

US urges Antigua to wait

In a surprise move, the United States has “advised” Antigua and Barbuda to delay taking any action after being awarded USD 21 million in annual trade sanctions by a World Trade Organisation (WTO) arbitration panel earlier this month.

According to the Associated Press news agency, US Trade Representative Spokesman Sean Spicer stated that the tiny Caribbean island nation should wait to implement any sanctions pending American changes to its international trade obligations under the WTO treaty.

Spicer said Washington had initiated a formal process at the WTO to revise its commitments by the removal of gambling services from its decade-long agreement and is in talks with Antigua and six other WTO members that have claimed to be affected.

‘We would expect that Antigua would not suspend its WTO commitments to the United States while that process is underway,’ said Spicer. “Once the process of clarifying the US schedule of commitments is complete, any issues in our bilateral dispute with Antigua will be moot and there will no longer be any basis for suspending WTO commitments.”

White House officials had stated earlier this year that the US was not bound to change its laws and open its borders to the online gambling industry due to an ‘oversight’ in a decade-old trade agreement.

However, US officials then announced that they would submit documents ‘to clarify’ Washington’s commitments citing a lack of clarity in the 1994 negotiations under the Uruguay Round of international trade talks that led to the General Agreement On Tariffs And Services (GATS), which took effect in 1995.