

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 12, 2020

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
The White House

Dear President Trump,

As elected officials who support a U.S. foreign policy that promotes democracy, prosperity, and respect for fundamental rights, we write to encourage and express our support for a consistent and principled application of U.S. policy across our hemisphere. Regrettably, the people of Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua remain under the thumb of dangerous despots who oppress their people and threaten U.S. national security interests. U.S. policy must continue to always, at its heart, extend unwavering solidarity to those engaged in the struggle for freedom, while simultaneously holding the brutal tyrants and criminal actors that oppress them accountable by imposing tough sanctions and proactive measures that advance our national security interests and those of our regional partners.

## **Solidarity with Those Struggling for Democracy**

Your administration, with strong support from the U.S. Congress, has demonstrated its steadfast support for the Venezuelan people by providing hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian aid and democracy assistance. Your administration further demonstrated its solidarity with the Venezuelan people by being the first to recognize its democratically elected representative and constitutional leader to the National Assembly, interim President Juan Guaidó. Fifty-seven other countries followed America's lead, further isolating the illegitimate Maduro regime and providing official diplomatic recognition to the legitimate representative of the Venezuelan people. Similarly, your administration continues to provide millions in democracy assistance to promote freedom and human rights for the people of Cuba and Nicaragua. Broadcasts of independent news and information continue to reach the Cuban people, and support for independent media remains a critical priority of our assistance to Nicaragua. Sadly, the previous administration failed to marginalize these oppressive regimes. In the case of Cuba, it attempted to "normalize" the illegitimate Castro regime by opening diplomatic relations and arranging President Obama's trip to Havana in March 2016 that ultimately resulted in no advancements in human rights for the Cuban people.

## **Tough Sanctions on Dictatorships**

In addition to robust assistance, your administration has imposed tough sanctions on corrupt actors and human rights abusers within these brutal regimes. In the case of Venezuela, your administration has sanctioned more than 100 Venezuelan or Venezuelan-connected individuals including Nicolas Maduro, his wife, his son, Executive Vice President Delcy Rodriguez, Diosdado Cabello, and heads of Venezuela's army, national guard, and national police. In addition, the Trump Administration has also sanctioned Venezuela's oil sector, digital currency system, the leveraging of debt, and financial industries. The previous administration sanctioned only a handful of Maduro operatives while continuing to recognize the Maduro regime.



In regard to Cuba, your administration has imposed tough sanctions that cut off revenue to the Cuban military, which runs most of Cuba's tourism industry and represses the Cuban people. Consequentially, your decision to limit flights, end cruises, and block financial transactions with military-run businesses, has been essential to a strong U.S. policy toward Cuba that holds the regime accountable. Since instituting the U.S. Department of State's "Cuba Restricted List" in 2017, more than 200 companies controlled by Cuba's military, security, and intelligence services have been sanctioned. Additionally, in a historic decision, your administration allowed U.S. victims to pursue claims against businesses trafficking in property stolen by the Cuban regime.

In Nicaragua, the corrupt Ortega regime continues to violently suppress dissent and undermine the country's institutions to maintain control. Many organizations have documented egregious human rights abuses including extrajudicial killings, torture, and arbitrary imprisonments committed by the Ortega regime following the protests that began in April 2018. To counter these abuses and corruption, the Nicaragua Human Rights and Anticorruption Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-335) blocks access to new multilateral lending to the Ortega regime. Additionally, the Trump Administration imposed sanctions against more than a dozen individuals for human rights abuses and involvement in significant acts of corruption, including Ortega's wife, sons, and several Nicaraguan front companies.

### **The Symbiosis**

Numerous reports detail disturbing aspects of the intricately symbiotic relationship among the Maduro, Cuban, and Ortega regimes. These three regimes protect each other in regional and international bodies, and openly support other pariah states globally. The shared ideological ties among these regimes is clear, and it is in their shared interests that each remain in power. But the relationships run deeper. In exchange for Venezuelan oil, the Cuban dictatorship has placed thousands of intelligence agents in Venezuela, providing additional means to suppress dissent and sustain Maduro's brutal grip on power. Additionally, your U.S. State Department's 2019 Trafficking in Persons Report noted that the Venezuelan and Cuban regimes have maintained an exploitative human trafficking scheme to export Cuban medical professionals in exchange for oil. Press reports indicate that this human trafficking scheme also serves a political coercion purpose, whereby Cuban doctors in Venezuela reserved medical care for Maduro supporters, and withheld medicines until just before an election. The inextricably symbiotic relationship between these dictatorial regimes, and the oppression that they inflict is not limited to their own countries, but also threatens the security and stability of the entire region. For these reasons, we believe it is imperative that we all acknowledge that the policies applied on one regime directly impacts the others and that weakening sanctions on one would inevitably strengthen the other. Therefore, U.S. foreign policy towards the regimes must continue to be consistently applied.

### **Disrupting a Global Malignancy**

Together, these dictatorships have formed a dangerous malignancy with tentacles that extend well beyond their borders leading the Maduro and Cuban regimes to maintain ties with U.S. adversaries, pariah states, and terrorist organizations such as Russia, Communist China, Iran, the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (FARC), and the *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (ELN). Russia has sent billions in military equipment and military "advisors" to help Maduro cling to power. Communist China has invested nearly \$70 billion in Venezuela since



2007, while Iran has provided over \$1.6 billion in loans to Cuba since 2005. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo explained that Iran's terrorist proxy organization of Hezbollah has cells in Venezuela and has set up a regional base in Cuba. Iran continues to ship food and oil to sustain the Maduro regime, for which the Trump Administration imposed sanctions on Iranian vessel captains. Commendably, your administration's Department of Justice indicted Nicolas Maduro, his cronies, and members of the FARC for crimes related to corruption, drug trafficking, and narco-terrorism. As these dangerous, intertwined relationships demonstrate, a coherent and consistent U.S. policy must reflect that obvious reality by targeting the regimes' enablers as well as the regimes themselves.

### Conclusion

For these reasons, we continue to support your administration's policy to deny U.S. dollars to regimes in our hemisphere which repress their people and engage in coordinated, dangerous activities beyond their borders. **We oppose any calls for ending measures adopted by your administration against these tyrannical regimes, as it would constitute a severe blow to the struggle for freedom at a time when those dictatorships are at their most desperate point.** We urge you to continue to reject the patently absurd view, espoused by others, to *oppose* sanctions against the Cuban dictatorship yet *support* sanctions against the Maduro regime. We commend your administration for not wavering on its policy promoting democracy and freedom in our hemisphere, and respectfully suggest that your administration continue imposing tough sanctions and holding accountable, within all applicable rules and regulations, all those seeking to maintain their brutal, illegitimate grip on power.

We appreciate your attention to this matter of utmost importance.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul  
Member of Congress



Kay Granger  
Member of Congress



Liz Cheney  
Member of Congress



Francis Rooney  
Member of Congress



Hal Rogers  
Member of Congress

Pete King  
Member of Congress

Alex Mooney  
Member of Congress

Adam Kinzinger  
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Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress

John Rutherford  
Member of Congress

Dan Crenshaw  
Member of Congress

Paul Cook  
Member of Congress

Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzler  
Member of Congress

David Joyce  
Member of Congress

Jenniffer González-Colón  
Member of Congress