
US and Cuba to Hold 2nd Round of Talks to Restore Diplomatic Ties

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The United States and Cuba will conduct a second round of negotiations in Washington next week to restore full diplomatic ties.

"I can confirm that the talks will be held on the 27th here at the State Department - the 27th of February," US State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told reporters in Washington on Tuesday.

A delegation of US senators who concluded a four-day visit to Cuba on Tuesday made a similar announcement.

Democratic senators Claire McCaskill, Mark Warner and Amy Klobuchar made their first trip to Havana over the weekend in support of a legislation that Klobuchar is sponsoring to remove US trade embargo on Cuba.

"We look with hope and expectations to the meetings next week in Washington between the Cuban government and the American State Department to make progress," Warner told reporters in Havana on Tuesday.

US President Barack Obama announced on December 17 that Washington will start talks with Cuba to normalize diplomatic relations, marking the most significant shift in US foreign policy towards the communist country in over 50 years.

US Senator Marco Rubio and some other Republicans have criticized Obama for trying to restore relations with Cuba because they say it could provide Cuba with legitimacy and money while it continues with its alleged human rights violations.

Rubio has stressed that he and fellow party members would seek to slow or block Obama's moves towards normalizing Cuba ties.