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Cuba, U.S. to meet again over new trade rules

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Cuba's Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment (Mincex) Rodrigo Malmierca will meet this week in Washington with his U.S. counterpart for a second round of talks on new bilateral trade regulations, state daily Granma reported Thursday.

The minister will lead the Cuban delegation to the Second U.S.-Cuba Regulatory Dialogue slated for Feb.17-18 "to discuss the scope and limitations of recently announced modifications to the (U.S. trade embargo), as well as their impact on bilateral economic-commercial relations," the daily said.

Malmierca and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker will jointly inaugurate the meeting, which will also be attended by representatives of Cuba's Foreign Affairs Ministry, Central Bank and Chamber of Commerce.

In a statement, Pritzker said the meeting "is another opportunity to work directly with our Cuban counterparts to better understand the way our two governments and economies can work together in support of the Cuban people."

Experts from the U.S. departments of Commerce, Treasury, and State will explain "the regulatory changes enacted on Jan. 26, 2016 that affect the export and financing of certain goods and services authorized for Cuba and the challenges identified by U.S. companies to doing business in Cuba," the Commerce Department said.

Since the two countries announced in December 2014 they would work to normalize ties, Washington has relaxed certain financial restrictions on banking institutions handling Cuban transactions, and is allowing more travel between the two nations.

The new rules introduced in January followed two prior packages of regulatory changes made in January and September of 2015 to alleviate the trade embargo put in place during the John F. Kennedy administration.

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The [White House](#) claims that only Congress can lift the embargo, but Cuba maintains that U.S. President [Barack Obama](#) has extensive executive powers to modify the regime of sanctions and punitive measures designed to punish both Cuba and any entity that wants to do business with it.

The first regulatory dialogue was held in October.

Malmiera is also set to meet with members of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from political and academic circles, and to visit the state of Virginia, at the invitation of Gov. Terry McAuliffe.

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