

Watch Live: President Donald Trump Adopts New Policy Toward Cuba

President Donald Trump is taking part in a ceremony in Miami, Florida, in which he will sign an executive order reversing much of the U.S. foreign policy regarding Cuba that was implemented by President Barack Obama and has emboldened the repressive Castro regime there.

You can see the entire event in the video clip above.

Thursday night, a senior administration official provided background on the president's new policy, which he said would be in keeping with a promise he made during the 2016 presidential election campaign. The following is the official's complete statement:

During the campaign last year, President Trump received an endorsement from the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association, the first presidential endorsement this group has ever made, at their museum in Little Havana, Miami. The president has repeatedly said he was "honored and humbled" to have received that endorsement from these veterans, recognizing that they were fighting to restore liberty and justice for the people of Cuba.

The president vowed to reverse the Obama administration policies toward Cuba that have enriched the Cuban military regime and increased the repression on the island. It is a promise that President Trump made, and it's a promise that President Trump is keeping.

With this is a readjustment of the United States policy towards Cuba. And you will see that, going forward, the new policy under the Trump administration will empower the

Cuban people. To reiterate, the new policy going forward does not target the Cuban people, but it does target the repressive members of the Cuban military government.

A second official also weighed in:

[T]he president made a promise September 16, 2016, when he was speaking in Miami, about his commitment to overturn the Obama policy of appeasement toward Cuba. And, in doing so, he promised to restore some of the restrictions on Cuba until they provide religious and political freedom to their people.

In order to follow through on the promises the president made, he ordered a full review of U.S. policy toward Cuba in February, and of his team here internally. The National Security Council, led by General McMaster, engaged in a thorough interagency review process, including more than a dozen working-level meetings, multiple deputies' meetings and principal meetings. This interagency process included, among others—there are additional agencies—but those I think that are most impacted by the policy included the Treasury Department, the State Department, Commerce Department, the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation. So each of those agencies and secretaries were actively engaged in this policy formation.

Additionally, during this process, the president met with members of Congress who are experts on Cuba policy and have been leaders in formulating Cuba policy, from a legislative perspective, for years. These members also worked with us hand-in-glove in providing technical guidance and policy suggestions as we continued to formulate the policy and went through multiple drafts.

The president and other principals also met with members on both sides of the aisle in this process, and even,

additionally, were sharing thoughts with those who have, I think, been advocates—in particular, agricultural trade with Cuba.

The president has tasked his Cabinet to work together to find ways to improve what we consider President Obama's bad deal. And we're very excited about the result that the president will unveil tomorrow."

A third official also added:

[T]he basic policy driver was his concern that the previous policy was enriching the Cuban military and the intelligence services that contribute so much to oppression on the island. And that's the opposite of what he wanted to achieve, which is to have the benefits of any economic commerce with the United States go to the Cuban people. So that would be our guiding principle.

I did want to note that there will not be a change to wet-foot, dry-foot current policy, and that very much the hope of the administration is that the Cuban regime will see this as an opportunity for them to implement the reforms that they paid lip service to a couple of years ago, but that have not in any way been implemented to the benefit of the Cuban people. {eo}