



## Obama To Rescind Cuba's "State Sponsor of Terrorism" Designation

The White House issued a statement on April 14 informing the public that President Obama had submitted a report to Congress indicating the administration's intent to rescind Cuba's "State Sponsor of Terrorism" designation.



The statement noted that Cuba was designated a State Sponsor of Terrorism in 1982 "due to its efforts to promote armed revolution by organizations that used terrorism."

When the State Department added Cuba to the list, it justified the designation by stating: "Cuba has long provided safe haven to members of Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc)."

However, noted the presidential news release, things have changed since then:

After a careful review of Cuba's record, which was informed by the Intelligence Community, as well as assurances provided by the Cuban government, the Secretary of State concluded that Cuba met the conditions for rescinding its designation as a State Sponsor of Terrorism.

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Several members of Congress who are the sons of Cuban immigrants voiced criticism of the Obama administration decision. Senator Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), an announced candidate for the 2016 presidential nomination, issued the following statement:

Well, the decision made by the White House today is a terrible one, but not surprising unfortunately. Cuba is a state sponsor of terrorism. They harbor fugitives of American justice, including someone who killed a police officer in New Jersey over 30 years ago. It's also the country that's helping North Korea evade weapons sanctions by the United Nations. They should have remained on the list of state sponsors of terrorism, and I think sends a chilling message to our enemies abroad that this White House is no longer serious about calling terrorism by its proper name.

Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas), who has also announced that he will run for the Republican presidential nomination, issued a statement reading:

When it comes to making any deals with world dictators, the President of the United States should use two words: Prove it. Cuba must prove it is willing to change its behavior before the United States takes a single action to remove it from the list of state sponsors of terror. Fidel and Raul Castro have a decades-long track record of violent hostility towards our nation. It is dangerous and reckless to use a terrorist designation as a negotiating tool, as their regime continues to support and harbor terrorists who have murdered Americans. We need better than a promise of future change; Cuba needs to prove it. And, until Cuba does, any discussion about changing its terrorist



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 15, 2015

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designation should be off the table.

The third senator who is a son of Cuban immigrants, Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), also opposed the decision, even though he is a Democrat. His statement read, in part:

This decision to take Cuba off the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism sends a message that you can continue to be complicit as Cuba has — with North Korea and China — in the smuggling of jets, missiles, and other weapons in direct violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions — and do it with impunity.

This decision to remove Cuba from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism allows Basque terrorists wanted by Spain, and members of FARC wanted by Colombia, to see Cuba as a place of refuge.

How can we say Cuba is not a State Sponsor of Terrorism when the Castro regime continues to harbor dozens of other American fugitives: cop killers, plane hijackers, bomb makers, arms traffickers?

For Cuba to be removed from the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, it must demonstrate changed behavior through verifiable actions, not empty rhetoric. Cuba remains as repressive today as ever and is undeserving of this potential newfound designation.

And Representative Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.) — whose father, Rafael Díaz-Balart, was once Cuba's house majority leader and under-secretary of interior under Fulgencio Batista (the president-dictator overthrown by the Communist revolution) and whose aunt, Mirta Díaz-Balart, was Fidel Castro's first wife — included these remarks in his statement:

Once again, President Obama has demonstrated that his eagerness to capitulate to dictators has no bounds. Today, the administration has jeopardized U.S. national security by choosing to absolve the Castro dictatorship of its dangerous anti-American terrorist activities across the globe. The Castro regime's extensive espionage activities, shoot-down of unarmed civilian aircraft in international waters, assistance to the Maduro regime in oppressing the opposition and subverting Venezuela's democratic institutions, harboring members of terrorist organizations such as the FARC and ETA, harboring fugitives from U.S. justice including terrorists Joanne Chesimard and William Guillermo Morales, and weapons smuggling in violation of international sanctions are just a few of the Castro regime's links to terrorism. The facts clearly show the Castro regime continues to be a state sponsor of terrorism....

The longsuffering Cuban people, who continue to struggle for the realization of human rights and democracy in Cuba, and the American people, living with an aggressive anti-American dictatorship 90 miles from our shores, deserve much better from the President.

The Cuban government, naturally, was delighted by the Obama decision. Josefina Vidal, the head of North American Affairs for the Cuban Foreign Ministry, said on April 14: "The Cuban government recognizes the president of the United States' just decision to take Cuba off a list in which it should never have been included."

[An article posted by \*The New American\* on April 10](#) quoted a statement made to our journal by Frank De Varona, a Cuban-born American patriot who was captured after fighting in the failed 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion to free Cuba and was locked in one of Castro's inhumane prisons. De Varona told *The New American* that the Cuban regime, operating through its close ally, Venezuela, was providing intelligence to Hamas and Hezbollah. (Both groups have been classified by the United States and its allies as



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terrorist organizations.) Also, noted De Varona, the regimes ruling Cuba, Venezuela, and Iran all have a very close relationship and continue to support terrorism across the Middle East.

As a totalitarian communist state, Cuba is inherently an ally of terrorists around the world. Quite simply, that is what communists do. A visit to the State Department's website shows that that department's list of "State Sponsors of Terrorism" is short and sweet and includes just four countries, Cuba, Iran, Sudan, and Syria. Instead of removing Cuba from the list, it would make more sense to add the world's remaining officially communist nations: China, Laos, North Korea, and Vietnam.

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