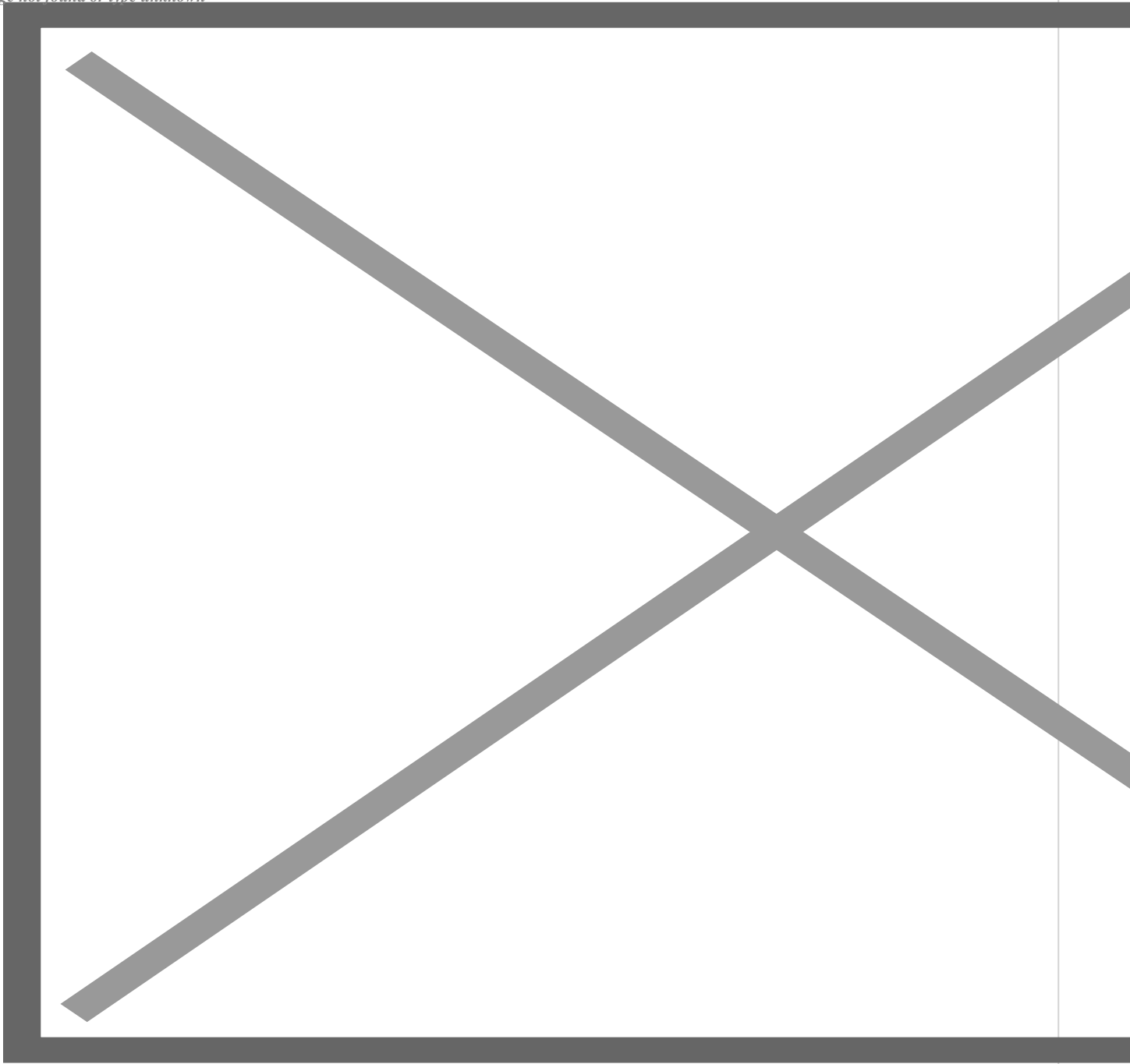


A special visit

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A special visit from Cuba to Belize

By María Josefina Arce

Although brief, President Miguel Diaz-Canel's visit to Belmopan has been especially significant. It is the first ever by a Cuban head of state to Belize, two nations that have supported each other in all these years and have fought common battles.

The president described his trip to Belizean territory as a debt and a commitment, where he received a warm welcome from the authorities and the people, who expressed their gratitude for the assistance provided in various areas by the Cubans.

In 1995 the two countries established diplomatic relations, but the collaboration dates back to five years earlier, when the first health professionals arrived to help raise the health indexes.

To this day, collaboration in the field of health is maintained on a permanent basis. More than 1,000 Cuban cooperants have put their knowledge to work for the benefit of the people of that state.

In addition, some 400 young people have been trained in Cuban universities, mainly in Medical Sciences. More than 60 are currently studying in the archipelago.

Culture is another area in which the link is special. Belizeans remember with great affection the historic leader of the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro, who contributed significantly to the development in that nation of the Houses of Culture, which today, according to Belizean intellectuals, are the backbone of social life in communities and villages.

But the gratitude is mutual. Belize once again showed its solidarity by sending supplies and other materials after Hurricane Ian hit western Cuba last September and the accident at the Matanzas supertanker base a month earlier.

The small nation has accompanied Cuba in its denunciation of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed for more than six decades against the Cuban people, which causes pain and suffering to families.

Courageous and sovereign was the criticism of Havana's exclusion from the so-called Summit of the Americas, held in June last year in the U.S. city of Los Angeles. Before President Joe Biden, the Prime Minister of Belize, John Briceño, pointed out that the Greater Antilles has provided constant and unequalled cooperation in health to almost two thirds of the countries of this hemisphere.

The ties between the two states are very strong. During the visit of the Belizean head of government to the Cuban capital in April 2022, three instruments were signed on cooperation in health, climate change and the will to continue strengthening the historic ties of friendship.

The Cuban president's recent trip to Belize, a land that has always stood by Cuba's side and with which he has defended the right of Caribbean countries to the development of their peoples, can undoubtedly be described as a meeting between brothers.



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