

# *Sports: Once again a victim of the U.S. blockade*

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Havana, October 14 (JIT) -- The effects of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. government on sports in Cuba continue to be innumerable.

This Friday, in a press conference, examples ranging from the impossibility of accessing the prizes won by athletes to the obstacles to finance the importation of essential supplies for development from the grassroots to high performance were exposed.

Raúl Fornés Valenciano, first vice-president of Inder, recalled the harmfulness of this extraterritorial policy, which violates the most elementary rights of our country and prevents the development strategy defended by society.

"Once again we expose Cuba's reasons to demand the cessation of the economic, commercial and financial blockade, especially because of the affectations it generates for the development of the sports system," the executive assured before detailing some details of those damages.

"Due to its many expressions in areas such as high performance, insurance, contracting of services and physical activity for all, only between March 2022 and February 2023 Cuban sports suffered damages amounting to more than 850 thousand dollars," he said.

"Even so, we continue to make progress and we continue to bet on sustaining the results we have historically achieved, but unquestionably the blockade has been an obstacle that prevents us from implementing the designed strategy," Fornés Valenciano added.

The impossibility of importing a court for the practice of American-made 3x3 basketball, the cancelled agreement with Major League Baseball (MLB) and the limitations of the national federations to be able to make their membership payments were also mentioned as realities that have an impact on the sector.

There were references during the meeting to the limitations in the scientific and educational fields, in addition to the moral cost implied by the genocidal policy that encourages the abandonment of national teams as one of the requirements to be able to access some leagues in the world, especially the American MLB.

For Ariel Sainz, vice president of Inder and head of the Cuban Volleyball Federation, it is clear that his sport could have much more development if it could perform on equal terms with the rest of the entities in the world.

"We have withheld thousands of dollars earned for prizes or professional services for our athletes, teams and referees. We have not even been able to reach agreements with the international federation to make payments to third parties," he explained.

As concrete cases he mentioned the debts with the referees Ricardo Borroto and Lourdes Perez, with accounts amounting to more than 16 thousand dollars each; and those contracted with beach volleyball players who participate in world pro tour tournaments.

"It happens that then, looking for an alternative way, the athletes request their discharge from the Cuban team, they settle in a country with a temporary residence, make their bank account and can receive the funds, but the damage is already irreversible, because they have already caused their discharge," he lamented.

"This is a latent phenomenon that limits other projects and not only economic, because let's remember that the United States is promoting pro volleyball, a modality of professional volleyball in which many of the world's stars in the women's sector participate and ours cannot be inserted," said Saínz.

Yilian Fernández, economic director of Sociedad Mercantil Cubadeportes S.A., the entity in charge of the commercialization of the sector in the Greater Antilles, focused her explanation on the difficulty of receiving and sending funds by transfers.

"The mere fact that the word Cuba appears in any transfer, Ofac activates the mechanisms so that those funds cannot reach the country", Yilian recalled as the main damage on this activity.

The suspension of 15 training bases so far this year and the payment of services abroad add to the long list of effects of the unilateral policy, whose negative impact on the Cuban economy and population is widely rejected year after year at the UN by the international community.



**Radio Habana Cuba**