

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending January 22, 2011

Curacao - Airport investments total \$96.1 million USD since 2003

Curaçao Airport Partners (CAP) director Albert Brunner has expressed surprise at the statements made by Minister of Economic Affairs Abdul Nasser El Hakim last week. El Hakim had said that the airport is in bad shape. Brunner said that CAP has invested \$96.1 million USD since 2003 in airport improvement projects. The amount represents investments and payments to the local government and the airport holding company. Brunner further stated that he forwarded all information to El Hakim, but that he has not yet received a reaction. (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra)

Curacao - Banks against dollarization

Commercial banks in Curaçao have always been against, and continue to be against, a possible dollarization, said Maduro and Curiel's Bank director and chairman of the Curaçao Bankers Association Lionel "Chicú" Capriles. The association will speak with Finance Minister George Jamaloodin (MFK) next week. Some banks have expressed different opinions. Banco di Caribe (part of the Parman Group) is for dollarization, while Girobank director Eric Garcia said that as a banker he prefers a new currency, but as a citizen he prefers the dollar. Banks will lose the exchange fee charged for transactions if Curaçao opts for dollarization. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

St. Maarten - PM welcomes visit by Chinese Ambassador

Prime Minister Sarah Wescot-Williams has welcomed the establishment of closer ties with China and says she looks forward to future talks with Chinese Government representatives. "As a young developing country spreading our wings as we seek new opportunities for development of our nation, we welcome contacts facilitated because of our status within the Dutch Kingdom," the Government Information Service (GIS) quoted her as saying Monday in the wake of her meeting with visiting Chinese Ambassador Zhang Jun. The Ambassador visited St. Maarten and held discussions here with the government representatives as part of a familiarization trip to the Dutch Caribbean. Prior to visiting St. Maarten, he had met with Sint Maarten's Minister of Plenipotentiary in The Hague, Mathias Voges. (Daily Herald, Amigoe)

Bonaire - Stricter environmental rules for NuStar, Bopec

Oil terminals NuStar in St. Eustatius and Bopec in Bonaire will have to comply with stricter environmental regulations, once the Dutch Parliament has approved the new public housing, planning and environmental management law for Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba (BES islands). The new law for the islands, which are Dutch special entities since October 10, 2010, will go into effect after approval by the Dutch Second and First Chambers. NuStar has a dated permit based on the St. Eustatius hindrance ordinance, while Bopec has no permit at all. Both companies are in the process of requesting a new permit in anticipation of the new legislation, Dutch State Secretary of Infrastructure and

Environment Joop Atsma said. According to Atsma, NuStar and Bopec are showing willingness to cooperate. The Dutch Minister of Infrastructure and Environment will issue the permits, not the island governments. The new environmental regulations for the BES islands are a lot more stringent than under the current, dated Antillean and local legislation. However, they will be less stringent than the European legislation for the European part of the Netherlands. Atsma explained that the execution and regulation of the new law had been taken into consideration, as well as a phased introduction of the legislation. (Daily Herald)

Curacao - Tsunami detection station installed

Curaçao's Minister of Transport, Communication and Spatial Planning, Charles Cooper, recently inaugurated a sea level monitoring station at the mega cruise pier. The local Meteorological Service installed the system in cooperation with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the University of Hawaii's Sea Level Center (UHSLC). Curaçao was chosen because of its geographical location. The installation of this well-protected station at the mega pier required the cooperation of Curaçao Ports Authority (CPA). After the tsunami disaster in 2004 in the Indian Ocean, the International Ocean Committee/UNESCO set up three work groups, of which the former Netherlands Antilles had formed a part. From recent research by the Meteorological Service, it appears Curaçao could be hit by a tsunami. From the study, it turned out the island actually had been hit by a tsunami in the past caused by landslides in neighboring Venezuela. Apart from detecting tsunamis, the system will also be used by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to measure climate changes. The system helps provide early warning for other parts of the Caribbean area. The Meteorological Service is responsible for its maintenance, the collected data and 24-hour control. (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra, Daily Herald)

Aruba - Minor earthquake felt in Aruba

Aruba experienced a small earthquake last Friday at 7:08 a.m. The quake's epicenter was at a depth of 7.8 kilometers between Aruba and Monkey Island off the Venezuelan coast and registered 2.3 on the Richter Scale. There were no reports of damage. (La Prensa)

Kingdom – Venezuelan Meddling in Dutch Caribbean A Top Priority in 2005

According to a released Wikileaks cable from 2005, Dutch concerns about Venezuelan interference in the Dutch Caribbean had risen to "the top" of the Dutch list of foreign policy priorities in 2005.

A Dutch senior foreign policy advisor reportedly told former U.S. Ambassador Sobel in August 2005 that the Dutch government is more and more worried about Venezuelan President Chavez' attempts to expand his influence in the Dutch Caribbean. The U.S. shared Dutch concerns about destabilizing Venezuelan moves in the region, but they could play a role in encouraging the EU to stand firm against Chavez' destabilization efforts.

Former Dutch Foreign Minister Ben Bot also expressed serious concerns about political developments in Venezuela and Chavez' intentions toward the Dutch Caribbean, which

he described as “our Malvinas.” If we leave today, Venezuela will occupy the Dutch Caribbean tomorrow, Bot supposedly said.

A policy of confronting Chavez militarily would be a risk given the Dutch position towards the Dutch Caribbean and the Dutch colonial legacy in general.

Dutch WHA civil servants uttered their concern over the increasing frequency and growing seriousness of Venezuelan attempts to pressure and intimidate the former Dutch Antilles’ government and noted that Chavez had a wide range of tools for applying influence on the islands, such as oil and buying political and criminal influence.

The Dutch continue to worry about Venezuela, but have not yet found the right mechanism to confront Chavez, former Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen reportedly told U.S. Ambassador to the Netherlands Fay Hartog-Levin in 2010. (Various media)

Curacao – Government Moves Shares from Utility Company to Refinery

The Curacao government decided to move its BOO (Build, Own and Operate) plant shares (49%) from Utility Company Aqualectra to Refineria di Korsou RdK (Curacao Refinery) in an attempt to improve the core efficiency of both companies. The BOO is now owned by RdK and Japanese Trading Company Marubeni which has a 25.5% equity interest in Curaçao Utilities Company and the BOO through its wholly owned subsidiary, Marubeni Caribbean Power Holdings, Inc. (Atlanta, GA), since August 2007. The BOO produces electricity, steam, desalinated water, and compressed air for the Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA-operated Isla refinery and up to several megawatts for the national grid. (Various media)

Curacao – New MLTF Reporting System Should Improve Efficiency

All entities that report unusual transactions to the Curacao Financial Intelligence Unit (MOT) - onshore and offshore banks, saving banks, money remitters, credit card companies, credit unions, life insurance companies, trust companies and other service providers, casinos, Customs, lawyers, notaries, accountants, tax advisors, jewelers, car dealers, real estate agents, administration offices, other tax, legal, accountancy experts - have to use the new Curacao Online Reporting System (CORSSYS) which should improve efficiency, a MOT media advertisement explained. If there is a suspicion of ML/TF, the transactions are disseminated to the relevant law enforcement agencies and the Public Prosecutors Office by the MOT. (Various media)

Curacao – Curacao Airport Partners Invests US \$800,000

The Curacao Airport Partners has started its US \$800,000 airport improvement implantation plan by performing runway, taxiway, and platform maintenance. The current upgrade is part of phase one, a CAP representative stated. (Various news)

Curacao – Minister Willems-Martina Sworn-in

Lia Willems-Martina (61) is the new Minister of Management, Planning and Public Service (Sovereign People - PS). She replaces Norman Girigorie who stepped down. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Island Hosts U.S. Superyacht Association Show

The U.S. Superyacht Association (USSA) held its 2011 annual show in St. Maarten January 19 and 20. The USSA is a trade association, with members represented by businesses and individuals who have a bona fide U.S. presence and activity in the superyacht industry. Current representation consists of over 120 businesses and individuals, encompassing 20 states and additional associate members worldwide. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Earthquake Rocks Island

St. Maarten was shaken by an earthquake of 5.0 on the Richter magnitude scale, yesterday. The earthquake occurred close to Montserrat at an ocean depth of approximately 103.7 miles about 30km/20 miles southwest of Oranjestad, St. Eustatius, according to the US Geological Survey. Thursday's earthquake, which occurred at 11:37pm, lasted several seconds and was steady and heavy, compared to the low build-up of intensity of past tremors felt on the island. (Daily Herald)

"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."