

# British Embassy Ashgabat welcomes applications for Chevening Scholarships

Applications for Chevening Scholarships to study in the UK are open between 3 August and 2 November 2021, with applications to be submitted via [www.chevening.org/apply](http://www.chevening.org/apply)

Chevening Scholarships are awarded to individuals from all backgrounds who can demonstrate that they have the commitment and skills required to create positive change, and can show how a UK master's degree will help them do that. The scholarship offers full financial support for scholars to study for any eligible master's degree at any UK university whilst also gaining access to a wide range of exclusive academic, professional, and cultural experiences.

Since the programme was created in 1983, over 50,000 professionals have had the opportunity to develop in the UK through Chevening. There are more than 1,500 scholarships on offer globally for the 2022/2023 academic year, demonstrating the UK's ongoing commitment towards developing the leaders of tomorrow.

Head of Scholarships at the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Naomi Rayner, said:

As the world continues to tackle major global issues such as Covid-19 and climate change, international cooperation is more essential than ever. Chevening seeks to build an international community of people who are committed to working together to drive positive change. We do this by bringing together incredible people from around the world and supporting them, through education, to achieve their goals.

In the UK we are proud of our world class universities and we know that our learning environments are enriched by the wide diversity of cultures, experiences and viewpoints represented on our campuses. Chevening scholars make a significant contribution to these communities, as well as becoming an important part of our network of over 50,000 alumni.

Chevening represents the very best of the UK, welcoming people from across the world to study, grow, and thrive. Being a part of the Chevening network instils a strong sense of pride and responsibility. I am consistently inspired by the passion and

commitment of those in the Chevening community and I look forward to hearing from this year's applicants.'

Chevening's Director, Duncan Barker, said:

The Chevening experience is so much more than a master's degree. As well as an academically challenging and fulfilling university experience, we'll immerse you in UK culture and bring you together with incredible people from around the world.

We organise an exclusive programme of events and activities, so you can experience Britain's heritage and history, discuss international policy, and interact with thought leaders at a range of academic, cultural, and social events. Previously, scholars have visited the UK prime minister's residence at 10 Downing Street, hiked up Mount Snowdon in Wales, exhibited art in London galleries, interned at the BBC and sat in the home dressing room at Anfield.

You will learn by interacting with people from all over the world, travelling around the UK and getting involved in the communities you live in. You will be expected to take control of your own learning, show independent thinking and chase new experiences. Those who get the most out of Chevening are the ones who put the most into it.

Your scholarship will last a year, but you will be a part of the Chevening community for life. Our hope is that you will leave the UK inspired, motivated, and better equipped to bring your own ideas to life.'

Her Majesty's Ambassador, Mr Hugh Philpott, to Turkmenistan said:

If you are someone who is passionate about driving change, whether on a local or global scale, if you want to be the best at what you do and if you have the imagination to inspire others, then a Chevening scholarship could be the perfect opportunity for you.

There is no such thing as a 'typical' scholar. Your age, race, gender, religion and cultural background do not matter to us. We want to see that you have energy, curiosity, compassion a clear vision for your future and the ability to achieve your goals. If this sounds like you, then you are very likely to fit in with our

community of over 50,000 alumni worldwide.

Our alumni network is full of dynamic influencers who have shared the same experience that you will. They can offer encouragement, mentorship, advice, and contacts. When you return home after your studies you should feel well-equipped to start making a real difference professionally or socially.

There is a lot to gain from submitting a thoughtful application, so if you have what it takes to be a Chevening Scholar, I would encourage you to apply before the 2 November deadline.

The call for new applicants follows the selection of scholars from Turkmenistan, who won an award to study at a UK university this year. Successful applicants have been sharing their stories through the #ChosenForChevening hashtag on social media.

## **More information**

Visit [www.chevening.org/scholarships](http://www.chevening.org/scholarships) for detailed information on the eligibility criteria and scholarship specifications.

## **Contact**

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## **Further information**

Chevening Scholarships are the UK Government's global scholarship programme, funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and partner organisations. The scholarships support study at UK universities – mostly one year taught master's degrees – for individuals with demonstrable potential to become future leaders, decision-makers, and opinion formers.

Chevening began in 1983 and has developed into a prestigious international awards scheme. Chevening Scholars come from over 160 countries and territories worldwide, and over the past five years we have awarded almost 10,000 scholarships. There are over 50,000 Chevening Alumni around the world who comprise an influential and highly regarded global network.

The name 'Chevening' comes from Chevening House in Sevenoaks, Kent – currently the joint official residence of the UK's Foreign Secretary.

More information is available at [www.chevening.org](http://www.chevening.org)

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# Customs Declaration Service to become UK's single customs platform

News story

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) has today announced that the Customs Declaration Service (CDS), a system founded on world-leading technology, will serve as the UK's single customs platform from 31 March 2023.



HMRC will be closing its Customs Handling of Import and Export Freight (CHIEF) system on 31 March 2023. From this date, all businesses will need to declare goods through the Customs Declaration Service (CDS).

CDS is currently used for Northern Ireland and Rest of World declarations and has already processed more than one million declarations since it went live in 2018.

Ahead of the 31 March 2023 complete closure, services on CHIEF will be withdrawn in two stages:

- 30 September 2022: import declarations close on CHIEF
- 31 March 2023: export declarations close on CHIEF / National Exports System (NES)

[Sophie Dean and Katherine Green](#), Directors General for Borders and Trade at HMRC, said:

CDS is a key part of the government's plans for a world-leading fully digitised border that will help UK businesses to trade and to prosper.

This announcement will provide clarity for traders and the border industry. We are committed to making the switch-over as smooth as possible and are working to ensure traders are fully supported with the new processes.

CDS has been developed over a number of years in consultation with the border industry and will provide a more secure and stable platform that has the capacity and capability to grow in line with the government's ambitious trade plans. The move to one system for all imports and exports will also deliver savings for the taxpayer.

There's [further information on GOV.UK](#) to help businesses and agents prepare for CDS, and there are also a number of live [customer support services available](#).

Published 3 August 2021

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## [New study into COVID-19 vaccine dose interval for pregnant women](#)

- New government-funded clinical trial investigating best COVID-19 vaccine dose interval for pregnant women launched in England
- Research shows pregnant women more likely to become seriously ill from COVID-19 and 98% of those in hospital due to COVID-19 are unvaccinated

The country's largest clinical trial investigating the best gap between first and second COVID-19 vaccine doses for pregnant women is being launched in England today (Tuesday 3 August).

Following 130,000 pregnant women being vaccinated in the US and no safety concerns being raised, the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna vaccines were recommended by the independent experts at the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) for pregnant women in the UK. Almost 52,000 pregnant women in England have now been vaccinated – similarly, with no safety concerns reported.

Data published last week by NHS England and the University of Oxford also shows no pregnant women who have had both doses of a vaccine have been admitted to hospital with COVID-19. Only three have been admitted after having their first dose, meaning 98% of those admitted to hospital have not received a jab.

The Preg-CoV study, backed by £7.5 million of government funding and led by St George's, University of London, will provide vital clinical trial data on the immune response to vaccination at different dose intervals – either four to six weeks or eight to 12 weeks.

This data will help determine the best dosage interval and tell us more about how the vaccine works to protect pregnant mothers and their babies against COVID-19.

**Minister for COVID-19 Vaccine Deployment Nadhim Zahawi said:**

Pregnant women are more likely to get seriously ill from COVID-19 and we know that vaccines are safe for them and make a huge difference – in fact no pregnant woman with two jabs has required hospitalisation with COVID-19.

This government-backed trial will provide more data about how we can best protect pregnant women and their babies, and we can use this evidence to inform future vaccination programmes.

I encourage anyone who is pregnant and eligible to sign-up and contribute to research that will save lives for years to come.

Vaccines have been given to pregnant women to protect them and their babies from diseases for years – including for whooping cough and flu.

The trial will involve over 600 pregnant women being vaccinated with either the Pfizer/BioNTech or the Moderna vaccine. They will be closely monitored by health professionals throughout their pregnancy and following the birth, with the safety of the women taking part in the trial the utmost priority.

The Preg-CoV participants will need to be between 18 and 44 years old, have no health conditions and be between 13 and 34 weeks pregnant on the day of vaccination. They will receive two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine – or one dose if they've already had their first – at either the shorter interval of four to six weeks, or the longer interval of eight to 12 weeks.

They will be scheduled to attend nine visits in total and will be required to complete an electronic diary between visits on any symptoms. They will also be given a 24-hour mobile number so they can contact one of the trial team at any time if they have concerns.

The scientists behind the trial will analyse blood samples from the participants and one blood sample from their newborn babies, alongside samples from breastmilk. They will use the samples to help understand more about how the vaccines are protecting these individuals from COVID-19, with initial results expected by the end of the year.

The study will open for applications from volunteers today via the study's website, with vaccinations set to start from mid-August. Participants will also be recruited to the study by invites sent through the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry, which allows research teams to speak to suitable volunteers who have signed up to be contacted about taking part in vaccine studies.

**Chief Investigator and Professor of Paediatric Infectious Diseases at St George's, University of London, Professor Paul Heath said:**

Tens of thousands of pregnant women have now been vaccinated in both the US and the UK with no safety concerns reported, but we still lack robust, prospective clinical trial data on COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women. This includes the best schedule to use to maximally protect them against COVID-19.

We are extremely pleased to commence the Preg-CoV trial, which aims to fill these gaps in our knowledge and will ultimately inform policy recommendations on the optimal use of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy.

The trial will be run across 13 National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) sites in England – including in London, Liverpool and Leeds. All the trial sites are working on ways of including participants from a wide variety of backgrounds and individuals from ethnic minorities are encouraged to apply.

The vaccination programme continues its phenomenal progress towards vaccinating the adult population of the UK, with over 85,336,436 vaccines administered in total – 46,872,411 first doses (88.6%) and 38,464,025 second doses (72.7%).

Further analysis from PHE and the University of Cambridge also suggests vaccines have so far prevented over 52,600 hospitalisations, an estimated 22 million infections and more than 60,000 deaths in England alone.

**Dr Pat O'Brien, Vice President of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said:**

We now have robust data of nearly 200,000 women from across the US and the UK, who have received the COVID-19 vaccine with no safety concerns. This tells us that both the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are safe in pregnancy. However, more research is needed to monitor and understand how pregnant women respond to the COVID-19 vaccine.

We welcome this trial as the next step in further monitoring the protection provided by the vaccine, to understand the risk of any potential adverse side effects, and observe the immune response within those who are pregnant and their babies.

We encourage all pregnant women to get vaccinated, as the protection that it provides against COVID-19 to both mother and baby outweigh the risks. We are seeing more pregnant women being admitted to hospital with COVID-19, and we know that the Delta variant is causing more pregnant women to have severe illness than previous strains of the virus.

We hope that this research will help to gain the confidence of pregnant women that the recommendation of vaccination in pregnancy is based on robust evidence.

**Professor Nick Lemoine, Medical Director, NIHR Clinical Research Network, said:**

The fact that every participant in this study receives an approved vaccine will give volunteers peace of mind that they are protected from the virus and that they can take confidence in the safety of these vaccines, and the monitoring involved in the study.

Vaccine studies like this remain crucial for researchers to gain more information on the best intervals and methods to help protect the whole population against COVID-19.

It is thanks to the continued dedication and commitment of volunteers that we are at this stage of research and the NIHR is very grateful for their efforts.

The NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry continues to help us reach out to potential participants and recruit to additional studies as we keep moving forward, and we encourage interested members of the public to sign up to be contacted at [nhs.uk/ResearchContact](https://nhs.uk/ResearchContact).

**Notes to Editor:**

- Volunteers can sign up to the trial [here](#)
- The trial was commissioned by the Department of Health and Social Care through the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and funded by the Vaccine Taskforce, with the study being undertaken by St George's, as part of the National Immunisation Schedule Evaluation Consortium (NISEC).
- Participants will be blinded to the vaccine they receive. The majority of participants will also be blinded to the interval between doses. This will be done by incorporating the routine whooping cough vaccine into the trial schedule. Participants will be followed up for one year after their baby is born.
- NHS England research on pregnant women in hospital due to COVID-19 can be found [here](#)
- This trial has received ethics approval by the NHS Research Ethics



Committee (part of the Health Research Authority), as well as approval from the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

- Latest PHE stats on vaccine effectiveness can be found [here](#)

Volunteering for COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials:

- People wishing to volunteer to support clinical trials can sign up for information on COVID-19 vaccine trials with the NHS COVID-19 Vaccine Research Registry, developed in partnership with NHS Digital. It is helping large numbers of people to be recruited into trials, meaning more effective vaccines for coronavirus can be found as soon as possible.

The hospitals taking part are:

- St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust
- St Michael's Hospital, University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust
- Liverpool Women's NHS Foundation Trust
- Leeds General Hospital, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust
- St. Helier Hospital, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Hammersmith Hospital, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
- Princess Royal Hospital, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust
- Royal Free NHS Foundation Trust
- The Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust
- Royal Preston Hospital, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

- Birmingham Heartlands Hospital, University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
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## Cash boost to create new flexible approach to apprenticeships

Sectors including the creative, agriculture and construction industries can now bid for a share of a £7 million fund to support the creation of new flexible apprenticeships, unlocking more opportunities for people to develop the skills they need to get good jobs.

Apprenticeships are at least 12 months long, so some sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, such as digital, adult social care, transport and manufacturing have found it challenging to benefit from the high-quality opportunities available.

The fund will establish a small number of agencies that will set up new flexi-job apprenticeships so an apprentice can work across a range of projects and with different employers to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to be occupationally competent.

For example, this would enable an apprentice working in film, TV or theatre to work on different productions during their apprenticeship, or an apprentice in construction to fulfil several contracts to complete their apprenticeship – such as working on a home refurbishment or a project for an office block. Meanwhile, someone working in adult social care could undertake care placements with a range of employers – including home care via a care agency, and in nursing home or hospice settings.

Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills Gillian Keegan said:

We want to build an apprenticeship system that enables everyone to get the experience and knowledge they require to get the job they want, while ensuring employers have a diverse talent pipeline to meet their skills needs.

Our flexi-job apprenticeships will unleash exciting new opportunities in sectors such as the creative industries and construction where employment is increasingly flexible and project-based, while also helping larger organisations to grow starts in their supply chains, levelling up chances for people to build the life they want.

Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak said:

I'm thrilled that apprentices and employers in freelance industries such as film and TV can start to benefit from our new flexi-job apprenticeship scheme as part of our Plan for Jobs.

Together, we're creating exciting new opportunities for apprentices and employers – harnessing the skill and talent of today for the jobs of tomorrow.

The announcement comes ahead of the start later this month of the ScreenSkills pilot for apprenticeships in the film and TV industry, with Netflix and WarnerMedia. Supported by a £100,000 investment from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, this pioneering programme has been designed to help better facilitate and boost apprenticeships in the UK's booming screen industries.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

It's hugely exciting that Government is working with some of the world's leading content producers, as well providing funding to make apprenticeships more flexible. Together, these steps mean many more young people from all backgrounds will have the chance to get a start in the UK's world-class film and TV industry.

ScreenSkills will host an induction event later this week where 20 apprentices from across the country will meet for the first time before their industry placements begin in September. Through their apprenticeships, they will get hands on experience as members of the production crew on the sets of big budget films, high-end TV shows and documentaries from Netflix and WarnerMedia. By undertaking multiple placements over 13 months, the apprentices will gain a breadth of experience which will serve as a solid foundation for their future freelance careers in the sector.

Seetha Kumar, ScreenSkills CEO, said:

As our diverse group of fantastic new apprentices start their induction later this week, we welcome this announcement which could unlock much needed apprenticeship opportunities for freelance talent and enable social mobility in key areas of skills needs for both our fast-growing sector and the wider creative industries.

Apprenticeships are playing a vital role in ensuring people have the skills they need to get the jobs they want. The flexi-job apprenticeship fund launched today will extend this offer further, giving apprentices access to even more careers as we build back better from the pandemic.

The response to a consultation the Government launched in April 2021 has also been published today, which highlights strong support for the introduction of flexible apprenticeships as well as wider flexibilities in apprenticeships.

Jocelyne Underwood, Manchester International Festival, said:

In the creative sector there is a huge will to do apprenticeships but very little experience. This fund should spur the market on as a catalyst.

Kath Geraghty, Workforce Development Manager, Royal National Theatre, said:

Flexi-job apprenticeships will enable a wider range of employers in the sector to take on apprentices, broaden the experience of each apprentice, and prepare them to work in a sector where freelancing and project-based work are the norm.

Richard Turner, St Martin's Group and Network Rail (responding in capacity as Chair of SMG), said:

As well as the challenges of making apprenticeships work within the gig-economy, flexi-job apprenticeships will also encourage new starts amongst SMEs and help tackle labour shortfalls. There is also potential in flexi-job apprenticeships being deployed for emerging, niche, or highly specialised skills, including data and digital.

Lord Puttman, film producer and educator said:

Our creative industries are a key driver of GDP and highly skilled jobs, a role that's become ever more important in the wake of the pandemic. The launch of these flexible apprenticeships, which take account of the specific employment patterns of the creative sectors, is hugely welcome. This will help ensure that a new generation of young people have the chance to seize the opportunities presented by a decade of spectacular growth.

The first apprenticeships organised through flexi-job apprenticeship agencies are expected to start in early 2022.

Flexi-job apprenticeships are just one of several improvements the Government is making this year to support employers to offer more apprenticeship opportunities, so more people can get on the path to a great career. These include increased cash incentives for employers hiring new apprentices, and making it easier for employers to spend unused funds – so that smaller businesses in their supply chain or region can benefit from the productivity and skills apprentices can bring to their business.

These improvements build on the reforms set out in the [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#), which will ensure employers are at the heart of plans to make sure

more people have the skills they need to progress and secure a great career.

Notes to editors:

- The fund will make £7 million available in England across 2021-22 and 2022-23. Organisations can apply for funding between £100,000 and £1 million to set up new flexi-job apprenticeship agencies.
- It may also support existing good quality apprenticeship training agencies (ATAs) to diversify as flexi-job apprenticeship agencies.
- The £7 million flexi-job apprenticeship fund will be a competed grant process and applicants will also have to apply to join the register of flexi-job apprenticeship agencies.
- Applicants must meet a robust set of criteria as well as being able to provide details of how they will meet the needs of their chosen sector or region, and ensure apprentices and placement employers receive a high-quality apprenticeship experience.

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## [His Excellency Nigel John Dakin, CMG, Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands address to the First Passing Out Parade of the TCI Regiment](#)

Good evening Turks and Caicos and good evening to those on parade. This is your moment.

### **BEING A MARINE**

You have just joined a new profession, you have just started a new vocation. To be precise you are now Marines. You are not Royal Marines and you are not US Marines. You are the first Marines of the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment!

The seas around these islands have dominated TCI's economy and culture for centuries. We are the epitome of an Island race. Our supply lines, our self generated food sources, our trading relationships, our old industry of salt and our new industry of tourism are all born out of our remarkable maritime environment.

As an archipelago our waters divide us, and connect us, in equal measure. The threats we face come at us from the sea, be they be natural as warm Caribbean waters fuel hurricanes, or be they man made, as people, drug and gun

smugglers profit from others misery.

Your ancestors, and those who come after you, because this Regiment will be standing in a 100 years, would and will be proud – that this Regiment is formed by those determined to soldier and support their people on land and on sea.

Superlatives can often be overused but in this case, both on a personal level for you, and on a national level for us all, this is an extraordinary day and it is a historic moment.

At the personal level you will now always see yourself as part of a Regimental family and see yourself linked to the profession of soldiering. In years to come, long after you have left the Regiment, you will think like a Marine and bear yourself as a Marine and while you will have many memories, this moment – when you became a Marine, and a full member of your Regiment – will be one of the most memorable.

You share now in a culture, a way of thinking and a way of doing things that marks you out. This is something that will continue to grow and develop over time. This culture now links you to every other man or woman in military uniform down through the ages. Society expect those who soldier to do things that normal men and women are not expected to do and you will, I suspect today, rejoice in that expectation.

The reality is that you will find the expectations placed on you, by yourself and by society, will occasionally weigh heavily. You will move towards known or suspected danger when any normal human response would be to move away. You will be there, when others are not. You will be on time, when others are late. You will be working in the bush at night when others are asleep in their bed. You will stay when others have gone. When others are tired, or hungry or extremely cold, or unbearably hot, or about to give up because matters seem hopeless, you will manage to experience all those conditions and emotions but you will bring hope, and you will bring energy, and you will bring strength, and you will bring courage, and you will set the example for others to rally behind.

There will be times when you are frightened. For example the power of nature here in the Caribbean – in all its wrath – almost dwarfs human imagination. But you will know that courage is not the absence of fear but the ability to overcome fear, and you will quickly understand that moral courage that can be honed every day is just as prized and important as physical courage which will come to you, when needed, because it has been prepared for.

You will not do this because you are super-human. You are not. But you are now part of something bigger than yourself, you are doing something that is greater than yourself, and you will have skill and capability and – increasingly – experience, that others do not have. You will know the team is stronger than the individual not through words but practice, you know that if you train hard you will fight easy, you know that your fellow Marine is now the person you would never, ever let down so you will lean off each other and stand together and you will do all of this because – in the end – you know

that when all else fails – if not ‘you’ – then who can the Territory and its people rely on.

The Regiment will give you all the opportunity to lead. Leadership is not about the rank that is worn permanently on your arm but the actions and behaviours that are on display, in the moment, and the reputation that builds as a result. The roles this Regiment have been entrusted with requires a small team ethos to develop; so Junior Commanders will carry much responsibility. Each and every Marine on parade will find themselves confronted by leadership challenges.

TCI’s new Regiment

## **A REGIMENT DESIGNED TO DELIVER EFFECT**

The national challenges are represented in your cap badge. Two symbols laid on top of one another. The Phoenix – a mythical bird that rises renewed and strengthened from the ashes of disaster, in TCI’s case natural disaster, an experience we know here too well. And the crossed Tridents representing the support you will provide to the protection of our maritime borders both on land and sea.

Therefore, from the outset, you are a Regiment focused on ‘Mission’. You wear your promise, your covenant with the Territory in terms of your delivery, as the single most important accoutrement to your uniform, your cap badge. Your Regimental identity is your mission – and your mission is your Regimental identity.

If we wish to look for an example of that, we need only look to the fact that before your basic training was concluded, you’d been instrumental in detaining 15 who had landed illegally on our shores and who were bringing a considerable quantity of contraband with them that would do us, as a society, harm. You did that professionally, compassionately, intelligently and purposefully but the point is you did it. This Regiment looks good on parade – as it must – but it is in the bush, and on the water, and in the wreckage following a hurricane where the difference will be made.

Of course Regimental life is more than just mission. It is about bonds and brotherhood and sisterhood and camaraderie. We hope your time in the Regiment is ‘fun’. If it isn’t you won’t, in the long term, be effective as a Marine or as a Regiment.

## **A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL IDENTITY**

Of course, to the people of this Territory, the Regiment is not just about what can be delivered, but also about the way we think of ourselves as a nation: our national identity, something I have spoken of before. This Regiment is I believe a strong signal of not just national identity but also national maturity.

As we mature as a nation our conversation as to what we mean by that word

'nation' also matures. We talk a great deal about both unity and diversity in TCI and I suggest before us is an example of how both can, indeed both must, sit comfortably together.

For example the Regiment speaks with one voice and within it, of course, engages in English but it can utilise Creole and Spanish and must have this language and cultural understanding to succeed in its tasks. It has a maritime infantry role, but both men and women serve in this Regiment alongside each other and go through the same training.

On parade are those proud to call North Caicos and South Caicos, Providenciales and Grand Turk, their home island. There are many old TCI family names represented in the Regiment and there are also TCI/Bahamian's, TCI/Haitians, TCI/Dominicans, TCI/Jamaicans and TCI/Guyanese serving in the ranks. Some in the ranks were born in the UK.

Diversity of ages brings differing strengths. The youngest on parade is 18, one is over 50. Half the Marines are in their twenties, fourteen of them are in their thirties. Three are in their forties The average age suggests a Regiment of mature experienced adults. There are some big physical men in this Regiment but I've also found someone my size!

Staying with diversity, and with an eye to the skills the Regiment inherits, before you is a doctor, there are boat captains, divers, life guards, electrical engineers, mechanical engineers, plumbers and carpenters, those that understand water sanitation and sewage, paramedics and firemen, managers and security guards, computer programmers and communicators, those that understand our main tourist industry, our large resorts and our airports.

In short this is a Regiment made up of volunteers that represent not only the totality of the Turks and Caicos Islands, but the very best of the Turks and Caicos Islands. There is both unity and diversity on parade, because unity and diversity are mission critical.

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## **MANY TO THANK**

There are many to thank. The UK Minister for the Armed Forces, James Heappay MP, was here this week and he and a predecessor in that role, Lord Mark Lancaster – himself a UK reserve officer – have proved unrelenting in their support as has the UK's Chief of Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter. The British Defence Attache, with us today, Lieutenant Colonel Simon Westlake, Royal Marines, has kept his eye on both the vision and on the detail, in equal measure and our Permanent Secretary for National Security – Tito Lightbourne – has provided critical policy and budgeting support including Chairing the Defence Board and my thanks to those who sit on that Board giving freely of their time and experience.



The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst played an early and influential role training our officers, with more Sandhurst training to come, and having the Queens Personal Bodyguard here who are also a reconnaissance Regiment – the Household Cavalry – and the excellence of their soldiers, and the example of their ethos – has got us off to the best possible start. Our thanks to them under the command of Major James Heath. The enduring presence of Sergeant Major Dan Collins of the Rifles Regiment has helped anchor the new Regiment in daily professional practice and will continue to do so, so my thanks to General Sir Patrick Sanders, the Colonel Commandant of the Rifles, for releasing to us, one of his best.

A huge vote of thanks is due to the fantastic employers who are prepared to release some of their most valuable staff to serve in the Regiment, and therefore serve the Territory, and to the families who have stood resolutely in support. In terms of commitment a family joins a Regiment, not just an individual.

## **POLITICAL UNITY AND SUPPORT**

A Defence Force that doesn't have political support, or national support behind it, will surely fail as night follows day. This Regiment would not be before us had it not been for the complete commitment of two people, our previous Premier and our Present Premier. When Honourable Sharlene Cartwright-Robinson and Honourable Charles Washington Misick, as the then Leader of the Opposition, were asked if a UK Trained Regiment was something TCI wanted, as part of the delivery of our National Security Strategy, they were unequivocal in their support, both in initial word and subsequent deed.

Forming a Regiment from scratch, at time of Pandemic, with the economy at its most uncertain, when everything was harder than it normally would be, was not straightforward. There was a General Election and a change of Administration and a compressed budget cycle. If nothing else the formation of this Regiment was an act of focused, cross-party, national political leadership, and national political unity, to deliver national security.

That thanks must extend to include members of the previous Cabinet, and the present Cabinet, and to the past and to the present Legislature. The round of applause, from all sides of the House of Assembly, on Christmas Eve 2020, when the Defence Act passed, tells those on Parade that this Territory stands with them, as they stand for it.

## **THE WEIGHT OF COMMAND**

My final word of thanks and reflection goes to the man on parade on whom so much rested and on who so much now depends. The Commanding Officer, Lt Col Ennis Grant. He was the first man recruited to the Regiment. At one point we had a Regiment of one man. I asked him to place great trust in others, that they would deliver, and I had to put great personal faith in him, and he in himself, around his own personal delivery and drive. The Regiment that stands before us today was never inevitable. Colonel Grant placed his reputation and credibility on the line and then threw himself, meticulously, into planning and delivering, researching and recruiting, brainstorming and directing as

well as program of inspiring personal development.

Colonel – a word to you – many people have been involved and have helped – some close and some distant – but in the end Command, I am told, is the loneliest of roles. Your Regiment, the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment, now stands before you: trained to a basic standard. They are no longer recruits, they are Marines, and this is no longer an aspiration but a formed and disciplined Regiment.

We collectively said we would have this Regiment ready for this Hurricane Season and on 31st July 2021 it is here. It is youthful and its journey towards full professional development is only just beginning – there is a long road ahead – it cannot run before it can walk – but it is here and you are stood in front of it, in Command.

All of us here today entrust this Regiment to you – a trust easily given – because it has been earned by you. You will soon instruct the Regiment to march off the Parade Ground and into its future – a future for itself, certainly, but many here hope it is also a symbol of a new and better future for the way this Island both secures itself and thinks of itself. All of us at this parade salute you, thank you for carrying the burdens as well as the pleasures of Command and we salute ‘your’ Regiment, as you salute us. We thank you for your service.

And so many God bless the Turks and Caicos Islands, may God bless the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment and most importantly, today, may God Bless our Marines who so willingly serve and of whom we are all so very very proud.

His Excellency Nigel John Dakin, CMG, standing proud with our new Regiment