



The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago

Ministry of the Attorney General and Legal Affairs

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Media Release

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE ATTORNEY GENERAL REGARDING WHISTLBLOWING ALLEGATIONS CONCERNING CAMBRIDGE ANALYTICA, AGGREGATEIQ AND THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION LABORATORIES

Madam Speaker, I have been authorised by the Cabinet of Trinidad and Tobago to make the following statement on rapidly developing critical enquiries and investigations before *inter alia* The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee of House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom and The United States of America Senate Judiciary Committee as well as the launching of investigation by the bipartisan coalition of 37 state and territory Attorneys General from the United States and the granting of warrants by the High Court in the United Kingdom relating to devastatingly sinister link to the alleged illegal interference of the rights of millions of citizens in the United Kingdom and the United States of America all stemming from the activities of several companies including Cambridge Analytica, AggregateIQ (AIQ), and the Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL) Group and their affiliate companies which allegedly began out of allegedly illegal data and communication mining activities in Trinidad and Tobago in 2013.

Madam Speaker, Cambridge Analytica is a British political consulting firm which combines data mining, data brokerage, and data analysis with strategic communication for the electoral process. It was started in 2013 as an offshoot of the SCL Group. The company engages in activities including the ‘microtargeting’ of voters. Microtargeting refers to the process of analysing data and communications to predict the behaviour, interests, and opinions held by specific groups of people and then serving them the messages that they are most likely to respond to or to be influenced by, specifically in the context of election campaigning. This data and communication collection is alleged to have been undertaken illegally and without the consent of the people from whom it was obtained.

Earlier in March 2018, multiple media houses around the globe broke news of Cambridge Analytica's business practices. The New York Times and The London Observer reported on the Facebook and Cambridge Analytica data breach, in which the company used for political purposes personal information acquired about Facebook users, by an external researcher who claimed to be collecting it for academic purposes. Shortly afterwards, Channel 4 News in the United Kingdom aired undercover investigative videos showing Cambridge Analytica's CEO, Alexander Nix boasting about using prostitutes, bribery sting operations, and 'honey traps' to discredit politicians on whom it conducted opposition research. In response to the media reports, the Information Commissioner of the UK pursued a warrant to search the company's servers. Facebook banned Cambridge Analytica from advertising on its platform, saying that it had been deceived. On March 23rd 2018, the British High Court granted the Information Commissioner's Office a warrant to search Cambridge Analytica's London offices, which were subsequently raided that same day.

Madam Speaker these events may seem far removed from our shores however whistle blower testimony from Cambridge Analytica's Christopher Wylie, who is the company's former Director of Research and who helped set up Cambridge Analytica, has pinpointed Trinidad and Tobago as the site of a data and communication mining test project allegedly conducted in 2013 under the Kamla Persad-Bissessar government.

According to Wylie the Trinidad and Tobago 2013 project formed the basis for the company's subsequent activities in the United Kingdom and in the United States in particular. Wylie is quoted as saying "it's something I regret, people should know what this company does, what this is, throughout history you have examples of grossly unethical experiments. You are playing with the psychology of an entire country without their consent or awareness, you are playing with an entire nation in the context of the democratic process".

In Wylie's whistleblowing interviews to the media and in his live testimony to the Committee of the House of Commons yesterday Tuesday March 27th 2018, he revealed "It was done through Trinidad and Tobago's National Security Ministry". He further disclosed "The standard SCL/Cambridge Analytica method is that you get a government contract from the ruling party. And this pays for the political work. So, it's often some project that's just a cover for getting the minister re-elected. But in this case, our government contacts were with Trinidad's National Security Council." Wylie further stated "It's incorrect to call Cambridge Analytica a purely data science company or algorithm company. It's a full service propaganda machine." Wylie went on to state "If you can control all of the streams of information around your opponents, you can influence how they perceive that battle space. And you can then influence how they will behave and react."

Madame Speaker, evidence before the UK House of Commons Committee on March 27th 2018 detailed the project carried out by the AIQ as the affiliate company of Cambridge Analytica. Contractual documentation and emails from AIQ's project in Trinidad and Tobago with the then Kamla Persad Bissessar Government were referenced and provided to the Committee of the House of Commons. The whistle blower admitted in his testimony to the Committee of the House of Commons that that he understands that the data acquisition in Trinidad and Tobago is and was illegal and that there was a "total disregard for the law".

Bloomberg Online News in an article entitled "Cambridge Analytica's History of Dubious Election Tricks" published on March 20th 2018 also reports other activities tied to the UNC Government and Cambridge Analytica. In the article it is stated that "In sales documents given to prospective clients, SCL [the British affiliate to Cambridge Analytica] said it helped a candidate in Trinidad by emblazoning graffiti slogans around the island that ostensibly was posted by young Trinidadians. "The client was then able to 'adopt' related policies and claim credit for listening to a 'united youth,'" the SCL document said. Nix acknowledged advocating the use of "street media"

such as graffiti and fly posters and says it's "normal election practice in many of the Caribbean islands." The work was for the United National Congress, which didn't respond to requests for comment."

Madam Speaker, the testimony of Christopher Wylie before a House of Commons Committee imputing illegal actions against the UNC Kamla Persad-Bissessar Government must be taken seriously. It has been noted that in response to enquiries, the then Prime Minister and now Opposition Leader Mrs. Kamla Persad-Bissessar Senior Counsel is quoted by LoopTT in an article dated March 22nd 2018, as saying that Cambridge Analytica was "not familiar" to her. Further, in a recent public meeting held by the Opposition on Monday March 26th 2018, the Opposition Leader dismissed the allegations related to Cambridge Analytica as 'fake news'.

Madame Speaker, legal action relating to Cambridge Analytica, AIQ, and the SCL Group, and their affiliate companies has already commenced in the United Kingdom. The House of Commons of the British Parliament through its Committee has begun hearings into these matters. According to an Article from Oregon Department of Justice dated March 26th 2018 a bipartisan coalition of 37 State and Territory Attorneys General from the United States sent a letter dated March 26th 2018 to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg demanding answers about the company's business practices and privacy protections. The legislature of the United States of America has intervened. The U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee said on Monday it had invited the Chief Executive Officers of Facebook Inc., Alphabet Inc. (Google) and Twitter Inc. to testify at an April 10th 2018 hearing on data privacy. According to an article by Reuters dated March 27th 2018 the US Federal Trade Commission took the unusual step of announcing that it had opened an investigation into Facebook which it generally only does in cases of great public interest – citing media reports that raise what it called "substantial concerns about the privacy practices of Facebook."

The Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago enshrines as a protected, fundamental right, the right to private life. The Interception of Communications Act, Chapter 15:08 at Section 6, strictly prohibits the interception of communication in the manner alleged by the whistle blower in testimony given before *The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee* of the House of Commons of the British Parliament. The Computer Misuse Act, Chapter 11:17, at Section 3, prohibits the unauthorised access to data. The alleged acts committed by Cambridge Analytica and its affiliates/alter egos potentially constitute breaches of the laws of Trinidad and Tobago.

Madam Speaker, in the election campaign of 2015 citizens would recall that there were wide scale receipts of unsolicited personalized political messaging from entities promoting the United National Congress.

It is therefore incumbent upon the Office of the Attorney General in discharging duties under the Constitution of Trinidad and Tobago, to cause an audit of all Government Ministries, Statutory Authorities, State Enterprises and the National Security Council to ascertain whether any contracts were established, whether any payments were made and whether any services were rendered by the named companies, Cambridge Analytica, AggregateIQ, and the Strategic Communication Laboratories (SCL) Group, and/or any of their affiliate/alter ego companies/entities. I shall ensure that this audit includes the application of a keen eye for any masked transactions through nominated/trustee entities to hide the true identity and nature of any services provided.

Further Madame Speaker, as the Central Authority for Trinidad and Tobago, the Office of the Attorney General shall take avail of the lawful provisions available by way of Mutual Legal Assistance and pursue the co-operation of international investigative agencies that are conducting parallel investigations into the matters addressed in this statement. We shall reach out to authorities in the United Kingdom and the United States of America to secure information and evidence relating to this most serious matter of alleged illegal conduct and activity.

Accordingly, Madam Speaker, I am to inform this Honourable House that yesterday I instructed the State's Attorneys in the United Kingdom to take immediate steps to secure the evidence and materials provided by persons including the whistle blower Christopher Wylie.

It is also reasonable to expect that the Committee of this Parliament with responsibility for matters of National Security will take due notice of this troubling affair and engage in suitable enquiry and interrogation of all relevant witnesses including whistle blowers here and abroad as is actively ongoing in the Committees operating in the legislatures of the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

Madam Speaker, this Government will do all in its power to investigate this very important matter to unearth whether the rights of the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago have been infringed and to hold all such persons responsible for breaches of the laws of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago properly accountable.

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Dated: March 28th 2018