

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 18, 2016

COMMITTEES:
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION
FOREIGN RELATIONS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE
SMALL BUSINESS AND
ENTREPRENEURSHIP

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Your determination to visit the communist state of Cuba on March 21st and 22nd, regardless of the disastrous consequences, is a mistake. I strongly urge you to reconsider visiting Cuba in the absence of the government undertaking meaningful reforms including: reforming their oppressive political system, reigning in a police state that orchestrated over 8,600 political arrests in 2015, freeing all political prisoners, resolving the billions of dollars in outstanding property claims and court judgments against the Castro regime, and returning fugitives from U.S. justice.

In other words, having an American president go to Cuba simply for the sake of going there, without the United States getting anything in return, is both counterproductive and damaging to our national security interests. Any time a president visits a foreign country, it speaks volumes to the host country, to the American people, and to the rest of the world. If you proceed with this visit, you will further confirm what the Castro regime has learned throughout its negotiations with your Administration: that you are willing to give up all the leverage the United States has in exchange for virtually nothing. You will send the message to the oppressed Cuban people that you stand with their oppressors. You will send the message to the Western Hemisphere and the rest of the world, especially our enemies, that the United States can grow tired of standing up for our national security interests and principles.

Furthermore, your Administration's recent handling of its re-opening of the U.S. embassy in Havana demonstrated complete diplomatic incompetence that does not bode well for a future presidential visit. That event further proved to the Castro regime that it can get extraordinary concessions from your government in exchange for nothing. That episode also showed a blatant disregard for the patriotic Cuban dissidents who have toiled for years in advancing the cause of freedom only to be shut out of the public ceremony on August 14, 2015.

A presidential visit to Cuba would inevitably entail staying at hotels and other accommodations controlled by the Cuban military, providing American taxpayer dollars to the regime, in addition to the economic concessions you have been making over the past year. As you know, the island's repressive apparatus is under the iron fist of Raul Castro's son, Colonel Alejandro Castro, while the economy remains under the control of the lucrative military monopoly, Enterprise Administration Group (GAESA), run by Raul

Castro's son-in-law, General Luis Alberto Rodriguez Lopez-Callejas. To date, the concessions you have given to the regime have strengthened Castro's military monopolies not the Cuban people.

In sum, I urge you to reconsider visiting Cuba and instead insist that the Castro regime finally make some serious concessions that have so far not been prioritized in negotiations. Before you announced your new Cuba policy on December 17, 2014, the United States possessed significant economic and diplomatic leverage over the Castro regime. Rather than achieving several long-standing U.S. goals and national security interests, you have methodically squandered this opportunity, legitimizing the Castro regime and enriching it in the process. A presidential visit to Cuba absent of any concessions from its government is a dangerous idea, and I urge you to reconsider.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Rubio', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Marco Rubio
United States Senator