

# *No date for reestablishment of consular services in Cuba*

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Washington, Feb 4 (RHC) Official sources reported today that the United States has not yet defined the date for reestablishing consular services at its embassy in Havana, according to what Brian A. Nichols, undersecretary of State for Hemispheric Affairs, said the day before.

According to press reports, Nichols stated in a congressional hearing on Thursday that consular service officials will be sent to the Cuban headquarters to increase the processing of visas for Cuban applicants but the date is pending.

In October 2017, the White House withdrew 60% of its diplomatic staff from the island, accusing without evidence the Cuban authorities of being the cause of a mysterious illness caused by alleged sonic attacks.

In the end, various analyses by U.S. experts and agencies indicated a lack of elements to support the accusation.

An internal report released in early 2021 revealed that President Donald Trump accused Havana without evidence and that mismanagement and lack of coordination dominated his response to these alleged "attacks".

For the moment, Biden avoided publicly accusing any country and his government continues to investigate the origin of these incidents occurring in several countries.

A CIA report quoted by the NBC network ruled out that the so-called "Havana syndrome" is the result of a campaign led by a country that is an enemy of Washington, and the causes are still unknown.

In his statements, Nichols answer to a question from Representative Joaquin Castro, a Democrat from Texas, who questioned the limitations imposed on consular services in Havana and the flow of remittances from Cuban-Americans. This is part of more than 240 coercive measures to tighten the blockade that was authorized during the presidency of Trump and is still applied by the White House.

"Following the President's instructions, the State Department reviewed the staffing of the U.S. embassy in Havana and plans to increase officials to facilitate diplomatic, consular and civil society participation with adequate security," he said.

The U.S. undersecretary acknowledged the effects caused to Cuban citizens when applying for visas outside their country.

During the meeting, the undersecretary, mention that Washington is still reviewing proposals to alleviate the restrictions imposed on remittances to Cuba, seriously limited since October 2020, when Trump banned Western Union operations with the island.

A report delivered by the Treasury and State Departments to the White House in July 2021 is still under "review process", a justification used to lengthen the validity of those coercive actions.

The lack of a timetable for executing any action indicates that the process could still be delayed, experts said, coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the application of the economic, commercial and financial blockade against the Antillean nation. (Source: PL)

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