

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending February 5, 2011

Curacao – 2008 Wikileaks: Does Venezuela Support Opposition Financially?

In June 2008, the United States Consulate General on Curaçao suspected some opposition leaders had ties with the Venezuelan government, and perhaps received significant funds for their electoral campaign from Venezuelan sources, according to Wikileaks information.

The cable reportedly stated: “We expect more attacks from the opposition on our military presence en route to the renewal of the U.S. Forward Operating Location (USFOL) agreement which expires in 2011.”

To counter resistance, the U.S. Consulate tried to influence the perception positively by continuously promoting the USFOL as a multinational effort to tackle the Antillean (and Aruban) drug smuggling, and demonstrating there’s a political price for not supporting the battle of protecting one’s own people. Also, the Consulate continued to emphasize the counter drug mission of the USFOL and their successes by putting emphasis on the positive economic and social impact for society, with the purpose of influencing the current favorable public opinion.

A U.S. Consulate representative and a pro-U.S. source discussed possible Venezuelan interference. Members of the government are reportedly concerned that the opposition parties and certain labor unions are suddenly better organized and funded. A strike and public demonstration by unions over fuel prices was far more organized and coordinated than prior events. Also, former cabinet member and avowed Chavista Errol Cova of the now-defunct Labor People's Crusade party was very involved in the proceedings, according to the document.

Party leaders Nelson Pierre of the Not One Step Backwards List (LNPA) and Helmin Wiels of Sovereign People (PS) party have taken to local media to plant the idea that the U.S. is attempting to use the USFOL as a staging area for military incursions into Venezuela, and that Curacao could eventually become caught in the middle should any military action occur. The reason to stir up fear is primarily related to an alleged violation of the Venezuelan airspace by a USAF S-3 aircraft from Curaçao. “The opposition parties, although small, have loyal followers, especially people from the working classes, who are on the alert for Dutch influence and control. Opposition leader Nelson Pierre (a well known former drug addict) from the LNPA is known for his terrible yelling at local radio stations, and accusing the Americans and Dutchmen of numerous complots against Curaçao and the region.”

A pro-U.S. source reportedly said opposition leaders will try to link the Venezuelan airspace incident to a fuel price increase, suggesting the local government object to the USFOL agreement continuation. In an attempt to counteract criticism and support pro-U.S. officials and the FOL, a U.S. government representative and a „Joint Interagency Task Force South“ (JIATF-South) liaison officer briefed Island Governor Lisa Dindial, and later former PM De Jongh-Elhage regarding the airspace incident. They provided background information on the USFOL agreement and on its benefits to Curacao. During the meeting with the PM the USG officials were reportedly surprised to meet visiting former Dutch State Secretary for Kingdom Affairs Ank Bijleveld and Netherlands local

representative Rob Vermaas. The PM invited them to sit in on the meeting, where they also expressed concern about possible Venezuelan interference. The Island Governor and PM planned to pass the USFOL information to friendly Island Commissioners so that they can better respond to the accusations and allegations that the opposition is likely to make at a public meeting. (Amigoe)

Kingdom – 2005 Wikileaks: Dutch Worried About Possible Venezuelan Military Intervention

The Dutch government was worried that Venezuelan President Chavez would try to actively diminish or eradicate Dutch influence in the former Netherlands Antilles, if necessary by military intervention, a 2005 Wikileaks cable reportedly stated. Former Foreign Minister Ben Bot, openly stated that a Dutch/U.S. military presence in the region would be a strong signal towards Venezuelan authorities and their territorial aspirations. (Amigoe)

St. Maarten – Renewed Attention For Missing Amcit Brous

The sister of missing U.S. citizen Robert Brous asked the media to raise attention again regarding her brother's case. The family had offered a US \$5,000 reward last year February to anyone who can find him, dead or alive, in a push to resolve the case that has so far failed to turn up any sign of Brous or the blue BMW car that he was driving while on a short St. Maarten vacation. The 42-year old Los Angeles-based interior designer was staying at La Samanna Hotel and went missing on January 22, 2010. Prosecutor's Office spokesman Rienk Mud said, "I am afraid that we have been unable to locate Robert Brous or the motor vehicle that he rented. It is fair to say that we have no information of any kind as to what might have happened to him. However, sadly, we must fear the worst. If anyone has information that might lead us to him, the vehicle or his remains, or who has information as to what occurred, please contact us in the strictest confidence." (Daily Herald)

Aruba – Green Island In The Caribbean

The Miami Herald newspaper features an article about Green Travel to Aruba. The article focuses on green sleeping, eating, transportation, eco-tourism, and diving. Aruba is known, first and foremost, as a destination for cruise ships and tourists (mostly from the U.S.) escaping colder climates. However, there are plenty of natural features to be found beyond the casinos, cruise terminal and beachside resorts. Read more: <http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/01/31/2043070/green-travel-aruba.html##ixzz1ChzYrgOC> (Aruba Post)

Bonaire – Passenger Carrying Cocaine Apprehended at Airport

Members of the Caribbean Netherlands Customs "Flamingo Team" apprehended a person in possession of cocaine at Bonaire's Flamingo Airport. The passenger arrived from Curaçao with the intention to board a KLM flight to the Netherlands. The suspect had approximately 500 grams of pure cocaine hidden in the lining of a briefcase. (Various media)

Curacao – U.S. Judge Rules In Ongoing Cuban Drydock Case

Judge King at the United States District Court, Southern District of Florida, ruled in the Magistrate's Report and Recommendation that all claims against the Curacao and the former Netherlands Antilles governments be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act (FSIA).

In 2006, three Cuban nationals then residing in the United States filed this action under the Alien Tort Statute, and the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, on allegations that they suffered physical and psychological damages as victims of a forced labor scheme in which the defendant, Curacao Drydock Company, Inc, in concert with the government of Cuba, trafficked them to Curacao and extracted forced labor. In 2008, the Court then entered a final judgment in the amount of US \$80 million following a bench trial on damages which was not attended by Curacao Drydock. This judgment remains outstanding at this time. The plaintiffs have 10 days to file their objections with Judge King. See attached document for court case ruling details. (Government Press Release)

Curacao – Isla Refinery Strategic Options

Dutch Consultancy and Research Company Ecorys has, on behalf of the Curacao Ministry of Economic Development, completed a financial and economic (or social) cost-benefit analysis for three scenarios into the possible future of the Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA-operated Isla refinery. The report proposes three strategic choice recommendations for the Isla area, including the oil refinery future.

1. Keep the ISLA refinery at its current location and “upgrade” it

The upgraded refinery will be in operation from 2019 onwards (or, if possible, starting its operations earlier), fully using the same extensive area of 1.482 acres;

2. Build a new refinery at a different location in Curaçao

A new, modern refinery will be built at Bullenbaai and will be in operation from 2019 onwards (or, if possible, earlier), using a much smaller area (currently unknown) compared to the ISLA site;

3. „Corner” solutions for Isla area re-development (after Isla closure in 2019 or earlier)

Three possibilities for using the clean area are: industry, residential area, or tourism/offices.

It is assumed for the time being that the entire Isla area is destined for one of these corner solutions. A mix of these three uses is more realistic. In later stages a mix of uses has to be discussed explicitly, the report stated.

In a letter to Dutch Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner, Curacao PM Schotte wrote that his government will develop a future vision after the Ecorys phase 2 report is released, probably later this year. The public interest and finding a balance between sustainable, economic, social, and ecological development is key, according to Schotte. See attached report for more details. (Various media)

Curacao\St. Maarten - First Millennium Development Goals Report

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte presented the Curacao Millennium Development Goals (MDG) report to resident representative of the UNDP in Trinidad & Tobago Mrs. Marcia de Castro yesterday. “The MDG represents a set of ambitious goals of the UNDP that received broad support and inspires countries around the world to continue

benchmarking and execute plans for an effective development of their communities. This is of major importance because only a common effort worldwide can relieve some of the most pressing problems and issues in human development that we are still faced with in the 21st century. The Curacao government supports the MDG,” Schotte said. (Various media)

Bonaire – “Zambezi” Drugs and Money-Laundering Case Ongoing

Dutch citizens Albert de Groot and Willem van Wijngaarden, both arrested in 2009 in the “Zambezi” corruption and money-laundering case, are reportedly still incarcerated pending their trial. The Dutch Caribbean Public Prosecutor’s Office is coordinating an international investigation into money-laundering, gold-smuggling, real estate fraud and international drug trafficking. Also, the investigation into Bonaire politicians Ramoncito Booi and Burney Elhage for possible fraud-related offences committed by people within the Bonaire public administration is still ongoing. They were briefly arrested last year but later released. The two cases are reportedly related. (Various media)

Curacao – UNICEF To Start Children’s Right Investigation Soon

The children’s rights organization UNICEF Dutch chapter wants to start, possibly later this year, an investigation into the children’s rights on Curaçao, in particular related to education and violence against children. UNICEF hopes the report will put children’s rights prominently on the agenda of the Curaçao government again. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Second Earthquake in Two Week Span

St. Maarten experienced its second earthquake in a two week span; this one on Wednesday, February 02, 2011, at 08:40 a.m. LT, measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale. The earthquake epicenter was registered at a 156.9 km/97.5 miles depth in the ocean, some 50 km/30 miles west-southwest of Oranjestad, St. Eustatius, and 825 km (510 miles) northeast of Curacao, according to the US Geological Survey (USGS). There were no reports of damage, injuries and/or casualties by the local government. (Various media)

Aruba – Aruba Airlines Grounded for Six Months

The Aruba Department of Aviation has temporarily grounded Aruba Airlines pending an investigation, since its Piper Chieftain Aircraft was forced to make an emergency landing when the airport was closed, on December 31, 2010. After investigation, the Aruba government decided to ground the company for six months because Aruba Airlines aircraft do not meet all airworthiness directives standards. Transportation Minister Otmar Oduber said the local investigation will be followed by an International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) investigation. (Amigoe)

Kingdom – Saba and St. Eustatius Prisoners Serve Time In Bonaire

St. Eustatius and Saba prisoners will serve their jail time in Bonaire if they cannot be accommodated on their own islands. The constitutional status change for Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba mandated that BES-Islands prisoners can no longer serve time in

St. Maarten, according to the St. Eustatius Police Chief. In the past, prisoners from St. Eustatius and Saba were accommodated in St. Maarten's Pointe Blanche prison if necessary. (Daily Herald)

Curacao – PM Schotte Prepares for Visit DR President Fernandez

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte met with Dominican Republic's Undersecretary for Economic Affairs and Trade Negotiations Juan Guilliani and Dominican Deputy Minister Miguel Mejia in preparation for the visit of Dominican President Leonel Fernandez later this year. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Curacao\Aruba – Two Dengue Casualties on Curacao, One On Aruba

The Curacao Health Department reported four dengue casualties on Curacao; two in 2010 and two in 2011. The Aruba Health Department reported one casualty in 2010. The dengue campaign on Curacao has not resulted in the desired effect, Curacao Health Minister Constancia said. An Aruban Health Department representative said 787 dengue cases were registered between August 9, 2010 and January 23, 2011. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime January 28 – February 3

On January 28, a suspect attempted to rob a female pedestrian in Dein. The victim was stabbed and injured during a struggle, after which the suspect fled the area. On January 30, a female pedestrian in Koraal Specht was shot and injured by vehicle occupants. The same morning, a male pedestrian in Julian was also shot and injured by vehicle occupants. The motive for the two shootings remains unclear. The same day, a business in Otrobanda was robbed (Amigoe, Extra, Antilliaans Dagblad).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime January 28 – February 3

On February 1, the driver of a parked vehicle in Philipsburg was robbed. The victim was also cut and injured. On February 3, several shots were fired at a vehicle in Philipsburg. There were no reported injuries and the motive was not known (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

"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."