

# Bobby Montague: Drop the PR and Get to Work



Jamaica, without a doubt, is one of the best places on earth to live, and this government is trying to convince us that Jamaica, in addition to being the best place to live, is also one of the best places to do business and invest. However, within the massive PR campaigns and the attempts to get Jamaicans to feel good about Jamaica again, there is just that 800-pound gorilla in the room: crime. This gorilla is a massive and violent gorilla too, jumping and knocking its mighty fists in several of our communities across the country, particularly, at this time, in Western Jamaica, where the gorilla is being fed by lotto scam-related gang violence.

What is the government doing about this crime problem? The first reaction as a political observer or one who keeps abreast of current affairs is to look to our political executive, particularly our Minister of National Security.

Our Minister of National Security is Robert St. Aubyn Montague, a fast-rising political star who, in the eyes of many enjoys a hearty and ambitious political reputation, rising from Councillor and Mayor in St. Mary, to MP and Senator, now to Minister. Even in spite of Montague's fully visible political power and influence, he has had a tenure of ups and downs. Whether the downs are more than the ups is for you to decide.

Before one can even move to talk about this present minister of National Security, is there ever a fair judgement for whoever holds the office? Think about it. Jamaica has a terrible crime problem that fears no political organization or political party holding government. Whoever becomes Minister of National Security, I opine, really has a baptism of fire. By baptism of fire, I don't simply mean a touch with a candle or even the candle wax, but that the Minister of National Security, whomever he may be at the time, may very well be standing in line with the three Hebrew boys to be thrown into the furnace by the Pharaoh. If these biblical allusions don't strike you, I will just state the point blankly; being National Security Minister in Jamaica is a tough-ass job, not for the faint of heart.

On to Sir Bobby now, he was swept into office by Prime Minister Holness when "NUH BADDY" thought that he would have been put in that particular portfolio and indeed he has received his fiery baptism. I hope that the Minister, by now, recognizes the intricacies of the job. Two thousand and sixteen has been a hard year for many. Murders are on the increase, and there is a heightened sense of fear.

The Minister has been talking tough and has been announcing a number of measures to reduce crime, the restructuring of the Constabulary and allocation and reallocation of resources, etc. However, these have for the most part been just announcements. The Minister, as he stands presently, is now at the risk of being just an announcer and not a doer. He must not run that risk. The announcements, grand as they are, assuring as they are, stand the risk of flopping if they are not followed through, and followed through quickly.

Also, I am not convinced that the Minister needs to come on and announce everything relating to his portfolio. While I respect the Minister's desire to communicate with the people, I don't think that the times that we face should necessitate it. I am of the view (and it may be unpopular too) that the Minister just needs to drop some of the PR and get to work immediately. The beautiful thing about it is that National Security matters do not always require disclosure. He has that within his power. The Minister must also work swiftly to integrate his National Security Advisor and his new Police Commissioner as soon as one is appointed.

Minister, I urge you, give the police the tools that they need, get the social intervention problems going, and get the legislative provisions through Parliament NOW. NOW NOW NOW NOW. The country cannot wait another second. One life taken is one too many.



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*The opinions expressed above do not necessarily represent the views of **The Desk at 13 West.***

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