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Compensation must match US \$21 million award

By Rory Butler - Monday, January 28th, 2013.

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ST JOHN'S, Antigua – Antigua & Barbuda is unwilling to consider any monetary settlement below US \$21 million annually to end the gaming dispute with the US, according to Finance Minister Harold Lovell.

Lovell said a one off US \$10 million settlement, which was once put on the table by the US to end the gaming dispute between the two countries, was far off the mark.

“At one time there was a figure of US \$10 million that was mentioned by the US and there was a possibility, there probably would have been the possibility of getting US \$10 million but here we have an award for US \$21 million annually,” said Lovell.

The finance minister insists that Antigua & Barbuda is not willing to take less than the amount stipulated by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

“If we don't get market access we believe there should at least be a substantial monetary award which at the very least reflects the sum of US \$21 million annually, that is the figure we are looking at, not 5 or 10,” said Lovell.

The finance minister however refused to go into further details on what offers have been made.

“Negotiations are ongoing and I think it could be seen as bad faith if as we proceed with negotiations we are discussing the various options that have been presented,” said Lovell.

Antigua & Barbuda is set to today inform the World Trade Organisation dispute settlement body that it intends to take up the judgment in the gaming dispute, which allows it to implement retaliatory trade sanctions against the US to the tune of US \$21 million annually.

Ambassador Colin Murdoch who has been leading the country's negotiations with the US Trade Representative said he hopes this will move negotiations forward.

"We had talks with US officials up to Friday and these talks have not moved forward in any substantial way and Antigua & Barbuda is frustrated," said Murdoch.

Lovell suggested the main aim is still to negotiate a solution with the US.

In 2003, Antigua & Barbuda launched a complaint with the WTO after the US put restrictions on its citizens' ability to place international online gambling bets. The nation estimates the damage at US \$1 billion.

In 2007, the WTO ruled in Antigua & Barbuda's favour, urging the US to either remove unfavourable laws from its books or allow Antigua & Barbuda to go after an "innocent bystander" industry – in this case the US intellectual property industry to the tune of US \$21 million per year.

The finance minister agreed that the WTO ruling doesn't offer an ideal solution but said it's important to give it a shot.

(More in today's Daily OBSERVER)



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1. JP Farnsworth View 4 hours

Go back and ask for more! the WTO ruling was always too low and now they have not paid in years so they owe even more. If they don't pay up we will have to invade the US, but with all the guns they have that might not be a good idea either.

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2. Captain Kangaroo View 4 hours

We are owed around U.S. \$200 Million if you count 21 Million per year from the time of the complaint. I hope the minister is making it clear to the U.S. and the WTO that we intend to collect every penny owed.

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