

US, Cuba in talks to finalise re-establishing embassies

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Many differences appeared close to being resolved.

The top US diplomat for Latin America, Roberta Jacobson, was meeting with her Cuban counterpart, Josefina Vidal, at the State Department, though officials suggested a breakthrough was unlikely.

The talks come as two of the biggest obstacles to the restoration of US-Cuban diplomatic relations are being removed.

Cuba will come off the US state sponsor of terrorism list on May 29.

Also, the US says Cuba's Interests Section in Washington has established a relationship with a US-based bank, meaning it won't have to operate on cash anymore.

Other issues remain. The US is still seeking to ensure its diplomats can travel throughout Cuba and meet with dissidents without restrictions.

In a symbolic show of closer US-Cuban ties, 10 Cuban journalists attended Thursday's White House briefing and press secretary Josh Earnest offered the final question to one of the reporters. A woman who identified her news organization as Cuban National Television took up the opportunity.

Cuban President Raul Castro recently complained about US programs for training Cuban

journalists, calling them an "illegal" infringement on Cuba's sovereignty. The State Department says it maintains such democracy programs in "restrictive environments" around the world.

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