



# Ministry of Transport & Aviation

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## PRESS RELEASE

### RESPONSE TO RECENT COMMENTS ON PILOTAGE IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

We have taken careful note of the tone and the content of recent comments regarding the safety of pilotage in The Commonwealth of The Bahamas. The words have been intemperate and the allegations inaccurate.

The Bahamas as a major Maritime Administration has consistently advocated safety, security, quality and the protection of the marine environment, a fact that is borne out by the exemplary safety record of The Bahamas Flag fleet – one of the largest and most modern in the world.

**Many of the best known shipping names in the world choose to fly The Bahamas Flag on some of the most modern ships in the world. The largest passenger fleet in the world, the largest fast ferry fleet in the world, and shipowners of quality from nations around the world flag their vessels with us, because we are known as an administration that advocates and delivers quality in maritime safety and quality in service.**

**The Bahamas has played an active, proactive and productive leadership role at the International Maritime Organization (the IMO – the United Nations agency responsible for the formulation of maritime safety regulation worldwide). The Bahamas has proposed and championed major initiatives at the IMO that have benefited maritime safety in The Bahamas and around the world.**

**The Bahamas has consistently and diligently promoted, implemented and adhered to conventions and regulations promulgated at the IMO, of which The Bahamas has been a Member since 1976, and a Council Member for many years.**

**The Port Authorities Act is the principle legislation governing marine piloting in The Bahamas and Nassau in particular. The Freeport Harbour Rules and the Hawksbill Creek Agreement are the statutes which govern the operation of pilots in Freeport. The requirements and guidelines for piloting in The Bahamas are specified within these statutes.**

**It is not correct, nor is it fair, to impugn The Bahamas' remarkable overall record of safety in the maritime field. We are respected as a nation for the fact we have expended and continue to expend tremendous effort in support of maritime safety.**

**Specifically as regards pilotage in The Bahamas, our ports – whether in Freeport or Nassau - are major international destinations. Our pilots have assisted in thousands of vessels movements a year. Port calls in The Bahamas include giant tankers, container ships, and the world's largest cruise vessels. Overwhelmingly, these port movements have been carried out safely and successfully. The Bahamas takes its obligations very seriously and is an advocate for international shipping standards. While The Bahamas recognizes that any incident is one too many, necessary steps have been and continue to be taken to continue the promotion of maritime safety and the protection of the marine environment.**

**The Bahamas does not rest on the fact that our maritime record has been a very good one. The Government of The Bahamas is in constant communication with all of the stakeholders in The Bahamas maritime sector, including the parties to the current dispute between Freeport Harbour interests and their former employees, a private dispute to which the Government is not a party. We consistently promote maritime safety and safe maritime practices, and we will not rest in our insistence that**

proper standards be maintained, and that wherever essential improvements should be effected, this will be done.

We find it disappointing that the aforementioned dispute has fostered claims that have the effect of tarnishing the reputation of our country internationally. This is done much to the detriment of The Bahamas and the Bahamian people, and cannot be a productive strategy. We would urge a moderation of the dialogue, a more balanced approach, so that substantive issues can be constructively discussed and addressed.

**The Honourable Glenys Hanna Martin, MP  
Minister of Transport & Aviation**

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