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Wednesday, April 5th, 2017

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Apr. 3, 2017–Belize's ambassador to Austria, businessman Joel Nagel, has been asked to leave his post in the country – a first occurrence of this type since Belize achieved political independence 35 years ago.

In September 2015, the Belize Government appointed the US attorney and businessman Joel Nagel to be Belize's ambassador, plenipotentiary to Austria. In addition, Nagel was also appointed as Belize's permanent representative to the UN offices in Vienna, Austria.

In the approximate year and a half that Nagel served as Belize's Ambassador to Austria, his poor performance caught the attention of the Austrian Government and they asked him to pack up and leave the country.

Today, Monday, Amandala confirmed with the Belize Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the Belize Embassy offices in Austria have been closed down, and there is no ambassador representing the country at the UN offices in Vienna.



A former high-ranking diplomat, who spoke to Amandala on condition of anonymity, told us, “It’s a major step to terminate an ambassador after he was appointed by a government. It is a terrible embarrassment for Belize.”

Our source also told us, from what he has been able to ascertain from sources in the Austrian Foreign Ministry, that Ambassador Nagel was not engaged in business for Belize, but was immersed in his own private businesses.

During the budget debate last month, in the House of Representatives, the Fort George area representative and former Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Said Musa, had this to say about the Ambassador Nagel debacle: “I cannot conclude my remarks, Madam Speaker, on the budget today without saying something about the shameful mismanagement of our foreign affairs and international relations under the present minister.

“I will not hold him responsible for the fact that the ambassador that he appointed in Vienna, Austria, has been...his [accreditation] has been canceled by the Austrian government. Are you aware of that, Minister? You are, okay. This man—sorry I have to call his name, but it is fact—Mister Joel Nagel was caught doing banking business when he was supposed to be doing ambassadorial work. This is the same man that had a bank in San Pedro, Caye Bank. He was appointed ambassador in Austria.”

Amandala attempted to speak to the Chief Executive Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lawrence Sylvester, who represented Belize in several diplomatic postings overseas, but we were told that he is on sick leave.

We also spoke to the Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Arleth Gomez, who told us that she is unable to speak about what happened with our ambassador to Austria. Gomez told us that that information would have to come from CEO Sylvester. Gomez would only confirm that “our embassy in Vienna has been closed.”

Joel Nagel is the founder and managing partner of international law firm Nagel and Associates, LLC in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A. The firm specializes in international commercial transactions and immigration.

Nagel is also chairman of Caye International Bank. He is also an investor in Exotic Caye Beach Resort, and president of Nicaragua Development Cooperation.



Apart from his many business connections, Nagel is also fluent in German, one of the attributes that helped propel him to the lofty office of Ambassador of Belize to Austria.

In 2014, Nagel's company, Caye International Bank Limited, was named as the first defendant and Joel Nagel was named as the second defendant in a civil claim at the Supreme Court filed by Tommy Lynn Haugen.

The case was heard by Supreme Court Justice Courtenay Abel, who issued a 16-page written judgment, writing in the introduction, "This is a claim filed on 25 November, 2014, which makes, when looked at in the round, allegations of a very sophisticated and subtle fraud against the claimant, Mr. Tommy Haugen, by the 1st Defendant, Caye International Bank Limited ('Caye Bank') and its pre-incorporation promoter, the 2nd Defendant, Mr. Joel Nagel."

Justice Abel ruled in favor of the claimant and ordered Nagel to pay cost of court in the sum of \$75,000.

Apart from cost of the claimant, Justice Abel also ordered Nagel to pay damages amounting to \$200,665, plus \$44,100 in interest covering the period May 2012 to January 2016.

The written judgment was handed down on February 9, 2016, while Nagel was still serving as Belize's Ambassador to Austria.

