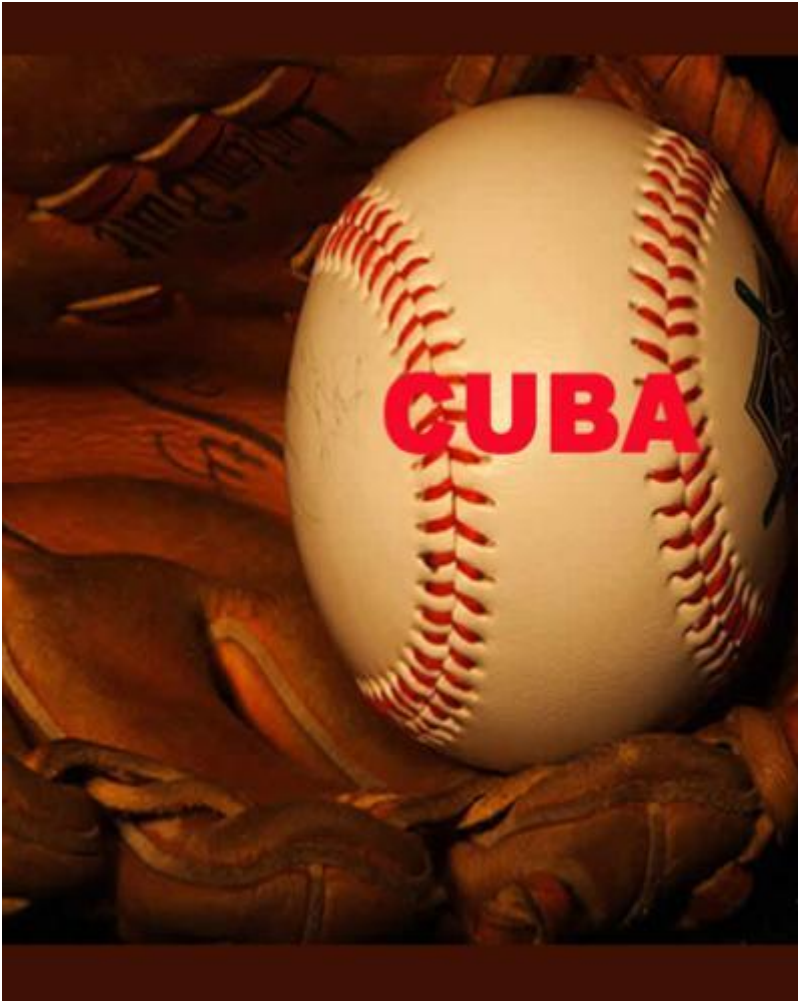


Cuba, MLB Still Far from Deal, Says Cuban Baseball Executive



Havana, Mar 17 (RHC) The Cuban Baseball Federation and Major League Baseball are far from reaching a deal on Cuban players signing up with US clubs, in spite of new regulations recently announced by Washington.

The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama issued new regulations on Tuesday that relax trade and travel restrictions with Cuba, including a provision that permits Cubans to earn salaries in the United States without having to sever ties with their homeland.

MLB and Cuban officials both want to normalize players signing, but such a deal remains unattainable as a result of the U.S. economic blockade. MLB is seeking special U.S. permission to sign up Cuban players so they no longer have to defect, but the Treasury Department has yet to make a ruling.

Higinio Velez, president of the Cuban Baseball Federation, told reporters that Cuba and MLB have yet to even begin negotiations.

"This is new, so we have to wait," Velez said. "It's an opening. We expect the procedure will be the same as for players in any part the world, as we have right now in several countries including Japan."

MLB's chief lawyer, Dan Halem, told Reuters the league was studying the latest U.S. regulations for their potential impact on signing Cuban players. "It will take some time for the Cuban Baseball Federation, MLB and the MLBPA (players union) to work through a complicated set of issues," he cautioned.

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