

President Trump partially reverses Obama's Cuba policy

On 16 June 2017, US President Donald Trump signed into law a partial reversal of Barack Obama's Cuba policy. During his speech to a sympathetic crowd in Miami last week, Trump declared that he was: *"cancelling completely the last Administration's completely one-sided deal with Cuba"*.

He said: *"Our policy will seek a much better deal for the Cuban people and the United States of America...We do not want to support a policy which props up the regime in Cuba."*

A closer look at the new policy reveals that the changes themselves are in many ways not as tough as Trump's speech; they represent only a limited reversal of President Obama's moves towards a thawing of relations with Cuba.

Two key changes

Firstly, under President Obama's policy, US citizens could not travel as tourists but could visit Cuba under 12 broadly defined categories. These included sports interests, cultural tours, and also "people to people" visits as an independent (individual) traveller for educational purposes. The new policy seeks to enhance travel restrictions so as to better enforce the statutory ban on United States tourism to Cuba. Among other changes, travel for non-academic educational purposes will be limited to group travel. In other words, President Trump's new policy looks to tighten controls on US citizens visiting Cuba by restricting the individual "people to people" category. The new policy seeks evidence that US travellers are visiting as part of a group/tour, *"and not just lying on a beach,"* a White House official suggested.

The second key category of the new policy seeks to prevent US persons from having business dealings with the military. This is a reasonably significant move as the Cuban military has many commercial interests on the island, particularly in the tourist industry.

Further information

For further information on the new Cuba policy, we refer Members to two sets of publications both issued by the US Administration on 16 June 2017: a set of [FAQs published by OFAC \(Department of the Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control\)](#) and a [Fact Sheet on Cuba Policy published by the White House](#).

It should be noted that the changes will not take effect until new Regulations are put into place by OFAC. This is expected to take place in the coming months.

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