

ECONOMIC EMBARGO TIMELINE

"For the thing we should never do in dealing with revolutionary countries, in which the world abounds, is to push them behind an iron curtain raised by ourselves. On the contrary, even when they have been seduced and subverted and are drawn across the line, the right thing to do is to keep the way open for their return."

Walter Lippmann, July 1959

1960



March 17. President **Eisenhower approves a covert action plan against Cuba** that includes the use of a "powerful propaganda campaign" designed to overthrow Castro. The plan includes: a) the termination of sugar purchases b) the end of oil deliveries c) continuation of the arms embargo in effect since mid-1958 d) the organization of a paramilitary force of Cuban exiles to invade the island.

October 19. U.S. imposes **a partial economic embargo** on Cuba that excludes food and medicine.

1961

September 4. The *Foreign Assistance Act* of 1961 passes in the U.S. Congress. It prohibits aid to Cuba and authorizes the President to create a "total embargo upon all trade" with Cuba.

1962

February 7. President **Kennedy broadens the partial trade restrictions** imposed by Eisenhower to a ban on all trade with Cuba, except for non-subsidized sale of foods and medicines.

March 23. President **Kennedy expands the Cuban embargo** to include imports of all goods made from or containing Cuban materials, even if made in other countries.

August 1. The *Foreign Assistance Act* is amended to

prohibit aid to "any country" that provides assistance to Cuba.

October 2. The U.S. government cables all Latin American governments and NATO countries new measures to tighten the economic embargo against Cuba. As of today, the transport of U.S. good is banned on ships owned by companies that do business with Cuba.

1963

February 8. The Kennedy administration **prohibits travel to Cuba** and makes financial and **commercial transactions with Cuba illegal for U.S. citizens.**

May 14. The U.S. Department of Commerce announces the requirement of specific approval for exports of all food and medicine to Cuba.

November 17. President Kennedy asks French journalist Jean Daniel to tell Castro that he is now ready to negotiate normal relations and drop the embargo. According to former Press Secretary *Pierre Salinger*, "If Kennedy had lived I am confident that he would have negotiated that agreement and dropped the embargo because he was upset with the way the Soviet Union was playing a strong role in Cuba and Latin America.."

December. The Foreign Assistance Act is amended to prohibit U.S. aid to countries that continue to trade with Cuba.

December 12. Less than one month after President John F. Kennedy's assassination, U.S. Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy seeks to end the travel ban to Cuba in a memo to Secretary of State Dean Rusk. He refers to the ban as "inconsistent with traditional American liberties," and difficult to enforce. The memo is not released to the public until June 29 2005.

December 13. Robert F. Kennedy's memo of December 12 is discussed at a State Department meeting (to which RFK is not invited) and Undersecretary of State George Ball rules out the possibility of ending the travel ban to Cuba. [The ban continues until 1977 when the Carter Administration opens travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens. The Reagan Administration reinstates the ban in 1981.]

1964

July 26. The Organization of American States (OAS) adopts mandatory sanctions against Cuba, requiring all members to sever diplomatic and trade relations. Only

Mexico refuses to comply.

1975

February 9. In a TV interview from Mexico City, U.S. Senator Edward M. Kennedy urges the U.S. government to lift the embargo and normalize relations with Cuba. "I believe the idea of isolating Cuba was a mistake," says Kennedy. "It has been ineffective. Whatever the reasons and justifications may have been at the time, now they are invalid."

July 28. The Organization of American States (**OAS**) **votes to end political and economic sanctions against Cuba.** This opens the way for each member nation to decide whether to have diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba, which many had already established.

August 21. The U.S. announces that it will allow foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies to sell products in Cuba, and that it would no longer penalize other nations for trade with Cuba.

November 15. In Washington, Representative John B. Breaux and senator J. Bennett Johnston Jr., Democrats from Louisiana, argue that it is in the national interest for Louisiana to be allowed to sell rice to Cuba. Mr. Breaux is quoted in the New York Times: "...my constituents say that if the United States can sell grain to the Soviet Union and China, why can't they sell rice to Cuba?"

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1976

April 5. U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger states that there is no possibility of U.S. relations with Cuba while Cuban troops are in Africa.

1977



March 19. U.S. President Carter drops the ban on travel to Cuba and on U.S. citizens spending dollars in Cuba.

Wayne Smith, Director of Cuban Affairs at the Department of State under Jimmy Carter: "There were three major fields or issues that had to be addressed before there could be a substantial improvement in relations. Number one: Cuban troops had to begin to leave Africa. Number two:

There had to be some improvement in Cuba's human rights performance, and specially in terms of releasing political prisoners. And number three: A reduction in Soviet-Cuban military ties." - From the book: "Cuba, Voices of Change," by Lynn Geldof.

May 25. The U.S. State Department warns that Cuba's recent deployment of military advisors in Ethiopia could "impede the improvement of U.S.-Cuban relations."

1978

February 27. U.S. Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, states that he does not foresee the normalization of relations with Cuba due to the presence of Cuban troops in Africa.

The Carter Administration relaxes laws to allow U.S. residents to send money to relatives in Cuba.

1979

January 1. Cuban-Americans are permitted to visit their families in Cuba. More than 100,000 visit in the coming year.

June 19. In the U.S., Rep. Ted Weiss (D-NY) introduces unsuccessful legislation to end the U.S. trade blockade against Cuba and re-establish diplomatic relations.

1981

January. **Ronald Reagan** is inaugurated as U.S. President, and institutes the most hostile policy against Cuba since the invasion at Bay of Pigs. Despite conciliatory signals from Cuba, the new U.S. administration announces a tightening of the embargo.

1982

April 19. The Reagan Administration reestablishes the travel ban, prohibits U.S. citizens from spending money in Cuba, and allows the 1977 fishing accord to lapse.

1985

October 4. U.S. President Reagan bans travel to the U.S. by Cuban government or Communist Party officials or their representatives. It also bars most students, scholars, and artists.

1989

November 20. According to new regulations by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba can only spend a maximum of \$100 per day.

1990

October. In alliance with conservative Republicans, Cuban émigrés and the U.S. Congress pass the **Mack Amendment**, which prohibits all trade with Cuba by subsidiaries of U.S. companies located outside the U.S., and proposes sanctions or cessation of aid to any country that buys sugar or other products from Cuba.

1992

February 5. U.S. Congressman Robert Torricelli introduces the Cuban Democracy Act, and says **the bill is designed to "wreak havoc on the island."**

June 15. From an editorial in the NY Times: "...This misnamed act (the Cuban Democracy Act) is dubious in theory, cruel in its potential practice and ignoble in its election-year expediency... An influential faction of the Cuban American community clamors for sticking it to a wounded regime... There is, finally, something indecent about vociferous exiles living safely in Miami prescribing more pain for their poorer cousins."

October 15. U.S. Congress passes the Cuban Democracy Act, which prohibits foreign-based subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba, travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens, and family remittances to Cuba. The law allows private groups to deliver food and medicine to Cuba. (At this time, 70% of Cuba's trade with U.S. subsidiary companies was in food and medicine. Many claim the Cuban Democracy Act is in violation of international law and United Nations resolutions that food and medicine cannot be used as weapons in international conflicts.)

October 23. President Bush signs the Cuban Democracy Act into law. Congressman Torricelli says that it will bring down Castro "within weeks."

November 24. The United Nations General Assembly votes heavily in favor of a measure introduced by Cuba asking for an end to the U.S. Embargo. The vote is 59 in favor, 3 against (the U.S., Israel and Romania), and 79 abstentions. State Department spokesman Joe Snyder in the LA Times; "The Cuban government, in violation of international law, expropriated billions of dollars worth of private property belonging to U.S. individuals and has refused to make reasonable restitution. The U.S. embargo - and I point out it's not a blockade - is therefore a legitimate response to the unreasonable and illegal behavior of the Cuban government."

1994

October 26. For the 3rd year in a row, the United

1994

Nations General Assembly votes overwhelmingly for a measure to end the U.S. Embargo of Cuba. The vote is 101-2, with 48 abstentions, and only Israel votes with the U.S.

1995

October 5. The Clinton Administration announces a new people-to-people-contact plan.

November 2. The United Nations general assembly recommends an end to the embargo (for the fourth consecutive year) by a vote of 117 to 3 (38 abstentions). Only Israel and Uzbekistan join the U.S. in saying no. Since then, **each time the vote comes up at the UN, the number of nations voting against the embargo increases.**

1996

March 12. President Clinton signs the *Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act* (also known as the Helms-Burton Act) which imposes penalties on foreign companies doing business in Cuba, permits U.S. citizens to sue foreign investors who make use of American-owned property seized by the Cuban government, and denies entry into the U.S. to such foreign investors.

July 16. President Clinton suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

November 12. By a vote of 137 to 3, the United Nations General Assembly recommends, for the 5th consecutive year, that the U.S. end the embargo against Cuba.

1997

January 3. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

February 12. The Clinton Administration approves licenses for U.S. news organizations to open bureaus in Cuba. (The Cuban government allows only CNN into the island.)

July 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

November 5. For the 6th straight year, the U.N. General Assembly passes a resolution to end the Cuban embargo. The vote is 143 to 3.

1998

January. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

March 20. U.S. regulations on Cuba are amended as follows:

- U.S. citizens may send up to \$1,200 annually to relatives in Cuba.
- Direct passenger flights are permitted.

July 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

October 16. The United Nations General Assembly adopts a resolution against the U.S. embargo on Cuba for the 7th consecutive year. The vote is 157 to end the embargo and 2 (U.S. & Israel) to keep it.

1999

January 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

February 18. Six members of the U.S. Congressional Black Caucus visit Cuba to evaluate the U.S.-imposed embargo. Among the visitors: Maxine Waters and Barbara Lee of California, Sheila Jackson-Lee of Texas, Julia Carson of Indiana and others.

February 23. The coalition of Americans for Humanitarian Trade With Cuba join the United States Association of Former Members of Congress to call on the Clinton administration to end the embargo on food and medicines to Cuba. "The U.S. embargo on Cuba is the single most restrictive policy of its kind. Even Iraq is able to buy food and medicine from U.S. sources," says George Fernandez, Executive Director at AHTC. "As a Cuban American, I speak for **the vast majority of us who do not think the U.S. should be in the business of denying basic sustenance to families and children** in Cuba."

July 16. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

November 9. A resolution is passed in the United Nations General Assembly on the need to end the U.S. embargo against Cuba. The vote is 155 in favor and 2 against (U.S. and Israel). This is the 8th time in as many years that the resolution is passed.

2000

January 15. President Clinton again suspends enforcement of Title III provisions of the *Helms-Burton Act*.

November 29. A 23-member task force in the U.S., made up of liberals and conservatives, calls for an end to the

embargo to "help the island's transition to a post-Castro era and reduce the chances of U.S. military intervention."

2001

April 18. In Washington, the Cuba Policy Foundation releases **a poll in which a majority of Americans are said to support the idea of doing business with Cuba** and allowing travel to the island. Most agree with the decision to reunite Elián González with his father in Cuba.

November 28. For the 10th consecutive time the United Nations votes to condemn the 4-decade-old trade embargo by a vote of 167 to 3, with three nations abstaining. Voting for the embargo: U.S., Israel and the Marshall Islands.

2002

July 23. In Washington, the US House of Representatives votes 262 to 167 to end the travel ban and allow the sale of American goods to Cuba. 73 Republicans vote against the embargo.

July 28. From an editorial in the *New York Daily News*: "...slowly but surely, the tide is turning in favor of lifting travel and trade sanctions against Cuba. More and more Republicans are not willing to let the larger interests of the U.S. and their own constituents be sacrificed to the gods of electoral politics." As Rep. Jeff Flake, the Arizona Republican who led the effort to repeal the travel ban, said: "This is all about freedom. Our government shouldn't tell us where to travel and where not to travel."

July 29. From an editorial in the *Boston Herald*: "The more travelers there are (to Cuba) the more the truth will spread, and that can only help the transition of Cuba out of tyranny when the tyrant dies."

August 7. In Washington, House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Texas) says the U.S. should open trade with Cuba.

August 7. From an editorial in the *Boston Globe*: "As for human rights, opening travel and trade to the island would improve the monitoring of human rights abuses and expose more Cubans to American values. Bush ought to put the interests of both Cubans and Americans before his domestic political needs."

2003

September 30. The U.S. Treasury Department's Office for Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) passes a regulation that bans publication of scientific articles from regimes subject to sanctions by the U.S. government, as is Cuba. (The measure is repealed on April 5, 2004)

October 10. U.S. President George W. Bush establishes the Committee for assistance to a Free Cuba, and further enforces the ban on travel to the island.

October 24. The U.S. Senate votes (59 to 36) in favor of lifting the ban on travel to Cuba. The result is similar to a vote at the House of Representatives last month. This is a major "rebuff" of President Bush's policy towards Cuba. (The travel ban was introduced by President John F. Kennedy in 1963.)

November 4. The UN General Assembly votes overwhelmingly against the U.S. economic embargo of Cuba for the 12th consecutive year. Only 3 nations vote for the embargo: the U.S., Israel and the Marshall Islands.

2004

February 26. U.S. President Bush signs Presidential Proclamation 7757, which bans vessels from traveling to Cuban ports from U.S. ports.

April 30. According to a letter sent by the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) to the U.S. Congress late last year (and now provided to the Associated Press) the Treasury Department had 4 full-time employees dedicated to investigating Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, and over 2 dozen assigned to investigating Cuban Embargo violations.

The letter reveals that over \$8 million were collected in embargo violation fines since 1994, and over 10,683 "enforcement investigations" opened since 1990. Relating to terrorism, the OFAC opened 93 "enforcement investigations" between 1990 and 2003.

October 28. For the 13th consecutive year, the UN General Assembly votes overwhelmingly against the U.S. embargo on Cuba. The vote is 179 to 4, with 1 abstention. Voting with the U.S. for the embargo are Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands. In the only speech loudly applauded on the assembly floor, Cuba's Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roughe states: "The U.S. government has unleashed a world wide genocidal economic war against Cuba. It is the government of a large and mighty empire, but it is afraid of the example of a small rebellious island."

December 16. A number of U.S. lawmakers and food firms meet in Havana. By the end of the week, Cuba has agreed to purchase about \$125 million in farm goods from U.S. companies.

2005

June 21. The U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee approves an amendment that rolls back a rule issued by the Treasury Department last February that requires that Cuba pay for food imports from the U.S. before they leave port. The full House and Senate must approve the amendment before it becomes law.

June 29. The National Security Archive releases a memo written by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy on December 12 1963 (less than a month after President Kennedy's assassination), in which he seeks to lift the travel ban to Cuba. He refers to the ban as "inconsistent with traditional American liberties." Also released is a memo about a December 13 1963 meeting at the State Department (to which Kennedy was not invited), in which Undersecretary of State George Ball rules out the possibility of ending the travel ban.

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