

Anthony Astaphan <astaphana@gmail.com>

9 Feb  
(2 days  
ago)

to GRCopley

Dear Mr Copley,

Greetings.

I am an Attorney who represents the Prime Minister of Dominica. This is not a hostile communication. It is intended solely to bring information to your attention.

I have read your Special Analysis "**Dominica Passport Scandal Reveals Iranian Sanctions Busting and PRC Intelligence Focus on the "Third US Border" in the Caribbean**" and I think you have been misled by information provided by persons in or connected to opposition forces in Dominica. Time does not permit a full response at this time, and in due course I will write to you about the allegations of alleging spying ties to China and concerning the sales of diplomatic passports, which the Prime Ministerial has repeatedly denied. I will point out though that the first to make this allegation was Gabriel Christian.

What I wish to do now I wish to point this out by referring to four (4) of the main parts of your Analysis which are inaccurate and show, at least to me, you were misled..

First, China was not subject to the Iranian oil embargo imposed by the United States during the years alleged first in Dominica by Thomson Fontaine and then by you. . China and 10 or 11 other countries were **exempted** from that oil embargo by Secretary Clinton in 2012. [See for example (i)<https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424127887324069104578527803679519748>; (ii) <https://www.ft.com/content/8b8d6328-c1ac-11e1-8e7c-00144feabdc0>; and (iii)<http://www.ibtimes.com/iran-keeps-biggest-oil-customer-china-gets-us-sanctions-waiver-704947>]]

Second, no ship or vessel flying the Dominica flag has ever been registered or administered in Greece since at least 2000. There is a simple explanation. In 1999 the UWP Government granted a **20 year** exclusive contract to an American. This agreement requires that all ships flying the Dominican flag must be registered and administered in

the United States of America. It therefore prohibits the registration or administration of ships with Dominica's flag anywhere other than in the United States

Third, you wrote

*Significantly, the Dominican GDP had declined after 2014, and much of the traditional agricultural export sector no longer functioned as it had done in earlier years. The Skerit Government had ignored agricultural development, the dominant source of Dominican employment and exports, and relied instead on funds from the "economic citizenship".*

The real reason why the GDP was nearly wiped out 'after 2014' was because of TS Erika. The post TS Erika assessment by the Government and World Bank indicated that in one (1) night Dominica lost over 90% of its GDP. However as the Prime Minister disclosed in the Parliament, ( see attached) the Government was able to use revenues from the CBI program to expedite the recovery of our destroyed country. As a result, the net lost in the following financial year was 3 to 5% of GDP. ( See the attached)

Fourth, you wrote

*'The public focus of the scandal — but not the breadth of the strategic activity — was the "Dominica Economic Citizenship Program", which actually began in 1993, and by which, under Dominican law, foreign citizens could acquire Dominican citizenship for \$100,000. The volume of sales of these "citizenships" is now, however, undocumented and no substantive numbers have been revealed, but was of sufficient concern that it could ensure that the ruling party could call on sufficient numbers of "new citizens" at any time to skew political voting. The sale of diplomatic passports involved substantially larger payments, and most of the funds were diverted away from the Government's coffers.'*

This allegation has been part of the Opposition play book for years, and is false because  
, among others,

1. For the last 10 years or more revenues collected are line itemed and disclosed in the Estimates of Revenues and Expenditure of the Government;and
2. The names of all persons granted citizens are published in the Official Gazette

I have taken the time to bring these matters to your attention because your Analysis appears to be premised on 'alternative facts' provided to you.

I trust you understand.

Regards

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## 2 Attachments

to me

Dear MrAstaphan:

Many thanks for your detailed email and attachments this morning. You raise significant points and I have passed these through to our analysis group so that they can be included in any follow-up reports. Significantly, the initial report which you saw was prepared solely for government consumption but was apparently leaked to the consumer media.

Without getting into all of the details of your message, let me state that it is clear that the governments of both Iran and the People's Republic of China are absolutely not bound by US laws or obliged to follow the application of sanctions regimes to which they did not agree. They, like the Commonwealth of Dominica, have sovereign rights and their governments' only obligation is to their citizens and to the international agreements to which they are signatory.

The issue of PRC linkages and apparently intelligence-linked activities relating to Dominican diplomatic passport holders was not brought to our attention by Mr Gabriel Christian; we had been following that, based on US sources, for some time. We are aware that he subsequently raised the issue publicly in the US.

We will certainly include reference to the public material you provided in the ongoing analysis of the situation.

We are grateful that you provided this important additional information.

Sincerely,

Gregory Copley,

President, The International Strategic Studies Association.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your reply.

I am not in a position to question what you have said. The main issue for me is that Clinton expressly exempted China, and that our ships are not registered or administered from Greece. I will pass on your views on the alleged intelligence to the Prime Minister.

I am willing to speak to you at any time.

Regards.

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**grcopley@strategicstudies.org**

9 Feb  
(2 days  
ago)

to me

Dear MrAstaphan:

Many thanks.

Sincerely,

Gregory Copley

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Dear Mr Copley,

Good night

As I indicated today, I referred your email to the Honourable Prime Minister more specifically on the allegation of "PRC linkages and apparently intelligence -linked activities to Dominican diplomatic passport holders". The Prime Minister has described the allegation provided to you as utter nonsense, and repudiates it in the strongest possible terms. The Prime Minister also indicated that he has had, and continues to have, close and co-operative ties with the US Embassy, and he and his Government have at all times fully co-operated with the various enforcement and other agencies of the USA. This fact was recently disclosed publicly by the former US Ambassador to Barbados and the OECS His Excellency Ambassador Palmer. The audio of Ambassador Palmer is enclosed for your information.

As promised, I will provide you with the facts on the allegations concerning diplomatic passports, hopefully by or on the weekend.

Best regards

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**grcopley@strategicstudies.org**

14:57  
(17  
hours  
ago)

to me

Dear MrAstaphan:

Thank you for that additional information. My understanding is that the audio of Amb. Palmer was made in 2012; is that correct?

I look forward to the additional information on the diplomatic passports. You can understand the concern of various foreign governments given the legal difficulties of at least three high-profile holders of Dominican diplomatic passports, which, by any stretch of the imagination, must have caused embarrassment to the PM and the Government.

With best wishes,

Gregory Copley



Anthony Astaphan <astaphana@gmail.com>

15:42  
(17  
hours  
ago)

to grcooley

Dear Mr Copley.

It was I believe 2012. But the year is importance. It indicates a strong relationship, and this relationship has continued. In 2015 the United States Department wrote

***"The United States established diplomatic relations with Dominica in 1979 following its independence from the United Kingdom. The United States and Dominica have a cooperative relationship. The United States supports the Dominican Government's efforts to expand its economic base and to provide a higher standard of living for its citizens.***

***The two countries work together in the battle against illegal drugs. Dominica cooperates with U.S. agencies and participates in counternarcotics programs in an effort to curb narco-trafficking and marijuana cultivation. The two governments have signed a maritime law enforcement agreement to strengthen counternarcotics coordination as well as mutual legal assistance and extradition treaties to enhance joint efforts in combating international crime."***

On the 3rd March 2016 the new USA Ambassador Linda Tagliatela visited Prime Minister Skerrit. The press reported the meeting this way

***"During a welcome ceremony held in her honor, the Prime Minister said the US is instrumental in the provision of material support, and the biggest sponsor of training programmes with the police.***

***"We have had a longstanding relationship with the United States, we are allies in the fight against drug trafficking, in particular, it's***

***something that Dominica stands in total solidarity with the United States,” he said. “That is very useful in equipping the police officers in fighting the increasingly challenging issue of drug trafficking. We look forward to the continued cooperation.”***

***Taglialatela stated that her predecessor had a very good relationship with the Government of Dominica and she hopes to follow in his footsteps***

***“I would certainly like to build on the relationship that we have and to strengthen it,” she noted.***

***According to her, Dominica is an esteemed partner which the US provided support to 2015.***

***Furthermore, she stated that the US provided over \$3-million to security assistance as well as funding programmes that empower youths and increase resilience to climate change impact.***

***Meantime; President of Dominica, His Excellency Charles Savarin, said that the US is committed to maintaining and strengthening its friendship with Dominica.***

***“The United States is committed to maintaining and strengthening the bounds of friendship and cooperation which already exists between the two countries...,” he stated. “Focus will be placed on continuing the robust partnership that makes the relationship between United States and Dominica special. We acknowledge the support provided by the United States overall and the programmes to empower the youths, improve health outcomes, increase resilience to climate change and in security assistance in 2015.”***

I will get back to you on the passports. But I must note your reference to concerns by various Governments. For the record, I do not know of which three you speak. But I can tell you that no concern has been expressed to the Government by any foreign Government. In relation to Monfared, his diplomatic passport was revoked and cancelled in January 2016 ( see the attached press release from Foreign Affairs). . As I understand it, Monfared was arrested in January 2017. I should add that in July 2014 Bishops Services Inc submitted a due diligence report on him.

Also, the Prime Minister addressed the country on the Allison -Maduake matter. Her diplomatic passport has been revoked and cancelled. ( see

the Prime Minister's statement, which remains on the OPM's website. <http://www.opm.gov.dm/?p=1611>. )

I must add that the USA has not been slow to act if concerned with any matter in the OECS. The USD Treasury Department has issued a financial advisory against St Kitts and Nevis because of concerns over passports. In addition, sanctions were imposed on Saint Lucia, and visas of persons including a minister revoked, because of extra judicial killings. No such advisory or sanction has ever been threatened or imposed.

I will get back to you on the issue of diplomatic passports and some of the other allegations in your Analysis on the weekend..

I trust I have been helpful.

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Attachments area

to me

Dear MrAstaphan:

Thank you for your prompt reply. I do note what has occurred in the US-Dominica political realm in recent years, but it is very much worth noting that there is a new US Administration in office, one which takes a very different position than the Obama Administration. Bear in mind that the US Ambassador who met with the Prime Minister in March 2016 was acting on the instruction of the former Administration. I note this because, without the ability to go into detail publicly, of the reporting which we are getting from the new Administration which has expressed a very different perspective. Again, we carry no brief from or for the new US Administration or any other government, but it is clear that the regional geo-strategic realities are changing and that these will impact Dominica (and others).

With best wishes,

Gregory Copley

**Anthony Astaphan <astaphana@gmail.com>**

18:16  
(14  
hours  
ago)

to grcooley

Mr Copley,

Greetings.

Facts cannot change simply because of the change of a Government in the USA. Nor can a new policy create convenient facts. There has been, and there is no, underpinning of US interests by or Third Border in Dominica. To use the new lingo in Washington, this is 'fake news.'

Best regards

**grcopley@strategicstudies.org**

18:50  
(14  
hours  
ago)

to me

Dear MrAstaphan:

I am staggered that you, as with some other politicians around the world, choose to ignore that there has been a seismic change in US strategic policy, just because you do not wish to address it. That's the real "fake news". As a non-American, myself, I have been constantly aware that each US Administration emerges virtually as a new nation. The Pakistanis learned this at their peril; they took a long time to understand that what one US administration did (and promised) might be totally overturned by the next. And please don't presume to tell me about "fake news"; we're seeing it in abundance everywhere, including the Caribbean. "Facts" may not change, but the strategic context within which they exist can and does change; at that point, so, too, must policy.

All the best,

Gregory Copley

**Anthony Astaphan <astaphana@gmail.com>**

18:56  
(13  
hours  
ago)

to grcopley

Oh No Mr Copley, I have not ignored the rise of Trump. Actually, I am of those in the Caribbean who actually like him. I also believe, like most Prime Ministers including Skerrit, DrGonsalves, Brownre and others, that a Republican President is best for the Islands. The Windward Island Prime Ministers have never forgiven Bill Clinton for supporting Chiquita against the EU protection for Windward Island bananas. They welcome Trump.

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**grcopley@strategicstudies.org**

19:25  
(13  
hours  
ago)

to me

Dear MrAstaphan:

Well said; and it behooves us all to take the current when it serves.

Have a good weekend.

Best wishes,

Gregory Copley

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**Anthony Astaphan** <astaphana@gmail.com>

19:59  
(12  
hours  
ago)

to grcopley

Mr Copley

This has always been the position of the OECS Prime Ministers. One of the first, not the first President to meet with them in the Islands was the last Bush.

There is much about us you do not know.

Have a good weekend too.

Sent from my BlackBerry — the most secure mobile device

**grcopley@strategicstudies.org**

21:15  
(11  
hours  
ago)

to me

MrAstaphan:

And there is much that I *do* know. I've been advising governments on strategic intelligence for 50 years.

It seems you feel you have it all under control, so perhaps the need for our communication has come to an end.

Good luck.

Gregory Copley

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**Anthony Astaphan <astaphana@gmail.com>**

21:17  
(11  
hours  
ago)

to grcopley

I am very sorry you feel this way. I was merely sharing information. But if that's the way you feel, many thanks for your time.

Best regards

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Dear Mr Copley,

Good day.

I was sent a copy of audio of a show you did recently in which you referred to our exchange of emails. However, I note you may not have indicated that you cut off our communication before I addressed the issue of the diplomatic passports especially in relation to Lap Seng. I think fairness requires that the host of the radio show should invite me or another representative of the Prime Minister to respond on his behalf. In any event, I was also surprised to hear your allegations about the Prime Minister's alleged lifestyle and wealthy. I will however taken the liberty to inform you of the following facts

1. In relation to Monfared, a due diligence report was in fact done by Bishops Services Inc in July 2014. A diplomatic passport was issued to Monfared in March 2015 but cancelled in January 2016. I have already sent you the Ministry's release. The due diligence report disclosed nothing adverse with, among others, Interpol, in the USA, EU, UK, Malaysia or Iran.
2. As I indicated in my first email to you, it is not correct to suggest that Dominican flagged ships were involved in any sanction busting. I am not even sure if the ships flagged in the USA ever shipped oil to the PROC. But if they did, it was not illegal or contrary to US law. I should add that President Trump now accepts the One China policy. This is the same position of Dominica. However it appears that you may be suggesting Prime Minister Skerrit was

involved somehow with Monfared in this shipping of Iranian oil for his personal gain. This is not based on fact, and the Prime Minister frontally denies it. There is nothing in our view except the mere existence of Monfared to base this allegation.

3. The Leader of, and the United Workers Party, who you describe as pro USA ( news to me), have alleged that Lap Send was promised a diplomatic passport in exchange for an investment in Dominica. They relied on the bail hearing transcripts in the us ( attachment 1). There is no reference to diplomatic passports in the transcripts. Lap Send became a citizen of Dominica in the late 1980's /early 1990s when Skerrit was still in High School. This so called investment was reported in the local media in Dominica in 2002. ( See attachments 2 and 3. ). At this time PM Skerrit was not the Prime Minister of Dominica. In 2009 the Minister of Foreign Affairs disclosed to the Parliament that Lap Seng, also Ng, assisted in the move from Taiwan to the PROC. ( see attachment 4). This ended by 2012. Therefore, at the time of Lap Seng's arrest in 2015, he had no official or personal connection with the Prime Minister or Government. However, and despite your criticism of Lap Seng, the bail hearing transcripts show that he was allowed to fly freely in and out of the USA several times, and allowed to invest and buy significant residential properties in New York and elsewhere in the USA. Lap Seng was allowed on bail in his own residence!( See the transcripts).
4. I am not sure where you got the information from that the Prime Minister has millions stashed away. The opposition party has been making this allegation for years. They have also alleged he owns an apartment in the USA. To date not a shred of evidence, despite the Prime Minister's multiple denials, have even been produced. You also spoke of the Prime Minister's life style. What Lifestyle were you referring to? These are extraordinary allegations which have been made against the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has denied these allegations ad nauseum.

As I have indicated, I only wish to provide you within accurate information, or as some would put it, the other side of the coin.

Regards

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