

# Cuban Embassy: Obama can annul key aspects of blockade

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- It is in the gift of US president Barack Obama to annul the key components of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba, according to the general director of the United States Department at Cuba's Foreign Ministry, [Josefina](#) Vidal.

Sanctions were still in force, the only new elements being the modifications that came into force on January 16 introduced by the departments of treasury and trade, said Vidal on Cuban television.

But the modifications which had been approved made the current prohibitions on travels to Cuba imposed on US citizens more flexible, she added.

These changes will also allow certain commercial transactions, mainly in the field of telecommunications, and the possibility for US financial institutions to start up operations in Cuba. However, the ban on Cuba to use the US dollar in transactions with other countries, something that the resident of the White House can revert if he has the political will to do so, is still in force, Vidal pointed out.

In general, President Obama can "bury the fundamental parts of the blockade" by using his executive powers, she added.

Vidal noted that only a small number of issues are ruled by laws approved by Congress, like the prohibition for US citizens to travel to Cuba.

The president cannot allow Cuba to carry out transactions with US companies in third countries either, although he can authorize links between Cuban companies and corporations based on US territory, she noted.

In addition, the president does not have the legal authority to allow US financial institutions to grant credits to their Cuban counterparts to acquire products or services, as payments must be made in cash and in advance.

Regarding the Cuban Adjustment Act (CAA), approved by the US Congress in 1966, Vidal noted that it was the main stimulus to illegal emigration to the United States.

She noted that it is impossible to have a normal migration relation between the two countries as long as that legal statute is in force. The same happens with the "dry feet, wet feet" policy, which was not a statute approved by Congress, but a governmental decision made by President William Clinton in 1995.



Director of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs

That policy grants refuge to Cubans who arrive on US soil and repatriates those who are intercepted at sea.

Vidal stated that there is confusion about the implementation of the CAA, as it is a legislative element that grants discretionary faculties to the US attorney general to grant benefits to Cubans or not.

It is not an automatic action, as it has been over the past few decades due to political motivations, the Cuban diplomat pointed out.

Vidal recalled that the so-called Helms-Burton Act, which came into force in 1996, codified all stipulations of the blockade and turned them into a law that can only be changed by the US Congress.

However, that act also grants the president of the United States the facility to authorize by means of licences some possibilities of interrelation with Cuba and that is the case of the recent measures taken to make the ban on US citizens to travel to Cuba more flexible.

Notwithstanding, Obama lacks the legal authority to allow US citizens to visit Cuba as tourists. The official noted the importance of the December 17 2014 decision made by presidents Castro and Obama to reestablish diplomatic relations and advance by a process of normalization of bilateral ties, on the basis of mutual respect and observance of the principles of international law.

Vidal added that it is a long and difficult process, which demands time, effort, work, the solution of complex issues, but the main thing is that it will give the opportunity to improve communication between the two parties, expand cultural exchanges and establish a more positive dynamics in general between the two countries.

She repeated that in these negotiations, the principles on which Cuba's domestic political order is based would not be at stake at all.

However, she pointed out that it is the United States that has to eliminate its negative projections on Cuba, particularly the policy of unilateral sanctions. It is also important to discuss the issue of the US naval base in Guantanamo, in eastern Cuba, which Washington has maintained against the will of the Cuban people and its government.

The radio and TV broadcasts that violate international norms in that field must also be included, among other actions.

Delegations from Cuba and the United States held official talks on January 21 and 22 to discuss issues such as illegal migration and the course to re-establish diplomatic relations and open embassies in the two countries' capitals.

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