

Fight against drug trafficking

A Ship-in-a-Box Simulator Facility to further Train Customs Officers

The **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** handed over a Ship-in-a-Box Simulator Facility to the **Mauritius Revenue Authority (MRA)** on Wednesday 15th of November, 2023. The handing over ceremony took place at QUAY E in Port-Louis in the presence of the Honourable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius, Dr. the Honourable Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, Director-General of the MRA, Mr. Tobin Bradley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa and the Middle East, US State Dept. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Henry V. Jardine, US Ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius and Seychelles and other eminent personalities.



The Ship-in-a-Box Simulator

The newly launched Ship-in-a-Box is a significant milestone in MRA's efforts to bolster maritime and border. The Ship-in-a-Box is made of stacked cargo containers with internal modifications to simulate the interior of a ship. It allows the training of Customs Officers and law enforcement agencies on the way ships should be searched.



The cost of the Ship-in-a-Box Simulator Facility has been borne by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) through funding received from the US State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL).



In his keynote address, Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth expressed his enthusiasm for this pioneering project aimed at enhancing the techniques for boarding, searching and tactical operations which will help in the combat against illicit trafficking of drugs and narcotics and other contraband, he said.



The Hon. Prime Minister recalled that the proposal to construct the Ship-in-a-Box Simulator Facility was discussed with the UNODC representative during the 2nd Ministerial Conference on Maritime Security (MASE) and the 22nd Plenary Session of the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) held on 18th to 20th June 2019 at the Intercontinental Resort, Balaclava.



[Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mauritius](#)



Relentless fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking



Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth commended the vital role that MRA, the police and other authorities play in preventing the entry of illicit drugs and narcotics in Mauritius. To this end, necessary funds were provided to MRA to acquire drones for surveillance and information gathering in the port and its surroundings, a mobile scan van to scan consignments at freight stations and at the cruise jetty for the screening of passenger luggage, fast Interceptor Boats and rigid hull interceptor for better intervention and surveillance in and outside harbour. The Government will continue to support the MRA in its fight against drugs, he said.

The Prime Minister expressed his gratitude to all partnering countries and organizations which are extending vital support and collaboration to the Republic of Mauritius. Some of these include: the US Government, the European Union, the Indian Ocean Commission, UNODC, the World Customs Organization (WCO), INTERPOL, US Drug Enforcement Administration and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service of the USA.

MRA aligns its efforts with the Government

The fight against illicit drug trafficking requires a united front, and the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Government are leading the charge. In his address, Mr. Sudhamo Lal, the Director-General of MRA, underlined that MRA is fully committed to combatting trans-national organized crimes which threaten national security and hinder the social, economic, political and cultural development of society.



The Director-General observed that *“criminals are expanding their networks and diversifying their activities. Thus, there is a growing need for law enforcement agencies to constantly evolve, adopt innovate approaches and equip our officers with the relevant knowledge, skills and abilities to reinforce our fight against this scourge”*.

Commenting on the Ship-in-a-Box facility which comprises the same main features of a vessel, Mr. Lal pointed out that this simulator will be used for practical training for MRA, as well as other regional enforcement agencies to enhance boarding, searching and tactical operations to combat contraband, reinforce and mitigate risks of transnational organized crime at sea.

Mr. Lal is confident that this will be hugely beneficial in producing highly skilled and qualified maritime and law enforcement personnel, including Customs Officers, the National Coast Guard (NCG) and the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU), among others.



[Mr. Sudhamo Lal, the Director-General of MRA](#)



In his address, Mr. Tobin Bradley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa and the Middle East, US State Dept. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs highlighted that *“Mauritius plays a key role in leading efforts to increase Maritime Security in the Western Indian Ocean and cut off these illicit enterprises”*.

He underlined that *“the Western Indian Ocean hosts vital trade routes that maintain the global supply networks and carry goods all over the world. Unfortunately, transnational criminal organizations also take advantage of these trade routes to create illicit trafficking networks”*. The Ship-in-a-Box simulator facility will help in assisting Mauritius and its international partners in improving their skills as regards security of the port, he said.



[Mr. Tobin Bradley, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Africa and the Middle East, US State Dept. Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs](#)



For Mr. David O’Conell, Head of the Indian Ocean West Programme, UNODC, *“Maritime law, and enforcement skills are of critical importance in Mauritius. Thus, this facility will offer the opportunity for realistic practice training and other maritime operations without significant costs.”* The Ship-in-a-Box stimulator facility will also serve as an additional tool for Mauritian maritime personnel who are already leaders

in the region, he concluded.



[Mr. David O’Conell, Head of the Indian Ocean West Programme, UNODC](#)

For Mr. Henry V. Jardine, US Ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles, *“advancing regional maritime security in this region is a top priority for the U.S. Embassy, the Department of State, and U.S. Government as a whole”*. He expressed his appreciation regarding the ongoing cooperation with the Government of Mauritius to address shared challenges, including drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal fishing, or other criminal activities that undermine the stability of the Indian Ocean region. The United States, he concluded, remains as a willing partner in the sustained effort to ensure peace, stability, and prosperity in the Western Indian Ocean.



[Mr. Henry V. Jardine, US Ambassador to Mauritius and Seychelles](#)

Snapshots of the event

