



Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

MINISTRY OF FINANCE

FEATURE ADDRESS

By

The Honourable Colm Imbert

Ag. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

**AT THE LAUNCH OF THE MOBILE CONTAINER
SCANNERS**

Wednesday April 18th, 2018

Port of Point Lisas, Couva

Salutations

- Members of the Cabinet
- Mr. John McIntyre, Chargé D’Affaires, U.S. Embassy
- Permanent Secretaries and Deputy Permanent Secretaries
- Mrs. Kathy Ann Matthews, Acting Comptroller of Customs & Excise
- Mr. Ian Atherly, Chairman of PLIPDECO and the Board of Directors of PLIPDECO
- Retired Colonel Lyle Alexander, Chairman of the Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago
- Mr. Ernest Taylor, President of PLIPDECO
- Staff of the Ministry of Finance & the Customs & Excise Division
- All other specially invited guests
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

Let me begin by saying what a privilege it is to be here in my capacity as acting Prime Minister of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and also as line Minister for the Customs and Excise Division to officially launch a new era of trade facilitation and border security for Trinidad and Tobago.

Securing the supply chain is a major concern for all countries and therefore with the continuous growth in international trade, there is an urgent need for Trinidad and Tobago to increase its border security capacity.

Violent crime, fueled by illegal narcotics and weapons, has had a deleterious effect on the landscape of Trinidad & Tobago, affecting each and every citizen and corporate entity. The deployment of mobile scanning technology is focused on combatting the importation of all contraband, specifically narcotics, illegal firearms and ammunition.

The benefits of this initiative are wide-reaching and encompasses the modernized Customs functions: so let me take the opportunity to list some of the benefits here:

Border Protection and Security

- Detects weapons and hazardous materials
- Combats the flow of illegal drugs and arms
- Interdicts other contraband

Revenue Collection

- Verifies manifests to mitigate duty and tax fraud
- Detects undeclared cargo for the collection of duties

Trade Facilitation

- Easier inspection and faster delivery times as verification of the contents of containers can be more easily done.
- Reduces the manpower requirement in determining the contents of containers;

The deployment of this innovative technology in Trinidad and Tobago is a reflection of the long-standing, well established and forward moving partnership between the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Office of International Affairs (INA) and the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT).

In this regard, the donation of four (4) Mobile Vehicle and Cargo Inspection Systems (VACIS) from US Government to the GORTT contributes to the Customs modernization initiative. It places in the hands of customs officials a valuable tool to enhance efficiency in cargo inspection.

These Mobile Scanners were accepted on the basis that they could be reconditioned by the GORTT to satisfy the Customs and Excise Division's need for scanning operations.

Mounted on a rugged truck chassis, the Mobile VACIS system helps trained operators see the contents of closed vehicles and containers and can support a wide variety of scanning scenarios.

These VACIS systems are a product of the Leidos Corporation. Leidos is a world leader in non-intrusive imaging technology, with systems installed for governments and commercial clients around the world. Leidos has been contracted to provide installation, training, maintenance and technical support to the Customs and Excise Division.

The Government's investment in this initiative is indicative of its deep commitment to border security and trade facilitation and supports the efforts of the hard working Customs personnel in achieving the Division's mission. The initial Operator Training and Maintenance Operations totaled US \$2,449,662.00 and the present three (3) year Comprehensive Maintenance Contract which took effect from October 1st 2017 and includes further Operator and Image Analysis training is valued at US \$1,467,895.00.

Mobile Units provide flexibility and due to their versatility and small footprint requirements, these mobile scanners can be used at other locations for special

operations. They will serve as an effective tool in assisting the Government in providing added security to the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago.

Customs and Excise Officers and Guards have been trained in operating these mobile scanners and stand ready to carry out these functions efficiently and effectively.

Two (2) mobile scanners are now being deployed at the Port of Point Lisas and the other two (2) will be deployed at the Port of Port of Spain at a later date.

In closing, I would like to thank the US Embassy, my Cabinet colleagues, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, the management and staff of Plipdeco and all who contributed to the successful achievement of this initiative.

Last but by no means least, my deepest thanks to the Comptroller and the staff of the Customs and Excise

Division, for your continued dedication to border protection and security.

I wish to encourage you to put into practice the training and skills that you have acquired so as to further safeguard our territorial borders.

Thank you.