

## Caribbean Connection

Dateline: GEORGE TOWN, Cayman Islands (November 2, 2006) —

Charles Clifford, minister of *tourism* of the Cayman Islands, is calling on Caribbean governments to chart a clear strategy to address new U.S. passport regulations that may cripple the *economies* of several *tourism* dependent Caribbean nations, and several leaders from the region see one part of it as harnessing the strong lobbying power of the cruise industry in Washington, which has already effectively secured an exemption for itself. Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, secretary general of the Caribbean *Tourism* Organisation, compared the recent decision by the U.S. government to amend the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative to "a Category 6 hurricane" for the Caribbean. The amendment delays the implementation of the new passport requirements until June 1, 2009, for land crossings at the Mexican and Canadian borders and for cruise passengers coming to the U.S. from the Caribbean, Mexico, Canada, or Bermuda, but still requires all US citizens traveling by air to and from these regions to have a passport by January 8, 2007. Currently, Americans can enter and return from many Caribbean countries with only a birth certificate and government identification, such as a driver's license.

Speaking with the Amsterdam News at the opening of the 13th annual FCCA Caribbean Cruise Conference and Trade Show here this week, Minister Clifford said ministers of *tourism* ought to take the lead and engage industry partners and Washington policymakers as soon as the dust settles from this month's U.S. mid-term elections. Opening the conference, Minister Clifford told hundreds of delegates, "To its credit, the cruise industry has recently gained an important, albeit partial victory. However, air travel is still not afforded a level playing field. It is to no one's advantage that this occurs. As a region and a *tourism* industry, we need to tackle this initiative with a united stance because our interests are inextricably linked."

At press time, several ministers of *tourism* were talking with senior cruise line executives about such a strategy for the way forward. "Time is of the essence now...this thing is looming on the horizon, so during our discussions here we intend to cement that issue," said Minister Clifford, who recognizes America's attempts to secure its borders, but regrets delayed U.S. public relations efforts to prepare its citizens for the change. He underscored that that the Cayman Islands fully supports the United States in its anti-terrorism campaign, but warned, "We must be very careful to ensure that we do not seemingly create loopholes in the very security network we are trying to enhance. Any security measure such as this, which involves staggered implementation dates for different forms of travel, can inadvertently undermine the very security regime that is desired within the Western Hemisphere."

Clifford said the cruise industry has been a true partner on this issue, unlike the U.S. airlines, which from all reports, are only now stepping up to the plate to back the Caribbean's efforts for a level playing field. Indeed, Micky Arisen, chairman and CEO of Carnival Corporation, said the cruise industry has long been active on this issue, even requesting the assistance of Florida Governor Jeb Bush since a negative impact in the Caribbean will hurt the Sunshine State.

**Please answer the following questions on the above article:**

1. Explain the new travel restriction to the Caribbean and why they were put into place
2. What economic impact will the travel restriction have on the Caribbean? Give stats or facts using another article that you find.
3. Who will benefit from the new travel restrictions to the Caribbean and why?