

June 16, 2015
Ambassador Samantha Power

Ambassador Power. The U.S. commitment to the promotion and protection of universal human rights and democratic reforms in Cuba remains unwavering. We condemn any instance of Cuban government-sponsored harassment, use of violence, or arbitrary detention of Cuban citizens who peaceably exercise their rights of expression, association, or assembly.

In fact, during my first week as United Nations Ambassador, I attended a luncheon hosted by the President of Argentina where I took the opportunity to meet with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez on the need for Cuban authorities to launch a credible investigation into the death of dissident Oswaldo Paya. Since then, I have personally met with Yoani Sanchez, I have used social media to speak out against crackdowns on the pro-democracy group Ladies in White, and I will continue to raise human rights abuses in Cuba.

The Administration will continue to speak out on behalf of universal values we think are important. We will also continue to engage the international community in these efforts, including within the context of the United Nations. I submit for the record this list of public statements by Administration officials on human rights in Cuba since the December 17, 2014 announcement by President Obama on our new direction on Cuba.

Attachment:

Administration comments on human rights in Cuba since December 17, 2014

Administration comments on human rights in Cuba since December 17, 2014

President Obama

Date	Comment
12/17/14	Proudly, the United States has supported democracy and human rights in Cuba through these five decades. We have done so primarily through policies that aimed to isolate the island, preventing the most basic travel and commerce that Americans can enjoy anywhere else. And though this policy has been rooted in the best of intentions, no other nation joins us in imposing these sanctions, and it has had little effect beyond providing the Cuban government with a rationale for restrictions on its people.
	Now, where we disagree, we will raise those differences directly -- as we will continue to do on issues related to democracy and human rights in Cuba. But I believe that we can do more to support the Cuban people and promote our values through engagement.
	But I'm under no illusion about the continued barriers to freedom that remain for ordinary Cubans. The United States believes that no Cubans should face harassment or arrest or beatings simply because they're exercising a universal right to have their voices heard, and we will continue to support civil society there. While Cuba has made reforms to gradually open up its economy, we continue to believe that Cuban workers should be free to form unions, just as their citizens should be free to participate in the political process.
	And I call on all of my fellow leaders to give meaning to the commitment to democracy and human rights at the heart of the Inter-American Charter. Let us leave behind the legacy of both colonization and communism, the tyranny of drug cartels, dictators and sham elections. A future of greater peace, security and democratic development is possible if we work together -- not to maintain power, not to secure vested interest, but instead to advance the dreams of our citizens.
4/9/15	As I said in December, we will continue to have significant differences with the Cuban government, including on issues related to human rights. The United States will always support universal values such as freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. During the Summit of the Americas, I'll be meeting with civil society leaders from across the region, including Cuba, as I regularly do in different countries around the world, because we believe that civil society has a critical role to play in supporting progress in all of our societies.
4/11/15	Now, obviously there are still going to be deep and significant differences between our two governments. We will continue to try to lift up concerns around democracy and human rights.
5/28/15	The topic of freedom for Cuba and human rights will always be on the negotiating table with [Cuban President] Raul Castro,

Secretary of State John Kerry

Date	Comment
12/17/14	Going forward, a critical focus of our increased engagement will continue to be on improving the Cuban Government's respect for human rights and advocating for democratic reforms within Cuba. Promoting freedom of speech and entrepreneurship and an active civil society will only strengthen Cuban society and help to reintegrate Cuba into the international community.

UNCLASSIFIED

12/24/2014	We support the 4 consensus points of Cuban dissidents. Democratic principles are the bedrock of new #Cuba initiative.
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Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker, and Secretary of Treasury Jacob op-ed: President Obama’s new Cuba policy looks forward, not back

Date	Comment
12/20/14	The president has made clear that a critical focus of these actions will include continued strong support for improved human-rights conditions and democratic reforms in Cuba. The promotion of democracy supports universal human rights by empowering civil society and supporting the freedom of individuals to exercise their freedoms of speech and assembly. For these reasons, we welcome Cuba’s decision to release more than 50 political prisoners, expand Internet access for Cuba’s citizens and allow better human-rights monitoring by the International Red Cross and United Nations. Our firm support for progress in these areas will be unwavering, and we will continue to implement programs to promote positive change in Cuba.

Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker

Date	Comment
12/17/14	These historic actions by the President chart a new course for our country’s relationship with Cuba and its people. It will improve the lives of millions and will help spur long overdue economic and political reform across the country. Expanding economic engagement between the Cuban people and the American business community will be a powerful catalyst that will strengthen human rights and the rule of law. President Obama and I believe deeply in the power of commercial diplomacy to change lives and economies for the better. Everyone deserves an opportunity to increase prosperity for themselves and their families, and to that end, I look forward to visiting Cuba to lead our efforts to expand our commercial diplomacy as part of the President’s initiative to encourage positive change in Cuba.
4/28/15	So what’s the goal of the president’s change in policy? The goal has been the emergence of a democratic, prosperous and stable Cuba that empowers the Cuban people and helps promote bringing universal human rights and freedoms to the Cuban people. Along with that comes economic opportunity

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power

Date	Comment
8/6/13	Oswaldo Paya stood up for freedom. Just raised with the Cuban Foreign Minister the need for a credible investigation into his death.
9/22/13	I’m raising the plight of, you know, for instance, a Cuban activist, Oswaldo Paya, who was run off the road in Cuba and there hasn’t been a sufficient investigation into his death and his family has been pushing us as a government, and we’ve been pushing the Cubans.
10/17/13	Met with @YoaniSanchez today to discuss human rights in Cuba, gov’t restrictions on freedom of speech online & flow of info to Cuban people.
10/22/13	Spoke w/@RosaMariaPaya about her father's dream of a democratic Cuba & the need for an international/independent investigation of his death.
11/6/13	Now, this term we use – crackdown – is suggestive, but it’s also a little bloodless. The human reality behind it can be found in Sudan, where families mourn the death

	of loved ones killed by security forces during anti-inflation protests; in Belarus, where acclaimed human rights activist Ales Bialiatski is serving a multi-year prison sentence on trumped-up charges; in Cuba, where the family of Oswaldo Paya is still seeking a credible inquiry into the democracy leader's death; and in North Korea, where there is no legal civil society whatsoever - where a UN panel reported last week on the existence of at least four fully operational prison camps, where people face torture and starvation for the crime of gaining access to foreign media or the crime of professing faith in God.
12/3/13	5 years ago today, American aid worker Alan Gross was imprisoned in Cuba. His crime? Facilitating uncensored internet access.
1/23/14	In Cuba, where Sonia Garro of the pro-democracy Ladies in White Movement was picked up immediately prior to the Pope's visit in 2012 and remains in prison, along with her husband Ramon Muñoz.
1/28/14	As world leaders gather for a summit in #Cuba, Cuban government harasses & arrests those working for democratic future, like @jdanielferrer.
1/28/14	Our msg to world leaders visiting: meet w/everyday Cubans & indep. civ. society to learn what's really happening & support democratic change
4/24/14	Jose Antonio Torres Fernandez, previously a journalist at Granma, the official newspaper of Cuba, was arrested after he reported on the mismanagement of a public works project – just the kind of reporting that President Castro has publically called for to promote transparency and accountability. He is now serving fourteen years on trumped up charges of spying.
5/1/14	Latest crackdown on freedom in Cuba: members of pro-democracy group Ladies in White arrested AGAIN trying to attend Sunday Mass. Outrageous.
5/3/14	Cuban Jose Antonio Torres serving 14 year sentence on trumped up charges—arrested after reporting government mismanagement. #PressFreedomDay
12/17/14	Best way to counter #Cuba's one-party rule is by betting on the Cuban people. Cuban civil society will be at the heart of our engagement.
12/17/14	Alan Gross was only working to give internet access to the people of #Cuba & sld never have been arrested. Welcome home, Alan.
1/12/15	President Obama's change in Cuba tactics NOT change in goal: improving human rights in Cuba still U.S. priority
1/12/15	Within Cuba, the Castro government has used the embargo as an excuse for its problems and a pretext for its repression. In 2003, for example, the government rounded up 75 of the country's most prominent human rights defenders, journalists, and democracy activists, and swiftly sentenced them to an average of 20 years in prison. Many were prosecuted under a law that criminalizes any act advancing the aim of the U.S. embargo – a provision the Cuban government interpreted broadly to include alleged crimes such as writing articles critical of the government, and participating in unauthorized political marches.
	At the same time, just as in Burma, we remain clear-eyed about just how repressive Cuban authorities remain. We know that the release of 53 political prisoners in recent days by the Cuban government – welcome as that step is, and heartening as it is for their families – does not resolve the larger human rights problems on the island. In 2014 alone, a Cuban human rights group reported that the government had carried out nearly 8,900 short-term detentions to prevent activists from gathering, or simply to harass them and stifle dissent.
	Indeed, just three days after the U.S. and Cuban announcements of steps to change the relationship, a Cuban artist named Tania Bruguera announced a plan to hold an event in Havana's historic Revolution Square. The purpose, she wrote, was for Cubans, “to discuss, via an open microphone, what kind of nation they want for

	<p>themselves.” She promoted the event on Twitter and Facebook with the hashtag, #yotambienexijo – “I too demand.” Tania was picked up before she made it to the Revolution Square. She and around a dozen other activists and journalists were detained on the morning of the event by the Cuban authorities. Dozens of other activists, bloggers, and artists were placed under house arrest so they couldn’t even reach the square. But something pretty remarkable happened next. A letter began circulating, expressing support for Tania’s attempt to foster free expression. Nearly 300 Cuban artists signed it, and many more supporters. In spite of genuine fear, Cubans were speaking out. And the Castro government was forced to explain why it would rather arrest a woman than let her speak freely in a public square.</p>
1/20/15	<p>Powerful & historic moment – POTUS welcomes Alan Gross home & calls to end embargo on #Cuba Previous policy long past expiration date. #SOTU</p>
4/11/15	<p>First meeting today between POTUS and President Castro is a key step in engagement in support of human rights of Cuban people.</p>

Assistant Secretary Roberta Jacobson, WHA

Date	Comment
12/18/14	<p>I do not necessarily think that we are talking about direct human rights conditionality in the restoration of diplomatic relations part. That is a legal process, if you will, or a diplomatic process, that will be fairly mechanical.</p>
1/22/15	<p>As a central element of our policy, we pressed the Cuban government for improved human rights conditions, including freedom of expression and assembly.</p>
2/3/15	<p>The President’s initiatives look forward and are designed to promote changes that support universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for every Cuban, as well as changes that promote our other national interests. They emphasize the value of people-to-people contact and very specific forms of increased commerce. We are already seeing indications that our updated approach gives us a greater ability to engage other nations in the hemisphere and around the world in promoting respect for fundamental freedoms in Cuba.</p>
	<p>This Administration is under no illusions about the continued barriers to internationally recognized freedoms that remain for the Cuban people, nor are we under illusions about the nature of the Cuban government. When we sat down with our counterparts in Havana, we were clear that our governments have both shared interests and sharp differences.</p>
	<p>At the same time, I raised with the Cuban government our concerns about its harassment, use of violence, and arbitrary detention of Cuban citizens peacefully expressing their views.</p>
	<p>But even while we do so, we will continue, both directly and through diplomatic channels, to encourage our allies to take every public and private opportunity to support increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba. We will continue to use funds appropriated by Congress to support the exercise of political and civil liberties in Cuba, facilitate the free flow of information, and provide humanitarian assistance. We also look forward to increased engagement to empower the Cuban people through authorized contact with Members of Congress, U.S. government officials, and American travelers. We encourage Members visiting Cuba to expand their engagement with the independent voices in Cuban civil society and, whenever possible, to engage effectively on human rights and democracy with the Cuban government.</p>
2/4/15	<p>The President’s initiatives look forward and are designed to promote changes that support universal human rights and fundamental freedoms for every Cuban, as well</p>

	as changes that promote our other national interests. They emphasize the value of people-to-people contact and very specific forms of increased commerce. We are already seeing indications that our updated approach gives us a greater ability to engage other nations in the hemisphere and around the world in promoting respect for fundamental freedoms in Cuba.
	We have only begun the official talks on normalizing relations – which will take considerably longer than the first step, which is the re-establishment of diplomatic relations. But even while we do so, we will continue, both directly and through diplomatic channels, to encourage our allies to take every public and private opportunity to support increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba. We will continue to use funds appropriated by Congress to support the exercise of political and civil liberties in Cuba, facilitate the free flow of information, and provide humanitarian assistance.
	This Administration is under no illusions about the continued barriers to internationally recognized freedoms that remain for the Cuban people, nor are we under illusions about the nature of the Cuban government. When we sat down with our counterparts in Havana, we were clear that our governments have both shared interests and sharp differences. From mail service to counter narcotics to oil spill mitigation, we owe our people a diplomatic relationship that allows an effective pursuit of their interests. On these types of practical issues, we agreed to continue dialogue and increase cooperation. At the same time, I raised with the Cuban government our concerns about its harassment, use of violence, and arbitrary detention of Cuban citizens peacefully expressing their views.
4/7/15	The U.S. will not change its “willingness to speak out on human rights violations simply because we are now engaging with the Cuban government directly.”
5/20/15	Since I last appeared before this committee in February, we have begun to see the Administration’s new approach to Cuba providing space for other nations in the hemisphere and around the world to focus on promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba and elsewhere in the region. This was illustrated at the Summit of the Americas in Panama last April.
	Indeed, as the President made clear prior to his historic meeting with Raul Castro at the Summit of the Americas, significant differences remain between our two governments. We continue to raise our concerns regarding democracy, human rights, and freedom of expression. And we will seek to engage with all Cubans to gain their perspectives on the best way forward for the country.
6/15/15	President Obama was direct with President Castro that we are not going to stop raising the issues of democracy and human rights, including the freedom of assembly and the freedom of expression. We do not think we are perfect or that every country has to mimic us, but there are a set of universal commitments for which we stand up everywhere.
	We understand that the Cuban Human Rights Act has been introduced in the House and referred to the House Committee on Foreign Relations. Our commitment to universal human rights in Cuba is unwavering. We condemn all instances of Cuban government-sponsored harassment, the use of violence, and the arbitrary detention of Cuban citizens that peacefully exercise their rights of expression or assembly. We will continue to speak out on behalf of universal values in Cuba and elsewhere in the world.
12/30/15	Freedom of expression remains core of US policy on #Cuba ; we support activists exercising those rights and condemn today’s detentions.
01/23/15	Met today with leaders of independent civil society in #Cuba , discussing #HumanRights and U.S.- Cuba relations.

04/01/15	The U.S. business community can help promote a more prosperous #Cuba that respects the universal rights of all its citizens. #HVG Cuba
	It will be the people of #Cuba who drive reforms, which is why U.S. has taken steps to increase flow of resources, information to Cubans.

Counselor Thomas Shannon

Date	Comment
5/20/15	The decision to engage with Cuba and seek normalization of our bilateral relationship attempts to create a new terrain on which to pursue a future that meets our interests and corresponds to our values. Our commitment to democracy and human rights, and our desire and hope that the Cuban people will know the benefits of liberty and become the sovereigns of their own destiny, is no less for our action.

Assistant Secretary Tom Malinowski, DRL

Date	Comment
2/3/15	First, the promotion of universal human rights and the empowerment of all Cubans must be the bedrock of our policy toward Cuba. President Obama has made clear that it will be
	As Secretary Kerry has said, we support the key points around which Cuban civil society groups have rallied: Cuban ratification and compliance with various UN human rights treaties; recognition of independent civil society; implementation of constitutional and legal reforms to ensure full respect for labor rights, freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and expression, and to allow for free elections; release of prisoners arrested for political reasons; and an end to government-sponsored harassment of independent civil society
	We will spare no effort to ensure that everyone still detained for simply exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association, or peaceful assembly is free, not just from prison but from harassment, threats and restrictions on their movement and their work.
	We have reengaged nations throughout our hemisphere on the importance of supporting genuine progress on human rights and democratic principles in Cuba as a means to advance meaningful and principled regional integration
	We are also deepening our engagement with Europe to encourage partners there to push for advances in human rights and democratic principles with their Cuban counterparts.
	We will also encourage the EU to press for concrete improvements in human rights in their discussions with Havana and to support the agenda of independent civil society on the island. No government – neither that of the Castros nor those of third countries – can credibly make the case that pushing the Cuban government to respect universal human rights is taking sides in a dispute between Cuba and the United States.
	Cuban dissidents have emphasized the important role that the United Nations can play in advancing human rights in Cuba, and we will use the new opportunities presented by our Cuba policy to mobilize others in the UN and other multilateral fora in support. The Cuban government has proposed bilateral talks on human rights, and I look forward to leading the U.S. team to these talks. Our objective in such talks will be to develop an agenda of specific reforms that will bring about concrete improvements in compliance with applicable international human rights obligations

	and commitments.
	<p>But we are not interested in an abstract debate; we will continue such talks only if they chart a course for concrete progress on human rights and democratic principles in Cuba. And we will insist that the most important dialogue the Cuban government should have on human rights is with its own people. President Obama has also made it clear that the U.S. government will continue programs that promote the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms such as freedoms of peaceful expression, association, and assembly in Cuba, just as we do in 95 countries around the world. These programs are a fundamental part of our human rights policy and national security interests around the world. The Cuban government may continue to object to these efforts, and to try to crack down on those involved with their implementation. But it will find it harder to treat contacts with the U.S. government and with international NGOs as criminal when Cubans see their own leaders engaging in diplomatic relations with us.</p>

Deputy Assistant Secretary John Feeley, WHA

Date	Comment
5/5/15	Going forward, a critical focus of our increased engagement will continue to be on improving the Cuban Government's respect for human rights and advocating for democratic reforms within Cuba. Promoting freedom of speech and entrepreneurship and an active civil society will only strengthen Cuban society and help to reintegrate Cuba into the international community.

Delegation of the U.S. to the Human Rights Council

Date	Comment
3/17/15	We urge Cuba to improve respect for fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, release arbitrarily detained activists, open space for independent civil society, schedule visits by UN special rapporteurs and international organizations, and facilitate greater access to the internet.

State Department Spokesperson

Date	Comment
12/19/14	This is going to be an ongoing discussion. As you heard Roberta Jacobson say yesterday, a human rights dialogue will certainly be a part of our important agenda moving forward with Cuba. And we think this is the beginning of a process; far from the end. There are many more restrictions that could be eased.
12/30/14	<p>We are deeply concerned about the latest reports of detentions and arrests by Cuban authorities of peaceful civil society members and activists, including Luis Quintana Rodriguez, Antonio Rodiles, Danilo Maldonado, Reinaldo Escobar, Marcelino Abreu Bonora and Eliecer Avila. We strongly condemn the Cuban government's continued harassment and repeated use of arbitrary detention, at times with violence, to silence critics, disrupt peaceful assembly and freedom expression, and intimidate citizens.</p> <p>Freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly are internationally recognized human rights, and the Cuban government's lack of respect for these rights, as demonstrated by today's detentions, is inconsistent with Hemispheric norms and commitments. We urge the Government of Cuba to end its practice of repressing these and other</p>

	<p>internationally protected freedoms and to respect the universal human rights of Cuban citizens.</p> <p>We have always said we would continue to speak out about human rights, and as part of the process of normalization of diplomatic relations, the United States will continue to press the Cuban government to uphold its international obligations and to respect the rights of Cubans to peacefully assemble and express their ideas and opinions, just like their fellow members of civil society throughout the Americas are allowed to do.</p>
1/6/15	<p>Well, we certainly welcome congressional input, but I would just reiterate what our view is, which is that this is an opportunity to discuss human rights issues directly. It is not as if our policy of several decades was working previously. Our new policy, by opening up Cuba to the United States, we will do more to empower the Cuban people than by keeping them isolated. It's certainly not in the interests of Americans or the interests of civil society activists to not continue these discussions and begin to make progress on some of these different components. And so our view is that continuing to engage in this process provides an opportunity to have a dialogue about how to make progress</p>
	<p>I would just say I would de-emphasize the link between the two. There are many components of why this new – our new approach to Cuba is going to help civil society, help human rights activists, help the human rights community in Cuba. Certainly, the step to release political prisoners is one we feel is important. That's why we've talked about it. But having a dialogue, opening up access to be able to communicate, to organize, those are all steps we feel is important.</p>
1/12/15	<p>We are pleased that the Cuban Government followed through on this commitment they made to undertake this sovereign decision. So clearly, we think this is a good thing. I think we have always believed, since we made this change in policy, that it was the right thing to do for a variety of reasons. We know there are going to be challenges that remain in terms of, while there may be fewer longer-term detentions, we're concerned about short-term detentions. So we know there are going to be human rights concerns we still have when it comes to Cuba, but we are very pleased that they followed through on this commitment and are looking forward to Assistant Secretary Jacobson's trip later this month.</p>
6/1/15	<p>We just disagree with the premise, that we believe you are better able to promote human rights in Cuba by having high-level American diplomatic representation. And if that's what Senator Rubio or others want to promote there, having a robust American team ready to engage to promote human rights, we believe is the better way to do this; that not having one for the past decades hasn't gotten where we need to be. And there are a number of countries around the world where we have ambassadors and full diplomatic relations with countries where we have very serious concerns about human rights, because we believe that we're better able to promote those rights by having people there on the ground. So obviously, if and when we nominate someone, we would encourage people to vote to confirm them if they believe that promoting human rights is something important.</p>
	<p>Well, each situation is different. Each situation is different. And for this case, for Cuba, we believe that now having an ambassador there, having diplomatic relations after all these years, in that specific instance, will help us better promote human rights. Each case is different.</p>
	<p>We believe that we are better able to promote human rights and to push for improved human rights if we have a high-level representative there. That doesn't always mean the government on the other end will do everything we want them to do, but we are</p>

better able and equipped to make that case.

White House Daily Press Briefings

Date	Comment
12/17/14	<p>Q: And to those who would say there's no commitment to free elections, there's no commitment to a free press, and there is no promise to end systematic political repression in the country, you would say what?</p> <p>MR. EARNEST: I would say that there was no evidence that they were more likely to do those things after the 53 or so years that this embargo has been in place. We do think that by putting in place a policy that allows for more openness and engagement, a policy that will empower the Cuban people, that there will be more pressure on the Cuban regime brought to bear to force them to better respect the basic political and human rights of their people.</p>
	<p>Sometimes, and often, it serves our national security interests to do so, but also because it's consistent with the President's view that by engaging with the leaders of these countries and by engaging with the people of these countries, we can facilitate more respect for basic human rights.</p>
	<p>The key to our success in Iran and Russia -- and I'm not saying for the first time today; this is the case that we've been making for some time now -- that the success of the sanctions regime has been predicated on our ability to work in coordinated fashion with the rest of the international community to maximize the impact of that sanctions regime. And as it relates to Cuba, the effect is actually the opposite. The rest of the world is actually on the other side of this issue. They criticize our sanctions regime policy against Cuba, and it actually interferes with our ability to bring to bear pressure from the rest of the international community on the Castro regime to better respect human rights in Cuba.</p>
12/17/14	<p>Let me also emphasize that I think what my colleague said -- let me emphasize, as well, that it's important to note that this is being done because we believe the policy of the past has not worked and because we believe that the best way to bring democracy and prosperity to Cuba is to do so via a different kind of policy. But that does not for a moment believe that we're lessening our emphasis on human rights, on democracy, on the importance of civil society. Quite the contrary. In fact, our emphasis on human rights will be just as strong and we believe more effective under this policy. We will engage directly with the Cuban government on human rights.</p>
	<p>We believe that this policy shift and the way we will engage the Cuban government in support of democracy and prosperity will greatly help our policy initiatives around the hemisphere and our influence throughout the hemisphere on things that are important to us, including democracy and human rights. And we expect strong support from governments throughout the hemisphere, both for this policy change and for efforts to support and promote civil society and human rights in Cuba. So we expect those efforts to be more effective under this policy than they've been in the past</p>
	<p>Secretary Pritzker strongly supports the President's initiative to spur long overdue economic and political reform in Cuba. She believes that commercial diplomacy initiatives outlined today will strengthen human rights and the rule of law.</p>
	<p>I would also add that, having taken these steps, we'll also be saying to our friends in the hemisphere that we all need to be raising human rights with the Cuban government; that, frankly, there will no longer be this focus on American</p>

	<p>policy. We've changed that. And now we can focus on discussing issues we care about and that includes human rights. So we believe that there's opportunity in that respect, as well. And the summit in Panama will be an opportunity to advance those discussions.</p>
	<p>We recognize that some members of Congress, including some Cuban American members of Congress, will strongly disagree with elements of what the President is announcing today. But this is going to be a continued dialogue, and our point is going to be that we're taking these steps because we care about the same things. We care about the Cuban people. We care about human rights. And we believe that the current approach isn't working and that a policy of engagement is going to be more effective.</p>
12/18/14	<p>The principal concern that's been raised about Cuba is about the deplorable human rights record that the Castro regime has. And for 50 years -- more than 50 years -- for five decades, there was in place a policy to try to compel the Castro regime to change that record by isolating them. And the fact is, that policy failed, because the Castro regime remained in power and continued to take steps that oppressed their people.</p>
1/6/15	<p>Q: Last thing -- the President just now said he'd like to bring up human rights in Cuba in the Summit of the Americas that is coming up. How would he do this? Would he meet directly with President Castro?</p> <p>MR. EARNEST: Well, I don't have any meetings like that to discuss at this point, but there certainly would be an opportunity for the President to speak publicly at that summit, and with so many world leaders from the Western Hemisphere gathered in one place it obviously would be a pretty high-profile venue for the President to step forward and raise his concerns about human rights in Cuba.</p>
	<p>Now that that policy change has been enacted, we anticipate that there will be greater focus on encouraging the Cuban government to change their policy toward their own people and start respecting basic human rights and releasing political prisoners and doing the kinds of things that reflect the will and ambition of the Cuban people. And that I think is an important consequence of the kind of policy change that the President made, and I do think that that will be on display at the Summit of the Americas later this year.</p>
1/15/15	<p>What the United States intends to do is -- well, let's take one step back here. There has been for several decades now a policy -- a set of policies in place that have attempted to isolate Cuba from the United States. And for decades, the explanation of those who supported that policy was that this would pressure the Castro regime to do a better job of protecting, even supporting basic human rights that we see that they readily trample. And for five decades, this policy was in place and it didn't really elicit much of a change or any sort of noticeable reforms from the Castro regime. What the President has said is that let's change those policies in an attempt to try something different as we pressure the Castro regime to do a better job of respecting and protecting basic human rights.</p>
	<p>That's right, the administration view is that we should normalize our relationship with Cuba. The effect of that would be that by that increased contact with the Cuban people and with the Cuban government would only serve to put more pressure on the Castro regime to abide by, protect, and even advance the basic human rights that we hold dear in this country.</p>
	<p>The other benefit is that so often when the United States participates in multilateral forums with other countries in the Western Hemisphere, those other countries want to come to the United States and say, why do you have this policy towards Cuba that doesn't make any sense? Well, now that we've changed our policy toward</p>

	<p>Cuba we can be more effective in saying to those other countries, hey, let's talk about the policy of the Cuban government and their treatment of their own people. And I think in that way we can do a better job of leveraging international support for an effort to convince the Castro regime to do a better job of respecting basic human rights.</p>
1/29/15	<p>It's clear that there are a wide variety of disagreements between the United States and Cuba, and, more directly, between the U.S. government and our values and the Cuban government and the values that they so often fail to codify -- that there are a variety of concerns that we have with the way that the Castro regime treats political dissidents, the way that they treat individuals who are trying to freely express their views, even the way that they treat some reporters.</p>
	<p>And the President continues to be optimistic that by engaging Cuba and by removing this distraction from our broader relations with other countries in the hemisphere, that we can actually focus more attention on the failure of the Castro regime to live up to the expectations that we have of governments, particularly when it comes to respecting basic human rights. And there's some evidence to indicate already that we're making some preliminary progress on that measure.</p>
2/3/15	<p>But the United States' efforts to isolate Cuba were not successful because just about every other country in the Western Hemisphere had relations with Cuba, so the fact is we had a scenario where the United States and our policy towards Cuba was only interfering with our ability to build strong relations with other countries in the hemisphere. And by dropping -- or moving to normalize our relationship with Cuba, we've removed that distraction and now only increased the pressure on Cuba in a way that will isolate at least a scrutiny of their policies of not respecting the basic human rights of their people.</p>
2/25/15	<p>Q: Over the weekend, a couple hundred dissidents were arrested as part of public demonstrations. How concerned is the administration about this, and what has your response been to it?</p> <p>MR. EARNEST: We continue to be concerned about the Cuban government's treatment of their own people. For generations, we've seen the Cuban government not just neglect but, in some cases, even trample the basic human rights of their people, and that includes a tendency to round up political protestors, or at least people who have different political views than their government.</p>
2/26/15	<p>I can tell you that when the President announced at the end of last year that he was prepared to move toward normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba, it was part of an effort to change our strategy in terms of the way the United States has pressured the Cuban government to protect and advance the basic human rights of their citizens.</p>
4/10/15	<p>Q: And on Wednesday, there was a fracas here between Cuban dissidents and pro-Castro supporters. The dissidents we talked to say that is an illustration that Cuba feels unencumbered; that it can quash dissent not only in Cuba but at the Summit of the Americas, and that flagrant use of force to beat up people who want to have a different opinion and want to have a political voice in Cuba ought to be renounced by the United States. And from their perspective, the move toward normalizing relations is only going to feed the desire and the will of the Cuban regime to continue behavior like that. How do you react to that?</p> <p>MR. RHODES: Well, Major, first of all, we obviously renounce any use of violence to silence the voices of civil society activists and citizens, whether they be from Cuba or anywhere in the Americas. On that particular incident, we expressed our serious concerns about the use of violence against those civil society representatives. And frankly, how grossly inconsistent that was with the spirit of</p>

	dialogue here in the Americas.
4/10/15	<p>Q: And to the point of what you talked about -- areas of difference and why some of the folks who were involved with that would call the violations of human rights that are ongoing in Cuba, and that's why they oppose this normalization of relations. What's the message? And what's the message specifically to Raul Castro?</p> <p>MR. RHODES: Well, I think in terms of differences between our government, we have been very clear that we're going to continue to speak up for human rights, and we're going to continue to have differences as it relates to the nature of Cuba's political system -- just as I would fully anticipate the Cuban government to make clear its opposition to the United States' ongoing presence at Guantanamo Bay, for instance.</p>
	Our question is, is it better to address our differences as it relates to human rights in Cuba by not talking to the Cuban government, by cutting ourselves off from the Cuban people, and by clinging to a policy of isolation that has failed for 50 years, or is it better to give us much greater engagement with the Cuban people and Cuban government to make our views known.
	So if the United States refused to have diplomatic relations with every country in the world that committed human rights abuses, or that we had difference with respect to their political system, we would stop talking to a lot of people, and we would lose the ability to seek to move those countries in a more constructive direction. Singling out Cuba in the way that we have, in our view, doesn't make a lot of sense.
	The question is, are our policies going to make it more likely that that evolution moves in a positive direction for the Cuban people, that brings them greater opportunity, greater human rights. We believe that the trends show that, yes, they are moving in a more positive direction. But that in no way means that there are not still practices in Cuba that are entirely inconsistent with how we support universal human rights around the world
5/11/15	<p>There is still some important diplomatic work that remains to be done. The President did enjoy the opportunity that he had to have a pretty blunt and direct conversation with President Castro about additional steps that we need to see Cuba make to better reflecting a country that protects the universal human rights of its people.</p> <p>And this is a strong case that the President made in the context of that meeting. And there are lower-level discussions that are ongoing, both on the human rights issue but also on the range of other steps that we can take to try to normalize relations between our two countries.</p>
5/12/15	The President had the opportunity to visit with President Castro in Panama a few weeks ago, and that certainly continued to advance this effort toward normalization. They also had an opportunity to have an extended discussion about the priority that the United States places on respecting basic universal human rights. And these are -- we have expressed quite often, in public and in private, the concerns that we have with the Cuban government and the frequency with which they trample the basic universal human rights of their people. And that's a concern. And the President's view is that after 50 years of a policy that tried to isolate Cuba, that the United States demonstrated very little ability to influence the Cuban government when it came to basic protections for human rights.

5/22/15	Chris, you've heard the President say many times that he doesn't believe that people should be treated differently just because of who they love. And that means that LGBT Cuban or Americans deserve the same rights and protections that everybody else gets. And that means that the concerns that we have about the way the Cuban government has all too often trampled the universal human rights of the Cuban people, we have similar concerns with the way that the Cuban government has failed to protect the basic human rights of even LGBT Cubans as well.
	And the President is hopeful that through greater engagement, that we can open up more economic opportunities, both in Cuba and in the United States. But that through that greater engagement -- including economic engagement -- that we will be able to apply additional pressure to the Cuban government and support the Cuban people in their aspirations for a government that reflects their will, and a government that is willing to respect, and even protect, their basic human rights.
5/29/15	That's why we've seen strong bipartisan support for the President's decision. Ultimately what we think all of that will do is empower the Cuban people. That is the ultimate goal of this policy change. And there is no question that the deeper engagement that we hope will be the result of this policy change between our two countries, and between the people of our two countries, that that will empower the Cuban people and put additional pressure on the Cuban government to do a better job of respecting and protecting the basic human rights of their people.
6/1/15	And this is a critical component of the strategy that the President announced at the end of last year; that for more than five decades, the United States had pursued a strategy to try to isolate Cuba to compel them to better respect the basic universal human rights of their people. And for more than five decades, we didn't see much improvement in that regard.
	So what the President has said is let's try a different strategy; let's try a strategy where we strengthen the ties between the United States and Cuba; let's create opportunities for more commerce between our two countries; let's give more Americans the opportunity to travel to Cuba, and give the Cuban people greater exposure to the kind of values and lifestyle that we so deeply value in this country; and that by promoting that kind of engagement, we can actually place additional pressure on the Cuban government to do a better job of living up to the values and the protection of basic universal human rights that we hold so dear in this country.
6/3/15	We have heard some from members of Congress who believe that if we would have just kept the 55-year embargo in place for a little while longer, maybe we would have started to see the kinds of changes that were promised at the beginning of imposition of that embargo. The President is a little skeptical of that case. The President believed that after 55 years we needed to consider something more impactful, we needed a new strategy. And the President continues to be convinced that by greater engagement between our governments, and greater engagement between our people, we can create economic opportunity for American businesses, but that we can also empower the Cuban people to advocate for and protect the basic human rights that are regularly trampled by the Cuban government.
6/17/15	But what I'll just say as a general matter is that the President is pursuing a change in policy in Cuba principally because the policy that had previously been in place for more than five decades failed. It didn't bring about the kind of change on the island nation of Cuba that we'd like to see. It didn't bring about a government that is protecting of the basic universal human rights that we so deeply value in this country. And, ultimately, the strategy that the President has put in place with regard to Cuba is one that's aimed at empowering the Cuban people, and by engaging

	them through increased commerce, through increased diplomacy and, yes, even increased tourism, that we can empower the Cuban people to have more say over the direction and future of their country.
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