

White House Will Tell Trump: 'Turning Back on Cuba Damages Ties with Latin America'



Washington, December 14 (RHC)-- President Barack Obama will make his case directly to President-elect Donald Trump not to derail the recent U.S.-Cuba detente, the White House said on Tuesday, insisting that "turning back the clock" would be damaging to U.S. relations with Latin America.

Ben Rhodes, Obama's deputy national security adviser, said the outgoing administration hopes to persuade the incoming Trump administration to preserve Obama's policy of engagement despite the president-elect's threat to roll back the opening with the Caribbean state.

Rhodes said that just weeks before Trump takes office, Obama and his aides are seeking to further cement one of his top foreign policy legacy initiatives, a breakthrough in Washington's Cuba policy, noting that since Obama eased travel and trade restrictions through executive actions, Trump would be able to reverse them on his own if he chooses to do so.

"Cuba has been and will be on the list of issues where President Obama will make his case that this is the right approach for American interests," Rhodes told reporters on a teleconference, referring to transition talks between the two.

'Do you really want to cancel travel plans for hundreds of thousands of Americans? Do you want to tell businesses as diverse as our major airlines or Google or General Electric... that have been pursuing opportunities in Cuba that they have to terminate those activities?

"What we believe would be very damaging is any effort to turn off the opening," Rhodes said, asserting it would hurt the Cuban people, U.S. business interests and Washington's standing in Latin America.

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