

What Employers With International Operations Can Learn From Secret Service Sex Scandal

By [Robin E. Shea](#) on April 20, 2012

"*Ai, ai . . . ai, ai . . .* have you ever danced in the tropics,

In that lazy, hazy, like

Kind of crazy, like

South American way?

"*Ai, ai . . . ai, ai . . .* have you ever kissed in the moonlight,

in the grand and glorious,

gay notorious*

South American way?"

*[*Those really are the words to the song.](#)*

Down South America Way, © Warner/Chappell Music, Inc., EMI Music Publishing.

Oh, those wild and crazy Secret Service agents. It's bad enough that they patronized ladies of the evening while they were on the presidential security detail to Colombia.

Gives a whole new meaning to the term "secret service," doesn't it?

But it's even worse that one of them allegedly promised a lovely young *señorita* named "[Dania \(last name unknown\)](#)" that he'd pay her \$800 USD . . . but then, after she'd acted [in reasonable reliance on his promise to her detriment](#), told her he was drunk when he promised her the \$800 and offered her \$30 instead.

The stupidity of THAT, my friends (if true), is astounding. And as we all know, the dispute about sums due and owing caused a row in the hotel lobby, which caused law enforcement authorities to be summoned, and next thing you know we have 11 Secret Service guys being placed out of service. One has already "retired," and one has been fired (and [reportedly plans to sue](#)). Another chose to resign. The other eight are still being investigated.

Employers with international operations tell me that this kind of thing is a real problem in two ways. First, we have the "Secret Service syndrome" - normally sober-minded Americans go to another country that is less . . . *Puritanical** than the U.S.A. and, next



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thing you know, they're wearing lampshades on their heads and engaging in other shenanigans that I am too delicate to recount here and that they'd never dream of engaging in here at home.

***DISCLAIMER:** Use of the adjective "Puritanical" is not intended as an endorsement of sexual harassment or other abuse, prostitution, or any other segment of the sex industry.

Second is the flip side -- I'll call it the "Dominique Strauss-Kahn syndrome." Foreign nationals from less . . . *Puritanical* countries come to the United States and think all the behavior that is acceptable (or at least winked at) at home is A-OK here, too -- like going to prostitutes, or kissing or pinching attractive female co-workers as a "compliment," or [succumbing to the irresistible charms of the hotel maid](#). (Actually, Strauss-Kahn is under investigation in Europe, now, too.)



Did you know that in many countries, [sexual harassment is not against the law](#), or [is a new concept](#)? *It's a fact!*



So if you have employees who do a lot of international travel as part of their jobs, or you have foreign nationals coming to work here, make sure they understand the risks of behaving badly, whether it's in the U.S. or somewhere else. Your harassment training should be tailored to your workforce, and if you're "international," you should make sure that your foreign employees understand how things work here (which they may honestly not know unless you tell them -- in my experience, folks from other countries are shocked to find out how . . . *Puritanical* we are here) and, for everybody, the risks of bad behavior to their families and their jobs.

I'd sure hate to be one of those 11 Secret Service agents having to come home and face the Missus. Not to mention the President of the United States. *Ugh.*



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