

# Trump cracks down on Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela

By GISELA SALOMON, DEB RIECHMANN AND MATTHEW LEE  
*Associated Press*

CORAL GABLES, Fla. — The Trump administration on Wednesday intensified its crackdown on Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, rolling back Obama administration policy and announcing new restrictions and sanctions against the three countries whose leaders national security adviser John Bolton dubbed the “three stooges of socialism.”

“The troika of tyranny — Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua — is beginning to crumble,” Bolton said in a speech near Miami on the 58th anniversary of the United States’ failed Bay of Pigs invasion of the island, an attempt to overthrow the Cuban government.

The measures seem likely to hit hardest in Cuba, which is at a moment of severe economic weakness as it struggles to find cash to import basic food and other supplies following a drop in aid from Venezuela and a string of bad years in other



This combination of images shows, from left, Cuba’s President Miguel Diaz-Canel, Nicaragua’s President Daniel Ortega and Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro.

key economic sectors.

Bolton announced a new cap on the amount of money that families in the United States can send their relatives in Cuba. The Obama administration had lifted limits on remittances, but the new limit will be \$1,000 per person per quarter. Remittances to Cuba from the United States amounted to \$3 billion in 2016, according to the State Department.

Washington also moved to restrict “non-family

travel” after a broad loosening of so-called purposeful visits under Obama led to soaring numbers of American trips for cultural and educational exchanges. Details on the restrictions were not immediately clear, but tourism is a key lifeline of hard currency for Cuba.

Bolton spoke hours after Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced a new policy allowing lawsuits against foreign firms operating on properties Cuba

seized from Americans after the 1959 revolution. The United States has enforced a trade embargo against Cuba since the early 1960s.

Cuban officials met the announcements with defiance.

“Nobody will snatch away from us, neither through seduction nor force, the Fatherland that our parents won for us by standing up,” President Miguel Diaz-Canel said via Twitter. “We Cubans will not surrender.”

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez called it an attack on international law, Cuban sovereignty and countries that would do business with the island: “Aggressive escalation by US against Cuba will fail. Like at Giron, we will be victorious,” he tweeted, referring to a Bay of Pigs beach where invaders landed.

On Venezuela, Bolton said Washington was sanctioning the country’s Central Bank, which the Trump administration says has been instrumental in propping up the embattled government of President Nicolás Maduro. He also announced sanctions against financial services provider Bancorp, which he claimed is a “slush fund” for Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

“The United States looks forward to watching each corner of this sordid triangle of terror fall: in Havana, in Caracas, and in Managua,” Bolton said in South Florida, which is home to many thousands of people from the three countries.

He said Obama administration policies had given

the Cuban government “political cover to expand its malign influence” across the region, including in Venezuela. Cuba has trained Venezuelan security forces to repress civilians and support Maduro, Bolton said, calling Maduro “quite simply a Cuban puppet.”

Bolton’s pledge to “never, ever abandon” the people of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua in their fight for freedom also might ring hollow in light of the historical events he sought to highlight at the event hosted by the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association.

Many Cuban Americans to this day resent the late President John F. Kennedy for not deploying American troops at a critical moment in the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Meanwhile, some critics of U.S. policy worry that the Trump administration’s stance that all options are on the table, including a military one, to oust Maduro is an empty threat that will only serve to ignite geopolitical tensions with Russia, compounding the misery of Venezuelan citizens.

## Long-lost Kafka works could emerge after messy legal battle

JERUSALEM (AP) — A long-hidden trove of unpublished works by Franz Kafka could soon be revealed following a decade-long battle over his literary estate that has drawn comparisons to some of his surreal tales.

A court in Zurich upheld Israeli verdicts in the case last week, ruling that several safe deposit boxes in the Swiss city could be opened and their contents shipped to Israel’s National Library.

At stake are untouched papers that could shed new light on one of literature’s darkest figures, a German-speaking Bohemian Jew from Prague whose cultural legacy has been hotly contested between Israel and Germany.

Though the exact content of the vaults remains unknown, experts have speculated the cache could include endings to some of Kafka’s major works, many of which were unfinished when they were published after his death.

Israel’s Supreme Court has already stripped an Israeli family of its collection of Kafka’s manuscripts, which were hidden in Israeli bank vaults and in a squalid, cat-filled Tel Aviv apartment. But the Swiss ruling would complete the acquisition of nearly all his known works, after years of legal battles over their rightful owners.

## \$1 billion raised to rebuild Notre Dame after fire

PARIS (AP) — Nearly \$1 billion has poured in from around the world to restore the fire-ravaged Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, after the French president set a 5-year deadline to get the work done.

Construction teams brought in a crane and a delivery of planks of wood to the site Wednesday morning. Firefighters are still examining damage and shoring up the structure after Monday’s fire collapsed the cathedral’s spire and destroyed the roof.

French President Emmanuel Macron ratcheted up the pressure by setting a 5-year deadline to restore the 12th-century landmark. Macron is holding a special Cabinet meeting Wednesday dedicated to the Notre Dame disaster, which investigators believe was an accident possibly linked to renovation work.

Bells will toll at cathedrals around France on Wednesday evening in honor of the monument. No one was killed in the fire, after firefighters and church officials speedily evacuated the site during a mass.

## Celebrities donate to 2020 Democrats

WASHINGTON (AP) — From Ben Affleck and Susan Sarandon to Anna Wintour and Willie Nel-

son, celebrities lined up to give money to their favorite Democratic presidential candidates ahead of this week’s first quarter fundraising deadline.

For months, candidates in the crowded field of more than a dozen contenders have aggressively courted key figures in music, television, publishing and film, who are one of the party’s most reliable sources of campaign cash. Although many donors remain on the sidelines, contributing to lackluster fundraising hauls, an early snapshot included in the campaign finance reports submitted to the Federal Election Commission this week offers a glimpse of who is drawing attention from entertainment industry in the early stages of the race.

“When you talk about Hollywood, yes, we are talking about movie stars and writers and directors, but we are also talking about people with decades of experience with presidential campaigns,” said Yusef Robb, a longtime California political strategist.

California Sen. Kamala Harris has long-standing relationships with major entertainment industry figures in her home state. But former Texas Rep. Beto O’Rourke, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders and South Bend, Indiana, Mayor Pete Buttigieg are also among the candidates who count celebrities as donors.

So far, few donors are bundling large sums of money for candidates by

asking their friends, family and colleagues to give, too. But many have given individually, which is limited under campaign finance law to a \$2,800 contribution during the primary election, and another \$2,800 for the general election campaign.

## Undercover spy targeted Kaspersky critics

LONDON (AP) — Keir Giles’ first thought was that the man’s cheap-looking suit didn’t seem right for a private equity executive. The man seated in front of him

at the London hotel claimed to live in Hong Kong, but didn’t seem familiar with the city. Then there was the awkward conversation, which kept returning to one topic: the Russian antivirus firm Kaspersky Lab.

He also asked Giles to repeat himself or speak louder so persistently that Giles said he began wondering “whether I should be speaking into his tie or his briefcase or wherever the microphone was.”

“He was drilling down hard on whether there had been any ulterior motives behind negative media commentary on Kaspersky,” said Giles, a Russia

specialist with London’s Chatham House think tank who often has urged caution about Kaspersky’s alleged Kremlin connections. “The angle he wanted to push was that individuals — like me — who had been quoted in the media had been induced by or motivated to do so by Kaspersky’s competitors.”

The Associated Press has learned that the mysterious man, who said his name was Lucas Lambert, spent several months last year investigating critics of Kaspersky Lab, organizing at least four meetings with cybersecurity experts in London and New York.

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