

Stronger blockade in times of global pandemic and economic crisis

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Outline

- Brief historical background
- Evolution over the last years
- UN response, present and past

Few words on history

- 1956
US owned over 90 percent of telephone and electric services; about 50 percent of public service railways; about 40 percent of raw sugar production; and almost a fourth of all bank deposits in Cuba [1]
- 1959
US businesses in Cuba owned an amount greater than any Latin American country except for Venezuela; the value of US enterprises in Cuba were over three times that of Latin America as a whole
- While being “America’s playground”:
Population of 7M, 700,000 did not have jobs
Lack of public health, low levels of education, extremely high housing rent, etc [2].

[1] American think tank paper

[2] Fidel’s trial 1953

Few words on history

- 1959
- May 17th the government passes the first Agrarian reform which ends the latifundium, and forbids foreign ownership of land, give ownership to the farmer in the land
 - [1] “recent issuance of the Agrarian Reform Law in Cuba has raised serious questions and affects many interests”
 - [2] “US Government to take a very firm position forthwith against the law and its implementation (...) best way to achieve the necessary result was by economic pressure”
- Compensation law No. 851, July 6th, 1960
 - Cuba offered 20-year 4.5 percent bonds in payment
 - Not accepted by previous owners.
- By August 1960, Cuba had expropriated the telephone, electric, and oil industries, and seized all U.S.-owned sugar mills, which altogether was valued at \$750 million in 1960

[1] US Department of State Memorandum May 27, 1959

[2] US Department of State Memorandum June 24, 1959

Genesis of US blockade

- April 6th, 1960

[1] “The majority of Cubans support Castro (the lowest estimate I have seen is 50 percent) (...) There is no effective political opposition (...) **The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship.**”

[1]
Memorandum From the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs to the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs,
April 6, 1960

April 2019 to March 2020

90 new economic actions and measures against Cuba

- On April 5, 2019, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the Department of the Treasury included 34 vessels owned by the Venezuelan oil company PDVSA, as well as two other foreign companies, on its list of Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) for sending crude oil to Cuba.
- On April 9, 2019, the OFAC imposed a sanction to the Standard Chartered Bank, a British-based entity in the banking-financial sector. This bank had to pay USD 639,023,750 for apparent violations of the Cuban Assets Control Regulations and other sanctions programs.
- ...
- ...
- On February 25, 2020, President Donald Trump issued a notice extending for one year the State of National Emergency relating to Cuba, declared by President William Clinton on March 1st, 1996.
- On February 26, 2020, the new regulations of the US company WESTERN UNION came into force, which eliminates the possibility of sending remittances to Cuba from third countries.
- **May 2, 2019 For the first time Title III allows former owners of properties that were nationalized in Cuba, including Cuban citizens who eventually became U.S. citizens, the possibility of suing in U.S. courts those who had any contact with such properties, which the law called “trafficking”**

From March 2020 on

- **On March 21, a shipment of COVID-19 aid from Asia’s richest man, Jack Ma, was blocked as a result of the extraterritorial reach of U.S. sanctions.** Ma’s foundation announced that it sent masks, aid ventilators, gloves, and diagnostic kits to twenty-four countries in Latin America, and Cuba was one of them. However, the selected cargo carrier, Colombia-based Avianca, declined to carry the aid to Cuba because Synergy Aerospace Corp. a majority shareholder, is incorporated in the state of Delaware and therefore falls under the laws of the United States.
- **In April 2020, two firms based in Switzerland—IMT Medical AG and Acutronic Medical Systems AG—refused to sell ventilators to Cuba, invoking the commercial, financial, and economic sanctions of the United States;** both companies had been acquired by U.S. company Vyaire Medical Inc and immediately suspended trade relations with Cuba.
- **On November 18, the U.S. Transportation Department denied exemptions for two charter flight companies to deliver humanitarian cargo to Cuba, including personal parcels containing food, medicine, hygiene, and other medical supplies.** One U.S. operator, Skyway, argued the flights should be permitted to address coronavirus pandemic impacts, as Reuters reported “ The Transportation Department said the State Department determined the flights did not fall within exemption guidelines and said they “would not be in the foreign policy interests of the United States”

<https://www.ethicsandinternationalaffairs.org/2020/u-s-economic-sanctions-on-cuba-in-the-context-of-the-pandemic-covid-19/>

From March 2020 on

- Cuba has provided international assistance by sending over 3,500 medical professionals to more than twenty-five countries in 2020. In this context, the U.S. State Department has included Cuba on a list of nations that do not collaborate in the fight against human trafficking and considers the doctors who collaborate in missions in countries dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic as “victims of human trafficking.”

UN response

Annual Cuba's resolution to the UN General Assembly calling for the US blockade to end.

- 1992: 59 in favor ; 3 against (against: US, Israel, Romania); 71 abstentions; 46 absent
- ...
- ...
- ...
- **2016: 191 in favor, no vote against; 2 abstentions (US, Israel)**
- 2017: 191 in favor, 2 against (US, Israel), no abstention.
- 2018: 189 in favor, 2 against (US, Israel), no abstention, 2 absent (Ukraine, Moldavia).
- 2019: 187 in favor, 3 against (US, Israel, Brazil), 2 abstentions (Colombia y Ucraina), Moldavia didn't vote

Next vote in June 2021

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1648511?ln=en>

Most recent EU response

- March 9th 2021, Swiss parliament approves a statement to intensify the pressure on Biden's administration to end the blockade
- April 14th 2021, Italian parliament approves motion to intensify international action for the ending of the US blockade

Unblock Cuba

Wirtschaftskrieg gegen Kuba beenden!

<https://www.unblock-cuba.org/call-for-solidarity/>



<https://cuba-solidarity.org.uk/news/article/4107/cuba-releases-annual-report-into-impact-of-us-blockade>