

# *Cuba strongly rejects new aggressive escalation by the US*

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Statement by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued on March 4, 2019 follows:

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejects in the strongest terms the new escalation in the aggressive conduct of the United States against Cuba.

The State Department today announced the decision to allow, as of March 19 and pursuant to Title III of the Helms Burton Act, legal actions in the courts of the United States only against Cuban companies included in the List of Cuban Restricted Entities elaborated by that government in November of 2017 and updated one year later. This arbitrary and illegitimate list, aimed at intensifying the blockade and extending its extraterritorial effects, prohibits US citizens from conducting direct financial transactions with the aforementioned entities.

The announcement by the State Department also indicated that it would suspend for only 30 days the possibility of initiating legal proceedings for the same concept against other Cuban or foreign entities with commercial or economic ties in Cuba.

Since its entry into force in 1996, the Helms-Burton Act has sought to universalize the economic blockade, through brutal and illegal US pressure on third countries, their governments and their companies. It seeks to suffocate the Cuban economy, and to promote or increase the shortcomings of the population with the purpose of imposing a government in Cuba that responds to the interests of the United States.

Because of their illegitimate and contrary claims to International Law, the Helms Burton Law and the blockade attract universal rejection, reiterated for almost three decades, in the most important regional and international organizations. The most recent example was the General Assembly of the United Nations when, on November 1, it received ten consecutive votes of rejection, in which the government of the United States was in absolute isolation.

Title II of the Helms Burton Act provides that the overthrow of the revolutionary government, the subsequent guardianship of the country by a US Comptroller and the subsequent establishment of a counter-revolutionary government subordinated to Washington would have as unequivocal task the return or payment to the former owners of all properties that are claimed by former owners or their descendants, whether or not they were US citizens at the time of nationalization or that they abandoned them. Throughout that period, the economic blockade would remain in full force.

Therefore, Cubans would be obligated to return, restitute or pay claimants from the United States for the house where they live, the land where their communities are built, the agricultural land where they grow and produce, the school where their children are educated, the hospital or the polyclinic where they receive medical services, where their work center is, where they have a private business, in addition to the electricity, water and subsidized communications services that the population enjoys.

It is a pretense only conceivable in the minds of those who identify Cuba as a colonial possession. According to the Helms-Burton law, the economic blockade could only be lifted once that ambition has been achieved.

This law rests on two fundamental lies: the notion that the nationalizations carried out shortly after the revolutionary triumph were illegitimate or improper and that Cuba constitutes a threat to the national security of the United States.

The Cuban nationalizations were carried out under the protection of laws, with strict adherence to the Constitution and in accordance with International Law. All the nationalizations contemplated processes of fair and adequate compensation that the government of the United States refused to consider. Cuba reached and honored global compensation agreements with other nations that today invest in Cuba such as Spain, Switzerland, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany and France.

The real threat to the peace and security of the region are the irresponsible declarations and actions of the United States government and the destabilizing plans against Latin America and the Caribbean in the declared desire to impose the Monroe Doctrine.

The Law of Reaffirmation of Cuban Dignity and Sovereignty of December 24, 1996, establishes that the Helms Burton Act is unlawful, unenforceable and without any legal value or effect. It considers null any claim protected by said law, by any natural or legal person.

As stipulated in that law, compensation claims for nationalized properties may be part of a negotiation process based on equality and mutual respect between the governments of Cuba and the United States, "examined in conjunction with the compensations to which the Cuban State and the people have the right because of the damages caused by the blockade and the aggressions of all kinds whose responsibility corresponds to the government of the United States." It clarifies, at the same time, that anyone who uses the procedures and mechanisms of the Helms Burton Act to the detriment of others will be excluded from future possible negotiations.

The Cuban government reiterates to the economic partners and foreign companies operating in Cuba all guarantees for foreign investment and joint projects. The Cuban Constitution, ratified by a large majority in referendum on February 24, 2019, in article 28 also recognizes those guarantees, incorporated in the Foreign Investment Law No. 118 of March 29, 2014.

Today's decision imposes additional obstacles to our goals of economic development and progress, but the United States will continue to fail in its central objective of forcibly subduing the sovereign will of Cubans and our determination to build socialism. The majority sentiment of the peoples of Cuba and the United States that favor the improvement of relations and the development of a civilized and respectful coexistence will prevail.

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