

# REMOVE CUBA FROM THE SSOT LIST

Cuba's addition to the State Sponsors of Terrorism (SSOT) list - in the waning days of the Trump administration - was politically motivated and has no national security justification. Given the negative impact on the well-being of the Cuban people, the Biden administration must be pushed to remove Cuba from the SSOT list now.

## No basis for Cuba's inclusion

Cuba was included on the list because it "refused Colombia's request to extradite 10 ELN (National Liberation Army) leaders living in Havana" and because it "harbors U.S. fugitives." However:

- Cuba was hosting peace talks between the Colombian government and ELN – the ELN negotiators were granted safe haven as part of the peace process
- Even the State Department admits Cuba's refusal was due to "peace negotiation protocols" and that Colombia subsequently dropped the extradition requests
- Colombian President Gustavo Petro characterized the original extradition request as "a betrayal of previous agreements signed in the form of protocols with Colombia, Cuba and Norway."
- Failing to extradite U.S. citizens on criminal charges has never been used as justification for placing a country on the SSOT list, aside from Cuba
- Cuba's issuance of asylum to U.S. fugitives does not meet the statutory definition for sponsoring terror laid out by the three laws that define international terror

The Cuban government engaged in talks with the U.S. on law enforcement cooperation in January 2023, sent a Border Guard delegation to visit the U.S. in March 2023 and held talks with the U.S. on anti-terror measures in April 2023. Would the U.S. do all this with an actual sponsor of terror?

## Broken Promises?

In his 2020 campaign, President Biden promised he "would go back" to the Obama policy of engagement. His incoming administration then "pledged to Congress" it would start the process of removing Cuba from the SSOT list, even telling members of Congress that the review was ongoing. In December 2023, three years after these promises were made, The Intercept reported that the process has not even begun!

## International Support

- "Cuba's deep commitment to international cooperation and the strict fulfillment of its commitments is a clear demonstration of the country's adherence to values that have no relation to terrorism." – 18 former Latin American & Caribbean presidents and prime ministers
  - "We reject Cuba's inclusion on the list of states sponsoring terrorism." – Brazilian President Lula da Silva
  - "We ask the U.S. government to cease the injustice... the only thing Cuba did was create a space for our peace process." – Colombian President Gustavo Petro
  - "Including Cuba on the list of countries that support terrorism is an outrage without any justification" – EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell
  - "Those who come [to Cuba] are profoundly shocked at what the SSOT designation is doing to the people here... [the designation is] desperately unfair." – British ambassador to Cuba Sir George Hollingbery
- Watch a video about the international community's support for removing Cuba from the list: <http://bit.ly/ssotinternational>

## Impacts

- Cuba's inclusion "risks delegitimizing what should be a tool that is used to punish actual state sponsors of terrorism" - former Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes
- Migration: CBP encounters of Cubans at the U.S.-Mexico border increased by 274% in the year after the SSOT designation
- Citizens from 40+ countries traveling to Cuba are ineligible for US visa waivers, depressing Cuban tourism - the biggest private sector employer
- 30+ financial institutions left Cuba within weeks of the SSOT listing, severely limiting banking options for Cubans and organizations working in Cuba
- U.S. & international NGOs working in Cuba had funds frozen and shipments of humanitarian supplies blocked
- Cubans living abroad had bank accounts frozen and transfers blocked, including remittances
- Companies refused to sell medical supplies to Cuba
- Cuban entrepreneurs and the private sector face obstacles in access to financing and reduced demand
- E-commerce platforms stopped offering services
- Cuban small businesses had bank accounts in the U.S. canceled

## Pressuring the Biden Administration

In December 2021, 114 members of Congress - the majority of House Democrats - called on President Biden to "remove Cuba from the list." Since that time, other Congressional letters criticized the designation as "baseless" and "vindictive". As voters, we welcome this leadership and ask that Congress do more. According to the Congressional Research Service, Cuba could be delisted in as little as 45 days. Now is the time to demand action from the White House!

