

Lawyer on bank case has international reach

BY CINDY KRISCHER
GOODMAN

cgoodman@herald.com

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. has tapped prominent Miami lawyer Leoncio de la Peña to lend his expertise in disposing of the assets of Hamilton Bank.

De la Peña's consulting firm, which includes an international banker, will advise the regulators on selling or collecting the bank's international loans and trade financing deals. The process likely will require hiring attorneys in various countries to help collect on the loans.

"We'll try to sell the good loans in packages to other banks," de la Peña said. "If we can not sell them, the government will keep them and collect on them."

De la Peña's Global Consulting Group is part of a team of consultants retained by the FDIC to assist in receivership and liquidation of Hamilton Bank. It will work closely with Allen C. Ewing, an investment firm in Jacksonville to sell the bank's assets.

De la Peña is a person Latin American investors might call when they run into trouble with U.S. brokerage houses. From his Brickell Key office, de la Peña says he has handled about 50 cases for investors against brokers in the past seven years. Most clients of his law firm, de la Peña & Bajandas, live outside the

United States. The roster includes some of the biggest banks, aviation companies and brokerage houses in Latin America.

De la Peña said he will use his contacts to generate international interest in Hamilton's loan portfolio.

A year ago, de la Peña, 41, teamed up with an international consultant and formed a separate company called Global Consulting Group. That company helps the law firm's clients with matters other than their legal needs such as strategic planning and investment advice. Ruben Gomez, an international banker and most recently former CEO of International Finance Bank in Miami, is running the company. Gomez had been director of the Americas for Banco Exterior España. Already Global Consulting helped one client, World Bank, with modifying banking regulations in Nicaragua.

Cuban born, de la Peña came to Miami in 1969 after spending five years in Spain. He's an active member of the Republican National Committee and visible in the community for his work with Voices for Children, a group to support court-appointed advocacy for abused and neglected children. De la Peña also serves on the board of BTS, a Fortune 500 company based in Spain that provides telecommunications service in Latin America and Asia.