

Cuba Awaits Answers on Terror List and Banking Issues from U.S.



Havana, February 26 (RHC) — Cuba expects a response from the U.S. government regarding its inclusion on the so-called terror blacklist and its inability to open bank accounts in the U.S. for its diplomatic offices, a senior Cuban official told reporters on Wednesday.

This comes as the two countries are slated to begin the second round of talks on Friday to discuss the re-establishment of diplomatic relations.

While President Barack Obama has asked the State Department to review Havana's inclusion on the terrorism blacklist, Cuba's formal removal would "create the favorable context" for the two countries to once more have formal embassies in their respective capitals, said Gustavo Machín, Deputy Director for U.S. relations at Cuba's Foreign Ministry.

"How could we explain to the Cuban people, the American public and the rest of the world that the U.S. and Cuba have restored relations while Cuba remains on that list?" Machín said Wednesday morning at a news conference for Cuban and

international reporters.

Cuba's lead negotiator, Josefina Vidal, will meet Friday in Washington with Roberta Jacobson, the top U.S. diplomat for Latin America. Machín said that the Cuban side awaits answers to the issues put forward at the first round of talks. He stressed that these are issues that Cuba considers important for the creation of an adequate context to the re-establish diplomatic relations and the opening of embassies in both countries.

Still, Cuba cannot be fully removed from the State Department's list of terrorism-sponsoring nations — which includes Iran, Syria and Sudan — until a 45-day waiting period has elapsed, State Department sources say. U.S. lawmakers are supposed to review the president's decision in that period, but it does

not require congressional approval to take effect. The White House has reportedly not yet set the 45-day process in motion.

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