
US Embargo on Cuba: South Africa Joins Other Nations in Condemning America

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South Africa is the latest to announce a solidarity campaign for Cuba, protesting the U.S. embargo.

"We should pay our solidarity to the cause of the Cuban people, reciprocate the solidarity they gave to us, and do that out of love and out of appreciation that we need each other," said Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe of the country's ruling African National Congress, according to Voice of America.

The announcement was met with some confusion — questions arose of why the country is picking up the cause on the 50-year-old embargo.

Gideon Chitanga, a political researcher at the Center for Study of Democracy, told VOA that it is because the country is maturing as a democracy and may be ready to start engaging in global issues.

"More and more, South Africa is becoming a confident voice of the global South. So, the timing should be seen in terms of a South Africa which is asserting itself in the context of general global issues, but not to necessarily say that this approach opposes the West," Chitanga said. "It's a policy that is based on calling for more engagement."

Mantashe said he intends to call on President Barack Obama to lift the blockade and release five intelligence spies — known as the Cuban Five.

"Ultimately it is the political decision by the president of the United States to release the Cuban Five. It is quite important that we don't only focus on the Cuban Five, you also focus on the lifting of the American blockade," he said. "It has outlived its usefulness, but they don't take the decision to lift it."

Cuba claims the five that were taken were not spying on the U.S. government but instead on the exiled Cubans in Miami.

The United Nations has passed a resolution each year for the past 20 to break the blockade, saying it is a violation of international law. But every U.S. president has upheld the embargo, stating it will only be lifted when Cuba becomes a democracy — even though other communist nations don't have similar ultimatums.
