

Cuban report to United Nations calls for end to US blockade

By Tom Whitney

Cuba's government on August 24 released a [59-page report on adverse effects](#) of the U.S. economic blockade. Its authors maintain that, "The blockade ... against Cuba constitutes the principal obstacle to the development of all potentials of the Cuban economy." Taking inflation into account, they charge the blockade with having drained \$933.68 billion from Cuba's economy since it took effect. Losses during the most recent year amounted to \$4.3 billion.

Once again the report appears ahead of a vote in the United Nations General Assembly on a Cuban resolution titled "Necessity for putting an end to the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba." The vote this year takes place on October 31. Cuba's first purpose in issuing the report is to inform national delegations at the Assembly about the blockade. In effect, the Cuban government is also sending a message to world opinion.

Nations of the world have voted on this Cuban resolution every year since 1992, and every year they have overwhelmingly voted down the U.S. blockade. Only the United States and Israel have come to its defense in recent years.

The blockade is the centerpiece of U.S. aggression against a sovereign nation. It has persisted for a duration taking up one fourth of the years since George Washington was president. Therefore, U.S. people on the side of decency and respect toward Cuba have reason to call their own government to account. The current report from Cuba is for them an incentive and a resource for information.

Cuba's 2018 report surveys U.S. laws authorizing the blockade, U.S. violations of international law, and U.S. and worldwide opposition to the blockade. The report offers a flood of examples of blockade-related damage showing up between April 2017 and March 2018. It surveys harm done to healthcare, education, sports, culture, economic development, foreign trade, and Cuba's relations with international financial institutions.

The report touches upon new U.S. regulations imposed by the Trump administration in November 2017, in particular the tightening of travel restrictions and banning of U.S. trade with 179 specified Cuban companies. This report returns to Cuba's charge over the years that the blockade exerts an "extraterritorial" effect. It reaches beyond Cuba to affect countries throughout the world.

The report outlines mechanisms by means of which the blockade causes shortages. There is the prohibition of direct dealings between entities of the two countries. The major exception is an allowance dating from 2000 for U.S. agricultural products to be exported to Cuba.

Monetary losses also result from U.S. sanctions, or the fear of sanctions, that are applied to specific companies, agencies, and financial institutions in third countries. Their vulnerability stems from any affiliation they enjoy with U.S. counterparts or from any significant admixture of

U.S. components or U.S. financing in the manufacture of goods in those third countries. Third-country companies involved in distributing such goods to Cuba also risk U.S. fines.

Companies in third countries may not use dollars in transactions with Cuba. Banks are punished “for using the word Cuba in reference to the transaction.”

The report catalogues difficult situations. Specialized medical equipment and drugs made only in the United States are unavailable and lives are lost. To buy goods from third countries rather than from the United States means higher prices and increased transportation costs. Cuban agricultural products are off limits to U.S. buyers. Services for Cuban embassies in foreign countries may be unavailable due to providers’ affiliations with U.S. companies. Tourist revenue is down as a result of the Trump administration’s new travel restrictions. The refusal of third-country banks to handle dollars heading for Cuba curtails revenue.

Frustration results from a lack of access to equipment and services from abroad that are essential for improvements in the agricultural, educational, and health care sectors. Shortages in health care cause “pain that never can be quantified.” The near impossibility of Cubana Airlines to secure spare parts or to rent or buy replacement planes is a recipe for danger.

Blockade regulations have long interfered with visits in both directions of performing artists, scientific delegations, academic groups, and cultural representatives. Academic exchanges and U.S. student programs in Cuba have been put on hold.

Economic reverses suffered by Cubans at the hands of the blockade are thus quantifiable and serious. But, as the report demonstrates, the blockade also causes fatigue, discouragement, and dashed hopes affecting people’s daily lives. That, in fact, is the way it was supposed to be. According to a State Department memo in 1960, the blockade would inflict pain and suffering and thereby, in theory, provoke rebellion.

The dominant U.S. media are ignoring the current Cuban report to the United Nations. One Internet search yielded two articles in English, one from Venezuela and the other from Cuba. A modified one identified another posting by the official “New China News Agency.” A search for Spanish-language articles on the report produced an overflow.

The blockade itself receives little mention in the U.S. press, which dwells on Cuba’s economic problems. Any pretense at objectivity surely would require press coverage of this U.S. policy, not least because the blockade has much to do with shortages and economic stress in Cuba.

We note, lastly, that the U.S. blockade operates in concert with other aggressive U.S. measures against Cuba, in particular many well-established U.S. programs providing money and support for a political opposition there. Broadcasting of counter-revolutionary propaganda from the United States has continued for decades. The U.S. Congress recently approved \$15 million in support of anti-government subversion inside Cuba and \$29 million to fund the U.S. propaganda arm Radio and TV Marti.