

Burma Ruby Task Force Advisory



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While we welcome the news that the that the Obama Administration has announced their intention to lift all financial and trade sanctions with respect to Burma (Myanmar) we must caution members of the United States Jewelry industry that the importation of rubies and jade from Burma is **still restricted until President Obama signs the Executive Order lifting the bans**. The Administration has expressed its intention to remove the restrictions but there are procedural steps necessary to put the order into effect. As with this announcement, we will inform the industry as soon as the Executive Order has been signed.

Below are points of reason and explanation as to why the AGTA Mission to Myanmar is as critical now that sanction removal has been made as they were before.

First both the US State Department and Elected Representatives on Capitol Hill were aware of and fully supported our mission. Cancelling the trip as a result of the announcement would have been very poorly received by all. The general feeling on Capitol Hill and the State Department is that AGTA/JA going representing the interests of the US Jewelry Sector is vital and the timing is perfect - to the point that it could not have been better scripted. The fact that a commitment for removal of sanctions has already been made removes the appearance of crafting a report to meet that goal. The efforts are to show what the reality is on the ground in the gem sector.

This mission offers AGTA a direct role in helping a new democracy develop its gem sector.

This mission has opened a sincere and meaningful dialogue between AGTA and both the US State Department and Capitol Hill. With these we can be a part of legislative conversations in two countries before the laws are written. This is a unique opportunity for AGTA and the US Jewelry Industry.

1. The Burma Ruby Task Force assessment trip is an AGTA led industry wide coalition with the support of the Jewelers of America (JA), American Gem Society (AGS), Indian Diamond and Color Stone Association (IDCA), New York Gem Dealers Association (NYGA) as well as many national and international individuals who have contributed to the effort.
2. The United States Department of State highlighted that, even as the sanctions may be lifted they will continue to work with the Burmese government to pursue the necessary "responsible and transparent investment and business practices, in particular in the jadeite and gemstones sector."
3. The new National League for Democracy (NLD) government is also focused on bringing transparency and top corporate standards to all sectors, particularly extractives. Given pressure from both NGO's and local sectors, the NLD (National League for Democracy, Aung San Suu Kyi's political party) could still suspend the mining of rubies and other gemstones until they are comfortable in the development of a transparent and responsible supply chain. NLD's lead economic advisor deemed the AGTA's assessment trip and mission "very worthwhile" and critical to efforts to understand and bring transparency to the ruby industry.
4. The US State Department and other relevant government agencies strongly support this trip and see it as a key strategy to continue to support the NLD and ongoing reform in a post-sanctions setting.

Congress could enact new legislation establishing further sanctions. The US Congress (in a bipartisan effort) has made it clear that transparency in the gemstone industry is a key priority. A bill proposed on Tuesday September 13th, emphasized Congressional support for the NLD-led efforts to reform and mainstream the country's extractives sector, bringing it under good governance standards.

Thank you,



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Association



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