

# **News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending January 15, 2011**

## **Curacao – PM Schotte and Four Cabinet Members Visit FOL**

On the afternoon of Friday, January 7, Commander of the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL), Lieutenant Colonel Brian Bell along with his staff and U.S. Consul General Valerie Belon hosted Prime Minister Gerrit Schotte and Ministers Charles Cooper, George Jamaloodin, Abdul Nasser el Hakim, and Elmer Wilsoe for a briefing and tour of the FOL. Foreign Affairs Director Joelle de Jong-Mercelina was present too. Sovereign Party leader Helmin Wiels criticized the FOL presence various times, but his Justice Minister Wilsoe was the FOL negotiator for the local government. After the briefing, PM Schotte and the ministers received a tour of the FOL facilities including a U.S. Air Force AWACs aircraft currently in Curacao to support counter-drug operations. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

## **Curacao – 17 Kilos of Cocaine Confiscated and 5 Arrested in Narcotics Case**

Law Enforcement Agencies raided various homes in Curacao and arrested at least five people in an international investigation into drug trafficking. They confiscated 17 kilos of cocaine and arrested three crew members of two small vessels at Caracasbaai, last Friday. The suspects are reportedly charged with trafficking cocaine to the Netherlands from Venezuela and Colombia via Curacao. Also, Drug Enforcement Administration agents supported the actions. (Various media)

## **Curacao – Chinese Businesses Interested to Invest?**

Chinese Ambassador to the Netherlands Zhang Jun will travel to Curacao before the end of this month, according to Minister of Infrastructure Charles Cooper. Ambassador Zhang Jun has scheduled meetings with PM Gerrit Schotte and Minister Plenipotentiary Sheldry Osepa. Cooper hopes the Chinese government will renovate its deteriorated property at Scharlooweg 53 known as “Chinese Club” which it purchased in 2008. (Amigoe)

## **Curacao – Tourism Bureau Expands Promotion in Venezuela**

The Curacao Tourism Bureau announced it is expanding its media promotion campaign in Venezuela. Venezuelan tourism has dropped 62% during the first 10 months of 2010. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

## **St. Maarten – Government Requests Dutch Police Reinforcements**

The St. Maarten Police Chief Peter de Witte has asked Dutch Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner for 20 Dutch police officers for a total of

three-years in an effort to strengthen his police corps. St. Maarten is missing expertise and has insufficient capacity to train its officers, De Witte said. (Extra)

### **Curacao – Customs Purchases Baggage Scanner for Airport Security**

Customs Director Julian Lopez Ramirez announced that two German Smiths Heimann baggage scanners were deployed at Hato International Airport. A total of three excess scanners were purchased from Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. The new scanners improve efficiency and enable us to meet the latest counter terrorism regulations, Lopez Ramirez said. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

### **Curacao – MinJus Wilsoe: “Parliamentarians Should Visit USFOL Too”**

Curacao Justice Minister Elmer Wilsoe said Parliamentarians should visit the U.S. Forward Operating Location (USFOL) to understand the magnitude of its operation, just like five cabinet members did on Monday. It is important to accurately and duly inform Venezuela concerning the true USFOL mission to avoid speculations about espionage and other rumors. The USFOL not only benefits Curacao but the entire region, Wilsoe stated. Senators and other organizations will truly benefit from a USFOL visit because often the USFOL is criticized out of ignorance and opinions change after experiencing the true value of the USFOL.

Some believe the U.S. uses the USFOL for espionage, but in reality they only combat organized crime, counter narcotics in particular. The USFOL is only a benefit to Curacao; there is nothing negative in fighting crime. However, it is important to keep Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in the loop because the USFOL counter narcotics efforts benefit the entire region. According to Wilsoe, President Chavez looks at the USFOL from an espionage angle but there are other ways to spy, the USFOL is not needed to accomplish that. The idea the USFOL is used for espionage is a total misconception. It is our sovereign decision to host the USFOL, Wilsoe stated. (Extra)

### **Curacao - Prime Minister Schotte and Four Cabinet Members Visit U.S. Forward Operating Location**

On the afternoon of Friday, January 7, Commander of the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL), Lieutenant Colonel Brian Bell along with his staff and U.S. Consul General Valerie Belon hosted Prime Minister Gerrit Schotte, four other Curacao Government Ministers, and the Foreign Affairs Director for a briefing and tour of the FOL.

Briefing PM Schotte, Deputy PM Charles Cooper, Justice Minister Elmer Wilsoe, Finance Minister George Jamaloodin, Economy Minister Abdul Nasser el Hakim, and Foreign Affairs Director Joelle de Jong-Mercelina, Lt.Col. Bell emphasized the exclusively counter-drug mission of the FOL supporting a multi-agency, multinational effort to combat illegal drug trafficking in the region.

Lt.Col. Bell also briefed the group on the significant contributions the FOL has made to the Hato International Airport including ramp and taxiway improvements, runway maintenance, training for airport firefighters, and programs to reduce the risk of bird strikes which can endanger aircraft. He also explained the large contributions the FOL makes to the local economy providing dozens of jobs and purchasing millions of dollars worth of goods and services locally as well as volunteer community service projects.

Consul General Belon emphasized how combating illegal drug trafficking is a common challenge of all countries of the region and the FOL plays an important role to detect, monitor, and hand off suspect vessels and aircraft to local authorities. Information is shared so that, depending on the legal jurisdiction, the appropriate local authorities can interdict, apprehend, and prosecute drug trafficking crime all around the region. In 2010 alone, these efforts resulted in over \$3 billion worth of drug seizures. After the briefing, PM Schotte, the ministers, and the Foreign Affairs Director received a tour of the FOL facilities including a U.S. Air Force AWACs aircraft currently in Curacao to support counter-drug operations. (Various media)

### **St. Maarten – Commemoration Ceremony Missing Amcit Leta Cordes**

It is three years to the day American woman Leta Cordes went missing from her home in Dawn Beach. The occasion is being marked by a get-together of her friends and some of the volunteers who searched for her extensively. Leta's husband Frank Cordes told police and media that his wife had left their home on the evening of January 11, 2008, to walk to The Westin St. Maarten Dawn Beach Resort and Spa. Discrepancies in the story and evidence gathered by law enforcement officials led to the arrest of Franks Cordes. However, he was not charged and denied involvement in his wife's disappearance or death. (Daily Herald)

### **St. Maarten – Money Laundering Is a Kingdom Concern**

Justice Minister Roland Duncan is expected to announce a Financial Intelligence Unit (MOT) staff increase later this week. Prime Minister Sarah Wescot-Williams said Dutch Kingdom Relations and Internal Affairs Minister Piet Hein Donner raised his concern about the MOT operability during their last meeting. A Financial Intelligence Unit is a central, national agency responsible for receiving (and, as permitted, requesting), analyzing and disseminating to the competent authorities, disclosures of financial information: (i) concerning suspected proceeds of crime and potential financing of terrorism, or (ii) required by national legislation or regulation, in order to counter money laundering and terrorism financing. The Kingdom of the Netherlands (the Netherlands, Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten) is also a Financial Action Taskforce (FATF) member. A FATF mutual evaluation program, the primary instrument by which the FATF monitors progress made by member governments in implementing the FATF Recommendations, is scheduled for later this year. (Daily Herald)

### **Curacao – 22 Drug Mules Appeared in Court**

22 drug mules appeared before a judge, yesterday. The mules tried to smuggle drugs to the Netherlands by plane, despite the 100% control enforced by Dutch customs and immigration of all flights originating from Curacao at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport. (Extra)

### **Curacao – PM Schotte Interpreter Chavez –Clinton Encounter**

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte reportedly used his language skills in Brazil last week where he interpreted a brief encounter between Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Secretary Hillary Clinton. Details of the courtesies were not revealed, but it was

mentioned in Venezuelan newspaper Agencias Venezolano de Noticias.  
<http://www.aporrea.org/venezuelaexterior/n172442.html> (Antilliaans Dagblad)

### **Curacao – PM Schotte Interested in Joining Petrocaribe?**

Venezuelan media reported that Curacao PM Schotte and Venezuelan President Chavez reportedly spoke about Schotte's possible interest to join Petrocaribe, last week in Brazil.

Petrocaribe S. A. is a Caribbean oil alliance with Venezuela to purchase oil on conditions of preferential payment. The alliance was launched in June 2005. Twelve of the fifteen members of CARICOM plus Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Honduras are members of Petrocaribe. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

### **Kingdom – Aruba and Netherlands Want To Strengthen Ties**

Aruba PM Mike Eman and Dutch Kingdom Relations and Internal Affairs Minister Piet Hein Donner are of the opinion that the two Kingdom entities should strengthen their ties now the Netherlands are officially part of the Caribbean after the BES-Island became Dutch municipalities, last year. Also, Aruba wants to strengthen their ties with the European Union. Details of the plans will be presented in the agenda for their next scheduled meeting. (Various media)

### **Curacao - Vice-PM Cooper Meets Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun**

Curacao Vice-PM Charles Cooper briefly met with Chinese Ambassador to the Netherlands Zhang Jun who is visiting the Island. Cooper informed Zhang Jun that Curacao is interested in strengthening the ties between the two nations and hopes the Chinese will post a consular representative on Curacao. Also, Zhang Jun will later meet with Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

### **Bonaire – Customs Officials Intercept 2.6 Kilos of Marijuana**

Dutch Caribbean Customs Officials confiscated 2.6 kilos of marijuana with an approximately street value of US \$29,000, on Tuesday; just 5 days after four packages containing 860 grams of marijuana were seized. One person allegedly involved in the shipment of the drugs from Curacao to Bonaire was arrested in Curacao. (Extra)

### **St. Maarten - U.S. Consulate General donates books to Public Library**

The U.S. Consulate General in Curacao donated an assortment of English language books, new and used, to the Philipsburg Jubilee Library January 6, 2011. The multi-interest books are an important addition to the library's current English language book collection. The books are intended for all ages, but many are of special interest to young people. Among the gifts are books related to sports, nature, U.S. government and subjects from Black History Month in the U.S. The United States Consulate General hopes this collection will contribute to a better understanding of the U.S. and its diverse culture.

Director Monique Alberts and Junior Librarian Maryland Powell accepted this gift from U.S. Vice-Consul Winifred Hofstetter. (Daily Herald)

## **St. Maarten – Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun Meets PM Wescot-Williams**

Chinese Ambassador in the Netherlands Zhang Jun will pay a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Sarah Wescot-Williams today. Wescot-Williams told the press this visit was part of the continued familiarization with the country St. Maarten. Whether the ambassador will raise any issue that may affect the Chinese community residing on St. Maarten is unknown.

## **Bonaire – Dutch Electoral Law Applicable on BES-Islands**

In a court case filed by an immigrant, a judge ruled that foreigners residing on Bonaire legally five years or longer are allowed by Dutch law to participate in the upcoming March, 2011, Island Parliament elections. This Dutch electoral law reportedly also applies to legal residents on Saba and St. Eustatius. (Various media)

## **Curacao – “Ocean Encounters” Named Best Dive Operation**

Ocean Encounters, a scuba diving facility on Curaçao, has been named “Best Dive Operation” in voting just released by Scuba Diving magazine. The publication recently published its annual Top 100 Gold List for 2011 and the Ocean Encounters operation was one of several prominent Caribbean dive centers to receive this top honor. Curaçao offers an ideal location for scuba divers. Scuba divers are rapidly discovering this dive destination. In fact, Curacao was recently named singled out as a Top Scuba Destination for 2011. Scuba Magazine is published by Winter Park, FL.-based Bonnier Corporation.

## **Curacao – University of the Netherlands Antilles Changes Its Name**

The University of the Netherlands Antilles has officially changed its name to University of Curacao mr. dr. (Doktor) Moises Frumencio Da Costa Gomez (1907-1966). Doktor was a well respected statesman, an international voting rights activist and the founder of the political National Party (PNP). The PNP stood at the roots of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Charter in 1954 and what the Dutch Kingdom is today. The name change was necessary after the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist in 2010. (Various media)

## **Aruba – MEP Loses Two Seats in Parliament; From 8 to 6**

MEP Senators Marisol Lopez-Tromp and Mervin Wyatt-Ras were expelled by party management after they voted in favor of a change in the pension law regarding parliamentarians, a law initiated by the sitting AVP party of PM Mike Eman, a few weeks ago. Lopez-Tromp and Wyatt-Ras refused to return their seats to the party, and decided to continue as independent Members of Parliament which is lawful in Aruba. The MEP now has six of 21 seats in Parliament (Various media)

## **Curacao – Utility Company to Build New Diesel Plant at Bullenbaai**

Utility Company Aqualectra management announced its plans to construct a new 84 megawatt diesel plant at Bullenbaai. The current diesel plant at Mundo Nubo will be dismantled. Project dates were not revealed. Other plans for a 36 MW wind farm and a 10 MW waste-to-energy Plant together with Waste Company Selikor are still in progress. Aqualectra projects that a 232 MW capacity total should be sufficient to service the entire Island. Also, the capacity of the reverse osmosis water plant at Santa Barbara will increase and the construction of a new reverse osmosis plant at Bullenbaai is needed to meet the growing water demand, Aqualectra management stated. (Various media)

## **Dutch Caribbean - New ISO Code elements for Dutch Caribbean**

This ISO (International Organization for Standardization) list which states country names (official short names in English) as given in ISO 3166-1 and the corresponding ISO 3166-1-alpha-2 code elements has changed.

BQ – Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius; CW – Curacao; SX – St. Maarten were added. The code AN for the former Netherlands Antilles was deleted.

ISO is the world's largest developer and publisher of International Standards. (Various media)

## **Kingdom – Dutch Minister Donner Has No Doubt On Integrity of Curacao Ministers**

At the end of a visit to the Caribbean parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Donner said the Dutch parliament should realize that the government of Curacao is checked by the Curacao parliament and not the Dutch parliament. In December Dutch political party spokesmen had expressed concern about the integrity of the new Curacao administration.

Donner said he discussed the Curacao ministers screening issue with Curacao Governor Frits Goedgedrag, “and he saw no reason to look further into it and I have no reason to doubt the Governor.”

Donner said he used the visit to see how things were going and what the status of the new political structure is. With the government of Curacao he talked in particular about the Isla refinery and the prison conditions.

## **Kingdom – PM Schotte and Dutch Minister Donner Discuss Isla Refinery Future**

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte and Dutch Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner discussed the Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA leased and operated Isla Refinery future and the Curacao Detention and Correction Center conditions. Details of the discussion were not revealed. (Various media)

## **Aruba - PM Eman Meets Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun**

Aruba PM Mike Eman met with Chinese Ambassador to the Netherlands Zhang Jun who is visiting the Island. Eman and Zhang Jun discussed topics of mutual interest. Details of the meeting were not revealed. (Various media)

## **Aruba – Dutch Minister Donner: “Aruba Responsible For Its Own Debts”**

Aruba is responsible for refinancing its debts, Dutch Internal Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner said. Aruba PM Mike Eman is asking Dutch assistance with refinancing the entire US \$1.1 billion debt, but Donner responded he cannot make any promises. (Various media)

## **Curacao – Hato International Airport In a Deplorable State**

Curaçao Airport Holding (CAH) and Curaçao Airport Partners (CAP) are currently working on an airport upgrade proposal for Economic Affairs Minister Nasser El Hakim, because the airport is in a deplorable state just five years after opening, CAH-director Maurice Adriaens said. The proposal offers several scenarios, each with a separate cost estimate and financing possibilities. Especially the arrival hall and the baggage system require serious maintenance. A possible airport departure tax increase could be part of the proposal. (Various news)

## **Kingdom – IOC Finds Solution for Former Netherlands Antilles**

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) executive board has found a solution for former Netherlands Antilles athletes by clearing the way for athletes from these countries to compete as independent athletes at the London Games, under the Olympic or Dutch flag. The local Olympic Committee no longer exists after the Netherlands Antilles dissolved in 2010. (Antilles Post)

## **Curacao – Minister Hakim: “Cost of Produce Too High”**

Curaçao's Economic Affairs Minister Nasser El Hakim is determined to reduce the cost of fruits and vegetables on the island. He is of the opinion that tax incentives and opening the market to more producers and countries would benefit the sector, despite signs that produce prices are rising globally. (Various media)

# **CURAÇAO**

## ***New ambulance service***

As of January 1 the new ambulance service Ambulance Care Foundation (*Fundashon Kuido di Ambulans – FKA*) has replaced the bankrupt Curaçao Emergency Medical Services (CEMS) and started operations out of the Public Health Department district office in Mundu Nobo. A total of 49 former CEMS employees have signed new labor contracts with FKA. The CEMS building in Emmastad will be converted into a central dispatch station for the police, fire and other emergency services departments (Antilliaans Dagblad).

## ST. MAARTEN

### ***Crime January 7 – 13***

On January 12, a tourist in Cole Bay was robbed by four men (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

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*"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."*