



Russia-Cuba Relations Continue Revival

OE Watch Commentary: On 5 February, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov kicked off a three-day visit to Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela to meet with his counterparts. During Lavrov's visit to Cuba, Venezuelan news source *Telesur* printed a tweet by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez as well as Lavrov's comments on Russia-Cuba relations, demonstrating the strong relationship. Rodriguez tweeted, "We ratified our wonderful relationship and ongoing commitment to continue expanding cooperation to tackle problems." Meanwhile, Lavrov noted that Russia is "categorically opposed to US sanctions and stand[s] by our Cuban friends during this time. We further insist on eliminating financial/economic barriers imposed by the US in order to guarantee complete socio-economic development, provide sovereign equality and ensure that equal rights are granted to all Cubans."

The second accompanying passage from *The Spectator* points out that Russian support to Cuba is nothing new and most recently goes back to 2013 when the two countries began increasing trade and investment activities. The passage also notes that Moscow is stepping up its military support for Havana. It points out for example, that Russia issued a ~\$43 million loan to Cuba in February 2019 so that the island could maintain its Soviet-era military equipment. It also highlights that in June of 2019, "the Russian navy also sent one of its most advanced warships to Cuba in a gesture of solidarity amidst Havana's growing tensions with Washington." (Also see: "Increased Russian Soft Power in Cuba," *OE Watch*, January 2020 and "More Russia in Cuba," *OE Watch*, November 2019) **End OE Watch Commentary (Fiegel)**



Embassy of Russia in Havana.

Source: Manuel Castro via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Embassy_of_Russia_in_Havana,_Cuba.jpg, CA by 2.0

“We (Russia) are categorically opposed to US sanctions and stand by our Cuban friends during this time. We further insist on eliminating financial/economics barriers imposed by the US to guarantee complete socio-economic development, sovereign equality and ensure that equal rights are granted to all Cubans.”

Source: "Canciller de Rusia llega a Cuba en visita oficial (Russian Chancery Arrives to Cuba on Official Visit)," *Telesur*, 6 February 2020. <https://www.telesurtv.net/news/cuba-rusia-lavrov-llega-gira-america-latina-20200206-0001.html>

Bruno Rodriguez Tweets Regarding his visit with Sergei Lavrov

--"We ratified our wonderful relationship and ongoing commitment to continue expanding cooperation to tackle problems."--

Lavrov to Telesur Regarding Russian Take on US Sanctions Imposed on Cuba

--"they (the US) are showing marked interest in disrupting economic activity on the island which is actually a human rights violation in the sense it hurts the common interests of the people."

"We (Russia) are categorically opposed to US sanctions and stand by our Cuban friends during this time. We further insist on eliminating financial/economic barriers imposed by the US in order to guarantee complete socio-economic development, provide sovereign equality and ensure that equal rights are granted to all Cubans."

Source: "Simes, Dimitri. "Putin is Resurrecting Russia's Cold War Pact with Cuba," *The Spectator*, 6 February 2020.

<https://blogs.spectator.co.uk/2020/02/putin-is-resurrecting-russias-cold-war-pact-with-cuba/>

With Cuba feeling the burden of US sanctions, Russia has emerged as an alternative source of trade and investment. Trade between the two countries more than doubled between 2013 and 2019, jumping from £139 million to over £380 million.

Additionally, Moscow is also stepping up its military support for Havana. For example, Russia issued a £33 million loan to Cuba in February 2019 so that the island could maintain its Soviet-era military equipment. In June of 2019, the Russian navy also sent one of its most advanced warships to Cuba in a gesture of solidarity amidst Havana's growing tensions with Washington.