

U.S. policy interferes with poor nations getting assistance from Cuban doctors

ANDREW W. GRIFFIN | JANUARY 19, 2014

CATEGORY:

PRAIRIE OPINIONS

OKLAHOMA CITY – Last summer, the *Inter Press Service* news agency featured a story headlined “Cuban Doctors Bring Eyesight, Healthcare to Haiti.”

It turns out that Cuba has been regularly sending doctors to beleaguered Caribbean nations like Haiti since the late 1990’s. Haiti has appreciated Cuba’s willingness to offer free medical care to its impoverished citizens who suffer from poor health care and are repeatedly struck by natural disasters from earthquakes to hurricanes.

In the story, it notes that since 1998, following Hurricane Georges, Cuban medical personnel have seen 18 million patients, carried out 300,000 operations, saved 300,000 lives and restored eyesight to 53,000 people.

Cuba offers **universal health care** to its citizens while also having a lower infant mortality rate and longer-than-average lifespan when compared to American citizens.

Meanwhile, the IPS report says: “The international healthcare aid to Haiti stands out not only due to its scope – it reaches the entire country – and its humanitarian impact, but also because it is preparing the country for the future by putting in place a public health system, including the reconstruction of hospital infrastructure.”

And those being helped are most appreciative to the doctors coming from the communist island nation. After all, Cuba is well-known for its tradition of generously providing doctors to the third world.

“We seek out the Cuban doctors because they treat people well and they don’t charge. We are poor, we cannot afford to pay,” said a Port-au-Prince resident who welcomed the Cuban medical mission to her city.

And yet the United States is not happy with allies accepting assistance from Cuba, there is little they can do about it – at this time – beyond diplomatic pressure or, in the case of

the Marshalls – sheer neglect.

In a session of the parliament (Nitijela) of the Pacific islands nation, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, there is serious concern about the shortage of medical staff on the various islands and atolls.

In a story this week in the *Marshall Islands Journal*, Foreign Affairs Minister Phillip Muller explained that inadequate medical care led to the painful death of a man from the Delap atoll.

However, Spanish-speaking Cuban doctors have expressed interest in filling the gap in the primarily English-and-Marshallese speaking country. And while there is a “language barrier,” Muller and others in the RMI government want to attract more Cubans to help them.

Two years ago, Muller acknowledged RMI’s precarious political position in supporting the U.S. and Israel in the United Nations, while also supporting their ridiculous embargo against Cuba.

Muller said “that support is costing the Marshall Islands access to development assistance, including much-needed doctors from Cuba.” Muller said that if they stop asking for Cuban doctors then the **U.S. and Israel** need to “provide us doctors to help solve our situation.”

And this week’s *Journal* article paints a dire picture, one where an irrelevant embargo policy is adversely affecting those seeking medical care in the Marshall Islands. Yet, due to RMI’s **Compact of Free Association** with the U.S., they are essentially forced into doing what the U.S. tells them to do at the UN, as they did for much of the first decade of the 21st century. The U.S. has bullied and damaged the Marshall Islands for years, as filmmaker Adam Jonas Horowitz reminds us in his hard-hitting, PBS-censored documentary *Nuclear Savage*.

"**Horowitz** has been angry about American treatment of the Marshall Islands for a long time. In late 2013 he told a reporter the U.S. 'destroyed an entire country that we were not at war with, that we were at peace with. Not only did they blow up all these islands, but they purposely contaminated all these people as human experiments. It's a very unknown story here.'" reported GlobalResearch.ca.

Red Dirt Report, however, is fully aware of it and **reported on this shocking subject** last May.

And while the U.S. was o.k. with contaminating an island paradise and its people, they did not like communism. So, when Fidel Castro nationalized property belonging to American corporations with interest in sugar, pineapple, nickel mines and more, the embargo was initiated – fully by 1961, under President John F. Kennedy. Today, in 2014,

President Barack Obama has done little to relax the embargo, beyond allowing increased travel to Cuba. To the rest of the world, America is a big bully and won't listen to reason.

And despite the overwhelming condemnation of America's decades-long economic and trade embargo, the RMI had voted alongside the U.S. and Israel in their continuance of the embargo.

Havana has said the 50-plus year embargo has caused \$1.126 trillion in damages to the Caribbean island. Let's not forget that it was Cuba, not the U.S., that sought - as then-Cuban industry minister Che Guevara put it in 1961 - an end to the "inhuman and fascist policy of apartheid" in South Africa. This, of course, was decades before the UK and US challenged white rule in South Africa.

In 2013, the UN vote to end the embargo was a vote of 188 to 2 – the U.S. and Israel, of course – with the Marshall Islands, Palau and Micronesia all abstained from voting, clearly hinting that they were tired of being puppets for stale Cold War-era militarism and inhumane American foreign policy. 2013 was the 22nd year in a row that the UN has condemned America's erroneous Cuban embargo policy.

This may explain why RMI officials have been more vocal about calling for Cuban doctors to flood the Marshalls because for them their health crisis requires putting people over politics, something the U.S. and Israel still have to learn.

- See more at: <http://www.reddirtreport.com/prairie-opinions/us-policy-interferes-poor-nations-getting-assistance-cuban-doctors#sthash.mWRNs3DK.dpuf>