

## Occupied Guantanamo. US-Cuba Relations

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*A historic agreement has been signed recently between Cuba and the United States to restore diplomatic relations. On the Havana's Malecon at the place of USA interests office the embassy was opened and the Cuban Mission appeared respectively in Washington, at the 16th Street.*

There are different opinions about this event. The liberal interventionists in the United States count on the possibility for expansion in economics as well as through the other elements of "soft power". The White House presented restoring of relations as a "renewal of USA leadership in North and South America, ending the outdated approach regards Cuba, promoting more effective changes that support Cuban people as well as the interests of national security."

Michael Totten, one of the editors of liberal journal World Affairs was extremely excited during the negotiation process, noting that free enterprise and political liberalism will finally come to Cuba. Havana will become the jewel of the Caribbean and perhaps even of the hemisphere. It can experience an extraordinary boom in tourism industry, partly because of Florida and Mexico. The way forward for the Cuban prosperity is clear, Totten says: "To bring as many people as possible to the world economics and to US economics in particular." However, Totten called Cubans terminally ill people if they are cut off from the large North American region they always belonged to before Castro.

The Cubans are more cautious in assessment of the economic freedoms and believe that USA will use tempting offers to establish a new form of dependence, at the same time depriving the Cuban people of their right and opportunity to participate in their own destiny.

Will the Cubans succeed to defend their independence while maintaining the achievements of previous years?

After all, in the bilateral relations if geopolitical players are unequal in size, military power and economy, there is always a temptation to label them as patron and client or as aggressor and victim. And Cuba has no more nuclear or other military umbrella of a friendly country like in the Soviet Union times.

The United States have their own distinct spatial and ideological imperatives. When Americans were just beginning their expansion, after the annexation of Texas and taking control over the Mississippi River basin, they continued conquering the South and seized a large part of Mexico. After that it became essential to establish control over key areas giving access to the Atlantic Ocean. According to the head of US intelligence and analytical center "Stratfor" George Friedman, Cuba was the fourth step in the US path to world domination. It was implemented in 1898 with the beginning of the first USA expeditionary war outside of its territory with the goal to seize Spanish colonies on the islands.

The last step was the manipulation before and during the Second World War which led to the creation of the bipolar world in 1945. However, after the Cuban Revolution the island got out of the direct control of the United States. It caused inadequate reaction in Washington, where it was believed that lack of direct control over the island could be a threat to the US coast in the Gulf of Mexico area with the strategic ports country's industry and trade depended on.

Because of that, the White House through the CIA and other agencies launched a number of campaigns against the Cuban Revolution: from organizing Fidel Castro assassinations to landing subversive groups and use of biological weapons. Part of the documents indicating the preparation of various provocations were declassified only recently.

And in the 90s when the opportunities for indirect actions appeared, the US Department of State initiated creating dissident movements in Cuba, including "Ladies in White", the Union of Free Journalists of Cuba and various projects funded by the US Agency for International Development.

Therefore, looking at the restoration of diplomatic relations, Cuba is important for USA not only as a trading partner and supplier of the labor force and resources but also as the important geopolitical hub for its dominance in the Caribbean.

But there is one important point, which shows that the restoration of diplomatic relations was not equal. Moreover, the USA carefully avoided discussing this point during negotiations. This is the American naval base of Guantanamo, which is actually the evidence of occupation of the sovereign Cuban territory.

It's well known that in Guantanamo were kept prisoners captured in Iraq and Afghanistan and suspected of connections to Al Qaeda. Numerous protests on this issue were held in many countries. They pointed out violation of the international law during detention, horrible conditions of confinement and use of various forms of torture.

However, the fact that all military and prison infrastructure was located directly on the territory of the island of Freedom, didn't get much attention from international press. They were pretending not to hear Cuban position. As if it goes without saying that the United States have a right for such occupation.

And the 45 square land miles are still being trampled by the foot of foreign invaders who landed there already in June 1898. After that, the United States tried to enshrine in law its military presence in Cuba.

According to the so-called Platt Amendment adopted by the US Congress in 1901, Cuba was granted limited sovereignty with the right of intervention by the United States. And in 1903 the puppet government of Cuba and the United States have signed an agreement to establish there a naval base. Note, that the US has used several times its right of intervention in Cuba: in 1906, 1912, 1917 and 1920 when there was a threat of the overthrow of the dictatorial regimes by people. And in 1934 during the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt a new treaty of friendship between the two countries was signed and the United States have been nicely using Cuban territory until 1958 when their military got disturbed by the revolutionary forces of the Castro brothers.

On January 1st, 1959 Batista's government finally fell and whole territory of Cuba was

declared free from foreign rule. On January 3rd, 1961 Cuba and the United States broke off diplomatic relations. But the troops remained in Guantanamo, partially serving as a gateway for dissidents and refugees from Haiti.

Status of the base has been changed by the events of September 11th, 2001, after which George Bush issued a law on the legality of the use of any power to search, seize and destroy those involved in the terrorist attack.

In January 2002, under the leadership of the US Marine Corps Command new infrastructure has been set up on the base to accommodate 2,000 prisoners. And almost immediately a plane from Kandahar, Afghanistan brought the first batch of three hundred people.

During the whole history of this dark place at least 800 prisoners were kept there. Known fact is that in June 2015 116 people were detained in Guantanamo prison and 655 were transferred to other countries.

Nevertheless, issue regarding the status of the base will inevitably be raised. That's what American officials themselves are warning about.

Retired US Navy Admiral James Stavridis believes that after the warming of relations, the question of closing the biggest and the oldest military base in the Caribbean and Latin America will be immediately put on the agenda by Havana.

He sees an opportunity to shut down the prison, but only if USA retain control of the Navy base, since it is a major logistics hub for the Fourth Fleet. This fleet based in the South Atlantic has been recreated in the summer of 2008, by the way, despite the protests of the leaders of Brazil, Argentina and Venezuela.

Stavridis assumes that Cuba will use simple argument to justify the shut down of the base: the Panama Canal was returned to Panama and in other Latin American countries, at the request of their leaders, points of the military presence of Pentagon have also been closed. Therefore, for the normalization of relations the same should be done regarding Cuba.

Moreover, resistance of other countries on deployment of US military bases, such as Japan and South Korea will be an additional justification in the general campaign for the global demilitarization.

But for now Washington continues to be the invader, clear evidence to that is the example of Guantanamo. And the US Department of State officials are trying to throw dust in the eyes, coming up with new myths aimed against Russia, Iran, China, North Korea, Syria, Venezuela and other sovereign powers.

Sadly enough, the hypocrisy of American politicians knows no limit.

By the way, one day before signing the law of the economic blockade against Cuba, US President John F. Kennedy sent his secretary to buy 1200 Cuban cigars for his own needs.

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