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Irony? In 1994, Minnesota-Based Carlson Companies Led U.S. Businesses In Interest Towards Cuba. In 2021, Its CWT- European Parliament Brussels (EPB) Refuses To Provide Travel Services Related To Cuba.

“This clearly raises the question of how the European Parliament could have chosen an agency, which is restricted in its activities by foreign legislation.... With regard to the current contract with CWT, the delegation wishes to examine whether a culpa in eligendo (negligence in choice of contractor) was committed.” (9/9/2021)

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Brussels, Belgium
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MEPs' Cuba trip foiled by US embargo

European Parliament's in-house travel agency is paid a monthly management fee of €157,082, according to 2018 budget report

By Nikolaj Nielsen

The European Parliament's in-house travel agency, CWT Global, is a US owned-company and therefore will not be able to book MEP flights to Cuba - because of the American embargo against Havana. [Since 2017, CWT has served the European Parliament.]. This clearly raises the question of how the European Parliament could have chosen an agency, which is restricted in its activities by foreign legislation," said Tilly Metz, a Green MEP from Luxembourg, in a recent letter sent to European Parliament president David Sassoli. The letter comes ahead of a European Parliament resolution on Cuba this week, and amid a wider discussion on EU strategic autonomy on the global stage. Metz chairs the European Parliament's delegation to Central America (DCAM), which had over the summer requested a September mission to Cuba. But CWT then refused to book the flights, citing US sanctions, says Metz. The letter came as leaders of the parliament's political groups, known as the Conference of Presidents, approved the delegation's mission to Cuba. The issue came to light after the delegation's secretariat had asked CWT to provide quotes for flights to Cuba.

"To our surprise however, the travel agency could not provide a quote because, as a US-owned company, it has to respect the US embargo against Cuba," said Metz, in her letter. She says the US embargo also apply to other countries like Iran - tossing a possible spanner into other future MEP visits. Metz said CWT had to instead outsource the flights to another agency, leading to delays. CWT Global itself has yet to respond for a comment. It won a travel agency tender for both the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman. A 2018 European Parliament budget report says the firm is paid a monthly management fee of €157,082 and employed 37 staff. For its part, the EU opposes the US blockade of Cuba but also condemned Havana's crackdown against July protests. DCAM's vice-chairs are German centre-right MEP Jens Gieseke and Spanish liberal Javier Nart. Both are said to be unhappy about the US sanctions on the travel agency and had agreed to have DCAM send the letter to Sassoli.

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USA TODAY
27 December 1994
Arlington, Virginia

CUBA SEEKS PARTNERS- U.S. firms ready to tap opportunity

By Micheline Maynard

CUBA: OPEN FOR BUSINESS; See info boxes at end of text; See related stories: 02B, 06B

(excerpts) HAVANA - Carlson, the Radisson hotel/restaurant powerhouse, wants to open a TGI Friday's restaurant in Havana, restore a historic hotel and build a lavish resort on one of Cuba's 300 pristine beaches... Peter Blyth, executive vice president of Minneapolis-based Carlson, thinks Cuba will quickly become U.S. travelers' top destination in the Caribbean once the embargo is lifted... Blyth, who has lobbied on Capitol Hill for the USA to open trade with Cuba, says the time is right. "There is tremendous potential out there," he says. "And there's nobody in a better position than (U.S. companies) to take advantage of it."

Minnetonka, Minnesota-based **CWT US, LLC** (formerly Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Inc.) (2020 revenues approximately US\$1.5 billion). Founded as Gold Bond Stamps in 1938, the company became Carlson Companies in 1973. Diemen, Netherlands-based **CWT Global B.V.** (2020 transaction volume approximately US\$24.4 billion) was created in 2006.

- 1994- Carlson Companies, Inc. of Minneapolis and the Paris-based Accor Group combine the business travel interests of their respective companies, Carlson Travel Network and Wagonlit Travel, under the name Carlson Wagonlit Travel.
- 1997- Carlson Travel Network in the United States and Wagonlit Travel in Europe merge to form the Carlson Wagonlit Travel network for business travel.
- 2006- A change in CWT's shareholding structure also occurs in August: Carlson and One Equity Partners (OEP) acquire Accor's 50% stake in CWT. Carlson becomes majority shareholder with 55% of CWT shares, while OEP holds the remaining 45%.
- 2014- In June, Carlson enters into a definitive agreement with JP MorganChase to acquire full ownership of CWT.

"CWT is a Business-to-Business-for-Employees (B2B4E) travel management platform. Companies and governments rely on us to keep their people connected – anywhere, anytime, anyhow. Across six continents, we provide their employees with innovative technology and an efficient, safe and secure travel experience backed by our three core promises: to simplify corporate travel, to connect to unlock possibilities, and to move forward, together."

From Moody's Investors Service: *"Formed in 1997, Carlson Travel is a leading global business travel management company (TMC), serving corporations of all sizes as well as government institutions around the world. In 2019 CWT reported net revenues of \$1.5 billion. Carlson Travel operates in nearly 145 countries and territories worldwide, with around 16,000 employees in its wholly owned operations. The company provides the following services: (i) Corporate Traveler Services, providing both online and full-service offline travel bookings for corporate and government clients; (ii) Meetings & Events Services, assisting clients to create and manage meetings and events on a cost effective basis; and (iii) Roomit hotel distribution services, providing a comprehensive hotel inventory and booking solution for clients and their business travelers, as well as distribution platform for over 800,000 hotels."*