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LOCAL

## OAS hosts counter-terrorism workshop

Thursday September 07 2006

by Corliss Smithen

While the threat of terrorism may not be imminent in the Caribbean, the Organisation of American States (OAS) believes that the region should be prepared for any eventualities.

In this regard, the OAS will be hosting a five-day workshop in St. Kitts, targeting the tourism sector.

"The OAS through the Inter-American Committee against Terrorism is sponsoring this workshop, which was first proposed after high level officials met in Trinidad in 2005 and they discussed what the countries ought to be doing with respect to protecting their tourism infrastructure with emphasis on the recreational areas.

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"They decided to develop a programme that is going to be running throughout the Caribbean where we're going to train individuals in the tourism sector, security guards, middle level managers and supervisors, so that they can be alert to anything that might be suspicious in the areas where they work, whether it is an historical site, whether it is at the berthing harbour, at restaurants, at hotels, the entire tourism infrastructure so that people are trained to see anything suspicious and will be in a position to take the necessary action..." OAS Director for St. Kitts/ Nevis, Starret D. Greene told the SUN.

Greene said the training is aimed at ensuring that an industry that is so vital to the economic development of the Caribbean countries is fully protected from any potential threats.

"...Security can be breached, regardless of how hard you try but what we are hoping is that if we can train our people to be alert and to be very sensitive to the possibility of any kind of attacks...In the end, we are hoping that the organisation would have made a serious effort to begin this kind of training around the Caribbean.

"The programme has three objectives and one of them is to

strengthen the institutional capacity of the tourism and recreational services sectors in the region; limit the capacity for terrorist attacks on the tourism and recreational services centres in the region and to build visitor confidence in the security and the safety of the tourism and recreational services sector.

“Our region is a peaceful region...and if we can build confidence of the tourists that come from North America, Europe and other parts of the world, then they will continue to come, which will benefit the peoples of the region....and we will also be protecting our livelihood,” Greene explained.

Among the range of topics to be addressed are tourism facilities, tourist attraction sites, transportation, food and beverage facilities, events planning, the infrastructure, golf courses and other recreational areas.

Countries that will be participating in the seminar are Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines and host country, St. Kitts/Nevis.

Greene said the exercise involves three levels of training – the first was held in Grenada, while the third will be conducted in St. Lucia.

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