
SERBIAN GOVT HIRES US LOBBYISTS AMID KOSOVO DISPUTE

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The Serbian authorities have signed an agreement with US company Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP to represent Belgrade in its dispute with Pristina over trade tariffs, according to a contract filed to the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) Registration Unit, which is part of the US Justice Department.

We are delighted that the Republic of Serbia has retained our Firm to represent it in connection with U.S. matters (including communications vis-a-vis the government of the United States of America) arising in connection with a dispute with the Kosovo and Metohija region (outside Serbia often referred to as Kosovo*) over certain regional cooperation issues, including trade restrictions imposed by the acting Kosovo* authorities on, in particular, Serbian origin goods and services (the Engagement), said the contract that the FARA Registration Unit received on March 28.

The document published by the FARA Registration Unit does not specify how much Serbia is paying for the US companys services.

The Kosovo government initially imposed a tariff of 10 per cent on imports of Serbian goods on November 6 last year, citing Serbias negative behaviour towards Kosovos statehood and its international campaign against Kosovos recognition.

On November 21, however, Kosovo decided to increase the tariff to 100 per cent, sparking criticism from Western governments, including senior US officials.

Kosovo already has ongoing lobbying contracts with the US lobbying companies.

The most recent two were signed by the Kosovo Foreign Ministry and the US-based company Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman, LLP with the purpose of providing legal advice and support for government relations and public communications activities.

Under the US Foreign Agents Registration Act, agents representing foreign powers in a political or quasi-political capacity must disclose the details of their relationship.

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