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PRESS RELEASE

Statement on Incident on the Sarstoon River

Belmopan, November 7, 2026.

On Saturday, 7 November 2026, a Belize Defence Force (BDF) patrol conducting a routine patrol around Sarstoon Island was aggressively approached by two Guatemalan Armed Forces (GAF) vessels that had crossed into Belizean waters, in an evident attempt at intimidation. The BDF patrol acted with professionalism and restraint and returned safely to the Sarstoon Forward Operating Base after concluding its patrol. The Sarstoon Forward Operating Base has since been reinforced by additional BDF and Belize Coast Guard vessels.

The Government of Belize strongly condemns these acts of aggression and the incursion into Belizean waters. Under the 1859 Treaty, the boundary is the mid-channel of the Sarstoon River, and Sarstoon Island lies within Belize's sovereign territory. With Guatemala's claim pending before the International Court of Justice, both countries are obliged to refrain from any action that may aggravate the dispute.

Belize will lodge a formal protest with the Government of Guatemala and report the incident to the Organization of American States. The Government commends the BDF for its discipline and composure and calls on Guatemala to respect Belize's sovereignty and refrain from further provocation. Belize remains committed to the peaceful resolution of the dispute.

Ends

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