

Trump's Measures Harm Cubans, Study Says

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A recent study shows that the measures taken by US President Donald Trump, harm the Cuban people.

The Cuban academic Rafael Betancourt stated on Monday that Trump's measures, especially those in the sector of tourism, harm Cubans, although some of his arguments are allegedly justified to help them.

Betancourt told Prensa Latina that the 56.6-percent decrease in tourist arrivals from the United States since restrictions were imposed by the Trump administration in June 2017 resulted in a 7-percent drop in the total number of foreign holidaymakers.

That reduction was reported in the first three months of 2018, as stated by Betancourt, based on official statistics published in April. The scholar is a member of the Tourism Chair at the Jose Marti International Journalism Institute in this capital.

In 2017, he said, after President Barack Obama's opening policy, nearly 620,000

US citizens traveled to Cuba, six times more than in the previous year. In June 2017, Trump approved a number of restriction and policy changes, including new regulations to restrict individual, self-guided and people-to-people travels.

Trump also prohibited (US nationals) from making any financial transaction with 180 institutions that are allegedly linked to Cuba's defense, intelligence and security services.

The long list of measures also includes the forced withdrawal of most officials at the US Embassy in Havana and from the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington DC.

The experts said that the long and negative list also contains the Travel Warning issued by the Department of State in September 2017 and the new system of Travel Warnings from the Department of State in January 2018.

Those warnings classify Cuba in Level Three: 'reconsider traveling... due to attacks on health aimed at workers in the US Embassy in Havana.'

Betancourt noted that the survey was carried out by the Center for Responsible Travel (CREST) among 42 US tour operators who took more than 17,000 people to Cuba in 2017.

The poll showed that 85 percent of the surveyed companies reported a larger decrease in reservations or an increase in cancellations in the second half of 2017, compared to the first semester of the year.

In addition, 66 percent of them received cancellations from their travel partners (universities, museums and professional associations), and 85 percent predicted fewer reservations of people-to-people travels in 2018, in contrast to 2017.

Among the reasons for that decrease are the abovementioned warnings (84 percent), the ban on individual travels (75 percent), the abovementioned health problems (56 percent), security (50 percent) and retaliations upon returning home (37 percent).

In that regard, the executive director of the Fund for Reconciliation and Development, John McAuliff, stressed that US citizens can still travel to Cuba independently, but few people know.

As part of his term paper, the professor and fifth year students in the subject of Urban Economics, at the San Geronimo University College of Havana, adjusted the CREST survey and applied it to a sample of businesses and entrepreneurs,

both state and private (March-April 2018).

After carrying out additional polls and analyzing other data, the study showed that when Trump announced his new Cuba policy last summer, he said that his objective was to elude the military and the government and help the Cuban people to create businesses and make their lives much better. However, the deep research shows exactly the opposite, Betancourt noted.

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