

# Panamá y Estados Unidos en busca de una estrategia para prevenir el lavado de dinero

La embajadora de Estados Unidos, Bárbara Stephenson se reúne con la administradora general de la Zona Libre de Colón para discutir los avances y estrategias para descubrir las actividades ilegales en la Zona Libre de Colón. Embajadora habla sobre el caso Murcia.

8 de enero de 2009

Hora: 9:03 p.m.

Clasificación Confidencial

**ID DOC:** 186322

**FECHA:** 2009-08-01 00:00:00

**FUENTE:** Embassy Panama

**PRIVACIDAD:** CONFIDENTIAL

**REFERENCIA:** VZCZCXYZ055200 RUEHWEBDE RUEHZP

#0021 0082103ZNY CCCCC ZZHO 082103Z JAN 09FM

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TAGS: ECON, EFIN, SNAR, KTFN, PM SUBJECT: EMBASSY ANTI-

MONEY LAUNDERING OUTREACH Classified By: Ambassador

Stephenson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d). 1. (C) Summary:

Spearheading Mission Panama's anti-money laundering outreach, Ambassador Stephenson met with Colon Free Zone (CFZ) General Manager Nilda Quijano during a December 17 visit to Colon. Quijano described the competitive advantages of the CFZ for legitimate businesses and the steps being taken to scrutinize illegal activity and marginalize illicit firms. On December 22, Ambassador raised with First Vice President and Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis Navarro press coverage of the apparent failure of Panama's Financial Analysis Unit (UAF) to report unusual transactions of Colombian pyramid scheme kingpin David Murcia Guzman. Ambassador Stephenson emphasized the importance of UAF credibility and efficacy. End Summary. 2. (C) At the CFZ, Quijano, who is appointed to a five-year term by the President, spoke about her efforts to reform the CFZ,

which are crucial to the zone's growth strategy. She emphasized that significant growth in government support over the past 4 years has, combined with revenue, allowed current and capital expenses to rise from \$29 million in 2005 to \$60 million in 2008. Those funds are being spent to digitize records of cargo movement in the Zone - a project that currently is at 70% completion. Quijano praised the NAS-funded evolusoft project, noting that voluntary participation and certification in anti-money laundering training for firm representatives will become mandatory and that monitoring of transactions under this project also will become mandatory. Quijano spoke at length about pushing out the bad actors in the zone - "I've raised the rent, and if a company goes sixty days without a transaction, they don't belong here." 3. (U) Recent growth in the CFZ, the second largest free trade zone in the world after Hong Kong, is fueled primarily by imports from Asia (63%) and re-exports to Central and South America (94%). The United States and Canada provide only 15% of imports into the CFZ and receive only 5% of its re-exports. Growth through most of 2008 had been 30% above 2007 levels. However, due to the global financial crisis, growth is expected to be flat -- at best -- in 2009. The CFZ's comparative advantage is its close proximity to the Canal (which carries 5% of world trade) and modern ports, and the Kansas City Southern Railroad. Merchants' ability to assume credit and inventory risk, to sell goods in scalable quantities, and to arrange finance and transport all have contributed to the CFZ's success since its founding in 1948. Logistics firms increasingly are using the Zone to repackage or modify higher value goods for specific markets. Also, the network of FTA's during the past decade has drastically reduced tariffs in the Americas, further fueling the growth of the CFZ. 4. (C) On December 22, during a wide ranging conversation with First Vice President and Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis, Ambassador Stephenson raised press coverage of the Financial Analysis Unit's (UAF's) reported failure to report suspicious transactions by Colombian pyramid kingpin David Murcia Guzman (DMG). Guzman was arrested by Panamanian public forces and deported to Colombia on November 20. While, according to the press, DMG's bank, Multibank, duly reported transactions totaling \$1.23 million in late 2006, the UAF failed to provide this information to the Attorney General as required by law. Ambassador stressed that the credibility and efficacy of the UAF were crucial in fight against money laundering. First Vice President Lewis agreed and added that "we as a government need to pull together all of the measures we have taken to tighten financial regulations so that we can present it in a clear fashion." 5. (C) Comment: Post will subsequently report on the progress of

automation efforts in the CFZ. Ambassador's message to Lewis was a powerful indicator of USG interest in ensuring that the UAF can function as a full partner with U.S. FINCEN and other financial analysis units. STEPHENSON.