

Press Releases: Actions Taken in Response to Attacks on U.S. Government Personnel in Cuba

Remarks

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC

September 29, 2017

Over the past several months, 21 U.S. Embassy employees have suffered a variety of injuries from attacks of an unknown nature. The affected individuals have exhibited a range of physical symptoms, including ear complaints, hearing loss, dizziness, headache, fatigue, cognitive issues, and difficulty sleeping. Investigators have been unable to determine who is responsible or what is causing these attacks.

On September 29, the Department ordered the departure of non-emergency personnel assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Havana, as well as all family members. Until the Government of Cuba can ensure the safety of our diplomats in Cuba, our Embassy will be reduced to emergency personnel in order to minimize the number of diplomats at risk of exposure to harm.

In conjunction with the ordered departure of our diplomatic personnel, the Department has issued a Travel Warning advising U.S. citizens to avoid travel to Cuba and informing them of our decision to draw down our diplomatic staff. We have no reports that private U.S. citizens have been affected, but the attacks are known to have occurred in U.S. diplomatic residences and hotels frequented by U.S. citizens. The Department does not have definitive answers on the cause or source of the attacks and is unable to recommend a means to mitigate exposure.

The decision to reduce our diplomatic presence in Havana was made to ensure the safety of our personnel. We maintain diplomatic relations with Cuba, and our work in Cuba continues to be guided by the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States. Cuba has told us it will continue to investigate these attacks and we will continue to cooperate with them in this effort.

The health, safety, and well-being of our Embassy community is our greatest

concern. We will continue to aggressively investigate these attacks until the matter is resolved.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.