United States Department of State

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs

Washington, D.C. 20520-6258

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SEP 28 2009
TEXAS DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

Todd Staples
Commissioner
Texas Department of Agriculture
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Mr. Staples:

Thank you for your letter to President Obama regarding your interest in adding a Texas airport to the list of authorized ports to service U.S.-Cuba direct flights and your suggestions regarding travel for educational and trade opportunities. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the President and regret the delay in responding to your letter.

We appreciate your interest in establishing additional avenues to facilitate increased air traffic that may result from the President's decision to ease restrictions on family travel to Cuba. The Air Commerce Regulations currently limit ports of entry or departure to Miami International Airport, Miami, Florida, John F. Kennedy International Airport, Jamaica, New York, and the Los Angeles International Airport, Los Angeles, California. Requests to amend the Air Commerce Regulations involve a broad range of policy, security, and technical issues and are therefore evaluated at an interagency level by the Department of State, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of Commerce, among others. Some airports have expressed their interest in offering direct charter flights between the U.S. and Cuba and we have taken note of these requests.

The new regulations published on September 3, 2009, by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Department of the Treasury contain a general license authorizing individuals regularly employed by a producer or distributor, or by an entity duly appointed to represent such a producer or distributor, to engage in certain travel-related transactions in connection with the commercial marketing, sales negotiation, accompanied delivery, or

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servicing of agricultural commodities, medicine, or medical devices that appear consistent with the Department of Commerce's export licensing policy. A specific license from OFAC is no longer required to engage in these transactions. Travel to Cuba for educational purposes continues to be permitted pursuant to specific licenses for students attending semester-length exchange programs and meeting other requirements available from OFAC. For additional information, you may wish to review OFAC's website at www.treas.gov/ofac.

The administration continues to review developments in Cuba and will look for opportunities to advance the broad range of our national interests and to support the desire of the Cuban people to live in freedom. We will remain mindful of the concerns expressed in your letter as we weigh options for moving forward in our relations with Cuba.

Please feel free to contact us on this or any matter of concern to you.

Sincerely,

Christopher W. Webster

Christopher W. Webster
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary