American Airlines says it will continue expanding flights to Cuba

Havana, May 23 (RHC)-- American Airlines, the leading international carrier serving Cuba, said on Wednesday that it intends to offer additional flights to the island despite moves by the United States to tighten its economic blockade and further restrict travel between the two countries.

"The level of the impact is being studied, but our focus at this moment is to wager on the Cuban market in the long term and to continue our operations, which continue growing," AA's operations director in Cuba, Ramon Jimenez, told EFE in Havana.

Jimenez represented Texas-based AA at Cuba Aviation Day, an event organized by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

AA began service this month between Miami and the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba and plans in June to add a second flight linking the Magic City to Santa Clara, the executive said.

In July, AA is scheduled to increase the number of daily flights between Miami and Havana from five to six, Jimenez said.

IATA's regional vice president for the Americas, Peter Cerda, told EFE that his organization expects air travel to Cuba to "more than triple" over the next two decades.

Forty-six airlines operate from 13 airports in Cuba, transporting 9.6 million passengers annually aboard 72,000 flights, with connections to 44 destinations in 26 countries, according to IATA figures.

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