

United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Senator LeMieux:

By way of follow up to recent conversations between officials of the Department of State and your staff, I want to memorialize the following points.

With respect to democracy programs in Cuba, the State Department will continue to encourage all Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to apply for FY 2009 projects. Every NGO will receive equal and fair treatment in the screening process. As we discussed and subject to privacy restrictions, we will keep you and your staff fully apprised in a timely manner and on an ongoing basis of the results of the deliberations related to the FY 2009 screening process and consult closely with you on the nature and objectives of U.S. democracy programs in Cuba.

With regard to events at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana (USINT), and further to our discussions, USINT will continue to include members of the dissident community in its major events. A broad cross-section of human rights defenders, dissidents, former political prisoners, independent librarians, independent writers and artists, and civil rights activists are routinely invited, and will continue to be invited, to events hosted by the USINT Chief of Mission and other members of the USINT staff and will continue to be standard guests for such occasions. USINT holds an array of events each year and includes representatives of such groups at all of them, including but not limited to the annual Fourth of July celebration, Black History Month events, televised U.S. national elections, debates and inaugurations, receptions for U.S.-based artists, state and local representatives, and American academic and cultural figures. In fact, on December 10, USINT hosted a 200-person event in honor of Human Rights Day. The event drew scores of Cuban dissidents and human rights defenders in addition to members of the international community, including members of the international press resident in Cuba. Also, it is worth noting that whenever a senior U.S. government official travels to Havana, USINT has done and will continue to do its utmost to ensure that members of the dissident community have an opportunity to interact meaningfully with that official.

With respect to Title IV sanctions, we also affirm that the Department continues to enforce these sanctions.

The Honorable
George S. LeMieux,
United States Senate

Also with regards to Cuba and pursuant to your request, I am enclosing a detailed analysis of Economic Support Fund (ESF) program expenditures made in Cuba during FY 2008.

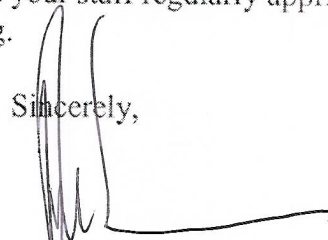
With respect to Honduras, in recent weeks, the Honduran people and President-elect Lobo have taken several important steps to launch a process of reconciliation in the country, including signaling a determination to form a unity government. The United States is encouraged by these events. As we have discussed, as we see progress by President-elect Lobo and the Honduran people in implementing the principles of the Tegucigalpa-San Jose Accords, the United States will take steps to normalize relations with Honduras.

Regarding our counternarcotics efforts in Honduras, the U.S. Embassy has maintained a level of cooperation with Honduran authorities that serves U.S. national security interests. As we have discussed, that cooperation will increase as progress continues on President-elect Lobo's national reconciliation efforts. Since July and almost without interruption, we have maintained a continuous counternarcotics radar feed to the Honduran National Police. The military is also now beginning to directly receive the radar feed through a newly formed Honduran Joint Intelligence Center.

I want to emphasize that U.S. policy in Honduras reflects a constant evaluation of facts on the ground. For that reason, on December 8, the State Department cancelled its travel alert for Honduras, in recognition of the improved security situation in the country. We will continue to shape our actions in Honduras to reflect the progress made inside the country at this pivotal time.

We will continue to keep you and your staff regularly apprised of how these and other efforts in the region are proceeding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arturo Valenzuela', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arturo Valenzuela
Assistant Secretary
Western Hemisphere Affairs