

FACT SHEET ON U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS

U.S. media have played up the July 11th anti-government protests in Cuba as a harbinger of regime change and a reason for U.S. intervention. The anti-government protestors (a significant number of whom have been funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy and CIA) number only a few hundred. Pro-government supporters—in defense of the revolution and opposed to U.S. intervention—have been flooding the streets, not by the hundreds, but by the hundreds of thousands. The mainstream media focus has drawn attention away from what is really happening in Cuba and the suffering the U.S. blockade has caused.

THE U.S. ECONOMIC BLOCKADE AGAINST CUBA

The U.S. embargo and policies operate as a blockade against Cuba. It creates shortages of food, medicine, financial and trade opportunities and continues to inflict hardship on the men, women, and children of Cuba.

In 1960, the United States government imposed an economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba. The 1996 Helms Burton Act extended the extraterritorial application of the initial embargo to apply to foreign companies trading with Cuba.

On December 17, 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and then Cuban President Raul Castro announced a new era of relations between the two countries and agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations. Accordingly, Cuba and the U.S. re-opened their respective embassies in 2015.

The Trump administration reversed course and tightened the blockade by instituting 243 additional sanctions, including many during the pandemic. In the final days of his term, Trump placed Cuba back on the "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list. Being placed on this list exposes countries to numerous other sanctions, including restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance; a ban on defense exports and sales; certain controls over exports of dual use items; and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions.

Despite campaign promises, the Biden administration has failed to reverse any of Trump's actions and has done nothing to alleviate hardship.

On June 23, 2021, in the United Nations General Assembly a total of 184 countries supported Cuba's motion for the end of the U.S. blockade. It was the 29th year that the vote to end the embargo was overwhelming supported by the world's delegates. Only the U.S. and Israel voted to maintain the U.S. embargo. The majority of the people of the United States and the world believe this embargo is ineffective, inhumane and in violation of U.S. laws and international conventions.

CUBA'S HISTORY OF MEDICAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL AID TO OTHER COUNTRIES

Cuba has a long history of providing international medical aid to other countries. Many of its medical personnel are directly involved in the fight against COVID-19 as members of the specially trained Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade against Disasters and Serious Epidemics. One of the first countries to offer aid to the U.S. after Hurricane Katrina, Cuba offered to send 1,586 doctors and 26 tons of medicine. This aid was rejected by the State Department.

Over the past year alone, Cuba has sent 3,700 health workers in 52 international medical brigades to 39 countries overwhelmed by the pandemic. Cuba's international medical brigades have treated patients and saved lives for the past 15 years in 53 countries confronting natural disasters and serious epidemics, such as the Ebola crisis in West Africa. It has assisted in many epidemics around the world, including dengue fever, HIV, swine flu, and hepatitis. Despite the importance of international Cuban medical assistance, the U.S. has attempted to stop other countries from accepting Cuban medical brigades, even claiming that Cuba's medical brigades represent a form of human trafficking.

In 2015 the World Health Organization recognized Cuba's medical system as a worldwide leader in biotechnology, and Cuba has made significant contributions to the international medical field, including a drug that prevents 77% of diabetic amputations.

Early in the pandemic, Cuba developed effective treatment regimens for patients and prevention protocols for health workers, including its drug Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant and community-based treatment and contact tracing.

Cuba has developed five internationally recognized candidate COVID-19 vaccines. By the end of October 2021 more than 98% of Cuba's 11.3 million people had received at least a first shot of a three-dose immunization regimen with Cuban-made vaccines (Abdala, Soberana-2 and Soberana-plus). More than 60% of the population, ages 2 and older, had been fully vaccinated. Cuba is very likely to reach its goal of 98% fully vaccinated by December 2021. Cuba also plans to produce millions of doses of its vaccines, beyond what is needed domestically, to meet its commitment to sharing its low-cost vaccines with poor countries in the developing world.

There is precedent for collaborative initiatives between Cuba and U.S. cities. A few examples include San Francisco CA, Seattle WA, Minneapolis MN, Chicago IL, Pittsburgh PA, Cambridge, MA, which all overwhelmingly passed a resolution supporting medical collaboration.

There have also been multi-year joint ventures between Cuba's Center for Molecular Immunology and Buffalo's Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in developing CIMAvax, the Cuban lung cancer vaccine, as well as a collaboration between medical personnel from Cuba and the University of Illinois on infant mortality in Chicago.

The U.S. blockade of Cuba has severely restricted collaboration on scientific and medical research. The blockade not only causes great harm to Cuba, it also denies U.S. citizens access to Cuban medical technology such as the diabetes drug Heberpot-P, vaccines for meningitis B and hepatitis B, monoclonal antibodies for kidney transplants, as well as the only therapeutic vaccine in the world against advanced lung cancer, called CIMA V AX-EGF.

EFFORTS IN THE U.S. TO END THE BLOCKADE AND PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO CUBA

There are hundreds of organizations throughout the world that are working to end the blockade against Cuba. In the U.S., the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) and its 58 local, state and national organizations throughout the country stand in solidarity with Cuba and have been working diligently to end the blockade:

- Over 40 resolutions have been passed by churches, city councils, labor unions, state legislators and school boards to call for the end of the U.S. blockade against Cuba. These resolutions represent the will of 41 million people in the United States.
- Car and bike caravans in support of Cuba occur monthly in Miami and other cities across the U.S. and around the world.
- The University of Minnesota leaders commenced and continue formal medical collaboration with Cuba to battle COVID-19.
- Federal legislation to end the embargo (S.249, H.R.3625) and other bills in support of Cuba (S.1694, H.R.198) is pending,
- U.S. residents generously donated more than \$680,000 to send over 6 million syringes to Cuba to enable Cuba to administer its COVID-19 vaccines to its people
- U.S. residents are providing humanitarian aid to Cuba by raising funds to purchase and ship food and medical supplies to counter the shortages caused by the blockade and Trump sanctions.
- IFCO/Pastors for Peace, Code Pink, Altruistas, Marazul Tours, and Building Relations with Cuban Labor have regular delegations to Cuba so that U.S. residents can experience Cuba themselves and see how the U.S. blockade affects the people of Cuba.