

Letters to the Editor

# TCI needs to increase penalties for violence

Regardless of the size of the police force or the number of community members looking out for criminal activity, you can never have the resources in the right place to stop every crime.

The current environment is significantly too lenient. The best way to reduce violent crime is to make the equation of risk versus reward significantly in favour of the public and not the criminal.

First, separate the tools of the trade from the crime. That is, make an armed robbery a series of several crimes, each with their own punishment.

Possession of an unregistered gun in any circumstance is an automatic five years in jail. Use of it in the commission of any crime is an additional 15 years. Firing of the weapon, whether at a person or not, an additional 10 years.

So if you use an unregistered weapon in a robbery and shoot a warning shot, you have a 30-year sentence on your hands. Plus, you will get some number of years for the commission of the robbery itself. All penalties must be served consecutively, not concurrently.

A 20-year, no-parole, no-reduction sentence for simply using a gun in the commission of any crime ought to deter most people.

Armed robbery—using a gun, knife or any offensive weapon—should carry a mandatory sentence of 15 years. Wounding a victim, another 20 years.

Supplying a person with a gun should attract a minimum sentence of 15 years. Fencing or otherwise helping a person convert the proceeds of crime to cash or other reward should be a mandatory 10-year sentence.

## TCI must learn to get tough

TCI is a joke  
The attack against officers in Grand Turk SHOULD BE the last straw.

What will it take before this government policing force realizes they're being made the object of a joke by criminals?

When an attack against a police officer happens in the USA, God help the villains. As we say, there is no wrath like that of a police department scorned.

It amazes me that Commissioner (Edward) Hall does nothing to change the current state of affairs. He waits for someone else to change the situation or solve the problem.

And the Turks Islanders are seeking independence? Are you kidding me? Before one is able to walk on their own, they must first learn to crawl. The TCI government is still in the cradle depending on Mommy to bring them what they need.

The response to all this crime should be a swift adaptation to the current rampant crime.

1. Report in the news that NO ONE will be immune from scrutiny during a crime investigation.

Harbouring or otherwise assisting a criminal avoid detection or arrest should attract a five-year sentence.

If you are arrested for any crime where a person was injured, threatened, wounded or terrorized, or any offensive weapon was used, you should be tried by judge only.

If you have a criminal record for a similar crime for which you are arrested, bail should be denied and trial set for no more than 45 days from the arrest date.

Penalties must be swift, sure and applied very quickly. Our prosecutors must be staffed so that they can dispose of these cases very quickly, and our courts must have the appropriate staffing to clear the cases quickly. Once the work is out that TCI is extremely hard on violent crime and very hard on any crimes against individuals and property, the criminals amongst us will soon move on to easier pastures.

None of these suggestions should infer that we should not also reinforce our police force with more and better trained individuals, offer significant rewards for turning in people that you know have committed a crime and using technology to assist in our crime fighting efforts. One hundred strategically

placed CCTV cameras around Provo all fed to a central monitoring station would greatly assist in the tracking of escaping criminals.

We only have a handful of banks, 10 roundabouts, 40 high net worth businesses, and fewer than 20 communities in Provo where there is a higher probability of finding a fugitive.

MARK PANKHURST  
Providenciales

2. ANYONE found to be harboring, lying for or withholding information from the police will be prosecuted to the fullest extent.

3. Issue Tasers to every officer—police, port and customs.

4. Permit civilians to purchase and carry personal type Tasers, (background check required). Best alternative to handguns. Non-lethal.

5. Make ALL handguns illegal. It is too difficult to know who has a permit and who does not. ANY handgun (other than police) is illegal.

6. Employ undercover trusted civilians as police informants. To gather intelligence from every settlement.

7. Once a criminal is caught, NO bail until the trial will be offered.

Why does all this seem so simple to many of us, yet the answers elude the authorities?

WAKE UP TURKS AND CAICOS!!! before you're back in the salt business as your only income source.

JACK GREVER  
Five Cays

# Governor proposes tougher gun laws

GUNS from page 1

Providenciales," he said. That exercise included roadblocks and traffic stops, resulting in impounding of illegal jitneys and charges for other violations.

Also, the Attorney General's Chambers will be increasing staff to help police make their cases.

During the last three months, there have been more than a dozen gun-related robberies, during which one victim was killed and two victims were wounded. In one case, the intended victim of a carjacking shot his assailant with a legal handgun.

In the latest attack, armed gunmen robbed a customer at the FirstCaribbean International Bank on Leeward Highway around lunchtime Oct. 14, the third such daytime robbery within two weeks. No one was injured, but police have yet to release any further details.

On Oct. 7, robbers shot out a glass door and a display case with an assault rifle during a bold daylight robbery of Royal Jewels on Leeward Highway, making off with watches and finger rings, police said.

And a Canadian man was wounded around 2 p.m. on Oct. 1 when he tried to stop two masked gunmen from robbing his fiancé outside the Royal Bank of Canada on Leeward Highway.

"I share the shock of the community at the increase in violent crime in recent weeks," the governor said. "The incidents

of armed robberies and indiscriminate use of guns, including today's (Oct. 14) attack at the First Caribbean Bank, have reinforced my determination to work with the commissioner of police and attorney general in bringing to account those responsible."

Residents, business owners and politicians have been calling on the interim government and the U.K. for tougher laws and increased police presence. The latest is a petition demanding the U.K. government take swift action, as the British are responsible for security in the country.

The aim of tougher mandatory laws and restrictions on bail is to get criminals off the street for as long as possible to prevent crime. Faced with the threat of tough penalties, criminals will think twice about using guns or go elsewhere to commit crimes, it is reasoned.

However, few arrests have been made in the latest spate of armed gun crimes. When there have been arrests, suspects have been quickly freed on bail—including six people charged with the daylight armed robbery of Jai's jewelry store in Grace Bay in July.

Even if some laws are changed, police still must be able to catch the suspects and gather credible evidence, prosecutors must convince juries of suspects' guilt, and juries must convict the guilty. Then it's up to a judge to impose a just sentence.

Proposed changes in the Constitution would remove the automatic right to a trial by jury, as has been done in the U.K. The Attorney General has proposed a law to accompany that change which would allow a defendant,

## Current maximum penalties

Under current TCI laws, criminals using guns during crimes could face these charges and penalties:

- ▶ Robbery (with or without guns) — life
- ▶ Causing grievous bodily harm with intent — life
- ▶ Using a gun during a crime — 10 years
- ▶ Illegal possession of a gun — 5 years
- ▶ Malicious wounding — 5 years
- ▶ Occasioning actual bodily harm — 2 years
- ▶ Common assault — 6 months



Source: Attorney General's Chambers

prosecutor or judge to request a trial without a jury. The judge would make the decision, but that ruling could be appealed to the three-judge Court of Appeal.

On Sept. 14, the Consultative Forum deferred that proposed law so that its members could receive more information, and that the law could be revised and discussed further before being recommended to the governor's Advisory Council.

While some oppose the change, others have said that judges alone should hear serious cases so that juries won't acquit someone they know or who is related to them—which can be a problem in small jurisdictions.

Some of the steps taken by the interim government to help police in their fight against crime include:

- ▶ An additional \$4 million was appropriated for police in this year's budget—a 30 percent increase.
- ▶ Four seasoned U.K. police specialists were hired.
- ▶ Four community policing officers now serve Providenciales, and two serve Grand Turk.
- ▶ Neighborhood Watches and community policing have been established in many areas.
- ▶ A new police substation has opened in Saltmills Plaza on Grace Bay.
- ▶ Police created a Case File Quality Assurance Unit to ensure proper case preparation for prosecutors.
- ▶ The governor's Advisory Council has approved moving the police department into new

quarters along with fire services and 911. Also approved were the purchase of five additional vehicles and a replacement generator.

Police patrol practices have been changed to get more officers on the streets and to increase uniform patrol visibility and improve response times.

Some people are calling for a more aggressive approach, such as allowing police and citizens be armed with Tasers, and bringing in military troops to aid police. Civilian handgun ownership is already allowed with a permit.

The increase in crime has left residents fearful and the governor under pressure from all sides to take serious action to bring such criminals to justice.

"We call on the government to put their money where their mouth is and spend the money

that it received from (the Department for International Development), which specifically provided the funding through the emergency loans for fighting crime," the People's Democratic Movement said in a statement Oct. 12. "We urge (Her Majesty's Government) to inject this \$4 million into the specialized equipment, training and personnel needed to protect our people."

Anyone with information relating to a crime which has been committed or knowledge of a person in the possession of illegal guns is asked to contact Crimestoppers at 1-800-TIPS (8477). All calls are anonymous, answered by trained professionals in the U.S.

## fp Turks & Caicos

FIRST PUBLISHING LTD.  
P.O. Box 257  
PROVIDENCIALES  
TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS, BWI

Published Thursdays  
On the Web: [fptci.com](http://fptci.com)  
E-paper / News Alerts / Searchable Archives

- CONTACT US
- ▶ News tips and press releases: [news@fptci.com](mailto:news@fptci.com) / (649) 332-5615
  - ▶ Advertising: [sales@fptci.com](mailto:sales@fptci.com) / (649) 332-5615
  - ▶ Web site: [info@fptci.com](http://info@fptci.com)
  - ▶ Letters to the Editor: [lettertoeditor@fptci.com](mailto:lettertoeditor@fptci.com)

### LETTERS POLICY

We welcome letters from our readers. Letters must include the writer's name, address, e-mail address and a telephone number for verification purposes. Only name and hometown will be printed. Pen names are not allowed, and anonymous letters will not be published. Publication is discretionary. All letters are subject to editing for length, clarity, grammar, libel and good taste.