

[Money talks in Antigua, even if it's Ponzi loot](#)

Posted by Al Lewis on August 16, 2009

[Mr. Ponzi](#)

Bernie Madoff makes more headlines, but the Ponzi-scheme allegations against Sir R. Allen Stanford are far more intriguing.

Stanford, now in prison awaiting trial in Houston, may have used his ill-gotten gains to essentially take over the island nation of Antigua. Stanford has maintained his innocence and blames the Securities and Exchange Commission for the collapse of his offshore banking empire - a counter claim as big and bold as the man making it.

Former U.S. Congressman and GOP presidential candidate Tom Tancredo told me it's right out of a James Bond plot, where an evil genius launches attacks on humanity from a remote island headquarters.

Natalia Querard, whose family owned a renowned hotel at Antigua's Half Moon Bay, told me Stanford got the government of Antigua to seize her hotel so that he could have it for himself.

It's a complicated tale, with more than one side, which I've told in two columns.

Property rights have to be protected for capitalism to thrive. We need free markets, but we also need rule of law.

I gave Antigua's Attorney General Justin Simon, left, a chance to speak through my column. But as you will see, it's difficult for me to side with any government - even our own - when it takes property away from its owners for any reason.

Never say never, but the power to confiscate property must be used with extreme discretion. Taking property from one entrepreneur and giving it to another - while legal - will always be suspect.

Especially, when the beneficiary has been knighted for plying the government with cash.

Here's but one example. At the top of this post, is a 2005 photo I found on the [Antigua government's website](#) of current Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer, left, and Mr. Big Man on Campus, Allen Stanford. A headline above the photo reads: "Prime Minister and R. Allen Stanford Sign Agreement Formalizing EC\$25 Million Donation for Secondary School of Excellence."

Hmm. And where did Stanford get the money for that? (I guess that will be for prosecutors and a bankruptcy trustee to decide).

In addition to plying the island's government with cash, Stanford also owned the Antigua Sun newspaper. [Click here](#) to read my column on the kind of newspaper he ran there.

Until he was finally indicted, Stanford was a man who could buy respectability. [Click here](#) to read my column on a London magazine that named him "Man of the year."

Of course, I think he should keep this title. One of the criteria was “innovative financial structures.”