

by [Walter Lippmann](#)
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USA Today reported on Sept. 17 that the US government was providing humanitarian aid to numerous Caribbean islands devastated by Hurricane Irma. Cuba, located just 90 miles off the coast of Florida – was not among them.

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, Cuba was the first nation to offer aid. The island prepared thousands of volunteers and huge amounts of emergency equipment and supplies to assist the victims in the affected regions with all the expenses incurred by Cuba.

Even on that occasion, Havana organized a permanent aid brigade to send to to countries affected by natural disasters that was named after a US citizen, Henry Reeve (1850-1876), who fought in an outstanding way in the Cuban independence ranks against Spanish colonialism, and who rose to the rank of Brigadier General.

The US government of George W. Bush rejected the magnanimous Cuban aid offer, in spite of the enormous humanitarian catastrophe that was unfolding in Louisiana at the time.

Katrina caused damage to the city of New Orleans, but it did not devastate it. Shortly afterwards, the Pontchartrain lake dams and several canals were broken. A toxic broth of contaminated water flooded the streets, as well as thousands of homes and beyond the second floor of tall buildings. Tens of thousands of people, almost all of them black and poor, had to fight for survival in the worst conditions of official abandonment. An estimated 300,000 families were made homeless. Nor was the offer of Cuban aid accepted at that time.

At the moment, although Cuba is recovering from the serious damage caused by Hurricane Irma, it has not hesitated to give aid to neighboring islands that have suffered a misfortune similar to its own. Hundreds of professionals, with their assistants and medical supplies, have been sent by Havana in support their Caribbean neighbors.

It is known that there are now hundreds of millions of dollars worth of food, medicine, and building materials being stored in the US military base that Washington illegally occupied more than a century ago, on the shores of Guantanamo Bay, on Cuban territory, in the easternmost part of Cuba. (This also includes the concentration camp whose inmates have no rights or trial as prisoners war).

But it is also known that the US military base has not shared a single bottle of potable water with the Cuban residents affected by the hurricane outside the perimeter fencing at the base.

Among other nations, they are providing assistance to Cuba, Argentina, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, China, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Dominican Republic, Russia, Uruguay, Venezuela and Vietnam, as well as some dependencies from the ONU. In contrast, the State Department has issued a warning against travel to Cuba

and advises the Americans in that regard.

Meanwhile, millions of Cuban volunteers have cleared the tracks that provide the most evidence of the destructive passage of Hurricane Irma. Tourists from the most diverse countries are already going massively to the island.

By denying Cubans aid, and discouraging its citizens' travel to Cuba, Washington is once again using the occurrence of a humanitarian disaster to punish Cubans for refusing to accept US meddling in their internal affairs.

However, as the Canadian tour operator "Cuba Explorer", which has been based for years in Havana, states in a message to its clients, "Americans are preparing to visit Cuba in large numbers in the coming months, aware that social tourism is a form humanitarian and economic aid. The travelers want to keep alive the new spirit of cooperation between the United States and Cuba that began during the Presidency of Barack Obama.

"Cubans are showing their disposition and their desire to welcome and warmly welcome their arrival to the island to their American guests," said the aforementioned US tour operator, based on his own experiences and expectations.