

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending

May 29, 2010

Antilles/Aruba – New Dutch Navy Ship Arrives Today

The Dutch Frigate Hr.Ms. Van Amstel arrives in Curacao for a three-month Caribbean tour, today. The ship has a Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) team from the U.S. Coast Guard aboard for counter-drug missions. The frigate is also equipped with a Westland Lynx helicopter. (Various media)

Antilles – Residences Raided in Drugs and Money-Laundering Probe

Various residences and businesses in Curacao and Bonaire were raided by law enforcement officials in an ongoing international investigation into money-laundering, gold-smuggling, real estate fraud and international drug trafficking, last Friday. Bonaire UPB politicians Ramoncito Booi and Burney Elhage are two of the suspects in this case. The Netherlands Antilles Public Prosecutor's Office is coordinating the investigation. (Various media)

Region – Dutch Frigate Intercepts Vessel Carrying Cocaine

The Dutch Frigate Hr.Ms. Van Speijk intercepted a Panamanian merchant marine vessel seafaring between Colombia and Panama on Saturday. Law enforcement officials found 317 kilograms of cocaine in a hidden compartment, after the ship was forced to dock in Colon, Panama. Also, the USCGC Tampa was involved in the operation. The Law Enforcement Detachment (LEDET) team from the U.S. Coast Guard stationed aboard the Dutch frigate arrested seven men. (Various media)

Curacao - America's Tall Ship Eagle to Visit Curacao

The Coast Guard Cutter Barque Eagle, also known as America's Tall Ship, will arrive at the West Wharf in Curacao from Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) on Friday, May 28, at 10 am. The Eagle is participating in the VELAS SUDAMERICA 2010 tall ships regatta. The regatta celebrates the Bicentennial of the First National Governing Board. The Navies of Chile and Argentina have also joined in the organization of "Sails South America 2010". The Bicentennial Regatta unites several magnificent sailing ships, among them frigates, schooners and brigs, both civil and military, from various countries sailing the seas of South America and the Caribbean.

The Eagle is the only square-rigged ship in active American government service and was originally commissioned as in 1936 as a German training ship. Since 1946, the Eagle has sailed each summer in support of United States Coast Guard officer training programs, exposing future Coast Guard leaders to their first taste of life at sea.

The 74-year old Eagle is a 295' long, three-masted square rigger with over 23,500 square feet of sail and six miles of rigging. You can follow Eagle's summer cruise on face book at: www.facebook.com/coastguardcuttereagle

The Eagle will be open for free public tours from 10am until 6pm on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, May 29th through 31st. (Various media)

Caribbean - U.S. Commits to Regional Security

The United States is committed to working with our Caribbean neighbors to combat threats that endanger our mutual security. President Obama, during the 2009 Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago, voiced the U.S. commitment to partnership in this hemisphere: "As neighbors, we have a responsibility to each other and to our citizens. And by working together, we can take important steps forward to advance prosperity, security, and liberty."

On May 27, 2010, the United States and the nations of the Caribbean will live up to that responsibility by launching the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI), an important step forward for the prosperity, security, and liberty of the region. CBSI will support a joint U.S.-Caribbean partnership that addresses the various security and safety concerns of our respective governments and citizens.

The definition of "security" under this new view goes beyond assistance for security forces and anti-trafficking efforts. CBSI is a broad initiative that also puts an emphasis on citizen safety partnerships that recognize the need to invest in crime prevention approaches, including education and workforce development as alternatives to criminal enterprise. This comprehensive view also acknowledges the need to further strengthen justice sector institutions to successfully investigate and prosecute all forms of criminal activity.

The United States and Caribbean nations are entering a new phase in our relationship—a phase of dialogue, shared responsibility, and understanding. This relationship should not be viewed as a panacea against crime and violence, but the beginning of a collaborative approach—one that identifies and provides appropriate and sufficient resources to institutions and communities in a common effort to support their efforts. Over the past year, representatives from our governments have met four times to define our strategic priorities. We have similarly identified a framework for security cooperation and a broad plan of action. These are not mere political declarations but rather guiding documents that should set a clear path toward improving citizen safety over the coming years. (Extra)

Saba - University of Alabama at Birmingham Protects Biodiversity

Ocean scientists and biologists from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, The Netherlands, California, Venezuela, and Australia reported an exhaustive study of coral biodiversity in the Saba Bank at PlosOne on May 21, 2010. Saba Bank is one of the largest submerged coral atolls in the world. The region supports an enormous diversity of fish, crustacean, and coral.

The coral research determined that the Saba Bank is very representative of coral biodiversity in the Caribbean and has not suffered the coral whitening problem found in other areas of the Caribbean. The number of unique coral species has not declined from previous surveys. Some damage from anchor chains to the largest coral species, the giant barrel sponge, *Xestospongia muta*, was noted.

The Saba Bank region has the potential to provide seed polyp (coral babies) to repopulate regions of the Caribbean that have suffered coral loss and extinction. The reason that the Saba Bank has not suffered the same fate as most Caribbean coral is not entirely clear but may be due to the depth of the atoll (20 to 30 meters) and to current flow that prevents contamination from pollutants. (Antilles Post)

St. Maarten – Dutch-American Friendship Law Suit Ruling

The Crew's Nest bar and restaurant's request to obtain a director's license for one of its employers, a U.S. citizen, has been referred back to the Island Council by a judge at the Court of First Instance. Judge René van Veen annulled the Island Council's rejection of the director's license application in question in a ruling and gave the Island Council three months to change their decision. Judge van Veen agreed with the plaintiffs that the Dutch-American Friendship Treaty means the same rules that apply to European Dutch should also apply to U.S. citizens. (Various media)

Aruba – PM Eman Raises Concern About Valero

Aruban PM Mike Eman said at a press conference that he is concerned about the future of the 600 Valero employees and 4000 contractors. San Antonio-based Valero Energy Corp. and the Aruba government were able to settle a tax dispute which spans 20 years and is subject to approval by Aruba's parliament. The dispute has the government's full attention, Eman said. Valero has kept its promise to keep all workers on payroll through June 1 at the refinery, which was idled July 2009. The long-running dispute has been seen as a roadblock to Valero's sale of the refinery. (Various media)

Curacao – Police Raid Marijuana Farm; One Arrest Made

Police Officers raided a marijuana farm in the Sabana Hundu neighborhood. More than 200 plants and paraphernalia to prepare the drugs for sale were confiscated. One arrest was made. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Island Council Approves U.S. Marketing Budget

The St. Maarten's government approved tourism marketing contracts with Tambourine and Kahn Travel Communications covering the United States market. Approximately US \$2.2 million is allocated U.S. marketing in 2010. Commissioner Richardson said the U.S. market is the most important air arrivals market and traditionally the U.S. represents about 50% of the overall tourism market. He said most U.S. visitors come to St. Maarten, December through April; stay an average of three and a half days and spend about US \$150 per day. "Over the years, the total US market revenue has been about US \$13.5 million per year. The key geographical markets in the U.S. are the areas that include the following gateways: New York, New Jersey, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Miami, South Carolina, Washington DC and Atlanta," he said. Also, Richardson announced that St. Maarten is expecting a Jet Blue airlift increase this summer. (Daily Herald)

St. Maarten – Save-A-Lot to Open a Store on St. Maarten?

The St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce is trying to attract St. Louis, Missouri-based grocery food chain Save-A-Lot. Save-A-Lot is a wholly owned subsidiary of SUPERVALU INC., a Fortune 100 company and one of the largest companies in the U.S. grocery channel. Save-A-Lot has recently conducted a market analysis to determine the feasibility of establishing a mini-market here, Chamber President Glen Carty said. (Daily Herald)

Aruba - RTKL Ready to Design Aruba Ritz-Carlton

U.S.-based RTKL, an international architecture, interior design, engineering, planning and creative services organization is ready to start the first construction activities for the for the new five-star Ritz-Carlton resort spa and casino in Aruba, after the construction permit for the hotel was processed by the Aruban government last week.

RTKL was hired by investment company Desarrollos Hotelco Corp. DHC Aruba N.V. for the development.

Various Aruban environmental organizations and the governing AVP party wanted 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 be too expensive to terminate, AVP MP Juan David Yrausquin said.

Project Manager Vera said that during the entire scheduled three-year construction period, approx. 700 to 800 people will be employed, directly by his company or contracted.

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. (Amigoe)

Kingdom – Next Political Steering Group Meeting on June 15

The next Kingdom Political Steering Group (PSG) is scheduled to commence via video-conferencing on June 15. One of the most important topics of the meeting is the vetting committee report concerning Curaçao's and St. Maarten's preparedness to obtain their semi-autonomous status within the Dutch Kingdom by October 10, 2010. A successful meeting is a prerequisite for the final Round Table Conference which is scheduled in The Hague on September 9. (Various media)

Curacao – The Safe Concordia Will Stay On Curacao For Six Months

The Safe Concordia will be in Curacao from June 10 for a six-month overlay. The semi-submersible vessel built as an oil rig and then changed into a "floatel", the platform is a floating hotel for people working out at sea on oil and gas fields. It can accommodate 390 people, has large deck areas, workshops, cranes, offices, information technology facilities and recreational and entertainment areas, but only has a crew of 35 aboard during its period in Curacao. The Safe Concordia will be moored at the deep-water harbor of Caracas Bay. The Cypress-based Company Rigzone decided to move the vessel to Curacao from the U.S., because of the start of the hurricane season and stringent U.S. immigration rules and procedures. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime May 21 – 27

On May 22 a man was shot and killed in Seru Fortuna during an argument over a vehicle (Extra, Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad).

ARUBA

Crime May 21 – 27

On May 22 a couple in Vader Piet was robbed by a drug addict. On May 25 a pedestrian in San Nicolas was beaten and robbed (Diario Aruba).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime May 21 – 27

On May 27 an electronics store in Philipsburg was robbed. The store owner was beaten (Daily Herald).

New cooperation protocol for justice agencies

Representatives of the Police Department, Public Prosecutor's Office, Court of Guardianship, prison and Probation Department have recently signed a cooperation protocol to tackle the rise in youth crime which has sharply risen in recent years. More intensive cooperation among the various justice agencies is considered an important crime-combating method. The protocol is a first step to a "Safety House St. Maarten." The "Safety House" concept is a commonly used tool in the Netherlands.

With the protocol, more reliable information about the nature and extent of crime among young people in St. Maarten can be provided. This information will provide a basis for policy-making and further development of an integrated approach. Regular meetings among justice partners will be used to investigate the possibilities of implementing a particular judicial decision, and will take into consideration (inter)national regulations on the trial and treatment of adolescents, as well as adequate, timely and personalized approaches to formulating and implementing penalties, with the aim of reducing the risk of repeat of offenses. The cooperation protocol will be financed by Dutch funding agency USONA and will fall under the supervision of the Ministry of Justice (Daily Herald).

"The Weekly Press Summary is a compilation of stories running in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruban press that is intended to alert readers about items of interest to them. There is no interpretation or verification of the facts contained therein."