
The recent reduction of certain restrictions in the 48-year-old U.S. embargo against Cuba has allowed



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educational exchanges and even some elements of marketing trips. In this sense the Obama administration took a first step on April 13, 2009, when President Obama announced an increased allowance for U.S. telecommunications companies to establish licensing agreements to allow roaming coverage on the island and establish a fiberoptic cable to Cuba, with the stated purpose of helping Cubans communicate with the rest of the world. However, according to Sabatini, it turned out that despite the fanfare, the regulations that came out of the U.S. bureaucracy five months later did little realistically to allow U.S. companies to establish the necessary and sufficient links to allow broad communication between Cubans and the rest of the world. For instance, in his announcement, President Obama called for the establishment of a fiberoptic cable linking Cuba to the outside world. However, regulations prohibiting U.S. equipment transfers or sales to the island for commercial purposes persist. Similarly, the regulations continued to prevent the sale of handsets on the island for commercial purposes and blocks infrastructure investments such as cell phone towers, routers, and switchers. All of these sorts of now-prohibited equipment is essential if there is to be any meaningful broad-based access to the tools of communication.

Sabatini contended that other stated goals of the Obama administration have suffered a similar fate, yet he also claimed this does not mean all is lost. In his view President Obama just needs to take the next step: with the stroke of the executive pen he can introduce regulatory modifications that can allow the federal bureaucracy to meet his stated goals regarding Cuba.

Regardless of the U.S. government's actions, a post-embargo, post-Castro Cuba does not necessarily



gas undiscovered reserves, will the Cuban people have the economic independence needed in order to consider a political and economic evolution.

A Cuban government influenced by its energy benefactors would most likely result in a continuation of the current political and economic model. If Cuba's future leaders are unable to fill the power vacuum left by the departure of the old cadre, they could become pawns of illicit business activities and drug cartels, and the United States could face a mass illegal immigration by hundreds of thousands of Cubans.

With the help on international oil companies such as Spain's Repsol, Norway's Statoil Hydro, Venezuela's PDVSA, and Brazil's Petrobras among others, Cuba is investing in oil production and refining infrastructure. Italian energy conglomerate

Although potential U.S. visitors to Cuba would bring money that would unfortunately help the Cuban regime, Cuba's dollar-deficit means that much of this money will return back to the United States in the form of agricultural purchases.

Similarly, the U.S. tourism industry would like to see changes to the U.S. embargo against Cuba, stated the National Tour Association's Public Affairs Advocate **Steve Richer**. An end to travel restrictions could lead to a surge in up to 1 million U.S. visitors to the island, by some estimates. Indeed, President Obama's recent easing of travel restrictions for Cuban Americans has led to an estimated 20 percent increase in U.S. travel to Cuba in the past year through the seven officially authorized Cuba tour operators. Yet many people are deliberately testing the administration's position



politically in the island. Canada is Cuba's largest source of tourism revenue and it sends the largest number of tourists. Considering that Canada is a

According to Sánchez, one of the main reasons for the establishment of the U.S. embargo against Cuba was neither Cold War calculations nor Cuban Americans' angst. Rather, it was the fact that the Cuban regime had expropriated assets belonging to U.S. businesses and citizens. Additionally, while the embargo became law in 1962, it can be said to only have truly begun in 1992. Up until President George H.W. Bush signed the Cuban Democracy Act in 1992, foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies (such as Coca-Cola México, for example) were allowed to do business with Cuba. On top of this, with the Soviet Union as its benefactor, Cuba was receiving over USD \$6 billion in aid per annum throughout this period. Sánchez proposed that if one thinks of the embargo as effectively beginning in 1992, then it has actually been quite successful. From 1992 until 2000—when Cuba located another foreign benefactor—the regime was forced to make positive changes: the economy was dollarized, assets were sold off, and foreign investment was pursued. This is not to say that the embargo's status quo is preferable, but just that



