

**Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025**

**Address by the Hon. Colm Imbert, MP, Minister of Finance**

**on the**

**Commissioning of Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) Mobile Scanners**

**at the Port of Port of Spain, Trinidad**

My Cabinet colleagues, the honourable Minister of Works and Transport and honourable Minister of National Security, representatives from the Ministry of Finance and the Customs and Excise Division, Port Authority officials, members of the private sector, distinguished guests, members of the media,

**Good morning.**

It is my distinct honour to stand before you today at this landmark event—the commissioning of state-of-the-art Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) scanners at the Port of Port of Spain. This event confirms the Government’s commitment to strengthening national security, enhancing trade facilitation, and ensuring efficiency in our port operations.

With more than 300,000 containers passing through the Port of Port-of-Spain, the smuggling of illegal items is a significant National Security concern. In response, the Government has taken a proactive approach by acquiring specialized equipment in accordance with the highest international standards to combat this threat.

The procurement process for these new Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) systems to strengthen the Customs & Excise Division’s border security operations began in 2023. This entailed a comprehensive assessment of the required specifications and design of the request for proposals, followed by a rigorous evaluation of proposals from prospective suppliers as well as overseas site visits to assess this highly rated inspection equipment in actual operation at international commercial ports.

Following this process, in 2024, the Ministry of Finance, contracted Sectus Technologies Incorporated, of Canada to supply, deliver, install and commission four

(4) Large Scale Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) High/Medium Energy Mobile X-Ray Scanners for the Customs & Excise Division (CED).

These scanners were assembled in Paris, France by Smiths Detection Group and purchased at a cost of US \$12.9 million (TT\$87 million). The scanners were shipped to Trinidad late last year after thorough on-site examination by officials of the Customs and Excise Division, following which officers of the Customs and Excise Division were successfully trained and authorized to function as operators.

Two of these large-scale non-intrusive inspection high/medium energy mobile X-ray scanners will be deployed at the Port of the Port of Spain, and two will be deployed at the Port of Point Lisas, further strengthening the nation's border security capabilities.

### **Enhancing Border Security and Trade Facilitation**

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, the security of our borders and efficiency of our ports are paramount to economic growth and national safety. The introduction of NII technology represents a significant step forward in our efforts to modernize and streamline cargo inspections while maintaining the highest security standards. By utilizing X-ray and gamma-ray imaging, the NII scanners provide a non-invasive yet highly detailed view of container contents, allowing for the rapid identification of potential threats without the need for manual inspections, thus equipping our border security teams with cutting-edge tools to detect and deter illicit activities, such as smuggling of contraband, weapons, and narcotics.

### **Improved Efficiency and Cost Savings**

In addition to national security, trade facilitation, improved efficiency, cost savings, and enhanced revenue collection are primary considerations for the Ministry of Finance, and these scanners will transform the way cargo is processed at our container ports. By reducing the need for time-consuming physical inspections, we will significantly minimize delays in cargo clearance, ensure a smoother flow of goods, and reduce bottlenecks that impact business operations.

Moreover, this technology will lead to substantial cost savings by reducing reliance on time-consuming manual inspection. This means a more competitive and business-friendly environment, which will enhance our country's appeal as a trade and logistics hub in the Caribbean region. By automating container inspection, we also expect to reap enhanced revenue from the operationalization of these scanners.

### **Choosing the Smiths Detection HCVM L – A Leading NII Solution**

The Smiths Detection HCVM L scanners (Smiths Heimann Cargo Vision Mobile scanners) which we are commissioning today, are state-of-the-art mobile container scanners that offer high-resolution imaging, real-time analysis, and flexible deployment capabilities. Their advanced imaging system allows for the detection of even the smallest anomalies, ensuring that no illicit items remain unnoticed. Its X-ray screening system is designed for ease of operation and can scan up to 25 container trucks per hour in the mobile scanning mode and up to 100 trucks per hour in the pass-through mode. It can penetrate steel up to 300mm or 12 in, with visual technology for organic or inorganic material, with a number of scanning modes and adjustable scanning heights and angles

The scanners will also positively impact the revenue of the country by supporting the Customs and Excise Division's ability to accurately identify cargo content and ensure proper classification based on value and quantity.

One of the key advantages of this scanner is its mobility, which allows it to be deployed at various locations, as needed. It can move from location to location and be ready for scanning within 30 minutes of arrival at a location. This flexibility enhances its effectiveness not only at ports but also at other critical inspection points. Furthermore, its user-friendly interface ensures the ease of operation for customs and border security personnel.

### **Global Best Practices and Local Implementation**

The implementation of NII scanners has proven successful in major trade hubs worldwide, including the Port of Rotterdam, the U.S.–Mexico border, Dubai

International Airport, and the Port of Marseilles, where it facilitated the largest cocaine seizure ever recorded at that location. Similarly, in Brazil, the Itapoa Port has utilized this technology to effectively detect illegal substances and contraband in import/export cargo.

### **Future Advancements and Integration**

As we look to the future, advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automated container handling will further enhance the effectiveness of NII technology. AI-powered image analysis will improve threat detection accuracy, while real-time data sharing and system integration will bolster intelligence efforts. These innovations will allow for even greater efficiency in securing our trade channels and ensuring the safety of our citizens.

### **Commitment to Progress**

Today therefore marks a new chapter in our nation's commitment to security, efficiency, and economic growth. The commissioning of these scanners is more than just an investment in technology; it is an investment in our people, our businesses, and our future.

I wish to extend my gratitude to the dedicated teams within the Ministry of Finance, Customs and Excise Division, the Port Authority, and all stakeholders who have worked tirelessly to make this initiative a reality. Your hard work and dedication have been instrumental in strengthening our nation's ability to facilitate legitimate trade, while safeguarding against illicit activities.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to collaborating with all stakeholders to ensure that the nation's borders are well protected. We will continue to monitor global advancements in technology with the aim of enhancing support for the Customs and Excise Division. We are also mindful that this support will extend to the Trinidad and Tobago Revenue Authority, which will absorb the primary functions of the Customs and Excise Division and Inland Revenue Division.

Additionally, the Ministry of Finance collaborated with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the necessary health and safety protocols associated with the operations of the

scanners were implemented. This collaboration will involve the establishment of a Radiation Safety Committee for oversight of the Standard Operating Procedures for Functional Radiation Protection Measures.

As we move forward, let us continue to embrace innovation and collaboration in our pursuit of a more secure and prosperous Trinidad and Tobago.

Thank you, and I look forward to seeing the positive impact of these scanners on our port operations and national security.