

10-23-1991

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Recommended Citation

Tyroler, Deborah. "Costa Rica-u.s. Free Trade Talks Continue." (1991). <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/noticen/6574>

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Costa Rica-u.s. Free Trade Talks Continue

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, October 23, 1991

On Oct. 21, in San Jose, Costa Rica, a delegation of Bush administration officials met with Costa Rican Foreign Trade Minister Roberto Rojas as part of ongoing negotiations for a bilateral free trade agreement. The discussions focused on the elaboration and implementation of new foreign investment regulations. The negotiations, which began in November 1990, are scheduled to continue until year-end with a focus on intellectual property rights. The calendar for bilateral free trade talks was moved up following President Rafael Calderon's early October visit to Washington. The Calderon administration reportedly wants to speed up the negotiations in order to ensure eligibility for Bush's Initiative for the Americas, and to avoid being marginalized by the trilateral (Mexico, US, Canada) free trade agreement in process. Although US government officials have publicly asserted preference for free trade negotiations with Central America en bloc, San Jose has insisted on the bilateral route, reportedly because of fears that regional talks prior to opening negotiations would result in an unacceptable delay. During his recent visit in Washington, Calderon also succeeded in advancing a proposal to reduce Costa Rica's debt owed to the US government by at least 30 billion colones (US\$214 million). Next, Calderon announced that his government plans to commence free trade talks with Canada within the next two months. (Basic data from AFP, 10/14/91, 10/21/91)

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