

Reactions in the U.S. Continue Slamming Trump's New Cuba Policy



Washington, June 17 (RHC)-- In the United States, reactions that clash with President Donald Trump's announcement of increased restrictions with regards to Cuba continued to emerge.

The congressional publication The Hill writes that President Trump's new U.S. policy toward Cuba was met with strong opposition from within the Republican Party itself on Friday.

The Hill says the move was immediately criticized by Republican members in both houses of Congress, including Rep. Justin Amash (R-Mich.), who accused Trump of "dancing with the Saudis and selling them weapons" while talking about national security.

Sens. Jeff Flake (R-Ariz.) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), who co-sponsored the Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act with 53 other senators, bashed Trump for the abrupt reversal of the Obama administration's policy.

"Any policy change that diminishes the ability of Americans to travel freely to Cuba is not in the best interests of the United States or the Cuban people. It is time the Senate leadership finally allowed a vote on my bipartisan bill to fully lift these archaic restrictions which do not exist for travel by Americans to any

other country in the world," Flake wrote in a statement.

Senator Patrick Leahy, meanwhile, accused the White House of "re-declaring war" on Cuba with the new policy. "This is a hollow retreat from normalization that takes a swipe at Americans' freedom to travel, at our national interest, and at the people of Cuba who yearn to reconnect with us – all just to score a political favor with a small and dwindling faction here at home," Leahy wrote. "This White House, by reaffirming the embargo, has re-declared war on the Cuban people."

In *The New Yorker*, author and researcher Jon Lee Anderson writes that "as with much else that Trump has done since assuming the Presidency, his Cuba directive appears to be a deliberate attempt to dismantle Obama's legacy."

The *New Yorker* article says also that while Trump's announcement may hurt the Cuban government's cash flow, it equally might "dent the forward momentum" of Cuba's self-employed private sector, and that Trump's initiative is also in direct opposition to the thinking of a number of influential Cuban-Americans.

CNBC, meanwhile, quotes business figures in the U.S. who question that Trump's restrictions could actually work for his stated goals.

While Trump wants to encourage business with the Cuban people, eliminating individual people-to-people travel undercuts that goal, Risa Grais-Targow, Latin America director at Eurasia Group, told CNBC on Friday. The network said that the U.S. Chamber of Commerce also doubts that the announced policy will help achieve its intended results.

The digital publication *The Intercept* writes that Trump sought to reverse Obama's openings to Cuba under the false flag of human rights. It quotes William LeoGrande, a professor with American University and co-author of the book "Back Channel to Cuba" as saying that "it is hard to believe that human rights are really anything more than just an excuse." LeoGrande says Trump's new measures are "more a matter of political horse trading than a matter of foreign policy."

The technology-focused publication *The Verge* notes that Trump's Cuba restrictions are a setback for the US company Airbnb, in the online marketplace and hospitality service.

Although Cuba isn't Airbnb's largest market, it has become its fastest growing one, writes *The Verge*, noting that the company recently estimated that 12 percent of all Americans visiting

Cuba stayed in private homes reserved via Airbnbs. Airbnb estimated that 35 percent of Airbnb lodgers in Cuba were traveling from the United States, and the announcement by President Trump poses a setback for the company.

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