

## New York Times highlights US brain drain program against Cuba

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HAVANA, Cuba (ACN) -- In a sixth editorial published in English and Spanish since October 12, this time entitled "A Cuban Brain Drain, Courtesy of the US", the New York Times weighed in on the US program implemented by the Bush administration, and still underway, to encourage defection of Cuban medical personnel from assignments overseas. The program, said the Times, is particularly hard to justify.

"It is incongruous for the United States to value the contributions of Cuban doctors who are sent by their government to assist in international crises like the 2010 Haiti earthquake while working to subvert that government by making defection so easy," the article read and went on to note that "American immigration policy should give priority to the world's neediest refugees and persecuted people. It should not be used to exacerbate the brain drain of an adversarial nation at a time when improved relations between the two countries are a worthwhile, realistic goal."

The newspaper said there is much to criticize about Washington's failed policies toward Cuba and the embargo it has imposed on the island for decades. But the Cuban Medical Professional Parole Program, which in the last fiscal year enabled 1,278 Cubans to defect while on overseas assignments -- a record number -- is particularly hard to justify.

The Times recalled that "the program was introduced through executive authority in August 2006, when Emilio González, a hard-line Cuban exile, was at the helm of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Mr González described the labour of Cuban doctors abroad as "state-sponsored human trafficking."

At the time, the Bush administration was trying to cripple the Cuban government. Enabling medical personnel posted abroad to defect easily represented an opportunity to strike at the core of the island's primary diplomatic tool, while embarrassing the Castro regime," the Times said.

The newspaper also stressed that the Caribbean island has one of the highest numbers of doctors per capita in the world and offers medical scholarships to hundreds of disadvantaged international students each year, and some have come from the United States. According to Cuban government figures, more than 440,000 of the island's 11 million citizens are employed in the health sector.

After reviewing other details related to the Cuban medical services and its revenues for the island's economy, the publication said that as long as this incoherent policy is in place, establishing a healthier relationship between the two nations will be harder.