

Second Session Thirteenth Parliament Republic of
Trinidad and Tobago



REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

Act No. 21 of 2026

[L.S.]

AN ACT to provide for the establishment of policing districts, the conduct of special operations to combat criminality in those districts and related matters

[Assented to 5th October, 2026]

ENACTED by the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago as Enactment follows:

PART I
PRELIMINARY

1. This Act may be cited as the Special Operations Short title Act, 2026.

Commencement

2. This Act comes into operation on such date as is fixed by the President by Proclamation.

Interpretation

3. In this Act—

“Chief of Defence Staff” means the person holding or acting in the office of Chief of Defence Staff of the Defence Force;

“Chief Secretary” means the Chief Secretary of the Tobago House of Assembly;

“closed area” means an area declared as a closed area under section 11 and includes an area within a cordon;

“Commissioner” means the person holding or acting in the office of Commissioner of Police;

“cordon” means a cordon established in a closed area under section 13;

“Defence Force” means the Trinidad and Tobago Defence Force established under the Defence Act;

Chap. 14:01

“district” means a policing district specified in the Schedule;

Schedule

“gang” has the meaning assigned to it in the Anti-Gang Act, 2021;

Act No. 4 of 2021

“gang-related activity” has the meaning assigned to it in the Anti-Gang Act, 2021;

“Minister” means the Minister with responsibility for the Police Service;

“police officer” means a member of the Police Service or a person to whom a precept has been issued under the Supplemental Police Act;

Chap. 15:02

“Police Service” means the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service established under the Police Service Act, the Municipal Police Service

Chap. 15:01

within the meaning of Part III of the
Municipal Corporations Act and the Special Chap. 25:04
Reserve Police established under the
Special Reserve Police Act; Chap. 15:03

“weapon” has the meaning assigned to it in
section 2 of the Anti-Terrorism Act. Chap. 12:07

PART II

POLICING DISTRICTS

4. (1) For the purposes of this Act, Trinidad and Establishment of
policing districts
Tobago is divided into the policing districts specified in
the Schedule. Schedule

(2) In the island of Trinidad, a district shall
comprise one or more Municipalities under the
Municipal Corporations Act.

(3) The island of Tobago shall be one district.

(4) Subject to subsections (2) and (3), the Minister
may, by Order subject to negative resolution of
Parliament, amend the Schedule.

PART III

ADMINISTRATION OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS

5. (1) Subject to subsections (2), (3) and (4), Heads of Special
Operations
the Commissioner shall, in respect of each district,
designate a police officer, not below the rank of
Superintendent, to be the Head of Special Operations
who shall be responsible for, and in charge of, the
conduct of special operations within that district.

(2) Before the Commissioner designates a police
officer under subsection (1), he shall consult with the
Prime Minister.

(3) A police officer shall not be designated under
subsection (1) if the Prime Minister, after consultation
with the Minister, the Minister with responsibility for
defence and the Chief of Defence Staff, signifies to the
Commissioner his objection to the designation of that
police officer.

(4) A Head of Special Operations and persons assigned under section 6 shall be police officers who are trained in—

- (a) human rights;
- (b) use of force;
- (c) community engagement; and
- (d) conflict de-escalation.

Assignment of police officers for special operations

6. Subject to section 5(4), the Commissioner shall assign to each Head of Special Operations such police officers as he considers fit and proper to participate in special operations under this Act.

Military assistance in support of special operations

7. (1) Subject to subsections (2), (3) and (5), the Chief of Defence Staff shall, in respect of each district, designate a member of the Defence Force, not below the rank of Major, to be the Head of Military Assistance who shall be responsible for, and in charge of, the provision of military assistance in support of the conduct of special operations within that district in any case in which such assistance is—

- (a) in the opinion of the Commissioner, required for the purposes of conducting special operations in that district; and
- (b) requested by the Commissioner.

(2) Before the Chief of Defence Staff designates a person under subsection (1), he shall consult with the Prime Minister.

(3) A person shall not be designated under subsection (1) if the Prime Minister, after consultation with the Minister, the Minister with responsibility for defence and the Commissioner, signifies to the Chief of Defence Staff his objection to the designation of that person.

(4) Subject to subsection (5), the Chief of Defence Staff shall assign to each Head of Military Assistance such members of the Defence Force as he considers fit

and proper to provide military assistance in support of the conduct of special operations under this Act.

(5) A Head of Military Assistance and persons assigned under subsection (4) shall be members of the Defence Force who are trained in—

- (a) human rights;
- (b) use of force;
- (c) community engagement; and
- (d) conflict de-escalation.

8. (1) A Head of Special Operations shall, within seven days after the end of each month, submit to the Commissioner a report of the special operations conducted by him and the Commissioner shall forward a copy of the report to the Prime Minister, the Minister and the Minister with responsibility for defence, within three days after the receipt of the report.

(2) A report under subsection (1) shall address such matters and contain such information as may be determined by the Prime Minister in writing, after consultation with the Minister, the Minister with responsibility for defence and the Commissioner.

(3) A Head of Military Assistance shall, within seven days after the end of each month, submit to the Chief of Defence Staff a report of any military assistance provided under his command and the Chief of Defence Staff shall forward a copy of the report to the Prime Minister, the Minister and the Minister with responsibility for defence, within three days after the receipt of the report.

(4) A report under subsection (1) shall address such matters and contain such information as may be determined by the Prime Minister in writing, after consultation with the Minister, the Minister with responsibility for defence and the Chief of Defence Staff.

(5) A person who fails to comply with subsection (1), (2), (3) or (4) is liable to disciplinary action.

(6) The Prime Minister shall, within three months after the end of each calendar year, cause an annual report on the conduct of special operations and the provision of military assistance under this Act during that calendar year to be laid in Parliament.

Protocols and
procedures

9. (1) The Commissioner and the Chief of Defence Staff shall establish joint protocols with respect to collaboration and cooperation between police officers and members of the Defence Force in the conduct of special operations and the provision of military assistance under this Act, including the method by which the identity of a police officer or a member of the Defence Force may be ascertained.

(2) The Commissioner shall, after consultation with the Chief of Defence Staff, establish standard operating procedures for the conduct of special operations by police officers under the Act.

(3) The Chief of Defence Staff shall, after consultation with the Commissioner, establish standard operating procedures for the provision of military assistance by members of the Defence Force under this Act.

(4) A police officer or a member of the Defence Force who fails to comply with any protocol or standard operating procedure established under this section is liable to disciplinary action.

Special operations in
policing districts

10. (1) Subject to the provisions of Part IV, the Head of Special Operations of a district may conduct special operations in that district with or without the assistance of the Defence Force.

(2) Where special operations are conducted under subsection (1), the police officers involved in the special

operation shall have all such rights, powers, authority, privileges and immunities, and shall be liable to all such duties and responsibilities, as any constable duly appointed has or is subject or liable to, or may have or be subject or liable to under the Police Service Act.

PART IV

SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN CLOSED AREAS

11. (1) The President may, by Order subject to ^{Declaration of closed areas} negative resolution of the House of Representatives, declare any area within a district to be a closed area, where the President is satisfied, on reasonable grounds, that public safety and peace in that area is threatened—

(a) by—

- (i) escalating rates of violent crime, homicide, shootings, kidnappings or gang-related activity in that area;
- (ii) the prevalence of illegal firearms or ammunition, or the unlawful presence of other weapons or explosives, in that area; or
- (iii) the control or intimidation, or the attempted control or intimidation, of a local community by a gang in that area; and

(b) by the inability of ordinary law enforcement measures to maintain or restore public safety and peace in that area.

(2) Within seven days of the making of an Order under subsection (1), the President shall deliver to the Speaker for presentation to the House of Representatives, a statement setting out the specific grounds on which the decision to make the Order was based.

(3) Notwithstanding section 75 of the Interpretation Act but subject to subsection (4), a resolution to annul an Order under subsection (1) may be passed by the House of Representatives at any time while the Order is in force.

(4) Motions for a resolution under subsection (3) shall not be brought within three months of each other.

(5) The President may revoke an Order under subsection (1) at any time.

(6) A Head of Special Operations may cause a closed area to be closed by means of barriers, roadblocks or otherwise.

Permits to enter and
leave closed areas

12. (1) Subject to subsection (2), no person shall enter or leave a closed area without a permit issued under this section.

(2) Subsection (1) shall not apply to—

- (a) the President, the Prime Minister, a Member of Cabinet, a Member of Parliament, a Member of the Tobago House of Assembly or a Member of a Municipal Council;
- (b) the Chief Justice or a Judge of the Supreme Court;
- (c) the Commissioner or the Chief of Defence Staff;
- (d) the Head of Special Operations, or the Head of Military Assistance, responsible for the closed area; or
- (e) a police officer, or a member of the Defence Force, when on duty or proceeding to or from duty.

(3) The Commissioner may, in relation to a closed area, issue a permit, by notice published in the *Gazette*, granting permission for persons of any class or category

specified in the notice to enter or leave the closed area during such times and subject to such conditions or restrictions as are specified in the notice.

(4) The Commissioner, the Chief of Defence Staff, or a Head of Special Operations or a Head of Military Assistance in relation to a closed area for which he is responsible, may issue a permit granting permission for any person to enter or leave a closed area during such times and subject to such conditions or restrictions as are specified in the permit.

(5) The Commissioner may, by notice published in the *Gazette*, suspend or cancel a permit issued under subsection (3) or (4).

(6) A person who issued a permit under subsection (4) may, at any time, suspend or cancel the permit by notifying the permit-holder in writing, by electronic or other means, of the suspension or cancellation, as the case may be.

(7) A person who—

(a) contravenes subsection (1); or

(b) fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a condition or restriction specified in a permit issued under this section,

commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of fifty thousand dollars and imprisonment for one year.

13. (1) A Head of Special Operations may, for the purposes of the conduct of a special operation in a closed area, establish a cordon around or in the closed area by means of barriers, roadblocks or otherwise.

Power to establish
cordons around or in
closed areas

(2) Where a cordon is established under subsection (1), the Head of Special Operations shall immediately cause notice of the establishment of the cordon to be—

(a) published by any means; and

- (b) displayed in several conspicuous locations in and around the cordon,

so as to ensure that the notice is brought to the attention of persons within the cordon and persons seeking to enter the area within the cordon.

(3) A notice under subsection (2) shall specify the boundaries of the area within the cordon and the requirements to be complied with by persons within the cordon, persons seeking to enter the area within the cordon, and other persons in relation to the cordon.

(4) A notice under subsection (2) shall—

- (a) be in such form as the Commissioner may approve; and
- (b) be published in the *Gazette* within three days after the date of its issuance.

(5) Subject to subsection (6), no person shall enter or leave an area within a cordon without a permit issued under this section.

(6) Subsection (5) shall not apply to the persons specified in section 12(2).

(7) The Commissioner may, in relation to an area within a cordon, issue a permit, by notice published in the *Gazette*, granting permission for persons of any class or category specified in the notice to enter or leave the area during such times and subject to such conditions or restrictions as are specified in the notice.

(8) The Commissioner, the Chief of Defence Staff, or a Head of Special Operations or a Head of Military Assistance in relation to an area within a cordon for which he is responsible, may issue a permit granting permission for any person to enter or leave the area during such times and subject to such conditions or restrictions as are specified in the permit.

(9) The Commissioner may, by notice published in the *Gazette*, suspend or cancel a permit issued under subsection (7) or (8).

(10) A person who issued a permit under subsection (8) may, at any time, suspend or cancel the permit by notifying the permit-holder in writing, by electronic or other means, of the suspension or cancellation, as the case may be.

(11) A person who—

- (a) contravenes subsection (5); or
- (b) fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a condition or restriction specified in a permit issued under this section,

commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of fifty thousand dollars and imprisonment for one year.

14. (1) For the purposes of the conduct of a special operation in a closed area, the President may, by Order subject to negative resolution of the House of Representatives, impose in the area, a curfew requiring persons within the area to remain in their premises during specified hours, unless otherwise authorised by the Order or a permit issued under this section.

Power to impose
curfews in closed
areas

(2) An Order under subsection (1) shall not apply to—

- (a) the President, the Prime Minister, a Member of Cabinet, a Member of Parliament, a Member of the Tobago House of Assembly or a Member of a Municipal Council;
- (b) the Chief Justice or a Judge of the Supreme Court;
- (c) the Commissioner or the Chief of Defence Staff;
- (d) the Head of Special Operations, or the Head of Military Assistance, responsible for the closed area; or
- (e) a police officer, or a member of the Defence Force, when on duty or proceeding to or from duty.

(3) Notwithstanding section 75 of the Interpretation Act but subject to subsection (4), a resolution to annul an Order under subsection (1) may be passed by the House of Representatives at any time while the Order is in force.

(4) Motions for a resolution under subsection (3) shall not be brought within three months of each other.

(5) The President may revoke an Order under subsection (1) at any time.

(6) The Commissioner may, in relation to a curfew, issue a permit, by notice published in the *Gazette*, granting permission for persons of any class or category specified in the notice to be outside their premises during such times and subject to such conditions or restrictions as are specified in the notice.

(7) The Commissioner, the Chief of Defence Staff, or a Head of Special Operations or a Head of Military Assistance in relation to an area for which he is responsible, may issue a permit granting permission for any person to be outside his premises during such times and subject to such conditions or restrictions as are specified in the permit.

(8) The Commissioner may, by notice published in the *Gazette*, suspend or cancel a permit issued under subsection (6) or (7).

(9) A person who issued a permit under subsection (7) may, at any time, suspend or cancel the permit by notifying the permit-holder in writing, by electronic or other means, of the suspension or cancellation, as the case may be.

(10) A person who—

(a) contravenes an Order under subsection (1);
or

(b) fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a condition or restriction specified in a permit issued under this section,

commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of fifty thousand dollars and imprisonment for one year.

15. (1) For the purposes of the conduct of a special Search and seizure operation in a closed area, a police officer may search any place, vehicle or person within the closed area, without a warrant, upon reasonable suspicion that an offence is in the course of being committed, has been committed or is about to be committed.

(2) Where a search of any place, vehicle or person is being undertaken, it shall be the duty of the police officer in charge of the search to take such steps as are reasonably practicable in the circumstances to ensure—

- (a) the attendance, at all stages of the search, of the owner, occupier or person in possession of the place or vehicle or, as the case may be, the agent of the owner, occupier or person in possession of the place or vehicle;
- (b) that the owner, occupier or person in possession of the place or vehicle or, as the case may be, the agent of the owner, occupier or person in possession of the place or vehicle is afforded every opportunity to observe everything done in relation to the search; and
- (c) that a female person is searched by a female police officer.

(3) A police officer, may in connection with a search, seize any vehicle, article or document that will assist in preventing or controlling a public disorder or that is likely to be of substantial value, whether or not by itself, to the investigation of any offence.

(4) A police officer shall not seize—

- (a) any tool of a lawful trade or business; or
- (b) any article or document that is subject to legal professional privilege.

(5) The police officer in charge of a search shall take such steps as are necessary to ensure that—

- (a) a list is compiled of all vehicles, articles or documents seized; and
- (b) a receipt of any vehicle, article or document, as the case may be, which is included in the list, is given to the owner or person in possession of that vehicle, article or document or the agent of the owner or person in possession of the vehicle, article or document as soon as possible.

Custody or disposal
of seized vehicles,
articles or documents

16. (1) Any vehicle, article or document seized under section 15 shall be secured in such place and in the custody of such person as the Commissioner may approve pending determination of any examination, investigation, trial or enquiry.

(2) If anything seized is perishable, it shall be disposed of in such manner as may be approved by the Commissioner.

(3) Where the Commissioner has reasonable grounds to believe that any vehicle, article or document seized will no longer assist in preventing or controlling public disorder or is no longer of evidential value in any criminal proceedings arising from, or in connection with, a search, he shall immediately cause the vehicle, article or document to be returned to the owner or person in possession or the agent of the owner or person in possession, and shall cause the owner, person in possession or agent, as the case may be, to sign a receipt for that vehicle, article or document.

(4) A person who believes that a vehicle, article or document seized under subsection (1) ought to be returned to him pursuant to subsection (3) may apply to a Magistrate for the return of the item.

(5) A Magistrate to whom an application is made under subsection (4) shall order the return of the

vehicle, article or document, as the case may be, to the applicant, or to such other person whom the Magistrate is satisfied is entitled to its return, if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds as referred to in subsection (3).

17. (1) Where a special operation is being conducted Arrest or detention in a closed area, a person shall not be arrested or detained unless the Head of Special Operations is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the person has committed or is in the course of committing or is about to commit an offence.

(2) Where a person is arrested or detained in a closed area, that person shall—

- (a) at the time of his arrest or detention, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, be told, in a language which he understands, of the reason for his arrest or detention; and
- (b) immediately, or as soon as is reasonably practicable, be taken before a Magistrate who shall determine whether or not there are reasonable grounds for the arrest or detention.

(3) Where a Magistrate is satisfied that the arrest or detention of a person in a closed area is reasonably required in the interest of justice, he may, having regard to such further investigations as may be necessary, order that—

- (a) the person shall be remanded in custody for a period not exceeding forty-eight hours; and
- (b) at the expiration of the period of forty-eight hours, the person shall be taken before a Judge of the High Court.

(4) Where a Magistrate makes an order under subsection (3) in respect of a person, the person shall be taken to a prison or a police station without delay, and

an entry shall be made in the appropriate occurrence book or the station diary, as the case may be.

(5) Where the Magistrate is not satisfied that the arrest or detention of a person is reasonably required in the interest of justice, he shall order that the person be released immediately.

(6) Where a person is taken before a Judge of the High Court pursuant to subsection (3) and the Judge is satisfied that the continued arrest or detention of the person without criminal charges being laid against him is reasonably required in the interest of justice, he may, having regard to such further investigations as may be necessary, order that the person shall be further detained for a specified period of time.

(7) Where a person is taken before a Judge of the High Court pursuant to subsection (3) and the Judge is not satisfied that the arrest or detention of that person is reasonably required in the interest of justice, he shall order that the person be released immediately.

(8) The powers exercisable under this section in respect of a person who could have been arrested or detained in a closed area, but who is in the process of fleeing the closed area, shall be exercisable in respect of that person outside of the boundaries of the closed area, as if the person were located in the closed area at the time of the arrest or detention.

Obstruction, etc.

18. (1) A person commits an offence if he—

- (a) threatens or assaults a police officer or a member of the Defence Force, or any other person, who is performing a function or exercising powers under this Act; or
- (b) without lawful justification or excuse, obstructs or hinders a police officer or a member of the Defence Force, or any other person, who is performing a function or exercising powers under this Act.

(2) A person who commits an offence under subsection (1) is liable on summary conviction to a fine of fifty thousand dollars and imprisonment for one year.

19. (1) Where a person is in custody for thirty-six ^{Persons held in custody} hours and no order has been made by a Magistrate under section 17(3), the officer in charge of the police station shall inform an officer not below the rank of Assistant Superintendent (hereinafter referred to as “the prescribed officer”) of the circumstances of the case and shall record in the station diary the fact that the prescribed officer has been so informed.

(2) The prescribed officer shall, upon receipt of the information referred to in subsection (1), cause such investigations as he thinks necessary to be made into the circumstances of the case and shall cause the person to be brought immediately before a Magistrate.

20. (1) Every complaint made by, or concerning, a ^{Treatment of persons arrested or detained} person arrested or detained under this Part, shall be recorded in the station diary.

(2) A person who is arrested or detained under this Part shall, during such times as may be determined by the prescribed officer, be allowed such visits as may be permitted having regard to matters of—

- (a) security; or
- (b) safety of persons.

(3) Subject to subsections (2) and (4), a person who is arrested or detained under this Part shall be permitted visits from his spouse, cohabitant or family member or from an Attorney-at-law or a registered medical practitioner of his choice.

(4) Where a person requests the visit of a registered medical practitioner of his choice, other than one provided by the State, the person shall be responsible for any expenses incurred.

(5) Particulars of each visit under this section shall be recorded in a station diary.

(6) A person who is arrested or detained—

- (a) shall be allowed to receive articles of food and clothing or such other article as is necessary in the interest of his health or welfare; and
- (b) shall not be allowed to receive any article which may endanger his health or the safety of his person, any officer or any other person.

(7) Where it appears to any police officer in charge of the supervision of a person who is arrested or detained under this Part that the person is ill or requires medical attention, whether or not the person complains of illness, that police officer shall, without delay, take such steps as are necessary to cause the person to be given medical attention.

Use of body-worn
camera

21. (1) A police officer or a member of the Defence Force shall, as far as is possible having regard to available resources, use a body-worn camera during the conduct of a special operation in a closed area.

(2) The Commissioner and the Chief of Defence Staff shall establish and review joint protocols and standard operating procedures for the use of body-worn cameras in closed areas and, notwithstanding the generality of the foregoing, the joint protocols and standard operating procedures may provide for—

- (a) the categories of persons who, subject to subsection (3), may access the data collected and in what circumstances;
- (b) the use of data collected;
- (c) the circumstances in which a body-worn camera may be activated or deactivated;
- (d) the manner in which a police officer or a member of the Defence Force is required to record the time and reason for deactivating a body-worn camera; and

- (e) the circumstances in which a police officer or a member of the Defence Force is required to inform a member of the public that persons are being recorded.

(3) The following agencies shall have access to data recorded by a body-worn camera for the performance of their respective functions:

- (a) the Police Service Commission;
- (b) the Police Complaints Authority;
- (c) the Police Complaints Division, the Professional Standards Bureau and other agencies within the Police Service which investigate police officers;
- (d) the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions; and
- (e) the Office of the Ombudsman.

(4) A police officer or a member of the Defence Force who fails to comply with any protocol or standard operating procedure established under this section is liable to disciplinary action.

22. Weapons, including the ballistic signature and ammunition assigned to police officers and members of the Defence Force involved in special operations, shall be registered with the Trinidad and Tobago Forensic Science Centre prior to the conduct of special operations within a closed area, unless the Commissioner or the Chief of Defence Staff determine otherwise.

23. (1) A police officer may require a person within a closed area to disclose his full and correct name, including any alias, and his full and correct address, where the police officer has reasonable cause to suspect that the person is in the course of committing, has committed or is about to commit an offence or can assist in the investigation of an offence.

(2) A person within a closed area who is requested to disclose his identity under subsection (1) shall not, without reasonable excuse, fail or refuse to comply with the request.

(3) A person shall not, without reasonable excuse, in response to a request made under subsection (1)—

- (a) give a name that is false in a material particular; or
- (b) give an address other than his full and correct address.

(4) A person who contravenes this section commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine of twenty thousand dollars.

PART V

MISCELLANEOUS

Applications for
permits

24. The Commissioner of Police and the Chief of Defence Staff shall make arrangements for applications for permits under this Act to be made manually and by electronic means.

Regulations

25. The Minister may make regulations for the administration of this Act.

Duration

26. This Act shall continue in force for a period of two years from the date of its commencement.

SCHEDULE

(Sections 3 and 4)

POLICING DISTRICTS

1. District 1 shall comprise the City of Port-of-Spain, the Borough of Diego Martin and the Regional Municipality of San Juan/Laventille.

2. District 2 shall comprise the Borough of Arima and the Regional Municipality of Tunapuna-Piarco.

3. District 3 shall comprise the Regional Municipality of Sangre Grande and the Regional Municipality of Mayaro-Rio Claro.

SCHEDULE—CONTINUED

(Sections 3 and 4)

POLICING DISTRICTS

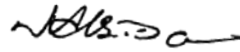
4. District 4 shall comprise the Borough of Chaguanas and the Regional Municipality of Couva-Tabaquite-Talparo.

5. District 5 shall comprise the City of San Fernando and the Regional Municipality of Princes Town.

6. District 6 shall comprise the Borough of Point Fortin, the Borough of Siparia and the Regional Municipality of Penal-Debe.

7. District 7 shall comprise the island of Tobago.

Passed in the House of Representatives this 19th day of September, 2026.

*Clerk of the House (Ag.)*

Passed in the Senate this 24th day of September, 2026.

*Clerk of the Senate (Ag.)*