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President Ramotar unveils 15-point anti-crime plan

March 13, 2015 By [GuyanaTimes](#)*...re-opening of "cold cases", Police at schools on the cards*

By Vahnu Manikchand

Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, President Donald Ramotar on Thursday called on Police to reopen the mountain of "cold cases" (unsolved crimes) as part of a plan he proposed to improve policing in Guyana and also slammed the Force for having the worst response time to crime in the Caribbean.



President Donald Ramotar addressing the Police Officers' Conference

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The President's call comes in wake of the steep increases in murder and the alarmingly high rates of unsolved crimes here. Ramotar made the remarks while delivering the feature address at the opening ceremony of the Police Officers' Conference held at the Police Mess Annex, Eve Leary. President Ramotar proposed what he calls the "15 in 2015 Programme", which he said will help to restore confidence in the country's Police Force.

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One of the measures the President is asking to be implemented is the reopening of cold cases and unsolved crimes in order to improve the clear-up rates in homicide, shootings, robberies, larceny and sexual offences. "If criminals don't think that they will be caught, they will continue to commit crimes," he pointed out.

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Ramotar also called for a review of the 911 response system to make it a rapid response system. "Too often we have heard about the length of time or the fact that people don't answer the 911 calls, this must stop. Our response time is the worst among Caribbean nations. The short the police travel time from notification to arrival at the crime scene, the more likely it is that police can arrest offenders before they flee," he stated.

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Increased surveillance

Another proposal is the establishment of a Neighbourhood Watch Programme, which he said will increase surveillance by residents and community members and also encourage the introduction of a problem-oriented policing (POP) approach in addressing crime by responding to problems, not only incidents in communities. Increase in the number of police officers in the streets and communities; and increased patrol policing are other areas he said the Force should address.

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Ramotar also noted that the police should focus on having a presence at schools to reduce school violence and the influence of criminals in schools. "Establish drugs and weapons free zones. If a person is caught with drugs or weapons near a school, they must be dealt with condignly in accordance with our laws," he expressed. Additionally, he called for programmes to be established to curb noise nuisance as well as expanding intelligence to target gangs, traffic syndicates and crime hotspots. "This '15 for 2015' Programme is the next step in the journey to bring great security, safety and stability to Guyana and I am committed to seeing that it becomes a reality," he stated.

RADIO GUYANA

On the other hand, in his address to the Conference, the President reminded the newly confirmed Commissioner of Police Seelall Persaud of the tremendous responsibility he is tasked with and the need to meet the expectations of the citizens. Ramotar pointed out that he envisions a Police Force that not only meet the needs of the country but also set an example for other countries to follow. "It is time for Guyana to stop wishing

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to be like other countries and to create a country that others would want to emulate," he stated.

Lowest level of trust

The President explained that the effectiveness of the Police Force is not measured by the number of arrests made but on the lack of crime. He mentioned the recent findings of the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) which found that Guyana has the lowest level of trust in the Police than anywhere else in the region.

According to the President, while persons may have their respective views on the methodology and analysis used for the survey, it does not take away from the fact that the findings have been published and disseminated widely as such an objective approach is needed to address the issues raised by LAPOP.

The survey found that between 2012 and 2014, the public's trust in the Guyana Police Force has decreased by 10 points on a zero to a hundred scale, that is, from 45.8 in 2012 to 35.4 in 2014. This, according to the President, is worrying and should not be acceptable.

"During your deliberations at this conference, I expect that you will discuss the perceived decrease in trust, what may have fuel such views and what can be done to turn this decrease in trust to an increase in confidence by the citizens into the Police Force," he stated.

Passion for the job

Ramotar told the ranks that in order for them to carry out effective policing, then they must have the desire to do the job; the desire to protect their friends and families. He further charged the senior ranks to ensure the welfare of the junior ranks is protected and that they are well equipped. The President noted that Government will continue its financial contributions to the Police Force which has been complemented by collaboration with external agencies to address transnational crimes and criminal synergies.

The President also highlighted major projects such as the Forensic Lab, Police floating bases, the Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) team and even the increase in capacity that the Force has been given, noting that these are some of the mechanisms that have been put in place to build a well equipped and responsive Police Force.

On another note, President Ramotar noted that there is no place for corruption in the Guyana Police Force and charge the officers to adopt a no-tolerance approach as it relates to police corruption.

"A Police Officer cannot be a walking contradiction. On one hand pretending to be a paragon of virtue but on the other, clandestinely filling their pockets.

"I am optimistic that those here can address this problem but make no mistakes, if you fail to perform your duties and failure to honour the oath you took to protect to serve the Guyanese people then I would do what I have to do to ensure that the Guyana people have proper service by the Guyana Police Force," he stated.



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