

Talking Points
Ambassador D. Brent Hardt
Open Skies Agreement with the Co-operative Republic of Guyana
Monday, March 25, 2013, 10:00am
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Honorable Minister of Public Works Robeson Benn,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I am very pleased that today the United States and Guyana have signed an agreement establishing an Open Skies air transportation relationship between our countries. The United States has over 100 Open Skies partners around the world and we warmly welcome Guyana as the newest member of this vital international partnership.
- Before today, U.S.-Guyana aviation relations had been governed by the 1946 Air Transport Agreement between the United States and the United Kingdom.
- The Open Skies agreement, which enters into force upon signature, establishes a liberalized aviation relationship that permits unrestricted air service by the airlines of both countries.
- It eliminates restrictions on how often carriers fly, the kind of aircraft they may use, and the prices they charge. It facilitates transportation, trade, and tourism between our two countries, and demonstrates our shared commitment to an open, competitive, market-based international economic system.
- All of this will help to open markets, create new jobs, and make it easier for people to travel, interact, share information, and build businesses together.
- The Guyanese Diaspora, with its extensive links of family and friendships, is likely to be one of the primary beneficiaries of this agreement, given that they make up such a significant element of the expanding travel between Guyana and the United States.

- As Guyana celebrates 100 years of civil aviation, we are pleased that this agreement forms part of that celebration. I believe it signals a promising start for the second century of civil aviation in Guyana.
- The United States proudly remembers it was a German-American pilot, George Schmidt, who first took off from Georgetown in 1913 using the Bel Air Park race course. In 1934, Dr. Gordon Williams, Guyana's official geologist took the first aerial photos of Kaitour Falls in a Wasp Ireland seaplane piloted by an American Pilot, Arthur Williams.
- Several airfields in Guyana, including Cheddi Jagan International Airport, originally called Atkinson Field, began as a U.S. army airstrip as part of our joint allied efforts in WWII carrying supplies to Africa and Europe.
- I would like to thank both delegations for their diligent work over the last few months to reach this important moment. Guyana is a valued and close partner of the United States and we are excited for the opportunity to expand and further develop that partnership.
- For at the end of the day, this agreement is about deepening relationships between people. The United States is a big believer in people-to-people diplomacy, and this Open Skies agreement helps facilitate such personal ties. This is what we call citizen diplomacy, and it is one of the key ways Guyana and the United States can together meet the challenges of the 21st century. Building a continuous airborne corridor of prosperity around the world is one of the best ways to achieve this goal.

Q: Benefits from agreement?

- For too long, restrictive agreements between governments cut off many potential connections. They kept airlines from entering certain markets. They forced shipping companies to fly inefficient routes with half-empty airplanes. And, by stifling competition, they kept air fares artificially high.
- That's why the Department of State and Department of Transportation negotiated the first Open Skies Agreement back in 1992 with The Netherlands. Today, we have agreements with countries in every region of the world, from major economies, such as Japan, Canada and the European

Union, to smaller but equally important countries such as Suriname and Guyana. Within the Caribbean, Guyana joins Aruba, the Netherlands Antilles, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and St. Kitts as Open Skies partners. We look forward to expanding these partnerships around the world.

- Open Skies agreements have powerful benefits – fewer government restrictions, more competition, more jobs in the air and on the ground; more people trading, exchanging and interacting; cheaper flights, more tourists, new routes to new cities.