

Insel to stop its Charlotte flight

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao aviation company InselAir is stopping its flights to Charlotte, North Carolina in the United States. Reason is a sharp drop in bookings on the twice-weekly connection to this destination.

The route is no longer profitable. As of January 19, there will be an end to this service, which began in 2011.

The announcement is in stark contrast to the island's tourism master plan presented by the Minister of Economic Development Stanley Palm (PAIS). The growth strategy outlined in that document relies heavily on more American tourism to the island.

InselAir director Edward Heerenveen said that by increasing the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) for travelers in transit, CAP was in effect waging guerrilla warfare against the local airline using the island as its main hub.

CAP regrets end of InselAir flight

WILLEMSTAD--Curaçao Airport Partners (CAP) laments InselAir's decision to discontinue its Charlotte flights as of January 19, 2016, for reasons related to the financial under-performance of the route.

CAP says almost 70 per cent of the local airline's Charlotte passengers transfer to other destinations. The operator of Hato-airport notes that the future American Airlines (AA) service from Charlotte "is more complementary than competitive to InselAir's service, as effectively all of the American Airlines' Charlotte passengers will be specifically bound for Curaçao as their final destination."

CAP believes that the introduction of AA service from Charlotte in December will aggressively stimulate traffic between Curaçao and this critical US/European hub, offsetting any gap in the market resulting from the withdrawal of InselAir's flights.

"The addition of American Airlines from Charlotte is also consistent with Curaçao's recently adopted Tourism Master Plan to concentrate on the US market as one of the important sources of future tourism growth for Curaçao, a strategy that is supported by CAP.



Curaçao baseball prospect Rilleysen Ignacio (right), son of Extra news photographer Rilleysen and grandson of carnival group association AGKK president Stanley "Weerlicht" Ignacio, died in a car accident in the US. The 20-year-old athlete was in his third year of studying at John Wood Community College in Quincy, Illinois and playing for its team. He and three others were in the vehicle that crashed, also killing the driver Edrick Rivera (left).



Aruban police arrested three youngsters for robbing an employee of Domino's Pizza at knifepoint on September 18 in San Nicolas, where the victim had been making a delivery ordered by phone. The first suspect to be held was J. (17), followed by R. (16) and V. (17).



The official handing over of the "key" to the event.

Curaçao Pride well underway

WILLEMSTAD--The third Curaçao Pride will wind up this weekend after it was officially opened by former ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the East Caribbean Lucita Moenir Alam on Wednesday evening.

She ceremonially handed over the key to "Pride Village" to Frank Holtslag, president of organiser Curaçao Gay Pro.

During the inauguration ceremony FOKO ("Fundashon Orguyo Korsou") presented an award to Rodeshka Martina, a 17-year-old who went public regarding her homosexuality at school. "She is the new generation and a tremendous example for several young people who have come out of the closet," said the organisation.

Frank Holtslag, Jurandy Regina, Andre Rojer and Marloes Molendijk were also recognised for being the driving forces behind Curaçao Pride since 2012.

The opening cocktail was followed by a Cabaret Night on Thursday in Oporto. Floris Suite Hotel hosted Friday's "Rainbow Lounge," while the "White Party" with live music by Dreams and HNLV today, Saturday, was also to be held there.

On Sunday there is a sailing tour on Insulinde and the gathering will culminate with a closing party that evening at Rif Fort.

Statia's appeal

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letter was addressed directly to the Executive Council. A letter was sent separately to the Government Representative the day after. Moreover, the supervision means that all Executive Council decisions have to be shared with the Government Representative without delay, so the Council is directly affected.

McKenzie motivated the appeal in emphasizing that the consecutive phases of the procedure to come to an instruction like this were not followed by the Ministry. Instead, the supervision was imposed quite abruptly.

She also pointed at various inconsistencies in the Ministry's motivation for the supervision on the basis of financial mismanagement. The appointment of a new investment officer without prior approval is an issue that the previous responsible Commissioner has already admitted was a result of misjudgement on his part. It can therefore not be used as justification for supervision, since it was not part of a pattern and did not happen again, according to McKenzie.

The appointment of her brother in another position did not go through, which McKenzie used to illustrate that the system of checks and balances actually works and does not require higher supervision.

Zaandam emphasized that no law was broken by any staff appointment and that if this turns out to be the case, the Governor and Government Representative are just as much to blame, because they were part of all procedures.

McKenzie concluded that the decision to impose supervision was based on arbitrary, subjective conclusions, while it makes it more difficult to actually remedy the situation.

Later, she also stated that there is no identification of what the actual problems are that need to be solved. "Is there a file? What are the points?" she asked.

She also stated there are solid agreements with CFT that work well. "So why is this supervision necessary? It is premature," she maintained.

No boycott

The Ministry denied that the decision came out of

the blue and stated that expertise and manpower had been offered to the Island Government on several occasions. It was said that there was no boycott of Statia, as McKenzie had mentioned, but "We do not feel to discuss other matters while the efficiency of the island's administration is not in order," said Director Kingdom Affairs at the Ministry of Home Affairs Erwin Arkenbout. The multi-annual plan, however, has been put on hold, he admitted.

He gave the high staff turnover and resulting lack of continuity as an explanation for the observed financial inefficiency and made a reference to the dismissal of the Head of the Finance Department. McKenzie explained that he was not sent away, but his contract had expired.

In summarizing, Arkenbout said the problems had grown so out of hand that these could not be solved without external assistance and concluded that imposing supervision was a matter of drawing the line. This far and no further," he said.

Good governance

Chairman Spijk wanted to establish if the imposition of higher supervision was in keeping with the principles of good governance. He tried to establish if supervision had been imposed abruptly or whether the Ministry of Home Affairs had tried to warn the island and gave it the chance to avoid it.

Zaandam stated that the recent meeting with Secretary-General Richard van Zwol could not be described as a consultation, since Van Zwol simply announced what his advice to the Minister was going to be. Arkenbout denied that such was the nature of that meeting.

Spijk also wanted to know why the existing process with CFT had to be cut short by this wider, more general supervision and why a more limited, custom-made measure could not have been found. Arkenbout asserted that a "robust measure" was the only way out of the problems.

Isabella explained how a Steering Committee was put together as per Minister Plasterk's instruction, with the Commissioners includ-

ed as members. However, they refused to participate with only the Governor and Island Secretary attending meetings.

Zaandam explained that logic dictates that Commissioners cannot take part because the Steering Committee is the result of a decision they have appealed. "Participation would mean acknowledgement of its legitimacy," Zaandam said.

Action plan

Isabella said an action plan has been put together and sent to the Minister. For the financial aspects an experts committee was created, which will submit a financial management plan next week. This plan will then be incorporated into the overall action plan. Plasterk has set January 1, 2018, as the date for completion of the action plan.

Spijk asked the CFT representatives why they did not take steps to get Statia's financial situation improved, despite recognizing the signals that things were not going in the right direction.

Gittens replied that they did advise the Executive Council to put a ban on new financial obligations. He also stated that CFT had said that if there would be no balanced budget by July 18, they would "most probably" issue the advice to the minister to impose prior supervision.

Zaandam and McKenzie both said that when they asked the Ministry for consultation and support, they were consistently referred to Isabella, who then referred them on to the Steering Committee, which they both considered not very helpful or constructive.

McKenzie explained that a local financial committee had also been put in place to help with the budgets and financial reporting. The concept budget amendment will be ready next week, she added. "There obviously is progress," Spijk concluded.

