

Cuban and U.S. Representatives Begin Talks in Havana



Havana, January 21 (RHC)-- Cuban and U.S. government delegations began talks on Wednesday aimed at restoring diplomatic ties and discussing other issues of mutual interest.

The two days of meetings are the first since Cuban President Raul Castro and U.S. President Barack Obama announced on December 17th they had reached a historic breakthrough after 18 months of secret negotiations.

On immigration, Cuba has said it will push to end the Cuban Adjustment Act, a law that welcomes Cubans into the United States once they set foot on American soil, thus promoting people-trafficking and dangerous journeys across the Florida Straits on flimsy vessels.

A senior Cuban foreign ministry official on Tuesday drew a distinction between restoring diplomatic ties and the broader issue of normalizing relations. "Cuba isn't normalizing relations with the United States. Cuba is re-establishing diplomatic relations with the United States. The normalization of relations is a much longer process and much more complicated process," the official told reporters, speaking on condition of anonymity. The official said normal relations would require the United States to lift the

blockade, remove Cuba from its so-called terrorism sponsor list and stop subversive activities against the Cuban Revolution.

Wednesday's talks dealt with immigration issues. On Thursday -- the second day of talks -- the U.S. delegation will be led by Roberta Jacobson, the top U.S. diplomat for Latin America and the first U.S. assistant secretary of state to visit Cuba in 38 years.

The Cuban team is being led by Josefina Vidal, the foreign ministry's chief diplomat for U.S. affairs.

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