

Antigua, US gambling dispute drags on – New resolution date set

Washington and St John's have set a new deadline of Friday to resolve their dispute over Internet gambling, according to Antigua's top finance official.

Antigua accuses the United States of crippling its gambling industry by banning Americans from placing online bets with gambling operators, including those based in the twin-island country of just 70,000 inhabitants.

On June 6, a World Trade Organisation deadline passed without resolution.

The WTO last year backed Antigua's request to target US services, copyrights and trademarks in retaliation for a US online betting ban – but ruled it could impose only USD 21 million in annual trade sanctions.

Antigua had sought USD 3.4 billion.

On Monday, Finance Minister Errol Cort said sit-downs with US trade representatives could achieve resolution over the gambling discord by June 20, saying the new settlement deadline would „allow both parties additional time to see whether we're able to meet some amicable resolution,“ Cort told reporters. He did not disclose specifics.

Trying to settle the dispute

Sean M. Spicer, a spokesman for the office of the US Trade Representative, has said the US and Antigua were trying in good faith to settle the dispute through a mutual agreement.

A law passed by the US Congress in 2006 bars banks and credit

card companies from processing payments to online gambling businesses outside the country. That regulation effectively blocks Antigua's access to the US gambling market, the most lucrative in the world.