



September 25, 2015.

Mrs. Roberta Jacobson  
Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Assistant Secretary:

On behalf of the governments of Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, we wish to express our deep concern regarding the potential impact of regulations being planned by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (“FDA”) with respect to premium cigars, and the challenges faced by the premium cigar industry, in each of our respective countries.

The implementation of the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (“Act”) by the FDA is of particular concern to cigar manufacturers in Honduras, Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic since the FDA announced its intent to regulate cigars via the FDA’s Center for Tobacco Products, and with the issuance of proposed regulations on April 25, 2014.

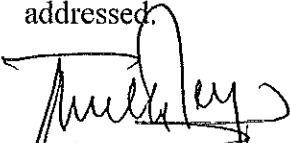
Based upon the Deeming Regulation document, we would encourage the Administration to pursue the “Option 2” course of action, and grant an exemption to premium cigars that meet the prescribed definition of ‘premium,’ though we have concerns regarding the expectation that all such cigars carry of \$10 price point, as many great cigars from our region sell for less, yet meet the remaining points of the definition.

Regulating premium cigars as if they were cigarettes and smokeless tobacco ignores the fundamental differences between premium cigars and other tobacco products. Among other reasons why premium cigars should be afforded different regulatory treatment from cigarettes and smokeless tobacco are that premium cigars are artisan products, made from 100% tobacco enjoyed by adults, not children. Cigars do not meet the Congressional intent of the Act, in that they are not chemically addictive, nor available to America’s youth.

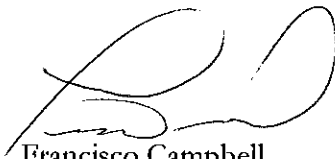
Some of the regulations that are be proposed by the agency (pre-market approval, ban on samples, new user fees, etc.) would prove disastrous to the centuries old cigar industry that provide over 300,000 jobs among our three nations, and represents millions of dollars in export revenue. No regulatory measure should threaten such jobs, and hence raise the specter of political and economic consequences within our region. Furthermore, FDA regulation of premium cigars would harm many of the small business owners in the United States that derive their livelihoods from these prestigious products.

As testament to our feelings on this issue, Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate have spoken in a very bipartisan manner through legislation that was filed, which would protect these craft products of our respective nations – The Traditional Cigar Manufacturing and Small Business Jobs Preservation Act. Many other Members of Congress have written the FDA, with our shared thoughts on this matter. This message from the House and Senate serves to echo our deep concern about the direction and intentions of the FDA.


We hope you will take our thoughts and concern into consideration as this issue is addressed.



Jorge Alberto Milla Reyes  
Ambassador of Honduras



Francisco Campbell  
Ambassador of Nicaragua



Jose Tomás Perez  
Ambassador of the Dominican Republic