

SENTATE STATEMENT

BY

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JUNIOR MINISTER OF NATIONAL
SECURITY AND TRANSPORT

OCTOBER 4TH 2023

**UPDATE ON BERMUDA
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
FIREFIGHTERS**

Madam President, since my last statement on this matter, I am pleased to report that our twenty-three (23) local recruit firefighters that travelled to Newcastle U.K. on the 05th August 2023 for six weeks to receive specialist training, successfully completed their foundational training course qualifying them as aircraft rescue firefighters.

Madam President, you may recall my previous statement when I stated that the Newcastle **International Fire Training Academy** is a world-class aircraft rescue firefighting training facility with highly qualified instructors. The Minister of National Security had the opportunity to visit the facility recently and learn how this Training Academy prepares trainee firefighters and was very impressed with the training products they offered. He also spent time on a first-hand tour of the life-size mock- up simulator of a commercial Aircraft and after learning more about the specific requirements of the aviation industry, it was evident, that our recruits were trained to the highest standards and is on par with any jurisdiction. The

Minister met and spoke with the recruits asking them about their experiences and they expressed that they had received excellent training and were keen to return to Bermuda to put that training to good use. They had clearly enjoyed their training and the morale was exceedingly high amongst them.

Madam President, our new firefighters worked extremely hard to qualify as Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighters, each one of them was taught how to work as a member of a cohesive team under hostile conditions. Additionally, they were individually assessed for evidence of assimilation of core aerodrome knowledge specifically, those relevant areas of the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) Publications such as CAP 168, CAP 1168, CAP 699, and the Air Navigation Order ANO 2016. In addition, they were required to demonstrate competence in the following core skills namely,

1. Chemistry of Combustion (including Hydraulics)
2. Aircraft Engines
3. Aircraft Undercarriages
4. Aircraft Construction
5. Aviation Fuels
6. Freight (including Dangerous Goods)
7. Military Aircraft
8. Helicopters
9. Fire Appliances
10. Complex Rescue Equipment
11. Firefighting equipment and media
12. Tactics and techniques of Firefighting

Each Firefighter would be required to undergo a specialized driving course enabling them to drive and operate the sophisticated Fire Vehicles used for Aircraft Crash Fire and Rescue. This includes how to

drive, position, and deploy the relevant resources depending on the incident type, of which there are many. They would later undertake a one week Self Contained Breathing Apparatus Course where they would learn about the operation of the equipment using it in smoke filled environments. This would also be carried out in confined space and under extreme heat and humidity with internal fires being present. At the end of these 'specialist' weeks, further assessments were conducted including a written exam, an oral exam, and a practical assessment.

Madam President, each recruit received a certificate of competence in accordance with CAP 699 (Standards for the competence of Rescue and Firefighting Service personnel, developed by the U.K. Civil Authority) additionally each of them received a certificate of completion of their foundational recruits' course from the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service.

Madam President, this milestone is significant as it represents the end phase of the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service's emergency plan to rapidly expand and build the extra workforce capacity required to meet the new minimum staffing levels mandated by the Aerodrome Regulators. The amount of resource energy and time expended by the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service to reach this stage was nothing short of extraordinary because of the timings of similar recruitment drives taking place in the wider Ministry.

Madam President, I am pleased to inform Members that our newly trained Fire Officers replaced the overseas consultant firefighters on 1st October 2023.

Madam President, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the role our Consultant Firefighters fulfilled during the most challenging period of this project. Last year, when the Aerodrome Audit Report featured prominently in the public sphere, the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service with the support of the Government developed a plan in coordination with a Canadian based Fire Protection Service provider which resulted in a surge of overseas consultant firefighters who answered the call to serve in Bermuda for the past 18 months.

Madam President, last week the Minister of National Security met with the Consultant Firefighters and expressed this Government's deepest appreciation for their willingness to leave the comfort of familiar surroundings and very quickly acclimate to living and working in Bermuda. Our consultants provided excellent service on behalf of the Bermuda Fire & Rescue Service and I wish for the record to reflect our deepest gratitude for that.

Madam President, we are committed to ensuring that there are sufficient resources at the airport to maintain operations. We are also committed to recruiting and retaining Bermudians in the Service in general. This

essential service provides a challenging and rewarding career and I encourage people to apply to join.

Madam President, in closing, I wish to point out that this is another example of a *promise made and promise kept.*

Madam President, I hasten to thank the women and men throughout the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service for their continued outstanding service to this Country, without which, our lifeline at the airport would not be able to function and operate.

Thank you, **Madam President.**