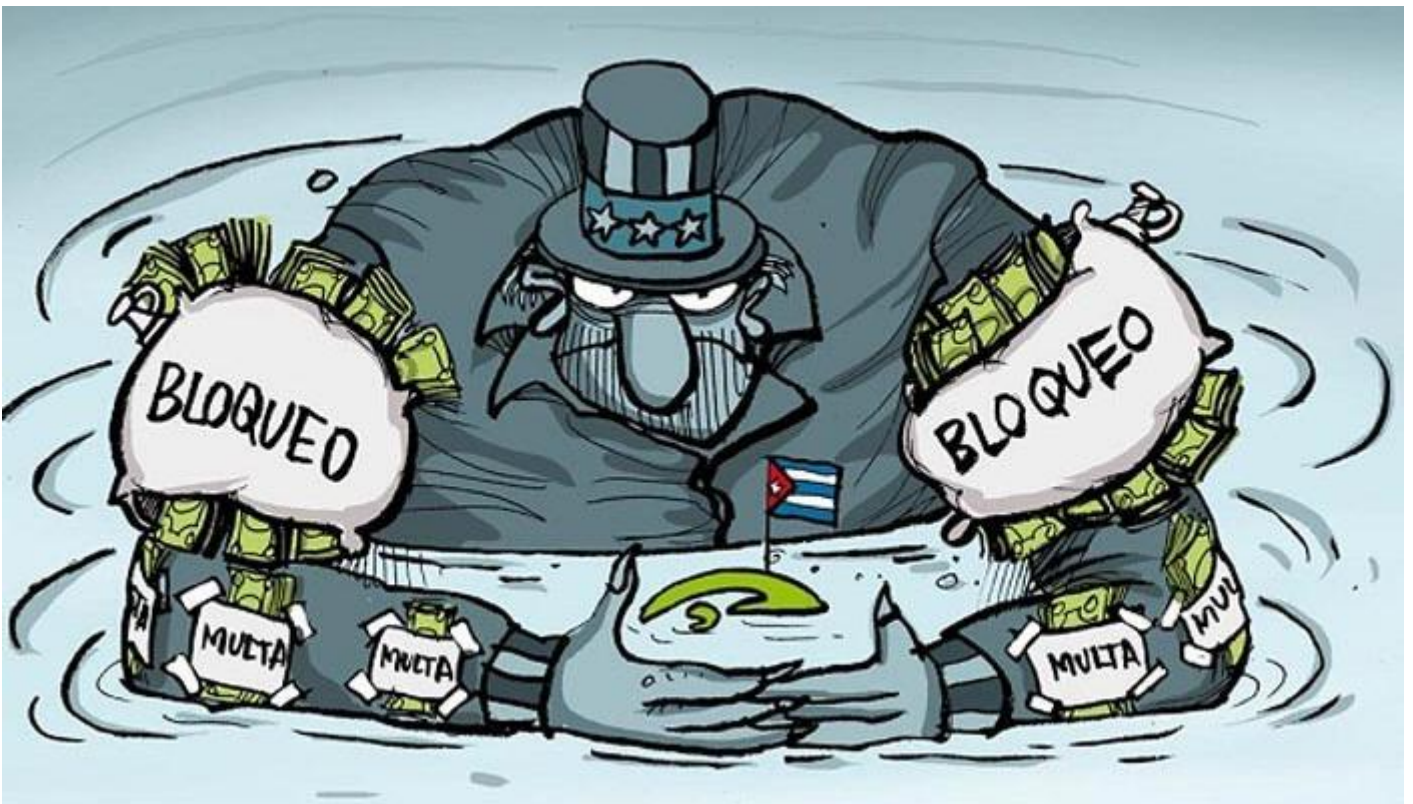


Cuban President Raul Castro Says Ending U.S. Blockade Will Be Long, Hard Struggle



Havana, December 22 (RHC-EFE) — Cuban President Raul Castro has warned that the struggle to end the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba "will be long and difficult" and will require continued international demands to end that policy.

In a speech before the Cuban National Assembly, Raul Castro said that with the decision to reestablish relations with the United States, an "important step" has been taken, but "the essential problem has yet to be resolved" and can only be done by the U.S. ending the blockade.

To achieve that, he hopes U.S. President Barack Obama would use "executive orders to substantially modify the blockade in those aspects that do not require congressional approval."

The policy of economic blockade against Cuba, imposed in 1962, became law in 1996 with the Helms-Burton Act, and ending it will require action by Congress.

Cuba's National Assembly backed President Raul Castro's decision to begin the process of restoring full diplomatic relations with the United States.

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