

News Items and Public Crime Summary for Week Ending August 28, 2010

Antilles – Parliament Approves Kingdom Charter Amendment

The Antillean Parliament approved a Kingdom Charter amendment which is required to formalize the Netherlands Antilles dismantling process. The vote which needed a two-thirds majority, because it is a Kingdom Charter amendment, was passed by a 17-4 margin. The Democratic Party Statia, Democratic Party Bonaire, and pro-independence Curaçao opposition party “Pueblo Soberano” (PS) voted against the charter change. (Various media)

St. Maarten – Cruise Tourism Tops One-Million Passengers Visit

St. Maarten topped the one-million cruise tourist arrival mark for the ninth consecutive year, last week. This is the first time the million-passenger arrival was reached so early in the year. (Daily Herald)

Aruba - Aruba South Wins Senior League World Series

Aruba South Senior Little League beat Bangor East/West of Bangor, Maine in the Senior League World Series championship game. (Various media)

Curacao - Viktor Bout, 'Merchant of Death' Arms Dealer, Faces US Terrorism Charges

An appeals court in Thailand on Friday ordered the extradition of a Russian arms merchant wanted in the US on terrorism charges for allegedly plotting to provide missiles and other military assistance to a Colombia-based guerilla group. Viktor Bout, sometimes called the “Merchant of Death,” is wanted on federal charges that he conspired to provide millions of dollars worth of military-grade weapons – including 800 anti-aircraft missiles – to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). After a series of preliminary meetings in Curaçao, and other places, the undercover operatives won a face-to-face meeting with Bout in Bangkok where he was arrested. (Various media)

Curacao – Political Shift; Support for New Constitution Grows

Various political parties have expressed support for the new Curacao constitution during a national televised political debate in the wake of the August 27, Island Parliament elections for the new Kingdom entity of Curacao. This election is necessary because a June 18, Curacao Island Parliament vote for the new Curacao Constitution did not garner a mandatory two-thirds majority. Changes to the Constitution require a two-thirds majority support in the legislature. A simple majority suffices to pass the stalled legislation after the election. The Democratic Party (DP) and new parties PAIS, and Movement for the Future of Curacao (MFK) have joined coalition parties PAR, PNP, and FOL in their support for the new Constitution. The opposition parties Sovereign Party

(PS), No Step Back (NPA), and MAN remain against. The inauguration date for the new Curacao parliament is set at September 4. (Various media)

Curacao – Isla Refinery Will Try To Resume Operations This Week

Venezuelan State-owned Oil Company PdVSA-operated Isla refinery will try to start-up its Crude Distiller-3 (CD-3) this Wednesday. Curaçao Utilities Company (CUC) reportedly guarantees they can supply enough electricity, steam and compressed air to support the re-start. The stock of crude oil needed for the re-start will be replenished by Venezuela, today. The BOO (Build, Own and Operate) plant - owned by Utility Company Aqualectra and Japanese Trading Company Marubini – is idle since March 1. Previous re-start attempts have led to Island-wide power outages and blackouts. (Various media)

Kingdom – Three Chinese Nationals Still Incarcerated In TIP Case

Three of 13 Chinese suspects who were arrested in Curaçao, Bonaire and Aruba in June and July, in connection with a large-scale investigation into human smuggling and trafficking, are still in jail. The detention of the other suspects was suspended by a judge. The case started when two persons of Chinese nationality were detained with counterfeit “sedulas” (identity cards). The names on the sedulas did not correspond with their passports. Police later arrested more suspects in Curaçao, one in Aruba, and three in Bonaire in cooperation with the Kingdom Detective Team RST, Customs and U.S. ICE. Police also confiscated computers, documents, ammunition, passports and 500,000 guilders (US\$280,000) in cash. Allegedly, there is a smuggling route from Hong Kong to the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba through Amsterdam. (Amigoe)

Kingdom – Same Counter-Drug Role Coastguard NA&A in Future

The Coastguard NA&A will consist of Curaçao, St. Maarten, and Aruba after the Netherlands Antilles dissolves, according to their Annual Report 2009. The Coastguard NA&A has made considerable investments during the past years in advanced tracing capabilities and is an international valued partner in the Caribbean counter-drug chain. The budget and the role of the Coastguard NA&A will stay the same, only the name will change, Dutch Defense Minister Van Middelkoop stated. (Amigoe)

St. Maarten – More Illegal Immigrants Arrested in 2009

Dutch Defense Minister Van Middelkoop was asked by a Dutch Chamber committee why more illegal immigrants were arrested in St. Maarten in 2009 compared to 2008. “Illegal immigration on the Windward Islands originates primarily from Haiti, because of its close proximity to St. Maarten. The French part of the Island (St. Martin) is part of the European Union which has an increasing attraction on immigrants. Also, St. Maarten is reportedly attractive to immigrants as a hub to the U.S. mainland and its Caribbean islands,” Van Middelkoop stated. (Amigoe)

Curacao – 114.828 People Eligible to Vote

The civil registry announced that 114.828 people are eligible to vote in the upcoming August 27, elections.

Electorate Island Parliament Elections

<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Total</i>
61399	53429	114828

Country of Origin

Curacao	93063
Netherlands	6946
Dominican Republic	3107
Venezuela	714
USA	115
Others	10883
Total	114828

(Government Release)

Aruba – MEP To Vote Against Constitutional Change

Opposition parties MEP and DR will vote against the necessary changes in the Kingdom Charter, because they believe it infringes Aruban autonomy without the Kingdom. The governing AVP party will vote in favor. Changes to the Constitution require a two-thirds majority support in the legislature. A simple majority suffices to pass the stalled legislation after a second round of votes after 30 days. It is expected that Aruba will approve the Constitutional change after the delay. (Various media)

Aruba – Tourism Continues to Struggle; Venezuela Main Factor

In June 2010, the total of stay-over tourists declined by 4.6% compared to the same month last year. Tourism from the U.S. (-2.9%), the Netherlands (-6.4%) and Venezuela (-33.5%) all decreased. The struggling Venezuelan economy and the exchange restrictions continue to affect the Venezuelan market. The total of cruise visitors dropped by 4.7%, compared to the same month last year. (Aruba Central Bank Report)

St. Maarten – Coastguard NA&A Confiscates 11 Kilos of Marijuana

The Coastguard NA&A intercepted the speedboat “Hunter” carrying 11 kilos of marijuana in St. Maarten’s coastal waters and arrested the captain. Three packets of marijuana were found hidden in a cooler, according to a Coastguard spokesperson. (Daily Herald)

U.S. Sailors, Airmen Help Rebuild Siloam Orphanage

Community relations (COMRELS) projects help bridge cultures, uplift communities and lay foundations for change for all involved.

USS Klakring (FFG 42) and Helicopter Anti-Submarine Squadron Light (HSL 42) Detachment (Det) 10 sailors worked alongside airmen from 429th Expeditionary Operations Squadron landscaping, building bookshelves and painting during a COMREL at the Siloam Village Orphanage in Curacao, 16 August. The ship was in Curacao as part of the six-month Southern Seas 2010 deployment to the region.

The orphanage presently houses 12 terminally ill children and helps the surrounding community through weekly food and clothing distributions. Plans are being made to provide a daycare, school and training facilities for adults to help improve reading and

enhance job skills. It is supported by the generous contributions from private citizens and organizations that give money, supplies and time.

Owner and director Brother Herman Gijbers, a missionary who along with his wife, Bep, and daughter, Natasja, moved from the Netherlands to Curacao 21 years ago, said he was very pleased and a bit overwhelmed to have the U.S. military (18 sailors and 10 airmen) come out and do so much for the children and community.

"It would have taken me three or four months to do the work you all did in four hours," said Brother Herman. "I saw the work and sweat you all gave for us in this heat today. I am truly grateful to both God and you for being here."

COMREL programs enable U.S. military members to be involved with the local community through humanitarian efforts. Many of the programs include repairing and repainting schools or hospitals in communities of need, as well as providing supplies such as medical goods and hygiene products. School supplies and toys are also common goods given to the local community.

Air Force Chaplain Karl Blancaflor said we as Americans sometime forget how fortunate we are.

"One of the Air Force's core values is service before self, and that has truly been exemplified out here today," Blancaflor said. "Projects like these remind us there is always someone who can use a helping hand."

Air Force Chaplain assistant Staff Sgt. Tiffany Hoeck said it was very easy to get her fellow airmen to come out and lend a helping hand. She added the U.S. Joint Forces worked well together.

"People are always requesting information on the next COMREL project. It's amazing so many people are more than willing to come out and do this type of work in this heat," said Hoeck. "It's a privilege to be here."

Klaking sailors were also eager to volunteer for the COMREL project, which enabled them to interact with members of the community, as well as their Air Force counterparts.

"I volunteer because I know how fortunate I am," said Fire Controlman 3rd Class Gordon Elder. "These kids deal with very tragic circumstances. Hopefully, our being here and the work we're doing will enable them to rest more comfortably."

"It is so difficult to put into words the feelings I have for you all and the wonderful work you did for these children and this community," said Brother Herman. "It's like opening a bottle of champagne. The bubbles represent my feelings, and they're just pouring out of me." (Antilliaans Dagblad)

Curacao – Final Pre-Election Poll: PAR, MFK, and PS Prevail

Curacao does not have a reliable polling history. However, the final pre-election poll by the University of the Dutch Caribbean indicates that PAR, PS and MFK are expected to prevail in tomorrow's elections. The error margin is 4% and 37% is undecided.

Party	Seats	Vote %
PAR	10	40
MFK	6	26
PS	2	12
MAN	1	7
DP	1	6
PNP	1	5

(Various media)

Aruba - Government Revenue Boost Attributed to Valero

The government revenue data for June 2010 shows record high tax revenue of US \$188 million, an increase of US \$141 million (Valero lump sum payment) compared to the same month last year. A substantial part, US \$146 million, of the total revenue increase is attributed to the tax agreement between the Aruban government and San Antonio-based Valero Aruba Refinery. Starting this month, a new tax regime is applicable to the refinery and terminal operations in Aruba. Valero is now subject to a 7% profit tax rate and a 0% dividend withholding tax rate. Also, all imports and exports are exempt from turnover tax. As of June 2012, Valero will pay at least US \$10 million annually. (Various media)

Curacao – TeleCuracao (Channel 8) Provides Election Coverage

TeleCuraçao (Channel 8) will provide election coverage during the entire day. It is expected that the preliminary results will be available on Saturday morning, because the civil registry mandated the use of pencil and paper ballots instead of the voting machines purchased in 2007 from Venezuelan-American Company Smartmatic. The SmartMatic machines were used in the 2007 and 2010 regular elections, and the 2009 referendum. It was chosen because it has a 'paper trail', that is, it prints a receipt that acts as a ballot, but opposition parties believe that the software can be tampered with. The official result is expected on Wednesday, September 1. The inauguration date of the new Island parliament is set at Saturday, September 4. (Various media)

St. Maarten – 19,601 People Eligible to Vote

19,601 people are eligible to cast their ballots in the St Maarten Island Parliament elections on September 17. The primary task of the new government is to prepare St. Maarten for dissolution but it will continue to serve as the first parliament in the new Kingdom constellation. 8,422 of the eligible voters were born outside of the Dutch Kingdom, of which United States (345); US Virgin Islands (97); Puerto Rico (33). (Daily Herald)

CURAÇAO

Crime August 20 – 26

On August 21, a Jamaican man was stabbed and injured during an altercation in Santa Rosa. On August 23, several shots were exchanged between two persons in Gosie. No injuries were reported (Extra, Amigoe, Antilliaans Dagblad).

ST. MAARTEN

Crime August 20 – 26

On August 25, a man was stabbed and injured during an altercation in Cole Bay. The same evening, a home owner was robbed in Dutch Quarter. The victim was shot and injured (Daily Herald, St. Maarten Island Time).

Police test helmet camera

Police are testing a helmet-mounted camera for their bike patrol, hoping this new tool against crime will make reporting events in the street and subsequent investigations more efficient. Initially, only one officer will test the camera in a two-month trial. The camera is fitted into a durable and weather-resistant container and can record for up to ten consecutive hours (Daily Herald, Amigoe).

"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."