

# **News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending February 19, 2011**

## **Aruba - Dollarization Remarks Curacao Surprise MinFin de Meza**

Dollarization remarks by Curacao and St. Maarten Central Bank President Emsley Tromp surprised Aruba Finance Minister Mike de Meza.

"The Aruba Finance Minister informed me that if Curacao and St. Maarten dollarize, they will follow", Tromp reportedly said. In a reaction, the Aruba Finance Minister said he never discussed the dollarization topic with Tromp. De Meza said he is waiting for the results of a dollarization study which should help Aruba make a conscious choice.

The Aruba Central Bank President Jane Semeleer labeled the advantages of dollarization as marginal. Semeleer said a Central Bank and a local currency are "part of a national identity," an argument that has also been used by Curacao Sovereign Party leader and MP Helmin Wiels. Semeleer added that Aruba, which has the florin as its local currency, has made great economic progress. "We have shown that it is possible to manage a local currency in a small, open economy." She also pointed out that the Dutch Central Bank advised against dollarization, back in 2005. "We found strong arguments to continue with a dollar-linked florin in Aruba. Like that, St. Maarten and Curacao would keep their independence." (Various media)

## **St. Maarten – First National Marine Park**

St. Maarten recently established its first national marine park - the Man of War Shoal Marine Park. The aquatic area, which opened in late December, is the first step St. Maarten has taken towards preserving the area known as the Proselyte Reef, the island's most important underwater habitat.

"The development of the marine park has been long in the making and we are pleased SXM Underwater 1 has begun the first and most crucial phase of the process. By creating the marine park, St. Maarten is taking steps to preserve the local environment as well as enhancing sustainable tourism", Economic Affairs, Tourism, Transportation and Telecommunications Minister Franklin Meyers said.

The Proselyte Reef includes the island's most important marine habitat consisting of coral reefs and sea grass beds as well as a large population of aquatic mammals, including whales, dolphins, sharks, sea turtles and fish. The reef also acts as a migratory stopover and breeding site for various endangered species.

The area was selected because of the ecological, economical and cultural value which provides more than \$50 million per year in economic goods and services. In addition, this designated region will help boost tourism to the island as diving in marine parks is on the rise globally and is a tourist "must do" while on vacation.

The new Man of War Shoal marine park allows St. Maarten to have an official protected SXM Underwater 2 area. Artifacts such as large anchors, cannons, barrel hoops, cannon balls and pottery are still present at the site, which is considered an archaeological treasure. (Antilles Post)

## **BES-Islands – Overseas Kingdom Department Website in English**

The Kingdom Department for the Dutch Caribbean (RCN) website [www.RijksdienstCN.com](http://www.RijksdienstCN.com) is now available in English. RCN wants to provide Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba residents the opportunity to gain information about the Dutch government and the various policy areas, it said in a statement. (Daily Herald)

## **Statia – Ocean Classroom Students Excited after Statia Visit**

A group of students and teachers sailing aboard the Ocean Classroom vessel Harvey Gamage visited St. Eustatius. Group leader John Petrillo said he was heading a group of more than 17 high-school students from all around the United States, with their teachers and crew members. He said their 5,000-mile trip that started in St. Thomas would bring them south to Trinidad and then back north to Maine and Canada in May.

Boothbay Harbor, ME-based Ocean Classroom Foundation

<http://www.oceanclassroom.org/index.php> is an educational organization that provides programs of sea education and adventure for the youth of America aboard the schooners Westward, Spirit of Massachusetts and Harvey Gamage. Ocean Classroom Foundation is a leader in experiential education, with award-winning programs sailing from the Canadian Maritimes to the Caribbean Sea. Programs vary from one-day, to one-week, to semester long adventures for middle school, high school and college students; custom programs for schools, youth and community organizations and continuing education for American history teachers. (Daily Herald)

## **Curacao – Push To Be Removed From Brazilian Tax Haven Black List**

Brazilian federal tax authorities published a jurisdiction listing classified as tax havens and privileged tax regimes as defined by Brazilian tax legislation in 2010. The Netherlands Antilles is included in the blacklist, but its successor entity Curacao believes the ranking is unjust, based on a changed tax regime. Curacao government officials are trying to convince Brazilian authorities and hope to be upgraded to the “grey list” when the Brazilian government updates its law to include the new semi-autonomous entities Curacao and St. Maarten. Local authorities promised to translate current and new tax legislation in English and Portuguese to support their cause. The ultimate goal is a tax treaty with Brazil, Director Fiscal Affairs Julian Lopez Ramirez said. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

## **Curacao – PM Schotte Travels to Colombia**

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte and Travel & Transportation Minister Charles Cooper are attending the Vitrina Turistica Anato; one of the largest tourism industry trade event in Bogota, Colombia. The February 24-26, 2011, event provides a platform to meet all the decision makers, payees of medical travel, specialized medical suppliers, and travel providers. Also, Cooper will discuss airlift possibilities with Colombian authorities and gather information concerning the Bogota transportation system. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

## **Aruba – A Few More Days for Valero Refinery Restart**

San Antonio-based Valero Energy Corp's oil refinery on Aruba is still shut for unplanned repairs since last week, company spokesman Bill Day said. Day responded to an earlier statement by Aruba Finance Minister Mike de Meza who said the refinery was operational again. The refinery remains shut for at least a few days while repairs are being completed, according to Day.

The Aruba refinery is able to process up to 235,000 barrels of crude oil a day and just recently returned to planned processing rates after shutting down in 2009 because of poor refining economics. (Various media)

## **Dutch Caribbean – Name Change: Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard**

The Dutch Kingdom Council of Ministers has approved the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba Coast Guard name change which was mandated by the Netherlands Antilles dissolution in 2010. The new Dutch name of the Coast Guard is “Kustwacht voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in het Caraïbisch Gebied,” and the English version is “Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard.” Its operational abbreviation is KWCARIB. (Various media)

## **Aruba – MOU Baptist Health South Florida and Aruban IMSAN**

The Aruban Public Emergency Medical Services San Nicolas (IMSAN) and Baptist Health South Florida have signed an MOU with the goal to improve health care services on Aruba, Health Minister Richard Visser said.

IMSAN, a private organization, and the Aruban government have signed an exclusive contract to provide primary ambulance care. The 911 and non-emergency transfer service provider operates seven ambulances from two stations: one in the city of Oranjestad and one in the city of San Nicolas.

Baptist Health South Florida is the largest faith-based, not-for-profit health care organization in Southern Florida, with an outstanding reputation for medical and service excellence. Its network of services extends throughout Miami-Dade, Broward and Monroe Counties with Baptist, Baptist Children's, South Miami, Homestead, Mariners and Doctors Hospitals, and Baptist Cardiac & Vascular Institute. (La Prensa)

## **Curacao – Various U.S. Artists To Perform At Curacao Jazz Festival**

The Curacao North Sea Jazz Festival organization reported that during the two festival days in 2010, approximately 18,000 visitors attended the events.

Today, they announced the line-up for the September 2-3, 2011, events. U.S. artists Dionne Warwick, Earth, Wind & Fire, and Chic will be accompanied by International performers Sting, Ruben Blades, Chucho Valdes, Poncho Sanchez & Terence Blanchard, Danilo Perez, Los Van, Eliane Elias, and local musicians Levi Silvano and Ronchi Mathews. Ticket prices are US \$185 per evening. (Various media)

## **Curacao – Energy Street Festival Is a Cultural Bridge**

The Energy Street Festival organizers announced at the press event yesterday that 32 young performers took the opportunity to audition for the flash mobs which will take place in downtown Willemstad, starting Saturday. Flash mobs are seemingly spontaneous public enactments of an art form and are fun to watch.

Dance choreographer and the founder of the New York-based Urban Dance Collective Niles Ford said we are trying to include, not to exclude interested participants. Also, Niles believes he can bridge the cultural “gap” between the U.S., Africa, and Curacao with dance.

The United States Consul General Valerie Belon said on prime time news the U.S. Consulate is a proud to be an Energy Street Festival co-sponsor. Ms. Belon emphasized the value of dance as a means of sharing U.S. African-American culture with the people of Curacao. (Various media)

### **Curacao – PM Schotte Meets With NY Yankee Owners**

Curacao PM Gerrit Schotte met with New York Yankees owners Jennifer Steinberger and her husband Steve Swindel, during his visit to the Dominican Republic. The PM said he is planning an enormous and interesting sports project for Curacao, but did not reveal the details. (Amigoe)

### **Aruba – Three Females Sentenced for Smuggling Cocaine**

Three females conspired to smuggle three kilos of cocaine into the Netherlands in September 2010, by concealing the drugs in their luggage at Aruba International Reina Beatrix Airport were sentenced to three years in prison each, following an Aruban law enforcement investigation. (Amigoe)

### **St. Maarten – Population and Housing Census in April**

The St. Maarten Statistics Department launched the 2011 census media campaign. The Population and Housing Census will take place April 9-17. The Statistics Bureau serves as the leading source of quality data about St. Maarten’s people and economy. (Daily Herald)

### **Curacao – Plans to Construct Gay Resort – Dream or Real?**

Two German developers have presented a plan to create and construct a luxurious gay resort „the Davion Lagoon” at Curacao St. Jorisbaai ([www.davionlagoon.com](http://www.davionlagoon.com)). The 4812 room resort can accommodate 9800 guests. The new resort roughly doubles the hotel room capacity on Curacao, if fully constructed.

The proposed 1,235 acre resort encompasses 15 hotels, a small city with shops, restaurants, rental and private apartments, cultural and sports facilities, a marina, beaches, parks and much more - total investment is approximately US \$1.8 billion. The local government and the land owners are reportedly unaware of the developers” plans. (Various media)

### **Bonaire – Drugs and Money-Laundering Case Against Politicians Dismissed**

The criminal case against Bonaire politicians Ramoncito Booi and Burney Elhage for possible fraud-related offences committed by people within the Bonaire public administration was dismissed by the Public Prosecutors office. 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. (Various media)

### **Curacao – Curacao Removed From Brazilian Tax Haven Black List**

Brazilian federal tax authorities reportedly moved Curacao from the tax haven "blacklist" to the tax haven "grey list", pending an analysis of the new Curacao tax regime. Brazil published a jurisdiction listing classified as tax havens and privileged tax regimes as defined by Brazilian tax legislation in 2010 which included the Netherlands Antilles. The Curacao ultimate goal is a tax treaty (TIEA, DTA) with Brazil. (Antilliaans Dagblad)

## **CURAÇAO**

### ***Joint Court of Justice announces 2009 figures***

The Joint Court of Justice of Curaçao, Aruba, St. Maarten and the BES Islands processed a total of 28,303 criminal cases in 2009 (26,592 misdemeanors and 1,711 felonies). The number of civil cases dropped from 3,471 in 2008 to 3,036 in 2009.

The Court's annual budget was 10.8 million guilders (USD 6 million) in 2009. Court President Lisbeth Hoefdraad said that during 2009, the Court had also worked on establishing the new internal organizational structure as well as the financial and human resources structures (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad).

## **ST. MAARTEN**

### ***Crime February 11 – 17***

On February 11, a female home owner in Philipsburg was robbed by one man. The same day, an elderly housekeeper was robbed in her employer's home in St. Peters by a masked man. On February 12, a man in Sandy Ground was stabbed and injured during a domestic altercation. On February 15, a tourist was beaten and robbed by two men near Sea Palace Hotel. The following day, a pedestrian who had received a ride in Cole Bay was beaten and robbed by the vehicle's driver and other occupant. A store in Philipsburg was also robbed by two men (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

### ***Robbery and burglary suspects arrested***

The St. Maarten Police Department reported that since last January, the investigation of 15 armed robbery cases has resulted in the arrest of 6 suspects. As a result, 40 per cent of the total number of armed robberies committed in January-February has been solved. Also, the newly established Home Invasion Team has been very successful investigating numerous break-ins in areas such as Sucker Garden, Simpson Bay, Low Lands and St. Peters. From December 2010 to February 2011, ten suspects have been arrested in connection with

these break-ins. Some 16 break-ins were solved, however police believe that the actual number of break-ins committed by this group may be much higher (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."*