

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending

April 9, 2011

St. Maarten – Dutch Government Applies Pressure

Dutch Interior Affairs and Kingdom Relations Minister Piet Hein Donner started his three-day visit to St. Maarten on Saturday. The Kingdom Council of Ministers has given St. Maarten one last chance to reach an agreement with the Committee for Financial Supervision (CFT). The St. Maarten Government has failed to produce a balanced budget which is mandated by the Netherlands Antilles' dismantling agreement. Article 43.2 of the Dutch Kingdom constitution states that safeguarding of fundamental human rights and freedoms, legal certainty, and good governance is a Kingdom affair.

The Kingdom Council of Ministers will not mandate St. Maarten to provide financial data yet, but is considering such a measure if St. Maarten does not comply with the Kingdom Charter, a Dutch government spokesperson said. Budget, justice, and immigration issues are on Donner's agenda during his scheduled meetings with Governor Eugene Holiday, PM Sarah Wescot-Williams and the St. Maarten Council of Ministers. (Various media)

Aruba – Ritz-Carlton Faces Lawsuit

Various Aruban environmental organizations have instituted legal proceedings against the Ritz-Carlton. They want to stop the Ritz-Carlton from developing a resort at Fisherman's Wharf and to preserve the proposed hotel location for other, environmentally friendlier, purposes, but the previous MEP administration has signed a development contract with Ritz-Carlton that would reportedly be too expensive to terminate. The parties appeared before a judge, last week. The Ritz-Carlton Aruba resort will consist of 320 luxury rooms, including a variety of suite configurations. The property sits on the last developable plot of land in the northwest corner of the island along Palm Beach, adjacent to a protected conservation area and existing Marriott Hotel. Ritz-Carlton management indicated that they will respect the environment. (Various media)

Bonaire – Three Political Parties Sign Majority Coalition Agreement

The Democratic Party (DP) led by Robby Beukenboom signed a coalition agreement with the Free Bonaire Movement (MBL) of Benito Dirksz and the Pro Justice and Union party (PHU) of Michiel Bijkerk. Balanced economic growth, human development, transparency, and the elimination of corruption are the main goals of the new coalition. The incoming commissioners will be named at a later date. (Various media)

Aruba – US \$25 Million Airport Upgrade Announced

The Aruba Reina Beatrix International Airport will soon undergo a US \$25 million upgrade which consists of improving the U.S. side departure and arrival hall, and other enhancements. (Various media)

Curacao – Lionel Jansen New Education, Science, Sports, and Culture Minister

Lionel Jansen was sworn in as the Education, Science, Culture and Sports Minister by Governor Frits Goedgedrag, last Friday. He succeeds René Rosalia, who resigned following a disagreement with Sovereign Party management. His goals include basic, free and accessible education to all; better schools; and more motivated teachers. He wants more accessible sports facilities in all neighborhoods. The minister believes in an innovative culture and carnival approach. Also, he will seek cooperation with neighboring countries in the field of education, science, culture, and sports. (Various media)

Curacao – Michigan Art Center To Host Local Artists

The DePree Art Center and Gallery in Holland, MI, houses the Hope College Arts Department including classrooms, studio space and a gallery hosting special exhibits throughout the year. The “Islands Reflections – the Contemporary Art of Curacao“ exhibit will feature 10 Curacao artists between August 19 and October 1. The city was established in 1847, as a settlement of Dutch Calvinists. Holland is proud of the high percentage Dutch-American residents. It has its roots in the most solemn aspects of Dutch culture. Much of the religious conviction remains, as does the traditional Dutch architecture, and ambiance. The annual Holland Tulip Time Festival attracts over 500,000 visitors. (Amigoe)

St. Maarten – Dutch Government Agrees to Fund Staff Recruitment

The Dutch Government has agreed to finance staff recruitment to strengthen St. Maarten’s government. The financial support will fill vacancies in the Police Force, Detectives Bureau, Pointe Blanche Prison and Immigration Services among others and will terminate on November 1, 2013. (Daily Herald)

Dutch Caribbean – Controversial Central Bank Board Candidate Withdraws Name

Rudolf Baetsen who was nominated to take the helm of the Supervisory Board of the Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten has asked Curaçao PM Gerrit Schotte to withdraw his name due to the controversy that ignited over his nomination. When Baetsen’s nomination was made public over a week ago as “a joint candidate” by the two islands, a fierce debate started over alleged ties with Italian casino mafia. (Various media)

Saba – Medical School Seeks EU Accreditation

The Dutch Ministries of Education, Culture and Science (OCW) and Public Health, Wellbeing and Sports (VWS) will look into European Union accreditation possibilities for the Saba University School of Medicine.

Also, Saba’s government wants to make it possible for medical school graduates to remain on the island to work as a doctor. Saba argues that when a graduate successfully acquires a license in the U.S. as a general practitioner, he or she qualifies to work wherever in the world, including Saba. The OCW and VWS ministries will contact U.S. authorities in an attempt to accomplish their goals. Since its founding, Saba University School of Medicine has awarded over 1,300 graduates, many of them U.S. citizens, with a Doctor of Medicine degree. The

graduates have obtained residency appointments in virtually every medical specialty and subspecialty at renowned teaching hospitals and leading medical centres across the U.S. Each year, Saba University School of Medicine graduates obtain ACGME-accredited residency appointments in virtually every medical specialty and subspecialty at renowned teaching hospitals and leading medical centers across the U.S. and Canada. (Daily Herald)

St. Maarten – St. Maarten Receives Best Caribbean Island Award

Earlier this month, St. Maarten received the 2011 Editor in Chief Award for Best Caribbean Island from Ft. Lauderdale-based Porthole Cruise Magazine. The magazine represents selected cruise lines with marketing programs and publishes Porthole Cruise for the consumer. Minister of Tourism and Economic Affairs, Franklin Meyers, was very pleased with this recognition which he said is the result of the hard work and input of everyone working in the tourism sector. Publisher and editor in chief of Porthole, Bill Panoff, stated that St. Maarten is a tropical paradise and a classic destination for returning passengers. (Various media)

Aruba - U.S. Consulate General Donates Books To The Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

The U.S. Consulate General in Curacao donated an assortment of English language books, new and used, to the Biblioteca Nacional Aruba on March 31, 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. culture, U.S. government and a variety of anti-drug flyers. The United States Consulate General hopes this collection will contribute to a better understanding of the U.S. and its diverse culture. Library director Astrid Britten accepted this gift on behalf of the library from U.S. Vice-Consul Winifred Hofstetter. (Various media)

Curacao - Tourist Arrivals Increase 32% From North America

Curacao's tourism sector continues to record notable growth with a 32% increase in visitor arrivals from North America in 2010. Curacao has seen consecutively increasing arrival numbers from the U.S. and Canada since the start of 2010. Arrivals from Canada and the U.S. were up 17% and 35% from 2009 to 2010, respectively.

The demand for travel to Curacao has been met with Continental Airlines launching twice-weekly nonstop service, on Wednesdays and Saturdays, from Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) to Curacao International Airport (CUR) in December 2010. The new service has made Curacao more accessible to the Tri-State area after Continental previously offered weekly, seasonal nonstop flights from Newark to Curacao. Curacao is serviced by American Airlines, twice daily, from Miami. Local carrier, InselAir, also services Curacao with one flight, Sunday through Friday, from Miami.

"Continental Airlines providing twice-weekly airlift has proven the demand for travel to Curacao is on the rise, and has helped to increase our overall arrival numbers, in addition to twice daily flights on American Airlines from Miami and InselAir service," says Curacao Tourist Board Marketing Manager, North America Andre Rojer. "Curacao is now more accessible than ever. "Curacao"s airlift capacity for 2011 is strong, with some 168,064 seats available for the United States.

Catapulting Curacao on to every jetsetter's radar for 2011 is a host of impressive accolades from SmarterTravel, Fodor's and AOL Travel, among others. Most recently, Curacao's nightlife

has been applauded by The Huffington Post as one of the „Best Islands in the Caribbean for Bar-Hoppers.“

“With Curacao quickly becoming a must-visit destination for American and Canadian travelers, and on the heels of becoming an autonomous country, we are growing beyond informing consumers of who and where we are, and now in a position of providing sufficient airlift to meet this increased travel demand,” Rojer says. “Curacao’s time has come.” (Antilles Post)

Aruba – Dutch Budget Cuts: Savaneta Marine Barracks Closing?

The Dutch Ministry of Defense will announce its budget cuts today. Aruba has asked the Dutch government to keep the Savaneta Marine Barracks operational. Aruba Foreign Affairs spokesperson Wicky Schouten said Aruba will hand the “Marine Barracks’ keys” to the U.S., if the Dutch decide to leave.

Aruba is a semi-autonomous territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. However, foreign affairs and defense are a Kingdom responsibility.

The Dutch military in the Caribbean works closely with the Joint Interagency Task Force South, located in Key West to maintain the rule of law in the region and fight international narcotics trafficking.

Schouten reportedly stated that he believes the U.S. government has used its influence to persuade the Dutch to keep the Marine Barracks open. He expects the Dutch will ask the U.S. for more regional support, based on historical and geo-political motives, if Savaneta closes. (Amigoe)

St. Maarten – Counterfeit Watches Destroyed

About 300 of 600 counterfeit watches, confiscated at four Philipsburg stores, were destroyed Thursday when a heavy steamroller was used to crush them. The counterfeit watches such as Rolex, Chopard, Audemars Piguet, Breitling, Gucci, Tag Heuer, Hublot, Christian Dior, Patek Philippe, Cartier, Blancpain, Breguet, Longines, Omega, Rado and Girard Perregaux were confiscated during raids conducted by the local authorities upon request of the Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry. (Daily Herald)

Aruba – Tourism and Oil Sector Boost Aruba Economy

The Aruba Central Bank (CBA) announced the 12-month average inflation rate remained at 1.2%. It is forecasted to reach 2.3% in 2011, and 2.8% in 2012. Given the renewed refining activities in the oil sector by the San Antonio-based Valero-operated oil refinery and increased tourism activities, economic activities are expected to expand by 9.0% in real terms this year, following contractions of 11.0% in 2009 and 3.7% in 2010, respectively. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime April 1 – 7

On April 4, a courier transporting cash for a local company in Caracasbaai was robbed by three men. The suspects were later arrested by police. The following day, the body of a man was found in Rif (near the Megapier) by a passer-by. Police consider it a murder due to the presence of stab wounds. On April 6, there were three murders. Two men were shot and killed in Otrobanda in a possible drug deal gone wrong. The same

evening, a man riding a quad bike in Klein Marchena was shot and killed by an occupant of a vehicle. A police spokesman said that there is no information suggesting that the two cases are related. (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra).

ARUBA

Crime April 1 – 7

On April 2, a Pizza Hut restaurant in Piedra Plat was robbed by two masked men. On April 6, an occupant of a vehicle fired one shot at a security guard in Boca Catalina. The guard was not injured. (Diario Aruba, Amigoe).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime April 1 – 7

On April 2, there were four robberies: a pedestrian in Philipsburg; a woman at the pier at Bobby's Marina; a lottery ticket selling business in Cole Bay by two masked men; and a store in Cole Bay. (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

Burglary cases solved

Police caught two burglars responsible for ten different cases of breaking and entering. Last week, a witness saw two men leave a home in Philipsburg they had broken into and called the police. The two suspects were arrested after their car full of stolen items was stopped by a police patrol. Police said the two suspects admitted during interrogation to robbing ten other houses in the surrounding area as well. The police department is continuing its investigation to establish whether the suspects have been involved in other crimes or with other accomplices. (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time)

Four men sentenced for armed robbery and theft

The first four suspects of a total of eight on trial for a number of robbery and theft charges were found guilty last Wednesday and received sentences between 28 months and seven years and six months. The four men, all in their twenties, committed a series of armed robberies and burglaries on both the Dutch and French side of St. Maarten between July 2010 and March 2011. The four men were cleared of membership in a criminal organization. "Even though the „group of friends“ had committed a large number of crimes, there was no evidence of close coordination or systematic operations," the judge stated. The remaining four suspects will go on trial on May 11. (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."