

Obama Hopes for U.S. Embassy in Havana before April Summit



Washington, March 3 (RHC) — U.S. President Barack Obama said on Monday that he hopes the United States will be able to open an embassy in Havana by the time of the Americas Summit in Panama in mid-April.

In an interview with Reuters, Obama also cautioned that it would take more time to fully establish normal relations with Cuba after more than a half-century rupture.

"My hope is that we will be able to open an embassy, and that some of the initial groundwork will have been laid" before the April 10-11 Summit of the Americas in Panama City, Obama said.

Washington and Havana announced on December 17th that they planned to restore diplomatic relations following 18 months of secret face-to-face talks.

Cuban and U.S. negotiating teams held a second round of talks in Washington on Friday on normalizing ties. Both sides said they had made progress, although they did not set a date for formal renewal of

diplomatic relations that the United States severed 54 years ago.

Josefina Vidal, head of the United States division of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, told state media on Sunday that Cuba is willing to restore diplomatic relations as soon as the Barack Obama administration declares its intention to take Cuba off a list of state sponsors of terrorism.

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