

CUBA IN THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

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Abstract

This research compiles the Cuba related activities that took place in the US Congress from January 1st to June 30th, 2024. It includes Resolutions, Bills, Hearings and Statements, Communiques, et al. During the six-month period under analysis, the extreme political polarization that afflicts the country continued to be present, and was particularly critical in Congress resulting in a low legislative output. In the case of Cuba, with the exception of bills relating to the adoption of budgets, none of the other bills were presented for discussion in the plenary sessions of both chambers. However, the topic of Declarations, Communiqués, etc., was well covered, especially due to the intense work by members of Congress of Cuban origin.

Key words

Congress Senate House of Representatives Democrat Republican Cuba Resolutions Bills Hearings Statements communications President Administration senator congressman representative Florida Cuban.

Introduction

This paper compiles the activities on Cuba that took place in the United States Congress during the first half of 2024. During this period, the strong political polarization that divides the country between liberals and moderates grouped in the Democratic Party on the one hand, and conservatives and ultraconservatives concentrated in the Republican Party on the other, has been ever-present. This extreme polarization is especially critical in Congress, resulting in low legislative output.

The policy that the Biden administration has applied towards the Island during the three and a half years in the White House, essentially maintains that of its predecessor, with the exception of a few flexibilities. These are related to flights to other provinces of the country, the elimination of obstacles imposed on remittances, the authorization of some categories of travel by Americans to the Island, and two others aimed exclusively at the private sector: the granting of permits for the import of some articles and the possibility- yet to be specified- of carrying out financial transactions with U.S. banks.

With the lukewarm disposition of the Executive, a Senate with a one-seat Democratic majority but subject to filibustering, and a Republican-controlled House of Representatives, little could be done by legislators interested in changing the current state of affairs between Cuba and the United States. Any move intended to improve relations would be doomed to failure.

The recent conclusions of their terms in Congress of some senators who used to work in favor of the normalization of relations with Cuba has also had an influence in this regard.

Attempts by some representatives, especially Floridians of Cuban parents Marco Rubio, Mario Diaz-Balart, Maria Elvira Salazar and Carlos Gimenez, and Rick Scott, also a Republican from the same state, to pass legislation aimed at toughening policies and sanctions, have also failed, with the exception of those that contemplate aspects intended to expand funds for subversive activities, and others, also of a harmful nature, which are included in the budget appropriations programs. This is typically shown in the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Bill, introduced on June 3 of this year in the House Appropriations Committee and approved by the full House on the 28th of the same month.

The Cuban related congressmen and Scott, who are the most constant and obstinate enemies of the island within the U.S. Congress, increased their accusations regarding human rights violations and the lack of democracy in the island after the events of July 11, 2021 and the sanctions imposed on those who, on that day and at later times, carried out actions that violated the law.

Biden's tenuous measures aimed at relaxing some policies, especially the one introduced in May of this year to remove Cuba from the list of countries that do not collaborate in the fight against terrorism, have also caused a reaction in these sectors. Their attacks on the island have increased as well as criticism and warnings to the Biden administration, fearing that more such relaxations will

take place, especially that Cuba will be removed from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

Senator Bob Menendez has been particularly harmful to Cuba because of his position at the head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, until his resignation as a result of the judicial process initiated against him for corruption. The possibilities that this position allows to pressure the Administration on some issues of great interest to the Executive are considerable, something that the senator expressed very clearly when he told the president “if you want my support, I do not want you to make any political change in relation to Cuba without consulting me”.¹

Let us review some of the events that have taken place in the 118th Congress of the United States in relation to Cuba in the course of the First Semester of the present year 2024. These will be divided into three groups: Bills and Resolutions; Hearings; and Statements, Communiqués, etc., both in the Senate and in the House of Representatives. Regarding Bills and Resolutions, and also the Hearings, practically all of them have been compiled, which is something impossible in the case of Statements, Communiqués, etc., which are countless, mainly due to the thousands of tweets from congressmen. However a few that are considered important are included and serve to give a general idea of how things went down.

Bills and Resolutions

a) Senate

On February 9, Senator Kyrsten Sinema introduced amendment SA 1572, intended to modify amendment SA 1388 proposed by Senator Murray on behalf of herself and Senator Schumer to H.R. 815, amending title 38, United States Code, to make certain improvements to the eligibility of veterans to receive reimbursement for emergency treatment provided through the veterans organizations for other purposes. One of its paragraphs mentions the fact that it does not apply to Cuban nationals subject to the Cuban Adjustment Act.

On February 28, Senator Marco Rubio's website announced that he and Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA) had introduced a bill aimed at modernizing diplomatic security operations, something that has not been done since 1985. The bill known as the Diplomatic Security Modernization Act, would modernize existing D.E. authorities, policies, resources, and operations to meet modern needs. It would also enhance the State Department's Rewards for Justice Program to find individuals who commit major cyber-crimes against the U.S. and those who violate U.S. sanctions. The bill mentions several countries that are adversaries of the U.S., including Cuba.

On February 29, Senator Christopher A. Coons (D-DE, with the support of co-sponsors from both parties, introduced S. Res. 569, recognizing religious

¹Kuttner, Robert. Bob Menéndez and Biden's Cuba Policy, 25/6/24.

freedom as a fundamental right, expressing support for international religious freedom as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy and expressing concern about increasing threats and attacks on religious freedom around the world. Point 4 refers to Cuba, where “the government subjects religious leaders and groups that are not registered with its Office of Religious Affairs to detention, interrogation, imprisonment, and confiscation of property”.

On March 6, Senator Bill Cassidy (R-LA) introduced bill S.3878 called Americas Act. (On the same day, Maria Elvira Salazar and Adriano Espaillat (D-NY) introduce in the House of Representatives the companion bill H.R.7571, also called Americas Act, both bipartisan and virtually identical) The subject matter is Foreign Trade and International Finance. The stated objective is to establish a regional trade, investment, and people-to-people relationship between countries in the Western Hemisphere to stimulate growth and integration through long-term private sector development and for other purposes. One goal of these projects is to counter China's influence in the hemisphere. At times Venezuela and Cuba are also mentioned in negative terms.

On March 21, Democratic Senator John Fetterman introduced the bipartisan S.4020-Banning Oil Exports to Foreign Adversaries Act, which includes Cuba. It refers to oil from the country's Strategic Petroleum Reserve.

On May 16, Senator Christopher Murphy (D-CT) introduced bill S.4361, the Border Act of 2024, which in one of its sections states that natives of Cuba, subject to the Cuban Adjustment Act, do not need to meet certain requirements of the law to be accepted into the country.

On June 5, Senator Marco Rubio, co-sponsored by Republican Senator Rick Scott of Florida, introduced Bill S.4478, which amends Title 49, United States Code, to “prohibit access by individuals from countries sponsoring terrorism to certain areas of airports, and for other purposes.”²

On June 12, Senator Mark Warner (D-VA) introduced S.4443, the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, which mentions Cuba a number of times. It lists several countries under “concerns for the United States” where it includes Cuba along with Russia, China, Iran, Syria, Korea and Venezuela. It also excludes visits by citizens of these countries to certain facilities in the country and requests from the National Intelligence Director information on the economic and security relations of Nicolás Maduro's regime with other countries including Cuba.

b) House of Representatives

On January 10, two new Democratic co-sponsors, Raul Grijalva (AZ) and Henry C. “Hank” Johnson (GA) are added to H.Res. 943 introduced on December 19, 2023 by Nydia Velazquez (D-NY) calling for the repeal of the Monroe Doctrine

² Floridian legislators introduced an identical one in the House

and the development of the “Good Neighbor” policy with a view to improving U.S. relations with its Latin American and Caribbean neighbors.

On February 6, Congressman Mark Alford (R-MO) introduced H.R. 7246, a bill that prohibits citizens of certain countries from acquiring real estate in the United States. Among these are the Cubans.

On Feb. 7, Representatives Brad Wenstrup (R-OH) and Abigail Spanberger (D-VA), joined by other representatives, introduced a bill titled Initiating Imperative Reporting on Anomalous Health Incidents, seeking to have the Secretary of Defense report to Congress and the Senate Armed Services Committee on health incidents also known as Havana Syndrome.

On March 20, the Appropriations Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives released the second package of the appropriations bill for the end of Fiscal Year 2024. It contains several mentions to Cuba introduced in the House bill, granting budget for the acquisition, rental, repairs, etc. of TV equipment, radio, transmitters and receivers. The prohibition of using funds for other purposes such as promotion of business with the private sector and any other purpose other than building democracy in the terms proposed in other bills such as those described in DEMOCRACIA and LIBERTAD Acts (Torricelli and Helms-Burton). Another section demands that the Secretary of State send to Congress a list of the countries that pay Cuba for the “slave trade of doctors”.

Speaking at the Committee, Diaz-Balart said that “the bill increases funding to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba and establishes strict guidelines to ensure that the funds support the democratic opposition.”

On March 28, the House Foreign Affairs Committee voted to include in H.R. 314 Fighting Oppression Until the Reign of Castro Ends Act (FORCE ACT), a new section introduced by Maria Elvira Salazar and 25 co-sponsors that same day. It was approved by 25 votes in favor (24 Republicans and 1 Florida Democrat) and 20 against (all Democrats). It proposes to prohibit the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism until it meets a series of requirements.

On April 9, Rep. Anthony D'Esposito (R-NY) introduced H.Res.1120, “Condemning Joanne Chesimard and those who celebrate her and her actions, and honoring the members of law enforcement killed by her and the groups with which she was associated.” The Resolution says Chesimard is among the FBI's most wanted persons and is a refugee in Cuba. The immediate extradition of the aforementioned convict is also requested of Cuba

On May 7, Rep. Michael T. McCaul (R-Tx) introduced H.Res.579, “condemning the continued acts of repression and human rights violations against the people of Cuba by the Cuban regime, and calling for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained citizens.”

The Resolution calls on the President and the Secretary of State to preserve U.S. leadership on press freedom issues under the First Amendment to the Constitution, conduct a transparent investigation, bring to justice the perpetrators of attacks against journalists, and promote respect for and freedom of the press throughout the world.

On May 28, Rep. John Carter (R-Tx) introduced H.R.8580 Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Appropriations Agencies Act which makes mention of prohibiting the use of funds therein to close or modify facilities at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base.

On June 3, the House Appropriations Committee released the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Bill.³

Among the statements made by some of the Congressmen on the Bill, Tom Cole (R-Ok), Chairman of the Committee, said that the Bill continues to restore U.S. leadership, something that was severely lacking in the last 4 years. The U.S. is a world leader and that should never change

About Cuba:

35 million for democracy programs in Cuba.

Prohibit funding for the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the Eco-Healthy Alliance, any gain-of-function research and laboratories in adversary nations such as China, Iran, Russia, North Korea or Cuba.

Regarding funds allocated for subversive programs in Cuba it says.

Providing, that of the funds allocated under this heading, not less than \$35,000,000 shall be made available to the Office of Broadcasting for Cuba (OCB): Providing further, that funds made available pursuant to the above proviso shall be made available for medium wave and shortwave broadcasting at a level not inferior than fiscal year 2024 and in such a manner as to reach all provinces of Cuba with daily programming:

Providing further, that in addition to the amounts available for such purposes, up to \$75,708,000 of the amount appropriated under this heading may remain available until expended for satellite transmissions, global network distribution, and Internet freedom programs, of which not less than \$43,500,000 shall be for Internet freedom programs:

Providing further, that of the funds appropriated under this title and made available to the Open Technology Fund, not less than \$5,000,000 shall be

³ It is interesting to see how a supposedly technical document has been turned into a political manifest of the most conservative sector (See Annex)

made available for grants for innovative methods of reaching audiences on the Cuba side: Providing further, that such funds shall be in addition to amounts otherwise made available for such purposes. Providing further, that of the funds appropriated under this title and made available to USAGM Networks, not less than \$5,000,000 shall be made available for programming produced about Cuba by OCB, which are in addition to the funds made available to OCB.

Of the funds appropriated by this Act under the heading "Economic Support Fund", not less than \$35,000,000 shall be available to promote democracy and strengthen civil society in Cuba, including support for political prisoners, and shall be administered by the United States Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor of the Department of State: Provided that no funds shall be used for business promotion, economic reform, entrepreneurship, or any other type of assistance other than democracy building, as expressly authorized in the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992.⁴⁴

None of the funds appropriated by this Act in title I and made available for public diplomacy programs may be made available for the promotion of business, economic reform, entrepreneurship, or any other activity or exchange in Cuba, or with Cuban nationals abroad, other than democracy building as expressly authorized in the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. PROHIBITIONS:

(A) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act or prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be used to revoke the designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism.

(B) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act or prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be used to remove or diminish the Cuba Restricted List maintained by the Department of State, or to permit, facilitate, or otherwise encourage financial transactions with entities on the Cuba Restricted List, as well as other entities or individuals within the Cuban military or intelligence services, senior members of the Communist Party, those on leave from the Cuban government, or the immediate family members of these entities or individuals. (e) CUBAN PHYSICIANS.

(1) REPORT - Not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees listing the countries and international organizations of which the Secretary has credible information that are paying directly to the Government of Cuba for the coerced and trafficked labor of Cuban medical

⁴ It is the Helms- Burton and Torricelli Acts.

professionals: Provided, That such report shall be submitted unclassified, but may include a classified annex.

(2) DESIGNATION. --The Secretary of State shall apply the requirements of section 7031(c) of this Act to officials of the countries and organizations identified in the report required under the preceding paragraph.(3) LIMITATION. -(A) None of the funds appropriated by this Act under title III may be made available for assistance to the central government of a country or international organization listed in the report required by paragraph (1). (B) The Secretary may resume assistance to the government of a country or international organization listed in the report required by paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines and reports to the appropriate congressional committees that such government or international organization no longer pays the Government of Cuba for the coerced and trafficked labor of Cuban medical professionals.

The day after the bill was published, the Appropriations Committee issued a report explaining aspects of the bill. Some of them concerning Cuba are:

Clarifying that “religious freedom” funds should be earmarked for non-democratic countries such as Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The Committee's concern regarding the thousands of arbitrary political prisoners in Cuba and the request to the State Department to report to the Committee within 90 days on the country's efforts to achieve their unconditional release.

The request to the State Department to deny visas to anyone who has trafficked in confiscated property.

That there are reports of Cubans undergoing military training in Belarus and therefore requests the State Department to submit a report on Cuba's participation in Russia's war against Ukraine within 90 days.

That the Committee shares the purpose of the USA and Europe to isolate Russia because of the threat it constitutes for Europe and the world. In this regard, they are also concerned about Cuba's relations with Russia and therefore request the Secretary of State to increase efforts with European countries to defend freedom and democracy both in Europe and in the case of dictatorships in the Western Hemisphere, particularly in Cuba.

Requests the Secretary of State, within 180 days, a report on the efforts he is making on European countries to reduce their diplomatic, trade and other financial ties with the Cuban dictatorship⁵.

⁵ Complete information about the law can be found at the end of point VIII in the Annex.

On June 4, Representative Carlos Gimenez, with the co-sponsorship of four other congressmen, 2 Democrats and 2 Republicans, all from Florida, introduced Bill H.R. 8608, which amends Title 49, United States Code, to “prohibit access by certain individuals from countries that sponsor terrorism to certain areas of airports, and for other purposes”.⁶

On June 12, the House Appropriations Committee approved a 33-26 vote for the FY2025 Homeland Security Appropriations Act. The bill contains language regarding Cuba prohibiting the use of funds for the transfer of prisoners from the Guantanamo Bay Naval Basethere after June 24, 2009. It also prohibits the use of funds for any country on the list of sponsors of terrorism to visit any facility or hold a meeting with an official of the Department of Homeland Security until 3 years after being removed from said list.

The House Appropriations Committee met on June 12 to consider the FY2025 State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Act. The bill was approved by the Committee with 31 votes in favor and 26 against. In relation to Cuba, the same contemplates all the points that were previously identified when the Bill was presented on June 3.

On June 28, the full House of Representatives voted on H.R.8771, passing by a vote of 212 in favor, 200 against, and 20 Congressmen who did not vote. One Republican voted against and 1 Democrat voted in favor.

Hearings

On January 16, Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar, of Cuban parents, chairwoman of the House Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, called for a hearing titled “The Myth of the New Cuban Entrepreneurs” to be held on Thursday, January 18 at 2 p.m. On or about January 20, several media outlets reported the results of that hearing.

It was especially noteworthy that Salazar did not allow the participation of Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Lee of California, whose participation was requested by Texas Democrat Joaquin Castro. An unusual action in these cases, where Salazar refused to accept her on the grounds that Lee was not a friend of the Cuban people but of Fidel Castro, an action described by another congressman as negative and outrageous.

Biden administration officials and members of the private sector intervened. In short, despite María Elvira's strong pressure on the two Administration officials that MSMEs were not independent from the government, her false arguments were evidenced, and the criterion prevailed that they were, in their vast majority at least, independent, and even that “they are tolerated but not embraced” by the government, and that “the organic expansion of the private sector on the island -directed by the Cuban people themselves and not by any foreign government- is an opportunity that should not be wasted”.

⁶ Senator Marco Rubio presented an identical one in the Higher Chamber.

On March 12, a hearing was held in the House Armed Services Committee on Security Challenges in North and South America with the presence of U.S. Southern Command chief Laura Richardson. In addition to Richardson, several congressmen intervened. Cuba was mentioned on several occasions when referring to the threats that Russia and China represent for the United States in the region, particularly by the reactionary Republican Congressman Mike Rogers and Richardson herself, due to “the growing Russian influence and presence in Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua”.

On March 21, the House Subcommittee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies of the House Appropriations Committee held a hearing on the Department of Agriculture's Fiscal Year 2025 budget request. It was attended by the United States Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Thomas Vilsack. During the course of the hearing Representative Barbara Lee asked Mr. Vilsack if there would be any possibility of importing agricultural products from Cuba. Vilsack responded that trade with Cuba is very limited, that Cuba has to pay cash in advance in addition to other regulations, that there is interest in many states for agricultural trade with Cuba, but that it would be necessary for Congress to remove some barriers to facilitate trade with Cuba.

On March 21, a hearing was held in the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Oversight and Accountability on the State Department's compliance evaluation. One of the witnesses appearing was Richard R. Verma, Under Secretary for Management and Resources of the State Department.

Rep. María Elvira Salazar addressed Mr. Verma and asked him to obtain all the information available on the communications between the U.S. Embassy in Havana and a micro and small business called Madwoman. According to Salazar, the Embassy contracted the services of this MSME, which fired a worker for having written in social media “down with the dictatorship”. Salazar also said that it is hard to believe that this supposedly private company really is. She said that she had sent a letter to the State Department in this regard and had not received a response, so she insists on personally committing Verma that he will personally dedicate resources to obtain and send her the requested information. Finally, Verma agreed to do so.

On April 10, the Senate Armed Services Committee held a hearing on Special Operations Command. Senator Jeanne Shaheen asked General Timothy Haugh, who serves as commander of U.S. Cyber Command, director of the National Security Agency and head of the Central Security Service, about CBS reports pointing to Russian responsibility for the attacks known as “Havana Syndrome.” The general gave her assurances that they routinely studied that and any other information or new evidence that had to do with the matter, and that he was personally engaged in it.

On April 30, the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee held a hearing on “Examining the Influence of Extremist Environmental Activist Groups on the Department of the Interior.

Among the several witnesses who appeared was Scott Walter, president of the Capital Research Center in Washington, D.C.

Walter raised the point that the P.A.A. (Pueblo Action Alliance) is aligned with a communist dictatorship through its alliance with the Venceremos Brigade, and that the Brigade's website includes an account of PAA glorifying the Cuban tyranny. He went on to say that most Americans would presume that the Department of the Interior does not take a group as radical as PAA seriously, but that the respect shown by the Department to these extremists has become notorious.

On May 15, a hearing was held in the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on external threats to the 2024 elections. Senator Mark Warner, Chairman of the Committee said that not only Russia, Iran or China, but also Cuba, Venezuela and terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and foreign hacker activists and cybercriminals motivated by economic interests have interfered or attempted to influence the country's elections. Marco Rubio said that in 2022 Cuba tried to obstruct the electoral processes of some congressmen whom it perceived as hostile.

On May 22, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs held a hearing on the FY 2024 budget request for the State Department. Secretary of State Antony Blinken appeared.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart asked Blinken if he knew that Joanne Chesimard, one of the 10 most wanted terrorists by the FBI was in Cuba. Blinken answered yes. He then asked him if he knew that William Morales, of the FALN, who made bombs, and FARC and ELN terrorists are also in Cuba, and Blinken answered yes. He then asked him if he knew that Cuba did not cooperate with investigations into the Havana Syndrome and Cuba's spy network - Victor Rocha being the last known case - and that Cuba had signed a military agreement with Belarus to train Cubans who would then go to Russia to fight against Ukraine. Blinken did "Hmm..."

Diaz-Balart criticizes the decision to remove Cuba from the list of countries that do not cooperate with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism, just because a pro-communist and pro-Hamas president of Colombia decided to no longer request the extradition of terrorists. Blinken explains that Cuba was taken off the list because Colombia no longer requests extradition. Diaz-Balart insists that Cuba has thousands of intelligence agents in Venezuela supporting the terrorist regime of Maduro, and that in Cuba there are not only terrorists, but also murderers of Americans. Blinken says that in many cases there are people convicted of crimes that are not terrorism.

Finally, Diaz-Balart said that he nevertheless finds it hard to understand that the fact that a country decides not to request the extradition of terrorists does not change the fact that there are also other terrorists and murderers that the regime refuses to extradite.

Also on May 22, a hearing was held where Secretary of State Blinken appeared, this time before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the State of American Diplomacy. Republican Maria Elvira Salazar critically mentioned two recent developments, the removal of Cuba from the “semi-black list of countries that support terrorism” and the visit of Cuban officials to the Miami Airport. Salazar told Blinken that this was a clear signal that he intended to take Cuba off the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, even though Cuba supports Hamas and harbors American fugitives. She then asked him if the six-month process established by law to remove Cuba from the list had already begun. She reiterated and clarified the question again (as this congresswoman usually does, in a way that seems to show little respect for the Secretary).

Blinken responded that Cuba was taken off the list of countries that do not collaborate with the U.S. in the fight against terrorism because Colombia is no longer requesting the extradition of ELN members who are in Cuba. Salazar replies: “That is a little excuse. Cuba has fugitives from the United States. Support..., please!”. Blinken replied “sure, but they are not claimed for being terrorists”. Salazar asked if they were going to take Cuba off the list, and Blinken told her “not in the immediate future”. Salazar insisted that the list had to be reviewed by July 21 and asked if they were contemplating Cuba. Blinken replied that not by July 21.

Finally, Salazar asked Blinken to commit, as he did last year, not to remove Cuba from the list between now and November 5. Blinken replies that at this moment he only commits himself not to do so until July 21.

On June 12, the House Foreign Affairs Committee held a hearing on Western Hemisphere affairs. Cuba was mentioned on several occasions when the issue of Russia's presence in the Hemisphere was discussed. Brian Nichols, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs at the State Department, and Michael Camilleri, USAID Advisor, attended and discussed Cuba. Congressmen Michael McCaul, Bill Keating, Kathy Manning and Thomas Kean mentioned Cuba in negative terms for its autocratic regime or its ties to Russia, for visiting warships or Cuba's support of Russia in its war with Ukraine, or serving it in its malignant influence in the Hemisphere. Camilleri was especially critical of the autocratic and undemocratic regime where USAID tries to support human rights and democratic changes. Maria Elvira Salazar took advantage of the occasion and addressed Nichols not in relation to Russia but to express her concern about the measures that allow Cubans to use U.S. banks and transfer money anywhere in the world. Nichols reiterated the Administration's interest in helping the private sector and that all measures are taken to ensure that only private entrepreneurs use these facilities.

On June 27, a hearing on the Curse of Socialism in Central America was held in the Western Hemisphere subcommittee chaired by Maria Elvira Salazar, of

Cuban parents, in the House of Representatives. Eric Jacobstein, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, in charge of Central America, Cuba and Regional Migration, and Greg Howell, Senior Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for Latin America and the Caribbean of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), appeared.

The legislators who spoke on the subject of Cuba were Joaquín Castro, Keith Self and María Elvira Salazar, the latter on many occasions with her customary aggressive and disrespectful style.

Castro said that the leaders of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua suppress the economic hopes and dreams of their peoples, but he argued for a more careful policy in the case of sanctions imposed by the United States and said that it is up to the people of these countries and not the US to resolve their affairs, choose their economic system and their leaders. With regards to Cuba he advocated for a relationship of compromise, evoking favorably that of Obama during his second term and criticizing the inclusion of Cuba in the list of countries sponsoring terrorism.

Keith Self criticized China and the leftist political forces in Latin America and the Caribbean that challenge the U.S., and asked if the Biden administration can remove these countries from the Sao Paulo Forum. Jacobstein responds that they cannot as it is an independent forum. Self criticizes that the State Department allocates money for these countries and ended by saying “freedom, freedom, is what you should send to Cuba and these other countries”.

In his opening remarks Jacobstein said that Cuba has around 1000 political prisoners unjustly behind bars and that the US policy towards Cuba is to support the people, including their human rights and fundamental freedoms and their political and economic well-being. He said that more than a third of the Cuban population works today in the private sector, and that the U.S. shall not cede space to Russia and China and will continue to support this sector which is the one that offers Cubans opportunities for a better life.

In his opening remarks, Greg Howell said that USAID deals with Cuba within the frameworks established by the Cuban Democracy and Liberty Acts (Torricelli and Helms-Burton). He pointed out the humanitarian aid provided to political prisoners and their families in Cuba, the aid to the Cuban people in their struggle against the oppressive regime, support in the area of human rights, democracy and freedom, support to civil society, access to information, and with aid that includes nutritional food, vitamins, medicines without prescriptions to improve the physical and psychological conditions of the people. He also criticized the exploitation of Cuba's medical missions abroad.

María Elvira Salazar criticized the presence of Cuban technicians at the Miami airport to point out that Cuba cannot help the US in air traffic matters because it

is on the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, and went on to insistently ask Jacobstein if they were thinking of taking Cuba off the list. Jacobstein replied that for the moment they were not considering it. She then said in her usual inappropriate manner: “repeat that”, and continued to insist on the subject. Later, when talking about Honduras, Salazar referred to the hiring of Cuban doctors and said that the president of that country, Xiomara Castro, is enslaving Cuban doctors, therefore the USA should deny visas to all those who collaborate with Cuba on this issue.

Declarations, Statements, Communiqués, etcetera

On January 2, 2024 Senators Elizabeth Warren (MA) and Ed Markey (MA), and Congressmen James P. McGovern, Ayanna Pressley, Seth Moulton, Lori Trahan, and Stephen F. Lynch, all from the state of Massachusetts, sent a letter to President Biden requesting that he remove Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism as soon as possible, arguing that it made no sense since Cuba does not support international terrorism, and that its inclusion on the list was a politically motivated decision by former President Trump without any new element to justify it.

On January 2, the New York Times published an article entitled “Menendez Faces a New Accusation: Aiding the Qatari Government”. It states that federal prosecutors allege that Senator Menendez accepted tens of thousands of dollars in bribes for aiding the Qatari government.

On January 3, House Committee and Subcommittee Chairmen Michael McCaul, Mario Diaz-Balart and Mark Green sent a letter to Secretary of State Anthony Blinken regarding diplomat Manuel Rocha, accused of spying on behalf of Cuba, noting the seriousness of the levels of infiltration of the U.S. government by the Cuban regime, the need to determine the level of damage caused by the spy and to identify his potential collaborators.

On January 11, Representative Steve Cohen sent a letter to President Biden asking him to remove Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism, an unjustified action taken by Trump 9 days before leaving the White House, and asking him to resume the path of interaction, travel and dialogue, which is the best way to be good neighbors.

A similar request was made by Washington State Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal in a tweet.

In the Congressional Record, Congressman Morgan McGarvey (KY), on January 12, 2024, requested and was granted permission to address the members of the House of Representatives. McGarvey stated that his town of Louisville is home to the fastest growing community of Cubans in the United States (14,000 in two years), which has contributed economically and enriched the life of the place, to which the Cuban Adjustment Act has greatly contributed, but that currently the I-220A provision jeopardizes their permanence in the country.

On January 16, it is reported on the website of Congressman Morgan McGarvey (KY) that he and Congresswomen Maria Elvira Salazar and Debbie Wasserman, both of Florida, sent a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas urging him to grant Parole in Place status to all Cubans who were issued I-220A forms, which would allow them to remain in the U.S. and apply for residency.

On January 30, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence Chairman and Vice Chairman, Mark Warner and Marco Rubio, and their equivalents on the House Intelligence Committee, Mike Turner and Jim Himes, sent a letter to National Intelligence Director AvrilHaines and CIA Director William Burns requesting that the Intelligence Community refrain from using National Intelligence Program funds to charter any private or commercial aircraft to transport detainees from

On January 31, Congressman Jim McGovern (D-Mass) and Junior Senator Peter Welch (D-Vt) sent a letter to The Wall Street Journal regarding an article by journalist Mary Anastasia O'Grady entitled "Why Cuba Belongs on the Terrorism List," which they believe is erroneous because, although the Cuban government deserves criticism, the list is of countries that sponsor terrorism, and she presents no evidence that Cuba deserves to be on the list.

In the Opinion media, Maria Elvira Salazar's lied about her voting record in relation to funding, which she tried to credit to herself when in fact they are Biden administration projects that she and other pro-Trump Republicans attempted to thwart. The article notes that journalist Jim DeFede, host of CBS4's "Facing South Florida," presented a series of evidence contrasting her votes with her claims and confronted Salazar with Biden administration funding bills that she voted against.

The media outlet pointed to several such bills that Salazar voted against. The congresswoman could not adequately respond to DeFede, resorting to claims of amnesia about Biden's most talked-about bills in recent years. Among the multitude of excuses: "I don't remember." "Sometimes I vote, sometimes I don't." More lies to deal with lies when it would have been simpler to acknowledge the partisan alliance.

On February 13, a new article appeared in the New York Times about the valuables seized from Senator Bob Menendez, of Cuban parents, and his wife.

On February 16, a tweet from Congresswoman Maria Elvira Salazar appeared in which she said that she had sent a letter to President Biden urging him to cancel the contract of the U.S. Embassy in Havana with MadWoman, "an alleged independent private sector company (MSME) of the regime in Cuba", in which she also requested all communications between the Embassy before April 1, 2024.

On February 20, several media outlets reported a meeting that took place in Havana between Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and a delegation from the National Association of U.S. Departments of Agriculture (NASDA), made up by secretaries of agriculture from several states and representatives of the U.S. agricultural sector, to discuss opportunities and challenges for agricultural trade between the two countries. A delegation from the Progressive Caucus was in Cuba at the same time, although there was no reported connection between the two visits.

February 20, the Daily Caller notes the refusal of all members of the Senate Ethics Committee to answer why the committee is not conducting an investigation into Senator Menendez, accused of corruption.

On February 27, El Nuevo Herald published an article entitled "What did members of the U.S. Congressional Progressive Caucus go to Havana for?", reporting that a delegation from the U.S. Congressional Progressive Caucus traveled to Cuba early last week on a trip that has not been previously disclosed by legislators or reported in the Cuban state media. The group of about a dozen people was led by Democratic Representatives Pramila Jayapal of Washington State and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota.

On March 1, ONCUBA NEWS reported that Congresswoman Ilham Omar added her voice to that of other Democratic members of the U.S. House of Representatives in favor of a change in White House policy toward Cuba. Omar expressed her frustration with the continuity of policies intensified with the Donald Trump administration towards the island and called on President Joe Biden for a substantial modification of such policies.

In early March, several conservative media outlets such as FOX NEWS and The Washington Times made critical references to the visit to Cuba made by several members of the so-called Democratic Squad (Progressive Caucus), calling them communist sympathizers who have aroused the wrath of Republican congressmen. REUTERS reported that Squad members counter Republican criticism with arguments about the need for a change in Cuba policy, something many Americans support.

On March 6, the Miami Herald reported that Cuban-born Florida Congressman Carlos Giménez invited Cuban counterrevolutionary Rosa María Payá to the State of the Union speech to be held the following day in Congress, where President Biden would be addressing the nation.

-POLITICO reports on March 7 that due to corruption charges supported by strong evidence against Senator Bob Menendez, he has lost much of his support in his home state of New Jersey. According to a poll, at this moment 65% of Democrats, 82% of Republicans and 77% of independents disapprove of his administration. Subsequently, other media reported that Menendez will not seek reelection as a Democrat, although he does not rule out running later as an independent.

On March 8, Republican members of the House of Representatives held a press conference to request the State Department to keep Cuba on the list of countries sponsoring terrorism. The participants were 4, all with Cuban parents, Nicole Malliotakis, Mario Díaz-Balart and María Elvira Salazar, or born in Cuba like Carlos Giménez.

On March 12, ADN Cuba reports that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee ruled on the case of political prisoner Maykel Osorbo, imprisoned on the island since May 2021, stating that Osorbo was sentenced to nine years in jail after a two-day trial in May 2022 and that he received the Freedom House Freedom Award that same year. He also says that since his imprisonment he has suffered human rights abuses and violations and has not received adequate medical attention.

On March 14, Senator Rick Scott reportedly tweeted that he and Senators Ted Cruz, Tommy Tuberville and Katie Britt, all Republicans, sent a letter to President Biden calling on him to implement strong sanctions for the continuing and increasing violations of religious freedom in Nicaragua. The letter states that the unjust sentencing of religious leaders confirms that the corrupt Ortega-Murillo regime in coordination with the Venezuelan and Cuban regimes is waging a campaign of oppression to destabilize the Western Hemisphere. It also urges the President to stand strong against the bandits oppressing the peoples of Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba.

March 15. Scientific American publishes an article that states that in March 2023 the National Intelligence Director reported that speculation about the involvement of Russian or Chinese agents in the incidents known as “Havana Syndrome” was highly unlikely, and that the consensus in the intelligence community was that the “syndrome” was likely the result of other factors that had nothing to do with agents from other countries, but rather pre-existing conditions, conventional diseases and environmental factors. The publication adds that congressmen looking for answers should look in the mirror, instead of investigating the intelligence agencies that had told them the truth about the mystery.

The article abounds in aspects that ratify their opinions on the matter, and concludes by saying that after seven years of investigations it is time to close this chapter and abide by what science says. Otherwise, they run the risk that the “Havana Syndrome” will soon become synonymous with other legends such as “bigfoot”, “chupacabras” and “alien abductees”.

On March 17, Congressman Carlos Gimenez publishes on his website that today thousands of Cubans have taken to the streets to protest against the Castro's murderous dictatorship, demanding food, electricity and freedom. That more than a thousand opponents are imprisoned and that he is asking President Biden to provide the island with satellite Internet to help stop the regime's brutal repression.

On March 18, Senator Rick Scott's (R-FL) website reports that the Castro/Diaz-Canel regime is attacking waves of peaceful protesters in Cuba, and that the Senator is demanding an immediate vote on his Denying Earnings to the Military Oligarchy in Cuba and Restricting Activities of the Cuban Intelligence Apparatus (DEMOCRACIA) Act, known as the Democracy Act, which brings unprecedented severe sanctions and financial pressures on the regime. Scott along with Congressmen Byron Donaldson, Alex Mooney, Mario Diaz-Balart and Maria Elvira Salazar introduced this companion bill.

The Democracy Act proposes sanctions not only against Cuban officials allegedly involved in human rights violations or corruption belonging to various political and mass organizations, but also against foreigners, as well as foreign entities, that provide Cuba with financial or technological assistance in security or defense matters. Also, the letter sent by the congressmen to the president requests that he provide Cuba with a reliable Internet system.⁷

On March 25, Florida Republican Senator Rick Scott's website reports that the Senator met with Cuban leaders to reaffirm his commitment to freedom and democracy in Cuba. At the meeting, the senator once again used the worst terms to refer to the Cuban government and the situation in the country and to his frequent demands to President Biden to apply an ironclad policy against Cuba and not one of appeasement as he is currently doing. He furiously attacked Democratic Congresswoman Debbie Mucarsel-Powell⁸, who is running for his Senate seat, accusing her of voting in favor of easing measures with Cuba, of voting with the Squad and of her family receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars from oligarchies comparable to those of Cuba and Venezuela. The site publishes long lists of the bills introduced by Scott against Cuba and her numerous articles in the press in the same sense⁹.

On March 28, Florida Democratic State Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz posted on her website a letter she sent to Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressing appreciation to the Biden Administration for its efforts to support Cubans fighting for democracy as the regime continues its brutal crackdown on dissent. Also to request assistance in freeing hundreds of political prisoners unjustly detained by the Cuban regime since the July 11 protests, including renowned rapper Maykel "Osorbo" Castillo Perez and visual artist Luis Manuel Otero Alcantara, sentenced to 9 and 5 years in prison respectively for political reasons.

On April 2, "The Hill" published an article reporting that a coalition of more than 100 groups and individuals, including civil rights, religious and political leaders in Maryland, sent a letter to Senator Ben Cardin (D-Md), currently chairman of

⁷This draft was introduced in the Senate by Scott on February 16, 2023. Due to lack of imagination or ignorance he called it DEMOCRACIA Act, just like the Torricelli.

⁸Murcasel-Powell is no longer in Congress. It seems to be a mistake in the Senators tweet when referring to Debbie Wasserman-Schultz; both called Debbie and both Democrats for Florida,

⁹ Scott is running for re-election this year and is one of the candidates who aspires to become party leader in the Senate, a post that will be vacant since the octogenarian Mitch McConnell shall not run again.

the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, requesting his efforts to end the U.S. embargo on Cuba. Cardin holds the post that until recently was held by Senator Bob Menendez, who had to resign because he is undergoing judicial proceedings on corruption charges. Cardín has announced that this will be his last term as senator.

On April 3, CUBANET refers to a tweet by Representative Carlos Giménez, where he calls for “the highest consequences” for the Cuban regime for its alleged involvement in the Havana Syndrome. “The murderous regime in Cuba must face the highest consequences for attacking U.S. officials and collaborating with Russia to undermine our country,” Gimenez wrote on social media.

On April 4, the news media “Cuba en Miami” reports that the U.S. government announced visa restrictions for officials who collaborate with the trafficking of Cuban doctors. The information indicates that, as part of the State Appropriations, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Act for Fiscal Year 2024, the U.S. Government announces visa restrictions for government officials and employees who support the trafficking of Cuban doctors.

Also on April 4, “Cuba en Miami” published an article by Manuel Lopez that says that the United States Congress approved support for free Internet access in Cuba. He says that the information was provided by Mario Diaz-Balart, and that it was also Congressman Carlos Gimenez who found where and when to use that budget. Thus, 43.5 million dollars were approved for the Open Technology Fund Program which has the fundamental mission of breaking the blockade of the Internet throughout the world, which is detailed within the State Appropriations, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Act for Fiscal Year 2024.

April 11, ABC announces that Senator Bob Menendez and his wife will have separate trials.

On April 18, “ADN CUBA” reports on the reaction of several congressmen to the meeting that took place between the governments of Cuba and the United States on Immigration. In this regard, Republican Mario Diaz-Balart pointed out in his official X profile that “the Biden Administration maintains its ridiculous and pathetic policy of appeasement with the murderous dictatorship in Cuba. The regime has imprisoned more than a thousand political prisoners and the repression has intensified. Enough of these false dialogues with these executioners!”. For her part, Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar posted a video lamenting these meetings with Havana. “The Biden Administration continues to get closer to the communist regime under the pretext of talks that lead to nothing and are used by Castro/Díaz-Canel to try to legitimize themselves,” she said. Salazar concluded that the regime is solely responsible for the migration crisis on the island.

On May 2, the New York Times published an article on the corruption trial of Senator Bob Menendez, where it is says that the legislator's lawyers explain

that Menendez's habit of keeping large amounts of money in his house is due to the trauma he suffers from the confiscation of assets that affected his family in Cuba and because his father committed suicide when he did not give him the money he requested to pay his gambling debts. Menéndez explained that he had the cash at home because he often withdrew it from the bank, a habit he learned from his immigrant parents.

Now the lawyers claim that it is due to a deep psychological trauma resulting from property confiscated in Cuba from his family and the suicide of his father, and they intend to have a psychiatrist testify at the trial, which the prosecutors oppose. In fact, according to the NY Times article, Menendez was born in the United States and his parents left Cuba long before the revolutionary triumph.

On May 14, the "*Diario de Cuba*" reports in a headline that "In the midst of the crisis in the sector, U.S. businessmen travel to Havana to identify potential businesses". The information says that "businessmen and politicians from the US and Cuba are meeting this Monday in Havana in another round of talks to identify potential agricultural businesses that contribute to the provision of food and nutritional security, in the midst of a generalized crisis in Cuban society, marked by the lack of food. The U.S. delegation is large and is made up of representatives of the agricultural sector from all over the country, while the Cuban counterpart brings together ministerial executives and members of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Rick Crawford, Republican of Arkansas, who was a member of the visiting delegation, declared that holding this type of regular meetings "constitutes progress, although we are still not where we would like to be". The legislator highlighted the growing support within the U.S. for agricultural initiatives in favor of regularizing economic and commercial relations with the island.

Information provided by the U.S. Cuba Trade and Economic Council states that Crawford's trip to Cuba between May 11 and 13 was for work related to the House Intelligence Committee and that he attended part of the 5th O.S.-Cuba Agriculture Conference (This information does not appear in any other media consulted, which refer exclusively to the subject of potential agricultural business).

On May 14, "CIBERCUBA" reported that Republican members of Congress Maria Elvira Salazar, Bill Huizenga, Carlos Gimenez and Blaine Luetkemeyer had sent letters to the Secretaries of State and Treasury, criticizing and showing concern about the government's possible intention to finance MSMEs that are hardly not linked to the government, despite Cuba's frequent attacks on U.S. national security and Diaz-Canel's alliance with adversarial countries such as Russia, China and Iran.

On May 15, REUTERS reported that the United States removed Cuba from the list of countries that do not fully cooperate in the fight against terrorism, and that legislators Rick Scott, Carlos Gimenez, Marco Rubio and Maria Elvira Salazar posted tweets criticizing the State Department's decision, while

Congresswoman Nidia Velazquez hailed the move as a good first step and Congressman McGovern said he was very upset by Biden's delays with Cuba.

Meanwhile, an article by Kimberly Leonard in POLITICO (Florida Playbook) on May 29, reports that Democratic Representative and Senate hopeful Debbie Murcasel-Powell¹⁰ said she believes Cuba should be reinstated to the list.

On May 17 *Radio TV Martí* publishes an article reporting that Democratic Senator Mark Warner, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said that declassified intelligence assessments identified several countries, including Cuba, as seeking to influence U.S. policy.

For his part, Senator Marco Rubio referred to a December 2023 National Intelligence Director's report which states that several countries around the world tried to interfere in the U.S. democratic process. He noted that Russia, China and Iran, carried out the most extensive campaigns, compared to Cuba which launched "smaller scale" efforts and with "more specific targets".

May 17 BREITBART publishes an article stating that Texas Republican Senator Ted Cruz, of Cuban parents, on his podcast The Verdict, highlighted reports of the "direct involvement of Communist China and Communist Cuba in the anti-Israel, anti-Semitic and anti-American protests that are occurring across this country." and urged the Biden administration to investigate reports of Communist China and Cuba funding and influencing radical leftist organizations to incite anti-Israel and anti-American protests across the United States, the goal of which is to create chaos, weaken the country and "tear us apart."

On May 20, Rep. Jim McGovern's (D-MA) website reports a statement signed by him and fellow Democrats Barbara Lee (CA), Gregory W. Meeks (NY) and Joaquin Castro (TX) applauding President Biden's decision to remove Cuba from the list of countries that do not fully cooperate in the fight against terrorism.

On May 21, *Diario de Cuba* reports on opposing reactions of congressmen to the decision to remove Cuba from the list of countries that do not collaborate with the United States in the fight against terrorism. Among those criticizing the measure are House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) and Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mark Green (R-Tenn.). While Democrats Jim McGovern, Barbara Lee, Gregory Meeks and Joaquin Castro, in a joint note published by the former, applaud the decision.

On May 21, the *Miami Herald* published an article with the headline "Cuban Delegation Visits Miami International Airport Causing Uproar Among Local Officials". The article reports that a Cuban delegation toured several airport facilities as part of a cooperation agreement between the two countries, but that local politicians criticized it and expressed concern, arguing that U.S.

¹⁰ Mixing up the names of this former Congresswoman and the current Debbie Wasserman-Schultz seems to be frequent.

adversaries should not be given access to “sensitive areas”. Senator Rubio said that only in a Biden administration could a terrorist regime be granted access to sensitive areas, while Congressman Carlos Gimenez said he will hold the Biden administration accountable for such a “shameful and dangerous decision”.

On May 26, the *Miami Herald* published an article by Nora Gomez reporting that Cuba related Congressmen Carlos Gimenez and Mario Diaz-Balart intend to propose legislation to prevent visits by Cuban officials to the Miami airport. The latter said he intends to do so through the Appropriations Act that administers the budget allocation to the different agencies. The article says that last year Congressmen Marco Rubio and Carlos Gimenez presented a bill prohibiting the visit of Cuban officials to U.S. port facilities.

On May 26, BREITBART reports that the State Department, the Department of Homeland Security and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) apologized for not coordinating and giving advance notice to county and airport authorities about the visit of Cuban officials to the airport. In its message, TSA clarifies that the agency routinely works with all countries with direct flights to the United States. It also notes that occasional reciprocal visits from the Cuban Ministry of Transportation occurred in 2018.

On May 29, some Cuban counterrevolutionary media reported that several legislators of Cuban origin reject the change in U.S. policy towards Cuba, which includes the access of the private sector to the U.S. banking system. Rubio, Salazar, Giménez, Díaz-Balart, coincide in pointing out that several Cuban MSMEs are integrated by relatives of Castro's leaders, officials and even deputies of the regime, and that the access of the private sector to the US banking system will only serve to give “more oxygen to the dictatorship”. Díaz-Balart expressed concern for US national security.

Marco Rubio criticized U.S. President Joe Biden and said that “President Biden's concessions to the Cuban regime, famous for its oppression, are deeply troubling. Cuba's private sector is a front that enriches the Castro and Diaz-Canel regime.”

For his part, former Cuban-American Democrat Congressman Joe García thanked on Tuesday the new measures announced by President Biden's Administration, which allow Cuban businessmen to open bank accounts in the United States and use payment platforms in that country, which “will help civil society in Cuba and MSMEs, which help support our families and expand private enterprise in Cuba, something good for the Cuban nation”.

On June 3, the *New Jersey Globe* reports in an article that Senator Bob Menendez will enter the Senate race as an independent.

On June 4 *Radio TV Martí* reports that Representative Mario Díaz-Balart reported that he included in the Homeland Security funding bill for Fiscal Year 2025 a prohibition blocking access to sensitive U.S. facilities to countries on the

list of countries sponsoring terrorism, which includes Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

On June 5, Senator Marco Rubio's website reports that he and Representative Carlos Gimenez, co-sponsored by other congressmen, introduced matching bills in the Senate and House of Representatives called the Secure Airports From Enemies (SAFE) Act to prevent access to transportation security facilities to terrorist-sponsoring countries, which includes Cuba.

On June 6 and 7, with the announcement that Russian warships, including a nuclear submarine, will visit Cuba, practically all Cuba related congressmen spoke out to say that this meant a provocation by Russia and the repressive dictatorial Cuban regime. Rubio addressed President Biden requesting "real consequences" for the Cuban regime for allowing it. For his part, Congressman Patrick Fallon said that only a weak government like Biden's allows it.

June 12 Senator Jim Risch (R-Idaho) Ranking Member of the Upper House Foreign Affairs Committee, today released a statement on Russian warships intentions to conduct military exercises with Cuba and Venezuela in the Western Hemisphere, made possible only by the weakness of the Biden Administration.

On June 12, *Marti Noticias* reports that, at a hearing in the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and in response to concerns expressed by Congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere Brian Nichols defended U.S. support for the private sector in Cuba as a brake on the influence of Russia and China on the island. The official assured that persons who would have access to U.S.-based Internet services and U.S. financial services are vetted, and that the participation of Cuban government officials is specifically prohibited.

On June 13, Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) posted on his website that President Biden supports Florida Senate candidate Mucarsel-Powell¹¹ while remaining silent when Russian warships come within 90 miles of U.S. shores. He mentions communist dictatorships in Latin America from where Russia and China threaten U.S. national security thanks to Obama and Biden appeasing the Cuban regime, and notes that Mucarsel-Powell has a long record in favor of Obama, Biden and the Cuban dictatorship.

On June 14, Republican members of congress of Cuban origin María Elvira Salazar, Carlos Giménez and Mario Díaz-Balart sent identical letters to the Secretaries of State and Homeland Security, Antony Blinken and Alejandro Mayorkas respectively, requesting that repressors of the Cuban regime not be allowed to enter the country. The text specifically points out the case of Camagüey prosecutor Rosabel Roca Sampredo, who requested prison

¹¹.Whatanobsession! He again mistakes Wasserman-Schultz with Murcasel.Powell. Strangely, no one points it out nor criticizes him for it.

sentences for Cubans who participated in the 11J protests and intends to seek political asylum in the United States.

On June 14, *The Floridian* published an article in which members of Congress Maxwell Frost (D), Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick (D), Carlos Giménez (R), and María Elvira Salazar (R) gave their critical opinions on the visit of Russian ships to Cuba, all in the usual terms, with the exception of María Elvira, who, as is usual for her, oversteps her bounds by saying that the Russians were going to stay in Cuba all year teaching Cubans how to launch missiles.

On June 20, *The Hill* publishes a warning from House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Turner (R-Ohio) about a potential Cuban missile crisis in space if Russia launches a nuclear weapon into Earth orbit. Also that the Biden administration warned last month that Russia had launched an anti-satellite weapon into space, which could be the first step toward putting a nuclear weapon into orbit.

On June 21, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Democrat from Minnesota, posted a tweet on her website celebrating the Biden administration's decision to give Cuba's private sector access to the U.S. financial system.

On June 26, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, through a tweet on her website, states that the failed embargo on Cuba has not served to improve democracy and human rights by punishing the Cuban population¹².

On June 27, Congressman Joaquin Castro publishes a tweet on his website where he rejects Congresswoman M.E. Salazar's hard line policy during her hearing in the Foreign Affairs Committee. He points out that the way forward should be to reach an agreement with Cuba and asks Biden to review the designation of Cuba as a country sponsoring terrorism.

Conclusions

The work compiles the activities related to Cuba that took place in the U.S. Congress during the first semester of the year 2024.

Regarding Bills and Resolutions in the Senate, 8 are included, while in the House of Representatives a total of 13 were found, With regard to those that appear in tweets on the congressmen's websites, only a few are included based on their importance or to simply give an idea- since they run into the hundreds- mostly from members of congress with Cuban parents and Senator Rick Scott.

Both actions and mentions to Cuba are considered and are divided into positive, negative and neutral.

In the case of Bills and Resolutions in the Senate, there are six negative, none positive and two neutral; in the House of Representatives, one positive and twelve negative. The neutral ones in the Senate are related to the mention that

¹²This tweet is a way of showing her opposition to the proposals by Mario Diaz-Balart in the draft H.R. 8771.

natives of Cuba, subject to the Cuban Adjustment Act, do not need to meet certain requirements of the law to be accepted in the country. In the Hearings, there were two positive mentions, eight negative and one neutral; in Statements, Communiqués, etc., there were 16 positive mentions, 33 negative and 13 neutral.

In relation to the negative bills and resolutions, out of six in the Senate, four were introduced by U.S. Senators and two by Marco Rubio. In the case of the House of Representatives, of the twelve negatives, five were presented by U.S. congressmen and seven by congressmen of Cuban origin. In the Hearings where there were eleven negative mentions, five were by U.S. congressmen or officials who testified and six by members of congress of Cuban origin.

In 28 of the 33 negative mentions in Statements, Communiqués, etc., congressmen of Cuban origin and R. Scott appear involved in one way or another. A good part of the 13 neutral ones are information related to the corruption trial of Senator Bob Menendez. The positive ones are of varied origin, although representatives Barbara Lee, Jim McGovern and Joaquín Castro stand out slightly.

Although for the reasons mentioned in the Introduction, almost all of the bills did not reach the plenary sessions of the respective chambers, in the case of Cuba, the considerable number of attempts and the approval by the House of Representatives of Bill H.R.8771 on the Budget for Fiscal Year 2025, containing numerous extremely harmful clauses, confirm the importance of the legislative body in the formulation of U.S. policy towards the island.

This is largely due to the presence of members of congress of Cuban origin, senators Bob Menéndez, Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, and representatives Mario Díaz-Balart, María Elvira Salazar, Carlos Giménez, from the state of Florida, and Nicole Malliotakis, from New York, most of whom are developing a very dynamic work, and some of whom occupy important and convenient positions for the promotion and achievement of their goals.

Menendez, until his resignation due to corruption charges, held the very important post of Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. Rubio is a member of this Committee and Vice Chairman of the Select Committee on Intelligence, while Cruz is also on the Foreign Relations Committee. In the Lower House, M.E. Salazar, Chair of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Diaz-Balart, on the Appropriations Committee and on three of its subcommittees.

At times, their harmful influence even extends beyond the legislative arena. Menendez's threats have been a major deterrent to Biden in implementing his campaign promises on Cuba, while most pundits agree that Marco Rubio was the chief architect of the Trump administration's Cuba policy.

The policy of the United States towards Cuba has its peculiarities that need to be analyzed from its own perspective. These peculiarities are due to the strong

participation of the legislative body and the influence exerted by legislators of Cuban parents.

Of the many aggressions that Cuba has been subjected to by the United States over the past 65 years, it is possible that none other has done as much damage as the Helms-Burton Act of 1996: the most comprehensive and perverse, which also codified the blockade, thus ensuring that only Congress can eliminate it.

But it has not only been Helms-Burton; the Torricelli Act of 1992 has also done considerable damage to the country by prohibiting subsidiaries of U.S. companies in other countries from trading with Cuba and affecting the transportation of goods by ships to the island, or the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, which forces food purchases in the United States to be paid for in cash and in advance, and prohibits the import of Cuban products. In addition, annexes to pre-1959 laws have been added to enhance punitive actions against Cuba.

Among the numerous penalties for Cuba in the recently passed House bill, H.R.8771 (see attached), is one that would prevent the State Department from removing Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism. If passed in the Senate or included in the final version of the Conference Committee when it reconciles the two versions, the State Department could be prevented from removing Cuba from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism during fiscal year 2025 (September 29, 2024 through September 27, 2025). The incorporation of these anti-Cuban clauses into the law is the work of legislators of Cuban parents, especially Mario Diaz-Balart.

Granma, in its article of June 29 of this year, entitled "Anti-Cuban politicians and congressmen despise the truth", in reference to the approval by the Lower House of the bill H.R.8771, states: "a couple of anti-Cuban congressmen managed to get the Republican Party to approve in the House of Representatives, where it has a majority, a legislation on State Department spending that is aimed at perpetuating the arbitrary and unjustified classification of Cuba as a State that allegedly sponsors terrorism.

Last March 28, the House Foreign Affairs Committee approved H.R. 314 Fighting Oppression until the Reign of Castro Ends Act (FORCE ACT), introduced by Maria Elvira Salazar, which proposes to prohibit the removal of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism until it satisfies a series of requirements. For now, based on the composition of the Senate and with a Democratic president, it is very unlikely that it will become law, but at some later time if these circumstances change, it could happen, and then it would not be for a fiscal year but until Congress decides otherwise.

It might be thought that the Helms-Burton and Torricelli bills, because they are usually referred to by the names of the congressmen who introduced them, are daughters of American conservatism. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The latter is known for the close personal relations of Congressman Robert Torricelli, Democrat from New Jersey, with Jorge Mas Canosa and the Cuban American National Foundation, as well as the latter's influence in the shaping of the pernicious law.

"New Jersey Congressman Torricelli, formed a political alliance with the president of the Cuban American National Foundation and received significant financial contributions from the Foundation." Torricelli even spoke at Mas Canosa's funeral and concluded by saying, "Jorge Mas Canosa lives!" ^{13, 14}

In the case of the Helms-Burton, the Congressmen who introduced it were Jesse Helms in the Senate, Republican from North Carolina, and probably one of the most ultra-conservative men ever in Congress. In the House of Representatives, it was Dan Burton, a Republican from Indiana, also far right, although more identified with opportunism than with a conservative ideology. Both had strong ties to Mas Canosa and congressmen of Cuban origin.

"Burton received more money from Florida, especially from Cuban exiles and Nicaraguans than from Indiana." ¹⁵ "His list of donors is filled with names of anti-Castro Cubans." ¹⁶

For his part, Helms appointed his assistant Dan Fisk to head the team that would draft the bill in the Senate, and "Cuban-born Congressmen Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Bob Menendez also appear on the team." ¹⁷

"Fisk showed the initial version of the bill to Jorge Más Canosa, executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, who made several suggestions" (Kiger 1998). Some companies that belonged to Cuban oligarchs lobbied in favor of the bill. The most prominent was Bacardi, an active part of the process from the beginning" (Arbolea, 2019).

Money of the Cubans, participation of congressmen of Cuban origin, Jorge MásCanosa and the Cuban American National Foundation, companies

¹³Wikipedia

¹⁴Death Probable Saved Mas From Forces Threatening to Undo Him, by Walter Russell Mead, Nov. 30, 1997.

¹⁵GOP Investigator to Return Donations, Tampa Bay Times, Published April 17, 1997 |Updated Oct. 1, 2005

¹⁶Campaign Fund-Raising Prober Finds the Microscope Trained on Him, *By Charles R. Babcock*, Washington Post, Sunday, May 18 1997.

¹⁷Understanding the Helms-Burton Act, Cornelio A., Barrera S. y Domínguez E., mayo 21, 2024.

confiscated in Cuba, Bacardi. Who can doubt that the Torricelli¹⁸ and Helms-Burton are legitimate daughters of the Cuban mafia of Miami and congressmen of Cuban origin?

Outlook

In less than four months there will be general elections in the United States and the outlook, both in the case of presidential and congressional elections, is still quite uncertain. The presence of a Democratic or a Republican president has a decisive influence on the behavior of the Congress, and in the case of Cuba things will surely be different if the president is a Democrat or if it is the Republican candidate Donald Trump.

At a time when most polls showed a virtual tie between the two candidates, President Biden suffered a serious setback in the June 27 debate against Trump. Voter concerns about his physical and mental state, given his advanced age, were confirmed. At the moment (first week of July) there is even a debate about the possibility of supporting another last-minute candidate, while Biden and his inner circle seem to cling to his candidacy, while a poll already gives Trump a six-point lead. The names that are most repeated as possible alternatives are those of Vice-President Kamala Harris and the governors of California and Michigan, Gavin Newsom and Gretchen Whitmer. With less than four months to go, there is still no idea what will happen in the November presidential election.

Regarding congressional elections, there is a Democratic majority Senate of 51 seats to 49. In this year's elections, 33 seats will be up for re-election, including 21 Democrats, 2 independents who vote with them, and 10 Republicans. All 10 Republicans are in states considered safe Republican and none appear to have a problem getting re-elected. Neither do the 2 independents who are in states considered safe Democratic states. However, among the 21 Democrats, there are 3 who are in states considered safe Republican and 6 in swing states.

As things look today, the most favorable scenario for the Democrats would be to lose only the West Virginia seat, one of the states considered safe Republican and where all specialists agree that it will go Republican, and keep the rest. In that case, the Senate would be 50-50, under the control of the party that wins the White House. However, there is a high percentage of possibilities that they will lose at least one more seat and the Senate will pass into Republican hands.

Regarding the House of Representatives, the Republicans control the House by 218 seats against 213 seats for the Democrats, with 4 vacancies. Their advantage is so small that with only 3 seats shifting from Republican to Democrat they would have a majority. At this time the prospects are very close and it is not yet clear which party will have control of the lower house for the next two years. The winning party will probably enjoy a precarious majority.

¹⁸The version of the Torricelli Act presented in the Senate was introduced by Senator Billy Graham, an influential politician of the Democratic Party in the state of Florida.

The setting that Cuba may face in Congress after January 2025 is very vague and could be similar or completely different from the current one. With Trump as president and both chambers Republican, it would be the worst.

Bibliographic references

Web sites:

Rep. Jim McGovern, Rep. Brad Wenstrup, Rep. María Elvira Salazar; Sen. Marco Rubio, Rep. Morgan McGarvey, Rep. Steve Cohen, Rep. Mario Díaz-Balart, Sen. Rick Scott, Rep. Carlos A. Giménez, Rep. Debbie Wasserman, House Foreign Affairs Committee, Appropriation Committee.

Agencies, blogs and press organizations:

ON CUBA, DAILY CALLER, NASDA, 14 Y MEDIO, THE WASHINGTON TIMES, FOX NEWS, REUTERS, AP/ ABC, CNN, THE HILL, POLITICO, NEWJERSEY GLOBE, US-CUBA TRADE AND ECONOMIC COUNCIL, Counterpunch, Telemundo, The Floridian, Florida Voice, Miami Herald, The Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Roll Call, El Nuevo Herald, Diario de Cuba, ADN CUBA, New York Times, BREITBART, Congressional Record, CIBERCUBA, RADIO TV MARTI, WASHINGTON EXAMINER, ABC NEWS, THE INTERCEPT, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, CUBA EN MIAMI.

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ANNEX

Expanded information contained in H.R.8771, the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025, introduced on June 14, 2024, in the House of Representatives by Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart.

(All texts are originally in English. References to Cuba are highlighted in bold type)

Amendments on Cuba to H.R. 8771 - Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2025

	Late Revised Strikes language that restricts the Department of State’s ability to react to changing circumstances and make timely fact-based decisions regarding the designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism.	
<u>Castro (TX)</u>	Democrat	Revised
	Revised at the last minute Language restricting the State Department's ability to react to changing circumstances and make timely, fact-based decisions regarding the designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism is deleted.	
<u>Titus (NV),</u>	Strikes paragraph prohibiting funds for public	
Castro	Democrat diplomacy programs to be used for economic	Submitted
(TX)	reform and entrepreneurship in Cuba.	

Note: Both proposals were rejected

H.R.8771 - Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Appropriations Act, 2025

Sponsor:	Rep. Diaz-Balart, Mario [R-FL-26] (Introduced 06/14/2024)
Committees:	House - Appropriations
CommitteeReports:	H. Rept. 118-554
LatestAction:	House - 06/14/2024 Placed on the Union Calendar, Calendar No. 457.

**Committee Approves FY25 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
Appropriations Act/ APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**

06/12/2024

Today, the House Appropriations Committee met to consider the Fiscal Year 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act. The measure was approved by the Committee with a vote of 31 to 26.

State and Foreign Operations Subcommittee Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) said, “As Chairman of the Subcommittee that funds our national security and foreign policy priorities, I am pleased that our Fiscal Year 2025 proposed funding legislation was approved by the full committee. We achieved a 19% reduction from the President’s Budget, and an 11% cut from Fiscal Year 2024 enacted levels. This legislation reaffirms American leadership, supports key allies such as Israel and Taiwan, **counters adversaries including Communist China and the terrorists of Cuba, Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah,** and promotes global freedom and security. Under the leadership of Chairman Tom Cole, the State and Foreign Operations bill for Fiscal Year 2025 builds on the policy victories of the Fiscal Year 2024 enacted bill, with a focus on supporting America’s allies, firmly confronting our adversaries, and prioritizing our national security.”

Chairman Tom Cole (R-OK) said, “Our actions today uphold the United States as a world leader for freedom, prosperity, and peace. Each priority ensures Americans are safer at home and abroad and sends a clear message that we will protect our interests. It confronts authoritarian regimes and their expansionist threats that seek to undermine our nation and liberty-loving ideals. As Moscow and Beijing pursue their communist agendas, Tehran continues its reign of terror, and transnational criminals infiltrate our border with fentanyl, this bill reasserts deterrence and maximum pressure against bad actors. Chairman Díaz-Balart proved we can accomplish more with less. I commend his work, and I look forward to strengthening our national security and standing firm with our allies and partners by supporting this legislation.”

Subcommittee Chairman Diaz-Balart’s opening remarks are available [here](#).
Chairman Cole's opening remarks are available [here](#).

Fiscal Year 2025 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act

The State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act provides a total discretionary allocation of \$51.713 billion, which is \$7.6 billion (11%) below the Fiscal Year 2024 enacted level and \$12.26 billion (19%) below the President's Budget Request.

The bill prioritizes agencies and programs that protect our national security, safeguard our global economic interests, support our allies and partners, and promote democracy and freedom abroad.

Key Takeaways

- **Supports our great ally Israel by:**

- Including \$3.3 billion in Foreign Military Financing for Israel to defend itself against terrorist attacks.
- Prohibiting funding for the International Criminal Court, International Court of Justice, United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA), and the United Nations Commission of Inquiry against Israel.

- **Counters the People's Republic of China (PRC) by:**

- Providing \$2.1 billion for United States national security interests in the Indo-Pacific and to counter malign influence.
- Including \$500 million in Foreign Military Financing for Taiwan to strengthen deterrence across the Taiwan Strait and up to \$2 billion in loans and loan guarantees for such purpose.
- Fully funding the Countering PRC Influence Fund at \$400 million.
- Prohibiting funds for the PRC and the Chinese Communist Party, prohibiting funds for countries to repay debt owed to China, and prohibiting funds for international financial institutions from loans to the PRC.

- **Strengthens our national security by:**

- Prioritizing funding and policies to combat the flow of fentanyl and other illicit drugs into the United States.
- Prohibiting funds that encourage or facilitate irresponsible migration towards the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Prohibiting the Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps from being removed from the Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list.

- Prohibiting funds to implement a nuclear agreement with Iran unless ratified by the Senate.

- Prohibiting funds to be used to implement the Arms Trade Treaty.

- **Supporting freedom in the Western Hemisphere, including \$35 million for democracy programs for Cuba.**

- **Responsibly refocuses taxpayer resources by:**

- Eliminating funding for the United Nations' (UN) regular budget, resulting in savings of \$761.6 million.

- Eliminating eight accounts in the bill, including the Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Fund, International Organizations and Programs, Contribution to the Clean Technology Fund, and Contributions to the Inter-American Development Bank.

- Reducing 14 accounts in the bill below the FY19 enacted level, including Contributions to International Organizations, Contributions to International Peacekeeping Activities, Economic Support Fund, Migration and Refugee Assistance, and Peacekeeping Operations.

- Reducing 14 accounts in the bill to the FY19 enacted level, including the United States Agency for Global Media, Peace Corps, and International Development Association.

- Terminating more than 18 unnecessary programs, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UN Women, UN Montreal Protocol, UN Environment Fund, and World Economic Forum.

- Prohibiting funding for Special Envoys, Special Representatives, Special Coordinators, and Special Advisors unless such positions are expressly authorized or have affirmatively received the advice and consent of the Senate.

- Eliminating 33 Special Envoys and Special Representatives at the Department of State, including the Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, Special Envoy for Racial Equity and Justice, Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of LGBTQI+ Persons, Special Envoy for International Labor Affairs, and Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs.

- Prohibiting the Treasury Department from carrying out the Biden Administration's climate agenda at the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, which harms developing countries and opens the door to predatory financing from the PRC.

- Prohibiting the Administration's current practice of co-opting programming, such as that to empower women; advance democracy and freedom; or counter trafficking in persons, to advance its radical global climate change agenda.

- Prohibiting funds for the Green Climate Fund, Clean Technology Fund, and Loss and Damages Fund.

- Prohibiting funds to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, the EcoHealth Alliance, any gain-of-function research, and labs in adversarial nations like China, Iran, Russia, North Korea, or Cuba.

- **Supports American values and principles by:**

- Maintaining all long-standing, pro-life protections.

- Implementing the Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance Policy, also known as the expanded Mexico City Policy, on all health funds in the bill.

- Prohibiting funds for controversial organizations and programs, such as the United Nations Population Fund, World Health Organization, and Gender Equity and Equality Action Fund.

- Supporting religious freedom programs abroad and religious freedom protections for faith-based organizations delivering foreign aid.

- Allowing only the American flag and other official flags to be flown over U.S embassies.

- Banning “disinformation” and “misinformation” programs that violate the free speech rights of American citizens.

- Prohibiting funds for unnecessary regulations and controversial Executive Orders that disadvantage American businesses.

- Prioritizing diplomatic engagement to favorably resolve commercial disputes abroad and to promote American business interests overseas.

- Refocusing attention on critical diplomatic functions, addressing the backlog of passport applications and ensuring the safety and security of our embassies.

- Prohibiting funds to implement COVID-19 mask and vaccine mandates.

A summary of the bill is available [here](#).

During the markup, Committee Republicans refused amendments offered by the Democrats that would have:

- Allowed funds to be used to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration towards the southwest border.

- Provided funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which is known to support coercive abortions.

- Provided resources to compromised organizations such as the World Health Organization or World Health Assembly and the Pandemic Treaty.
- Funded the United Nations' controversial iVerify "fact-checking" program.
- Disbursed funds to the Office of Palestinian Affairs at the Department of State.
- Allowed for individuals in Gaza to be resettled in the United States.
- Allowed the implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty without Senate approval.
- Funded the Administration's wasteful green agenda.
- Allowed funds to be used to label Americans' constitutionally protected speech as "misinformation," "disinformation," and "malinformation."
- Funded unnecessary and polarizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
- Promoted or advanced Critical Race Theory.
- Exposed Americans to religious discrimination.
- Allowed funding for drag shows.
- Provided funding for hormone therapies or surgeries for gender-affirming care.
- Allowed resources to be directed to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, EcoHealth Alliance, or other laboratories owned or controlled by the People's Republic of China.

Adopted Amendments

- Diaz-Balart (Manager's Amendment) – Makes technical, bipartisan changes to the bill and report.
 - The amendment was adopted by voice vote.
- Diaz-Balart (En Bloc) –
 - Prohibits funding for unnecessary and polarizing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives.
 - Protects Americans against religious discrimination.
 - Prevents funds to a foreign aid advocacy organization.
 - Prevents the targeting of conservative media through the Data Journalism Agency or Global Disinformation Index.
 - Prohibits the hiring of individuals based on gender, religion, political affiliation, or race.

- Prohibits funds to U.S. universities that fail to act against antisemitism.
- The amendment was adopted by a vote of 31 to 25.
- Clyde #1 – Prohibits assistance to the Republic of the Maldives until the Secretary of State determines that the Republic has revoked its ban on Israeli passport holders.
- The amendment was adopted by voice vote.

Bill text, before adoption of amendments, is available [here](#).
 Bill report, before adoption of amendments, is available [here](#).

The Committee on Appropriations submits the following report in explanation of the accompanying bill making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs, for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, and for other purposes.

MENTIONS OF CUBA

(...)

NATIONAL SECURITY

(...)

The Committee remains committed to supporting freedom for the people of Cuba and provides \$35,000,000 for democracy programs and \$35,000,000 for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting. The Committee recommendation also includes strong support for democracy programs for the people of Venezuela and Nicaragua and incentivizes European partners seeking support in Ukraine to stand for freedom and democracy in the Western Hemisphere as well, especially in Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua.

(...)

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

(...)

Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).—The Committee recommendation does not include funding for PAHO. PAHO must fully account for its role in trafficking Cuban doctors and medical personnel in the Mais Medicos program in Brazil, including compensation in potential judgements related to the United States Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act, publication of all relevant financial records, and publication of internal analyses of PAHO's operational, administrative, and financial role in the Mais Medicos program and

any other Cuban medical professionals program with which PAHO had a role in facilitating

(...)

INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING OPERATIONS

International Broadcasting Operations (IBO) funds the operating, programming, and engineering costs of the Agency, including the Voice of America (VOA), the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB), and the independent grantees: Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL); Radio Free Asia (RFA); the Middle East Broadcasting Networks (MBN); and the Open Technology Fund (OTF).

(...)

Office of Cuba Broadcasting.—The Committee directs \$35,000,000 be made available for OCB. The Committee is concerned about the detrimental effect under-funding has had on OCB's operation over the last several years, including the Reduction in Force. OCB is a critical source of independent, outside information for the Cuban population and is necessary to counter the Cuban regime's propaganda and oppression. The Committee directs USAGM to keep the Committee informed of any staffing or relocation plans on an ongoing basis

Open Technology Fund.—The Committee directs that \$43,500,000 be made available for the Open Technology Fund (OTF). The Committee further directs that not less than \$5,000,000 of such funds be made available to enable innovative methodologies for breaking the information blocks and internet shutdowns administered by the Cuban regime in an effort to match OTF's positive gains in other parts of the world, which shall be subject to consultation with the appropriate congressional committees.

(...)

USAGM networks content.—The Committee directs USAGM to allocate, through its networks and operations, not less than \$5,000,000 for the development and distribution of news and information related to Cuba and should utilize OCB to produce such content for other regions. Amounts allocated for the purposes of providing information globally about the lack of freedoms in Cuba shall be in addition to amounts provided to OCB within this Act and will contribute to USAGM's existing efforts to inform global communities about democracy and human rights

(...)

Office of Cuba Broadcasting.—The Committee is concerned about data being collected on radio listeners in Cuba both in terms of veracity and the potential threats to respondents. Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State and the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of USAGM shall jointly submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on survey

protocols and quality control of listenership surveys followed by USAGM and administered in Cuba as well as plans for surveys during fiscal year 2025.

(...)

Section 7007 (Prohibition Against Direct Funding for Certain Countries) This section includes language carried in the prior year prohibiting assistance for the governments of Cuba, North Korea, Iran, and Syria

(...)

Individuals detained at United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.—Not later than 5 days after the conclusion of an agreement with a country, including a state with a Compact of Free Association with the United States, to receive by transfer or release individuals detained at the United States Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the Secretary of State shall notify the Committees on Appropriations in writing of the terms of the agreement, including whether funds appropriated by this Act and prior acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs will be made available for assistance for such country pursuant to such agreement.

(...)

Section 7033 (International Religious Freedom)

(...)

The Committee recommendation directs that funds made available for religious freedom shall be made available in undemocratic countries like Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, where faith-based communities are drivers for democratic change.

(...)

Honduras.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Committee directs the Secretary of State to submit an update to the report required under this heading in House Report 118–146 regarding the successes and failures of the Government of Honduras in democratic governance, rule of law, economic freedom, and human rights. The report shall include assessments of the impact Honduras' relationships with Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Russia, and the PRC have on United States national security interests. The report shall also include a cost-benefit analysis on United States assistance to Honduras in fiscal year 2023 to determine whether such assistance has yielded material results, including for American investors and business owners operating in Honduras.

(...)

Cuba. _The Committee recommendation includes \$35,000,000 for programs to promote democracy and human rights in Cuba, while strengthening the position

of civil society as facilitators of change. The Committee directs that funding be administered by DRL, USAID, and the NED. The Committee directs that no funds provided under title III be made available to the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, Department of State, for democracy promotion activities in Cuba.

Cuban Liberty and Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996.—The Committee directs that funds provided by the Act for Cuba democracy programs shall only be used for programs and activities pursuant to section 109(a) of the LIBERTAD Act of 1996 and section 1705 of the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and shall not be used for business promotion, economic reform, entrepreneurship, or any other assistance that is not democracy building. In addition, the Committee applies the same limitations to public diplomacy funds. With respect to grantee selection and implementation, the Committee directs that democracy promotion grants exceeding \$1,000,000 shall only be awarded to organizations with experience promoting democracy in Cuba.

DRL, the NED, and USAID.—The Committee endorses a refocus on the state of freedom in Cuba by all donors and implementers and encourages DRL and USAID to consider the unique capabilities of the core institutes of the NED in implementing programs in Cuba.

Political prisoners.—The Committee is concerned with the conditions faced by over one thousand Cuban political prisoners who remain wrongfully and arbitrarily detained by the Cuban regime, including prominent artists and activists jailed before, during, and after the July 11, 2021 protests. The Committee directs the Department of State to provide a classified briefing, not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, for members of the Committees on Appropriations regarding United States efforts to secure the unconditional release of political prisoners held by the Cuban regime, including all communications to the Cuban regime demanding the releases.

Reports, Cuba

Confiscated property.—The Committee notes that title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 creates substantial legal liability and risk for any entity, Cuban or otherwise, that traffics property that was confiscated by the Cuban regime. Title IV of the same Act provides the Secretary of State with the authority and responsibility to deny visas to individuals determined to have trafficked in confiscated property to which a United States national has a claim. Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations documenting how the Department of State is implementing the law related to title IV, including the number of processed determination letters of claimants in the last fiscal year, methods being utilized by the Department to identify individuals suspected to be subject to visa bans, and any additional actions being undertaken to achieve justice for those whose property was stolen.

Military collusion.—

The Committee is concerned with continued reports of Cuban participation in military exercises and training in Belarus. Not later than 90 days after the date of

enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees on Cuba's involvement and contribution to Russia's war in Ukraine

Cuban doctors

The Committee firmly stands against the use of Cuban medical professionals against their will in foreign countries. The scheme under which the Cuban regime is compensated for the services of their doctors is a form of modern-day slavery, as doctors are paid low wages and prevented from leaving their assignments while recipient countries benefit from this coerced transaction. Subsection (e) applies restrictions to assistance for countries and organizations that benefit from trafficked Cuban doctors, and the Committee directs the Secretary of State to use authorities within Section 7031(c) to restrict visas of entities engaging in such practice.

Irresponsible migration

The Committee is greatly concerned by non-profit organizations organizing and facilitating the movements of migrant caravans, which stands in contrast to the stated foreign policy objective of the Administration to dissuade illegal border crossings. Subsection (f)(1) of this section establishes a prohibition on assistance to any organization that mobilizes, organizes, or encourages such acts. This prohibition extends to the publication of materials and online information about migrant caravans. The Committee directs the Secretary of State to update the report required under this heading in House Report 118–146 not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, on information related to donors and organizations that are facilitating this irresponsible migration.

Reports, Irresponsible migration Migration cooperation.—

Not later than 60 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the Committees on Appropriations on the Department of State's utilization of United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) data, including ICE's listing of countries that are uncooperative with the agency, and how the information is weighed in allocating foreign assistance. Promotion of Safe Mobility Offices (SMOs).—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall report to the appropriate congressional committees on promotion and advertising of SMOs in countries where the offices exist, including the funds allocated in prior years toward promotion and advertising, samples of the various messages being projected through social media campaigns, the degree of incorporation of NGOs to promote and build awareness of SMOs, and internal analysis on the number of migrant clients of SMOs who learned about the process through social media campaigns or other forms of marketing and promotion

(...)

Leveraging universities.—The Committee directs the Secretary of State to support partnerships with universities in order to establish platforms of researched information about the practices and victims of communism and authoritarian control in Latin America, including political prisoners. Such

partnerships should leverage Latino student bodies to serve as researchers and data collectors, including students who have emigrated from Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua

(...)

The Committee supports the shared goal of the United States and Europe to coordinate with allies and partners to isolate the Russian Federation and its sources of financing and facilitation of its war in Ukraine, which poses a security threat to continental Europe and the world. The Committee remains deeply concerned by long-standing diplomatic, economic, and security ties between Russia and Cuba. In furtherance of efforts to cut off Russia's sources of financing and facilitation of its continued brutal attacks against Ukraine, the Committee urges European allies and partners to review their diplomatic and economic relations with the Cuban regime and recognize the same aspirations of freedom and democracy for the Cuban people. Therefore, the Committee directs the Secretary of State to increase diplomatic efforts to coordinate with countries in Europe to achieve such objectives and ensure consistency of transatlantic priorities to defend freedom and democracy both in Europe and the dictatorships in the Western Hemisphere, particularly in Cuba.

Report European policy on Cuba.—Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall submit an update to the report required under this heading in House Report 118–146 on efforts to urge European countries to diminish diplomatic, trade, and other financial ties with the Cuban dictatorship.

(...)

Section 7050 (Global Internet Freedom)

(...)

The Committee notes the internet restrictions, content censorship, and mobile network disruptions imposed by Cuba and Iran. The Committee supports continued partnership between the Department of State, USAGM, and OTF, as well as other relevant Federal agencies, to use innovative technologies and creative actions to increase access.

MENTIONS OF CUBA IN THE TEXT OF THE DRAFT LAW

(...)

RELATED AGENCY UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING OPERATIONS

For necessary expenses to enable the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM), as authorized, to carry out international communication activities, and to make and supervise grants for radio, Internet, and television broadcasting to the Middle East, \$798,196,000, of which \$39,910,000 may remain available until September 30, 2026: Provided, That of the funds appropriated under this

heading, not less than \$35,000,000 shall be made available for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB): Provided further, That funds made available pursuant to the previous proviso shall be made available for medium- and short-wave broadcasting at not less than the fiscal year 2024 level and in a manner able to reach all provinces in Cuba with daily programming: Provided further, That in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes, up to \$75,708,000 of the amount appropriated under this heading may remain available until expended for satellite transmissions, global network distribution, and Internet freedom programs, of which not less than \$43,500,000 shall be for Internet freedom programs: Provided further, That of the funds appropriated under this heading and made available for the Open Technology Fund, not less than \$5,000,000 shall be made available for grants for innovative methods to reach audiences in side of Cuba: Provided further, That such funds are in addition to amounts otherwise made available for such purposes: Provided further, That of the funds appropriated under this heading and made available for USAGM networks, not less than \$5,000,000 shall be made available for programming produced about Cuba by OCB, which are in addition to funds otherwise made available for OCB

(...)

BROADCASTING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS For the purchase, rent, construction, repair, preservation, and improvement of facilities for radio, television, and digital transmission and reception; the purchase, rent, and installation of necessary equipment for radio, television, and digital transmission and reception, including to Cuba, as authorized; and physical security worldwide, in addition to amounts otherwise available for such purposes, \$9,700,000, to remain available until expended, as authorized

(...)

PROHIBITION AGAINST DIRECT FUNDING FOR CERTAIN 8 COUNTRIES

SEC. 7007. None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available pursuant to titles III through VI of this Act shall be obligated or expended to finance directly any assistance or reparations for the governments of Cuba, North Korea, Iran, or Syria: Provided, That for purposes of this section, the prohibition on obligations or expenditures shall include direct loans, credits, insurance, and guarantees of the Export-Import Bank or its agents

(...)

COUNTRY NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS.—None of the funds appropriated under titles III through VI of this Act may be obligated or expended for assistance for Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Colombia, Cuba, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen, and Zimbabwe except as provided

through the regular notification procedures of the Committees on Appropriations.

(...)

CUBA.—(1) DEMOCRACY PROGRAMS.—

Of the funds appropriated by this Act under the heading “Economic Support Fund”, not less than \$35,000,000 shall be made available to promote democracy and strength en civil society in Cuba, including to support political prisoners, and shall be administered by the United States Agency for International Development, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Bureau for Democracy Human Rights and Labor, Department of State: Provided, That no funds shall be obligated for business promotion, economic reform, entrepreneurship, or any other assistance that is not democracy building as expressly authorized in the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992.

(2) PUBLIC DIPLOMACY LIMITATION.—

None of the funds appropriated by this Act in title I and made available for public diplomacy programs may be made available for business promotion, economic reform, entrepreneurship, or any other activity or exchange in Cuba, or with Cuban nationals abroad, that is not democracy building as expressly authorized in the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992. (3) PROHIBITIONS.— (A) **None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act or prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be used to revoke the designation of Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism.** (B) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act or prior Acts making appropriations for the Department of State, foreign operations, and related programs may be used to eliminate or diminish the Cuba Restricted List as maintained by the Department of State, or to otherwise allow, facilitate or encourage financial transactions with entities on the Cuba Restricted List, as well as other entities or individuals within the Cuban military or Cuban intelligence services, high level members of the Communist Party, those licensed by the Cuban government, or the immediate family members of these entities or individuals. (e) CUBAN DOCTORS.— (1) REPORT.—Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall submit a report to the appropriate congressional committees listing the countries and international organizations for which the Secretary has credible information are directly paying the Government of Cuba for coerced and trafficked labor of Cuban medical professionals: Provided, That such report shall be submitted in unclassified form but may include a classified annex. (2) DESIGNATION.—The Secretary of State shall apply the requirements of section 7031(c) of this Act to officials from countries and organizations identified in the report required pursuant to the previous paragraph. (3) LIMITATION.— (A) None of the funds appropriated by this Act under title III may be made available for assistance for the central government of a country or international organization that is listed in the report required by paragraph (1). (B) The Secretary may resume assistance to the government of a country or international organization listed in the report

required by paragraph (1) if the Secretary determines and reports to the appropriate congressional committees that such government or international organization no longer pays the Government of Cuba for coerced and trafficked labor of Cuban medical professionals.

(f) **FACILITATING IRRESPONSIBLE MIGRATION.**— (1) None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used to encourage, mobilize, publicize, or manage mass-migration caravans towards the United States southwest border: Provided, That not later than 180 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of State shall report to the appropriate congressional committees with analysis on the organization and funding of mass-migration caravans in the Western Hemisphere. (2) Unless expressly authorized by a subsequent Act of Congress, none of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be made available— (A) to designate foreign nationals residing in Mexico and awaiting entry into the United States on the Mexico side of the United States border as of May 19, 2023 for Priority 2 processing under the refugee resettlement priority system; (B) for the Safe Mobility Offices; and (C) for the Welcome Corps or any successor programs. (3) Of the funds appropriated by this Act under the heading “Diplomatic Programs” and made available for the Office of the Secretary, percent shall be withheld from obligation until the Secretary of State reports to the appropriate congressional committees that negotiations have begun with each of the governments listed in section 302 of H.R. 2, as passed by the House of Representatives on May 5, 2023, to carry out the directives of such section: Provided, That such report shall detail the status of such negotiations with each government.

1. GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY

(...)

any laboratory owned or controlled by the governments of the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela under the regime of Nicolas MaduroMoros, or any other country determined by the Secretary of State to be a foreign adversary; or gain-of-function research.