



BACKGROUND

Travel to Cuba as a Life-Line for the Castro Regime's Economy

- While the Castro regime claims to oppose the people to people tours from the United States, they have decided to support and promote these trips in order to gloss over the economic crisis in Cuba, since tourism is Cuba's primary source of income. (*Europass Press España, "Cuba recibe al primer grupo de estadounidenses al amparode la nueva ley de viajes entre ambos países", August 17, 2011*)
- At the start of August 2011 Raul announced that the Cuban economy had grown 1.9 percent during the first half of the year, and that they expected it to grow a total of 2.9 percent over the course of 2011. Tourism was cited as one of the top three growth industries. According to Raul Castro, during the first half of 2011 the "energy efficiency of the economy grew," in part because "tourism arrivals grew." (*Terra.com, "Economia cubana crecio 1,9% en primer semestre y proyecta 2,9% en el 2011", August 1, 2011*)
- In a meeting of Raul Castro's parliament, Cuban Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero noted that tourism was a growth industry in Cuba, as the country saw an increase in the number of visitors. During the first half of 2011, 1.5 million foreign tourists visited the island. Marrero also noted that in 2010 Cuba received 2.2 million dollars in income from tourism. (*Infobae.com Americas, "Cuba entre criticas analiza reformas", July 31, 2011*)
- Economic experts in Castro's Cuba noted that the increase in tourism to Cuba was due in part to the loosening of travel restrictions by President Barack Obama in 2009 and that tourism is a crucial source of income to fill Cuba's dwindling coffers. (*Pueblo en linea, "Crecen más de 13% ingresos de Cuba por turismo", August 11, 2011*)
- Tourism income to Cuba grew in the first half of 2011 by 990 million dollars, according to Cuba's state radio station Radio Rebelde citing a report from Cuba's National Statistics Office. (*Reuters, "Cuba reporta alza 13,3 pct ingresos turismo en 1er semestre 2011", August 10, 2011*)