



## **Ministerial Statement**

By

**The Hon. Michael A. Weeks, JP, MP**  
Minister of National Security

### **Royal Bermuda Regiment – Summer Update**

July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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**Mr. Speaker**, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with a comprehensive update on the commendable work and recent achievements of the Royal Bermuda Regiment (RBR) and the Coast Guard Unit, highlighting their unwavering dedication to leadership, youth development, and maritime safety.

**Mr. Speaker**, from June 1st to 14th, the Regiment conducted the Junior Non-Commissioned Officer Cadre Camp at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. This challenging and essential leadership course, held for the first time in three years, equips our future leaders with the necessary skills to effectively command a section of eight soldiers. This year, 18 dedicated RBR students participated alongside four soldiers from the Turks and Caicos Islands Regiment and one from the Cayman Islands Regiment, reflecting Bermuda's pivotal role in regional cooperation and training.

**Mr. Speaker**, in our continued commitment to fostering the next generation of leaders, from June 27th to July 4th, the Regiment hosted

two highly successful youth camps involving a total of 40 young Bermudians. The Junior Leader Programme saw 24 enthusiastic middle and high school students participate in a rigorous, seven-day residential camp, divided into junior and senior cohorts. Our young leaders undertook foot drills, weapons training, and a memorable overnight exercise. The senior cohort also experienced live-fire exercises, and both groups proudly showcased their discipline in a drill display at the Passing Out Parade, attended by families and honoured by the presence of the Junior Minister of National Security, Senator Lindsay Simmons.

Simultaneously, **Mr. Speaker**, the Regiment's Band hosted a vibrant Junior Band Camp, attended by 16 talented students aged between 11 and 25. Guided by the Band's own dedicated college students - Gabriella Arnold, Isaiah Hayward, Samuel Webal, and Josiah Talbot - and supported by experienced RBR Band Corporals Hall, Dowling, Smith, and Morrissey, the camp provided invaluable developmental opportunities for potential conductors and drum majors. Their impressive performance at the Junior Leader Camp Passing Out Parade and the Sunset Ceremony culminated in an inspiring Beating of the Retreat on Cabinet Grounds on July 16th.

**Mr. Speaker**, immediately following these youth initiatives, the Regiment commenced its second recruit intake of the year on July 6th, welcoming 36 new recruits, 12 from our local community and 24 from the Turks and Caicos Island Regiment (TCIR). The TCIR, actively expanding

its ranks, sought our assistance, which we readily provided due to historically lower numbers during our summer intake. I must stress, **Mr. Speaker**, the TCIR fully funded their participation. Upon completion of the initial camp on July 18th, the RBR recruits will enter a three-month continuation training phase before joining operational units this autumn, increasing the Regiment's active strength to 283 personnel.

Turning now, **Mr. Speaker**, to our maritime guardians, the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard Unit. This dedicated team of 14 full-time and 22 reserve soldiers is fully mobilized for robust summer operations, reinforcing weekend and holiday shifts to maximize visibility and enhance response capabilities during peak boating periods. In June alone, the Coast Guard conducted 136 patrols, observed 2,804 vessels, issued 23 marine regulation tickets, made four arrests, and successfully completed 10 search and rescue operations. Additionally, they partnered with Police and Customs in two joint operations and supported the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on two occasions, further underscoring their critical inter-agency collaboration.

**Mr. Speaker**, in a significant advancement, the Coast Guard recently commissioned three state-of-the-art FLIR (forward-looking infrared cameras), enhancing nighttime fisheries and rescue operational capabilities. These high-resolution, heat-sensing cameras, valued at a combined total \$172,000, were funded by the UK's Maritime Coastguard

Agency and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's Blue Belt Blue Shield Project.

While we celebrate these successes, Mr. Speaker, we must acknowledge ongoing challenges. The Coast Guard's fleet of 11 vessels, primarily composed of ageing former police boats, restricts its operational efficiency due to limitations in endurance, sea state performance, and crew protection. Addressing this remains an urgent priority, as does increasing the unit's capacity.

Concerted efforts are underway to double the size of the Coast Guard Unit, from 14 to 28 full-time soldiers. Achieving this expansion will provide sustainable operational coverage, alleviate over-reliance on reserve personnel, and ensure continuous professional training. Additionally, the forthcoming Coast Guard Station at the former St. David's post office, projected for completion by mid-December, will significantly boost operational presence in the East End. This new facility will reduce response times for eastern search-and-rescue operations, enhance oversight of fishing activities, expedite customs procedures in St. George's, and strengthen emergency responses to aircraft incidents.

**Mr. Speaker**, this Government remains committed to supporting the men and women of the Regiment and the Coast Guard as they tirelessly safeguard our island and inspire our youth. Their achievements and ongoing dedication deserve our collective recognition and support. I

encourage all Bermudians, particularly our young people, to consider joining the Royal Bermuda Regiment. Service in the Regiment promises not only the chance to develop exceptional leadership abilities and contribute meaningfully to our community, but also offers unmatched opportunities for personal adventure. Members experience tactical training, achieve peak physical fitness, sharpen their mental acuity, and have the opportunity to travel and engage in unique, rewarding experiences. We look forward to welcoming new members to our proud tradition of service and excellence.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**