



THE WATCHSTANDER

Newsletter of the Belize Coast Guard

Volume 7 Issue 1

31 March 2025

Defence Engagement with the United Kingdom



Caribbean – United Kingdom Chief of Defence Conference

Military leaders from twelve Caribbean nations and the United Kingdom convened at the annual

Caribbean – United Kingdom Chief of Defence Conference in the Dominican Republic 27-30 January 2025 for defence engagement activities within the scope of concern for the Caribbean

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Wonder Woman Champions

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Rear Admiral LF Elton Bennett, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin

Maritime Governance



LCDR Jazmine Bellni

Enhancing maritime governance requires building a shared understanding among all stakeholders about the purpose and importance of

the regulations they implement. Effective governance is not just about the presence of rules but about the engagement and buy-in from those who enforce and follow them. By ensuring that maritime professionals understand the goals of the conventions and regulations, leaders can foster a more proactive and committed

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Wonder Woman Champions 2025



Defence Engagement—United Kingdom

Caribbean—UK Chief of Defence Conference

region. Discussions on both conventional and non-conventional security threats and challenges guided the conference towards a regional renewed commitment in ensuring that the Caribbean remains a region for peace.

The Chief of Defence Staff of the United

forces in the region. For Belize, the British Army Training Support Unit Belize (BATSUB) is a valuable defence engagement program that offers opportunities for capacity building through training offered to the BDF and the Coast Guard. Admiral Sir Tony Radakin also committed to working with the

the host country and the Caribbean Community's Defence Chiefs expressing increased concern for its fellow CARICOM State. Rear Admiral Elton Bennett, Commandant of the Belize Coast Guard reiterated the Government of Belize's support to the multinational security support mission to Haiti.

Conference also discussed regional security concerns such as drug trafficking and weapon smuggling and their impacts on crime rates in the region. CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS) offered valuable insights through its Crime and Security Strategy that focuses strengthening law



Kingdom Armed Forces, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin reiterated the UK's resolve and its support for the region through defence engagement that fosters trust and confidence amongst military chiefs and their

region in emphasizing the impacts of those nontraditional threats associated with climate change.

Instability in Haiti featured high on the agenda with the Dominican Republic as

The Belize Defence Force currently has two officers in the MNSS Headquarters in Haiti and a joint contingent from the BDF and the Coast Guard is currently awaiting deployment orders.

The Chief of Defence Staff

enforcement, border security and information sharing.

Rear Admiral Elton Bennett had the opportunity during a bi lateral engagement with Admiral Sir Tony Radakin to update the UK senior

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Maritime Governance

LCDR Jazmine Bellini

approach to governance. This alignment between knowledge and purpose is essential for creating an effective and resilient governance system. Such an approach also aligns with the collaborative governance model Ansell and Gash (2012) proposed, emphasizing the importance of shared understanding and mutual objectives in achieving effective governance outcomes.

Secondly, the collaborative process must be enhanced by building trust and fostering a shared understanding among maritime stakeholders. Therefore, establishing regular stakeholder forums and joint training is a crucial first step. These forums provide a structured platform for dialogue and collaboration, allowing diverse groups to come together and address common challenges. Due to the lack of a maritime

administration in Belize and the lack of cohesion among the other support agencies and being under separate ministries, it is not easy to collaborate continuously with maritime organizations, especially with proper knowledge and information sharing; the lack of a comprehensive maritime document even more compounds this. A general theme coming out of all the organizations, mainly flag, port, and coastal, is that these organizations have been working in silos with the view that it will better allow their respective organizations to achieve their mandates versus working together as a maritime community. A flag state representative in an interview stated that:

“And what we saw many agencies was being concerned about jurisdiction...who will be

responsible now for what? Will their ideas, work plans, deliverables and initiatives be removed? Will they have to start over? And so, what we saw was a lot of these agencies operated in silos, and bringing them together under one committee, or maybe one commission was, was very difficult, because each agency felt that their mandate would not be getting the proper attention.”

Both port and coastal states similarly shared this point. The paucity of joint meetings and their format, mainly discussion, must create an environment conducive to building trust. Joint meetings are infrequent and primarily for discussion, with minimal emphasis on execution or policy development. In addition, the absence of a tangible policy or document to define the roles and responsibilities is a roadblock to productivity because the

issues in trust-building and shared understanding have not been resolved.

This view was shared in interview seven, where an organizational head stated:

“So here in Belize, we are not structured, as many other countries are with a Maritime Administration. It is disjointed, but we work around that by incorporating different initiatives, such as ad hoc committees and meetings, to overcome the shortage of not having a full-time Maritime Administration.”

However, to further strengthen this collaborative process, it is also necessary to initiate continuous and established joint working groups to develop actionable plans for improving stakeholder coordination. Regular inter-agency meetings should complement these efforts focused on relationship-building and enhanced communication. Such



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Search and Rescue Ops:

We Rescued Him Before He Asked to be Rescued

Search and Rescue has been the most important operation executed by the Belize Coast Guard since its inception. On an average year the Coast Guard would save about 80 lives. Rightfully, the Coast Guard prides itself to have never lost a life after receiving a distress call. Our state of readiness has a lot to do with our operational efficiency and the fact that the Coast Guard has a proven SAR standing orders.

Communications form a huge part of that success. The ability to receive distress calls, communicate with persons in distress, or coordinating other vessels in the area in support of a SAR mission has been crucial to our success. Such was the case of Mr. Carlos Pinto who was rescued on the 24th March 2025 about

17 miles south of Belize City in the Bluefield Range. Rescue being the debatable word here as Mr. Carlos Pinto was not in distress, neither did he make a distress call. Conversely, he appeared quite contented on his makeshift raft when the Coast Guard rescue team arrived at his location.

The Coast Guard Standing Orders defines SAR as “search for and provision of aid to persons who are or are feared to be in need of assistance” and in this case the Coast Guard believed that Mr. Carlos Pinto was in need of assistance. Despite not making a distress call, and being reluctant to accept assistance the Coast Guard believed that he was a potential distress case. Furthermore, the Coast Guard SAR Standing Orders references an ‘uncertainty phase’ where information is analyzed and search planning aims towards accuracy of information

and determining whether to activate SAR Units. The Coast Guard would have been derelict in duty if we didn’t respond.

The afternoon sunlight had given way to the evening rays that generates a difficult silhouette for SAR units. Luckily our SAR unit was moving south to north avoiding the glare of the evening sun when they spotted Mr. Pinto. Whilst Mr. Pinto’s appeared contented, the experience of the Coast Guard knew fully well that he would have become a distress

case, throughout the night. And especially without the ability to communicate, our assessment was a worst case.

Communications is such a crucial component to SAR. It was a passerby that first reported the sighting to the Port Authority who relayed it to the Coast Guard. Within minutes our SAR team was on the scene, located him and brought him into safety. **We rescued him before he asked to be rescued.**



Defence Engagement—Taiwan

Generating Officers



Five years ago Officer Cadet Tyler Reyes departed Belize for the Taiwan Naval Academy. He was the first Belize Coast Guard officer to benefit from the defence engagement program that is now very well established and on scheduled to generate one graduate each year. Officer Cadet Tyler Reyes departed Belize in February 2020, on the brink of the Covid Pandemic, navigated uncharted course through military

indoctrination in Taiwan and became our first officer to have returned from this prestigious institution.

He graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Marine Science from the Republic of China Naval Academy. The picture on the top is Officer Cadet Tyler Reyes receiving his formal approval form the then Taiwanese Ambassador to Belize His Excellency Remus Chen. On the bottom he is greeted by the current ambassador Lily Li-Wen

Hsu after returning from Taiwan.

Our defence engagement with Taiwan has grown significantly since this initial program. The Belize Coast Guard now has a Memorandum of Agreement with the Ocean Affairs Council in Taiwan that broaden the scope of engagement to include marine science and ocean management and post graduate level senior staff course The Belize Coast Guard has found a true partner with Taiwan.



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military officer on the ongoing International Court of Justice (ICJ) case between Belize and Guatemala. Emphasis was placed on the importance of the international security system particularly where institutions such as the ICJ, and the UN Security Council (of which the UK is a permanent member) is very much needed in

managing disputes.

The Belize Coast Guard and the UK Military continues to enjoy special defence engagement programs particularly in the fields of leadership and education. For example, Lieutenant Commander Freddie Ku is currently undertaking advance staff studies at the Defence Academy, while

Lieutenant March Choc recently returned from the Exclusive Economic Zone Protection Officers Course in Collingwood Portsmouth England.

A key feature of the conference was an exhibition at the Dominican Armed Forces' C5i Centre, showcasing advanced technology used to combat cyberattacks, manage

disaster responses, and enhance regional security efforts. The event underscores the growing importance of defence collaboration in an increasingly complex global landscape.

Evidently, the Dominican Republic is potential partner for Defence Engagement.

Maritime Governance

LCDR Jazmine Bellini

meetings can help break down the existing barriers between agencies, as highlighted in Interviews ten and thirteen, where a lack of trust and mutual understanding was identified as a primary cause of collaboration issues. Lastly, the analysis highlighted that facilitative leadership required the most significant improvements at all levels based on the Kruskal-Wallis test and interview responses. Challenges in facilitative leadership were particularly evident in areas such as communication within and across organizations and the continuous monitoring of social and technological trends. The document analysis did not indicate directives for improving facilitative leadership, leaving individual organizations responsible. However, this has led to limited collaboration among these organizations. While a joint document aimed at improving facilitative leadership is being developed, it remains in draft form and has yet to become effective. This lack of structured guidance and coordination has hindered the ability of organizations to transfer knowledge effectively and enhance governance through facilitative leadership.

Facilitative leadership is fundamental for guiding

collaborative efforts, fostering adaptive management, and enhancing organizational communication (Ansell & Gash, 2012). However, the findings indicate that while the need for strong leadership is acknowledged, the actual execution is lacking. This gap in effective facilitative leadership is particularly concerning because it impedes the ability of maritime organizations to work collaboratively, respond flexibly to emerging challenges, and communicate effectively within and between agencies. One of the issues for the lack of perceived facilitative leadership is due to the limited resources and support by higher authority, as was shared by interviewee thirteen:

“I think it boils down to when you lack resources... what you find ends up happening is that people withhold or want to show how important they are. So, they hold information until the highest level to get the biggest exposure sharing information.”

The organizations have collectively identified this as an area that needs significant improvement, and the heads of

organizations from flag, port, and coastal states have tried to address these issues. All flag, port, and coastal states shared the same views on facilitating training and capacity building. Flag state noting that the difficulties in the organization:

“For us, capacity building, in terms of training, and ensuring that we have the proper personnel trained to carry out our mandate has been very difficult... we work on a budget, a limited budget, and the bureaucracy and the red tape involved with actually getting these training or attending or workshops are very difficult.”

Nevertheless, they also identified ways of addressing these hindrances: *“I believe that by enhancing skills within our sector, we become more empowered and effective in our roles within the maritime governance framework.*

So, collaboration, inclusivity, and continuous learning are what I believe are necessary to build a successful maritime industry.”

The coastal state also echoed this idea: *“But let me add that we plan to develop a National Maritime Training Centre...In concept, we want to have one facility or one sort of institution 60 where*

we can standardize training across the country for all of our mariners...it is one of those very important initiatives that we have enacted to ensure that education and training form a cornerstone for the organization.”

While this uniformity could be seen as a positive sign, suggesting that all levels of the organization are aware of the leadership challenges, it also underscores the widespread nature of the issue. Despite the willingness of leadership to support collaborative efforts, as noted in several interviews, the practical execution remains inadequate until the plans become substantiated. To improve facilitative leadership, it is critical to address these execution gaps by streamlining communication structures, securing adequate resources for training and development, and fostering a culture of trust and collaboration across agencies. As the literature suggests, successful leadership in collaborative governance models requires the will to lead and implement strategies effectively and adaptively. By aligning the leadership practices with these principles, Belize’s maritime governance can overcome the current challenges and move towards a more cohesive and effective system.

Letters of Appreciation



Development Finance C... : X

5,771 followers

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DFC Staff Take Flight with Drone Training!

DFC is embracing innovation! Thanks to the Belize Coast Guard Drone Squadron, 25 DFC staff are now equipped with essential drone operation skills—covering safety, regulations, and hands-on flying techniques.

These new skills will help us enhance project monitoring and environmental assessments, making our processes more efficient and data-driven.

This is just the beginning! DFC is committed to leveraging technology for better service, innovative solutions, and a stronger Belize.

[#DFCInnovation](#) [#DroneTech](#) [#FutureForward](#)



Good afternoon RDM L Bennett:

I am writing to express our heartfelt gratitude for your support in having your medical team facilitate the first aid & CPR training to our team. The team exceeded our expectations by delivering important content in such a fun and engaging manner. Overall, they not only made the learning process enjoyable but also highly effective. Our team only had positive feedback to offer the officers. We're excited about the possibility of having your team provide this training to more officers within our unit in the near future.

Thank you once again for your invaluable support.

Delsie Ku
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Wonder Woman Champions



In a most anxious, high energy and combative Wonder Woman Competition yet your Coast Guard TEAM ALPHA was crowned 2025 Champions. In its nine years of running never have we witnessed such a tightly contested competition where the lead was alternated after every event culminating on the final event, the Crucible.

Initiating six events in three days our women across the Tri-service certainly demonstrated a high level of physical fitness, determination, leadership and team spirit that inspired our nation. The Wonder Woman Competition is

evidently the most arduous challenge in our Country and our women conquered it in competitive fashion and high spirits. The BDF and Coast Guard teams were equally matched

alternating lead throughout and winning by seconds on occasions leaving fans and supporters on edge and engaged throughout the three days of activities. Team Police had a special drive and motivation that brought continuous energy throughout the competition. They were always on the edge, on the verge of winning this one, or the next event. And they kept that motivation throughout.

At the start of the competition Team BDF demonstrated the best total body fitness in the

Coast Guard Fitness Test that comprised push-ups, sit ups, pull ups and a two-mile run. Lance Corporal Paquit knocked out at impressive 76 push ups in the two-minute drill. And whilst the Coast Guard team had the best running time, the overall tally placed the defending champs BDF in the lead.

The lead changed after the one-mile swim – two mile run in light chop to choppy seas, an event that favored the Coast Guard team due to the swim. Coast Guard Seaman Chrysta Guydis had the best swimming time with forty-nine minutes.

At the end of day one The BDF and Coast Guard were tied.

Day two started with a six mile road run that was won by the Coast Guard by a mere 17 seconds. However the BDF tied the competition at the end of day two by winning the Medley by 20 seconds.

Day three started with a march and shoot competition through the Hattieville – Boom road culminating at the Hattieville gallery range. BDF won the 8 mile road march putting pressure on the Coast



Wonder Woman Champions



Guard on the shooting event. Both BDF and Coast Guard fell all twenty falling plates, but the Coast Guard did it in a better time and also handed in 17 live rounds less than the BDF resulting in a tie after the march and shoot. Team Police also had a very good shooting day by hitting 11 of the falling plates.

With the competition tied at this point all fears, adrenaline, anxiety and every emotional feeling was geared toward the final event – THE CRUCIBLE!. The is a cross fit beast of a competition that commences with two 400 meter lap with burdens followed by tire flips. Tires that are bigger than some of the participants and heavier than all. They then transition to the obstacle course by initiating the low wire entanglement and subsequently engaging a series of obstacles that tested strength, teamwork and strategy. The CRUCIBLE concludes on the 18 feet rope climb. Coast Guard TEAM ALPHA had a temporary disappointment with a 3 minute time penalty resulting from one member unable to complete the rope climb. At this point the Coast Guard's countenance fell.

Conscious of failure they went silent and separated themselves, reflecting on the effort they had put in and the pain they endured over the past three days. Meanwhile Team BDF was blazing through the course on rhythm of the drums and dance by the BDF fans who came out in numbers to support their defending champ. The Coast Guard girls watched from a distance and hope was resonated when BDF slowed on the cargo net high structure and continued to slow on the ladders to the heaven. By the time they hit the 18ft rope they were two minutes slower than the Coast Guard but virtually in the lead due to the three minute time penalty on the rope. But the reality of three days of stressful competition would culminate on the ropes for the BDF as they would suffer the same fate as the Coast Guard as one member was unable to climb the rope canceling the 3 minute penalty. This resulted in the Coast Guard winning by just over a minute on the final obstacle on the final day in the most competitive Wonder Woman Competition yet.



SAILOR OF THE MONTH

January



Central sailor of month for January 2025 nominee is none other than (SN Bolon N). His commitment to the job has been outstanding, he is determined to be successful within the organization. SN Bolon N is very punctual and very hardworking in the execution of his task as a seaman. He performs to the best of his ability and not settling for a mediocre standard thus speaks a lot of this particular seaman.

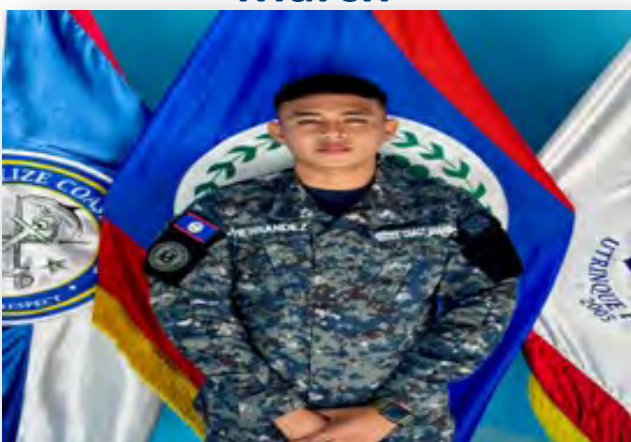
February



Petty Officer 2nd Class Alphonso Perez is February's Sailor of the month. During this period, Petty Officer Class 2 Perez Alfonso has met the criteria of outstanding performance, exceeding that of their peers in the following manner:

Petty Officer Class 2 Perez Alfonso has shown to be a humble Sailor, dedicated, and disciplined. PO2 Perez A was transferred to the engineer department in December 2008, where he demonstrated effective skills, in the Engineer field. On June 2022, he completed Petty officer Class 2, course and was promoted on June 2023.

March



Sailor of the month has been awarded to Seaman Dennis Hernandez for his invaluable contributions to within the orderly room. His work ethic, dependability and efficiency are consistent and vital parts of the recent successes of the Orderly Room.



Sports



Champions

Belmopan Inter-Office Basketball Competition

Ministry of National Defence & Border Security





Sports



Boom Run 2025

Hammock Bridge Race

And pretty much every race that he runs

Albert Davis



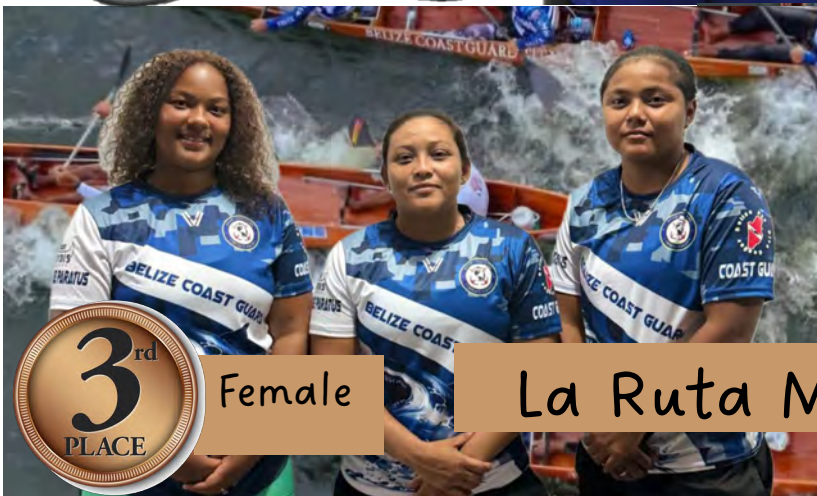
Digi Valentine Tour

Giovanni Lovell



Belmopan Classic

James Alford



Female

La Ruta Maya



Male Elite

Strategic Mission

To protect Belize Maritime Spaces from threats both foreign and domestic by providing maritime security, safety and protection of our people, industries and natural resources through military, law enforcement and humanitarian operations

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