

COMMENTARY - November 2017

I will briefly mention the “Chepo project”. I have no more information on that, but it may (or may not) relate to this post and I should mention it. It is a “mystery”, but potentially a very important one with a budget of \$500,000,000 over 15 years. If you do not know what I am talking about, the last couple posts will explain.

I want to talk about another “mystery” today. There have been rumors, pranks, and false stories about this for more than a decade, so many people ignore it. I am referring to the possibility of the Disney corporation coming to Panama to create a park or a resort. I ignore all the rumors and only consider facts. A professional outfit like Disney will not talk about plans until they are ready to talk about them and that happens only when everything is final and ready. So, you have to look carefully to get any real information. What follows is just part of the information we have found, all of it is public.

Immediately following the inauguration of President Varela in 2014, ANPanama (*Agencia de Noticias Panamá* – Panama News Agency) interviewed the new Director of Panama’s Tourism Authority at that time, Mr. Jesus Sierra.

[This is what Mr. Sierra had to say.](#)

Very briefly in English, Mr. Sierra explained that an important part of the new administration’s tourism program would be the creation of a theme park in Panama designed and operated by one of the biggest theme park operators in the United States. He could not share their name or the location because it was still under discussion, but there definitely was going to be a theme park and an announcement would come soon.

This was the reaction of [one website](#) in Panama. Their headline expresses their idea of who was coming, “They will open Disney World in Panama!”

That was nice to hear, but there was no further announcement. The subject was not brought up again. I have to believe that Mr. Sierra was being honest based on what he had been told, but obviously it was not yet ready to be made public. However, ANPanama has not taken down that video for a good reason. The interview was real. It is part of history.

There are also many little things that tell us that the entertainment industry in the US is aware of Panama. Some of you probably remember the attempt to set up a Sea World, another Orlando park, in Panama. It failed as described here at the [Los Angeles Times](#) due to opposition from animal rights and environmental organizations, but it clearly indicated Orlando interest in Panama back in 2007. And of course, there was the [Disney Parade](#) during the Christmas season in 2015 and the passage of the Disney Wonder, the first cruise ship to pass [through the new Canal locks](#), so Disney is certainly aware of Panama too.

But so what? Is there any clear, specific evidence that Disney is interested in something more in Panama? Yes, there is, and it has been there for two decades, if you know where to look and what to look for.

In this case, I am referring to Internet domain names, like PanamaWave.com. As long as we pay our fees, we have complete use of that domain name and no one else can use it. In the 1990s, there was controversy because major corporations were having to buy their corporate domain names from someone who had paid for them earlier for a few dollars, but the companies were having to pay tens of thousands of dollars, even more!

That is a legal question involving trade names, trademarks, and intellectual property. Today, if you try to do that with a major corporation like Disney that is legally registered in every nation on the planet, you are going to fail. But if you are seriously considering a specialized name in the 90s, even if it included your corporate name, the smart thing was to buy it immediately and never have to worry about it.

The Disney corporation bought two specific domain names for Latin America on 1 December 1997.

The two names were chosen for obvious reasons. The first was for Disney in Brazil (Brasil in Portuguese, as well as Spanish). With 208 million people (52 times Panama's 4 million), Brazil is quite capable of supporting a park domestically, plus they are Portuguese-speaking, not Spanish-speaking, and should have their own park.

The second name was clearly intended for the Spanish-speaking people of Latin America and it was for Panama.

The records of the two domain names are exactly the same, except for the domain names.

But do we know if Disney is the real owner? Yes, and here are two ways to check it.

When you click on a link, you are taken to the website of that domain name. If you have no plan to use that domain name for a website in the near future, then the visitor goes nowhere.

Click on <http://DisneyBrasil.com> and see what happens. The domain name is owned by Disney, but it is not being used. They simply own it.

Okay, now click on <http://DisneyPanama.com> and meet the "owner" of that domain name face-to-face.

The only reason that you can see our little friend Mickey is that this domain name is owned by the Disney Corporation. There is no other explanation.

The second way is simple too, but totally authoritative. For those with tech backgrounds who understand who and what ICANN is, you can go to [their site in English](#) or [their site in Spanish](#) and enter both domain names. The owner is right there to be seen and is as “public” as you can get. When it comes to Internet domain names, ICANN rules, literally. When they say Disney is the owner, Disney is the owner.

Some readers will notice that when they click on the Panama link, it does not send them to DisneyPanama.com. It “redirects” them to another address at Disney. Then it says, "UH OH! Couldn't find that. Try something else?" Why?

Typically, that is because a real website is under construction to use the DisneyPanama.com address, **but** they do not want to make that public yet. This page is used so anyone who comes in will think they made a mistake! They did not make a mistake. It was done on purpose by Disney. But not for the Brazil website because it is not yet necessary. These last sentences are my guesses, not facts, but I have operated more than two dozen websites and have used the “redirect code” frequently, so it is a guess based on experience. Do you want to see an example? Click on <http://PanamaEast.com> and see where you go. We also own that domain name, plus three more that are not redirected at the moment – LagoByanao.com, PanamaEste.com, and EasternPanama.com. We have long-term plans too.

Is the “Chepo project” connected to the Disney corporation? I do not know, but I will say this. It is the only suggestion that we have heard that fits a \$500,000,000 project. If you have a better one based on facts you have collected, please share it!

Whatever the final results may be, Panama Wave S.A. continues to be a “bull” on the market for eastern Panama Province and, eventually, the Darién Province. It is only a matter of time, perhaps less than many people think now. At this moment, we are happy to hear that someone is willing to spend half-a-billion US dollars on a project in Chepo District, home to the [land we represent](#). That is a nice Christmas gift.