

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending January 8, 2011

Kingdom – PM Schotte Represents Kingdom At President Rousseff Inauguration in Brazil

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte, together with other foreign dignitaries, attended the inauguration of the new President of Brazil Dilma Rousseff. Rousseff officially took over Brazil's presidency from her mentor Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Saturday. In addition to Schotte, U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton and nine Latin American Presidents attended Rousseff's inauguration – the Presidents of Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Guatemala, Guiana, Peru, El Salvador, Uruguay, and Venezuela were reportedly all present. Schotte briefly met with Secretary Hillary Clinton, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, and Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. There were no reports on what was said between the dignitaries. (Various media)

Dutch Caribbean – Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius Phase Out Guilders, Embrace US\$

Dutch Caribbean islands Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius are phasing out its currency to make way for the US dollar. All Netherlands Antillean guilders in bank accounts across the Islands were to be automatically converted by midnight Saturday, Dutch Ministry of Finance official Richard Doornbosch said in a recent statement. Doornbosch expects the guilder to be out of circulation within a week's time. The conversion comes nearly three months after the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles -- colonized by the Dutch in the 17th century — as the islands became Dutch municipalities. The US dollar already serves as the islands' second currency. Complicating the transition is the introduction of a new tax structure that eliminates import and sales taxes, finance officials said. Residents also worry about price-gouging, but Evert Piar, president of Maduro & Curiel's Bank, downplayed those concerns. (Various media)

Curacao - Cocaine in Rum Bottles Discovered in Amsterdam

Customs at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport recently made a remarkable discovery when they discovered cocaine mixed in rum bottles from Curaçao. Customs officers came across a batch of 144 rum bottles half of which contained cocaine during a control at Schiphol Airport earlier in December. The rum in more than 70 bottles from Curaçao was mixed with cocaine. In total, the bottles contained some 10 kilos of cocaine. The narcotics were handed over to the Cargo Harc Team, consisting of Dutch Customs, the Royal Marechaussee and the Dutch Fiscal Intelligence and Detective Division of the Tax Department. (Daily Herald)

Curacao - Pride's Latest Drillship Called at Curacao Megapier

Pride International's brand new drill ship, DEEP OCEAN CLARION, was in port for 23 hours last week, calling at the Curacao Megapier.

During her brief stopover, a full crew change was carried out and close to 70 tons of spares was delivered on board, together with provisions and other items. She departed Curacao, bound for the Gulf of Mexico, for her first assignment. Headquartered in Houston, Texas, Pride International, Inc. is one of the world's largest offshore drilling contractors. Pride provides contract drilling and related services to oil and gas companies worldwide. (Various media)

Curacao – “Escape the Winter Blues” Ad Featured in Times Square

“Escape the Winter Blues” is the slogan of the new Curacao Tourism Board campaign in the United States. The promotion is highlighted by a billboard advertisement in New York’s Times Square during January 2011, and various television advertisements in the tri-state area. (Various media)

Curacao – PM Schotte Invites Venezuelan President Chavez to Discuss Refinery Future

Curacao PM Schotte invited Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to discuss the Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA leased and operated Isla Refinery future. PdVSA reportedly intends to stay in Curacao after the current lease expires in 2019, but Schotte wants to know if PdVSA is planning a multibillion US dollar investment that could turn the refinery into a modern plant. Future phases require Curacao government approval and will probably include lease contract negotiations. Schotte wants to investigate opportunities to operate an environmentally friendly refinery at its current or other location (possibly Bullenbaai), or discuss options to cease refinery activities completely and turn the refinery location into a tourist area. (Various media)

Curacao – Secretary Clinton Interested to Support Alternative Energy

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte said U.S. State Secretary Hillary Clinton is interested to support Curacao reaching its alternative energy goals. Also, Schotte based his comments on a recent meeting with Consul General Valerie Belon which whom he discussed the same topic. (Extra)

Aruba - Valero Restarts Its Aruba Refinery

San Antonio-based Valero Energy Corp. initiated production Sunday night at its Aruba refinery. Production rates “are being gradually increased, and we expect that the refinery will be at planned rates between mid-January and the end of the month,” Valero spokesman Bill Day said in an e-mail Monday.

Valero closed the Aruba plant in July 2009, saying the 235,000-barrel-a-day refinery had been losing tens of millions of dollars a month.

Valero officials said in mid-2010 that they would restart the refinery near the end of 2010 because of improving economic conditions. Valero has since completed refinery wide maintenance at the plant and the company continues to seek strategic alternatives for the refinery that could include selling it.

A tax settlement approved by Aruba's Parliament helped prompt serious consideration of a restart, Valero officials have said. (Various media)

Curacao\St. Maarten – PM Schotte: Dollarization a Serious Option

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte is exploring the possible introduction of the US dollar as the monetary unit for Curaçao, because St. Maarten Finance Minister Hiroshi Shigemoto stated St. Maarten is seriously discussing dollarization. The BES-Islands are already using the USD as the new monetary unit, and Curacao and St. Maarten are contemplating following suit. The process to discuss opportunities, risks, and effects of dollarization has started in 2006, Schotte said.

St. Maarten PM Sarah Wescot-Williams and Vice-PM Theo Heyliger reportedly support a possible move to the USD. St. Maarten and Curacao share a monetary unit and one Central Bank. Also, Central Bank of Curacao and St. Maarten President Emsley Tromp said that dollarization is considered a serious option and various bankers indicated they support the dollarization idea.

Advantages

- Reducing risk and protecting against inflation and devaluation.
- Full dollarization creates positive investor sentiment, almost extinguishing speculative attacks on the local currency and the exchange rate.
- A more stable capital market, the end of sudden capital outflows, and a balance of payments that is less prone to crises.
- Full dollarization can improve the global economy by allowing for easier integration of economies into the world's market.

Disadvantages

- When a country gives up the option to print its own money, it loses its ability to directly influence its economy, including its right to administer monetary policy and any form of exchange rate regime.
- The central bank loses its ability to collect 'seigniorage', the profit gained from issuing coinage (the minting of monies costs less than the actual value of the coinage). Instead, the U.S. Federal Reserve collects the seigniorage, and the local government and gross domestic product (GDP) as a whole thus suffer a loss of income.
- In a fully dollarized economy, the central bank also loses its role as the lender of last resort for its banking system. While it may still be able to provide short-term emergency funds from held reserves to banks in distress, it would not necessarily be able to provide enough funds to cover the withdrawals in the case of a run on deposits.
- Securities must be bought back in USD. If the country does not have a sufficient amount of reserves, it will either have to borrow the money by running a current account deficit or find a means to accumulate a current account surplus.
- A local currency is a symbol of a sovereign state, the use of foreign currency instead of the local one may damage a nation's sense of pride. (Various media)

Kingdom – Dutch Minister Donner Visits Dutch Caribbean Islands

Dutch Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner will start his familiarization visit to all six Dutch Caribbean Islands on Thursday.

Donner is scheduled to arrive in Saba on Thursday, January 6. He will visit St. Eustatius on Friday, January 7, and Bonaire on Monday, January 10. The exact agenda for the meetings was not released, but it is expected they will cover general Island specific matters. The minister and his delegation will return to the Netherlands on Thursday, January 13, from Curaçao.

Aruba - Aruba Tourism Authority Sponsor 2011 Boston Globe Travel Show

Aruba Tourism Authority has signed on as the supporting sponsor for the Boston Globe Travel Show for the sixth consecutive year. SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment and Vacation Outlet are lead sponsors, and Bermuda Tourism and TNT Vacations are contributing sponsors of the 2011 show, which takes place February 11-13 at the Seaport World Trade Center in Boston.

The Boston Globe Travel Show is the top-attended consumer travel show in the United States, attracting an affluent and educated audience from throughout New England. In 2010, more than 20,000 consumers and 2,000 travel trade professionals attended the show. More than US \$5 million in travel was booked on the show floor, across more than 250 exhibitors.

Aruba Tourism Authority has been part of The Boston Globe Travel Show since its inception in 2005. "The Boston Globe Travel Show offers us an opportunity to reach a large number of consumers, many of whom come to the show ready to book a vacation to Aruba. Many are actively seeking out information about the hotels and activities in Aruba, while shopping the show for travel specials and the best value," said Colleen Lessard, Aruba Hotel & Tourism Association. "We look forward to being part of the show again this year and educating visitors on all that Aruba has to offer, from ideal year-round weather and friendly locals, to world class resorts, exquisite cuisines and a wide array of activities." (Aruba Post)

Curacao – PM Schotte to Visit Venezuelan President Chavez This Month?

The Curacao and Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Ministries are reportedly planning a January 2011 meeting most probably in Venezuela between Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The two dignitaries briefly met in Brazil earlier this week where they discussed the future of the PdVSA leased and operated Isla Refinery in Curacao. PdVSA is a Venezuelan state owned oil company. The Dutch government is aware of the plans, a spokesperson for Schotte said. According to the Kingdom Charter, Foreign Relations are a Dutch Kingdom affair. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Curacao – Dutch Minister Donner Visits Curacao on Wednesday

Dutch Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner will visit Curacao next Wednesday. He has scheduled visits with Governor Frits Goedgedrag, PM Gerrit Schotte, and various other dignitaries. Donner has a meeting at the Bon Futuro prison and he will discuss Venezuelan leased and operated Isla Refinery issues with his counterparts. (Extra)

St. Maarten – Island Breaks 1.5 Million Cruise Passengers Record

St. Maarten broke its 2005 cruise tourism record in 2010 by welcoming more than 1.5 million cruise passengers. The year's arrivals represented a 24.5% increase over estimated projections. The expectations for 2011 are similar. (Daily Herald)

Aruba – Aruba Airlines Grounded

The Aruba Department of Aviation has grounded Aruba Airlines after its Piper Chieftain Aircraft was forced to make an emergency landing after reportedly experiencing mechanical problem, last week. The authorities want to ensure that the Aruba Airlines aircraft meet all airworthiness directives standards. (Amigoe)

Aruba – Minister Dowers: “KIA Prison Upgrade Involves Millions”

“A necessary KIA prison upgrade will cost millions,” Aruban Justice Minister Dowers said. “The eastern wing of the prison is in a deplorable state and needs immediate attention, but I also want to know what happened to the millions already invested in the prison upgrade,” he added. Also, Dowers wants to sign a cooperation protocol with Dutch prison supervision authorities to ensure quality and security controls. (Amigoe)

Aruba – Neighborhood Crime Is down 40%

Aruba Justice Minister Dowers said, based on a recently received report that neighborhood crime is down 40% in Aruba. The Community Policing and Neighborhood Leadership program helped control crime and reduce fear. Community or neighborhood policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, which proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. (Amigoe)

Caribbean - Norwegian Cruise Line Announced Its Caribbean Deployment For The 2012/2013 Season

Norwegian Cruise Line announced its Caribbean deployment for the 2012/2013 season with itineraries from Miami and other U.S. cities. The 4,100 passenger Norwegian Epic continues her alternating seven-day Eastern and Western Caribbean cruises, departing on Saturdays from November 3, 2012 to April 13, 2013 from Miami. The Eastern Caribbean cruises call at Philipsburg, St. Maarten; St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands with an optional tour to St. John; and Nassau, Bahamas. In addition, Norwegian Sun sails 10- and 11-day Southern Caribbean cruises from Miami from October 14, 2012 to April 10, 2013. The 10-day cruise calls at St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands with an optional tour to Philipsburg, St. Maarten, and other destinations. The 11-day cruise calls at Cartagena, Colombia; Oranjestad, Aruba; Willemstad, Curacao; Philipsburg, St. Maarten; and St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands with an optional tour to St. John. (Aruba Post)

Aruba – Discovered Jawbone Unlikely Missing Amcit Amy Bradley’s

The parents of American citizen Amy Lynn Bradley who disappeared almost 13 years ago while on a Caribbean cruise with family are doubtful that a jawbone recently discovered on an Aruba beach belonged to their daughter. Amy Bradley was 23 when she disappeared from the cruise ship Rhapsody of the Seas early on March 24, 1998, as the ship docked in Curacao after a short overnight run from Aruba.

But just to make sure, they have provided the FBI with their daughter's dental records. The Bradleys still believe that their daughter was abducted by someone aboard the ship during the family's vacation in March 1998. They also adamantly believe that Amy is still alive and being held captive based on several reported sightings of their daughter over the years. The last was on March 1, 2005, when a woman reported she saw Amy in a Barbados restaurant restroom. "We feel like she's either in human trafficking, or some type of gun trafficking, or the two involved."

In late November, law-enforcement authorities determined through forensic testing that the jawbone did not belong to Alabama teenager Natalee Holloway, who disappeared in 2005 during a senior class trip to Aruba. The piece of jawbone, which contained a wisdom tooth and likely was from a Caucasian, was found by an American tourist near the Phoenix Hotel, a resort on the western side of the island. It had washed up on the beach. (Various media)

Curacao – Approximately 800 Dengue Cases Reported in 2010

Curacao has registered approximately 800 mosquito-borne dengue cases in 2010, compared to 190-200 cases in a normal year, Health Minister Jacintha Constancia said. The increase in cases is being blamed on warm weather and an unusually long rainy season, which has produced an explosion of mosquitoes, but Constancia said it is too early to call it an epidemic. The Health Department has started an aggressive Island-wide media campaign to inform the public. One person died of dengue in 2010, Constancia added. Opposition MP Humprey Davelaar believes the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) should intervene to prevent a possible epidemic. (Various media)

Aruba – Dutch Minister Donner Visits Aruba on Tuesday

Dutch Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner will visit Aruba next Tuesday. He has scheduled visits with Governor Fredis Refunjol, PM Mike Eman, and he will attend a Cabinet of Ministers meeting. Donner will visit a Neighborhood "Bo Bario" Improvement Project. Also, he will give a lecture at the University of Aruba. (Extra)

Aruba – Minister Oduber: "Airport to Remain Open 24/7"

Aruban Transportation Minister Otmar Oduber wants to keep the Aruba Reina Beatrix International Airport open 24/7 to accommodate special needs and other important flights. Also, it is important to propagate our International airport status, the Minister said. The airport is currently closed daily 12:00am-6:00am. (Various media)

Aruba – No Dollarization Without a Solid Financial and Economic Base

Central Bank of Aruba executive Ridderstraat stated that keeping a local currency should be thoroughly considered, because it contributes to the identity of a nation. If a country complies with the necessary financial and economic conditions dollarization could be an option, but dollarization will eventually be a political decision. Ridderstraat also said Aruba will continue monitoring the dollarization impact on the BES-Islands and the developments on Curacao and St. Maarten. (La Prensa)

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