

1. Background: From the early days of our republic, the US has had a close and sometimes difficult association with Cuba. US relations with Cuba deteriorated sharply following the rise to power in 1959 of Fidel Castro and his subsequent turn to the Soviet Union. Diplomatic ties were severed in January 1961. The Carter Administration has made efforts to improve relations with Cuba, but normalization will take a long time and will depend on many factors, including Cuba's international behavior.
2. US policy: The US is convinced that its best interests are served by maintaining communications with all countries, whether or not it approves of their governments. Steps toward normal relations with Cuba, however, must be measured and reciprocal. Some progress has been made, but serious obstacles remain.
3. Steps toward normalization: Beginning in January 1977, the Carter Administration took several steps to improve relations with Cuba. It:
 - granted visas to selected Cuban citizens to visit the US;
 - lifted the ban on US travel to Cuba; and
 - permitted the resumption of charter flights between the two countries.

For its part, the Cuban Government released several American political prisoners and permitted all American citizens still in Cuba to depart with all members of their households, even those of Cuban citizenship. So far, more than 450 American citizens have been repatriated.

In addition to these individual and reciprocal steps, the US and Cuba have taken several mutually beneficial steps to improve channels of communication:

Interests sections. The US opened an Interests Section in the Swiss Embassy in Havana on September 1, 1977, while the Cubans established one in Washington in the Czech Embassy. The main purpose of these interests sections is to facilitate communications between the two governments and to provide a broader range of consular services.

Fisheries and maritime boundary. Only 90 miles of water separate the US and Cuba, and both countries have established 200-mile offshore fishery zones. Negotiations with Cuba to define the maritime boundary began in March 1977 and led to the signing a month later of provisional maritime boundary and fishing rights agreements.

Coast Guard talks. Talks were held in Havana in mid-January 1978 on Coast Guard matters such as improving communications, cooperating on search and rescue in international waters, and curbing drug traffic and terrorism. A second round of talks was held in Washington in May 1979.

4. Human rights developments: The improved climate in our bilateral relations has made possible other unilateral steps by the Cuban Government. Late in 1978, President Castro announced that he would release almost all Cuban political prisoners and allow them to leave the island with their families if they wish. As of November 1979, about 3,600 political prisoners had been released. Some 1,000 of them have chosen to settle in the US with their families. For the first time since the early 1960s, the Castro government now allows Cuban-Americans to visit Cuba. The US welcomes these steps and hopes that they reflect a continuing commitment to improving human rights in Cuba.
5. Trade embargo: In 1962, the US banned all US trade with Cuba. We also prohibited foreign ships that traded with Cuba from landing at US ports. These restrictions were modified in 1975 to permit business transactions between Cuba and US subsidiaries in third countries. The US ban on foreign shipping calling at Cuban ports was rescinded in June 1977, but US ships still cannot call at Cuban ports.

Before the trade embargo, two-way US-Cuban trade totaled over \$1 billion annually, and it has been estimated that we could sell \$300 million worth of agricultural commodities, farm machinery, industrial equipment, and computer hardware to Cuba each year. The embargo will not be ended, however, until the claims of US citizens and corporations for losses suffered through expropriation are resolved. About 5,900 of these claims, amounting to \$1.8 billion, have been certified by the US Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. We regard their settlement as an essential element in the normalization process.

6. African involvement: Cuba's involvement in Angola, Ethiopia, and other parts of Africa continues to impede progress toward normalizing Cuban-US relations. The presence in Ethiopia of 12,000-17,000 Cuban troops, and in Angola of some 19,000, is an obstacle to the peaceful settlement of disputes there. The US has emphasized that there can be no significant gestures on its part until there is convincing evidence, including troop reductions, of Cuban restraint in Africa.
7. Other concerns: More recently, two additional concerns have arisen--growing Cuban involvement in the Caribbean and Central America and Cuba's increasingly close military, political, and economic relationship with the USSR, one manifestation of which is the presence of a Soviet ground forces unit in Cuba. President Carter announced measures responding directly to these concerns in a nationwide address on October 1, 1979. Those steps reflect US determination to preserve peace in the region and defend US security interests.