

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending February 6, 2010

Antilles – Governor Goedgedrag Appoints ‘Informateur’ Atacho

Netherlands Antilles Governor Frits Goedgedrag has asked Pedro Atacho (PAR) to investigate possibilities to form a new Netherlands Antilles coalition government. Atacho will begin his first round of meetings today with the social partners on Curacao such as the Council of Churches, the Chamber of Commerce, the Businesses Trade Association, the various unions, the NGO Platform, and press association Prensa Uni.

He has scheduled meetings later this week with similar organizations on the other islands and consultations with all the political parties that obtained a parliament seat, early next week.

Atacho will meet with Aruba PM Mike Eman, on February 11, to discuss Aruba's support for the dismantling process of the Netherlands Antilles and future cooperation with the new Kingdom entities.

The Governor has asked Atacho to present an interim progress report no later than February 12, and his final report on March 3. (Various media)

Bonaire – Island Parliament Approves Referendum By-Law

The Bonaire Island Parliament approved the by-law Referendum Bonaire 2010, last Friday. The referendum will be held as planned on March 26. The question is: “I want Bonaire to have a direct relationship with the Netherlands in the form of A: Association (Bonaire will acquire a separate status within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, or B: Integration (Bonaire will become a part of the Netherlands)”.

The five Democratic Alliance (ADB)\List for Change (LpK) coalition MPs voted in favor while the four Bonaire Patriotic Party (UPB) MPs voted against. The UPB won the January 22nd elections in Bonaire, capturing two of the island's three seats, but forms the current Bonaire opposition. Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba, the so-called BES islands, had decided to join the continental Netherlands as public entities, but the current Bonaire Island government has criticized the process and the Dutch influence. They believe that Bonaire must obtain the same rights as a current municipality of the Netherlands. (Various media)

Curacao – Police Confiscates 128 Kilos of Cocaine; Five Arrested

Local Police Officers confiscated 128 kilos of cocaine, a weapon, ammunition, and an undisclosed amount of money at a house in the Kanga neighborhood on Curacao, last Friday. Three men and two women, all from Colombia, were arrested. (Various media)

Bonaire – Hilton Hotel to Open Franchise This Summer?

The director of the Tourism Corporation Bonaire announced that the Hilton Bonaire Resort and Spa will be the first U.S. brand hotel in Bonaire. The new 120-room Hilton that will include 12 luxury suites, a rooftop fitness center and spa, a dive center, shopping, and a pair of restaurants, is to be located just minutes from the Bonaire

airport, and will reportedly open in July 2010. Also, the Tourism Bureau is negotiating airlift opportunities with American Airlines from Miami. (Various media)

Antilles – PM De Jongh-Elhage to Visit Haiti; Missing Curacao Man Found Dead

Netherlands Antilles PM De Jongh-Elhage and Transportation Minister Adriaens will visit Haiti on Wednesday, according to a government press statement. Also, the government announced that Mr. Isenia, one of the missing Curacao nationals in Haiti, was found dead and that Mr. Francisco is still missing. (Various media)

Curacao - Inflation Rate Declined in 2009 Compared to 2008

The twelve-month average of consumer prices in Curaçao increased by 1.8% in 2009, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics. This represents a decrease from the 6.9% inflation rate reported over 2008. The biggest price increase (+26%) took place in the food sector (Various media).

Antilles - Treaty Could Possibly Be Positive For U.S. Citizens

Unedited article from the St. Maarten Daily Herald

Citizens of the United States have the same status in the Netherlands Antilles as the European Dutch citizens. This is because the Treaty of Friendship between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the United States of America determines in article 3 that nationals of the United States in a part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands outside Europe enjoy the same treatment as Dutch nationals who had not been born in that part. However, both the central government and the island territories wrongfully continue to neglect this, just like the fact that European Dutch citizens are allowed legal entry after a three-month stay in the Netherlands Antilles, according to the Land-regulation Entry and Deportation (LTU). Therefore, citizens of the US ought to claim aforementioned policy, in connection with the non-discriminatory treatment between European Dutch citizens and American citizens. This is the main issue of a court case against the island territory St. Maarten, which had come up in court on the island yesterday afternoon.

The Crew's Nest Bar & Restaurant and Matt LeBlanc have lodged an appeal against the island territory St. Maarten to dismiss the request for a director's permit for Matt LeBlanc. In September 2006, LeBlanc had been employed by Michael's Day Cruises and had been appointed director of The Crew's Nest Bar and Restaurant in January 2007. The owner of The Crew's Nest has started reorganizing the bar and the charter events. The entire reorganization has not been completed yet due to a previous experience with director permits. "What's the point of making ambitious plans if the island territory will not issue the required permits?" he wonders.

Once the reorganization has been completed, LeBlanc himself will act as director without the owner's support, and will assume all tasks as of that moment.

In the case of Extreme Sports NV and Deborah Ann Kunder versus the Minister of Alien Affairs, the Court in First Instance of Aruba had considered and judged on June 11th, 2008 that the protocol under article 3 of the Treaty of Friendship are direct active treaty provisions. The provisions contain a clear and explicit right for the nationals of the involved states.

These rights, which do not oblige the states to do anything, but to omit something, make them become effective immediately pursuant to their disposition in the legal relationships between the treaty concluding states and their nationals.

Therefore, appellants are entitled to a direct appeal on the treaty stipulations.

The court will give a decision on this case on February 22nd. (Daily Herald)

Bonaire – Referendum Plans on Hold; Island Governor Objects

A referendum concerning Bonaire's constitutional future, planned for 26 March, was put on hold by Island Governor Glenn Thodé.

Thodé asked Netherlands Antilles Governor Frits Goedgedrag to annul the referendum request by the current ADB party-led coalition. The N.A. Governor will decide within 30 days.

According to Thodé, the referendum contravenes international law by limiting the voting rights of European Dutch nationals. Also, Dutch MPs demanded clarity about the draft Island Ordinance Referendum Bonaire 2010 which stipulates that European Dutch nationals can only vote in the referendum if they were living in Bonaire before January 1, 2007.

A United Nations representative who visited Bonaire recently to conduct a referendum assessment study advised the government to proceed only if there is a broad consensus. The UPB party that won the January 22 elections voted against the referendum. (Various media)

Antilles\Aruba – Coast Guard N&A Release Annual Plans

The Netherlands Antilles and Aruba Coast Guard (CGNAA) released their annual plan 2010 on Monday. Counter narcotics, Trafficking in Persons (TIP), illegal immigration, and staff training are the main focus of the CGNAA for the coming year. "It is expected that the strength of the CGNAA as part of the 2010 planned NA&A law enforcement operations will be consolidated," the release stated. Close cooperation with local and foreign law- enforcement agencies are deemed very important.

The establishment of a Terrorist Incident Response Plan (TIRP) should improve counter-terrorism operations.

Also, the CGNAA is preparing for the projected constitutional changes later this year. (Various media)

Antilles - MAN, NPA and FK Political Parties Will Enter Parliament Separately; Not as LdK

The MAN, NPA, and FK political parties will not enter parliament united in the List for Change (LdK). The MAN, led by Charles Cooper, will take three seats while NPA and FK each obtain one seat. Management of the three parties announced they will form one opposition block and are seeking the best format to continue future cooperation. The LdK cooperation agreement states that the parties will always keep their own identity and independence, but will work closely together. (Various media)

Netherlands – Dutch Socialist Party Wants USFOL Out

Dutch Socialist Party (SP) MP and foreign affairs specialist Harry van Bommel has requested Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen to disapprove USFOL agreement

prolongation. At a minimum the GON should consider a one-year prolongation versus five-years as is stipulated in the current agreement, he said. Van Bommel does not believe that the U.S is planning an attack on Venezuela, as repeatedly implied by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, but is of the opinion that it leads to undesired tensions in the Caribbean region. The Venezuelan government has accused the Netherlands of contributing to existing military tensions between Colombia and Venezuela. Van Bommel is calling on Verhagen to try to reduce tensions between Colombia and Venezuela.

The SP voted against the FOL agreement in 1999, because of the risks it carried for security in the Caribbean, van Bommel said. The SP insists that prolongation of the agreement will be subject of a parliamentary debate. "I would like to add my voice to the call from a number of Antillean political parties at the beginning of December to facilitate peace negotiations between Colombia and Venezuela," says Van Bommel. "I call on Minister Verhagen to make a major contribution to this. Saber-rattling between Venezuela and Colombia must be ended as soon as possible." (Radio Netherlands)

Antilles – Haiti Visit Shocks PM De Jongh-Elhage

Netherlands Antilles PM Emily de Jongh-Elhage said after her trip to Haiti yesterday that the catastrophic scenes in Haiti have shocked her tremendously. However bad things are in this country, it is difficult to conceive of what life must be like for the survivors of this disaster. The situation really puts our own troubles into perspective. We could see many people searching for family members, relatives, and friends with our own eyes, but we also noticed they are beginning to rebuild their country, the PM said. (Various media)

Antilles – Transfer of Tasks About to Start; Dismantling Continues

Curaçao's General Affairs Commissioner Zita Jesus-Leito (PAR) stated that the first transfer of tasks from the Central government to the Island government will occur during the week of February 15. Transferring of tasks is an important step in the Netherlands Antilles dismantling process and will impact the new NA cabinet of Ministers formation process. Several politicians suggested appointing fewer cabinet- level officials, because many tasks will transferred to the Island level. (Various media)

Curacao - U.S. FOL Staff Assist Orphanages

Approximately 75 staff members from the U.S. Forward Operating Location (USFOL) on Curacao, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mike Price, participated in three community relations projects at the Meant to Shine Foundation Orphanage, the New Teenage Center and at the Siloam Orphanage-Hospice in Barber on January 21, 2010.

The U.S. FOL, 429th Expeditionary Operations Squadron, supports multinational aircraft operations that conduct detection, monitoring and tracking missions supporting counter-drug efforts in the region. FOL military and civilian personnel often volunteer their services in support of community projects and are pleased to partner with local agencies in reaching out to the people of Curaçao. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Kingdom – Dutch MFA Disappointed by Lack of Venezuelan Response to USFOL Dialogue Offer

Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Maxime Verhagen was reportedly disappointed by the Venezuelan response to the Dutch willingness to open a dialogue regarding accusations by Venezuelan President Chavez. The Dutch government announced on several occasions it was ready to begin such a dialogue. Various calls by MFA Verhagen to his Venezuelan counterpart Maduro were left unanswered. A Dutch official said: "We are willing to talk to Venezuela about their US Forward Operating Location concerns, but they are not responding." (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Antilles – Elections For New Kingdom Entities In June?

Parliamentary elections for all Netherlands Antilles islands are reportedly planned for June 11 or 18. Curacao, St. Maarten, Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius must each elect a new legislature in preparation for the new Kingdom entities formation on 10-10-10. (Various media)

Aruba – Impossible to Sell US-Owned Valero Refinery

San Antonio- based Valero Energy Corp. is trying to sell its idle Aruba refinery that it admits wouldn't be profitable if it were running today, Valero executives said.

Valero pegged the book value of the 235,000 barrels- capacity Aruba refinery, which it has been trying to sell for more than a year, at US \$1 billion.

During the bull market for commodities, the Aruba plant raked in big profits for Valero thanks to their ability to process heavy, sour crude oil. This tougher-to-process crude traded at a wide discount to light, sweet blends of crude. However, that difference narrowed sharply during the economic downturn and those refineries started bleeding cash.

Meanwhile, Valero has been having trouble finding a buyer for the Aruba refinery. It has also been involved in a tax dispute, which the company reiterated will be settled upon final approval from the Aruba government. "What's happening in 2010 as far as tax structure is not that important," Valero Chief Executive Bill Klesse said in the conference call with analysts. The tax agreement with Aruba's government spans 20 years, so that gives the company options as it looks for a buyer, he added.

Valero has placed more than US \$200 million of cash in an escrow account while the dispute was in arbitration. Once the government approves the settlement, Valero will pay about US \$112 million in taxes and a minimum tax payment of US \$10 million a year as long as the company owns the refinery. Valero will continue to keep the plant's employees on the payroll until at least June 1, 2010. However, it is unlikely that the company will restart the refinery after executives said that it wouldn't be profitable if it were operating today. Valero has 14 refineries with the capacity to process 2.8 million barrels of crude oil a day. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Curacao – Aqualectra Changes Social Tariff Structure to Help Vulnerable Customers

Utility Company Aqualectra has changed its social tariffs structure on Feb. 1, to help their most vulnerable customers cope with the high costs of water and electricity, based on Curacao Government recommendations.

The Aquallectra social tariff structure (<http://www.aqualectra.com/en/consumer-news/234-press-release-february-1st-2010>) is aimed at reducing the water and electricity bills of the company's most vulnerable customers. Aquallectra has 63,000 households registered for power and 66,000 for water.

The new tariff provides extra help to vulnerable customers, particularly those who use Pay-As-You-Go Energy (Pagatinu) meters which is helping people on low-incomes to budget. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime January 29 – February 4

On February 3 a man in Seru Fortuna was shot and injured. The motive for the incident was not clear (Extra).

ARUBA

Crime January 29 – February 4

In the morning of January 29 a jewelry store in San Nicolas was robbed by two masked men. During the evening of the following day, two men broke into the home of a Chinese couple in Madiki. The victims were tied and the suspects ransacked the house in search of money and valuables (Diario Aruba, Amigoe).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime January 29 – February 4

On January 29 two men were shot and injured during an altercation with another man in Dutch Quarter. In the evening of January 30 a woman was raped by two men at the Joe Laveist Sports Park near Philipsburg. On February 4 a tourist couple in Philipsburg was robbed by four men. One of the suspects was arrested by the police (Daily Herald).

Gang clash results in shooting incident

Police detained nine teenagers and seized a revolver after a gang clash in Cul de Sac that led to a shooting from a school bus in the afternoon of January 29. A gang from the neighborhood allegedly attacked the school bus on L.B. Scott Road, pelting the bus with bottles. A passenger retaliated, firing at least one gunshot from the bus window. Witnesses reported hearing two gunshots, one of which had not come from the bus. The driver proceeded to Philipsburg where police intercepted the bus. Officers searched all teenage passengers, and subsequently found a .38-caliber revolver in a girl's schoolbag. Police confiscated the gun, along with two machetes and three knives they also found on the bus. The case is under investigation (Daily Herald, Amigoe).

"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."