



CAPITAL WEEKLY

"From the Heart of the Nation to the Soul of the People."



No. 045

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Online Publication

BIDEN and BARROW

BELIZE BANKING AND THE UNITED STATES

The occasion was the inauguration ceremony for the new President of Guatemala, Jimmy Morales. And while it is major news in its own right that Belize's Prime Minister was an invited guest for such a grand occasion in a neighboring country with which we still have an unresolved border dispute, perhaps the bigger news for Belizeans was that our Prime Minister got the opportunity to rub shoulders with the second most powerful political leader of the great United States of America, Vice President Joe Biden.

That made for a good photo occasion, but it also afforded Prime Minister Barrow the opportunity raise a substantive and critical issue, that of the problem being faced with correspondent banking, a matter that is centrally linked to United States relations with



US Vice President Joe Biden and Belize's PM Dean Barrow

our region and our country.

Mr. Barrow reported to the nation, via a government press release, that he in fact availed himself of the opportunity to raise the matter with the Vice President. The press release says, "Prime Minister Barrow recalled that this matter had been raised

before with President Obama who undertook to look into it, but to date the problem persists. For this reason the Government of Belize is preparing for a high level visit headed by the Prime Minister to Washington D.C. later this month." The release says the US Vice President "was very interested in doing what he can to assist and support the efforts in getting to a resolution."

Answering earlier questions on the matter from the Belize media, Prime Minister Barrow had informed, "I've met

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Major New Private Sector Investment



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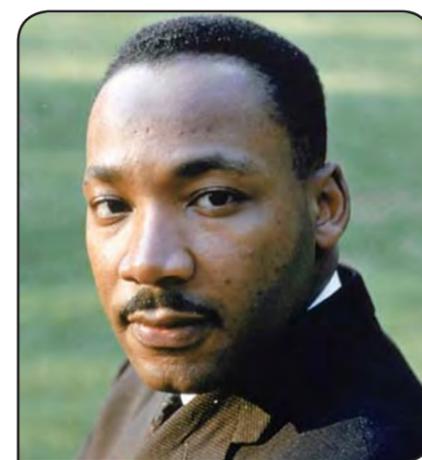
BELTRAIDE's Nicolas Ruiz with Hilly Martinez of Bowen and Bowen

Observing the Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr

As we go to press this Monday evening, the United States of America is marking the birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. with a public and bank holiday.

Martin Luther King Jr. was a Baptist minister and social activist who led the Civil Rights Movement in the United States from the mid-1950's until his death by assassination in 1968. He was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. King, both a Baptist minister and civil-rights activist, had a seismic impact on race relations in the United States, beginning in the mid-1950s.

Among many efforts, King headed the SCLC. Through his activism, he played a pivotal role in ending the legal segregation of African-American citizens in the South and other areas of the nation, as well as the creation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. King received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, among



The Late Martin Luther King Jr.

several other honours. King was assassinated in April 1968, and continues to be remembered as one of the most lauded African-American leaders in history, often referenced by his 1963 speech, "I Have a Dream."

The life, mission and death of Martin Luther King Jr. have positively and permanently impacted not only the United States but the entire world. And so, to all peoples everywhere, we say, Happy Martin Luther King Day! May 'The Dream' Never Die!

EDITORIAL

THE DELICATE PATH OF DIPLOMACY

Events and developments at home and abroad over the past week underscore and remind us how delicate—some would say, how dangerous—the path of diplomacy can be.

In the United States, President Barack Obama and his political advisors are celebrating the implementation of a historic Nuclear Deal with Iran, coinciding—some would say, coordinated—with the reciprocal release of prisoners/hostages by the two nations in question. Mr. Obama's harshest critics, however, are accusing him of being misguided and naïve in trusting the Iranian leaders who they say are taking Mr. Obama and the United States for a dangerous ride down a path which can only lead to the much dreaded outcome of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons.

Here at home, Belizeans viewed with similar mixed emotions our Prime Minister's attendance of the grand inauguration of the new President of Guatemala, our neighbors to the West and South who still constitutionally maintain a territorial claim over our country. As in the case of Mr. Obama, Mr. Barrow's goodwill cannot be gainsaid. But, given the historical nature of the relations between our two countries, further complicated by the pre-election comments of President Jimmy Morales himself, there certainly are a number of Belizeans who will maintain that the Guatemalans must not be trusted.

If humanity is to progress, if peoples and nations are to develop and realize their full potential, if the world is to become a safer and more secure place, we must be prepared to forge, however cautious and measured, some level of trust between and among us. Such is the delicate path of diplomacy.

NEW DIRECTOR NAMED FOR THE FINANCIAL INTELLIGENCE UNIT (FIU)

The Financial Intelligence Unit has a new Director. She is Joy Grant, one of Belize's most outstanding women and a person of impeccable character and integrity.

Miss Grant is a former Senator and Cabinet member who served from 2012 until the general elections of November 4, 2015 as Minister of Energy, Science, Technology and Public Utilities. She was also appointed as Chair of the recently established National Bank.

She was previously ambassador of Belize to the European Union (EU), a position she held from 2008 until 2012 under the first term of the Dean Barrow Administration, when she was named Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Belize to Brussels, Belgium, accredited to the European Community.

Miss Grant has been well recognized internationally, having served as Managing Director of the Nature Conservancy Office in Arlington, Virginia, USA from 2001 to 2005, and as Executive Director of Programme for Belize from 1989 to 2001.

Grant takes over command of the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) from Eric Eusey who held the position for one year. She is the fifth person to head the FIU since its formation. Miss Grant says her priorities include liaising with stakeholders and enhancing the interaction between the FIU and other related organizations and agencies.

She said the Unit will take recommendations from the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) seriously, and will develop new regulations. That task-force has made a number of recommendations to financial institutions. She says she has already identified a number of those recommendations that will be given great priority for implementation.

Miss Grant says one of



Joy Grant, New Director of FIU

the FIU's priorities is conducting a National Risk Assessment, looking at organizations in the real estate business, attorneys and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The National Risk Assessment will help the Unit to identify the weaknesses and strengths of such organizations, making adequate changes and implementing methods to make them more efficient.

The FIU will also look at NGOs to update the database of existing ones. All NGOs will be required to register with the FIU, she said. And, the Financial Intelligence Unit will look at the procedures organizations use to provide financial information. This will help to regularize the process and make it more efficient.

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BIDEN and BARROW

BELIZE BANKING AND THE UNITED STATES

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with the US Ambassador; our Ambassador in Washington is trying to secure me appointments with the State Department, with the US Treasury, with the World Bank, with two regulators, the FDIC and the Office of the Controller of the Currency.

One of our difficulties is that apart from the tier one banks, smaller banks, community banks, state banks, in the case of credit card settlements, it's a community bank that has agreed to do that for Belize Bank, and for Heritage after the corresponding banking relationship was cut off by Bank of America. That bank has now indicated that by the middle of next month it is looking to discontinue even that sort of less comprehensive relationship. So even the question of the



Central Bank of Belize which Regulates the Nation's Banking System

credit card settlements is now in some jeopardy. That's one of the reasons that I want to talk to both FDIC and the Office of the Controller of the Currency, because those are regulatory agencies for the state banks and for the small community banks."

Asked if he believes the matter can be considered a crisis, PM Barrow responded, "Well it is potentially a crisis. In fact, I don't want to overstate things but if we don't find a solution one way or another, it is going to be a huge crisis. We are not quite there yet.

I hope that my visit to Washington will pay some dividends, although when I had raised it with the President and he had expressed his willingness to try and have the US help us find a solution - nothing has happened."

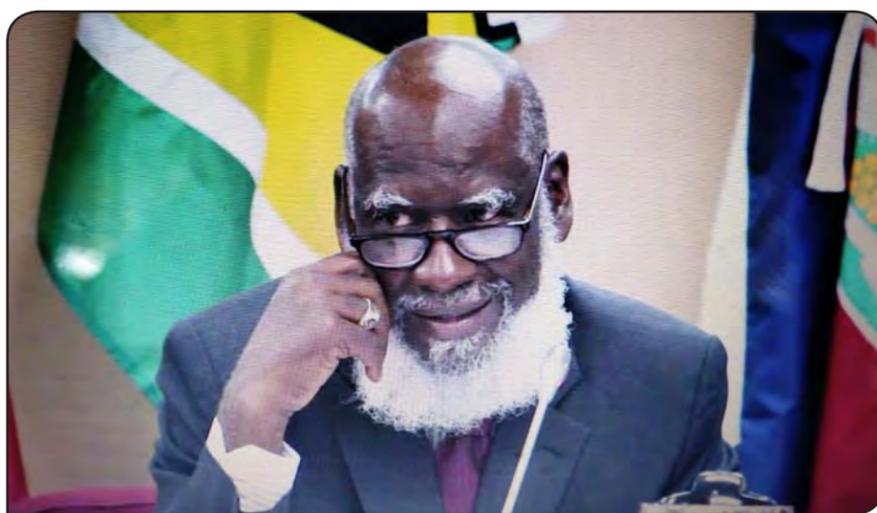
The loss of correspondent banking relationships is a problem being experienced not only by Belize, but by the entire region of Central America and the Caribbean. It is the result of new measures implemented by the US Treasury Department for the expressed purpose of reducing money laundering and terrorism related financial activity. The problems such measures create for countries like Belize are perhaps the unintended consequences, but that does not make them any less devastating potentially to our relatively vulnerable economies.

"WE HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO" Belize Foreign Minister Addresses CARICOM

With Belize's Prime Minister Hon. Dean Barrow now chairing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), our Foreign Minister, Hon. Wilfred Elrington, is now Chairman of the Community Council of Ministers. In this capacity he addressed the Community of Ministers on Friday, January 15, 2016 at the start of the 37th Meeting of the Council in Georgetown Guyana.

Honourable Wilfred Elrington stated, "Our collective actions and our accomplishments to date are proof positive that our integration process is strong and inexorably deepening. Our presence here is a commitment to that integration movement which is itself impelled by our resolve to deliver increasing benefits to the people of our community.

We continue to work assiduously to improve the standard of living of our peoples, and to provide for them a safe and secure environment in which to grow, to learn, work, invest, recre-



Belize's Foreign Minister Honourable Wilfred 'Sedi' Elrington at the 37th Meeting of the CARICOM Council in Georgetown Guyana

ate and indeed to attain their full potential. While we are encouraged by our accomplishments, we fully appreciate that we need to build on our success, and to move forward without ever losing sight of why we were elected and the mandates that our people entrusted to us to carry out.

Our endeavours will demand perspicacity and resolution from all of us in leadership position given the very daunting challenges which now confront our world, challenges which can only be surmounted by

our resolute collective action. Fortunately for our community, we have a very dedicated and capable CARICOM Secretariat and staff to aid us in our quest. They have presented us with a road-map to reform our secretariat and develop community strategic plan 2015-2019 to guide our actions in the future. That strategic plan is designed to

build our economic, environmental, social and technological resilience with the CARICOM Single Market and Economy as an important vehicle for greater resilience. What we now need is to commit to making our governance arrangements more flexible and dynamic, and to revise those arrangements for our integration movement to become more effective and relevant to the needs of the peoples of CARICOM."

Elrington ended on an optimistic note, asserting, "We have a long way to go, but we undoubtedly also have the will and capacity to keep moving forward and to bring about the objectives of our integration movement."

A key part of the meeting involved shaping the agenda for the upcoming 27th Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of CARICOM Heads of Government to take place next month in Belize.

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26 New & Young Ambassadors

Defending the Convention on Rights of the Child

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Honourable Patrick Faber was the main speaker at a ceremony for newly appointed ambassadors for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) held on January 12, 2016.

In his address, Hon. Faber remarked, “Back in the days, children were to be seen and not heard; in fact, children were considered in some instances to be subhuman and they were mistreated in many regards. And with the convention that was readily embraced—more so readily that by Belize than others—but many countries have embraced the convention and in fact, the status of the treatment of children as a result has improved tremendously; and for that we are grateful to the entire world, because this is a worldwide effort.”



*Darwin Westby
Newly named Ambassador*

The new ambassadors, 26 of them, are being deployed around the country to monitor compliance with the commitments made under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Also speaking at the ceremony was Minister of Social Transformation and Human Development, Honourable Anthony Martinez. He remarked, “We must educate those that are affected and those that are not affected, so that, at the end of the day, we



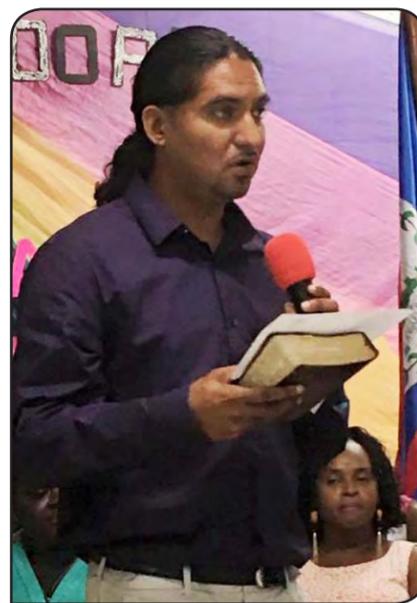
*Honourable Patrick Faber and Honourable Anthony Martinez
with new Ambassadors for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*



Ambassadors of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

have a better community, we have a better society. Most of the time, you know, we have difficulty with parenting, parental skills. I think we need to have a look at that. But with these ambassadors, I think they can bridge that gap for us, especially with the difficult time a lot of children have.”

Program Coordinator,



Lindbergh Smith, stated, “Tonight was the final step in officially bestowing upon them the title of ambassadors. And I think while it is a prestigious title, it’s quite a tall order for them because it is living up to it now. And so these ambassadors will have the privilege or the opportunity to go out there and champion children’s rights



Ambassadors of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

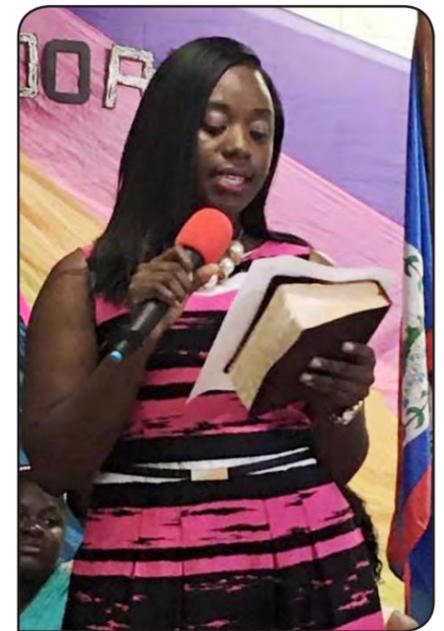


*One of the newly named
Ambassadors at the Ceremony*

in their local community.”

One of the new ambassadors, Darwin Westby, remarked, “We knew, ultimately, this has benefit for the children of Belize and their families. We were all bounded by the same selfish service for the greater good of Belize, more so for a cause so worthy. Our Belizean children are the future and we have the responsibility to safeguard them.

We have been networking and communicating from the first day of training. A bond was forged and an alliance was formed ensuring that the mantra of this program descends on every corner of this beautiful Jewel. We dialogued regularly, created a Facebook page so that everybody can feel free to join us, and the idea bank keeps getting daily deposits. Look out for the ambassador tsunami coming your way! Progress is



being made; the program is launched, the ambassadors are officially ready and the journey now lies before us.”

The new ambassadors are well-trained, having participated back in November 2015 in a rigorous three-day training session that saw key stakeholders making presentations on tools currently in place to protect children.

Belize signed on to the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child over 25 years ago in 1990.

Major New Private Sector Investment

Bowen & Bowen's State Of The Art Bottling Facility

A new multi-million, state of the art soft drink bottling facility has been inaugurated by Bowen & Bowen Ltd as part of the company's efforts to increase its competitive edge to secure its fair share of the local market, which in recent years has been flooded by an expanding number of imported brands.

The beverage market in Belize is becoming more competitive with products now be-



Bowen and Bowen Bottling Facilities

with the soft drink bottling facility being on the top of the list. According to Michael Bowen, President and CEO of Bowen and Bowen, the new facility is valued at approximately Bz \$40 million and can process 22,000 bottles per hour. Bowen and Bowen is the producer of Lighthouse Lager, Belikin Beer and Stout, Belikin Premium, Guinness Stout, Coca Cola, Sprite, Fanta, Crystal Water and Crystal Fruit Beverage. At the inauguration ceremony, Prime Minister Dean Barrow said the investment was emblematic of the company's commitment to



Address by Prime Minister Honourable Dean Barrow

producing the finest products for the local market and the creation of jobs for Belizeans. He offered his congratulations to the management of Bowen and Bowen Ltd and reiterated his Government's unwavering support for the project.

Under the Government of Belize's Fiscal Incentive Programme, the Bowen and Bowen expansion project was granted a development concession, which is being administered by the Aftercare Unit of the Belize Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE), to assist the company to increase the feasi-

bility for the full implementation of its expansion plan. BELTRAIDE's mission is to enhance Belize's prosperity by fostering investment confidence, entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation. In addition to its main functions, BELTRAIDE also operates the Small Business Development Centre (SBDC) and the Belize Training Employment Centre (BTEC), which are based in Belize City. Since its establishment in 2011,

over 8,000 local and international businesses have benefited from BELTRAIDE services. The inaugural ceremony was attended by over 2,000 company employees, government officials, members of the House of Representatives and Ministers of Government, including Hon. Tracy Taegar Pantón, Minister of State in the Ministry of Economic Development, Petroleum, Investment, Trade and Commerce. Minister Taegar is also the Minister responsible for BELTRAIDE. (Information & Photographs Courtesy of Mike Hernandez)



Address by Nicolas Ruiz Director of BELTRAIDE



Invited Guests including Ministers of Government and Clergy



Invited Guests including Ministers of Government

ing imported from Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean. To maintain its market share, Bowen and Bowen Ltd decided to upgrade its soft drink manufacturing and beer fermentation and bottling capacity at its facilities in Ladyville. This investment is mainly in the form of new bottling equipment in line with the requirements that the international holders (Coca Cola, Fanta and Guinness) are demanding. The project will cost approximately Bz 79 million and will be implemented in three main phases over a period of five years



Invited Guests including Ministers of Government

"This is A Good Day"

President Barack Obama on US-Iran Deal

This is a good day, because, once again, we're seeing what's possible with strong American diplomacy.

As I said in my State of the Union address, ensuring the security of the United States and the safety of our people demands a smart, patient and disciplined approach to the world. That includes our diplomacy with the Islamic Republic of Iran. For decades, our differences with Iran meant that our governments almost never spoke to each other. Ultimately, that did not advance America's interests. Over the years, Iran moved closer and closer to having the ability to build a nuclear weapon. But from Presidents Franklin Roosevelt to John F. Kennedy to Ronald Reagan, the United States has never been afraid to pursue diplomacy with our adversaries. And as President, I decided that a strong, confident America could advance our national security by engaging directly with the Iranian government.

We've seen the results. Under the nuclear deal that we, our allies and partners reached with Iran last year, Iran will not get its hands on a nuclear bomb. The region, the United States, and the world will be more secure. As I've said many times, the nuclear deal was never intended to resolve all of our differences with Iran. But still, engaging directly with the Iranian government on a sustained basis, for the first time in decades, has created a unique opportunity -- a window -- to try to resolve important issues. And today, I can report progress on a number of fronts.

First, yesterday marked a milestone in preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Iran has now fulfilled key commitments under the nuclear deal. And I want to take a moment to explain why this is so important.

Over more than a decade, Iran had moved ahead with its nuclear program, and, before the deal, it had installed nearly 20,000 centrifuges that can enrich uranium for a nuclear bomb. Today,



United States President Barack Obama delivering address on implementation of US-Iran Deal and release of hostages/prisoners

Iran has removed two-thirds of those machines. Before the deal, Iran was steadily increasing its stockpile of enriched uranium -- enough for up to 10 nuclear bombs. Today, more than 98 percent of that stockpile has been shipped out of Iran -- meaning Iran now doesn't have enough material for even one bomb. Before,

A historic swap between Iran and the U.S. means the release of long-imprisoned Washington Post reporter Jason Rezaian, Christian pastor Saeed Abedini and former Marine Amir Mirzaei Hekmati. In exchange seven Iranians charged or imprisoned for sanctions violations will be granted clemency.

"We have a rare chance to pursue a new path - a different, better future that delivers progress for both our peoples and the wider world."

Iran was nearing completion of a new reactor capable of producing plutonium for a bomb. Today, the core of that reactor has been pulled out and filled with concrete so it cannot be used again.

Before the deal, the world had relatively little visibility into Iran's nuclear program. Today, international inspectors are on the ground, and Iran is being subjected to the most comprehensive, intrusive inspection regime ever negotiated to monitor a nuclear program. Inspectors will monitor Iran's key nuclear facilities 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. For decades to come, inspectors will have access to Iran's entire nuclear supply chain. In other words, if Iran tries to cheat -- if they try to build a bomb covertly -- we will catch them.

So the bottom line is this. Whereas Iran was steadily expanding its nuclear program, we have now cut off every single path that Iran could have used to build a bomb. Whereas it would have taken Iran two to three months to break out with enough material to rush to a bomb, we've now extended that breakout time to a year -- and with the world's unprecedented inspections and access to Iran's program, we'll know if Iran ever tries to break out.

Now that Iran's actions have been verified, it can begin to receive relief from certain nuclear sanctions and gain access to its own money that had been frozen. And perhaps most important of all, we've achieved this historic progress through diplomacy, without resorting to

another war in the Middle East.

I want to also point out that by working with Iran on this nuclear deal, we were better able to address other issues. When our sailors in the Persian Gulf accidentally strayed into Iranian waters that could have sparked a major international incident. Some folks here in Washington rushed to declare that it was the start of another hostage crisis. Instead, we worked directly with the Iranian government and secured the release of our sailors in less than 24 hours.

This brings me to a second major development -- several Americans unjustly detained by Iran are finally coming home. In some cases, these Americans faced years of continued detention. And I've met with some of their families. I've seen their anguish, how they ache for their sons and husbands. I gave these families my word -- I made a vow -- that we would do everything in our power to win the release of their loved ones. And we have been tireless. On the sidelines of the nuclear negotiations, our diplomats at the highest level, including Secretary Kerry, used every meeting to push Iran to release our Americans. I did so myself, in my conversation with President Rouhani. After the nuclear deal was completed, the discussions between our governments accelerated. Yesterday, these families finally got the news that they have been waiting for.

Jason Rezaian is coming home. A courageous journalist for The Washington Post, who wrote about the daily lives and hopes of the Iranian people, he's been held for a year and a half. He embodies the brave spirit that gives life to the freedom of the press. Jason has already been reunited with his wife and mom.

Pastor Saeed Abedini is coming home. Held for three and half years, his unyielding faith has inspired people around the world in the global fight to uphold freedom of religion. Now, Pastor Abedini will return to his

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"This is A Good Day"

President Barack Obama on US-Iran Deal

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church and community in Idaho.

Amir Hekmati is coming home. A former sergeant in the Marine Corps, he's been held for four and a half years. Today, his parents and sisters are giving thanks in Michigan.

Two other Americans unjustly detained by Iran have also been released -- Nosratollah Khosravi-Roodsari and Matthew Trevithick, an Iranian -- who was in Iran as a student. Their cases were largely unknown to the world. But when Americans are freed and reunited with their families, that's something that we can all celebrate.

So I want to thank my national security team -- especially Secretary Kerry; Susan Rice, my National Security Advisor; Brett McGurk; Avril Haines; Ben Rhodes -- our whole team worked tirelessly to bring our Americans home, to get this work done. And I want to thank the Swiss government, which represents our interests in Iran, for their critical assistance.

And meanwhile, Iran has agreed to deepen our coordination as we work to locate Robert Levinson -- missing from Iran for more than eight years. Even as we rejoice in the safe return of others, we will never forget about Bob. Each and every day, but especially today, our hearts are with the Levinson family, and we will not rest until their family is whole again.

In a reciprocal humanitarian gesture, six Iranian-Americans and one Iranian serving sentences or awaiting trial in the United States are being granted clemency. These individuals were not charged with terrorism or any violent offenses. They're civilians, and their release is a one-time gesture to Iran given the unique opportunity offered by this moment and the larger circumstances at play. And it reflects our willingness to engage with Iran to advance our mutual interests, even as we ensure the national security of the United States.

So, nuclear deal imple-



President of the United States of America Barack Obama and Supreme Leader of Iran Ali Khamenei

mented. American families reunited. The third piece of this work that we got done this week-end involved the United States and Iran resolving a financial dispute that dated back more than three decades. Since 1981, after our nations severed diplomatic relations, we've worked through a international tribunal to resolve various claims between our countries. The United

States and Iran are now settling a longstanding Iranian government claim against the United States government. Iran will be returned its own funds, including appropriate interest, but much less than the amount Iran sought.

"We can leave this world and make it safer and more secure for our children and our grandchildren for generations to come."

For the United States, this settlement could save us billions of dollars that could have been pursued by Iran. So there was no benefit to the United States in dragging this out. With the nuclear deal done, prisoners released, the time was right to resolve this dispute as well.

Of course, even as we implement the nuclear deal and welcome our Americans home, we recognize that there remain profound differences between the United States and Iran. We remain steadfast in opposing Iran's destabilizing behavior elsewhere,

including its threats against Israel and our Gulf partners, and its support for violent proxies in places like Syria and Yemen. We still have sanctions on Iran for its violations of human rights, for its support of terrorism, and for its ballistic missile program. And we will continue to enforce these sanctions, vigorously. Iran's recent missile test, for example, was a violation of its international

obligations. And as a result, the United States is imposing sanctions on individuals and companies working to advance Iran's ballistic missile program. And we are going to remain vigilant about it. We're not going to waver in the defense of our security or that of our allies and partners. But I do want to once again speak directly to the Iranian people. Yours is a great civilization, with a vibrant culture that has so much to contribute to the world -- in commerce, and in science and the arts. For decades, your government's threats and actions to destabilize your region have isolated Iran from much of the world. And now our governments are talking with one another. Following the nuclear deal, you -- especially young Iranians -- have the opportunity to begin

building new ties with the world. We have a rare chance to pursue a new path -- a different, better future that delivers progress for both our peoples and the wider world. That's the opportunity before the Iranian people. We need to take advantage of that.

And to my fellow Americans, today, we're united in welcoming home sons and husbands and brothers who, in lonely prison cells, have endured an absolute nightmare. But they never gave in and they never gave up. At long last, they can stand tall and breathe deep the fresh air of freedom.

As a nation, we face real challenges, around the world and here at home. Many of them will not be resolved quickly or easily. But today's progress -- Americans coming home, an Iran that has rolled back its nuclear program and accepted unprecedented monitoring of that program -- these things are a reminder of what we can achieve when we lead with strength and with wisdom; with courage and resolve and patience. America can do -- and has done -- big things when we work together. We can leave this world and make it safer and more secure for our children and our grandchildren for generations to come.

I want to thank once again Secretary Kerry; our entire national security team, led by Susan Rice. I'm grateful for all the assistance that we received from our allies and partners. And I am hopeful that this signals the opportunity at least for Iran to work more cooperatively with nations around the world to advance their interests and the interests of people who are looking for peace and security for their families.

Thank you so much. God bless you, and God bless the United States of America. **(The Preceding is the full text of an address by President of the United States of America Barack Obama on the implementation of the US-Iran Deal and Release of Iranian-American hostages and prisoners. The address was delivered Sunday January 17, 2016 from the Cabinet Room in the White House)**

STATE OF AFFAIRS OF THE BELIZE DEFENCE FORCE

On Wednesday, January 13, 2016, Minister of National Security Honourable John Saldivar and BDF Commander, Brigadier General David Jones spent quality time with the local media, briefing them on the state of affairs of the Belizean Military and sharing valuable details on the achievements, strategic review and plans to be implemented.

The formulation of a well-crafted plan of action to guide the Belize Defence Force into the future has been a work in progress for Commander David Jones. Since taking over command of the BDF three years ago in 2012, a Strategic Defence Review has been one of the top priorities for Brigadier General Jones. That proposal will, among other things, look at expanding the size of the military. It will also deal with defining the objectives of the B.D.F. over the next five years. And its implementation, according to Minister of National Security Honourable John Saldivar, will be complemented by funds from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) to improve physical infrastructure being used by the armed forces.

Brigadier General Jones stated, "We've never had a formal document before. This is the document that has political input, military input in charting the way forward for the Belize Defense Force. So, based on what the size of the force will be, what are the goals they want to achieve, the task they want to get from the ministry and the government, the resources that are required to achieve those, what the size of the budget should be, what should be the new ORBAT or formation of the force.

All that will be put in place for this document, and we're looking, at a minimum, it is a five-year projection as to what we want the force to look like within the next five years. What we're going to achieve within the next five years, and possibly up to for the next ten years."

For his part, Minister of National Security John Saldivar stated, "I believe that's one of the things that will be achieved from the CABEI project, in terms of repairing and improving all these facilities across the country. The general can perhaps go into greater details as to the specifics, the specific areas that will be addressed, but the 60 million



Brigadier General David Jones and Hon. John Saldivar

dollars that is being invested between the three institutions, the Police Department, the B.D.F. and the Coastguard, it's going to significantly improve the physical infrastructure of these three institutions. Over the years we have seen the B.D.F.'s budget grow if only because of the growth in numbers but also as a result of increased investments in equipment and machinery. The CABEI project is going to see a significant improvement in buildings and equipment and vehicles for the B.D.F. So, this year and in the next three years, as that project is a three-year project, we're going to see quite a few benefits to the B.D.F."

Another matter discussed was the expected benefits to be derived from the return of the British Army Training Support Unit in Belize (BATSUB) and the expansion of the Jungle Warfare Instructor Course which will accommodate military personnel from a number of other countries.

Brigadier General Jones explained, "In the past, we've had European countries and also countries in CARICOM who attend our course. We have Trinidad, Jamaica and some of the other smaller islands. They traditionally send their students here in Belize to do training. We have members from the Dutch, the Norwegian, French Guiana and even the Guyanese come in to do training here in Belize. We've also had US forces who come in

to do jungle training here. In the past we've also had Mexicans and even Canadians, and at one point we had two Guatemalan officers, I believe, who came in to do our jungle warfare instructor course in Belize. With it being expanded to a more international arena, it brings revenue to the economy and for the country. That money would go to the government, and that money can be used to assist the B.D.F to buy the necessary resources and equipment. This can be a very good income earner for the government and the B.D.F."

The BDF Commander discussed the effectiveness of the BDF in patrolling protected areas particularly along the Belize-Guatemala border and curbing illegal activities in those areas:

"For the last 2 years, the big area of concern we had was in the area of Rio Blanco where we had many encroachments, too much encroachments, and we were able to arrest that situation not just by the increase of patrols but also with the assistance of our Guatemalan counterparts, where people are being persuaded to come across into Belize and do illegal activities.

Our aim for 2016 is to arrest the situation even more along our border with our neighboring countries, with Guatemala and Mexico. So, air reconnaissance will increase. There also will be an increase in foot patrol and coverage of some of the areas that we haven't been covering. So the other area of concern now is

the area of Sebada which is inside the Chiquibul. This is the area in which we will be working with FCD to arrest that situation."

Brigadier General Jones also spoke about important investments to be made in the repair and upkeep of Price Barracks which was inherited from British Forces over 20 years ago. "The buildings that we have in the BDF, that we have at Price Barracks and the other bases, are very old and they require refurbishment. Some of them actually require demolition and reconstruction, so that is expected to occur; and from the CABEI fund, apart from the vehicles, monies is also being put aside to do construction and refurbishment of the buildings for our soldiers to live more adequately and comfortably.

Field equipment and resources are also going to be ongoing and we expect that every soldier by the end of 2016 is going to be fully equipped, fully resourced to meet the national goals of our country. So when a soldier gets deployed, he won't be in need or want of the kit or equipment, because we're going to be reaching our goal this year that we have all the kit and equipment that we need for our soldiers to adequately do their patrols, do their operations comfortably."

Finally, the Commander spoke about helicopters being acquired for the BDF and the accompanying training that is being arranged:

"Helicopter training will be a big thing for us this year because we expect to get in the other two UH-1H helicopters actually on Monday; coming Monday those two helicopters are expected to be in Belize. We will finalize between two contractors, we are looking at now to decide which one of them will provide the helicopter training for our pilots. We already have the BEL, so this year, 2016, we expect to have three helicopters up and running," he explained.



Members of the Belize Defence Force High Command and Members of the Media

THE POLICE & THE CRIME SITUATION

2015 Finishes Good - 2016 Starts Bad



Award presented to Senior Superintendent Chester Williams

On Wednesday January 6, 2016, Minister of National Security Honourable John Saldivar and Commissioner of Police Allen Whylie met with other members of the Police High Command to review the statistics from the year just ended, 2015; and they invited the local media to share the details and analysis of those statistics.

Those statistics showed that while the major crime figures for the first half of 2015 were high, the last six months of year saw a marked reduction.

Commissioner Whylie informed, "The Southern Regional

Command area had a total of 296 major crimes recorded compared to 328 recorded in 2014. This reflects a decrease of 32 major crimes recorded, or 9.8% decrease in 2015 on the Southern Regional Command area. The Northern Regional Command area had a total of 200 major crimes recorded in 2015, compared to 327 in 2014. This shows a decrease of 127 major crimes or 38.8% in 2015. The Northern Regional Command area had the greatest decrease in major crimes recorded in 2015. The Western Regional Command area had a total of 440 major crimes recorded in 2015, compared to 573 cases in 2014. This reflects

a decrease of 133 major crimes or 23.2% in 2015. The Eastern Division Rural Command had a total of 152 major crimes recorded in 2015, compared to 172 in 2014. This shows a decrease of 20 major crimes or 11.6% in 2015. The Eastern Division North Command, which includes San Pedro and Caye Caulker, had a total of 604 major crimes recorded in 2015, compared to 547 recorded in 2014. This shows an increase of 57 major crimes or 10.4% in 2015. Eastern Division South Command had a total of 524 major crimes recorded in 2015, compared 547 in 2014. This shows a decrease of 23 ma-

that 214 cases of robberies were reported countrywide for the year under review. A decrease was noted of 77 robberies or 26.5% in 2015 when compared to the year 2014. Murders, 119 murders were recorded in 2015 contributing to 5.4% of the total major crimes recorded. A decrease of 4 murders or 3.3% was noted in 2015 in comparison to the previous year. The month with the highest incidents of major crimes was August, 2015, with a total of 221 cases reported. Whilst, in 2014, the highest was recorded in the month of May with a total of 229 major crimes."

Asked what he believes

down of crimes, especially in Belize City, South-side in particular in terms of the cases of murder.

The community policing approach was in effect, the intervention efforts were in effect. Mr. Williams took it to another level. He was more out there and was more willing to meet with each and every person whenever an incident occurred, in an effort to intervene. It was also being done by the previous commander, but it was not highlighted by the media as such, that now they realize the benefit of the media. So I'm saying the North side is also having the media present whenever they are out doing



Award presented to Senior Superintendent Dennis Arnold

was the reason for the dramatic improvement in the crime situation during the second half of 2015, Commissioner Whylie stated, "You could recall in the second half of 2015, first of July to be exact; we created 3 new divisions out of Belize district; Eastern Division Rural, which comprises the Hattieville Ladyville area; Eastern Division South, which is the South-side of Belize City; and Eastern Division North, which is the North-side of Belize City, as well as San Pedro and Caulker. That allowed the divisional commanders, our very senior officers, ACP/Senior Superintendent to be able to better manage the smaller area and to be more flexible and adaptable to issues of crime. In the second half of 2015, we were able to see a significant slowing

some of these meet and greet activities. Obviously, the Police, with the consent of the people, and so the key to our success, is being on the ground to meet the various residences of the city as well as the nation, to listen to their concerns and see how we're able to assist and respond. Not everything we're able to solve, but the things that are within our ability to solve we do try to solve them, and solve them quickly."

Awards were issued to the commanders of those areas which saw the most dramatic improvement in the crime situation during 2015.

Unfortunately, the New Year, 2016, has started off with an overall spike in major crimes, particularly murders. Hopefully, the situation will once again improve as the year progresses.



Award presented to Assistant Commissioner of Police Desiree Phillips

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major crimes or 4.2% in 2015. "Our statistics for the year 2015 shows a grand total of 2216 major crimes recorded in the country of Belize, as compared to 2494 in the year 2014. This reflects a decrease of 278 cases of major incidents or 11.1% in 2015. Theft was the highest major crime reported in the country of Belize for the year 2015. A decrease of 96 cases of thefts or 8.5% was noted in 2015 when compared with the previous year, 2014. Burglary was the second highest reported major crime countrywide for the year 2015. This is a decrease of 93 cases of burglary or 11.1% as noted in 2015 when compared to the previous year. Records show



Award presented to Senior Superintendent Edward Broaster

Bright Prospects In Tourism

A Profitable Government-Private Sector Partnership



The Fort Street Tourism Village (FSTV) in Belize City

In his 2016 New Year's Message, the Prime Minister stated: "It is in tourism that our prospects continue to shine brightest. In September, October and November of 2015, overnight arrivals exceeded the 2014 numbers for the same three months by 19.2%, 22.1% and 33% respectively. With the new Southwest and Copa airline services from the US and South America to Belize already

headline news for 2016 is twofold: NCL's Harvest Caye project becomes fully operational by April and brings with it two thousand jobs for Southern Belize; and the Supreme Court ruling on Belize City Port exclusivity, or lack thereof, clears the way for us to green-light a new, Old Capital alongside docking facility. This latter will undoubtedly mean a significant ramping up of cruise calls



Inaugural Flight for Southwest Airlines In Belize

launched; and with the scheduled commencement of direct flights from Canada in 2016, we expect to maintain and better the record breaking, year-over-year increases in stay-over tourism."

Turning to cruise tourism, the Prime Minister reported, "On the Cruise side, there was a 9.2% passenger jump this November, the last full month of 2015 for which we already have the statistics, over November of 2014. And on that front the

via the country's main harbour, and completes an overall tourism picture that we can paint in colours of unambiguous optimism. The new cruise port will be built by the private sector in some form of partnership with Government, and we expect to develop the Commerce Bight container port in Stann Creek using the same model."

Since the Prime Minister made those remarks in his New Year's Message, the question of

a new alongside docking facility in the Old Capital (Belize City) has taken another twist, with the developer of the proposed Stake Bank Project (Michael Feinstein) now asking the Government for an exclusive agreement similar to the very one entered into by a previous administration with the Fort Street Tourism Village which had been preventing the green-lighting

the Supreme Court saying that exclusivity is illegal and cannot stand. I fail to see how he can then come back to us and say, give me an exclusive. So, that's where that is. We know that Luke Espot and Carnival were going to build at Port Loyola, and Carnival had done it studies and knew that the Port Loyola option was feasible. Mr. Feinstein tells me that was then,



Inaugural Flight for Copa Airlines In Belize

of his Stake Bank Project. As explained in a press release issued by Cabinet last week, this Government has turned down the request for such an exclusive agreement, even as the government is determined to ensure the construction of at least one new alongside docking facility in the Belize City area.

Speaking to the local

and now because the ships have grown bigger, he is positive that Port Loyola is not an option. Well, we need to hear that from the experts that are going to be retained by those that have an interest in Port Loyola. So, for us, its wait and see."

While the Government is not prepared to enter into any exclusive arrangement with any



Carnival Cruiseline in Belize

media on the matter, Prime Minister Dean Barrow elaborated, "I made it plain to Mr. Feinstein that we are perfectly happy to green light his project and to bring the law that we had passed into effect. But he says that that's not enough, that we must give him a 25 years exclusive arrangement. Government is not prepared to do that for all sorts of reasons including the fact that he just won, six months or so ago, a ruling from

single developer, it will nevertheless continue to work in partnership with the private sector to further develop and expand the country's cruise tourism industry nationwide, making it more profitable for all stakeholders and for the country and people as whole. Indeed, with all that is already on the ground, what else is in progress, and much more to come, the prospect for Tourism should continue to shine brightly in 2016 and beyond.



Norwegian Cruiseline in Belize

Transformation Apace - Jobs Aplenty

Infrastructure Works Continue Countrywide in 2016

One of the primary benefits of the massive physical infrastructure transformation that has been unfolding under this UDP Administration is the major employment it has generated. If there is any notion anywhere out there that this is about to slow down dra-

are the tourism road-network improvements (which had commenced in the last quarter of 2015) such as the upgrade and paving of the road to Lamanai; the North Ambergris Road to the new Efrain Guerrero international Airport; and the Road to Caracol funded by the United Kingdom.



Paving of Streets in Rural Belize District

one lane bridges with modern two-lane bridges. There is the new Cayo Bridge across the Macal River connecting the already upgraded Loma Luz Boulevard from the Highway through Jo-

River, extending from behind Gentrac to around Mile 8 on the George Price (Western) Highway. The PM says all these projects are being financed through a combination of grants and



Upgrading Loma Luz Boulevard in Cayo leading to new Bridge to be constructed across Macal River

matically or stop completely in 2016, someone must have grossly misinterpreted the Prime Minister's New Year's Message.

In the PM's own words, "Our trademark infrastructure drive will also continue, though now there will be a

As the PM noted, the UK Government's Caribbean Grant Initiative has recently been announced and Belize's share of this new aid endowment is in the region of 135 million Belize Dollars. This is what is being used to finance the upgrading of the



Cementing of Streets in the Southern Town of Dangriga

soph Andrews Drive and linking up with the Benque Road. There is the reconstruction of the Benque Viejo Road itself; and there is the upgrading of the Cristo Rey - San Antonio Road. And, back in the Belize District, there is, for good measure, the construction of a new PGIA Link with a bridge over the Belize

loans from CDB, IDB, OPEC/OFID and the Kuwaiti Fund.

In case the point was missed, the Prime Minister reiterated, "The point is that in 2016 there will continue to be public infrastructure work and jobs aplenty, with all the multiplier benefits to our people that this entails."



Preparation for paving of a road in Belize Rural North

mix of funding sources." And he outlined a number of specific projects, some already in progress, others about to commence, for which funding has already been secured.

In addition to the countrywide BIL (Belize Infrastructure Limited) sporting projects funded with PETRO-Caribe monies already set aside, there

road to the ancient Mayan Site of Caracol in the Cayo District.

Also, there is the Philip Goldson (Northern) Highway upgrade from Belize City to Airport Junction which is being done in two phases. There is the rehabilitation of the entire 54 Miles of the Hummingbird Highway, which also includes the replacement of 8 outdated



Paving of Streets in Rural Belize District

A Promising Year for Productive Sector

“Huge Investments Now Coming To Fruition”

Government’s ability to press forward with its transformation drive while meeting its debt obligation amidst the finan-

a view to expanded, post-drought production. The poultry industry has recovered from the avian flu, and shrimp harvesting is expected by mid-year to rebound



Harvesting of grains in Belize

tract which has now come to fruition, grinding operations set to start in February with an initial amount of 350,000 Tons to be milled, and increasing to 800,000 Tons in the second year.

purchase agreement with BEL to supply cheap cogeneration energy to the local grid,” the PM informed. So, with the continuing good stewardship of the government



Truck delivering fruits to the Citrus Products of Belize Limited (CPBL) in Pomona, Stann Creek District

cial challenges, is premised not only on the government’s good stewardship but also on the performance of the private and productive sector, and in this regard, as the Prime Minister indicated in his New Year’s Message, the outlook for

completely from disease to take full advantage of continuing high export prices. In citrus, factory consolidation should increase efficiencies, and external demand and payment for our by-products remain firm.” With respect to Sugar,



Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Minister of Agriculture Hon. Gaspar Vega at Shrimp Farm in Southern Stann Creek

“Apart from the foreign exchange earnings and permanent employment that the coming of sugar to the West brings, Santander is also negotiating a power

and the industriousness of the productive sector, God’s blessings and nature’s goodwill, 2016 promises to be a rewarding and prosperous year for Belize.



Cane Farmers loading Truck to deliver Sugar Cane to the Factory at Tower Hill, Orange Walk

2016 is just as promising. Quoting the PM himself, “In agriculture, the grain farmers have taken full advantage of Government’s tax and duty moratorium on all irrigation equipment to reinvest in the sector with

the Prime Minister conceded that Belize is not fetching the optimum returns in the European Market, but this should be more than offset by the huge Santander investment in a factory and cane fields in the Cayo Dis-



Santander Group investing heavily in cane farm and factory in Belize

Massive Investment in Sports Infrastructure

Belize City - Belmopan - Dangriga - Punta Gorda



What the New Belize City Center will look like upon completion

In his 2016 New Year's Message, Prime Minister Dean Barrow assured that Government's trademark infrastructure drive will continue through a mix of funding sources. With respect to sports infrastructure, he stated, "There

old Civic Center on Central American Boulevard, which will serve not just the residents of Belize City but the entire country. The contract was awarded to the local JVCA of Medina's Construction Ltd. / International Environments Ltd. and

championship women's U-21 and U-19 world championship men and women events. There will be three (3) interior practice basketball courts, and one (1) professional center court. The design allows for designated seating for up to 4,000 for games and 5,000 for indoor entertainment

recreational sports and parks, including two (2) outdoor basketball courts, one (1) 5 on 5 soccer field, skateboard parks just to name a few. It caters to hosting outdoor entertainments with Security features, Police and Ambulance Zones. Other projects, some of



What Isidoro Beaton Football Stadium will look like upon completion

events such as conventions, concerts and other sporting events such as boxing and volleyball.

Seats will be individual and are numbered by rows. The design also includes post game rooms, media rooms, administration room and more concessions space. The new Belize City Center will be fully air conditioned and fully handicapped accessible. The facil-

which are already underway, include the upgrading of the Isidoro Beaton Football Stadium in Belmopan, the Multi-Complex and Carl Ramos Football Stadium in Dangriga, as well as the Multi-Complex in Punta Gorda.

The upgrading of the Isidoro Football Field in Belmopan is well underway, the contract having been awarded in February of 2015 to a Santa



What Dangriga Multi-Complex will look like upon completion

is enough that we have set aside from the PetroCaribe days of plenty to complete the countrywide BIL sporting projects (such as the Belize City Center)."

This particular project will see the construction of an innovative, well equipped state-of-the-art Arena and Cultural Complex at the location of the

on October 8th, 2015 contract signature occurred for contract price of Z\$32,940,261.34.

This will include the civil works of the grounds and all FIBA certified equipment. Construction period is twenty-four (24) months. The new Belize City Center Arena and Cultural Complex design will qualify for world



Carl Ramos Stadium in Dangriga being upgraded to FIFA Standard

ity will be equipped with stage and event performance space and back-of-house facilities.

The size and careful design of the building footprint and structural placement allows for a broader range of vehicles that will now be able to park under the building.

The interior function design of the building was completed in accordance with FIBA standards and in conjunction with approved consultancy input. Exterior design allows for multiple plazas to accommodate

Elena based firm, Pedro R. Lizarraga & Sons headed by General Contractor Mr. Pedro Lizarraga.

Signing of the Contract for the Dangriga Complex took place on August 31, 2015, that contract awarded to Salvador Habet of BCG Ltd from Belize City for \$2,991,544.07.

And for the Punta Gorda Multi-Purpose Complex, The contract was awarded on August 10, 2015 to Daniel and Carlo Arguelles of International Environments Ltd from Belize City for \$3,190,063.47.



What Punta Gorda Multi-Complex will look like upon completion

BELIZE'S new Ambassador to CARICOM

As the CARICOM Committee of Ambassadors met in Georgetown, Guyana, Wednesday, January 13, 2016 to engage on the Community Reform Process, CARICOM Secretary-General Ambassador Irwin LaRocque accepted the Letters of Credence from H.E. Daniel Gutierrez, new Ambassador of Belize.

In a short accreditation ceremony held in his office, Ambassador LaRocque told the newest member of the Committee that he will have the opportunity to help shape the future direction of the integration movement by advancing the implementation of decisions of Organs of the Community at the national level.

He noted that during his recent engagement with the Hon. Dean Barrow, Prime Minister of Belize and Chairman of the Caribbean Community for the next six months, it was evident that the Prime



H.E. Daniel Gutierrez Presenting his Credentials

Minister was keen on making an even stronger link between national and regional agendas.

The CARICOM Committee of Ambassadors is an important element of the governance structure of the Community, focussing on advancing the integration movement, and providing strategic advice

and recommendations to the Community Council towards achieving that goal.

“As a Member of the Committee, you will be expected to assist in advancing implementation at the national level of decisions of the Organs of the Community,” the Secretary-General said. He told the newly accredited

Ambassador that with his experience in Communications and Marketing, he is anticipating that those skills will be employed in bringing greater public awareness about CARICOM and its benefits, to the people of Belize.

Belize has been a very active participant in CARICOM, hosting two important institutions: the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) and the Caribbean Regional Fisheries Mechanism (CRFM), both of which play leading roles in the sustainable development of the Community, Ambassador LaRocque noted.

He added that Belize has used its unique position as a member of the Caribbean Community and the Central American Integration System (SICA), to act as a catalyst for stronger ties between the two Regions – a role that CARICOM Member States have appreciated for the great potential that exists.

“The Best Years of CARICOM Lie Ahead” New Belize Envoy Speaks Upon Accreditation

Newly accredited Ambassador of Belize to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), H.E. Daniel Gutierrez has said the best years of the integration movement lie ahead for what he calls the “tremendous untapped potential” that lies within the Region.

Speaking at a ceremony to present his letters of credence to CARICOM Secretary-General Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, at the CARICOM Secretariat Headquarters on Wednesday, Mr. Gutierrez referenced his Prime Minister’s New Year Address in which he heralded 2016 as a landmark year for the integration movement.

Against this backdrop, Mr. Gutierrez said: “I am not the first and will not be the last to speak of the untold wealth, underdeveloped talent and the unshakable hope that



H.E. Daniel Gutierrez and Officials of Caricom Secretariat

characterize the brotherhood of nations that call themselves CARICOM. But as leaders and

servants we are obligated to diagnose, understand and engineer solutions that will

“As leaders and servants, we are obligated to diagnose, understand and engineer solutions that will guide our People to resilience in the troubling waters ahead.”

guide our people to resilience in the troubling waters ahead. The skies ahead darken with climate change, economic uncertainty, a haunting gap in education and technology with our global competitors and any number of parallel global challenges. Undaunted we shall remain.” He added that the hard work which identified hurdles and proposed a Strategic Plan for the Community must be matched by action.

“2016 must be a year when words are made flesh. Low hanging fruit must be addressed with diligent haste and conviction. The people of the Caribbean spring hope eternal, but that hope cannot be abused. We owe them, the pioneers at Chaguaramas and all our children, our most energetic and unflinching commitment. Ladies and gentlemen, at CARICOM we must make 2016 a year of action,” the Belizean Envoy stated.

SECOND BEST PLACE TO RETIRE

HUFFINGTON POST LISTS CAYO, BELIZE AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S 12 BEST PLACES TO LIVE OR RETIRE IN 2016

#2 Cayo, Belize

[Belize](#) is one of the quirkiest countries in the world. Geographically, Belize is in Central America, yet its strongest ties are to the English-speaking Caribbean. Belize is Caribbean, Central American... and, thanks to its history as a former colony, British. Belize City's roadways are built around a system of roundabouts, but shops alongside them sell rice, beans and tortillas still ground by hand. Everyone you meet speaks English (it's the country's official language), but this belies the stories of their origins. The 350,000 people populating Belize today are descendants of migrants from Britain, yes, but also, more so, the surrounding Central American countries. You've got Mexicans, Guatema-



Photo of Ancient Mayan Site in Cayo featured by Hoffington Post

lans, Hondurans and Nicaraguans mixed with current-day generations of the Maya who originally inhabited this land, the pirates who came later, the Mennonite farmers who began arriving on the scene in the 16th century, the British who ruled until 1981, and each other. Belize is a nation of independent thinkers and doers, a country where you make your own way

and where, while you're doing it, no one, including the Belize government, is making any attempt to thwart your efforts. This is a poor country. The government doesn't have enough money to get up to any real trouble. Arriving in Belize, especially in its interior, it doesn't take long for any other reality you've brought with you to fade. In this frontier land of rivers and

rain forest, your mind and your body are occupied with challenge and discovery from sunup until you fall exhausted into your bed each evening. Belize is a sunny country that's easily accessible from the United States and where the folks all speak English. It's also one of the easiest places in the world to establish foreign residency, as well as a banking and a tax haven. You could live and run a business here tax-free. On the other hand, this is a small country where the infrastructure is most kindly described as "developing." The cost of living can be affordable, even low, but not if you want to live a more "developed world" lifestyle that would mean buying lots of things not available or produced locally. Anything imported comes at an inflated price.

Belizean Drafted To US Major League Soccer

Michael Salazar Selected 24th Overall In MLS Super Draft

The Montreal Impact selected UC Riverside's Michael Salazar with the fourth pick in the second round (24th overall) of the 2016 MLS SuperDraft Thursday afternoon. The Highlanders have had players drafted by MLS teams in each of the last five years.

"Michael Salazar has the speed and quickness to help an MLS squad looking to add depth to the striker position," said TopDrawerSoccer.com prior to the draft. "With Didier Drogba's imminent departure, the [Montreal] Impact needs to find more attacking punch up front even though Cameron Porter and Anthony Jackson-Hamel are already in the lineup and quite young.

In a counter-attacking system, Salazar could help Ignacio Piatti and co. while having a physical presence in the box and able to support the midfielders when playing lower on the pitch to hold the ball. "Though, there is a big chance the Impact either trades up in the draft to get a better striker in the draft or plainly combine that pick with allocation money to get a MLS-ready striker that might be made avail-



Michael Salazar - Drafted by MLS Soccer Club Club Montreal Impact

able by other MLS clubs." TopDrawerSoccer.com's Matthew Doyle also has Salazar ranked as the fifth best forward in the draft.

Salazar and teammate Norberto Ochoa both participated in the 2016 Adidas MLS Player Combine from January 7-12 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. All invited players are eligible for selection in the 2016 Super Draft presented by Adidas that takes place on Thursday, January 14 in Baltimore, Maryland. Salazar was

named to the National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-Far West Region Third Team, and also earned All-Big West First Team accolades this season. He had six goals, and three assists for 15 points during his 2015 campaign, and finished his two-year UC Riverside career with 12 goals, four assists and 28 points.

Three of his career scores were game winners. Ochoa was an All-Far West Region Third Team and All-Big West First

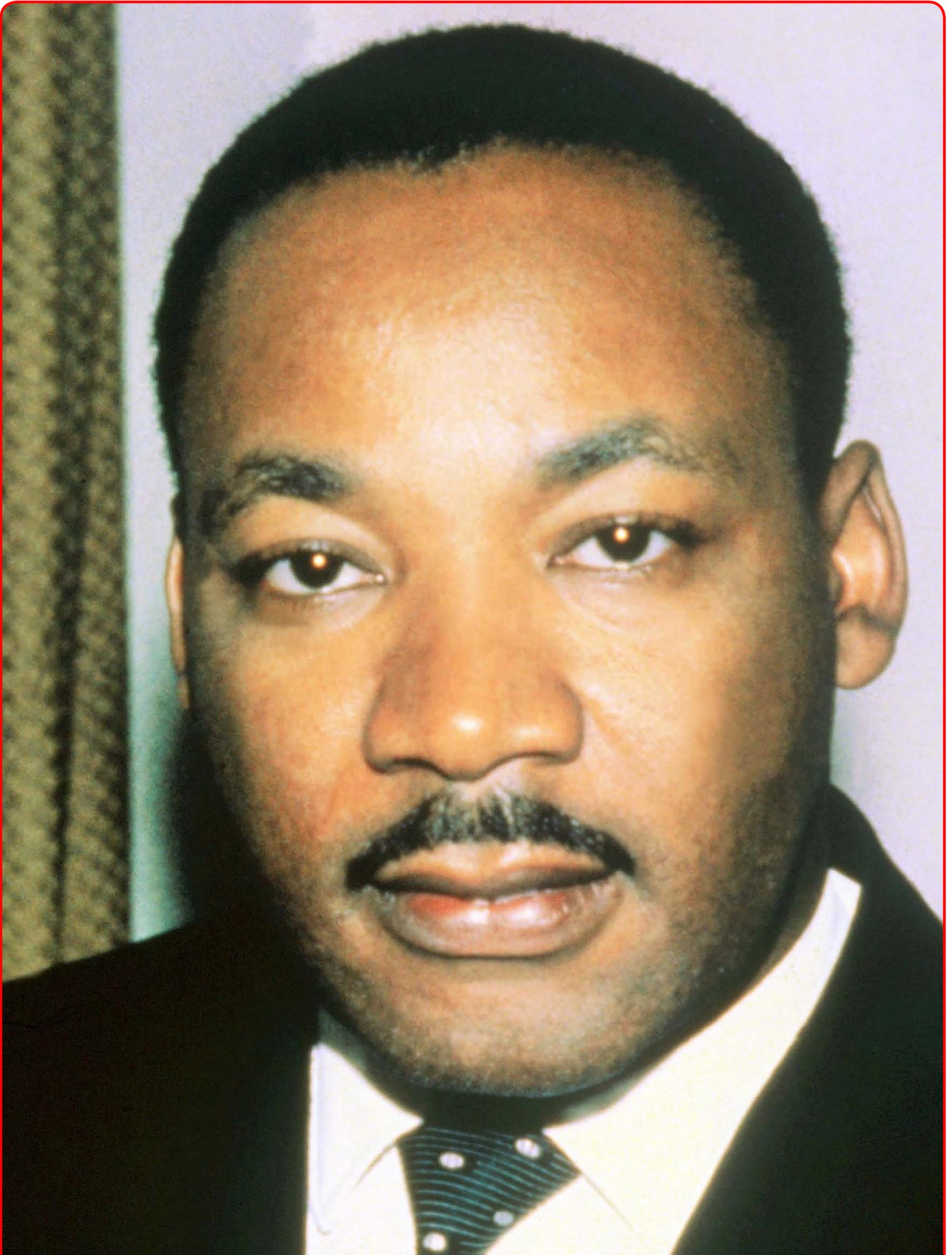
Team performer this year, finishing the regular season tied for second in the conference in goals (7) and tied for fifth in points (16).

He earned Big West Conference Offensive Player of the Week honors, and was named to the College Soccer News Team of the Week, the same week he recorded the second hat trick in UC Riverside's Division I history against San Francisco.

He later added a pair of scores against Sacramento State for his second multi-goal game of the season.

(Reprinted From University of California Riverside Website)

Michael Salazar is quoted elsewhere as saying: "This is the best day of my life. I want to thank everyone who had been apart of this journey with me. And wish me luck the rest of the way. Can't wait to meet the fans and the players. I also hope I get to get the chance to work with my childhood idol Drogba. The best of me is still yet to come." He is the son of San Ignacio Town Councilor and owner of Maximum Radio, a local station in that municipality.



“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” - **Martin Luther King, Jr.**”