

RELEASE IN PART
B5,B6

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, September 13, 2011 11:09 AM
To: H
Cc: Sullivan, Jacob J
Subject: FW: Obama re: Alan

Confidential fyi

From: Reynoso, Julissa
Sent: Tuesday, September 13, 2011 10:37 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: Fw: Obama re: Alan

Cheryl:

From Gross' lawyer. I frankly share his frustration. Between us -- is there any way for us to give the WH a better understanding of what's going on Cuba. The Cubans have released many, many political prisoners over the last year. They have initiated economic reforms -- though minimum. And -- although we don't like their laws --
 Most importantly, attacking the Cubans and demanding regime change historically has not been productive -- it just leads to their retrenchment.

Julissa

From: Kahn, Peter [mailto:]
Sent: Tuesday, September 13, 2011 09:32 AM
To: Reynoso, Julissa; Brennan, Peter M
Subject: FW: Obama re: Alan

Julissa and Peter,

What is going on at the White House??!! Don't they understand they are throwing Alan under the bus? The President calls for regime change, but then is quoted as saying "anything to get Alan Gross free we will support". What is he prepared to do? Is there any coordination with Restrepo and the NSC on our efforts? Please call me re this. Thanks.

Peter

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Obama: "It's clearly time for the Cuban regime to change"

Sep 12, 2011, 23:12 GMT

Washington - US President Barack Obama thinks that recent changes in Cuba have not been 'sufficiently aggressive' and that more substantial transformations are needed on the communist island, in line with what is happening elsewhere in the world.

The policies of his own administration, in turn, are creating 'more space inside Cuba for freedom and civil liberties,' Obama told a small group of news agencies, including the German Press Agency dpa, Monday.

'The Cuban government has said that it wants to transition, to loosen up the economy, so that businesses can operate more freely,' Obama said at a White House round-table discussion with Hispanic reporters.

'We have not seen enough evidence that they have been sufficiently aggressive in changing their policies economically, and they certainly have not been aggressive enough when it comes to freeing political prisoners and giving people the opportunity to speak their minds.'

This is particularly disappointing in the current international context, Obama said.

'Everywhere people are crying out for freedom, you are seeing enormous changes taking place in the Middle East just in the span of six months, you are seeing there are almost no authoritarian communist countries left in the world, and here you have this small island that is a throwback to the 60s.'

'Obviously it's not working for them. The standards of living have not improved significantly, in fact they are deteriorating in many cases, people's liberties continue to be constrained at a time when the world is more open and people have more information than ever before,' Obama said.

In this setting, he stressed, 'it's clearly time for the Cuban regime to change.'

'Whether they are going to seize that opportunity, so far we have not seen the kind of evidence that we'd like to see, but that change is going to take place,' Obama said.

The US strategy of offering Cuba a slightly more outstretched hand, by freeing up remittances and allowing Cuban-Americans to more freely travel to the island, is appropriate in this context, he said.

'It empowers Cubans inside of Cuba who then are able to have other sources of income, meet their families, get new ideas and exposure to what is going on outside of Cuba.'

'We think it creates more space inside Cuba for freedom and civil liberties,' Obama insisted.

As to the situation of US contractor Alan Gross, who is serving a 15-year jail sentence in Cuba for espionage, Obama repeated the US demand for his release.

'We've said repeatedly that Mr Gross should be free, that the conviction was not based on evidence or rule of law, also that there's an humanitarian issue here involved given Gross' precarious health.'

Still, he highlighted the 'private' nature of the ongoing trip to Cuba of former New Mexico governor Bill Richardson, who is meeting with officials to secure Gross' release.

'Richardson is acting as a private citizen on an humanitarian mission to try to free Gross.'

'Anything to get Mr Gross free we will support, although Mr Richardson does not represent the US government in his actions there,' Obama said.

Cuban courts found Gross, 62, an employee of a firm working for the US State Department, guilty for handing out satellite telecommunications equipment in defiance of laws on the Caribbean island.

The court said he had created secret networks to provide access to the internet to help opposition groups organize against the government of President Raul Castro. The US government has said Gross was not a spy, but was involved in distributing equipment and access to the internet for Jewish groups in Cuba.

Gross has been detained on the communist island since December 2009. The case is regarded as a serious obstacle to dialogue between the two countries.

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