



The Northern Caribbean Security Summit (NOCSS) is rooted in the **Operation Bahamas, Turks and Caicos (OPBAT) framework**, which for decades has underpinned trilateral cooperation between the **United States, the Bahamas, and the Turks and Caicos Islands** in counter-narcotics and maritime security operations.

The first official joint principals-level meeting of this arrangement was convened as the **OPBAT Conference on December 1-2, 2021**, hosted by the **Turks and Caicos Islands** at The Palms Hotel in Providenciales under the theme **Enhanced Cooperation**. This inaugural engagement marked a significant elevation in OPBAT dialogue to the Principals' level, reinforcing strategic oversight while maintaining a strong operational focus. Against the backdrop of an evolving threat landscape impacting border sovereignty and national security of member states, this forum recognised the need to expand maritime security cooperation beyond the traditional OPBAT remit. Pivotal to the success of this first meeting was the signing of two (2) landmark bilateral agreements aboard Bahamas' HMBS Nassau and United States' Venturous, in the national's capital, Grand Turk:

1. **Memorandum of Understanding on Technical Cooperation on Maritime Law Enforcement (Shiprider) Between The Government of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas and The Government of The Turks And Caicos Islands.** This MOU established clear mechanisms for operational coordination between TCI and the Bahamas, providing for coordinated border control efforts, intelligence and information sharing, joint and complementary operations.
2. **Memorandum of Understanding For Cooperation Between The Royal Turks And Caicos Islands Police Force and The United States Coast Guard Concerning Aeronautical And Maritime Search And Rescue.** This MOU established a cooperative framework for aeronautical and maritime search and rescue (SAR) coordination between the TCI (through the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force) and the US (through the United States Coast Guard); building on long-standing operational collaboration, and aligned with international SAR instruments.

These defining outcomes of the 2021 conference, strategically strengthened the regional partner's collective national security posture, through enhanced cooperative relationships.

In **March 2023**, the second Principals' Meeting marked an important evolution of the forum with the formal rebranding as the **Northern Caribbean Security Summit (NOCSS)**. Hosted by the **United States** at the InterContinental at Doral in Miami, the meeting adopted the theme **Modernizing Strategic Partnerships, from Florida to Haiti**.

This re-framing reflected the growing recognition that security threats in the northern Caribbean, particularly illicit trafficking, irregular migration, and transnational organized crime, were increasingly interconnected and required a more holistic, forward-looking approach. While participation remained among the three OPBAT member states, the dialogue matured beyond traditional counter-drug operations to encompass broader

strategic considerations. The agenda underscored the continued centrality of OPBAT in maritime and counter-narcotics operations, while emphasising the need for enhanced maritime and border security to disrupt maritime threats.

A significant outcome of NOCSS 2023 was the signing of a **three-way statement by Heads of Delegation**, affirming the need to leverage respective national authorities collectively to confront complex threats, and pledging to the common goal of security and stability in the northern Caribbean.

The third OPBAT Principals' Meeting, hosted by the **Bahamas in Nassau** in **March 2024** at the British Colonial Hotel marked another milestone for the Summit's development, further consolidating the NOCSS as a standing regional security forum. Held under the theme **Now Matters: Evolving Today's Security Strategies for a Safer Tomorrow**, NOCSS 2024 reflected a decisive shift toward deeper engagement on a broad spectrum of pressing and interconnected threats impacting the region. Importantly, the Summit further expanded its scope to incorporate emerging risk domains, reinforcing a multi-domain approach to regional security that integrates law enforcement, intelligence, public health, cyber resilience, and social policy to better equip Member States to respond to evolving challenges.

The **three-way statement of intent** of the NOCSS 2024 reaffirmed OPBAT partners' long-standing commitment to trilateral cooperation as the foundation for peace, safety, and security in the northern Caribbean. It underscored a shared resolve to counter evolving transnational threats through joint operations, enhanced domain awareness, regular practitioner engagement, and real-time intelligence sharing.

By the 3rd NOCSS, the forum had firmly established its operating model of preceding principals-level engagement with practitioner-level meetings. With the exception of the inaugural 2021 OPBAT – which included both Principal's and Practitioner's segments within the two (2) meeting days; followed by a full Practitioners' meeting in August 2022 – each subsequent Principals' Meeting has been preceded by a dedicated practitioner-level engagement. This framework ensures that strategic discussions are informed and grounded in operational realities, and that agreed priorities are translated into practical action.

The fourth Principals' Meeting of the Northern Caribbean Security Summit, brings the forum full circle – returning to the Turks and Caicos Islands as host.

This year's Summit is being held at The Shore Club Providenciales on February 12–13, 2026. This meeting represents a further maturation of NOCSS, and a further milestone in the Summit's development. Anchored by the theme **Dismantling Illicit Maritime Activities Through Enhanced Cooperation**, the meeting reflects a deliberate decision by OPBAT partners to broaden participation in the summit by inviting regional partners – including Canada, the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Caribbean Community - Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (CARICOM IMPACS) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – to contribute to the discussions. This expanded engagement is intended to provide a broader regional threat perspective, support more informed decision-making, and strengthen collective approaches to maritime security across the northern Caribbean.