

Custom Officers Fail Polygraph Tests

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The Contraband Enforcement Team (CET) reportedly struggled to find persons to staff a planned Airport Interdiction Task Force in September 2006 as many failed lie detector tests.

"(Embassy official) explained to the commissioner (of customs) that of seven CET people who were polygraphed last September (2006) only two were deemed to have passed," The United States Embassy in Kingston reported in a diplomatic cable dated March 2007 and acquired by **The Gleaner** through whistle-blowing organization WikiLeaks.

Most troubling for the US officials was the fact that a CET member acting in a relatively senior position also failed the lie-detector test, even though the director of the task force had passed a test he faced. "While (the Embassy official) said he realized that failing a polygraph did not constitute grounds for firing personnel, the commissioner should give some thought to what to do with the polygraph results," the cable stated.

The Americans also told the commissioner that they would find it difficult to work with the person acting in the senior role if he was to remain in that position.

The cable said the commissioner asked to get a copy of the polygraph results and this was promised to him with a notation beside each name as to whether they passed or failed.

"It remains to be seen, what if anything, he intends to do with the information moving CET people who fail (polygraph test) back into regular Customs will aggravate the staffing shortage in CET, which is another reason (the commissioner) needs to get off the dime and come up with a plan to attract applicants for CET positions," the cable said.

It noted that the then commissioner of customs was confident that despite the number of persons failing the lie-detector tests, he could find the six persons needed to staff the Airport Interdiction Task Force as, "four other CET personnel had passed polygraphs administered by the Canadians".

"This is true, but most occupy sensitive positions within the CET, some in Montego Bay" the cable added.

The news that most of the CET officers hand-picked for the Airport Interdiction Task Force failed lie-detector tests came weeks after the US Embassy reported that 70 per cent of the police personnel selected for that unit had also returned negative results when they did lie-detector tests.

While not stating the number of police tested the embassy had expressed concern about how the Government would staff the unit which was being established to clamp down on illegal drugs moving through the island's two international airports.