

Independence Day Address 2018

Delivered by Prime Minister Rt. Hon. Dean Barrow

Belmopan, Belize, 21 September 2018

As we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of our Independence, I have been reflecting on just how glorious an achievement it was. Consider the circumstances. We were confronted by twin, seemingly insurmountable odds: a large, militarized neighbour with an unjust and illegal claim to our country, threatening our extinction; and a colonial power reluctant to do what was necessary to help finalize our secure freedom. But we would not be deterred. And history records the tremendous persistence and skill with which Belize persevered and overcame. The nations of the world all remarked the force of our campaign. No one doubted that its triumph stamped our small country as one destined for greatness.

Now, it is 37 years on. And the maintenance of our Independence with our territory intact is vindication of all those qualities that made our original struggle so wonderful to behold.

But this is the year 2018 and there are still multiple challenges that beset us. Many are new. They are not peculiar, though. Indeed, they are no more than should be expected from any nation-building process and are shared by all small, developing countries. One, however, remains the same bane that confounded our Independence campaign. But we defeated it then and we will defeat it now. And if next April, we decide to deploy the newly available legal tool of our impregnable ICJ court case, it will mark the beginning of the end for Damocles and his sword.

As for the rest, the durability of the Belizean spirit, the imperishability of the Belizean soul, are what will see us through. Our hard-won Independence has been enriched by our own human capital and the world's recognition of our fantastic natural wealth.

On September 21st this year then, I ask Belizeans to think on all these things and be glad. Let us celebrate the success of an Independence well won – a job well done. Let us celebrate the

confidence given us by our history, by our victory. Let us be assured that metal forged in fire is unbreakable. And that mettle produced by struggle is unconquerable.

Thus it is that we march straight on. Nothing can daunt us, nothing can stop us. Let us remember those architects of Belizean Independence, of Belizean exceptionality. And long may they inspire us.

Let our celebration, therefore, be unconstrained. For carried by the past and confident of the future, our nation moves unstoppably forward.

And so, Happy Birthday Belize and God bless our native land.