

# *Pope Francis Hopes Cuba-U.S. Relations Come to Fruition*

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Washington, September 23 (RHC)-- Pope Francis has called the U.S. blockade of Cuba by its name -- a "blockade." According to CubaDebate, this the first time in 17 years that a Pope has not called the blockade "an embargo."

The statement was made aboard the Alitalia flight that took him from Santiago de Cuba to Andrews Air Force Base in Washington, DC, where he was welcomed by U.S. President Barack Obama.

CubaDebate had the privilege of asking the first of seven questions on-board the flight to the United States. Pope Francis said he will urge the U.S. Congress to reach a bi-national understanding "as a sign of progress in coexistence" and will not mention the blockade directly, although he stated the traditional position of the Holy See in this regard, which is opposed not only to this one but also to "other cases of blockades."

The Supreme Pontiff also acknowledged that he is "happy for having met the Cuban people, the Cuban Christian communities" and said that "the meeting with families at the Santiago Cathedral was very nice, very beautiful."

He gave details of his meeting with Fidel in Havana and said that the Cuban leader was very interested by the Pope's Encyclical "Laudato Si," where Pope Francis calls for justice for the needy and encourages the

implementation of the famous "comprehensive ecology."

During the flight, which lasted about three hours, journalists transcribed and translated the entire press conference, in which Pope Francis replied in English and occasionally in Italian.

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