

# **News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending January 16, 2010**

## **Curacao – Venezuelan President Chavez Alleges Incursion By USFOL Plane**

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said a US military aircraft had entered Venezuelan airspace last Friday, insisting that the governments of the U.S. and the Netherlands were behind what he described as a "provocative action." The U.S. has denied the charge. Chavez said he ordered two F-16 jets to intercept a P-3 Orion anti-submarine/surveillance aircraft that entered Venezuelan airspace from Curacao. The U.S. plane, according to the Venezuelan president, returned to Curacao after it twice entered Venezuelan airspace, where it spent a total of about half an hour and was escorted out by the F-16s.

"We're not inventing anything when we say the government of the Netherlands must assume their responsibilities," the firebrand leftist leader said.

"We are here ready to defend Venezuela's sovereignty... We accuse the governments of the U.S. and the Netherlands of launching provocative actions against Venezuela, to find an excuse to attack Venezuela."

But the US Southern Command, which is in charge of US military activities in the hemisphere, said that it was able to confirm that no US military aircraft had entered Venezuelan airspace on Friday. "As a matter of policy we do not fly over a nation's air space without prior consent and coordination," the command said in a statement. "We operate with the utmost respect for the sovereignty of the nations in our hemisphere." In addition, a senior U.S. Government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said U.S. officials were "unaware of any U.S. government plane within 300 plus nautical miles of Venezuelan airspace today," the official pointed out.

Last month, Chavez accused the U.S. of launching a spy plane from Colombia that violated his country's airspace, and vowed to shoot down any such aircraft in the future. Also last month, Venezuela's foreign ministry called on the international community to condemn alleged incursions into its airspace by US military drones launched from Aruba and Curacao.

The Netherlands has rejected the allegations, with Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen calling the accusation "unfair, baseless and fantastical."

Venezuela suspended diplomatic relations with Colombia in July in response to a US-Colombian military base deal, denouncing it as a military threat to the sovereignty of Latin American countries and saying it paved the way for a possible attack against Venezuela.

In December, Chavez said the U.S. military was using Dutch Caribbean Islands as a staging area for a possible attack. The Netherlands has denied the claims. (Various media)

## **Curacao – Official Investigation Into Chinese Residence Permits Case**

An initial probe by the Netherlands Antilles Justice Department into the issuance of residence permits for Chinese immigrants has reportedly been handed over to the public prosecutor's office for further investigation.

The report which was recently released, to Netherlands Antilles parliament only, reportedly includes at least 60 permit applications for Chinese immigrants in the retail and restaurant sector that are under investigation for possible fraud by local government officials. (Various media)

## **Bonaire – Alleged Political Corruption Case Under Investigation**

Bonaire MP Jopie Abraham said in a reaction to an alleged deal, reportedly involving a US \$300,000 bribe he is accused of, that he urges the public prosecutor to start an immediate investigation. Abraham said that he also wants an investigation into possible financial support of the opposition UPB party by Dutch governing political party CDA. Bonaire's Commissioner Anthony Nicolaas and the ADB party of Jopie Abraham are accused of overthrowing the former UPB party led Island Government. The alleged deal has shocked politicians in The Hague and the Netherlands Antilles, but Nicolaas and Abraham have qualified the accusations as an election stunt. (Various media)

## **Kingdom - Venezuela Protests To U.S. and Kingdom On Claimed Air Incursion**

Venezuela made a diplomatic protest to the United States and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on Monday, saying a U.S. military plane violated its airspace last week after taking off from Curacao.

Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro called the purported incursion "an attempt to provoke some type of incident." He presented a protest letter to John Caulfield, charge d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Caracas, and to Dutch Ambassador J.G. van Vloten Dissevelt.

Maduro expressed concern about the Netherlands' role, saying that "we are worried that their territories are being used by the United States to make illegal incursions into our airspace." The Dutch Ambassador, who was received by Maduro at the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry, denied the allegations.

Caulfield also denied the accusation, saying a U.S. military plane has not strayed into Venezuelan airspace since 2008, when the U.S. acknowledged what it called an accidental incident involving a Navy plane. Caulfield noted U.S. and Venezuelan officials discussed that incident in 2008. "We have not had any other event of a violation of Venezuelan airspace by American planes," Caulfield said.

In making the allegation last week, Chavez accused Washington of trying to provoke his government by sending an American P-3 plane from Curacao to twice enter Venezuelan airspace Friday. The plane was met by Venezuelan F-16s and escorted out of Venezuelan airspace, he said.

Venezuelan Vice President Ramon Carrizalez appeared on Venezuelan state television Monday to present what he said was evidence of the alleged incursion. Flanked by military officials, Carrizalez showed diagrams of what he said was the route taken by U.S. aircraft after its takeoff from Curacao.

"We are showing the country and the world that incursions into our airspace are occurring to provoke us, to test our reaction and possibly, at any moment, to launch an attack," Carrizalez said.

U.S. officials have said the American military's use of airfields in Aruba and Curacao for counter-drug flights poses no threat to Venezuela. (Various media)

### **Curacao – Opposition Leader Cooper Does Not Want USFOL Out**

Opposition leader and MP Charles Cooper announced that he does not want the U.S. Forward Operating Location to leave, as suggested by the current coalition. "Who would be against the fight against illicit narcotics trafficking," Cooper said. Cooper is of the opinion that a diplomatic solution would be best, after the tensions in Venezuela ease. The opposition leader suggests forming a multinational committee consisting of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles, Venezuela, and the U.S. in an attempt to supervise USFOL operations by performing unannounced spot checks on USFOL agreement compliance. "Only the Sovereign Party on Curacao has openly announced that the USFOL must leave; we do not agree," Cooper stated.

Former PNP PM Maria Liberia-Peters again vowed her support for the USFOL in a news article yesterday. (Amigoe)

### **Aruba – Cruise Tourism Thrived in 2009**

Aruba welcomed a record total of 606.970 cruise tourists last year, which is up 16.000 from record year 2006, according to an Aruba Cruise Tourism Authority (ACTA) and Aruba Ports Authority (APA) press announcement. According to ACTA, cruise tourism is one of the industries that continued to generate revenues for the harbors and companies on Aruba and in the Caribbean despite the financial crisis. (Various media)

### **Aruba – AirTran Now Offers Weekly Service From Orlando**

Aruba government officials welcomed AirTran's inaugural flight between Orlando and Aruba, at Queen Beatrix International Airport on January 9, 2010.

AirTran's new non-stop weekly service is being operated on Saturdays. Orlando is the 13th airport from which flights are flown to Reina Beatrix airport. The airline company had already started a regular service between Aruba and Atlanta on December 19th (Amigoe)

### **Aruba – Two Men Arrested in Valero Fraud Case Set to Appear in Court**

Two men who were arrested in an US-owned Valero refinery fraud case last September are scheduled to appear in Court. One of the arrested men is reportedly a former Valero contractor. The Aruba Public Prosecutor's office investigated the multimillion-dollar fraud case at the Aruba refinery. (Various media)

### **Curacao – 9<sup>th</sup> Pre-Election Poll: Opposition is Taking Charge**

The opposition parties Lista di Kambio (LdK) and the Sovereign Party (PS) are increasing their lead, according to the 9<sup>th</sup> pre-election poll by Opinion Korsou. The division of parliamentary seats has significantly shifted to the opposition compared to the

poll last week. Lista pa Kambio +1 (7); PAR (4); Sovereign Party +1 (3). 42% of the electoral is still undecided, according to the researchers. Coalition partner PNP lost both of its projected seats from last week and the other coalition partner FOL would still be without a seat in the new parliament. The changes for the other parties are insignificant. The election date is January 22. The polling organizers stated that their poll is independent and scientifically based. The poll is also available on [www.opinionkorsou.com](http://www.opinionkorsou.com). (Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra)

### **Kingdom – Dutch State Secretary Bijleveld Vowed Continued Support**

Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Ank Bijleveld-Schouten said in a reaction to a Venezuelan diplomatic protest to the Netherlands concerning a purported military aircraft incursion by the U.S. from Curacao that the Kingdom government will continue to protect the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba against foreign countries. Venezuelan President Chavez alleged on Monday that a U.S. military plane violated its airspace last week after taking off from Curacao and expressed his concern about the Netherlands' role, saying that "we are worried that their territories are being used by the United States to make illegal incursions into our airspace." Both Dutch and U.S. officials denied it. The Venezuelan leader asserted earlier that to prepare for the offensive, the U.S. government has deployed intelligence agents, together with war ships and surveillance aircraft on the islands of Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire. "They are three islands in the territorial seas of Venezuela that are still under the imperial regime of the Kingdom of the Netherlands," Chávez said. Bijleveld reiterated that defense and foreign affairs are Kingdom responsibilities; that the islands are protected and that there is no reason for fear. (Extra)

### **Curacao – Visit by Venezuelan Government Delegation Canceled**

The Antillean Government canceled a last minute request by Venezuelan Deputy Foreign Minister Francisco Arias Cardenas and PdVSA executive Asdrubal Chavez to visit Curacao for a meeting concerning the future of the Venezuelan state-owned PdVSA operated Isla refinery. Antillean PM Emily De Jongh-Elhage reportedly said that she regrets the cancellation, but that she would like to reschedule the meeting in early February (note: after the islands' Jan. 22 elections). (Amigoe)

### **Aruba - Flight From Amsterdam to Aruba Diverted After Threats**

An ArkeFly flight carrying 235 people from Amsterdam to Aruba in the Caribbean was diverted to Ireland on Wednesday after an unruly Dutch passenger made bomb threats during the flight. The threats turned out to be false. ArkeFly said the plane, Flight 361, landed at Shannon Airport, where the passenger was handed over to authorities. There were 224 passengers and 11 crew members aboard the Boeing 767. The Irish police searched the plane, but found no bomb. The passenger, identified as a 44-year-old man, was in custody. A spokeswoman for Shannon Airport said the airliner was towed to a remote location for the police search. The plane was held in a secure area until after its scheduled landing time as a precaution in case there were any devices on board, ArkeFly said. Early reports of the threat raised fears of another attempted plane bombing out of Amsterdam. A 23-year-old Nigerian man who flew out of Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam

on Dec. 25 has been charged in the United States with trying to blow up that flight as it neared Detroit. Schiphol has since tightened security. (Various media)

### **Kingdom - Netherlands Sends Rescue Team to Haiti**

Dutch Development Aid Minister Bert Koenders decided to send an Urban Search and Rescue Team to Haiti. The team will be part of an international effort coordinated by the UN. Netherlands Antilles PM Emily De Jongh-Elhage and Aruba PM Mike Eman announced that they support and join the Kingdom endeavors. Efforts are underway by various local volunteer organizations on the Islands of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba to assist the thousands of Haiti earthquake victims. Also, the Red Cross is ready to assist. (Various media)

### **Aruba – Light Earthquake Shocks Aruba**

A January 13, M4.2 earthquake, 41 kilometers south of Aruba and 4 kilometers northeast of Cabo San Roman on the Venezuelan Paraguana peninsula was felt in Aruba, but did not cause any reported injuries or significant damage. (Various media)

### **Antilles – Financial Intelligence Unit Received 19,600 Suspicious Reports**

The Financial Intelligence Unit Netherlands Antilles (MOT) has submitted approximately 4,000 unusual transactions to the Public Prosecutor's Office for further research, because the FIU has no criminal investigative responsibilities. MOT head Kenneth Dambruck announced that he received 19,600 unusual financial transaction reports from local institutions for further analysis in 2009. It is yet unknown how many of the submitted cases resulted in referrals to law enforcement entities for investigation and resulted in criminal cases, Dambruck said. (Various media)

### **Curacao – Businesses Association Fears for Financial Future if LdK Wins Election**

A spokesperson for the Curacao Businesses Association (VBC) said if Lista di Kambio (LdK) would win the election next week it could lead to discontinuation or cancellation of the debt restructuring.

LdK wants Curacao to leave the Netherlands Antilles (NA) constellation as soon as possible, but based on its own terms. The opposition wants to restart negotiations with the Dutch government, because they believe that the financial and judicial oversight authority retained by the Kingdom is a form of recolonization. The Dutch government repeatedly said that the dissolution agreement signed by the Kingdom partners is non-negotiable. The Kingdom partners agreed that the Netherlands will absorb 70% of the total debt of the NA (approximately 2 billion USD) in return for some degree of financial supervision and judicial oversight. The VBC believes that any form of renegotiations could jeopardize the debt-relief agreement and would cause structural damage to the financial and social-economic development of Curaçao. 2

LdK party leader and MP Cooper said that the Dutch cannot stop the debt relief unilaterally, so renegotiating certain elements of the agreement is possible and should not cause any delays. (Various media)

## CURAÇAO

### ***Crime January 8 – 14***

On January 10, an elderly woman was robbed in her home in Marie Pompoen by several men. On January 12, a passenger of a bus was robbed at knifepoint by a young man (Amigoe, Extra, La Prensa).

## ARUBA

### ***Crime January 8 – 14***

On January 9, an establishment in Cumana was robbed by two men. The same evening, an elderly man was beaten and robbed by three youngsters in Tanki Leendert. The following morning, a man fired several shots from a handgun at a house and a vehicle in San Nicolas. Allegedly, the suspect had had an argument with a resident of the house during the previous evening. No injuries were reported.

There were four robberies in the evening of January 11. Several men robbed a Chinese restaurant in Oranjestad. This was followed by a robbery at a minimarket in Oranjestad, a robbery of two tourists near Dutch Village, and an attempted robbery of a restaurant in Paradijs. With the exception of the tourists, police suspect the other three robberies were committed by the same group of men.

Three robberies were recorded for January 12. In two separate incidents, a female and a male pedestrian were robbed in Oranjestad. The third incident took place at night in Dakota when a Chinese restaurant was robbed (Amigoe, Diario Aruba, Awe Mainta).

## ST. EUSTATIUS

### ***Suspects arrested***

Police arrested three men on January 11 in connection with a string of break-ins that took place in St. Eustatius during the holiday season. Many stolen goods were discovered and subsequently confiscated by the police. The suspects, all in their early twenties, were said to be known by the police. Inspector Quintin Rogers said that they had been able to pinpoint the suspects with the help of the public, and that house searches had turned up many stolen items such as computers, TVs, lamps, jewellery and silverware (Daily Herald).

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*"The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruban press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein."*