



BORDER VOICES

ment Newsletter

Bahamas Customs Depart-

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A LEGACY OF VIGILANCE AND CELEBRATION

The Bahamas and Its Enduring Commitment to International Customs Day

Long before International Customs Day became a fixture on the national calendar, The Bahamas had already begun shaping its own distinctive interpretation of the celebration, one rooted not only in professional excellence, but in culture, recognition, and national pride. That journey formally began in 1989, when the Bahamas Customs Department first embraced the global observance under the leadership of Superintendent Bernard Evans and a dedicated cadre of senior officers who understood that Customs was more than a technical function. It was, and remains, a living institution at the crossroads of trade, security, and society.

Under Superintendent Evans' stewardship, International Customs Day in The Bahamas was introduced not as a symbolic observance, but as a fully realized national event. His team laid the foundation for a tradition that would endure for decades, carefully documenting each year's celebration through commemorative booklets, newspaper supplements, formal banquets, grand balls, and ceremonial gatherings that elevated the role of Customs within the public consciousness. These early celebrations established guiding principles that successive generations of leadership would follow: professionalism, visibility, appreciation, and continuity.

As the years passed, the celebration evolved, enriched by the unmistakable color and rhythm of Bahamian culture. Music, pageantry, and community became essential elements of the observance, transforming International Customs Day into an event anticipated by staff with the same reverence as the Long Service and Awards Recognition Ceremony. It became a moment not only to reflect on global Customs mandates, but to publicly honor the men and women whose quiet sacrifices

strengthened the Department and safeguarded the borders of The Bahamas and the wider Caribbean region.

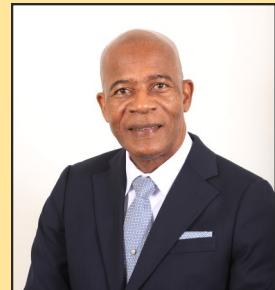
Each succeeding administration carried forward the blueprint established in those early years, refining it while preserving its spirit. The celebrations became both a mirror and a measure of the Department's growth, charting its expanding role from traditional revenue collection to a broader mission encompassing border protection, trade facilitation, and international security cooperation.

This year's observance continues that proud tradition without diminution or restraint. Across the archipelago, grand celebrations are being planned that reaffirm the Department's national reach and unity of purpose. From Freeport, Grand Bahama, to Nassau, the capital, and throughout the Family Islands, officers and staff will come together in recognition of their shared mission and collective contribution. The scale and inclusiveness of this year's activities reflect a Department confident in its heritage and clear in its direction.

The global framework for the 2026 celebration, as articulated by the World Customs Organization, emphasizes the theme *"Customs Protecting Society through Vigilance and Commitment."* In The Bahamas, these words resonate not as abstract ideals, but as lived principles that have guided the Department since its earliest participation in the international observance. Vigilance has long defined the daily work of

Bahamian Customs officers, while commitment has sustained the institution through periods of growth, reform, and increasing operational complexity.

International Customs Day in The Bahamas is therefore not merely a date on the calendar. It is a living chronicle of leadership, service, and national responsibility. It is a celebration shaped by history, animated by culture, and sustained by the dedication of those who serve. As the Department once again gathers across islands and generations, it does so with a clear understanding that the legacy begun in 1989 continues to shape its future, and that the vigilance and commitment of today's officers will define the celebrations of tomorrow.



Message from
Ralph B. Munroe CD. LLB
(Hons.) CLE
Counsel and Attorney-at-Law
Notary Public
The Comptroller of Customs

As we observe International Customs Day 2026 under the World Customs Organization theme *"Customs Protecting Society through Vigilance and Commitment,"* I am reminded that these principles have guided my own career in Customs from its inception. Vigilance and commitment are not abstract ideals; they are professional obligations that require continuous learning, preparedness, and accountability.

The role of Customs has evolved significantly. While revenue collection and border protection remain central to our mandate, we now play an increasingly critical role in safeguarding regional and global security. This includes preventing the movement of illicit drugs, firearms, weapons of mass destruction, and other threats that undermine lawful trade and public safety. These responsibilities demand close cooperation with our law enforcement partners and a workforce equipped to meet modern operational challenges.

I therefore encourage all officers and staff to actively pursue professional upgrading and requalification where necessary. Continuous development is essential to maintaining the standards expected of this Department and to ensuring that our mandate is fulfilled effectively. As we move forward, let us remain vigilant and committed, not only to our country and communities, but to the wider region and global society we serve.

INTERNATIONAL CUSTOMS DAY 2026 SCHEDULE

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
18 Jan 2026	Church Service—Church of the Ascension	Freeport, Lucaya	09:00a
25 Jan 2026	Church Service—Bethel Baptist Church	Nassau, N.P.	11:00a
26 Jan 2026	Award Ceremony—Government House	Nassau, N.P.	6:00p
26–30th	Exhibition—Mall at Marathon	Nassau N.P	9:00a
26–30 Jan 2026	Exhibition C. A Smith Building	Freeport G.B.	09:00a
27 Jan 2026	Award Ceremony—Government house	Nassau, N.P.	6:00p
27 Jan 2026	Presentation to Feeding Programs	Freeport, G.B.	11:00a
28 Jan 2026	T-Shirt Day / Free Breakfast Give Away at Customs House	Nassau, N.P.	
29 Jan 2026	Adopted School—T A Thompson Give Away & Feeding of Elderly homes	Nassau, N.P.	
30 Jan 2026	Grill and Chill—Customs HQ	Nassau, N.P.	Noon Until
30 Jan 2026	Closing Brunch	Lucayan Harbour	
31 Jan 2026	Children's Party / Fair	Nassau, N.P.	Noon Until
TBA	Long Service Award Ceremony	Freeport, G.B.	

The Department will also be hosting Morning Devotions on ZNS Radio 1540 at 6:00 a.m. each morning from January 26th to January 31st, 2026 and in Grand Bahama. They will also appear on various talk shows during that week to discuss the activities of International Customs Day.



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SAN SALVADOR:

The First Port of Discovery and the Heart of Bahamian Duty

Set like a sapphire upon the turquoise ribbon of the Atlantic, **San Salvador Island**—once known as *Watling's Island*—rests just south of the centerline of The Bahamas' 700 islands and cays. History remembers it as the **first landfall of Christopher Columbus** on **October 12, 1492**, when his fleet—the *Nina*, *Pinta*, and *Santa Maria*—anchored off its radiant shores. To this day, San Salvador stands proudly as **The Bahamas' first international port of record**, a place where history, beauty, and national service meet upon the same sands.

A Jewel with Living History

Long before the arrival of Columbus, the Lucayan people called this island *Guanahani*—“the sweet waters island.” Its limestone cliffs, hidden lagoons, and shimmering white beaches still echo that name’s meaning. The question of whether the explorer first set foot here or on nearby Cat Island has long been debated, yet San Salvador’s monuments and cross at Long Bay stand firm as symbols of The Bahamas’ **gateway to the New World**.

A Peaceful Post with Deep Purpose

Today, San Salvador remains a quiet but vital part of The Bahamas. The island’s main economic lifeline flows through **Club Med Columbus Isle**, a resort known worldwide for its crystal waters and fine diving. Yet, beyond the resort’s gates, the island’s heartbeat is powered by its people—fishermen, farmers, teachers, nurses, and our own **Customs Officers**, who serve with dedication on this historic frontier.

In this tranquil post, the pace is slower, the relationships closer, and the work uniquely meaningful. Each shipment, passenger arrival, and vessel clearance carries both practical and symbolic weight—it is a continuation of the same duty that began over five centuries ago when the first foreign ships anchored offshore.

Honoring Our Officers on the Island of First Discovery

We salute Senior Customs/Revenue Officer Deidre Cox, Customs Revenue Officer Grade I Jamaal Edgecombe, and Customs Revenue Officer

Grade I Laverne Bowleg, who serve with excellence and endurance in this distinctive post. Their responsibilities go far beyond paperwork and inspections. They are guardians of the nation’s first gate—protectors of trade integrity, enforcers of import law, and ambassadors of Bahamian hospitality. Working through the daily rhythms of freight arrivals, charter clearances, and community engagement, these officers stand as living representatives of the Department’s values: **Service, Integrity, and National Pride**.

Living and Serving in Paradise

Serving on San Salvador comes with its own blend of challenges and charms:

Natural Environment: Officers work amid radiant turquoise seas and quiet beaches that feel untouched by time. The island’s terrain rises from the ocean floor like an ancient mountain peak—lush, breezy, and breathtaking.

Community Connection: With fewer than 1,000 residents, San Salvador is a close-knit family. Officers often find themselves both civil servants and neighbors, sharing in church events, homecomings, regattas, and Independence celebrations.

Resilience in Simplicity: While supplies arrive every two weeks by *King Ocean Services* and flights from Nassau, Florida, and Houston, daily life still calls for resourcefulness and patience—traits that define true island officers.

Bugs, Breezes, and

Brotherhood: As every officer stationed here can attest, the island’s tranquility comes with its share of buzzing company! Yet, even through the “nicks and buzzes” of nature, duty remains steady, grounded in camaraderie and humor.

The Island Experience Beyond the Uniform

Outside of duty hours, San Salvador offers experiences few other postings can match. Over 50 world-class dive sites circle the island, including *Devil’s Claw* and *Vicky’s Reef*. The inland lakes shimmer like mirrors at sunset, while **Dixon Hill Lighthouse**, built in 1887, still casts its light across the sea. Locals take pride in their homecomings, Junkanoo rush-outs, and seafood feasts, where the catch of the day might include snapper, conch, or lobster pulled fresh from the turquoise shallows.

A Port of Legacy and Hope

For The Bahamas Customs Department, San Salvador is more than an out-island station—it is a **living symbol of The Bahamas' first encounter with the wider world**. Every declaration processed and every vessel inspected is a chapter added to that ongoing story of vigilance, honor, and national pride.

As international travel and commerce continue to grow, San Salvador remains a strategic link in our national network—a sentinel of sovereignty at the edge of paradise.

To serve here is to walk daily on sacred ground: where history began, where blue horizons

stretch endlessly, and where the spirit of The Bahamas still whispers through the waves, reminding every officer—you stand where discovery first dawned.



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Photos submitted by Senior Customs / Revenue Officer, Deidre Cox

INTERNATIONAL UPDATES

Working Together to Combat Organized Crime

Recent international discussions on intellectual property (IP) crime have reinforced an important reality for Customs administrations worldwide: IP crime is closely linked to organized crime and poses serious risks to governments, economies, and public safety. Speaking at a global enforcement conference, the Secretary General of INTERPOL emphasized that IP crime undermines innovation, erodes public trust, and fuels wider criminal networks. He stressed that building capacity, strengthening partnerships, and sharing intelligence are essential to ensuring operational readiness to anticipate, investigate, and disrupt these networks.

Similarly, the Secretary General of the World Customs Organization highlighted that only through cooperation can Customs administrations effectively prevent counterfeit and dangerous goods from moving through the global trade system. Speakers further explained that counterfeiting and piracy, often seen as low-risk and high-reward crimes, are frequently connected to corruption, human trafficking, and other serious offenses.

For The Bahamas, these global concerns closely reflect our local operational environment. As a key transit point in the Caribbean, the Bahamas Customs Department works daily alongside the Royal Bahamas Police Force, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, and the Department of Immigration to intercept illicit goods and protect our borders. International training initiatives, advanced investigative tools, and information sharing directly strengthen our ability to identify counterfeit products, illicit pharmaceuticals, and hazardous items moving through ports and airports.

The discussions also underscored emerging risks, including the environmental damage caused by counterfeit goods, the rise in falsified medicines, and safety threats during transport, such as fires linked to counterfeit lithium batteries. These risks reinforce the importance of vigilance, joint operations, and continuous training for all border agencies.

• By remaining engaged with international partners and strengthening collaboration among local border agencies, The Bahamas continues to align with global best practices while protecting our communities, trade, and national security.



WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANIZATION