

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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CUBA POLICY

EASING EMBARGO ON CUBA A PROPAGANDA VICTORY FOR CASTRO,
UNDERMINES SUPPORTERS OF DEMOCRATIC CHANGE:
INCREASES URGENCY FOR "CUBAN LIBERTY & DEMOCRATIC SOLIDARITY ACT"

WASHINGTON -- Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole today issued the following statement regarding President Clinton's announcement on policy towards Cuba:

"Fidel Castro refuses to change but, once again, President Clinton has changed U.S. policy toward Cuba. At a time when strong bipartisan majorities in both houses of Congress support tougher measures to support democracy in Cuba, President Clinton has unilaterally decided to ease the 30 year old U.S. embargo by relaxing travel restrictions. The Clinton Administration has many advisers who favor normalizing relations with Cuba. Apparently their views persuaded the President to ignore the wishes of Congress. Today's decision makes it even more imperative that the Senate act on the 'Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1995.'

"Outside of giving a propaganda victory to Fidel Castro, it is difficult to see why President Clinton would take these steps. Educational, research and family travel to Cuba have been allowed for years, and have been routinely approved, but to grant a blank check may very well be the end of the travel embargo.

"U.S. news organizations such as CNN and Associated Press have been able to operate in Cuba for years. It is difficult to understand why the President would now allow Cuban government propagandists masquerading as 'journalists' to open shop in the United States. There has been no agreement over ending the Castro dictatorship's effort to prevent free information from reaching the Cuban people -- Radio and TV Marti will still be jammed. This is a classic example of giving up something for nothing.

"The White House announcement claims that enforcement of the embargo will be increased. The embargo against Cuba has been the law of the land since President Clinton came into office. It should not be news that the U.S. law will be enforced. If President Clinton is serious about enforcing the embargo he should immediately open a Treasury Department Office of Foreign Assets Control office in Miami where most violations occur. Giving the enforcement arm of the U.S. government the tools to do its job on the scene would genuinely increase embargo enforcement.

"Today's announcement about easing the embargo on Cuba is the latest in a pattern of decisions by the Clinton Administration which could have the effect of delaying real change in Cuba. Last year's secret negotiations and the resulting deal with Castro to repatriate freedom-seeking Cubans was the first. The veto threats on the legislation to strengthen the Cuban embargo earlier this year were the second. An apparent decision to grant Fidel Castro permission to travel to the United States is the third. And today, news reports indicate the Clinton Administration allowed a U.S. business delegation to travel to Cuba even though they have nothing to do with educational exchanges. Prolonging the Castro dictatorship is, unfortunately, the likely result of these decisions. President Clinton cannot have it both ways -- by continuing to heed the voices of normalization in his administration, he has undermined the supporters of democratic change in Cuba."