

PRESS STATEMENT

Cocaine Found in Pepper Sauce Case

The Ministry of Home Affairs wishes to make reference to the article titled ***Failure to request info on pepper sauce cocaine bust proof of gov't disinterest- Ramjattan*** published in the Sunday edition of the Stabroek Newspaper dated July 08, 2012.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has observed that the article paints a very negative impression of the Government's commitment to fight narco-trafficking and could also serve as a potential hindrance to the strengthening of relationships with our counterparts overseas. It must be noted that during the initial investigations regarding the cocaine seized in Canada during December 2008, a request was made by the Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU) directly to the Canadian authorities for the information. However, as stated before the information provided to CANU was insufficient to commence criminal proceedings in Guyana.

The Ministry of Home Affairs wishes to state that the reason that no request was made through the Mutual Legal Assistance mechanism was due to the fact that at that time (2008) such a mechanism did not exist since the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act No. 38 of 2009 was assented to on 9th June 2010.

The Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act establishes the Minister of Home Affairs as the Central Authority for Guyana responsible for receiving and transmitting requests for legal assistance in criminal matters as outlined by the aforementioned Act. Letters of requests for assistance are drafted by the Ministry of Home Affairs on behalf of the requesting law enforcement agency based on information provided by the said agency and established best practices. The letter of request, which includes the specific assistance requested, is then forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (or in some cases the Diplomatic Representative of the requested country in Guyana) in order to facilitate transmission to the Central Authority for the requested country.

The current policy of the Government of Guyana is that the Mutual Legal Assistance mechanism must be employed as much as possible in situations where important information, which would prove invaluable to any criminal investigation or prosecution, can be retrieved by contacting the relevant authorities of the requested country in accordance with the provisions of the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act.

Since the enactment of the Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters Act, numerous requests for assistance have been drafted and despatched by the Ministry of Home Affairs on behalf of the Guyana Police Force and the Customs Anti-Narcotic Unit (CANU) to the respective Central Authorities in foreign countries requesting information that would assist locally in the

investigation and prosecution of several matters, including trafficking in narcotic.

Countries to which requests for assistance have since been made include Barbados, St. Lucia, Canada, Venezuela, United States of America, Jamaica and Suriname. Thus far over fifteen (15) requests have been made.

Many of these investigations are ongoing and the Ministry of Home Affairs is still awaiting in some cases responses from the Central Authorities of the requested countries.

The Ministry of Home Affairs wished to emphasise that the Government of Guyana has used and will continue to use the Mutual Legal Assistance mechanism as one of its tools to assist law enforcement authorities in investigating and prosecuting matters in cases where the available information is outside the jurisdiction of Guyana.

Ministry of Home Affairs

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