



U.S., CUBA TO HOLD TALKS ON NORMALIZING AIRLINE SERVICE: U.S. OFFICIAL

News / Airlines



The United States and Cuba plan to hold talks in Havana next week on normalizing [airline service](#), a U.S. official said on Tuesday, a step that could benefit U.S. carriers if the island becomes open to American tourism.

The talks will take place Sep. 28-29, the official said, as Washington and Havana inch toward normal relations after more than half a century of hostility that followed Cuba's 1959 revolution. The two nations restored diplomatic ties and reopened embassies this summer.

Next week's talks could be announced as early as Tuesday, the U.S. official said.

The United States unveiled new rules on Friday to ease trade, travel and investment restrictions with Cuba that will allow some U.S. companies to establish offices in Cuba, expand banking and Internet activities and eliminate limits on the amount of money that can be taken there, U.S.

officials said.

The changes, while significant, stop short of allowing cross-the-board investments by U.S. companies or general U.S. tourism, activities banned under the U.S. trade embargo that can only be formally removed by Congress. The majority Republicans are unlikely to do that anytime soon.

U.S. citizens can now visit the Communist-ruled island only for a dozen purposes, including cultural exchange, journalism and religious activities, but general vacations are barred. On Friday the Obama administration issued a new rule allowing authorized travelers to visit Cuba with their close relatives.

U.S. airlines cannot operate scheduled flights to Cuba. While the countries reached a formal air transport agreement in 1953, carriers have been limited to operating charter services for specialist tour groups since the 1959 revolution.

While major U.S. airlines have all expressed a desire to add Cuba to their route maps, American Airlines Group Inc and JetBlue Airways Corp might stand to benefit most. They have focused more on the Caribbean than their U.S. rivals, offering travelers many connecting opportunities.

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