
A Great Victory: Peace Caravan to Cuba Enters US from Canada

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Over 90 supporters gathered at Peace Arch Park today, Sunday July 6, to send off the 25th Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba. Supporters came from across British Columbia and Washington State to make sure all of the humanitarian aid collected in British Columbia would make it across the border and on its way to Cuba. After a picnic and cultural/political program that we will report more about soon, the truck and car full of about \$10,000 worth of humanitarian aid, including walkers, wheelchairs, medical supplies, sports equipment, school supplies and tools made their first attempt to cross over the border in the afternoon. With all of the caravan supporters chanting against the blockade of Cuba, holding signs, waving flags and handing out leaflets to those waiting in traffic, the US border crossing was alive with the dynamic campaign demanding an end to the US government's illegal and immoral blockade against Cuba.

The signs were held high, the voices and chanting were loud

However, even with this sign of strength the Peace Arch Border officials turned the aid away, in other words rejected the aid, claiming it was "of a commercial quantity" and thus needed to go through the Commercial/Truck Crossing. Caravan supporters were resolute so the protest moved about 5 km down the road to the Commercial/Truck Crossing, where again the signs were held high, the voices and chanting were loud and the truck and car made their second attempt to cross the border with the humanitarian aid destined for Cuba.

The vehicles were x-rayed and many questions were asked, but after some delays the US border officials had no choice, first, because they could not find any legal justification and second, because it was clear that they were under the tremendous pressure of the loud protest at the border. Activists who were driving the aid across the border reported from within the inspection building that the border guards were intensely monitoring the protesters on their closed-circuit security TV. It was clear from this that the protest had become a big concern for them. Our militant and determined voices could be heard from blocks away, as well as many cars honking in support as they crossed through the border. It was only after 7 hours of chanting and protest that the US border guards finally were forced to relent and allow all of the aid into the US so it can travel with the Caravan on its way to Cuba! This victory

brought back the feeling of two years ago, when the same border agency refused to let the humanitarian aid pass, but after 24 hours of protest were forced to let it through.

The caravan will pass through the US/Mexico border on July 23

This was a great victory that has set the tone for the rest of the Caravan which will face another test on its way to Cuba when it passes through the US/Mexico border on July 23.

We must be alert and ready to defend this Caravan and its precious cargo for Cuba: Caravanistas who will travel from the US in defiance of the US government travel ban and humanitarian aid which the US government tries to blockade from Cuba.

Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) would like to thank everyone who supported the Caravan to Cuba at the border today, especially our co-organizers of the Seattle-Cuba Friendship Committee and our dynamic guest speaker, Manolo De Los Santos, who travelled from New York City to speak on behalf of IFCO/Pastors for Peace!

Photos from today's victory are now on our website and twitter, we will be posting a full report from the day soon!
