

Reaction to Trump's Cuba Policy Announcement

Statement from Mark Grabowski, who teaches internet law at Adelphi University and [took a group](#) of students to visit Cuba in January 2016.

This is bad news for Americans and Cubans. But, if there's a silver lining, it's that tech and telecom will be exempt from the rollback and will be able to continue to make inroads in Cuba.

A senior White House official today [indicated](#) that expanding telecommunications and internet access to Cubans are among the Obama-era exemptions Trump will leave in place.

Getting Cuba online is one of the best and quickest ways to bring about change there. The new connectivity will have a momentum all its own.

The Obama Administration knew this and that's why they focused on expanding tech in Cuba. Google [recently became](#) the first foreign internet company to operate in Cuba.

In fact, even if we rollback to where we were before Obama started loosening sanctions, it shouldn't hinder tech. Congress's embargo gives the president more leeway over telecom than over other sectors.

Statement from John Drew, a communications professor at Adelphi University who [took a group](#) of students to visit Cuba in January 2016:

I am deeply troubled by today's news and Trump's heightened aggression towards Cuba although I am not surprised since he has shown great interest in and capacity to undo some of the most noteworthy accomplishments of the Obama presidency.

What Trump has failed to realize is that American tourism and economic development on the island makes it much harder for the Cuban regime to get away with repressive human rights tactics. In fact, one could say that more international and internet enabled and savvy eyes and ears on the island can be seen as a way of heightening surveillance on the Cuban regime's human rights record and thus, if this record was really the Trump administration's most pressing concern in Cuba, they would be better suited to further expand American travel and economic investment in Cuba.

What we have seen today however is perhaps far more worrisome. Last month Russia resumed oil shipments to Cuba for the first time in more than a decade and there are now reports emerging that Putin and the Cuban regime are discussing the re-opening of a Russian military base on the island.

One would think that with all the news reports about potential Russian interference in the recent U.S. presidential elections that the country's executive leadership would be doing everything it can to prevent Russia from developing further opportunities in which to interfere or influence U.S. domestic policy and political outcomes. And yet, by suddenly isolating Cuba after the previous administration had just created major momentum towards building a potential alliance in Cuba, the Trump administration has given Russia a very enticing opportunity to exploit this renewed isolation and the fact that Venezuela is all but a failed state now means that Cuba has very few countries to turn to for help and given that the Cuban economy remains one of the most vulnerable in the region suggests that the Cuban regime will seek assistance and build economic alliances wherever they may present themselves, ie. enter Russia.

It remains to be seen how much more difficult the U.S. treasury department will make it to legally travel to Cuba but as a professor who has seen first hand what sort of impacts materialize by taking American students to Cuba and introducing them to one of our nearest and friendliest neighbors, you can be sure I will do everything I can to hold up this tradition and to resist yet another and increasingly dangerous foreign policy blunder by the current presidency.