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What Belizeans need to know about Joel Nagel



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By BBN Staff: Disgraced Ambassador Joel Nagel, had only been featured on a few newscasts in recent years, but became a controversial name when he was removed from his post at the Belizean Embassy in Vienna, Austria. The nation heard about his historic removal from his post, but many Belizeans are still unfamiliar with who Nagel is.

Business wise, Nagel is a career attorney and businessman for over 20 years. He is the founder and managing partner of the international law firm Nagel & Associates, LLC in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. The firm is Pittsburgh's first law boutique focusing exclusively on international commercial transactions and immigration.

Locally, he is also the Chairman of Caye International Bank, an investor of Exotic Caye Beach Resort and legal counsel and Treasurer/Chief Financial Officer for Grand Baymen Belize.

His business history is not without difficulties, as in 2014, when one of his companies, Caye International Bank, lost a Supreme Court civil suit, filed by Tommy Lynn Haugen. Haugen accused Nagel and Caye International Bank of fraud and won over \$319,000 damages and legal fees. The decision was handed down in February of 2016, while Nagel was still serving as Ambassador to Belize in Austria.

Apart from his business history, Nagel has also had a visible community presence, serving as the President of the Pittsburgh Rotary Club, Governor for Rotary District 7300, Secretary of the Violetta Barrios de Chamorra Foundation in Nicaragua, and Board President of the Nicaragua Development Corporation. In Belize, he has been actively involved with Rotary, the CONA Foundation and the Living Word Church in San Pedro.

He was assigned to the post in Austria in September 2015. At that time, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wilfred Elrington stated that Nagel was the best option for the post at the Belizean Embassy in Vienna, due to his qualifications.

"Nagel has a perfect combination of skills to represent our nation in Austria and Western Europe," said Elrington. "Among these is his extensive experience as a Belizean businessman and his fluency in speaking and writing German," Elrington said.

The government of Belize had kept his disgrace in Austria quiet, until former Prime Minister Said Musa told the country about it at the National Budget Debate in March. Musa explained that Nagel was asked to leave by the Government of Austria, after they found him doing personal banking business, when he should have been doing diplomatic work. After it was revealed, Elrington told the media that the situation has been deemed by former high-ranking diplomats as a 'terrible embarrassment for Belize.' Reports from the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs indicated that indeed Nagel was engaged in his own private businesses, instead of acting as an ambassador.

"Countries behave in their own way. You have diplomats being expelled immediately when you have disputes, so apparently there is no real protocol," explained Elrington. "These countries, especially when they are dealing with smaller countries, tend to be kind of arrogant and there is not much that we can do," Elrington added.

The offices of the Belizean Embassy in Austria remain closed, until a new ambassador is appointed.

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Stephen Thompson

Is Mr Nagel a citizen of Belize? The reason I ask is that I was appointed by the Country of Latvia as Honorary Consul at that point I was only a long term permanent resident and not a naturalized citizen and because of that nothing happened. From my sources in San Pedro, and this is all hearsay, not an allegation, it seems that Mr Nagel has actually lived in Belize but in Pittsburgh, PA and his time here has been mostly devoted to self promotion, doing to sell offshore investments, get deposits for his bank and fund his enterprises in Nicaragua. Based upon the above it would appear that he was doing the same thing in Austria. A "terrible embarrassment for Belize" is an understatement as is the fact (and I could be wrong about this) that he may legitimately be referred to as "His Excellency" for his position.

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