



U.S. Embassy Belize

Media Advisory

August 4, 2003

Free Trade Area of the Americas Speaker in Belize

United States of America Ambassador Russell F. Freeman is pleased to announce that Ambassador Michael Smith, former deputy U.S. trade representative (USTR), has agreed to visit Belize for two days to address the important topic of Free Trade Area of the Americas.

Free Trade Area of the Americas, or FTAA, refers to an effort to unite the economies of the Western Hemisphere into a single free trade market. The heads of state and government of 34 countries in the region, including Belize, agreed to this initiative at the Summit of the Americas in December 1994. At the Sixth Ministerial meeting held in Buenos Aires and at the Third Summit of the Americas held in Quebec City in April 2001, a number of key decisions were made regarding FTAA. It was decided that negotiations for the FTAA Agreement are to be concluded no later than January 2005 and entered into force no later than December 2005.

As part of Ambassador Smith's presentation, he will explain FTAA as it relates to areas such as trading, customs procedures and capacity building. He will also address the advantages and disadvantages of an FTAA in Belize and what Belize must do to prepare for an FTAA agreement.

Ambassador Smith is presently Chairman of the Board of Cantabs, Inc., a Washington D.C. based international trade and investment consulting firm. From 1983 to 1988, he was Cantabs' senior deputy. From 1979 to 1983 he was the first U.S. Ambassador to the General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade and Deputy USTR in Geneva, Switzerland.

All media houses are invited to attend his presentation and a question-and-answer session on Wednesday, August 6th from 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the conference room, located on the first floor, of the National Development Foundation of Belize, #2882 Coney Drive, Belize City. He will also make a presentation in Belmopan on Thursday, August 7th at 9:00 a.m. at the George Price Center.

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