



# BORDER VOICES

Bahamas Customs Department Newsletter

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## BAHAMAS CUSTOMS HIRES 92 RECRUITS

September 2025 brought new energy to the Bahamas Customs Department as the government welcomed **92 recruits** to its training program. This intake follows the **Class of 2024**, which graduated 54 officers now serving as Trainee Customs Officers.

A notable difference between the two classes is in gender balance. While the 2024 class included only 11 males, this year's group proudly counts **50 males**, a much-needed boost to strengthen the Department's workforce.

The 2025 recruits will undergo a **comprehensive four-module training program** designed to prepare them for the diverse demands of a Customs career. This hybrid training approach combines classroom instruction with real-world experience:

- **On-the-job training** at Customs stations for up to six months
- **BahamaHost Program** training through the Ministry of Tourism to enhance customer service and professionalism
- **Specialized instruction** by the Customs Training Team on laws, regulations, and governing acts
- **Division-led lectures**, where subject matter experts present practical applications of Customs law and operational requirements
- **Training Discipline** Where they will go through physical training and basic law enforcement training the Police College.

This rigorous program ensures that each new recruit is well equipped to uphold the mission of protecting our nation's borders, facilitating trade, and serving the Bahamian people with integrity.



Staff of the Grand Bahama Customs Department celebrated the promotion of Deputy W. Kenny on October 9th with a grand brunch featuring a heartfelt performance by a local artist. The song, *"They Said I Wouldn't Make It,"* reflected on Deputy Kenny's journey from his start in 1979 to the present day. The touching moment moved many in attendance, inspiring reflections on perseverance, growth, and the hope that each officer will one day rise to achieve their own dreams.

## HIGHLIGHTED Staff



### TRAINING UNIT New Providence Island

#### SUPERINTENDENT DELLARESE HINSEY

Joining the Bahamas Customs and Excise Department in 1985, **Superintendent Hinsey** brings a remarkable blend of excellence, dedication, and longevity in service. She serves as the official correspondent between the Department and key international partners, including the **Caribbean Customs Law Enforcement Council (CCLEC)**, the **World Customs Organization (WCO)**, and other regional and global bodies.

Her nurturing and professional spirit make her ideally suited for her role as **Officer-in-Charge of Training**, where she oversees **Induction Programs**, **International Training Courses**, and the coordination of **governmental visits and official meetings** on behalf of the Department.

Superintendent Hinsey's commitment to mentorship and professional development continues to shape the next generation of Customs officers, ensuring that the Department remains a leader in customs administration and enforcement throughout the region.



**Customs/Revenue Officer I Yasmin Munnings** has proudly served with the Bahamas Customs and Excise Department since 2009. With sixteen years of dedicated service, she has brought her professionalism and steady presence to several stations, including Congo Town, in South Andros, and Entry Checking in Nassau. She is currently posted at LPIA.

Officer Munnings is known for her reliability, calm demeanor, and genuine care for those she works with. She is a proud mother of one son, Taj, and holds a special love for flowers, which reflect the warmth she brings to her work and personal life.

She is a team player and continues to serve with grace and consistency, leaving a positive mark wherever she is assigned.



**Customs/Revenue Officer II Gordon Smith** joined the Bahamas Customs and Excise Department in 2016 at just 19 years old. Since then, he has served with distinction at several stations and is currently posted on the island of Bimini.

Officer Smith is known for his thoughtful and methodical approach to his duties, along with his strong commitment to supporting colleagues both in the field and behind the scenes. His focus, professionalism, and care are evident in everything he does.

Beyond his professional role, Officer Smith has a passion for software development, viewing technology as a creative outlet to explore new ideas and innovations. Above all, he is a proud father to his son, Graycin, who remains his greatest source of motivation and purpose.

Through quiet dedication and a genuine desire to enhance the Department and those around him, Officer Smith continues to exemplify the integrity and service that define The Bahamas Customs Department.



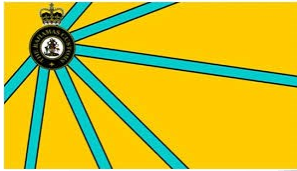
**Trainee Customs/Revenue Officer Jonathan Mackey** joined the Bahamas Customs and Excise Department in 2023, earning the distinction of **Valedictorian of his squad**. Currently stationed at Great Harbour Cay, Officer Mackey has quickly become a valued member of the team, known for his positive attitude, reliability, and strong sense of camaraderie.

Beyond his professional duties, Officer Mackey expresses his creativity and warmth through cooking, often preparing meals for his colleagues and fostering a sense of home and family within the workplace. His quiet leadership and genuine willingness to help others have made him the glue that keeps the team connected. Whether assisting with daily operations or enjoying a peaceful moment on the island's scenic beaches, Officer Mackey continues to bring balance, unity, and enthusiasm to the Customs family in Great Harbour Cay.



### LATIN AMERICAN & CARIBBEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Representing the Bahamas at the **Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference on Strategic Trade Controls of Dual-Use Items** were First Asst. Secretary Charmaine Williams, CCRO Dellareesse Young and CRO GRI Ronique Thompson who were selected not only because of their academic qualification but also for their ability to deliver further training in this area for the Country. We congratulate this team for representing The Bahamas well and we hope to hear more about what **Strategic Trade** is and how it affects us all and foreign Policies...



### Customs Symbols

The **Bahamas Customs Flag and Crest** were designed in 1989 by the Bahamas International Customs Day Committee Team. The Head Graphic Artist for that team was Coderro Edgecombe, now C/R Chief. Also on that team would have been Retire Assistant Comptrollers of Customs Alfred Stubbs (Deceased), Retired Asst. Comptroller Mark Daniels and Retired Chief Clerk Alfred Ferguson. The seven bean flag design with the Customs crest at the top left corner symbolizes that Customs authority reaching out to the outer extremes of our countries through the Seven C's being practiced by our officers. The Colors which replicates the colors of The Bahamas. A Symbol we are all proud of.



### Message From The Comptroller of Customs, Mr. Ralph Munroe LLB

Leading any organization in these times is no easy task. Yet, I count it a privilege to lead some of the most skilled, committed, and hard-working officers this nation has to offer. Every day, you stand at the front lines of border control, protecting our people, our economy, and our sovereignty. I could not be more proud.

The challenges are many. External pressures, evolving threats, and unexpected situations test us daily. But your resilience, professionalism, and determination continue to shine through. Our partnerships with the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the Royal Bahamas Police Force remain vital, and I am grateful for the spirit of cooperation that strengthens our shared mission—securing our borders and ensuring compliance. Together, we make a powerful team.

I also recognize the importance of preparing the next generation of Customs leaders. Training, personal development, and continued education are not simply checkboxes—they are the foundation for advancement and excellence. I encourage each officer not to settle for minimum entry requirements but to invest in yourselves, as the department is committed to investing in you.

Our performance has been nothing short of impressive. Revenue collections are surpassing projections. Our detection of drugs, firearms, and contraband is stronger than ever, making our borders more secure. While it would be easy for me to take credit as the leader, the truth is clear: this success belongs to you—the officers who, despite delays in promotions or benefits, remain steadfast, principled, and dedicated to the mission.

For that, I extend my deepest gratitude. Your work does not go unnoticed. You represent the Customs Department with distinction, and I am both honored and humbled to serve alongside you. Let us continue together, pressing forward with pride, integrity, and a shared vision of a safer, stronger Bahamas.





# CUSTOMS IN PARADISE:

## Behind the Scenes in Great Inagua

Ask the average Bahamian what Customs does in **Great Inagua**, and you might get a chuckle-worthy answer: *“They go there to see flamingos between salt boat checks.”* Charming as that sounds, the truth is far more exciting—and far busier.

Yes, Customs officers in Inagua interact with Morton vessels and manage bonded goods, but their daily grind stretches well beyond that. From clearing freight shipments and fuel deliveries to processing pleasure vessels and ecotourists arriving in small, sometimes whimsical aircraft to glimpse flamingos or the turquoise waters, these officers are always on the move.

And what a setting to work in! **Great Inagua’s beaches** are nothing short of breathtaking: marbled turquoise waters melting into deep blue oceans, wave-shaped sandy shores, and untouched landscapes that feel like they belong in a National Geographic special. The island is home to the **largest flamingo reserve in the region**, a thriving bird park attracting migratory visitors from as far north as Chicago, and the island’s only free-roaming wild donkey population. Thousands of pink **spoonbills** swoop gracefully over the brine ponds, hunting shrimp and wiggly mud critters, a spectacle that could make anyone pause—if only the officers had the time.

But while the scenery is spectacular, the job is relentless. Positioned at the **southern gateway of The Bahamas**, officers navigate the complex paperwork from Haitian vessels, pleasure crafts from Norway and Russia, and respond to midnight calls from cruise ships whose passengers sometimes venture too close to danger.

Daily operations include clearing **OPBAT crafts**, including DEA and DEU flights, US Coast Guard helicopters, and C-130 aircraft delivering freight and equipment. They also ensure compliance with the **Agricultural and Manufacture Acts** at Windsor Field, home to the island’s solar salt production, bonded warehouses, and frequent ship arrivals destined for Morton’s depots in Cape Canaveral or Georgia. Private charters also pass through, delivering cargo or transiting from the Dominican Republic, adding another layer of complexity. And Of course there are flights for good ole Bahamasair domestic and on rare occasions, international.

Amid all this work, Inagua doesn’t

pause for long. When the **Sweet Homecoming Festival** or Easter celebrations roll around, the island transforms. Drums echo through the streets, locals don new wardrobes, and vibrant church concerts and parties stretch into the morning, reminding everyone that even in a small station, life pulses with energy.



The **Customs team in Inagua** may be small, but they are mighty:

- **Senior Customs Officer:** Jay Williams
- **Grade One Officers:** Dwayne McKenzie and Andrew Kemp
- **Grade Two Officer:** Luther Mortimer
- **Warehouse General Service Worker:** James Cartwright

Together, they manage all inward and outward vessels to Great and Little Inagua—and sometimes Mayaguana—overseeing cargo storage, revenue reporting, and the enforcement of Customs regulations. Despite the small team and office space, they collect over **\$2 million annually**, a remarkable feat in what might seem like one of the Department’s quietest outposts.

From flamingos to freight, festivals to fiscal responsibility, **the small station in Inagua** is a testament to the dedication, versatility, and perseverance of our officers—proving that behind every serene tropical paradise is a team working tirelessly to keep The Bahamas safe and prosperous..

# BAHAMAS CUSTOMS RAMPS UP DRUG DETECTION AMID RISING TRAFFICKING THREATS

The Bahamas Customs Department is stepping up its border protection efforts following a sharp rise in drug trafficking attempts across the country’s ports, airports, and coastal waters. In recent months, officers have made a series of significant seizures, reinforcing the Department’s vital role in safeguarding the nation’s borders and deterring the flow of illegal narcotics.

The most notable discovery came through the combined efforts of the **Joint Task Force**, which includes the Bahamas Customs Department, the Royal Bahamas Police Force’s Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU), and the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Acting on advanced screening intelligence, officers at the **Freeport Container Port** uncovered drugs concealed inside air-conditioning units. The seizure, valued at approximately **\$4.5 million in suspected cocaine**, was detected by the Department’s state-of-the-art **scanner unit**, demonstrating the effectiveness of non-invasive inspection technology in the ongoing fight against smuggling.

Just weeks earlier, at the **Lucayan Harbour in Grand Bahama**, a Customs Marine Officer relied on professional instinct rather than outside intelligence when he stopped and searched a vessel entering the marina. His decision led to the discovery of a substantial cache of marijuana, which was immediately turned over to the **Royal Bahamas Police Force** for processing and investigation.

Not long after, officers at the **Air Freight Division** intercepted an unmarked package containing 30 bags of what appeared to be hydroponic marijuana. Consistent with protocol, the shipment was seized and handed over to the RBPF for case handling.

Smaller, yet equally important, inter-

dictions have also taken place in **New Providence**, where Customs officers—sometimes guided by little more than determination and intuition—have uncovered hidden drugs and firearms even when detection dogs failed to pick up the scent. These successful finds highlight the Department’s emphasis on vigilance, teamwork, and the human element in enforcement.

Across The Bahamas, Customs officers continue to respond to the evolving tactics of traffickers. Recent international reports have tied several maritime and air routes between The Bahamas and the United States to illegal trafficking of drugs and persons, underscoring the importance of strong border surveillance and inter-agency cooperation.

At the heart of these operations is the **Customs K-9 Unit**, a specialized team of dogs and handlers who serve as the Department’s frontline defense against smuggling. These expertly trained canines use their keen senses to detect narcotics, firearms, currency, and contraband hidden in cargo containers, courier packages, tires, vehicles, and baggage. Working alongside scanning teams and marine units, they provide an essential safeguard that supports the nation’s security and economy.

The Bahamas Customs Department continues to urge all officers—across every division and port of entry—to remain alert and proactive. As smugglers adopt more sophisticated concealment methods, the Department’s mission grows even more critical. Through cooperation, technology, and the tireless dedication of its officers, Customs remains resolute in its commitment to protect the Bahamian border and preserve the safety of its citizens.

## IN LOVING MEMORIES

On **May 1, 2025**, the Customs family bid farewell to **Superintendent Reginal Ferguson 67**, who retired after many years of faithful service, his last post being **Officer-in-Charge at LPIA**. Reginal was more than an officer—he was a soul filled with artistry and music.

A musician and artist, he shared his talents freely, adorning walls with his artwork and bringing joy to colleagues through his vendor-style displays. With a guitar in his hands or at the keyboard, his voice carried both the **golden oldies and modern favorites**, lifting spirits and brightening even the heaviest of days.

Joining Superintendent on 18th October 2025 in the Heavens is Bursel Edward Woods 77, Long time retired Officer also passed.



Customs Marine Officer (face not shown) on board the Vessel with the DEU officer with drugs that were found. The unsuspecting vessel made a verbal declaration that they were not coming from an inter-

## Honoring a Legacy of Service: Farewell to Distinguished Officers

The Customs Department proudly salutes several of its finest officers who, after decades of faithful service to country and community, are stepping into the well-earned chapter of retirement. Their contributions, discipline, and dedication have left an indelible mark on the Department and the nation.

Senior Customs/Revenue Officer **Floyd Lewis** officially closed his service on **July 17, 2025**, leaving behind a proud record of commitment to duty. **Assistant Comptroller Sheldon “Hully” Symonette**, a man of many hats from Investigations to Procurement, is scheduled to retire on **November 23, 2025**. Owing to his valued expertise, Symonette has been granted a temporary extension to remain at post until a suitable successor is appointed.

In September, the Department also bid an early farewell to **Chief Customs/Revenue Officer Theadora Edgecombe**, who embarked on her pre-retirement leave. After 38 years of distinguished service in almost every capacity, her official retirement comes on **May 16, 2026**. Edgecombe’s “motherly disciplinarian” spirit, coupled with her no-nonsense approach to station operations, will be sorely missed.

The spirit of celebration reached a crescendo on **October 16, 2025**, when **Customs/Revenue Superintendent Margarita Wilson** was honored at a grand retirement party hosted by her colleagues at the airport. Wilson, widely respected as the Department’s in-house Tariff authority and Cabinet advisor on budgetary amendments, now transitions into retirement. She began her pre-retirement leave immediately following the celebration and will officially retire on **January 16, 2026**.

The Department also remembers with gratitude the early retirement of **Chief Rodney Lightbourne**, Customs Trainer for the Northern Bahamas. Known as the “go-to man” on Customs laws and IT, Lightbourne’s work in Training, Investigations, and Bonds continues to inspire a new generation of officers. His broad expertise left an enduring legacy across the Northern Region.

As these stalwarts move into a new season of life, we extend heartfelt congratulations and deepest appreciation. Their years of sacrifice have strengthened the very foundations of Customs operations, guarding our borders and revenues with honor. We pray God’s blessing and guidance upon each of them as they embrace the joys of retirement, carrying with them the gratitude of a Department and a nation.

## WHAT IS CLIKC? The short answer is?

*Clikc is the World Customs Officer’s training platform.*

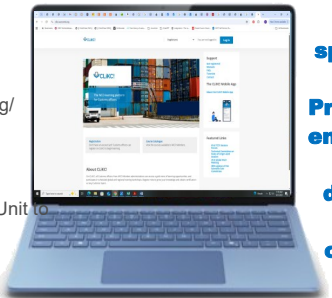
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Then Click register.

Then call the Training Unit to alert us that you did.



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