



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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SCHER: My name is Daniel Scher, and I'm here with Ms. Gail Teixeira in Georgetown, Guyana, on the 20th of May, 2009. Ms. Teixeira, thanks very much for agreeing to meet and agreeing to the recording part of the conversation. I understand that you have many demands on your time, so I do appreciate you're taking time out of your schedule. I told you a little bit about our project, and you shared some very interesting reflections on the Guyana constitutional reform process. You were just getting to your time as Minister of Home Affairs.

TEIXEIRA: Yes.

SCHER: I understand you were Minister during a particularly difficult time.

TEIXEIRA: Yes.

SCHER: In a country where the security situation was under a lot of scrutiny, and a lot of public pressure and public demands for things to be done. I was wondering if you could just reflect a little bit on going into this position at this particular time, and what you felt your priorities were and your immediate needs.

TEIXEIRA: *Okay. I think in the beginning, let me just do a preamble on that, and that is that I think we have to put Guyana in the context. By the time I became Acting Minister of Home Affairs in 2004, and then Minister of Home Affairs from 2005 to 2006 elections. Prior to that, I think that Guyana has to be recognized that the first free and fair elections in '92; we took over a country where the treasury was empty, basically. And our first priority was trying to reconstruct the country.*

So if you look at Guyana, what we did as a government, between '92 and '99 basically, was trying to reconstruct the education sector, the health sector. We tried to get funding for water and housing, which were in terrible condition. There was no housing program, so a lot of people had no place to live, or we had twenty people living in one small home. The poverty levels were 67% of the people living below the poverty line in 1991. Today it is 35% are living below the poverty line and 18% of that are what you call extreme poverty or serious poverty.

So that you have to look at what we end up doing when I become Minister of Home Affairs in that context. We came in as a government of pro-poor, that poverty reduction programs and trying to improve the quality of life of our people. We had only about 75% of the children went to primary school and about 40% of the kids went to secondary school. So a lot of our interventions in the beginning were social services, health sector, education, trying to get water where water was already supposed to be there, to be working and to be relatively clean, and to start expanding, looking for money to go further afield. To try to put the productive areas of Guyana back into operation because you needed money.

So the service sector was in bad condition, rice sector, gold mining, etc., all the areas, bauxite, all the areas that didn't bring us, couldn't bring the kind of revenue we wanted, including corruption and trying to reduce corruption so we could include revenue generation.

You also have between '97 and 2002 a period of a lot of violence in the country, political violence, post-'97 elections and post-2001 elections. So it is a very unstable political situation, and socially unstable. You then have in 2002 the breakout of the prison. What happens after that is that these criminals are

validated by the political opposition as freedom fighters. So they go and occupy—now, most of these chaps were not from the village of Buxton, but they occupied that, they seized it and occupied, it and they really occupied the territory from 2002 until 2008.

The gang then that was formed by these five prisoners who had escaped and bringing together other gang leaders and other criminals, very serious criminal elements, posed a serious challenge to the police and security forces. What made it more difficult is that the opposition called them freedom fighters. The then former President of Guyana, Mr. (Desmond) Hoyte and leader of the opposition party, Leader of the Opposition, went into Buxton and called them kith and kin men, that they were fighting for the liberation of Guyana. What then made the situation more and perilous was Afro-Guyanese gangs and Afro-Guyanese opposition against Indo-Guyanese, other ethnic group, and a government-backed—was not majority Indian, but certainly had a very large Indian base.

So it was extremely—it wasn't just a criminal gang running around with AK-47s; they were highly armed and the death toll was estimated at over 200 people that they killed. They did execution-type killings and so on. The police tried to deal with it. First of all, the first visual thing was that the police had small caliber revolvers and they were meeting rapid-fire weapons. The police were chased out of the area and unable to manage it. The army was then called in.

The army had, at that time, certain dual loyalties of an ethnic ground class background, and they themselves felt that armies don't deal with civilian issues; they deal with borders and border security and stuff like that. But this issue of dealing with a village in Guyana that was under siege was not part of their mandate. In addition to that, the gangs then recruited young boys who were in school from the village, young 14, 15-year-old boys that were impressionable with these guys walking around with guns and police couldn't handle them. They recruited many of them to their forces.

The village also had dual loyalties, but they were—so anybody in the village who cooperated with the police or security forces were executed. Houses were burned, people were beheaded, etc. The government approached friendly governments, the British, the Americans, the Canadians, to assist. The only country that at that time responded in a way was the British. So I think you may have seen the (Terrence) Symmond's Report. That comes out of that era. The British at that time also assisted with training with a rapid deployment group, not a SWAT exactly, but a rapid deployment unit. Regrettably, that unit had to be disbanded before I came in because it was infiltrated by the drug barons.

So you have a criminal gang and you have the drug barons. The drug barons and the criminal gangs have an interesting synergy between the two of them in that supplies came from various places, including, from time-to-time, from the drug guys. That area, there are many issues that can't be written about as yet as they're not—some of the things- haven't even been fructified or confirmed. So that the then Minister of Home Affairs was accused by the opposition of extra-judicial killings. The government then set up a Presidential Commission of Inquiry which met from 2003 into 2005, hearing evidence by parties, by individuals, etc. So in the meantime, the Minister was released from his position.

I then was appointed to act. So he was given leave to come off, and so I then took on basically, just to be the holding force while the Presidential Commission was going on. However, the crime wave continued. So the issues that were still

critical for the government were that you have to deal with the criminal activity. So a number of interventions were started. The original forays by the government, with the donor community, these are the IFIs (International Financial Institutions)---in the 2003-2004 period, they brought nothing to the table. They all said, "We don't get involved with police reform; we don't get involved with modernization of police forces." By the end of 2004, the government was able to get the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank) to agree to an approach to do with modernization of the police force, because it was recognized by then that it wasn't just arming police, it was training police. That there were structural and systemic impediments to police reform. One of them being that the police force is modeled on the old British colonial police organizational structure, administration, management, etc., and that this model was in fact not one that lent itself to reform easily. It was very hierarchical, and it had so many ranks.

So two things happened. One was with the IDB, what was called the Citizens' Security Project (CSP). We had an aide-mémoire by 2005, September, and we started designing the Citizens' Security Project. The IDB wanted very clearly community police relations and stuff like that. We did a very interesting baseline survey, which I think is excellent, and IDB has copies of it. It looked at two regions of Guyana which had the highest crime waves, Region four and Region six, that would be Berbice and Demerara regions, where we are now. They did a survey with over 2000 people based on the gender, demographics, ethnic demographics of Guyana using the 2002 census. So that document was called "Realizing Safe Neighbourhoods".

They asked questions about the people's view of the army, police, prison, fire, from a national point of view. Basically these are institutions got about a C plus, about 65%, somewhere in there. But when the question switched to asking about the police in the neighbourhood, that's when the statistics changed dramatically. Clearly, the face of the policemen that they interact with all the time, the sergeant and corporal, the lower ranks, was where you had the greatest criticisms, lack of response, unfriendly attitudes, sometimes collusion with elements that were in the community that may be anti-social, even bending to illegal activity. That was the next part of the survey.

The third part of the survey was saying, based on the crime wave, have you changed your lifestyle? Have you stopped going out to parties? Have you changed your vote, where you live, do you go out late at night any more? Interestingly enough, there was no radical change in that, despite the media hyping up and the media conveying that hell break loose, that the whole country was in chaos and people were being gunned down all over the place.

So ironically, in the two regions where you had the most crimes and the worst crimes, that people felt insecure, but they were not making radical changes in their lifestyles. There was a change, but it wasn't a radical movement. They also asked questions to the persons being interviewed of their attitudes to domestic violence, to interpersonal violence, a range of areas like that, drugs and so on. Again, there were issues that came out. So that that has formed the baseline in terms of opinions in relation to where the weak areas of the police sector, in particular—that a lot of attention had to be paid at the lower levels of the police force in terms of training, reconstruction of police stations so that you would have places for witnesses to give evidence, two-way mirrors for witnesses to identify and so on.

So in the first, what was called the pre-feasibility study, we were able to build two new police stations that incorporated some of these issues. For example, the

identification room allowed for two-way mirrors and the special room for rape victims, domestic violence, or where you had a witness you had to sequester, because the old stations were built in the old model and most of the stations went back 40-50 years ago. These were open police stations. So when you're questioning a witness the whole group—and you know some of the stations are very tiny, so they might be a little bigger than this room. So if I'm questioning someone who is giving information on a gang member who has been harbored by a neighbor, everybody in the station can hear it.

So the issue of the confidence of the informant, or the person bringing information in, was a serious problem in the crime wave. People had information, but they didn't know how to relay it. So the area of trying to acquire major financial resources to be able to bring structure and systemic changes in the police force and a new approach to community relations, that began in the design phase in the 2005-2006. It was also recognized that you needed legislative changes [Interruption, End of Tape 1].

SCHER: This is part two of the interview.

TEIXEIRA: *I don't know if this is what you're looking for.*

SCHER: Absolutely, the outline of the process is very helpful, actually.

TEIXEIRA: *So we were able to, with the pre-feasibility study, to do a lot of the design conceptualization of the Citizens' Security Project, with the IDB. We went through many stages. In fact, I'll just give you a small thing. That is, in the beginning, the IDB did not want major infrastructure work to do with the stations, the police stations. We went through quite a long process with the IDB, in which we successfully were able to increase the amount of the loan and to include the remodeling of police stations to incorporate these areas that I spoke about earlier. Also to include the construction of a new training school for the police or training academy for the police because we recognized we needed better facilities, more modern facilities and so forth.*

The community action part was one that both the IDB and the government felt were important in terms of trying to build confidence between the police force and the community. That would be the only way we would be able to reduce crime and have better crime prevention, by having a community that had confidence in the police force. So that was at the IFI level, the big donor level, where in 2007 we signed the loan. I was no longer there, but we signed the loan, which was a 20 million US dollar loan for 2006 to 2011 with the IDB. So that project is going on and I'm sure Minister Rohee (Minister of Home Affairs) spoke to you about that.

At the other end of the donor area, there were discussions that started with the British about assistance to the police force. The Scottish police were part of both the IDB conceptualizing design phase and what were some of the DFID (Department for International Development) interests in relation to the security forces.

The government also recognized that it wasn't strictly government affairs, it was a recognition between the security sector, rule of law, etc., that we couldn't only modernize the security sector and the police force; we had to modernize the justice sector and the criminal justice sector. So simultaneously, as we were dealing with the IDB in 2005-2006, we were also dealing with the judiciary. So you have a justice sector project, which is 25 million US. That began in that same

2005-2006 period in terms of design and conceptualization, which recognized a number of things that your police complained about. Because the police were part of this consultation in the CSP, it wasn't just people sitting there and saying what we needed to do and people coming in with their templates from overseas. So a lot of things that were proposed to us were rejected as inoperable in our context.

But the two projects are married. It is important that they both work, in the backlog of the criminal justice system, criminal cases and civil cases, to build confidence of the public in law and order, one had to do both together. If we had gone on the track of just dealing with police as crime fighting, we would have ended up losing confidence in the courts, because by 2005, people were saying, and the media was championing it, that people that take the law into their own hands—because when these criminals are apprehended, the courts are giving them bail. So they're back on the streets and they go back and shoot another person, or they go and rob another place.

So more and more the civilian population was feeling very frightened that one, the police were having difficulties managing. The GDF (Guyana Defence Force) was also not showing great capacity, and at the same time, you had a judicial system that worked, at best, very, very slowly, and which seemed to be arbitrary in its judgments. So you have a population, with the media hype, and any study of this period has to examine not only the Home Affairs and the security sector, it must examine what the media did in this period.

The media played several roles, one of which was to point out and to constantly bash the security forces for ineptitude, for incompetence, even when they did do things that were right. If they did, in a shootout with the criminals, they were then accused of using abuse of force, even when the criminals had AK-47s shooting at the police force. So the police were being hammered, bashed. You have the government being bashed because it was said that we weren't able to provide public safety for our population.

You had an opposition that attacked the police force and accused them of being loyal to the government and attacking Afro-Guyanese. So it was an extremely traumatic period where you basically walked between the raindrops and prayed that the raindrops are far apart and to keep things in balance.

So at the government level, there were a number of initiatives while you started with the IDB thing, were the other issues, to try and bring some immediate turnarounds or bring some confidence to both the police force and to the general population. One was immediately spending quite a large amount of money in equipping, improving the equipment of the police force. This included vehicles, some armored vehicles, because when the police were shot at, they were shot at with AK-47s, no .38, not 9 mms. So you had to in some cases have armored vehicles. You had more police vehicles because the police didn't have a lot of vehicles because, as I said, when we started out, the emphasis was on the population, of improving the conditions of life of our people. Therefore, the security sector was getting more money than it ever did before, but probably not as much in retrospect as it needed had we known that 2002 would have occurred.

So we gave them much more. We did a lot of work in the police force that had never been done for decades, but it was not, in terms of the percentage of the budget going to them versus water, housing, roads, electricity, that was a smaller percentage. So that vehicles, armored vehicles, radio equipment, better radio

equipment, bulletproof vests of a higher caliber than what they had been using. Many of the police in the beginning did not have bulletproof vests

So there were simple interventions, these were not—we weren't bringing in high-powered, high-tech stuff. These are things that would be considered rudimentary in the United States for policemen. Improving the caliber of weapons they were able to use. This is where, of course, with the British training that we had in the 2005-2006 period, to help our police, to know how to manage mobs, what you call public order training in anticipation of the elections, that the British, for example, didn't want us using MP-3 weapons. They wanted us to use a different type of weapon. Then we couldn't get approval from Europe to bring in the weapon. I may be getting the weapon wrong, but I think it is MP-3s. Anecdotally, they insisted on the training, yes the MP-3s. But we had to get waivers from the Europeans and the British to allow us to import the weapons because it was a German manufacturer, whatever, with a British subsidiary.

We never got the waiver even though we paid, you had to pay. Jamaica had exactly the same experience. The difference between Jamaica and Guyana is that they paid a whole set of money, never got the waiver and lost their money. Guyana decided after that we were not putting money up front, we were waiting for our waiver then, but we had the money holding, but we didn't hand it over, but it was in our embassy.

So we had British training which was very useful to our police. This was an immediate intervention, and we appreciate what the British did for us and the trainers, because they allowed our police, for the first time to have proper training in hostage taking and in public order training, mob training, riots and stuff like that. I saw some of the demonstrations as a minister in the simulations they did to show if a house was occupied by criminals, how to handle it, to surround, blah, blah, blah. Our policemen did not have that training. That was formerly seen that GDF do that kind of anti-guerrilla type of activities. These were our police being trained in basically urban anti-guerrilla type training, which the police had never been trained for in our country whatsoever.

A lot of these trainings were joint forces training, that is army and police, not just police alone, because we have a small army and we have a small police force. We're not a huge—neither are large. So that was one intervention. The budgetary increase and the type of equipment coming in. A lot of money on radio equipment so stations would be equipped, cars would be equipped and so on.

The third area was now the community interventions where we spent money. Two things we did were that the layout of the divisions of the police force were, as I said, based on the old British divisions, colonial times. The country has changed, the country has moved, populations have moved, and you had some very strange divisions. So the police stations have few people in them in some areas. So what we did, we found that recruitment in the police force in the crime wave was very low. People just didn't want their sons and daughters to become police when guys are coming at them with AK-47s, including a statistic which was publicly known and not hidden, which was between the formation of the Guyana Police Force or the British Guyana Police Force in 1865 to 2002, ten policemen were killed in action. From 2002 to 2008, the number went up to 30-odd.

So what happened in the recruitment period is the recruitment into the police force dropped. So to try to augment that, we then developed what was called the Neighborhood Police. The Neighborhood Police were residentially-based, community-based citizens between the ages of 18 and 50, who may not have all

the qualifications to get into the police force, who may have been rural constables or just civic-minded citizens, who didn't mind playing this role as a community-based rural constable, but now with a police uniform on, but who would live in the community, knew the community and would be one, an informant, an information person who could provide information on strange activities, but who could also be the peace officer in the community. You have domestic violence, you have drunk men having fights, or in some of the rural areas, people fighting over the pig going in their yard and eating up their flowers. These are parochial and rather robust irritants in the communities. The cows go and eat the rice farmers produce in the field, so it is big disputes in the community.

So we recruited and then started training. We set a goal of 600 Neighborhood Police around the country and the program started on my time. We were able, we had money released. We had training programs, uniforms and so forth. Those people are still in the system. We trained approximately about a hundred in the 2006 period. They were very critical when we came to the election period. At the polling stations, being supplementary security at the police stations with the police and so forth.

SCHER: Armed?

TEIXEIRA: *No, they are not armed. They are not armed in the main. They have their baton, they have their little precepts and stuff like that. They work under the direction of the nearest station and the commander of that station. They are not free agents on their own. They report to the police station, they're given duties and they are in contact. They are given cell phones to be in contact with the station, reporting, and stuff like that.*

SCHER: But they are paid and compensated?

TEIXEIRA: *Yes, yes, they're paid and they're ranked. They're the level of a rural constable. If any of them—and they're residential. So if the Neighborhood Police decides I don't want to live in this village any more, I want to go live somewhere else, he can no longer be the Neighborhood Police for that village. So if he moves to a village or area where there is no Neighborhood Police, he may be considered, but the community has to validate the Neighborhood Police. The Neighborhood Police is validated. If a name goes up, if someone applies to be a Neighborhood Police, the community has to say yes, he's a good man, he doesn't drink, he doesn't behave bad, he doesn't beat his wife.*

So how it is done is through the local government organ by the religious people. If there's a women's group or whatever, they would say, "No, this is a good man. If he tells us to listen to him, we will listen to him." But some names may go no, no, we'll never listen to him because he is telling us to do things that he doesn't obey. So this was a very innovative, residential-based policeman, what we call community-based policeman. They don't have a—if they want to have promotional opportunities in the police force, then they have to enter in a more formal way, and go into the police training school. But if they're 50 years old and retired and he wants to just do that for the next ten years and he is a good man, that's what he stays at, at that level.

So you can have a real constable, you can be a real constable, you can go to the level of a corporal, but you can't go higher than that in that area. So that was one innovation.

The second innovation which had existed since the '70s, what was called community policing groups which has had an interesting history and that will need to be written one day. It was started in the former government, the PNC (People's National Congress) days. Basically it began because of crime waves, not at this level, but break in entries and banditry and stuff like that, and it was a way of trying to mobilize communities to protect themselves. It had a colored history in the sense it started out with very good intentions. It became then more arms of the PNC under the dictatorial period of the PNC regime. However, there were people who became rural constables, were trained, and many of them tried to be professional in their outlook with the community.

When in the '90s, in the 2002 period, we then tried to encourage the formation of community policing groups all over the country. In the haste to do so there were sometimes accusations of them acting outside of the police force or not with the police force, put it that way more accurately. So in 2004, what we did was try to work with the community policing groups and the police as partners. So that was the shift. It wasn't that the community policing groups were disbanded and restarted. What we tried to do was work with the groups that were in existence. We had on record 3000 members of community policing groups with about 300 groups. That was on paper. When we went down to the good between 2004 to 2006, probably there were a hundred groups operating with ten persons each.

By the way, you had women in these groups as well. Not a majority, not a big group, but even you had one or two groups where women headed a community policing group. Now the community policing group is voluntary; they're not paid. They assist the police force in patrolling, providing information. If there is a problem in a village calling out the police force. They may be the first call. As I said, they patrol at night in villages where a police station may cover about ten villages and that may be a radius of twenty miles. The police in 2005-2006 didn't have many vehicles, so they themselves couldn't patrol. So you have—someone has broken into someone's house. In some cases, not everyone had phones, either, so how did they know. So there was the attempt to try to improve timeliness of police response, and the first call would be the community policing group.

So we went on a campaign to encourage communities to be part of crime prevention, number one. Crime prevention by being part of the—noticing a strange vehicle if places were being stalked. Strange persons coming into the village as well as patrolling and to try to build the community confidence in the police force, to develop a partnership between the police and the station and the people in the community. So if they saw them working together, it would enhance a feeling of confidence, that there were greater possibilities.

The community policing groups in 2000-2003 wanted weapons. This was a problem from the police point of view. So in the 2005-2006 period what was done was that members of the community policing groups that were rural constables, or were being trained as rural constables and had acquired their precepts as rural constables, would then be issued with a weapon for the community policing group, but there was a limit of how many weapons for each group, and they could only be held by the rural constable and/or if there was a licensed firearm member who was a member of the group. So a man might be a member of the community policing group; he is a businessman, he has been able to get a weapon. Therefore, that is part of the group's strength.

A farmer might belong to a group, and farmers in this country do have weapons because sometimes jaguars go and eat their crop or whatever, this is our reality.

So they may have a rifle or whatever. So that was to supplement those kinds of things.

We provided vehicles. So the state gave them a vehicle, which they had to maintain. The vehicle had to be kept with the police force and when they went on patrol, they then picked up the vehicle. The police force provided the gasoline for the use for the vehicle. It was not to be used for personal purposes whatsoever. So the vehicle could only be used in the line of duty, of voluntary duty that is at the time. We also provided boats. You may have seen in yesterday's paper, the other paper, the Minister handing over boats, because we're a riverain country and we found in the crime wave of 2002 to 2008, that these vast areas of Guyana that are unoccupied or sparsely occupied became havens for when the gangs had to run into the interior to hide from the police; that they were able to get into areas of country which the police found difficulties to get into, so did the community policing groups.

So vehicles, in some of the interior areas we gave them ATVs (all-terrain vehicles). A few of those were given over because we were now going into this new area. So those were some of the kinds of interventions. A lot of community meetings were held in the 2004 to 2006 period where people carried on. They cursed, they ventilated. Then you got down—you let them ventilate about their fears, their anger, their whatever. Then you tried to then hone that into okay, what can we do, we the public partner/, the private citizen/ police, and so on. Hone that into the view that this problem is all of ours and to what can we do. So that was the strategy that was used.

You went to meetings, and boy did you get told off. You had the commander with you. The police commander was with you of the division and some of the police officers with you. You allowed for the dialogue to take place between the community and the police. So the community people would get up and quarrel the police didn't give them a weapon or whatever. The police would respond and stuff like that. So it was also a forum to make the police more sensitive to the views of the community. So these were kind of what you call immediate interventions we made to try to also manage the situation and to bring some—because we did have in 2005, what made us realize how delicate the situation was, was that in 2005 you had some what we called—what I called—spontaneous community eruptions.

In Port Mourant, for example, in November 2005, there was a shooting incident, the police took a long time to get there. Certain elements in the community, hotheads, got together, led the community in mass—300, 400 people, set the road on fire with tires and stuff like that. We had to go in and negotiate and so forth and so on. There were a couple of other things like that. They put tires on the road, the main road. I think you know by now, Guyana has a number of main arteries that the village spin off. So all you have to do is block a road and that blocks transport for sixty to a hundred miles or more. You just blockade a country basically.

So a lot of my time was spent outing fires. That meant negotiating with communities, assuaging fears, and going through a lot of negotiations, mediation with communities, sometimes separate the most extreme from the less extreme, the more moderates, and so on. Of course, in a number of these communities, there was political intervention, political activities behind the scenes, which sometimes guys gave cartons and cartons of beer. So by the time you got there you were dealing with a whole set of drunk men who were pelting bottles at

police. They didn't use weapons, but they were very tense times. You had to deal with the police and the community at the same time.

In only one instance, after negotiating, reaching agreements on everything, and a way forward, and an agreement to clear the road, stop the fires and stuff like that, the next morning an extremist group took over and came back out on the police force after we cleared the road, brought in all the heavy equipment and the road was badly damaged. They came back out, and I gave the order to use more force. That was when we used what you call rubber bullets. No one was killed, no one was injured, but it cleared the road. That was in an area that was sympathetic to my government. It was not an area hostile to my government. It was people who vote for us. But I felt the nation was watching, and if we couldn't control that situation, areas that were hostile to us—well, as we say in Creole, cat ate your dinner. That was going to be the end of it.

So I had to show an even hand and that I was prepared, once law and order reached a certain point, that I was prepared to give the police an order to deal with the situation. So that was the only time that I used that kind of intervention. A lot of the other spontaneous eruptions you had to go and negotiate. They would eventually clear the road, they would obey the police after, but they cuss, they had to get their ventilation out. We also had at that time, what must not be forgotten, and I'm sorry to take you through all this history.

SCHER: No, this is great.

TEIXEIRA: *That is, as if the crime wave wasn't enough, as if the preparation for 2006 elections wasn't enough, as if the normal government program wasn't enough, December 2005, we then were faced with the floods and national disaster where 300,000 people were flooded out of a population of 700,000 along the coast. In the midst of that, you had criminal activity. It quelled down a little bit because they were flooded out as we were flooded out. Then the political hype began because opposition forces tried to make political issues about the response to the disaster.*

This is a tiny, poor country of ours. In 24 hours of—because we had rain from January 17—the rains had started in the Christmas period. You had had some flooding, the water went down. January, it started back again. Then from January 17th, the rain rained for days, and water just had nowhere to go. So within 24 hours to 48 hours, the government response of bringing food to people, of trying to get people to evacuate where necessary, of moving people to the schools and trying to have emergency responses. We had never, as a country, ever dealt with anything of this magnitude. The civil society, army, police—the police were completely diverted now into public order issues, and people lining up to get food and rice, food to eat, fresh water and stuff like that. The army and so on were now into a different mode.

You had, so from then until February 28, 2005, we were under extreme pressure. The opposition tried to show that there was discrimination, but that was not so. What happened, though, and this was a good lesson for us as Guyanese, not good for the southern United States, but after all the political hype that was given and every single minister, every single elected official, Member of Parliament on our side, were roped in, assigned. We were out—I was in charge of Region three, which is across the river. I was now Minister of Home Affairs, also in charge of the disaster response in Region three.

Anyway, in my region you had these spontaneous eruptions again, which was where the hottest opposition attempt to show discrimination. It was interesting times, I must say. But anyway, the—when we looked at the Katrina, and Guyanese were left in awe to say, here we were—and this was not government people, these are ordinary people saying, we criticize our government for taking 48 hours in many areas, look what has happened in the United States, which has resources like we can't believe.

I mean, we used, anecdotally, in villages where they may have been near the seashore or river, they had small boats that we could have used to get relief in and to get the elderly out and children and take fresh water in and stuff like that. But in villages which didn't have that kind of history and culture, there are funny photographs, now we can laugh about it, about abandoned fridges being used to ferry food stuff down and Ministers down to the back of villages to get relief to people and to help people and stuff. So we were innovative.

So these are some of the things. Interestingly enough, the community policing groups came out and helped in a number of these issues as volunteers, because we had to move supplies around the coast of Guyana, rice and all these things. So the community policing groups, civil society, religious groups, were part of that whole mass volunteer group that were involved. As I said, you had a couple of road blockages in my region, which we negotiated and were able to make sure that people were helped and stuff like that.

Then you have now the lead up to the 2006 elections. There were two more attempts to have breakouts of the prison in 2006. Then you have the robbery, the Berbice robbery and stuff like that. I am quite convinced that the agenda for 2006, the political agenda for 2006, we were successfully able to undermine it with our limited resources, limited intelligence and everything else, because I think the plan was to have another set of—[Interruption, End of Tape 2].

SCHER: This is really excellent.

TEIXEIRA: *I mean, it is history. The preparations for 2006 in terms of all the British training that helped, the improvements in surveillance, the improvements in electronic equipment, basically radios, we didn't have all these wiretapping things, we've now got legislation that allows for that. Equipment, again, vehicles, and the armored vehicles, all these things helped to provide the police having a feeling of greater security themselves, the bullet-proof vests, the helmets, the visors, shields. These were all things that were required for the elections. So it gave confidence to the voters that there was this image there that if anyone tried to storm a polling station or harm anybody, there was some capacity out there.*

Certainly, I think that the attempts that led up to July, August, because they were successfully intercepted and controlled that that removed the other area which was really to cause some mayhem on the 2006 elections. But outside of the strict security area, one mustn't ignore the role of the Ethnic Relations Commission in the peace meetings and the role of the Inter-Religious Organization, which was the interfaith body that brought together Hindus, Muslims, Baha'is, Rastafarians, spiritualists, and all these different religions that we have to work with their congregations, to work with communities in having a nonviolent, or peaceful 2006 elections. So these were interventions at a political level. So one mustn't only see a police reform, that is now in training and is moving forward in a variety of directions, that it was never seen as crime prevention, crime fighting, public safety—could be dealt with strictly as a police matter, as a weapon matter or anything like that. It had to have a variety of other interventions.

The 2006 elections is a perfect example, a good example of the kind of work that was done, encouraged and supported by the government, for these interventions. For example, the media monitoring unit, because I've mentioned the media a couple of times. In '97, in 2001, the media was the force that incited people to violence and to riots. One of the recommendations of the international observers' mission in 2001 was this media monitoring unit that had started work in 2001. People didn't listen to them too much. So in 2006, we had a permanent media monitoring unit that dealt with training programs for the media, responsible journalism. We also passed a Racial Hostility Act that would prevent inciting to racial violence.

Out of that whole process came what was called the media—there were two accords, the Media Accord—sorry, Code of Conduct—that was its proper name, which was signed by the media houses. I think all the media houses signed that. Then there was a Peace Accord that was to be signed by all the political parties that they would not resort to violence, that they would not encourage violence, that they would not incite racial hostilities of any kind. The parties signed it except one, and that was the People's National Congress itself; they did not sign it. So that was an area of concern for the security forces and in terms of looking at preparations for the 2006 elections.

So the experiences, and I think that Guyana is an interesting model; we've never been seen as that. We tend to be, as Guyanese we like to, we go to the point of criticizing ourselves so badly, and there are many things that are wrong, we're not perfect. But show me a perfect society. But we have not sometimes been, how do you put it, I'm trying to look for the right word, that actually is able to say that we have some good examples of things to show the world, to show the region, show the world.

One I use is the constitutional reform process, it is a great model and one in which the parliamentary reform which is enshrined in the constitution is an excellent model and submodel. Our parliamentary reform for the Caribbean region is way in advance of any of the Caribbean countries. The level of government scrutiny, and we're trying to move in that direction more and more and so forth.

The model of how we came to our security sector reform—and we will, as a government, unapologetically in a sense, say that there are areas of police reform, security sector reform, that we're not going to compromise on, because ultimately, we're accountable to the electorate. So yes, there are rights, and we will uphold the rights, but we're also not going to, how you say, play the—dance to the tune of another piper, because we are satisfied as a country and as a government that many of the benchmarks that we are measured on have been grossly violated by some of the developed world, especially since the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan.

So telling us as developing countries that we need to do X, Y and Z, yes, but don't tell us—and you're telling us that on the indices we're way at the bottom, and you who are grossly violating them at the top as countries as models for success and for police reform and security reform. Come off of it, we're not going to buy it. We don't have secret prisons; we don't have secret trials. Yes, there are encounters with criminals where there will always be the judgment issue, did the police use their weapons correctly or not, according to the protocol. That will have to be subjected to the usual parameters of scrutiny, whether it is the Police Complaints Authority, whether it is the Office of Professional Responsibility of the

Police Force, whether it is the courts. Those are the ways in which they will be judged. Did the policeman make an error of judgment? Did he abuse power or did he, under the circumstances, do what is correct? We will stand by that all the time. But we are not going to be told a number of issues as a country.

We have capital punishment still in Guyana, but we have not hung anybody since 1998. There is capital row, death row. Because of the crime wave there are many of us who don't like capital punishment, but after the 2002 crime wave the population out there doesn't want to hear anything about the removal of capital punishment. If we were to listen to some of the more conservative elements in our country, we should hang people, and we have not done that either.

We have put in our, what you call, denunciation in the ICCPR (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) that we have still not abolished capital punishment. Those are the benchmarks in terms of the UN human rights treaty. They will raise issues with us. We report to the human rights treaty bodies. We're open to scrutiny, and we have obligations there which we will implement as far as we can, whether it is financial or other constraints. But the police force obviously are coming along in a variety of ways. As I said, the reforms have to look at the organizational structure of the police force, the systems, the protocols. A number of issues have to be modernized. The number of ranks have to be reduced. The number of divisions increased based on our—as the society develops and as we have more economic activity in regions which never had much going on, the security forces and the police have to move.

With the donor community in the justice sector project, the issue of penal reform, prison reform, is a critical component. However, the donor community will not listen, do not want to support at all, any funds being used for creating new prisons or modern prisons, so we have very old prisons, which, if we look at our balance sheet—do we build a new maximum security prison, which we need, of billions of dollars, or do we provide water, housing, roads and electricity to our people. There is only so much money we have; we're not a rich country. So while we've moved from being a poor, low-income country to a middle and low middle-income country and we're proud of that, we will have limitations.

So even in the IDB CSP project for justice sector, they refuse to give us any money that would enhance, improve, the lockups in the police stations that we're doing, that we're modernizing. So we have to use our money for that. So they did not want to hear. So the lockups are bad, they're not the Ritz, I can tell you that, having been locked up in the good old days, there is no funding that is going to come from any donor agency for that. But the reason why we have, we have at any one time 1600 prisoners in the prisons in Guyana, women are 50 something in our prisons. The majority of our female prisoners are foreigners, female prisoners, the majority for drugs, and a few South Africans every now and then, I should tell you (laughing). We have Italians, Chileans, in my time. I remember South Africans, both male and female, all drugs, all drug-related.

SCHER: Four Canadians recently?

TEIXEIRA: Yes. So that the foreign population in the prison is very small but all drugs. So that, of that 1600 that are in prison at any one day, approximately 500 are remand. So if we can improve the justice sector and the timeliness of the cases in the Magistrate court and the High courts and so on, we can reduce the pressure on the present prisons that we have. We can improve that, reduce that amount and so forth. So I have given you a mouthful. I hope I haven't forgotten anything. Oh, I did forget one thing. That is part of the process too, we created

what is called a National Commission on Law and Order. It is a big body, we put every Tom, Dick and Harry on it. That is that the chairman is the Minister of Home Affairs. The terms of reference were approved by Cabinet, and it allows to make recommendations, it is an advisory body to the President actually. It brings forth recommendations. It can have community outreaches, it can do surveys, it can do research.

Who are the bodies on it? The parliamentary political parties are invited to have a representative on it each. The private sector, the three official religions: Christian, Hindu, Muslim. The community policing group which has a national executive of all the community policing groups; they meet annually and they elect an executive, so that body is represented. Then you have the Attorney General's Office, the Ministry of Human Services sit on it, the Commissioner of Police, representative of the army, representative of the prison, representative of the fire, and, I forgot, the trade union movement, they have a representative.

So it is a very broad-based body, and in my period, we started looking at domestic violence, road safety, organized crime and narcotics trade. Those were the four themes that we ran on in the period when it was set up in 2005 November to 2006 August. Minister (Clement) Rohee continues with that work today. So that was an attempt to say okay, look, this issue requires a coming together of a variety of entities to examine the issues and to say to the government, here are some things you can do.

We also had in that period, again based on social and political stability, meetings with the private sector bodies, to look at—because they were part of the victims: businesses were being attacked, workers and their bosses or owners were being shot, some killed, and stuff like that. So that they had many concerns, because their businesses were being affected, their security, etc. So there were several conferences, workshops, in which the private sector was very much a part of it, putting forward recommendations to the government, some of which were, for example, trying to get the business sector to recognize electronic transactions for payments and for checks to be used instead of cash. Because in those days, not long ago, you went to buy—you're building a house, you went to buy materials. You walk with half a million dollars cash on you, a million dollars cash on you.

Part of it is that that is how culturally people are now developing a trust in the banking sector. The traditional culture of our people is you keep your money home, put it under the mattress, you bury it in the backyard. We're a rural society. The majority of people are rural. These are traditions. So you have your jewelry, your gold and stuff that you wear for your weddings, our tradition of dowries and stuff like that. You keep it at home so that you can you're your daughter-in-law, your—you can wear it for a wedding and stuff like that. So they were very vulnerable; to try to get those people to open bank accounts was a big issue.

So a campaign was on to get people to open bank accounts so that they could transact. Then you found that business entities weren't accepting checks. Not all of them have the ATM, debit card arrangements. So we discovered these little interventions that could reduce vulnerability of people to the criminals. So those were little things that were done. The banks didn't mind because it made more people bank.

What we did in the public service, we realized our vulnerability, because every month when you pay public servants, each ministry would go to the bank, clear a

5 million dollar check, walk with 5 million dollars cash to the ministry, and people would come from all over that ministry to be able to be paid.

So we changed that, and that encouraged all workers in the public sector to open a bank account. Then all the money was transferred into their bank account and only temporary or casual workers or weekly workers were paid cash. This was like very small percent in each ministry. Because it was always a view at one time, geez, they could come in here and attack the ministry on payday. So those were small interventions, and it develops an interesting culture because then people realize, oh, my bank account—because the tendency, if you walk with your cash, your salary, you'll use it more than if you have to keep going to the ATM to get money out. That developed a little saving culture for people. First it was resisted, and we had to try to get the banks to be more efficient, because when we started doing it it led to banking day—in the banks were horrendous because there were hundreds of people lining up, but they've become more efficient in that, and stuff like that.

I've talked a lot. I hope all of that was useful.

SCHER: Extremely useful. I know you have many demands on your time, so I do appreciate your giving me so much of your afternoon, thank you very much.