



NATIONALE DEMOCRATISCHE PARTIJ

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To: The Chairperson of CARICOM, The Honourable Mia A. Mottley
cc: Secretary General of CARICOM, Dr. Carla Barnett

Subject: Protest Against Guyana's Military Activities in "Het Boven Corantijn gebied van Suriname" (the Upper Corentyne region)

17 February 2025

Esteemed Honourable Chairperson of CARICOM,

The National Democratic Party, a major political party of Suriname, submits this serious letter of complaint and protest on the continued acts of aggression carried out by the Cooperative Republic of Guyana on an area of land located in the border region that is historically determined as Suriname's territory, but that Guyana has claimed by force. The continued military activities undertaken by the Government of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana are in the territory confined between the Koeroeni River and the Upper Corantyne River. The acts of aggression are in violation of the Agreement of Chaguaramas, as stipulated and agreed to on April 10, 1970, in the presence of Dr Eric Williams, the then-Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, acting as Mediator, between the late Prime Ministers of Suriname and Guyana. This agreement was adopted after consultations **on both sides** aimed at finding a peaceful resolution to the occupation of the said territory, as a result of military aggression by armed forces of Guyana against nationals of Suriname in violation of the principle of peaceful coexistence among states.

It is well known that in 1969, Guyanese military forces unlawfully evicted Surinamese civilians engaged in lawful economic activities in the above-mentioned territory, establishing an airstrip within the territory. Recognizing the need for a peaceful resolution, the late Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Dr. Eric Williams, mediated negotiations that led to the 1970 Agreement of Chaguaramas. This agreement stipulated that the area in question be demilitarized, an obligation that Guyana has persistently failed to uphold. From June 24-27, 1970, the late Prime Minister Jules Sedney paid an official visit to Guyana to discuss with the late Prime-Minister Forbes Burnham matters of cooperation and other outstanding issues between the two countries, including the peaceful resolution of the arisen border dispute, a remnant of the pre-independence colonial legacy of the British and the Netherlands. At the end of his visit a joint communique was issued stating among others:

“The Prime-Ministers also reviewed the work that has been done since their previous meeting on the question of demilitarization of the border area in the region of the Upper Corentyne. They have recognized the importance of achieving demilitarization as rapidly as possible and, this in view, and in the spirit of friendship and understanding which characterised their discussions and motivated the policies of their Governments, the Prime-Ministers agreed upon the immediate demilitarization by both countries of their respective presence in the region”.

Suriname has always upheld this agreement. To date, Guyana has not; instead, in abrogation of the joint communique, it now appears that Guyana treacherously inches further afield in the opposite direction based on recent developments.

Despite Suriname's commitment to diplomatic dialogue to resolve the dispute in the spirit of good neighborliness, Guyana is maintaining military forces with heavy equipment in the area and has recently announced plans for the expansion of the airstrip to accommodate military aircrafts. These actions constitute a direct violation of the agreement between the two countries and furthermore continue to violate international law, particularly on the basis of the following legal principles:

- **United Nations Charter (1945), Article 2(4):** Prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Guyana's military presence in "het Boven Corantijn gebied" (the Upper Corentyne region) constitutes an infringement on Surinamese sovereignty. (In 1975 when Suriname gained its independence from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the late Prime Minister Joop den Uyl, declared in writing the following translated text: "The western boundary is formed by the low-water line on the left bank of the Corantijn (Corentyne) from origin to mouth. The boundary thereby runs from a point to be determined on the southern boundary to the origin of de "boven Corantijn" (the Upper Corentyne) then along the low-water line on the left bank of the Upper Corentyne and the Corentyne to the point where the shoreline merges into the coastline... [The Original NEDERLANDS TEXT reads: "De westgrens wordt gevormd door de laagwaterlijn op de linkeroever van de Corantijn, van oorsprong tot monding. De grens loopt daardoor vanaf een nader te bepalen punt op de zuid-grens naar de oorsprong van de Boven-Corantijn, vervolgens langs de laagwaterlijn op de linkeroever van de Boven-Corantijn en de Corantijn tot het punt waar de oeverlijn in de kustlijn overgaat...")

It is this, in a nutshell, that forms one of the crystal-clear basis of the sovereign state of Suriname at Independence in 1975, thereby rightly claiming the Upper Corantijn region as territory of Suriname, and not Guyana.

- **Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933), Article 11:** Prohibits the use of force as a means of acquiring territory. Guyana's continued occupation and military expansion violate this fundamental principle.
- **Principles of the Organization of American States (OAS) Charter, Article 21:** Prohibits the military occupation of a disputed territory and emphasizes the peaceful resolution of conflicts through diplomacy.
- **Agreement of Chaguaramas (1970):** Guyana's continued military presence directly contravenes its commitment to demilitarization under this agreement.

Suriname has repeatedly protested Guyana's actions through diplomatic channels, yet our concerns have gone unheeded.

Thus, today, at this historic moment, we call upon CARICOM - through whose good offices the Agreement of Chaguaramas was precisely detailed 55 years ago - to reaffirm and re-underscore its unmitigated commitment to regional peace and stability by urging Guyana to immediately withdraw its military forces from the Upper Corantijn and adhere to its obligations under international law, and in the spirit of good neighborliness and fraternal relations.

Lest we descend to chaotic land-grabbing-occupation based on 'might is right' as some articulate these days within the region and beyond, we respectfully request CARICOM's early intervention to facilitate re-energized dialogue and ensure compliance with the principles of peaceful dispute-resolution. As has been the case for decades, Suriname remains committed to diplomacy and urges the regional body to take appropriate steps to prevent further escalation. While it is our expressed intent to uphold the peace of the region, let it not be misconstrued that anyone may ride rough-shod over our sovereign rights, especially in the name of political expediency or accommodation.

We look forward to your response and the necessary actions to ensure a just and peaceful resolution to this matter.

Please accept the assurances of my highest consideration.



Jennifer Geerlings-Simons, Chairperson, National Democratic Party (NDP) of Suriname

PLEASE SEE Attachments:

- (1) Agreement of Chaguaramas, April 10, 1970.
- (2) Official Letter of Prime Minister Joop den Uyl (Netherlands) to Prime Minister Henk Arron (Suriname), 25th November 1975
- (3) The Joint Communique of Prime Ministers Jules Sedney & L.F.S. Burnham, 27th June 1970.