

Christmas Message 2021 by Commissioner of Police, Mr. Colin John, LLB (Hons)

“...Give Love on Christmas Day...”

Fellow Vincentians and members of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force (RSVGPF) and its Auxiliary Force. As we celebrate yet another time, the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I wish you joy, peace, good health, and prosperity for this and many more Christmas' to come.

Christmas indeed is 'the most wonderful time of the year'. On no other occasion, you would see, feel and experience the kind of love, care, warmth, and togetherness of people everywhere. It is a time when we endeavour most to evoke smiles on the faces of family, friends, children, and the most vulnerable in our communities. So as we celebrate this Christmas, I encourage every Vincentian and visitor to our beautiful island to give whatever little that you have to make someone else's Christmas 'merry' and bright.

2021 has been a very challenging year for the members of the RSVGPF. By now, some of the reasons are well known. The continuance of the COVID-19 pandemic, the eruption of the La Soufriere Volcano in April of this year – securing our citizens and the maintenance of law and order have tested us the most. But through it all, and under very difficult circumstances, the men and women of the RSVGPF performed commendably well. Accordingly, I wish to thank them very much for dedicating their lives, time, effort, and energy to the safety, stability, and protection of the SVG and its citizens.

I am tremendously pleased to announce that crimes continue to trend downwards. Once again, there has been a marked reduction in crimes and criminal activities in SVG over the corresponding period in 2020. More importantly, 2021 has seen the lowest crime rate ever recorded over the last fourteen (14) years. At the time of writing this message, there were a total of 3562 crimes reported for 2021. This shows a reduction of 31% over the same period in 2020 which recorded a total of 5148 crimes.

This reduction came about as a result of different factors including; improved detection, investigation, and prosecution of crimes, a more determined and focussed police force, improved police, and public partnerships, and undoubtedly, the COVID-19 pandemic among others. The men and women who I am honoured to lead will continue to do their best to maintain a level of security in SVG where everyone can feel safe and comfortable while conducting spiritual, cultural, social, and business activities daily.

Gun-related crimes and the proliferation of illegal firearms and ammunition have been a major concern for law enforcement over the years. In 2021, law enforcement successfully seized 29 illegal firearms and 484 rounds of ammunition in comparison to 33 and 220 respectively in 2020. A firearm in the wrong hands, (especially an illegal one) can wreak unimaginable injury, pain,

and death. Accordingly, I call on all persons in possession of an illegal firearm and ammunition to hand them over to the police immediately. I gave the assurance that you would not be prosecuted for doing so.

The RSVGPF continues to modernize its functions to better serve the public. On March 30, 2021, the Legal Policies and Research Unit (LRPU) was launched. This unit is charged with carrying out professional legal analyses, research, training, vetting, and the implementation of policies other things among. It is the main liaison between the RSVGPF and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP).

Training and development are of paramount importance to the Police High Command. The development of the human resources of the RSVGPF is most critical to citizen safety and the maintenance of law and order. In 2021, a total of 76 recruits received their initial training. They have been deployed throughout the organization to complete their probation. Moreover, over 3 police officers attained degrees from the University of the West Indies this year - and many more are currently pursuing higher learning at different levels.

In the first quarter of 2022, the RSVGPF will implement the RSVGPF Email Policy. Under this initiative, every police officer, police station, department/branch will be issued an email address. This will be spearheaded by the Information Technology Unit (I.T Unit). Among the benefits that will be derived from this project are:-

1. Improved operability in the force
2. Faster and more efficient communication between members and departments within the organization.
3. Reduction in operational costs i.e. less printing of documents
4. Fewer documents to store, thus freeing up storage space.

In short, the organization would be using less paper going forward from 2022.

For this holiday season and going forward, I urge all Vincentians and visitors alike to comply with the COVID-19 protocols – be alert and do not make yourselves targets for opportunistic criminals. Work along with the police, as we seek together to make SVG a safer and more prosperous country. On 22.12.21, the Police Band held its first Virtual Christmas Concert via the RSVGPF Facebook Page. It was a success. Over five thousand persons viewed - while hundreds commented and shared the Livestream.

I take this opportunity, to thank every member of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police and Auxiliary Force (including the SVG Coast Guard Service) for their support, loyalty,

and commitment to duty during the past year. I also applaud those officers who served the organization and have retired or resigned in 2021. Your service to SVG is very much appreciated. To the families of those officers who we lost during the year, we continue to mourn with you. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

A joyous Christmas and a New Year filled with opportunities, success, and achievements to everyone.