

US gives Jamaica Vehicles and Protective Gear

The United States government has donated vehicles and protective gear valued at approximately \$64 million to the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) to boost its crime fighting efforts

Jamaica's Minister of National Security, Hon. Peter Bunting, accepted the items, which include 20 motor vehicles, 500 ballistic vests, and 500 tactical uniforms, at a handing over ceremony held Wednesday morning (February 8) at the Commissioner of Police's Old Hope Road headquarters in Kingston.

Mr. Bunting expressed his gratitude to the US government for its continued assistance.

"I know that the men and women out there on the front lines are going to benefit from the use of the ballistic vests," he said, noting that they will reduce the risk of serious harm or death if they come under fire from criminal gangs.

He noted that the vehicles are especially welcomed. "We probably need 300 vehicles in the short-term to really have an impact. But we are certain that the 20 vehicles will have an impact in the areas where they are deployed," Mr. Bunting said.

He stated that the government of Jamaica continues to value the friendship it has with the US "and we look forward to continued cooperation and to strengthen and deepen our bonds in the future".

In his remarks, Commissioner of Police, Owen Ellington, said it was a pleasure to accept and deploy the well-needed resources in the hope that they will improve the quality of service offered to the citizens of Jamaica by the police.

"We want to assure you that the equipment provided will be used to serve our communities and we will care and preserve this equipment as best as we can," he stated.

"We assure that you will also continue to see improvements in the interaction between the police and citizens in the communities, which will be characterised by greater respect for human rights and human dignity and a renewed sense of service and professionalism on the part of our officers," the Police Commissioner pledged.

US Ambassador to Jamaica, Pamela Bridgewater, who made the presentation, said the gifts served as a clear example of the long standing commitment and partnership between her country and Jamaica.

"(This is) for your security forces (and) for your people, so that they can enjoy a more safe and secured life in this beautiful country. We wish you good use of this equipment for the safety, security and well-being of the Jamaican people," she stated. South Florida Caribbean News