

US Blockade Forces Cuban Interest Section in Washington to Close Consular Services



HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 26 (acn) The Cuban Interest Section in Washington announced the interruption of consular services beginning November 26 and till further notice, amidst the impossibility to have a financial institution willing to keep its bank accounts as a consequence of the US economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba.

A statement by the Cuban Interest Section in the US capital, cited by Cubadebate webpage, explains that despite countless contacts with the US Department of State and numerous banks, the office has been forced to close consular services.

The Cuban office explains that on July 12, the M & T Bank notified that it would not continue to offer its services to foreign diplomatic missions. The Bank gave the Cuban Interest Section and the islands permanent mission at the United Nations a limited period of time to finish relations and find a new bank.

But due to current restrictions derived from the US blockade against Cuba, the office has not been able to find another bank that keeps the bank accounts of the two diplomatic missions. For this reason, the Cuban Interest Section in Washington has been forced to suspend consular services as of November 26 till further notice, the statement explains and adds that the office will only attend to humanitarian issues and of other nature in a limited way.

The Cuban office has reiterated the US Department of State that the US government has the legal obligation to meet international conventions on services to be granted to diplomatic missions and consular offices to facilitate their appropriate work. The statement recalls the accord dated May 30, 1977, which set up the two interest sections both in Washington and Havana, in which both parties affirmed their commitment to international treaties that rule diplomatic and consular relations.

The Cuban office in Washington particularly regrets the inconveniences that this situation will have for Cuban and US citizens, due to the impossibility of the Consular Section to keep offering its services, which include the issuance of passports, visas, legalization of documents and others.

The statement concludes by saying that such inconveniences will have a negative impact on family visits, academic, cultural, educational, scientific and sports exchange between Cuba and the United States.

Washington's Blockade of Cuba Affects International Banking System

HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 28 (acn) The world banking system is having the direct and negative impact of the over-50-year US economic blockade of Cuba, said Cuban American lawyer Jose Pertierra while addressing the closing by the M and T of the account of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington as a result of the US siege of the island.

In a release this week the Cuban Interest Section announced its closing of consular services after the bank's measure, which joined other restrictive and hostile actions against Cuba.

Lawyer Pertierra said recalled that Credit Suisse was fined 536 million dollars by the US for crossing the line in the economic blockade against Cuba and some months back the Italian bank Intesa San Paolo was fined three million dollars by the US Government for conducting financial operations in which Cuba was involved.

London's Lloyds Bank is another of the victims of the US Government. For conducting normal bank operations in which Cuba participated, this well-known bank was fined 80 million dollars by Washington.

Having Cuba as a client is too risky and financially expensive to the world's banks as a result of the illegal US persecution of the Caribbean island's financial transactions, Pertierra said and noted that the forced closing of normal consular services by Cuban diplomatic offices in the

United States poses a tragedy for the Cuban family.

Cubans on both sides of the Florida Straight hope for normality. That means coming and going and gathering as families and friends, just as the Mexicans, Salvadoreans and the Irish do, just to mention a few nationalities, the noted lawyers added.

Washington Punishes Swiss Oil Company for Dealing with Cuba

HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 26 (acn) Washington fined Switzerland's Weatherford oil company a total of 252 million dollars for commercial operations with Cuba, Iran and Sudan, according to US authorities cited by international media.

An official release by the US Treasury, the punishment against Weatherford is due to some business deals with Cuba between 2005 and 2008 which involved oil equipment.

Cited by AFP news agency the release says that the Swiss company also exported technology and services calculated at 23 million dollars, aimed at Iranian oil fields and another group of materials and services was also exported to Sudan between 2005 and 2006 amounting to 296 thousand dollars.

The Swiss company was forced to pay 91 million dollars to the Treasury Department in what is considered the strongest fine imposed by that US entity to a non-financial company for violating the blockade of Cuba and sanctions on other countries unilaterally blacklisted by Washington.

Weatherford will also have to pay 87.2 million dollars to the Justice Department and 65.6 millions to the Securities and Exchange Commission, which regulates the market of assets.

The rest of the money charged, another eight million dollars, will be divided between the Department of Trade and the Attorney General's Office of Texas. Having violated the US

blockade of Cuba and sanctions on other countries has implied for Weatherford to submit itself the additional punishment of an audit to check its efforts aimed at abiding by the US policy of sanctions in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

President of Seychelles Holds Talks with Cuban Foreign Minister

The president of Seychelles James Michel stressed the contribution of Cuba to his country's health system, while meeting in the capital Victoria with Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez, who is on an official visit to that nation.

According to PL news agency, a Cuban cooperation brigade made up of 38 doctors and health and sport technicians is currently offering their services in that country.

President James Michel recalled his visit to Havana in 2009, where he took a first-hand look at the island's advancement in the health sector and he reiterated his government's rejection of the US economic blockade of Cuba.

Foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez also held talks in Victoria with his counterpart Jean-Paul Adam, and he was received by vice-president Danny Faure and by Parliament president Patrick Hermine.

The official visit by minister Rodriguez to Seychelles has favored bilateral exchange on different issues of common interest and other topics on the regional and international agenda, including the negative impact by climate change on the economy of small island nations.

Thousands Venezuelan Patients Treated in Cuba

HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 28 (acn) Some 58 thousand Venezuelan patients have received medical

treatment in Cuba during the past 13 years as a result of the Venezuela-Cuba integral medical treatment agreement.

The Coordinator of that binational medical attention programme, Johnny Ramos, underscored the humanist essence of this programme, based on Cuba's emphasis on high-quality preventive medicine.

"Cuba has opened its best medical centers and specialists to Venezuelan patients, who always travel to the Island for treatment accompanied by a relative", the Venezuelan expert said.

Cancer treatment, as well as neurological disorders, orthopedics , dermatology, cardiovascular diseases and persons with differing addictions are included among the Venezuelan patients sent to Island for specialized treatment, the Venezuelan official said.

Tourist Yachts Allowed to Stay in Cuba up to Five Years

HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 27 (acn) In a further effort to diversify tourist offers for foreign visitors, who pick the island as their holidays destination, the Cuban government authorized the stay in Cuban territory of tourist yachts up to five years, with the possibility to renew their licenses for more time.

The initiative was established by a government decree that rules the organization and operations of harbor and maritime services at the island's marinas.

The measure, which is also backed with resolutions issued by the ministries of Tourism, and Finance and Prices, is mandatory for providers and those who benefit with the new services in an effort to improve current arrangement related to the entrance and stay of boats.

And in order to increase competitiveness at Cuban marinas, the decree establishes a definition

of these facilities, with information on their planning activity, development and preservation in Cuban territory.

Some of the rules include that if the owner of a yacht leaves the island for a prolonged period of time, he must sign a contract with the Marina facilities to guarantee the custody and services of his boat.

The legal measure allows those interested in bringing their boats to Cuba to previously send the Tourism Ministry information on their ship, crew and passengers, which will facilitate access to Cuban territorial waters, according to a Xinhua report.

Environment-related regulations stipulate that during docking or anchoring no ship can undergo repairs, maintenance, cleaning or painting activities, while dumping wastes or polluting substances or articles on the water is strictly prohibited.

The government decree also establishes the performance and functions by a National Commission for Nautical Activities, which is in charge of implementing the policies relevant to the marinas in tune with the interests of authorities in the field.

In mid 2013, the Cuban Parliament passed the Law on Maritime, River and Lake Navigation, which regulates the general performance of this sector in Cuban territorial waters as well as all aspects related to merchant, fishing and recreational maritime activities.

Seychelles' President Thanks Cuba for Cooperation

Victoria, Nov 28 (Prensa Latina) President James Michel stressed the value of Cuban contributions to Seychelles' healthcare system, after receiving the Caribbean island's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez yesterday, on an official visit here.

Cuba has a collaborative brigade in this country comprised of 38 physicians, and health and sports technicians.

Michel recalled that during his visit to Havana in 2009, he could verify the Cuban progress in these spheres, and reiterated his government's opposition to the U.S. blockade against Cuba, the Cuban ambassador to Victoria, Orlando Alvarez, told Prensa Latina.

Rodriguez also held official talks with his Seychelles peer, Jean-Paul Adam, and was received by Vice President Danny Faure and the Speaker of Parliament, Patrick Hermine.

The visit of the chief Cuban diplomat has resulted in a rich exchange on many issues of bilateral interest as well as the regional and international agenda. The negative effects of climate change on small island economies were also discussed, Alvarez said.

Cuban Oil Refinery has Already Met its Output for 2013

CIENFUEGOS, Cuba, Nov 26 (acn).-- The oil refinery jointly operated by Venezuela and Cuba in the Southern Cuban Port City of Cienfuegos has already met its production quota for this year, with almost 19 million 700 thousand barrels of crude oil.

The refinery is the most important economic project installed in Cuba by the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America regional integration bloc.

Since its inauguration six years ago, it has produced 121.3 million barrels of oil.

The facility is the main economic project managed by ALBA in Cuba and was officially inaugurated on 21 December, 2007, during the Fourth Petrocaribe Summit, held in Cienfuegos in the presence of Bolivarian leader Hugo Chavez and Cuban President Raul Castro.

This important binational industry has also excelled in the savings of inputs, such as water, chemical substances, lubricants and fuel oil.

Plant efficiency has also increased and this year the operations team was able to improve the reduction of inputs and increase plant output, said engineer Humberto Padron, the refinery's manager.

The efficient operation of the refinery also contributes to the preservation of the environment in the huge bay of Cienfuegos, one of the largest on the Southern Cuban coast.

Padron also said that the installation of new equipment last year has contributed to further improving the quality of gasoline, diesel and other fuels and oils produced at the Cienfuegos refinery.

Guinean Culture Minister Visits OSPAAAL Headquarters in Cuba

Havana, Nov 26 (Prensa Latina) Guinean Culture Minister Ahmed Tidjane Cissé today visited the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia, and Latin America in the Cuban capital, in what became a solidarity meeting.

Cissé, who is on an official visit to Cuba on the invitation of Cuba Culture Minister Rafael Bernal, was received by OSPAAAL General Secretary Lourdes Cervantes, representatives of Puerto Rico and Syria, and members of the OSPAAAL executive secretariat.

In welcoming remarks, Cervantes emphasized the historic role played by Guinea in the African liberation struggle against colonialism, and the founding of OSPAAAL and its executive secretariat. Guinea is still a member of the secretariat.

Cervantes stressed the legacy of Guinea independence hero Amhed Sekou Toure (1922-1984), whom she described as one of the greatest leaders in African history and the Third World, and said his example was still present in the struggle the OSPAAAL continues to carries out for tri-continental solidarity.

On the other hand, Cisse acknowledged OSPAAAL "for its great work" in the liberation struggle of the Third World peoples and, particularly, its contribution to consolidating Guinea's independence

Cuba Provides Services for Latin American Visually Challenged

Havana, Nov 28 (Prensa Latina) Nearly 100 Latin American patients have received services at Cuba's National Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired, it was reported during the 7th Congress of the National Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, which ends Thursday in the Cuban capital.

Those 100 were part of more than 1,600 blind and visually impaired people who have been served at the center in the city of Bejucal, in the western province of Mayabeque, according to the association's president, Dr. Jose Blanch.

Blanch highlighted Cuba's achievements in integrating blind and visually impaired people into society with actions such as the Braille literacy campaign, which has benefited more than 4,000 people.

He also highlighted the creation of special schools in all regions of the nation, and continuing education for visually impaired Cubans, as evidenced by a growing number of university graduates in careers such as psychology, law, and physical rehabilitation, among other.

Meanwhile, during the final day of the Congress, the Latin American Union of the Blind will grant the Cuban association a special recognition for its achievements and contributions to other countries of the region.

Universities of Mexico and Cuba Sign Cooperation Agreements

HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 26 (acn) Mexico's Metropolitan Autonomous University and the University of Havana signed a series of cooperation accords during a ceremony attended by Mexican ambassador to Cuba Juan Jose Bremer.

The rector of the University of Havana Gustavo Cobreiro and of the Mexican higher education center Salvador Vega penned the documents on Monday, which stipulates the exchange of students both in regular and postgraduate courses, and that the subjects they approve should be accepted by the two universities.

A news release by the Mexican embassy in Havana explained that the accords reflect the willingness of cooperation shared by the two parties, the two governments and the two nations, according to notimex news agency.

The universities of Havana and Mexico committed themselves to exchange up to four students for a top period of one school year or three quarters and during one semester or two quarters at minimum.

The protocol stipulates that the subjects passed by the students during such periods of time will be recognized by the university of origin.

Cuba Manufactures its own 32 Inch Integrated Digital TV Receivers

HAVANA, Cuba, Nov 25 (acn).— A Cuban 32-inch screen digitally integrated TV set will be shown this coming Wednesday at the Twelfth Edition of the Technological Week event.

The new model of TV set is produced by the Electronic Industry Enterprise, a possibility opened by a close relationship with its Chinese developers .

The set is undergoing tests for its final registration in the industrial output record. The price of this set is very competitive and its high quality guarantees its successful entry in the market of electric appliances. The new equipment introduces several innovations, such as the reproduction of music, films, videos and photos, besides its normal reception of TV signals.

The Technological week event is focusing on the application of electronics to educational processes and to the sustainability of telecommunications in Cuba.