

Still no end in sight to gaming dispute between Antigua and US

Antigua Finance Minister Errol Cort revealed that Antigua and Barbuda has not reached any closer to a settlement with the US on the gaming dispute.

“We had a series of discussions in an effort to advance the settlement talks; but, today we have not been able to agree on or finalize those discussions,” he said in a press conference this week.

When contacted, Mark Mendel, Antigua’s attorney at the World Trade Organization (WTO), stated that to his understanding, another extension for a settlement was in the works.

Cort said he would hold a teleconference on 7 October, with the deputy representative of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) at the end of which, a final determination could be made as to which way forward the nation would go with the matter.

He said a number of issues were discussed with various departments of the US government and that an optimal outcome should be a settlement that would have financial and technical assistance components, as well as a component which would assist with the economic growth of Antigua and Barbuda.

Regarding the issues specific to the gaming companies and their own particular challenges, Cort stated that those discussions were being held with the US Justice Department.

He pointed to three ways that the scenario could be addressed. One way would be to send the matter back to the WTO and let them determine what would be the reasonable levels of

compensation, through concessions granted to Antigua and Barbuda, in light of the US withdrawing from its obligations to the WTO on gaming.

Cort also postulated that they could let the matter lag and enter into a new US administration, with the aim of trying to renegotiate and see whether Antigua and Barbuda could be more successful in resolving the issue bilaterally and in an amicable way. Lastly, he said, "Or do we just, (notwithstanding our inability to conclude fully on a number of issues), run with what we have?"

He concluded that the matter would have to go through many more discussions for any result to be attained.