



NEWS

United States Consulate General

J.B. Gorsiraweg #1, Willemstad, Curaçao
Tel: 461-3066 Fax: 461-6489

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, February 21, 2013

Contact: W.J. Remie
Phone: 461-3066 ext. 2240

Curacao Prime Minister Hodge and Parliament Chair Franco Visit U.S. Forward Operating Location

On Thursday morning, February 21, Commander of the U.S. Forward Operating Location (FOL), Lieutenant Colonel Tim Beers along with his staff and U.S. Consul General Valerie Belon hosted Prime Minister Daniel Hodge, Chair Parliament Mike Franco, and two other Curacao Government Ministers for a briefing and tour of the FOL.

Briefing PM Hodge, Parliament Chair Franco, Justice Minister Nelson Navarro, and Transportation Minister Earl Balborda, Lt.Col. Beers 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. Beers 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 2012 alone, these efforts resulted in over US \$3 billion worth of drug seizures.

After the briefing, PM Hodge, Chairman Franco and the others received a tour of the FOL facilities including a U.S. Air Force AWACs aircraft currently in Curacao to support counter-drug operations.

###

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

<http://www.state.gov>

<http://curacao.usconsulate.gov>