

Bruno Rodriguez tells AP Cuba will not change its dignity for oil



New York, Oct 2 (RHC) "What defines the current state of relations is a strong tightening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade," says Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla during an interview granted Tuesday to Ian Phillips, vice president of International News of the Associated Press (AP), at the agency's headquarters in New York.

Relations between the United States and Cuba was the main topic covered by the interview.

Rodriguez considered that current relations are guided by ideological and electoral political motivations that seek to win votes, essentially, in Florida. The Trump administration believes that Cuban Americans in South Florida support a hard line on the island, and he called that "erroneous political calculation."

"I believe it's proven that the majority of Cubans in Florida support the advances in the normalization of relations and the lifting of the blockade, and the younger they are, the more they support it," Rodríguez said.

"Regardless, political moments are ephemeral. We have the political will to advance without delay," he added.

The minister regretted that there are no official channels of communication between the two nations, not even for priority issues such as immigration, especially now when the operation of the embassies in both capitals is affected by staff reductions or the suspension of consular services, but he noted some cooperation remains in the area of law enforcement and national security.

"Cuba has been threatened with even more extreme measures of blockade if it does not change positions that for us are essential to foreign policy. But, as we said at the United Nations, the island will not change its dignity for oil," he stressed.

The Cuban foreign minister added that blockade actions of the last six months against oil shipments to Cuba are not typical of a situation of international normality. The United States threatens with retaliation every ship, shipping company, government where those ships or companies are registered, as well as insurance firms for helping Cuba obtain petroleum.

"Cuba has the financial capacity to acquire the fuel it needs. If it were not so, the United States would not insist on attacking the transportation of oil," he continued.

Regarding immigration, in his remarks to AP, the island's top diplomat denounced that the U.S. is not granting the number of visas it committed itself to grant when it signed the migratory agreements in 2018. It has also cut consular services in Havana, which makes all procedures more expensive and time-consuming, noting that the current arrangements "seriously affects family reunification and Cubans' travel to the United States."

The Minister stressed that, despite this measure, "600,000 Americans visited Cuba last year, 400,000 Cubans residing in the United States as well, and in recent years one million Cubans have visited the United States for short periods of time. So there is an important link between the two peoples, between numerous institutions, and he noted that cultural ties are essential in communication between the two peoples.

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