

# *Cuban President Raul Castro Meets with Visiting Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan*

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Havana, February 11 (RHC) — Cuban President Raul Castro has met with his visiting Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The Turkish leader arrived in Havana last night to begin an official visit to the island.

Erdogan's trip is part of a wider regional tour that includes stops in Colombia and Mexico. He is being accompanied by Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock Mehdi Eker, Minister of Culture and tourism Ömer Çelik and Minister of Economy Nihat Zeybekçi.

It's the first visit to the region by a sitting Turkish president since 1995, according to a statement from the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. With this official visit, Turkey is reiterating its strong interest in the Caribbean region.

In July 2014, the country announced what it called a "clear and long-term engagement" to strengthen its Caribbean ties. That included a proposal to establish a joint chancery for the common use of CARICOM members to establish diplomatic representation in the country's capital, Ankara.

Last year, the country also expanded its partnership with the Caribbean, with moves including a \$2.1 million grant to the government of Antigua and Barbuda, a series of cooperation agreements with the Dominican Republic and, on a smaller side, the donation of laptops to Dominica's Ministry of Agriculture.

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