



Horizons Newsletter



Sports, Tourism and Expansion PJIAE PRESIDENT REFLECTS ON LINKAGES ON WORLD TOURISM DAY

The expansion of the Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIAE) will allow St. Maarten to continue playing its role as a major tourism destination and as hub for its direct sub-region, said Drs. Eugene Holiday, the President of the Princess Juliana International Airport Operational Company (PJIAE). Reflecting on World Tourism Day, the Airport Director told Horizons that the expansion also sets the stage for the island to reap the benefits of efforts and successes of the island's sports heroes. World Tourism Day was this year celebrated on Monday September 27. It was themed "Sports and Tourism, two living forces for mutual understanding culture and the development of societies."

"The expansion project is definitely a plus. It will allow St. Maarten to continue to play a major role in developing a greater level of sports tourism in the island and the region," said Drs. Holiday.

In his view St. Maarten's tourism-based economy, travel and sports are all intertwined. "If you think of travel in the modern world and of tourism, you think of air travel. Fifty years ago, travel was mostly done by ship, but with the dawn of modern day flight, aviation was opened up for a wider group of people. Airports have come to play an essential, all important role in opening up economies," he philosophized.

Airports, he said, were important actors in facilitating and making it possible for airlines and all players in aviation to function in a more efficient manner, so that the broader economy could be fed. As far as St. Maarten is concerned, the Princess Juliana

International Airport has certainly played a crucial part, from when it was started back in the early 1940's until now, 60 years later. "PJIA is by far the most important strategic asset of St. Maarten's tourism economy," said Drs. Holiday. Still, he added, while the Airport's key strategic role is undeniable, it's not an entity on its own or in isolation, but an integral part of the overall economy of St. Maarten, and of surrounding islands. "Interchangeable influences, signals from and developments within the economy also act as impulses for what needs to happen at the Airport. There is a constant interaction, an ongoing assessment of the needs of the wider economy," he explained.



Arriving passengers at PJIAE

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TOURIST BUREAU DIRECTOR REGINA LABEGA COMMENDS PJIAE



Mrs. Regina Labega

Tourist Bureau Director Regina Labega has commended PJIAE for "putting its money where its mouth is." Labega was referring to the addition in the arrival hall of an immigration line dedicated to people from Anguilla, St. Barth's and St. Kitts and Nevis: the islands in St. Maarten's sub region. "We have to be honest. If it weren't for those islands we would not attract as many airlines as we do now. And expansion would not be as critical," said Labega. She said the airport's actions were warranted, as a Carrying Capacity Study that was conducted several years ago also recommended that St. Maarten embrace the islands in the direct vicinity.

The Tourist Bureau is involved in the efforts to market these islands as one destination. "We have jointly developed a funding formula geared at marketing this sub region as on destination," said Labega. Using visitor arrival numbers as the starting point, St. Maarten, St. Martin, St. Eustatius, Saba, Anguilla and St. Barth's have approached United Airlines as one block and managed to secure an agreement that this airline will service St. Maarten as of December 2004.

"United is the first result. But it would be unfair to only target one company with our product," said the Tourist Bureau Director. A strategic session is planned for October 12th and all partners -

wholesalers, tour operators, airlines in the US- have been invited to attend. "That's where we'll announce that we'll be working together as one product."

Labega said the united product has appeal. "The airport expansion fits well into those efforts. If we're truly partners we should be working together. The main reason why we attract airlines is because of the islands. We wouldn't have them had it not been for the other islands. We don't have the capacity to handle everything on our own," she said. The Tourist Bureau Director said United Airlines was considering a flight to St. Maarten or Barbados. St. Maarten emerged as the victor because of the high yield guaranteed to airlines from passengers traveling to Anguilla and St. Barths.

The "United" effort is one of the sustainable and strategic activities proposed, to market St. Maarten in the United States market. "At the end of the first half of 2004, St. Maarten hosted 298,701 visitors or 15.7% increase over the previous year. The United States market provided for a 15.7%, which could be largely attributed to the branding of the Maho Hotel to the Sonesta Resort, which also allows for marketing of the destination", Labega said. She continues: "The beautification strategies Philipsburg will also assist in further repositioning this destination as a preferred island in the region."

To structure these efforts even further, Tourism Transport Consult (TTC) has been commissioned by the Economic Recovery Fund Steering Group, consisting of members of Public and Private Sectors Representatives, to develop the St. Maarten Tourism Master Plan., "It's a real good structured move. We're in tourism for over

40 years and we should look at our "product", determine our current position, where we want to go, and how we will get there. As a team, we will all look at all aspects of the industry. It will be an in depth plan. It will encompass everything from product improvement, such as further beautification to marketing," said Labega. The plan will be ready by the second quarter of 2005.

The Tourist Bureau celebrated World Tourism Day on Monday, September 27th. As this year's theme placed the spotlight on linkages between sports and the development of tourism, several sports organizations and people, such as the Judokas and the organizers of the Heineken Regatta, were lauded for their contributions to giving St. Maarten international appeal. Berthia Parle, the first female President of the Caribbean Hotel Association (CHA) - a St. Lucian- gave the keynote speech during the special World Tourism Day event, this year hosted by the French Office du Tourisme.

Nathalie Maccow heads for new challenges

Nathalie Maccow departed the PJIAE family. After seven years St. Maarten, four of which as the dedicated Legal Counsel to PJIAE, she's heading



for new challenges in Holland on October 5th. We thank her for her invaluable contribution and wish her much success with her future endeavors.

PJIAE ATTENDS AIRPORT CITIES CONFERENCE/EXHIBITION

The Princess Juliana International Airport Operating Company (PJIAE) will take its place among the world's International Gateways represented at the Airport Cities Conference and Exhibition at the Westin Detroit Metropolitan Airport in Detroit, Michigan (USA). A major gathering of international airport officials, this event is scheduled for October 4th to October 6th, 2004. PJIAE will be represented by President Drs. Eugene Holiday, Marketing Manager Ms. Julliette Hassell and supervisory director Mr. Rolando Tobias. The concept of airports becoming cities has initiated several conferences already. Conference organizer Insight Media Lt from the UK explained: "an increasingly fast-paced, economi-

cally networked world is changing the rules of industrial competition and business location. International gateway airports are driving and shaping business location and urban development giving rise to an emerging airport-oriented urban form - the airport city." Insight Media Lt said that the concept of the conference was developed to create an interactive forum that brings together senior airport executives with their peers in the real-estate, commercial development, retail, hotel, tourism, entertainment and finance industries dedicated to the creation of airport cities. The organizers said that the intention is for the participants to exchange experiences which should help to successfully develop their individual airport cities.

Topics that will be discussed during the upcoming conference feature insights into the role airports play in shaping economies, the role local economies play supporting development on and off airports, maximizing regional growth potential, and identifying and structuring financing. Drs. Holiday is scheduled to make a presentation on PJIAE on October 5th. He said he would talk about the airport as the gateway of the Dutch and French sides of St. Maarten and the role it plays as premier hub for the North Eastern Caribbean. Drs. Holiday will also outline the execution of Phase II of the Airport Expansion Plan, which will enable the airport to handle 2.5 million passengers annually.

BWIA Rep. June Douglas: new building is more business

BWIA Representative June Douglas welcomes and is very pleased about the airport expansion project. She envisions the new airport terminal building as an incentive for increased business. "We're operating within the present capacity, but if we were given more room, we could increase our services," she said. Ms Douglas, BWIA's Area Sales Manager is of the view that a larger building would make overall operations more comfortable. New office space, with improved facilities -such as bathrooms and restrooms- for airport workers and even amenities such as a food court will improve the airport environment, she said. "You're here most of your life. Some people are here eight to nine hours. Their working environment should be comfortable," she said. The BWIA Manager also recommended that some consideration be given to the shops at the airport. While duty free shops at airports are usually inside the departure halls, the duty free status of the entire island of St. Maarten made it possible to have duty free shops outside. Ms Douglas said that it would be

recommendable to make it mandatory for travelers to go through the shopping area, by placing the shops between the counters and the departure hall entrance. "The shops are there to do business too. They deserve a fair chance," she said. She said that she could certainly use more space. Crammed away in her current facilities she handles BWIA sales for St. Maarten, Tortola and Anguilla. "Everyone operates under the premises that improved facilities will also mean improved business. A bigger terminal would certainly be an advantage. The airport facilities are important for BWIA. "St. Maarten functions as an important hub for the northeastern Caribbean region within our network", Ms. Douglas commented. She adds that with the new facilities additional flights would be in the reigns of pos-

sibilities. "If there is a demand for additional services and routes, we can look at it, considering that the airport could then handle it," she said. BWIA currently connects travelers from St. Maarten on its services to Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Guyana, Costa Rica, Cuba, Grenada, London and points in the US.



Mrs. June Douglas

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The PJIAE President said furthermore that tourism trends also play a role in the direction of the Airport. In that respect, he said, the airport was in support of ongoing efforts of tourism officials of St. Maarten/St. Martin, Saba, St. Eustatius, St. Barths and Anguilla to market the "sub-region" as a multi-destination tourism area.

"Those talks are a very positive effort. The promotion of the sub region is a positive development. Promotion of these islands as one area with diverse opportunities for the visitor enhances each island's individual opportunities to attract tourists," he said. He explained: "When making his or her choice, the tourist does not simply want to visit just 37 square miles, he/she want to have a complete experience. That larger the geographic area the greater the chance of offering the desired experience. Thus, the united marketing efforts for the sub-region make us more able to compete with larger destinations."

And, he added: as PJIA's strategic objective was to position itself not only to function as the Airport for St. Maarten, but as a hub for its sister islands as well, the efforts are a perfect fit.

"For us it solidifies one of the reasons why we are expanding: mainly the expected growth of business of the airport. It's dependent on the growth of the numbers of transfer passengers. They account for 23 to 25 percent of the overall traffic at PJIA. That public mainly goes to those islands, as well as St. Kitts and Nevis. It is therefore recommendable to consider including St. Kitts and Nevis in the effort. The united initiative is positive and we look forward to seeing it get firmer ground. In fact we feel positive that it's going to happen," he said.

The aforementioned factors, Drs. Holiday said furthermore also tie in to the theme of World Tourism Day. "When you have major sporting activities, you see concomitantly a major flow of tourists to the specific destination where the sports activity is taking place," he said.

For instance, with St. Maarten hosting the Leeward Islands Cricket tournament late September and early October, the Airport and therefore the island will ben-

efit from the inflow of sports tourists, he said. "People: players and supporters will come to witness and enjoy the event. That type of tourism plays a role in the development of travel and tourism," said the Airport Director.

Drs. Holiday said that the same goes for any sporting event, such as the Heineken Regatta, which, he said, is one of the biggest and most popular sporting events on the island. "Cricket has major international appeal and so does the Heineken Regatta. It behooves us to look at our place in tourism and, as an island to join forces and look at other possibilities to develop sports. I, myself am a great lover of basketball. There are huge possibilities to develop the Leeward Islands Basketball Tournament for instance, so it could engender the type of attraction that the others have become. So is baseball; also a major sports activity. Look at the recent successes of the Curacao Little League team and at the appeal that the West Indies Cricket Team has internationally. There you see the links between sports and the promotion of a destination. It brings a lot of awareness for small destinations like ours. There are major links and possibilities to engender more opportunities out of sports," said the Airport Director.

He said PJIAE is already a contributor to the development of sports on St. Maarten. "We underscore the importance of sports; not only as activity that is good for the individual, but also because of its potential from a travel and tourism perspective," said Drs. Holiday. PJIAE channels funds through sponsorships and donations into sports activities organized by various sporting organizations and especially to those involved with youth sports

"In that way we contribute to the enhancement of sports and of course to the spin off that could come from a travel and tourism perspective. Both because of the international appeal that you can have once they do good or when sports people come to compete against our local sports people," he said. And in that light, he continued, the Airport expansion is of major importance. "Today the current facilities are

too small. We have capacity constraints. Our maximum capacity is less than what we actually accommodate. We accommodate more than 1.5 million passengers per year, while our capacity is 1.2 million."

He said that PJIAE had to consider the expected overall growth of world tourism of about 3.6 percent per year for the next ten years. "If we don't upgrade and St. Maarten gets but a small portion of that growth, even if it's just one or two percent, it will mean that we will not be able to continue to fulfill our function of facilitating the growth and development of tourism. Hence, the need and importance of our Airport facilities being expanded," said Drs. Holiday.

He said that when in after 2006 opportunity comes knocking, St. Maarten will be ready to take advantage of the possibilities that are expected in the various areas of tourism, be it sports, dive or any other kind of tourism.

Drs. Holiday applauded the tourism officials for choosing sports as the theme for World Tourism Day and to look at sportsmen and women from a tourism perspective. "We want to congratulate the sportsmen and women of the island and around the region, who through their activity helped to bring sports to the international forefront. We encourage those people involved in sports to continue their good work and try to make that part of our islands a much more important aspect of our community."

COMING EVENTS

November is Safety Awareness Month at PJIA. Our Quality Assurance Department is gearing up to commence the awareness campaign.

In the next edition of Horizons Newsletter Mrs. Bernadette Davis, Tourism Director of the St. Martin Tourist Office will share her views regarding the tourism product and the significance of the airport expansion project.

NEW WIND STATION FOR MET OFFICE

Phase II is bringing the Meteorological Service closer to its work: a new "Upper Wind Station" is being built right behind the Met office on the Airport Boulevard. "It's better for me," jokes Chief Observer Rignald Eugenio. "I will not have to drive all the way to where the building is now (close to where BBW used to be). And the current building is kind of outdated." In the Upper Wind Station the Met Office inflates weather balloons, which are then released into the air. "The balloons are equipped with an instrument that gives a signal to the antennae on our roof," Eugenio, a Met Official with more than 32 years of experience, explained. He said the collected data is used by officials in aviation and by the Met Office to track weather patterns in the upper atmosphere. "Temperature varies when you go higher up. By releasing the balloons we can study wind directions and wind speeds at different heights," said the Observer. He said in the hurricane season balloons

are released twice every day; outside the hurricane season it happens once daily. Its operations are financed by the National Weather Service.

The new building will house the equipment to make the gas which the balloons are filled with and a generator to inflate them. Eugenio said the target is to have the new facility completed at least by November.

"We have to move as soon as possible. The old building will soon be demolished. All the other buildings that were around it are gone," he said. He didn't have precise dates, but according to him the old facility was built before the fifties. "I know a guy who used to work for the airport in 1946 and he said the building was already there then. It's an old building," said Eugenio.

He said that the new building may be closer, it may make his work more convenient, but also demanded of Observers that they be more on their toes. "It's closer to the runway, so we

really can't release any balloons until we get total clearance from the tower. We always have to get clearance, but now it will become even more important. Accidents can happen," he said.



Workmen dotting I's on the roof of the new wind station, which should be completed by November.

Anguilla Government and Chamber of Commerce of St. Maarten support PJIAE on Phase II expansion project

The Government of Anguilla congratulated PJIAE on the commencement of the Phase II expansion works. They pledged their full support during the presentation held September 10th by Commissioner Wescott-Williams and the PJIAE management on the Phase II plans. They are keenly looking forward to the conclusion of the works and the positive impact it will have on access to Anguilla and St. Maarten.



Comm. Wescott-Williams hands over a phase II informatoin package to hon. Chief Miinister Fleming.



fltr: Mr. Willemsberg, Mrs. Patrick, Mr. Ouenniche, Mr. Meyers, Mr. Holiday (PJIAE), Mr. Kong (PJIAE) and Mr. De Castro.

September 15th, PJIAE welcomed the St. Maarten Chamber of Commerce boardmembers and office members, headed by Chamber President Charles Meyers, to the airport for a presentation on the Phase II developments. The delegation was impressed by the scope of works and called the project long overdue. The Chamber expressed their full support to the project.

PHASE II WELL UNDERWAY

"Phase II of the PJIAE Expansion Plan is well on its way," Koop Holding Europe Project Manager, Ton van Schaick reported on September 23rd, 2004. He was proudly sitting in his new office in the company's mobile site headquarters right opposite the airport parking lot. The office is already fully functional; only the phone lines were left to be installed. "All engineering staff has been moved down here. So was the bookkeeping and administration for the project," said Van Schaick.

The Project Manager said work is also advancing on the construction of the project office for the supervisors of the project. In this building, that's located at the western end of the site, officials of Netherlands Airport Consultants (NACO) and PJIAE Chief Project Office, Derek Hillman will have their offices. Van Schaick said the building will get a permanent designation within the airport operations once the expansion project has been completed.

And, added the Project Manager, groundwork was being done for the new road that will lead traffic around the new airport building once completed. "And we're busy with the irrigation system. We're placing the culverts that will lead rainwater from the whole facility into the Simpson Bay Lagoon," he said.

The pile driving process was also pro-



West side view of the expansion works.

gressing well. "We reached our 550th pile on September 22nd. We're doing between 20 and 25 piles a day. We're making good headway," Van Schaick stated.

He said that the pile driving process will go on for about another month. "Before the end of October we'll have that behind us and the crane will be sent back to Holland," he said. HM Nederveen, a company from Groningen was sub-contracted to drive the 850 piles that will hold the foundation of the four-level terminal building.

And, meanwhile, while all parts of the

future airport terminal building are going up, workers were clearing around the old wind station that's located where the offices of BBW used to be. "That building has to go," said Van Schaick. Care is to be taken not to destroy the dome.

The Project Manager was keeping his fingers crossed that hurricanes would continue to divert from St. Maarten. "We've been lucky up to now and hopefully it stays like that. It's been kind of nerve-racking times. We did get some rain, but a hurricane would be a monstrous hold-up."

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL DEPARTMENT REINFORCED

Four new Air Traffic Controllers have been added to the team that ensures safe flying into and out of St. Maarten.

Sophia Peterson, Elcardo Morris, Elymas Richardson and Donovan Blackman completed theoretic training at Navigation Canada in Ontario, Canada earlier this year. They have been in on-the-job training under qualified supervision for 90 days to earn their licences. This practical part of their training included working on-site with live traffic. Now they're ready to start working as Procedural Traffic Controllers. An inspector from the Department of Civil Aviation handed them their licenses on September 31st.

Mr. Brown called on his new staff members to be responsible.

"You have graduated but you're not there yet. Be serious, be responsible. Our motto is 'Safety and Efficiency on the Job'. Maintain that," he said.

The Air Traffic Control Services Department is also hosting two young Air Traffic Controllers from Anguilla, who just finished their theoretic training in Trinidad and Tobago. "We are in the habit of assisting other facilities with on-the-job training. We have hosted and had exchanges with people from Grenada, Antigua, Guadeloupe and others in the past," said Mr. Brown. The two Anguilleans -Ms. Meade and Mr. Brooks- are here for 30 days.