



# INFOSERV



# MISSION DOMINICA



The aftermath of Hurricane Maria



## PM Minnis offers medical assistance / says Bahamians Cannot Live in Isolation



NASSAU, The Bahamas – Bahamians should not, and must not, live in “isolation” from the rest of the world, as The Bahamas is part of the much wider regional and global village, Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis said Monday.

“We must always realize that we cannot live in isolation and that we must try to assist others whenever possible, just as they assist us, as we are a Member State of CARICOM (Caribbean Community) and a Member State of the United Nations,” the Prime Minister said.

“My job as Prime Minister and the Leader of the country is to always look at the big picture and to look at what is in the best interests of our country. Citizens of Dominica have assisted in building The Bahamas to where we are today in terms of their assistance with the Police Force, the education system, the corrections system and even our healthcare system.

“While individuals are entitled to speak their minds with regards to the offers of assistance I have made to Dominica, as Prime Minister, I have to look at the big picture which includes The Bahamas being a Member State of CARICOM and the United Nations,” Prime Minister Minnis added.

Bahamian officials say the humanitarian situation in Dominica is far greater than what could have been imagined. The country is now also facing a potential healthcare crisis as a result of the loss of all of its medical facilities – including hospitals and clinics.

“For all intents and purposes, the main city was under 4 feet of water,” Prime Minister Minnis said. “What is remarkable is that you can see the trauma still on the face of the people. In spite of that, they are all working together cleaning the country.

“There are still challenges with the medical fraternity and being a part of CARICOM, I have offered medical assistance. I will meet with the Minister of Health and see how we can assist in that area. Medical service is greatly needed and I think if we were in a similar situation we would have been seeking assistance not only from First World countries, but also from our neighbouring CARICOM countries.”

Prime Minister Minnis said a number of regional and global countries are in Dominica lending whatever assistance they can to help rebuild the country.

“They are being assisted by the U.S., by the Dutch, by the Canadians, by Venezuela, by CARICOM and other countries (both small and large),” Prime Minister Minnis said.

**Dominica's Minister of National Security, the Hon. Rayburn Blacknoore (first right) and Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Francine Baron (second right) greet Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis at the National Stadium in Roseau prior to Prime Minister Minnis' meeting with Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit. Minister of Financial Services, Trade and Industry and Immigration, the Hon. T. Brent Symonette is at left.**

The Prime Minister announced during a press briefing upon his return to the capital Monday that a number of Bahamians have made monetary donations to assist the citizens of Dominica. He applauded them for those donations.

“A number of Bahamians, citizens from the private sector, have come forth and have given me \$60,000 to give to Dominica to assist them in addition to the other supplies and different things we are about to do,” Prime Minister Minnis said.

“I am certain that after Bahamians see what has happened there and become more cognizant of what has happened, they will give further donations,” Prime Minister Minnis added.



## **NEMA boss describes destruction in Dominica as 'heart-wrenching'**



**The Director of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Captain Stephen Russell.**

NASSAU, The Bahamas – The Director of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Captain Stephen Russell, described the level of destruction caused by Hurricane Maria in Dominica as “heart-wrenching.”

“I have been in the forefront of Disaster Management in The Bahamas for over 25 years and it was heart-wrenching to see the level of destruction in Dominica,” Captain Russell said. “I saw Jamaica after Hurricane Gilbert in 1988 and Dominica is much worse.”

(Hurricane Gilbert slammed into Jamaica on September 12, 1988 as a Category 5 monster storm with winds of 175 miles per hour and a 40-mile wide eye that covered the entire island. Gilbert left more than 200 persons dead, 80 percent of the homes, businesses and buildings destroyed and 500,000 of Jamaica’s then 2-million population homeless.)

Captain Russell was part of a Bahamian delegation that visited Dominica on Monday, October 2, 2017 to get a first-hand view of the destruction caused by Hurricane Maria. The contingent was led by Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis, who was accompanied by Minister of Financial Services, Trade & Industry and Immigration, the Hon. T. Brent Symonette; Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Darren Henfield; President of The Bahamas Christian Council (BCC), Bishop Delton Fernander; and President of The Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT), Mrs. Belinda Wilson.

Captain Russell said the level of destruction to Dominica’s economy is “great.”

“As a country depending on tourism – particularly its rainforest attraction – the destruction was great. Its agriculture industry was totally destroyed during the passage of Hurricane Maria.”

He said the mudslides that occurred as a result of the heavy rains associated with the Category 5 monster storm, further compounded the level of destruction in Dominica.

The NEMA boss met with members of Dominica’s Emergency Management Committee during the visit and spoke with a team of international and regional consultants he “has become familiar with over the years” and was encouraged to see the level of support for the disaster committee in Dominica.

The Bahamas, Captain Russell said, stands ready to assist in the repair and reconstruction phases in Dominica through the expertise within the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.





## Bahamas Christian Council President says Visit to Dominica Set Great Precedent for The Bahamas

NASSAU, The Bahamas –The Bahamas’ delegation to Dominica set a great precedent for how the country will be “taken care of if this was to ever happen to us,” Bahamas Christian Council President, Bishop Delton Fernander said Monday.

Bishop Fernander, was part of the contingent – led by Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis – that visited Dominica on Monday (October 2, 2017) to get a first-hand view of the devastation caused by super storm Hurricane Maria.

The contingent also included Minister of Financial Services, Trade & Industry and Immigration, the Hon. T. Brent Symonette; Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Darren Henfield; Director of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Captain Stephen Russell, and President of The Bahamas Union of Teachers, Mrs. Belinda Wilson.

“I believe, as a country, we demonstrated that we are citizens of the world,” Bishop Fernander said. “We showed up, we showed representation. People were there from all around the world trying to lend a helping hand and we stepped up in a very real and meaningful way.

**Bahamas Christian Council President, Bishop Delton Fernander (left) greets Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit.**

“We saw the devastation, we spoke with the Prime Minister (Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit), we met with the other Cabinet Ministers and some of the people on the ground, and there was a sense that ‘We are glad you are here; We are glad that you are looking after us and that you are concerned about us.’

“I believe that we, as a Diaspora, set a precedent for how we will be taken care of if this was to ever happen to us and so I think we should be mighty proud as a nation that we were able to step up and be that kind of example of what we ought to do as CARICOM Leaders,” Bishop Fernander added.

Bishop Fernander said the devastation caused in Dominica by Hurricane Maria was daunting.

“Just about every place had tremendous damage and there is a tremendous cleanup effort taking place with mud still everywhere. You have to wear masks in some areas from what has taken place (as it relates to some potential public health concerns).

“This is a journey of how we learn to take care of our brothers and sisters, with the hope that this never happens to us,” Bishop Fernander added.



**Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis, Bahamas Christian Council President, Bishop Delton Fernander (left) and Minister of Financial Services, Trade & Industry and Immigration, the Hon. T. Brent Symonette get set to disembark the helicopter that transported them to the National Stadium in Roseau ahead of the contingent’s meeting with Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit.**

**Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis Bishop Delton Fernander, Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Darren Henfield, B.U.T. President Mrs. Belinda Wilson, Minister of Financial Services, Trade & Industry and Immigration the Hon. T. Brent Symonette**





## **BUT President Gives Full Support to Helping Students of Dominica Get Back to Normalcy**

NASSAU, The Bahamas – Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT) President, Mrs. Belinda Wilson, expressed full support in helping students of Dominica get back to normalcy as quickly as possible upon her return from a humanitarian trip to Dominica on Monday (October 2, 2017), as part of the Bahamian contingent that was led by Prime Minister, Dr. the Hon. Hubert A. Minnis.

“They want to get back to normalcy as quickly as possible [as] they have had just about all of their schools destroyed, and so we have to make sure that we assist them.” She added, “We will see how best we can accommodate them.”

Prime Minister Minnis had announced in the House of Assembly (Wednesday, September 27) that the Government of The Bahamas proposed to temporarily relax the immigration rules for three categories of students from Dominica who wished to continue their education in The Bahamas.

Resident’s Permits are to be issued to students from Dominica wishing to study in The Bahamas – with approval of parents.

The policy will cover three categories of students who may apply. They include children who have relatives in The Bahamas and who can find lodging and support from family members; college students who may wish to study at the University of The Bahamas and who seek boarding at UB; and children of parents employed in companies, banks (etcetera) which have offices in The Bahamas. (Temporary employment transfers can be arranged with these institutions.)

Prime Minister Minnis said the decision was made in an attempt to assist the children of Dominica as children are among the demographics that can be more adversely impacted, psychologically, by natural disasters such as hurricanes.

Mrs. Wilson said she was able to have a number of discussions with Prime Minister Skerit. She observed she expects the numbers of students to be low as many of the students have already left the devastated island to live with relatives in neighbouring island-nations such as Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, and Trinidad and Tobago.

“We will be in a better position to know how many students may be coming after the [registration] process is completed, but right now I don’t think it will be a large number, so we await that data so that we can know how to go forward from here,” Mrs. Wilson said.



The BUT President said, “You would also note that the private schools have opened their doors, so when we get the numbers from the registration and we know the ages of the students, then we will be able to assist the Ministry of Education in placing them in schools that may not have large populations. If the teachers come with them, that will be even better because they can actually focus on their students,” Mrs. Wilson added.

Mrs. Wilson said Dominica’s educational infrastructure consisted of 40 primary schools, 20 secondary schools, and a tertiary institution, “most of which have been destroyed.” She noted the ones that were not destroyed by Hurricane Maria are being used as shelters.

“So what they are also trying to do within another four weeks’ time is to see how best they can find somewhere else for the displaced citizens to be housed so that they can begin their educational process. Remember now, they want to get back to normalcy as quickly as possible, they have had just about all of their schools destroyed, and so we have to make sure that we assist them.”

### **Bahamas Union of Teachers (BUT) President, Mrs. Belinda Wilson**

Mrs. Wilson said her discussions with Prime Minister Skerit and education officials on the ground in Dominica also centred on any other technical assistance that may be offered.

“I would have also asked the Prime Minister (Skerit) if he would need some technical assistance from us based on their curriculum and the preparation of their examinations and he said yes he will, and so that is something I will discuss with the Minister of Education to ensure that our Testing and Evaluation Section is able to assist Dominica.

“Both systems would have support from Cambridge in London (and) so we may have to prepare some scripts for them to assist them in that vein. Whatever it is we can do to assist we are prepared to do that,” Mrs. Wilson added.







# HMBS LAWRENCE MAJOR TO ENGAGE IN RELIEF AND RECOVERY EXERCISE IN DOMINICA

The far-reaching devastation inflicted on Dominica by the Category 5 storm, Hurricane Maria in September 2017 prompted the Bahamas government to pledge a series of relief initiatives to that country during the storm's aftermath. Among those pledges, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, Dr. the Hon. Hubert Minnis promised the delivery of relief supplies to the Caribbean Island via a Royal Bahamas Defence Force vessel. In fulfilling the Government's pledge, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force vessel,

HMBS LAWRENCE MAJOR, will depart for the Commonwealth of Dominica on Friday 20th October, 2017, to assist with disaster relief and recovery operations on that Caribbean Island.

A total of 33 Defence Force personnel will participate in the exercise. The team will consist of HMBS Lawrence Major's 19-member ship's company, 2 Defence Force Emergency Medical Technicians, a 6-man Defence technical corps consisting of carpenter's, electricians, and mechanics, and another 6-man team to operate a 17-piece containerized Unit called the Mobile Base City (MBC).

Supplementing the Defence Force's team will be a cadre of 5 medical doctors, who will be accommodated aboard HMBS Lawrence Major during its two-week stay in Dominica. The 187-foot auxiliary landing craft is the largest vessel to be purchased under the government's Sandy Bottom Project, arriving in the Bahamas in December 2015 and commissioned on 18th March 2016.

The craft will slip Coral Harbour Base on Friday with relief supplies collected by the National Emergency Management Agency from The Bahamas Government, NGOs, Corporate Bahamas and the local Dominican community. Upon departure, Lawrence Major will proceed to Jamaica where it will embark two containers of relief supplies before proceeding to Dominica. The relief operation will last for approximately one month – 1 week en route to Dominica; 2 weeks in Dominica; and 1 week en route to New Providence.

The Force's Mobile Base City (MBC) will be deployed aboard HMBS Lawrence Major as part and parcel of the disaster relief voyage. The 17-piece containerized Mobile Base Unit will be set up as a work station in Dominica.

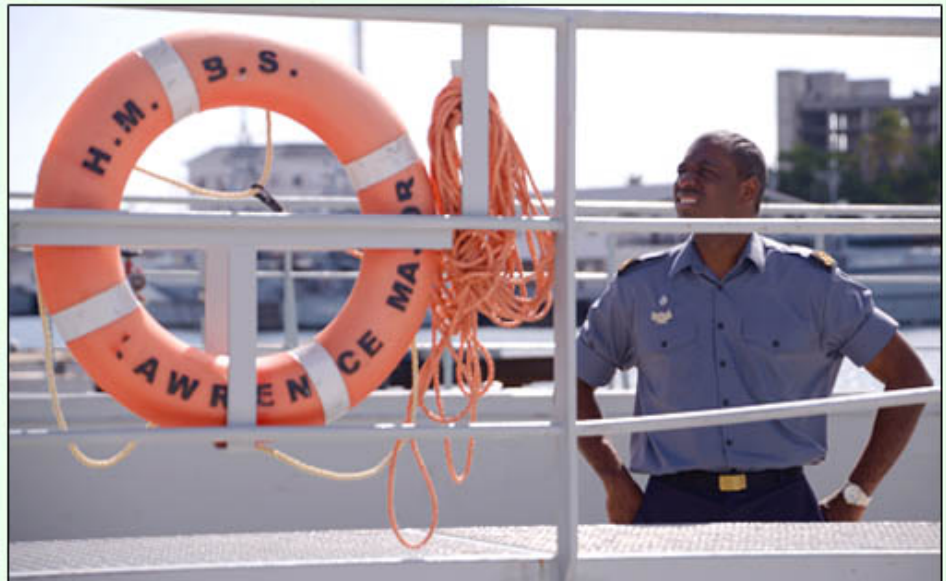
The MBC is equipped with restrooms, showers, sleeping quarters, food and water

storage units, basic medical treatment and technical workshops, as well as generators and a reverse osmosis water-making plant that can produce up to 24,000 gallons of water per day. In addition to supporting technical, medical, and support personnel, the MBC is capable of preparing up to a thousand meals per day with its field kitchen.

Lawrence Major will also transport approximately 20,000 gallons of drinking water that was donated by Aqua Pure Water Company in New Providence for distribution in Dominica.

After delivering the two containers from Jamaica to Dominica, personnel will collaborate and coordinate their efforts with the Caribbean Disaster Management Agency representatives to assist with water production and distribution, technical repairs, medical treatment, and feeding programs.

Both the Lawrence MAJOR and the Mobile Base Unit were previously deployed to Landrail Point, Crooked Island during Hurricane Joaquin in 2015 and to Morgan's Bluff, North Andros during Hurricane Matthew in 2016 where Defense Force Disaster Relief Teams were extensively involved in relief and recovery efforts on those Islands.







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