
US Embargo Threatened Cuban Ebola Mission

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A World Health Organization official revealed that payments for the doctors' accommodation and food were delayed for several weeks by the U.S. Treasury.

Cuba's Ebola mission was put at risk by the ongoing U.S. embargo on Cuba, a U.N. World Health Organization representative said this weekend.

The Cuban government — [the first to send doctors to West Africa to tackle the Ebola outbreak](#) — was forced to pay for the accommodation and food of its medical mission for several weeks, because the U.N. health agency could not make money transfers, according to Cuba's WHO representative, Jose Luis Di Fabio.

Di Fabio said to the Associated Press that this was due to the U.S. blockade of the island, imposed 50 years ago.

Di Fabio explained that the WHO had to request a special permit from the U.S. Treasury, so that bank transfers to doctors in Africa could be made without being sanctioned by Washington. The request took several weeks to resolve, meaning the island had to pay the costs for the doctors in the meantime.

Cuba has sent 256 doctors and health professionals to Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia, the nations most affected by the Ebola outbreak, which has killed close to 7,000 people so far.

Each of the 256 Cuban doctors who have travelled to Africa is supposed to receive about US\$250 per day for accommodation and food.

The economic blockade against Cuba, which has been criticized by the international community and denounced by the U.N. General Assembly 23 years in a row, bans corporations from having any trade or finance relations with the Cuban government.

