

Announcement of new Deputy Police Commissioner in Turks and Caicos

My purpose today is to announce the appointment of a new Deputy Commissioner of Police and to explain to you the choice I've made. I will deal with that important matter in a few moments. Before that I intend to put that decision in the context of how I see crime on the island, and say something about the future openness that needs to exist between the public and the Police in terms of two way communication.

But before saying anything, I want to pay tribute to the officers in our Police Force. In the last three weeks, I've spent more time with them, than I have spent with my own team. I'm only just starting to get to know them but I like what I see. I note that the police come in for occasional criticism, from some quarter's sustained criticism. That criticism will probably pause the moment it is you who dials 911. These are the people that we rely on to move rapidly towards trouble when they are called on to do so, not run from it. Our police are this countries first responders and we are lucky to have men and women prepared to serve in this way.

I've just completed a visit to Grand Turk Police Station where I've been briefed on crime here in Grand Turk, and their response to it, by police officers serving in this, the nation's capital.

Crime is a headline issue at present and so it would be remiss of me to make a statement at a police station, announcing the appointment of a new Deputy Commissioner of Police, without touching upon this issue. In a few moments I'm going to provide a telephone number, if you are in anyway concerned about crime I'd ask that you write it down. Have a pen and paper, or your phone, to hand. This isn't just about me informing you, this is about how you can help.

In talking about crime, however, I don't have to be at a police station. I could be anywhere in these islands – a church – a home – a shop – a school – hanging out under a tree – at a basketball court – in the bush – in one of the best restaurants on the island. Anywhere.

Crime occurs when members of a society choose to reject the norms that a society has decided it needs, for the good of all. Those norms are called 'the law'. Laws provide peace and stability. Laws provide prosperity and security. Laws allow us to live the good life rather than a life lived in physical fear, a life lived in permanent mutual suspicion fearing that the strongest will take all.

The answer to crime therefore does not come from the police, or if it comes from the police, it comes as a last resort. The first responsibility of a society is not to build a police force to detect and arrest wrong-doing. The first role of society is to generate a climate where all who live within that society believe they have a sufficient stake in it that short-term possible profit, gained from wrong-doing, is overwhelmingly displaced by a belief that

their stake is in the collective security, and humanity, that the law provides for and demands.

A society has to be healthy and inclusive if it is to capture its citizen's loyalty. A person must believe they are living in a society worth embracing and committing to rather than exploiting and corrupting. The belief in the collective good must trump individual desire, and it has to be bolstered by a society that generates personal integrity, from the earliest age, so that the citizen does what is right when no one is looking rather than hiding their true self through apparent virtuousness or engaging charm.

If you find yourself saying the police needs to do more you have moved to the very end of the conversation you need to have, without tackling your own personal agency or the agency of your community in the issue. If the police needs to do more, the society that it serves needs to be healthier.

Two points flow from this. The first is simply a phone number – write it down – +1-800-8477. I've already posted what I'm about to say on my Instagram account @governortci. It's not just the police's job to detect and prosecute, it's your job to help focus them and report, not the fact that a crime has been committed or you need help – that's 911 – but information that will stop the crime from ever occurring.

There are good people out there, there may even be great people who some think of as 'bad' – through prejudice – but who do have a strong internal moral compass. Who do have integrity. And who do know something. You can be courageous, you can demonstrate personal integrity – but you can also be safe – if you report what you know to Crime-Stoppers on that number +1-800-8477.

They won't ask your name. Everything is deliberately anonymous; much investment has gone into it and it all fails if it fails one caller, once. The call is taken in Miami. There is no call identification. It cannot be traced. The information can't be too small, it might just provide a start point to allow a thorough investigation that will lead to an arrest or a gun being taken off the street. You can provide a perfect example of your own integrity, your own quiet commitment to this community, by making that call. Third time: the number is +1-800-8477.

My second point is about information running in two ways, from the public to the police and the police to the public. I've covered the first but what about the second. While, of course, I do not welcome any apparent increase in violent crime, I do welcome the fact that I have already seen we are smart enough as a country, not least in conversations I have heard in our churches, and in our press, that rather than just taking the easy course of blaming the criminal or the police, you are also questioning the role we can all play in the reduction of crime through the strengthening of our society.

But in looking at the police's response to crime, and to have an intelligent national conversation, you do need to know facts. Headlines can mislead, but we have responsible journalists serving us who I'm sure can help facilitate smart, rather than ill informed, conversations. In a democracy the press not only has a right, it has a duty, to ask tough questions – preferably

questions that elicit facts rather than opinions – and the police have an interest in having an educated community understanding the challenges they face.

It's therefore good timing that the new Commissioner of Police, who I swore in last week, is committed, in terms of engaging the public, to be generous in terms of explaining what's happening with regard to crime underpinning his narrative with data.

Commissioner Botting holds his first press conference on Wednesday. From my conversations with him, much as I believe in 'Governing in the sunlight' – so people can draw their own conclusions about my Governorship based on fact – he too believes in 'Policing in the sunlight'. In terms of openness my expectation is that we are cut from the same cloth, although it is worth saying the Commissioner has a duty to protect ongoing operational equities, and also matters that are subjudacy – something I'm sure the press will understand. I'm looking forward to the two of us being a very strong team that communicates well on this issue.

But today is not about the Commissioner, or our relationship, or indeed our approach to openness. It is all about announcing the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner. I spoke to the successful candidate at midday today, over the phone, to inform him of my decision.

The title 'Deputy Commissioner' doesn't in some ways do justice to the extraordinary role this individual will inherit. I rather suspect that Commissioner Botting, while delighted to receive his promotion, regrets losing the role he has been promoted out of.

This role is, if you like, the Operational Command job in the police force. While the Commissioner must look up and out, and take responsibility for the Forces medium and long term future, and good governance across all functions, it's the Deputy Commissioner who runs the daily operations of the force making those decisions that impact right here, and right now, on the safety of our citizens. If you are operational by nature this is the dream job. This is the appointment that, when done well, is the conductor of an operational orchestra.

As Governor, it's therefore an extremely important appointment for me to get right. The best job I can do for the Islands is to place the best person I can find into the role. I certainly need the chemistry between the Commissioner and his Deputy to be first class, with a complimentary skill set that makes this policing top team better than the sum of its parts.

So I've given great thought to this appointment.

It has, I think, been entirely appropriate for others to lobby publicly that this role should go to a local officer. I can see all the reasons why that makes sense, not least in the Turks and Caicos Islands national story.

You will also appreciate that with my focus on crime, border protection and human trafficking, and with the way these issues are at the top, or near the

top, of the public agenda, my first priority is to appoint the very best man or woman I can find to the job. I am a strong believer in meritocracy, I dislike any sense of entitlement, and if there is a competition for a job, the best candidate will always, under my watch, secure the role.

This dilemma has not proved as hard as some might have thought. I'm delighted to be able to announce that I can square this particular circle painlessly. The interview panel, chaired by the new Commissioner, interviewed a strong mix of local and international candidates and they have recommended to me the appointment of Rodney Adams, a TCI Islander and veteran police officer, to be the next Deputy of the force.

The Islands will have, as the person making the daily operational decisions about policing, a man who came from these islands. I think in Trevor, and Rodney, I and the islands get the best of both worlds.

While it is my intention to make this appointment 'substantive', for the moment I intend the rank to be 'acting'. While I understand it was not a popular comment, I do believe it was a wise comment, made by the outgoing Commissioner that our officers need as much international exposure – or at least as much cross-government exposure – as they can get if they are to really deliver in the top jobs. I also agree with the present Commissioner, who recommended Mr Adams, that we have not done well in investing in our officers to give them this opportunity.

So our new Deputy Commissioner will be invested in, on the prestigious Police Command Course, run in the UK. This course is mandatory for UK police officers advancement to the highest ranks. It's a tough course, but it's also a course that develops an officer and will give Mr Adams tremendous exposure to national policing and national security leadership – including exposure at Ministerial level – in the UK.

Mr Adams's permanent appointment will be subject to passing that course. In the interim it will give me the opportunity – one I much prefer when making senior appointments – to observe Mr Adams deliver against some of the biggest challenges these islands face, in the field, rather than just describing how he will tackle them in the interview room. I wouldn't be appointing him today if I didn't think he will not only relish the challenge, but also deliver above expectation. I briefed the Premier on this course of action on Friday, and she is delighted.

I conclude with my congratulations to Rodney Adams a man who has secured this opportunity to further serve on merit, and merit alone, who will be confirmed by being tested in both the role here in TCI, as well as against the best Britain has in the UK, while also recognising that our new Commissioner of Police has the Deputy he wants and the one we both believe the country needs.

And may God bless the Turks and Caicos Islands.