



Office of the
Prime Minister

REMARKS TO THE NATIONAL HONOURS INVESTITURE, 2022

**PRIME MINISTER HON. PHILIP E. DAVIS KC, MP
CONVENTION CENTRE
BAHAMAR**

31 OCTOBER 2022

Good morning to all and please be seated.

The Most Honourable Cornelius A. Smith,

Governor General;

Cabinet and Parliamentary colleagues;

Honourees;

Invited guests...

On behalf of the government and people of the Bahamas, I have accepted this invitation from the Governor General to pay special

tribute to the recipients of the 2022 **National Honours.**

I am indeed humbled and grateful to be able to be here today to bring remarks as we pay special honour the four brave marines who lost their lives working in defence of the fledgling Bahamas forty-two years ago. They serve as enduring reminders of the courage, tenacity and fortitude that make a hero.

Today in a significant gesture of gratitude, we posthumously confer the Order of Lignum

Vitae to A/B Fenrick Sturup, M/S David

Tucker, M/S Edward Williams, and M/S Austin

Smith. We pray that in this way, we honour the memory of our dear sons of the soil and afford their families a peace that comes with knowing that their loved ones did not live or die in vain.

On May 10th 1980, only six weeks after the Royal Bahamas Defence Force's official establishment— these four men, along with fifteen other servicemen embarked on a routine patrol of Bahamian waters. By late afternoon, they spotted Cuban fishing vessels poaching in Bahamian waters and after a

short chase, the officers apprehended the culprits, seized their spoils, and confiscated their boats. But this was not to be a routine stop-and-arrest. On the way back, the crew of the HMMBS Flamingo was hailed with a barrage of machine gun fire from Cuban military fighter jets. The second round of attacks proved fateful as the crew was forced to abandon the embattled vessel and swim to shore. Roll-call was a bitter and somber moment—as they discovered that four members of the crew were missing. Their bodies were never found. News of the attack

spread quickly throughout the Bahamas, sparking a veritable wildfire of national outrage. It was in this moment that we as a nation recognized the true brevity of nationhood, and geo-political sovereignty. We realized that this country was truly ours—ours to protect, ours to live for, ours to die for. These four marines paid the ultimate sacrifice in defence of our rights to this Bahamaland.

This story is an integral part of the fabric of our history—of who we are. It is in peering into the past that we recognize our own

strength and draw courage to press forward into an ever-uncertain future. Let us tell it, and tell it often, so that we never forget what it took to build this nation.

These Bahamians honoured today represent a principal part of the foundation of this great nation. These men truly embodied what it meant to serve God and country and to do so with honour.

I applaud the fine work of the National Honours Committee who's done a remarkable job organising this series of investiture

ceremonies. While the list of honourees is certainly not exhaustive, its chosen represent us at our best.

I am eternally grateful to all of the award recipients whose sacrifice set a firm foundational standard for us all. These are our heroes who use their God-given talents to boldly tackle the challenges we face as a country, and work tirelessly in the interest of ALL.

It is the work, legacy, and sacrifice of these toiling men and women, that strengthens our democracy, advances our charge to a better,

brighter future, and helps deepen our resolve to be more than we'd ever dreamed possible.

Ladies and gentlemen, at this point, I must recognize the efforts of our Foreign Minister, the Hon. Fred Mitchell, Loretta Butler Turner, Freddie Munnings, Father Sebastian Campbell, Athama Bowe, the late Terence Bethel, and all those whose efforts were indispensable in making this event possible.

In the same vein, I commend the honours committee who had the vision and foresight

to organize this special honours ceremony today.

My government is grateful for their leadership, and hard work.

I believe that we all must continue to work together to build a national culture that celebrates and memorializes outstanding Bahamians. It is this culture of elevating goodness that stands to set the tone for a history written in "positive tense."

While the work already done has been remarkable, we have a long way to go yet.

The establishment of Heroes Park has not yet

been fully realized and we must make fervent efforts to document the lives and legacies of our heroes. Our children need to know who they are. Our children must know who WE are.

Let us leave here knowing that the example has already been set.

May God continue to bless you all, and favour the Commonwealth of The Bahamas.

