

# Antigua awaits WTO position on gaming issue

The government is expected to get a response from the United States, today, concerning that country's compliance with allowing cross-border Internet gaming, as decided by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) ruling in 2004 and 2005.

In 2003, Antigua filed a formal complaint against the US, with the WTO, over the issue of Internet gaming stating the American ban on cross-border Internet gaming is crippling the local gaming market.

In 2004, a WTO panel ruled in favour of Antigua, but partially reversed the ruling in 2005, still leaving the state of Antigua largely successful in its suit.

As it stands, the US has to grant Antigua & Barbuda access to its markets or face going against the WTO ruling.

At the opening of the AML/CFT Workshop for Caribbean Regulators of Casinos and Internet Gaming Entities at the Jolly Beach, yesterday, Finance Minister Dr. Errol Cort, revealed that the WTO will be meeting in session today, in Geneva, and he understands that the US may make a statement at that meeting.

He made clear, though, that both countries continue to enjoy excellent relations despite the ongoing matter.

Whether the statement from the US will be amicable or not, remains to be seen as, up till yesterday, at the opening of the workshop, one of its officials stated that the US maintains its strong stance against Internet gaming.

Carlos Correa, the US treasury regional adviser for the Caribbean & Latin America, said "We must caution you, anything

that is said in this workshop by treasury ... representatives cannot be read as an indication that the US government approves of Internet gambling.

“Our policy in the United States is that regulation simply cannot stem the inherent crime risk posed by Internet gambling due to such factors as the volume, the speed, the international reach and the anonymity of players working over the Internet.”

He said Internet gaming is inherently vulnerable to money laundering and can then be used to fund terrorism, which is a critical issue in the US at the moment.

But Dr. Cort believes that the issue can be resolved amicably.