US representative deems A&B move ‘radical’

By Alicia Simon - Friday, February 1st, 2013.

ST JOHN’S, Antigua – General Counsel for the office of United States Trade Representative (USTR) Timothy Reif is warning that the United States "can not" allow the World Trade Organisation’s decision in the online gaming dispute to be used as a tool for “piracy” by Antigua & Barbuda.

"We, the US government, obliviously can not allow any WTO decision to be distorted into a license for piracy,” the USTR attorney told OBSERVER Media in an exclusive interview yesterday.

The cross-border trade dispute between Antigua & Barbuda and the United States has been escalating since last week. And, the attorney responsible for enforcing the US trade agreement in the WTO, said he wants to put a halt to the back and forth and get negotiations back on the right track.

Reif said he was "surprised and disappointed" by Antigua & Barbuda actions that, he considered, as a bold move on the part of the county and could be construed as ‘radical.”

He said this is evidenced by Antigua & Barbuda’s seeking permission from the WTO to impose sanctions on US intellectual property rights and government’s strong stance on enforcing the sanctions if negotiations were not successful.

Without being specific, Reif said the US government offered Antigua & Barbuda a “fairly wide ranging package of other kinds of steps that would allow Antigua to create as many as or more than jobs that they expected to lose as a result of the internet gaming decision.”

Although Antigua & Barbuda has not denied that negotiations were not pursued, it is the country’s position that the US has not gone far enough to make up for the loss of what it estimates is a US $3 billion per year industry.

Meanwhile, Reif is maintaining that the US relationship with Antigua & Barbuda is “highly valuable.”
"That is why we have worked so hard over the last six years to reach a resolution with Antigua," he said.

However, this was contrary to Finance & Economy Minister Harold Lovell pronouncement yesterday on the Parliament floor. Lovell said that negotiations, in fact, have been "fruitless."

(More in today's Daily OBSERVER)

Tags: Finance & Economy Minister | General Counsel | Harold Lovell | license for piracy | online gaming dispute | Timothy Reif | United States Trade Representative | ustr | world trade organisation | wto
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