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**MINISTRY NATIONAL SECURITY  
STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY**

ANNUAL REPORT  
**2021**

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The photographs used on the cover and in this document were done by members of staff.  
The cover: The Country, the Agency (the bird) exposed to the Covid-19 pandemic (the downpour) yet still, stands resolute in the face of adversity (watching over our nation and fulfilling our responsibility).

## MANDATE

This report is prepared in compliance with Section 4 (4), Chapter 15:06 as amended by Act 4 of 2016:

*“The Director shall prepare an annual report on the operations of the Agency which shall be submitted to the Minister within one month after the end of the year to which the report relates.”*

Taking into cognisance section 8 (1) and (2) Chapter 15:06 as amended by Act 4 of 2016:

*“(1) Subject to subsection (2), no employee of the Agency shall disclose any information obtained or accessible in the course of the performance of duties and functions under this Act unless so authorised by the Director.*

*(2) Disclosure referred to in subsection (1) is permissible for the following reasons only:*

*(a) for the investigation or prosecution of a serious crime, an offence under the Dangerous Drugs Act or any other contravention of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago;*  
*or*

*(b) for the investigation of a serious crime or a dangerous drugs offence committed abroad or contravention of the laws of any other country which is party to the 1988 Vienna Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances or with whom Trinidad and Tobago has a mutual legal assistance treaty.*

*(3) Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction on indictment to a fine of one hundred thousand dollars and to imprisonment for ten years.”*

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# THE STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY

## DESIRED IMPACT

*Trinidad and Tobago is a peaceful, thriving society in which there is public trust in justice, the rule of law is upheld, and the safety, security and defence of the nation and its people is assured.*

## OUR VISION

*A world class intelligence agency enabling the fight to reduce and prevent serious and organised crime in Trinidad and Tobago*

## OUR MISSION

*The SSA contributes to the security of the nation and the people of Trinidad and Tobago by creating and delivering the highest quality intelligence, operational support and training products and services to our local and international partners to detect, pre-empt, disrupt and dismantle current and emerging threats*

## OUR CORE VALUES

*Service, Integrity, Innovation, Excellence, Partnership, Patriotism*

## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

### FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR

As indicated by the Strategic Services Agency act 15:06, 6.(1) the Agency has manifold responsibilities - providing strategic intelligence and strategic intelligence policy advice; providing crime prevention strategic and the requisite policy advice to stakeholders; a knowledge management clearinghouse on serious crime; provide technical assistance to law enforcement; provide training for staff and others under national security umbrella; develop sound relationships with sister services regionally and internationally; provide assistance to other national security bodies to secure the nation.

This is achieved through the labour of a competent well-trained staff, who are mission-focused and creative. We are thankful for our diligent employees, whom, everyday go beyond their limits to execute operations, programmes and plans with the aim of fulfilling the Agency's mission of protecting the people of our sovereign state.

We are responsible to the people and the Republic, hence the importance of using our legislated authority sensibly, proportionately and with decorum. With great power comes greater responsibility and we are committed to acting within the letter of the law, with integrity. Integrity being one of our core values, we have also pledged to transparency. This Annual Report is submitted to the Minister conscientiously every year and then to Parliament. We encourage rigorous oversight. We are also willing participants at the in camera Joint Select Committee (Security) hearings.

Over the year 2021 and in keeping with the goals and initiatives of our strategic plan, there was an amplified use of the whole-of-Agency model for increased productivity. The core divisions of the Agency continued to enhance their relationship, creating a stronger more successful union. Corporate services in particular has done yeoman's service to ensure employees were protected during these pandemic times.

Communication being essential to the success of any endeavour, the Fusion Centre launched the Agency's media room, which is available for all of the users/partners of the centre. In an emergency, we are here to provide all aspects of support to our key stakeholders.

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### IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC:

Over the past year, the Covid-19 pandemic continued to impact the Agency. We used it however, as an opportunity to adapt and adopt - adapting methodologies to a VUCA environment (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) and adopting new practices and processes, which have positively positioned us to continue to prosecute our mandate of providing daily coverage in the sphere of intelligence, information and situational awareness to our external partners. According to Winston Churchill who famously said, “Never let a good crisis go to waste”, in 2021, at the Agency we continued to explore our creativity.

In acceding to the exigencies of the pandemic, we ensured staff were protected against exposure to the disease and we continued our strict hygiene regimen which included infrastructural measures, staff and visitor protection and last year we included the facility, through one of our partners, of voluntary staff vaccinations.

We continued our safety procedures from the previous year, but put in place contact-tracing facilities to ensure the safety of our employees and their families.

Operations continued apace with our reports to external stakeholders increasing significantly over 2020; actionable intelligence reports, reports which can be acted upon immediately by the police/receiving bodies, to nullify a threat, increased by 21%; strategic intelligence presentations by more than 50%. The number of reports – special, weekly, monthly and others - all increased in 2021 as we adjusted to the modifications due to the pandemic, despite its continued impact on staff and their operating environment. In 2021 despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to accomplish most of our plans as we acclimatized to the changing environment.

### THE FUTURE

As 2021 has proven, the world has become more VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. In the midst of this, we at the SSA are poised to offer a place of vision, understanding, clarity and agility. It is our aim to provide the support to our external stakeholders by fine-tuning our products, offering an environment for collaboration and creativity and to ensure our role is understood by our partners. We stand by our word, we live our values of patriotism, integrity, service, excellence, partnership and innovation.

The following report details the accomplishments of the people of the Agency over the past twelve months.

### ***The Director***

### ***Strategic Services Agency***

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trinidad and Tobago faced unprecedented challenges in 2021. The combined effects of COVID-19, and this country's vulnerability to international shocks in trade and energy prices pushed the economy into further decline. In addition, our country was exposed to other international security issues related to cybersecurity, illegal migrants, violent social movements, and the potential effects of new virus (cov-Sars-2) variants and their attendant consequences

Some of the many-faceted aspects of our responsibilities, (as written in the SSA Act CH 16:06 paragraph 6 (1) (b) (c) (d) (j)), are the provision of policy advisories. They are some of the most important products of the Agency. To provide solutions for some of the areas above, for 2021, in excess of twenty-five (25) strategic alerts and more than ten (10) strategic intelligence products were disseminated by the Strategic Services Section. CARCIS – our Centre for Applied Research and Caribbean Intelligence Studies - produced and disseminated several strategic intelligence products, special reports, alerts, and strategic assessments.

They labour in the vineyard as they develop strategic intelligence, make recommendations to the Government on the formation of policies in relation to serious crime; prepare crime prevention strategies and stimulate action toward and monitor the implementation of the agreed strategies. They also disseminate information and intelligence to the services; provide strategic intelligence to assist and promote the efficient and effective use of operational resources so as to enable the development of law enforcement strategies and identify new trends in, and patterns of criminal activities.

The Agency through its Intelligence division hosted a one-day international counter-terrorism conference "Counter Terrorism and the Prevention of Violent Extremism in the Caribbean". Included in the list of presenters were representatives of the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs and TTPS Special Branch. Over 100 persons were in attendance from, not only from indigenous security units, but regionally and internationally. Partnership, excellence, service and innovation – four of our core values - were captured in this process. This will be detailed in the report.

At a strategic level, and with collaboration foremost, the Agency, is also focused on the attracting and strengthening of global alliances, through effective partnering and to facilitate strategic training and development of employees as well as provide training to external stakeholders. 2021 yielded a collaborative effort by the SSA and the Office of the Immigration department, wherein we developed a programme orienting Heads of Missions to essential security requirements, with an

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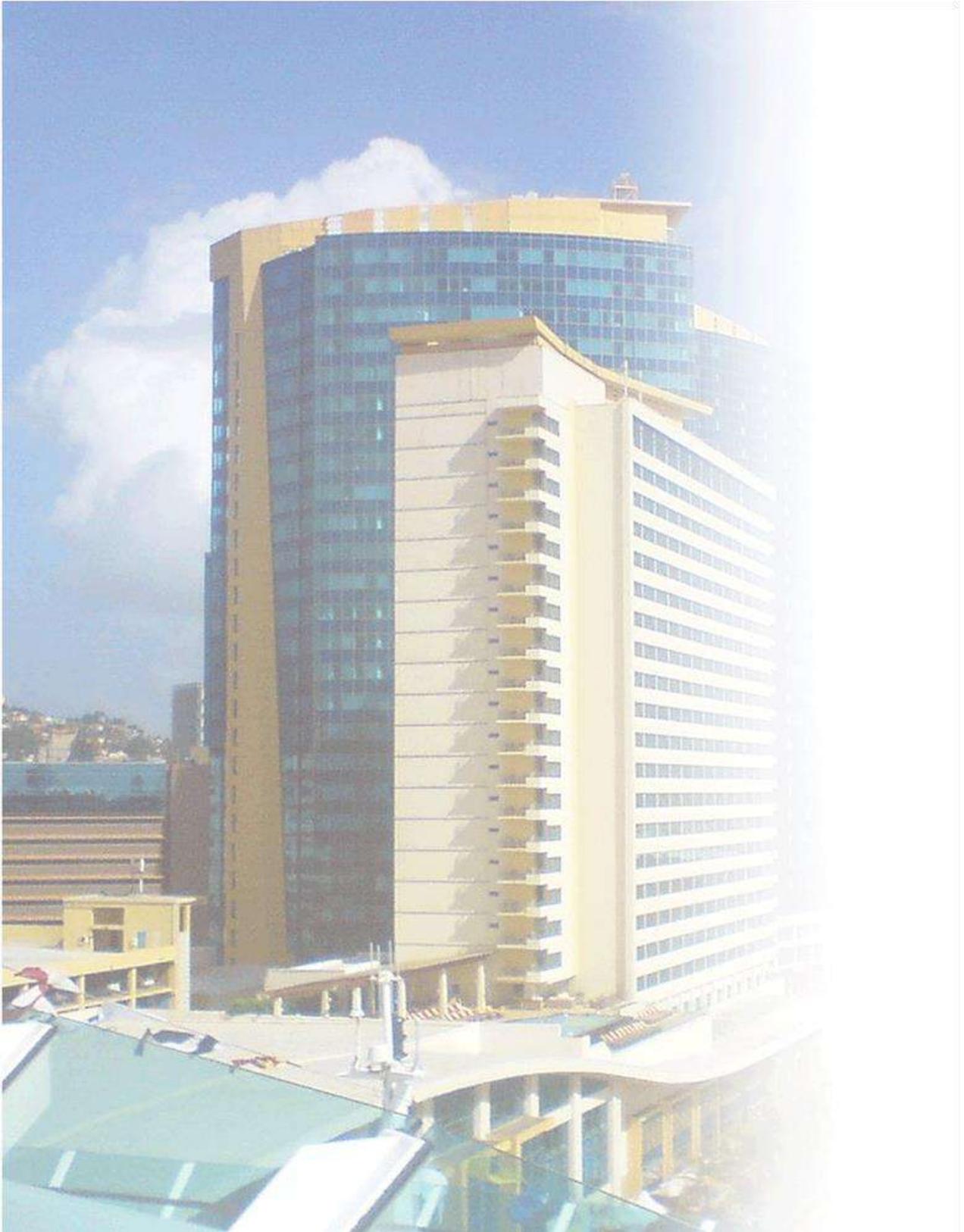
aim to establish robust systems to protect critical infrastructure and vital services, essential to the nation's security, economic vitality, public health and safety.

We seek to add value to all of our stakeholder relationships, ensuring the other party is equipped and supported to be even more effective in fulfilling their respective missions.

The rest of this report covers work done by the Agency:

- The Operating Environment – Even through the covid-19 pandemic, context must be given to the serious crime issues facing the country. A global perspective is a requirement, leading then, into the regional and national scenes. This section analyses these outlooks and makes the links to the reality facing us at home, in terms of the potential for socio-economic-political opportunity as well as turmoil, and its impact on national security.
- The Administrative Report – this deals primarily with administrative, human resources, capacity building, and other systems implemented in the timeframe, to ensure increased efficiency of services. It also gives a breakdown of the finances of the Agency for the period under examination.
- The Operational Report –provides details on the organizational productivity and priorities.
- 2022 Strategic and Operational Priorities.

At the Strategic Services Agency, we are unyielding in ensuring excellence in all the areas as stated in SSA Act 15:06 Sect (6) (1) and (2), to protect and secure our citizens and the sovereign state of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Excellence is our objective.



## SCANNING THE SSA

With our focus on building stronger relationships, tighter collaborations and service, tied to the strategic priority of continually improve training products and services, our training arm, the National Security Training Academy (NSTA), provided specialised training to the SSA and the national security sector (See Fig 1)

PROG/PARTICIPANT	TTPS	TTPRS	TTR	DFIU	PATI	TTMPS	CTU	PARLIAMENT POLICE UNIT	TTFS
ACADEMIC	18	8	8	4	3	7	22	3	2
TECHNICAL	431	1		1		14			

FIGURE 1

In compliance with the SSA Amendment Act 2016 Chap. 15:06 Section 6. (1) (d) and (k) and (2) (f): ... The Agency has the responsibility ...to maintain an inventory of all training undertaken and seek to identify opportunities for training; ... contribute to the training of staff of the Services in crime prevention.

In that context and despite the covid 19 pandemic, four (4) academic programmes were offered in addition to eight (8) technical programmes. Participants attended from all spheres of national security including the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS), The Trinidad and Tobago Prisons Service (TTPRS), The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), Port Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (PATI), Trinidad and Tobago Regiment (TTR), Parliament Police Unit, Trinidad and Tobago Fire Services (TTFS), The Defence Force Intelligence Unit (DFIU), The Trinidad and Tobago Municipal Police Service (TTMPS).

### DATA BASE DEVELOPMENT

In keeping with the SSA Act the Agency has continued to develop stronger more effective data bases. The Strategic Services Agency (Amendment) Act 2016, Chap. 15:06, Section 6. mandates that the SSA, “act as an office for centralising information that could facilitate the detection and

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prevention of serious crime, for coordinating operations for the suppression of serious crime matters and for co-operating with the Services or the corresponding Services of other countries.” The Act further requires Section 6 (2) (b), that the Agency, “provide a central point for the receipt of all disclosures made under the laws pertaining to serious crime and develop such disclosures through the intelligence process and disseminate to the appropriate Services for further action.”

Knowledge Management Department continued to focus on ensuring that the requisite processes, infrastructure and supporting culture is developed to guarantee that the SSA makes the most efficient use of all intelligence and information generated and collected from external stakeholders. Collaboration continued with technical assistance to our external stakeholders, employing GIS technology to identify and disrupt criminal activity; providing pattern /trend analysis reports on serious crime occurrences and mapping high crime and high-density areas within Trinidad and Tobago.

The Investigations Department (INVESSA) worked directly with other operational units and services to assist in the conversion of intelligence into evidence; disrupting activities of organised crime groups. This included the rescue of kidnap victims, seizures of firearms and narcotics and the arrest of persons involved criminal activity.

### INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

With respect to the International Compliance Regime, the Agency would have successfully applied for and received funding for the digitisation and integration of the Firearms Data Management system, with the assistance of the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty. Further, the Agency successfully completed several outstanding compliance reporting instruments including the United Nations Military Expenditure Report (UNMILEX), United Nations Pre Export Notification System (PENS), United Nations Arms Trade Treaty (UNATT) and United Nations Register on Conventional Arms (UNROCCA).

The SSA being appointed the point of contact in 2021 officially began collating responses for United Nations Annual Report Questionnaire (UNARQ) and the United Nations Illicit Arms Flow Questionnaire and International Tracing Instrument (UNIAFQ/ITI). There have been several strides made by the SSA in this regard; however, several outstanding reports already collated, remain without Cabinet approval, which is required, for international dissemination. It is expected that recent lobbying and Ministerial intervention

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will increase the level of compliance with international reporting standards of the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) in 2022.

## STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION 2021

The strategic development of the Agency continued in 2021 with a focus on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), necessary for the continued implementation of the strategic Plan and fortunately, as advised by the Ministries of Public Administration and Planning and Development. Expert training was provided for the various levels of staff as we sought self-improvement, in keeping with our mission “To contribute to the security of the nation and the people of Trinidad and Tobago by creating and delivering the highest quality intelligence, operational support and training products and services to our local and international partners to detect, pre-empt, disrupt and dismantle current and emerging threats”. Required are increased efficiency and agility, neither of which can be fully achieved without the M&E capability.

Through the Covid-19 pandemic, divisions also focused on cultural change by further developing charters, service level agreements, creating the environment for increased collaboration and resourcefulness.



FIGURE 1 UNDERPINNINGS OF THE AGENCY'S WORK PROCESSES

2021 workplans produced by each division focused on the core and enabling priorities of the Agency's Strategic Plan (see Figure 2).

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CORE/ENABLING	PRIORITIES	METHODOLOGY
<p><b>THE CORE PRIORITIES FOR THE AGENCY TO 2023 ARE:</b></p>	<p>1. Detection and Prevention of Serious Crime</p>	<p>Continually improve intelligence products and services                      Continually improve training products                      Advance research on serious crime                      Enhance information sharing networks                      Strengthen communication with the Public</p>
<p><b>THE ENABLING PRIORITIES ARE:</b></p>	<p>2 Achieve Operational Excellence</p>	<p>Strengthen current and attract new Alliances and Partnerships                      Build/Upgrade the Agency's technology infrastructure and facilities                      Continually develop and upgrade work processes and practices</p>
	<p>3. Build Organisational Capacity</p>	<p>Develop our Staff                      Complete Organisational Transformation                      Fortify the desired culture of fraternity and performance</p>
	<p>4. Create Social and Economic Value</p>	<p>Establish return on investment in delivery of national intelligence products and services</p>

FIGURE 2 – AGENCY PRIORITIES

## 2021 GEOPOLITICAL OVERVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The protracted COVID-19 pandemic continued to trigger major health crises across the globe, and the ensuing economic fallout affected every aspect of human endeavour, exposing countries' vulnerabilities and forcing geopolitical shifts among states, and world politics.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the virus claimed over 1.5 million lives<sup>1</sup>. The conditions of vulnerability that characterise the region have made it particularly susceptible to the effects of the pandemic. It is uncertain that the COVID-19 pandemic will end in 2022 as countries worldwide continue to register high numbers of COVID-19 infections. As such, with the new Omicron variant threat, governments have re-visited pandemic restrictions and are encouraging mandatory vaccination.

In 2022, the COVID-19 virus is set to have a lingering impact as in 2021, and the changing macro effects will continue to contribute to supply-chain disruptions, cyclical and structural changes in labour markets, and varying inflation outlooks<sup>2</sup>. The extent to which the pandemic has changed lives, the economy, social norms, and elevated security risks have been overwhelming.

Other global issues include:

- ✚ Geopolitical conflicts and great power competition, which threaten to destabilise regions and exacerbate existing humanitarian crises among vulnerable countries worldwide.
- ✚ Climate change, which is increasingly viewed as a global security threat that will feature resource conflicts, food and energy shortages, rising extremism, and forced migrations.
- ✚ Rising political violence, for example in 2021, countries' diverging macroeconomic uncertainties have influenced domestic policies and upended elections' outcomes which resulted in major political upheavals, military coups, and violent protests movements against perceived corruption and pandemic freedom.

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<sup>1</sup> Reuters COVID-19 Tracker, 2021. [online]. Available at: <https://graphics.reuters.com/world-coronavirus-tracker-and-maps/regions/latin-america-and-the-caribbean/> [Accessed on 20 December 2021].

<sup>2</sup> IMF 2021, Regional Economic Outlook, Navigating New Waves of New Variants: Pandemic Resurgence slows Recovery. [online]. Available at: <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/downloadpdf/books/086/464518-9781513593630-en/ch001.pdf> [Accessed on 12 November 2021].

In the Western Hemisphere, several other factors have driven these elevated security risks, starting with structural changes in the geopolitical environment that include a more competitive world order involving the United States (US), China, Russia and to a lesser extent Iran. These changes included soft power approaches through economic engagement, health diplomacy, technology and military assistance.

Other risk factors include rising economic inequality and deepening criminal governance (the growing symbiotic relationship between states and influential elite political and business groups in society and/or organised crime groups (gang leaders, mafia, criminal enterprises) in Latin America and the Caribbean) via political elites and organised crime groups, creating a 'pandora's box'<sup>3</sup>, which can drive public discontent and challenge the future of liberal democracy in the region.

Given this situation, the evolving nature of geopolitical issues and the pandemic effects are expected to intensify and shape the events of 2022.

As the Government of Trinidad and Tobago (GORTT) attempts to navigate these structural geopolitical and economic shifts, this report will highlight some of the global issues that will continue to be monitored as there are significant implications for the health, economics, security and the serious crime landscape of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T).

## **GEOPOLITICS**

The threat of great-power competition will merge to produce a world of heightened national-security risks. In 2021, several emerging power configurations challenged the United States (US) and its allies over leadership in the global crisis and raised concerns over pandemic recovery, political polarisation, democracy, and whether the US can engage in great-power competition with China and Russia simultaneously.

Conversely, China and Russia have strategically enhanced geopolitical manoeuvres during the pandemic in their respective regions. The two (2) countries have systematically provided access to vaccines to several countries, giving pandemic support and humanitarian aid to traditional allied and non-allied states thus raising their global statuses in the international community.

China and Russia are operating on multiple fronts, building up their military defences by upgrading its nuclear-weapons arsenal and hypersonic-missile capabilities, increasing electronic and cyber

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<sup>3</sup> A process that once begun generates many new and complicated problems that did not exist or not known before. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/pandora-s-box>

warfare attacks while making significant political, military, and strategic overtures in its space programme, the South China Sea and the Balkans, CIS<sup>4</sup> states respectively.

In addition, a Chinese pressure campaign against Taiwan and a Russian build-up of forces along Ukraine's eastern border have prompted a global arms race among allied nations, reflecting new geopolitical structures and its potential effects on regional and global security in 2022.

Other matters including COVID-19 management, the Winter Olympics in Beijing, the FIFA Men's World Cup 2022 in Qatar, the Chinese Communist Party's 20th National Party Congress and the upcoming US mid-term elections will feature prominently in the geopolitical landscape in the new year.

The US administration is facing several foreign policy challenges. However, the threat of great-power competition involving the US, China and Russia, and their allies are projected to be an important geopolitical dynamic in 2022, as opposed to previous forecasts, which focused on Salafi-Jihadist extremists and other non-state actors.

### **IMPACT OF COVID-19**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is anticipating that the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 virus could change the course of the pandemic based on its transmissibility, severity of infection, and vaccine effectiveness.

The global spread of this new variant has led governments to adjust measures to once again reduce the threat. Several countries in Europe have opted for the reintroduction of unpopular lockdowns, partial lockdowns,<sup>5</sup> and safe zone restrictions.<sup>6</sup> Some governments have also ramped up vaccination of the immunocompromised with additional third doses, while others<sup>7</sup> have instituted lockdowns of unvaccinated citizens in the hope that this will mitigate spiralling cases and deaths. Further, several governments have also declared mandatory vaccination for public workers, parliamentarians and the general population with stipulated guidelines into April 2022. Some Asian governments have demanded weekly testing for the unvaccinated, and from January 01, 2022,

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<sup>4</sup> The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was founded in 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/commonwealth-independent-states-cis/>

<sup>5</sup> "European Countries to Impose Fresh COVID Curbs After Drastic Rise in Infections," [online] Available at: <https://zeenews.india.com/world/european-countries-to-impose-fresh-covid-curbs-after-drastic-rise-in-infections-2410062.html>.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Waldie, "Britain Takes Different Approach as Much of Europe Tightens Restrictions Amid Fourth Wave of COVID-19," [online] Available at: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-britain-takes-different-approach-as-much-of-europe-tightens/>.

<sup>7</sup> "Covid: Austria Introduces Lockdown for Unvaccinated," [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-59283128>.

unvaccinated nationals will be denied social assistance and free COVID- 19 health care services. With the onset of the Omicron variant, countries have reintroduced travel restrictions for affected countries. As such, the global effects of the pandemic in 2022 may include:

- A global economic slowdown as financial conditions derail re-emerging markets
- Worsening US-China ties could force a decoupling in the global economy i.e. the deliberate dismantling and eventual re-creation elsewhere of some of cross-border supply chains which have continued to be disrupted during the pandemic.
- Socio-political and economic conditions may continue to fuel illegal migration
- Increased widespread social and political unrest that weighs on global recovery efforts
- The evolution of new COVID-19 variants that may prove resistant to vaccines
- Health-care workers' burnout and/or post-traumatic stress disorder
- Increase inter-state cyberwar that could cripple major economies as cyber-attackers see the pandemic as an opportunity to step up their criminal activities by exploiting the vulnerability of employees working from home among other issues. As well, given the much higher costs of direct military conflict, and the difficulty in identifying perpetrators of cyber-attacks, military escalation is likely to take the form of cyber-warfare, ultimately targeting software that controls state infrastructure.
- A reduction in law enforcement personnel due to quarantining or redeployment to enforce public health regulations
- Individual behavioural changes, such as fear-induced aversion to workplaces, public gatherings and schools

#### **GLOBAL CRIME AND SECURITY PERSPECTIVE**

As countries adjust COVID-19 restrictions and criminals adapt to the prevailing environment, serious and organised crimes and the rebounding of gang-related activities are on the rise:

- Law enforcement agencies have recorded an increase in serious crimes and gang-related homicides. African authorities recorded a surge in kidnapping for ransom of foreign nationals and high-profile business owners within the last month. A powerful Haitian gang

has kidnapped 17 missionaries, demanding exorbitant ransoms for their release. The US has reported that the largest cities are on track to surpass the murder rates of 2020.

Within the Caribbean region, gang-related activities have rebounded resulting in homicides and other serious crimes. Jamaican authorities have reported a 9.9 percent increase in murders this year when compared to a similar period for 2020. Similar upward trends have been reported in Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas, and Barbados<sup>8</sup>.

- **Vaccine immunisation card fraud is on the increase.** As a result of the safe zone requirements, and mandatory vaccination in several countries, there is an uptick in immunisation card fraud, facilitated by medical professionals. The New York administration has suspended employees as an enquiry ensues into the use of fake vaccination cards. European cyber-specialists have identified thousands of social media accounts offering fake vaccination cards for sale.

Within the Caribbean region, several countries have reported similar events while in Trinidad and Tobago, health officials have confirmed that fake immunisation cards are being offered for sale<sup>9</sup>.

- **Cyber-attacks have become more sophisticated, complex and with devastating impacts.** Intelligence agencies in the United Kingdom (UK) reported a surge in ransomware attacks with criminal hackers – originating in Russia, seizing control of corporate data and demanding payment in cryptocurrency. European Union (EU) authorities have also confirmed that cyber-criminals are becoming increasingly interested in monetising their activities and that financial gains from crypto-jacking have incentivised cyber threat actors to increase attacks. In the US, the email system of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) was compromised. Hackers sent thousands of fake emails, warning of a cyber-attack from email accounts purporting to be from the Department of Homeland Security. New Zealand's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) recorded a 15% increase

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<sup>8</sup> Internal Report 2021. SSC Monthly COVID-19 Report

<sup>9</sup> Trinidad Express, "2 Arrested with Fake Vaccination Cards: How Many Are Out There?" [online] Available at: [https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/2-arrested-with-fake-vaccination-cards-how-many-are-out-there/article\\_12d24c6e-10d0-11ec-9b6b-8b7b5727da47.html](https://trinidadexpress.com/newsextra/2-arrested-with-fake-vaccination-cards-how-many-are-out-there/article_12d24c6e-10d0-11ec-9b6b-8b7b5727da47.html).

in attacks against significant national organisations, noting that most ransomware attacks were criminally or financially motivated as opposed to state-sponsored.

The Caribbean region has also seen an uptick in phishing schemes, data theft and ransomware attacks. Although the incidences have been infrequent, it continues to engage CARICOM's attention as the region becomes increasingly reliant on digital networks.

In Trinidad and Tobago, threats made by criminal actors demanding payment in cryptocurrency have engaged the attention of local law enforcement<sup>10</sup>.

- **Low vaccination uptake among law enforcement professionals can pose a threat to public safety.** In several countries, law enforcement efforts have been impeded due to vaccine hesitancy, and in some cases, officers have taken legal action against the state for imposing mandatory vaccination. In addition, governments have had to struggle with low vaccination uptake among state employees and in particular, law enforcement officials. In the US, hundreds of police officers have died, with thousands consistently in quarantine<sup>11</sup>.

Trinidad and Tobago's law enforcement officers have also been adversely affected by the virus with several deaths having been recorded since the commencement of the pandemic<sup>12</sup>.

- **The terrorist threat is more diverse, including the threats posed by far-right extremists and jihadists joined by political and socio-cultural actors.** The most lethal terrorist threats are likely to remain jihadism and far-right extremism, however, a growing mix of extremism and violent anti-government protests in Europe, the US, Canada and Australia can be challenging. In addition, parts of Africa and the Middle East have experienced several terrorist attacks from insurgent groups that use terrorism as a primary tactic. In Ethiopia, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) conducted acts of terrorism, while in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Turkey a combination of opposition rebel forces, jihadist affiliates, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Protection Forces (YPG) remain active. The Islamic State has shifted resources and attention to

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<sup>10</sup> Internal Report 2021. SSC Monthly COVID-19 Report

<sup>11</sup> Kate Gibson, "COVID-19 is Nation's Biggest Cop Killer, Yet Many Officers Are Vaccine Resistant," [online] Available at: <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/covid-19-is-nations-biggest-cop-killer-officers-vaccine-resistant/>.

<sup>12</sup> Internal Report 2021. SSC Monthly COVID-19 Report

Afghanistan, Iraq and its affiliates and branches elsewhere to remain relevant. In 2022, Al-Qaeda and Islamic State operatives in Central Africa Province (ISCAP) and Islamic State Khorasan (ISK) will be among the most lethal, continuing a trend from 2021<sup>13</sup>. The pandemic and travel restrictions have mainly confined terrorist attacks to their respective regions, as such the FIFA Men's World Cup 2022 in Qatar is a significant target for a major terrorist incident, hence the already heightened security plans among regional and international countries.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR TRINIDAD & TOBAGO**

With the emergence of new and virulent mutations of the COVID-19 virus, the global economic and human costs of the pandemic and the uncertainties about sustained recovery may have long-lasting implications for the economy and international security environment.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the virus poses significant risks to public health, the economy and to our national security that includes:

- The threat of political instability the longer the COVID-19 crisis continues, as the current unstable economic environment has reduced private investments and spending and increased financial debts, business closures and increased unemployment levels
- The ambiguity around political stability - political instability is unhealthy for the world economy, unhealthy for eventual economic recovery. In addition, instability can cause the movement of people across borders, it can create ungoverned territory where extremists can take root, and it can potentially significantly undermine countries' strategic interests.
- A declaration by the state on mandatory vaccination among lower age groups in 2022 could drive protests, and legal action against the state from citizens, workers' unions and parents representing school children, teachers and public sector workers, and facilitated by political and social agitators using online platforms to perpetuate anti-state narratives
- The pandemic ills have changed the modality of organised crime and extremism, including online recruitment tactics, changing crime typologies and the illegal trafficking of humans, narcotics and arms and ammunition

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<sup>13</sup> Colin P. Clarke, 2021. Trends in Terrorism: What's on the Horizon in 2022? [online] Available at: <https://www.fpri.org/article/2021/12/trends-in-terrorism-whats-on-the-horizon-in-2022/>

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- The increased online activity exposes our vulnerability to cyber-attacks online phishing schemes and card skimming. Also, critical state infrastructure may become the target of ransomware attacks with criminal hackers demanding payment in cryptocurrency
- The expansion of the recreational safe zone areas may potentially result in increased opportunities to falsify documents concerning the sale of fraudulent vaccine cards and licences to operate as businesses attempt to revert to normal activities.
- Sustained low vaccination uptake among members of the protective services will likely affect crime-fighting efforts due to increased numbers of infections and quarantine orders including the diversion of personnel at safe zones could strain the human resource capacity to carry out critical law enforcement activities.
- A possible increase in illegal immigrants from neighbouring Caribbean countries experiencing political instability and economic decline.

### **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

Trinidad and Tobago has faced unprecedented challenges in 2021. The combined effects of COVID-19, and this country's vulnerability to international shocks in trade and energy prices have pushed the economy further into decline. The authorities' immediate priorities are to accelerate vaccinations and support economic recovery. In addition, Trinidad and Tobago is exposed to other international security implications related to cybersecurity, illegal migrants, and violent social movements, and the potential effects of new variant infections and their attendant consequences. As such, the following are key areas of consideration when moving forward:

- To plan, anticipate and monitor the challenges of shifting dynamics in geopolitics and the global economy and its impact on the local economic sectors
- Implement strategic communications and public education campaigns to counter misinformation relative to vaccination and the government COVID-19 measures.
- To assess and upgrade national security agencies information technology (IT) platforms, and upskill technicians to identify national-level vulnerabilities in cybercrime and develop mitigation strategies to address these threats.

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- Improve the collaborations between the Ministry of Digital Transformation, National Security and Public Administration to determine the way forward concerning protecting critical state data and information.
- Advance the use of internet disruptions by the GORTT to stem online radicalisation, COVID-19 misinformation and gang recruitment. These issues could be mitigated through targeting specific websites and applications utilising blocks and focused throttling.
- Develop social intervention programmes, policies and strategies to treat ungovernable spaces where criminal gangs and other influential groups act in a governing capacity; providing social, health and law enforcement services in periods of crisis.
- To improve coordination and cooperation of maritime security assets and systems to provide complete coverage of Trinidad and Tobago's maritime space.
- Consideration of regional maritime coordination exercises that mitigate illegal migration opportunities through enhanced cooperation with Regional Security System (RSS) and US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM).
- The development and implementation of an overarching national migration policy is required, and the monitoring of the environment for triggers of a mass migration event.
- To supplement the number of cargo/container scanners at legal ports, as this is an essential component required to increase the number of seizures of contraband entering the country illegally to further starve criminal groups of resources.
- Enhance mobile posts along key traffic routes and illegal ports utilised by smugglers and traffickers.
- Remaining vigilant in monitoring all forms of extremists' ideology and radicalisation locally and online, against perceived systems of oppression and victimisation.

With the world still reeling from the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic, nearly two years in the making, several geopolitical issues will inform forecasts on the US and its allies, shifting attention and resources to great power competition, drawing down forces from dangerous hotspots, and leaving local and host nation forces responsible for countering terrorists and non-state armed groups.

The speed with which the pandemic crisis has overtaken the global economy is a clue to the depth of the recession and the resultant effects discussed earlier.

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In Latin America and the Caribbean, the pandemic and its associated economic costs have destabilised countries and forced new international alliances that could challenge and provoke geostrategic rivalries in the region. Growth prospects will certainly depend on many factors, including how COVID-19 and its variants evolve and the continued impact on global economic activity.

Beyond the unprecedented tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic lies the 'New Normal', as the virus may become more seasonal due to immunity from past infection or vaccination, and as the global economy slowly recovers. However, world leaders are required to take steps to improve the future of pandemic resilience and develop strategies to adequately prepare, respond, and recover from such crises more decisively.

## THE LOCAL MILIEU

### THE NATIONAL SERIOUS CRIME REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Overall, within the last year there was a general decrease in serious crimes including the murder rate. The Ministry of National Security continued its efforts to stymie the drug and contraband trade, Human Trafficking and effects of Criminal Gang proliferation. While detection rates remain abysmal at fourteen (14%) percent with an accompanying low conviction rate, there remains several alarming issues within the National Security apparatus. Increases in Gender Based Violence, Police Killings, COVID-19-related deaths, migrant smuggling, terror-related acts, kidnapping for ransom, overall juvenile delinquency, cybercrime and contraband trafficking continue to demand the attention of both Law Enforcement and Intelligence Officials.

While a State of Emergency was implemented in conjunction with the Public Health Ordinances for the majority of 2021, serious crimes continued, albeit at a slower rate. The general decrease in public movement initially inspired a reduction in serious crimes, however as the year progressed there was an incremental increase in serious crimes and murders. The murder rate surged to 32 per 100,000 and at December 31<sup>st</sup> there were a total of 449 murders. Although there was a rise in altercations as a motive for murder, gang rivalry remained the primary cause. Both were resultant from the continued use of firearms to perpetrate violent crimes and this trend is expected to persist.

The continuous upward trend of COVID-19 infections coupled with low vaccination rates - due to overall vaccination hesitancy - is expected to continue, to negate the initially low infection rate throughout Trinidad and Tobago. The GORTT stipulated decrease in movement would have decreased the infection rate; however, as COVID-19 fatigue set in within the population this trend quickly reversed. Rising infection rates, the resumption of economic activity and movement within public spaces are expected to monopolise the attention of Law Enforcement (LE) and use of both financial and human resources for the foreseeable future.

The Agency provided analysis specific to the changing trends in gender-based violence and offences, changes in trafficking modi, evolution of criminal gangs, juvenile-based violence,

the evolution of fraud, illegal firearm national estimates, illegal migration, migrant offending and victimisation among other strategic intelligence products. There was the dissemination of several strategic intelligence alerts issued by the Agency.

## **STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY VALUE CHAIN**

### **Security Operating Environment:**

The role of the SSA must be understood in order to visualize its purpose in the National Security value chain. The SSA lends assistance and provides both operational support to all levels and partner agencies and essential services attached to the Ministry of National Security. As the only intelligence agency in Trinidad and Tobago with the mandate to execute such functions, the SSA and its staff also provides assistance and guidance to the:

1. Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) towards the detection and prevention of serious crimes including fraud, kidnapping for ransom, gang-related murders, disappearances and/or missing persons, conspiracy to murder Law Enforcement Officials and gang rivals, terror-related threats and conspiracies to inspire moral panic.
2. Immigration Division, the Transnational Organised Crime Unit (TOCU) and the Counter Trafficking Unit specific to the mass migration and illegal human smuggling and trafficking.
3. Coast Guard to detect the movement of contraband within the maritime domain and issues related to the protection of energy based maritime infrastructure,
4. Prisons Service specific to threats to life of officers, contraband trafficking, corruption, movement and court appearances of high profile prisoners, prison breaks and escapee recaptures, and
5. Defence Force specific to illicit marijuana field eradications and other external or local actors.

Strategic analytical products at the national level are continuously developed and disseminated to several stakeholders including the National Security Council, the International Affairs Unit of the Ministry of National Security, the National Drug Council

and other relevant entities. Anticipatory threat alerts that highlighted threats that occurred within the 6-month period for 2021 included:

- Concealment of Identity – Balaclavas & Facemasks
- Vaccination certification Fraud
- Psychosocial Impacts of COVID-19
- Changes in Contraband Trafficking
- Vulnerabilities at Places of Worship
- Venezuelan Migrant Breaches & Migrant Squatting
- The local Resurgence of Micro trafficking for Export
- Media Manipulation in Trinidad and Tobago
- New trafficking routes – Netherlands
- Street Harassment
- Increased Consumption of Recreational and Poly Drug E.g. Lean
- Public Buildings & Terrorism
- Missing Persons
- Use of Non-Lethal Offensive Weapons
- Online Child Exploitation & Use of Social Media for Serious Crime
- Employer-Mandated Vaccines
- Sub-Contracting in the local Airports & Trafficking

Further, several threat assessments were generated for all national events, public holidays and other events of national significance. National Strategic Intelligence Products produced by the SSA included but was not limited to the following:

- Crime Prevention through Environmental Design and the East Port of Spain Development Project
- National Firearms Estimate 2021 & Armed Violence
- The Evolution of Fraud in Trinidad & Tobago
- National Threat Assessment 2021,
- Pepper Spray & Non-Lethal Weapon Administration
- Regularisation of locally issued SIM Cards and their registration

- National Situational Report: Tobago Operations
- Victimisation of Non-Nationals in Trinidad and Tobago
- Budget Review 2021
- Legislative Amendments to Firearms Act
- Missing persons and,
- Suspension of CEPEP program.

Place, offender and crime-specific analyses were also provided using a combination of geographical, operational, tactical and strategic analysis. These strategic documents allow for interventions that aim to prevent, detect and reduce already occurring crimes. These profiles advocate for an all of government approach and considers the need for social, economic and law enforcement interventions. For the year 2021 at least nine (9) community profiles were completed and disseminated to both internal and external stakeholders.

#### NATIONAL THREAT PERSPECTIVES

While threats continue to emerge and were sometimes treated with the combination of approaches, including preventing and dismantling, we continue to have varied levels of success.

Threats for 2021 were generally low-medium; however with the advent of COVID-19 there were few high ratings, especially related to the uncontrolled meetings of people within private settings. These high ratings usually occurred when public holidays and weekends coincided, and remained one of the most vulnerable times for the populace.

#### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Trinidad and Tobago experienced a relatively stable year with little to no adverse activities tied to changing climate. The efforts by the GORTT via the Ministry of Works and Transport, successfully implemented a drainage program and installed several water pumps which reduced the impact of flooding in certain areas. While rainfall levels were substantially lower than previous years, there was no serious fallout observed. There remains however the

threat of vandalism to pumps during the dry season, that could be politically or financially motivated.

The adverse effects of lower rainfall coincide with lower levels of water collection by the Water and Sewerage Authority (WASA). As such, the inability to meet the demands of the population remains an issue for concern.

Covid-19 remains the single most important threat within the natural environment. The spread and infection of persons in the workplace including the public sector, threatens overall productivity. The resumption of economic activity and the incremental reopening of borders would also encourage the resumption of several other serious crime related activities including trafficking and human smuggling. Infection rates could continue to rise resulting in a collapse of the parallel healthcare system if left unchecked.

### **Terror & Radical Threat Environment**

The level of threat emanating from the Terror Environment remained at medium for the majority of the year. While COVID-19 dominated concerns for the majority of citizens, there were pockets of citizens who remained motivated to commit terror-related activities. There was a noticeable increase in bomb scares and two occasions where crudely made incendiary devices were detonated or planted in public spaces. There remains no intelligence to confirm whether these non-state actors are terror or politically motivated.

### Foreign Terrorist Fighters

There are approximately 130 local foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) detained in Syria and Iraq camps. Conflicting numbers are always forthcoming, given the restricted flow of information from these areas. This is expected to occupy the intelligence and immigration authorities especially, given the legislative amendments which may allow for mass-repatriation. In 2021, the majority of the State apparatus remained focus on the COVID-19 pandemic, so there was little to no emphasis on this issue.

Given the decision made by the Court in 2021, local sympathisers - inclusive of local, radicalised actors who advocate and legally challenge the State - could eventually become more disenchanted and hostile towards the state.

Terror actors remain a serious threat to Trinidad and Tobago as they aim to spread radicalized philosophies through moral panic, and recruit otherwise disenchanted and easily susceptible persons. The recruitment of persons who exit or enter the prison system, illegal immigrants and others who are offspring of historically radical families, remain an ever-present threat. The availability and unbridled use of illegal firearms and ammunition are issues that can also provide fertile ground for engaged threat actors.

In conclusion, while the terror threat decreased, there are several persons who remain radicalised but possibly disillusioned. This combination relates to the decimation and non-fulfilment of the ISIS agenda globally and the further compromise of the Al Qaeda and other terror groups. There remain several persons of radical leaning, who are either incarcerated or affiliated to incarcerated persons, and are motivated to attack the prison facilities, as well as other elements and persons attached to the National Security Apparatus.

### **Trafficking - Smuggling (Narcotics, Arms & Ammunition; Humans)**

The threat attached to Trafficking activities were medium for 2021. The closure of aviation borders affected the free movement of persons to and from the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. The (current) prolonged socio-political reality of Venezuela continued to allow for the movement of narcotics, humans, contraband items and livestock to and from Trinidad and Tobago. Despite the decriminalisation of marijuana locally, there remained a high demand for product originating in Venezuela, Colombia, St Vincent and Grenada.

The North-American countries proved to be the primary source for Firearms and Ammunition entering Trinidad and Tobago. Frequent arms and ammunition shipments concealed in barrels, furniture, building materials and electronic appliances, arrived in Trinidad and Tobago via sky boxes or personal shipments. Intelligence suggests that there is some level of complicity by some Customs Officials, Brokers and other Port facilitators, who assist in the movement of these contraband items to Trinidad and Tobago. Further, there are several locals who reside permanently in the USA and Canada who facilitate this

movement from these source countries. This movement continues to be one of the most potent threats to peace and quality of life in Trinidad and Tobago.

This milieu is further exacerbated by the reality in Venezuela, which also allows for the diversion of firearms from corrupt Venezuelan Law Enforcement and traffickers, who sell firearms to those residing in coastal communities and traffic additionally, in both people and narcotics. There are emergent trends whereby Venezuelans now residing in Trinidad and Tobago play a more active role brokering deals for local traffickers. The involvement by Venezuelans in the local trafficking landscape is also reflected in the crime statistics as more Latin Americans are becoming victims of more violent crimes.

As long as the political impasse continues in Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago may continue experiencing mass illegal migratory activities and more trafficking in 2022.

### **Criminal Gangs**

Criminal gangs continue to be considered a high threat within the Serious Crime environment. Despite an initial statistical forecast of four hundred and twenty-three (423) murders in 2021, there was an eventual increase by thirteen (13%) percent in the last two months of the State of Emergency (SoE). The SoE, which limited public congregation and reduced movement with the implementation of a nationwide curfew, severely impacted gang activity and restricted their revenue stream. Notorious offenders were limited from targeting rivals in other police station districts. Retaliatory killings moved from public spaces to home/localised community spaces. This eventually changed with the eventual cessation of the SoE. There was a noticeable shift in leadership as several notorious gang leaders were either eliminated by gang rivals or remain incarcerated for prolonged periods. Newer, younger, more violent leaders are emerging and existing gangs are disaggregating with an accompanying level of animosity towards each other.

The changing gang landscape reflects the movement away from inter-generational criminality resulting in the lack of loyalty by these newer gang members. These occurrences coupled with the branding and association with conflicting music styles and artistes also encourage

the ensuing violence. There is now a more sporadic spread of violence throughout non “hot spot” areas in Trinidad and Tobago.

This spread is also accompanied by the spread of graffiti which is also becoming a problem in several state funded housing programs. This is anticipated to put further strain on the already limited national security resources as gang-splintering, particularly in hot spot communities, is expected to result in the emergence of new gangs, new symbols and an increased social media presence. These newer gangs are anticipated to be more volatile as they try to establish themselves resulting in an increase in murders, injuries, shootings and other violent crimes.

While conflicts associated with State funded projects and contracts ensue, there are ventures upon which criminal gangs have sought to capitalise. These include but are not limited to illegal quarrying, fraud-scheming, money-laundering, black-market sale and resale of US currency, copper theft, party and events promotion, organised robbery, motor vehicle larceny, marijuana trafficking, counterfeiting, human smuggling and illegal gambling.

This thrust by criminal gangs to engage in poly-criminality to maintain a constant revenue stream, is an integral issue that requires the State to also be multifaceted in its approach to dismantle the existing and emerging criminal gangs.

## **Conclusion**

In 2021, there was an initial decrease in serious crimes including murders, robberies and other property-related crimes. This was mainly motivated by the State-mandated reduction in movement and congregation. The SoE ended in November 2021 and since that time there was a sharp increase in criminal activity throughout the country. Criminal gangs and other illegal actors have aggressively sought to negate the loss in income for the period. Narcotic trafficking alone, has proven unable to finance criminal groups and the reduction in State contracts has also exacerbated the situation.

Monetary and profit-motivated crimes remain at the fore by most criminal actors. Kidnapping-for-ransom, extortion, burglary and other property based crimes for non-traceable items are expected to persist.

The continued arrival of illegal weapons and ammunition and the compromised integrity of several state employees including Police, Customs, Coast Guard, Prison Officers are signs that the state agencies themselves could eventually become compromised.

The slow pace of the judicial system and the prolonged nature of proceedings also exacerbate the situation, affecting quality of life and rule of law.

The majority of medium threat ratings coupled with the decline in economic activity throughout the country could inspire new forms of criminality based on survival.

These issues provide the foundation and negative outlook for the threat environment in 2022. The inability of the State security machinery to deal with these localised threats coupled with the cumulative external pressures, including the Venezuelan socio-political reality, the lack of controls that limit diversion of firearms and ammunition from the North American countries and the demand for cocaine, allow for the unfettered use of violence and money laundering activities.

The local terror threat though dormant, may see a resurgence as these actors may be galvanized by the various community leaders, possible rFTF repatriations and the perception that the State is slow to recognise them and their concerns.

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# Corporate Services Report

## CORPORATE SERVICES

Almost the circulatory system of the Agency body, the Corporate Services Division ensures the Agency fulfils its mandate as captured in the SSA act, to “*Employ staff as it considers necessary for the due performance of its duties and functions; provide for the remuneration and other terms and conditions of their employment; exercise disciplinary control over or terminate the appointment of persons employed under this section; establish procedures relative to the presentation, consideration and adjudication of grievances of employees; and ensure every employee swears to the Oath of Allegiance*”

Organisational management of the Agency’s human resources is captured in this portfolio – employees are recruited, oriented, paid, resourced, trained and educated. Comprising HR, Administration, Training and Library, this division ensures the increased effectiveness of the assets and efficiency of the employee.

### ADMINISTRATION

The Administration Department is focused on delivering effective administrative support to the Agency, guided by relevant legislation, regulations and policies of the Ministry of National Security and the SSA. This department provides administrative advice and support in the areas of facilities management, security management, procurement and is effectively supported by an IT management infrastructure which implements significant security and efficiency upgrades. Another of its essential areas is of course Finance and Accounts. According to the SSA Act Section 10 (1) and (2):

- The Agency shall keep proper accounts and records of the transactions and affairs of the Agency and shall do all things necessary to ensure that all payments out of the moneys of the Agency are correctly made and properly authorised and that adequate control is maintained over the assets of, or in the custody of, the Agency and the incurring of liability by the Agency.
- The Agency shall submit a financial statement in respect of a financial year to the Minister no later than three months after the close of the financial year.

The following report is the Strategic Services Agency's financial statement with respect to the financial year 2021.

### FINANCE AND ACCOUNTS

The Finance and Accounts Department is responsible for the management of the Agency's financial resources on behalf of the Director, particularly in relation to the payment of salaries, allowances, goods and services. The Department is also actively involved in the monitoring, control and implementation of accounting systems. This is carried out in accordance with the laws, regulations, policies and guidelines of the government through the Ministry of National Security, Ministry of Finance and other Ministries/Departments as required.

Included is assisting in budget planning and management, efficiently effecting payment for goods and services procured for or on behalf of the Agency and ensuring accountability/fidelity in all financial transactions. as a result, focus is placed on ensuring that the policies and systems that govern the Department's activities support timely work-flows, approvals and administrative processes taking into consideration the needs of all cost centres as approved by the Director.

The Finance and Accounts department pursuant to the Agency's strategic plan (2018-2023) remains focused on delivery of two Strategic Plan Key Results Areas (KRAs). These are KRA 2- Achieving Operational Excellence and KRA 3 – Building Organisational Capacity.

For 2021 the Department continued to pursue the strengthening of its internal processes, budget prioritization of key operational expenditure and adjustments to the Agency's expenditure profile to meet expenditure requirements in response to new Covid-19 health protocols as established by the Ministry of Health.

The challenges of the pandemic initiated a review of the delivery approach for strategic objectives of the corporate services division by way of a revised 2021 wider Agency work plan. to this end, the Department focused on four priorities:

- I. Administration and management of wire transfer payments with the MNS
- II. Strengthening Covid-19 response - facility maintenance and health and safety expenditure

- III. Stakeholder prioritization for managing core business continuity
- IV. strengthening Internal control processes

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The SSA received a total of **\$163,403,531.86 TTD** from the Ministry of National Security and grant funding of \$320,507.33 from the Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat during 2021, representing approximately 7% decrease in income from 2020. Total expenditure in 2021 decreased by just over 11% from 2020, primarily due to reduction in monthly subventions and increases in wire transfer commitments. This is reflected in the expenditure for **Goods and Services**, which decreased from **\$82,475,165.00 TTD** in 2020 to **\$66,339,075.51 TTD** in 2021.

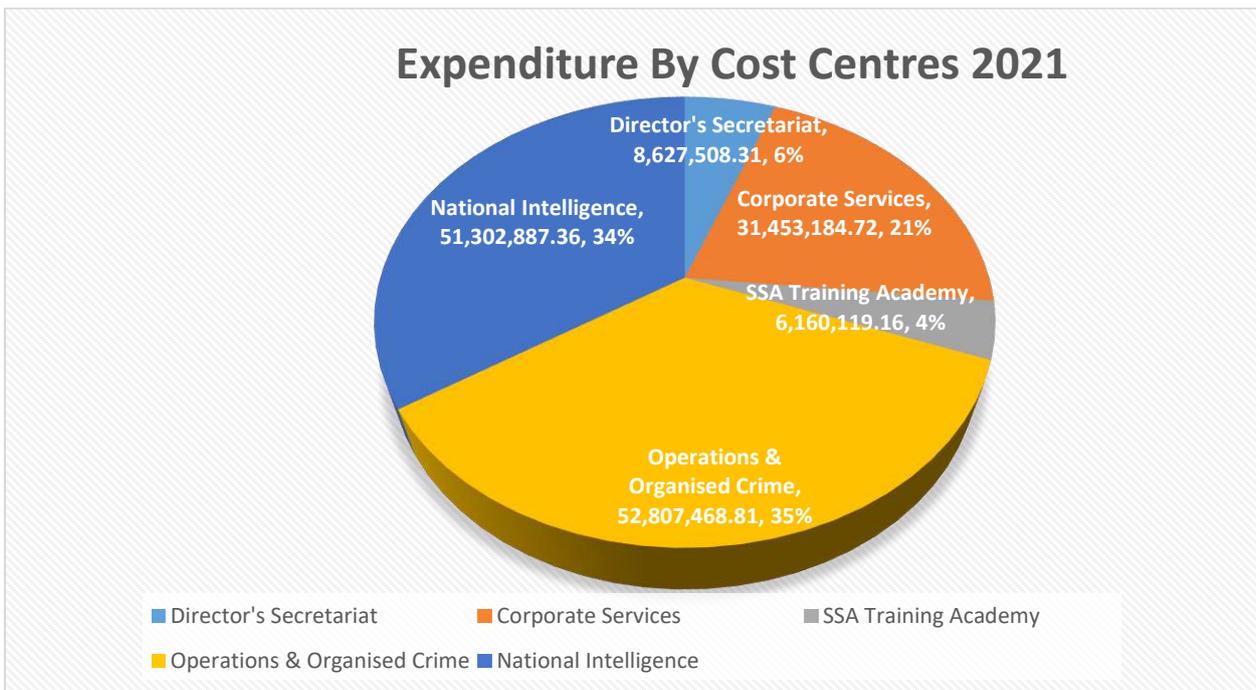
Personnel expenditure saw a slight increase from \$67,789,067.00 **TTD** in 2020 to \$77,865,216.31 **TTD** in 2021. When considering all payments (salary, allowances and gratuity) made to all staff, there was also a decrease of approximately 4% from 2020 to 2021. Notwithstanding a reduction in the total expenditure for salary, allowances and gratuity<sup>14</sup> for 2021 there was an increase in personnel expenditure which was on account of the payment of outstanding approved arrears of salary to Staff. Moreover, based on the existing staff vacancies there may be a need to seek increases in personnel expenditure to fill critical existing vacancies in the upcoming year based on approval of the new revised structure.

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<sup>14</sup> Notwithstanding, expenditure in this regard has somewhat stabilised based on the rationalisation of a revised organisational structure and payments of gratuities in fulfilment of employment

**TABLE 1: INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2021**

INCOME	TT\$
Subvention from the Ministry of National Security	150,640,859.07
Wire transfer payments	12,762,672.79
Recovery of Over-payments	184,499.55
Grant Funding (Arms Trade Treaty Secretariat)	320,507.33
<b>TOTAL INCOME FOR THE PERIOD</b>	<b>163,908,538.74</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE PERIOD</b>	<b>150,351,168.36</b>
<i><b>Including:</b></i>	
Contract Staff (Personnel Expenditure)–Salaries and Allowances	77,865,216.31
Goods & Services	66,339,075.51
Minor Equipment	1,934,067.88
Gratuities	4,212,808.66



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Operational expenditure within the Operations and Organised Crime Cost Centre represented 35% of all major expenditure for 2021. Moreover, expenditure remitted to National Intelligence was slightly less at 34%. These represented a reduction of approximately 15% and 7% less respectively than 2020. The combined expenditure of \$104,110,356.17 TTD of these two Cost Centres represented operational expenditure aimed at strengthening the Agency’s Cyber Crime and technological intelligence capability for 2021. Additionally, funds were remitted to meet existing contract commitments to foreign intelligences technology partners.

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

At the Agency, the role of the HR Department is to provide human resource planning, human resource development and ensure sound employee relations through the provision of a rigorous recruitment and orientation procedure, compensation research and application, health and safety procedures, employee development, assistance and rewards, sound grievance and disciplinary procedures, and proper Industrial Relations practices.

In relation to the Strategic direction of the Agency, the Human Resources Department, in 2021, focused on developing the Agency’s research capability; building and developing the Agency’s technological infrastructure and fortifying a culture of teamwork and performance, even as recruitment, orientation, employee support and on-boarding continued.

Over this period, developing needs required a revisit to parts of the Agency’s structure. They were revised and compensation packages developed.

From January to December 2021 the department recruited seventy-eight persons during the covid-19 pandemic, completed the orientation of 28 persons, trained managers and supervisors on performance management. (see figure below)

RECRUITMENT		SEPARATED			SECONDMENT	
78		18				
RENEWALS	NEW STAFF	VOLUNTARY RESIGNATION	NON-RENEWAL OF CONTRACT	OF	FROM THE SSA	TO THE SSA
62	16	4	14		0	2

FIGURE 3 – HR RECRUITMENT

#### COVID-19 CARE

The destructive socio-cultural impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was felt throughout the entire country. In anticipating the adverse fallout, the Human Resources department organised Psycho-social awareness training with our Employee Assistance Programme providers, who hosted eight (8) seminars with one hundred and ninety-nine employees.

The department also provided in-agency covid-19 tracking for the ministry of health and sanitization of Agency buildings, along with the relevant and current Covid-19 communications and provision of employee Covid-19 care packages. Action plans were developed from risk assessment for facilities, as well as Covid-19 monitoring tools, and the refurbishment of Agency sickbays and first aid rooms.

Although dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic was the primary objective of the OSH team, they also took the time to train staff in the following areas - First Aid Training (Certified and Awareness Training), Fire Warden Training; General awareness of Occupational Safety and Health in the workplace.

## LEGAL REPORT:

### Significant Legal Matters impacting on SSA's Business

Under the Strategic Services Agency Act (4), the Director shall be (a) responsible for the operational, investigative and administrative control of the Agency and (c) be the principal adviser to the Minister on matters relating to this Act.

To achieve this with excellence, the Director must have, not only a sound operational perspective from the intelligence experts on his team, but this must be balanced by solid legal advice. To whom much is given, much is expected and with the power granted to the Agency comes greater responsibility. Our team of legal experts ensure that we conduct our activities in accordance with the Laws of the Republic, and consistently with the mission and vision of the Strategic Services Agency.

As they advise the Director on the various issues and concerns facing the Agency, both internally and externally, they also represent the Agency's interest in all litigation brought before various tribunals and courts. The Legal team advocates for and assists in the drafting of legislation to advance the Agency's strategic objectives – which redounds to the security of the country and the benefit of the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2021, in addition to training relevant departments on specific legislation and legal obligations, this team also provided advice to the Agency as it pertained to international and treaty obligations.

In striving to further the Agency's strategic goals by protecting and preserving the administrative, investigative and operational integrity and reputation of the Agency, the legal team ensured that all service providers were bound by accurate and robust agreements. They also ably represented the Agency at all litigation-civil lawsuits and industrial relations disputes.

In the table below (FIGURE 4) this is explained.

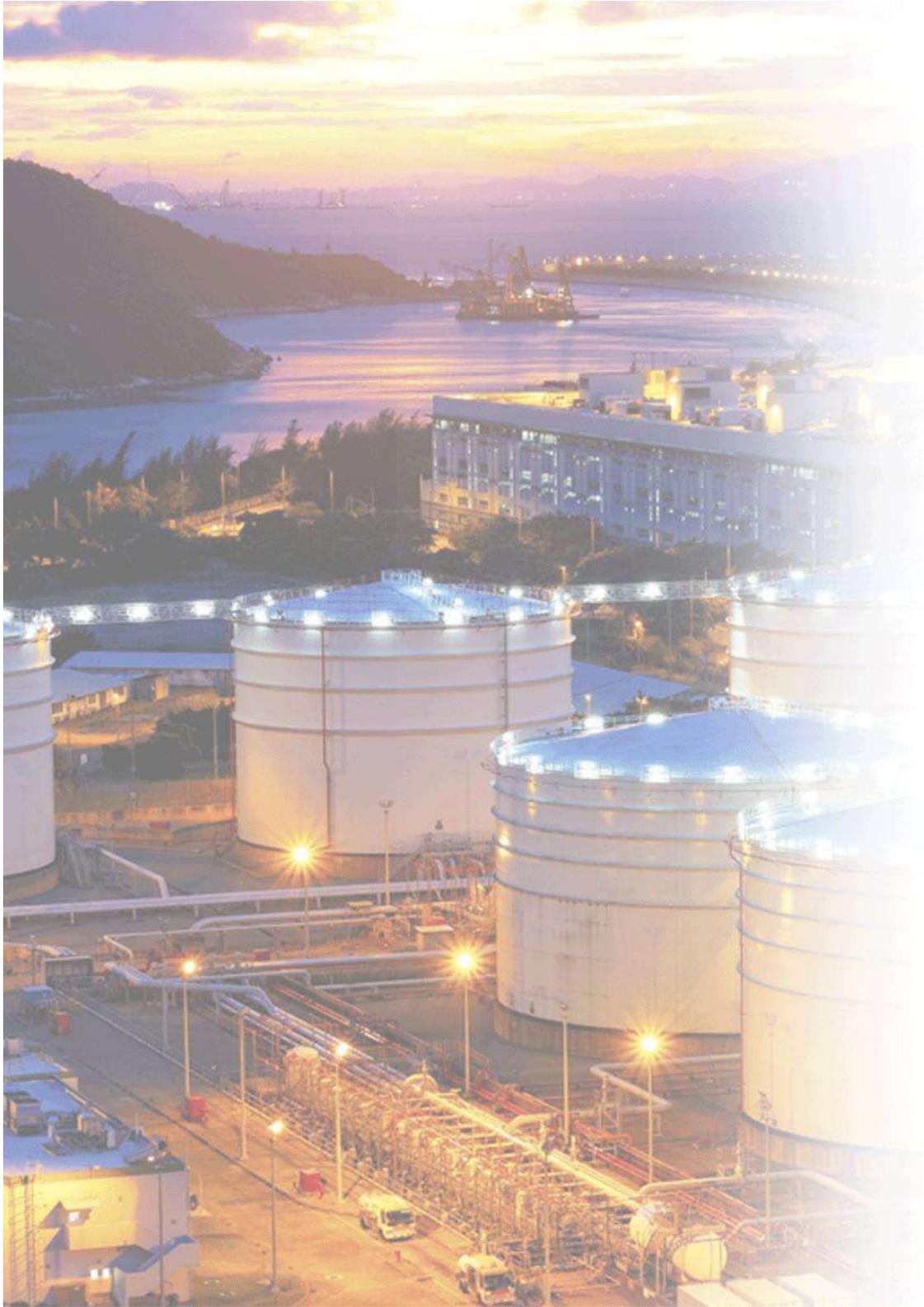
SUPREME COURT MATTERS	PRIVY COUNCIL MATTERS	INDUSTRIAL COURT MATTERS	MINISTRY OF LABOUR MATTERS
FOUR (4)	TWO (2)	ELEVEN (11)	ELEVEN (11)

**FIGURE 4 – AGENCY LEGAL MATTERS**

**Covid -19**

Of course the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the department both negatively and positively. It became more time-consuming to provide the relevant training to staff, but more importantly it was the catalyst for creativity to manage staff, processes and for delivering services.

The legal department provided yeoman’s service to the Agency through these very trying and VUCA times. They lived the core values of the Agency, but especially these three- service, integrity and partnership.



# Operational Report

## OPERATIONS AND ORGANISED CRIME

Comprising primarily of the Fusion Centre, Investigations (INVESSA), Knowledge Management and other departments, the division's role is to coordinate and execute all operations on behalf of the Agency and coordinate operations with external agencies as directed; to liaise with and establish relationships with external stakeholders and to be the repository of information for the Agency.

The Division's focus is oriented towards achieving the objectives of the strategic plan through the accomplishment of the four priority key result areas, namely:

- Detect and Prevent Serious Crime
- Achieve Operational Excellence
- Build Organizational Capacity
- Create Social Value

This is achieved through the operationalising of intelligence generated by the Agency, through partnerships with both internal and external stakeholders and the deployment of internal and external resources. Partners with such creativity and ingenuity as the National Operations Fusion Centre and National Intelligence Fusion Centre bolstered the capacity of the Agency adding further to the value chain, and by extension, to multi-agency operations.

In 2021, the division established new and reinforced existing relationships (especially with external stakeholders) in order to synchronise methodologies and share information, to ensure that operations when executed, had an increased chance of success. As a repository of the Agency's knowledge, and conduit for information from external sources back to the Agency, the Agency's database and resource pool steadily increased.

The division - also considered the Agency's public engagement unit, as it has the most interaction with the society in general - ensures the Agency is poised to garner public goodwill thus improving the citizens' confidence in the nation's executive to secure and safeguard them. These activities and successes were all linked to the prime objectives of the strategic plan and the division's key result areas.

### COVID -19

The Covid-19 has remained an enigma which does not appear to be abating anytime soon. There, however, has been a positive impact of the pandemic on our activities. It has allowed us to be more

creative. It will be the culture of the division going forward, to constantly seek new methodologies and processes, and always remain a step ahead to better deliver on its mandate. The division has fully embraced the opening afforded and is now better positioned to respond effectively, anytime circumstances demand.

### **THE SSA FUSION CENTRE (SSA FC)**

The SSAFC is an All Threats/All Hazards Fusion Centre with responsibility for the coordination of operations and the monitoring of incidents and events of significance to National Security and Safety. The SSAFC provides stakeholders with situational awareness, and the national leadership with the necessary information to assist them in making the most appropriate choices, by delivering a Common Operating Picture (COP), which gives an overview of issues of National, Regional and International significance for decision making occurring within any 24 Hour period. The SSAFC also provides support for matters of national urgency, national events, and disasters and to different agencies in operational planning, strategies and interventions to suppress criminal activities.

In 2021, over 150 requests were received from law enforcement. Requests also were made from Trinidad and Tobago Prisons Services and other National Security entities. The Office of Disaster Preparedness and Management (ODPM) solicited the SSAFC to create dashboards to reflect real-time damage reports of natural and manmade disasters. TTDF Liaisons assigned to the SSAFC provided situational awareness of TTDF Mobile and Foot Patrols among other operations.

The Fusion Centre also facilitates communication between the Agency and the public. Communication being essential to the success of any endeavour, in 2021, the FC launched the Agency's Media Centre, which is available for all of the users/partners of the centre. In an emergency, we are here to provide all aspects of support to our key stakeholders.

### **INVESSA – THE INVESTIGATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE SSA**

Invessa has a multifaceted role. It is a major overt representative of the Agency, the liaison department to the TTTPS, to provide assistance in linking intelligence to evidence and to support the Agency in its collection of intelligence and other data.

Some of its functions include the initiation of investigations based on criminal conduct and some may progress into the building of standardised packages for medium to long term complex investigations. Invessa's investigative function has and can be completed independently of stakeholders or as a joint investigation and can include both conventional

and unconventional investigative actions. Invesa also works with the Fusion Centre to obtain possible information relative to any matter receiving attention and also provides the Agency with situational reports to guide Law Enforcement and others.

The Department is an overtly deployable asset and functions both openly and covertly to collect data, information and intelligence to support the Agency’s requirements.

2021 successes include in Figure 5:

CALLS CLEARED	EVIDENTIAL WARRANTS	IOC REQUESTS	RFIS	INTELLIGENCE REPORTS GENERATED	INVESSA INITIATED ACTIONS	EVIDENTIAL ACTIONS
28,551	60	5	133	119	98	126
<b>73 INTEL REPORTS YIELDED</b>						
12 persons arrested and charged	8.23 kilograms of marijuana seized.	8 firearm seized	1,679 rounds of ammunition seized	18 threat to life / robberies disrupted	recovery of kidnap victim	

FIGURE 5 REPORTS

The strength of the Operations and Organised Crime Division can be found in its well-trained staff and rigorous systems. As an enterprise, it is undergirded by a complex grid of expertly supervised data, knowledge, and ever-expanding geo-spatial information, ensuring, at the forefront of every decision, the rights of our citizens.

**NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

The work of the Agency centres on this Division - National Intelligence - how it sources intelligence - whether open (OSINT) or through the other devices, for example HUMINT (human intelligence) - its analysis, and its distribution of this intelligence, especially to external stakeholders.

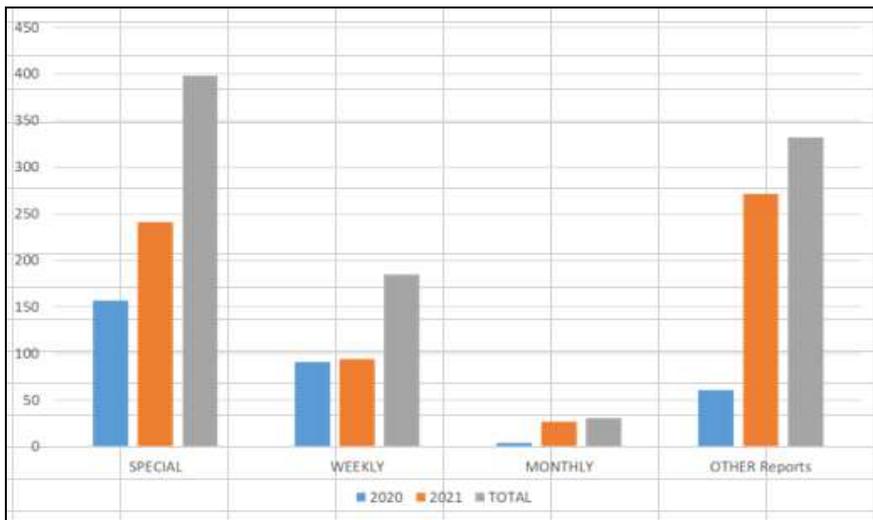
As part of its mandate, the SSA, in its eponymous Act 15:06, must “*Develop strategic intelligence and make recommendations to Government on the formation of policies in relation to serious crime; prepare crime prevention strategies and stimulate action towards and monitor the implementation of the agreed strategies*”, among other objectives. In fulfilling this, strategic initiatives were identified and developed for the National Intelligence division, the most important being:

- The Detection and Prevention of Serious Crime, wherein the division sought to
  - Continually improve intelligence products and services
  - Advance research on serious crime
  - Enhance information sharing networks
- Achieve Operational Excellence
  - Strengthen current and attract new Alliances and Partnerships
  - Continually develop and upgrade work processes and practices

Over the past year, this has been achieved through deepening relationships internally and externally, refining intelligence-related procedures and filling identified gaps administratively and operationally to achieve an increase in the following (see Figure 6 and chart below):

REPORTS/YR	2020	2021	TOTAL	% INCREASE
SPECIAL	157	241	398	53
WEEKLY	91	94	185	3.3
MONTHLY	4	27	31	575
OTHER Reports	61	271	332	442
PRESENTATIONS	199	266	465	67.7
ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE	96	117	213	21.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>1016</b>	<b>1624</b>	

FIGURE 6 REPORTS



**REPORT CHART YRS 20/21**

In 2021, there was a significant growth in the number of products distributed, over the year 2020. These were disseminated to Law Enforcement and other key stakeholders such as the Defence Force, the Immigration Division. Over the two-year period (covering 2020, 2021) the calibre of the reports have also improved. These reports include special, weekly; presentations; and actionable reports.

Actionable reports are significant as they can be acted upon immediately by the police/receiving bodies. Immediate steps can be taken to avert or nullify a threat. No case building or analysis is necessary. The stakeholder (TTPS, Immigration, Defence Force et al) can act solely based on what is provided.

Other accomplishments included the following, with the Division providing intelligence support to the TTPS and the TTDF, aiding in the successful resolution of arrests, drug seizures, murders, threats to lives and kidnappings among other activities (Figure 7):

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT	ICAP QUANTITIES
Persons Arrested (Narcotics)	12
Marijuana Seized (lbs)	840.84
Persons Arrested- Murder/Threat To Life	2
Persons Arrested (Firearms)	15
Firearms Seized	9
Ammunition Seized	1809
Firearm Components Seized	31

LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT	ICAP QUANTITIES
Kidnapped Hostages Recovered	1
Threat to Life Averted	16

FIGURE 7

RESEARCH AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Strategic Services and the Centre for Applied Research and Caribbean Intelligence Studies (CARCIS), the research arms of National Intelligence, based on Section 6 (1) of the Act is responsible for developing strategic intelligence and making recommendations to the Government on the formation of policies in relation to serious crime. They are also accountable for the preparation of crime prevention strategies and stimulate action toward and monitor the implementation of the agreed strategies. Among other obligations, they must identify new trends in, and patterns of criminal activities.

In the period under review, in excess of twenty-five (25) strategic alerts and thirteen (13) Strategic intelligence products were disseminated, in addition to nine (9) special reports, five (5) alerts and twenty-nine (29) strategic assessments. All done with the aim of fulfilling our mandate to secure the people and assets of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

Collaboration is another aspect of the research being done by the National Intelligence Division. In 2021 the Department hosted an international Counter Terrorism conference “Counter Terrorism and the PVE in the Caribbean” PVE being the Prevention of Violent Extremism. A combination of local and international law enforcement, legal and intelligence expertise were in attendance. In addition to presentations by the Agency, expertise was also provided by the:

- TTPS – Special Branch

Topic: “Evidence Gathering for Prosecution, and Tools and Tactics utilised by Law Enforcement Locally”.

Presenter: Mr. Allister Nurse

- The Office of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

Topic: “Protecting the Financial System and National Security - The AML/CFT Regime”

Presenter: Casandra Seetahal

- The Commonwealth Secretariat

CONFIDENTIAL

Topic: “The Role of Civil Society in C/PVE”

Presenter: Mark Albon

Topic: “Managing the Reintegration of Extremists and their families”

Presenter: Assan Ali

The conference, opened by the Minister of National Security, the Honourable Fitzgerald Hinds, sought bring the views of the various arms of security together to create a collaborative and learning environment, where the exchange of ideas, expertise and experience would help to develop stronger relationships and more creative solutions to the issues surrounding terrorism which are facing us locally, regionally and internationally.

## EXTERNAL SCRUTINY

In the SSA Amendment Act 2016, Chap. 15:06, the oversight of the work of the Strategic Service Agency is essential to the maintenance of law and order in a democratic society. Where we have been entrusted with taxpayers' resources, we must be exemplary in our approach to our work. We who have taken the oath of office, are expected not to violate the trust of the nation. Hence our support for external scrutiny.

Sections 10 and 13 speak to properly accounting for the funds of the Agency, with the requisite Auditor General's inspections and, the completion and submission of an annual report on the activities of the Agency to Parliament, respectively. This 2021 Annual Report is complete.

Another important leg in the SSA's pyramid of supervision is the *in camera* Joint Select Committee requirement. At this Joint Select Committee, pertinent questions about the administration and policy advice of the Agency can be asked of representatives. Although the Covid-19 pandemic did not allow for such meetings in 2021, we are prepared.

### THE SSA'S OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

*I, ..... do swear and declare that I will honestly and faithfully serve and fulfil the duties that devolve upon me by reason of my employment in the Strategic Services Agency, and that I will not divulge any information being facts or expressions of opinions based on such facts gained by me as a result of my employment to any unauthorised person, orally or in writing, without the previous sanction of the Director. I understand that these provisions apply not only during the period of my employment but also after my employment with the Agency has ceased.*

## 2022 STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES

In 2022, the SSA will continue to discharge its functions in line with its statutory mandate and guided by the Strategic Plan 2019-2023. Monitoring and evaluation, team building and increased collaborations will be the theme of the Agency for 2022.

The Agency will continue to identify opportunities for collaboration and cooperation to reduce and disrupt serious crime. We shall work with partners to improve mechanisms for the capture and analysis of information to enhance our products and build the capacity to address present and emerging threats.

The SSA will take advantage of technological solutions improve systems to manage data, conduct risk/vulnerability assessments and develop viable counter-terrorism / crime plans and strategies. The primary objectives for 2022 will be to continue to deliver on the following:

### Detection and Prevention of Serious Crime

- Continually improve intelligence products and services
- Continually improve training products and services
- Advance research on serious crime
- Enhance information sharing networks
- Strengthen Public Education and Outreach

By Achieving Operational Excellence: Strengthening our current, and attracting new alliances and partnerships; Optimising the Agency's technology infrastructure and facilities; Continually developing and upgrading work processes and practices

Building Organisational Capacity by Growing our People; Completing the Organizational Transformation; Fortifying the desired culture of fraternity and performance

And Continuing the Creation of Social and Economic Value by establishing a return on investment in the delivery of national Intelligence products and services.

There is much work to be done as we approach the new strategic cycle beginning 2023.

THE STRATEGIC SERVICES AGENCY'S AUTHORITY

According to The Strategic Services Agency Act, Chapter 15:06 3. (1) The Strategic Services Agency was established, and consists of the Director and employees of the Agency.

Maj. Roger Best was appointed and given a three-year contract as Director of the Agency in July 2019. He is responsible for the operational, investigative and administrative control of the Agency; and is the principle advisor to the Minister on matters related to the Act.

-End-