
Trump Puts More Pressure on Cuba, Targets Cuban Doctors Program

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The campaign against the doctors aims to strangle the revenue they bring in, much of which goes into Cuba's health and social services, according to analysts.

Donald Trump's administration is targeting the Cuban medical program that has helped some of the most impoverished communities worldwide, in a bid to exert more pressure on Cuba's economy, according to a report published Tuesday by the Guardian.

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Washington is using a whole host of allegations to thwart the program. It has been accusing Havana of undermining democracy and interfering in the internal affairs of the countries where the doctors operate.

Among other allegations, the U.S. claims that the Cuban government is "exploiting" the medical staff deployed on the missions.

Officials in Cuba, backed by analysts who studied the work of the medical missions, retort that the U.S. is using this claim to enforce further its policy of asphyxiating Cuba's economy in the hope of bringing down its regime.

The campaign against the doctors, which includes attempts to convince them to defect, is little

more than an effort to strangle the amount of foreign revenue that they bring in, much of which put back into Cuba's health and social services, the Guardian cited critics as saying.

"The [U.S. policy] is targeting the two main sources of external income for Cuba, first tourism and now medical services," explained Pavel Vidal Alejandro, a Cuban-born academic at the Xavierian University in Colombia.

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"Medical services represent around 60% of Cuba's total foreign income. It's the old policy of applying a high-pressure cooker strategy in the hope it will produce social protests. That didn't happen in the past and is not happening now."

U.S. secretary of state Mike Pompeo is leading the campaign against the Cuban program. He has described the presence of Cuban doctors in countries from Venezuela to Brazil and Ecuador as a "sinister" interference in their affairs and praised countries like Bolivia that have expelled them.

Recent political changes in Latin America exacerbated Washington's campaign against the Cuban doctors, leading to the withdrawal of the missions from several countries, including Bolivia, Brazil, and Ecuador, where far-right regimes aligned with Trump took over left-wing governments. The departure of Cuban doctors from these countries saw severe consequences for the most vulnerable populations.

USAID, the leading U.S. development agency, has also played an important role, offering to fund organizations to expose negative aspects of the Cuban scheme.

The program is known as "Cuban doctors" was founded more than 50 years ago after Fidel Castro's revolution. It is currently active in over 60 countries.

It has provided healthcare across the globe, from indigenous Amazon peoples to impoverished areas in Africa to the victims of Haiti's 2010 earthquake.
