



May 22, 2007

Secretary  
United States International Trade Commission  
500 E Street S.W.  
Washington, DC 20436

USITC Inv. No. TA-2104-025

Re: U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement:  
Potential Economy-wide and Selected Sectoral Effects,  
72 Fed. Reg. 24327 (May 2, 2007)

To the Commission:

The International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA) supports the earliest adoption by the U.S. Congress of the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement (Panama TPA).

As required by the Trade Act of 2002, the ITC has commenced an investigation to assess the likely impact of a comprehensive bilateral trade promotion agreement (TPA) between the U.S. and Panama. The ITC will prepare a report for release (in September 2007) that assesses the likely impact of proposed free trade agreements on the U.S. economy as a whole and on specific industry sectors and the interests of U.S. consumers. In this regard, IIPA hereby submits our comments on the contributions to the U.S. economy made by the copyright-based industries as well as some observations about the copyright law and enforcement situation in Panama.

### About the IIPA

The IIPA is a coalition of seven trade associations (listed below), each representing a significant segment of the U.S. copyright-based industries. These member associations collectively represent over 1,900 companies producing and distributing materials protected by copyright laws throughout the world—all types of computer software including business applications software and entertainment software (such as videogame CDs and cartridges, personal computer CD-ROMs and multimedia products); theatrical films, television programs, home videos and digital representations of audiovisual works; music, records, CDs, and audiocassettes; and textbooks, trade books, reference and professional publications and journals (in both electronic and print media).

## **Economic Impact of the Copyright Industries in the U.S. Economy Generally**

As the Commission knows, the copyright-based industries are among the fastest growing and most productive of any sector of the U.S. economy, employing new workers in higher paying jobs faster than the rest of the economy, creating new revenue at rapid rates, and contributing close to \$90 billion to the economy through foreign sales and exports.

On January 30, 2007, the IIPA released an economic report entitled *Copyright Industries in the U.S. Economy: The 2006 Report*, the eleventh study written by Stephen Siwek of Economists Inc. This report details the economic impact and contributions of U.S. copyright industries to U.S. Gross Domestic Product, employment, and trade. The latest data show that the “core” U.S. copyright industries<sup>1</sup> accounted for an estimated \$819.06 billion or 6.56% of the U.S. gross domestic product (GDP) in 2005. These “core” industries were responsible for 12.96% of the growth achieved in 2005 for the U.S. economy as a whole (this means that the growth contributed by these core industries (12.96%) was almost double their current dollar share of GDP (6.56%)).

In addition, the “core” copyright industries employed 5.38 million workers in 2005 (4.03% of U.S. workers) in 2005. And the report, for the first time, provides data on the estimated average annual compensation for a worker in the core copyright industries: \$69,839 in 2005, which represents a 40% premium over the compensation paid the average U.S. worker.

Finally, estimated 2005 foreign sales and exports of the core copyright industries increased to at least \$110.8 billion, leading other major industry sectors. Those sectors include: chemicals and related products (not including medicinal and pharmaceutical products); motor vehicles, parts and accessories; aircraft and associated equipment; food and live animals; and medicinal and pharmaceutical products. It is essential to the continued growth and future competitiveness of these industries that our trading partners provide not only free and open markets, but also high levels of protection to the copyrights on which this trade depends

## **IIPA Supports the Panama TPA**

IIPA supports the Free Trade Agreement process and looks forward to the prompt and effective implementation of Panama’s obligations under the TPA. The U.S. began free trade agreement negotiations with Panama in April 2004, and negotiations concluded on December 19, 2006. On March 30, 2007, President Bush notified the U.S. Congress of his intent to enter into this agreement with Panama.

We believe that free trade agreements benefit local economies as well as U.S. companies. Comprehensive, modern copyright laws, combined with effective enforcement of those laws, are necessary for the copyright industries – both U.S. and local industries – to grow. The Panama TPA offers yet another tool for encouraging compliance with other evolving international trends in

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<sup>1</sup> The “total” copyright industries include the “core” industries plus those that, under conservative assumptions, distribute such products or other products that depend wholly or principally on copyrighted materials. The “core” copyright industries are those that create copyrighted materials as their primary product. *The 2006 Report* is posted on the IIPA website at <http://www.iipa.com>.

copyright standards (such as fully implementing WIPO Treaties obligations and extending copyright terms of protection beyond the minimum levels guaranteed by TRIPS) as well as outlining specific enforcement provisions. Panama currently is a beneficiary country of several U.S. trade programs: the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) plus the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Agreement (CBTPA).<sup>2</sup> These programs have high standards of intellectual property rights (IIPA has previously provided our views on the ATPA/ATPDEA to the USITC). Once the TPA enters into force, Panama's trade benefits under these trade programs will cease.

The Panama TPA, once fully implemented, will assist Panama in attracting new foreign investment and new trade in valuable digital and other intellectual property-based products, particularly in the area of e-commerce. The private sector advisory committee to the U.S. government (ITAC-15) has already produced a favorable recommendation regarding the IPR Chapter of the Panama agreement.<sup>3</sup> The ITAC-15 report does, however, identify some shortcomings in the Panama agreement, especially where the drafting deviates from the text in the three Middle Eastern FTAs, which contains the most comprehensive text for copyright law and copyright enforcement issues to-date.

### **Economic Impact: Problems of Copyright Piracy in Panama**

IIPA realizes that this ITC review focuses on the potential economic impact here in the U.S. It is difficult for IIPA members to quantify an explicit domestic impact, other than noting, in general, the U.S. copyright-based industries continue to export their creative content to international markets and that export in turn supports U.S. employment and economic vitality.

In this section, we turn to some highlights regarding the situation in Panama which affects the ability of U.S. copyright owners to engage in the commercial distribution of their content as well as protect that from unlawful infringement in that market.

**Copyright Piracy:** Copyright piracy in Panama, combined with inadequate enforcement, has significantly limited legitimate revenues to right holders and has become a major market access barrier for the copyright industries. The challenges faced by these and national governments to enforce copyright laws grow exponentially as the forms of piracy shift from hard goods and toward digital media and unauthorized electronic transmissions. Over the last few years, unauthorized "burning" of CDs has grown rapidly in Latin America, including Panama. The piracy of sound recordings and music in Panama remains high. While audiocassette piracy had been the preferred

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<sup>2</sup> See IIPA submission to the Trade Policy Staff Committee on the Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act and the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act, November 1, 2005, posted on the IIPA website at <http://www.iipa.com/pdf/IIPA%20CBERA%20CBTPA%20filing%20to%20TSPC%2011012005.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> See Report of the ITAC-15 on the U.S.-Panama Trade Promotion Agreement Intellectual Property Rights Provisions, April 27, 2007, at [http://www.ustr.gov/assets/Trade\\_Agreements/Bilateral/Panama\\_FTA/Reports/asset\\_upload\\_file960\\_11234.pdf](http://www.ustr.gov/assets/Trade_Agreements/Bilateral/Panama_FTA/Reports/asset_upload_file960_11234.pdf).

business of pirates for years, music CD piracy is clearly now the preferred format of choice. As a result, very few companies remain operating in the country. Hit albums that a few years ago sold in the thousands today sell a few hundred copies. Although no official figures exist for the level of music piracy, the industry conservatively estimates that it exceeds 50% of the total market.

Business software piracy takes various forms, including counterfeiting, illegal reproduction and/or distribution by resellers, mail order houses, bulletin boards, other Internet-based distribution and corporate end-user piracy. The Business Software Alliance (BSA) estimates that there was a 74% level of piracy for business software applications in 2006 in Panama. Panama's Ministry of Education has been leading the initiative among various Panamanian agencies to implement Decree 273 of 2000 which regulates the use of computer programs by public agencies.

The U.S. entertainment software industry reports that piracy and counterfeiting affects videogames on all platforms, including cartridges, personal computer CD-ROMs, and game consoles, especially those entering Panama from Southeast Asia. This transnational form of piracy points to the enhanced need for continued cooperation among governments in tracking infringing materials across borders. As optical disc piracy grows in the region, the motion picture industry is concerned about the possibility that Panama will become a transshipment point for optical disc piracy or pirate circumvention or other technology as the market for such pirate product grows. The major forms of piracy afflicting the U.S. book publishing industry involves commercial photocopying piracy, especially as photocopying shops near universities fill requests for illegal reproductions of entire textbooks.

**Border Enforcement:** Cooperation with Panamanian customs has been improving over the years, but more work is needed. To that end, in March 2005, Panama's General Directorate of Customs signed a cooperation agreement with the recording industry, IFPI-Latin America, to help stop the movement of piratical goods into Latin America. Panama serves as a transshipment point for blank CD-Rs into the region; estimates placed this at 40 million units/year (2005). This agreement provides for the exchange of statistical data and information, training by IFPI experts and the creation by Customs of a specialized IP unit. The Industrial Property Law (Law No. 35 of May 10, 1996), which entered into effect on November 19, 1996, allows Customs and CFZ officials to impose administrative sanctions and seize pirated and counterfeited products. Public prosecutors can act *ex officio* against infringements of copyright as well as industrial property. Industry does not have specific information regarding the results of such IPR actions.

**Criminal Enforcement:** Panama has established a variety of specialized IPR entities over the years, including: IP departments in the Colon Free Zone and at the Customhouse General Offices; specialized IPR groups at the local police level; and most recently (starting in December 2003), the Judicial Technical Police. The Specialized Superior Office on IP Infringements began its operations in January 2003. The Third Superior Court handles all IPR cases. The Inter-Institutional Commission on Intellectual Property continues its coordination and policy oversight efforts. A National Intellectual Property Prosecutor was named years ago, and this office has a permanent budget and staff and with national jurisdiction. Cooperation between the copyright industries and Panamanian police and prosecutors has generally remained good. Since the implementation of the new Industrial Property Law in November 10, 1996, copyright actions may now be taken *ex officio*, which has greatly aided anti-piracy enforcement efforts in Panama. The Office of the Tenth District

Public Prosecutor has been particularly vigilant in pursuing cases over the years, and we acknowledge its assistance. With some exceptions, however, much of the investigatory burden continues to be shouldered by private industry.

**Copyright Law and Related Laws:** Panama's Law on Copyright and Related Rights entered into effect on January 1, 1995 (Law No. 15 of August 8, 1994). This law represented a significant improvement over the prior law and enabled Panama to adhere to the Berne Convention (effective June 8, 1996). In general, this 1994 copyright law was a relatively progressive one in the region a decade ago, even though there were some immediate challenges launched against this law. The 1994 Copyright Law required the filing of a complaint by rightholders in order to initiate actions; however, this problem was alleviated by the passage of the Industrial Property Law in 1996, and copyright actions may now be taken *ex officio*. Panama was one of the first countries in this hemisphere to join the two WIPO Internet treaties, the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and the WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT). Given the higher standards contemplated in an FTA IPR chapter with the U.S., Panama's copyright law (and enforcement-related laws) will require some modification.

Various amendments to the copyright law have been proposed over the years (e.g., 1996, 1998 and 2002), but many have not been adopted (the 2002 exercise was aimed primarily at implementing the provisions of the WIPO treaties into Panamanian law, extending the term of protection, improving enforcement mechanisms and strengthening penalties). This project is still lingering in the Ministry of Education and has not been presented to the Panama's legislative body for evaluation and processing. Passage of these reforms is a crucial matter to protect intellectual property in a digital environment and give enforcement and prosecution teams the necessary tools to carry out an effective anti-piracy campaign. Legal reform to the penal codes and Industrial Property Codes (Law No. 1 of January 5, 2004) appears to have been accomplished to minimize prior confusion and clarify that criminal sanctions, including aggravated penalties, is available for both copyright and industrial property infringements. Under the Copyright Law, the level of administrative fines (from \$1,000 to \$20,000) and as imposed have been inadequate to deter pirates from engaging in commercial piracy. The level of penalties for piracy should track the higher levels available for trademark counterfeiting.

### **Conclusion**

IIPA and its members continue to request U.S. government attention and engagement with the Panamanian government on reducing piracy and improving enforcement there. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Panama Trade Promotion Agreement. If you have any questions, please contact us.

Sincerely,



Maria Strong  
on behalf of the  
International Intellectual Property Alliance