



Ministerial Statement

By

The Hon. Wayne Caines, JP, MP
Minister of National Security

The Bermuda Coast Guard

14th February 2020

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to not only give an update in relation to where we are with the Bermuda Coast Guard, but to also ensure that we are mindful of the position we were in prior to the implementation and where we are headed.

Mr. Speaker, you and members of this honorable house would be cognizant that much discussion took place in 2016 in relation to the Royal Bermuda Regiment (RBR) assuming responsibility for inshore maritime patrolling from the Bermuda Police Service (BPS). However, there was very little movement. Prior to that you would be conscious that the National Security and Defense Review Report in 2014, identified that the Regiment could establish a maritime unit or a Coast Guard in line with a proposal that was presented to Cabinet in February 2013. This was agreed to by the then Commissioner of Police who at

the time expressed his desire to ‘**refocus on law enforcement and to divest/delegate ancillary services to the appropriate third parties**’.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018 this government working with Government House had a proof of concept document developed which identified a possible road map to make this concept a reality.

On Friday 10th August 2018 I stated that the Bermuda Coast Guard would be at full operating capability by April 2020. I am pleased to state this ship is sailing on course for meeting that target.

Mr. Speaker, the Unit will operate jointly for a year under the operational control of the BPS. Although this will allow for the hiring of new members, it is more important to note the following:

The Defence (Coast Guard Unit) Amendment Act 2018 not only made amendments to the Defence Act 1965 and the Interpretation Act 1951, **but** also included the Police Act 1974, the Police Complaints Authority Act 1998, The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 2006 (PACE), The Police (Conduct) Orders 2016, and the Police (Performance) Orders 2016. In short the members within the Coast Guard shall have the same powers and authorities as are conferred by law on members of the BPS. Many of the members of the Regimental Boat troop had previously been

sworn in as Special Constables with the BPS given those powers and the authority as police officers. Others shall be sworn in shortly.

Mr. Speaker, in order to achieve proficiency across the spectrum of tasks associated with an in-shore Coast Guard, in addition to providing emergency services and which also has enforcement functions, especially as it relates to the aforementioned Acts and Orders, an aggressive training plan has been put in place by the project team. The Coast Guard will receive specialist training in addition to law and procedures and will have the opportunity to apply the training this summer. This is the first and most important phase for 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the Unit will maintain an in-shore Coast Guard in order to secure Bermuda's Territorial waters, initially out to 12 nautical miles and beyond depending on sea state and the available assets. Members of the Unit will operate out of the Command Centre at Watford House in the Parish of Sandys, providing a 24 hour on-duty capability during the summer boating season. We are working towards the accreditation of the Command Centre, and envision that it and the Unit will become the Centre of Excellence for the other Overseas Territories.

Mr. Speaker, last year in 2019, Government House identified a Coast Guard advisor from the Royal Navy, Commander Marcus Jacques. This gentleman has over 31 years of experience with the Royal Navy. He has been working closely with the Royal Bermuda Regiment and the Bermuda Police Service in making the concept of a Bermuda Coast Guard Unit a reality.

Mr. Speaker, Commander Jacques, working with representatives from both the regiment and the police developed a plan that is to be phased in over the next 5 years. The main focus at this time is ensuring that the men and women of the Coast Guard are satisfactorily trained in Search & Rescue (SAR), Marine Safety, Marine Security, Accident & Disaster Response, Pollution Response, Vessel and Traffic Management, Customs & Boarder Control, Fisheries Control and Law Enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, members have been fortunate to have recently receive training in relation to shoreline cleaning and assessment techniques (SCAT) and oil spill response. This training was put on by the Department of Environment & Natural Resources. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) has also provided Royal Navy International Maritime training in, advanced small craft handling and navigation. The Royal Yachting Association (RYA) has provided

training to members of the Coast Guard which will assist in them obtaining the internationally recognized Royal Yachting Association (RYA) boating qualifications. The intent is to ensure all members of the Coast Guard receive standardized training making it easier to obtain full accreditation. We must ensure that Bermuda meets the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Triple I Code Inspection towards the end of this year, which amongst other things, will be focusing on our Search & Rescue capabilities requiring 24 hour coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the Newport to Bermuda Race is due to commence on June 19th 2020 with the first vessels arriving on June 20th through 24th. This will be the first major event taking place this summer. The Coast Guard will play a significant role and will be assuming responsibility for:

1. Search and Rescue within a 12 mile limit, partnering with Marine and Ports should it be required.
2. Marine transport and support to sister agencies (Customs/ Immigration/Fire) as required in relation to any bespoke operations.
3. Port Security of the Hamilton area and surrounding environs where yachts will dock. Possibly St Georges and Dockyard depending on final number of entrants.

4. Marine enforcement

5. Disaster Response and Management.

There will also be a table top exercise prior to the event.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the boats being used, I want emphasize that these are not new boats. Both the Regiment and the BPS had their boats surveyed and refurbished to meet the initial requirements in order to make the Coast Guard a reality.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the financial implication for this year 2020, regarding the Coast Guard I can state that both the Bermuda Police Service and the Royal Bermuda Regiment have worked extremely hard in identified funding within their current budget to establish the Coast Guard. As we move forward into 2021 and the next phase of the plan, additional funding may be required as we move to make the Bermuda Coast Guard its own entity.

Mr. Speaker, we have come a long way but I recognize there is still a lot of work to be done. To ensure that we continue to meet our medium to long term plans a steering committee has been created in addition to the project team. The project team continues to meet almost daily. The launch of the Bermuda Coast Guard is a significant milestone for us as we evolve this new service.

Finally **Mr. Speaker**, members of this house, I wish to once again congratulate all involved for ensuring the success of our new Coast Guard Unit. To the men and women of the Bermuda Coast Guard, I am aware that there was some storming before the norming to make this unit a reality but I want to leave you with this quote, '**Life's roughest storms prove the Strength of our anchors**'. Always remember hope anchors the soul.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.