



# Horizons Newsletter



## ST. MAARTEN HOSTED THE BEST AAAE MEETING EVER

drs Eugene Holiday, president of the Princess Juliana International Airport Operating Company NV is pleased with the success of the Airports Conference of the Americas hosted by PJIAE in July 2008. With more than 100 delegates, it had been the largest aviation conference ever on the island. "We got some pretty interesting insights and we will certainly see what can work for us. We learned that we have to be as creative as possible and continue to work with our airline partners," drs. Holiday said.

Many delegates declared the conference "the best ever", so one may safely say that objectives have been achieved. St. Maarten and its airport's new terminal building were properly showcased, guests had a wonderful time and the conference itself was productive. Buyers and suppliers met during the table-top trade show. For host Princess Juliana International Airport the event was a prime opportunity to showcase its new facilities and promote the island.

The Conference, which was organised by the American Association of Airport Executives, brought over 100

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## Commissioner Wescot-Williams: "build partnerships at AAAE conference"



*drs. Holiday and Commissioner Wescot-Williams*

Aviation Commissioner Sarah Wescot-Williams, at the opening of the AAAE meeting on July 21st 2008 expressed words of appreciation to the Princess Juliana International airport and to AAAE for bringing the prestigious Airports Conference of the Americas to St. Maarten.

"PJIA is the main gateway to our island for residents and the larger traveling public, and plays an important role for air traffic in the North Eastern Caribbean. For this reason, the government of Sint Maarten is thrilled to welcome so many of the region's aviation movers and shakers," Mrs. Wescot-Williams told the gathering at Sonesta Maho Resort's conference room.

She hinted at the pressure the aviation industry has found itself under and expressed hopes that the attendees would have fruitful meetings. "Considering the vital role of airports everywhere, this is an area that is under constant review in terms of capabilities, limitations, innovations and new technologies.

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*Continued from page 1* **build partnerships during AAAE meeting**

In addition to all of that, safety and security of the traveler have taken on new dimensions since the tragedy of 9/11, but the fall-out experienced by the aviation industry after that horrific event was but a dress rehearsal for the fall-out from the oil crisis of today. It has severe consequences for airports like ours that have recently invested massively in new facilities to meet the growing demands, as well as those airports that were poised to invest in their facilities to anticipate future demands," the commissioner said, adding: "and so precisely at this time, amidst much insecurity, we gather on Sint Maarten to examine and assess the very challenges facing aviation in general."

She said that though St. Maarten is an island of merely 37 square miles, it is very cosmopolitan in nature, and therefore welcomed the opportunity to deliberate with so many industry experts and partners the challenges and opportunities of the industry. "Yes, there are opportunities to be had, even now. One opportunity is surely the

interaction this conference affords us. The knowledge and experiences of others we can share. Why re-invent the wheel; why re-invent the wing?" she asked. "Regardless of what, this world will stay connected and people will travel and air service will remain an important means of travel."

Mrs. Wescott-Williams said the conference was organized with good timing and in a good place to be.

"We can only be successful with the assistance of other stakeholders in the industry and outside of it. I think of governments, financiers, suppliers and unions to mention a few. It all ties in together. The ripples are not contained to the aviation industry only and the stakeholders mentioned are not immune. It is a delicate balancing act, with dialogue as the key and partnerships indispensable. This conference is such a partnership, between the FAA, AAAE, IAAE and the co-host, our own PJIA," said the Commissioner.

**Antigua upgrades Bird airport**

The V.C. Bird International Airport of Antigua and Barbuda is undergoing a promising overhaul. "We're doing a runway extension, adding 300 meters to declare a runway extension safety area. And we're increasing the ramp by 60 percent," said Edward Gylkes Director of Operations with the Antigua and Barbuda Airport Authority. He revealed that the airport terminal is also scheduled for a total remake. "In 2009 we are starting with the construction of a new airport building; by 2012 it should be standing," he said.

Mr. Gylkes said Caribbean nations depending on tourism cannot afford to lag behind as far as their airports are concerned. "Airport developments have always been looked at as issues without priority. We have always tended to upgrade other elements of the tourism product first, but airports have to be the elements that are continuously growing; baggage, radar systems, facilities, our personnel etc; all of it has to be part of the continuous improvement. That is why we are doing what we are doing in Antigua," he said.

The Airport Authority executive said that since the (Vere) V.C. Bird airport's terminal building was constructed in 1981, some minor improvements have been made, while the gateway grew to handle 1.1 million passengers per year. "We expect that by 2010 that number will increase to 1.5 million and 2 million by 2015," he said. "We have to upgrade if we take the growth and our popularity as a Caribbean tourism destination into consideration," he argued.



*Ed Gylkes*

He said that the extent of the upgrade also has much to do with the fact that Antigua is the second largest hub for British airline Virgin Atlantic. "They are considering acquiring a Boeing A380, the largest passenger aircraft. " We get three weekly flights from Virgin, so we might benefit. It would make sense to use an aircraft of that size on long haul flights," he said.

The developments will cost the twin-island about US\$ 116 million. "The runway rehabilitation is an investment of about US\$ 46 million and the new terminal building between US\$ 65 and US\$ 70 million," Mr. Gylkes said.

## US carriers cut Caribbean flights; region fighting back

American Airlines and American Eagle have announced another reduction in their services to the Caribbean, even as regional tourism ministers said they had devised a strategy to help the sector deal with flight cuts by United States carriers.

American Airlines will no longer serve Antigua, St Maarten and Santo Domingo with jet service out of San Juan. It will also reduce flights into San Juan from 38 to 18 from September 3, as well as discontinue nonstop daily service to San Juan from a number of US cities. American Eagle will reduce its Caribbean schedule from 55 to 33 daily departures out of San Juan from September 3 and eliminate daily flights from San Juan to Aruba as well as to La Samana, Dominican Republic. Both destinations will continue to be served daily from Miami.

region.

"The Puerto Rico hub is very critical to this region not only for the airlift to land-based properties, but clearly the potential implications it may have on our cruise sector as well," Chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO), Allen Chastanet said.

At the end of the talks, the ministers indicated that dealing with the major cuts in airlift to Puerto Rico would be a priority as they embark on a strategy they had developed to deal with the situation.

Mr Chastanet, who is also St Lucia's Tourism Minister, said officials would set up four committees to deal with the major areas of hubs, revenue guarantees for airlines, marketing the region and the way forward for regional

### LIAT considers filling American Eagle void

(CMC) Mark Darby, the Chief Executive Officer of regional carrier LIAT has said that the airline is willing to increase its service in the wake of news that American Eagle is cutting flights into the region. He said he has already raised the issue with top tourism officials at the Caribbean Tourism Summit held recently in Washington DC.

"We've been able to get in touch with a number of ministers of tourism and other stakeholders to say 'look, we've got the capacity to put on some extra services throughout the region to fill in the gap that American Eagle has left'," Darby said. "I think that came as welcome news to them. I think there are all sorts of ideas about how American Eagle can be replaced. The most obvious one is to use LIAT," he added.

Mr. Darby, however, made it clear that LIAT and the respective Caribbean governments will have to discuss revenue guarantees in order for the airline to service the routes which American Eagle dropped as a way of tackling rising fuel prices. Mr. Darby said the airline management was still very cautious about the way the general aviation market is developing.



LIAT is ready to step in

"The crisis in the airline business is real, and the steps American is taking to reduce its schedule are necessary," American Eagle's CEO Peter Bowler said in a message to employees.

The carriers have blamed rising fuel prices for the cuts.

The developments in the San Juan, Puerto Rico hub were a cause for concern among regional ministers of tourism who met in Antigua last Thursday to discuss the impact of rising fuel costs and the pull out of some carriers from the

carriers. A work programme created through the work of those committees is expected to be completed in time for the Caribbean Tourism Summit this month for discussion and ratification.

Among the other measures which form part of the ministers' rescue plan are discussions with major tourism stakeholders across the region and the commission of a study on oil futures to forecast oil prices so that effective plans can be put in place to deal with increases before they actually occur.

## JUNE IS FOD MONTH AT PJIA

# NEW CULTURE INSTILLED TO CLEAR AIRCRAFT MOVEMENT AREAS



Workers who participated in the FOD activities

The efforts to clear Princess Juliana International Airport of "foreign objects and debris (FOD)" will continue uninterrupted; at the wrap-up session of the first FOD month on Monday June 30, 2008, it was announced that from now on every June will be "Foreign Object Debris/Damage Awareness Month". "Let us all make PJIA FOD free," PJIAE Operations Division Director Mr. Larry Donker told a gathering of airport workers.

The workers had for the second time in June joined in an early Monday morning "FOD walk" aimed at ridding all aircraft moving areas of fod." The first FOD walk on June 2, 2008 marked the start of several activities PJIAE organized together with airport users, aimed

at building an environment of awareness of FOD prevention. Foreign objects lying around on airport runways can cause expensive, significant damage to aircraft, equipment and may result injury of passengers, crew and employees and even death. It is estimated that FOD cause the aerospace industry \$4 billion USD per year. Mr. Donker explained that through the FOD awareness month, PJIAE plays its part in reducing this unnecessary expenditure.

During the FOD month, personnel and users at the airport will be given deeper insights of what FOD is, what

its dangers are and what actions can be taken to prevent it. During the entire month of June Workers were encouraged to help prevent FOD.

"It is our objective that no FOD is found on the aircraft movement area and that is why we will follow up this exercise with letters to users reminding them of their responsibility to remove FOD and other unwanted material," said the Operations Director.

Participating workers were all presented with tokens of appreciation, made available by PJIAE and co-organizers Menzies Aviation and American Airlines.



Instilling a new FOD culture



Tokens of appreciation

## PJIAE signs new ATS Agreements with S. Barths, Grand Case

PJIAE on Thursday May 29, 2008 signed new Air Traffic Services Agreement, with Grand Case airport and St. Jean airport of St. Barths. "Because the French have adopted new status, their airports that fall within PJIA's area of responsibility are now run on local level," explained Mr. Jan Brown, Director of Air Traffic Services. Decisions on certain levels regarding operations at Grand Case and St. Jean airport previously were made through the French Department of Civil Aviation based in Martinique.

Mr. Brown explained that the agreements are standard procedure, required on international level. "Basically partners agree on the provision the air traffic services, the

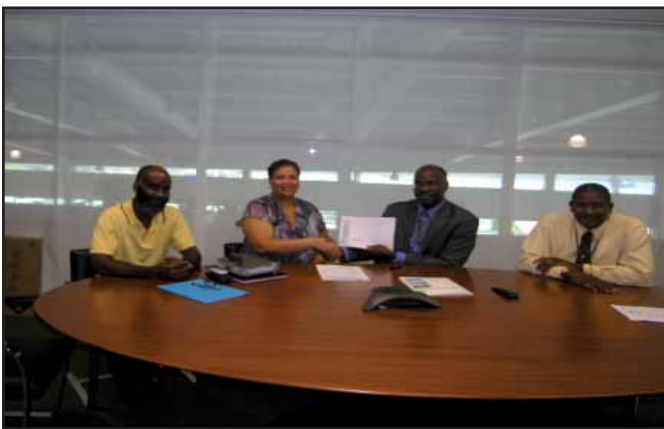


Mr. Jan Brown, drs. Holiday and Mr. Magras

communication aspects of their cooperation, the airspace, the areas involved and on applicable contingency plans in case anything goes wrong," he said.

PJIAE President drs. Eugene Holiday signed on behalf of PJIAE, while Grand Case Airport Manager Sabrina Charville signed on behalf of French St. Martin. For St. Barths Airport Manager Bruno Magras signed.

Mr. Brown said the agreement should assist in speeding up procedures and decision making between the airports that fall within the 4,000 square mile zone that PJIA oversees. "Amendments can be carried out quicker. Anything we decide on can be agreed upon locally. That cuts down on time," he said.



Ms. Charville accompanies by a Grand Case airport officials (left), Mr. Holiday and Mr. Brown

## Air France/KLM quarterly earnings drop 59 per cent

Air France-KLM has reported that it would deepen a cost cutting plan in 2008 after rising oil prices led to a higher fuel bill and a steep drop in first quarter earnings, the Associated Press reported.

Europe's largest airline said it would seek to save an additional 190 million euros (US \$296 million) on top of the 430 million euros (\$669 million) already budgeted, taking the total planned savings for the year to 620 million euros (\$ 965 million). The airline did not say where the savings would come from.

Air-France-KLM said net profit in the April to June period was 168 million euros (\$262 million), down 59 per cent from a year earlier as rising oil prices caused the airline's fuel bill to jump 24 per cent.

The drop in earnings was comparable to the falls recorded by Europe's two other largest airlines. British Airways said net profit fell 90 per cent in the April to June period, while Germany's Lufthansa reported a 60 per cent drop over the first six months of the year.



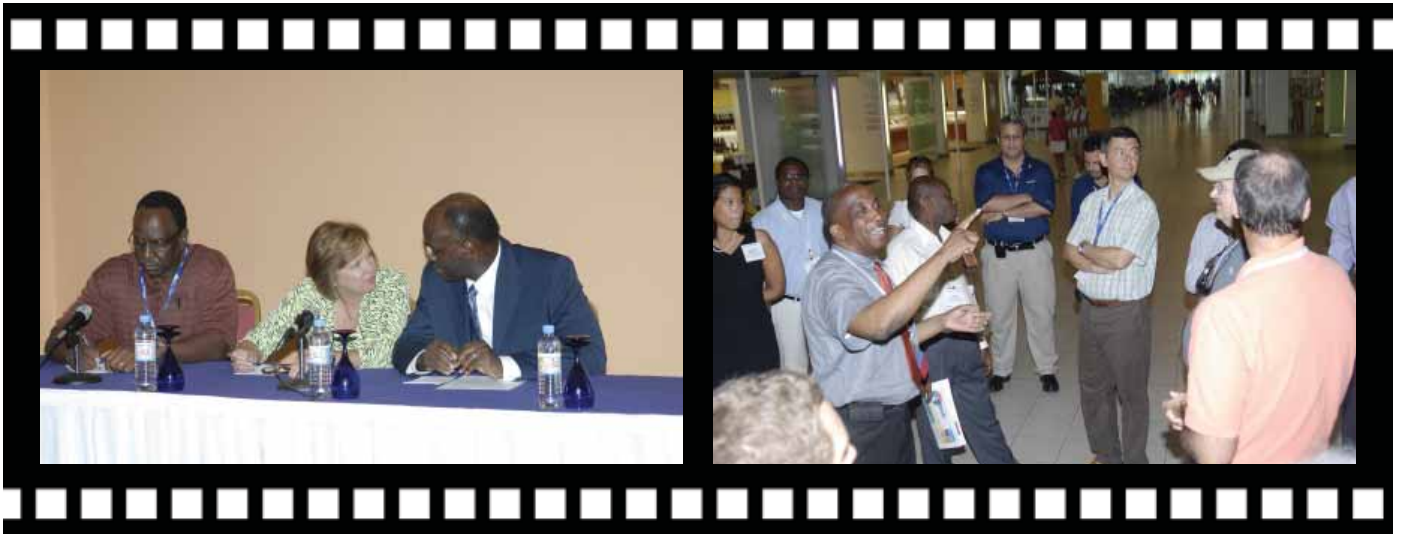
Air France-KLM said its business passenger traffic growth remained "dynamic" and that the profitability of its cargo operations continues to improve.

The airline confirmed its May forecast for a decline in operating profit in the current fiscal year of around 30 per cent to one billion euros (\$1.56 billion).

*AAAE meeting 2*



2008 in pictures



## *CERTIFICATES FOR OUTSTANDING SAFETY WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS*

The companies and the PJIAE departments that excelled during the Safety and Security Workshop were presented their Certificates for Outstanding Performance. Accepting their certificates were Mr. Roy Mingo for Arrindell Aviation Services (AAS), Mr. Anthony Brown for Liat, Mrs. Elsa Simons-MCrea for Last Stop Rum Shop and Michel Hyman, Acting Manager of PJIAE's Operations Department.

Mr. Anastatio Baker, Manager of the Quality Assurance Department, which organised the Safety and Security Workshop that ran in October 2007, January and March 2008 said it was a pleasure for him to make the presentations. "They excelled in attendance and participation," he said.



*Anstatio Baker, Michel Hyman, Anthony Brown, Elsa M'Crea, Roy Mingo and Robert Brown*

The workshop was a guideline to ensure consistent and thorough application of rules and regulations on airport areas. Mandatory for all people holding a security pass for the airport, it started on October 29 2007; it was supposed to run till December, but its completion was postponed no less than three times to enable everyone to take part. It

was finally wrapped up on March 12, 2008. The classes included presentations on the Safety Management System by the Quality Assurance Department, Airside Safety by the Operations Department, Security Procedures by the Security Department and Fire Prevention by the Rescue and Fire Fighting Department.



Construction of the overhang-canopy at Princess Juliana International Airport has been completed; the airport building now features a new structure at the east entrance outside the meet and greet area. A welcome improvement that many are already making optimal use of to hide from the weather elements. Construction of the structure started on Monday, May 5, 2008, as part of PJIAE's ongoing efforts to better service customers.

Mr. Mingo said AAS was honoured to receive the award. "We fully support the goals of PJIAE to take safety and security to higher levels. Our employees are much more aware of the importance of adhering to safety regulations; they observe the lines and wear their vest," he said, when asked what the training value of the workshops had been.

Mr. Brown agreed. He said that if there was one thing the training also did, it was enhancing teamwork among LIAT staff.

Mrs. McCrea was excited. I am so psyched to receive this award," she said. "We are really glad we participated, because this workshop made us more aware. We are always on the look-out for little things lying around on the floor that could cause accidents," she said.

Mr. Hyman said that it is also among his department's to carry out and enforce the safety and security procedures; he was happy to get the award. "This workshop enlightened the users on safety and security, so we will continue playing our role carrying out safety and security improvements to make Juliana the nr 1 airport," he said.

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aviation executives from the Western Hemisphere to St. Maarten. For two days they discussed their industry. The conference itself centred on alternative ways and means for the industry to keep afloat; rising fuel costs, high energy bills, airline capacity shortages and the lingering safety concerns have left aviation no shortage of challenges; the airport and airline officials acknowledged that there is no quick fix to their problems and that going forward all players will have to use their full effort to bring about major efficiency, improvements and put to work all their creativity.

drs Eugene Holiday, president of the Princess Juliana International Airport - was pleased with the two-day conference: with more than 100 delegates, it had been the largest aviation conference ever on the island. "We got some pretty interesting insights and we will certainly see what can work for us. We learned that we have to be as creative as possible and work with our airline partners," he said.

The conference heard some pretty interesting presentations, among which by airport veteran Bill Barkhauer, Chairman of the AAAE. Mr. Barkhauer said that as air service issues remain a major challenge, airlines will slash their service to smaller communities in remote areas; so destinations have to be inventive. Calling the problem an international issue, he said small rural communities in the US as well as small communities outside the US –such as the Caribbean-should advise their governments of the enormous economic impact flight cuts will have and consider offering the airlines incentives in return for maintaining flights.

Bobbi Thompson, vice president of consultants Airport Business Solutions said airports could consider applying alternative revenue earning methods, while Jawad Rachami, business development director at engineering specialists Wyle Laboratories made a case for energy cost savings methods. "There are things airports could do right now to optimize their energy use at," he said.

Most speakers advised that airports and airlines should talk cooperation a lot more, because airlines are frustrated and airports are feeling the pinch; the new reality is not what it used to be, so everybody needs to engage to continue to make money.

But while the presentations during the conference were excellent, they were not its only element that made delegates proclaim that St. Maarten hosted the best AAAE meeting ever. Delegates also got to enjoy the island's friendliness in social gatherings and sporting events; and it was the Caribbean beach-side, "sand-between-your-toes" party on the night of June 21 that blew everyone away.

The airport's marketing and customer service department set up a well appreciated event at Waikiki Beach; the beachside restaurant was turned into a marketplace where delegates were taken back to St. Maarten's olden days. They were treated to performances by some of the island's top artistes and fireworks; by the time the buses were ready to take them back to their accommodations, many clearly had not had enough yet.

**Three more Aerodrome Flight Information Service Officers for Saba**



From left: Instructor Junior Williams, AFISO Vito Charles, Airport Manager Vincent Hassell, Instructor Jan Brown, AFISO Meagan Hassell, and AFISO Marcel Peterson.

PJIAE Air Traffic Services officials Mr. Jan Brown and Mr. Junior Williams have been instrumental in the recent certification of three Aerodrome Flight Information Service Officers (AFISO) in Saba. Marcel Peterson, Meagan Hassell, and Vito Charles were prepared on rules and regulations set forward by the International Civil Aviation Organization, including emergency procedures, traffic classification, and much more, said Airport

manager Vincent Hassell. Peterson was certified in June and Hassell and Charles in August. Including Hassell, Saba now has six employees who are certified to take on tower duties as AFISOs.

To four-day course was conducted by Junior Williams, and Director of Air Traffic Service at St. Maarten's Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) Jan Brown arrived to do the actual certification exam on August 8, 2008. Airport Manager Hassell said that he is proud to have increased staff because it helps alleviate overtime and long working hours.

He said that other projects to improve and upgrade the airport are underway. Two sturdy, wooden green-stained benches have already arrived in the departure lounge to replace the metal chairs, which have corroded over time.

Hassell is working on replacing the glass tinting to reduce tower glare, improve radio equipment, repair the fencing, improve runway marking, and even add a small gazebo so that travellers can have another place to relax to reduce traffic at the airport entry.

## *Aviation crisis crippling tourism*

### *No solution in sight as jet fuel costs hurt industry*

Caribbean leaders are no closer to finding a long-term solution to the debilitating aviation crisis that has beset the region's tourism industry, even after guaranteeing revenue to a number of legacy carriers.

Addressing prime ministers, tourism ministers, commissioners and general delegates at the first Annual Caribbean Tourism Summit (ACTS) in Washington, DC, on June 24th 2008, Dr Alan Greenspan, former chairman of the United States Federal Reserve, said it was clear that, if there was no reduction per mile to the cost of jet fuel, there would be immense impact on the region's tourism industry.

"The old aircraft that are being operated are highly fuel inefficient and only when you improve technology in them will there be a change," he told the gathering.

Greenspan's assessment comes at a time when experts have predicted that the issues faced today probably represent the single-largest economic, social and political threat that the region has seen for many years. The shock waves that the industry is experiencing are even greater than 9/11, the experts have noted.

With oil moving from US\$20 per barrel five years ago to US\$135, forecasters estimate that all major legacy carriers will be in default on various debt covenants by the end of 2008 or early 2009.

The dim report, which was published by Business Travel Coalition and AirlineForecasters, implies that several large and small airlines will ultimately end up in bankruptcy and,



Dr. Alan Greenspan

of those, some will be forced to liquidate.

However, the region has no plans to sit on its laurels and watch its demise. Admitting the aviation crisis was deeply affecting the Caribbean, newly elected president of the Caribbean Hotel Association, Enrique deMarchena, said come July 2, there would be a full day dedicated to the issue at the CARICOM Heads of Government conference in Antigua. "Decisions must be taken in order to preserve the business here," he stated, suggesting the time was ripe for the region to work on integration and consolidation.

The new actors in the market, Brazil and Dubai, have money, he said, adding that, with stiff competition from both countries, one rich in oil, this should serve as the signal that it's now or never for the 'One Caribbean' marketing campaign to take precedence. "Large countries such as Jamaica and the Dominican Republic must lead the charge," he urged.

## *Airport temporarily waives rent increase*

Princess Juliana International Airport Operating Company (PJIAE) will waive the 2008 rent increase for all tenants -airlines and concessionaries- as a relief method to combat rising airline cost and other expenses.

The planned increase for fuel throughput charges that was to be effective January 1, 2009, is also temporarily put on hold. The efforts taken were duly accepted by both airlines and concessionaires as the slow season approaches with its challenges, according to the airport.

Further to addressing these challenges, PJIAE has also implemented measures to reduce its energy cost, and is developing plans aimed at increasing non-aeronautical revenues and increasing air service development initiatives.

PJIAE President Eugene Holiday recently presented its

plans to government and St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA).

In view of the potential loss of business, the airport recognizes the need to provide relief to aviation partners and to secure its revenue base.

The global economy is facing record prices for both crude oil and refined jet fuel. Many airlines as a result are experiencing major financial problems and as a result have announced cut backs of fleet capacity, increased their ticket fees, and introduced new service fees to make up for loss revenues.

Based on this, the airport has a situation review to assess the potential impact of these developments for St. Maarten as a preferred destination and formulate the appropriate responses.

## Menzies unfolds big plans



*Menzies' headquarters in St. Maarten*

Menzies Aviation has got big plans for the region and St. Maarten, one of the two islands where the airline handler still operates, is poised to fare well from these developments. Mr. Jim Niblock, the company's Vice President East Coast and Caribbean said recently that within the next year to 18 months Menzies plans to open at least three stations; each representing US\$ 3 to US\$ 5 million in investments. "We're talking about a complete handling product; ramp and passenger service, and probably cargo," he said, revealing that talks are well underway with Columbia and Panama.

As for St. Maarten he divulged that within the next year at least US\$ 1.7 million will be invested in upgrading equipment. "We have been here since the company was called Ogden Aviation and some of our equipment is tired; has been painted a few times. We have to reinvest in new loaders and push-backs," he said. He said also that as the challenges aviation faces these days are also felt in St. Maarten his company will also invest in units that will allow pilots to turn off their aircraft while they are parked. "We have no worries about the troubles the industry is facing. We're confident. It is a recession that could last up to 2 years, so we have to stick through, but we have to be smart and work with the airlines as much as we can to drop cost," he said.

He said Menzies remains committed to St. Maarten. "It has been a success model for us. When we talk to other potential stations we always use St. Maarten's airport as an example. Bags that arrive on time and everything going smooth, is a result of the model we have here. It works well, as opposed to models where three and four handlers compete and service suffers. Of course there are pitfalls to this model, but if you get it right and you have a good relationship with the airport, then you have the best of both worlds," he said, referring to Menzies

as St. Maarten's handling company.

His short-term expectations were good. "There are some new airlines flying into St. Maarten, with new companies. We have seen excellent growth in this region. September could be different, because fuel prices could sky-rocket, but hopefully people will still want to get away for the winter; so the traffic could maintain its levels," he said.

Business operations also got a high mark and Mr. Niblock attributed much of it to Station Manager Kenneth Kong who is also in charge of the station in the Dominican Republic. "Kenneth is major contributing for in the good 12 months we have had after the two to three years of inconsistent service and staffing issues. He has been very instrumental in establishing a stable workforce. He knows the floor," Mr. Niblock said.

He said Kong fitted well within company strategies. "We require quality management. We do a lot of business between St. Maarten and the Dominican Republic and we want to continue to develop this area and set up a great network. For that we need local knowledge and people. One thing we don't want is to seem to be exploiting countries where we have stations in any way. "We want to build partnerships, so before we even go near a business opportunity we meet the airlines, the airports, the staff, and do our best to understand the environment. We try to understand what drives a place," he said.

He said Menzies will try to develop stations in Latin America. "We used to be stronger in this area, with stations in Brazil and Panama. We are looking to grow in these areas again. We're also looking at Columbia; a lot of people are scared of this country, but we have had nothing but positive feedback," he said.

## *FRENCH SIDE OFFICIALS PROUD, IMPRESSED AFTER PJIAE TOUR*



*French officials, among whom President Albert Fleming of the Collective (right) touring the ATC facilities*

A behind the scenes tour of the facilities of Princess Juliana International Airport on Tuesday July 8, 2008 left French St. Martin Government officials impressed, proud and eager for stronger cooperation with the Dutch side. Following the welcome by Leader of government Sarah Wescott-Williams, the 30+ French officials, led by President Louis Constant Fleming were treated to a presentation on the airport's history and operations by PJIAE President drs. Eugene Holiday. They were then bussed to and given a tour of the state of the art ATC tower followed by a tour of the modern baggage handling, sortation and screening system in the basement of the Terminal building where they marvelled at the quality of the facilities and at the professionalism displayed by the employees they encountered at the airport. The notion at the end of the tour was that St. Maarten's southern and northern sides should work closer by using the available expertise on the island to resolve a lot of issues together.

"We are leaving with a lot of knowledge and foresight that we didn't have before we came here. This is the beginning of real cooperation between the both sides under the principles of the treaty of Concordia," Mr. Fleming said. He said that one of his objectives after being elected President of the Collectivite was to make sure St. Maarten/St. Martin do away with the attitude that there is only one side to the island. "... the attitude that there is a separation. It is important that we acknowledge that there is tremendous amount of expertise on the Dutch side; just look at this facility put together by local St. Maarteners. It is important that we have these meetings," he said.

He hinted at wanting more cooperation on lagoon and other marine issues, on resolving the question of garbage on the island and on aviation matters. "We have a "small" airport in Grand Case and we're looking at how we can

make it bigger," he said.

Mr. Fleming wasn't the only one of the French officials who showed interest in more cooperation with PJIAE. Executive Council Member Mr. Alain Richardson, after drs. Holiday's presentation and in interviews after the tour, said that L'Esperanse Airport in Grand Case would fare well if it would initiate a partnership with PJIAE. His interest was in the private jet business PJIAE sometimes cannot handle because of over bookings. "There is tremendous potential here. If we would upgrade Grand Case airport it could handle private jets; we need to go beyond the speeches and realize that this is one island. These two airports should complement each other, instead of seeing each other as competitors," he said, warning that the real competitors are the other airports in the region where private aircraft divert to when they cannot be accommodated here.

Mr. Richardson also expressed pride at seeing local people at the helm of PJIAE and running its "masterpiece of infrastructure. "I want to commend the management and the employees for the tremendous work they are doing here," he said.

The tour of the airport facilities was part of a series of visits coordinated through Government, as French St. Martin settles into its new status, the rein of several of its affairs in own hands.

Leader of Government, Mrs. Sarah Wescott-Williams, who is also Commissioner of Aviation, expressed hopes that the French officials were more enlightened about the aviation developments on the Dutch side. She too said that both sides of the island need to work together more. "This is just the beginning; I look towards much more synergy. The world around us is facing so many problems and St. Maarten is not left out; so it calls for us to work together and see what we can do together for the betterment of our island. The island has a lot of expertise we can share, if we only look for it," she said.

PJIAE President Drs. Holiday said he was happy that the French officials showed so much interest in the inner workings of the airport. "PJIAE is not just the airport of the Dutch side, but of the French side as well. We are a dual nation island, but we are one people, and should work on concrete steps to give this content; visits like these only enhance that," he said. "PJIAE currently provides air traffic services for flights going into Grand Case airport and there is potential for a further deepening of the relations", he said. A proponent of the concept of complementing instead of competing with Grand Case airport, he said he looked forward to greater cooperation on aviation matters with the French side.