
Cuba Insists that Washington must Lift Blockade

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During the second meeting of the Cuba-US Bilateral Commission in Washington on Tuesday, the island's representatives reiterated the need to lift the over-50-year economic, commercial and financial blockade as a priority to advance the normalization of bilateral relations. Just like in the first meeting, held September 11 in Havana, we insisted in the lifting of the siege, given the damage it inflicts on the Cuban people and on economic and commercial relations between the two countries and with third parties, said Cuban representative Josefina Vidal, who heads the United States division and the island's Foreign Ministry.

Vidal headed the Cuban delegation to the meeting of the bilateral commission, which was set up to advance the normalization of relations between Havana and Washington, as announced 17 December 2014 by presidents Raul Castro and Barack Obama.

But according to Vidal, during the meeting at the US State Department, the Cuban delegation put forth other aspects that run contrary to its sovereignty, which must be addressed and solved to achieve normal relations.

The return to Cuba of the eastern territory occupied by the US naval base in Guantanamo and the elimination of illegal radio and TV transmissions to Cuba aimed at regime change were two of those aspects mentioned by Vidal.

The Cuban official said that the meeting was held in a constructive and respectful environment and it allowed reviewing previously agreements adopted in September in Havana related to

issues of mutual interest.

We looked at the steps we have taken thus far, which can lead to concrete accords on areas like the reestablishment of regular flights, environmental protection, the resumption of direct postal services and the fight on drug trafficking, she explained.

Other aspects analyzed at the meeting included recent high-level visits to both countries and others that will take place. The Bilateral Commission will hold another session in February 2016, in Havana.
