

Cuba and embargo essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The island nation of Cuba, located just ninety miles off the coast of Florida, is home to 11 million people and has one of the few remaining communist regimes in the world. Cubas leader, Fidel Castro, came to power in 1959 and immediately instituted a communist program of sweeping economic and social changes. Castro allied his government with the Soviet Union and seized and nationalized billions of dollars of American property. U. S.

relations with Cuba have been strained ever since. A trade embargo against Cuba that was imposed in 1960 is still in place today. Despite severe economic suffering and increasing isolation from the world community, Castro remains committed to communism. (Close Up Foundation) The United States and Cuba share a long history of mutual mistrust and suspicion. All aspects of U.

S. policy with Cuba, such as the current trade embargo, immigration practices, and most recently the possibility of a free exchange by members of the media, provoke heated debates across the United States.

While most Americans agree that the ultimate goals should be to encourage Castros resignation and promote a smooth transition to democracy, experts disagree about how the U. S.

government should accomplish these aims. Some believe that the countrys current policy toward Cuba is outdated in its Cold War approach and needs to be reconstructed. However, many still consider Fidel Castro a threat in the hemisphere and a menace to his own people and favor tightening the screws on his regime even more. (Close Up Foundation) For almost forty years, the

United States has not imported any Cuban products, nor allowed any American food, medical supplies, or capital to enter Cuba.

President Clinton, like each of his predecessors, supports the trade embargo. Two recent pieces of legislation have tightened the economic restrictions on Cuba. (Close Up Foundation) The Cuban Democracy Act, passed by Congress in 1992, further isolates Cuba from the world economy by prohibiting any foreign-based subsidiaries of U. S. companies from trading with the country.

The bills goal was to cripple the Cuban economy in order to bring down Castro within weeks, according to the bills primary advocate Robert Torricelli (D-N.

J.). The Helms-Burton Act states that American citizens can sue foreign investors who utilize American property seized by the Cuban government. In addition, those who traffic in this property or profit from it will be denied visas to the United States.

Supporters of the legislation believe that prohibiting foreign investment will quicken Castros downfall. (Close Up Foundation) Many debate on the issue of why the U. S. should or shouldnt keep the ebargo against Cuba. These debates deal with the effects of the Embargo on Cubas economy, humanitarian rights and health of the people of Cuba. The embargo today places a ban on subsidiary trade, Licensing, shipping and humanitarian aid.

(Close Up Foundation) In 1992, the Cuban Democracy act imposed a ban on subsidiary trade with Cuba. This ban restricted Cubas ability to import medicines and medical supplies from third country sources.

There have also been corporate buy-outs and mergers between U. S. and European pharmaceutical companies thus adding to the number of companies permitted to do business with Cuba.

Under the Cuban Democracy Act, The U. S. Treasury and Commerce Departments are allowed to license individual sales of medicines and medical supplies, supposedly for humanitarian reasons to make up for the embargos impact on health care delivery. According to the U.

S. corporate executives, the licensing provisions are so tough as to have had the opposite effect. With this statement, it is assumed that there are fewer licenses given out for humanitarian reason therefore favoring the embargo and aiding in the downfall of health in Cuba. Since 1992, the embargo has prohibited ships from loading or unloading cargo in U. S.

ports for 180 days after delivering cargo to Cuba. This has discouraged shippers from delivering medical equipment to Cuba. Due to this, shipping costs have risen and further constricting the flow of food, medicines and medical supplies to Cuba.

Another result of this is Cubas increased spending on shipping medical imports from Asia, Europe and South America rather than from the neighboring United States. Charity hasnt been enough for an alternative to free trade in medicines, medical supplies and food.

With the delays in licensing and other restrictions have discouraged charitable contributions from the U. S. The effects of the bans on subsidiary trade, licensing, shipping and humanitarian aid has contributed to

malnutrition, poor water quality, lack of medicines and equipment and updated medical information. The ban on the sale of American foodstuffs has aided in nutritional deficits. These food shortages were linked to an outbreak of neuropathy numbering tens of thousands. Poor water quality is due to restrictions on Cubas access to water treatment chemicals and spare-parts for the islands water supply system.

This leads to unsafe drinking water therefore causing rising mortality rates from water-borne diseases. (American Association for World Health)

Many foreign investors see great opportunities in the Cuban trade market, because of the end of Soviet aid and decades of the U. S. trade embargo. For example, Canadian businesses are benefiting from the lack of competition from the United States.

Canadian pharmaceutical companies are marketing Cuban products, Canadian mining companies are developing uninhabited areas in Cuba, and hotel chains are operating state-owned resorts on Cuban beaches. American investors take note of all this and conclude that they are missing out on valuable business opportunities. (Close Up Foundation) The primary purpose of the Embargo was to help facilitate the removal of Castro from power. In order to accomplish this goal, the U. S. has worsened the economy.

Cubans live under conditions of mass unemployment, widespread hunger and insufficient wages. In a report done by the close up foundation, there is a statement made by a Cuban market vendor.

This Cuban market vendor commented, the only way people can buy [meat] regularly is if they get money from relatives abroad or from something illegal. People opposing the U.

S trade embargo point out that by injuring the Cuban economy is cruel and inhumanely by denying people basic essentials. However, supporters of the embargo argue that isolating Cuba from the global economy is the most effective way to weaken Castros political support. People that support the embargo believe that there is a large body of false information and accusations made on the United States. There has been false accusations that include U.

S. policy to deny medicine or medical supplies and equipment to the Cuban People. (Burns) Spokesman Nicholas Burns released a press statement about the misinformation about the U. S. government and the embargo against Cuba. The U.

S. is not all to blame but at the same time cannot be ruled out. Everyone seems to be blaming the U. S. but Castro plays a big part as well.

This release speaks of the small details that supporters of the embargo seem to leave out.

As stated earlier, the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 does permit companies and their subsidiaries to sell medicine and medical equipment to the United States and has approved 36 of 38 license requests for commercial sales of medicines and medical equipment to Cuba. During the same period, the U. S. has licensed over \$150million in humanitarian assistance which is more than

the total world wide foreign aid received by Cuba in those years much of which came in medicines and other health-related items. (Burns) This contradicts the statement made by the U.

S. corporate executives that licensing provisions are tough. They may be tough but they get the job done. The corporate executives may be bias in their judgment in saying this only because it is harder for them to be able to make the money. Castros way of controlling health care does not benefit the majority of the people but only the few elites.

We must not forget once again that the U.

S. is not all to blame since the U. S. did not create the health care system in Cuba.

Health care has deteriorated for the average Cuban because of Castro government has made a choice to direct its resources elsewhere. Aside from this, there has not been a fair healthcare system in Cuba. Substandard healthcare is available to the average Cuban while senior Cuban Communist Party officials and those who can pay in hard currency can get first-rate medical services when needed. This system exists because the Cuban Government has chosen to develop a two-tiered medical system, which established a kind of medical apartheid. This medical apartheid funnels money into services for a privileged few, while depriving the health care system used by the majority of Cubans of adequate funding.

Following the loss of Soviet subsidies, Cuba developed special hospitals and set aside floors for exclusive use by foreigners who pay in hard currency.

These facilities are well equipped to provide their patients with quality modern care. (Burns) In 1994, Cuba exported \$110 million worth of supplies. In 1995, this figure rose to \$125 million. These earnings have not been used to support the health care system but diverted to support and subsidize Cubas biomedical research programs. This money could have been used for primary care facilities.

(Burns) In this release, Burns mentions a group of Cuban doctors that arrive to the United States said that they were mystified at the allegations made in the American Association for World Health that the United States embargo is to be blamed for the public health situation in the country. These are doctors that see how the system really works. Burns also mentions the case dealing with the founder of the Havana International Center for Neurological Restoration and her views on how Castro runs the medical system.

The founder is Dr. Hilda Molina. She quit her position in 1994 after refusing to increase the number of neural transplant operations without the required testing and follow-up visits.

She expressed her outrage that only foreigners are treated. She resigned for her seat in the national legislature, and returned the medals Fidel Castro had gave her for her work. For someone this dignified to see that the Castro government is wrong just gives people a better view and to think again on who is to blame. The U. S.

has issued 21 visas to Cuban medial doctors in 1997 to attend medical congresses and/or to visit U. S. medical institutions. Among other things, Cuban doctors have visited the Center for Disease Control, the University of <https://assignbuster.com/cuba-and-embargo-essay/>

Puerto Rico (Bio Ethics Congress), the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons Annual Meeting, the Johns Hopkins University/Johns Hopkins Schools of Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill/Duke University (HIV infections), the Marmer Medical Eye Center, and the American Academy of Neurology (Parkinsons Disease).

In 1996, visas were issued to 125 researchers in the natural sciences, most of whom were doctors who worked in hospitals and clinics throughout Cuba. (Burns) Referring back to medical contacts, the U. S. has clearly made an effort to educate and promote the latest advances in medical research throughout Cuba.

The U. S. S. R. gave \$5 billion dollars a year in subsidies.

With this money, the Cuban government has made significant advances in the quality of health care available to average citizens. Even though this helps, the Cuban government also devoted the bulk of its money to the military. Poor economic conditions did not arrive from the embargo but began with the downfall of the Soviet Union.

After the break up of the Soviet Union, the absence of subsidies from the Soviet Union has forced Cuba to face the real costs of its health care system. Since Castro refuses to adopt economic changes to reform its dysfunctional economy, the Castro government continue to spend more money to maintain expenses of the military.

The Embargo Effects Health and Economy to a certain extent but not all of it should be blamed on the Unites States. Cuba has not only been affected by

the embargo but also its dependence on the former Soviet Union. The U. S. seems to be helping as much as they can given the situation. The government of Cuba has been known to be corrupt which does not help the economy.

It seems that the only way we can truly free Cuba is by reform within the government. If Castro really wants the United States to lift the embargo, he should start making some changes as well. How could the United States continue aiding a government that is not willing to give in. I feel that in order for us to aid Cuba, Castro should start making changes. It is not for the United States, but for his own people.

Bibliography

USA Info-med. Health News From Cuba. 2000. <http://www.igc.org/cubasoli/news99.html>

American Association for world health. Denial of Food and Medicine: The impact of the U. S.

embargo on health and nutrition in Cuba. NY, 1997. <http://www.ifconews.org/aawh.html#findings>

Burns, Nicholas, U. S. Department of State.

The U. S. Embargo and Health Care in Cuba, 1997. <http://www.us.net/cip/sdmyths.htm>

Castaneda, Mereya. Washington Guides European Votes Against Cuba. Granma Interacional Digital, Cuba, 2 May 2000 Vasquez, Ian.

, and Rodriguez, Jacob. Trade Embargo In and Castro Out. 1996, <http://www.cato.org/dailys/12-12-96>.

html U. S. State Department. Cuba: U. S.

-Cuban Relations . 1999, <http://www.state.gov/www/regions/wha/cuba/policy>.

html Garfield, Richard., Santana, Sarah. The Impact of the Economic Crisis and the US Embargo on Health in Cuba American Journal of Public Health. <http://www.usaengage.org/news/9701ajph.html>