

**IN OUR**

# **NATIONAL INTEREST**

**THE TOP TEN REASONS FOR CHANGING U.S. POLICY TOWARD CUBA**



**THE CENTER FOR DEMOCRACY IN THE AMERICAS**

Freedom to Travel to Cuba Campaign



**Center FOR Democracy**  
IN THE **Americas**

*This document was written and produced by the Center for Democracy in the Americas, and its Freedom to Travel to Cuba Campaign, to urge a fundamental change in U.S. policy toward Cuba.*

*Our organization advocates replacing our current approach toward Cuba with a policy of engagement – by encouraging commercial transactions, free travel to and from the island, and normalized diplomatic relations.*

*A post-Castro transition is taking place in Cuba without our constructive participation. Now more than ever, it is time to change our policy.*

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**ON THE COVER:** Havana's neoclassical Capitolio was built between 1926 and 1929 as a smaller-scale version of the Capitol building in Washington, DC.

## INTRODUCTION

The United States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba in 1961 and imposed an economic embargo on the island the following year. In the context of its time – in the climate of the Cold War and with the Soviet Union threatening the United States by expanding its influence in Latin America – this policy made sense.

Since the embargo began, ten presidents, from both political parties, have supported Cuba's diplomatic and economic isolation and imposed increasingly severe restrictions on travel and trade strictly for the purpose of overthrowing the Castro government.<sup>1</sup>

Years after the Soviet Union fell and withdrew from the region it is time to recognize the truth: This policy doesn't work, it can't work, and it's never going to work.

The embargo discredits the United States overseas, compromises our values at home, and hurts the American economy at the same time it takes away Americans' constitutional rights to travel and do business as they please. Compared to our relations with every other nation in the world, including the remaining communist systems in China and Vietnam, U.S. policy toward Cuba simply isn't rational, and it must be changed.

We need a new Cuba policy rooted in America's national interest and our common sense.

The case is simple, direct, and clear. It's time to repeal restrictions on travel and trade with Cuba and end our country's lonely and self-imposed diplomatic estrangement from our neighbor's government, people, and national life.

There are a million reasons for changing U.S. policy toward Cuba. The Center for Democracy in the Americas has produced an extraordinarily convincing Top Ten.

—Jake Colvin, Director, U.S.A. Engage

USA\*Engage ([www.usaengage.org](http://www.usaengage.org)) is a coalition of small and large businesses, agriculture groups and trade associations working to promote the benefits of U.S. engagement abroad. USA\*Engage leads a campaign to inform policy-makers, opinion-leaders, and the public about the importance of exports and overseas investment for American competitiveness and jobs, the role of American companies in promoting human rights and democracy world wide, and the counterproductive nature of unilateral sanctions.



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# ONE

## THE POLICY HAS PRODUCED NOTHING IN DECADES.

**O**ur country's goal in imposing the embargo was to weaken and economically starve the Communist government of Fidel Castro. But this policy has been ineffective and has become increasingly counterproductive. Unilateral sanctions against an island economy simply cannot work; Cuba has been proving that day-in and day-out for nearly fifty years. The embargo is recognized globally as an ineffective and expensive farce. The Cuban government uses our policy as an all-purpose rationalization for its own shortcomings. It blames everything from food shortages to electrical outages on the embargo.

The continuation of this policy, long since frozen in the amber of its own ineffectiveness, owes its existence to the demands and political strength of South Florida's Cuban-American community. Nevertheless, our government continues to pour millions of additional dollars into the failed policy.

Despite U.S. policy, the Cuban economy is rebounding today, thanks to large-scale foreign investment. While Cuba continues to face serious self-imposed challenges to economic growth, new trade relations with China and Venezuela are allowing it to “pull out of the grueling crisis” caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. In 2004, for example, tourism was up 7%, high prices for nickel, Cuba's top export, appeared solid, and 40 years of investment in human capital, such as medical personnel, were bringing in significant revenues.<sup>2</sup> As Emily Morris of the Economist Intelligence Unit writes: “Cuba's performance since 1993 has been better than Latin America's... and the forecast for Cuba in the context of Latin America is at the top end, among the stronger performers in the region.”<sup>3</sup>

After more than 40 years, the State Department still finds it necessary to spend enormous amounts of money to “hasten change” in Cuba. Our policy is to “use American tax dollars to topple Castro's government and replace it with one that has been conceived in the corridors of the State Department and the parlors of Miami's Cuban-American exile leaders.”<sup>4</sup>



**“CUBA'S PERFORMANCE  
SINCE 1993 HAS BEEN BETTER  
THAN LATIN AMERICA'S...”**

**—EMILY MORRIS  
ECONOMIST INTELLIGENCE UNIT**

# TWO

## ENFORCING THE POLICY DRAINS RESOURCES FROM THE WAR ON TERROR.

**E**nforcement of the economic embargo against Cuba draws resources away from vitally important efforts to disrupt financing of terrorist operations overseas. Although the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security are charged with enforcing the economic embargo against Cuba, their enforcement agenda is driven and controlled by the State Department and the White House. These agencies are forced to spend millions of dollars a year preventing U.S. citizens from traveling back and forth to Cuba and stopping harmless rum and cigar purchases from entering the United States. Wasting these millions in execution of a failed policy is bad enough, but the enforcement of the Cuba embargo has also drained precious resources from our efforts to stop the flow of financing to Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. In an age of international terrorism, this failed policy is a luxury we can ill-afford.



The U.S. Treasury Department admitted in 2004 that it had five times as many agents working on embargo violations than it did investigating sources of funding for Al-Qaeda. From 1990 to 2003, just 93 cases related to terrorist financing had been opened by OFAC<sup>5</sup> world wide. Over the same period, OFAC agents pursued 10,683 investigations of possible violations of the Cuba trade embargo.<sup>6</sup>

Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA), then-Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, said: “OFAC obviously needs to enforce the law with regard to U.S. policy on Cuba, but the United States is at war against terrorism, and Al-Qaeda is the biggest threat to our national security. Cutting off the blood

money that has financed Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden must be a priority when it comes to resources.”<sup>7</sup>

Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-ND) threatened to start a movement to slash funding for OFAC if more resources weren't allocated to the capture of Osama bin Laden. “This is really astounding,” Dorgan said. “I hope somebody in the administration will soon come to his or her senses and start directing our resources where they are needed. Politics is clearly diverting precious time, money and manpower away from the war on terrorism here.”<sup>8</sup>

# THREE

## THE POLICY HURTS AMERICAN COMPANIES AND AMERICAN WORKERS.

**S**anctions prohibit U.S. businesses from selling any goods except food and medicine to Cuba.<sup>9</sup> Other regulations prevent our farmers from fully enjoying opportunities for agriculture sales to the island. American jobs are lost, but the embargo has little real effect on Cuba. Her doors are opened to our competitors and adversaries from all over the world. Ending the embargo could gain upwards of a billion dollars annually in U.S. sales of manufactured goods and agriculture products<sup>10</sup> and create tens of thousands of U.S. jobs in the travel industry.<sup>11</sup>

During a 2003 hearing, Senator Max Baucus (D-MT) noted that the embargo has damaged U.S. interests and strengthened Castro's economic hold on the country. "The International Trade Commission has estimated that, in the absence of sanctions, U.S. exports to Cuba would grow to more than \$1 billion. Meat exports from the U.S. could be as much as \$76 million, while wheat exports could be as much as \$52 million."<sup>12</sup>

Yet, since 2005, new obstacles imposed by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) have made the flow of U.S. wheat, corn, soy, powdered milk, and poultry more unreliable, costing U.S. companies \$100 million in deals that Cuba made with firms in other countries.<sup>13</sup>

In the aftermath of OFAC's maneuvers, Members of Congress say "Rice sales have fallen by 43% by value and the value of dairy also fell 43%. Apple exports have fallen by 64% by value, while the value of cotton sales declined 55%. The value of our poultry exports has fallen by more than 19%, while wheat sales have fallen nearly 14%. These lost U.S. sales are being made up by our competitors."<sup>14</sup>

As American agricultural sales fell, a November 2005 agreement – worth \$20 million – lifted Canadian wheat sales to Cuba to their highest level since 1990. The sale of 100,000 tons of Canada Western Red Spring was the largest single sale to Cuba since 1997.

The embargo bars oil exploration by American firms; this is especially harmful now, as Cuba is encouraging exploration in off-shore blocks in 1,660 square miles of its waters in the Gulf of Mexico. India's largest state-run petroleum exploration firm won the rights to search for oil in these waters.<sup>15</sup> Cuba's state oil company also signed an agreement with Spain's Repsol YPF, Norway's Hydro, and India's OVL in May 2006 for the exploration of its six offshore blocks. Venezuela's state-owned oil company will also join in oil exploration in Cuba's north coast. According to Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), agreements like these could mean

"forever closing the door on those resources to the U.S. industry."<sup>16</sup>

Bilateral trade between China and Cuba reached \$777 million in 2005, \$560 million of which were Chinese exports to Cuba.<sup>17</sup> Chinese appliances and transportation services are flooding into Cuba. The Financial Times reports "Cuba's ports are being revamped with Chinese equipment, in part to handle the millions of Chinese domestic appliances that began arriving last year. Cuba is turning to Chinese rather than Western companies to modernize its crippled transportation system at a cost of more than \$1 billion."<sup>18</sup> Cuba has purchased 100 locomotives from China for \$130 million,<sup>19</sup> 1,000 Chinese buses for urban and inter-provincial transportation,<sup>20</sup> and 30,000 Chinese refrigerators.<sup>21</sup>

The Brattle Group reports that an end to travel restrictions to Cuba would lead to increased demand for air and cruise travel to the region. Without restrictions, it is estimated that U.S. economic output would "expand annually by \$1.18 billion to \$1.61 billion. This expansion would create from 16,888 to 23,020 new jobs."<sup>22</sup>

# FOUR

## THE POLICY IS AN ASSAULT ON FAMILY VALUES.



**R**estrictions on travel between the United States and Cuba fall especially hard on Americans of Cuban descent in the United States. The regulations on travel prohibit Cuban-Americans from visiting members of their immediate family in Cuba more than once every three years. The limits have stopped children from attending funerals of their own parents. Sgt. Carlos Lazo, a Cuban-American combat medic and war hero, was prevented from visiting his kids while on leave from Iraq.

Congressman Jeff Flake (with cosponsors in the U.S. House) and Senator Mike Enzi (with Senate colleagues) have both introduced legislation to repeal the ban on legal travel by Americans to Cuba.

When he introduced the legislation in 2005, Senator Enzi said: “When we stop Cuban-Americans from bringing financial assistance to their families in Cuba and end people-to-people exchanges and stop the sale of agricultural and medicinal products

to Cuba, we are not hurting the Cuban government, we are hurting the Cuban people. If you keep on doing what you have always been doing, you’re going to wind up getting what you already got.”<sup>23</sup>

The *Chicago Tribune* notes that, of all the sanctions, “few are as cruel, vindictive, and un-American as those that sharply limit Cuban-Americans from visiting their relatives in the island.”<sup>24</sup>

Thousands of people have been denied permission to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba and have been separated from their loved ones, forcing them to choose between caring for their ill family members and obeying the law. The *Miami Herald* reported in 2006, “Sanctions punish Cuban families, weaken communication and add to the misery

that Cubans on the island already suffer. These policies certainly don’t encourage mutual understanding or reconciliation.”<sup>25</sup>

The policy is cruel and indiscriminate. In 2004, after serving seven months in Iraq, U.S. Army Sergeant Carlos Lazo planned to spend part of his two-week furlough in Havana visiting his two sons, one of them ill, but he was denied permission to go due to the restrictions. As he saw it, “the administration that trusted me in battle in Iraq does not trust me to visit my children in Cuba.” He was soon shipped back to the Middle East and straight to Falluja, where, in November 2004, he earned the Bronze Star for “exceptionally meritorious service.”<sup>26</sup>

As the *Miami Herald* has written: “Dividing Cuban families is a hallmark of the Castro dictatorship. The U.S. government shouldn’t pile on.”<sup>27</sup>

“We find it particularly ironic that in the name of freedom for Cuba ... freedom of Cuban Americans to travel and maintain normal family relations are being trampled,” stated Silvia Wilhelm, Executive Director of the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights.<sup>28</sup>

# FIVE

## THE POLICY INFRINGES ON THE RIGHTS AND LIBERTIES OF ALL U.S. CITIZENS.

**U**.S. citizens have the right to travel, to associate freely, to express religious beliefs, to study, and to conduct legal business affairs. Restrictions on travel to and from Cuba infringe on the rights of all U.S. citizens.

Members of religious communities making unlicensed trips to Cuba to distribute Bibles, baptize Cuban Christians, and provide humanitarian relief to religious workers in Cuba have been prosecuted. Universities and colleges that sent students to Cuba for academic exchanges have had their programs shut down by the U.S. government. The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has diligently worked to shut down and punish service providers of Cuba travel.

The Supreme Court has ruled that “the right to travel is an inherent element of ‘liberty’ that cannot be denied to American citizens... [the government] may not condition the fulfillment of such requirements with the imposition of rules that abridge basic constitutional notions of liberty, assembly, association, and personal autonomy.”<sup>29</sup>

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the sanctions against Cuba “run counter to the human rights principle that all people have a right to return to their own country.”<sup>30</sup> International law requires that all Cubans and Cuban-Americans be allowed to return freely to their home country if they so choose.

The restrictions also curtail religious liberties. Church-based organizations conducting authorized religious activities in Cuba are being pursued for alleged violations of the terms of their licenses. The *Birmingham News* reports U.S. Treasury officials fined the Alliance of Baptists \$34,000 after citing Birmingham’s Baptist Church of the Covenant and other churches for engaging in “prohibited tourist activities” such as sightseeing and picture-taking, while in Cuba for religious purposes.<sup>31</sup>

Numerous humanitarian and religious organizations note that travel restrictions curtail their ability to react in the event of a catastrophe. Rev. Tricia Lloyd-Sidle, the Presbyterian Church’s regional liaison for the Caribbean, says that the four-trip annual limit on denominational

agencies “takes away any flexibility ... to respond should there be a crisis, a hurricane or any kind of crisis in Cuba that the Cuban church might ask ... the national Presbyterian Church in the United States to respond to.”<sup>32</sup>

An open academic exchange with other countries is fundamental for promoting peace and democracy but the travel restrictions curtail academic freedom. In recent years, academic exchange between the United States and Cuba, historically very strong, has deteriorated rapidly. “Well-established and prestigious programs of U.S. cultural and academic institutions encountered new licensing procedures ... a precipitous decline occurred in State Department approvals of visas for Cuban academics and intellectuals invited to travel to the United States as part of ongoing exchange programs and activities.”<sup>33</sup>

300 U.S. universities have cancelled their Cuba exchange programs since the Bush administration stepped up restrictions on travel in 2004. The number of U.S. students in Cuba dropped from 296 to 41, according to a report in the *Cuba Trade and Investment News*.<sup>34</sup>



## THE POLICY HURTS AMERICA'S IMAGE ABROAD.

**O**ur policy of isolating Cuba economically puts us at odds with U.S. allies. Canada, members of the European Union and our trading partners in Asia and Latin America all have normal trading relations with Cuba. Laws that punish foreign companies for doing business in Cuba extend the reach of U.S. trade restrictions in controversial and, many believe, improper ways. The U.S. is being condemned internationally for violating global trade agreements.

For the last fifteen years, the United Nations General Assembly has argued the embargo violates the U.N. Charter and the Geneva Conventions and passed resolutions 15 times urging an end to U.S. economic, commercial and financial restrictions against Cuba.

Other U.S. actions, taken at the insistence of the Cuban-American community in Miami, undermine the credibility of the U.S. war on terror.

Overzealous enforcement of the embargo harms our standing as an economic partner. During a 2006 public meeting and discussion held in Mexico City's Sheraton Maria Isabel hotel regarding opportunities in Cuba's energy sector, Sheraton managers received a message from

Washington ordering the Cubans out and abruptly ejected all sixteen Cuban attendees. They were told that they could have nothing to eat or drink on the way out, and they would forfeit the money that they had paid for the remaining nights at the hotel. Mexican officials thought the U.S. had overstepped its bounds by trying to block retail services to Cubans in a third country. The *Miami Herald* editorialized that "a friendly nation has been insulted, U.S. businesses in Mexico are alarmed, and Cuba can once again paint itself as the aggrieved party in its dispute with the United States."<sup>35</sup>

Every year since 1992, the United Nations General Assembly has approved a resolution condemning the U.S. embargo by lopsided margins. In 2006, for example, the vote in favor of the Cuba-sponsored resolution was 183-4, with opposing votes cast by the United States, Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands. All members of the European Union voted for the resolution against the United States.

The embargo, and overall U.S. hostility toward Cuba, damages our credibility as we fight the war on terror. According to declassified U.S. intelligence reports, Luis Posada Carriles, a former CIA asset, helped

plot the bombing of a Cuban airliner in October 1976 that killed all 73 persons aboard.<sup>36</sup> He has publicly claimed responsibility for a bombing campaign in 1997 against hotels in Havana that resulted in the death of an Italian businessman.<sup>37</sup> Most recently he was convicted and imprisoned in Panama for attempting to assassinate Fidel Castro using C-4 explosives. Posada Carriles slipped into the United States in March, 2005, seeking asylum. Since detaining him on illegal immigration charges, the U.S. government has refused to answer Venezuela's extradition petition for Posada to face justice for the plane bombing, and has tried instead to deport him. At least seven other nations, including Canada, Mexico, Panama, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, have refused to take him.<sup>38</sup> The Justice Department has recently brought perjury charges against Posada Carriles related to statements on how he entered the U.S., but has so far declined to prosecute him for terrorism.<sup>39</sup> As a result, around the world we are viewed as harboring a terrorist, undermining our campaign to counter terrorism. At the same time, the White House maintains an official designation of Cuba as a terrorist state,<sup>40</sup> subjecting the United States to ridicule.<sup>41</sup>

# SEVEN

## THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT USES OUR POLICY TO ADVANCE ITS OWN ENDS.

**T**he existence of the embargo and our broken diplomatic relationship allows Cuban leaders to rally opposition to the United States, crack down on internal opposition, limit expression, and forge diplomatic and economic relations with America's competitors and foreign adversaries.

When President Bush added additional sanctions to the embargo, Cuba's government responded by launching a new propaganda campaign against the United States. The Cuban National Assembly scheduled a special session to debate the sanctions and analyze their impact. The Cuban government translated the Bush Commission report imposing new sanctions into Spanish and distributed it across the island. Members of the government, including the Cuban foreign ministry, held town meetings to discuss the report. There is currently an active billboard campaign against what they call "el Plan Bush."

The embargo bolsters rather than weakens the Castro government. The Gannett News Service reports "While squeezing the economic life out of Fidel Castro's regime has been the goal of a succession of American presidents, the embargo of Cuba has succeeded only in rallying most of this country's 11 million people behind their aging leader."<sup>42</sup> Rather

than inciting the Cuban people to overthrow Castro, it has "provided the government with a justification for its repressive policies."<sup>43</sup>

The embargo has also served to rally anti-U.S. opposition on the island. A typical example: On October 4, 2006 over 10,000 people from San Miguel del Padron joined Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque in launching a month-long festival aptly named "Cuba against the blockade and annexation" involving all Cuba's provinces, schools, factories and work places.<sup>44</sup>

Members of Cuba's dissident community are outspoken against U.S. policy. Oscar Espinosa Chepe, a political dissident in Cuba, who was arrested as part of the crackdown against alleged dissidents in March 2003, said this about the Bush administration's crackdown on Cuba: "It's incredible. Maybe the objective is to make Fidel Castro stronger. We can't understand it. If France did this to the United States, the American people wouldn't like it."



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**—OSCAR ESPINOSA CHEPE,  
POLITICAL DISSIDENT IN CUBA**

# EIGHT

## THE POLICY PUTS POLITICAL INTERESTS ABOVE THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

**M**ajorities in both Houses of Congress have voted to repeal the ban on travel, but certain legislators have acted in secret to kill that legislation and prevent it from being signed into law. Cuba offers to send doctors to help victims of Hurricane Katrina, but the White House insults their medical training and won't allow them to help. Cuba's Catholic Cardinal comes into the United States, and is subject to humiliation and held at our border. The list is seemingly endless and unquestionably embarrassing.

For decades, presidents and legislators from both political parties have fashioned Cuba policy to meet the demands of hard liners within the Cuban-American community – often in ways that are at odds with values of the rest of Americans.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO PLACATE AND PLEASE THIS COMMUNITY?**

**U.S. taxpayers pay anti-Castro activists to break the law.** According to an investigation by *The Chicago Tribune*, “One non-profit funded by USAID, Accion Democratica Cubana, spent only \$88,059 on humanitarian aid out of \$366,758 in total expenses, according to its 2004 tax report.” Juan Carlos Acosta, the group's executive director, said “the group also is hiring more professional smugglers because tightened travel restrictions put in place by the Bush administration mean

there are fewer volunteers traveling to Cuba.” Acosta spent about \$120,000 on smugglers and other shipping costs in 2004, records show.<sup>45</sup> In 2006, the Government Accountability Office found waste and abuse by grantees under the USAID program that gives aid to Cuban dissidents and families. One NGO was cited for purchasing cashmere sweaters and Godiva chocolates.<sup>46</sup>

**We ban books.** The Miami-Dade school board, heavily influenced by anti-Castro Cuban Americans, voted in 2006 to ban a children's book, “Vamos a Cuba,” on the grounds that it was inappropriate for its intended kindergarten-to-second-grade audience. The board voted 6-3 to ban the book, overruling two review committees and the superintendent of schools. After a legal battle, a federal court ruled against the ban, stating that it was unconstitutional to ban books because of their content.<sup>47</sup>

**We refuse to “play ball!”** The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), denied the Cuban national baseball team's application to take part in the World Baseball Classic on the grounds that Cuban spies might have infiltrated the team. In response, the International Baseball Federation threatened to withdraw its consent for the tournament and Puerto Rico threatened to withdraw as a host if the Cuban team was not allowed to play.

According to White House spokesman Scott McClellan, “Our concerns were centered on making sure that no money was going to the Castro regime and that the World Baseball Classic would not be misused by the regime for spying.”<sup>48</sup> The OFAC decision was reversed after Cuba said that it would donate any profits it received to victims of Hurricane Katrina.

**We defame and outlaw artists.** In 2002, six aging members of the legendary Buena Vista Social Club, made famous in the U.S. by the 1999 Ry Cooder documentary, were denied visas to attend the 2003 Grammy Awards. 76 year-old singer Ibrahim Ferrer, who had already won three Grammys and had traveled numerous times to the United States, was dumb-founded to learn that the State Department had invoked a law that applies to terrorists, drug dealers and dangerous criminals to deny him a visa. Said Ferrer (who died in 2005), “I don't understand because I don't feel I'm a terrorist. I am not, I can't be.”<sup>49</sup>

**We investigate babies.** The pregnant wife of a Cuban Interests Section official went home to give birth, carrying a valid re-entry visa. The visa application for the newborn was delayed, U.S. officials explained, to allow sufficient time for a background check on the baby.<sup>50</sup> The new mother was forced to remain in Havana for three extra weeks.

# NINE

## IMPORTANT PEOPLE OPPOSE THE POLICY AND WANT TO SEE IT CHANGED.

**T**he U.S. embargo against Cuba is opposed by thoughtful and influential people from across the globe including such luminaries as: former President Jimmy Carter; former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan; Costa Rican President Oscar Arias; General John Sheehan, USMC (Ret.), former Commander, Atlantic Command; political dissidents in Cuba such as Oscar Chepe Espinosa, Miriam Leiva, and Oswaldo Paya; Vicki Huddleston, the former Chief of the U.S. Interests Section under Presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush; Cardinal Jaime Ortega, the Catholic Prelate of Cuba; scores of sitting Members of the U.S. Congress from both political parties; Human Rights Watch; Amnesty International; William F. Buckley, Jr. and Larry Wilkerson, former Chief of Staff to Secretary of State Colin Powell, who described the embargo as the “dumbest policy on the face of the earth.”<sup>51</sup>

In a televised address in Havana in 2002, former president Jimmy Carter announced that the United States, as the more powerful nation, should “take the first step” towards the normalization of relations between the two countries. He went on to say “The embargo freezes the existing impasse, induces anger and resentment, restricts the freedoms of U.S. citizens, and makes it difficult for us to exchange ideas and respect.”<sup>52</sup>

Then-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan told CNN “the [Cuba] embargo has proved ineffective and now its time to consider alternative means of bringing about positive social change.”<sup>53</sup>

The late Pope John Paul II, in his visit to Cuba, delivered stinging condemnations of the U.S. embargo, calling the policy “oppressive, unjust and ethically unacceptable.”<sup>54</sup>

Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who advocates the free exchange of information and scholarship throughout the developing world, said at an American Library Association conference, “after 45 years of embargo against Cuba it is time to get something new.”<sup>55</sup>

Nobel Laureate and president of Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, stated in 2006 “The first and most urgent guarantee for which we must struggle in every international forum is the lifting of the economic embargo to which [Cuba] has been subject for decades.”<sup>56</sup>

Vicki Huddleston, former chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, notes that current U.S. policy isolates American diplomats. The United States, she says, is “absolutely without information about what’s going on in the Cuban government .... the vacuum created by a lack of communication can potentially lead to an armed conflict, intended or not.”<sup>57</sup>

In an open letter to Congress, six prominent Cuban dissidents noted that the tightening of the embargo has created an image of human rights and dissident organizations in Cuba as “agents or protégés” of the Bush administration, and is counterproductive to openness and democracy. Washington’s proclamations of “increased assistance to the dissidents in Cuba” are counterproductive and cast “doubt on the legitimacy of other groups in Cuba that may accept such a role.”<sup>58</sup>

In May 2006, U.S. Senator Larry Craig (R-ID), along with twelve Senators from both parties, introduced the Western Hemisphere Energy Security Act. This bill would allow U.S. companies to compete with other nations in exploring and extracting oil from the waters of the North Cuban basin. Senator Craig asserts that “we must re-evaluate our failed policy of disengagement, which limits our ability to diversify our resources and compete with China, India, and others. Disengagement also dooms the governments of Latin America to repeat their failed history, rather than join the community of modern and progressive democracies.”<sup>59</sup>

# TEN

## THE POLICY STOPS AMERICANS FROM DOING WHAT THEY DO BEST.

**T**here is no better advertisement for freedom, democracy and the United States than the spread of American ideas, products and – especially – our people, to every corner of the world. Keeping Americans out of Cuba allows leaders who don't like us to portray Americans as malignant stereotypes. If we cannot meet Cubans, they cannot discover our generosity, good humor, values and friendship. As some of Cuba's most important political dissidents and human rights activists have put it, the more American citizens in the streets of Cuba's cities, the better it is for the cause of open society.<sup>60</sup>

A policy based on enlightened engagement with Cuba would expose both the Cuban people and the American people to the best of their cultures, societies, and ideals; undercut the Castro government's efforts to blame Cuba's failings on U.S. policy; improve living standards for the people of Cuba; bring benefits to the American economy; and allow families who have been cruelly separated to see each other once again.

A post-Castro transition is taking place in Cuba without our constructive participation. Now more than ever, it is time to change the policy and replace it with one of engagement.

As William A. Reinsch, President of the National Foreign Trade Council, has said, "This moment presents an extraordinary opportunity for the United States to reconsider its policies toward Cuba and allow for increased exchanges, humanitarian aid and commerce. If the Cuban people are to believe that they have no better friend than the United States, and if we are to hold any hope of spreading our values and ideas later, then we must begin to engage now. Until U.S. policy changes, American businesses, educators, religious groups and humanitarian organizations will remain on the sidelines as a new era dawns."<sup>61</sup>

A better future is possible. Increased interaction between Cubans and Americans would go a long way toward abating fears in Cuba that a new economic relationship between the two countries would threaten Cuba's sovereignty and threaten its social policies. As the National Academy of Public Administration put it, "We owe the people of our beleaguered island neighbor a far brighter future than either colonialism or socialism ever provided."<sup>62</sup>



**A POLICY BASED ON ENLIGHTENED ENGAGEMENT WITH CUBA WOULD ... UNDERCUT THE CASTRO GOVERNMENT'S EFFORTS TO BLAME CUBA'S FAILINGS ON U.S. POLICY**

# NOTES

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