

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 7, 2020

The Honorable
Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Madam Secretary:

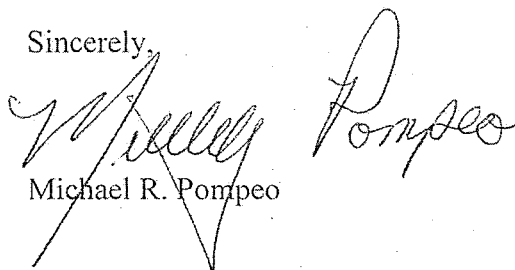
The Department of Transportation's October 25, 2019, action to suspend scheduled air service to nine Cuban airports took effect on December 10, 2019, the same day the world celebrated Human Rights Day. Since then, the Cuban regime has increased its repression of the Cuban people, detaining dozens of human-rights activists and entrenching policies that restrict freedom of religion, expression, and peaceful assembly.

To strengthen the impact of the Administration's policy of applying economic pressure on the Cuban regime to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms for all in Cuba and to cease its unconscionable support for the illegitimate and totalitarian regime of former President Maduro in Venezuela, and in the foreign-policy interests of the United States, I respectfully request that the Department of Transportation suspend until further notice all public charter flights between the United States and all airports in Cuba except José Martí International Airport (HAV) in Havana. I further request that the Department of Transportation, in the foreign-policy interest of the United States, cap charter flights to José Martí International Airport at an appropriate level consistent with the policy objectives identified above.

Suspending public charter flights to these nine airports and limiting such flights to Havana would send a clear message to the Cuban government that the United States is continuing to increase economic pressure on the regime in response to its ongoing repression of the Cuban people and support for Maduro. The suspension of public charter flights to all points outside of Havana will prevent public charter operators from expanding their services to compensate for the Administration's October 25, 2019, action suspending commercial flights to those airports. Maintaining and capping public charter flights to José Martí International Airport preserves the main gateway for travel from the United States to Cuba for family visitation or other lawful purposes, while preventing public charter operators from increasing service to Havana in response to the suspension of flights to all other airports in Cuba.

The Department of Transportation's implementation of this public charter suspension measure with a 60-day advance notice would allow for the orderly wind-down of flight operations. The Department of State considers that this action would not conflict with the U.S. government's obligations under applicable international agreements.

Sincerely,



Michael R. Pompeo