets.

Mr. Mutema: Did anything seem unusual or strange?

Insp. Alexander: Not until later in the afternoon when all this set of communications started to take place, then it started to soak in somewhere that something apparently may have gone wrong somewhere along the line.

Mr. Mutema: And so therefore you understand the level of—well the inconvenience that took place?

Insp. Alexander: Yeah, some what I understand and I saw it, that is why I said before the operation, as the Minister said, you know, I am saying that it is probably a successful police operation, but then we need to “re-strategize” and look at how it affected other persons so it could never happen again.

Mr. Mutema: All right. In such a situation obviously you will get reactions from the public because you have a number of institutions affected, banks, schools, hospitals, all were affected. And therefore you would have complaints. I go back to that same programme, in terms of your own programme, “Beyond the tape” and there were questions posed, your statement was, people would complain about roadblock exercises regardless. From your own experience over the years, this is your experience and knowledge that in terms of roadblocks exercises, normally, you get such complaints from the public, that level of complaint?

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir. Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: That level of complaint.

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir. A lady—

Mr. Mutema: From the Chamber of Commerce, people from the banks complaining about roadblocks.

Insp. Alexander: You never know who—what institution someone belongs to you caught up in a roadblock exercise. Only thereafter somebody will say, you know, I was in the roadblock and I am from this place or that place. I recall people saying to me, why you do not go and look for real criminals? Why are you asking me for my drivers permit and insurance? Does the police have any other thing to do? And this is a regular occurrence, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: So that is your experience.

Insp. Alexander: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Mutema: You get a wide number of complaints.

Insp. Alexander: Many times, Sir. And when you look at it, the criminal elements might be glad, sometimes when we look like we do not want to work, and then we have the civilian population complaining when we look like we do not want to work, because I get calls on the programme, time and time again. And then we have the situation when we work too hard sometimes the criminal family and their friends complain about us. So it is a kind of “damn if you do, damn if you don’t” situation that we are involved in. But as I said before, if I was to make a general assessment of the situation then it just goes to show that probably we need to “re-strategize” and come up with new techniques in how we go about policing at particular times.

Mr. Chairman: So this was at no point in time about the police showing what they could do?

Insp. Alexander: No, Sir, they have other needs. There are other ways to do that, Sir. You know that, you have experience with the police, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, well, we are very good. Are there any other questions or comments? Well, Insp. Alexander you, of course, are a high profile member of the police service. You have given several distinguished years of service to the police and to the public and the committee thank you for that, recognizes your efforts—

Insp. Alexander: Thank you, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And we thank you for coming and sharing with us today. We are very grateful that you can make the time and we want to wish you every success going forward.

Insp. Alexander: Thank you very much, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much.

Insp. Alexander: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman: This sitting is now adjourned.

1.10 p.m.: *Meeting adjourned.*

Dr. Rolph Balgobin	Chairman
Mr. Collin Partap, MP	Vice-Chairman
Mr. Prakash Ramadhar, MP	Member
Mr. Faris Al-Rawi	Member
Brig. Gen. Carlton Alfonso	Member
Mr. Errol McLeod, MP	Member

Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel	Secretary
Ms. Sheranne Samuel	Assistant Secretary
Mr. Johnson Greenidge	Assistant Secretary

Dr. Keith Rowley, MP ¹⁰	Member
Ms. Donna Cox, MP	Member
Mr. Brent Sancho	Member
Mr. Kwasi Mutema	Member (excused)

Ms. Ellen Lewis	Head, Corporate Communications
Mr. John Richardson	Senior Superintendent – Head, Guard and Emergency Branch

**OFFICIAL FROM THE
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE**

Mr. Chairman: Okay, good morning every one. Welcome to the meeting of the Joint Select

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Committee on National Security. We welcome the head of Corporate Communication of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, Ms. Ellen Lewis. Welcome, and as it is accustomed here we introduce ourselves and then we invite you to introduce yourself and then we begin to talk.

[Introductions made]

Ms. Lewis: Good morning. I am Ms. Ellen Lewis, Head of Corporate Communications with Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. I am pleased to be here.

Mr. Chairman: Welcome, and let me—as you may be aware, we are here to examine the circumstances around the day of total policing on Monday March 23, 2015 and we have invited you in this regard. So before we begin, we would like to ask if you would like to make any opening remarks.

Ms. Lewis: The only thing I wish to say is that, I look forward to the outcome. I think it is a sought of extremely important exercise embarked on by the Joint Select Committee on National Security, and I am looking forward to the outcome.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. So let me invite members, anyone who wishes to begin. Well, I will begin. Ms. Lewis, you were on the job at the time of the day of total policing and you would have given several interviews to the media.

Ms. Lewis: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: On that morning in particular.

Ms. Lewis: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: Can you tell me what was the time of the first interview?

Ms. Lewis: The first interview on March 23 may have been around 6.35 or thereabouts or 6.45 or thereabouts.

Mr. Chairman: 6.35 or 6.45 a.m. Okay. Now, interviews aside, could you tell us what happened on that day?

Ms. Lewis: I learned of certain roadblock exercises by way of the media and it was clear to me that—

Mr. Chairman: At what time was this?

Ms. Lewis: I would say that would have been—I generally watch all television morning shows. I think, in particular, it was TV6 that I leant about the exercises.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, yes.

Ms. Lewis: And I began to make my own enquires to confirm whether or not what was being

reported was in fact true.

Mr. Chairman: Who did you enquire of?

Ms. Lewis: I enquired of the ACP Mobile. I enquired of DCP Operations. I enquired of ACP South and the Senior Superintendent South.

Mr. Chairman: And what did they tell you?

Ms. Lewis: Well in most instances at the level they were unaware of, by what appeared to be major exercises taking place that appeared to be simultaneously and the information I received was that they were moving to clear/unclog these roadblocks.

Mr. Chairman: So when you realized that they were unaware what happened then?

Ms. Lewis: No, they being unaware, well the extend of what was happening, the next step for me, based on the media enquiries was to attempt to allay public fear of concern of what was happening on the ground.

Mr. Chairman: So you acted on your own in this regard.

Ms. Lewis: I acted in the manner to which I was expected to act in my capacity.

Mr. Chairman: Who would have expected you to act in this manner?

Ms. Lewis: Well, as the person with the lead responsibility for communications in the organization, I will be required to take my initiative on matters required on me to act upon.

Mr. Chairman: But you are communicating with no information?

Ms. Lewis: No, I had information. The information I had was that, one, there were things happening on the ground and while I was calling, in fact, the Superintendent in south said to me that he was hearing of all these roadblocks and he had moved to have them cleared. So at that point there was something happening. It was clear there was something happening.

Mr. Chairman: Did you at any time—is it not usual that someone in your position would communicate directly with the office of the Commissioner?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Chairman: Did you at any time communicate with the Commissioner?

Ms. Lewis: You see, at that point in time I did not think it was as major as it turned out to be, nothing that I could not handle on my own. So, as I said, I called several key offices whom I felt ought to know. They were indicating to me that they were also being made aware of what was happening, and so therefore, as what you would call a kind of holding statement to the media, I indicated that the exercises are being done at a district level that they were planned at that level

and will come to a close, and I think I said 7.00 a.m. to 7.30 a.m., because there was a level of concern being communicated to me.

Mr. Chairman: And you did not communicate that to the Commissioner.

Ms. Lewis: I communicated to the Commissioner, we would have communicated just before 7.00 a.m., we had direct contact.

Mr. Chairman: So before 7.00 a.m. you communicated with Commissioner—

Ms. Lewis: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: And what did you communicate to each other?

Ms. Lewis: Well, I was given a better appreciation as to what was happening and at that point I was of the view, it was confined to Trinidad. As information came to hand I was told it was happening in the west, in the east, in the north, in the south and I was clearer as to what was happening. I was given two interviews, I believe, prior to my direct contact with the Commissioner of Police at that time.

Mr. Chairman: So the Commissioner of Police was aware?

Ms. Lewis: When she briefed me she would have been that something was happening and she said to me, yes.

Mr. Chairman: And when she briefed you and she was aware, you spoke to the divisional heads.

Ms. Lewis: I did not. Just, you know, I spoke to one divisional head. The other persons I spoke with was a Deputy Commissioner of Police and two Assistant Commissioners of Police.

Mr. Chairman: So you spoke to the ACP Mobile—

Ms. Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: Is it a DCP Ops?

Ms. Lewis: DCP Ops.

Mr. Chairman: DCP south?

Ms. Lewis: ACP south.

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Ms. Lewis: And these are the office holders—why I would call Traffic, because they would know whether an exercise was taking place; under Operations all the divisions fall. So I would go there first.

Mr. Chairman: Did it concern you that these people were unaware?

Ms. Lewis: I think they were not, I am not sure that I would have said unaware. I called them to enquire what was happening and something was happening on the ground, the extent of which I think was just beginning to come home to everyone.

Mr. Chairman: So they were not aware? Or they were not fully aware?

Ms. Lewis: Yeah, the extent of what was happening.

Mr. Chairman: They were as surprised as you were?

Ms. Lewis: I was quite very much surprised. I would not speak for them but I was quite surprised.

Mr. Chairman: And so when the Commissioner spoke to you at 7.00 a.m. or thereabouts, just before 7.00 a.m., were you concerned at that point?

Ms. Lewis: I was concerned from the time I turned the television on and I began to hear the report I wanted to understand better what was happening. So from that point I began to make my own enquires to ascertain what was happening.

Mr. Chairman: And what did you think was happening?

Ms. Lewis: I was not clear. I was not clear. But my primary concern at that point in time was to ensure that the public understood and their inconvenience would be short-term.

Mr. Chairman: But when you spoke then, what was your concern, when you said to the media these exercises were planned and scheduled, you did not really know if they were planned and scheduled?

Ms. Lewis: No, I operate on the basis that, well my understanding of police operation is that, at operation level, at district command level everything is planned. An officer is detailed, teams are detailed. So at that level, at that level of operation it would have been planned, it would have been scheduled. The police operate deliberately. It is not by chance. And so therefore I was proper to have advised the public that what was happening was scheduled and planned and would come to a close because ordinarily there was a prior incident and when there were concerns raised—

Mr. Chairman: On what day?

Ms. Lewis: It would have been sometime prior to the traffic congestion.

Mr. Chairman: Would that have been the 20th?

Ms. Lewis: I believe it was.

Ms. Lewis: And when we heard of it, the media did in fact call me and it was cleared up, but

that was confined to one particular area. So I saw no need that, you know, having been, all the officers being now directing to what was happening, it would not clear within short order.

Mr. Chairman: So the events of the 20th proved instead to be a precursor for what would happen on the 23rd?

Ms. Lewis: I cannot say, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Well, whether it was planned or not, that was the effect. A dry-run as it were.

Ms. Lewis: I really cannot say, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So you tried to allay the concerns of the public even though you yourself was operating in that information vacuum, because you would not have known. You are assuming that these were planned and scheduled, but all of the testimonies we have heard from members of the police service invites us to believe that these roadblocks, 20-plus that occurred in 19 police stations and across six divisions, were in fact coincidence. Do you think it was a coincidence?

Ms. Lewis: Well, I learned that they were all happening simultaneously as I said as the day progressed, but I wish again to explain my statement because I am pretty clear on it, I am saying at a district command level that the officers in charge of stations are so authorized to plan unscheduled activities. And that is what would have happened.

Mr. Chairman: So, this would not have been a coincidence?

Ms. Lewis: What they would have done? If you detail officers to perform a certain task, you detail officers to perform a certain task.

Mr. Chairman: So they would not come to work that morning and decide, well, let us have a roadblock here.

Ms. Lewis: I am saying that officers from my understanding are detailed to perform.

Mr. Chairman: But nobody at the upper echelon of the police executive appeared to know that these officers had been detailed to perform.

Ms. Lewis: From my understanding is that these things can happen which is why when it occurred on the very day, the Commissioner of Police, they would have had the authority to do that. It was after the move and the power level was increased to Divisional Commander, but before a Sergeant could detail, a corporal could detail, that is my understanding.

Mr. Chairman: But is it not true, that even within a division, if someone is ordering wide roadblock exercises even within a division, that Divisional Commander would be part of the planning?

Ms. Lewis: I would not be able to say so, Sir. I operate at a different level and I really cannot say.

Mr. Chairman: But you said that the police acted deliberately.

Ms. Lewis: Yes, the police acted deliberately. But you are asking me whether or not the divisional commander would know. I am saying that I do not know that. But police actions are deliberate.

Mr. Chairman: So then this was a deliberate attempt to conduct 20-plus roadblock exercises.

Ms. Lewis: I am saying that what they embarked upon to do was deliberate.

Mr. Chairman: Was planned?

Ms. Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Chairman: And scheduled?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, and scheduled.

Mr. Chairman: And has any information come to you subsequent to this day of total policing that would cause you to re-evaluate that position?

Ms. Lewis: No, even in the statement of, you see, I think what has happened is that, when I would have made my statement the assumption would have been that when you say planned, as in a business or a professional sense or schedule, it may have meant that the Executive would have known. How I understand police operations is that at the level of the district command level, exercises are planned, like in any organization, there are departmental managers charged with certain responsibilities and they would have discharged, and that is how I viewed it.

Mr. Chairman: So what you are saying then is that you did not want to tell the public that you yourself and the leadership of the police service was not too clear on what was happening, because you felt that—

Ms. Lewis: I wanted to assure the public that we were in control and that what was happening would be cleared up shortly.

Mr. Chairman: But all of the people you are talking to were not too clear on what was happening.

Ms. Lewis: The reality is that what would have happened, and I just ask the question, if I had indicated to the country as the companies head of communications that there was uncertainty of what was happening on the ground, what would have resulted?

Mr. Chairman: Alright, that is fine. You made a conscious decision not to transmit nationwide

the fact that neither you nor several members of the leadership of the police service were clear on what was happening. You are looking at an evolving situation, you are talking to people. People are dimly aware, they are becoming aware through the media not through the police or any police formal communication channel, and so you felt that it would have created a great sense of unease if you told the public the truth of the matter, which is that, we are really not quite clear on what is happening here or the extent of it, and therefore we want to assure you that these are planned and scheduled because exercises like these are planned and scheduled. But really in the back of your mind you are trying to keep things cool until you could get more information to communicate to the public.

Ms. Lewis: I indicated before that in a situation of crisis you would see what is called a holding statement until you are better apprised. I acted with the knowledge that at the level to which these things are being discharged they would have been planned.

Mr. Chairman: Do you feel if you had told the absolute bald truth, that everybody I have talked to so far is not quite clear on what is happening here. Do you feel that that would have created unease in the country?

Ms. Lewis: If I were to say that the police was not in control, which I felt we were, yes, it would create a bit, a level of concern among the citizens. Without a doubt it would have.

Mr. Chairman: You felt that the police were in control.

Ms. Lewis: I felt that if they were not in control then perhaps something else would have happened.

Mr. Chairman: But you would not have had in your contemplation that perpetrators of a disruptive act might be the police themselves.

Ms. Lewis: No.

Mr. Chairman: And now with the passage of time, with some temporal distance between the event and us here today, you now have the opportunity to revisit that. Do you regret issuing a holding statement?

Ms. Lewis: No, I do not.

Mr. Chairman: You felt it was the right thing to do?

Ms. Lewis: No, I do not.

Mr. Chairman: And you felt therefore that if you had said anything other than what you had said, that you would have created significant disquiet and unease.

Ms. Lewis: A level of concern would have been created. My job would have been, part of my job will be to maintain public calm and to ensure the maintenance of trust and confidence in the police service. Why, to indicate anything otherwise would have been highly irresponsible of me. So notwithstanding, I would not have full appreciation what was transpiring, I acted to ensure that confidence in the service was maintained.

Mr. Ramadhar: First of all, let me thank you for your clarity and frankness today, and I think, if I may, and tell me if I am wrong, put it this way that you resorted that morning to standard operating procedure with the ultimate end to ensure public stability and calm. Is that accurate?

Ms. Lewis: That is accurate, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: And the holding statement you made is as things evolved you were trying to get further information and that you would have communicated as you proceeded on that basis. What is obvious though, is that from your opinion as an experienced officer, working with all of the heads, what happened on that morning could not have occurred unless it was planned and scheduled?

Ms. Lewis: In my view.

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes, and to this day you do not know who planned it or who scheduled it?

Ms. Lewis: I am operating on the belief at the level to which it was discharged it would have been planned and scheduled.

Mr. Ramadhar: Appreciate that. And it is very disturbing to you as an individual and as a citizen, first, that something as enormous as this could have occurred without a person or a group of persons who planned and scheduled it being known to the public to this day. The persons who planned and scheduled these operations and up till today, May 28, you do not know—is it the 29th.

Hon. Members: 29th.

Mr. Ramadhar: No, no, today's date?

Hon. Members: 29th.

Mr. Ramadhar: May 29, I beg your pardon. Yes, we do not know the name or names of those persons who scheduled and planned this thing.

Ms. Lewis: It is not known to myself.

Mr. Ramadhar: Right. Would you consider that then to be a very dangerous development in the hierarchy or the order of the police service?

Ms. Lewis: What I would say is that, at the time when it happened the then Commissioner of Police whom I felt was extremely brave and strong in all the circumstances, she took extremely firm decisions. She relinquished a great degree of power that resided at all levels and to do that for persons who understand how law enforcement or the police service or even the military may perform that is a major step and requires a significant degree of the testicular fortitude to do that and she would have done that.

Mr. Ramadhar: Do you prefer the term, intestinal fortitude which is not gender biased? Ms. Lewis with all due respect, I appreciate the holding statement that we are getting now. But is it not a dangerous development and notwithstanding the great effort of your Commissioner, I think we all recognized on that morning, for something like that to have occurred and to this day the persons who perpetrated this act have not been known to the very Commissioner.

Ms. Lewis: I do not think that the investigation is complete and so therefore I would want to wait until it is complete before it is alluded that we do not know, because we have not completed the investigation.

Mr. Ramadhar: No, no, let us deal with what we are dealing with today, before the Joint Select Committee. And we are on the 29th of May. This thing happened on March 23rd. Is it a comfortable position for you as the head of corporate communications for the service that neither you nor the population now know the name or names of those persons who perpetuated this thing?

Ms. Lewis: I think it would be of concern. We would want to know—

Mr. Ramadhar: Is it of grave concern to you that something like this could have occurred which had such a dramatic effect as we have heard where surgeries had to be put off, persons' lives would have been jeopardized waiting in traffic to get medical attention. Schools, you name it, the entire society came to a halt that something like that could have occurred by those who have pledged to protect and serve us, right. You appreciate that, by persons who pledged to protect and to serve us to actually do just the opposite.

Ms. Lewis: Yes, it would be of concern.

Mr. Ramadhar: And therefore you would be eager like all of us are to find out who the perpetrators are and to have them, what shall I say, made accountable.

Ms. Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: Well, I hear you say that the investigations are not yet concluded. You are

aware then of which investigations are in progress?

Ms. Lewis: Well, I am aware that the Commissioner of Police has stated that he is awaiting the outcome of the investigation being done by the PCA, and I am aware as well, because I have in fact read the report of ACP Edwards indicating that had he had more time more could have been done. So I am aware that the matter is not yet concluded.

Mr. Ramadhar: But you appreciate then that nothing precludes the internal investigation from continuing?

Ms. Lewis: I do not know, I am in a different environment to a state or public sector/private sector environment. I am not sure what the rules govern investigations are.

Mr. Ramadhar: Well commonsense will dictate then that those who have pledged to serve us and they also pledged in their job to investigate, nothing will prevent them from continuing internal investigation as you are saying, from public investigation.

Ms. Lewis: I understand the initiatives exist in the matter of investigation between the PCA and the police service and I could only be guided by what I understand to be the order of things.

Mr. Ramadhar: Well, to be fair to you I shall not pursue it because if you do not know, you do not know. But to this day you would appreciate that one has been made accountable.

Ms. Lewis: That is correct.

Mr. Ramadhar: And that those persons who, and I use the words, perpetuated and perpetrated are still within the bosom of the police service.

Ms. Lewis: I would suspect that they are.

Mr. Ramadhar: And therefore we have to be very, very cautious that there be no further disturbance to the society by those persons.

Ms. Lewis: But I would have to rely, as I suppose the entire country would, on the assurance given on the day in question and subsequently the assurance was given that such would not reoccur.

Mr. Ramadhar: We must take comfort in those holding statements. If we do not, then we will assume the worst and that is never a healthy place to be.

Ms. Lewis: No, I would not advise it, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: All right, and you would appreciate a very quick closure to these investigations so that we shall—

Ms. Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: The quicker the closure the better—

Ms. Lewis: I think for all of us, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: For all of us. I am very grateful to you.

Brig. Alfonso: Ms. Lewis, thanks for coming. You are relatively new to this job?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, I am, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: How many months, how many years?

Ms. Lewis: I entered the service as a civilian in October 2014.

Brig. Alfonso: Okay, so you are relatively new.

Ms. Lewis: Yes, I am.

Brig. Alfonso: You will know, of course, that the police service has a culture of its own which you would not quite understand just yet.

Ms. Lewis: No, I would not, Sir. That is correct.

Brig. Alfonso: You have had no police training of course?

Ms. Lewis: None whatsoever.

Brig. Alfonso: One of the things in your job, I would imagine is to show the police a good light.

Ms. Lewis: That is precisely why they hired me.

Brig. Alfonso: And you can only, well, the way I look at it you can only do that if you are properly brief about what is happening in the police service, generally.

Ms. Lewis: That is correct.

Brig. Alfonso: And if a massive operation that occurred on March 23 were to take place, you admitted that it would have been planned?

Ms. Lewis: Well, if a massive operation is to take place, a planned one, I am assuming that it would be at the higher level.

Brig. Alfonso: And under normal conditions if they are planning an exercise of that nature of that massive—

Ms. Lewis: Major exercise.

Brig. Alfonso:—you would have known?

Ms. Lewis: Yes. If it is a major national exercise, I will be informed.

Brig. Alfonso: And clearly you did not know. And you were just as surprised as everybody else?

Ms. Lewis: Because once that exercise—from my understanding was not being planned at the

Executive level.

Brig. Alfonso: We are still trying to find out, and I know Minister Ramadhar just asked, we are still trying to find out who might have been the person responsible, the person responsible, that ringleader if you will, that leader, and we have already established that it was not the Commissioner, it was not the Deputy Commissioner and it was not the top stature of the police service. Another person who was before this enquiry said, he think it might have been GEB. Have you heard who it might have been?

Ms. Lewis: No, I am not as fortunate as the person who may have said that. I am not.

Brig. Alfonso: Yeah.

Ms. Lewis: I am a civilian—

Brig. Alfonso: Yes, I know.

Ms. Lewis: What officers would be access or privy to, I would not. I will be privy to what is official information, that is, what I need to know relative to the conduct, execution of my job. And in terms of what would have been heard in the context of the policing interface and communication would not be in the corridor of what I would have access to.

Brig. Alfonso: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: May I ask a question of you, Ms. Lewis? You sat at home, and you were looking at the morning talk shows and you realized that something significant was happening by way of policing. You start calling around all these people and they are either totally unaware, or dimly aware that something is happening. Within 30 minutes you reached out to the Commissioner who herself was not entirely clear of what was going on. Media meanwhile is calling you and you issued a holding statement. They do not know it is a holding statement. But you do. You issued this holding statement, you must have been very, very concerned.

11.20 a.m.

Ms. Lewis: Anybody in my position would be concerned if the public is concerned on a matter.

Mr. Chairman: No. I mean, the fact that you had to issue a holding statement. Because a holding statement is not something that you just sort of put out there in circumstances like that.

Ms. Lewis: That is correct. What was happening—the reports that were coming to me from persons in the media, the indications I was getting from the commanders who were in charge

whom I would have engaged, indicated that whatever was happening was unusual, was abnormal and so therefore—

Mr. Chairman: So you would have been quite worried.

Ms. Lewis: And so therefore my primary concern would have been not to cause persons in this room to be worried or concerned.

Mr. Chairman: Not to cause panic.

Ms. Lewis: Not to cause persons to be concerned or worried.

Mr. Chairman: Not to cause panic.

Ms. Lewis: Yes, that is correct, not to cause panic.

Mr. Chairman: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Good morning to you. I had the pleasure of listening in on the radio whilst I was coming from my previous engagement, Mr. Chairman. I just have one question—and thank you for your candour this morning, of course. Being the person with responsibility for communications as you are, and now having, as the Chairman had put it earlier, some temporal distance between the event and today, do you think it appropriate now that the full story and that an account of responsibility be provided to Trinidad and Tobago? You see, this Joint Select Committee is a very new thing and is, in fact, a creature of our own parliamentary system, created by us. If we had not had the benefit of calling in people as we do now, the question would be: would the TTPS—or are you aware as to whether the TTPS would be informing the public of the truth of this situation in the manner in which we are now foreseeing? And if that is, in fact, the case, are you aware whether something further is intended to be put out to the public, perhaps, through you or some other channel, as a responsibility, accountability and maybe even a necessary further apology on this occasion?

I know that on the day in question the Commissioner of Police did, in fact, make an

apology. I know that on the day in question she did, in fact, issue certain orders. I am not at this stage aware of any further statement to be made. But what I am aware of, though, is that post-March 23, I know that the Commissioner of Police was very much concerned as to what had happened in the context of our image and our reputation and I was so directed to do whatever is necessary to improve and to build public confidence in the police service and the issue of police legitimacy with respect to how we conduct our work. And we began scheduling a series of interviews, opening himself up, as it were, to the public through the media, and we held a series of interviews, very frank and open interviews on a range of issues. We also reached out, because the business community was also tremendously affected by the operations of March 23. We did, in fact, approach the Chamber of Commerce to address the business community, and we are still awaiting a response to confirm a day on which to appear. We have, in fact, through a series of staff meetings, been engaging, interacting with our staff, not just of the events of March 23, but other events that impact the operations, with respect to how we go about policing, how we go about reducing our crimes, as it were, in particular murder.

So I am not aware of any formal statement, but I do know that we are doing things, one, internally and externally to improve, as best we can, how the public currently perceives us.

Mr. Chairman: But you are a communicator. This is your profession. And communication involves a sender, a message and a receiver. And so, great communicators, would it be true to say, are also great listeners?

Ms. Lewis: We ought to be great listeners.

Mr. Chairman: And, therefore, you might, or surely must have heard something about who was behind this between March 23 and now. You would not just be communicating the TTPS position, surely. You must be aware, you must hear, who did this and why. You are a good communicator by all accounts and, therefore, if we invited you to share that with us, what would

you say?

Ms. Lewis: Invited me to share whether I heard—

Mr. Chairman: Yes, what have you heard? What do you think has happened? Who is behind this? You have said yourself it is extremely unlikely that this would be a coincidence because these efforts are managed. They are planned—to use your words, planned and scheduled.

Ms. Lewis: That is correct.

Mr. Chairman: So you agree that it is extremely unlikely that you would have these road blocks nationwide and they would be a coincidence.

Ms. Lewis: I am saying that, yes, because persons are planning it. So the persons who are planning it, there is no coincidence there. Is there? It is deliberate.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I just introduce a very pointed question? Perhaps I should ask this first. Are you aware that Mr. Johnny Abraham—what is his correct position? Senior Superintendent Johnny Abraham—attended before this Joint Select Committee and on live television, in answer to the very question posed to you by the Chairman, when asked, who do you estimate—in fact, I asked the question: who do you estimate was responsible for this event. A direct answer was given. He said, “I think it was the Guard and Emergency Branch”. Secondly, in answer to the question as to why they may have done it, the response elicited was that the estimation is that it had a connection to do with the wage negotiations. Save for him, not a single other soul has been as direct as that. Everybody is batting in their proverbial crease.

Question: Has there been any direction or consideration as to a response to what Senior Superintendent Abraham has said? He said it as a commander in charge of his particular division. If he is wrong, or if there is something untoward with what he has had said, have you been given any instruction, or have you, in your role and discharge of your responsibility, considered it necessary to refute what he has told this Committee?

Ms. Lewis: I have not received any direction nor have I—to refute it.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Are you aware of the statement he made?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, yes.

Mr. Al-Rawi: What is your view on the statement he made?

Mr. Chairman: May I just invite you, have you heard a similar view expressed anywhere else?

Ms. Lewis: Actually, no, I did not.

Mr. Chairman: So this took you by surprise.

Ms. Lewis: Yes. I looked, for the record, at all our appearances before this respected Committee, as I must, and yes, I listened with my entire staff and we were all being educated as to what he was sharing.

Mr. Al-Rawi: So it was a surprise to you to hear that it may have been an orchestrated event that is non-coincidental, that 19 entities were involved in, that may have been tied to wage negotiations between the CPO and the police? That was a surprise to you?

Ms. Lewis: What was a surprise to me was the identification of a particular unit of the service as being responsible.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much. I was actually saving this at the end but I shall do it now. Remember I asked you about internal investigations.

Ms. Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: That bit of information, do you think it not worthy of investigation, that it might be the GEB?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, and it may well—

Mr. Ramadhar: Are you aware if any such investigation has been launched based on the statement of a very senior police officer, as to information he had that the GEB was responsible?

Ms. Lewis: I have no information on that.

Mr. Ramadhar: So would it be surprising that information as germane as that, as important as that, would not be immediately investigated by the police?

Ms. Lewis: I am not saying that it is not. I just have no information on it.

Mr. Ramadhar: My question was not that. Would it be surprising then, that such information is not immediately investigated?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, it would be.

Mr. Ramadhar: Because in the normal course of things, it ought to be.

Ms. Lewis: Yes, agreed.

Mr. Ramadhar: But in relation to your earlier answers, we are hearing that “we are awaiting the outcome of the PCA’s investigation” and no internal investigation on this matter?

Ms. Lewis: Well, I am saying there is an investigation taking place and I did say how the police conduct its investigations. I am, in fact, new to the organization and I really am not sure as to how they would go about conducting an investigation.

Mr. Ramadhar: And I want to say, you are doing a very good job for your organization thus far. Would you, as the head of Corporate Communication, not find it extraordinarily useful to you, so that you could communicate to the country, the finality of what has happened there, to bring those who are responsible to account?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, I think it will do well in the context of public trust and confidence if you could identify the persons so responsible for what transpired, because a great degree of inconvenience was caused. There is no doubt about that.

Mr. Chairman: So you feel that we should try to identify those people.

Ms. Lewis: I think it will be a value to all of us if we do.

Mr. Chairman: And do you not feel, therefore, that in the context of both Mr. Al-Rawi’s and Mr. Ramadhar’s questions, that perhaps making the apology circuit might not be sufficient, given

the losses that were incurred, the inconvenience, the multiple inconveniences heaped on citizens, the concerns raised? Do you feel that no investigation by the police service into what has happened, but plenty apologies and a lot of assurances that this would not happen again, even though no attempt is being made to find out who did it or why? Do you feel that that is a valid and a logical approach to a resolution of a matter such as this?

Ms. Lewis: As I sit, I cannot say that. What I do know is that the matter is not complete. That is my information. So, therefore, it is reasonable for me to conclude that there is an intent to determine who were the persons behind what transpired on March 23. I think, as an organization, if it is that we are serious—and I trust that we are—in building a relationship with the citizens that we represent, we have to find out who was responsible. I think the onus is upon us to ascertain who they are and the PCA to assist in ascertaining who they are.

Mr. Ramadhar: Ms. Lewis, to help you a little bit, that is the point. You came here to assist, and you therefore—because you are the communications head—would have made enquiries or as best as you could have, to ascertain what has been done to bring some comfort to the population.

Ms. Lewis: Um-hmm.

Mr. Ramadhar: And my final issue, to go back on it, is having regard to all of your preparation in readiness to be here today, you have not been able to come and tell us that there is, in fact, a live investigation into the GEB role in this matter.

Ms. Lewis: No, I have no information on that, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

Mr. Al-Rawi: One final question from me, please. Insofar as one of the roles that you perform is that you would receive information and then report back to those whom you must report to as to the intensity of observations, and insofar as that would probably lead to recommendations,

have you, in observing the intensity of the repulsion that people felt in experiencing the so-called day of so-called total policing, and in experiencing the incredible, circuitous never-ending position of the entire seniority of the police coming forward to say, “I haven't a clue who did this, notwithstanding the fact that I have all the investigative powers, and we are responsible for investigating all crimes in Trinidad and Tobago, and you must trust us because we are equipped to do that and we are capable and repose faith in us that we will get the job done, but please, do not hold us to the same standard to account for our own actions.” Insofar as you may have heard any of that, have you made a recommendation in your role that an immediate conclusion of this investigation is required in Trinidad and Tobago? And if so, who have you made that report to?

Ms. Lewis: We would have, upon the return of the Commissioner of Police, we did have a conversation and it was conveyed that it was important for us to determine who was responsible—an oral conversation. From a communications perspective, my role would be to see how best we can build a relationship with the public to better understand what had happened, what we had done as a consequence and how we perceive it going forward, which is what I would have done. I would have submitted to the Commissioner of Police a written proposal, from a communications perspective, as to what we ought to do. Now it would have included, not just the external public or clientele of the police service, but the internal clientele as well. And, yes, it would involve engaging the business community. It continues to involve engaging the communities. We hold at least three meetings with our communities every week—

Mr. Chairman: Hold on, just one second. What do you think when you come to the business community that they want to hear? It is a good thing that those meetings have not yet been scheduled, you know. I think that you would find yourself at the end of a barrage of criticism because this is not something that you can go to business people with, and have explained away. It is not something that you can go to people who are ill, who had to go for dialysis or for surgery

or for operations or for medical care and explain it away. And that is what I was asking earlier. Do you feel this is something that can be papered over?

You have a senior, a very senior police officer, appearing before this committee two weeks ago and identifying, clearly, an area in which this Committee ought to look; singling out a unit and nothing has been done internal to the police service? Let me ask you this then, since your answer will be no, nothing has been done. As a civilian, do you feel that you are being kept out of the inner circle? Do you feel that you are being denied some information, that there are things happening in the service that you are clearly not privy to?

Ms. Lewis: I think in all organizations, Sir, there are things for which the communications profession may not be privy to, but I think that I am not being—

Mr. Chairman: I was not asking you generically about all organizations, I was asking you about you and the police service.

Ms. Lewis: I do have a role to perform and I am required to discharge—I do not get the impression I am left out of anything deliberately.

Mr. Chairman: So if and you are not left out of anything and you do not know that some sort of searchlight has been placed on the Guard and Emergency Branch of the police service, fully two weeks after the testimony of a senior officer here, then it would be reasonable for the Committee to conclude that nothing is really being done.

Ms. Lewis: It does not mean because I am not aware of something that nothing is being done, if that is what you are saying.

Mr. Chairman: No, I am asking you. You just said that you do not feel as if you are being kept out of anything.

Ms. Lewis: No, I am not, but it does not mean to say that everything that transpires in the context of an investigation, I would be briefed immediately. Perhaps it is not time for them to brief me.

I do not know. But I would not sit here and say I am aware of something and I am not. I am not aware of any investigation.

Mr. Chairman: But two weeks have passed. Two weeks is no longer immediate.

Ms. Lewis: But I am not aware of an investigation.

Mr. Chairman: And no one told you anything about that prior to your coming before this Committee.

Ms. Lewis: No, I have had no conversation on that matter. In fact I have had none on that matter.

Brig. Alfonso: Ms. Lewis, let me see if I could bring some clarity to this thing. I have some knowledge about how these things go, and there are times when the top brass will meet behind closed doors but you would not have a clue what is going on inside there, and they would only tell you what they want you to know—

Ms. Lewis: On a need-to-know-basis.

Brig. Alfonso:—and what they want you to say. So, as a civilian, I can understand police behaviour, not unlike military behaviour. We will get together and say what we have to say and then we may bring in the civilian and tell the civilian, “This is what we want you to tell the public”. So, clearly you have never been privy to everything.

Ms. Lewis: And, quite frankly, there may be times when I might never be privy to everything, and based on what is required for me to know, I would be informed about. But statement about being shut out in the literal sense, I do not think that I am. I feel that if there is something I need to know, I think maybe if I felt that I was being asked a question on the GEB today, which I did not foresee, maybe on my own I may have enquired as to, “Are we doing anything on this?” And I did not.

Brig. Alfonso: I think what we are just trying to find is—Senior Superintendent Abraham had

heard that it might have been GEB, we were hoping that by now you might have heard it might not have been GEB or it might have been Mounted Branch or Canine or somebody who was responsible. But you have not heard anything—

Ms. Lewis: No, Sir, I have not.

Mr. Chairman: May I just ask one question of you and then I will go to Mr. Ramadhar. I want to ask you a question about “Beyond The Tape.” We had quite the theatrical performance here by one of the hosts of “Beyond The Tape”, Inspector Roger Alexander, and he is on video saying on the television something quite different to what he came here to say, because on the television he said that, “This is planned, this is coordinated and you must walk with your breakfast, lunch and dinner”, seeming to imply that more disruption is to come. Here, he said, he did not know anything about it and he was just as confused as anybody else as to what might have actually happened. So there is an inconsistency here which we will address. But given that, and given that he was so loudly proclaiming that citizens ought to be prepared for more disruption and more inconvenience, you are the head of communications for the service, how do you feel about the service’s involvement in “Beyond The Tape”?

Ms. Lewis: There is a value in having such a programme that seeks to project and facilitate community interaction with the police service. It allows us a forum, which we had not had before, to address certain issues and to communicate certain information to the general public with respect to their own sense of safety and security. There is a value to the programme. In fact, there was a survey conducted by the Police Service Commission, November 2014, and in every area which was being measured or considered, the programme performed exceedingly well. What has happened with respect to the statements that were made, I view them as highly unfortunate, and it did cause me some distress because I had, in fact, wondered why those statements were being made. The programme in itself, barring—

Mr. Chairman: So what are you doing about the statement and the statement maker? These things are--you know, police are deliberate people. These statements are not to be made willy-nilly, surely. What do you make of it then? Is it that there is nothing? You just carry on as normal?

Ms. Lewis: That is not what has been happening.

Mr. Chairman: Well, what has been happening? Have you issued new guidelines for how one should conduct oneself in a programme like this? What one ought to comment about or not comment about? What is happening?

Ms. Lewis: Post that particular broadcast on that day, we have, in fact, held discussions with the co-host of the programme in terms of, more or less, recognizing the role and responsibility—

Mr. Chairman: Which co-host?

Ms. Lewis: That is the Inspector Alexander, the person who is a member of the service. And we would have, in fact—that is the Commissioner of Police—had a conversation with the Inspector in terms of statements that he ought not to make because of how it would reflect on the police service. So post those statements, the Inspector would have been spoken to and was spoken to.

Mr. Chairman: And do you feel that the public might have found those statements offensive?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, they would have.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much, Chairman. Forgive me for holding on to this GEB thing, but it is clearly the only lead that we have in the public domain as to who might have been responsible or at least part responsible. You are aware, of course, that a unit of the GEB conducted a roadblock in the south land. Are you?

Ms. Lewis: Yes, that is correct.

Mr. Ramadhar: You might also recall some years back, officers of the GEB whose duty it was

to ensure the safety and protection of the Prime Minister and her family at her home in San Fernando, that they abdicated their responsibility and left the scene totally unprotected?

Ms. Lewis: I have a faint recollection of it.

Mr. Ramadhar: A fair, or a vague?

Ms. Lewis: A vague. It would have happened when I was not in the service at the time but I do recall an incident outside the residence of the Prime Minister involving the police.

Mr. Ramadhar: And that brought a level of shame and disgrace to the service, did it not?

Ms. Lewis: I would not have been with the service at that time, but I suspect—

Mr. Ramadhar: Whether you were or not, I mean reflecting backward.

Ms. Lewis: I suspect it would have been.

Mr. Ramadhar: And it would trouble you, too, to learn that once again, the GEB, was the unit that participated in the roadblock matters to which they are not accustomed or not normally expected to. Is that an accurate statement?

Ms. Lewis: I am not familiar as to the duties and responsibilities of the Guard and Emergency Branch. But what is of concern to me, the entirety of March 23.

Mr. Ramadhar: But let us focus a little bit more on the GEB, please. From the time that you have become involved as head of corporate—or as a citizen—were you ever aware of the GEB conducting roadblocks on their own?

Ms. Lewis: I would see officers on duty, Sir. I would not be familiar with which unit they are attached to. I would not know what unit they are attached to.

Mr. Ramadhar: GEB carries special uniforms and armaments, do they not?

Ms. Lewis: Sir, as a civilian, if I see police officers—

Mr. Ramadhar: No, no, speaking now as head of corporate communications. Without trying to, in any way, put you in any difficult circumstance, you do appreciate that GEB is differently

uniformed and armed.

Ms. Lewis: Yes.

Mr. Ramadhar: In fact, I think, I may be wrong, but probably the most heavily armed of all of the divisions of the police service.

Ms. Lewis: I cannot say, Sir. I know that they do carry arms.

Mr. Ramadhar: All right, thank you very much.

Ms. Lewis: You are most welcome.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Well, Miss Lewis, I want to thank you very much for coming and spending some time with us. It has been illuminating, as illuminating as we expected and we hoped for and we are grateful for your time. You have joined a service in need of your services and we are grateful for your testimony before us today. We will reflect on what you have had to say and we will express our sentiments in our report. But for now, the only sentiment I wish to convey is gratitude, to you for appearing before us and for the forthrightness of your answers. I wish you a good day. Thank you very much for appearing.

Ms. Lewis: If I may close before I leave, make the statement?

Mr. Chairman: Yes, please.

Ms. Lewis: I wish to say that what has happened on May 23 has clearly—March 23—is clearly a mark on our character, on our name, which we wish had not been there, but it is what it is. And, therefore, how do we proceed going forward? We have, in fact, made tremendous strides, even before my advent or entry into the police service, as to where we want to go and how to identify ourselves going forward. Clearly, we are successful in the context of reducing crime. The evidence is there for all to see.

There are two surveys I wish to refer us to, the most recent being that conducted by the Sunday Express, and a part of which was published and carried on Monday, and it was instructive

for us to look at. It looked at certain key institutions in this country, one of which being the police service and the results were simply that over a consistent three-year period there was a marked increase in public confidence in the police service, and it happened post—that survey was conducted post March 23 of 2015. In one year, we were at 11 per cent, another year we were at 23 per cent. We are currently at 30 percent. In November 2014, the survey done by the PSC put us at 50 per cent—two separate surveys looking at different things.

What I wish to say before I exit this place is that, do not let one incident, as serious and as grave as it was—I am not discounting that at any point in time, but the fact of the matter is, we are looking forward to see what comes out of this exercise. We are looking forward to see what we do internally, addressing our issues, and what the PCA will come forward with in order to move forward. We are clear that there were deficiencies in operations which allowed this to happen, but it happened. We have revisited ourselves, we have acted immediately, not 24 hours, not 48 hours, within short order. And I feel that we have made strides and those strides ought not to be forgotten in the context of what happened on March 23. I think it is important for us to bear that in mind.

Mr. Ramadhar: Let me just say you have acquitted yourself miraculously well today. You have done a great service to the police service, and that is why I think we are all very troubled because of the tremendous work and uplift that we have seen in the police service in the last couple of years; the reduction in crimes generally and the quality of conduct that we see across the board, an improvement in, but you may have a small number who will attempt to diminish that effort. That is why we are all very troubled and we all, I imagine—I speak for all of us—congratulate the work of the police service as they continue to be our protectors for the society, and that is why it is even more important to get to the root of this and to weed those out.

Ms. Lewis: I pray and I trust that you do.

Mr. Chairman: Just to let you know, in closing, that your words resonate with us and we want to assure you, since you are looking for action, that this is the Parliament and you will get action. We will report and we will ensure that our report drives further action. Whether the police acts or not, we will act. So since you also receive messages and re-transmit them, I presume, you may wish to do—you are free to do so.

Ms. Lewis: I think the entire police service is interested in the deliberations of this Committee, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: We will not keep them waiting much longer. We are almost at an end of our deliberations, and we will act, even if they do not. Thank you.

Ms. Lewis: Thank you for having me, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to suspend the sitting for five minutes.

11.51 a.m.: Sitting suspended.

11.58 a.m.: Meeting resumed.

**OFFICIAL FROM THE
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE**

Mr. John Richardson

Senior Superintendent – Guard and
Emergency Branch

Mr. Chairman: All right. Welcome to the Joint Select Committee on National Security. I would like to welcome Senior Superintendent John Richardson who is the head of the Guard and Emergency Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. As is our custom here, we introduce ourselves and then we ask you to introduce yourself. I will start with the member to my extreme left, which is Mr. Al-Rawi.

[Members of the Committee introduce themselves]

[Official from Trinidad and Tobago Police Service introduces himself]

Mr. Chairman: Thank you and welcome, Snr. Supt. Richardson. As you are aware, we are here to consider a matter related to the day of total policing held on Monday, March 23. Before we begin, it is our custom to invite you to make an opening statement if you wish to.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: I decline to make any opening statement, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. And so we are open for questions. Mr. Ramadhar.

Mr. Ramadhar: Mr. Richardson, you have been the head of the GB for how long?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: I assumed leadership of the Guard and Emergency Branch on February 27.

Mr. Ramadhar: Of which year?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Of 2015, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Oh, you are recent to the head. Well congratulations. Help us now. The GB—if I am wrong tell me—have a special uniform that distinguishes them from other members of the police service.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: The Guard and Emergency Branch, Sir, has a uniform, and when you look at that uniform you will be able to identify the Guard and Emergency Branch.

Mr. Ramadhar: That is the point. And you are for emergencies and for guarding, and your men are very well armed whilst they are on duty, are they not?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you. In fact—well I shall not go there. Now you are aware on March 23 there was a general lockdown on Trinidad and Tobago by members of the police service in terms of the institution of roadblocks in 19 police stations and six divisions? You are aware of that now, are you?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, I am, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: The Guard and Emergency division do not, as a common feature of their work, hold roadblocks on their own. Is that an accurate statement?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: That would not be accurate, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: They normally hold roadblocks on their own?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Since I assumed the helm, I have been doing that, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Excellent.

Mr. Chairman: How many roadblocks have GEB done for the year?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: For the year, Sir, I cannot say.

Mr. Chairman: Since you have taken command?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Since I have taken command, Sir? Since February/March, within that time I would have done one roadblock—

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you very much.

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—of exercise a week.

Mr. Ramadhar: One a week?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: One a week.

Mr. Ramadhar: So the one that—

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, that—

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you for that. So one week since you took command?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, I am not finished.

Mr. Chairman: Well, just one second. If you could allow the member to finish his question.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Very well, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: One a week as a scheduled and routine.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Good! On March 23, therefore, you instructed a scheduled and routine roadblock by the GEB, did you?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Thank you. You may finish your statement.

Mr. Chairman: Now please feel free to elucidate.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir, on March 23 I did not schedule a roadblock. However, personnel of the Guard and Emergency Branch would have been performing road check exercises.

Mr. Chairman: Why did they conduct this road check exercise?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: That was done, Sir, in response to information they would have received.

Mr. Ramadhar: Sir, with all due respect, you are the head, you knew there was an issue on March 23, did you make any enquiry specific to roadblocks by the GEB on March 23?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Good, you did. Who authorized that roadblock on March 23 inclusive of the GEB?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, I can only speak for the Guard and Emergency Branch—

Mr. Ramadhar: Well that is what I am speaking to.

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—and on 23rd we—

Mr. Ramadhar: Who? Who did it? Who instructed it?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: All right, Sir. As I said before, the Guard and Emergency Branch, the officers there were acting on information and, Sir that—

Mr. Ramadhar: With all due respect, Mr. Richardson, I am asking a specific question. I am not interested in the information at this point in time.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Right, Sir, and that is what I am leading to.

Mr. Ramadhar: Who instructed it? It is a simple question which requires a very simple answer.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: And I am saying, Sir, based on that communication was made—

Mr. Ramadhar: You reminded me of being in the Magistrates' Court, Sir, and listen, we are in the Parliament. The question I am asking is: who instructed that roadblock?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, and I am saying again, they would have responded to information. The Inspector would have been informed.

Mr. Ramadhar: Who is that Inspector? You having told us that you made enquiries in relation to the—

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Oh, the Inspector at that point in time would have been aware and—

Mr. Ramadhar: Chairman, I am entirely in your hands for this time.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I ask something?

Mr. Chairman: Please do.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good morning, Sir.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Morning, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: If I may perhaps assist by making a preface to what I am about to ask. Our role as a Joint Select Committee of Parliament, which is a non-partisan role here—we all sit equally here—is to try to assist the country by putting a report to the Parliament which can recommend solutions to issues which arise.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: We appreciate, Sir, that you have a delicate road to walk, in that you are in charge of a division and that you coordinate as a member of the TTPS and have obligations and loyalties. We appreciate that. All that we are asking for is for clear unambiguous assistance. We have been told by a member of the TTPS, in clear and uncritical language, that the events that transpired in the day which brought Trinidad and Tobago both to a halt, March 23, 2015, that the Guard and Emergency Branch was responsible or may have been responsible for this event. We have started asking questions this morning and we are going to come to that issue as to

whether the Guard and Emergency Branch had a role in this and, if so what, but the first question is a very simple one.

We have received reports which say that the Guard and Emergency Branch conducted roadblock exercises on that day. The question that my colleague asked is very simply: who authorized the roadblock on that day? Not what the circumstances which would have arisen to lead somebody to do something. A simple question: Who is the person in charge who said, I now parade and dispatch you to go and conduct a roadblock exercise? There must be a person.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Okay, Sir. In that instance, Sir, it would have been the Inspector in charge of the—

Mr. Chairman: And that Inspector is?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Inspector Nobbee, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Nobbee?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Nobbee.

Mr. Chairman: Did Inspector Norbee notify you of his action?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, I was informed, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And when you were informed, what did you do?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: When I was informed—

Mr. Chairman: At what time were you informed?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: I would have been informed probably around 6.15, 6.20, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is the command structure inverted in the Guard and Emergency Branch?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. Let me just invite Brig. Alfonso to talk.

Brig. Alfonso: Snr. Supt., let us see if we could clear up this thing a bit. An Inspector is very, very junior to you by two ranks down.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: So in other words he cannot give you instructions?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: No, he could give you information?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: And you would take your instructions from an Asst. Commissioner?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: A higher authority. Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Did you receive any instructions from the Asst. Commissioner or anybody senior to yourself?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, what I can tell you—

Brig. Alfonso: No, no. Hold on—

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—as head of the Guard and Emergency Branch—

Brig. Alfonso: No, no, let us keep it simple. I have some knowledge of how the thing goes with the police service.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Okay, Sir, no.

Brig. Alfonso: So nobody senior to you gave you instructions.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Good. But you got information from Inspector, Sergeant—you got the information from anybody.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: So on that morning you were not instructed, but you were informed?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman: You were informed at what time did you say?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: About 6.15, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And is it the norm that people would inform you before or after? What would be the appropriate practice?

12.10 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: What would be the appropriate practice?

Mr. Al-Rawi: The first question, sorry Chairman, is there a degree of autonomy? Can the inspector who gave you the information, within your structural operationality, can that inspector, does that inspector, does Inspector Nobbee have the operational authority to go out and conduct a roadblock exercise under his own say-so?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Inspector Nobbee?

Mr. Al-Rawi: Yes, Sir.

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—has that discretion within the TTPS to sanction that, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And the Guard and Emergency Branch specifically?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Specifically, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And he has used it before?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir. That is routine, Sir. That is normal.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: And on that day in question when he informed you, did he inform you prior to parading and dispatching the officers to perform that roadblock exercise, or did he inform you after he had paraded and dispatched those officers?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: After, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: After. So you told us that on or about 6.15 a.m. on March 23, 2015, you received information from Inspector Nobbie that a roadblock exercise had been put into effect, is that correct?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: When I enquired, Sir, yes. May I say—

Mr. Al-Rawi: Did he call you or did you call him?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: I called him, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Why did you call him?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Well, Sir, I called him because around 6.00 a.m. I would have received information that a roadblock was being carried out, that is what was told to me, and it was causing great hardship on the travelling public.

Mr. Chairman: But this is at variance with one of your earlier answers a little bit, because you would have heard this from a member of the public or a member of the media? Who informed you?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir, I would have received this information from my line Assistant Commissioner, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So your boss calls you up and says there is a disruption.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And you suggested earlier that Inspector Nobbie would inform you—

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman:—of any roadblock exercise that he was taking or about to take.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, any roadblock or any road check exercise, Sir. I would be informed.

Mr. Chairman: Before?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Or after, depending on the situation.

Mr. Chairman: How long after?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: As soon as possible Sir, depending on the situation.

Mr. Chairman: Good, because I have a letter here from Acting Sergeant Ogunsheye who was the person in charge of the roadblock on the Gasparillo Flyover.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: He sent us quite a long letter explaining that he got a phone call at 3.20 am alleging that arms and ammunition were moving out of the Cedros/Icacos area by members of the Rasta City Group and he communicated with Inspector Nobbee and told him of the information and his intention to treat with same.

He goes on to say that they went out on patrol and the exercise commenced at 4.20 a.m.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: But you are told about this by your boss two hours after.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And Inspector Nobbee has not called you yet?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Does that trouble you?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No Sir, because he has the discretion and he could institute, he could authorize road check exercises based on the information.

Mr. Chairman: But you said that he would inform you of any such action that—

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Before or after, Sir. In this case it was after.

Mr. Chairman: And two hours after he has not told you.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: In this case it was after, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Is that usual that for hours after he has initiated an exercise he has found himself so pressed for time that he has been unable to call his commanding officer and let him know what is going on.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: That is unusual?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir. That is not unusual.

Mr. Al-Rawi: May I, Mr. Chairman? I accept, thank you, Sir, that there is autonomy, events can happen and depending upon the situation that the information may come faster or slower.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Let us now pinpoint out of the hypothetical. Let us go to these events on this

day. On 23rd March, 2015, an autonomous exercise went ahead, which is nothing unusual. However, on that day it turned out that Trinidad and Tobago was locked down.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: And there is a disastrous consequence as a result of it and it was so disastrous that your superior, who is your line superior?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Assistant Commissioner of Police, Mr. Alleyne.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Thank you. So you got a call from Mr. Alleyne telling you: Listen, something is going on.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: You then made enquiries of Inspector Nobbee.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: At that point what did Inspector Nobbee tell you?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Inspector Nobbee told me yes, Sir, that he is aware that there is a road check exercise taking place.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Nationwide or just at—

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, that is just for the Guard and Emergency, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: What was your instruction to him?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: At that point, Sir, I would say again having had the information prior to speaking to him that the effect the roadblock was having, or the road check which we carried out was having on the travelling/motoring public, my instructions were to abort it.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Was it aborted?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: As far as I am aware, Sir, yes.

Mr. Al-Rawi: What time did you receive a report that it is aborted?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: At about 6.45?

Mr. Chairman: Did your commanding officer, your ACP instruct you to abort the exercise?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: When my line ACP communicated with me he enquired of me whether or not such an exercise was being carried out by the Guard and Emergency Branch and Yes, Sir, he did say, based on the effects it was having, it should be discontinued.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you have—we have received, by way of request a number of station diary extracts and telephone message book extracts, all of which indicate the time on which people were paraded and dispatched and the time back in, providing an indicator, therefore of the length

of the exercise.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Are you in a position to tell us what point in time those persons paraded and dispatched to go on that roadblock exercise came back into the station.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: They would have come back about between 7.00 and ten past seven.

Mr. Al-Rawi: So, by your estimation the exercise was conducted between 4.00 a.m. and somewhere just before 7.00 a.m., is that correct?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Between 7.00 and 7.10 a.m.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Have you received a written report as to what the outcome of that roadblock exercise has produced?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Were the members of the Rasta City Group discovered in any activity in the course of that roadblock exercise between 4.00 and 7.00 a.m.?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And you were looking for two gold and one silver Nissan Almera motor car. Did you find any of these cars?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Did you receive a copy of that report that the Chairman just referred you to? The letter written by—

Mr. Chairman: Acting Sergeant Ogunshye.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, I have copy of it, Sir.

Mr. Al-Rawi: Do you have anything to tell us about that?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: I do not understand your question, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You do not? Is there anything you wish to add to the Acting Sergeant's report?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: To what the Acting Sergeant said, Sir, in his report? No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And you feel that your men acted honourably and well on the day?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir. It is my belief, my honest belief that on that day they would have been acting with the best interest of the country at heart, Sir, because to my mind, we would have been working towards the operating plan in the police service.

Mr. Chairman: Aaah!!

Snr. Supt. Richardson: And I am talking in particular about the reduction of crime.

Mr. Chairman: Very good, thank you. Did you want to ask something?

Brig. Alfonso: Snr. Supt. are you aware why you were asked to come before this Select Committee? Do you know why you were asked to come here?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, well based on what the hon. Senator would have said a short while ago that would have been why.

Brig. Alfonso: I am asking you if you know why you were asked to come?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Specifically?

Brig. Alfonso: Yes.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: To help the Joint Select Committee make a determination as to what happen on that day.

Brig. Alfonso: Let me see if I can help you. You were asked to come so that you can help us find out what took place on March 23.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir, that is what I said last, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Okay. I feel a little saddened as the line Minister, as your line Minister, the Minister of National Security.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: That we have asked you to come here, a very senior police officer to assist is in understanding what went on.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: And I get the strong feeling—I might be wrong but I am sure I am not—that you, you are a national of Trinidad and Tobago, are you not?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: I get the strong feeling that you are “brakesing”. I cannot put it any differently. You seem to be “brakesing” and as the Minister responsible for national security, and as your line Minister, I feel very—I am not going to say embarrassed yet but I feel very saddened that you are not cooperating as we expected you to.

Your whole demeanour almost comes over as aggressive. I may be wrong and I hope I am. But you come over as aggressive and you seem to be unwilling to cooperate. All we are trying to do is to find out who was in charge, who gave the instructions as to what happened. We are not challenging total policing, you know and what policemen do and how they operate. We are not doing that. We would be out of place to tell how to be a policeman. We cannot tell

you that. All we are trying to find out is what happened on 23rd March, who was responsible, who gave the instructions? We know all who it was not. We know it was not the Commissioner. We know it was not the top strata. We know it was not the Senior Supt. So we are trying to find out and we are hoping that you would be able to help us find out because some fingers are pointed to GEB. I have not heard any other unit or sub unit or division being targeted. We have heard that GEB might be the people responsible and we are hoping that the head of GEB might be able to say yes we are responsible or no we are not responsible, or I do not know.

But, I get this feeling that you are unwilling. Please correct me if I am wrong or please advise me if I am wrong in thinking so.

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, you are wrong in thinking that way, Sir, very wrong, Sir. I can tell you that the Guard and Emergency Branch could only speak about what went on or transpired at the Guard and Emergency Branch. The Guard and Emergency Branch had nothing to do with any conspiracies or whatever.

Brig. Alfonso: And if anyone was to say that GEB was responsible, anybody in the police service, any senior person in the police service were to say they understand that it is the GEB, they would be wrong also?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Brig. Alfonso: Thank you.

12.25 p.m.

Mr. Chairman: Just to clarify, when you say they would be wrong, you mean they would be lying?

Snr. Supt Richardson: What I am going to say, Sir, in relation to that, their facts, they may not have it straight.

Mr. Chairman: So when you say what you have said there, what you really are implying is that the people are telling an untruth about you?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: And about your organization?

Snr. Supt Richardson: They would be telling an untruth about the Guard and Emergency

Branch.

Mr. Chairman: So they are lying on you?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir; they would not be speaking the truth.

Mr. Ramadhar: Mr. Richardson, being the head now of GEB you would be aware of some of its history, where in 2011 GEB abdicated their responsibility to protect the life and the family of the hon. Prime Minister by leaving their post?

Snr. Supt Richardson: I am aware that something took place, but I am not intimate with the—

Mr. Ramadhar: You are at present in charge and therefore you take full responsibility of the command of the men under you?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: GEB is also responsible, and we thank them for their efforts, for the protection of all Members of Parliament, the Speaker and the Prime Minister at Parliament, is that correct?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Correct, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Last Wednesday, May 20, you are aware of course that the Prime Minister and Members of the Parliament were within the confines of this building, and that Guard and Emergency Branch had removed itself from the precincts?

Snr. Supt Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Ramadhar: Would that be disturbing to you that that happened?

Snr. Supt Richardson: I am not aware of that.

Mr. Chairman: Would it be of concern to you?

Snr. Supt Richardson: It would be disturbing to me.

Mr. Ramadhar: Will you make an inquiry as to the fact that the Prime Minister and Members of Parliament were within the confines of this building and GEB had left.

Snr. Supt Richardson: I will Sir, yes.

Mr. Mc Leod: Senior Supt, what is your length of service in the police service?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Thirty-four years.

Mr. Mc Leod: And prior to February 27, 2015, where were you employed in the police service?

Snr. Supt Richardson: At the South Western Division, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: So you are new to the Guard and Emergency Branch essentially?

Snr. Supt Richardson: I have now assumed the role as head of the Guard and Emergency Branch from the 27, but if you asking, Sir, whether I had been in the Guard and Emergency Branch before, yes, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: Do you see yourself as having a responsibility to defend the GEB as a unit in any and every circumstance?

Snr. Supt Richardson: I see myself, Sir, as seeking the truth in any situation that may arise.

Mr. Mc Leod: When you got the report from Inspector Norbee, on the 23, would that have been the first report that you got from Inspector Norbee having anything to do at all with the total policing on March 21, or the dry run that may have taken place on March 20, or the meeting that was conducted on March 19?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Okay, Sir. So far, as it relates to Inspector Norbee, that was the first that I would have been aware of a road check exercise being carried out on the March 23, 2015.

Mr. Mc Leod: And that road check exercise was designed to be an action taken in furtherance of your commitment to capturing two particular motor cars with a shipment of guns and so on?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir; capturing motor cars. The information is that they would have had arms and ammunition.

Mr. Mc Leod: And you did not so succeed?

Snr. Supt Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Mc Leod: Are you aware that there was a dry run to the 23rd on the 20th?

Snr. Supt Richardson: A dry run? No, Sir.

Mr. McLeod: Was the GEB involved in roadblocks on Friday, March 20?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir, GEB had a road check exercise again on the 20th.

Mr. Chairman: Was that a planned exercise?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Again, Sir, the officers had responded to information.

Mr. Chairman: Information that negotiations were not going well with the CPO?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Information in relation to vehicle again carrying arms and ammunition—illegal arms and ammunition.

Mr. Chairman: I am very grateful for your information. So let me put some things to you very quickly and see how you respond to them.

On Valentine's Day, 2011, February 14, are you aware that the Guard and Emergency Branch walked off the job at the Prime Minister's residence and the residence of the Attorney General, in response to a call for sick-out action?

Snr. Supt Richardson: No, Sir. What date did you say, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: I am asking the questions; let me just finish. Are you aware that the Police Service Social and Welfare Association said that they would not support any sick-out action because that is illegal?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So you are aware of that?

Snr. Supt Richardson: That sick-out is illegal.

Mr. Chairman: The Welfare Association had said, "We do not support any of this kind of action because—"

Snr. Supt Richardson: Yes, Sir, I am aware of that part. That part, Sir, I am saying yes to, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You are not aware that the folks from the Guard and Emergency Branch walked

of the job?

Snr. Supt Richardson: When, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: On February 14, 2011, at the Prime Minister's residence—

Snr. Supt Richardson: As I said before, I am aware that something would have happened, but I have no intimate knowledge of that.

Mr. Chairman: That is okay, I will make you intimate with it now. The thing is, while the Association has said it distances itself from industrial action, it has also been warning the country that you would have “blue flu”, that you would have disruption that police officers were very upset and in normal labour union language would say, “We cannot be held responsible for what happens next”.

Interestingly, in a story by Akile Simon on February 15, 2011, it says:

“Sources at the Guard and Emergency Branch (GEB), which provides 24-hour security at the Prime Minister's, Attorney General's and Chief Justice's residences, said none of their officers showed up for duty yesterday and the same is expected today, when the protest action is to continue.”

I also wish to draw to your attention—since you do not know, I just thought I would make you intimately aware—that there is a report by Camille Clark and Radhica Sookraj in the *Guardian* newspapers published on February 15, 2011 which says that the highest rate of absenteeism on this day of industrial action, was reported by the Guard and Emergency Branch, and that more than 90 per cent of the GEB officers stayed away from work on that day.

I also wish to make you aware that by the February 21, the Guard and Emergency Branch officers who left the Prime Minister's residence to seek medical attention, because they were feeling unwell—presumably there was no arms and ammunition in cars passing around that they had to go and chase—so they felt unwell and they sought medical attention—they had a meeting

with the Police Association Executive, asking them to protect the interest of these officers so that they would not be victimized. And so, the Police Service Association and the Guard and Emergency Branch have a relationship. I put it to you, and it goes back several years, I put it to you.

Feel free to contradict me at any time, because we have more facts before us than you may be aware of. So when the Chief Personnel Officer's invitation to a meeting ended on Thursday 19, March, in a walk-out, where were you on that day?

Snr. Supt Richardson: What year is that, Sir?

Mr. Chairman: 2015. Where were you on that day?

Snr. Supt Richardson: What day, when?

Mr. Chairman: Thursday, March 19, 2015. Where were you on that day?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Sir, one, I am not aware of any walk-out, any advisement to walk out and, two, I was at the Guard and Emergency Branch.

Mr. Chairman: Excellent, so then you would have been present at a meeting at the Guard and Emergency Branch between GEB officers and officials from the Police Service Social and Welfare Association, which would have occurred on the 19th or 20th, and immediately prior to the roadblock exercise, based on the information you alluded to, which the rest of the country calls the "dry run" on the 20th, and eventually the full blown initiative on the 23rd?

And you would be aware that GEB officers were communicating by word of mouth to police officers, even in this Parliament, inviting them to participate in this day of disruption? You would have been aware of all of that, because you know what is going on in the GEB, and you know what is happening with all of your men?

Snr. Supt Richardson: Sir, yes, I am aware.

Mr. Chairman: Good, we wanted to know that you are aware.

Snr. Supt Richardson: Sir, as the officer in charge, I am aware of things that have happened with my men. As the officer in charge, I am in charge of the Guard and Emergency Branch, we have a conference room, there was a meeting. I was in my office; I did not attend the meeting.

Mr. Chairman: Who was in the meeting?

Snr. Supt Richardson: I cannot say, Sir, I did not attend the meeting.

Mr. Chairman: It is your conference room, you must know who went in and went out; they must pass by your office. It is okay, we have sent for the records, but I am just asking you.

Snr. Supt Richardson: No, Sir, where my office is—

Mr. Chairman: So they used your conference room. You were aware that there was a meeting, but you do not know who attended the meeting? That meeting, I put it to you, was put to plan this exercise?

Snr. Supt Richardson: That is not true to say, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: How would you know, you were not in the meeting.

Snr. Supt Richardson: I am aware that the Association had a meeting there.

Mr. Chairman: But why are you defending the Association, and the GEB was in the meeting?

Snr. Supt Richardson: If they had planned an exercise, I do not know, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: The exercise on March 20, was it as unsuccessful as the exercise on the 23rd? Did it yield any arrests?

Snr. Supt Richardson: That day, Sir, one person was charged for driving a vehicle without a certificate of insurance.

Mr. Chairman: No, guns, no ammunition.

Snr. Supt Richardson: No, Sir, another person was arrested on outstanding warrants; stop and search forms, several were filled out.

Mr. Chairman: Okay. So we know now that negotiations—here is what we know: we know

that the Guard and Emergency Branch has an intimate relationship with the Police Service Social and Welfare Association.

Snr. Supt Richardson: I am not aware of that, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: I am not asking if you are aware. I am making a statement, not asking a question. I am telling you here is what we know.

Snr. Supt Richardson: Okay, Sir, and I am saying that is not true.

Mr. Chairman: That is okay, I do not need you to comment. If you could turn your mike off there, please. I just need you to listen.

We know that there is a close relationship, we have discovered it. We had to unearth it because no one in the police service is telling us. So we have had to do our own work, and we have found this relationship. We have found an instance where the Guard and Emergency Branch has heeded the call of the Police Service Social and Welfare Association, to such an extent that even the residences of the Prime Minister and the Attorney General have been abandoned. I do not know about the Chief Justice; I see it is mentioned in one of the news report. We know that.

We know that the Police Service Social and Welfare Association has run to the aid of the officers who participated in the walk-off from duty at the Prime Minister's residence on Valentine's Day 2011. We know that; it is documented.

We know that there was a breakdown of negotiations—fast forward four years now—on March 03, 2015, which resulted in a walk out in a meeting with the CPO, between the CPO and the Police Service Social and Welfare Association. We know that the Association refused to attend scheduled meetings for March 10 and 17. We know that they attended a meeting on March 19 and they walked out.

We know that a meeting was then held in your conference room with the Association and

the Guard and Emergency Branch officers.

Mr. Ramadhar: What date?

Mr. Chairman: This is what date? It is the 19th.

Snr. Supt Richardson: There was a meeting on the 19th.

Mr. Chairman: That is okay, I have said for the records, so we can prove it independently; we will triangulate, but thank you.

Mr. Chairman: Yes. So we know that—at what time was that meeting?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: I remember it started in the morning, so I do not know what time that actually started.

Mr. Chairman: That is all right, we will find that out. No problem. And then, we know that this dry run occurred based on information which really yielded nothing, and then a full-blown initiative takes place on the 23rd. We know that the Guard and Emergency Branch officers appear to have been communicating orally. They did not use a phone or a radio and get people from all over the country to participate in this disruptive action. All of this we know. We are not asking you to verify it, we know.

So, what I want to know is what have you done about this? Two months almost have passed, what have you done? These are your officers—we know of the nexus, we know of the relationship, we know the timing of the meetings, we know—it is not a secret anymore—we know. The Commissioner of Police did not know. In fact, he brought his entire top brass here and none of them knew, but now we know, and now you know, and you know that we know. What have you done about this? What have you done?—anything at all. And I would like for your answer to not be as combative and as defensive as it has been—as your performance has been to date, because, really, we know. We knew before you walked in here.

So, what I want now from you is, what have you done with these officers?—because, either they have lied to you, they have embarrassed you, and they have put a big question mark over what exactly it is—the Guard and Emergency Branch is about. That has raised some very serious questions for this Committee, because you all are in charge of important things and people. So, what are you doing about this? Or, what have you done?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, the Guard and Emergency Branch, as far as I am aware, has not been involved in any industrial action.

Mr. Chairman: Well, that is because the definition of “industrial action” is “a sick-out”. You learned from that in 2011. Sorry, not you, your organization. So, you know you cannot do that again because the law does not permit you to do that. So, you have gone the other route and this is now called “malicious obedience”. So, did the Guard and Emergency Branch participate in any way in this, to your knowledge?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, if you are asking, and I heard you talk about “malicious disobedience”—

Mr. Chairman: “Malicious obedience” was the term used by ACP Vincel Edwards

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: So, you do not view what has happened as an abuse of the authority that the citizens of this country have given to the police service and the GEB, in particular?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: No, Sir. I do not think that their intention was to abuse their authority, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: Are you sure you know what is going on in the Guard and Emergency Branch?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Chairman: You did not know that they decamped last Wednesday when the Prime Minister was still in the building?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Sir, I—

Mr. Chairman: You did not know about these roadblock exercises before they happened? You did not know about this relationship that I referred you to earlier? Are you sure you know what is happening in there?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yes, I know what is going on, Sir, but I have to admit—

Mr. Chairman: Okay.

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—where you spoke about the Guard and Emergency Branch not being at Parliament when the hon. Members were present, that is disturbing, and I definitely will have to look at that, Sir. The matters, as I say, of 2011, Sir, I—

Mr. Chairman: Just so you know, you know 2015 looks a lot like 2011, here is Inspector Michael Seales, who, unlike his president, read the report of Vincel Edwards—I think the president came here and said he did not read the report, although he referred to its contents, maybe you could look at the cover and magically divine what happens in it—what he says in a

Newsday story written by Carol Matroo dated March 20, 2015, and carried on page 16 is as follows:

“Asked if the country could expect another “Blue Flu” situation such as when earlier this month, members of the protective services, including the police, stayed away from the job for two days, Seales said it may be taken even further.”

He said that on March 20, one day after a meeting with the GEB, in your conference room. We will find out who attended, do not worry. If you do not want to tell us, that is okay, we will find out, and we will also write you and have your secretary tell us. We will get the records and we will make sure that we find out the truth of who was there, and we will make sure that those people are asked what it was that they were thinking when they took up the guns that the public gave them, and they took up the legal instruments that the society gave them and turned those powers and those instruments against the society for better pay.

Interestingly, you should know that, as the noose has tightened, the Police Service Social and Welfare Association has accepted, apparently, the same terms and conditions that they were walking out on two months ago; just so you know. No—just for your information. So your men should be—what is it?—14 per cent better off. So, do we have any other questions? No? So, thank you very much. I would leave the floor open for you to make a non-contentious closing remark, if you would like to. So, please—

Snr. Supt. Richardson: Yeah. What I can say, Sir, the Guard and Emergency Branch, as far as I am aware, and I am the commanding officer, has not been involved in any action to intentionally bring harm, hurt, discomfort to any member of the public. The Guard and Emergency Branch that I am superintending at this point in time, I am of the firm belief they would not do anything to embarrass the Government, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, or try to bring any harm to our hon. Prime Minister. Sir, my name is John Richardson and it cannot be bought for 14 per cent, and I am thinking that the members of the Guard and Emergency Branch, the administration of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, will not indulge in any such action as you would have said, Sir—

Mr. Chairman: Except that they did.

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—for 14 per cent, or any percentage, because our duty is to country.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you. Good. Thank you.

Mr. Ramadhar: Could I? Thank you very much. Mr. Richardson, to be fair to you, how many members form the GEB—Guard and Emergency? How many officers?

Snr. Supt. Richardson: At this point in time, Sir—

Mr. Ramadhar: Yes.

Snr. Supt. Richardson:—we would have about 244, approximately.

Mr. Ramadhar: There you go. I want to make it abundantly clear, no one is suggesting that every member involve themselves in any less than honourable activity. As you know the old saying, “a glass of water with a drop of poison creates a glass of poison”, and that it is obvious that it is a very small, minuscule number of persons who were involved on that day, having regard to the numerous members of the police service that may have been involved in this. So, we want to make that quite clear, and we congratulate the efforts of all police officers who act on a daily basis to protect the lives and the civilization known Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Chairman: Well, I just want to say something here. The actions of the GEB appear to have tarnished the image of the entire service, and so if you had to find out what happened, who was in that conference room on April 19, might be a good place to start. Are there any further questions or comments?

Mr. Richardson, I want to express the Committee’s gratitude for your coming before us. I know it cannot be easy, but you have given your life to the service of this country and we are grateful. We are also grateful for your candour in coming here to us today, you must have anticipated would have been a difficult meeting. So, we thank you for that and for your efforts to explain to us what, to the best of your knowledge, has happened.

Supt. Richardson: Sir, I thank you all for having me here.

Mr. Chairman: Thank you very much, and I wish to bring this—the witness is excused, and I wish to bring this meeting now to a close. Thank you very much, members.

12.51 pm.: *Meeting adjourned.*

APPENDIX III

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS COMMISSIONER OF POLICE

[Mission of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service]

In partnership with the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago, we provide for safe and secure communities and other places through professional policing, focused leadership and consistent, high quality service.

Role and functions of the Commissioner of Police:

The responsibilities of the Commissioner of Police are provided in the following legislation:

1. Constitution (Amendment) Act, 2007;
 2. Police Service Act, 2006;
 3. Police Service Commission Regulations; and
 4. Police Service Regulations Legal Notices 101, 102, 103 of 2009.
- By virtue of Section 85 of the Constitution the Minister of National Security is responsible for the security of the Nation. Effective January 1, 2007 the Commissioner of Police was given by the Constitution complete control over the Police Service. Under Section 123A(1) of the amended Constitution, the Commissioner assumed “complete power” to manage the Police Service and is required to ensure the efficient and effective use of all human, financial and material resources available to the service.
 - The Act and Constitution (Amendment) Act 2007 confer direct responsibility on the Commissioner of Police for recruitment, promotions, appointments, transfers and discipline of all police officers up to the rank of Assistant Commissioner of Police.
 - Disciplinary matters which do not carry the penalty of dismissal have been delegated to the Commissioner by the Police Service Commission. In addition, confirmation of appointment of officers in the Second Division has been delegated to the Commissioner of Police. On the other hand, officers in the First Division are confirmed by the Police Service Commission.
 - The criteria and procedure for the appointment of persons to hold or to act in the offices of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners of Police are contained in Legal Notices 101, 102, 103 of 2009. The Act and the Constitution (Amendment) Act 2007 empower the

Commission inter alia to appoint persons to the Office of Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners of Police and to act in these offices. Section 123(1) of the Constitution also empowers the Commission to discipline and remove the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners from Office.

APPENDIX IV

REPORT ON THE “TOTAL POLICING” INITIATIVE ON MARCH 23, 2015

1. Executive Summary

On Monday 23rd March, 2015 between the hours of 4.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m. some officers of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service embarked on a nationwide roadblock which caused a massive traffic pile up along the nation's roads. Persons heading to the capital city, Port of Spain had to undergo bumper to bumper traffic for hours. The business activities in the nation came to a halt with some major stakeholders indicating that they were unaware of what was happening and the real reason behind this dilemma.

The entire East/West corridor was affected terribly. Even as far as San Fernando the gridlocked was experienced and some commuters disembarked maxi taxis which resulted in them having to journey by foot to the rest of their destination.

The sister isle Tobago was not left out of the equation with the Claude Noel Highway and Scarborough being mostly affected with traffic congestion. Some of the Police Officers who took part in the roadblock exercises indicated that it was a *Total Policing Day* which was directed by the Police Executive. Other officers said it was part of the Police Crime Plan 2015 which was initiated by the Commissioner of Police.

However, the general public shared a different view. They believed that the roadblock exercises which caused the nationwide gridlock were a direct result of the unsettled salary negotiations between Police Officers and the Chief Personnel Officer.

The Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association has since distanced themselves from what may appear to be an industrial action by some members of the Police Service.

On the said day Ms. Alleyne-Daly the then Acting Commissioner of Police held a press conference and apologized to the nation for the actions of those members of the Police Service. She then appointed me to investigate the cause/causes of the event of that day.

From the investigation conducted three (3) causes were discovered and they are detailed herein. In addition six (6) recommendations are offered as a guide to deal with any fallout.

2. Facts of Roadblock Exercises

On Monday 23rd March 2015, there were police roadblock exercises throughout Trinidad and Tobago. Those roadblocks caused massive pile up of traffic which resulted in numerous complaints of inconvenience made by members of the travelling public. The traffic on all the main thoroughfares in the country was at a standstill. This including the Eastern Main Road, the Priority Bus Route, the Churchill-Roosevelt Highway, the Sir Solomon Hochoy Highway, the Uriah Butler Highway, the Audrey Jeffers Highway, the Western Main Road, Maraval Road, the Lady Young Road and the Claude Noel Highway.

While roadblock exercises by the police are not uncommon in this country, it is widely perceived by the general public that the exercises conducted on Monday 23rd March 2015 were in reality industrial action brought about by a break down in the 2010 to 2013 salary negotiations. Even the media crystallised the action of the police as industrial action. This had brought condemnation against the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service by some members of the general public.

As a consequent the Acting Commissioner of Police Ms. Annmarie Alleyne-Daly together with Deputy Commissioner of Police Mr. Harold Phillip and Deputy Commissioner of Police Mr. Glen Hackett held a news conference and apologised to the nation for the action of those Police Officers who were involved in the roadblock exercise. The Acting Commissioner of Police then appointed me to investigate the cause/causes of the traffic congestion on that day. The instrument which authorised me to pursue this investigation said:

"I refer to the above mentioned subject and hereby advise that you have been appointed to investigate the cause/causes for the massive traffic 'pile up' throughout Trinidad during the period from 4:30am- 9:00am on Monday 23rd March, 2015."

While the mandate given to me for the investigation identified Trinidad to be the geographical frame for the investigation I have not limited myself to Trinidad but have also included Tobago for the obvious reason.

3. The Investigation of Roadblock Exercises

I commenced this investigation by communicating with the Senior Superintendent of the nine (9) Police Divisions. I asked them to provide me with a report of whether there were any roadblock exercises in their division during the period 4am to 10am on Monday 23rd March 2015. I also asked them if there were exercises, to furnish me with information as to who sanctioned the exercises, who were the officers detailed and the purpose for same.

It is instructive to note that the Senior Superintendent of Police in charge of the **Central, Southern and South Western Divisions** reported that there were no road block exercises conducted in their division. This therefore means that none of the officers attached to those three divisions were responsible for the massive traffic pile up in the country on Monday 23rd March 2015.

However, the Senior Superintendent of Police in charge of the **Eastern, North Eastern, Northern, Port of Spain, Western and Tobago Divisions** indicated that there were roadblock exercises carried out on the 23rd March 2015 in their divisions.

In addition, it was discovered that officers from the **Guard and Emergency Branch (South)**, officers from **Port of Spain CID** and one officer from the **Special Branch** participated in the road block exercises.

The under mentioned is a presentation in terms of the Divisions, Section and Branch areas where roadblock exercises were conducted, who authorised/supervised them and also the results of those roadblock exercises.

(a) Eastern Division

1. Station involved - Sangre Grande Police Station

Area of roadblock - Turure Junction

No fixed penalty notices issued;

No arrest;

This road block was authorized by Inspector Thom and supervised by No. 14504 Ag. Sgt. Sookdeo.

(b) North Eastern Division

1. Station involved- Santa Cruz Police Station

Area of roadblock - Bourg Mulatresse

This road block was authorized by Inspector Jacob.

2. Station involved- San Juan Police Station

Area of roadblock – Saddle Road Santa Cruz in the vicinity of the San Juan North Secondary School

4 fixed penalty notices were issued;

No arrest;

This roadblock was authorized by Ag. Inspector Ramlogan.

3. Station involved- Barataria Police Station

Area of roadblock – Corner Priority Bus Route and Morvant Junction

No arrest;

This roadblock was authorized by Ag. Inspector Ramlogan.

4. Station involved- Morvant Police Station

Area of roadblock – Eastern Main Road, Barataria

6 fixed penalty notices were issued;

1 person was arrested;

This roadblock was supervised by No. 12744 Cpl Richards.

(c) Northern Division

1. Station involved- Piarco Police Station

Area of roadblock - Corner Churchill Roosevelt Highway and Piarco traffic lights

15 fixed penalty notices were issued;

15 stop and search forms were written up;

3 persons arrested;

This road block was authorized by No. 12558 Ag. Sgt. Moona.

2. Station involved- Pinto Police Post

Area of roadblock - Corner Churchill Roosevelt Highway and Pinto Road

14 fixed penalty notices were issued;

12 stop and search forms were written up;

1 person arrested;

This road block was supervised by No. 14696 Ag. Sgt. Thomas.

3. Station involved- Cumuto Police Station

Area of roadblock - Cumuto Main Road

6 fixed penalty notices were issued;

137 stop and search forms were written up;

5 persons arrested;

This road block was supervised by No. 13213 Ag. Cpl. Gordon.

4. Station involved- San Raphael Police Station

Area of roadblock - San Raphael Junction

3 fixed penalty notices were issued;

25 stop and search forms were written up;

No arrest;

This road block was supervised by No. 12812 Ag. Sgt. Williams.

5. Station involved- Maloney Police Station

Area of roadblock - Priority Bus Route by Red Hill lights

15 fixed penalty notices were issued;

No arrest;

This road block was supervised by No. 12666 Ag. Sgt. Greene.

6. Stations involved- La Horquetta and Arima Police Stations

Area of roadblock - Corner De Freitas Boulevard and Churchill Roosevelt Highway,
Arima

15 fixed penalty notices were issued

144 stop and search forms were written up

No arrest

This road block was supervised by No. 12774 Ag. Sgt. Waldropt.

7. Station involved- Arouca Police Station

Area of roadblock – Five Rivers Junction, Arouca

9 fixed penalty notices were issued;

No arrest;

This roadblock was supervised by No. 12626 Ag. Sgt. Joseph.

8. Station involved- St. Joseph Police Station

Area of roadblock – Priority Bus Route and Eastern Main Road in the vicinity of TML
Primary School

1 fixed penalty notice issued;

No arrest;

This roadblock was supervised by No. 13694 Ag. Sgt. Peters.

(d) Port of Spain Division

1. Station involved- Central Police Station

Area of roadblock - Beetham Highway by Light house

7 fixed penalty notices were issued;

No arrest;

This road block was supervised by No. 12271 Ag Sgt. Seepersad.

(e) Western Division

1. Section involved-Western Division Task Force

Area of roadblock - Western Main Road, Cocorite

5 fixed penalty notices were issued;

48 stop and search forms were written up;

No arrest;

This road block was supervised by No. 16086 Ag. Cpl. Nurse.

(f) Tobago Division

1. Stations involved- Roxborough and Charlotteville Police Stations -

Area of roadblock - Windward Road Goodwood

13 Fixed penalty notices were issued;

101 stop and search form were written up;

No arrests;

This road block was authorized by No. 11867 Ag. Sgt. Williams.

2. Station involved- Scarborough Police Station

Areas of roadblocks - Claude Noel Highway, Orange Hill Road and Milford Road

12 fixed penalty notices were issued;

No arrest;

This road block was authorized by No. 14786 Ag. Sgt Alleyne of Scarborough Police Station and No. 13745 Ag. Cpl. Sebro.

3. Station involved- Moriah Police Station

Area of roadblock - Big River Hill

1 fixed penalty notice was issued;

No arrest;

This roadblock was authorized by No. 12877 Ag. Sgt. George.

4. Station involved- Old Grange Police Station

Area of roadblock - Auchenskeoch Road

13 fixed penalty notices were issued;

7 stop and search forms were written up;

This road block was authorized by Inspector Powder.

(g) Guard and Emergency Branch

The investigation revealed that officers from the **Guard and Emergency Branch** named hereunder conducted roadblock exercise at Gasparillo in the vicinity of the flyover. That roadblock exercise was authorised and supervised by No. 11946 Acting Sergeant Ogunshaye. Efforts were made to have the Acting Sergeant submit reports on the nature of his exercise but to date he has not done so.

No. 11946 Acting Sergeant Ogunshaye;

No. 13543 Constable De Govia;

No. 14094 Constable Breed;

No. 14839 Constable Pierre;

No. 14955 Constable Reid;

No. 17973 Constable Crawford and

No. 7974 Constable Charles

(h) Criminal Investigations Department

The Criminal Investigations Department / Criminal Records Office Operational Unit conducted a roadblock exercise on Independence Square South in the vicinity of the Cathedral. One person was arrested and this roadblock was supervised by No. 13393 WPC Collette.

The senior officers involved in the mentioned exercises were also asked to provide reports on the roadblock duties that they performed. They were specifically asked that in their report they should include *inter alia* the time of commencement and completion of the exercises, the officers who participated, purpose of the exercises, who instructed them to conduct the exercise and the

period of time they were rostered. It should be noted some reports and diary extracts were obtained from the Divisions.

Inspector Thom who in the **Eastern Division** authorised the roadblock exercises in the area of Turure Junction indicated in his report that he took a proactive measure to prevent crimes and criminal activities in general. This he said was as a result of an incident which occurred on March 21, 2015 where a Police Officer was shot and wounded. He further indicated that his action was in response to the mandate and strategic plans of the Commissioner of Police.

The Senior Officer who actually supervised the exercise; No. 14504 Acting Sergeant Sookdeo also provided a report. In his report, Ag. Sgt Sookdeo indicated that No. 12685 Acting Sergeant Waldropt of the Special Branch asked to join the exercise which he was allowed to do. However, Acting Sergeant Waldropt left the exercise ten minutes later.

A report was also obtained from Acting Sergeant Waldropt.

In the **North-Eastern Division**, reports were obtained from several officers from Morvant, San Juan, Barataria and Santa Cruz Police Stations. No. 12744 Corporal Richards of the Morvant Police Station indicated that the exercise was conducted as instructed by the Senior Superintendent North Eastern Division re: Crime Plan.

Ag. Inspector Ramlogan of the San Juan Police Station stated in his report that as a result of a mandate given to the Station Commanders by the Senior Superintendent North Eastern Division, a decision was taken to conduct road block exercises on the 23rd March 2015.

Generally the officers of the North-Eastern Division indicated in their reports that the road block exercises were conducted in keeping with the Strategic Crime Plan as instructed by the Commissioner of Police.

In the **Northern Division**, reports were obtained from officers attached to the St. Joseph, Arima, La Horquetta, Arouca, San Raphael, Maloney, Cumuto, Pinto and Piarcu Police Stations. No. 14732 Acting Corporal Rampersad of the La Horquetta Police Station stated in his report that the exercise was in keeping with the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Anti-Crime (Strategic Plan 2014-2016).

No. 12626 Acting Sergeant Joseph of the Arouca Police Station indicated that the roadblock was geared towards apprehending wanted persons and dealing with persons violating the Motor Vehicle and Road Traffic Act.

In the **Port of Spain Division**, a report was obtained from No. 12771 Acting Sergeant Seepersad of the Central Police Station who indicated that the roadblock exercise was held as a result of the Commissioner's Operation Plan for 2015.

In the **Western Division**, a report was obtained from No. 16086 Acting Corporal Nurse of the Western Division Task Force who stated that the roadblock exercise was held in an effort to recover two motor vehicles which were reported stolen on the 21st and 22nd March 2015.

In the **Tobago Division**, reports were obtained from several officers from the Scarborough, Moriah, Old Grange, Charlotteville and Roxborough Police Station. No. 14411 Acting Sergeant Sterling of the Roxborough Police Station indicated in her report that as a result of a lecture held on the 16th March 2015 at the Roxborough Police Station, a decision was made to conduct roadblocks in an effort to curb the upsurge of incidents of larceny of motor vehicles in that district.

Inspector Powder of the Old Grange Police Station stated in his report that he decided to conduct pre-Easter roadblock and traffic exercises and the roadblock exercise held on the 23rd March 2015 was coordinated and supervised by him.

No. 14786 Acting Sergeant Alleyne of the Tobago Division Task Force and No. 15084 Acting Corporal Bishop of Scarborough Police Station both stated in their reports that the roadblock exercises were conducted as a result of the policing concept of a 'Total Policing Day Exercise.'

Synopsis

Having carefully reviewed the contents of the reports submitted by the Officers it seems to me that the roadblock duties they performed on Monday 23rd March 2015 maybe consistent with the concept of 'Total Policing Day' which is a crime fighting initiative. I shall briefly review the concept of Total Policing Day.

4. Total Policing Day

The concept of a total policing day is a crime fighting initiative from the office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police Operation Mr. Harold Phillip who mandated all Divisional Commanders by way of a memorandum dated 19th January 2015 to conduct a '*Total Policing Day*' each week with effect from the 19th January 2015.

In the memorandum, the Deputy Commissioner stated that the Total Policing Day should include "*roadblock exercises stop and search exercises, ticket exercises, search warrant executions, warrant exercises, targeting of priority offenders and priority crimes as well as gang members*".

On the completion of such, the various Divisions were instructed to generate and submit by 12.00 midday after the date of the exercise a report of the outcome.

In addition to the Total Policing Day concept, the Deputy Commissioner of Police Operations issued a further memorandum dated February 10th 2015 titled "*Police Visibility Patrol*". Divisional Commanders were to detail officers to perform visibility patrols (foot / mobile) within their respective Divisions. The patrols were to include police officers performing duties at the main thoroughfare that is – Highways, Main Roads, Key institutions, School crossings, business areas, malls, squares, parks and coastal areas such as beaches.

The patrols were to be performed at the aforementioned locations at the times of the day when maximum impact could be derived.

The patrols were also to be instituted daily and the officers conducting the patrols were to be "People Centered", that is courteous, attentive, responsive and tactful.

NB: Assuming that the Total Policing Day concept was the driving force of the exercises conducted by the Police Officers on Monday 23rd March 2015, then its application was disastrous on the general citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. It caused a massive traffic pile up along the East-West corridor and also Scarborough, Tobago.

Based on several newspaper articles the action caused great inconvenience to the travelling public. The Trinidad Express newspaper reporter Ms Sharlene Rampersad reported that “commuters had to sit in standstill traffic for up to an hour or more.”

Another story by Mr. Richard Charan of the Trinidad Express newspaper dated March 24th 2015 stated that the action was deemed by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as a ‘Total Policing Day’ but outraged citizens considered it an act of police brutality.’ He opined that it was a calculated move that brought torture to thousands of citizens on 23/03/2015. The Police found a way to protest the compensation package being offered by the State by setting up surprise road blocks along all major roads in Trinidad and Tobago.

A Guardian newspaper article dated March 24th , 2015 indicated that commuters leaving San Fernando were delayed for up to two hours or more in traffic on the north bound lane just to get to Gasparillo. Standstill traffic backed up into San Fernando clogging the by-pass and causing hundreds of commuters to arrive late for school and work.

Commuters in Tobago were also severely affected. First Citizens Bank Roxborough Branch and Republic Bank Auchenskeoch Branch remained closed as staffs were reportedly stuck in traffic.

Several passengers scheduled to fly with Caribbean Airlines (CAL) and other airlines on the morning of 23/03/2015 were also affected. Several regional and international CAL flights were delayed.

Another newspaper article reported that the Chaguanas Chamber of Industry and Commerce was deeply concerned by the action taken by Police Officers which brought the legitimate business of the country to a near standstill and affected thousands of commuters throughout the nation.

Newsday reporter Ms. Carol Matroo reported “that thousands of commuters heading out to work and school yesterday were greeted with endless miles of traffic, many having to return home after reaching nowhere fast as the Police Service conducted what they called ‘a total day of policing’. Traffic also snaked into central and south Trinidad leaving motorists and passengers disgusted and frustrated with what they believed to be an exercise in futility.

At the Arima dial where people were usually hustling to the maxi taxi hub to get to work or school, most were taking the opposite direction to head back home saying the situation was 'madness.'

Regional and International News Agencies also highlighted the situation in Trinidad and Tobago such as the Jamaica Observer and Yahoo News website.

Finally, it was concluded that the Police lost big in the court of public opinion with officers condemned for showing no consideration for the people. As a result, persons streamed out of Port of Spain early in the evening of Monday 23rd March 2015.

5. Industrial Action

In addition, the roadblock exercises conducted by the Police Officers were crystallised in several circles and in the media as an act of industrial action. It has now become necessary to briefly review this area of concern to have an understanding of it.

According to **Section 2 (1) of the Industrial Relations Act Chapter 88:01**, industrial action, means:

“strikes and lockouts, and any action, including sympathy strikes and secondary boycotts (whether or not done in contemplation of, or in furtherance of, a trade dispute), by an employer or a trade union or other organisation or by any number of workers or other persons to compel any worker, trade union or other organisation, employer or any other person, as the case may be, to agree to terms of employment, or to comply with any demands made by the employer or the trade union or other organisation or by those workers or other persons, and includes action commonly known as a “sit-down strike”, a “go-slow” or a “sick-out”, except that the expression does not include— (a) a failure to commence work in any agricultural undertaking where work is performed by task”.
caused by a delay in the conclusion of customary arrangements between employers and workers as to the size or nature of a task; and (b) a failure to commence work or a refusal to continue working by reason of the fact that unusual circumstances have arisen which are hazardous or injurious to health or life”.

Synopsis

There is the notion that the roadblock exercises conducted by Police Officers throughout Trinidad and Tobago on the 23rd March 2015 between the hours of 4.00am and 10.00am were a form of industrial action as a result of their on-going salary negotiations. While there may seem to be a correlation between industrial action and the police roadblock exercises in Trinidad and Tobago there ^{is} ~~are~~ really no evidence to substantiate this view.

Firstly, it is my view that the action taken by the Police Officers on the said date does not fall within the definition of industrial action as outlined in the **Industrial Relations Act Chapter 88:01**.

Secondly, the Police Officers who conducted the roadblock exercises in general claimed that the exercises were done in adherence to the directive on Total Policing Day.

Thirdly, the secretary of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association submitted a written report distancing the Association from the Police activities on Monday 23rd March 2015. In fact he said:

“This letter serves to confirm that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA) is unaware that these activities were in anyway related to salary negotiations.”

I do recognise the enormous sensitivity generated by the general public in this area and I do share their pain. However, in spite of the emotional feelings advocated in this area one needs to take an objective view bearing in mind the three (3) factors illustrated above before one can come to an informed position. For me there is no evidence to substantiate the fact that the Police Officers were engaging in industrial action although there are some obvious superficial parallels that can be drawn.

6. Causes of The Roadblock Exercises

From the investigation I have conducted, I wish at this time to advance three (3) reasons on what may have caused the massive pile up as a result of the roadblock exercises conducted between 4.00am and 10.00am on Monday 23rd March 2015 by some members of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

1. Malicious Obedience

In conducting the roadblock exercises on that day the Police Officers who participated in those activities were **maliciously obedient** to the Laws and Regulations of Trinidad and Tobago. They were also **maliciously obedient to instructions** by following all Standing Orders, Departmental Orders, Rules, Policies and Procedures.

The reality is those Police Officers maliciously performed their duties based on the Total Policing Day concept and the Police Visibility Patrol concept without any regard or concern for the plight of the general public or even to maintain a relationship with the general public.

The point to note, they did exactly what they were told to do in the memorandum dated 19th January 2015 on ***“Total Policing Day”*** and the memorandum dated February 10th 2015 on ***“Police Visibility Patrol.”*** However, their actions were without disposition and relationship to sustain the spirit of the Total Policing Day concept and moreover they have failed to accept any responsibility for the results.

2. It seems that there is a breakdown in some of the systems within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

The activities of Monday 23rd March, 2015 are a clear indication of the breakdown of some of the systems in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. There is no indication that the intelligence agencies within the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service reported on the possibility of such activities taking place or in the planning stage. In fact correspondence was sent to the Head of the Special Branch, Head of Divisions, Head of Cyber Crime Unit and Head of Criminal Gang and Intelligence Unit requesting kindly

from them whether they had prior information on any planned roadblock exercise in the country.

The Head of the Special Branch was not helpful. She was more concerned with her seniority over me and refused to provide me with any information. This is unfortunate because I have no personal interest in this investigation. I was detailed to conduct this investigation by the Commissioner of Police and this is known throughout the country. I really thought that we were part of a complementary team with one vision in mind. However, the courtesy I received from her suggested otherwise. Her mere refusal to engage in discussions with me on the subject matter showed a communication issue and it is evident of a breakdown of systems in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

The other Heads of Divisions and Branches, Cyber Crime Unit, Criminal Gang and Intelligence Unit supplied information that they were unaware of any planned roadblock exercises. Again their failure to know or have intelligence in this area is evident of breakdown of systems in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

3. There was a breach of paragraph 131 (2) and (3) of the Police Service Regulations 2007.

Accordingly paragraph 131 (2) states:

An officer in the First Division who is in charge of a Division or Branch shall be responsible for the state of his command as well as the state of his district and for the conduct and efficiency of all the officers under his command.

Accordingly paragraph 131 (3) states:

An officer in the Second Division who is in charge of a Police Station shall be responsible for such Station and its district and for the conduct and efficiency of all the officers under his charge.

Rhetorically:

- Can we truly say that the First Division Officers in charge of Eastern Division, North Eastern Division, Northern Division, Port of Spain Division, Western Division and Tobago Division were in charge of their Divisions and responsible for the state of their command as well as the state of their district and for the conduct and efficiency of all the officers under their command between 4:00 am and 10:00 am on Monday 23rd March, 2015?
- Can we truly say that the Second Division Officers who were in charge of Police Stations within the six Divisions mentioned above were responsible for such Stations and districts and for the conduct and efficiency of all the officers under their charge?

The reports obtained from the First Division Officers in charge of the Divisions indicated that they were unaware of what was taking place in their Divisions. They alluded that they received calls from the Acting Commissioner and The Deputy Commissioners to cease the roadblock activities within their Divisions.

Rhetorically:

- Are they saying that the Acting Commissioner of Police and the Deputy Commissioner of Police knew what was taking place in those six Divisions before the First Division Officers in charge of their Divisions?

NB: The point to note is that for a brief moment that is between 4.00am and 10.00am on Monday 23rd March, 2015, the First Division Officers who were in charge of six Police Divisions and Second Division Officers who were in charge of Police Stations within the six named Police Divisions lost control of their Divisions and Stations respectively to a small group of Junior Officers.

This small group of Junior Officers took control of six Police Divisions in Trinidad and Tobago and conducted their brand of malicious obedience to the Total Policing Day and the Police Visibility Patrol concepts.

Thanks for the astute leadership of the Acting Commissioner of Police Ms. Annmarie Alleyne-Daly, Deputy Commissioner of Police Mr. Harold Phillip and Deputy Commissioner of Police Mr. Glen Hackett who intervened and took control of the situation in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. They certainly averted further crisis since the information obtained suggested that the said officers would have taken control of the streets of Trinidad and Tobago again by 2.00 pm the said Monday 23rd March, 2015.

7. Recommendations

In view of the investigation conducted and in view of the causes identified I wish to suggest the following recommendations to deal with any fallout from the roadblock exercises conducted by some Police Officers between 4.00am and 10.00am on Monday 23rd March, 2015.

1. In relation to any breach of Paragraphs 131(2) and (3) of the Police Service Regulation 2007, I am suggesting that a conference be called with the officers of the First Division who are in charge of Divisions or Branches and the officers in the Second Division who are in charge of Police Stations. There are two main reasons for such a conference:
 - The first is to enlighten them of the provision of the Regulations illustrated above and to show them of its applicability to them.
 - The second is to reprimand them for their failure to be in control of the state of their command as well as the state of their district and for the conduct and efficiency of all the officers under their command on Monday 23rd March, 2015.
2. It is my respectful view that serious consideration should be given to your relationship with the Police Officer who co-hosts the talk show programme Beyond the Tape. The programme is a great way to articulate the views and interest of the Police Service. However, I am not sure that the Police Officer who co-hosts such a programme is really articulating the views of the Police Service.

On Monday 23rd March, 2015, the Acting Commissioner of Police Ms. Alleyne-Daly held a news conference apologizing to the nation of the action of the Police Officers who on that day held the roadblock exercises that caused massive traffic pile up. However, the co-host of the programme "Beyond the Tape" which is aired during the hours of 6 pm to 7 pm on that said day was praising the Police Officers who conducted the roadblock exercises.

Both views are diametrically opposing to each other and have clearly demonstrated mixed signals. Thus it is my respectful view that the support of the Police Service to this officer be reconsidered.

3. Although there is evidence that officers of the Guard and Emergency Branch took part in road block exercises in the Southern Division, it is noteworthy that there was no evidence that officers within the Central Division, Southern Division and South Western Division took part in any roadblock exercises between 4:00 am and 10:00 am on Monday 23rd March, 2015. This means that in no way officers attached to those Divisions were responsible for the traffic gridlock that took place on the main thoroughfare in Trinidad and Tobago on that day. This to my mind is commendable and it is my respectful view that you compliment all officers in those Divisions accordingly for their devotion to duty.
4. Information coming to hand is that some members of the general public felt that they were victimized and unfairly treated by the Police Officers who performed roadblock duty on that day. Bearing in mind that one of the causes of the massive roadblock exercises is "*malicious obedience*" by Police Officers to the Standing Orders, Departmental Orders, Rules, Policies, Procedures, Laws and Regulations of Trinidad and Tobago. Then it may be prudent to lobby the State to hold a Commission of Enquiry into the Police activities on that day.

The conclusion and findings of this enquiry may help to win back the public trust and confidence since the public will have a medium to let us know exactly what they endure in the hands of some Police Officers.

5. No 12685 Ag. Sgt Waldropt of The Special Branch, who is posted in the Eastern Division and performed roadblock duty dressed in police uniform, should be realigned. The Special Branch should provide support in terms of intelligence and avoid participating in situations like these yet this officer chose to do the opposite.
6. Finally, it may be worthy for the Commissioner of Police and the three (3) Deputy Commissioners of Police to formally apologize to the nation for the actions of the few Police Officers who were able to simultaneously hold roadblock exercises between the period 4.00 am and 10.00 am on Monday 23rd March, 2015. This effort may help to build

back the bridge of confidence between the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the members of the public.

8. Limitations of this Enquiry

There were several limitations I encountered pursuing this enquiry. In this regards I shall identify two of those concerns:

➤ **Time.**

I was given two weeks to complete this enquiry. However, the magnitudes of this enquiry required in excess of that time to gather more information and also to interview and obtain reports from other Police Officers involved in this road block. Lack of sufficient time has been a disadvantage in this regard.

➤ **Support and Co-operation.**

Even though I was appointed by the Acting Commissioner to investigate this matter I certainly did not get the co-operation of some my colleagues to address some areas of concern to me.

Many thanks for affording me the opportunity to serve in this capacity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vincel Edwards', with a date '27/4/15' written below it.

Vincel Edwards

Assistant Commissioner of Police

North West (Ag.)

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER
OF POLICE
NORTH WEST

APPENDIX V

Dates of the Permissions for the Official Overseas Travel of Trinidad and Tobago Officials including the:

- i. Commissioner of Police**
- ii. Director of the Strategic Services Agency**
- iii. Executive Director of the National Operations Centre**



MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

31-33 Abercromby Street, Port of Spain.

Ph. – 623-2441-8 Fax – 627-8044

Email – info@mmns.gov.tt

NS: 35/9/9 Sub. II

May 25, 2015

Ms. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel
Secretary
Joint Select Committee on National Security
Levels G-7, Tower D
The Port-of-Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road
Port-of-Spain

Dear Madam,

Re: The Joint Select Committee of Parliament on National Security - Inquiry into the "Total Policing" initiative on Monday March 23, 2015

I refer to your letter *PARL: 14/3/43*, dated May 20, 2015, on the subject above.

In response to request, the following particulars are relevant:

1. Mr. Stephen Williams, Commissioner of Police (Ag.), Trinidad and Tobago Police Service

On March 12, 2015, the Cabinet approved the Official Overseas Travel of Mr. Stephen Williams, Commissioner of Police (Ag.), to attend the 11th Annual Heads of National Central Bureau in Leon, France, over the period March 24, 2015 to March 26, 2015.

Mr. Williams departed Trinidad and Tobago on Sunday March 22, 2015 and returned on Saturday March 28, 2015.

2. Mr. Bisnath Maharaj, Director, Strategic Services Agency, Ministry of National Security

On February 25, 2015, the Honourable Minister of National Security approved the Travel of Mr. Bisnath Maharaj, Director, Strategic Services Agency, over the period March 23 - 27, 2015.

The Travel was to facilitate an invitation from the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), to participate in meetings at CSIS' Headquarters in Ottawa, Canada.

3. Mr. Garvin Heerah, Executive Director, National Operations Centre, Office of the Prime Minister

On March 20, 2015, the Honourable Prime Minister granted approval for Mr. Garvin Heerah, Executive Director, National Operations Centre, to visit ECU 911 in Ecuador during the period of March 23 to 27, 2015.

Yours respectfully,


Permanent Secretary
Ministry of National Security

APPENDIX VI

Correspondence between the Committee and Snr. Supt. John Richardson (GEB)



PARLIAMENT
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Levels G - 7, Tower D
The Port-of-Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain

PARL: 14/3/43

June 01, 2015

Snr. Supt. John Richardson
Guard and Emergency Branch
Trinidad and Tobago Police Service
Garden Road
ARANGUEZ

Dear Sir,

The Joint Select Committee of
Parliament on National Security

Inquiry into the "Total Policing" initiative on Monday 23 March, 2015

Pursuant to discussions which took place during the public meeting held on May 29, 2015, I have been directed by the Chairman of the above named Committee to request the following additional information:

- i. Documentary evidence (e.g. diary extracts) of the Guard and Emergency Branch conducting one (1) roadblock per week since February 27, 2015;
- ii. A listing of all pre-scheduled as well as unscheduled roadblocks conducted for the year to date; and
- iii. The names of all persons in attendance at the meeting with officials of the Guard and Emergency Branch (GEB) and the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association (TTPSSWA) held on March 19, 2015 at the offices of the GEB.

In this regard, you are kindly requested to submit an electronic copy to the undersigned at jscnationalsecurity@ttparliament.org by **Wednesday June 03, 2015**.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Chairman: Dr. Rolph Balgobin
Joint Select Committee on National Security

Telephone: (868) 624-PARL (7275) Fax (868) 625-4672 Email: jscnationalsecurity@ttparliament.org Website: <http://www.ttparliament.org>

Respectfully,


14/ Jacquie Sampson-Meiguel
Secretary to the Committee

c.c. Senator Dr. Rolph Balgobin
Chairman of the Committee



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO POLICE SERVICE

Guard and Emergency Branch

#17 Garden Road Aranguez South. Trinidad, Republic of Trinidad & Tobago
Telephone: 1 (868) 674-8846 Facsimile: 1 (868) 674- 8846

June 03rd 2015.

Dr. Rolph Balgobin

Chairman Joint Select Committee
Level G – 8, Tower D
The Port-of Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain

Dear Sir,

**Re: Inquiry into the Total Policing
Initiative on Monday 23rd March 2015.**

I refer to your letter dated June 01st 2015 requesting additional information as it regards the Public Meeting held On May 29th 2015 re the subject matter at caption.

i. Refer to the attached.

ii. Refer to the attached.

iii. The Curt Lewis Conference Room which is located at the upper floor of the G.E.B./I.A.T.F Complex was utilized by the Trinidad and Tobago Police Social and Welfare Association for a meeting with all its members. I am not in possession of that attendance register. I humbly recommend

that this information be sought at the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Association Office.

Respectful Regards.

Senior Superintendent
John Richardson

APPENDIX VII

**Correspondence to
Insp. Anand Ramesar
President – TTPSSWA**



PARLIAMENT
Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Levels G - 7, Tower D
The Port-of-Spain International Waterfront Centre
1A Wrightson Road, Port-of-Spain

PARL: 14/3/43

June 01, 2015

Insp. Anand Ramesar
President
Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association
1st Floor, Multi-Purpose Unit
4 Piccadilly Street
PORT OF SPAIN

Dear Sir,

**The Joint Select Committee of
Parliament on National Security**

Inquiry into the "Total Policing" initiative on Monday 23 March, 2015

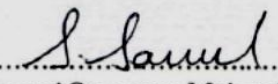
Pursuant to discussions which took place during the public meeting held on May 08, 2015, I have been directed by the Chairman of the above named Committee to request the following additional information:

- i. A listing of the members of the Central Committee of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service Social and Welfare Association for the last ten (10) years.

In this regard, you are kindly requested to submit an electronic copy to the undersigned at jscnationalsecurity@tpparliament.org by **Wednesday June 03, 2015.**

Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Respectfully,


H/ Jacquie Sampson-Meiguel
Secretary to the Committee

C.C. Senator Dr. Rolph Balgobin
Chairman of the Committee

Chairman: Dr. Rolph Balgobin
Joint Select Committee on National Security

Telephone: (868) 624-PARL (7275) Fax (868) 625-4672 Email: jscnationalsecurity@tpparliament.org Website: <http://www.tpparliament.org>

