

# *Canadian Citizens Punished by U.S. Blockade of Cuba*

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Havana, January 29 (RHC) — Canadian citizens and spouses Brian and Jan Ficht, two gardeners in the province of Alberta, were punished with the freezing of their Paypal account after they used it to finance a three-week trip to Cuba — a direct consequence of the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade of the island.

According to CBC News, the couple -- who traveled to Cuba to learn about urban agriculture -- had no idea that they were doing a transaction with a U.S. company.

"I'm one Canadian, dealing with another Canadian, through what I believe is a Canadian organization — PayPal.ca," he said as he referred to the domain of the site he consulted. He added: "In fact, it's falling under the shadow of U.S. foreign policy."

CBC said that both the Fichtes and the tour operator he was trying to pay have cancelled their PayPal accounts because of the experience, which Ficht describes as "economic imperialism."

Paypal Canada sent an e-mail reply saying that the restriction on the account was due to an activity that may be violating U.S. regulations established by the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Treasury Department.

Jan Ficht said she was surprised her interest in organic and sustainable vegetable growing would be red-flagged by the U.S. government, noting that Canada has always maintained trade relations with Cuba. She said: "It certainly made me feel like a bumpkin all of a sudden."

Last December 17th, Washington and Cuba announced their intention to advance towards the normalization of bilateral relations, but Washington maintains its unilateral and extraterritorial blockade of Cuba, which is the main obstacle for the normalization of such links.

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