



ROYAL BAHAMAS POLICE FORCE CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BUREAU

May 8, 2007

RE: CORRUPT/UNETHICAL PRACTICES AT THE CONSULAR DIVISION OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Reference is made to the above captioned matter. Since 2005, the Central Intelligence Bureau (CIB) of the Royal Bahamas Police Force has consistently received intelligence from a number of sources and Confidential Informants that there is widespread corrupt and unethical practices that are ongoing at the Consular Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

To date, not only has Central Intelligence confirmed the reports but has uncovered a plot that has spanned beyond the Consular Offices to include other Government departments. In my humble estimation, there is 'institutionalized' corruption and unethical practices at the Consular Division that has been exasperated by the unwillingness of top officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take any immediate and effective action to curb such trends. This is despite repeated requests by the Hon. Fred Mitchell, former Minister, and other top officials of the Ministry of National Security.

A brief of the whole matter is contained in this report. It is noted firstly that criminal charges/prosecutions has not been levied for two main reasons:

(1) Confidential Informants are not prepared to give written statements or become overtly involved as it would consequently reveal their identity; and

(2) Covert intelligence operations has been significantly hampered by ongoing statements in the media regarding this matter.

INFORMATION

According to intelligence received as far back as 2005, Mrs. Dorithea Lafleur, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] c/o the Consular Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are all involved in the selling of Bahamian visas. Haitians and other foreign nationals pay the sum of \$1,500.00 each for the visas.

As a result of this information, the Central Intelligence Bureau commenced an undercover operation to substantiate or disprove the allegations. This operation involved the use of Confidential Informants and extended to the deployment of undercover officers to observe and gather intelligence on this matter.

It is submitted that there are strong reasons to conclude that the above employees of the Visa Section are involved in corrupt and unethical practices at the said Ministry. Confidential Informants themselves had to resort to the use of one of the individuals associated with employees of the Consular Division in order to process even legitimate applications.

Mrs. Lafleur [REDACTED] were identified as the primary facilitators who are assisted by the other employees. Extensive enquiries conducted by CIB revealed that Mrs. Lafleur and [REDACTED] process visas in significant numbers for several Haitian nationals including one [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. These persons were identified as 'Generals' of Mrs. Lafleur and either own or are associated with a number of Haitian vessels that act as 'couriers' for Haitian Passports out of Haiti to be processed by the Foreign Affairs/Immigration Office. They would collect documents from Haitian nationals living in The Bahamas and Haiti who require visa renewals and facilitate the same for a fee.

Two other persons who were identified as being involved in this visa racket are one [REDACTED] [REDACTED] alias [REDACTED]" who is married to a Haitian national and is a farmer from Freeport/Abaco. These persons have submitted hundreds of visa applications that were processed by the named employees.

[REDACTED] D.O.B 05th February, 1967 resides in Marsh Harbour, Abaco. Investigations reveal that he frequents Nassau and is presently the owner of seven Haitian vessels, namely:

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| (1) MISS ROSE MICA | (2) HEAD PEN AND FAMILY |
| (3) LOVE MY WIFE | (4) WILRID |
| (5) NATACHA | (6) LOVETHA |
| (7) MISS FLORIDA | |

[REDACTED] alias "[REDACTED]" D.O.B 17th October, 1957 resides at Family Street, New Providence. [REDACTED] frequents New Providence and regularly obtains two types of visas - one for the crew of his vessels and the other are for persons to travel from Haiti by way of aircraft.

According to information received, these persons would go to the Ministry on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays to drop off packages containing passport/documents for processing and would return to collect them on Wednesdays and Thursdays. This was confirmed by CIB as on occasions, these men were seen around the Consular Office and upon receiving 'packages' would exit the area. They frequently met and transacted business with staff and their 'clients' in the parking lot at Market Street north.

On one occasion, [REDACTED] was observed with [REDACTED] in the stairway exchanging documents for what appeared to be cash. He returned in the evening to the Ministry at the back door and collected the processed documents. Shortly thereafter, Simeon was seen distributing the Passports to Haitian nationals who were waiting in the parking lot at Market Street.

In addition to conducting covert operations surrounding practices at the Consular Division, CIB also carried out intelligence operations targeting flights coming out of Haiti. As noted earlier, persons obtaining visas through the Consular's 'back door' obtain them for persons to travel from Haiti to The Bahamas by way of aircraft.

Flights operating out of Haiti are facilitated by Western Air, Pineapple Air or Southern Airlines. Several persons and operators associated with these companies are known for their involvement in the facilitation of alien smuggling and drug trafficking.

On one flight alone on Sunday, February 4, 2007, a total of thirty four (34) Haitian nationals who arrived from Haiti had Bahamian-issued visas. Four (4) visas were issued by the Embassy of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas in Haiti and thirty (30) visas were issued from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nassau. The persons were interviewed as to the purpose of their trip, the length of stay and the intended place of abode in The Bahamas. Once completed, the persons were released as they were already cleared by Bahamas Immigration.

The examination of these individuals and their documents revealed significant defects. The most significant was that two Haitian Passports bore the same number but nonetheless, were issued with Bahamian visas in Nassau on the same date.

Although these persons were landed by Bahamas Immigration, an examination of the documents clearly indicate that there is likely unethical and corrupt practices being undertaken by the mentioned agency in dealing with these Haitian nationals and flights coming out of Haiti.

When interviewed, each of the persons did not have a fixed place of abode and had very little cash. They arrived either on Western Air, Pineapple Air or Southern Airlines. The intended time of stay was

rehearsed as all of them were using the same amount of time, either two or three weeks. In addition, based on the interview of these persons, it was evident that they have no intention of returning to Haiti. Only one of these persons were previously in The Bahamas.

On Monday, December 25, 2006, a similar operation took place with one Haitian flight. At that time, some fourteen (14) persons were brought in onboard Germinal Air. These persons went through the same process and the information and documents presented were the same.

To further add weight to the 'allegations', on Wednesday, February 21, 2007, a meeting was held with the Hon. Carl Bethel at his law firm at Cumberland Street. He too indicated that a certain person had come to him and volunteered information of practices witnessed by that person involving Consular staff. Mr. Bethel also handed over a substantial quantity of documents which consisted of applications for visa from the Consular Office.

Upon scrutinizing the documents, it was revealed that a number of the applications were submitted by the individuals named above including David Joseph. There were many irregularities and discrepancies regarding the applications in that the applicant did not sign the form nor was there any photograph of the applicant. Nonetheless, the applications were processed and approved by [REDACTED] and Mrs. D. Lafleur.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is no doubt that the image and reputation of the Consular Division and the entire Ministry of Foreign Affairs is at stake due to this matter. More importantly, the national security of The Bahamas is being jeopardized by 'our' inaction. Hence, the following recommendations are humbly offered:

(i) Comprehensive Review & Immediate Implementation of Safeguards

In light of the numerous irregularities at the Consular Office, it is recommended that a comprehensive review be undertaken with the object of tightening controls. It is apparent that there are little safeguards or checks and balances regarding the application and issuance of Bahamian visas. The entire process of visa application and issuance should be scrutinized and a proper **written** policy should be implemented.

It is noted that such a review has already been completed by an outside agency. If this is the case, then a Select/Implementation Committee should be set up to review and implement the 'new' procedure as soon as possible. This can be 'sold' as a component of a complete package (another component being the introduction of the machine readable Bahamian Passports).

An important aspect of any new system is 'evaluation'. Evaluation is a vital part of the project planning and management process. It provides evidence of the level of achievement and can pinpoint resources which have been used effectively. It also identifies what aspects of any new procedure worked well and where improvements are needed. This is essential to ensure checks and balances at the Ministry.

(ii) Periodic Rotation of Consular Staff

A formal system of periodic rotation **must** be developed and introduced to minimize future occurrences of matters of this magnitude. The nature and high sensitivity of all aspects of work falling under the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demands that employees should be rotated in order that the integrity of the processes and the image and reputation of the Ministry and the employees themselves are not brought into question. In essence, no employee should be left in very sensitive areas of the Ministry for extended periods. A formal system of rotation would eliminate all myths and speculations associated with transfers.

In the interim, it is firmly recommended that administratively, all of the employees noted in this report be transferred from the Consular Division immediately. This is a very serious matter which has merit.

Steps should be taken immediately to reassign Mrs. Lafleur, [REDACTED] to eliminate tensions and reduce the 'racket'.

In this context, it is important to express that the Police shall continue to monitor this matter. At this stage, whether something can be done or not in terms of a criminal investigation and prosecution cannot supersede the need to prevent further damage to the image and reputation of the Ministry; the haemorrhage must be stopped.

(ii) Formal Agency System/Limitation On Number of Applications

It has been established that persons are being allowed to submit substantial numbers of applications for processing. A number of these individuals are acting as agents for various foreign national groups and are charging for their service. This state of affairs facilitates corrupt and unethical behaviour on the part of employees at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as these 'agents' align themselves with the employees.

In light of this case, an Agency System should be formally introduced and its protocols should be extensively advertised through MOFA in order that all persons in The Bahamas and elsewhere would be aware of the process. The use of a website could be effective. Once this is done, there should be a limitation on the number of applications that can be submitted by any one private individual.

(iv) Relocation of Consular Division

There is a need to address the issue of physical space at the Consular Division as all foreign nationals applying for visas are made to wait in a small cramped area or on the outside of the Consular Division, Norfolk House, Frederick Street. This too gives the appearance that there are corrupt and unethical practices when employees can be seen in conversation with applicants around the Office.

It is recommended that the Consular Division be relocated and proper facilities be provided for employees of the said Division.

(iv) Collaboration Of Efforts by Government Agencies

The problem faced by The Bahamas regarding all matters connected to immigration requires collaboration, communication and cooperation by all agencies of Government. Persons identified in this report as engaging in this visa scandal are well-known to the Police and Bahamas Immigration Department. However, there is not enough collaboration in terms of simple information sharing between these entities. This case highlights that need.

In light of modern technology, there is a need to introduce some integration system and better means of collaboration by all departments of Government.

In the interim, there is an immediate need for MOFA and the Bahamas Immigration Department to meet to resolve the landing of persons who have Passports with Bahamian issued visas where there are obvious irregularities.

Humbly submitted sir.

Supt. Keith R. Bell

Director – Intelligence & Legal Services