

## **BERMUDA - US DELEGATION TO WASHINGTON**

### ***WASHINGTON D.C. VISIT***

#### **Press Statement**

**(060501) by:**

**The Hon. W. Alexander Scott JP, MP**

*Premier of Bermuda*

The Hon. Paula Cox

The Hon. Randolph Horton

Mr. Gregory Slayton, United States Consul General

Members of the media

Good afternoon:

This is an historic occasion.

We have invited you here to share in a ground-breaking initiative between a modern-day super power and our own tiny island nation that has, over the decades, slowly etched a significant place of its own on the world stage.

Bermuda is a major player in the international business arena, having garnered industry partners from various corners of the globe. We guard jealously our reputation for fiscal prudence, and the resulting success we have achieved has catapulted us into an international leadership role with world wide recognition.

But Bermuda did not get here alone. One of our noteworthy partners, the United States of America, has been on this journey with us almost from the year of our discovery in 1609.

From then until today, with only a few exceptions, we have called the United States our friend. The mutually beneficial relationship between our two countries stretches back over the centuries and the initiative that will be detailed by my friend Mr. Gregory Slayton, Consul General for the United States of America will continue to solidify that relationship into the future.

I have just returned from the Risk Insurance Management Society (RIMS) conference in Honolulu, Hawaii and during my interaction with the many industry representatives there, I stressed the value of partnership and the strength it brings to both an economy and a people.

This historic initiative between Bermuda and the US will see a delegation participate in what has been classified as the first ever Official Bilateral Visit of Bermuda Government Officials to Washington, D.C., and is truly representative of this philosophy. And while it continues our partnership, it is history in the

making.

It is said that 'history is most qualified to reward our research'.

A quick history lesson for perspective so that we can appreciate from whence we came to where we are.

- In 1609 the islands were discovered by English Admiral Sir George Somers.
  - The Somer's Isles, alias Bermuda, were settled in 1612 and this paved the way for Britain to send British emigrants to the USA.
  - The diverse talents of Bermuda's earliest middle class and trades people exported first their products and then themselves to Massachusetts.
  - Boat builders, used to crafting small boats and sea-going vessels in Bermuda from the earliest days, became much in demand in Massachusetts and the rest of the New England - and began boat building and seafaring traditions there that have continued to the present.
  - Nowhere in America is this mentioned as a local contribution to the American Revolution, but we are all familiar with the story of Gunpowder Tavern. Hundreds of barrels of gunpowder, stolen by sympathetic Bermudians from a local British fort, were used by Americans at the Battle of Bunker Hill. They lost the battle but won the will to keep fighting, and the Continental Congress was so grateful that it lifted the embargo on food and grain shipments to Bermuda it had applied to all other British held possessions.
  - On April 6, 1917, three years after the Great War for Britain and her European allies, the United States finally declared war on Germany. American naval vessels sailed from US East Coast ports bound for Bermuda, to use Bermuda as a base.
  - And as a final anecdote, Bermuda did play a round about way in contributing to the most famous musical lyrics in all America, their national anthem, the Star Spangled Banner. The writer, Francis Scott Key, wrote the words while a temporary detainee on a British warship that assembled in and sailed from Bermuda during the British American war.
- Yes, Bermuda has unique connections with the USA...

In history, commerce, culture, education, tourism and trade.

That connection has produced a business and diplomatic relationship that bodes well for our two countries. We certainly are proud to be a partner in this diplomatic effort.

Partnership for Progress! A fitting title for our future endeavours.

I will now ask Consul General Slayton to provide some details on this historic visit.  
Thank you.

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**REMARKS OF  
US CONSUL GENERAL GREGORY W. SLAYTON**

**May 1, 2006**

Good afternoon, Premier Scott, Cabinet Ministers, Permanent Secretaries and other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

For over two hundred years, Bermuda and the United States have shared a strong and mutually beneficial partnership that is not only long-standing but also multifaceted: business; insurance and tourism; cultural and education exchanges; and medical services are just a few of its pillars. The United States supplies Bermuda with approximately 80% of its imports, nearly \$766 million in goods in 2004. The value of US exports to Bermuda is 27 times that of the United Kingdom.

And US citizens make up about 85% of the island's tourists. Some 204,000 US airline passengers visited Bermuda in 2005 and tens of thousands more came via cruise ships. The US sends approximately 10 times more air visitors to Bermuda than the Brits. In fact, US tourists contributed hundreds of millions to Bermuda's economy annually.

But this important partnership is very much a two way street. While the US is shipping goods and sending tourists to Bermuda, America has become the major beneficiary of Bermuda's thriving international insurance industry. After a record-breaking 2005 hurricane season, Bermuda-based insurers and reinsurers expect to pay nearly 26% of the insured losses arising from the devastation caused by hurricanes Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma. In fact, Bermuda carriers will pay out to their US clients at least \$13 billion for rebuilding in the hurricane zones - as much if not more than their better-known European counterparts. And all of this money is going to assist the rebuilding of the devastated US Gulf and Florida coasts.

Because of our shared history, I am honored to be here today to announce an historic achievement. For the first time in diplomatic memory, the United States' Chief of Mission in Bermuda will escort a delegation from the Government of Bermuda to Washington, DC to meet with key decision-makers in the United States.

It has been my great privilege to organize this first Official Bilateral Visit, scheduled for May 17 and 18, 2006, which will provide Bermudian lawmakers with a never-before-realized entrée to leaders in the American government.

Accompanying me on this landmark visit will be the Honorable Premier of Bermuda, Mr. Alex Scott, and the following Cabinet members:

- Minister of Finance Paula Cox and
- Minister of Labor, Home Affairs & Public Safety Randolph Horton.

Also traveling with the team will be the following Bermuda government officials:

- Mr. Donald Scott, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance;
- Mr. Robert Horton, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Labor, Home Affairs & Public Safety;
- Mr. John Drinkwater, Secretary to the Cabinet, and
- Ms. Beverle Lottimore, Director of Communications and Information.

Foremost on the agenda are breakfast and conferences at the White House, and meetings at the State Department, where Bermuda delegates will convene with senior officials.

Meetings have also been scheduled on Capitol Hill, where Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Representative Dennis Hastert – third in line for presidential succession – will host a Diplomatic Reception with other leaders of the House of Representatives. On the Senate side, Senate Leader Bill Frist, has kindly agreed to a private meeting with the Bermuda Delegation.

Other private meetings on the Hill have been planned with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, including:

- Senator Norm Coleman
- Senator Mel Martinez
- Senator George Allen

Private meetings have also been confirmed with other top leaders:

- Senator John McCain, one of America's best-known Senators
- Senator Susan Collins, Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

- Senator Sam Brownback, member of the Committee on Appropriations and the Joint Economics Committee
- The Congressional Black Caucus, including Congressman G.K. Butterfield, whose father emigrated to the United States from Bermuda in 1905 and fought for the US in World War I.

Finally, to round it all off, the delegation's schedule will include high-level meetings at the:

- US Department of Commerce
- US Department of the Treasury
- National Security Council
- World Bank

This is an historic opportunity for Bermuda's government to build rapport with Washington principals. And, as you can tell from the list of scheduled meetings, the Premier and his team will have unprecedented access to many of the principal leaders in American government. It is an extraordinary agenda and I am gratified that I have been able to draw on my relationship with these public figures on behalf of Bermuda.

In my experience, the value of friendship is incalculable; there is no better time to establish an alliance with friends than before one is required to call upon them.

The alliance between our two countries is over two hundred years old, but strengthening the ties that bind us is a continuous process. Like a marriage, it requires constant communication, mutual commitment and lots of good will.

That is why I place public diplomacy in the forefront of my priorities as Chief of Mission of the US Consulate in Bermuda. I am very happy to be able to do my part in fostering relations with and strengthening lines of communication between our two countries.

There is no doubt that constructive and positive dialogue is the most effective tool in the diplomatic arsenal. And that is what this bilateral visit is all about.