
Cuba Says US to Blame for Surge in Risky Migration

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Cuba says a U.S. policy of treating Cubans arriving at U.S. soil as legal immigrants is driving many to make the risky and costly trip.

U.S. policy toward Cuban immigrants is to blame for a surge in people leaving the island nation in a risky attempt to reach the United States by land and sea, the Cuban government said Sunday.

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A government statement carried by local media announcing the arrival of 14 Cubans deported by Colombia said migrants were the “victims of the politicization of the migration issue by the U.S. government, which stimulates illegal and unsafe immigration.”

Tens of thousands of Cubans over the last two years have flocked to the U.S.-Mexican border and taken to sea in hopes of reaching Florida, fearing that warming ties between the Cold War foes will lead to a change in U.S. policy.

Under a 1960s law, the Cuban Adjustment Act, Cuban citizens are treated as

legal immigrants if they set foot on U.S. soil. Cuban citizens “receive differential treatment ... they are immediately and automatically admitted ... including if they arrived by illegal means,” Havana said in the statement, adding that the policy contradicted normalization efforts.

Several Latin American countries have been deporting Cubans seeking to travel to the U.S., including Colombia and Ecuador.

Colombia last week announced that more than 1,000 Cubans stuck in the country would be deported. Last month, Ecuador said it was deporting more than 60 Cubans who were planning on going to the U.S. through illegal means.

The [Cubans were demanding](#) that Mexico or Ecuador pay for their trip to the U.S., where they intended to apply for residency. However, those Cubans who arrive in other Latin American countries are not applying for refugee status or any visa.

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“We are not against the freedom of movement, which is a human right. But movement always must be legal and secure; it should respect the laws of both countries,” Rafael Nodarse, president of the Association of Cuban Residents in Ecuador, told teleSUR last month.

A Pew Research Center report released Sunday said that during the first 10 months of fiscal year 2016 more than 46,500 Cubans had arrived and been admitted to the U.S. without visas, compared to more than 43,000 in 2015 and just over 24,000 in 2014.

As the long trek through the region becomes more difficult and costly, more Cubans may take to the sea.
