



President Obama Announces Relaxation of Sanctions on Cuba

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On Wednesday, President Obama announced that the United States will initiate discussions with Cuba to re-establish diplomatic relations for the first time in more than 50 years, and relax other established sanctions restrictions on Cuba. These changes come in conjunction with a number of high-profile developments, including an hour-long call between President Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro, the first such call between leaders of the two countries since the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Cuba also released detained U.S. Agency for International Development contractor Alan Gross, an unnamed American intelligence agent and other political prisoners held in Cuba.

The White House has indicated that the Administration intends to take a number of actions to move forward toward “normalization” of U.S.-Cuba relations in the weeks and months ahead. However, until concrete actions are taken to amend and implement these changes as a matter of U.S. law, it is important to understand that established U.S. sanctions on Cuba remain unchanged and fully in effect. Provided below is an overview of how the White House has indicated it will proceed with easing U.S. sanctions on Cuba in the months ahead, along with the associated legal, political and policy considerations affecting the potential scope and pace of these changes.

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