

CUBA AND U.S. SAY THEY SEEK ACCORD TO CURB HIJACKING

Declare That Negotiations
Can Be Conducted Through
the Swiss Government

BROADCAST BY HAVANA

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Washington Reacts Publicly
to Radio Statement After
Private Exchanges

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 15—

Cuba and the United States expressed a desire today to negotiate an agreement to curb the hijacking of airliners.

Both Governments said in public statements that such negotiations should be conducted through the Swiss Government, which represents United States interests in Cuba. But a Nixon Administration official made a point of saying tonight that the United States would be ready to enter direct talks if the Cubans were willing.

The public exchanges today between Havana and Washington followed two hijackings of American airliners to Cuba in the last two weeks and were the result of a series of private communications between the two Governments conducted through Swiss diplomats.

Broadcast by Havana

The Cuban Government's statement, broadcast this morning by the Havana radio, called for a "broad agreement" with the United States to curb all forms of hijacking and of violence affecting the two countries, meaning air and sea piracy and armed attacks against Cuba by exiles.

Shortly afterward, the State Department spokesman, Charles W. Broy 3d, unaware of the Cuban broadcast, said at his regular news briefing: "We have the impression that there may now be a basis for reopening discussions on the hijacking issue with the Cubans."

Later in the day, after the Cuban declaration had been studied, the State Department issued a second statement saying, "This broadcast would seem to confirm that impression and to the extent it does so, we are gratified."

"We certainly will follow up to see whether we are justified in our continuous hope that an exchange of views now has a better chance than before to lead to an understanding," the State Department said.

Cuban Position Outlined

The Cuban declaration, which was broadcast in Spanish, said: "If the United States Government so desires, demarches leading to the aforementioned agreement on measures to be taken regarding the hijacking of planes and vessels and illegal entries and exits between the territories of the two countries can be undertaken through the mission representing its interests in Cuba — the Swiss Embassy."

The Cuban statement added: "On succinctly stating its position on these problems, the

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means and the practical way to resolve them, Cuba expects to learn the position of the United States in this matter."

The State Department acted within hours to communicate publicly its positive reaction to the Cuban proposal as it issued its second statement of the day on the subject.

Cuba said she wanted to negotiate "without delay" if Washington showed "equal willingness and interest."

"The Cuban Government affirms," the statement said, "that it has absolutely no interest, nor does it desire in any way, that Cuban territory be used as a refuge by persons responsible for common criminal acts that occur in any part of the United States territory. The Cuban Government has no interest whatever in promoting hijackings of airplanes or ships, or illegal entries and exits between the two countries."

State Department officials said that American views had been forwarded to Havana during the day in a note sent through the Swiss Government.

A significant sign of Cuban interest in an antihijacking agreement came in a note Oct. 29 signed by Raúl Roa García, the Cuban Foreign Minister, confirming the arrest of three men who had hijacked an Eastern Airlines 727 jetliner after allegedly committing three murders in the United States.

'Appreciation' Voiced

The note, which was not made public, reportedly conveyed Cuban interest in a form of negotiations toward an accord on hijackings as well as on what Havana regards as hostile acts emanating from the United States. At the time United States officials thought it significant that Mr. Roa had signed the note.

The next step was Cuba's unusual degree of cooperation with Southern Airways last weekend when three fugitives from the United States hijacked a DC-9 to Havana with a full crew, 27 passengers and \$2-million in ransom money.

On Monday, the State Department went out of its way to express "appreciation" to Cuba for her cooperation in dealing with this hijacking. In the last two days, officials said, private notes were exchanged between Havana and Washington through the Swiss.