

Barack Obama to Announce New Executive Measures to Improve Relations with Cuba



Washington, December 19 (RHC) -- U.S. President Barack Obama will announce new executive measures next month aimed at improving relations with Cuba, according to White House officials cited by The New York Times.

The measures will ease the economic blockade imposed on the island since 1962, according to the sources. The White House officials said that Obama will use his executive power to lift the Cuba travel ban, and re-establish trade and financial activity.

Obama's measures are only the beginning of what some White House officials and foreign policy experts describe as a large agenda of change, which the president can implement to improve commercial and diplomatic links with Havana.

The U.S. Department of the Treasury will issue a series of regulations to facilitate agricultural exports to Cuba and establish banking relations, while the Department of Commerce will favor actions for U.S. companies to export construction and telecommunication equipment, among other investment.

The New York Times also confirmed that the State Department began a revision that could withdraw Cuba from the list of states sponsors of international terrorism.

Late in January, high-level U.S. State Department officials will come to Cuba to discuss the reestablishment of diplomatic relations and migration issues.

Other measures aimed at lifting obstacles hindering travel to Cuba of U.S. citizens and their financial transactions on the island. The Office of Foreign Assets Control will reportedly eliminate the special licenses required by U.S. citizens eligible to make family visits in Cuba, professional, religious, cultural or humanitarian programs on the island. And the amount of remittances will be increased from 500 to 2,000 dollars per quarter.

Many of these measures by Obama constitute a clear defiance to his opponents in Congress with regards to the Cuba issue.

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