

Josefina Vidal a Decision Maker according to Foreign Policy Magazine

---

02/12/2015



A lingering chapter of the Cold War closed in December 2014, when the United States announced it would re-establish full relations with Cuba. Leading the reconciliation were two White House aides, Ben Rhodes and Ricardo Zuniga, who spearheaded more than 70 hours of secret talks with Havana on previously intractable issues such as prisoner swaps and easing economic sanctions.

In 2015, the State Department's Roberta Jacobson and the Cuban Foreign Ministry's Josefina Vidal seized the diplomacy baton, meeting to hash out the détente's nuts and bolts. They sometimes clashed (on both countries' harboring of fugitives, for instance) and faced complex politics (for example, Fidel Castro's public call for the relinquishing of U.S. control of Guantánamo Bay, which the United States isn't prepared to accept). Yet they still laid the groundwork for a new era of cooperation: In July, the United States and Cuba reopened their respective embassies in Havana and Washington for the first time in a half-century.

---