

Ghanian nurses expected in a week's time

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Photo courtesy: Wayne Mariette

Governor General Sir. Rodney Williams addressing the members of the National Bar Association of the United States which is currently meeting in Antigua and Barbuda

Ghanian nurses expected in a week's time

The government is moving positively to strengthen the country's health care system by contracting an estimated 120 nurses from the African country of Ghana.

The Director-General of Communications, Maurice Merchant reported that on Wednesday, the Cabinet reaffirmed its commitment to the **strengthening and long-term sustainability of Antigua and Barbuda's national health system**, noting the Government's continued focus on expanding and stabilising the healthcare workforce.

"In this regard, Cabinet welcome the arrival of **one hundred and twenty (120) nurses from the Republic of Ghana expected** over the weekend of **January 23, 2026**, who will serve within the public healthcare system of Antigua and Barbuda. Minister of Health, **Sir Molwyn Joseph**, announced that these nurses will be deployed primarily at the **Sir Lester Bird Medical Centre**, as well as within **community health clinics and schools**, thereby enhancing both hospital-based and community-level



Director of Communications in the Office of the Prime Minister, Maurice Merchant

el healthcare delivery," the Cabinet Notes stated.

Accordingly, this expanded cadre of health professionals is expected to significantly improve service delivery and reduce pressure on existing staff within the public health system.

In addition, Cabinet underscored the Government's ongoing push to **train more nurses locally** through the **University of the West Indies Five Is-**

lands Campus, as a strategic response to the persistent shortage of nurses in the public health service. This investment in local training and capacity-building reflects the Government's long-term approach to developing a resilient, sustainable, and self-reliant healthcare workforce for Antigua and Barbuda.

Merchant revealed that Antigua and Barbuda nurses are generally highly-trained and like nurses from other Caribbean territories, they are wooed by health institutions in North America and Europe with promises of higher pay and greater benefits that the country cannot match. Thus the need to recruit nurses from elsewhere to help booster the healthcare system.

Recognising this phenomenon, Merchant said the government as placed much emphasis on training of additional nursing personnel, noting that scholarships were offered in the last academic year to fifteen nurses to pursue Master's Degrees at the UWI FIC.



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The arrangement with Cuban nurses has not formally ended...but going through a period of transition

The Antigua and Barbuda government has not formally ended the programme where it has recruited health professionals from Cuba to work within the country's healthcare system.

That's the word from Director General of Communications, Maurice Merchant when he addressed media representatives at Thursday's Post-Cabinet briefing.

He noted that the Cuban health professionals have been a mainstay of the local healthcare system for many years and as with all relationships, the arrangement is currently going through a period of transition.

Merchant added that anything to the contrary is erroneous.

"There have been speculations and statements erroneously being made in the public by politicians and individuals who just simply want to 'muddy the waters' between the relationship between the Republic of Cuba and the United States. It is unfortunate that this is being done. The government values the contributions that have been made and are being made by the Cuban government with regards to our health



sector and as with everything, there is a period of transition," he remarked.

Merchant said the goal of the government is for Antigua and Barbuda to be self-sufficient with regards to the provision of nurses in the country's healthcare system.

He said this is why the government has focused much energy on the train-

ing of local nurses in collaboration with the University of the West Indies FIC.

According to the Director-General, Antigua and Barbuda is nearing its goal of self-sufficiency with the number of nurses in the system, although he admits to the high rate of migration among the healthcare professionals.



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UWI Five Islands Campus Launches a Programme to help Final-Year Nursing Students



The University of the West Indies (UWI) Five Islands Campus officially launched its Pre-mentorship Programme, a transformative initiative designed to guide and prepare final-year nursing students for the transition from university training into professional practice.

The launch featured remarks from several distinguished speakers, including Minister of Health, Sir Molwyn Joseph, who highlighted the vital role mentorship plays in shaping the next generation of nurses and strengthening the nation's healthcare system.

"Nursing is not just a profession—it is a calling that requires discipline, compassion, and resilience," Sir Molwyn said. "Programmes like this one help to mold young nurses before they ever fully enter the healthcare system. When we invest in mentorship at this critical stage, we are strengthening the quality of care across our nation."

He also noted that while mentorship had previously been delivered largely through virtual platforms, the Five Islands Campus has now made it possible for students to benefit from face-



to-face engagements.

"The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus has now provided the opportunity for this important work to be done in person—where real connections are built, professional standards are reinforced, and young nurses are truly prepared for the realities of the job," Sir Molwyn added.

The Pre-Mentorship Programme offers structured support through academic guidance, professional coaching, leadership development, and exposure to clinical and workplace expectations. It is designed to ensure that students entering the healthcare

workforce are confident, ethically grounded, and well prepared to meet the demands of modern nursing.

Campus officials emphasized that the initiative reflects UWI Five Islands' commitment to excellence in health-care education and student success.

"This programme allows us to provide targeted support at a critical point in our students' journey, ensuring they leave our campus not only qualified, but confident and career-ready," a campus representative said.

The launch brought together government officials, university administrators, faculty, nursing students, and healthcare stakeholders, highlighting a shared commitment to building a strong, compassionate, and highly skilled nursing workforce for Antigua and Barbuda and the wider Caribbean.

The Attorney General says Antigua and Barbuda is firmly rooted in strong democratic institutions



Photos courtesy: Wayne Mariette

Attorney General, Sir Steadroy Benjamin says Antigua and Barbuda is proud of its strong democratic institutions and its independent judiciary, and the country has recognized the vital role that members of the legal profession play in safeguarding these foundations.

Sir Seadroy made the point in a welcome address to members of the National Bar Association of the United States which is currently meeting in

Antigua and Barbuda. The National Bar Association, as the oldest and largest African American Bar Association, is hosting its 2026 Mid-Year Conference here in Antigua. “We therefore value opportunities such as this to engage in dialogue, to exchange ideas across borders, and to strengthen professional and personal connections among members of the global legal community,” the minister explained.

He told the delegates their presence

among us carries special significance. “It reflects not only the international stature of your Association, but also the enduring ties that bind our peoples across the African diaspora—ties forged through shared histories of resilience, resistance, and the continuing pursuit of justice,” he observed.

The Attorney General described Antigua and Barbuda as a small nation, but one whose history is profound. He noted that Antigua was the first British


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colony to abolish slavery without a period of apprenticeship, which has been seen as a bold and principled stand that speaks to a long-standing belief in human dignity and freedom. "That legacy continues to inform our legal and democratic institutions today, including our commitment to the rule of law and to an independent and impar-

tial judiciary within the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court," he declared.

Sir Steadroy observed that as a people, Antiguans and Barbudans have always understood the importance of using law to advance equity and nation-building.

"Our first Prime Minister, the Right

Honourable Sir Vere Cornwall Bird Sr – the father of the nation - often reminded us that independence must be anchored not only in political sovereignty, but in justice, opportunity, and respect for institutions. Those ideals align closely with the mission and work of the National Bar Association," he remarked.

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Festivals team praised for successful One Nation concert



Members of the production team at the Ministry of Creative Industries have received much praise from the Prime Minister and the Cabinet for another successful staging of the One Nation Music Concert held last weekend.

Warm congratulations went to Minister responsible for Festivals, Daryl Matthew on the successful hosting of the two-day **One Nation Music Festival**. The Cabinet says the event stood as a shining example of excellence in planning, coordination, and execution, and Cabinet is of the firm view that it was **one of the best organized and**



Minister responsible for Festivals, Daryl Matthew

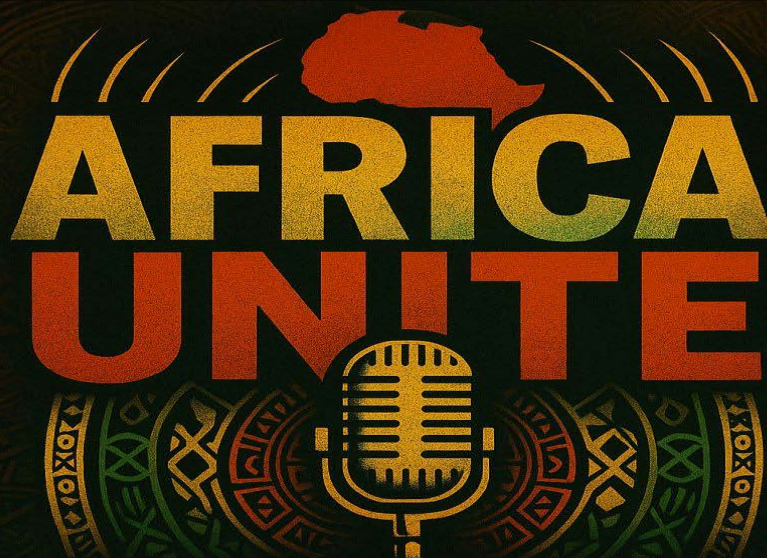
executed festivals to be staged in Antigua and Barbuda. “The seamless operations, strong attendance, high-quality performances, and overall positive atmosphere reflected clear vision, effective leadership, and meticulous preparation,” the Cabinet says.

Cabinet further acknowledges that the festival not only celebrated music and culture, but also powerfully embodied the spirit of unity and national pride for which it was named. The One Nation Music Festival showcased Antigua and Barbuda’s capacity to deliver world-class cultural events while

strengthening community cohesion and enhancing the country’s reputation as a premier destination for entertainment and culture.

Special commendation is extended to the **Chairman of Festivals, Ambassador Elizabeth Makhoul**, and her entire team, whose dedication, professionalism, and tireless efforts were instrumental to the festival’s success. Their attention to detail, commitment to excellence, and collaborative approach set a high benchmark for future national events.

Cabinet also expresses sincere gratitude to the **general public**, whose enthusiastic support and strong turnout contributed significantly to the vibrant energy and overall success of the festival. Appreciation is equally extended to all **service providers, security personnel, vendors, technicians, artists, volunteers and support staff**, whose professionalism and cooperation ensured a safe, well-managed, and enjoyable experience for all. Their collective efforts underscore the importance of partnership in delivering national events of the highest standard.



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CHOGM Task Force reports making 'good' progress

The Task Force set up by the government to plan the country's hosting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in November, says it is making progress in the planning for this major event.

Members of the Task Force reported to the Cabinet that planning has reached an advanced stage, with all teams fully established and operational, working closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat and relevant Commonwealth organisations. Inter-agency and inter-ministry coordination has improved significantly, strengthening national readiness and reducing execution risk.

The Cabinet was advised that operational planning and execution training delivered by the Canadian Military in December significantly enhanced contingency planning and positioned the Task Force to move from planning into delivery.

Known risks were outlined and are being actively managed. Accommodation was highlighted as a critical and time-sensitive area of concern. The Task Force is actively mitigating risks.

Cabinet was further informed that countries are formally engaging the High Commission to offer support, and that the CHOGM budget is nearing completion and will be presented at the next Cabinet meeting.

Cabinet noted the update and the continued progress toward delivering a secure, well-coordinated, and successful CHOGM 2026.





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Antigua & Barbuda Trades and Labour Union Celebrates 87 Years of Service



AT&LU President Bernard de Nully

The Antigua and Barbuda Trades and Labour Union (AT&LU) is today (Friday 16) observing its 87th anniversary, an occasion union officials say honours the enduring legacy of the Union and its commitment to the working class of Antigua and Barbuda.

On Sunday, 11th January, 2026, a Service of Thanksgiving was held at St. Philip's Anglican Church under the stewardship of Rev. Pauline Ramsey-Burns.

President Bernard de Nully used the occasion to express gratitude for the longevity of the institution, stating, "It is not by coincidence that the AT&LU has reached this milestone; our union's existence truly reflects a divine purpose."



He emphasized the importance of unity and labour, affirming the motto: "The Unity of Labour is the Salvation of our Country."

According to de Nully, for 2026, the Union will focus on renewal and youth development and empowerment as the youth arm of the AT&LU will be revived. "We owe it to the great 39ers who sacrificed for us, so that we may enjoy their fruits in 2026," de Nully remarked.

In addition, the union will launch a new website and app to enhance communication with its members and to document the history of trade unionism in Antigua and Barbuda. "Our mission is forever blessed, and the unity between the AT&LU and ABLP will guide us

toward a prosperous future," he added.

A moment of silence was observed at the Church Service to honour the late Comrade Rufus Lewis and Comrade Harold Carter, whose legacies continue to inspire the Union's efforts. "Their legacy and determination are why the AT&LU has stood strong for 87 years," three years shy of 90 and counting," said de Nully.

He also announced plans to have "Emancipation House" rehabilitated and completed this year.

"As we embark on this new chapter, I pray for the transformation of our members' spirit and strength, as we move forward in faith," de Nully concluded.

Message from the President



Bernard de Nully
President of AT&LU

I am eternally grateful and humbled, for the longevity of our institution that has stood firmly, testing the hands of time. It is not by coincidence that the AT&LU has reached this milestone because without a divine purpose, our institution would have never lasted for 3 years short of ninety and counting. Deuteronomy 5:33 states, "walk in obedience to all that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess." The correlation of this passage of scripture and the motto of the Antigua & Barbuda Trades and Labour Union is proof that our Union is God fearing and obedient to the Almighty Father when we proudly say that the Unity of Labour is the Salvation of our Country.

Our 87th Chapter will read one of renewal and youth development and empowerment where the youth arm of AT&LU will be revived and re-established to continue the work of the great 39ers who have sacrificed their blood, sweat and tears, so that in 2026, we can enjoy the fruits of their labour. Additionally, the AT&LU will launch our

website and app to better serve our membership and to provide an online historical account of the legacy of Trade Unionism in Antigua and Barbuda. In God's willing and the Restoration and completion of Emancipation House will start and be completed also in 2026. The Preliminary work has already been started to establish a Credit Union for our membership to promote financial saving and to offer micro-loans at low interest rates.

I stand proud to lead the Antigua & Barbuda Trades and Labour Union through this passage of renewal, I pray to the Almighty Father to transform the mind and spirit, to restore the strength and physical well-being of all the members of the Trade Labour Movement as the word of God says in Romans 12:2 and I quote, "let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think."

To the Membership, Executive Committee and Staff of the AT&LU, thank you all for 87 Years of commitment, dedication and sacrifice to your union. May the lord continue to protect and guide us all.

"Happy 87th Anniversary to our beloved Antigua & Barbuda Trades and Labour Union"




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Visa Restrictions and the Cost of Caribbean Disunity



By Sir Ronald Sanders

When powerful states act, small states are tempted to personalize the action. When small states fragment, powerful states do not need to explain themselves.

That is the lesson CARICOM should draw from the recent U.S. decision to impose partial visa restrictions and to pause the issuance of certain immigrant visas - commonly known as "green cards" - to nationals of several countries, including Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

Across the region, a misleading narrative quickly took hold. Opposition parties and political actors rushed to portray the U.S. action as a sanction against governments in power, each tailoring the claim to domestic political advantage. Some governments stayed silent. One appeared to exult, pleased that neighbours had been named while it had not.

That reaction revealed more about Caribbean weakness than American intent. The truth, supported by U.S.

statements and data, is that this is not a diplomatic punishment directed at Caribbean governments. It is a domestic U.S. policy decision, driven by internal political and financial considerations that extend far beyond the Caribbean.

A domestic policy, not a Caribbean rebuke

The U.S. review rests on two stated concerns.

First, public expenditure. U.S. authorities have pointed to data showing that a significant proportion of immigrant households eventually draw on public assistance. President Donald Trump has been explicit that immigrants must be financially self-sufficient and must not become a burden on American taxpayers. One may debate the policy, but it is neither novel nor unlawful within U.S. immigration practice.

Second, demographic and political distortion. Over-stayers who remain in the United States illegally are nevertheless counted in population totals that shape congressional representation and federal funding. In a polarized America, this is not a technical matter; it goes to political power and legitimacy.

These concerns explain why the pause applies to immigrant visas, not to tourist, student, or business travel. They also explain why the list of affected countries is global, spanning Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and much of the Caribbean. This is domestic policymaking; not diplomatic retaliation.

The numbers underline the point. U.S. data show that across CARICOM the percentage of immigrant households receiving public assistance is fairly

high: Antigua and Barbuda at 41.9 per cent; Dominica at 45.1 per cent; Saint Lucia and Guyana at 41.7 per cent; Belize at 41.8 per cent; Grenada at 40.7 per cent; Saint Kitts and Nevis at 39.1 per cent; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines at 38.1 per cent; Trinidad and Tobago at 37.1 per cent; Jamaica at 36.7 per cent; The Bahamas at 34.0 per cent; and Barbados at 33.9 per cent. Haiti sits higher still at 52.3 per cent. These figures are not judgments on governments; they are actuarial inputs into U.S. domestic assessments of "public charge" risk.

Why B1-B2 visas are also affected

There is, however, another issue that must be addressed honestly: the restriction on new B1-B2 visitor visas for Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica.

This measure is tied primarily to concerns about visa overstaying, unlawful residence, and the use of public services - particularly healthcare - without payment. These concerns intersect with Citizenship by Investment programmes, not because such programmes are illegitimate, but because U.S. law-enforcement agencies believe identity verification must be strengthened.

President Trump stated this plainly in his Proclamation, noting that CBI programmes have historically been susceptible to risks, including the concealment of identity or assets to evade travel or financial restrictions. Enhanced biometric systems are intended to address those risks.

It is also widely understood that nationals of several other CARICOM countries - though not formally listed - are already experiencing heightened scrutiny and informal visa refusals, pending agreement on improved bio-

metric arrangements. This is not selective punishment; it is a demand for deeper verification.

Sovereignty cuts both ways

Another truth must be stated plainly. The United States has the sovereign right to regulate entry to its territory, to pause visa categories, and to deport persons who are unlawfully present and dependent on the public purse. Every CARICOM state exercises the same authority. We deny entry. We deport overstayers. We enforce immigration laws when national interest requires it.

To deny the U.S. this right would be hypocritical and diplomatically unsound. The issue is not authority; it is how consequences are managed, especially for lawful travellers who comply with the law.

Where the Caribbean failed itself

If the U.S. action is understandable - even if debatable - the Caribbean response has been weak.

There was no coordinated CARICOM position, no early joint clarification, no collective insistence on fact over fiction. Instead, there was silence, finger-pointing, and political theatre. Governments calculated how to protect themselves individually rather than how to protect the region collectively.

That fragmentation had predictable results. When the U.S. State Department later published its broader list, it became clear that 11 of the 14 independent CARICOM states were affected. Fragmentation did not buy protection; it merely delayed recognition.

This is the CARICOM contradiction laid bare. We consult, but too often do not conclude. We proclaim unity, but practice unilateralism when pressure comes. Self-censorship -anticipating what a powerful partner expects and

adjusting behaviour accordingly - has replaced collective resolve.

Fragmentation does not preserve sovereignty. It surrenders it, piece by piece.

A better path

What is needed now is neither outrage nor inter-Caribbean recrimination. CARICOM governments should consult to agree on a common framework for engagement with the United States - one that distinguishes illegal overstayers from lawful travellers; separates individual "public charge" assessments from national reputation; and addresses biometric and identity-verification concerns through collective, technically sound solutions.

Any cooperation offered should be transparent, voluntary and capped. If

not, each country will continue to do what they are doing now - every man for himself.

When small states quarrel among themselves over another country's domestic policy, they do not influence outcomes; they merely endure them. Sovereignty for small states is not defended by silence, nor by opportunism, nor by celebrating a neighbour's discomfort. It is defended by coherence, discipline, and the courage to speak with one voice when facts matter most.

(The author is the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the OAS, and Dean of the OAS Ambassadors accredited to the OAS. Responses and previous commentaries: www.sirronaldsanders.com)



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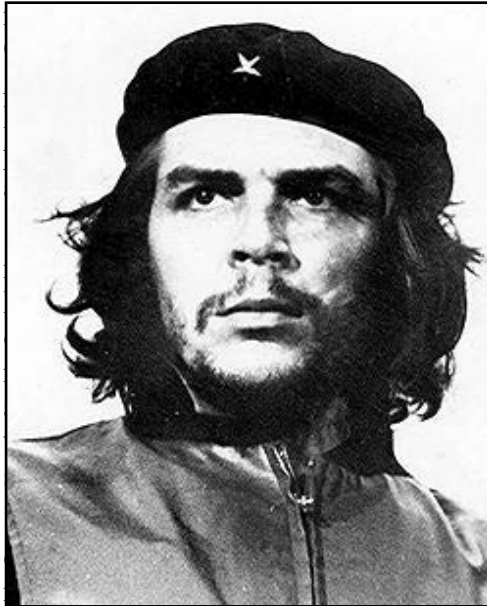
The internationalist spirit of the Cuban Revolution, which has become established policy, can be traced right back to the very beginning of the revolutionary process.

When Fidel Castro came to power with the triumph of the Rebel Army, on January 1st 1959, there were dire health conditions in Cuba, especially in rural areas, just as there were widespread poverty and illiteracy.

Of the few young people from poor families, who had got the opportunity to study medicine, there were those who were waiting for five or more years, to save enough money to pay for graduation. It was the revolution that allowed them to graduate free of cost.

Several doctors, who were members of elite families, left the country, rather than participate in a new, socialized healthcare system. It was therefore necessary to train as many doctors as would be needed.

But the Cuban revolutionary leadership was never just concerned about Cuba. Theirs was the cause of hu-



Che' Guevara

herself in the forefront of healthcare, not only for her own citizens, but for people around the world. Thousands of young people from around the world, primarily the Third World, have been trained as medical doctors

in Cuba, and Cuban doctors can be found working around the world.

All of the above has been accomplished by the extraordinary effort and revolutionary generosity of a people blockaded economically and financially, and under constant threat and hos-

tility. The Cuban government and people know what they have had to do and what they must do for the survival of their revolution and for its internationalist thrust. The Cuban professionals fulfill their internationalist missions with great enthusiasm and pride.

We therefore reject and soundly denounce the repeated pronouncements made by the Trump regime, in an effort to vilify the Cuban leadership and to demean the internationalist engagements of the Cuban professionals.

At this time, when the wealthiest nation in the history of the world finds itself in a deep health crisis which it should have averted; lacking the material preparation, the organization or the social capital, to deal with COVID-19, its leaders choose to be shamelessly loud in pouring scorn on Cuba, a little blockaded and struggling island in the Caribbean, that is coming to the rescue of even countries in the developed world.

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Dr. Chermila Martin, DVM, takes the spotlight

Today, we shine the spotlight on Dr. Chermila Martin, DVM who recently graduated from the St. Nicholas University in Dominica after completing her Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine. Dr. Martin tells SGW News that she is equally passionate about animals as she is about lifelong learning.

Dr. Martin attended the Pares Secondary School, (Class of 2012), and the Antigua State College, (Class of 2016). She then went on to the University of Trinidad and Tobago, where she pursued studies in Animal Health and Veterinary Public Health. Upon graduation, she then went on to the St. Nicholas University in Dominica, where she pursued further studies in Veterinary Medicine, which lead to a Doctorate in Veterinary Medicine.

Dr. Martin shared that she enjoys travelling, reading and learning. We asked her what was her motivation for pursuing studies in veterinary medicine. She said: “My motivation for studying Veterinary Medicine grew from a lifelong passion for animals, but also from recognizing that I have the patience, empathy, and problem-solving mindset that the field requires. Even as a child I wanted to be a Vet, and as I got older, I realized that this wasn’t just an interest, but something I genuinely wanted to build my life around. That early passion became clearer as I grew older, and it shaped my decision to pursue Veterinary Medicine as a career.”

As for the journey in becoming a Veterinary Doctor, she said: “My journey through veterinary school has been very hands-on and truly global. I had the opportunity to train in several countries — including Curaçao, United States, and Trinidad and Tobago — which exposed me to a wide range of veterinary practices and animal species.”

Dr. Martin informed us that in Curaçao and Texas, she gained valuable clinical experience working with



Dr. Chermila Martin

both exotic and domestic animals. “I worked with sea turtles, flamingos, parrots, parakeets, iguanas, and other exotic birds, which helped me develop strong skills in handling and caring for wildlife. I also participated in soft-tissue surgeries on dogs and cats, including spays and castrations, which really strengthened my surgical confidence.”

She recalls that one of the most memorable parts of her journey was interning at the REATA Equine Hospital in Weatherford, Texas. There, she worked closely with horses and the equine team, learning more about equine medicine, lameness evaluations, and daily hospital procedures.

As for her experience in Trinidad, she said: “I gained experience with large animals such as sheep, pigs, and cattle. I also had the privilege of working alongside the lecturers and staff at the UWI St. Augustine campus, where I expanded my knowledge of farm animal management and herd health.”

Overall, her journey has been diverse, challenging, and incredibly rewarding. Traveling to different countries and working with such a wide range of species helped her grow both person-

ally and professionally. It confirmed how passionate she was about veterinary medicine and prepared her to work confidently in a variety of clinical environments.

I didn’t grow up having pets around, just the normal dog or cat roaming in the yard, but I was always drawn to animals and fascinated by their behavior and well-being.” That early passion grew stronger as she learned more about animal care and the impact Veterinarians have. So, it was her own curiosity and love for animals that inspired her to pursue this path.

Dr. Martin wants young people to “Know your ‘why’, take the time to understand why you want to pursue further studies and make sure it aligns with your long-term goals.” She reminds that further studies are demanding, but they are worth it when you have a clear goal, plus the workload becomes much more meaningful. “With the right mindset and preparation, it’s incredibly rewarding.”

As for her future plans, Dr. Martin said “I do plan to continue building my qualifications over time, but for now my main focus is continuing developing my clinical skills, performing well and grow into a confident, independent Veterinarian.”

Her personal motto is simple: focus on what I can control and give my best to it. One quote from a song I return to often is “All things are working for my good, cause He’s intentional, never failing” it reminds her that God has perfect timing, just trust in Him.

Dr. Chermila Martin is the daughter of David Martin and Yolanda Thomas, both of Willikies Village, and is the second of three siblings. SGW News offers heartiest congratulations to Dr. Martin and wishes her well in her veterinary practice.

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SGW News

Regional News

Bodies of 32 Cuban officers killed during US strike on Venezuela repatriated

Cuban soldiers wearing white gloves marched out of a plane on Thursday carrying boxes with the remains of the 32 Cuban officers killed during the United States' capture of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

Trumpets and drums played solemnly at Havana's airport to receive the bodies.

Nearby, thousands of Cubans lined one of the Havana's most iconic streets to await the bodies of colonels, lieutenants, majors and captains as the island remained under threat by the administration of US President Donald Trump.

Hours earlier, state television showed images of more than a dozen wounded people accompanied by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez arriving Wednesday night from Venezuela. Some were in wheelchairs.

The official announcer indicated that they were "combatants" who had been "wounded" in Venezuela. They were greeted by the Minister of the Interior, Lázaro Alberto Álvarez, and the Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Álvaro López Miera.

Those injured and the bodies of those killed arrived as tensions grow between Cuba and US with President Donald Trump recently demanding that the Caribbean country make a deal with him before it is "too late." He did not explain what kind of deal.

Trump also has said that Cuba will no longer live off Venezuela's money and oil. Experts warn that the abrupt end of oil shipments could be catastrophic for Cuba, which is already struggling with serious blackouts and a crumbling power grid.

Cuba recently released the names and ranks of 32 military personnel —



ranging in age from 26 to 60 — who were part of Maduro's security detail during the raid on his residence on January 3.

They included members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Interior, the island's two security agencies.

Cuban and Venezuelan authorities have said that the uniformed personnel were part of protection agreements between the two countries.

The remains of those killed would be placed at the headquarters of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, next to Revolution Square, so that the public could pay their respects.

Meanwhile, a demonstration was planned for Friday across from the US Embassy in an open-air forum known as the Anti-Imperialist Tribune. Officials have said they expect the demonstration to be massive.

"People are upset and hurt. There's a lot of talk on social media; but many do believe that the dead are martyrs" of a historic struggle against

the United States, analyst and former diplomat Carlos Alzugaray told The Associated Press.

Thursday's mass funeral was only one of a handful that the Cuban government has organized in almost half a century.

In October 1976, then-President Fidel Castro led a massive demonstration to bid farewell to the 73 people killed in the bombing of a Cubana de Aviación civilian flight financed by anti-revolutionary leaders living in the US. Most of the victims were Cuban athletes returning to their island.

In December 1989, officials organized "Operation Tribute" honor the remains of more than 2,000 Cuban combatants who died in Angola during Cuba's participation in the war that defeated the South African army and ended the apartheid system.

In October 1997, memorial services were held following the arrival of the remains of guerrilla commander Ernesto "Che" Guevara and six of his comrades, who died in 1967. (AP)

Gonsalves hits back at critics questioning his role as Opposition leader



Ralph Gonsalves on Wednesday addressed his constitutional status and parliamentary participation by clarifying the distinction between his official appointment and the formal requirements for sitting in the House.

Gonsalves asserts that his status is already legally established, stating that on December 1st, he was “appointed leader of the opposition by the Governor General in accordance with the constitution”. He cites this official appointment as the basis for receiving his salary for December and the reason why he was consulted by the Prime Minister regarding appointments to the public service and police service commis-

sions.

Gonsalves dismisses claims that he is not the Leader of the Opposition because he has not yet been sworn in, characterizing this narrative as a “foolish line,” “malignancy,” and “misinformation” propagated by “ignorant people” or biased talk show hosts. He says that his absence from the “opening jamboree” at parliament does not negate his status.

Regarding the specific mechanics of taking his seat, Gonsalves outlines a “simple and straightforward” process required for an elected member to participate in parliament:

- He will attend the next sitting of the House.

- At the beginning of the sitting, he will make a declaration that he is qualified to sit as a member.

- He will “take the oath of allegiance to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines”.

Gonsalves on Wednesday also emphasized that he accepts his new position based on the “verdict of the people,” viewing it through the lens of “fate history and circumstance”.

He rejects the suggestion that he is too proud to serve as Leader of the Opposition after being Prime Minister for 25 years, stating he will carry out the duty with “dignity and love”. (St. Vincent Times)

Regional News



St Vincent & the Grenadines' newly renovated volcano observatory officially handed over

St Vincent and the Grenadines has successfully completed the renovation of its volcano observatory, with Michelle Forbes, the Director of the National Emergency Management Organisation (NEMO), describing it as “remarkable”.

The upgraded Belmont Observatory facility was officially handed over to the organization earlier this week, said a media release from the island's Agency for Public Information.

Forbes explained that the project was financed through a concessional loan from the World Bank, with the total expenditure reaching EC\$4.696 million. It is reported that construction began in March 2024 and, despite delays caused by adverse weather and other unforeseen circumstances, was finalized in December 2025.

Forbes noted that the newly renovated observatory represents a critical milestone in enhancing the country's capacity to monitor volcanic activity and respond effectively to emergencies.



“We started this work in 2024 and here we are now early 2026 handing over this new facility...those of you who haven't been here for a while, it is really a remarkable facility, and I'm really happy today that the Soufriere Monitoring Unit team and the scientist that will join us from time to time here in St Vincent and the Grenadines have a much better and more conducive environment in which to

work,” she stated.

She also acknowledged that while it is preferable not to witness another volcanic eruption in the near future, the country is now better prepared. “We may not want to see another eruption soon, but we know it will come someday. When it does, we are now better equipped, with improved facilities for our scientists and local monitoring team to do


their work,” Forbes added.

In her remarks, Forbes expressed appreciation to all involved stakeholders, including the Soufriere Monitoring Unit team, architects, engineers, and contractors. She highlighted that the project faced and overcame several challenges through effective collaboration.

As per the release, the upgraded Belmont Volcano Observatory is part of the St Vincent government's broader strategy to reduce disaster risk and bolster resilience. Officials say the aim is to protect lives and infrastructure by ensuring more effective monitoring and response capabilities during volcanic events.

The refurbishment process was carried out in phases by different agencies, says the report.

The handover ceremony was attended by key officials, including Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Security, Disaster Management, and Immigration, Major Hon. St. Clair Leacock. (Dominica News Online)



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Astronauts splash down to Earth after medical evacuation from space station

Four astronauts evacuated from the International Space Station (ISS) have landed back on Earth after their stay in space was cut short by a month due to a “serious” medical issue.

The crew’s captain, Nasa astronaut Mike Fincke, exited the spacecraft first, smiling and wobbling slightly on his feet before lying down on a gurney, following normal procedures.

Nasa’s Zena Cardman, Japan’s Kimiya Yui and cosmonaut Oleg Platonov followed, waving and beaming at cameras. “It’s so good to be home!”, said Cardman.

It is the first time astronauts have been evacuated due to a health issue since the station was put into Earth’s orbit in 1998.

The team, known as Crew-11, will now receive medical checks before being flown back to land after the splash down off the coast of California.

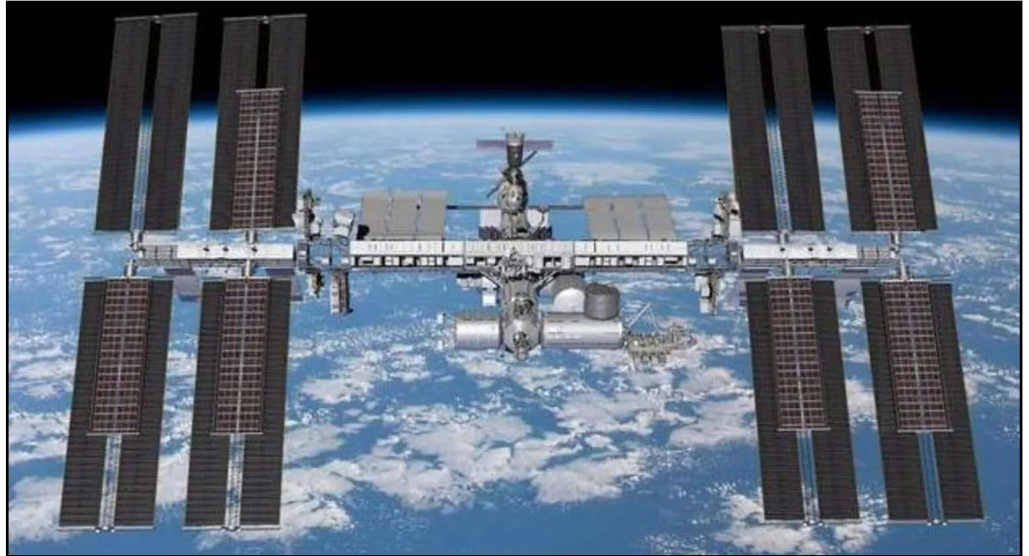
In a news conference after splash-down, Nasa administrator Jared Isaacman said the sick astronaut is “fine right now” and in “good spirits”.

Judging by past Nasa communications about astronauts’ health, it is unlikely that the identity of the crew member or details of the health issue will be released to the public.

Control of the ISS has been handed over to Russian cosmonaut Sergey Kud-Sverchkov and two other crew members.

The astronauts arrived on the ISS on 1 August expecting to complete a standard six and a half month stay. They were due to come home in mid-February.

But last week, a scheduled spacewalk by Fincke and Cardman was called off at the last minute. Hours later, Nasa revealed a crew member



had become ill.

“It’s bittersweet,” said Mr Fincke when he handed over the keys to the ISS to Kud-Sverchjov on Monday.

In a social media post, he stressed that all crew members on board were “stable, safe, and well cared for”.

Orbiting Earth at an altitude of 250 miles, the International Space Station (ISS) makes 16 orbits of our planet a day, travelling at a speed of 17,500 miles per hour.

It is run by five space agencies and carries out wide-ranging scientific research about space and the effects on humans, animals and plants of living in microgravity.

The ISS carries some medical equipment and astronauts are trained to deal with minor medical issues, but it does not have a doctor on board.

The evacuation was a serious test of Nasa’s procedures for dealing with medical issues.

By all accounts, it passed, although there may be questions about how well the agency could have responded if the astronaut had suffered a medical emergency.

The early departure leaves the ISS

with a skeleton crew of just three astronauts - Nasa’s Chris Williams and cosmonauts Kud-Sverchkov and Sergei Mikaev - until another four arrive in February.

“Despite all the changes and all the difficulties, we are going to do our job onboard ISS, performing all the scientific tasks, maintenance tasks here, whatever happens,” Kud-Sverchkov said on Monday. He then issued his first command - a group hug.

The incident is unprecedented in the history of the ISS, which has been permanently crewed for 26 years.

Space missions have ended early due to health issues just twice before.

In 1985, Soviet cosmonaut Vladimir Vasyutin and his colleagues returned four months ahead of schedule from a mission to the Salyut 7 space station due to a urological issue.

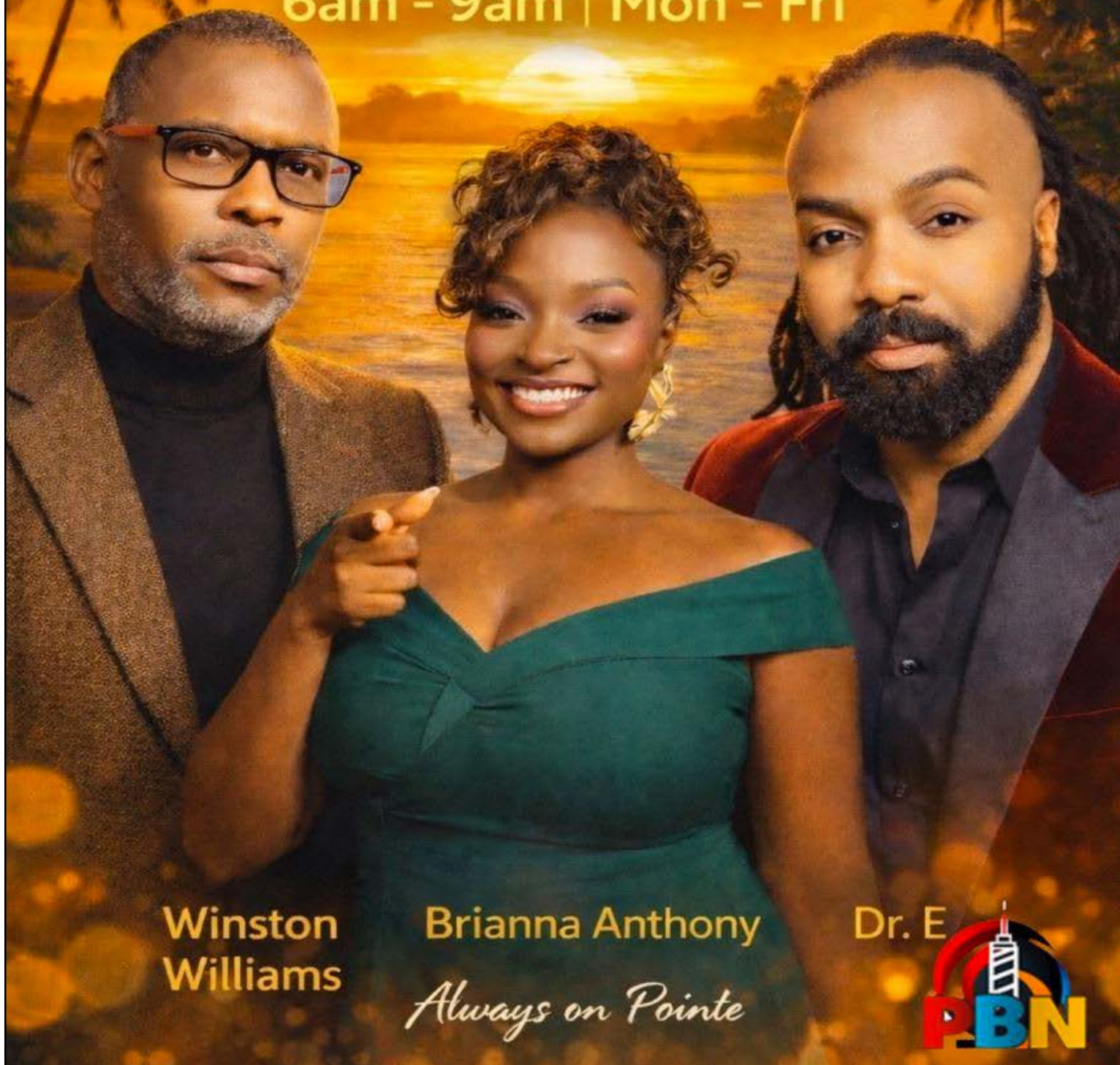
And in 1987, a heart arrhythmia caused Soviet cosmonaut Aleksandr Laveykin to leave the Mir space station early.

As more and more humans travel into space, including for tourism and a possible occupation of the Moon or even Mars, space experts say doctors will need to travel on missions. (BBC)

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Federal agent shoots Minneapolis man in leg after shovel attack, officials say



A federal officer has shot a man in the leg in the US city of Minneapolis after being attacked with a shovel as he tried to make an arrest, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) says.

Tensions have been running high in the city since an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent shot dead a woman last week, sparking protests there which spread to other US cities.

In a statement on X, the DHS said the

latest shooting happened after a car chase involving a Venezuelan national who was in the country illegally.

It ended in a crash and the driver was joined by two more people who all attacked the officer, it said.

Fresh clashes broke out between protesters and law enforcement in the Hawthorne area of the city, near the scene of the incident, and city officials appealed for calm.

Local media, including the Minnesota Star Tribune, reported that protesters damaged a number of vehicles that were believed to belong to the federal government.


In a social media post on Thursday morning, US President Donald Trump threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act if Minnesota officials did not act to “stop the professional agitators”.

This is a 200-year-old law which allows the president to use active-duty military personnel for law enforcement duties inside the US, and which Trump has previously said he might invoke elsewhere.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey said the situation in the city, where a new deployment of federal agents has arrived against the wishes of local officials, was “unsustainable”.


Tensions over immigration enforcement have been running high in the city since the fatal shooting on 7 January of 37-year-old Renee Nicole Good by an ICE agent, who was standing in front of her car as she drove forwards.

The man wounded in Wednesday’s





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WATER



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International

AROUND THE WORLD



shooting was taken to hospital with non-life threatening injuries and an ICE officer was also taken to hospital to be treated for injuries, the DHS said.

It prompted renewed clashes between demonstrators and law enforcement, the city's police chief Brian O'Hara said, adding that his officers were hit by fireworks, ice and snowballs.

Minneapolis city officials said on X: "We understand there is anger. We ask the public to remain calm."

"The City of Minneapolis again demands that ICE leave the city and state immediately," they added.

The DHS statement said that after the pursuit the man got out of his car and an altercation took place between him and the federal agent.

It added: "While the subject and law enforcement were in a struggle on the ground, two subjects came out of a nearby apartment and also attacked the law enforcement officer with a snow shovel and broom handle.

"As the officer was being ambushed and attacked by the two individuals, the original subject got loose and began striking the officer with a shovel or broom stick."

The DHS statement went on to say, "fearing for his life and safety as he was being ambushed by three individ-

uals, the officer fired defensive shots", and added that "both attackers are in custody" while the subject and agent were in hospital.

Law enforcement officials who spoke to the BBC's US partner, CBS News, gave additional details of what happened in the aftermath of the shooting.

They said the man hit by the bullet fled into a home and barricaded himself inside with three others. This resulted in additional agents being called to the residence, which was then breached with the help of a specialised ICE team, the officials said. All of those who were inside the home were believed to have been taken into custody.

The BBC could not immediately verify details in the statements. O'Hara said the FBI was investigating the incident.

Around 3,000 federal officers have been deployed to Minnesota over recent weeks.

In a statement on X responding to reports of ICE shooting the man in the leg, US Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche said: "Minnesota insurrection is a direct result of a FAILED governor and a TERRIBLE mayor encouraging violence against law enforcement. It's disgusting."

Shortly before news of the shooting,

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz urged Trump to end the "occupation" of ICE officers in the state.

"Angry is not a strong enough word," Walz said in a video on social media.

Officials have offered differing accounts of the fatal shooting of Renee Nicole Good, with the Trump administration saying the ICE agent acted in self-defence, while local officials argue the woman posed no danger.

Videos of the incident show ICE agents approaching a car, which is in the middle of the street.

As she attempts to drive off, one of them at the front of the vehicle points his gun at the driver and fires three shots. The FBI is also investigating that incident.

Minneapolis city leaders have said Good was at the scene as a legal observer - a volunteer who monitors law enforcement activity.

The Trump administration says she was impeding the work of federal agents and tried to kill one of them in an act of "domestic terrorism".

An online fundraiser set up for Good's widow and family has raised more than \$1.4m. Another online fundraiser for the ICE agent at the centre of the deadly confrontation has raised \$740,000. (BBC)




EARLY VIBRATIONS 6AM-10AM MON. - FRI.
WITH GREMSTA

THE RUSH HOUR SHOW 5PM-7PM MON. - FRI.
WITH ROGER LAKE 6AM-9AM SATURDAYS

TOUCHLINE 7PM-9PM MON. - THURS.
WITH EPILUS

BAD COMPANY 2PM-6PM THURS. 12PM-4PM SATURDAYS
LIVE FROM THE V.I. & 1PM-5PM ON SUNDAYS

REGGAE INSPIRATION 9PM-12AM MON. THURS. SUNDAY
WITH SELECTOR KEEGAN

JAH WADADLI 7PM-9PM FRIDAYS
WITH DJ JAH WADADLI

European military personnel arrive in Greenland as Trump says US needs island

A small French military contingent has arrived in Greenland's capital Nuuk, officials say, as several European states deploy small numbers in a so-called reconnaissance mission.

The limited deployment, which also involves Germany, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands and the UK, comes as US President Donald Trump continues to press his claim to the Arctic island, which is a semi-autonomous part of Denmark.

French President Emmanuel Macron said the initial contingent would be reinforced soon with "land, air, and sea assets".

Senior diplomat Olivier Poivre d'Arvor saw the mission as sending a strong political signal: "This is a first exercise... we'll show the US that Nato is present."

Poivre d'Arvor said the initial French deployment involved 15 people, hours after Denmark and Greenland's foreign ministers travelled to Washington for a meeting with US Vice-President JD Vance on Wednesday.

Following the meeting, Danish Foreign Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said while the talks were constructive, there remained a "fundamental disagreement" between the two sides and later criticised Trump's bid to buy Greenland.

Trump, meanwhile, doubled down on his bid to bring Greenland under US control, telling reporters in the Oval Office, "we need Greenland for national security". Although he did not rule out the use of force, he said late on Wednesday that he thought something could be worked out with Denmark.

"The problem is there's not a thing that Denmark can do about it if Russia or China wants to occupy Greenland, but there's everything we can do. You



found that out last week with Venezuela."

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said Poland was not planning to join the European military deployment to Greenland, but warned that any US military intervention there "would be a political disaster".

"A conflict or attempted annexation of the territory of a Nato member by another Nato member would be the end of the world as we know it - and which for many years guaranteed our security," he told a press conference.

Russia's embassy in Belgium meanwhile expressed "serious concern" at what was unfolding in the Arctic, accusing Nato of building up a military presence there "under the false pretext of a growing threat from Moscow and Beijing".

However, the European Nato deployment consists of only a few dozen personnel as part of Danish-led joint exercises called Operation Arctic Endurance. While heavy in symbolism, it was not immediately clear how long they would stay.

Finland is sending two military liaison officers for what it said was a fact-finding mission during what was

currently a planning stage of the operation.

"Right now we are not ruling anything out but we are not specifically considering anything," Janne Kuusela, head of the defence ministry's policy department, told the BBC.

Finland is also an Arctic nation, and Kuusela said the aim was to increase the and defence of an allied territory, following concerns about how firm a grip Nato had on Greenland.

Germany was sending an A400M transport plane to Nuuk on Thursday with a contingent of 13 soldiers, although officials said they would stay in Greenland only until Saturday.

Danish defence officials said they had decided with the government of Greenland that there would be an increased military presence around Greenland in the coming period to bolster Nato's "footprint in the Arctic for the benefit of both European and transatlantic security".

Macron, in his new year address to France's armed forces, said Europeans had a special responsibility to Greenland "because this territory belongs to the European Union and it's also one of our Nato allies". (BBC)



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Princess Margaret School completes hat trick of Under-16 titles



The starting XI of Princess Margaret School Under-16 Boys team

The Princess Margaret School (PMS) captured the Under-16 Boys Division league title in the Ministry of Sports, Cool and Smooth, and Joma Patrick C. Whyte Cup Secondary Schools' Football Competition for a third straight time on Wednesday.

Princess Margaret School clinched their third consecutive title by snatching a one-nil victory against Antigua Grammar School in the final at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (SVRS).

Player of the match Shamar Walters struck the winner in the 62nd minute to secure the hat trick of titles for the Princess Margaret School.

Shumba Thomas of PMS claimed the Most Valuable Player (MVP) Award, while teammate Mekhi Phillip captured the Best Goalkeeper Award. Robert Jeffery of Ottos Comprehensive School won the Golden Boot Award by finishing as the league's chief goal scorer with 14 conversions.

There was more success for the Princess Margaret School, which retained their title in the Under-16 Girls Division at the same venue on Wednesday.

Princess Margaret School made a successful defense of their title by pull-

Award and the Golden Boot accolade with 13 goals. Lareka Kelly of Ottos Comprehensive School won the Best Goalkeeper Award.

The 2025/26 Ministry of Sports, Cool and Smooth, and Joma Patrick C. Whyte Cup Secondary Schools' Football Competition will conclude with the staging of the remaining three finals at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium on Friday (today).

The Antigua Grammar School will defend their title in the Under-14 Boys Division League against Princess Margaret School in the final at 3 pm.

The Antigua Girls High School and defending champion Princess Margaret School will clash in the final of the



The starting XI of Princess Margaret School Under-16 Girls team

ing off a 5-4 victory on penalty kicks against the Antigua Girls High School (AGHS) in the final of the Under-16 Girls Division.

The game was decided via a penalty shootout after both teams fought to a goalless draw at the end of regulation.

Kavita Cordice of PMS claimed the player of the match award. Nafisa Quashie of AGHS captured the MVP

Under-20 Girls Division League at 4 pm.

The Harrison Center Antigua and Barbuda School of Continuing Education (HCABSCE) will tackle the Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS) for the Under-20 Boys Division League title in the final at 6 pm.

Winning start for Windies at ICC Under-19 Men's World Cup



West Indies captain Joshua Dorne, right, and Tanzania skipper Laksh Bakrania shake hands after their opening match in the ICC Under-19 Men's World Cup in Windhoek, Namibia, on Thursday, January 15, 2026. (ICC/Getty Images)



Tanez Francis

Antiguan Tanez Francis struck a half century as the West Indies recorded a five-wicket victory against debutant Tanzania in their opening match of the 2026 ICC Under-19 Men's World Cup at the High Performance Oval in Windhoek, Namibia, on Thursday.

The diminutive Francis, who opened the innings, struck a top score of 52 to lead the West Indies Under-19s to victory at 124 for five in 21 overs.

Francis faced 55 balls and struck five fours and a six. He shared an 80-run second wicket partnership with fellow Antiguan wicketkeeper/batsman Jewel Andrew, who cracked 44 off 44 balls, with six fours and a six.

But the other young West Indies batsman missed out on the opportunity to get a good score and some added batting practice against one of the weakest opponents in their four-team group.

Opener Zachary Carter fell for eight, West Indies captain Joshua Dorne got five, and Johnathan Vanlange was dismissed without scoring.

Augustine Mwamele picked up two for 17, and Raymond Francis captured two for 23.

Tanzania, who was making their debut in the tournament, was bundled out for 122 in 34 overs after being sent in to bat, with only four batsmen managing to reach double figures.

Opener Dylan Thakrar top-scored with 26 off 28 balls, while fellow opener Darpan Jobanputra made 19 off 46 balls. Khalidy Juma got 12, and Acrey Hugo chipped in with 10.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Vitel Lawes grabbed three wickets for 23 runs in six overs, Antiguan leg-spinner Micah McKenzie claimed two for 15 in six overs, and right-arm medium pacer

Shaquan Belle captured two for 23 in seven overs.

The West Indies are contesting Group D alongside South Africa, Afghanistan, and Tanzania.

The Young West Indies will continue their World Cup campaign with their second match against Afghanistan in Windhoek on Sunday, January 18. The West Indies will face South Africa in their last Group D encounter on Thursday, January 22.

Tanzania will play their second match against South Africa in Windhoek, Namibia, on Monday, January 19.

The 16-team tournament is being held over 23 days and will comprise a total of 41 matches across five venues in Zimbabwe and Namibia.

The 16 teams are split into four groups of four teams each in the group stage, which includes 24 matches. The top three teams from each group will advance to

the Super Sixes phase of the tournament.

The 12 teams in the Super Sixes will be divided into two groups of six each, with the top three teams from Group A and D placed together, while the top three sides from Group B and C will be in the other group.

Each team will play two matches in the Super Sixes stage of the tournament, against teams that finished in different positions in the other group.

Moreover, teams will carry the points, wins, and net run rate they earned against the sides that progressed in the Super Sixes from their group.

The semifinals will take place on February 3 and 4, before the title clash (final), which is scheduled for February 6. Australia, which defeated India in the final of the 2024 edition, is the defending champion.

Players boycott forces Bangladesh cricket to remove official



DHAKA, Bangladesh (AP) — A players' boycott, which postponed matches in the Bangladesh Premier League on Thursday, prompted the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to force out an official after his disparaging remarks about players started the disruption.

The board removed Nazmul Islam as chairman of the finance committee to meet player demands that he resign.

Two scheduled matches in the Bangladesh Premier League and four in the Dhaka Cricket League on Thursday were not played after the cricketers — many of them Bangladesh internationals — did not turn up at the grounds.

Neither the Cricketers Welfare Association of Bangladesh, the players' body, nor the BCB said the boycott was over, putting in doubt whether Friday's games in both domestic leagues will go ahead.

Nazmul said on Wednesday that he believed national cricketers should return the "crores and crores of taka" that the BCB spends on them if Bangladesh withdraws from the men's T20 World Cup in India next month.

It's a ripple from the BCB decision not to play World Cup matches in India after premier fast bowler Mustafizur Rahman was released by IPL franchise Kolkata Knight Riders on the instructions of the Board of Control for Cricket in India. The BCB wants its World Cup

games moved to co-host Sri Lanka.

The players immediately threatened a domestic boycott if Nazmul didn't resign and the BCB distanced itself from Nazmul's comments. Then the BCB president got rid of him on Thursday.

"The decision ... is aimed at ensuring the continued smooth and effective functioning of the board's affairs. Until further notice, the BCB president will assume the role of acting chairman of the finance committee," a BCB statement said.

"The BCB reiterates that the interests of the cricketers remain its highest priority. The board remains fully committed to upholding the honor and dignity of all players under its jurisdiction."

Bangladesh is scheduled to play three World Cup group games in Kolkata, including its opener against the West Indies on Feb. 7. One game is scheduled to be hosted in Mumbai.





THANK YOU

The Antigua and Barbuda Festivals Commission and, by extension, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to everyone who contributed to the successful staging of our One Nation Caribbean Music Festival – 2026. We are deeply grateful to our valued sponsors for their unwavering support and confidence in this music festival's vision.

Special thanks to our sponsors: the Citizenship by Investment Unit, Antigua Barbuda Tourism Authority, Point Broadcast Network, Elite Island Resorts, Long Bay Lager, LIAT Air, and Luxury Vans Global. Our media partners include ABS – TV & Radio, Bakanal TV, Flava FM, Jump FM, and VIBZ FM. Your contributions were instrumental in bringing this event to life.

To our incredible One Nation Team, from Management to Logistics, Marketing, Hospitality, Drivers, Engineers, Police, EMS, Solid Waste Management, Services Providers, and the Public Works Department, this festival was carried out to the highest standards of professionalism and expertise. We extend our heartfelt thanks for going above and beyond the call of duty.

To the incredible lineup of artists, from nightly hosts and DJs to our musicians, local, regional, and international, you were all chosen with intention and purpose. You understood the assignment and delivered first-class performances that made the One Nation Caribbean Music Festival high-energy, electrifying, memorable, emotional, and almost magical.

To our wonderful patrons, thank you for entrusting us with your presence at this festival.

Your support, adherence to changes, and unwavering dedication were crucial to its success. You helped create an atmosphere of unity and celebration that truly embodied the spirit of **"One People. One Love, One Nation"**

As we reflect on this achievement, we look forward to building upon this foundation for an even more spectacular One Caribbean Nation Music Festival on **January 9th and 10th, 2027.**

Yours in Gratitude,
The One Nation Team

ONE PEOPLE ONE L  VE

Gauff and Venus set for potential meeting at Australian Open



Coco Gauff of the United States plays a forehand return during a practice session ahead of the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Thursday, Jan. 15, 2026. (AP)

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Coco Gauff and Venus Williams could meet in the second round of the Australian Open, another potential chapter in a tennis tale that started with a 15-year-old on her Grand Slam debut beating a seven-time major winner at Wimbledon.

Gauff thanked Williams for being such an inspiration for her career after that win at the All England Club in 2019, saying “I wouldn’t be here if it wasn’t for her.”

She followed it up with a first-round win at the Australian Open in 2020. Now she’s the No. 3 seed and a two-time major winner. The 45-year-old Williams has a wild-card entry for the Australian Open, where she’s playing for the first time in five years.

The tournament starts Sunday at Melbourne Park. When the draw was conducted Thursday, Gauff was drawn to open against No. 91-ranked Kamilla Rakhimova and No. 576-ranked Williams, who made her Australian Open

debut in 1998 and has twice reached the final, was drawn to face No. 68-ranked Olga Danilovic in the first round.

Williams is set to become the oldest woman to compete in an Australian Open main draw, surpassing the record previously held by Japan’s Kimiko Date, who was 44 when she lost in the first round at Melbourne Park in 2015.

To have any chance of facing Gauff again, she needs to do something she hasn’t done in 2026, record a win. In the last two weeks, Williams played tournaments in New Zealand and in Hobart, losing in the first round at both.

After a 6-4, 6-3 win over Williams on Tuesday, Tatjana Maria said it was a tough one because “everyone loves Venus. I love her, too.”

Gauff and Williams are in the same half of the draw as top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, who won back-to-back Australian Open titles before losing

last year’s final to Madison Keys.

Sabalenka, who opened her season with a title in Brisbane last week, has a potential third-round meeting against 2021 US Open winner Emma Raducanu.

Defending champion Keys, who lost her quarter-final match at the Adelaide International to rising Canadian star Victoria Mboko in three sets on Thursday, was drawn into the same quarter as No. 6 Jessica Pegula, and No. 4 Amanda Anisimova.

No. 2-ranked Iga Świątek, seeking a career Grand Slam with her first title at Melbourne Park, is in the bottom quarter on that side of the draw and has a potential fourth-round match against four-time major winner Naomi Osaka.

Jannik Sinner and Novak Djokovic landed in the same half of the draw, setting up a potential semifinal between the defending champion and the 24-time major winner.

Djokovic, who has won 10 Australian titles but hasn’t gone past the semifinals at Melbourne Park since 2023, played an exhibition against Frances Tiafoe on Rod Laver Arena hours after the draw was made. He withdrew last week from a warmup tournament in Adelaide to give himself more time to be ready for the Open.

Top-ranked Carlos Alcaraz is on the opposite side to Sinner and Djokovic, and has Tiafoe and local hope and sixth-seeded Alex De Minaur in his quarter of the draw.

Cabinet offered financial sponsorship to sprinter Joella Lloyd

The Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda has approved full sponsorship for national sprinter Joella Lloyd, in a major boost for her preparations for major international track and field events, particularly the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California, in the United States of America.

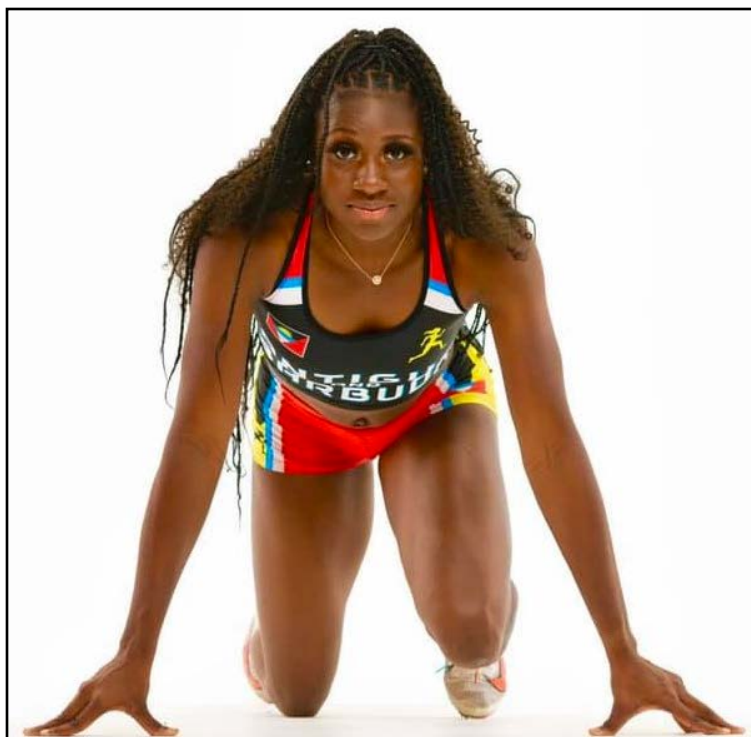
The disclosure was made by Director-General of Communications in the Prime Minister's Office Maurice Merchant during the weekly Cabinet media briefing on Thursday.

Merchant said the Cabinet of Antigua and Barbuda discussed the issue during its meeting on Wednesday, confirming Lloyd will be placed in a special programme of financial assistance.

"One of our rising stars, Joella Lloyd, was looked at, and the Cabinet agreed that it will provide full sponsorship to Joella Lloyd towards her training," Merchant said.

"The government would have offered assistance to her while she was attending the University of Tennessee, and she has now graduated from that university, so she is now focusing on her athletic training.

"So the government of Antigua and Barbuda will be placing her in a special



Joella Lloyd

programme of assistance to ensure that she receives adequate training that would eventually lead to her participation in international meets."

Last May, Lloyd officially drew the curtain on a stellar collegiate career that began at the University of Tennessee and concluded at Florida State University, where she capped her journey by rewriting her country's national record in the 100 meters.

The two-time Olympian set a new national record of 11.01 seconds at the NCAA East Regionals to qualify for the NCAA Outdoor Championships in Eugene, Oregon, on May 31, 2025.

Lloyd's time in collegiate athletics was nothing short of prolific. From becoming the first Tennessee Lady Vol to win an indoor 60-meter SEC title since 2008, doing so as a freshman with a national junior record of 7.15 seconds, to earning three NCAA First-Team All-American honours and breaking national records in both the 100 and 200-meter events, Lloyd's legacy is firmly cemented.

She began her NCAA journey at Tennessee in 2019, though she redshirted her first year. Once unleashed, her impact was immediate. In 2021, she set the Antigua and Barbuda national record with an 11.19-second clocking in the 100 meters

and went on to qualify for the NCAA Championships in both the 100 and 200-meter events.

That same year, she claimed silver and bronze in the 200 and 100 meters, respectively, at the NACAC Under-20 Championships.

After completing her degree in psychology in 2022, Lloyd went on to obtain a master's degree in sports psychology before transferring to Florida State University, where she continued to thrive.

During the 2024-25 season, she contributed to a record-setting 4x100m relay team that won gold at the ACC Outdoor Championships and clocked a school and ACC record of 42.72 seconds at the NCAA East Preliminary.

She also placed fifth in the 100 meters at the ACC Outdoors before uncorking the fastest time of her life—11.01 seconds—to break her own national record.

That performance marked not just a personal best for Lloyd, who reached the semifinals of the women's 200 meters at the 2023 World Championships in Budapest, Hungary, but also a statement of intent as she prepares to take the leap into the professional ranks.