



National Statement by The Commissioner of
Police Clayton Fernander
On The United States Southern District of
New York Indictment involving Bahamian
Nationals

December 1st, 2024

Tonight, I wish to address the recently filed indictment in the Southern District of New York.

On Tuesday, November 26, 2024, I was travelling with my family in Florida when I received a call from ASP Foster Rolle, captain of the Royal Bahamas Police Force aircraft. He informed me that Chief Superintendent Elvis Curtis had been arrested overnight and was

scheduled to be arraigned in Federal Court at 1:00 p.m.

Immediately, I contacted Chief Superintendent Harris Cash, our Liaison Officer attached to the Bahamas Consulate in Miami. At that time, he was unaware of the arrest but confirmed shortly after checking that Chief Superintendent Curtis was indeed in custody and facing the following charges:

1. Conspiracy to Import Cocaine
2. Possession and Use of Firearms

3. Firearm Conspiracy

Later that day, I met with Superintendent Cash and Mrs. Curtis, the wife of Chief Superintendent Curtis, at the courthouse where the arraignment took place.

Due to federal procedures, I could not speak with Chief Superintendent Curtis.

After the arraignment concluded, I immediately updated the Prime Minister, and the Minister of National Security, to ensure that

they were fully informed of this grave development.

This moment was not just shocking—it was devastating.

It cuts to the core of the trust that the Royal Bahamas Police Force is meant to represent.

The indictment outlines allegations against Chief Superintendent Elvis Curtis that raise serious questions about activities that allegedly began in May 2021.

The indictment further mentions Donald Frederick Ferguson II, who was previously questioned as a person of interest in the killing of Geovani Rolle.

His connection to this case, alongside Chief Superintendent Curtis, raises new questions that we are actively pursuing as part of our expanded investigation.

For now, we only know what is outlined in the indictment.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of how these activities began and then remained undetected, I have already initiated consultations with key individuals who held leadership roles during that period.

I have already spoken with former Commissioner of Police Paul Rolle, who served from March 2020 to July 2022.

Additionally, I intend to contact former Commissioner Anthony Ferguson, who served from October 30, 2017, to March 29, 2021.

In addition to former leaders outside of the Force, I intend to reach out to Former Prime Minister Hubert Minnis and Former Minister of National Security Marvin Dames, who were in office from 2017-2021, during the period in which the alleged crimes are said to have begun.

These discussions aim to determine whether any concerns or intelligence about these activities were raised during their tenures and, if so, how they were addressed.

I want to assure the Bahamian people that we will of course cooperate fully with the US Department of Justice.

To date, we have not as yet received a request to arrest the other individuals in the indictment.

Also, we have not been given the names of any additional police or government officials who may be under suspicion.

And, as far as I know, no one else in country, has been given the names of any individual or individuals referenced in the indictment.

Speculation as to who those individuals might be, can be extremely damaging to the reputations of innocent people.

At the moment, nobody knows.

We therefore discourage people from calling any names from the current and previous administrations.

It is pure speculation.

I also advise the public that the DOJ defines a government official as any individual currently working for the government, from a member of clerical staff, to a senior politician.

I additionally want to update the public on the investigation into Chief Superintendent Michael Johnson.

As previously mentioned in interviews, we are committed to concluding this matter in a few weeks, before the end of the year.

That commitment remains firm.

Only a thorough and transparent response by the Force to the findings of the investigation can advance the crucial objective of restoring the trust of the Bahamian people.

In helping to understand how we have arrived at this point, there is some context that Bahamians may find useful.

In 2019, the political directorate decided to reduce the size of the Force's senior leadership, and transferred a number of experienced officers outside of the organization.

I was assigned to the Ministry of Health.

In July 2022, I was appointed Commissioner of Police. Since that time, I have worked extremely closely with local and international partners, especially US agencies.

That partnership has resulted in many successful operations.

For decades, The Bahamas has relied heavily on the US Government for intelligence to drive operations involving weapons and drug

trafficking, given the vast resources required to address activities involving multi-national criminal organizations.

In our communities, we are making important progress in several categories of crime.

But we are well aware that there is still a lot of work to do.

A new 'Clear, Hold, and Build' initiative was launched recently and is still underway.

Even at this early stage, it is showing strong signs of success.

It is critical to understand that, as police officers, we can only act on evidence and intelligence.

At no time during my tenure did any of our international partners raise concerns about the activities outlined in the US indictment.

I have reviewed my meetings with agencies such as the FBI, US Homeland Security, The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the US Drug Enforcement Agency, and the US Bureau of International Narcotics

and Law Enforcement, as well as with the US Charge d'Affaires.

As recently as October 2024, none of these interactions highlighted suspicions about the individuals or activities now under investigation.

The crimes alleged in the indictment are extremely serious, and require serious change and reform in response.

Many police and security forces around the world have found themselves addressing very

serious allegations or crimes in their own ranks.

We have already started to benefit and learn from their experience.

Our neighbours in The Caribbean and North America, have also been challenged with similar breaches within senior ranks of law enforcement agencies.

This culture of corruption that has infiltrated the Royal Bahamas Police Force did not happen overnight.

But from today, we will redouble our efforts to stamp it out.

Dealing with police wrongdoing is complex and will require both a new legislative framework and operational changes.

As Commissioner, I believe these are the crucial steps needed to restore this institution's integrity and to rebuild the trust with the public that is so essential.

I fully support the government's proposal for independent civilian oversight of the Police Force.

Experience has shown that such oversight, which includes members of the public, has a strong deterrent effect on improper policing behaviour.

The public must know that someone is watching—not just from within but also from the outside. Independent oversight means that no one can hide behind the badge.

Tonight, I am presenting a framework to rebuild the Royal Bahamas Police Force that targets the failures and breaches in trust that have brought us to this point.

This plan is rooted in accountability, action, and transparency. It is bold because it must be, and I am asking for the support of the Bahamian people, the government, law enforcement and all stakeholders to see it through.

The first step is to create a safe way for people to report corruption.

I therefore propose the immediate implementation of an encrypted, anonymous whistleblower platform.

This will strengthen the existing protections we have for whistleblowers.

It will allow officers and citizens to report wrongdoing without fear of retaliation.

Corruption thrives in silence, and this platform will end that silence.

In addition, I will formally request significant increased funding from the Ministry of National Security to expand anti-corruption investigations.

With additional resources, we can become more self-reliant in our intelligence and evidence-gathering capability.

The introduction of body cameras has helped ensure that every police interaction is recorded and accountable.

To expand that accountability, I propose we accelerate the transition from paper-based systems to a fully digital platform. This platform will track every action the Force takes, creating a tamper-proof record that ensures transparency and eliminates manipulation.

I am also proposing mandatory annual integrity testing for all senior officers and mandatory financial disclosures for ranks at Chief Superintendent and above.

Any individual who has departmental responsibility should be subject to 'unexplained wealth orders'.

The public deserves to know that those at the top of this organization are beyond reproach.

We recruit our officers from members of the public, and so our recruitment process must also change.

In the past, several incidents of character references provided by members of the public were simply untrue.

Moving forward, I propose publishing the names of shortlisted recruits in the newspaper for public feedback during a 30-day review period.

This will allow citizens to raise concerns confidentially about any individual's character or past behaviour.

We want to know if someone in your community is unfit to wear this uniform.

Every credible concern will be investigated. Recruits will also face enhanced screenings to

ensure only individuals of the highest integrity join this Force.

For longer-serving members, I am proposing that the Force undergo mandatory annual ethics training.

Every officer, from the most junior to the most senior, will be reminded that serving the Bahamian people with integrity is not optional — it's the bare minimum.

Finally, we will create independent oversight channels where external bodies can review

misconduct reports to ensure transparency. No report will be swept under the rug.

If you are part of the problem, you will be found and dealt with.

If you are not prepared to meet the standards the Bahamian people expect, this is not the Force for you.

Unfortunately, corruption in our country goes beyond law enforcement.

According to a recent IDB report, nearly three-quarters of Bahamian firms admitted to paying bribes to obtain permits or access basic public services.

This report is a damning indictment, not just of the systems we've allowed to fester, but of the culture we've let grow in our country.

I'm asking you now: if you've ever been asked to pay a bribe, come forward, no matter how big or small. We need to know whether it was

for a permit, a favour, or to make something happen faster.

The sooner people start speaking up, the sooner we can start breaking the cycle.

The IDB report confirms what we already know: corruption has become normalized in too many corners of our society.

It will take all of us working together to change it.

This approach is about creating a system in which honesty has a chance to flourish, and wrongdoing has no place to hide.

A fairer, more just society benefits everyone.

To the many courageous and honest officers who serve with integrity: I know this moment is challenging for you.

I know you feel betrayed by your colleagues and scrutinized by the public.

Let me tell you this—you are the backbone of this Force.

You are the reason we still have hope, and I will fight for you.

We understand the seriousness of the moment, and the work to recover trust which we must do with all of our determination.

The Bahamian people expect more and deserve better.

These problems must not come to define this Force.

The Royal Bahamas police force is one of our country's oldest institutions, spanning more than 184 years.

We have had great storms before. We will emerge from this one better and stronger.

When the going gets tough, we do not cut and run. We do not turn our back on the problem, or simply push it aside onto other shoulders.

This moment requires strong, decisive leadership.

I will continue to uphold my oath and perform my duty with integrity, loyalty and courage.

Good Night, and God Bless you Bahamas.