



A new USA project against the Cuban medical brigades

Un nuevo proyecto estadounidense contra las brigadas médicas cubanas

The US government persecutes Cuban health agreements to cut off the income obtained in this way. It alleges that the Cuban government violates the human rights of professionals by promoting manifestations of modern slavery in its medical brigades.⁽¹⁾

The US Agency for International Development (USAID), launched on July 12, 2023, its program Combating forced labor in Cuban medical missions.⁽²⁾ It is a call similar to the one carried out during the Donald Trump administration, in 2019.⁽¹⁾ The most substantial difference lies in the amount to be allocated, since on that occasion the budget was three million dollars and now it is four million. Two million dollars will be allocated to two beneficiaries. They will be organizations with an extensive subversive history, American or not, and that they must have two key people, with experience in democracy projects in Cuba, for ten and five years, respectively.⁽²⁾

The program is based on three legal instruments that form part of the backbone of the blockade and that, in one way or another, prohibit financing to the Cuban government, but authorize the delivery of funds to the counterrevolution: the Foreign Assistance Law of 1961, the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Cuban Democratic Freedom and Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996. Everything is done under the protection of US Foreign Assistance for Cuba, which aims to destroy the Revolution.⁽²⁾ The categorization of Cuba in Level 3 of the Report on Trafficking in Persons is also put forward,^(3,4) because "the Cuban government signs lucrative contracts to send medical brigades to other countries in an attempt to buy goodwill and support," but in doing so, "violates the basic rights of these medical workers."⁽²⁾ The general objective of the program is to combat alleged forced labor in Cuba's medical missions, "through greater documentation of human rights abuses and national and international promotion."⁽²⁾ This suggests that it could arise in the Latin American region, an anti-Cuban movement similar to the one that already took place in Trump's time,⁽¹⁾ as is already happening in Mexico.⁽⁵⁾

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The new testimonies must be integrated into media campaigns, and oxygenate them, which in turn must conceive the distribution of materials on human trafficking, and promote promotional plans and recommendations to inform legislators in national governments and international organizations about abuses in the missions.⁽²⁾ This is a continuation of the subversive actions carried out during the Trump administration, when debates were promoted in legislative bodies; rejection from medical union associations increased; the main media discredited the mechanism that allowed the presence of Cuban professionals and legal subterfuges were sought to prevent the continuity of the contracts.⁽¹⁾ The priority of the program is concentrated in the Western Hemisphere, particularly in countries where there are active medical missions, or where local governments are considering new agreements with the Cuban government.⁽²⁾ This is done in a context in which Biden promotes his health and resilience action plan for the Americas until 2030, and the formation of the health force of the Americas, to influence the area and take Cuba's prominence away.⁽⁶⁾

Finally, it is highlighted that the program has covert nuances. The applicant for funds is required to clarify how he will mitigate "the inherent risks of implementing a program of this scope and complexity." These risks occur when the people involved travel to Cuba, an almost mandatory condition on the part of USAID. The Treasury Department granted a general license to cover USAID beneficiaries/subrecipients during their travel to Cuba and expenses they may incur while carrying out the activities.⁽²⁾

"Due to political sensitivity," none of the materials distributed in Cuban territory should mention USAID, which is not responsible for "any injury or inconvenience suffered by people" who travel. There is also a special travel liability clause for Cuba, in which "the Beneficiary will not hold USAID responsible for injury, death, detention, imprisonment, kidnapping, loss of property, damages." They further recommend that consultants and travelers "speak fluent Spanish, have a solid understanding of the cultural context, and have prior experience on the island, to maximize their effectiveness in this unique operating environment."⁽²⁾ It is clear that USAID is the federal agency in charge of financing and promoting the media campaign against the Cuban medical brigades, which is part of a strategy of boycotting health services exports, to cut off incomes. The main message line is that the agreements promote slave labor.



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