

# *Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro Praises Return to Cuba of the Five*

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Havana, December 26 (RHC)-- In a letter to Fidel and Raul Castro, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro hailed the significance of the U.S. decision to release three Cuban anti-terrorist fighters in exchange for an U.S. intelligence operative held in Havana and Cuba's release on humanitarian grounds of U.S. government subcontractor Alan Gross

"The U.S. government's decision to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba after more than 50 years is key to Washington's understanding the new era in Latin America," Maduro wrote in a letter published Friday by Granma newspaper.

Maduro sent letters to Cuban President Raul Castro and Revolution leader Fidel Castro, following the December 17th announcement of a renewal of ties between Washington and Havana.

"There is a still a long way to go for Washington to recognize that we are no longer their backyard, to end the criminal blockade against the Homeland of (Jose) Marti and Fidel," the Venezuelan said in his message.

Maduro wrote: "However, I think this is a very important step for the United States to understand that here, in our land, there is a change of era, that the Greater Homeland changed forever and that it will not go back to the past."

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