

Javits and Pell End Visit, Say Castro Seeks Better Ties

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By Dan Morgan

Washington Post Staff Writer

Two senators ended the highest-level American visit to Cuba in 13 years yesterday by declaring that Prime Minister Fidel Castro seems ready to strive for a "normalization of relations" with the United States.

Sens. Jacob K. Javits (R-N.Y.) and Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.) returned to Washington from Havana and immediately briefed members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the results of their trip, which included three hours of dining and talking with Castro Sunday night.

Sen. Gale W. McGee (D-Wyo.), a member of the committee, said that the two travelers had revealed "no surprises" from their trip. But he said that the trip had "opened up the possibility of (further) talks, and loosened the situation."

Before leaving for Miami in a chartered seaplane early Monday, the two senators told newsmen that subjects discussed with Castro included human rights of prisoners, separation of families, hardship of refugees, summary executions, and American property confiscated without compensation by the Communist regime.

"We believe that Premier Castro is interested in working toward better relations with the United States, I could say a normalization of relations, that is our impression," said Javits in a statement issued on behalf of both senators in Havana.

Pell said that the senators had taken strong exception to a harsh anti-American speech delivered by Castro over the weekend, while they and 29 reporters and photographers were in Cuba.

Among other things, the speech, delivered to thousands of Cubans, attacked President Ford's recent defense of Central Intelligence

Agency funding for the opposition to Chile's late Marxist President Salvador Allende.

The speech posed a potential embarrassment for the visitors, but Castro told the senators at a dinner in Havana's Revolutionary Palace that the remarks had been prepared long in advance of the setting of the date for the trip.

Diplomatic sources said yesterday that eventual "normalization" of relations between the two countries would have to include accepted principles of "mutual respect," which would presumably preclude such polemics.

However, both senators stressed in Havana and again in Washington that they had not begun the process of negotiation. Rather, they said, they had come to study, talk and report to their Senate colleagues.

According to McGee, both

sides had presented lists of steps which could be "unilaterally" taken by the other, without need for formal negotiations.

He said that the Cubans desire in this category "any kind" of signal from the United States that its own rigid posture may be growing more flexible.

A test of this will come in November when foreign ministers of the Organization of American States meet in Quito, Ecuador. The question of the OAS's economic sanctions against Cuba is expected to be raised. The official U.S. view is that it would take a two-thirds majority — 16 of the 23 voting states — to vacate these sanctions.

A principal aim of U.S. policy toward Cuba, if it is to receive congressional support, will be to reduce some of Havana's dependence on the Soviet Union, which has remained the country's chief economic supporter during the U.S.-backed trade embargo.

Following their three-hour meeting with Castro Sunday night, Javits and Pell said that "the ice has been broken."

Javits said Cuba feels wronged by the economic embargo. The senators said Castro did not raise the question of the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay. Pell described the meeting as "frank, warm and friendly."

No top Cuban party or state officials were on hand when the Americans departed yesterday morning, but congressional aides described the farewell by the Cuban hosts as warm.

The aides said that no toasts had been exchanged at the Sunday night dinner with Castro.