

CUBA

Current Affairs

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Embassy of Cuba in Cambodia

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Facts on Cuba 2018:

January 28th:

Anniversary 165th
of José Martí birthday.

Cuba is a safe, peaceful and healthy country



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In the morning of January 9, a hearing was held in the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, organized by Republican Senator for Florida Marco Rubio and co-chaired by New Jersey Democrat Senator Robert Menendez, both with a vast record of work against better relations between Cuba and the United States, and the promoters of all kinds of legislative and political proposals that affect the interests of

the Cuban and American peoples, and only benefit an increasingly isolated minority that has historically profited from attacks on Cuba.

From its very title “Attacks on U.S. Diplomats in Cuba,” it was evident that the true purpose of this hearing, to which three high-ranking officials of the State Department were summoned, was not to establish the truth, but to impose by force and without any evidence an accusation that they have not been able to prove.

No one is surprised by the unfounded accusations or the fabrications of these anti-Cuban senators, whose only political agenda over the years has been to bring our countries to confrontation, regardless of the consequences. Their total lack of scruples and credibility is renowned. The great victim of today’s hearing has been the truth.

For the Cuban government, the irresponsible statements made at the hearing by the Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of the Department of State, Francisco Palmieri, are unacceptable.

The Director of the Bureau of Medical Services at the State Department, Dr. Charles Rosenfarb, said there are a multitude of symptoms that are not attributable to a specific cause and that there is a lack of certainty about the causal agent. The Assistant Director for International Programs of the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Todd Brown, said experts have not been able to identify the cause or perpetrator. And Mr. Palmieri repeatedly used the term attacks. It became clear that this is an unfounded accusation against Cuba.

The State Department does not have any evidence that allows it to affirm that there have been attacks against its diplomats in Havana, or that Cuba may be responsible, or have knowledge of the actions of third parties. On the contrary, months of exhaustive investigations have demonstrated that

“ The State Department does not have any evidence that allows it to affirm that there have been attacks against its diplomats in Havana. ”

“ We reject the politicization of this matter and the unjustified measures adopted by the United States government, with a high cost for our population, Cuban émigrés and the U.S. people. ”

Cuba is a safe, peaceful and healthy country



there have been no attacks.

I categorically reiterate that the Cuban government has no responsibility whatsoever for the health conditions reported by U.S. diplomats. Cuba never has, and never will, perpetrate such acts, nor has it or will it permit third parties to act against the physical integrity of any diplomat, without exception. The Cuban government is aware of its responsibilities and fulfils them exemplarily. Once again I affirm that the investigation carried out by Cuban authorities, the results of which the State Department and specialized agencies of the United States have had ample and systematic access to, has shown that there is no evidence at all regarding the occurrence of the alleged incidents and no attack of any kind has occurred. Nothing presented by the government of the United States throughout this period, including today, provides evidence that the health problems reported by its diplomats have their

origin or cause in Cuba.

We reject the politicization of this matter and the unjustified measures adopted by the United States government, with a high cost for our population, Cuban émigrés and the U.S. people.

We also condemn the political manipulation of these events by anti-Cuban elements, who seek to aggravate the bilateral atmosphere, with the sole purpose of returning to an era of confrontation, with negative consequences for both countries and the region.

Cuba is a safe, peaceful and healthy country for Cubans, for foreigners, for accredited diplomats and for the millions of people who visit us every year, including U.S.

FBI finds no evidence of “sonic attacks” in Cuba



Washington.— Following months of investigations and four visits to the island the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has uncovered no evidence of the alleged “sonic attacks” against U.S. diplomatic personnel in Cuba, according to a January 8 article by Associated Press (AP).

In the article AP cites an unreleased interim report from the bureau’s Operational Technology Division, dated January 4. According to the news outlet, “The probe has uncovered no evidence that sound waves could have damaged the Americans’ health.”

The results of the FBI investigation coincide with those of the Committee of Cuban experts after senior government officials ordered a thorough investigation into the alleged incidents. Ever since reports of health issue related to U.S. personnel emerged the Cuban

government has categorically stated that its territory has never, nor will it ever, be used to harm accredited diplomatic personnel on the island or their families. Despite a lack of clarity surrounding the case, Washington took unilateral steps withdrawing the majority of its diplomats from the island - practically paralyzing the visa processing system in Havana - and demanding the withdrawal of 17 Cuban officials from the island’s embassy in Washington.

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, speaking to AP, confirmed that the U.S. government has no plans to send its diplomats back to Havana because the United States would be “putting people intentionally in harm’s way.” Likewise, Florida Senator Marco Rubio – who has been trying to manipulate the case to reverse the few advances made in bilateral relations between the two countries - is set to hold a Senate hearing on the alleged attacks this January 9. However, Jeff Flake, also a Republican Senator, speaking in Havana January 6 stated that there is no reason to doubt the Cuban government’s position, adding that there is no evidence of the involvement of the Cuban government in any of the reports he has seen.

“ The Cuban government has categorically stated that its territory has never, nor will it ever, be used to harm accredited diplomatic personnel on the island or their families. .”

Over one million U.S. citizens visited Cuba in 2017



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right to travel to the island. The reestablishment of diplomatic relations in July 2015 marked the onset of an increase in U.S. citizens traveling to the island, which received a record 4.7 million international visitors last year. However, relations have suffered various setbacks, starting mid-last year with U.S. President Donald Trump's announcement in June of a change to Cuba policy, marked by a tightening of the blockade and increased restrictions on travel by U.S. citizens to the island. This was followed by the withdrawal of almost all diplomatic personnel from the U.S. Embassy in Havana after some officials allegedly suffered health problems which the western press and Washington baselessly decided to dub "sonic attacks." The Cuban government has vehemently denied any involvement and question the veracity of the existence of an attack, launching a full scale investigation into the case which failed to find any evidence supporting the allegations. Meanwhile, the FBI were also unable to find any evidence of the supposed attacks, according to a January 8 article by AP. Nevertheless, under this pretext Washington issued a travel warning for its citizens advising them not to visit the island, and approved new restrictions on individual visits in November.

Cuba received three times as many U.S. visitors in 2017 than in 2016, according to Josefina Vidal, General Director for US Affairs at the Cuban Foreign Ministry. The number of U.S. travelers visiting Cuba tripled in 2017, as compared to 2016, announced Josefina Vidal, General Director for US Affairs at the Cuban Foreign Ministry.

In a Twitter post, Vidal noted that 2017 saw the arrival of 1,173,428 U.S. travelers to the island, an increase of 191% as compared to the year before, when the country received 619,523 visitors from that nation.

Of the over one million visitors who traveled to Cuba last year from the U.S. 619,523 were citizens, representing an increase of 217%, while the remaining 453,905 were Cubans resident in the country - up 137.8% from 2016, reported the diplomat.

This rise in arrivals has occurred despite restrictions include in the U.S. blockade of Cuba by on citizens'

" Over one million visitors from the U.S. traveled to Cuba in 2017, 619,523 were citizens, and the 453,905 rest were Cubans resident in the country "

Spanish Tourism Fair recognizes Cuba as safe country



MADRID.—Yesterday, January 16, Cuba was awarded the Excellence Prize as the safest country for tourism, at the 38th International Tourism Fair in the Spanish capital, which is continuing through the 21st.

The distinction was accepted by Cuban Minister of Tourism Manuel Marrero, who is leading a delegation to the important event, and Gustavo Machín, the island's ambassador in Spain. According to Marrero, the number of Spanish citizens traveling to Cuba grew by 10.5% in 2017.

As part of the Cuban delegation were executives from major hotel chains, as well as associates from Melia Hotels, Iberostar and Blue Diamond. On this occasion, were also present representatives from Cuban Medical Services (SMC) and stores chain Caracol.

Ironically, the award comes shortly after the U.S. State Department issued a warning to its citizens to "reconsider" traveling to Cuba, alleging serious security risks, even though all statistics indicate that the island is one of the world's safest tourist destinations.

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A realistic perspective on the economy



Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, a Council of Ministers vice president and head of Economy and Planning

For many, knowing that Cuba's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew 1.6% in 2017, and that the figure projected for 2018 is around 2%, means, at the least, that the rate is still far removed from that needed to move along the path to development. Specialists have repeatedly said that this requires sustained levels of growth above 5%.

Others, nonetheless, see these figures as simply "numbers," perhaps "small," not providing much basis for an evaluation, not aware that the GDP is "a macro-economic indicator that includes the country's total production of goods and services, measured according to their value, after deducting the intermediate consumption required for the process of production," as explained by Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz, a Council of Ministers vice president and head of Economy and Planning.

"Its expression in current terms is based on the record of transactions at the year's real prices. Disregarding

price changes, it is calculated in constant terms with the goal of evaluating growth in activity, taking as a reference the prices of a given year.

"Toward this end, GDP growth rates announced in the recently concluded National Assembly of People's Power are expressed in constant terms, that is, variations in prices are eliminated, allowing the actual performance of the economy to be described.

"The GDP is disaggregated by types of activities: agriculture, industry, construction, transportation, commerce, tourism, public health, education. There should be correspondence between the growth rates of different activities, since they are related to each other. If the economy were to grow without considering this principle, imbalances could be created that lead to wasting resources, among other aspects. Agricultural production, for example, is linked to industry, direct sales to the population, and exports. Transportation activity, to cite one case, must reflect these relations. Production to satisfy the direct needs of the population must be in step with other activities involved in the entire process."

"Growth in Cuba's GDP is often compared to that of other countries, noting important differences in some cases, but the balanced distribution of this wealth is not always acknowledged. In the majority of countries, extreme concentration of distribution exists, with a few enjoying that which many do not, even in terms of basic services such as health, education, and food.

It has been stated that the efficiency of the enterprise system continues to be an issue which must be addressed in a differentiated manner. What strategies were implemented in 2017 to increase efficiency and thus guarantee the main activities that give the economy vitality?

As has been said, the current monetary environment does not favor the development of socialist state enterprises. Nevertheless, progress was made in autonomy and granting of authority.

Recently approved were four legal norms of greater scope that favor autonomy and contribute to improving the ways all Cuban enterprises operate. They also contribute to separating state functions from those of enterprises, which will continue to be done in an ordered, gradual process.

In accordance with these new norms, the Central Organizations of Enterprise Management (OSDE) carry out the role of direction and control of entities they include - without intervening in their operations, and strictly respecting their autonomy - and strengthened is the governing role of state agencies, which are not directly linked to the administration of the enterprise system. Additionally, during the period, 28 Government Boards were created within the OSDE. Their functions are mostly related to approving strategic projections, evaluating the appropriateness of enterprise plans, and demanding that basic commitments be met, in particular the origin and destiny of earnings, the distribution of which they must endorse. Likewise, every three months, they evaluate principal economic indicators.

In 2017, as on other occasions, the process of disaggregating the plan was not done in a satisfactory manner. What strategies have been implemented by the Ministry of Economy and Planning to avoid that this situation is repeated?

The disaggregation of the 2017 Plan was examined by all actors who participate in the process and shortcomings were identified, many of which have been seen before in previous processes. Establishing the release of the 2018 Plan after the conclusion of the National Assembly of People's Power, facilitated the conditions, in terms of time and format, to conduct an adequate, quality process of disaggregation.

Meanwhile, this past December 11, the Ministry issued Resolution 444-2017, that governs the 2018 plan's disaggregation process, and explicitly defines the roles of all the economic actors involved.

"Current monetary environment does not favor the development of socialist state enterprises."

A realistic perspective on the economy

The Resolution emphasizes that, from the highest leadership levels to subordinate bodies, the different categories used in the plan and the budget must match, so they may be used as effective management tools. The regulation established that the process must be completed by January 30, 2018.

Discussions on the plan and the budget, to be held with workers, must consider their execution with maximum efficiency in the use of material, human, and financial resources. Conservation of fuel, strict adherence to consumption limits, and efficient management of operational inventories as assets in the plan, are priority elements to be addressed, among others.

Admonitions regarding the lack of objectivity in planning have been made frequently. In this context, what mechanisms need to be modified, or what measures taken, to prevent this problem from continuing to hurt the economy?

The lack of objectivity in planning stems from two problems, among other reasons, that we do not always start with a concrete evaluation of existing circumstances in the economy, or recognize the real possibilities of meeting the demands of different sectors of society. At the same time, also present on occasion, is the failure to comply with established methodological norms and regulations.

It is a two-way, transversal process, that requires the attention of all economic actors, who must be capable of establishing a close relation between general aspects and those of each level.

There are factors that transcend the review of regulations, that are related to the economic and social model being updated. Consequently, the management system, of which planning is a part, is constantly being evaluated in accordance with the environment in which the economy is operating. Under these principles, work is underway on tasks related to the National Sustainable Development Plan through 2030, in accordance with the foundations approved by the National Assembly of People's Power.

Significant 2017 economy figures:

GDP Estimated growth at constant prices: 1.6%

- Sectors of greatest impact.

Tourism (up 4.4 %), Transport & communications (3,0 %), Agriculture (3.0 %), Construction (2.8 %)

Impact of Hurricane Irma

Total damage: 13,000,185,000 pesos

More than 1,800,000 persons sheltered

More than 179,000 dwellings affected.

More than 2,900 educational and healthcare facilities damaged.

Serious damage to electrical, road, water, hotel, and telecommunications infrastructure.

Agricultural losses of more than four billion pesos.

Estimated income to state budget: 57.2 billion pesos.

More than 80% of contributions come from the state enterprise system. Taxes, fees, and contributions continue to grow and constitute 75% of all income

- Estimated fiscal deficit.

11.725 billion pesos (11.4% of GDP)

- Investments: 90.8% completed

Water diversion: 90.1% completed.

Program to recover refrigeration and freezing capacity: 56% completed.

Program to produce bio-pesticides, bio-fertilizers, and bio-stimulants: 69% completed

Program to recover food process industry: 83% completed.

Program to recover fuel storage capacity: 310,000 m3 completed of the 550,000 projected

Program to develop tourism in La Habana, Varadero, the Northern Keys, and Holguín: 87.5% completed.

Renewable Energy Program: 90.1% completed

Modernization and expansion of Antillana steelworks

Housing program: Completion of 10,200 dwellings estimated, to surpass plan by 5%

- Economic Performance of key sectors

Cargo transportation: 94.6% of plan met

Passenger transportation: More than two billion passenger-trips provided, to surpass plan by 4.5%.

Water distribution system: Plan 100% met with the supply of more than 7.8 billion cubic meters of water.

Renewable energy sources: 4.25% of electricity generated with these resources, while 4.65% was planned. Principal shortfall in Azcuba sugar mill bio-mass generation

Tourism: Visitor numbers estimated to be up 11.9% with the arrival of 4.7 million tourists, surpassing plan by 500,000.

A labor of love: Anna Hyatt's equestrian statue of Martí



On January 28, on the occasion of the 165th Anniversary of the birth of José Martí, a replica of the first equestrian statue of Cuba's National Hero will be officially unveiled.

The 8.5-ton bronze piece arrived to Cuba from the United States at the beginning of October, 2017, and was placed in the 13 de Marzo Park, situated in Old Havana, on a black granite base, exactly like the original, located between those of Bolívar and San Martín, in New York's Central Park, and with the same inscriptions in Spanish and English, which read as follows:

"Apostle of Cuban independence. Leader of the peoples of America and defender of human dignity. His literary genius vied with his political foresight. He was born in Havana on January 28, 1853. For fifteen years of his exile he lived in the city of New York. He died in action at Dos Ríos, in Oriente Province on May 19, 1895."

The artist behind the piece, which portrays Martí wounded and dying, ennobled by the idea that he is sacrificing his life for a just and exceptional cause, was already in her old age when she began the sculpture. Her name was Anna Hyatt Huntington.

At the time, the sculptor lived at Stanerigg Farm, a rural property of little more than 300 hectares, with two lakes in the center that served as gigantic mirrors to the small hills that bordered them. This is how Cuban journalist José Antonio Cabrera described it, who in the summer of 1957 went to report on the statue, alongside photographer Osvaldo Salas, at that time a correspondent for the magazine *Bohemia* in New York. At the time,

the artist was finishing the equestrian statue of Martí, which would soon be sent to the foundry to be cast.

There, Anna told Salas and Cabrera that they were the first to see and take photographs of the initial phase of the work. She was 81 years old and had recently been widowed. Her husband Archer Milton Huntington was a wealthy American philanthropist, a great Hispanist, and a friend of Gonzalo de Quesada and Professor José García Mazas, prominent Cubans who lived in New York.

Archer Milton donated to Cuba another equestrian statue by his wife Anna. A work that the island has treasured for more than half a century, located by a busy intersection in Havana, in a small park on the corners of Ayestarán and 20 de Mayo Streets and titled **The Hispanic Cultural Legacy**.

Salas shared the love story behind these statues, with a certain irony that was typical of his character. In 1927, Archer had promised that to each work that Anna sculpted, he would dedicate a poem. However, Archer Milton didn't live long enough to write a poem dedicated to Martí, as Anna had not yet finished the statue of the Apostle.

Meanwhile, before personally meeting the U.S. artist, these Cuban journalists were doubtful whether she would be able to finish the piece, given her age. However, as Cabrera reported, all their doubts faded away when they shook her hands and felt her strength, gained through her work with plaster, plasticine, marble and using the chisel.

According to the report, the sculptor told them: "You should know that I am an enemy of publicity and that it was only at the request of Professor Mazas, who impressed upon me that Cubans have the right to see what I am doing with their hero, that I have agreed to this interview."

She added: "My husband had a deep respect for the work of Martí... I learned to love your Apostle in the same way that I loved all the things that made my husband happy. Through your compatriot Gonzalo de Quesada, I learned a huge amount about Martí's work, from his struggles for the independence of his homeland, to his character. Without Quesada's collaboration, my work would have been impossible. Above all, I see in Martí a deep intellectual spirit and a man of a rare and exquisite sensitivity."

THE REPLICA

Havana City Historian Eusebio Leal and his Office were committed to the idea of uniting Cubans and Americans in the effort to place a replica of the unique statue in the colonial environment of the Cuban capital. Finally, the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation authorized the request. The replica was financed through donations

from U.S. citizens, numerous members of the Cuban community living in the United States, and other donors from around the world through the “Friends of José Martí Sculpture Project.”

As Leal noted, the project was supported by the Bronx Museum of the Arts and led by its Executive Director, Holly Block, until her death in October 2017. The efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba and the island’s missions in Washington and New York also contributed to making the project a reality. The Havana City Historian’s Office informed that the replica of this great monument to the Apostle was made possible thanks to the joint work of the Restauration and Puerto Carena enterprises, and its own Investment Office, under the advice of the Bronx Museum. The City Historian describes the work sculpted in bronze and dedicated to Martí as “colossal.” For him and all Cubans, it represents another example of the relations between the peoples of the United States and Cuba, that have existed over time, and continue today.

WHO WAS ANNA HYATT HUNTINGTON



The sculptor of the equestrian statue representing the moment of Martí’s death was the daughter of the eminent American paleontologist Alpheus Hyatt. She studied at the National Academy of Design, with professors Hermon MacNeil and Gutzon Borglum. The French government made her a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor for her equestrian statue of Joan of Arc, the original of which was located on Riverside Drive, New York, with replicas in Blois, San Francisco and Quebec. She won the Rodin Gold Medal from the Plastics Club in Philadelphia and the National Academy of Design’s Saltus Gold Medal. She was a member of the Royal Catalan Academy of Fine Arts of Saint George, and winner of the Shaw Prize and the Gold Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She was honored with Spain’s Grand Cross of Isabel the Catholic and Grand Cross of Alfonso the XII.

Among her most outstanding works are two bas-relief pieces of Don Quixote, in limestone; the statue of Cid Campeador, the original of which is located in Seville, with replicas in Buenos Aires, San Diego and San Francisco; the statue of Joan of Arc, in the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Divine, in New York; and that of Diana Cazadora, which was presented to the Cuban government to be placed in Havana’s Palacio de Bellas Artes.

Martí’s legacy to be remembered throughout January



The commemoration, on January 28, of the 165th anniversary of the birth of José Martí, will represent the culmination of an intense month of activities in tribute to the national hero, involving a range of institutions.

The Martí Youth Movement, for example, as explained in a press conference by its President Yusuam Palacios, will take part in the traditional tours of the places visited by the Apostle, and host dialogues between different generations of Cubans, to emphasize the continued relevance of the national hero’s thought.

As part of the program of activities, the national tour “Con la luz de sus ideas” organized by the Young Communist League and the José Martí Cultural So-

ciety, will run January 10 to 27, beginning in the Santa Ifigenia cemetery, Santiago de Cuba, and concluding with the March of the Torches on the steps of the University of Havana. Twenty-five young people will be selected in each province to participate in this tour across the island, visiting sites linked to Martí.

January 26 through 28 will see the First International Meeting of Young Followers of Martí, which will be dedicated, among other figures, to Armando Hart Dávalos, and will be hosted by the Martí Studies Center (CEM).

Meanwhile, Miriam Egea, head of the Department of Marxism, Leninism and History, of the Ministry of Education, emphasized “the design of an action plan that has the purpose of orienting the study of Martí in all pedagogical and student collectives, whose essence will be adapted to the conditions of the institutions and their needs.”

Vice President of the José Martí Cultural Society and Hero of the Republic of Cuba, René González, announced the proposals of each of the organization’s branches throughout the country, and highlighted the presentation of issue No. 51 of the magazine **Honda**, and the presentation of awards.

Meanwhile, CEM Director Ana Sánchez emphasized the center’s research results and the holding of a solemn session, alongside the Academy of History of Cuba, with the theme José Martí: Patriotic Unity.

Also announced were various activities organized by the Martí Studies Department of the José Martí Military Technical Institute, the Museum of the childhood home of Martí, the José Martí Memorial and the Fragua Martiana Museum, as well as community performances by the José Martí Art Instructors Brigade.

Cuba has a lung cáncer vaccine



Written by Sally Jacobs

with stage 4 cancer, like me, should be allowed to try whatever they want to stay alive, whatever they think will work. The last thing they need is the government on your neck over some archaic regulation saying just take what is available here and die.”

Keays has abundant company. In the two years since relations between the U.S. and Cuba were normalized under President Barack Obama, a growing number of lung cancer patients traveled to Cuba for a vaccine called Cimavax, and more recently, a newer vaccine, Vaxira. These patients are an elusive group. None of those who went apparently provided their real reason for going to Cuba when applying for a visa, nor did many of them declare to U.S. customs officials that they were bringing multiple vials of the vaccine into the U.S. on their return. Few even tell their doctors they are taking the injections for fear they will refuse to treat them further.

“I can only see it as compromising him because now he has a patient on a drug that is not approved by the FDA,” said a patient in Florida named Larry, who asked that his last name not be used. Larry has gone to Cuba twice for the vaccine — both times without telling his doctor because, “He might be afraid he would be sued, or he might stop treating me.”

Just how effective are the vaccines they’re smuggling into the country in their small refrigerated lunch boxes is unclear. Neither of the vaccines prevents cancer; rather, they are a kind of immunotherapy that prompts the body’s immune system to battle the disease in patients with non-small cell lung cancer. In January, the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, N.Y., launched a clinical trial of Cimavax with Cuba’s [Center of Molecular Immunology](#), which developed the vaccine. It is the first such joint venture between the two countries since the Cuban revolution.

Roswell is now doing research to determine if they want to do a similar trial with Vaxira. It will take years for either of the drugs to receive any final approval.

For many patients, including some who were not accepted into the Roswell trial, travel to Cuba has become a much-talked-about option. So popular has the practice become that patients on Internet support groups routinely trade anecdotes and travel tips about their Cuban journeys. Until, that is, Trump threw a wrench into the process. Major changes for patients going to Cuba

The change in regulations governing travel to Cuba that went into effect in November altered one of the most popular categories of travel to Cuba initiated by Obama, known as “people-to-people,” which allowed travelers to go to Cuba on their own. That’s how many Americans have been quietly going to the island for medical care, even though doing so is prohibited under the U.S. embargo against Cuba. Now, people in this category must travel with an organization and have a guide present.

Americans can continue to travel on their own to Cuba for the purpose of professional research or to provide “support for the Cuban people.” But given that travelers in those categories are required to maintain a full schedule of activities, it’s likely that neither will be a good option for cancer patients.

At the La Pradera International Health Center in Havana, where most American cancer patients go for treatment, Dr. Anabely Estévez García felt the impact of the new regulations in her inbox as soon as Trump announced back in June that the changes were in the works. American patients began canceling their plans in a flood.

“We can not go at this time,” a Texas man emailed García on the day of Trump’s announcement. “President Trump changed everything today. It is not possible to go directly from here. Keep us in touch.”

A patient in New York on the brink of travel wrote that she had decided “to wait a little longer. Now, it will be harder to get there as our President has made it impossible to travel alone.”

George Keays is not a rogue kind of a man. A Colorado real estate agent and grandfather of three, the 65-year-old practices yoga and meditates regularly. But the U.S. government, he says, has left him no choice but to break the law. If, that is, he intends to stay alive.

Keays has stage 4 lung cancer. As his treatment options appeared to be dwindling this fall, he went to Cuba for a vaccine treatment despite a federal law that prohibits Americans from going there for health care. Now, with President Trump’s recent tightening of the regulations governing travel to Cuba, it has become much harder to travel there. But Keays needs more of the vaccine. This spring, he’s going back.

“I am not looking to break the law. But I am not looking to die, either,” Keays declared. “People

“ U.S. patients can’t get the vaccine without breaking a federal law that prohibits Americans from going to Cuba for health care.”

Cuba has a lung cáncer vaccine



Center of Molecular Immunology

facility with a swimming pool and fountains, for four days, during which they receive their first of several doses of the vaccine. Each dose consists of four injections — two to the arms and two to the buttocks. One dose costs about \$860, so the total cost of the trip, including airfare, lodging and a supply of the medication to take back home, can run well over \$10,000.

While Cuba is often recognized for its pristine beaches and throbbing rumbas, it is also home to a burgeoning biotechnology industry. Prompted by the country's high rate of lung cancer, researchers began work on a lung cancer vaccine back in the mid-1990s. In the most recent of several Cuban trials, patients receiving Cimavax lived about three to five months longer than those who did not. Available to Cubans for free since 2011, it has been given to more than 5,000 patients worldwide.

Cimavax is currently available in Cuba, Colombia, Peru, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Paraguay. Vaxira, which one Cuban clinical trial indicates can extend life by up to two months, is currently undergoing more testing in Argentina. It is available in that country and in Cuba.

Roswell scientists began collaborating with Havana's Center of Molecular Immunology, which developed the vaccines, in 2011, and scientists from both countries have worked in one another's laboratories frequently over the years. In the Roswell trial, Cimavax is being combined with a checkpoint inhibitor, which blocks proteins on cancer cells, called Opdivo.

While talk of Cimavax has circulated in American medical circles for years, much less is known about Vaxira. Roswell researchers are currently doing preclinical studies of Vaxira in animals to determine if the vaccine merits a possible human trial. Dr. Igor Puzanov, director of the early phase clinical trials program at Roswell, said that it could take up to a year before a decision can be made on whether to proceed. "We know what the vaccine is supposed to do," he said. "It's just too early to say if it does it."

Meanwhile, at the Center of Molecular Immunology, scientists are now focused on taking Cimavax to a next step. They are working to extend patients' survival rate by identifying markers in those who are responsive to the vaccine. Patients with high concentrations of the EGF protein, for example, have been shown to be more responsive to the vaccine than those who do not. Camilo Rodriguez, a clinical researcher at the center who has worked on Cimavax for 15 years, says he believes that eventually, the vaccine might be used on a host of cancers.

The tighter regulations are only part of what is keeping patients from going. Another factor is the State Department advisory issued this past September warning American citizens not to go to Cuba due to alleged assaults against American Embassy staff. Investigators have yet to determine exactly who or what was behind the assaults, and the staff in Havana has been significantly reduced. For some travelers, it's all just too much.

Since relations between the U.S. and Cuba were normalized at the end of 2014, the number of patients going to the plush La Pradera clinic at the city's edge had risen steadily. In 2016, 50 Americans came for treatment. Last year, the number of inquiries about the vaccines tripled over the previous year, while 47 patients had already made the journey to Cuba in the first eight months of 2017, according to García. Now, the numbers have plateaued.

Patients stay at the La Pradera clinic, a resort-like



Working to save lives from the very beginning



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Photo: Endrys Correa Vaillant

On the occasion of its 90th anniversary, the Cuban Society of Pediatrics is to hold its 28th National Congress, *Pediatría 2018*, dedicated to preventive aspects and problems affecting the health of infants, children and adolescents.

"If on the one hand we have the constant challenge of maintaining and continuing to reduce indicators such as infant mortality, which we recently celebrated having reached its lowest rate in history, we pediatricians and other related specialists today face a greater challenge, linked to the first, to guarantee quality from the very beginning of each life," stated Dr. Fernando Domínguez Dieppa, a second grade specialist in neonatology and pediatrics, for whom it is not only a question of reducing infant deaths, but also that children have better health and development.

Contrary to what one might believe, there is, for example, evidence of a rigorous longitudinal study undertaken at the González Coro Hospital, which shows that the

same elements that served to reduce infant mortality rates in very low weight infants, born weighing under 1,500 grams, have also resulted in a reduction over the last 13 years in the number of children with sequelae, or problems, and a higher percentage of minors with normal neurodevelopment; a trend that has also been evident in other areas of the country, the professor and senior researcher noted.

The 28th Cuban Pediatrics Congress, *Pediatría 2018*, which will be attended by some 400 Cuban and international delegates from 8 countries, will therefore offer a space to show results in at risk patients, based on neonatal and pediatric intensive care, and the research carried out in this area from different parts of the country.

The event will run alongside the 7th International Symposium on Neonatal and Pediatric Intensive Care and the 2nd International Symposium on Childcare, from January 23 - 26 at the Havana International Conference Center, and has an ambitious program, which includes themes related to prevention, health promotion and intensive care of critically ill children.

As Dr. Fernando Domínguez Dieppa explained, Cuban developments in the field of retinopathy of prematurity prevention, as well as the screening of metabolic diseases and hearing disorders, will be outlined. Similarly, details of the country's cardio-pediatric and nephrology-pediatric networks and the system for the detection of children with malignant diseases (about 200 each year), timely intervention and diagnosis, will be discussed.

Dr. Gladys Abreu Suárez, second grade specialist in pediatrics and president of the event organizing committee, added that the scientific program includes activities such as an infectology symposium organized by the Pedro Kourí Institute of Tropical Medicine, which will address everything related to arbovirosis and its treatment in children, and the follow-up protocol for children of mothers who had Zika. Likewise, she noted that *Pediatría 2018* includes two symposia on new vaccines, with the collaboration of the Finlay Institute. The first concerns technology transfer with India, in which this country offers the vaccine against rotavirus, which requires technology that Cuba has difficulty in acquiring. The second, she added, will deal with the Cuban pneumococcal vaccine - which is in the final phase of a clinical trial - and which protects against pneumonia and meningitis. The tests and results of clinical trials of this vaccine will be outlined, a product that if approved will join the other 13 vaccines of the country's immunization schedule. The advantages of the use of SURFACEN to treat children with acute respiratory distress syndrome, a product applied to premature babies in Cuba since 1990, will also be presented in coordination with the National Center for Clinical Trials, pediatricians and intensivists.

Pediatría 2018 will also offer a space to recognize not only the best of Cuban research in the field of child health, but also to award the Aballí prizes, in honor of Dr. Ángel Arturo Aballí Arellano, the forefather of this specialty in Cuba, which recognize pediatricians who, in addition to practicing care and teaching, are linked to research. A woman pediatrician will also be recognized, with the Liane Borbolla Vacheren award, in tribute to the first woman to receive a PHD in Medical Sciences in Cuba, and the first and only woman to have been president of the Cuban Society of Pediatrics. Meanwhile, the event is also dedicated to two honorary members of the Cuban Society of Pediatrics: Santiago Valdés Martín, senior professor of the specialty at the University of Medical Sciences of Havana, forefather of pediatric nephrology on the island, and Professor José González Valdés, pulmonologist and consultant and merit professor, both of whom are already in their nineties and are still active in teaching, care and research. Also to be commemorated are Cuban National Hero José Martí on the 165th anniversary of his birth, and Fidel, who noted "nothing is more important than a child," representatives of the values to which Cuban health professionals dedicate their efforts every day.

" The 28th Cuban Pediatrics Congress, *Pediatría 2018*, will be attended by some 400 Cuban and international delegates from 8 countries."

Casa de las Américas in 2018



Written by María del Carmen Vasallo / CubaSi

Cuban cultural life will be marked in January by the Literary Prize of this prestigious Cuban cultural institution.

This is how it will begin, as every year, its program in 2018 that will also include, among other proposals, the Musicology Prize, another edition of its Colloquy on Women, as well as the intense days of the Latin American and the Caribbean Theater Season Mayo Teatral, among other events. There will also be workshops, homage, besides exhibits, book premieres, and concerts in favor of common creation of our America.

On January 15th will be formed the jury for the Literary Prize Casa de las Americas that this year arrives to its 59th edition. This award is one of the oldest in the continent. Winning works will

be made public on Thursday 25th.

As it's tradition, during the sessions it will be developed alongside the main event presentations of books, round-tables, panels, and debates about topics related with the genres and categories in competition. The jurors coming from different Latin American countries will participate. The encounters will have venue in Cienfuegos where the jury will work and then here in Havana, on January 22-25.

This time the competition will include the following genres and categories: story, theater, and essay of artistic-literary topic; as well as work in Brazilian literature, with non-fiction books written in Portuguese, and texts published in Caribbean literature in either English or Creole. It has also been convoked the Prize of Studies on Women.

The history of this contest go as far back as the early foundational days of that institution, when, in July 1959, Casa de las Americas, newly created organized the first edition of the contest which after 59 years still has great prestige within the literature of our continent.

While on February 19-23, Casa will host a new edition of the International Colloquy of its Program on Women's Studies. Those encounters are developed yearly since 1994. This time the main topic will be: "Women and Families in the History and Culture of Latin America and the Caribbean". Further details at the e-mail: pem@casa.cult.cu.

The fourteenth edition of the Musicology Prize of Casa de Las Americas is scheduled for March 12-16. This year texts will compete on musical historiography; interpretation and critical explanation of the musical creation; traditional and folkloric music; theory and practice on music teaching; global theoretical frameworks of musicology; and other problems related to aesthetics, sociology and the anthropology of music among others. The dateline for the admission of works is February 1st. During those days it will also take place the Tenth International Colloquy of Musicology. And of this spring, casa de las Americas will organize the tenth edition of Season of Latin American and the Caribbean Theater Mayo Teatral. On May 11-20 will arrive to this capital, representative theater groups in the region with a great variety that will include dramatic theater, testimony theater, scene of the street, theater of objects, rereading of classics and the presence of outstanding music.

This time the theme axis is the bonds between processes and results, the presentations will be accompanied by thorough explanations of the theater plays. There will also be workshops, conferences, exhibitions, book and magazine premieres, among other proposals. Likewise the program of Casa de las Americas for 2018, announces the third International Colloquy of Studies on America's Original Cultures, on October 9-12 dedicated to indigenous languages of America, expression, translation and recovery; and in November will arrive the Author's Week, as customary by yearend every year.

With its varied cultural program, Casa de las Americas, a beautiful project for unity, defense and promotion of the Latin American culture, will continue in 2018 its rich history in favor of the tree of common creation of our America.

Amilkal Labañino Valdés / Cubasi Translation Staff

Casa de las Americas to Receive a UNESCO Award in Cuba



Paris, Jan 13 (Prensa Latina) Cuba's Casa de las Américas will receive the 2017 UNESCO-UNAM/Jaime Torres Bodet Prize during a ceremony scheduled for January 24 in Havana, the United Nations organization based in Havana reported today.

According to a statement, the event will take place at 'Manuel Galich' hall of Casa de las Américas, and renowned intellectuals, representatives of the Cuban government, as well as members of the diplomatic corps, among other guests, are expected to attend.

'The ceremony will highlight UNESCO's commitment to the global agendas in favor of inclusive, sustainable and peaceful societies,' the text said.

The then UNESCO Director General, Irina Bokova, designated in October Casa de las Américas as the winner, based on the recommendation of an international jury.

After the announcement, UNESCO noted that the Cuban institution emerged in 1959 with the aim of developing and extending the socio-cultural relations with the coun-

tries of Latin America, the Caribbean and the rest of the world.

The entity has become one of the most recognized and prominent cultural institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean, the text noted. Founded by initiative of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the award highlights the close ties between UNESCO and that educational institution.

Virtuous Cuban Musician Closes Jazz Plaza Festival



By Alain Valdes Sierra Havana, Jan 22 (Prensa Latina) Roberto Fonseca, a multifaceted and virtuous Cuban musician, closed the 33rd International Jazz Plaza Festival, an event that gathered in Cuba many outstanding figures of that musical universe

Fonseca once again showed his artistic class at the Teatro Nacional de Cuba by combining sounds and apparently distant expressions of jazz on stage, sharing stage with musician X Alfonso, an exponent of urban music, and dancer Carlos Acosta, an essential artist if we refer to the dance on the island.

A musical and visually rich show that successfully closed the Cuban jazz event, where Fonseca debuted in 1990 with only 15 years old.

beyond jazz, has spent much time remembering his stay at the Buena Vista Social Club band, where he replaced legendary musician Ruben Gonzalez in performances that took him to the most demanding international stages.

His relationship with urban music, a genre he worked during a time when he joined forces with hip-hop leading bands such as Obsesion and Doble Filo, also comes from years ago.

However, jazz has defined him as a musician, and his career stands solid on an interesting discography that begins with 'En el comienzo' (1999), and now, 'ABUC' (CUBA spelled backwards), passing by 'Tiene que ver', 'No Limit', 'Elengo y Zamazu', y 'Akokan y Yo'.

The Fonseca-Alfonso-Acosta triad was all strength at the Avellaneda hall stage and one more sign that ingenuity can be an element for major cultural events, and the potential of jazz to dialogue harmoniously with other musics and artistic means.

The 33rd edition of the International Jazz Plaza Festival came to an end, leaving a good concert program and other activities that strengthen as an event of great attraction for the great exponents of the genre.

The International Jazz Plaza Festival has been held in Cuba since 1980 at the initiative of Bobby Carcasses, is the most significant Jazz event in Cuba, and has been included among the leading countries in the development of this complex and fascinating genre.

33
FESTIVAL
INTERNACIONAL
JAZZ PLAZA
CUBA

The company founded by Alicia Alonso reaches its 70th anniversary



This 2018 the company founded by Alicia Alonso reaches its 70th anniversary

October 28, the date of the Alicia Alonso Ballet's first performance in 1948, is set as opening day for the 26th International Ballet Festival of Havana, convoked by the prima ballerina assoluta, held every two years and drawing special attention in the world of dance.

The prestige of her stellar career and that of the Cuban school of ballet attract dancers, choreographers, critics, and audiences from across the globe.

Attempting to summarize her vast work would be an overwhelming task, but citing two dates may serve to provide a snapshot of her 64 extraordinary years on the stage:

Historians report her debut as taking place in 1931, in Havana's Auditorium Theater, in Sleeping Beauty's grand waltz, by Tchaikovsky, when she was still a student at the Pro-Arte Society's ballet school, and it will be Alicia who decides when her last performance was.

The living legend said in a treasured interview, "It was in Italy (in 1995, in the Massini Theater in the city of Faenza). I danced Farfalla (a choreography of her own making). I didn't want a dramatic or painful farewell, that the audience would know it was the last time. I thought that would be cruel for both. When I finished dancing, I said, I'm not dancing any more. No one knew. What could have been better than Farfalla, that fleeing butterfly?"

THE SPIRIT OF AN EXCEPTIONAL WOMAN

A bronze statue of Alicia Alonso was unveiled January 1, with the ballerina and sculptor José Villa Soberón on hand. The simple, moving ceremony was presided by First Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez and Abel Prieto, minister of Culture.

Eusebio Leal, Havana City Historian, offered a few words of tribute to the exceptional woman, who he said took art to perfection.

He described Villa's work as beautiful and recognized the difficulty of working with bronze, recalling that Alicia visited the sculptor's workshop, touching and caressing the statue, to "see it with the light of her heart.. from the depths of her soul."

Alicia, as always, played her part in the event with serenity and aplomb, as Leal highlighted the iron will she displayed over the years to leave a school modeled after her style.

The City Historian emphasized how happy he was to witness such a unique moment, a recognition by the Cuban people of the grand dame of ballet, adding that Havana's Grand Theater, that now also bears her name, is even more splendid with the statue immortalizing Giselle.

On the occasion, Alicia said, "Everything I danced, I enjoyed very much, and it has all been important to me, but Giselle holds a special place in my life as a dancer and a human being. It was a great challenge after a long, difficult recovery. But I triumphed. A dancer, if she is a true artist, when she goes out onto the stage must be willing to give her all or die on its planks."

" Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, first vice president of Cuba's Councils of State and Ministers, presided the unveiling of a statue of the iconic ballerina. "



Havana's Grand Theater

Cuba embarks on a 100-year plan to protect itself from climate change

By [Richard Stone](#). Source: <http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2018/01/>



More than 10-meter waves pummeled “El Morro lighthouse” in Havana.

On its deadly run through the Caribbean last September, Hurricane Irma lashed northern Cuba, inundating coastal settlements and scouring away vegetation. The powerful storm dealt Havana only a glancing blow; even so, 10-meter waves pummeled El Malecón, the city’s seaside promenade, and ravaged stately but decrepit buildings in the capital’s historic district. “There was great destruction,” says Dalia Salabarría Fernández, a marine biologist here at the National Center for Protected Areas (CNAP).

As the flood waters receded, she says, “Cuba learned a very important lesson.” With thousands of kilometers of low-lying coast and a location right in the path of Caribbean hurricanes, which many believe are intensifying because of climate change, the island nation must act fast to gird against future disasters.

Irma lent new urgency to a plan, called Tarea Vida, or Project Life, adopted last spring by Cuba’s Council of Ministers. A decade in the making, the program bans construction of new homes in threatened coastal areas, mandates relocating people from communities doomed by rising sea levels, calls for an overhaul of the country’s agricultural system to shift crop production away from saltwater-contaminated areas, and spells out the need to shore up coastal defenses, including by restoring degraded habitat. “The overarching idea,” says Salabarría Fernández, “is to increase the resilience of vulnerable communities.”

“Irma [has] indicated to everybody that we need to implement Tarea Vida in a much more rapid way,” says Orlando Rey Santos, head of the environment division at Cuba’s Ministry of Science, Technology, and Environment (CITMA) here, which is spearheading the project. The government aims to spend at least \$40 million on Project Life this year, and it has approached overseas donors for help. Italy was the first to respond, pledging \$3.4 million to the initiative in November 2017. A team of Cuban experts has just finished drafting a \$100 million proposal that the government plans to submit early this year to the Global Climate Fund, an international financing mechanism set up under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Project Life stands out for taking a long view: It intends to prepare Cuba for climatological impacts over the next century. “It’s impressive,” says marine scientist David Guggenheim, president of Ocean Doctor, a nonprofit in Washington, D.C., that has projects in Cuba. “Cuba is an unusual country in that they actually respect their scientists, and their climate change policy is science driven.”

Rising sea levels pose the most daunting challenge for Cuba. Over the past half-century, CITMA says, average sea levels have risen some 7 centimeters, wiping out low-lying beaches and threatening marsh vegetation, especially along Cuba’s southern midsection. The coastal erosion is “already much worse than anyone expected,” Salabarría Fernández says. Storms drive the rising seas farther inland, contaminating coastal aquifers and croplands. Still worse is in store, even in conservative scenarios of sea-level rise, which forecast an 85-centimeter increase by 2100. According to the latest CITMA forecast, seawater incursion will contaminate nearly 24,000 square kilometers of land this century. About 20% of that land could become submerged. “That means several percent of Cuban land will be underwater,” says Armando Rodríguez Batista, director of science, technology, and innovation at CITMA.

To shore up the coastlines, Project Life aims to restore mangroves, which constitute about a quarter of Cuba’s forest cover. “They are the first line of defense for coastal communities. But so many mangroves are dying now,” Salabarría Fernández says. Leaf loss from hurricane-force winds, erosion, spikes in salinity, and nutrient imbalances could all be driving the die-off, she says. Coral reefs can also buffer storms. A Cuban-U.S. expedition that circumnavigated the island last spring found that many reefs are in excellent health, says Juliette González Méndez, a marine ecologist with CNAP. But at a handful of hot spots, reefs exposed to industrial effluents are ailing, she says. One Project Life target is to squelch runoff and restore those reefs.

Perhaps the thorniest element of Project Life is a plan to relocate low-lying villages. As the sea invades, “some communities will disappear,” Salabarría Fernández says. The first relocations under the initiative took place in October 2017, when some 40 families in Palmarito, a fishing village in central Cuba, were moved inland. Other communities may not need to pull up stakes for decades. But Cuban social scientists are already fanning out to those ill-fated villages to educate people on climate change and win them over on the eventual need to move. That’s an easier sell in the wake of a major hurricane, Rodríguez Batista says. “Irma has helped us with public awareness,” he says. “People understand that climate change is happening now.”

**Cuba is implementing
measures to face
climatological impacts
over the next century.**

Cuba's Varadero beach receives record 1.7 mln tourists in 2017



"The transparency of the water, whiteness of the sand, as well as the combination of blue shades and gentle underwater slope, make Varadero Beach the top attraction" in Cuba, the tourism ministry said in a press release.

The ministry also cited "people-to-people exchange, (local) heritage and safety" as reasons visitors are drawn to the destination. Canada remains the resort's leading tourism market, followed by Germany, Russia, Spain and France.

Located just 140 km east of the capital Havana, Varadero has fully recovered from the impact of Hurricane Irma, which lashed Cuba's northern coast in September, the ministry said. Expanded hotel infrastructure has helped to

increase visitor numbers, with the latest property to open being the Iberostar Bella Vista operated by the state-owned Gaviota Hotel Chain, in partnership with Iberostar. The addition increased the number of rooms to 21,388. Tourism is Cuba's second-biggest source of foreign revenue, generating more than 2.5 billion U.S. dollars a year. Cuba has received more than 4.7 million international visitors this year, and expects to reach the five-million mark in 2018.

Jardines del Rey Implements New Cultural Options



CIEGO DE AVILA, Cuba, Jan 17 (ACN) The Cuban Tourism Ministry and other institutions have come up with new and a variety of cultural options with the objective of increasing the activities for vacationers at Jardines de Rey.

The representative of the entity in Ciego de Avila, Iyoleixis Correa Lorenzo told the press that the initiative will strengthen the day and night life of the northern keys, will increase the extra hotel services, nature activities and for children. She added that some 42 international flights a week arrive to the region which include the Coco and Guillermo Keys with its main market which are Canada, Britain and Argentina without for-

getting the presence of national visitors. The new project includes the Jardines del Rey Carnivals in March with multiple initiatives that include floats, dance groups, street theater performances and other cultural events said Public Relations Director of the Provincial Tourism Office Mariuska Martinez Aleman.

Campesino fiestas in Sitio La Guira, Habano night in the Gaviota Commercial Center and alternative nights with presentations of trova music, several performances in addition to bike tours and a moto event. Coordination and work are underway with national artists that will participate in the Pina Colada Festival with the musical group Arnaldo y su Talisman in the installations of Jardines del Rey for the enjoyment of the vacationers.

