

U.S. lawmakers demand lifting prohibitions on sending humanitarian items to Cuba



Washington, May 5 (RHC)-- A group of 27 members of the U.S. Congress have asked their government to confirm that it is possible to ship humanitarian goods to Cuba from other parts of the world, despite U.S. policy toward the island.

Through a letter sent to the Secretaries of State, Mike Pompeo, and Treasury, Steven Mnuchin, the legislators called on them to make such clarification in the midst of the SARS-Cov-2 coronavirus pandemic that is affecting almost all the countries of the world, including Cuba.

"We write to urge them to immediately confirm that companies and humanitarian workers around the world are not prevented by law, regulation or U.S. policy from providing medical equipment, food and other humanitarian items and public health information to Cuba," they said.

The letter, initiated by Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy and Congressman James McGovern, pointed out that there have been reports that foreign companies have been dissuaded from providing humanitarian items to Cuba, even to respond to the coronavirus, due to regulatory requirements and fear of prosecution or sanction under U.S. law.

They warned that such situations have occurred regardless of whether or not such humanitarian equipment is technically prohibited under the U.S. blockade against the neighboring nation nearly 60 years ago. According to the congressional representatives, the situation for Cuba in this sense is dangerous and contrary to what they claimed is "our long tradition of not politicizing the delivery of humanitarian aid."

"In an unprecedented emergency caused by a deadly virus that is so easily transmitted, public health and safety must take priority," they concluded.

Signatories to the letter include Democratic senators and former presidential candidates Amy Klobuchar, Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders; their House of Representatives members Tom Udall, Tim Kaine and Ron Wyden; Kathy Castor, Barbara Lee, Nydia Velazquez and Jamie Raskin, among others.

On April 1, the Cuban ambassador to China, Carlos Miguel Pereira, denounced that the blockade by Washington prevented the Alibaba company from taking a donation to the island to combat COVID-19 because the U.S. firm hired for the transportation declined that order at the last minute, under the argument of the blockade regulations.

In addition, island authorities reported month that Medicuba could not acquire artificial respirators from several of its usual suppliers because the manufacturers, IMT Medical AG and Acutronic, were bought by the U.S. company Vyair Medical Inc.

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