

US and Cuba announce resumption of diplomatic relations

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US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro exchanged letters Wednesday announcing their decision to restore diplomatic relations on July 20. At that time, the Interests Sections maintained by each country will be raised to the status of full embassies. The US and Cuba have not had embassies in one another's country since 1961.

The Castro regime sees the restoration of diplomatic relations and expansion of capitalist market conditions as a means of securing its rule. The US government and some of America's largest corporations see the Cuban regime as opening the way to the return of the country to its previous status as a semi-colony.

According to reports, the chief of the US Interests Section in Havana, Jeffrey DeLaurentis, hand-delivered a letter from Obama to the Cuban interim foreign minister, Marcelino Medina, announcing the change. This was reciprocated by a letter from Castro to Obama. The State Department also sent word to Congress, initiating a 15-day notification period. Secretary of State John Kerry announced he would be in Cuba for a late-July flag-raising ceremony at the embassy.

The restoration of diplomatic relations follows the recent removal of Cuba from the State Department's list of sponsors of state terror and is part of a process begun just over two years ago in talks initially brokered by Canada and the Vatican. Though diplomatic relations will be restored, the US embargo remains in place, preventing a wide range of economic activity from moving forward.

Despite the opposition of some members of Congress—particularly those with personal ties to Cuba, such as Republican Senator Marco Rubio and Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen—geopolitical and economic factors are

pushing the US towards dropping the embargo.

Bringing Cuba into the US sphere of influence will strike a blow against Russia and China. Russian ships are frequent visitors to Cuban ports, and China has been increasingly active in Latin America, funding development and expanding trade agreements. Brazil as well has been among the countries most involved in Cuba, with construction giant Odebrecht handling the expansion of the port and free trade zone at Mariel.

US corporations have been drooling over the possibilities provided by the well-trained and educated yet relatively low-paid workers of Cuba, as well as the island's natural resources.

US agriculture companies are particularly interested, given that one-third of Cuban land is arable and 20 percent of the labor force is still employed in agriculture. Many of these companies have banded together as the US Agriculture Coalition for Cuba (USACC), which sent a delegation to Havana in March to meet with Cuban officials.

Among the many members of USACC are agribusiness giants ADM and Cargill, along with organizations such as the American Feed Industry Association, the Corn Refiners Association, and the National Chicken Council.

Last year, the US Chamber of Commerce sent a high-level delegation to Havana to discuss the pace of privatization and opportunities for US firms once the embargo is lifted. Among the visitors was Alfonso Fanjul of the Fanjul Corp. sugar empire, which includes Domino Sugar and Florida Crystals. The Fanjul family was involved in sugar in Cuba before the Cuban Revolution and is interested in reclaiming its lost mansions as well as its once-dominant position in the Cuban countryside.

Telecommunication companies are also hoping to

cash in on a market that has been woefully underdeveloped, with less than 20 percent of residents having mobile phone service and less than 25 percent having any kind of access to the Internet.

With the easing of travel restrictions, hotel and cruise ship companies are also looking to cash in. Frank Del Rio, CEO of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, said, “I can’t stop thinking about it.” He added, “Cuba and the cruise industry are just a match made in heaven, waiting to happen.”

The Castro regime hopes to cash in from the reintegration of Cuba into the world market in a fashion similar to the Chinese Stalinist regime. It wants to discipline Cuban workers on behalf of US corporations and receive a cut of the profits.

However, Cuba cannot restore “normal” relations with the US without rapidly falling under the total domination of Yankee imperialism. This is underscored not only by Washington’s continuing efforts to foster “democratic” opposition groups and direct USAID-sponsored destabilization operations. It was reflected in Obama’s announcement of the restoration of relations.

In his White House Rose Garden remarks Wednesday morning, Obama indicated that US destabilization efforts would be stepped up. “With this change,” he said, “we will be able to substantially increase our contacts with the Cuban people. We’ll have more personnel at our embassy. And our diplomats will have the ability to engage more broadly across the island. That will include the Cuban government, civil society, and ordinary Cubans who are reaching for a better life.”

For his part, Raúl Castro, much as in his speech at the OAS summit where he absolved Obama of the crimes of US imperialism, deemphasized the predatory role of the US government. “In making this decision,” he said, “Cuba is encouraged by the reciprocal intention to develop respectful and cooperative relations between our two peoples and governments.”



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