

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending October 30, 2010

Curacao - Chinese Smuggler Junhua Wu Sentenced to 30 Months

Chinese suspect Junhua Wu (34) stood on trial on October 22, for his involvement in a Chinese immigrants trafficking case. Wu had arranged for a trio of fellow citizens to travel from Hong Kong to Amsterdam, and onward to Bonaire and Curaçao in July 2010, using temporary residence permits and national identification cards from fellow compatriots. (Extra)

Curacao\Aruba – Carnival Cruise Lines Back After Years of Absence

The arrival of the ship Miracle of Carnival Cruise Lines last week to Aruba and Curacao was the first in a series of 21 visits to the islands, after a three year absence to Aruba and six years to Curacao. The two Islands signed a contract with the world's largest cruise holding company Carnival, last year. A Carnival ship will visit the two islands twice a month until 2012. (Various media)

Bonaire – Constitutional Referendum On December 17

Bonaire's Constitutional referendum will take place on December 17, 2010. Bonaire is a public entity of the continental Netherlands since the Netherlands Antilles ceased to exist on 10-10-10. The current Bonaire government is not satisfied with the existing agreement on the division of tasks, level of social security and Dutch influence. They believe Bonaire must obtain the same rights as a current municipality of the Netherlands and want the people to decide their future in a referendum. The referendum question is: "I agree with the negotiation result concerning the future constitutional structure of Bonaire," to be answered "yes" or "no." Registered Dutch national residents established 50 days prior to the date of the referendum, and 18 years of age may participate. The new Bonaire status within the Dutch Kingdom will be evaluated by all Kingdom partners in five years, whatever the outcome of the referendum might be. (Various media)

Kingdom - Drug and Money Laundering Organization Appeal Case in Court

International cooperation among law enforcement authorities in Curacao, the Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia, Venezuela and the U.S. resulted in the arrest and conviction of 17 people in Curacao who participated in an international drug and money laundering organization in April 2009. Approximately 250 law enforcement officials from various organizations joined forces and raided various residences and business on Curacao. The organization was held responsible for having trafficked at least 2,000 kilos of cocaine annually. Four of the 18 criminals were sentenced to 10-18 month prison terms at the Court of First Instance. 13 others received sentences ranging from 4-7 years while one suspect was acquitted in December 2009. 9 people were in court last week to appeal their case.

"The group shipped containers with cocaine from Curacao to the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Jordan," a statement said. "From Venezuela, containers with drugs went to West Africa and then to the Netherlands, Lebanon and Spain. Carriers smuggled the cocaine as airline passengers from Curacao and Aruba into the Netherlands." The proceeds were allegedly invested in several countries, said the statement. As part of the investigation, which was initiated by the Curacao police in early 2008, the National Crime Squad intercepted 300 kilos of cocaine in the port of Rotterdam in October 2008 resulting in the arrest of three Colombians.

Initially the public prosecutor's office assumed that the organization was in contact with other criminal networks that supported Hezbollah financially. Any assumptions that large sums of money from the drug trade became available in Lebanon through underground banking were unfounded, a public prosecutor said. (Various media)

Curacao - Space Tourism: To Infinity And ... Right Back To Earth

If your idea of the perfect vacation is a ride into space in the morning and some scuba diving in the afternoon, there's good news. A company from the Netherlands says it hopes to offer rides into space from a spaceport in Curacao by 2014.

If this sounds fantastic and impossible, you're right about one adjective and wrong about the other. Space Experience Curacao has signed a memorandum of understanding with XCOR Aerospace to lease a Lynx suborbital spacecraft. The Lynx takes off from a runway, but its rocket engine can propel it to about 65 miles above the Earth — what's considered the edge of outer space. When the rocket engine shuts off, the Lynx glides to a landing back at the airport's runway. XCOR is just one of several companies planning to get into the space tourism business. Armadillo Aerospace is making a vehicle that Space Adventures will sell tickets for, and Virgin Galactic is making its own suborbital craft modeled after Burt Rutan's SpaceShipOne, the first commercial vehicle to carry spaceflight participants into space. If spaceflight participant sounds like a cumbersome phrase, it has legal importance. Apart from the myriad technical challenges facing the would-be rocketeers, there are also legal hurdles. For example, "passengers" have certain legal rights, whereas Congress has determined that spaceflight participants must sign an informed consent releasing from liability the company that's carrying them into space. Despite the challenges, it appears likely the first commercial suborbital flights are only a few years away. It won't be cheap; \$200,000 seems to be the going rate. (Various media)

Caribbean - Dengue Reaching Epidemic Stages in the Area

Mosquito-borne dengue fever is again reaching epidemic stages across the Caribbean. Health authorities are concerned it could get much worse as the rainy season continues. The increase in cases is being blamed on warm weather and an unusually heavy rainy season, which has produced an explosion of mosquitoes.

Healthcare officials are worried the cases of the more severe hemorrhagic dengue will continue to increase. The more people are repeatedly infected, the greater the chance they will develop the hemorrhagic form, which can be fatal.

There are four types of dengue, and all cause fever, headaches and extreme joint and muscle pain. Most victims recover within a week, and while they become immune to the specific type of dengue they caught, they are still vulnerable to other types, a Health Department spokesperson said.

The principal vector mosquito, *Ae. aegypti*, is most frequently found in or near human habitations and prefers to feed on humans during the daytime. It has two peak periods of biting activity: in the morning for several hours after daybreak and in the late afternoon for several hours before dark. The mosquito may feed at any time during the day, however, especially indoors, in shady areas, or when it is overcast. Mosquito breeding sites include artificial water containers such as discarded tires, uncovered barrels, buckets, flower vases or pots, cans, and cisterns. Dengue fever is characterized by sudden onset after an incubation period of 3-14 days (most commonly 4-7 days), high fevers, severe frontal headache, and joint and muscle pain. Many patients have nausea, vomiting, and rash. The rash appears 3-5 days after onset of fever and can spread from the torso to the arms, legs, and face. The disease is usually self-limited, although convalescence can be prolonged. Many cases of nonspecific viral syndrome or even subclinical infection occur, but dengue can also present as a severe, sometimes fatal disease characterized by hemorrhagic manifestations and hypotension (DHF/ dengue shock syndrome). (Various media)

Aruba – Valero Refinery Should Come Online in December

San Antonio-based Valero Energy Corp. said Tuesday it posted a third-quarter profit, reversing a loss in the same period last year, thanks to a double-digit boost in revenue. Revenue increased 20 percent to US \$22.21 billion from US \$18.57 billion. Bill Klesse, Valero chairman and CEO, said the Aruba refinery should come online in the middle of December. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Alleged Criminal Appeals Extradition to Puerto Rico

Hector A. who was arrested in May, for allegedly being a member of a criminal organization, has appealed an extradition decision and requested to remain in custody in St. Maarten, after U.S. authorities had filed an extradition request. The Joint Court of Dutch Caribbean will process his appeal. (Extra)

St. Maarten – Busy Cruise Season Starts With Four Port Calls

Four cruise ships (Oasis of the Seas, Carnival Dream, Norwegian Sun, and Ruby Princess) with approximately 14,134 passengers and 5,000 crew members will be in port today, kicking off a very busy cruise season, according to the St. Maarten Harbor Group of Companies. (Daily Herald)

Curacao – Swallowing Liquid Cocaine International Trafficking Trend

Drug mules are playing a 'game of chance' with their lives as they swallow liquid cocaine to try to make some quick money. Police on the island are on the lookout for smugglers who are gulping down scores of homemade drug capsules. Seeing "nothing but dollar signs", the mules can swallow up to a kilo of liquid cocaine. They line their stomachs with liquid cocaine pellets stashed inside latex, even though the tiniest of tears can cause the liquid drug to seep out and kill them. This form of drug smuggling - known as body packing - is on the increase across the world and overdoses and deaths are not uncommon. Police spokesperson Reggie Huggins stated that this form of trafficking is an increasing international trend. The police

arrested five persons, at a local residence on Monday, who were in the process of preparing and swallowing the pellets.

The technique involves dissolving the crystalline white cocaine in water then creating homemade pellets using a machine which supposedly ensures an airtight seal. Drug mules used to swallow drugs inside of condoms or balloons, but it is now thought that the fingers of surgical latex gloves, which are sturdier, are the material of choice. Also, liquid pellets are easier to swallow than the traditional solid cocaine pellets. However, the release of gastric acids in the stomach can burn through the latex, and leakage nearly always means a massive overdose and death. A spokesperson for the National Addiction Foundation said drugs in liquid format are extremely difficult to detect by airport X-ray machines.

Drug mules can swallow anything from 10 to 120 pellets of cocaine - which are about two inches long and half an inch wide. The mules will take tablets to induce constipation during the course of the trip then take laxatives when they have arrived at a pre-arranged address. The amount of cash depends on the number of pellets they can swallow, but they only usually get paid at the end of the journey after the safe delivery of the consignment. (Various media)

Aruba – Bailiffs Close Casablanca Casino at The Westin Hotel

The Casablanca Casino at the Palm Beach Westin Hotel was closed by a bailiff on Tuesday. Dozens of casino employees were sent home until further notice.

The Aruba Investment Bank has ordered bailiffs to close the casino in an attempt to clear outstanding debts with current management. New York City-based, Belfonti Capital Partners, LLC, acquired the former Wyndham Resort, Spa & Casino in a US \$230 million transaction in 2006. Belfonti Capital Partners (www.belfonticapital.com) is a venture capital firm focused on acquiring real estate development and investment opportunities throughout the United States and internationally. (Various media)

Bonaire – Group of Possible TIP Victims Refused Entry by Airport Immigration

A group of 10 people (3 Pakistani, 6 Afghans, and 1 Haitian) was refused entry into Bonaire by airport immigration officials. The Public Prosecutors Office received a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) request from Ecuadorian authorities while the flight was en route from Ecuador to Bonaire, because the travelers were possible Trafficking in Persons victims, a Public Prosecutor's Office spokesperson said. The group was sent back to Ecuador immediately upon request of Ecuadorian authorities. (Amigoe)

CURAÇAO

Crime October 22 – 28

On October 24, vehicle occupants fired several shots at a parked vehicle in Berg Altena. No injuries were reported. The following day, a housekeeper cleaning a home in Goede Hoop was robbed by several men. On October 27, a man was robbed of his vehicle in Monte Carmelo when he arrived home (Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad, Extra).

ARUBA

Crime October 22 – 28

On October 22, a Texaco gas station in Oranjestad was robbed by two men (Diario Aruba, Amigoe).

“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.”