

Erla steps aside

House to meet Wednesday on acting CoP

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THE House of Representatives is expected to meet on Wednesday to discuss the notification of the President for the appointment of an acting Commissioner of Police.

This meeting has been triggered by the separation of Police Commissioner Erla Harewood-Christopher from the office of CoP by the Police Service Commission (PolSC). It is understood that Harewood-Christopher was asked to step aside by the PolSC during the ongoing investigation. Trinidad and Tobago is in a state of emergency and it is therefore critical to have a police commissioner in place.

Harewood-Christopher was arrested last Thursday in connection with the alleged importation of two sniper rifles for the Strategic Services Agency (SSA) in 2023. She had been detained at the Police Administration Building on Thursday where she was questioned by a team of officers led by Deputy Commissioner of Police Suzette Martin. She was later moved to the St Clair Police Station and was released on Sunday evening.

Sources said the Merit List is making its way to the President. The Merit List is submitted to the President by the PolSC and the President would then submit a notification in respect of the top person nominated by the Commission on the Order of Merit List. Sources said there are next two names on the Merit List and that Deputy Commissioner of Police Junior Benjamin was ranked by the PolSC at number one on the Merit List for acting appointments.

In the meantime, the police have been asked by the Director of Public Prosecutions to provide certain information from the National Security Council in furtherance of the investigation.

Sources said this information is likely to be produced today. The Prime Minister said on Saturday that the Government had no role in the arrest of Harewood-Christopher.

Meanwhile, the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service is denying a report in the *Sunday Guardian* which stated that DCP Suzette Martin had indicated that Harewood-Christopher will not remain Police Commissioner while she is still under active investigation. 'The TTPS wishes to state that DCP Martin made no such statement and would not be in a position to make any comments on the tenure of the CoP. As such, that report is erroneous,' a media release from the TTPS stated yesterday.

The release said the TTPS was urging the public, the media and other stakeholders to refrain from engaging in speculation or making misleading comments that could undermine the ongoing investigations into Harewood-Christopher and retired major and former SSA director Roger Best. Best was also released on Sunday.

It said Martin, commenting on the matter, stated: 'The investigations are being handled with the utmost professionalism, transparency and impartiality and justice must be based on facts and due process, rather than assumptions or biased narratives. Premature conclusions and false information can create unnecessary tension and hinder the work of investigators. I give the assurance that the investigation, which has been guided all along by the Director of Public Prosecutions, is being treated with the utmost seriousness and all the findings will be based on credible evidence. Let us all exercise responsibility by allowing the investigation to unfold without interference, as I call on everyone to uphold fairness, trust the legal system and refrain from sensationalising the case. Let us await the facts, before forming opinions.'