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March 24, 2016

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**RNC organizers look for riot gear; what about DNC in Philly?**



**BCAP offices will be closed Good Friday, March 25**

When President Barack Obama was working secretly to restore diplomatic and business relations with Cuba two years ago, he got some help from an unlikely place.

Google Executive Chairman Eric Schmidt and other company executives, with encouragement from the White House, traveled to Havana in June 2014 to talk with the Cuban government about the benefits of Internet access. When he returned, Mr. Schmidt called for an end to the trade embargo.

The White House didn't tell Google, now a unit of Alphabet Inc., about the secret negotiations with Cuba. But by the time Mr. Obama announced that December the U.S. would restore diplomatic ties, Google had established a toehold in the island nation by rolling out versions of its popular search engine and other Internet offerings.

On Monday, during the first full day of Mr. Obama's historic trip to Havana, the president announced that Google had reached a deal to open a temporary demonstration project in Havana to showcase some of its Internet products. "We hope to have the chance to offer more services to the Cuban people in the future," said Brett Perlmutter, a Google executive who traveled to Cuba this week, in a blog post after the announcement.

During the Obama presidency, Google's foreign interests have frequently aligned with those of the administration. Google's visit to Havana helped the White House familiarize the Cuban government with U.S. companies and the benefits of the Internet.

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Mr. Obama's effort to lift the embargo has begun opening for Google a potential new market of more than 10 million customers.

Many U.S. businesses, including some of Google's competitors, are working hard to take advantage of new opportunities in Cuba. It isn't unusual for U.S. corporations to work with the State Department to secure big business deals abroad, or to lobby the Commerce Department to negotiate trade pacts that open new markets. Google says it never lobbied the administration to end the embargo. What makes Google's efforts around the globe unusual is the involvement of the company and its executives in places where the State Department faces tough challenges,

including North Korea, Iraq and Cuba. That stems from Google's professed interest in promoting Internet access as a way to give people around the globe, especially in repressive regimes, access to new ideas and information.

A State Department spokesman said the department "engages with many U.S. companies, as appropriate, to ensure we are advancing U.S. economic interests around the world," and that its relationship with Google was no different. Roughly one-third of the world's population has access to the Internet. The remainder is a potential market for Google's Internet and advertising business.

The U.S. government believes that providing people with Internet access will help promote democracy around the world by enhancing communication and exposing people to American-style enterprise and commerce. Nevertheless, it hasn't always welcomed Google's efforts. The State Department, for example, said a 2013 visit by Google executives to North Korea was "not a great idea."

Some unusual theories have emerged overseas about Google's intentions and government ties. In Cuba, after Mr. Schmidt's June 2014 visit to Havana, a professor at a university visited by the Google executives was quoted by a state-run publication saying that "it wasn't Google's technical wing that came; it was the political wing, which is an extension of the U.S. State Department."

A Communist Party newspaper in China has called Google the new opium, writing that "in the Internet age, Google uses its monopoly of Internet information searches to sell American values and assist America in building its hegemony." The State Department spokesman said that the "suggestion that any private company is an extension of the U.S. State Department reveals a fundamental lack of understanding of how a free-market democracy functions."

Google has a substantial presence in Washington, and its ties to the Obama administration are extensive. Google employees have been big contributors to Mr. Obama's campaigns and is one of the top corporate spenders on lobbying, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics. An analysis of White House visitor logs shows that Google lobbyists visit more frequently than many of its rivals. Many former Google employees currently work in the administration.

Google's efforts in Cuba began through a unit, called Jigsaw, that builds technology "to protect vulnerable populations and defend against the world's most challenging security threats," according to the company's website. It is run by a former State Department official, 34-year old Jared Cohen, whose career has straddled Google and Washington.

When Mr. Cohen was working at State under Hillary Clinton, he joined a delegation to Iraq that included Mr. Schmidt, then Google's chief executive, and other executives from tech companies. Google later announced a partnership with the Iraqi government to start the country's first YouTube channel. The

company also helped digitize the collection at Iraq's National Museum. Mr. Cohen helped draft the State Department's "21st-Century Statecraft" Initiative, which called for using social media and digital technology to achieve diplomatic goals. In January 2010, Mr. Cohen arranged for Mrs. Clinton to host a dinner at the State Department for Mr. Schmidt and other tech executives to discuss technology and diplomacy.

The next month, Mr. Cohen and a colleague, Alec Ross, flew to Google's headquarters for a public discussion with Mr. Schmidt. "I like to think of Alec and Jared as our representatives to the government," Mr. Schmidt said during the session. "We consider them some of the best friends of Google." Messrs. Cohen and Ross declined to comment.

On Dec. 17, 2014, after 18 months of secret talks, Mr. Obama announced the moves to normalize relations with Cuba. A day after the announcement, Jeffrey Zients, a top economic adviser to the president and head of the National Economic Council, said that normalizing relations with Cuba would provide some "targeted economic opportunities for U.S. companies," including Internet and tech firms. Last September, the Treasury Department unveiled a series of new rules designed to help guide U.S. companies in doing business with Cuba.

They allowed Google and other Internet companies, for the first time, to hire Cubans to help develop software applications. They also enabled Internet companies to export various telecommunications equipment, including Wi-Fi routers, to Cuba. In talks with Cuban government officials, Google has offered to do what it has done in other countries, such as archive the national library on the Web, create detailed online maps of the country and build a broadband Internet network. So far, no agreements have been reached. The Cuban government regards the nation's telecommunications network as a critical part of national security.

In Monday's announcement, Google said it reached a deal to open a temporary demonstration project at an art studio in Havana to allow up to 40 Cubans at a time to use computers with high-speed connections to access the Internet. "We're also exploring additional possibilities around increasing and improving Internet access, but they're at early stages," said Mr. Perlmutter, the Google executive who traveled to Cuba, in his blog post. "We've always been very open about the fact that we want to make available as many of our products as possible throughout the world," he wrote, "because we believe access to information and technology can improve lives." – *Wall Street Journal*

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The U.S. Federal Communications Commission is not expected to make a decision this week on Charter Communications Inc's planned acquisition of Time Warner Cable Inc, sources briefed on the matter said on Wednesday. Charter said in May that it would buy Time Warner Cable in a \$56 billion (39.6 billion pounds) cash-and-stock deal that would make it the No. 2 U.S. Internet and cable company after Comcast Corp. Kim Hart, an FCC

spokeswoman, declined to comment. "We continue to work productively with regulators and look forward to obtaining approval soon," Charter spokesman Justin Venech said.

Should the deal team at the FCC and the companies reach an agreement on conditions for approving the merger, the next step would be for FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler to circulate a proposed order approving the transaction. Time Warner Cable declined to comment. Shareholders of both companies and most U.S. states have approved the deal.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that Wheeler is likely to circulate a draft order approving the deal, citing people familiar with the matter. The order would levy some conditions on the deal, such as preventing Charter from including clauses in pay-TV contracts that limit a content company's ability to offer its programming online or to new entrants, the newspaper reported. An informal 180-day FCC "shot clock" is set to expire on Friday, but the agency says on its website that ensuring any deal is in the public interest takes precedence over the informal timeline. – **Reuters**

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Time Warner Cable says it is dropping the price of the Los Angeles Dodgers' sports channel, in the hopes that other distributors will sign on after a long and contentious dispute. But so far there's no telling whether the newly floated price will satisfy holdouts like satellite provider DirecTV.

Here are the numbers behind the dispute: Time Warner Cable had originally offered the channel at a rate of \$4.90 a month per subscriber home, according to research firm SNL Kagan. DirecTV and others balked at the price, however, saying it was too steep. As an olive branch, Time Warner said this week it would reduce its carriage fee. It is now asking for a rate of \$3.50, **a discount of 30%**.

Not wanting to tip its hand, DirecTV has not publicly said how much it would be willing to pay for the network, dubbed SportsNet LA. The company has also yet to comment on Time Warner's most recent offer. Meanwhile, Time Warner has already said it doesn't expect any new deals before the start of the season, beginning April 4.

The \$3.50 rate may still prove too high, especially considering the offer's big catch: It only lasts one year, covering the upcoming Major League Baseball season. Still, it would not be the most expensive regional sports network in the country by a long shot. That honor goes to the YES Network in New York, which carries the Yankees games. That channel costs more than \$5 a month per subscriber, according to SNL Kagan. – **Los Angeles Times; meanwhile, LA's mayor is encouraged**