

LatAm banks must match US anti-money laundering standards

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PM Latin American banks need to get closer to the anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing standards regulators impose on US banks if they want to continue to do business with the latter, David Schwartz, president of the Florida International Bankers Association (FIBA), told BNamericas. '9/11 changed everything... the focus on anti-money laundering compliance was heightened,' said Schwartz in a interview in Miami, where bankers gathered this week for Latin American banking Federation Felaban's annual assembly.

While it is true business relationships between Latin American and US banks date back decades, it is critical for Latin American financial institutions to update their knowledge on the issue and employ practical tools to comply with US laws and regulations, the executive said.

Compliance is more than a set of written rules, said Schwartz, who also serves as senior VP and manager of international risk mitigation at Regions Bank.

To attend to growing demand from the region's lenders on getting updated, FIBA and Florida International University college of business administration partnered last February to offer a senior compliance officer certification program, according to Schwartz.

The program allows for financial services industry members in the US, Latin America and the Caribbean to enroll in anti-money laundering compliance training and become certified in such practices, he said.

Florida-based trade association FIBA promotes international trade and finance in the state of Florida. Its membership includes around 80 financial institutions from 18 countries.