

# Trump's Cuba Policy Reverses Course Set by Obama

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Simpler and less expensive travel to Cuba by Americans is apparently short-lived, as more difficult and costly travel to the island nation appears forthcoming.

In a recent speech in Miami outlining his policies on Cuban travel and commercial ties with the island country, President Donald Trump said the U.S. is not severing ties with Cuba and the U.S. Embassy will remain open, but he hopes to force the Castro government to reform, especially as to human rights violations, by reverting to some of the policies that had been in effect for close to 50 years before the Obama détente moves.

What will change and what will not change?

- Tourism to Cuba is technically banned, but, under the Obama Administration, the regulations were relaxed and individuals could plan their own “people to people” cultural tours. Now, Americans making educational or cultural trips will have to do so through a licensed tour company or apply for their own license from the Treasury Department. This is apt to be not only more costly, but more complicated.
- Americans will be prohibited from transactions with companies controlled by the Cuban military, intelligence, or security services. Since those agencies run much of the tourist infrastructure, including hotels, tourists will find it hard to know where they can spend money.
- The Department of State will issue a list of blacklisted companies (which could make things clearer) and the Department of Treasury will audit tours and finances more stringently.
- There will be exceptions to the embargo for American companies (such as Starwood Hotels) already doing business with the Cuban government and for airports and seaports, meaning cruise ships and commercial air flights will not be affected directly (although the companies may curtail them as tourism may drop).
- Other exceptions to the trade embargo are expected to remain in effect, including for medical supplies, telecommunications technology, and agricultural products.
- The [“wet foot, dry foot policy” ended by Obama](#) will not be reinstated, i.e., Cuban refugees making it to the U.S. soil will be treated like any other refugees. They will be sent back or they

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will have to try to apply for asylum.

Trump stated he wants to force the Castro Administration to promote free and fair elections, release political prisoners, and allow Cuban workers to be paid directly. Those goals are seemingly shared by both the current and former administrations, but there are marked differences in how to accomplish them. Under the Obama Administration's scaling back of restrictions, there was a surge in Cuban "capitalism." More than 600,000 Americans visited Cuba last year and a Cuban entrepreneur class has been developing. Entrepreneurs have opened independent restaurants and have been selling their own "products," such as tourist rooms and tours through Airbnb to cater to the revived American tourist industry.

The new rules will not go into effect immediately and it may take months before they become reality. The government has 90 days to start rewriting regulations.

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