

Kerry travels to Cuba to raise flag at American embassy

Eric London
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Dozens of US and Cuban officials gathered at the newly reopened US embassy building along the Malécon in Havana Friday and watched as US Marines raised the American flag. In the foreground, US Secretary of State John Kerry stood hand-over-heart as a US Army band played the American national anthem.

The symbolic event comes almost a month after the opening of the embassy, which was closed by the US government in January 1961, roughly two years after the overthrow of US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

The ceremony marks a further step in efforts by the administrations of Barack Obama and Raul Castro to “normalize” relations between the two countries, opening up the island nation for exploitation by American corporations.

After 18 months of secret negotiations moderated by the Catholic Church, the Castro and Obama administrations announced a resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries in December 2014. This was followed by a US State Department announcement in May 2015 removing Cuba from the “state sponsor of terrorism” list. On July 20, the US embassy in Havana was officially reopened.

Since the rapprochement began, the American corporate media has been salivating over the prospects of reopening Cuba for American business.

In December, the *Wall Street Journal* wrote: “US companies from General Motors Co. to agribusiness giant Cargill Inc. to furniture retailer Ethan Allen Interiors Inc. applauded the White House announcement on Wednesday of its move to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba and begin dismantling the embargo in place for 54 years.”

The *New York Times* also praised the normalization, noting that it will “inevitably inform the debate about the merits of engagement,” and that “history will prove

Mr. Obama right.”

Addressing the crowd on Friday, Secretary Kerry called the ceremony a “historic moment” and noted: “We are gathered here today because our leaders—President Obama and President Castro—made a courageous decision to stop being the prisoners of history and to focus on the opportunities of today and tomorrow.”

Corporate leaders anticipate returning Cuba to the “golden era” of the 1950s when the subservient country was a playground for the ultra-wealthy and a world center of mob corruption and corporate exploitation.

According to an interview with yachting consultant Bob Saxon on the web site *SuperYachtNews.com*, “Cuba presents a very interesting scenario as far as yachting is concerned.”

The article notes that Cuba’s natural resources “form the basis of our superyacht playground.”

“With an agreement to establish diplomatic presences in the respective countries,” Saxon said, a picture of Cuba with “wall to wall megayachts” will emerge.

Writing after the flag-raising ceremony, the *Wall Street Journal* noted that “next comes the hard part if President Barack Obama’s policy shift is going to fully take root: Congress must act to fully lift the trade and travel embargoes. The US and Cuba must also sort out thorny issues relating to financial and property claims.”

The full lifting of the US embargo, an economic blockade imposed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in October 1960, requires an act of Congress, where opposition to the US-Cuban rapprochement remains strong. However, American big business, the principal constituency of both major parties, is pressing strongly for a lifting of this impediment to US capital, fearing that it will continue sacrificing lucrative potential profits on the island as its rivals in Europe and Asia

increase their own investments.

By “property claims,” the *Wall Street Journal* means claims by the American owners of plantations and factories that were nationalized by the Castro government after the revolution of 1959. The *Wall Street Journal* estimates the total value of these claims at “more than \$6 billion.”

The brazenness with which the American ruling class is advancing on the path to the carve-up of Cuba is paralleled by the subservience of the Cuban government in allowing US imperialism to proceed with its plans.

The newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party, *Granma*, published John Kerry’s full remarks in its online edition yesterday alongside a fluff piece titled “popular support evident at historic event.”

The author also recommends:

US-Cuban rapprochement: The lessons of history
[19 December 2014]



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