

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending August 14, 2010

Curacao – Isla Refinery Strike; Union Want Americans Out

On Friday, Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA-operated Isla refinery employees went on an open-ended strike organized by the Workers' Federation of Curacao (PWFC) Union. A group of employees blocked the entrance gates to the refinery, prohibiting gasoline trucks from entering or leaving the refinery. A fear of gasoline shortages sparked panic buying and long lines at stations all over the island, after some gas stations reportedly ran out of gas.

PWFC union leader Angelo Meyer is displeased by the performance of the BOO (Build, Own and Operate) plant management and wants all American citizens in management out. Japanese Marubeni Corporation (Marubeni) has a 25.5% equity interest in Curaçao Utilities Company and the BOO through its wholly owned subsidiary, Marubeni Caribbean Power Holdings, Inc. (Atlanta, GA), since August 2007. The BOO produces electricity, steam, desalinated water, and compressed air for the Isla Refinery and up to several megawatts for the national grid. Several blackouts caused by the BOO plant in the past years have severely hampered the refinery. The Isla refinery is completely shut down since March 1, and all attempts to re-start the BOO have failed.

The PWFC union instructed their members to end the strike after a meeting with refinery management and government representatives, but independent workers continued to strike.

A judge ruled the workers should immediately end their protest after Utility Company Aqualectra instituted legal proceedings against the protestors. Curoil trucks are reportedly replenishing the empty gas stations. Also, the strike has caused various power outages over the weekend, because Aqualectra could not supply its power plant with diesel. (Various media)

Antilles\Aruba – Changed Visa Regulations for Colombian Nationals

Colombian nationals in possession of a valid multiple entry visa for the Schengen-area, the U.S. or Canada do no longer need a visa to enter Aruba or the Netherlands Antilles. Aruban PM Mike Eman and his Antillean colleague Emily de Jongh-Elhage are very pleased with the new regulations and Dutch support that made the change possible. The change makes it easier for travelers from Colombia to visit Aruba and Netherlands Antilles, and gives the tourism to these islands an extra stimulus," Mike Eman said. (Various media)

Aruba – PM Mike Eman Present at Inauguration Colombian President

Aruba PM Mike Eman traveled to Colombia to attend the August 7, inauguration ceremonies for Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos. (Various media)

Aruba – USS Klakring Visits Aruba; Provide Community Support

USS Klakring (FFG 42) will conduct a port visit in Aruba for several days in August, during its “Operation Southern Seas” deployment.

The port visit will give Klakring’s sailors the opportunity to experience the Aruba culture and serve as the American Navy’s goodwill ambassadors in Aruba.

During their stay, Klakring’s sailors will participate in community-related projects to build relationships and mutual understanding with the local community. Also, the sailors plan to donate various items, including stuffed animals for children, to the Aruba Red Cross. “Southern Seas 2010, a United States Southern Command directed operation, focuses on enhancing relationships with regional partner nations and improving operational readiness for all assigned units. Southern Seas provides the opportunity for U.S. and other forces to operate in the multinational environment, refine coordination, improve interoperability and demonstrate flexibility. In addition, assigned units will focus on unconventional threats, such as illicit trafficking, and improving training levels in a variety of mission areas,” a US Consulate release stated. (Daily Herald)

St. Maarten – NY Tourists File Police Brutality Complaint

A tourist couple from New York claimed a policeman attacked them early Sunday while they were stuck in traffic. The tourist said an unidentified officer had punched him in the face and slapped his wife after they tried to find out why traffic was heavy that night. The couple filed a police brutality report with the police. Police spokesman Inspector Ricardo Henson said Monday he couldn’t comment based on insufficient information about the alleged attack. (Daily Herald)

Aruba – “Foxy Lady” Nightclub TIP Case; Alex Mathew Arrested

Alex Mathew and three others were arrested after Dutch authorities received a report from the Ukraine about possible Trafficking in Persons violations at the Aruba “Foxy Lady” Nightclub. In 2005 the Dutch Government has been ordered to pay Alex Mathew 10,000 Euros in damages by the European Court for Human Rights, because of the punishment he was given after he beat Ben Vocking, the warden of Aruba’s KIA prison, in 2001. Because of his Aruban prison history, Mathew was moved a Bonaire detention center. (Various media)

Antilles – Four Arrested and Residences Raided in Narcotics Case

Law Enforcement Agencies raided four homes in Curacao in an international investigation into money-laundering and drug trafficking. They confiscated a small amount of cocaine and a few weapons. Three persons were arrested on Curacao and one on St. Maarten. The suspects are reportedly charged with money laundering and trafficking cocaine to the Netherlands in 2008 and 2009. (Various media)

Bonaire – Drugs and Money-Laundering Suspects to Appear in Court

Dutch citizens Albert de Groot and Willem van Wijngaarden, both arrested on September 8, 2009, have to appear in court on August 13. The Netherlands Antilles Public Prosecutor’s Office is coordinating an international investigation into money-laundering, gold-smuggling, real estate fraud and international drug trafficking. Several

residences, government agencies, and company premises were searched in Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao, last September. Similar actions took place at various locations in several European countries. Also, the residences of Bonaire politicians Ramoncito Booi and Burney Elhage were raided by Dutch detectives for possible fraud-related offences committed by people within the Bonaire public administration, last September. They were briefly arrested, but later released. The two cases are reportedly related. (Various media)

Aruba – Ritz-Carlton Faces Possible Lawsuit

Various Aruban environmental organizations are planning to institute 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 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)

Curacao – Promotion Tour U.S. Chess Icon Richard Conn

U.S. chess icon Richard Conn and Russian chess legend Anatoli Karpov are campaigning on Curacao for the presidency of the International Chess Federation (FIDE). The United States Chess Federation (USCF) stated it is pleased to announce that former World Champion Anatoly Karpov, candidate for the office of FIDE President, has offered a spot on his ticket to the prominent international attorney Richard A. Conn, Jr. The Executive Board has unanimously endorsed the inclusion of Mr. Conn on the Karpov ticket and enthusiastically supports the ticket. Mr. Conn will run for Deputy President of FIDE, a post exceeded in prominence only by the President. If elected, he will be the highest ranking American in FIDE history. (Various media)

Antilles\Aruba - Infiltration and Telephone Tapping Banned

The Netherlands Antilles and Aruban Public Prosecutor Offices cannot make use of special criminal investigation methods, such as telephone tapping, observation, or use of civilian infiltrators, because the criminal law does not include such a provision. This reportedly flows from a ruling earlier this year by the Joint Court of Justice. Since then, the Public Prosecutor Offices on the islands are trying not to use special investigation methods to prevent their evidence from being declared inadmissible. Aruba's chief public prosecutor Peter Blanken said politicians should come with a statutory provision as soon as possible.

In 2000, the Netherlands adopted the Act on Special Investigation Authority, which regulates procedures for allowing special investigation methods, but the overseas Kingdom entities have not. The Dutch Interior Ministry has reportedly made funds and manpower available to the Antillean government to modernize the Criminal Code. The draft code reportedly is ready but legislative procedures attached to this have been delayed. The Criminal Code should be enacted prior to 10/10/10, when the Netherlands

Antilles, Aruba and St. Maarten become semi-autonomous entities within the Kingdom. The three other islands (Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba) will become Dutch territory -- essentially equivalent to Dutch municipalities -- making the Dutch Justice Minister responsible for law enforcement. According to a spokesman of the State Secretary for Kingdom Relations, the special investigation powers for these three latter islands can easily be arranged via a ministerial decree. (Press report)

Kingdom – Dutch MFA Verhagen on FIR Incident With Venezuela

In reply to questions by Dutch left-wing MP Van Bommel, Kingdom Foreign Minister Verhagen, also on behalf of the Kingdom Defense Minister, noted that “Venezuela did not complain on July 14 that a Dutch aircraft had violated Venezuelan airspace, which also did not happen. Venezuela did argue that a violation of the Flight Information Region (FIR) of Maiquetia had occurred.” Also, the Minister said the Venezuelan claim that the Dutch helicopter violated its airspace “lacked every factual ground.” Verhagen explained that part of the area of operation of Dutch naval and coast guard aircraft stationed in the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba falls within the Flight Information Region within which Venezuelan air traffic control in Maiquetia informs and coordinates air traffic. “This FIR also covers large areas of international airspace, which is not uncustomary. Flying in international airspace within a FIR is permitted under international law. After all, a FIR only provides services on air traffic information and coordination. This responsibility does not generate rights or authorities for the coastal state on the point of admission or refusing admission to international airspace.” “In the period indicated by Venezuela, a board helicopter of the Dutch navy’s station ship twice carried out flights that occurred partly in the international airspace covered by the FIR Maiquetia and partly in the FIR Curacao. Venezuela is of the opinion that the helicopter thus violated the FIR, which is contrary to the Kingdom’s view. Venezuela did not assert that it violated Venezuelan airspace.” Verhagen noted that he discussed the issue with his Venezuelan counterpart during a visit to Caracas. “The outcome of the meeting that took place in a good atmosphere in Caracas was that Venezuela promised to engage constructively in a dialogue with the Netherlands, Netherlands Antilles and Aruba on matters relevant to our bilateral relations. Specifically with respect to the FIR, technical consultations are to take place shortly to avoid misunderstandings in the future. The government hopes that differences on FIR Maiquetia will be resolved in good consultations with the authorities of Venezuela.” (Various media)

Kingdom – Venezuela Deports Antillean Narcotics Trafficker

Venezuela deported three people Wednesday to face drug trafficking cases in the Netherlands, Aruba and Peru. Netherlands Antilles citizen Marcelino Glenn Kerkeboom hung his head, hiding his face as he was led to a vehicle at Caracas’ international airport. Venezuelan authorities say he is wanted for allegedly smuggling more than a ton of cocaine to the Netherlands. Dutch prosecution spokesman Reinout den Haan confirmed a suspect was being turned over but wouldn’t confirm his name due to Dutch privacy laws. Officials said the man had been sentenced to 12 years in prison in Amsterdam and had about a year and a half left when he failed to return from a furlough. The Dutch issued an international arrest warrant and the man was detained last month after requesting a passport in Venezuela.

Also deported were Colombian Gloria Chavez Ceballos — wanted in Aruba for allegedly trafficking Colombian cocaine to the United States — and Aldo Enrique Forero, a Peruvian former police officer wanted in Peru for allegedly trafficking cocaine to the United States. Justice Minister Tareck El Aissami said all three were captured last month and that their deportation demonstrates Venezuela's commitment to counter-drug efforts. (Various media)

St. Maarten – U.S. Vice Consul Provides ACS Services

The U.S. Consulate General Vice-Consul for the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba will be in St. Maarten for American Citizen Services at The Parliament Building in Philipsburg, on Friday, August 20. The Vice-Consul will not take applications, offer advice or otherwise advise about non-immigrant visas. (Daily Herald)

Aruba – PM Mike Eman: “New Container Harbor at Barcadera”

The Aruban Council of Ministers has decided to move the current container harbor from Oranjestad to a new location to be built at Barcadera. The development of the new harbor will cost approximately US \$56 million and should be operational in two years. The government wants to develop the current container harbor area into a tourist area. (Various media)

CURAÇAO

Crime August 6 – 12

On August 7, police found the body of a man in an overgrown area near Brakkeput. The victim had been shot. The case is under investigation. On August 12, a home owner in Emmastad was robbed when she arrived home at night (Extra, Amigoe).

ARUBA

Crime August 6 – 12

On August 10, the owner of a tool rental store in Curá Cabay was shot and killed. The motive was unknown. The case is under investigation (Diario Aruba, La Prensa).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime August 6 – 12

On August 6, police found the body of a man in the Over the Bank area. The cause of death was not immediately clear. On August 7, a jewelry store in Philipsburg was robbed by two masked men (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

St. Maarten National Guard Commander to retire

Major Jean Illidge announced his retirement as commanding officer of the St. Maarten National Guard VKS. Illidge has led the VKS for the past 13 years. After Hurricane Luis struck the island in 1995, the Curaçao National Guard VKC provided assistance in maintaining public order and the clean-up efforts. Police commissioner Walter Kramers suggested that St. Maarten should have its own national guard. With Kramers's help, Illidge started the VKS recruitment process in 1996. The VKS was officially established on June 28, 1997. Illidge did not say when exactly his retirement would go into effect (St. Maarten Island Time).

"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."