

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES***Friday, January 27, 2012*

The House met at 1.30 p.m.

**PRAYERS**[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]**MR. PATRICK MANNING****(ILLNESS)**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, while this House stood adjourned, we learned that former Prime Minister and Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, Mr. Patrick Manning, had taken seriously ill and had to be hospitalized. The hon. Member was admitted to the Intensive Care Unit of the San Fernando General Hospital where he received urgent medical treatment for a mild cerebrovascular accident.

I am advised that the most recent official report describes the hon. Member's condition as stable. He is reportedly recuperating well and resting comfortably at the hospital.

Hon. Members, I wish to inform you that I have already written, on your behalf, to the hon. Member of Parliament for San Fernando East expressing our best wishes for his full and speedy recovery.

**LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I have received communication on behalf of Mr. Patrick Manning, Member of Parliament for San Fernando East, to be excused from today's sitting of the House due to illness. The Hon. Chandresh Sharma, Member of Parliament for Fyzabad and Minister of Local Government, has also asked to be excused from today's sitting of the House. The leave the Members seek is granted.

**PAPERS LAID**

1. Consolidated financial statements of the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards for the year ended September 30, 2009. [*The Minister of Trade and Industry (Hon. Stephen Cadiz)*]
2. Audited financial statements of Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2006. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Winston Dookeran)*]
3. Audited financial statements of Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2007. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Winston Dookeran)*]

4. Audited financial statements of Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2008. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Winston Dookeran)*]
5. Audited financial statements of Evolving TecKnologies and Enterprise Development Company Limited for the financial year ended September 30, 2009. [*The Minister of Finance (Hon. Mr. Winston Dookeran)*]

**DEFINITE URGENT MATTER  
(LEAVE)**

**Light Transport System  
(Port of Spain to Arima)**

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin North/East*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with Standing Order 12, I seek your leave to raise a definite matter “of urgent public importance at today’s sitting of the House of Representatives related to the following. In the *Daily Express* of January 26, 2012—yesterday—the Ministry of Transport, by way of a public advertisement invited expressions of interest for the design, financing, construction, operation and maintenance of a light transit system from Port of Spain to Arima, to be constructed approximately 4.2 metres above the bus route from Port of Spain to Arima.

Mr. Speaker, interested parties are required to provide details of their experience in the successful implementation of such a system and to submit a methodology for the project, including the level of investment, approvals, waivers and activities required from the Government for the project. They must also demonstrate how they intend to finance the project and provide a full company profile. Most importantly, interested bidders have been given a deadline of February 23, 2012 to submit expressions of interest for this complex project; in other words, four weeks.

This matter is definite because it involves a specific public infrastructure project that is likely to cost billions of dollars and to cause significant inconvenience to the travelling public during construction.

The matter is urgent because the advertisement was only published yesterday in the *Express* and interested parties have been given only four weeks, inclusive of the carnival period when government offices will be closed, to submit detailed expressions of interest for a multibillion-dollar public transport project.

Finally, the matter is of public importance for two reasons. From the perspectives of transparency, accountability and value for money, four weeks is far

too short a time for the submission of detailed expressions of interest for such a complex project and, most importantly, the invitation by the Ministry of Transport for expressions of interest for a project of that size, complexity and cost is in breach of the Central Tenders Board Ordinance and the procurement laws of Trinidad and Tobago. Government Ministries are only permitted by law to initiate procurement of goods and services with a maximum value of \$1million and this project is likely to cost billions of public dollars.

Further, the present Government has publicly expressed a commitment to reforming and improving the procurement regime in Trinidad and Tobago and this invitation for expression of interest flies in the face of that commitment.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I am satisfied that this Motion does not qualify under Standing Order 12, but can receive the attention of the House under Standing Order 11. I therefore urge the Member to submit the requisite notice—[*Interruption*]

Can I have the attention of this honourable House? It is disrespectful, while the Speaker is on his legs, for talk to be taking place in this Chamber.

Hon. Members, may I repeat. I am satisfied that this Motion or matter does not qualify under Standing Order 12, but can receive the attention of the House under Standing Order 11.

I, therefore, urge the hon. Member to submit the requisite notice to me by Monday, if he so desires.

**STATEMENT BY MINISTER  
Point Fortin Highway  
(Update)**

**The Minister of Works and Infrastructure (Hon. Jack Warner):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to update this honourable House and the national community on the progress of one of the biggest projects in the history of Trinidad and Tobago, that is to say, the Point Fortin Highway.

You will recall that on January 25, 2011, the hon. Prime Minister Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar turned the sod for the start of the 47-kilometre highway from the City of San Fernando to the Borough of Point Fortin.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that one year later, we are on target with this project, [*Desk thumping*] which is scheduled to end in April 2015. A project of this size has to be treated with a phased approach, where Phase I enters

[HON. J. WARNER]

the area from Golconda to Debe. We are well on our way with Phase I, where clearing and grubbing between Golconda and Papourie Road have been completed and work continues by the contractor OAS Construtora and its subcontractors.

I do not need to remind this country of the benefits of such a highway. However, for those Opposition forces, especially at the end, I will quickly like to recall what the benefits are.

In the first case, let this community and this House be reminded that this highway, which some people describe as a highway to nowhere, will reduce the travel times between the rural regions and the other urban areas of the country.

Secondly, this highway goes a long way in remedying what, up to now, is a lengthy and painful stretch of road between San Fernando and Point Fortin.

Thirdly, this highway will also increase the movement of people, goods and services to this region for the benefit of our population.

Fourthly, thousands of skilled and unskilled labour resources will be in demand during the various phases of the project. As a Government, we have demanded that a minimum of 40 per cent of all labour, skilled and unskilled, must be local. As such, this will drive the unemployment levels down and create a more sustainable living for citizens of this region and the country.

Fifthly, there is also a greater demand for materials which will be required in large quantities such as aggregate, sand, cement, bitumen and asphalt; to name a few. In fact, as late as this morning, we were discussing with some citizens what the local quarry can contribute to this project. As such, many local companies will benefit from this initiative. We have insisted that, even with the use of materials, equipment and supplies, at least 40 per cent must come from our local industry wherever such is possible.

Last but not least, this will result in several downstream industries, which will stimulate the transportation industry, service contractors and small entrepreneurs who provide food and other ancillary products.

**1.45p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister, last August, announced an interministerial committee to oversee the highway in anticipation of the many ministries involved in a project of this nature, and to allow the MPs for these areas to be encompassed into implementation of the highway. This committee is chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, and held its last meeting on Wednesday, January 25, 2012 in Debe to discuss some of the key issues with the highway and the way forward.

Mr. Speaker, you would have seen many criticisms in which it has been said that this Government has not consulted with the people on this project. However, I would like to indicate that this is, indeed, far from the truth. In fact, Mr. Speaker, long before this Government came into office, as far back as January 2006, consultations had started. This current Government had several consultations to date with the residents—the most recent being held earlier this month at Debe High School, where I personally met with residents of the area to hear their concerns.

This Government is committed to people-centric governance. [*Desk thumping*] We are committed to ensuring the population is given the information it needs, as well as the opportunity to give us some feedback. It was to this end that we opened a Nidco office in Debe. For the first time, a Nidco south office in Debe, [*Desk thumping*] so that the people affected by the highway do not have to go to Port of Spain to get information.

Mr. Speaker, you also would have seen recently, concerns raised by residents in Diamond Village, where they complained about the effect of work-related vibrations to their homes. This Government is committed to listening and then leading and, as such, Nidco has engaged a geo-technical company, the best in the country, to investigate the vibrations that would be propagated by construction activities. The fieldwork for this investigation will begin on Tuesday, January 31, 2012 and will be completed in one week's time. The final report will advise on the necessary actions to be taken thereafter.

We have recently seen concerns being raised about the environmental impact of this highway. I wish to assure this honourable House that this Government is committed to ensuring minimal impact on the environment. Mr. Speaker, it should be noted, that this highway has already received the necessary certificates of environmental clearance and also already received the Town and Country Division's full planning permission. Mr. Speaker, in addition, there is also an environmental plan, as well as a waste management plan for the entire highway. Furthermore, there are other such plans as flood, water quality and sediment management plans for each segment of the highway. As such, we are ensuring that there is proper planning at every stage of this project.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said here before, the cost of the highway is \$5.2 billion, with another \$2 billion to be spent on land acquisition, construction oversight, Nidco management fees and construction contingencies for this project. There are a large number of persons and communities to be relocated. These persons must be adequately compensated and the Government will not shirk its duty to do so, but will treat all citizens equitably and fairly.

[HON. J. WARNER]

As you know, the Debe to Mon Desir segment of the highway entails the relocation of some 300 households in order to acquire right of way for the passage of the highway. Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate, once again, for those persons who have “stick in dey ears” and who will not hear. I want to say, once again, that this Government is committed to ensuring that persons who have to be relocated are properly compensated for their properties. [*Desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Including the Petrotrin ones.

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Overcompensated!

**Hon. J. Warner:** In addition, it is informative to note that the highway will be passing through communities and, as such, many institutions will have to be relocated, therefore, we propose to rebuild the communities so as to reduce the social impact on the lives of the citizens. [*Desk thumping*]

As a consequence, we have since acquired land in Petit Morne which would be made available to residents to rebuild their communities. You see, Mr. Speaker, we are a responsible Government, committed to the development of our country. We know that for any country to progress there must be change. Change is inevitable, and what matters is how you handle the change, and what matters to us is how we handle the change with the minimum amount of disaffection to the people of the area.

Mr. Speaker, also, I should say that, while some persons may be apprehensive about the highway, I want us to consider the future generation of this country and what this highway will give to them. This highway will make the commute easier for persons travelling to Port of Spain; it would allow easier access to job opportunities; it will bring development to the southern region; and it will bring easier access to education. I say this last point, because I do not want us to ever forget that the University of the West Indies South Campus in Debe is also a project under this Government. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, we, therefore, propose to continue with the Golconda to Debe phase of the highway and also at the same time starting from Point Fortin to Mon Desir. This will allow us, Mr. Speaker, adequate time and resources to address the issues with the Debe to Mon Desir segment as we attempt to ensure that persons are properly compensated.

In conclusion, we are committed to developing this country to new heights and, in doing so, we anticipate there will be changes and persons will have to adapt. What we do today may be our legacy, but it will benefit the citizens of this country, especially our children and grandchildren.

*Point Fortin Highway (Update)*

*Friday, January 27, 2012*

Today, we enjoy easier commute from San Fernando to Port of Spain, but we must never forget the days when there was no highway between San Fernando and Port of Spain, and when commuting was painful for those of us old enough to remember. Similarly, therefore, if we want better for our future generation, the sacrifice we make today will be for their benefit tomorrow.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the population of this country that this Government remains committed to the completion of the highway within budget and on time [*Desk thumping*] whilst ensuring value for money and the least discomfort for our citizenry. Mr. Speaker, I do not know if what I am saying now is normal and, if it is not, I want to apologize, but this statement which I have just made, was made with the full cooperation of Minister in the Ministry of Works and Infrastructure, Hon. Stacy Roopnarine, without whose help this statement could not have been possible. Mr. Speaker, I thank you. [*Desk thumping*]

#### NATIONAL RAMLEELA COUNCIL (INC'N) BILL

*Question put and agreed to*, That a Bill for the incorporation of the National Ramleela Council of Trinidad and Tobago and for matters incidental thereto, be now read the first time.

*Bill accordingly read the first time.*

#### NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEMS (DISMANTLING OF)

**Miss Donna Cox** (*Laventille East/Morvant*): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I just want to take this opportunity to wish our former political leader and Member of Parliament for San Fernando East a speedy recovery as we continue to pray for him. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, the following Motion standing in my name:

*Whereas* the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago has continued to escalate;

*And whereas* the former PNM administration had initiated a number of systems and strategies to deal with the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago;

*And whereas* the current Government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken certain actions to weaken the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago;

*And whereas* the action of the current Government has contributed to the escalation of crime in Trinidad and Tobago;

*Be it resolved* that this House take note of the systematic dismantling of the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago and

[MISS COX]

call on the Government to cease this action and to take steps to put in place an effective national security system which would have the effect of securing the borders and, by extension, the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago to bring about a reduction in crime in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here this afternoon to speak on this Motion today, increasingly concerned as they are, with the misgovernance of Trinidad and Tobago. The people of Trinidad and Tobago are concerned, particularly in the areas of public safety and public order, that is, national security. Crime has continued to escalate under this UNC-led coalition Government, and this Government, instead of building the security systems and structures in the country, continues to dismantle them to suit their whims and fancies.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear, it was never the primary concern of this Government to secure the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*] Mr. Speaker, the UNC, while in Opposition, relentlessly criticized the PNM on crime, notwithstanding the PNM's systematic approach in treating with this deep-seated and pervasive issue. They had all the answers to solve crime when they were in Opposition. The UNC, now in Government, is expected to have a crime plan of their own, seeing that they had all the answers, yet we see the Attorney General, demanding of the Commissioner of Police—a foreigner—for his crime plan, something that the country did not vote on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear, our difficulty with the Commissioner of Police is the extent to which he bends over backward to accommodate the UNC Government, thus politicizing the police function.

**2.00 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, for this month already the murder toll is 34, and the escalating crime rate is indeed an indication of the Government's cluelessness with respect to the management and control of crime. [*Desk thumping*] Where are all their promised plans, policies and collaborative efforts that were fed to the population to gain votes? During the election campaign, they boasted that they had the answer to solving crime. They have lost their way. And on second thought, they have not lost their way, they never had a way.

They are hoodwinking the population. The evidence is there, because they resorted to a wholly unnecessary state of emergency to allow security forces to perform what should have been normal policing operations, clearly designed to target some of the segments of the population. The state of emergency was declared simply to boast of a decline in the murder rate. It is 28 days in the New Year and the



murder rate stands at 34. It is clear that murders continued, unabated, as soon as the state of emergency ended. Unlike them, we on this side are not gloating about their failure; we are all saddened by the loss of lives of our citizens, but the facts are there for all to see. All we get when we ask questions—all they do is blame, it is a blame game—it is the PNM, it is the PNM. You are in office now. Fix it. How long will they blame the PNM for their lack of vision and incompetence in dealing with the crime situation? They need to realize that to tackle crime it requires sustainable short-medium and long-term, crime-fighting collaborative efforts if we are to see a reduction in serious crimes.

I hear many ill-informed persons, including Government spokespersons, saying that the PNM did nothing with regard to crime. Mr. Speaker, that is nonsense. This UNC Government deliberately dismantled systems and structures which the PNM administration put in place, some of which had begun to have a positive effect in the fight against crime. What they did not dismantle, they changed the name in order to claim it as their own. And if they did not change the name, they are so “boldface” they made statements about programmes which are clearly PNM initiatives. And do you know why they have to do that? It is so that they can continue to hoodwink the population into believing that the PNM did nothing about crime.

Mr. Speaker, they thought it was easy. I distinctly remember when the Minister of National Security was appointed and asked the question about crime. He stated he was confident that he will reduce crime. I noted it, Mr. Speaker. But what have we got? A state of emergency justified on the most spurious grounds in order to boast that they are doing something about it, and playing the numbers game, of course, claiming that crime went down from 2010 to 2011. This claim now seems to be exploding in their faces, based on the rate so far in January 2012.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House, I am sure, knows what “ah horn” is.  
[Crosstalk]

**Dr. Moonilal:** What is that?

**Miss D. Cox:** “Ah horn”

**Mr. Roberts:** What is “ah horn”? Describe it for us, definition.

**Miss D. Cox:** Definition?

**Mr. Roberts:** Yes.

**Miss D. Cox:** No, I would not go into that.

**Dr. Rowley:** Tell him stay in ignorance.

**Miss D. Cox:** Mr. Speaker, if a man “horns” his wife and she decides to lock him up for a few months, it is only natural that after those few months the number of “horns” that she would have received would lessen. So, of course, when she opens the gate, or opens the door, yes you can leave home, when that happens, it will just continue unless sustainable measures are put in place.

**Mr. Roberts:** Like what?

**Miss D. Cox:** I think you better learn what those sustainable measures will be in the event—

**Dr. Moonilal:** What experience do you have in that?

**Miss D. Cox:** Mr. Speaker, this is what is taking place with this Government and this so-called crime-fighting initiative. I want to make it clear, I do not have that experience. [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** So that is hearsay?

**Miss D. Cox:** The state of emergency is really not a deterrent for crime. I see that there has been a lot of boasting taking place, boasting about crime. I see advertisements in the newspapers and so on; 21<sup>st</sup> Century policing and so on, but now is not a time to boast when the crime rate is escalating. When I see all this boasting about crime taking place—even recently on the weekend, I remember James 4: 16, which said:

“But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil.”

So, I want to tell them to stop the boasting, we want to see action, “we doh want no set ah talk”. At this point in time, the population of Trinidad and Tobago wants to see serious action where crime is concerned. You had all the answers. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the PNM administration utilized a multipronged approach in the fight against crime. We know that the answer did not lie in a state of emergency. The PNM administration successfully reduced kidnapping in Trinidad and Tobago because we utilized crime-fighting techniques which were sustainable, and which they have now dismantled, and I wonder why. We did not use a knee-jerk approach like this Government. Through the policy measures of the PNM administration, kidnapping was virtually eliminated.

The PNM Government recognized that crime and capacity-building were not an overnight affair. It was recognized that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service drastically needed reforming while maintaining law and order. Fundamental

changes were necessary to reform and improve its structure and conditions of service. Mr. Speaker, we met with a lot of obstruction from the then UNC opposition.

The PNM Government spared no resources in ensuring staff, civilian and uniformed officers received the required training in various areas. They have been speaking about a provost. Who hired the provost? Under the PNM administration, a provost was hired to ensure that new recruits get proper induction training, and that police officers receive the required in-service training.

Over 4,000 police officers were trained in crime scene first-response courses, crime scene investigation, crime scene technician, basic investigation, courtroom skills, interviewing techniques and surveillance. Mr. Speaker, the Policy Training Academy was established under the PNM administration. It was modernized, not only physically, but also a new curriculum was introduced, with an emphasis on modern policing techniques.

The Policing for People and Model Station Programme was also introduced, which the Government has adopted and renamed Policing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, advertising it all over the place and claiming it to be a success. The Repeat Offenders Programme was introduced, and this unit was responsible for tracking gangs in Port of Spain and environs.

**Miss McDonald:** Tracking in constituencies.

**Miss D. Cox:** They have dismantled it—I wonder why. This Repeat Offenders Programme was also dismantled by this UNC-led coalition Government. Having done this—and we want to know why, of course—gang activity escalated in those areas.

**Miss McDonald:** Yes.

**Miss D. Cox:** Are you surprised, Mr. Speaker? Can anyone be?

**Miss McDonald:** And they removed the police post.

**Miss D. Cox:** The unit had the benefit of the services of an experience senior gang officer from Chicago. The state of emergency seriously tackled gang members, and we have not been told why an entire unit of such importance was disbanded. I would like the Minister of National Security to tell me why. *[Interruption]*

**Mr. Roberts:** Mr. Speaker, Standing Order 33(6), point of Order. I see that my learned friend is reading, I am not sure. I think she is supposed to get permission to read.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right. Overruled. I want to make it very clear to hon. Members, the mover of a Motion or a Bill, and the Minister who is responding to that particular Motion or Bill—well, in the case of a Bill, of course, the first Member of the Opposition, I am suggesting that they must be given the right to liberally use whatever method or technique they choose. If they wish to read, that is their right. If they wish to refer to their notes, liberally, that is their right. So, point is not sustained. Continue.

**Miss McDonald:** The Speaker said that already. You must listen.

**Miss D. Cox:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to get my injury time, please. And I would like to suggest that the Member learn his Standing Orders. The PNM administration recognized the need for police officers to be adequately compensated on the basis of the unique nature of the policing function. The then Minister of National Security established a Police Compensation Review Committee, with the aim to establish an appropriate benchmark for compensating officers. That committee's proposals were agreed to by the Police Social and Welfare Association, the Ministry of National Security, and the executive of the Police Service. They scrapped that too. They feel that by paying the \$1,000 allowance to police officers, that would suffice.

**Dr. Rowley:** It does not go to their pension.

**Miss D. Cox:** But police officers would undoubtedly be aware of the fact that this \$1,000 is not part of their basic salary; it will not be included in the computation of their pension benefit.

The PNM government recognized that Trinidad and Tobago's location means that it is a trans-shipment point for drugs to North America and Europe. As such, a comprehensive plan was put in place to stop the flow of guns, drugs and ammunition, and this was being operationalized. The coastguard's naval assets consist of the 360-degree radar system that they are now boasting about. That was under the PNM administration. Two coastal patrol craft, 14 fast interceptor craft and 6 fast patrol craft contributed to the seizure of large amounts of cannabis and, to a lesser extent, cocaine.

These assets were being developed based on intelligence provided by the nation's 360-degree radar system, local and regional air surveillance. They were further supported by the airship, helicopters, and the fixed wing aircraft, all equipped with modern avionics communication links and forward-looking infrared systems that allow for the integrated support with land and sea-based assets. In other words, we were systematically tightening the noose around the drug trade, which has been so damaging to Trinidad and Tobago.

With regard to the cancellation of the OPVs, which were called "a lemon" by the Minister of National Security, they sent out tenders for similar vehicles. Can you imagine that? I wonder why. They sent out similar tenders for similar vessels.

Mr. Speaker, by cancelling the contracts, they have destroyed our drug interdiction capability, and that is our ability to intercept drug shipments on the high seas. They have also dismantled the collaborative marine surveillance and patrol efforts that were in place with other military organizations and agencies within the region. The three offshore patrol vessels would have assisted greatly in stemming the flow of guns and drugs, not only into Trinidad and Tobago, but in the region.

For the first time in the nation's history we would have been able to deploy our naval assets, based on the 360-degree radar system coverage. They dismantled the OPVs which could have been at sea for a maximum period of one month. Imagine, Brazil Security Services have snatched up our OPVs, deriving the benefits which the PNM government had sought for Trinidad and Tobago, which this UNC Government has chosen to abandon. And again, I wonder why.

Mr. Speaker, we all know about the SIA fiasco involving Reshmi Ramnarine, so we would not bother to go into that. But who can forget that? From the *Guardian* report of January 06, I quote:

"Sandy stripped of 4 security units"

Mr. Speaker, the report states that the Minister of National Security was stripped of his responsibility for four units which were placed under the Office of the Prime Minister. The Anti-terrorism Squad, the radar equipment, Canine Unit and, most importantly, I must note, the Helicopter Unit.

**2.15 p.m.**

Why has this taken place, if this is true? Who advised the Prime Minister to do this? Which one of the Ministers of National Security, or was it the Minister himself. Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from the *Guardian* report, January 6:

"Sandy stripped of 4 security units"—

just to enter it in the record.

Mr. Speaker, the security advisor to the Prime Minister stated that he was not in agreement with this move. He stated publicly that he was not in agreement with this move, and that he would do his utmost best for this not to happen. Lo and behold, Mr. Speaker, the *Mirror* newspaper dated today, January 27, headline: bitter battle:

"Leaked e-mails show Griffith waging war against Sandy".

**Hon. Member:** That war going on long time.

**Miss D. Cox:** The article quotes an email purporting to be from the captain—where he scolds the Brigadier and his advisor, Mr. Roy Augustus, telling them once the Cabinet makes a decision they must not stand by it. How conflicting, Mr. Speaker! This email speaks about SAUTT, SIA, SSA. It refers to PNM SAUTT, it speaks about PNM boys in the intelligence agencies, Mr. Speaker. I would like the Minister of National Security to tell us today, that that email does not exist and the information is erroneous.

Mr. Speaker, if there is any bit of truth to that story, we are in serious trouble in this country. I wonder, Mr. Speaker, how this Minister of National Security, who always speaks with pride about his military career, could preside over this blatant politicizing of the national security intelligence.

Mr. Speaker, under the PNM administration, employees of the intelligence units were never appointed based on political affiliations [*Laughter*] and this Government, in violation of its oath of office is doing precisely that, and in the process denying citizens their constitutional rights.

**Mr. Roberts:** And you say that with a straight face.

**Miss D. Cox:** Mr. Speaker, if we were doing that—they are laughing—Reshmi Ramnarine would not have been a whistle-blower in the SIA today. She would not have been promoted to a position that was totally unsuitable to her qualifications. Mr. Speaker, I just want to share with this House, under the PNM government, how we did things.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Please do not remind us.

**Brig. Sandy:** Please do not remind us.

**Miss D. Cox:** We took development and nation-building seriously. In establishing the SIA, the positions were advertised. The applicants were interviewed using international best practice procedures for such recruitment. Applicants were interviewed by three foreign experienced professionals who recruited for intelligence agencies. They could not have known the political affiliation of the applicants; they would only have known that they were nationals of Trinidad and Tobago. They scored them to determine suitability for intelligence work, and made recommendations differentiating those with the ability to be analysts or operatives.

A second interview was held which included local personnel, and indeed some of the applicants withdrew when they became aware of the nature of the job. A final selection was then made by the second interview panel.

Mr. Speaker, politics should not be involved in the selection of individuals to work in intelligence agencies. This Government has therefore, compromised the security of this nation by playing politics with intelligence matters and with the employees of the SIA, SSA and SAUTT.

Are the employees recruited by this administration to be terminated when a disgusted electorate removes them in the next free and fair election? Mr. Speaker, some persons left the military because they were hired as technical persons; many of them have since been fired I am sure the Minister knows this. None of them was hired because of their political affiliation. That was not important to the PNM government. We looked for the required skills, qualifications and competence. They went through vigorous interviews and tests.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has dismantled the independent intelligence operations in the national security of this country, and replaced it with a set of partisan, political operatives, and this is a threat to the national security of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, the PNM administration brought several pieces of legislation to this House in an effort to strengthen the legal environment: the Police Service Act; the Evidence (Amdt.) Act; the Kidnapping Act, the Proceeds of Crime Act in 2009; the Financial Intelligence Unit Act 2009, the Financial Obligations Regulations 2010 and the Anti-Terrorism (Amdt.) Act, all to support the systems and structures we put in place for the fight against crime, and to enhance the national security systems of Trinidad and Tobago—systems and structures which are now being systematically dismantled by this Government, whose claim to fame is a reduction in crime because of a state of emergency. Listening to their crocodile tears you would not believe—

**Hon. Member:** “Crocodile”?

**Miss D. Cox:** —that when they were in Opposition they opposed every bill that the PNM administration brought to this House with regard to the fight against crime. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, all these measures, including our mentoring programmes geared towards youth—like MYLAT, MYPART, CCC, citizens’ security programmes and expansion of the cadet force—helped to reduce the level of criminal activities. They cannot claim any reduction in crime. All the programmes, systems and structures I have outlined, that the PNM government put in place, will bear fruit. It is sad that they have been dismantling them one by one.

Mr. Speaker, the upgrading of the police academy and the change of curriculum, which was done by the PNM administration, would see a high quality

[MISS COX]

and better trained police officers graduating, and of course, they want to take credit for that. We established the Crime and Problem Analysis Unit to favourably enhance the technical capacity of law enforcement. *[Interruption]* I am not sure if they dismantled that as yet.

**Mr. Roberts:** So, why “all yuh get vote out”?

**Miss D. Cox:** Mr. Speaker, the Special Anti-Crime Unit was established to provide specialist support to partner agencies. SAUTT also had a mandate to treat with gang-related crime. SAUTT contributed to the development of professional crime scene investigations; the professionalization of crime scene processing and evidence recovery; the enhancement of inter-agency cooperation, the expansion of the use of air operations to support realtime investigations, and the expansion of the use of technology for interviewing suspects.

Mr. Speaker, the downward trend of homicides started in October 2008, when the Homicide Investigative Task Force was established in SAUTT. They dismantled that. Between September 2008 and May 2010, the Homicide Investigative Task Force was charged with investigating 132 gang-related murders, which represent 13.7 per cent of the total homicides committed during that period. The Homicide Investigative Task Force detected 28.8 per cent of these homicides under their purview and contributed to the national detection rate. If the Government is concerned about homicide investigation, why did they shut down the Homicide Investigative Task Force which was making arrests and providing evidence against gangs in Trinidad and Tobago? What have they replaced it with?

Mr. Speaker, some examples of SAUTT’s successes include: apprehension of 439 persons, including murder suspects, kidnap suspects, and persons with outstanding warrants for arms and ammunitions offence; the seizure of 939 rounds of ammunitions, C4 explosives, and homemade hand grenades; the seizure of illegal narcotics and other items including rifles, 38 revolvers, shotguns and sub-machines guns; and they did all of this without a state of emergency.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that they dismantled that too, and fired the head of SAUTT in a huff and a puff, and now they have to pay him for wrongful dismissal. *[Desk thumping]* Wrongful dismissal, Mr. Speaker. Now they have to pay him after they fired him in a huff and a puff. You do now treat people like that.

Mr. Speaker, the newspaper report states that they are now trying to muzzle him; if they had done the right thing, then why did they have to pay him, and now try to silence him. This is the same way they are trying to muzzle the population of Trinidad and Tobago, in an attempt to conceal their corrupt practices.



Mr. Speaker, the airship surveillance platform was introduced by the PNM administration in keeping with the mandate to develop enhanced technological solutions to crime fighting. Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of talk about the blimp—much of which is adverse—people who are taking that position, may very well know why they are doing so. During its tenure, SAUTT had operated these blimps within the airspace of Trinidad and Tobago. The first blimp was purchased from Misa Worldwide AeroIncorporation, the second was leased from the same company, while the third was purchased through a joint cash trading arrangement for Misa Airship Management Services.

Mr. Speaker, the cost details are as follows:

The Aero 40B Sky Dragon was purchased at a cost of US\$2 million. After a year of operation though there were some challenges, but based on a professional evaluation submitted that the concept of the Aero Surveillance Platform was still valid, and that another platform should be leased to determine its feasibility, then the Skyship 600 was leased at a cost of \$4 million. This airship was eventually bought. The purchase price of Skyship 600 consisted of the transfer of ownership of the Aero 40B Sky Dragon to be considered at past payment for the airship. The cost was US\$2.5 million or TT\$15 million. Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that, during its tenure of operation in Trinidad and Tobago from January 2006, until it ceased operation in 2010, due to the political games of this UNC-dominated Government playing politics with crime, the Skyship routinely flew four to six days per week, and between six to eight hours a day. In special circumstances the airship could provide persistent surveillance for a period of between 12 to 14 hours on a single flight. Which helicopter could do that? Where is the Minister of National Security?

**Dr. Moonilal:** He stepped into the elevator.

**Miss D. Cox:** As compared to a conventional helicopter, the airship was more effective at area surveillance, provided a more stable platform for the onboard surveillance equipment, and was easier and cheaper to maintain. Mr. Speaker, I read newspaper reports—

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, I know that Members seem to be uneasy, I am hearing a lot of disturbing noises, and I would like Members to pay attention to the contribution of the hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant. Could you continue, hon. Member.

**Miss D. Cox:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have read newspaper reports stating that the blimp or the airship cost US\$15 million. This is definitely not true, Mr. Speaker. Their figure was also attributed to persons in the national

[MISS COX]

security sector. Mr. Speaker, many persons were led to believe that the cost was US\$15 million—it was TT\$15 million. Mr. Speaker, they dismantled that too.

They spoke about high maintenance cost. The maintenance undertaken on the airship was consistent with the requirements of the Federal Aviation Authority, Federal Air Regulations part 43 which stipulated stringent maintenance requirements.

Mr. Speaker, many officers received training on the maintenance of the blimp, so by the time they gave away the airship for \$50,000 many locals were already trained to maintain the airship. This investment in our human capital has been wasted. You see, Mr. Speaker, while they were in Opposition they criticized it. They wanted us to tell them all the security capabilities of the blimp, but we are not, and will not be irresponsible, as they are, for revealing national security intelligence matters.

### 2.30 p.m.

We understand the dictates of governance and governing. The blimp enhanced the national security intelligence which facilitated better coordination between law enforcement agencies. It improved kidnapping monitoring which led to a substantial reduction in kidnapping, a virtual elimination; it assisted in the management of hotspots, thus facilitating more precise responses to hotspot incidents. The blimp served as a proactive stand in the fight against crime. The presence of the blimp overhead served as a deterrent to crime; it created a positive psychological effect on the population. And they got rid of that also and I wonder why. What have they put in its place?

Mr. Speaker, in a letter dated September 27, 2011; the Commissioner of Police—the million-dollar man—

**Miss McDonald:** The hotshot, top cop. [*Laughter*]

**Miss D. Cox:** —signed a letter of intent with the Trinidad and Tobago Air Support Company Limited for sky view surveillance. [*Interruption*] This letter was dated September 27, 2011 signed by the Commissioner of Police. This is the letter of intent. [*Holds up document*] I quote part of this letter:

“I wish to express my thanks to your company for your interest to supply your unique services to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service as a law enforcement aviation pilot project.”

The interesting part would be the terms:

“Contract cost — US \$140,400;  
Contract period — 12 weeks.”

Note, Mr. Speaker, 12 weeks. [*Interruption*]

“Deliverables — 720 hours use of Zenith CH 750 Air Scout Aircraft over a 12 week evaluation period.”

Mr. Speaker, I cannot remember seeing a tender go out for the selection of an appropriate aircraft for air-view surveillance. When was this put out for tender? I ask the Minister: please tell this House, when did this go out for tender? Talk to your commissioner, for he is the only one you talk to, you said. Talk to him and tell us. I also have a copy of that contract. The Zenith CH 750 has been described as a light two-plane kit-built aircraft, first introduced in 2008. It is a light sport aircraft with a gross weight of 1,320 pounds. This weight is minus fuel, pilot and so on. Therefore, the empty weight of this plane is 775 pounds.

Mr. Speaker, what is the weight of the surveillance equipment to put in this plane? The fuel, pilot and equipment should not exceed 1,320 pounds, so, therefore, the weight that would be available would be 545 pounds. This type of weight constraint will definitely affect the range and capability of what the aircraft can do. Clearly, this sounds like dolly house. It sounds like dolly-house surveillance to me. They cannot be serious!

Again, I must ask, I wonder why? [*Interruption*] This plane cost US \$19,480 and the cost of the contract is US \$140,400 for an initial 12 weeks.

**Dr. Rowley:** So the man “buy” the plane five times?

**Miss D. Cox:** Seven times! Mr. Speaker, what wastage of taxpayers’ dollars. I wonder who the directors of this Trinidad and Tobago Air Support Company are affiliated to. Perhaps, the very garrulous national security advisor to the Prime Minister, the former captain can advise the Brigadier the hon. Minister so he can enlighten this House, or I do not know, maybe it is a State secret. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, the directors of this company are: Mr. Dirk Barnes, who I understand had some affiliation to national security; Mr. Dan Condon, who I understand is under investigation by the authorities—not this Government—and Mr. David Lewis of Label House.

Mr. Speaker, they talked about the blimp being expensive yet they chose an inappropriate dolly-house airplane which cost \$19,000-plus, signed a contract to a company for US \$140,400 to do air surveillance. Is it that the company intends to

[MISS COX]

use our money to pay for that plane? Just imagine, this plane could have been bought seven times over, but instead they choose to spend \$140,400 for a mere 12-week contract. *[Interruption]*

Mr. Speaker, I was on the Internet checking on the plane. Anybody could buy this plane on the Internet! I could buy it, bring it in and assemble it. *[Interruption]* Yes, I got information on the plane. The plane looks like this. *[Holds up document]* You have to assemble it though, so you may not be able to see it properly. You can buy the small plane on the Internet, bring it in and assemble it. It is a kit. It is a light airplane. *[Interruption]* So, I am saying here TT \$1 million for 12 weeks, work. Scandalous! *[Crosstalk]* You are paying \$19,000-plus for this; you could buy it seven times. Seven times this plane could be bought, and just to use for 12 weeks, but I will tell you, I would go on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to know what role the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Jack Ewatski, played in all of this. I do not want the Minister of National Security—*[Interruption]*—I want him to hear me clearly, I do not want him to be disturbed at all, he needs to hear this. Mr. Speaker, what role did the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Jack Ewatski, play in all of this? Was he fraternizing with the directors of this company in July 2011? *[Interruption]* I would like to quote from an email sent between the two directors dated June 05, 2011. That email states:

“Made contact w/ Ewatski — he wants to go flying w/ me.”

**Dr. Rowley:** What!

**Miss D. Cox:** “I think this can seal the deal w/ the TTPS.” What does TTPS mean?

**Miss McDonald:** Trinidad and Tobago Police Service.

**Miss D. Cox:** Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Mr. Speaker, I need to put on my glasses because I need to see. *[Laughter]*

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** Read it!

**Miss D. Cox:** This was the email between Dan Condon and Dirk Barnes.

**Miss McDonald:** Lord have mercy and you all have the nerve to talk about Calder Hart and Uthara Rao.

**Miss D. Cox:** I quote from another email dated July 02:

“I’ve been talking to Ewatski — he wants to fly.”

I quote from another email dated July 03, 2011:

“...flight was great.”

So many emails, Mr. Speaker. July 03, 2011:

“We flew 2.0 today and with the 2.1 Jack and I flew in early June.”

**Mr. Warner:** Which Jack? [*Laughter*] [*Desk thumping*]

**Dr. Rowley:** At least you are awake and alert. You are right to be.

**Miss D. Cox:** Mr. Speaker, for once the Member for Chaguanas West is not that Jack. For once he is blameless.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you, thank you very much.

**Miss D. Cox:** It is not Jack Warner. [*Crosstalk*] So, Mr. Speaker, we see here where—and this is since June and July this has been happening, sealing deal. He said, “I’ve been talking to Ewatski—he wants to fly. Made contact w/ Ewatski — he wants to go flying w/ me. I think this can seal the deal w/ the TTPS.” Between Dan Condon, a director and Dirk Barnes, the managing director of the company. [*Interruption*]

Mr. Speaker, check the familiarity: “Jack”. You see why they got rid of the airship? You understand why they had to discard the airship for a deal which smacks of corruption? [*Desk thumping*] We need to come out and tell the public the truth. I quote from the *Trinidad Guardian* dated January 07, 2012:

“The police service is moving in the next couple of weeks to try out a ‘light’ airplane policing system to supplement its helicopter patrol, after moves to sell the ‘blimp’ the service confirmed yesterday.”

Mr. Speaker, the same Jack Ewatski who wanted to fly and presumably he did, is quoted as saying:

“The initiation of a new policing for the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service was now examining options and had noted that many law enforcement agencies were moving to fixed wing aircraft, especially light aircraft, since these cost less and could also hover over a scene. We want to explore this...We’ll be doing”—

**Mr. Imbert:** Aircraft could hover over a scene?

**Miss D. Cox:** Aircraft could hover over a scene? [*Crosstalk*]—“a short-term pilot project for the next couple of weeks.”

[MISS COX]

So, this is now being attributed to Mr. Ewatski who is now confirming that, yes, the police service is in need of this, not knowing that he already flew in June and July on the same plane, and here they talked about sealing the deal. *[Interruption]* What I really want to know—*[Interruption]*—then we have, as a result of that a letter of intent, and this is the contract signed with the signature of Mr. Gibbs—

**Dr. Rowley:** Dr. Gibbs. Dr. Gibbs, “eh”.

**Miss D. Cox:** —and Mr. Barnes on behalf of the company, Trinidad and Tobago Air Support Company Limited.

What I really want to know—because it is clear there that the deal was sealed before—what is their obsession with planes and helicopters? *[Desk thumping]* Maybe it has something to do with the “We will rise” slogan. What is the obsession? *[Crosstalk]* One Minister, the Member for Oropouche East, wants to use plane to view squatters; the hon. Prime Minister prefers to use helicopters as a taxi service rather than as a crime prevention tool.

**Miss McDonald:** Yes. *[Desk thumping]*

**Miss D. Cox:** The Prime Minister is flying here, there and everywhere with a helicopter.

**Miss McDonald:** That is right; we want to know the cost.

**Miss D. Cox:** Those helicopters were bought for national security and are not to be used as a taxi to suit anybody’s whims and fancies!

**Miss McDonald:** That is right; we have the Water Taxi they could use! *[Desk thumping]*

**Miss D. Cox:** Mr. Speaker, the Government has been systemically dismantling the national security institutions of Trinidad and Tobago, and we have to ask the question, why? *[Interruption]* Because, in so doing, they endanger the peace and stability of this young republic whose 50<sup>th</sup> birthday we celebrate this year.

They are wantonly and recklessly throwing people on the breadline in the thousands—more than 6,000 was our last count—on the spurious grounds of restructuring and reorganizing—always ominous words when used by them—violating the constitutional rights of citizens of this country to join parties of their choice. Someone merely has to say that the person is a PNM for them to justify the dismissal of that person. *[Interruption]* They are provoking this country, and then they pretend to be surprised by the level of tension and pervading insecurity

that currently exist in this nation. By their ineptness they have made this small and respected country a laughing stock in the region.

**2.45 p.m.**

Every Government has the right to review the security structures and systems made by a previous administration, but this Government must realize that not everyone hired under an administration owes their allegiance to a political party. Many people do not think like you all. Many people do not just think party, most people think country. [*Desk thumping*]

**Miss Ramdial:** Oh please, are you telling us that?

**Miss. D. Cox:** It appears to the population that this Government is simply trying to score cheap political points, stumbling and bumbling along the way.

I beg to move, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Motion requires a seconder.

**Dr. Rowley:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the Motion and reserve my right to participate at a later time in the proceedings.

*Question proposed.*

**The Minister of National Security (Sen. The Hon. Brig. John Sandy):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to participate in this debate on the Motion raised by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, with respect to the systematic dismantling of the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, and on behalf of my colleagues on this side, to send our best wishes to the Member for San Fernando East, and wish him a speedy recovery and to let him and his family know that our prayers are with them. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, please permit me to identify the intended deception, trickery and falsehood—[*Desk thumping*] purported in the assumptions of this Motion. The Motion states:

“*Whereas* the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago has continued to escalate,”

False. [*Desk thumping*]

“*And whereas* the former PNM administration had initiated a number of systems and strategies to deal with the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago,”

The results show, false. [*Desk thumping*]

“*And whereas* the current government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken certain actions to weaken the national security systems and structure”—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** True.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** False. [*Desk thumping*]

“*And whereas* the action of the current Government has contributed to the escalation of crime in Trinidad and Tobago,”

False.

I do not know where the Member for Laventille East/Morvant lives, certainly not in Trinidad and Tobago. And, when the Motion is resolving “to take steps to put in place an effective national security system” to bring about a reduction in crime—there is a reduction in crime. [*Desk thumping*] There is a reduction in crime. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** False, false, false!

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** I do not know where she is living, not in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Dr. Rambachan:** They live in Carriacou.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** —and the evidence is there.

Mr. Speaker, before I proceed with my contribution, I would like to refer to some of the points made by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. We spoke about the escalating. To date, there are 34 murders for the year; 34 too many. But last year this time, there were 39. The year before that, was 41, under their watch. I do not know what she understands by the word “escalating”. [*Interruption*]

**Miss. Cox:** Who is she?

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** My apologies Ma’am, the Member for Laventille East/Morvant. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant said that the evidence is there, but we did not see any evidence, we did not hear of any evidence, but the evidence is there. I do not know where the evidence is. The evidence shows that there are 34 murders for the year, and as I said 34 too many, 39 last year on this date, 41 the year before. But, the evidence is there. We did not get it from her. [*Crosstalk*] They were in office for eight years, did they fix it? [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** No.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** No, Mr. Speaker, they did not fix it. And they are speaking about positive effects. Show what that positive effect was over those



eight years. They are unable to do so, because they were negative effects. [*Crosstalk*] And then, Mr. Speaker, the Member spoke about me being confident. That is a trait that the Almighty God gave to me. I make no excuses. [*Desk thumping*] Yes, I am confident. But, it is strange that prior to the state of emergency, Mr. Speaker, they themselves said when the state of emergency was called, there was no need to call a state of emergency because crime was on the decline. They said that. [*Desk thumping*] They said so.

And, then, of course, there was the word “horned” used. The PNM was “horned out” of office. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

**Hon. Member:** Affirmation.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** The Member also used the word “arrogance”. Arrogance, arrogance among other things, caused them to lose the government. I quote the Member, “crime is not an overnight affair,” and we agree. We have been getting crime to subside. It is not expected to go away overnight, but I am happy to know that the Member for Laventille East/Morvant understands that.

Yes, they employed a provost, but even with the employment of that provost, the strength of the police service was declining, because the attrition rate carried more officers leaving than officers being recruited; 200-odd officers per year. It went up to 298. We have changed that. We are aiming now at 800 with that same provost that you brought.

But, Mr. Speaker, when I joined the Ministry and I looked at the police service, there was no evidence of developmental training, and there was no evidence of career path planning. And as I continue to say it, I came from an institution where you see a soldier going down the street with one stripe, you know he has done a course; you see one with two, he has done two courses; you see one with three—and similarly with the commissioned ranks. But what was happening in the police service, is that there were no concentrated courses or programmes to cause the police officers to be trained and to be promoted based on that.

The Member spoke about the repeat offenders unit. But, gang activity escalated even with that, and the former Minister of National Security every two weeks he would come and say, there are “10 more gangs, 5 more gangs, 3 more gangs”, every time he came. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant was in the Ministry of National Security. [*Crosstalk*]

**Hon. Member:** Misleading, misleading.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Mr. Speaker, the 360-degree radar system—the Member is saying that we claimed it. I am trying to understand her, Mr. Speaker, because in one breath she is saying that we dismantled it, and in the other breath she

is saying that we held on to it and we are using their thing. What does the Member want?

**Dr. Griffith:** That is what tabanca does to you. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Then, there is the falsehood of saying we are tendering for similar vessels. I am surprised at the Member, having been in the Ministry of National Security, I thought that she would have understood. I do not know what she has read, but that is another story.

And with respect to the OPVs, I am advised, from a legal perspective, that I ought not to discuss it because it is at a delicate point at this time. [*Cross talk and Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** You cannot defend it.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Mr. Speaker, you know there was a claim of Sandy being stripped of four units. Sometimes it is not good to believe everything that you read in the press, but I will not go into that now. But, then we are talking about emails. [*Interruption*]

**Miss Cox:** I want to hear.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** But, I am wondering how the Member is privy to those emails. And then there was the talk about my military career. [*Crosstalk*]  
Mr. Speaker, my military career is well documented and I am not coming here to—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Speaker:** I am not hearing the Hon. Member, and I am sure that the *Hansard* reporter is having some challenges and even members of the media, because of the crosstalk. Could I appeal to Members to observe Standing Order 40(a), (b) and (c). Hon. Member, you may continue.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for protecting me. My military career, there is no need for me to go into that and I will not. I would never take God out of my thoughts and refer to the Member's professional career. I am too well bred for that. I would not. [*Laughter and desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, the Mentoring Programme—[*Interruption*]

**Mrs. Gopee-Scoon:** We invite you over.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** —the Member referred to the Mentoring Programme. [*Interruption*]

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** Tell them, tell them, John.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** That in itself, I mean, is well documented. Everyone in Trinidad and Tobago knows what is happening with the Mentoring Programme. I am not saying that it was not an idea, it might have been an idea, but they did nothing with it. So, this Government came and we ran with it and successfully so. [*Desk thumping*]

Cadets in school: I was of the opinion when they spoke about cadets in school, that there was a cadet unit in every school. No, “ah cadet here, ah cadet there, ah cadet there”. When, that poor little cadet now has to get time to go, some of the teachers do not want to give them time to go and train. We have changed that. [*Desk thumping*] We are putting in a cadet unit in every school. That is what we are doing. [*Desk thumping*]

Mr. Speaker, they are talking about the million-dollar man; referring to the Commissioner of Police as the million-dollar man, SAUTT carried million-dollar man—[*Desk thumping*] about 50 of them; million-dollar men and they spent most of their time up at Maracas and on the Golf Course—[*Crosstalk*]—50 million-dollar men. So I wonder.

Mr. Speaker, they spoke about the operating cost of the blimp? But, I will come to that a little later. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, because when the Member starts to quote from people’s private email, I wonder. I wonder, I wonder [*Crosstalk*] “Ah ha ha, boy”. It is so unfortunate. Mr. Speaker, please.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Member for Laventille East/Morvant, your chair is to me. I would like you to straighten your chair. [*Laughter*] And at any rate, Member for Laventille East/Morvant, I sought to give you the fullest protection whilst you were speaking, and I would like you to take note, because you have a right to reply. So, could you take note and at the appropriate time, you shall be able to reply, and allow the hon. Member to speak in silence. Continue, hon. Member.

### 3.00 p.m.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. But I was just wondering aloud whether it is legal to get into someone else’s email. But, Mr. Speaker, I am bewildered and bemused by some of what I have heard here today. The reason for my profound bemusement is the fact that this Opposition sees it fit to bring a Motion to the Parliament to debate crime and the Government’s handling of the national challenge. After eight years in office and nothing positive happened, this is what we are getting here today.

We have said over and over again in this august House that they do not have the moral authority—[*Desk thumping*]—to come here and debate crime. I will say that

again. They do not have the moral authority. What audacity to come here and speak about that!

This Motion before us is flawed. In the first instance, there is reference to an escalating crime situation, which is not so. Serious crimes are down, even as we speak. I made the point earlier, even prior to the state of emergency they were saying—they were accepting; they knew, that crime was down, so much so that they indicated that there was no need for a state of emergency because crime was on the way down. You know, it would have been so good for them to join us—because we are all Trinidadians and Tobagonians—to get this criminal activity down, but instead of doing that, they are opposing.

The records speak for themselves. In the last 19 months in office of this Government, under the astute leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, [*Desk thumping*] we have been successful in bringing the levels of serious crime down by 9.2 per cent in 2010 and 21.1 per cent at the end of last year. [*Desk thumping*] This was done in 19 months. They were there for eight years and it escalated. At the end of January 2009, there were 49 murders; at the end of January 2010, 46; 2011, 47. It means, therefore, that to come here and say that on the 27<sup>th</sup> of the month with 34 murders that crime is escalating, is totally false. They had eight years to prove to the national community that they could deal with the problem. Instead, in those eight years what we got from them was a number of failed crime policies and initiatives.

**Dr. Browne:** Anaconda.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Sandy:** Anaconda. Thank you. I was not even going to say that; I forgot that one. I appreciate it. A 30-day crime plan; weed and seed! And do you know what I wonder as well? During 2009, there was the CHOGM and the OAS, and there was such a unique coming together of the forces and operational capability, and they just allowed that to evaporate. I could not understand that. That was what happened in 2009. The audacity of Members on the opposite side to come here and try to tell us how to deal with crime is laughable, in the least. Remember, that Member was a Minister in the Ministry of National Security. It is laughable, because when you look at their record in dealing with this scourge, it kept rising and rising. With all the assets at their disposal, it kept rising and rising and rising.

Prior to 2010, when the now Opposition was in government, serious crime had been on a path of consistent increase. In 2008, for example, serious crime increased by 4.6 per cent; in 2009 there was another increase by 7.8 per cent. The systemic

dismantling of our fear of crime was what they were doing. They were doing the systematic dismantling, not us. [*Desk thumping*] If, therefore, there is any conclusion to be arrived at with respect to the escalation of crime, the statistics support the fact that it occurred during the regime of our predecessors. The former Government assumed power in December 2001 and at the end of that fiscal year, 2002, serious crime stood at 16,610, with a detection rate of 23.5 per cent. By fiscal year 2009, serious crime had risen to 20,621, with a detection rate of 14.9 per cent.

That represents a 24 per cent increase in serious crime and an eight percentage point or 36 per cent decrease in the rate of detection. Over that period we saw a systemic dismantling of the national security apparatus. That is what we saw. Murders went up from 160 in fiscal year 2002 to 549 in fiscal year 2008, meaning that many more families had to suffer the trauma of their loved ones being taken away from them at times through very heinous acts. That was the systematic dismantling of families in Trinidad and Tobago. And do you know what is strange about that? [*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members on both sides, stop the crosstalk, please. I have been repeating, repeating and asking for your cooperation. Let us keep the dignity of this place. Let us raise it, please. Forget the crosstalk; do not engage in crosstalk as far as possible. If Members wish to speak, could you take some leave and go behind the Chair or outside in the Ellis Clarke corridor and discuss your matters? But you cannot be disturbing, repeatedly disturbing, a Member when he is on his legs. So I appeal to both sides, please, to avoid the crosstalk. Hon. Minister, you may continue.

**Sen. The Hon. J. Sandy:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They cannot face the truth; that is all. They cannot face the truth.

It was understandable, therefore, when our citizens declared that element of fear. Sometimes you are in your homes; you decide, "Okay, I am not going out because the crime is out there." You are in your homes and they are coming into your homes. You have a little function, they come. Even at wakes they would come in. And this is what we were experiencing. It was so sad to hear them refer to people being killed as collateral damage. Could you imagine that, your daughter, your aunt, your mother, your brother, your sister being referred to as collateral damage? That is well-documented; very well-documented.

However, the true value of what we are trying to do is something that the entire national community wants, and this is why we will be relentless in our efforts to make sure that crime is reduced in Trinidad and Tobago. Repeatedly we have said in this honourable House that we are making strides and gradually it will happen. It

[SEN. THE HON. BRIG. J. SANDY]

is not going to happen overnight—as recognized by the Member for Laventille East/Morvant—but it will.

We are talking about the systemic dismantling of the detection rate. In 2003, 23.6 per cent detection rate—systemic dismantling; 2004, 23.4 per cent, systemic dismantling; 2005, 22.2 per cent, systemic dismantling; down to 2009, 14.9 per cent systemic dismantling. That Opposition was in government at the time. So when you are talking about systemic dismantling, with all these assets that they had, what did they do? What did they do with all those assets?

**Hon. Member:** Nothing.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Nothing. The figures speak for themselves. Had that Government remained in power, given their track record of failures, delays and indecisiveness, that process would, perhaps, have been still with us today. But that changed, and for the first time we saw Trinidad and Tobago being able to breathe again because the criminal activity was on the downswing. [*Desk thumping*]

I would like to ask the Member for Laventille East/Morvant, since she was Minister of State in the Ministry of National Security in 2008 when this statement was made by former Minister Joseph, do you agree with this statement that the Government's anti-initiatives failed? This was his response. We are looking at the *Guardian* of Friday, January 04, 2008, captioned:

“Minister of National Security Martin Joseph addresses members of the media at yesterday’s news briefing.

What Joseph said:

- Crime-fighting measures failed
- Government reviewing options
- Homicides gang-related.”

And the article goes on to say:

“National Security Minister Martin Joseph says anti-crime initiatives which were implemented failed to work.”

He admitted that. And I will read it again. I want them to hear.

“National Security Minister Martin Joseph says anti-crime initiatives which were implemented failed to work.”

With all the blimp and everything that they had.

“As a result, the Government was now conducting an extensive review of those measures.

Joseph was speaking at a news conference—which lasted no more than seven minutes—at the Ministry of National Security...

‘Clearly,...the measures which were implemented did not work... Government is currently conducting an extensive review of all measures put in place’...

He said the Homicide Prevention Working Group, the Homicide Bureau of Investigations, the Repeat Offenders’ Programme, and the Inter-Agency Task Force were established to deal specifically with gang-related crime.

But they ‘clearly did not work and as a result those measures are being reviewed,’...”

**Hon. Member:** Who said that?

**Sen. The Hon. J. Sandy:** Martin Joseph, Minister of National Security.

“Commenting about the murder toll for 2007—seven up to late yesterday—Joseph said the Government has projected a ten per cent reduction in homicides, but ‘that was not the case’.”

And this was her boss at the time.

“Joseph said after spending ‘a substantial amount of time’ on the matter, it was the Government’s intention to pilot a motion at the first sitting of Parliament on Monday, to debate the issue of crime fully and comprehensively...

‘We will review the measures that we have put in place and the extent of which those measures have not worked and the extent to which we can expect new initiatives’.”

I am saying we do not expect everything to work, but the impression you are getting here is that everything for them worked and we are now coming to dismantle things that were working well for them.

The Member for Laventille East/Morvant also alluded to systems and strategies initiated by the PNM administration to deal with the crime situation in Trinidad: the eye in the sky, the blimp. My first experience with the blimp—when I went there I thought I would have seen an air vessel that could have taken off and become airborne in a matter of minutes, because here is where we are, and I specifically asked the director the mission of the blimp. But do you know that there are some guide ropes alongside the blimp, and I am watching men running with that; running

along with those guide ropes to get that blimp airborne? About 20 men were required to get that blimp airborne. They were running with it, plus the pilot, plus the person who was coordinating that, running with it.

**Hon. Member:** Like a mad bull. [*Laughter*]

**Sen. The Hon. Brig J. Sandy:** Like a mad bull! [*Desk thumping and laughter*]

**3.15 p.m.**

Mr. Speaker, it cannot become airborne in an emergency, and if the weather is bad, well, “waste ah time”. And, do you know, to land the blimp it is similar. When it is coming down, they have to hold on to the rope and run after it. [*Laughter and desk thumping*] That was the blimp; The eye in the sky.

During the period of the blimp, between December 2004 and June 2006, it cost Trinidad and Tobago \$33 billion; repairs and/ or maintenance of the two purchased airships amounted to TT\$1.2 million and TT\$1.4 million per month, respectively.

Over the period of the implementation of those costly airships in 2004, we saw the increase in serious crimes to 16,386; 2005, 17,000. The blimp, which could have—when you read the mission for the blimp, it said that it could hover the entire 362 kilometres of Trinidad and Tobago, and it could be in contact at all times, and together with the 360-degree radar system, they would prevent any arms, ammunition or drugs coming into Trinidad. If that is the case, well then there was no requirement to purchase other vessels. I would not even refer to the vessels that they were talking about.

In 2009, with all the blimp, it escalated to 22,160—with the blimps. In fact, between 2002 and 2010, little was done to make any effort, apart from “Blimping”, to secure Trinidad and Tobago, and this is where we found ourselves when we came into office in 2009—Winkin’, Blinkin’ and Nod.

However, these elaborate systems and strategies of which the Member of Parliament for Laventille East/Morvant speaks so proudly, may have been sounding brilliant on paper, but fell short—Mr. Speaker, please—of expectations, and they ought to admit that. Say so. Like the former Minister of National Security, Martin Joseph, said that.

**Hon. Member:** Be honest.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** But do not come here now and try to fool us into believing that the blimp was so successful. When we are talking about the development of the blimp, we need to look as well at how the blimp came into being.



**Dr. Moonilal:** Be honest.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** “Yeah”, tell us, tell us. The airship: In December 2004, the first airship, Aeros 40B Sky Dragon and associated equipment and training package was acquired at a cost of \$28,161,000.

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** The Member said \$16 million. *[Interruption]*

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** I would not bother with that. It is nothing new; distortions have been coming from there all afternoon, so I would not bother with it. From the inception, the Sky Dragon suffered from a number of technical difficulties that adversely affected its ability to bring benefits that its technology was expected to deliver. And, listen to this, apart from the technical deficiencies, it has to be noted, that shareholders were not consulted in determining the relevance of this technology to the local law enforcement environment. *[Interruption]*

So, they just went out and said: “Well, boy, leh we buy a blimp, and dey buy ah blimp”. No. It was afterwards—*[Interruption]*

**Hon. Member:** Who did that?

**Mr. Warner:** My colleague said the “Sky Su”.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Yes, and, we looked around and say, “who else using dis blimp boy; this noisy thing? *[Interruption]* They said the Bahamas was using it.

**Hon. Member:** Nobody.

**Mr. Warner:** The Bahamas got rid of theirs while we were buying ours.

A Special Anti-Crime Unit of Trinidad and Tobago (SAUTT) report to the Minister of National Security in 2006 stated, and I quote

“Failure of the Aeros 40B Sky Dragon is related to technical difficulties associated with equipment failure as a result of environmental conditions in Trinidad and Tobago, and the failure of equipment supplies to provide reliable operational and logistic support. The platform has not successfully integrated into operations on a continuous basis.”

Now you all know that. *[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** “Dey say de... weather bad”.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** They did not check these things before. *[Interruption]*

**Dr. Gopeesingh:** ”Yuh remember, Rudy?”

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** So what did they do? They went out and got another aircraft, the Skyship 600, which was acquired in 2006, at a cost of

TT\$30,573,560. The Skyship 600 and attendant hardware and support amounted to \$68 million. In the intervening period of those two acquisitions, Cabinet approved the lease of a Skyship for five months, at a total cost of \$4,785,590.

The justification advanced by SAUTT for the acquisition of the Skyship 600 was that it was expected to improve and the solving the rate of murders, robberies, burglaries and other high-incident crimes. Let me read that again. The justification advanced by SAUTT for the acquisition of the sky ship 600, was that it was expected to improve the solving rate of murders, robberies, burglaries, and other high-incident crimes. Its success in these areas has never been properly evaluated or measured. At the time, however, crime continued to escalate. And, the cost of operating the blimp was US \$225,000 per month, TT\$1.4 million. Saddled with this piece of equipment and having regard to the cost factor and its limited success, it was felt that we ought to get rid of it.

Mr. Speaker, nobody wanted it. [*Laughter*] Nobody wanted to buy the blimp. As a consequence, and this is why it had to be sold to the original owner, they were the only people who wanted it—to be used in the United States when they are having—what is the big football game? [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Super Bowl.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Super Bowl, yes.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Budweiser.

**Sen. The Hon. Brig. J. Sandy:** Yes, that is what the blimp degenerated to. We continue to put things in place to ensure that our country could get from this Government, the best element of national security that they can ever get. For years now, the police service has been dealing with a system of communication that has been long outclassed and archaic. I could not believe when I got into office and recognized what they were dealing with. I am told that for years they have been complaining, because we need, and I will read a bit of the brief history:

“In 1996, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago made a decision to provide a 999 rapid response public safety system”

Since 1996. And, we now have to come in to Government to purchase that system, that Harris system, to move from monolog to digital; where every other country in the world is state-of-the-art and we are supposed to be the jewel of the Caribbean, and we are now trying to move to get digital.

I will tell you some of the advantages because the existing functions in the 999 system—totally obsolete and it is breaking down from time to time. What this digital will do is it would allow easy connectivity to the CCTV network, since all cameras are IP-based. GPS tracking of assets in realtime is easily accessible. Connectivity to the Internet is also easily possible. In short, police officers on operations can link easily with the military and with air assets, so we have that total connectivity of our operations as we go forward.

Increased level of security data: We have had instances from way, way, back, even in my time, when we would go out on operations and because of the radio system, you could get distorted messages. You can get a message like “shoot”, when it should be “do not shoot”, or the other way around, and this would always interfere with operations.

Now, we have clear and operational assets that would assist us in our operations out there. The acquisition would be state-of-the-art, current and designed with an open architecture topology, and the inter-connectivity, the data sharing, and the interruptibility which is most important for our operations of our security forces. These are the types of things that we are putting in place to assist our security forces. [*Desk thumping*]

With respect to our intervention and prevention, we are going guns with our programmes; the same programmes that they said we stole from them. We are going guns.

Yesterday, we were in Gonzales. We have organized a little complex where we have the police. They are organizing a little area where the members of the community can go and seek advice, and guidance. Those are the types of things we are doing in communities because we recognize that crime cannot be fought alone by suppression.

So, while we have the police doing the suppression aspect against the criminal activities, we are going into the communities as well and trying to partner with them. As we told them, they had three and one-half months of comparative peace; why now would they want to go back to that? Up to my last count, there were four of the detainees—they speak about detainees. I said some of those detainees—during the state of emergency, because of being detained, that saved their lives. Four of them have been killed, four of them. “Why do you allow your sons to get involved in criminal activity? You know, you know. This is why we are going to the communities and speaking with them, so that we could get them to understand that our aim is to have them compete—as I said here before—in sports and culture, and not guns and violence. And, this is what we are trying to do.

We are inviting Members on the opposite side to join us in the areas. All these areas that we have dealt with—our National Mentorship Programme, our Making Life Important, and our Minister’s Outreach Programme—it is amazing, these youngsters out there, all they need is a little love and a little help.

You know, I find it difficult to understand sometimes, you are trying to put certain things in place—last year, I had my Father’s Day Fair; I invited all of you; not one showed up. And I am saying, we are in this thing together. As I have said on numerous occasions, I want no praise if criminal activity subsides, and if you are saying that you are responsible for it, okay, I have no problem with that. I tell people, and I will say it again, I give God all the praise and glory for everything. I do not take that praise. Let us work together, and together we could bring down crime in Trinidad and Tobago and make Trinidad and Tobago the paradise that we want it to be. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**3.30 p.m.**

[*Mr. Imbert stands*] [*Crosstalk*] [*Mr. Imbert sits*]

**Mr. Imbert:** I had already caught Mr. Speaker’s eyes. Not so, Mr. Speaker? I caught your eyes. I raised my hand and you acknowledged.

**Mr. Warner:** He did not.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, but let me just hear what the Hon.—

**Dr. Moonilal:** Mr. Speaker, there was an understanding between the Opposition and the Government that there would be one speaker from the Government, Sen. The Hon. Sandy would reply, and we would adjourn the House. Mr. Speaker, they need to be very clear on what is happening. [*Crosstalk*] So, you want to change that now? Then, because that understanding has now been breached, it requires now the Government to regroup. [*Crosstalk*] Would the Opposition want to continue now, having made that arrangement before?

**Mr. Warner:** Your word cannot be trusted. [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** This is Private Members’ Day! Why is he cutting into our time?

**Mr. Warner:** You cannot be trusted.

**Dr. Moonilal:** So our arrangement will not hold?

**Miss McDonald:** Yes, let us go—[*Inaudible*]

**Dr. Moonilal:** So, our arrangement would not hold? Our arrangement that we

made before will not hold. So, that is fine. [*Crosstalk and interruption*] Hello, I could adjourn the House, “you know”.

Mr. Speaker, I want to put on record, in the interest of fairness, it is the Opposition’s Private Members’ Day. We made an arrangement with the Opposition that there will be one speaker on each side and we will adjourn. And we will adjourn! [*Crosstalk*] No, there will be one speaker on each side and we will adjourn. If it is now that that arrangement will not stand, I have no difficulty with it. We would allow the Members of the Opposition to continue.

**Mr. Warner:** Go ahead, talk! [*Crosstalk*]

**Dr. Rambachan:** That is why the country did not trust “all yuh”! [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, could you quell the Members opposite, please. Mr. Speaker, “dey making ah set ah noise.”

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, allow the Member for Diego Martin North/East to speak at this time. [*Crosstalk and interruption*]

**Mr. Imbert:** Mr. Speaker, as you sit down, “dey” going again! [*Mr. Speaker indicates to move on*] I will try.

Mr. Speaker, today is Private Members’ Day. The Opposition gets one day per month to raise its own business.

**Dr. Khan:** Well, do not make an agreement.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It is expected, Mr. Speaker, that at the very least, the Opposition will be allowed to promote its views and perspectives until at least 4.30 p.m. Mr. Speaker, en passant, in the Standing Orders that we have been looking at for a while, in the last incarnation of this Parliament, I do recall the then Opposition, the UNC, complained that it was the practice of the Government to adjourn Private Members’ Day at 4.30 p.m.

**Hon. Member:** Absolutely!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** In fact, a proposal was made and accepted by all Members of the House, both Government and Opposition, that on Private Members’ Day, the House would sit until at least 6.00 p.m. For the Government to attempt to adjourn us at 3.30 p.m. on Private Members’ Day, they are just cutting into our time, Mr. Speaker. [*Crosstalk and interruption*] But anyway, Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]

**Mr. Speaker:** Is that the Member for Mayaro? Please, do not use that kind of language across the floor.

**Mr. Peters:** Well, I would not say, “he is dishonest” again.

**Mr. Speaker:** No, no, no, just withdraw that. Do not use that language here, please. Let us be more respectful to one another. Okay?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall now attempt to speak until at least 4.30 p.m. [*Interruption*]

**Mr. Peters:** You could speak until the cows come home.

**Mr. Speaker:** All right, Member, could you just keep your silence and allow the Member to speak?

**Mr. Colm Imbert** (*Diego Martin North/East*): Mr. Speaker, thank you. Let me read the Motion before the House because, in listening to the Minister of National Security, the purpose and intent of this Motion got a bit lost. The Minister of National Security spent a lot of time engaging in semantics and, to use a word introduced into this Parliament, I believe, by the Member for Chaguanas West. I have not heard that word being used here before, “histrionics”, a nice word and that does describe the last contribution. Histrionics!

Mr. Speaker, let me read into the record what the Motion is, and it goes as follows:

*Whereas* the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago has continued to escalate;

*And whereas* the former PNM administration had initiated a number of systems and strategies to deal with the crime situation in Trinidad and Tobago;

*And whereas* the current government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken certain actions to weaken the national security systems and structure in Trinidad and Tobago;

*And whereas* the action of the current government has contributed to the escalation of crime in Trinidad and Tobago;

*Be it resolved* that this House take note of the systematic dismantling of the national security systems and structures in Trinidad and Tobago and call on the government to cease this action and to take steps to put in place an effective national security system which would have the effect of securing the borders and by extension the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago to bring about a reduction in crime in Trinidad and Tobago.”

I heard nothing from the last speaker about security of the borders of Trinidad and Tobago. Nothing! I heard nothing about the steps the Government is putting in place to ensure an effective national security system. And so, Mr. Speaker, it falls to me to address some of the issues raised here today.

The hon. Minister spent a lot of time talking about the airship and claimed that airships are not used in other countries. But, that is simply not true, and anybody who wishes to do even rudimentary research on the use of airships in security surveillance can do so. I do not intend to get into any banter with the Minister over that. It is simply incorrect to state that security agencies all over the world do not use an airship. An airship is simply a lighter-than-air-machine. It contains gas of some type that is lighter than air and it is propelled by a small engine with a propeller. That is all an airship is, Mr. Speaker.

The features of an airship are its capability to stop, to hover, to move slowly, to stay in position over an area for extended periods of time. Those are the distinguishing features of an airship, unlike a fixed wing aircraft, which must keep moving. That is why this proposal that we have heard about today that is intended to, apparently, replace the airship surveillance using this Zenith light aircraft, is preposterous. A plane has to keep moving. The only aircraft that I am aware of that can stop is the Harrier jet that was used in the Falklands War. Maybe the Member for Chaguanas West, as a student of—is it history or geography?

**Hon. J. Warner:** History. Histrionics!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** History and histrionics too, apparently—would have some knowledge of the Falklands War. I remember I was studying for my master's degree in England at the time when the Falklands War came out, and there was a lot of talk about the characteristics of the Harrier jet because, it not only has a jet engine in the rear, but it has jet engines in the wing, so it can stop and hover using its jet propulsion. But, a light aeroplane such as this Zenith STOL CH 701 certainly cannot do that.

When one looks at the features of this aircraft that they say they have bought or leased—a single or two-seat aircraft only, so only one or two people could be in this plane; single reciprocating engine, including rotary or diesel engine; fixed propeller; unpressurized cabin; fixed landing gear. Do you know what this is, Mr. Speaker? “Yuh ever see ah Cessna? Yuh ever see dem lil plane up in de sky dat dey use tuh train people tuh fly?”

**Miss Cox:** A toy plane!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The Member for Laventille East/Morvant is calling it a toy plane. But, anybody who has a smattering of familiarity with aircraft—if you go up by the airport, you would see a few of them parked up there on the tarmac; tiny little planes, single engine, fixed landing gear, unpressurized cabin—it is training aircraft. As I said, a fixed wing aircraft with a propeller engine cannot hover. From the time the aircraft tries to hover, it will stall and crash. I mean, anybody who has a smattering of knowledge of aircraft will know that.

[MR. IMBERT]

Mr. Speaker, years ago, in another life, I in fact did train to be a pilot; [*Crosstalk*] many, many years ago. And I used one of these little single engine, fixed wing rotary engine, fixed landing gear aircraft. When you are landing this aircraft, you essentially have to stall it. So, you are coming in at Piarco and you have to get down to a slow enough speed, so the aircraft just drops down on the ground. So, can you imagine if they are trying to use this little propeller plane for surveillance and they are trying to hover—and in order to hover you have to drop the air speed below 80 knots? What would happen? Steel is heavier than air, so the plane would just drop and crash, Mr. Speaker. So, the very idea, that the national security agencies are considering purchasing one of these little fixed wing, fixed propeller aircraft is ludicrous.

While one can argue about the cost of these airships, the cost of maintenance and the efficiency of the equipment, those are matters of opinion. Those would be established in any study. The Minister himself said, “no study was done”. That is what he said. He read out. I took notes. He said no study was done on the performance of the airship, but they sold it still. Can you imagine; you have not established the performance of the equipment, you do not know whether it served its purpose or not, you do not know whether when it was going out in the air for these periods of 12 hours and 14 hours, which no helicopter can do—and I will come to helicopters in a short while—no helicopter that I am aware of unless it is one of those blackhawks that they use in Iraq, the ones with the big guns at the side, maybe they could travel for five and six hours. But no ordinary helicopter such as the helicopters that we have in Trinidad can go outside there and conduct surveillance for 12 hours and 14 hours, which this aircraft can do.

Remember, the airship is consuming very small amounts of fuel. The propulsion is only required to push the airship along because, as I said, it is a lighter-than-air vessel. So, it stays up there because it is filled with a gas—helium or some other gas—which is lighter than air, which allows the airship to rise and then you use the small propeller for propulsion. That is why it can stay outside there for 12, 14, 16, or 24 hours.

**Mr. Warner:** Good flying lessons, boy!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** You will get a flying lesson just now. [*Laughter*] My understanding of these airships is that because of their capability to remain up in the air for long periods of time, because of the fact that they are lighter-than-air vessels, they can hover and remain stationary over certain locations for long periods of time and that is what you really want in an aircraft or airship when you are doing surveillance.



My understanding of the airship was that it had sophisticated equipment that could intercept communications and listen in on conversations on the ground. Its purpose was not to see what was going on, but it was to hear what was going on. There is a lot of popular mythology in Trinidad and Tobago over all this equipment. People feel there were some cameras in this thing spying on people down below. That was not it. There was sophisticated audio equipment that would intercept communications between kidnappers in particular. And, where this airship was successful, I am told—I heard the Minister rattling out statistics—is in the reduction of kidnappings. If you look at the number of kidnappings around 2007, kidnappings for ransom had reached about 100. But, after the deployment of this airship, after the crew had been trained and people had been trained in the use of the audio equipment, kidnappings were reduced to five. That is what happened.

So, it is all very well for the hon. Minister of National Security to come and tell us that this equipment was useless, it was costly, et cetera—okay, fine. What are you replacing it with? If, in fact, this piece of equipment, the airship, was capable of listening in on conversations between kidnappers and would-be kidnappers on the ground, and if, in fact, this airship was successful in intercepting communication between kidnappers, giving the police the capability to detect, prevent and intercept kidnappers and thus reduce the rate of kidnapping for ransom in Trinidad and Tobago from 100 to five in one year, what is the Government replacing it with? And, that is what I expected to hear the hon. Minister tell us.

**3.45 p.m.**

**Mr. Warner:** The *Mv Su*.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes, we are not coming here to argue semantics about statistics, about how many murders they had. I mean, come on, the population is tired of that, Mr. Speaker. If this debate was taking place on January 20, the rate of murders for this year would be higher than last year. That is a fact. Thirty murders in the first 20 days of 2012. So, if we were doing this debate seven days ago then the murder rate would have been higher for 2012, on a daily average basis than 2011.

What are we doing arguing here about how they had 37 murders last year and 39 murders this year? Who cares? What the people are worried about is not that, at this time in the year, there are 34 murders, and last year there were 39 murders. The people want no murders at all! They want zero. The population is fed up of Ministers of National Security, no matter which party they are from, coming into this Parliament and elsewhere and boasting that they reduced murders from 35 to 34. The population is fed up of that. I am fed up of that! [*Desk thumping*] I do not want to hear another Minister of National Security come in this Parliament and tell us they reduced crime from 2,000 serious crimes to 1,952 serious crimes.

**Mrs. Mc Intosh:** “Dey playing with statistics.”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** “Dey playing with statistics.” The population does not want to know about that. They want to know what you are doing. So if, in fact, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service and the Ministry of National Security have together dismantled the airship capability—because this is what they have done; they sold it, they say “it eh good”; all right, so they dismantled the capability—what are they going to replace it with?

We have heard the Member for Laventille East/Morvant tell us that the sitting Commissioner of Police, Mr. Gibbs, had on September 27, written to some company, Trinidad and Tobago Air Support Company Limited—who or what that is, I think we will have to do a company search and find out who are the directors and shareholders. I mean, I do not know who they are. I have heard all sorts of insinuations that there are persons who have some kind of affiliation with the Government in some way, who are somehow connected to this company. I do not know. Mr. Speaker, I want to say flat out I do not know. I just heard an insinuation in the presentation from the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and, of course, that will be investigated.

But on September 27, 2011, the Commissioner of Police wrote the managing director of the Trinidad and Tobago Air Support Company Limited thanking him for his interest to supply his unique services to the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. Now, what is unique about a small single-engine toy plane? What is unique about that? And, which single-engine aircraft built from a kit—this thing was put together from parts, you know. When you read the thing—the Zenith STOL and CH701 and CH750 are a family of light two-placed kit-built aircraft designed by some Canadian aeronautical engineer. *[Interruption]* Do it yourself. When you get into the emails, you will see how preposterous this whole thing is.

Here we have the Government is replacing the surveillance capability of the airship, which they say was no good, “doh mind” it reduced kidnapping from 100 down to five, less than 10. “Dey say it no good forget dat, we doh want to bother with dat, we not interested in reducing kidnapping. Dat is wat dey say.” But they are replacing it now with this thing:

I wish to express my thanks to your company for your interest to supply your unique services as a law enforcement aviation pilot project.

It goes on to talking about. How the police service is in the process of some 21<sup>st</sup> Century policing initiative. Twenty-first Century? This looks like something from

the Wright brothers from 1911. But, anyway, the fact is it goes on to talk about the client being the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service, contractor Trinidad and Tobago Air Support Company Limited, deliverables 720 hours of use, of this Zenith Air Scout Aircraft.

“Hm, maybe is for boy cubs.”

Contract cost TT \$902,000; contract period, 12 weeks.

So, for a period of three months, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is going to pay this company almost \$1 million to provide us with a little light aeroplane that anybody from the Light Aeroplane Club of Trinidad and Tobago could provide us for free.

What is curious about this is the sequence of events that led up to the procurement, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Laventille East/Morvant read out some of the things, but, when you read these emails the—excuse me Member for Port of Spain South, you are disturbing me. *[Interruption]* No, it is a fact. I have to be consistent, you know. “When you read out these emails,” you have a very scandalous situation. This is an email, July 03, 2011, from this Dan Condon “fella”—*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Rowley:** Before the contract was awarded.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Yes. This contract was awarded in September. This is an email from July, last year:

Eddie, flight was great, thanks. Would have called but my cellphone battery died.

Then it goes on the same:

Dan, sorry about the headsets. Patrick put the aircraft together yesterday morning.

**Hon. Member:** What?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** We were using the battery in the Piper Chieftain and the radios were in the shop. Notice the new knob I put for you on the ADF. The aircraft has not flown since used it last, so the fuel should be the same. The keys are under the carpet in the usual place.

*[Interruption]*

**Dr. Browne:** How much money this thing cost?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I will try with security, but Jack can easily get a pass from AA if he likes. Eddie.

**Mr. Warner:** “Why yuh putting me in dat boy, why yuh putting me in dat?”

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Not you. Mr. Speaker—[*Interruption*]

**Mr. Warner:** Say Jack who!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I am not—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Not you, Jack.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** —totally au courant with this matter. It has come as a shock to me as, I am sure it has come as a shock to all right-thinking citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. But, I am certain the “Jack” who is being referred to is not that Jack. [*Points to Mr. Warner*] Okay?

**Hon. Member:** Not you Jack.

**Mr. Warner:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** So calling Jack now, not you.

**Mr. Warner:** All right.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Can you work your magic with the security folks at the airport? How much gas does the plane have in it? [*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** What magic is that?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Will Patrick put the keys in the plane? Headset still in place? Yes, no problem. Remember this aircraft has no insurance [*Laughter*] whoever breaks it will fix it. Have fun!

Eddie.

Right, so—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Have fun?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Have fun! And then it goes on. There is another one before that about:

Good, I need to take Jack Ewatski flying.

Okay—[*Interruption*]

**Hon. Member:** Oh, oh, oh!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I am back now,. I have been talking to Jack Ewatski.

This is July 02—

He wants to fly. Plane available?

So you have these sequences of events. Danny is telling Eddie: “I have been talking to Ewatski. He wants to fly.” And, then they go through this thing:

The key is under the carpet, take the battery from the other plane.

Remember this thing “eh fly for ah long time eh, and it have no insurance and take Jack up in the air, man”. Then they say: “Flight was great.” And the end result of this scandal is the Commissioner of Police entering into a contract—and this is a signed contract here—[*Mr. Imbert flips through documents*—the signatures are on the back—for almost \$1 million, to rent this little light aeroplane for three months to carry out surveillance work.

Mr. Speaker, before I got into that I was about to point out that light aircraft of this type with a rotary engine, which is an internal combustion engine; which, just like a car, has an exhaust system. So, as you have internal combustion, the aviation fuel is converted into heat in the engine, and then you have the by-products of the combustion process come out through the back of the engine, through the exhaust pipe. It makes a noise. You must have heard crop dusters and these little light aircraft flying around. You can hear them. This thing is not fitted with a silencer. So, they are going to use a little light aircraft, a noisy little light aircraft, to do national security surveillance of kidnappers, murderers, gang members, robbers, burglars and so on. This is what Trinidad and Tobago is coming to?

This is what we paying these gentlemen these expensive salaries to engage in this “pappyshow”? They must all be laughing at us, Mr. Speaker, “Look how we ketch dem. We take ah plane” whose value, if you buy it new, is just over TT \$100,000 for one of these things. If you go on the market now and buy a brand new one of these things, \$100,000, but they are renting us a \$100,000 little toy plane for \$1 million for three months. For three months, they are renting us a plane worth \$100,000 for \$1 million, and you cannot use this plane for any surveillance. The kidnappers will hear it coming from a mile. The bandits would hear and see this plane—[*Interruption*]

**Dr. Browne:** He did not—could you tell us what countries use such planes?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** I will love to know what serious countries in the world use light aeroplanes of this type, single or double seater with rotary engine, diesel engine, for surveillance of criminals. I would love to know. And I can tell you, “that aircraft cannot hover over nothing. As it start to hover, it go crash.” So, it would seem to me that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has, in fact, dismantled our capability to conduct [*Desk thumping*] aerial surveillance of criminals.

[MR. IMBERT]

Whether you like it or not, whether you thought it was inefficient or not, whether you thought it was expensive or not, the fact of the matter is, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and there was a significant reduction in kidnapping or over 90 per cent reduction in kidnapping using aerial surveillance equipment that they have now disposed of.

Now, Mr. Speaker, let us deal with drug interdiction. What have they done with respect to that? On a previous occasion I had cause to read from an American security report talking about the international drug trade. I recall displaying some diagrammes that showed the flow of illicit narcotics from the producer countries of Colombia, and I think Peru to a lesser extent, through Venezuela, through Trinidad and Tobago, up to the United States and Europe.

It is well documented and well established that this is where the bulk of narcotics comes from. I mean, you have types of narcotics. You have heroin coming from the east and you have cocaine coming from the west, but we are talking essentially about cocaine, crack and things like that, Mr. Speaker, produced in Colombia and other countries in the vicinity of Colombia, passing through Venezuela and then they come to Trinidad and Tobago and they are repackaged and trans-shipped out of Trinidad and Tobago to North America and Europe. Everybody is well aware of this. It is well documented in the literature for the last 20, 30 years.

There was a proposal to have a regional approach to stop the shipment of illegal narcotics out of Venezuela into Trinidad and Tobago and up to Europe and to the United States. There was collaboration between the French government, the British government, the Dutch government, the Trinidad and Tobago Government and the American government with respect to surveillance of our Caribbean Sea. A lot of the drug busts that have taken place within the Caribbean Sea have been done by the French navy in particular, in the Southern Caribbean. Apparently they have some responsibility for the Southern Caribbean.

If you read the literature, you will see the size of the drug bust that have been made within the last 10 years or so, coming out of Venezuela through Trinidad and Tobago and then the stuff is put onto yachts and vessels. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars of cocaine, Mr. Speaker. So, there was a collaboration between all of these navies from the developed world, and Caricom, with respect to a regional strategy, which would now incorporate the governments of South America, Central America, North America and the Caribbean, together with some European nations that have an interest. Remember you have French

territories in the Caribbean, Guadeloupe and Martinique; you have Dutch territories, Curaçao and Aruba, within the Caribbean. There is collaboration between all of these countries that have an interest in the Caribbean Basin/the Caribbean Sea and it was agreed that Caricom would have a role in the patrolling of the Caribbean Sea.

**4.00 p.m.**

This led to the contract for the procurement of three offshore patrol vessels. As part of agreements within Caricom, Trinidad and Tobago, being the wealthiest country in the Caribbean, agreed that it would provide naval assets to work together with the navies of France, Great Britain, Holland and the United States to create an offshore patrol system within the Caribbean.

So, Trinidad and Tobago was going to take care of dealing with its north coast, its east coast, its south coast and also the Southern Caribbean up to Grenada, St. Vincent, St. Lucia and so on. The other countries would come in and collaborate; and all of the naval assets would be pooled together to give an offshore platform for the interception and interdiction of illegal narcotics. That is the genesis of this OPV contract.

Working together with these offshore military assets would be shore-based craft. You have fast patrol craft and these were delivered just before the general election—six of them, manufactured in Australia; six fast patrol craft capable of achieving a speed of approximately 40 knots, together with either six or nine interceptors. I am pulling from memory. These are smaller craft that could maintain a speed of 50 knots. So, you have the small interceptors, capable of going at 50 knots; the fast patrol craft, which will have a crew of maybe 25 or 30 men and which would have guns on them—they are here already, the six fast patrol craft—from Austal of Australia; and then the three offshore patrol vessels which were being manufactured in Great Britain.

The offshore patrol vessels would have a range of some 5,000 miles; could stay out at sea for 35 days; could carry between 70 and 120 men; and could travel at 25 knots. On each offshore patrol vessel, there was a landing pad for an armed helicopter. These are short-range aircraft. I will come to helicopters now.

Helicopters have different specifications. As I said, the Blackhawk, the one that you see in the movies, in Iraq and so on, can fly for long periods, but there are short-range military helicopters that can fly for maybe two or three hours. These helicopters were the ones to be based on the OPVs.

So when you take the 360-degree radar system, which is established around the coastline of Trinidad and Tobago, it can see the drug shipment coming out of

[MR. IMBERT]

Colombia or Venezuela or wherever it is. You can pick it up by satellite and, using the radar, you will see what is suspected to be a shipment of illegal drugs leaving these countries in their fast boats—they usually use fast boats—and you would have your OPV patrolling outside with its helicopter which could get up to over 100 knots, faster than any boat. Helicopters can fly faster than any boat, so you immediately deploy your helicopter and then you have your fast patrol craft coming out of the shore so that, in a pincer movement, you trap the drug trafficker. That was the whole point.

You cannot just use shore-based technology. I understand this is what the new Government is saying, badly advised by their national insecurity advisor, that you can use shore-based technology; but you cannot. If you have one of these drug boats going at 60 knots—because they can go at these speeds or faster—the only way to catch them is to have some capability on the high seas waiting for them, so you take off from the shore behind them and then the helicopter and the interceptors, which are on the offshore patrol vessels, catch them in a pincer movement.

By eliminating the offshore capability, you now allow the drug man to just outrun you because he is running faster than you already. Your helicopters cannot be shore based because they do not have the range. That is why this is a short-range military helicopter from the offshore vessel that can easily intercept the drug boat. I am of the view that the Government's strategy is quite short-sighted.

I suspect they are just listening to this character who is the country's advisor and this person, or whoever else is advising the Minister of National Security and the National Security Council, just does not have the holistic overview on how you deal with drug interdiction. Our offshore patrol vessels were supposed to be working in collaboration with the other offshore vessels of the French Navy, the British Navy and the American Navy. So you form a ring and push the drug traffickers out of the region. That was the whole point.

The problem in Trinidad and Tobago is that anybody who does any smattering of research on our security problems would know that the real root of crime in Trinidad and Tobago—homicides and violent crime—is drugs. That is what it is all about. It is a fight over turf. Trinidad and Tobago is well known to be a trans-shipment country and it is a fight over turf to get involved in this trade. The way to stop violent crime in Trinidad and Tobago—or to reduce it significantly—is to stop the inflow of drugs into Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

We do not produce drugs here. We do not make cocaine here, but certainly the cocaine comes out of Colombia, through Venezuela, et cetera, into Trinidad and



Tobago waters and is then reshipped using yachts. Yachties, quite a few of them, have been caught and arrested with tons of cocaine, or container vessels, commercial vessels, and so on. If you do not have the offshore capability with the fast interceptors, the fast helicopters working with the other military powers in the region, then you simply cannot stop the drugs from coming in.

The other problem that we have—people wonder why we have so many illegal guns in Trinidad and Tobago—is that the guns come with the drugs. Apparently it is a bonus. The drugs continue on to the destination country. The cocaine passes through Trinidad; it is broken up and sent on, but the guns remain. It is part of an incentive for the—

**Hon. Member:** How do you know this?

**Mr. C. Imbert:** It is well documented in literature. Mr. Speaker, I have read out in this Parliament reports on Trinidad and Tobago that go back for years, as far as 15 years ago. So the guns come from Venezuela in the boats with the drugs, and the guns remain. That is why we have so many guns in Trinidad and Tobago. They are a surplus to the trade and if you are able to intercept these drug traffickers, you will stop the flow of illegal guns as well. From all the information that I have read, the trade in guns is not so much somebody putting in an order to get 100 guns out of Venezuela, it is that the guns come as an accessory to the cocaine when it comes in on the boat to protect the shipment, as the Leader of the Opposition says, and also as an incentive to the drug people here in Trinidad and Tobago.

What has the Government put in place to build our capacity to intercept drug shipments on the high seas? I think, from where I sit, it is fair to say that the Government has, in effect, done some dismantling of the programme that was in place to give Trinidad and Tobago the capacity to intercept shipments of drugs coming from the producer countries in Central America. I think it is fair to say that.

I would not have minded if the Minister of National Security had come here and told us what you are replacing it with because it was a holistic strategy. You said it was too expensive. All right! The same thing with the airship. You say it is too expensive. Okay! You are a new Government; that is a policy decision. What did you replace the airship with? A toy aeroplane? Not even that. What are you replacing the offshore patrol vessels with? How are we building our drug interdiction capability? I am not hearing anything from the Minister, you know.

All I heard today was a set of—again using the words of the Minister of Works and Infrastructure—histrionics. I did not hear the Minister of National Security tell us: “Okay, we recognize there is a problem with drug shipments coming out of Colombia, passing through Venezuela, finding their way into Trinidad for onward

[MR. IMBERT]

shipment to Europe and North America. We recognize that.” I did not hear him say that and, in order to deal with that, this is what the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is doing. I did not hear that. All I heard was a set of “ol” talk about the PNM doing nothing and the PNM did this and that.

The Member for Chaguanas West was recently attending a funeral because of the very tragic death of two fishermen. They were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, Member for Chaguanas West, and there was no offshore patrol vessel and no military capability to help them. As I said, they are coming in with the drugs and guns. They must use people here to repackage and to reship; but that is not the point. If you do not stop the drugs from coming in, you will be forever putting out fires. This is crisis management. If you do not deal with it at source, all you are doing is dealing with the symptoms of the problem. You are not dealing with the problem itself.*[Interruption]*

I heard the Minister of National Security—Mr. Speaker, I know they are having a congenial conversation, but they are disturbing me.

**Mr. Speaker:** I agree.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** The two of them; the leaders are disturbing me.

I heard the Minister say that our police communication system is obsolete. He is probably right but, Mr. Speaker, I was a member of a ministerial committee and one of the responsibilities of that ministerial committee was to oversee the procurement of a number of systems and military assets for the security of Trinidad and Tobago. I distinctly remember that we had procured the services of an expert in digital communication in police communication systems, in national security data collection and dissemination from the United States. I distinctly remember that at the last meeting, just before the general election—I think the last meeting was in April 2010—we had reached the stage where the specifications and the procurement mechanism for the acquisition of a new digital communication system for the police and national security agencies had been settled. I distinctly remember that all that was necessary to be done—utilizing the services of this United States expert who had been sent to us by the United States authorities—was to invite tenders.

I heard the Minister talk about the system being obsolete and the PNM doing nothing. That is not exactly true. The PNM put in place the capability to invite and evaluate tenders and to award a contract. If the Minister of National Security could only do what the Member for Chaguanas West, the Minister of Works and Infrastructure, does all the time—he takes the projects of the PNM that were in

progress and finishes them—then we would have a proper digital radio system in Trinidad and Tobago. [*Desk thumping*]

What has happened since May 2010? What has the Ministry of National Security done? The specifications were completed. All of the potential suppliers were identified. The procurement regime had been settled. [*Interruption*] All they had to do was to invite bids and award a contract. They have done nothing for the last two years. [*Interruption*] You have awarded no contract. You have invited no tenders for communication systems. I did not hear the Minister say that. So that for the last two years, you have just spun around in the same place and Trinidad and Tobago is now either in the same place or worse off than it was in May 2010.

If the 999 and police communication system were obsolete in May 2010, they were very well obsolete in January 2012. What have they done? It is just talk, semantics and histrionics, Mr. Speaker.

I recall, as well, that there is a problem with prisoner transportation and that committee was looking at a new system. Again an expert was brought down from the United States to assist the Ministry of National Security and, again, all of the scope of works, the specifications, the tender documents; everything was ready to invite proposals for a new system of prisoner transportation in Trinidad and Tobago. What has happened between May 2010 and now? Zero, Mr. Speaker.

#### **4.15 p.m.**

The same company that was providing prisoner transportation in 2010 and 2011 is the same company providing it in 2012. There has been no improvement in the system, and then you to want know, what happens when prisoners arrive late? The Member for St. Augustine is always telling me that I have no courtroom experience. [*Crosstalk*] He has told me that I have no experience as an advocate in the court, but through you, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for St. Augustine will know of the problems with prisoner transportation in Trinidad and Tobago—prisoners arriving late; the equipment is inadequate and so on.

There was a system in place to completely modernize our system of prisoner transportation, and I did not hear the Minister talk about that. I did not hear the Minister tell us what they have put in place to replace our drug-interdiction strategy. I have not heard him tell us what they have put in place to replace our aerial surveillance capability.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the speaking time of the hon. Member has expired.

*Motion made:* That the hon. Member's speaking time be extended by 30 minutes. [*Miss M. McDonald*]

*Question put and agreed to.*

**Mr. C. Imbert:** As I said, Mr. Speaker—[*Crosstalk*]—no problem, we will do that. I will support you. We expect to get a proposal shortly from the relevant authorities. Is that not so, Mr. Speaker? The fact of the matter is, under the present Standing Orders, I think I would have, at least, another 13 minutes, unless you decide to rudely interrupt me before 4.30 p.m. The fact is, there were a number of procurement exercises in place to deal with our aging national security infrastructure; to deal with what the Minister has described as our obsolete infrastructure. I am not going to argue with him on that.

The very reason that we set up an interministerial committee for the procurement of military assets was because we recognized that we need to modernize our national security systems, our coast guard capability, our military capability, our police telecommunications capability and so on; and everything was there to be done. As I said, why did they not do like the Member for Chaguanas West and just take it and run with it? I would love to know. But just coming here and telling us “a set of ol' talk” about the cost of the blimp, and the blimp would not see and all these kinds of things. [*Crosstalk*] It was not supposed to, it was to hear; it was not to see. It was to hear.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to dismantling the strategy that was in place and the systems that were in place for aerial surveillance, drug interdiction, prisoner transportation and national security telecommunications, there is also the allegation that the Government must answer with respect to the dismantling of the specialized agencies that were set up to deal with criminal gangs in this country. I am not hearing an answer to that either.

The new Government came in and said SAUTT is a waste of time—a set of multimillion-dollar men in there and only PNM—in fact, I took notes: They are going Maracas and if they are not in Maracas they are on the golf course. [*Crosstalk*] The fact of the matter is, there was a Special Anti-Crime Unit which was tasked to deal with criminal gangs in Trinidad and Tobago; to deal with interception of communications to strike—

**Mr. Roberts:** To “maco”!

**Miss McDonald:** That is unparliamentary.

**Dr. Rowley:** Withdraw that.

**Mr. Roberts:** I withdraw.

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes Member, please. Continue.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There was a special anti-crime unit, and as the Member for Laventille East/Morvant has told us, the people within the system were being trained in crime scene investigation. That is a skill that we lack in Trinidad and Tobago. Any of us who watch cable will see CSI, and see how they go to a crime scene and pick up a little fragment of cloth; a cigarette butt or whatever, and then they analyze it in the laboratory and use their forensic capability to hunt for clues as to the perpetrators of the crime.

Mr. Speaker, the Special Anti-Crime Unit was training local people in crime scene investigations and in modern crime scene investigation techniques in the handling of evidence, and in the investigation of physical evidence found on a crime scene. All those fellows that you say were eating “shark and bake” in Maracas, I saw them on crime scenes dressed in their protective gear. I am aware that some of those foreigners were here training our locals in crime scene investigations. The new Government says it is a waste of time, but what have you replaced them with? What programme is in place in Trinidad and Tobago to improve our crime scene investigation capability? I did not hear a word from the Minister.

With respect to the interception of communications, one of the first actions of the new Government was to shutdown the strategic services agencies. They subsequently, after that, appointed some junior technician to head the agency, but that is another story. The fact of the matter is—[*Crosstalk*] That was the second story. The first story was that there was a big hullabaloo in Parliament about the interception of communications and how unlawful it was, and so. The net effect of all of that was that they stopped monitoring criminals in Trinidad and Tobago.

**Mr. Roberts:** Not true!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** They did stop; the shut it down. They came to the Parliament, and we went through a marathon session. We went to a joint select committee and came up with joint proposals for the orderly collection of sensitive information, but the Minister of National Security has not told us—they dismantled what was there—the interception of conversations between criminals—what has happened since they put the new system in place. I did not hear a word from the Minister about the effectiveness of our new interception of communications strategies, not a word. I would have to assume—because I have not heard anything—that the system is just not working, and that is what we expected to hear from the Minister.

[MR. IMBERT]

I heard the Member for Laventille East/Morvant tell us about a homicide unit which they have closed down. So the Anti-Kidnapping Squad has closed down; the homicide unit has closed down; SAUTT has closed down; the SSA “mash up”; the blimp was sold; OPVs were cancelled. Helicopters, which are supposed to be fitted with guns and outfitted for men—you know when you watch TV, you see these fellows all dressed up with their parachute and bulletproof vests, their helmets and their guns—these military helicopters were designed to transport troops, specialized units dealing with the prevention and interception of crime.

I have seen the photograph of the interior of one of these helicopters—reconfigured, refashioned, reengineered, plush leather seats, table; and I think there is even a machine dispensing refreshments, Mr. Speaker.

**Dr. Moonilal:** Dispensing ice!

**Mr. C. Imbert:** When you look at these military helicopters, which are supposed to work on an offshore patrol vessel in a hostile environment intercepting drug traffickers on the high seas—you could imagine what this helicopter would be like, Mr. Speaker. It would be light, stripped down to the bone, just metal interior—and capability to go after drug traffickers in a flash, Mr. Speaker. These military helicopters are now being converted into the most luxurious aircraft you could think of. Have you ever seen Air Force I? Have you ever seen the interior of Air Force I? They have a bed, a shower, television, a couch, kitchen and a table.

**Mr. Speaker:** Please! We have about another five minutes before tea, so let us just hold our hunger, if that is the case. Hon. Member, you may continue.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The point is, setting all jokes aside, these armed helicopters were designed for military application. They were designed to be very light; they were designed to be stripped out so that they could be as fast as possible; and they were designed to take guns so that they could intercept drug traffickers on the high seas, and they would land and take off from a platform on the offshore patrol vessels.

The helicopters are being converted into plush Porsche-like personnel carriers, complete with leather seats—[*Crosstalk*] Yes, it is a fact—and ice-dispensing machines. You just heard it from the Member for Oropouche East. I would send you a photograph. So, since they have taken the military helicopters and changed their internal outfitting—no fellow in battle fatigues and helmet with a gun on his back and muddy boots is going to trying to dodge between the couch, the sofa, the bed, the ice machine and the shower and the various other things inside this helicopter. It is supposed to be an open interior.

So these military helicopters, having been converted for pleasure, could the Government tell us, because the Minister did not tell—when I say “pleasure”, I mean pleasure craft. I do not mean any other connotation. You all have dirty minds. So, Mr. Speaker, these aircraft are being converted from very tight military machines into pleasure craft. What has the Government replaced them with? If you are going to use these aircraft for carrying people up and down, where are you getting the interception capability from?

The helicopters that we have now—the ones that were bought before this—were not designed for interception, Mr. Speaker. They were designed for surveillance and for support in a raid. You must have seen these helicopters together with a platoon of soldiers and police and so on maybe in the hills. I see them in my constituency. You have the helicopter providing air support and the men on the ground trying to root out some criminal or something like that. That is what our other helicopters are designed for: short-range air support to ground operations.

Where is the Trinidad and Tobago capability in terms of armed helicopters to intercept drug traffickers out on the high seas? That is why this Motion speaks to the dismantling, because they have dismantled our capability to intercept drug traffickers using aircraft. I did not hear the Minister come with any strategy and say, “All right, we are buying four more helicopters to augment our fast patrol craft. We have another type of aircraft we are going to use to complement our naval assets in order to interdict drug shipments.” I did not hear a word out of him; not a word.

You see, that is why this Motion is calling on the Government to take steps to put in place an effective national security system to protect our borders. Our borders are now wide open. Mr. Speaker, at another time I spoke about the amount of marijuana that is coming in on the north-east quadrant from St. Vincent—hundreds of tonnes of marijuana coming in off Toco, Balandra and so on. What is being done? I read out a police record from the Cumana or Toco Police Station about the amount of marijuana coming in from St. Vincent into our north-east coast. What system—it is hundreds of tonnes.

**Mr. Roberts:** You said thousands of tonnes.

**Mr. C. Imbert:** Sorry, it is hundreds of tonnes—millions of dollars’ worth of marijuana coming out of St. Vincent into Trinidad. What is the Government doing to deal with the trade in marijuana along our north-east coast, Mr. Speaker? What is the Government doing to intercept the flow of cocaine from Venezuela?

[MR. IMBERT]

Mr. Speaker, I join with the Member for Laventille East/Morvant and I demand that the Government put in place an effective national security system to secure our borders and, by extension, the citizenry of Trinidad and Tobago. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. [*Desk thumping*]

#### ADJOURNMENT

**The Minister of Housing and the Environment (Hon. Dr. Roodal Moonilal):** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn to Friday, February 03, 2012 at 1.30 p.m. and to serve notice that on that day it is the intention of the Government to debate two Motions under “Government Business”: Motion No. 1 by the Minister of Public Utilities and Motion No. 3 by the Minister of National Security, and time permitting, Bill No. 8, a Bill to amend the Legal Aid and Advice Act, Chap. 7: 07, 2011. I beg to move, Mr. Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly.*

*Adjourned at 4.31 p.m.*