

Cuban government restores electricity

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WASHINGTON - The State Department Tuesday said the Cuban government has restored electricity to the U.S. diplomatic mission in Havana, ending a one-week cut-off that triggered Washington complaints and strong Cuban denials of a deliberate power cut.

State Department spokesman Eric Watnik confirmed the restoration of electricity in an email to the Miami Herald. The U.S. Interests Section in Havana had been using back-up generators and had operated normally. U.S. officials also complained of water shortages and other harassments.

An editorial today in Cuba's Granma newspaper said the government there "categorically denies" the accusations that it had deliberately cut off electricity and water to the American diplomatic mission in Havana.

The Communist Party newspaper blasted the U.S. government and El Nuevo Herald, which first reported the news, as "brazen liars."

The U.S. State Department Monday said the Cuban government had intentionally cut off electricity to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana June 5. The mission -- not quite an embassy because the two nations do not have formal diplomatic relations -- has continued working with emergency generators.

The Cuban government fired back, saying the 13,000-volt underground electrical circuit that serves the Interests Section broke and is under repairs. Heavy rains have not helped, the paper said.

"You'll excuse me if I don't take that explanation at face value," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said today, noting that in Cuba the power company is controlled by the government.

"It's the only building or compound on the block that doesn't have power," McCormack said, "and we did pay our power bill."

Granma noted that the U.S. Interests Section hasn't had any trouble powering up its electronic billboard sign that displays "insulting" messages critical of the Cuban system.

"That shows that installation hasn't lacked even a watt of electricity," Granma said, noting that each time the American diplomats have complained of a lack of water, workers have responded.