

Jamaica seeking closer relationship with US military

Chief of Defence Staff, Major General Antony Anderson, and senior Jamaica Defence Force (JDF) officers, were in Washington D.C. last week for discussions on objectives for Jamaica as part of the National Guard State Partnership Program.

The visit, from August 21 to 24, included meetings with senior officials of the US Department of Defense, US Army and District of Columbia National Guard (DCNG) and tours of the Pentagon and DCNG training facilities. Commanding General of the DCNG, Major General Errol R. Schwartz, in welcoming the Jamaicans, said that senior official visits are a way to strengthen professional bonds between the National Guard and the JDF. "This is our time to discuss continued mutual support through the State Partnership Program and plan what kind of subject matter and expert exchanges between our forces would be mutually beneficial," he stated. The National Guard State Partnership Program provides capacity-building resources to combatant commanders and US ambassadors through partnerships between American states, territories and the District of Columbia, and foreign countries. The 20-year-old programme is a key US security cooperation tool, facilitating cooperation across all aspects of international civil-military affairs and encouraging people-to-people ties in 65 countries. Major General Anderson's first stop in the US capital was at the Jamaican Embassy, where he met with Ambassador Stephen Vasciannie, followed by a capabilities briefing and tour of the DCNG armory. The party then travelled to Joint Base Andrews and Davison Army Airfield for an overview of DCNG aviation assets. While in Washington, D.C. Major General Anderson and his party met with Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff; and Chief, National Guard Bureau, General Craig R. McKinley. The JDF Chief of Staff also met with officials at the Center for Hemispheric Studies and at the Inter-American Defense Board. The delegation was also taken on a visit to Fort Meyer to view the 2012 Military District of Washington Twilight Tattoo. The JDF's visit to Washington follows ceremonial celebrations commemorating Jamaica's 50th anniversary of Independence and 50th anniversary of the JDF. The DCNG had conducted a senior official visit to Jamaica during the army's celebrations, highlights of which included a military tattoo. The 257th Army Band, a D.C. National Guard Unit, participated in the Jamaica Military Tattoo 2012, which ran from June 28 to July 1, under the theme: "Precision, Pomp and Pageantry: The First Five Decades". JIS