

U.S. Aides Say Cuba Negotiations May Begin Today

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 21 (UPI) — State Department officials said today that the United States expected to begin indirect negotiations with Cuba on a broad agreement to deal with week, possibly tomorrow.

The officials reported that authorities had proposed that the talks begin tomorrow and that the State Department had asked the Swiss Embassy here to tell its diplomats in Havana to proceed at their earliest convenience. The Swiss have responsibility for United States diplomatic contacts with Cuba.

The indirect exchanges will renew United States-Cuban negotiations of 1969 and 1970 on a possible hijacking accord, which became stalemated. Those earlier negotiations, like the negotiations that are to begin shortly, were carried on by Swiss diplomats in Havana.

The Cuban Government has become increasingly annoyed and concerned about the continuing hijackings from the United States to its territory.

In a diplomatic note dated Oct. 30 and in a Havana radio broadcast on Nov. 15, the Cuban Government signaled its desire to reopen negotiations with the United States.

Cuban Proposal Reported

It is understood that the Cuban Foreign Ministry has already developed a number of draft proposals for consideration by the United States.

Swiss diplomats will receive these proposals and forward them to Washington. The Swiss diplomats will also seek any necessary clarifications and serve as a channel to transmit American proposals or counter-proposals.

The negotiations in 1969 and 1970 broke down over Cuban insistence that any agreement to return American hijackers to the United States should be coupled with an American commitment to return to Cuba persons who flee illegally to the United States. In the last six years, United States officials

said, 3,000 Cubans have fled to the United States in small boats and rafts to seek political asylum.

The State Department spokesman, Charles W. Bray 3d, announced yesterday that Cuban authorities had declined to return three hijackers who forced a Southern Airways jetliner to land in Havana on Nov. 12. The Cubans said that the hijackers could not be returned because they were to be tried in Cuba "on certain charges, including extortion in various forms."

Officials here explained that the Cuban extortion charge involved the hijackers' efforts to obtain jet fuel through force.

"We have noted the Cuban Government's statement of its intention to bring the hijackers of the Southern Airlines plane before a Cuban court for trial and hope that this step will serve to deter others in the American hijacking community," Mr. Bray said.