

# **News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending January 1, 2011**

## **Curacao - Oil refinery operational in January**

The Isla oil refinery is expected to be back at full capacity in the first week of January, after a prolonged shutdown since March 1, 2010, due to continued problems with the independent Build, Own and Operate (BOO) utility plant. The refinery leased to "Petroleos de Venezuela" lost some US\$150 million as a result. During the last few weeks, several plants were put back into operation, with the rest to follow by early January. (Daily Herald)

## **St. Maarten - French need only ID to enter St. Maarten**

French citizens originating from Paris or any other French territory will be able to use their national IDs or any other official identification to enter and leave St. Maarten for a six-month grace period. This period will give tourism offices and travel agencies and organizations the necessary time to inform French travelers of the passport requirement. On Christmas eve, PM Sarah Wescot-Williams and Justice Minister Roland Duncan met with French St. Martin Collectivité President Frantz Gumbs to discuss various matters, including establishing committees to research and implement the Franco-Dutch treaty. (Daily Herald)

## **Curacao - CG Belon meets PM Schotte**

Recently, U.S. Consul General Valerie Belon paid a courtesy visit to PM Gerrit Schotte. During the meeting, they talked about various issues, including the improvement of the drainage system for rainwater runoff near the International School of Curaçao, which experienced severe flooding and property damage during the November rains, and the planned March 2011 visit of a Hurricane Hunter C-130 aircraft. Other issues discussed were crime and trafficking in persons. (Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra)

## **Aruba\Curacao - FARC planned to abduct local banker**

The Colombian narco-terrorist organization FARC had plans to abduct a bank official in Curaçao or Aruba, according to reports citing statements made by Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. Allegedly, the FARC also had plans since 2003 to abduct people in Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela as a means of financing its struggle against the Colombian government. The information has come from the personal computer of Jorge Suárez Briceño (aka Mono Jojoy), a FARC commander killed in a bombing raid last September. One of the computer documents allegedly mentions the possibility of abducting the owner of a bank in Aruba and Curaçao. (Various media)

## **Aruba - Well-known Aruba reporter murdered**

Aruba journalist and TV presenter John Anthony Castro (47), popularly known as "Poentje" Castro, was shot and killed in the late evening of December 24 at his home. His body was found by one of his children the following morning. Neighbors told the police that they had heard two shots and then heard a vehicle leaving at high speed during the night. They thought the noise had come from fireworks because it's almost New Year's Eve. Castro was a well-known television personality in Aruba. For the past nine years he had a weekly television program called *Un Dia den Bida* (One Day in the Life), a popular program featuring guests from all walks of life. In the Netherlands, Castro was known for his ties to Patrick van der Eem, the journalist who had used a hidden camera to tape Joran van der Sloot's alleged confession about what had happened to Natalee Holloway in 2005. In 2008, Castro had received threats against his life after broadcasting a program about the Holloway case. Castro had also broadcast several programs about drug trafficking in Aruba, but friends said that he had no real enemies. Police are in the dark as to the circumstances and motives that led to this gruesome murder. (Various media)

## **Curacao - Budget and energy at top of PM Schotte's 2011 agenda**

PM Gerrit Schotte is looking forward to the challenges of 2011. Among those challenges as he sees it, is the budget and implementing the program policies of the governing coalition. The Prime Minister also said that he will focus on the transition from fossil fuel to clean natural gas as an additional source of energy for Curaçao. This will directly affect the cost of living and doing business on the island. Schotte further noted that a wind turbine park will be created, aimed at producing 30 megawatts or about 20 per cent of the energy that is consumed by the island on a daily basis. Natural gas has a 100-year reserve capacity and it is clean and cheaper to produce, indicating that this is the way to go for Curaçao. (St. Maarten Island Time)

## **Curacao - Steven Martina possible candidate for MAN party leadership**

Steven Martina (49), son of MAN party founder Donald "Don" Martina, is a possible candidate for the party's leadership. Martina himself has not reacted to media requests for information. Martina is the former CEO of utility company Aqualectra and current director of insurance company Fatum. The MAN party is looking for a new leader after its disappointing results in the August 27, 2010 elections. Current leader Charles Cooper indicated he wanted to step down. The party has only two seats in Curaçao's Parliament. (Antilliaans Dagblad, La Prensa)

## **St. Maarten – Island to break 1.5 million cruise passenger arrival mark**

St. Maarten will reach another milestone this week after receiving cruise ships for more than forty years: the arrival of 1.5 million cruise passengers in one year. This number will surpass the projections for the year, barring any unforeseen circumstances, according to St. Maarten Harbor Group of Companies. The island came close to this milestone in 2005, when a total of 1.488 million cruise passengers visited. Based on the arrivals for the year so far, St. Maarten is about 33,520 cruise passengers short of reaching this

new milestone. This year has been projected to see a total of 1,454,274 cruise passengers. Harbor CEO Mark Mingo said that whether or not the 1.5 million milestone was met, St. Maarten has had a good season despite the still waning global economic crisis. Mingo said the island should not expect a large surge in cruise arrivals in the coming years, but has to focus on further improving the destination. (Daily Herald)

### **Curacao - Minister Norman Girigorie to step down**

Minister of Management, Planning and Public Service Norman Girigorie (Sovereign People - PS) will step down because of his deteriorating health. There have been rumors about Girigorie giving up his seat since last week. His party Sovereign People, has indicated that Lia Willems will probably take up Girigorie's ministerial position. (Extra)

### **Curacao - Inflation continues at 2.7 per cent**

Consumer prices have increased with 2.7 per cent in Curaçao, compared to 2009, announced the Central Bureau of Statistics. The highest increase can be found in the food sector (0.2 per cent). In this category, the biggest increases occurred in the price of potatoes, vegetables and fruit. Remarkable is the fact that the remaining five categories, which represent 51 per cent of consumer expenditures, have remained stable: alcohol and tobacco; home furnishings; transport and communication; recreation, education and development; and others. (Amigoe)

## **CURAÇAO**

### ***Crime December 23 – 29***

On December 26, a man was shot and killed in Punda. The motive was not known. On December 28, a tourist in Otrobanda was robbed by two men. The same evening, a lottery ticket-selling business in Cher Asile was robbed. A security guard who attempted to stop the suspect was stabbed and injured. There were three armed robberies on December 29. The victims were an insurance broker's office in Otrobanda, a Dutch tourist in Otrobanda, and a Chinese grocery store in Santa Maria (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra).

## **ARUBA**

### ***Crime December 23 – 29***

On December 26, the public transportation office in Sabana Blanco was robbed by five men. A security guard was beaten. On December 28, a Western Union office in Oranjestad was robbed by two men (Diario Aruba, Amigoe).

## ST. MAARTEN

### ***Crime December 23 – 29***

On December 29, a ship's crew member was shot and injured in Sucker Garden during a robbery. The same day, another ship's crew member was robbed by three men in Philipsburg (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

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