

Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel welcomes medical brigade returning from Italy



Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel received the returning medical brigade that served in Italy for a little over two months. Upon their arrival at the Jose Marti International Airport -- on Monday, June 8th -- the 52 doctors and nurses that saved lives in northern Italy were welcomed as heroes. The Cuban president welcomed them home on a special video-conference link, transmitting from the Palacio de la Revolucion.

Beloved compatriots: Welcome to the homeland!

Just a few minutes ago, today's meeting of the Temporary Working Group that has been directing the actions to confront the pandemic ended, and here a group of colleagues have stayed to participate in this remote reception, which we will do in a more intimate form when you have completed quarantine. But we do not want to violate the measures that the country has established to avoid the transmission of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Manuel Marrero, Vice President Salvador Valdes, Deputy Prime Minister Roberto Morales are with us; the Ministers of Health and Foreign Trade, Portal and Malmierca; and Comrade Amado, secretary of the Council of Ministers, and Dr. Tania Margarita.

We, on behalf of Army General Raúl, in the name of our Party, our Government and our people, welcome you home.

Your return fills us with deep rejoicing, because you return healthy and with the most humanitarian and noble mission accomplished: saving lives.

After more than two months of intense and risky work, we would like nothing more than to embrace you, one by one, to thank you for your heroic mission; but we can only try to touch your heart today with words and say to you from the depths of our emotions: Thank you! We will meet again in another reception, where we will be closer to each other.

You have even harder sacrifices ahead: two more weeks of isolation, continuing to postpone the encounter with your loved ones.

I hope that in all this time you have felt the admiration, affection and pride expressed by each clap of applause of our people for you.

You represent the victory of life over death, of solidarity over egoism, of the socialist ideal over the myth of the market. With your noble gesture and your brave disposition to defy death to save lives, you have shown the world a truth that the enemies of Cuba have tried to silence or misrepresent: the strength of Cuban medicine!

When you left Havana for Crema, there were many uncertainties concerning the epidemic. The virus had been testing our epidemiological response capacity for only a few days. But we clearly understood something from beginning of the first news about the spread of the virus: a pandemic will go away only with great effort.

The world is called to cooperation and solidarity, two resources of human will that Fidel taught us to cultivate as fundamental principles of a Revolution in power.

The victorious return of this brigade of more than fifty persons, including medical and nursing personnel, has a great deal of value in light of these principles. People from all latitudes, including in the developed world, trust in the professional and human quality of health workers in Cuba.

You put that truth at the highest, which the imperial spokespersons have tried to hide, undermine, and bury with lies and aggression in an enormous, costly, and untruthful discrediting campaign of despicable attacks.

You are that just idea capable of stopping an army from the bottom of a cave, of which our apostle José Martí spoke.

You, together with the message of life that you leave in your saved patients, have brought solidarity back into fashion, when many believed that caring was dead.

In the more than two months that you were away, the country did not stop paying attention to every message transmitted to your family and colleagues. From here you were applauded every night and, while our authorities closely followed your work, popular prayers were lifted that you would return safe and sound, with the mission accomplished.

Professionals from almost all scientific and academic disciplines have formed in our country a powerful network from which strategies for coping with the epidemic have emerged, including studies of its

evolution throughout the country and procedures for the treatment of the sick and vulnerable population, among others. It gives us pride to show this work as proof that those who stayed here also struggled to live up to the standards of those who went to kiss the world, as the lyrics of Valientes say, the song of Good Faith, which has become one our hymns in these days.

Only tireless work, under exceptional conditions, of persons of all occupations and professions and with overflowing talent, can explain why we are winning the fight against the pandemic, at a time when another terrible pandemic, that of the blockade and the economic war, has intensified mercilessly from the most criminal and most discredited U.S. administration.

In these crucial two and a half months for the world, but especially for a nation blockaded to genocidal extremes, the United States denied and prevented purchases of all kinds; it did not share information nor act in accordance with established international laws with respect to a terrorist attack on our Embassy in Washington; and at the height of cynicism, it put Cuba on a list of spurious nations that do not cooperate in the fight against terrorism. It acted with particular malice in the persecution of fuel vessels from Venezuela, and it imposed new sanctions against current or possible investors and against Cuban institutions. There is no longer a hole in the belt that they tighten around Cuba.

It is not by chance that the Cuban medical brigades that today defend life in 28 countries are named after the North American who did the most for Cuba: Henry Reeve, Brigadier General of our Liberation Army and permanent inspiration of those who, like Martí, "love Lincoln's homeland, as much as we fear Cutting's homeland."

We have been filled with healthy pride these days to know of a growing world clamor for these brigades to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. With the mission that you have accomplished, you have contributed solidly to promoting that movement.

When the world is a fairer and more noble place, the entire Cuban health system will surely be rewarded for having transformed into reality Martí's preaching that "nation is humanity", to which Fidel, Raúl and Generation of the Centennial dedicated their greatest energies and efforts, and which you whom we welcome today are sons and daughters, continuing their heritage.

Again, thank you! Deeply human works like the ones you do every day, honor the memory of Martí, Fidel and all Cuban revolutionaries. They also inspire our unwavering cry: Homeland or Death! We shall overcome.

Welcome to the homeland!

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