

Once More UN General Assembly Rejects US Blockade of Cuba

By Tom Whitney

It happened again. For the 28th consecutive year a Cuban resolution calling for an end to the U.S. economic blockade of that island was approved overwhelmingly in the United Nations General Assembly. The vote on November 7 was 187 votes in favor, three votes against – the United States, Israel, and Brazil – and two nations abstaining, Colombia and Ukraine.

For all those years the United States and Israel have been the two consistent naysayers. Some years, one or two other nations have joined them. Brazil, taking its turn this year, and Colombia, one of the abstaining nations, undoubtedly were signaling cooperation with the U.S. project of control over the entire region.

Voting Started		11/7/2019		12:01:36 PM	
Item 39 A/74/L.6 Draft resolution					
Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against					
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He cited these other items: cutting back on remittances Cuban-Americans send to families on the island, denial of visas for Cubans wanting to enter the United States, reduction of consular services, cancellation of baseball agreements, tightened restrictions on US travel to Cuba, cruise ships blocked from visiting Cuba, airline terminals in Cuba and elsewhere off limits to airlines of several countries, prohibitions on Cuba renting airplanes with 10 percent or more U.S. components, halting “commercial, cultural and education” interchanges, and interference with Cuban doctors serving abroad.

Rodriguez highlighted Cuba’s inability to gain access to life saving medicines and equipment for both critically ill children and cancer patients. “There’s no Cuban family that doesn’t suffer consequences” from the tightened restrictions, the chancellor affirmed, adding that “The blockade has constituted the main hindrance for generations of Cubans and continues as the principal obstacle to our development.” He referred to imperialist domination of Latin America and the Caribbean and continuing application of the Monroe Doctrine.

The representatives of at least 12 countries spoke before the General Assembly prior to the vote. Denunciation of the United States for violations of international law, including the United Nations Charter, was a common theme. The United States, they said in various ways, was interfering in the affairs of a sovereign nation.

Finland’s delegate, speaking on behalf of the European Union, rejected activation of Title III of the Helms Burton Law, declaring that doing so “violates commitments by the United States with the European Union in 1997 ad 1998.”

Venezuelan Chancellor Jorge Arreaza objected to the U.S. practice of converting U.S. laws into universal laws. For him, the blockade represents “a criminal practice that fits perfectly as a crime against humanity. It’s collective punishment emanating from the whims and arrogance of those who think they are superior.”

Reacting to far-reaching condemnation from the world community, the U.S. government offered a few quibbles. Voice of America applauded “cash infusions received in Cuba from the United States” – a reference to remittances from Cuban Americans, now reduced as per new U.S. edicts.

Prior to the vote Kelly Craft, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, asserted that, “we get to choose which countries we trade with; this is our sovereign right.” She complained that, “the international community in the name of protecting sovereignty, continues to challenge this right.”

Reflections are in order. One is that from the vantage point of these dark times, the Obama administration deserves great praise for its opening toward Cuba. Now, the fact of U.S. abstention in the annual UN vote on the resolution in 2016 looks like a major milestone.

And, this writer has been reporting on the UN vote on the U.S. blockade for more than 15 years, every year. That realization leads to speculation that long repetition of this and other such exercises might portend troubles ahead for the Cuba solidarity campaign, especially in view of the apparent stasis in U.S.-Cuban relations. The possibility of growing accommodation with terribly unjust U.S. policies is worrisome, especially the prospect of diminishing ardor among current activists and problems with recruitment.