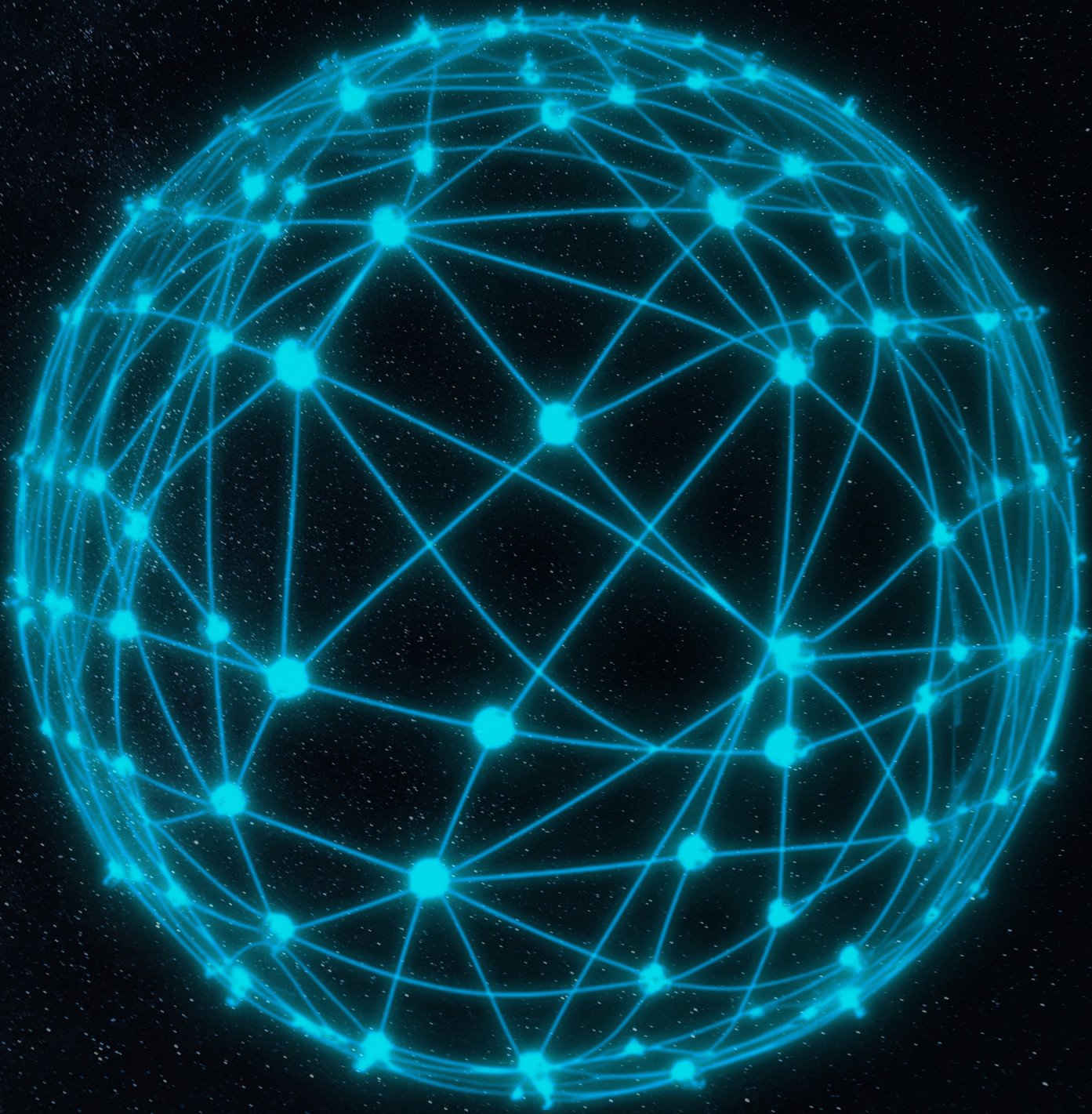
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THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

SPOTLIGHT ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

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GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION:

Spotlight on Crime and Public Safety is a quarterly, online newsletter published in March, June, September and December by the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) at The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT). This newsletter is interdisciplinary in nature and provides a space for academics, researchers, professionals, policymakers, students and stakeholders from diverse fields to share their views. Articles/Commentaries should be between eight hundred (800) to one thousand (1,000) words in length. We also encourage the submission of creative efforts (for example, poems, photography, posters, quotes etc). Submission deadlines are February 15 for the March issue and May 15 for the June issue. Note: September is reserved for our Special Student Issue, and December for our Special Staff Issue. References or Bibliographies should be prepared using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Edition).* Contributors should include their professional/job title/appropriate designation, contact email and photograph (optional) for use in the relevant issue. Submissions should be sent via email to icpsnewsletter@utt.edu.tt.

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Editorial



Dear Enthusiastic Readers,

We are pleased to present this edition of ***Spotlight on Crime and Public Safety,*** the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety's quarterly newsletter. This issue brings together timely contributions from security professionals, academics, and public safety practitioners who examine some of the most pressing issues affecting Trinidad and Tobago, the wider Caribbean, and the international community.

Garvin Heerah examines the implications of the Iran conflict for the Caribbean in his article, "A Crisis Far Away, A Threat at Our Door: Why the Iran Conflict Matters to the Caribbean Now." He highlights how global instability can affect energy security, maritime trade, migration, financial systems, and regional preparedness, reminding us that small island developing states (SIDS) are often deeply exposed to conflicts beyond their borders. Adrian Palmer explores alcohol misuse among young adults in Trinidad and Tobago in his article, "Alcohol Misuse and Public Safety: Emerging Crime and Safety Risks Among Young Adults in Trinidad and Tobago." Drawing on recent research involving UTT students, he discusses the links between alcohol consumption, polysubstance use, impaired driving, risky sexual behaviour, interpersonal conflict, and broader public safety concerns.

In his article, "The Use of Force in Military Operations," Sheldon Ramanan considers the legal and ethical dimensions of force in military operations. He outlines the importance of necessity, proportionality, accountability, and objective reasonableness, particularly when military personnel operate in support of civilian law enforcement and national security objectives. Gang violence in Trinidad and Tobago is examined by Troy Smith through the lens of dynamic systems theory in his article, "System Persistence in Trinidad and Tobago: Modelling Gang Violence as a Dynamic System." He argues that lasting change requires more than temporary disruption; it requires sustained action to alter the deeper conditions that allow violence to persist and reorganise.

These articles remind us that public safety is shaped by a wide range of interconnected forces, from global conflict and military governance to public health, substance misuse, organised crime, and community violence. We hope this edition, together with several informative items, informs your work, encourages critical discussion, and contributes to the ongoing pursuit of safer, healthier, and more resilient societies.

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"Peace cannot be kept by force;
it can only be achieved
by understanding.

- Albert Einstein

A Crisis Far Away, A Threat at Our Door: Why the Iran Conflict Matters to the Caribbean Now



What we are witnessing with Iran, the United States, and their allies is no longer a distant geopolitical quarrel confined to the Middle East. It has crossed that line. This is now a full-spectrum global risk event, and the signals are clear: naval blockades in the Strait of Hormuz, fragile ceasefire efforts, rising military posturing. These are not routine tensions. This is the kind of moment that shifts the global order, and when that happens, small regions like ours do not get spared. We feel it, sometimes harder than those at the centre of the conflict.

For the Caribbean and the wider Latin American region, this is not theoretical. It is real, immediate, and layered with consequences that can destabilise our economies, our security, and our social systems if we are not alert and prepared.

At the heart of it all is energy. The Strait of Hormuz is one of the most critical arteries in the global oil supply chain. When that artery is threatened, the entire world feels the pressure. Oil prices have already surged past US$100 per barrel, and that alone sends shockwaves across our region. For countries that depend heavily on imported fuel, the effect is immediate: rising costs, inflationary pressure, and strain on already tight national budgets. For Trinidad and Tobago, there may be a short-term advantage as an energy exporter, but let us not be shortsighted. Volatility is never a friend of stability. Demand uncertainty and global market shifts can quickly turn opportunity into vulnerability.

Beyond the economics, there is a human dimension that we cannot ignore. The United Nations has already warned that millions could be pushed into poverty as a result of this escalation. Small Island Developing States like ours sit dangerously exposed in that equation. We may be geographically distant, but economically, we are on the frontline.

Then there is the issue of maritime security. The Caribbean lives and breathes through its sea lanes. Our food, medicine, and essential goods come through those channels. When global shipping routes are threatened, when vessels are attacked or rerouted, when insurance premiums rise due to war risk, the impact trickles directly into our daily lives. Higher freight costs, delayed shipments, and potential shortages are not abstract risks; they translate into higher prices on supermarket shelves and increased hardship for our people.

There is also a dangerous precedent being set. The normalisation of naval blockades as a geopolitical tool should concern us deeply. Today it is the Strait of Hormuz. Tomorrow, in a fractured global environment, similar tactics could emerge closer to home, affecting smaller maritime regions like the Caribbean basin.

At the same time, the geopolitical landscape is becoming increasingly polarised. This is no longer just about Iran and the United States. Major powers are positioning themselves, and global lines are being drawn. For Caribbean nations that have traditionally walked a path of diplomatic balance and non-alignment, this presents a serious challenge. There will be pressure, subtle and overt, to choose sides. That comes with consequences for trade, aid, and security cooperation. It also risks fragmenting regional unity at a time when cohesion is most needed.

Periods of global instability also create fertile ground for transnational crime. The Caribbean already sits within known trafficking corridors for narcotics, weapons, and human smuggling. When global attention shifts towards major conflict zones, gaps emerge, and criminal networks exploit those gaps. Increased trafficking, the movement of illicit arms, and the strengthening of organised crime structures are all real possibilities. Even more concerning is the potential for external actors to use proxy networks within regions like ours to advance their strategic interests quietly and indirectly. We must also be mindful of migration pressures.

Global conflicts rarely remain contained. They create ripple effects: economic hardship, food insecurity, and instability in vulnerable regions that push people to move. Not always directly from the conflict zone, but through secondary displacement. The Caribbean, along with Central America and the southern United States, can become part of that migration pathway. That brings additional strain on border systems, social services, and national resources that are already under pressure.

Another area of concern is our financial systems. As tensions escalate, sanctions regimes will expand. Caribbean financial institutions operate within tightly regulated international frameworks, and that exposes them to heightened compliance risks. We may see increased scrutiny, further de-risking by global banks, and additional pressure on correspondent banking relationships. That is not a small matter for economies like ours that depend heavily on access to international financial systems. All of this points to one reality: the Iran crisis is not distant. It is a global disruptor with direct consequences for us. It brings into sharp focus some hard truths about what we must do moving forward.

Energy resilience can no longer be treated as a long-term aspiration. It is a national security priority. Diversification into renewable energy and deeper regional cooperation must accelerate. We cannot remain so exposed to external shocks. Our maritime domain awareness must be strengthened. That means investing in surveillance, intelligence-sharing, and coordinated regional responses to protect the lifelines of our economies.

There is also a compelling need for a more integrated regional security framework, one that allows Caribbean states to monitor global threats in real time, coordinate responses effectively, and bring together law enforcement and defence capabilities in a unified manner. Perhaps most importantly, our governments must be prepared for economic shocks. That means planning for fuel price spikes, ensuring food security, and building more resilient supply chains that can withstand global disruptions.

The defining question for Caribbean leadership is not whether we will be affected. That is already answered. The question is whether we are prepared. This moment demands strategic foresight, regional unity, and decisive leadership. Because in a world that is becoming increasingly uncertain, the Caribbean cannot afford to drift. We must anticipate, adapt, and act before the storm that is brewing on the horizon reaches our shores.

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Alcohol Misuse and Public Safety:
Emerging Crime and Safety Risks Among Young Adults in Trinidad and Tobago



Alcohol consumption is a well-established contributor to a wide spectrum of injuries and socially harmful outcomes, including road traffic accidents, falls, drowning, and suicide; it is also strongly associated with violence and abuse, including intimate partner violence and sexual assault. Furthermore, alcohol use increases exposure to sexual and reproductive health risks, including HIV transmission (World Health Organisation, 2024). In this context, alcohol extends beyond a personal health issue and becomes a matter of public safety, affecting individuals, communities, and national systems.

The burden of alcohol misuse is particularly evident among young adults. Globally, alcohol contributes to approximately 13% of deaths among individuals aged 20–39 years, making it one of the leading risk factors for premature mortality and disability in this age group (World Health Organisation, 2024). This demographic is also more likely to engage in concurrent substance use, including tobacco, e-cigarettes, marijuana, and other illicit drugs. The interaction between alcohol and these substances further amplifies risk, creating complex behavioural patterns associated with impaired judgment, increased aggression, and heightened vulnerability. Young adults aged 18–25 years represent the group at highest risk of developing alcohol use disorders and engaging in broader substance use behaviours (Lu et al., 2023; Pan American Health Organisation, 2020).

In February 2025, a cross-campus study involving undergraduate students aged 18–25 years at the University of Trinidad and Tobago examined patterns of alcohol consumption and their association with substance use practices. A total of 465 students were included in the final analysis. The study aimed to explore alcohol use behaviours and identify their broader social, public health and safety implications within this population.

Findings indicated that alcohol use is deeply embedded within this cohort. The vast majority of students reported prior exposure to alcohol, with approximately 92.9% indicating lifetime use and 55.2% reporting consumption within the past 30 days. A notable proportion, around 24.5% were engaged in patterns of alcohol misuse, including binge and heavy drinking. Screening using the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) further suggested that approximately 3.3% of students demonstrated levels of consumption consistent with moderate to severe alcohol use disorder, indicating potential dependence.

Importantly, social context emerged as a key determinant of alcohol use. Students who lived in environments where alcohol use was present, particularly within households or peer groups, were significantly more likely to report active consumption, with odds of use increasing among those with drinking household members (OR = 2.40) and close friends who consume alcohol (OR = 3.99). These findings highlight the influence of social networks in shaping behaviour and reinforce the notion that alcohol use among young adults is not solely an individual choice but one that is socially reinforced.

The study also identified clear patterns of polysubstance use. Alcohol consumption was frequently accompanied by the use of other substances, including e-cigarettes (18.6%), marijuana (12.7%), tobacco (9.9%), and illicit drugs (4.1%). Students who reported alcohol use were significantly more likely to engage in multiple substance use behaviours compared to non-drinkers ($\chi^2 = 41.962$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, individuals with higher-risk alcohol consumption patterns (AUDIT scores >7) demonstrated substantially elevated odds of engaging in other substance use practices, including being over six times more likely to use tobacco, e-cigarettes, marijuana and more than ten times more likely to engage in illicit drug use. These findings indicate a clustering of high-risk behaviours, amplifying both health risks and exposure to public safety threats.

Public Safety and Crime Implications

Beyond patterns of use, the findings raise important concerns regarding the intersection between alcohol consumption and public safety. Alcohol use was linked to a range of behaviours that have direct implications for crime, injury, and social disorder. High-risk sexual behaviour emerged as a significant concern. Approximately 20% of students reported engaging in unprotected sexual activity, while 1.5% reported experiencing sexually transmitted infections, and 0.9% indicated unintended pregnancies within the past year. Alcohol is recognised as an independent risk factor for unsafe sexual practices due to its effects on judgment, decision-making, and risk perception (Rehm et al., 2012). These behaviours not only contribute to adverse health outcomes but also increase vulnerability to exploitation and coercion, particularly in situations where consent may be impaired.

Alcohol use also contributed to socially disruptive and potentially criminal behaviours. Around 15.1% of students reported experiencing conflicts with partners, family members, or close friends, while 6.5% admitted involvement in fights, confrontations, or arguments with strangers. These patterns illustrate how alcohol can escalate interpersonal tensions and contribute to public disorder. Additionally, 4.5% of students reported incidents of property damage, and 1.1% indicated involvement with police or campus security, highlighting the legal consequences associated with alcohol-related misconduct.

Perhaps most concerning from a public safety standpoint is the prevalence of impaired driving. Approximately 15.5% of students reported driving under the influence of alcohol within the past 12 months. This behaviour constitutes a serious legal offence in Trinidad and Tobago and is strongly associated with road traffic collisions and fatalities (Gopaul et al., 2016). Alcohol-impaired driving presents a risk not only to the individual but also to passengers, pedestrians, and other road users, contributing to broader societal harms including injury, loss of life, and economic burden. Injuries associated with alcohol use further compound this burden. Approximately 5.6% of students reported sustaining injuries related to alcohol consumption, while 1.5% required emergency medical care. These outcomes demonstrate the tangible consequences of alcohol-related risk-taking. Beyond individual harm, such incidents place additional strain on emergency services and healthcare systems, reinforcing alcohol misuse as a significant public health and safety concern.

Polysubstance Use and Escalating Risk

A major concern arising from the study is the strong association between alcohol misuse and other forms of substance use. Individuals engaging in harmful alcohol consumption (AUDIT

score greater than 7) were significantly more likely to use tobacco, e-cigarettes, marijuana, and illicit drugs. In particular, the likelihood of illicit drug use was markedly elevated among those with higher-risk alcohol use patterns.

The findings also raise important legal considerations, particularly in the context of the decriminalisation of marijuana in Trinidad and Tobago. While limited possession is permitted, marijuana use was associated with an increased likelihood of engaging in other illicit drug practices, highlighting the need for careful policy and public health responses (Ramdass, 2024).

Broader Social and Economic Consequences

The implications of alcohol misuse extend beyond immediate safety concerns. Risky behaviours associated with alcohol use can disrupt educational attainment, reduce employment prospects, and contribute to financial instability. These factors are closely tied to broader social determinants of health and may increase long-term vulnerability to poverty.

In some circumstances, these outcomes may also intersect with criminal activity, either through direct involvement in illegal behaviours or through indirect pathways such as economic hardship and social instability. As young adults transition from education into the workforce, these risks have the potential to affect both individual life trajectories and broader societal outcomes.

Recommendations for Public Safety

Addressing alcohol-related risk among young adults requires a comprehensive approach that integrates public health and public safety strategies. Firstly, targeted education programmes should be implemented within university settings to increase awareness of the risks associated with alcohol misuse and polysubstance use. These initiatives should adopt interactive and accessible formats, including peer engagement and digital media, to maximise reach and impact.

Secondly, interventions should be strengthened during high-risk periods such as Carnival, when alcohol consumption tends to increase. Promoting safer drinking practices and encouraging alternatives to alcohol use are critical in reducing harm during these periods.

Thirdly, sexual health education should be expanded to address the link between alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour. Collaboration between university health services and the Ministry of Health can improve access to screening, prevention, and support services.

Finally, stronger public awareness campaigns on impaired driving are essential. Partnerships with organisations such as Arrive Alive TT and the Ministry of Homeland Security can enhance messaging around the legal and safety consequences of driving under the influence, using real-life examples to reinforce behavioural change.

Conclusion

Alcohol misuse among young adults represents a significant and multifaceted public safety concern in Trinidad and Tobago. Its association with risky sexual behaviour, impaired driving, interpersonal violence, and polysubstance use underscores its role as a catalyst for both individual harm and broader social risk. Addressing this issue requires coordinated action across public health, education, and law enforcement sectors. By recognising alcohol use as not only a health issue but also a critical public safety concern, stakeholders can develop more effective strategies to mitigate risk and promote safer communities.

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The Use of Force in Military Operations



"Force should be used only to the extent necessary to achieve a legitimate military or law enforcement objective while preserving human dignity and minimizing harm."
— United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials

The use of force in military operations remains one of the most sensitive and heavily regulated responsibilities entrusted to military personnel. Armed forces are empowered to defend the sovereignty of the State, protect citizens, and preserve national security. However, this authority must always be exercised within strict legal and ethical boundaries. Modern military operations, particularly those involving support to civilian law enforcement authorities, require a careful balance between operational effectiveness, public safety, and the protection of human rights.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force performs both traditional military functions and secondary law enforcement support roles. Under the Defence Act Chap. 14:01, the primary responsibility of the Defence Force is the defence of the nation. Nevertheless, the TTDF may also be called upon to assist civil authorities through "Aid to the Civil Power" operations, during which military personnel support the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service in maintaining law and public order. In these circumstances, personnel operate under clearly established Rules of Engagement (RoE) and Rules on the Use of Force (RUF), which govern when, where, and how force may lawfully be applied.

Rules of Engagement are directives issued by competent military authority that define the circumstances and limitations under which military personnel may initiate or continue combat operations. Rules on the Use of Force, by contrast, generally apply during domestic or law enforcement-related operations and focus on the lawful application of force in peacetime environments. The distinction between RoE and RUF depends primarily on the nature of the mission. Both frameworks are critical because they provide operational guidance while ensuring compliance with domestic law, international law, and accepted ethical standards.

International legal principles significantly influence modern military use of force policies. Two of the most influential instruments are the United Nations *Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials* (1979) and the *Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials* (1990). These instruments establish that force should only be used when absolutely necessary and only to the extent required to achieve a lawful objective. They further encourage the use of non-violent methods before resorting to force or firearms. According to these principles, firearms should only be employed where there is an imminent threat of death or serious injury and where lesser measures would be ineffective.

Another major legal standard governing the use of force is the principle of "objective reasonableness," established in the landmark United States Supreme Court case *Graham v. Connor* (1989). The Court held that the reasonableness of force must be assessed from the perspective of a reasonable officer on the scene rather than with the benefit of hindsight. This principle recognizes that military and law enforcement personnel are often required to make split-second decisions in tense, uncertain, and rapidly evolving situations. Factors such as the severity of the threat, the number of individuals involved, the presence of weapons, environmental conditions, and the risk posed to civilians must all be considered when determining whether the level of force used was reasonable in the circumstances.

Closely linked to reasonableness is the principle of proportionality. Proportionality requires that the level of force used must not exceed what is necessary to effectively counter a threat or achieve a lawful objective. Military personnel are therefore expected to apply the minimum force required to bring a situation under control. For example, where verbal commands or physical restraint are sufficient to resolve an incident, the use of lethal force would likely be considered excessive and unlawful. During operations such as the 2009 Fifth Summit of the Americas, the TTDF's Rules of Engagement emphasized that all force used must remain both reasonable and proportionate to the threat encountered.

The concept of escalation of force further reinforces this principle. Military personnel are trained to respond progressively based on the degree of resistance or threat presented. The TTDF Aide Memoir Direction for Opening Fire outlines a graduated force continuum beginning with officer presence and verbal commands, followed by soft control techniques, hard control measures, intermediate weapons, and ultimately lethal force where absolutely necessary. This structured approach helps prevent arbitrary or excessive use of force while promoting professionalism and restraint.

Self-defence also remains a legally recognized justification for the use of force. Both international law and the courts of Trinidad and Tobago recognize that individuals may use reasonable force to defend themselves or others from unlawful attack. In *Fabien La Roche v. The State* and *Stephen Robinson v. The State,* the courts acknowledged that defensive actions must be reasonably necessary and proportionate to the threat faced. Importantly, the courts also recognized that persons confronted with sudden danger may not be able to precisely measure the exact degree of force required in a moment of crisis. Nevertheless, any defensive action must still remain within objectively reasonable limits.

Accountability and training are critical to the lawful use of force in military operations. Military organizations must properly document and investigate all incidents involving force to ensure transparency, protect human rights, and maintain public confidence. The Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force strengthened accountability through standardized reporting procedures and continuous training in Rules of Engagement, de-escalation, firearms safety, and human rights obligations. International partnerships with organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United States Southern Command

have further enhanced professional development and operational standards.

In conclusion, the use of force in military operations is governed by a complex framework of domestic legislation, international standards, operational directives, and ethical responsibilities. Military personnel must exercise force lawfully, proportionately, and only when necessary. The principles of necessity, proportionality, accountability, and objective reasonableness are fundamental to preserving the legitimacy of military operations and protecting human rights. As military organizations continue to support domestic security and law enforcement operations, adherence to these principles remains critical for maintaining public trust, operational effectiveness, and the rule of law.

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System Persistence in Trinidad and Tobago: Modelling Gang Violence as a Dynamic System



Gang violence in Trinidad and Tobago remains one of the country's most difficult and persistent public safety problems. This article examines gang violence as a social and behavioural system that has become durable because the system of reinforcing and balancing mechanisms that generate violence is repeatedly left in place. To do so, the concepts of attractors and basins are utilised from dynamic systems theory. An "attractor", in this context, may be understood as a recurring high-violence state to which the system tends to return. A "basin of attraction" refers to the set of conditions from which the system is pulled back into that state after disturbance (extrinsic shock).

Baird et al.'s (2023) description of Trinidad and Tobago as a "weapons sink" provides a useful base for this article's approach. It redirects attention from the transit of illicit commodities to what remains within the domestic environment. Drugs may pass through the country, but firearms remain, circulate and accumulate. Firearms do not merely increase the lethality of disputes. Over time, they change the operating logic of gang life itself. They shape ideas of protection, readiness, reputation and survival. They also encourage an arms-race dynamic, where carrying or acquiring a firearm comes to be seen as rational because rivals are assumed to be armed. As more firearms circulate, ordinary disputes carry a greater risk of becoming lethal, providing the force-reinforcing loop. The increased lethality then produces fear, which reduces residents' willingness to cooperate with formal authorities. Once cooperation weakens, investigations become more difficult, witnesses become less available, and cases are less likely to move smoothly through the justice system. In that environment, violence may still carry risk for the offender, but not always a clear expectation of consequence. The conditions that should interrupt violence are therefore weakened, allowing the system to reproduce itself.

Retaliation is a second reinforcing mechanism. In gang-affected communities, a shooting is rarely treated as a closed event. It may be read as disrespect, territorial intrusion, betrayal, unpaid debt, or a test of group strength. The pressure to respond is often driven by fear, reputation, grief, anger and the belief that failure to retaliate invites further attack. This is where the loop can still be broken: in the hours and days after the initial violence, before revenge hardens into expectation. Credible messengers, rapid intelligence, family and community mediation, victim/witness protection, visible but disciplined policing, and immediate disruption of known conflict actors can reduce the perceived need for retaliation. Once revenge becomes socially required, prevention becomes much harder.

Governance must also be part of the analysis. Gangs in Trinidad and Tobago are not always experienced only as external threats to otherwise stable communities. In some areas, they punish, protect, distribute resources, settle disputes and impose a rough form of order, especially where residents perceive the state as absent, uneven or unwilling to invest in communities already labelled as crime spaces. This does not amount to democratic legitimacy, but it does create social embeddedness and, in some cases, garrison-like conditions. It can also weaken confidence in official authority, particularly where state actors appear to negotiate with gangs or rely on them as intermediaries in areas they influence. Pawelz's work on gangs and politics is useful here because it draws attention to patronage, welfare brokerage and political-criminal entanglement (2020). Adams et al. (2021) similarly show how gangs shape everyday community life through intimidation, domination and retaliation. This complicates both policing and prevention: residents may fear gangs and still depend on them, while calculating, often rationally, that silence is safer than cooperation.

Smith and Haines' study of murder during COVID-19 gives this systems approach a stronger empirical base (2022). Their analysis did not simply show that murders fell under restrictions; it showed that the movement was uneven, classification-specific and not proportionate to changes in stringency or mobility. More importantly, the mathematical testing pointed to a non-linear structure in the murder series, with the neural network model outperforming the linear Bayesian time-series model. That matters because it suggests that murder rates in Trinidad and Tobago do not just rise or fall in a straight line in response to curfews, lockdowns or police surges. They appear to cycle around deeper system conditions. The earlier State of Emergency produced a sharp fall, but the system later moved back toward prior murder levels; COVID-19 produced another disruption, but again in ways shaped by what was already happening in the series. This reinforces the relevance of attractors and basins. Violence may be pulled back toward familiar levels when the underlying conditions remain intact, while different initial conditions can push the system into a temporary or more durable new phase. The practical lesson is that disruption is not the same as transformation. Lasting change requires altering the system conditions that make violent recurrence probable.

The policy implications are direct. Trinidad and Tobago cannot rely solely on episodic suppression, because temporary pressure does not necessarily change the conditions that pull the violence system back toward its familiar high-murder state. Enforcement remains necessary, particularly against firearms trafficking, armed offenders and corrupt facilitation, but enforcement that begins only after a killing has already occurred is structurally late. A more defensible strategy would seek to alter the initial conditions from which violence emerges: firearm availability, retaliatory expectations, low clearance confidence, witness fear, gang brokerage, youth exposure to violent networks, and uneven access to state protection and services. From a dynamic systems perspective, even relatively small changes can matter when they are made early, sustained, and targeted at the right pressure points. Better firearms tracing, port and parcel interdiction, intelligence-led targeting, homicide clearance, witness protection, anti-corruption safeguards, credible-messenger intervention and community-level service delivery should therefore not be treated as separate policy lines. They are interacting levers within the same violence system. The aim is not only to suppress violence temporarily, but to shift the system far enough that it becomes less likely to reorganise around the previous basin of attraction.

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Author's Note - The opinions expressed here are solely my own and do not reflect the views or policies of any current or previous organization(s) with which I am or have been affiliated.

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UTT ICPS-ONTARIO TECH UNIVERSITY, CANADA EXPAND COLLABORATION



The UTT's Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) was pleased to host Professor Wesley Crichlow of the Faculty of Social Science and Humanities at Ontario Tech University, Canada from March 18-19, 2026. During this time, Professor Crichlow met with Professor Selwyn Cudjoe, Chairman of the UTT Board of Governors and Professor Rean Maharaj, UTT President (Ag), as well as the academic staff at the ICPS where discussions were held regarding the expansion of joint research work, student/staff exchanges, and related collaborative efforts. He also delivered a Guest Lecture to current ICPS student cohorts and Alumni. Some photo highlights from Professor Crichlow's visit:





UTT & ICPS at
NNY (Nestle Needs YOUth) EmpowerHER – A Speed Mentoring Experience





The UTT was invited to send student representatives to participate in the NNY (Nestle Needs YOUth) EmpowerHER Mentoring Experience. This event was held on May 27, 2026 at the Nestle Head Office, Valsayn, and is designed to create an avenue where women in various leadership positions interact with employees and external youth partners through mentoring conversations. Representing the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) was Ms. Aanushka Mungal. She reports: "Attending the EmpowerHer mentorship event was a truly an exciting experience and a powerful reminder of the impact created when women are given spaces to connect, inspire, and uplift one another. The atmosphere in the room was filled with strength and purpose, where meaningful conversations took place openly and authentically. Interacting with both the mentors and fellow students created valuable connections and networks that will continue to shape not only our individual futures, but the future of women collectively. One of the most inspiring aspects of the programme was hearing about the diverse experiences shared by the mentors. Women from different careers, lifestyles, and backgrounds spoke with honesty, resilience, and confidence, reminding us that success does not follow one path. Their advocacy for inclusivity, disability awareness, and conversations surrounding gender based violence further emphasized the importance of creating a society where every woman feels seen, heard, and empowered. The programme left me feeling inspired, reassured, and more confident in the belief that women do not have to limit their ambitions. We are capable of pursuing every aspiration while continuing to lead, grow, and create meaningful change."

Report by
Aanushka Mungal
(Year 3, Bachelor of Applied Science in Criminology and Public Safety)

As part of its continuing outreach/public education activities, the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS), together with colleagues at the Student Recruitment Unit (SRU) and other UTT units, attended Parvati Girls Hindu College's Career Fair on March 26, 2026; the Ministry of Culture and Community Development's Community Development Series on April 11, 2026, and the Rydeus Parent Support Group's Youth Symposium on April 25, 2026:

Parvati Girls Hindu College's Career Fair





Photos show Dr Linda Mohammed, Assistant Professor & Programme Leader, and Dr. Natasha Dass-Mahabir, Assistant Professor of the ICPS (at right respectively), on site at Parvati Girls Hindu College interacting with students and taking questions about our programmes.

Ministry of Culture and Community Development's Community Development Series



Dr. Keron Ganpat (at right), Instructor II represented the ICPS at the Ministry of Culture and Community Development's Community Development Series which took place at the MIC-IT Penal Tech Centre.

Rydeus Parent Support Group's Youth Symposium







Dr. Chantelle Cummings Senior Instructor at the ICPS (at left) speaks with visitors to our booth, and Dr. Wendell Lewis, Superintendent, YTRC (at left), while Mr. Kurt Callender of the Trinidad and Tobago Service and ICPS Alumni (at centre) shares a point of view with ICPS Senior Instructor Vidya Lall (at left) and Dr. Cummings (at right).

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UTT CRIMINOLOGY STUDENT COPS CANADA SCHOLARSHIP



Ryon Ramsey

The Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) is extremely delighted to announce that one of our students has been awarded the prestigious ELAP-CANADA Scholarship for 2026. Mr. Ryon Ramsey is a final year student enrolled in the Bachelor of Applied Science (B.A.Sc.) in Criminology and Public Safety Programme at the ICPS, and will undertake a study/exchange Semester 1 (August to December 2026) at the Ontario Tech University (O.T.U.) located in Oshawa, Canada. His local host will be Professor Wesley Crichlow at the Criminology and Justice Department, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, O.T.U. Mr. Ramsey will return to the UTT ICPS to complete Semester 2 of his final year during the January to April 2027 period.

The Government of Canada in 2009 announced the Emerging Leaders in the Americas Programme (ELAP) to support the development of human capital and the next generation of leaders in the Americas, while extending the linkages between post-secondary institutions in Canada, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The ELAP scholarships are facilitated through institutional collaborations and student exchange agreements between post-secondary institutions in Canada and their partners in eligible countries worldwide.

Mr. Ramsey is an excellent example of the dedicated work/study student. He is focused, balances his time, and has been consistent in his academic output. He holds the rank of Senior Aircraftsman, Trinidad and Tobago Air Guard (TTAG), which is the Aerial Warfare and Search and Rescue Branch of the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force (TTDF), for the past fourteen years. He is also an avid sportsman, and father to a ten year old daughter. He says *"Throughout my career, I have remained committed to serving my country with professionalism, discipline, and dedication. I believe in lifelong learning and personal development. In addition to completing the B.A.Sc. soon at the UTT ICPS, I also hold a Diploma in Information and Communication Technology from the University of Cambridge, which has strengthened my technical knowledge and skills for my job. I am a proud resident of Manzanilla, serving my community as a member of the St. Francis of Assisi Baptist Church, volunteering and working with youths in a variety of sporting activities to help them focus, build discipline and keep mentally sharp. I am grateful for this ELAP-CANADA scholarship to study abroad at the Ontario Tech University, and to bring back new knowledge and skills which will help contribute to the safety and security of my country Trinidad and Tobago."*

The UTT Institute of Criminology and Public Safety extends congratulations to Mr. Ramsey on receiving this 2026 ELAP-CANADA scholarship, and we wish him a most successful semester at the Ontario Tech University!

RAYNEL TAYLOR-BABB



ICPS Alumni Mrs. Raynel Taylor-Babb received a most coveted award earlier this year. She says: *"**I am truly honored and grateful to receive my Long Service Medal from Her Excellency the President of Trinidad and Tobago in recognition of fourteen years of service at the Ministry of Homeland (formerly National) Security. This achievement recognizes my dedication, hard work, and commitment throughout my career. My studies at the Institute of Criminology and Public Safety (ICPS) at the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) played an important role in advancing my professional growth and helped shape the person I am today. To young persons reading my story, stay focused, believe in yourself, and never stop striving for your goals. Hard work and perseverance always pay off."***

RICHARD COOPER

Another of our esteemed ICPS Alumni, Mr. Richard Cooper obtained yet another promotion at the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS). He says: ***"I was transferred out of the Special Branch, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) in April 2026 after more than twenty-five years. By May 2026, I was appointed to act as an Inspector of Police in the North Eastern Division. Change is not the enemy it is an opportunity to grow, learn and evolve. The skills and confidence that I acquired during my time at the University of Trinidad and Tobago's (UTT) Institute of Criminology and Public Safety, not only helped me in attaining my Bachelor of Applied Science (B.A.Sc.) degree in Criminology and Public Safety, but it also prepared me to meet my challenges head on and to have the skills needed for this ever evolving job."***



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SPOTLIGHT ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

A Quarterly Newsletter by

THE INSTITUTE OF CRIMINOLOGY AND PUBLIC SAFETY (ICPS)

Vol 7. No. 2. March 2027

The ICPS at UTT launched its online quarterly newsletter entitled ***Spotlight on Crime and Public Safety*** in December, 2020. Interdisciplinary in nature, it provides a space for local, regional and international academics, researchers, professionals, policymakers, students and stakeholders from diverse fields to share their views. Each issue features enlightening articles, commentaries, important updates, announcements and much more. We also encourage the submission of creative efforts (for example, poems, photography, posters, quotes and the like). Articles/Commentaries should be between 800-1,000 words in length. References or Bibliographies should be prepared using the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th Edition)*. We are now inviting submissions for our March 2027 open-themed issue.

OPEN-THEMED ISSUE

- Submission Route: ✉ icpsnewsletter@utt.edu.tt
- Submission Deadline: **February 15th, 2027**
- Scheduled Publication Date: **March 15th, 2027**

Upcoming Issue:
Special Student Issue - September 2026 | Special Staff Issue - December 2026

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



VISIT https://utt.edu.tt/icps/categories/icps-newsletters

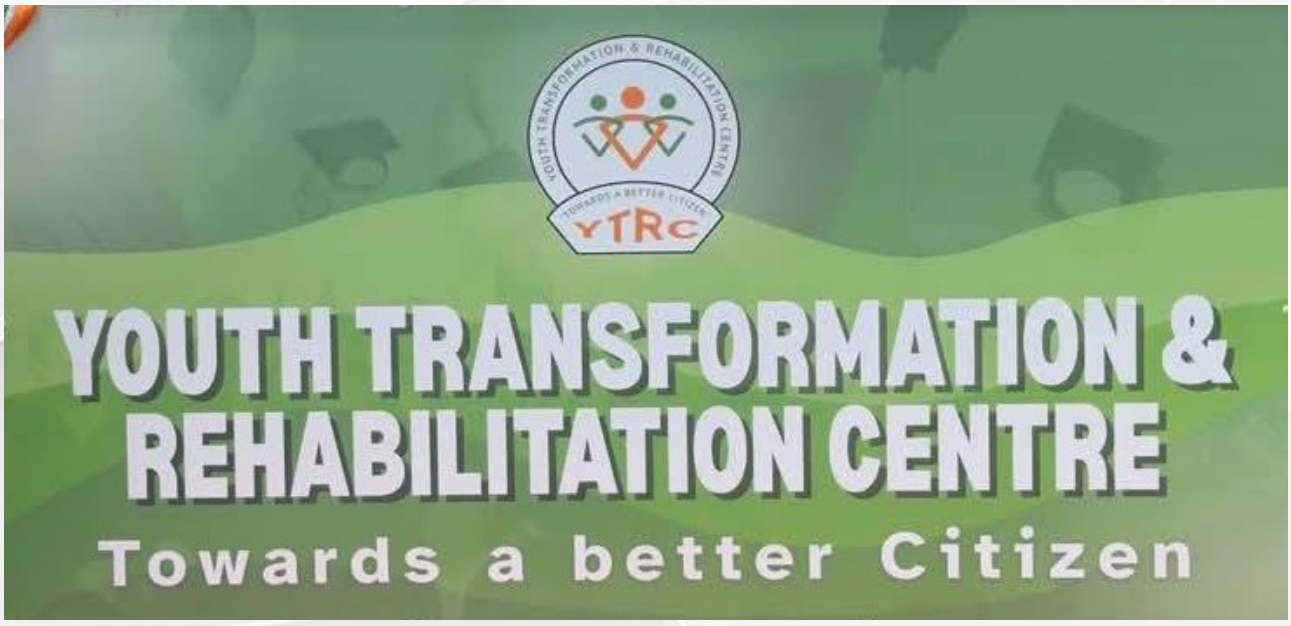
TO VIEW ALL ISSUES OF **SPOTLIGHT** ON CRIME AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Did you know that the Youth Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre (YTRC) (formerly the Youth Training Centre) turns 100 years old in 2026?

In a recent event held to observe this milestone, Mr. Carlos Corraspe, Commissioner of Prisons said: ***"At YTRC and YTRCF, we are afforded the opportunity to save lives — lives that, through their circumstances, demonstrate the need for guidance and intervention. When we successfully rehabilitate an adult offender, we protect our society from potential harm. When that intervention occurs at the youth level, the positive impact on our nation is immeasurable. Touching even a single life represents a victory, one with generational implications." Dr. Wendell Lewis, Superintendent of the Youth Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre points out: "The history of the Youth Transformation and Rehabilitation Centre (YTRC) reflects the evolution of the juvenile justice system in Trinidad and Tobago. The YTRC's transformation from a detention-focused institution to a rehabilitation-oriented centre mirrors the shifts in Trinidad and Tobago's approach to juvenile justice....including a growing recognition of the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration for young offenders."***

Sources:
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For further information, view:
https://www.ttprisons.com/



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The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago recently tabled a suite of important bills for debate. See, for example, the following for your own review and discussions:

- **The Criminal Records (Rehabilitation of Offenders) Bill, 2026**
  An Act to make provision for certain criminal convictions of offenders to become spent, to be expunged from the record and for other related matters.
  https://www.ttparliament.org/publication/the-criminal-records-rehabilitation-of-offenders-bill-2026/

- **The Parole Bill, 2026**
  An Act to provide for a system of parole and related matters
  https://www.ttparliament.org/publication/the-parole-bill-2026/

- **The Law Reform (Zones of Special Operations) (Special Security and Community Development Measures) Bill, 2026**
  AN ACT to provide for special measures for upholding and preserving the rule of law, public order, citizen security and public safety within certain geographically defined areas of Trinidad and Tobago, and for other related matters.
  https://www.ttparliament.org/publication/the-law-reform-zones-of-special-operations-special-security-and-community-development-measures-bill-2026/

Sources:

https://www.facebook.com/PrisonServicett/posts/the-youth-transformation-and-rehabilitation-centre-ytrc-commemorated-a-significa/1374936397998316/

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Source: https://www.ttparliament.org/category/photo-gallery/



Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_Trinidad_and_Tobago

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Friday June 26, 2026

UTT Chaguanas Campus, Soldado Room

10:30a.m. - 11:30a.m.

To recognize and celebrate the outstanding achievements of ICPS students enrolled in our Certificate, Diploma, and Bachelor of Applied Science (BASc) programmes, including recognition for the Best Group Research Project (Year 3, BASc), and other notable accomplishments demonstrated throughout the academic year.

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Student Poster: How Terrorist Groups Recruit
by Anthony Allsop, Avionne Maule, Kavir Khadan, Fimileya Sookram and Christian Chandree
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