Cuba's Medical and Educational Brigades in The Bahamas: a disconcerting "cooperation"

April 28, 2025*

The citizens of The Bahamas are likely unaware of the exorbitant costs and other troubling aspects of its government's "cooperation" with Cuba.

Cuba considers sending workers overseas in "internationalist missions" as a "collaboration." According to Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as of April 2024, more than one hundred Cuban "collaborators" were working on nine islands[1] of the Bahamian archipelago's 700 islands, of which 30 to 40 are inhabited. The actual numbers, pieced together from different sources, appears to be at least 170: 130 in education and 40 in healthcare.

For over two decades, Cuban teachers have worked in several islands of The Bahamas' public education system. The educational mission currently has around 130 teachers working on ten islands,[2]/[3] and reportedly had around 40 collaborators in years past.

40 Cuban collaborators are currently working in the health field.[4] In 2016, according to Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, The Bahamas Public Hospital Authority signed an agreement with Comercializadora de Servicios Médicos Cubanos, CSMC, a 100% state-owned entity that "allowed 36 Cuban health professionals to work in institutions in the country.[5] Apparently, only 5 pharmacists and 2 biomedical engineers remained in 2019, who continued working during the COVID-19 pandemic.[6]

** This report is an expanded version of an April 16, 2025 report titled "Cuba's Medical Brigade in The Bahamas: the high cost of "cooperation" with Cuba;" it includes new information obtained by Cuba Archive since the earlier version was published.*

[1] "The Bahamas and Cuba strengthen educational cooperation," Nassau, Minrex, Apr. 17, 2024,

[2] "Cuba and Bahamas celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations," Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, República de Cuba, Dec. 5, 2024 (reports 133 brigade members); Rashad Rolle and Earyel Bowleg, "Govt asked to clarify how Cuban workers are paid," *The Tribune*, Mar. 14, 2025 (reports 130 brigade members, citing the President of the Teachers Union of The Bahamas.)

[3] This source put the number at 40 in late 2024: Joshua Williams, "B.U.T. president: 46 Cuban teachers join the education system," Nassau, *Our News*, Sep. 8, 2024.

[4] Wennys Díaz Ballaga, "Cuba y Bahamas fortalecen sus lazos de colaboración en materia de Salud," *Granma*, 20 de abril de 2025.

[5] "Cuba and Bahamas celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations," Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior, Mininsterio de Relaciones Exteriores, República de Cuba, Dec. 5, 2024. https://misiones.cubaminrex.cu/en/articulo/cuba-and-bahamas-celebrate-50-years-diplomatic-relations

[6] Ibid.

In 2022, an "emergency brigade" of 50 nurses was sent to Nassau,[7] allegedly to assist with the pandemic. In October of 2023, the Bahamian government hired 37 Cubans as "laboratory technicians, X-ray technicians, physiotherapists, nurses, and biomedical engineers" to work at Nassau's Princess Margaret Hospital and Rand Memorial Hospital in Freeport.[8]

The COVID-19 brigade

An "emergency" brigade of nurses spent a year in Nassau in 2022 and paved the way for a more permanent medical mission. The Cuban government has frequently opened new markets or reopened prior ones for its export medical services by sending an emergency brigade; at least some have been funded by third parties such as other governments and/or international organizations.[9]

The COVID group was part of what Cuba calls "Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Grave Epidemics"[10] and arrived rather late into the pandemic, on January 14, 2022. Days earlier, on January 8th, Cuba's Minister of Public Health, José Angel Portal, and the Minister of Health and Wellness of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, Dr. Michael Darville, had signed an "Inter-Ministerial Cooperation Agreement for the care of the COVID-19 emergency in The Bahamas."[11] The text of the agreement or its terms —such as how the credentials of the Cuban workers were authorized, the costs of the brigade, and what each government or any third parties would pay— was not found in open sources. Presumably, the emergency brigade was paid by the government of The Bahamas

The brigade of 50 nurses worked in New Providence Island, at Nassau's Princess Margaret Hospital. Cuba's official media reported that it consisted of licensed nurses with over 20 years of professional experience —42 women and 8 men from 12 provinces, of which 86% had previously served on international missions.[12] The testimony of one of its members, a nurse, follows.[13]

Health workers sent overseas as part of the Henry Reeve Emergency Brigade are usually provided a very cursory course of just a few days and issued a diploma from Cuba's Pedro Kourí Institute.[14] (This

[7] The Bahamas looks to Cuba to fill medical staff shortage," *Loop News*, Jan. 9, 2022; Ministros de Salud de Cuba y Bahamas firman acuerdo de cooperación para respuesta de emergencia a la COVID-19," *Cuba Debate*, Jan. 8, 2022.

[8] "Darville: 50 nurses from Ghana and Cuba to bring relief next week," *The Tribune*, Oct. 23, 2023.

[9] See CubaSalud.org for detailed and comprehensive information on Cuba's international medical brigades.

[10] Henry Reeve was a native of New York city who fought with Cubans in the early war of independence of Spain (1868-1878). In September 2005, Fidel Castro offered aid to the United States after Hurricane Katrina, renaming the emergency brigades Cuba had used for decades as the "Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disaster Situations and Grave Epidemics" or "Henry Reeve brigades." ("Misión Henry Reeve," FidelCastro.cu, http://www.fidelcastro.cu/es/internacionalismo/mision-henry-reeve.)

[11] "Cuban medical brigade to fight Covid-19 in Bahamas," Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, República de Cuba, Jan. 14, 2022.

[12] "A Bahamas, la 58 brigada médica cubana que parte a enfrentar la pandemia," *Granma*, Jan. 14, 2022.

[13] Testimony of Anonymous Source #4, by telephone and electronic messages with Maria C. Werlau, Apr. 21-27, 2025.

[14] See https://instituciones.sld.cu/ipk/mision/

has been reported by other collaborators who have been part of emergency brigades in other countries at different times.) The nurses assigned to The Bahamas for the pandemic had a 3-day training on COVID. They were told to plan for a six-month stay, but once in The Bahamas, the mission was extended for another six months for 35 of its members; they were unable to travel home until it ended. Those who stayed for the last six months, remained in The Bahamas with expired visas and working at the hospital with no work permits.

From the start, only around ten nurses treated COVID patients in a separate designated area; the rest was assigned to different departments of the hospital such as gynecology-obstetrics, emergency, intensive care, and others. The Cuban nurses could not complain or refuse any tasks or requests for fear of punishment, so they had to work very hard, always on their feet, and were usually assigned to do work the independently-hired nurses didn't like.

The brigade was provided lodging and meals at a hotel —two to a room, although the head of the brigade had a single room— as well as transportation to and from work. Many nurses gained weight with the all-inclusive all you can eat buffet meals 7 days a week for 12 months, a particularly unusual scenario especially for Cuban citizens whose access to food is usually a daily struggle. The cost for the twelve-month stay at the Breezes Resort Bahamas All Inclusive of Nassau hotel for a full year is conservatively estimated by Cuba Archive at $1.5 million.[15]

The nurses were paid just $750 a month, or $25 a day for a 30-day month, which was considered a "stipend;" it was to cover all their personal expenses such as sundries, laundry, and phone in very expensive Nassau. Phone plans were very expensive —a basic plan was $75 a month— and they were required to maintain an active wireless account phone line on their own phones, which had to be available at all times to receive calls from the supervisors (a chief of mission and a chief of brigade). This hardly allowed them to save any money or purchase goods to take home, which had been the main reason most had signed up for the mission. They later learned that other nurses at the hospital, hired directly, were reportedly making at least around $4 thousand a month and $6 thousand with overtime work, that was common.

Before the group left for The Bahamas, it was assembled at the CUJAE (former university that serves as headquarters of the Central Unit for Medical Collaboration[16]) and provided employment contracts, which they had to sign immediately with no time to even read them. They were unable to take pictures of the document with their phones and were not provided a copy. Years later, after seeing reports on the medical missions, the nurse-witness recalls that the contractual party was the Comercializadora de Servicios Médicos Cubanos, CSMC, which is a Cuban entity 100% state-owned.[17] The only part of the

[15] Current online prices on April 25, 2025 at the hotel's site, www.breezes.com, for 2 persons per room, all-inclusive, are $337.54 to $422.04 per day, averaging $380, depending on the month. An assumed half-price negotiated rate for a long group stay of $190 per room, two to a room for 50 persons (25 rooms), for six months, and 35 persons (17 rooms) for another six months comes to a total of $1,456,350. See https://www.breezes.com/

[16] https://www.ecured.cu/Unidad_Central_de_Cooperaci%C3%B3n_M%C3%A9dica

[17] Servicios Médicos Cubanos, https://www.smcsalud.cu/en/somos-smc

document read out loud to them was regarding the compensation. Upon learning they would earn $750 a month, they accepted, given it far exceeded the salaries they were paid in Cuba, which range from 4,010 to 4,610 CUP monthly, equivalent to just around US$40 in January 2022 (at the rate of 100 CUP:1US$) —at the today's market rate, it is just US$11.5-13.2.[18] During the 12-month mission, that salary in Cuban pesos was also paid to their families on the Island, usually with a debit card. The nurse providing this testimony said: "Some people allege we are free to go on a mission or not, and do so voluntarily; they don't understand what it means to get on a plane and have to leave your family behind just to be able to feed your children."



Cuban medical brigade ready to leave for The Bahamas, Jan. 2023. Photo: Minrex, improved with AI.

Upon arriving in The Bahamas, each nurse had to purchase two sets of uniforms, which cost well over US$100, and a t-shirt for $25 to wear for public marches against the US embargo they were required to attend every last Sunday of the month.[19] When Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero paid a visit

[18] The Cuban government fixes salaries in the health sector, which is solely state-controlled. The current rates were posted in the official record in December 2020. (Gaceta Oficial No. 69 Extraordinaria, Dec. 10, 2020, Anexo II, Salarios mensuales de los médicos, estomatólogos y enfermeras, p. 63, y pp. 608-609). See foreign exchange market rates at *El Toque*.com.

[19] Since mid-2021, every last Sunday of the month, Cuban citizens, graduates from Cuba, and supporters gather in a caravan against the U.S. embargo that travels through several streets of Nassau and culminates with a rally in a public square. According to a Cuban collaborator in the Bahamas, they are obligated to participate. (Testimony of Anonymous Source #1, a member of the medical brigade to The Bahamas, by telephone and electronic messages, March 28 to April 2, 2025, to Maria C. Werlau; and Testimony of Anonymous Source #4, op. cit.; "From the Bahamas, Cubans and friends condemn the genocidal blockade against the Cuban people," Ministry of Foreign Relations, Republic of Cuba, Feb. 25, 2025, https://misiones.cubaminrex .cu/en/ articulo/bahamas-cubans-and-friends-condemn-genocidal-blockade-against-cuban people.)

to The Bahamas in August 2022,[20] after a large explosion and fire in Matanzas, Cuba,[21] they were forced to, in solidarity, make a donation of $50 each.

Many of the selected team of nurses were members of the Communist Party who monitored each other and informed of any rules' violations; the group often met separately. (Membership in the Communist Party is by invitation and highly vetted; members commit to "defend the revolution" at all costs and in a number of specific ways). After the COVID mission ended and the brigade returned to Cuba, three of the most stalwart "revolutionaries" were selected to comprise the more permanent medical brigade that would return to The Bahamas; they prevailed over others with higher qualifications and better English skills.

The COVID brigade did not receive written Disciplinary Rules, but was instructed verbally on the rules: they could not go out after 6pm unless to and from work, could not have social relations with locals (including work colleagues), and had to request permission to have a romantic relationship — if approved, the individual would be considered a "supportive friend" of the brigade who did favors for the group. They could not accept any invitations by locals unless for authorized public events; some nurses managed to do so in hiding. If religious groups or Arabs were staying at the hotel, they could not leave their rooms. On the other hand, they were strongly and frequently urged to encourage patients to go to Cuba on all-included medical tourism packages. The nurse-witness exclaimed: "You're in another country, but you're subject to the same methods as in Cuba."

Some of the Cuban nurses were not experienced and could not cannulate a vein (insert an IV) or calculate medication dosage, which raised concerns among the administration and local staff. But, Dr. Darville, the Minister of Health, went by the hospital frequently and apparently played a decisive role in dismissing complaints and questions. He was also a frequent visitor at the hotel where the Cuban brigade was staying[22] and met there regularly with the head of the brigade (Glenda González, a nurse, who is now back as head of the mission) and the head of a mission, (Danixia Novoa Sotomayor, a doctor who does not speak English). The Cuban Ambassador, Julio Cesar González Marchante, and his wife Flora frequently joined the small group and had meals at the hotel. They also heard rumors that Dr. Darville often traveled to Cuba on vacation.

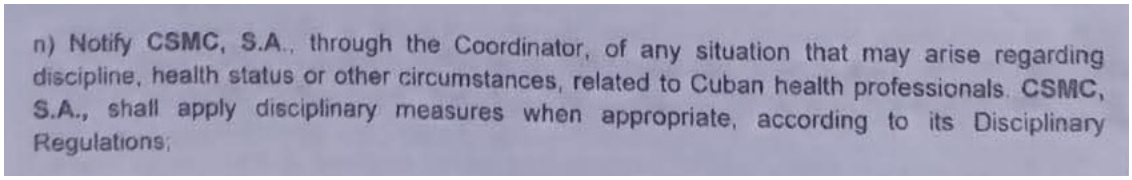
At the end of the brigade, the nurses had to pay $130 for their transportation to the airport and to check the two suitcases allowed on the flight back to Cuba, plus $60 for their carry-on purses, which they had been told were allowed —25% of their meager monthly stipend just to get back home. (Cuba requires brigade members to travel only on designated flights, which are often charters.) Upon arriving in Cuba, most had their luggage opened and precious belongings, which they had sacrificed so much to acquire, stolen. (In Cuba, consumer goods are hard to find, extremely expensive, and out of reach

[20] "Cuba and Bahamas celebrate 50 years of diplomatic relations," Dec. 5, 2024, Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, https://misiones.cubaminrex.cu/en/articulo/cuba-and-bahamas-celebrate-50-years-diplomatic-relations

[21] "Cuba's worst ever fire brought under control after burning for 5 days at an oil depot, officials say," *Reuters/CNN*, Aug. 9, 2022.

[22] https://www.breezes.com/

for most citizens). In return for their one-year service, having risked their lives during the pandemic far from their loved ones and their homeland, they were awarded a certificate.


n) Notify CSMC, S.A., through the Coordinator, of any situation that may arise regarding discipline, health status or other circumstances, related to Cuban health professionals. CSMC, S.A., shall apply disciplinary measures when appropriate, according to its Disciplinary Regulations;

Excerpt from the Bahamas-Cuba bilateral agreement on The Bahamas Ministry of Health's obligation to notify the Cuban Coordinator of any indiscipline by the Cuban workers and allow CMSC to apply disciplinary measures.

A more permanent medical mission

In 2023, the Bahamian government entered into an agreement for a regular (non-emergency) medical brigade. Cuba Archive obtained through unofficial channels three agreements: the bilateral agreement between The Bahamas Ministry of Health and Comercializadora de Servicios Médicos Cubanos, CSMC (Trading Company of Cuba's Medical Services), the employment contract the workers must sign with the CSMC, and the "service agreement" they had to sign with the Bahamas' Ministry of Health.[23] The bilateral agreement exposes the forced labor/trafficking in persons scheme, as it ratifies the Ministry's collaboration with CSMC to enforce Cuban laws, regulations, and disciplinary actions on the workers[24] restricting their rights, including the "Disciplinary Rules" for international collaborators with its many arbitrary measures.[25] It also precludes their employment outside the agreement,[26] requires confidentiality for up to two years after the agreement's expiration, and establishes large payments for CSMC, the Cuban partner.

The bilateral agreement dated 2023 is valid for one year, although its effective date was left blank. Presumably, it remains in effect indefinitely, as it may be terminated by either party at least three

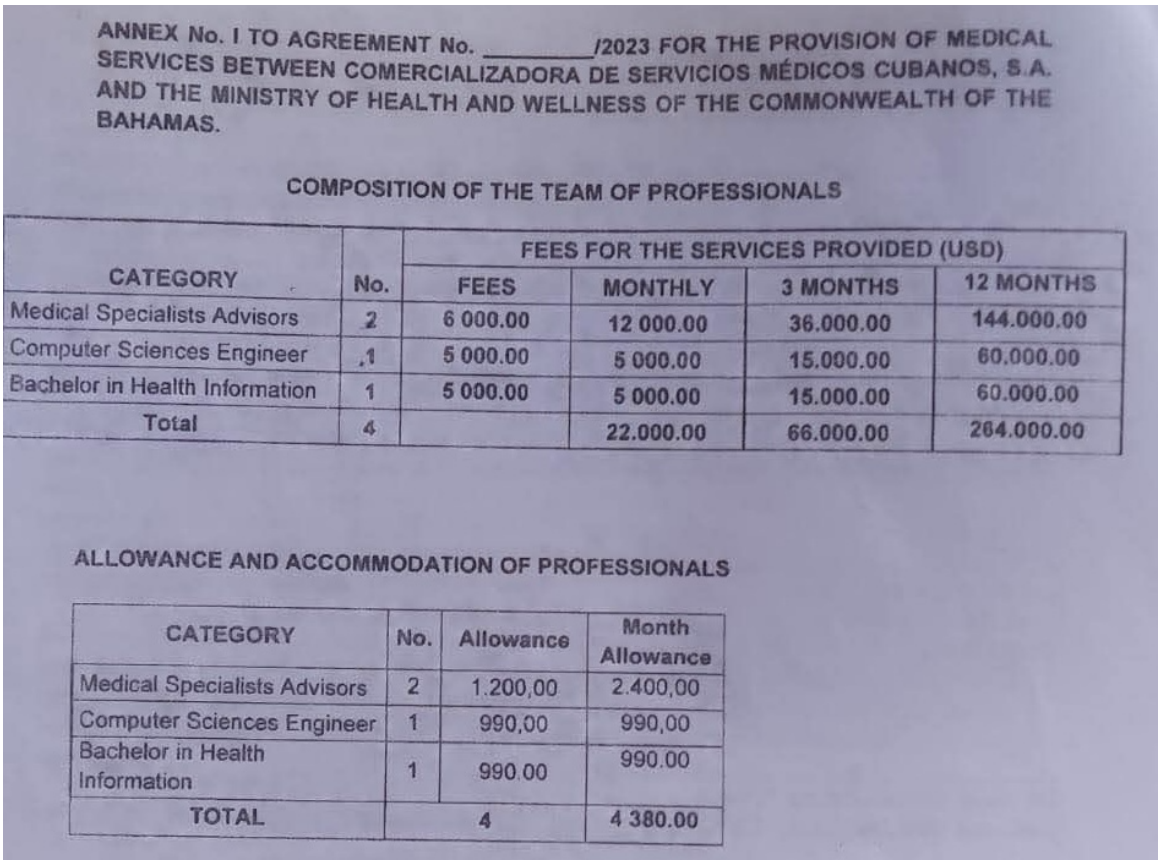
[23] See all three agreements at CubaArchive.org (go to Medical Brigades, Countries, Bahamas), https://cubaarchive.org/cuba-salud/bahamas/

[24] In the bilateral agreement, the Ministry of Health of The Bahamas undertakes to: "3.2, n). Notify CSMC, S.A, through the Coordinator, of any situation that may arise regarding discipline, health status or other circumstances related to Cuban health professionals. CSMC, S.A., shall apply disciplinary measures when appropriate, according to its Disciplinary Regulations." For its part, CMSC undertakes to "h.) Assume the cost of the return airfare to the Republic of Cuba of the Cuban health professional who commits any infraction or the discipline, which so requires, according to the legal dispositions of both countries."

[25] See details on the Disciplinary Rules in "Forced/compelled labor (trafficking in persons) by the Cuban state, Information for the 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report for the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons US Department of State, February 2025, Free Society Project/Cuba Archive, https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2025-TIP-Info.-Submission-Cuba-Archive-PUBLISHED.pdf (see in particular pp. 11-12 and 15.)

[26] The agreement reads: 3.3. a) The Ministry of Health and Wellness of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas shall not enter into individual employment contracts within the public health system of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas with any contracted Cuban health professional who interrupts the term of this Agreement and seeks to be rehired in a personal basis, terminating at the time the Labor Contract signed under this legal instrument."

months prior to the intended termination date.[27] It guarantees the delivery of medical services by "highly qualified and experienced Cuban health professionals in the areas of epidemiology, computer support and data processing … as additional technical support … with the purpose of contributing to the viability and sustainability of the health system … for the purpose of promoting the access of the population of that country to health care and, consequently, to provide them with a better quality of life." It refers to the Cuban workers as "health professionals." The workers in turn, are hired by CMSC for up to 3 years as per a separate agreement and provided a service agreement by The Bahamas' Ministry of Health valid "until completion of the services provided for in the Cooperation Agreement."



ANNEX No. I TO AGREEMENT No. _____/2023 FOR THE PROVISION OF MEDICAL SERVICES BETWEEN COMERCIALIZADORA DE SERVICIOS MÉDICOS CUBANOS, S.A. AND THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS.

COMPOSITION OF THE TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS

CATEGORY	No.	FEES FOR THE SERVICES PROVIDED (USD)			
		FEES	MONTHLY	3 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
Medical Specialists Advisors	2	6 000.00	12 000.00	36.000.00	144.000.00
Computer Sciences Engineer	1	5 000.00	5 000.00	15.000.00	60.000.00
Bachelor in Health Information	1	5 000.00	5 000.00	15.000.00	60.000.00
Total	4		22.000.00	66.000.00	264.000.00

ALLOWANCE AND ACCOMMODATION OF PROFESSIONALS

CATEGORY	No.	Allowance	Month Allowance
Medical Specialists Advisors	2	1.200,00	2.400,00
Computer Sciences Engineer	1	990,00	990,00
Bachelor in Health Information	1	990.00	990.00
TOTAL	4		4 380.00

From Annex I of the Bahamas-Cuba bilateral agreement.

An Annex to the bilateral agreement specifies payments by The Bahamas for a team of four: $12,000 per month each for two "medical specialists advisors" (reportedly not physicians or PhDs), of which $1,200 is a stipend paid directly to the worker, and $5,000 per month each for a "computer sciences engineer" and a "graduate in health information," of which $990 is a stipend paid to the workers. The

[27] Its clause X., states: "This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of its signature and shall remain in force for one (1) year. At the expiration of the term, the outstanding agreed obligations. including the payment of what is due, shall remain in effect."

so-called "biomedical engineers" actually carry out basic tasks such as exclusively moving hospital patient beds, but receive the same compensation package as the computer engineer.[28] The Bahamas must transfer the rest of the money to CSMC. The agreement also contemplates a commission (fee) of $6,000 paid for the first two and $5,000 for the two computer specialists, plus a bonus of 15% for all at the end of their service; the latter payments were neither disclosed to the Cuban workers nor mentioned in their contracts with CMSC or the Bahamian Ministry of Health.[29] According to the agreement, the annual cost in salaries to the Bahamian government is $183,600 and $86,000 respectively for the two categories of workers covered by the Annex, all tax exempt in Bahamas.

If Cuba received the first salary on the Annex table, $12,000 a month, for half of the medical mission's 40 workers and the second salary, $5,000, for the other half, plus the 15% bonus, the government of The Bahamas would be paying for the medical brigade alone $4,692,000 annually just in remuneration. In addition, assuming that each of the 130 teachers in the educational brigade are paid $5,000 per month plus a 15% bonus, $8,970,000 is disbursed annually for that brigade on remuneration alone. The total cost is remuneration for both brigades is, consequently, conservatively estimated at $13,362,000 a year.

Aside from salaries/wages, The Bahamas pays at least $1,000 per month for a housing allowance per collaborator (at least for certain categories of workers for which documentation exists). If the rent allowance averaged $1,000 per for the members of both brigades month (it could be higher for some workers), the annual cost in rent of $2,040,000 for 170 workers would bring the disbursement by the government of The Bahamas to $15.7 million a year just in remuneration and rent, not taking into account all other costs and additional benefits per worker: optional "incentives" (not specified in the contract), round-trip travel to Cuba, medical and dental care, administrative expenses for visas and work permits, entry medical exams, housing placement support, English language courses and exams, and necessary training. Cuba Archive estimates these ancillary costs conservatively at $5,000 annually per worker not counting incentives. The cumulative costs: $186,600 for a medical specialist and $91,000 for the computer specialists (who, actually, do menial labor) more than double the reported average salaries for comparable positions in Nassau.[30]

The Bahamas' Ministry of Health must also "facilitate" the administrative and logistical facilities for the resident Cuban Coordinator (legal representative) who coordinates with the Ministry of Health and the CSMC's appointed "coordination team." There is no detail on who covers those associated

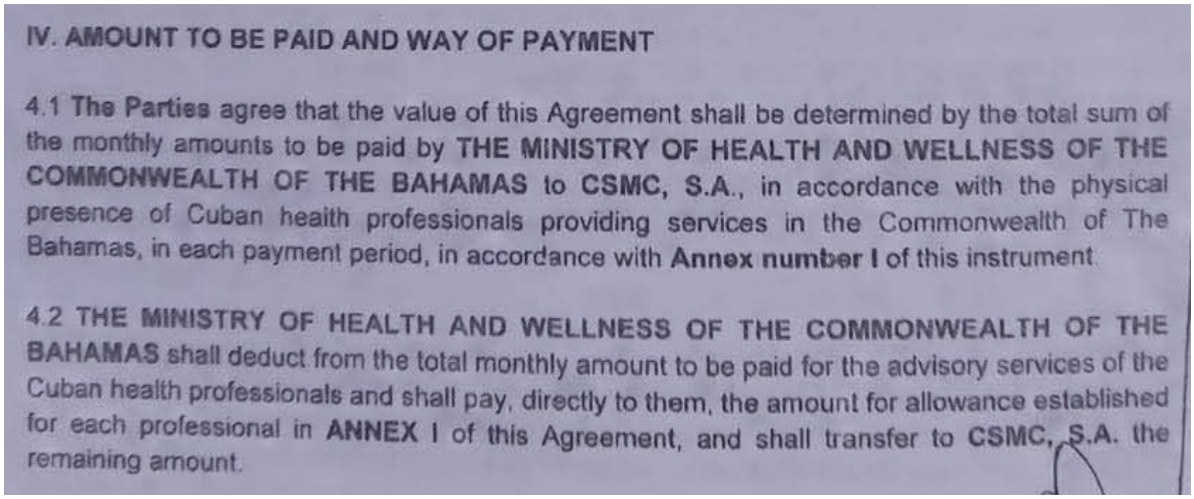
[28] "Per worker costs to the Bahamian government of the Cuban medical mission," https://cubaarchive.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Bahamas-BMC-ALL-COSTS.pdf

[29] Testimony of Anonymous Source #1, op. cit.

[30] The Bahamian dollar, BSD, is equivalent to the US dollar. See "Salary ranges in Bahamas," https://www.paylab.com/bs/salaryinfo. According to the Economic Research Institute, a computer technical support specialist in the Bahamas receives an average annual salary of BSD 60,897, within a salary range of BSD 42,445 to BSD 74,111 (www.erieri.com/salary/job/computer-technical-support-specialist/bahamas) and the average annual salary for a nursing assistant in Nassau is BSD 32,077, withing a salary range of BSD 24,216 to 37,526, depending on experience and education (www.erieri.com/salary/job/nursing-assistant/bahamas/nassau).

costs, in what capacities these individuals operate, and who will appoint them. If The Bahamas is paying those costs, they must be proportionately applied to the group of Cuban workers they coordinate in order to arrive at a real cost per worker. Bahamas also agrees to pay up to $2,500 for the repatriation of remains of any collaborator who dies.

In sum, the total cost per worker is exorbitant when compared to the cost of hiring native or independently contracted foreign workers, especially considering that most of the hired Cubans are not highly-qualified health professionals or fluent English speakers. In fact, the language problem has generated complaints.[31]



IV. AMOUNT TO BE PAID AND WAY OF PAYMENT

4.1 **The Parties** agree that the value of this Agreement shall be determined by the total sum of the monthly amounts to be paid by **THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS** to **CSMC, S.A.**, in accordance with the physical presence of Cuban health professionals providing services in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, in each payment period, in accordance with **Annex number I** of this instrument.

4.2 **THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS** shall deduct from the total monthly amount to be paid for the advisory services of the Cuban health professionals and shall pay, directly to them, the amount for allowance established for each professional in **ANNEX I** of this Agreement, and shall transfer to **CSMC, S.A.** the remaining amount.

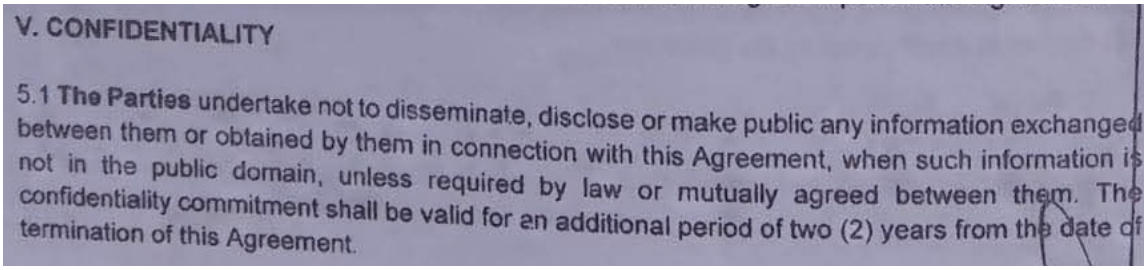
From the Bahamas-Cuba bilateral agreement

The payment arrangement reflected in the contracts have Cuba (CSMC) receiving 83.9% and 91.6% respectively for the two categories of workers covered in Annex I of the bilateral agreement. Additionally, CSMC collects 50% of any overtime, any incentives Bahamas decides to pay, and any remaining pay due to the worker after returning to Cuba. The worker, in turn, receives the respective monthly stipend of $1,200 or $990 (8.4% and 16.1% of what Bahamas is paying) and, as is standard in the CSMC contracts, the usual "labor and social security benefits to which they are entitled under Cuban law while abroad," which means they are paid the same wage in Cuban pesos they would receive if they were working in Cuba. According to a recent member of the Cuban medical brigade in the Bahamas, a good salary in Cuba is about 5,000 Cuban pesos, which is currently equivalent to

[31] The Bahamian Teachers Union complained of the Cubans problems with the English language, but Education Minister Glenys Hanna-Martin announced that appropriate measures would be taken to ensure effective teaching and learning. (Aygen Marsh, "Doctors are sent to the Bahamas, while Cuban hospitals are rarely staffed," *Amico Hoops,* Oct. 26, 2023; "Hay un conflicto entre el sindicato de docentes y el Gobierno de Bahamas por los maestros cubanos," Nassau, *Diario de Cuba*, Sep. 9, 2023; https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=281310631353465)

approximately $14 per month.[32] For heads of household with their family in Cuba, it cannot even cover their basic expenses. As in most missions, the workers must leave their families behind.

The Bahamas is, reportedly, the fourth most expensive location in the world and the Cuban workers can barely save anything from what is left of the low stipends they receive, which is the main incentive most have to take on an international mission. The $1,000 housing allowance is generally insufficient to rent a decent lodging.[33] They are also obliged, among other things, to participate in the monthly public demonstrations against the U.S. embargo held on the last Sunday of each month since 2021,[34] presumably organized by the Cuban embassy, directly or indirectly.



V. CONFIDENTIALITY

5.1 The Parties undertake not to disseminate, disclose or make public any information exchanged between them or obtained by them in connection with this Agreement, when such information is not in the public domain, unless required by law or mutually agreed between them. The confidentiality commitment shall be valid for an additional period of two (2) years from the date of termination of this Agreement.

From the Bahamas-Cuba bilateral agreement

The Bahamas-Cuba bilateral agreement is highly unusual and might even be illegal, as The Bahamas enforces strict requirements before foreigners may be issued work permits; the government is obliged to prioritize employment for its citizens. To start out, the agreement allows the CSMC to select the workers by only providing guarantees and unspecified documentation of their qualifications, skills, and experience, whereas the Ministry of Health of The Bahamas may select the workers only based on their Curriculum Vitae provided by Cuba. The "service agreement" the workers must sign with the Ministry of Health expressly states that it is not an "employment contract."

Members of the Cuban medical mission are said to be working without legal authorization after their initial 90-day work permits expired —those are typically requested before entering the country. Any foreigner wishing to work in the country over 90 days must apply for a long-term work permit and visa. Hiring someone without a valid work permit can lead to a fine of up to $10,000 and up to five years in prison,[35] or both. For a long-term work permit to be issued, employers must advertise the vacancy in a local daily newspaper for three days and the Department of Labor must use its database to identify potential Bahamian job seekers for the position. Only after those two steps are met, can the Department issue a Labor Certificate with a Notice of Vacancy (NOV) indicating that no

[32] Testimony of Anonymous Source #1, op. cit. (The market exchange rate is today around 350 Cuban pesos to the US dollar. See eltoque.com.)

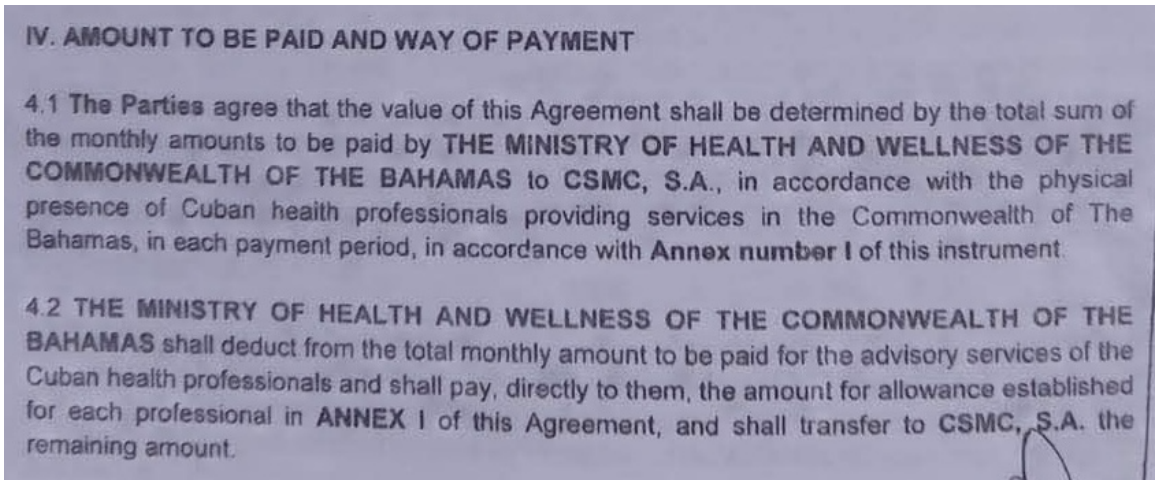
[33] The average cost of living in Nassau, the capital, is $2.741, which is in the top 4% of the most expensive cities in the world. The cost of a 1-bedroom apartment in city center (40 m2 or 430 ft2) is $1,639. (Cost of Living in Nassau, Updated: March 02, 2025. https://livingcost.org/cost/bahamas/nassau)

[34] See footnote 13.

[35] Practice Guides, Corporate Immigration 2024, Chambers and Partners.

Bahamian is available for the job. The process also requires extensive documentation, including, among others, a letter from the prospective employer explaining the reason for the request, the position and its duration, a police certificate of character covering five years of residency in The Bahamas, a medical certificate, written references from previous employers, and copies of certificates for exams mentioned as requirements in the application form.[36]

Perhaps bypassing local requirements for the practice of medicine, three Cuban ophthalmologists are reportedly "working" at the Eye Clinic affiliated with Princess Margaret Hospital for the purpose of identifying patients for treatment in Cuba.[37] The Bahamas' ambassador to Cuba, Elliston Rahming, confirmed in a June 2024 interview that in The Bahamas "there is no medical brigade, although there are several doctors diagnosing those who will travel, mainly for eye-related diseases," adding that 30 to 50 Bahamians arrive weekly for "medical tourism in Cuba" to receive "specialized treatments."[38] According to several Cuban doctors, including an ophthalmic surgeon, who spoke confidentially to Cuba Archive, with a profit motive, Cuban doctors have been pressured into diagnosing vision problems requiring unnecessary procedures. This merits attention by qualified independent local experts to verify the diagnoses, as medical tourism is a business exclusively owned by the Cuban State.



IV. AMOUNT TO BE PAID AND WAY OF PAYMENT

4.1 **The Parties** agree that the value of this Agreement shall be determined by the total sum of the monthly amounts to be paid by **THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS** to **CSMC, S.A.**, in accordance with the physical presence of Cuban health professionals providing services in the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, in each payment period, in accordance with **Annex number I** of this instrument.

4.2 **THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS** shall deduct from the total monthly amount to be paid for the advisory services of the Cuban health professionals and shall pay, directly to them, the amount for allowance established for each professional in **ANNEX I** of this Agreement, and shall transfer to **CSMC, S.A.** the remaining amount.

From the bilateral agreement.

After *The Tribune* of The Bahamas published a piece citing a recent report on the medical brigade by Cuba Archive,[39] Dr. Darville defended the program and said: "The Bahamas currently employs three Cuban nurses and three doctors —two of whom are ophthalmologists and one an optometrist. Other professionals include X-ray technicians, physiotherapists, and biomedical specialists."[40] *The Tribune*

[36] "Application Process for the Approval of Work Permits (Long Term)," The Government of the Bahamas (accessed Apr. 2, 2025)

[37] Testimony of Anonymous Source #1, op. cit.

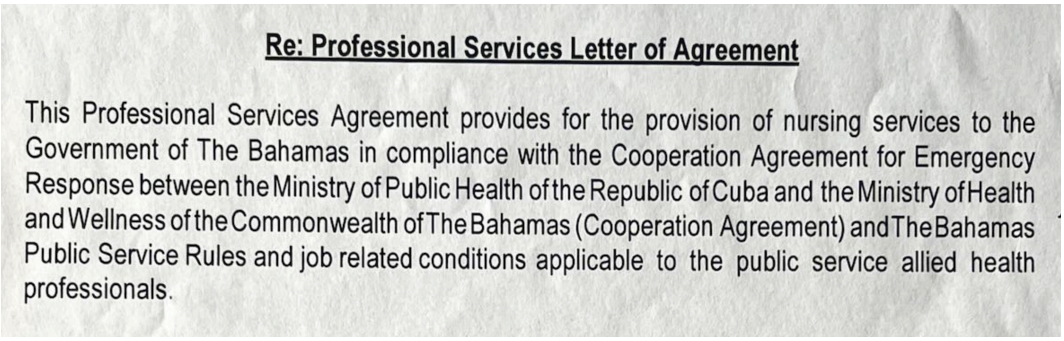
[38] Nuria Barbosa León, "Cuba y Bahamas similares en lo diverso," *Granma*, Jun. 6, 2024. (Translation from Spanish.)

[39] Maria C. Werlau, "Cuba's Medical Brigade in The Bahamas: the high cost of cooperation with Cuba," Cuba Archive, April 16, 2025.

[40] Rashad Rolle, "Cubans' take-home pay 'less than 16%'," *The Tribune*, Apr. 22, 2025.

reported that Prime Minister Philip Davis had said that "the government would review the arrangement to ensure it aligns with international labour standards," although he had previously acknowledged that part of Cuban workers' salaries goes to a Cuban agency while defending the practice as "part of a longstanding cooperation model."[41]

The bilateral health "cooperation" has for years included sending Bahamians to study in the medical or health field in Cuba. By April 2025, 51 had graduated and 17 were studying in Cuba.[42] Information regarding who pays for what is missing from the public sphere. Oftentimes, Cuba is said to provide these scholarships, but apparently, some governments, multilateral agencies, and international non-governmental organizations pay for all or certain aspects the program.



Re: Professional Services Letter of Agreement

This Professional Services Agreement provides for the provision of nursing services to the Government of The Bahamas in compliance with the Cooperation Agreement for Emergency Response between the Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba and the Ministry of Health and Wellness of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas (Cooperation Agreement) and The Bahamas Public Service Rules and job related conditions applicable to the public service allied health professionals.

From the letter provided by the Ministry of Health of The Bahamas to the Cuban worker

In December 2024, Dr. Darville, and the General Director of the Public Hospitals Authority, Dr. Aubynette Rolle, agreed with Cuban representatives on the positive progress of the bilateral health collaboration and their desire to strengthen it in the future.[43] On April 20th, Dr. Darville traveled to Cuba to attend a health fair and paid a visit with Cuba's Minister of Health, to "enhance the collaboration," acknowledging "the Cuban medical assistance … that for over two decades … has been operating in remote areas of the Bahamas, due to the challenges in healthcare coverage in those communities."[44]

Cuba's educational brigade in The Bahamas

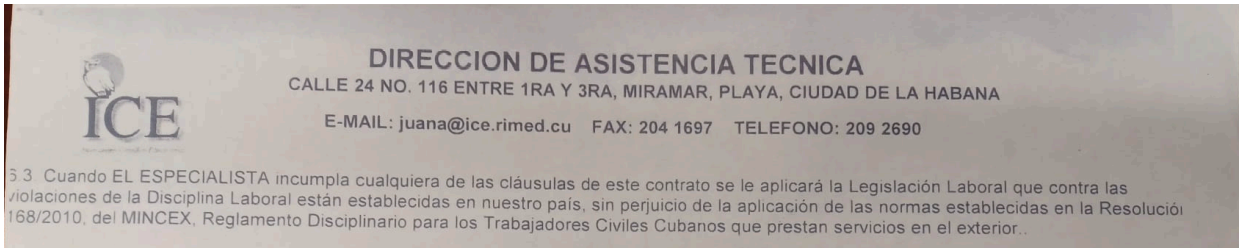
Since 2003, The Bahamas and Cuba have had an "educational collaboration" by which Cuban teachers are hired to go to The Bahamas to teach special education, agriculture, science, mathematics, and technical and modern language subjects.[45] In February 2020, The Bahamas Ministry of Education announced plans to engage 60 teachers from Cuba to fill gaps in subjects such as agricultural science,

[41] Ibid.
[42] W. Díaz Ballaga, op. cit.
[43] "Visita de representantes Servicios Médicos Cubanos a Las Bahamas," Nassau, Minrex, Dec. 21, 2024
[44] "Cuba and Bahamas strengthen ties in the realm of healthcare," Havana, *Radio Reloj*, Apr. 22, 2025.
[45] "Cuba's educational collaboration in The Bahamas nearing 19th anniversary," Op-Ed, Nassau, *Eyewitness News*, Apr. 5, 2022.

auto mechanics, biology, chemistry, electrical installation, mathematics, Spanish, and French.[46] In March 2025, Belinda Wilson, President of The Bahamas Union of Teachers said that the government employed 130 Cuban teachers, who "play a vital role to fill the gap because of the teacher shortage especially in those disciplines or subject areas where the local expertise is not readily available." She added: "My experience is that the Cuban teachers who are recruited enjoy the same benefits as Bahamian teachers and other educators. In fact, in some instances, more benefits, such as a gratuity payment at the end of their contracts."[47]

Two confidential sources with direct knowledge of the educational brigade —as historic participants and privy to current details— independently provided accounts to Cuba Archive of the educational mission when it had around 40 members some years ago.[48] Their testimony follows. For reasons we will not disclose, similar circumstances are believed to be still in play.

Cuban teachers are selected by a Bahamian delegation to Havana. When the collaborators arrive in Nassau, they are informed (not consulted) as to where they will be assigned, and many are sent to small and remote islands of the Bahamian archipelago. The two interviewees, who served around a decade ago, were forced to sign a Code of Ethics[49] and follow the usual arbitrary Disciplinary Rules for international collaborators. Among other things, they were prevented from visiting other Bahamian islands and forced to transfer to the Cuban government the larger portion of the salaries paid to them by The Bahamas. Agents or informants within the Bahamas Ministry of Education alert Cuban authorities if any collaborators seek to abandon the mission, so they can be captured and deported.


DIRECCION DE ASISTENCIA TECNICA
CALLE 24 NO. 116 ENTRE 1RA Y 3RA, MIRAMAR, PLAYA, CIUDAD DE LA HABANA
E-MAIL: juana@ice.rimed.cu FAX: 204 1697 TELEFONO: 209 2690
ICE
6.3 Cuando EL ESPECIALISTA incumpla cualquiera de las cláusulas de este contrato se le aplicará la Legislación Laboral que contra las violaciones de la Disciplina Laboral están establecidas en nuestro país, sin perjuicio de la aplicación de las normas establecidas en la Resolución 168/2010, del MINCEX, Reglamento Disciplinario para los Trabajadores Civiles Cubanos que prestan servicios en el exterior..

Extract of document provided to the collaborators in Bahamas indicating they will be subject to Cuba's laws and Disciplinary Rules.

Until very recently, the special passports issued to collaborators —valid only for "official" purposes, with a red cover rather than the standard blue— were systematically retained. The official passports are cancelled by Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs after any collaborator abandons the mission or stays in The Bahamas after it ends.[50]

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[46] Earyel Bowleg, "60 Cuban teachers to cover shortages," *The Tribune*, Feb. 24, 2020.
[47] R. Rolle and E, Bowleg, "Govt asked to clarify," op. cit.
[48] Telephone testimony of Anonymous Source #2, by telephone and electronic messages, to Maria C. Werlau, Apr. 20 and 21, 2025.
[49] See the original document at https://cubaarchive.org/cuba-salud/bahamas/
[50] Cuba Archive has a copy of the letter sent to the Ministry of Education of the Bahamas.

Regarding their compensation, at least in years past, the teacher-collaborators received their salaries from The Bahamas as direct deposits at Scotiabank, where they had individual bank accounts in their name. As branches are present in Nassau and the larger islands, they were forced to go in person to withdraw the salary in cash and transfer the larger portion into an account belonging to the Cuban embassy, keeping just enough for their rent and personal expenses. The collaborators assigned to the outer islands were transferred to Nassau every several months by the Cuban coordinators —whom they consider to be agents of State Security— and taken collectively to the bank. Bank tellers were aware of this standard practice and, according to a former collaborator, would ask some of the Cubans, "Are you sure of this transaction?" before effecting the transfer. The collaborators also had to give their Cuban handlers a second copy of their bank debit card to their account with the pin number, and receipts of the amount transferred as salaries into their account. Additionally, they had to provide evidence of what they paid in rent, so any leftover portion of the rent allocation had to be included in the required "remittance" to the Cuban government.

From: Eloy Moreno González bajamar.colab@gmail.com
Date: Friday, September 14, 2012 at 2:56 PM
Subject: Reminder and guidance regarding payment
To: xxx (Names and emails deleted to protect privacy)

Dear colleagues,

Although since last academic year I have emphasized in several emails that you immediately sending the banking information, and that we informed the new teachers about this during the meetings held upon their arrival, I am reiterating the need for you to send me the banking information (including the remittance details) **within 72 hours** of receiving your deposit.

This month, the deposit is scheduled for **Wednesday, the 26th**, so it is necessary that you carry out the remittance and send the bank information between **the 26th and 28th**. All the information you send must be processed and submitted to ICE by **October 2**. I hope there will be no issues in sending this information. (…)

I also remind you that **all rent payment receipts must be submitted to me** as proof of the deduction you make from your salary each month.
Finally, the banking information you must send me is the following:

- **Salary deposited by the Government of The Bahamas: _____**
- **Date of deposit: _____**
- **Amount withdrawn for RENT: _____**
- **Stipend withdrawn: _____**
- **Bank service fees deducted: _____**

Please remember that the remaining balance in the account should match the initial deposit amount if it remains unchanged. **No money to be remitted to Cuba should be left in the account—not a single cent—as that would constitute a violation of the agreement with ICE.** This requirement applies to all teachers, including those in Nassau. …

Excerpts of a 2012 email by the Cuban Coordinator in The Bahamas to collaborators in the educational mission. Translation from Spanish. See the original full text at CubaArchive.org/cuba-salud/bahamas/

The Cuban supervisors refer to the transfers as a "remittance." The same salary confiscation scheme has been reported to Cuba Archive by collaborators working or having worked in other islands of the Caribbean.[51] The Bahamian government alleges that it deposits the salaries directly in the collaborators' accounts, yet its officials are reportedly well aware of the salary confiscation scheme and conveniently turn a blind eye.

For collaborators with PhDs, who received the highest salaries over ten years ago, of the almost $5,000 monthly they were paid, they were able to keep the rent allowance of $1,000 to $1,200 plus a stipend of $500 or $650 (the latter for the educators in islands other than Nassau).[52] A teacher-collaborator with a lesser educational degree reported receiving a monthly deposit of $2,800, of which he was only able to keep $650 for rent and $650 as a stipend.[53] The stipends were generally insufficient to cover their expenses.

All three former collaborators of the regular brigades interviewed for this report explained that the 15% bonus paid to all collaborators at the end of the typically 2-year mission is entirely appropriated by the Cuban government. As of very recently, one had heard from a current member of the educational brigade that some are being allowed to keep a portion of the bonus (for example, $5,000 of $15,000).[54] Apparently after a Cuban embassy official recently stole the funds from the embassy account, the collaborators have been instructed to transfer the funds by making an online purchase of electronic goods using a certain link. (Cuba owns multiple offshore businesses, which would make it easy to capture the funds.)

The former collaborators report that at least during the tenure of Cuban Ambassador Ernesto Soberón, the educational mission in The Bahamas was a prized assignment typically reserved for individuals related to or connected with Cuba's ruling elite. Slots were allocated through bribes and, apparently, the Cuban Ambassador was running a personal-family business with proceeds from the mission and other misappropriated embassy funds.

In October 2023, Cuba Archive wrote to Dr. Darville to inform him of the human rights' violations surrounding Cuba's brigades contrary to the Protocol on Trafficking in Persons, ratified by The Bahamas in 2008.[55] The letter requested copies of all the agreements and a breakdown of all payments and expenses to host the Cuban workers and offered to contact Cuban health professionals eager to find work independently and willing to relocate immediately. No response has been received to date.

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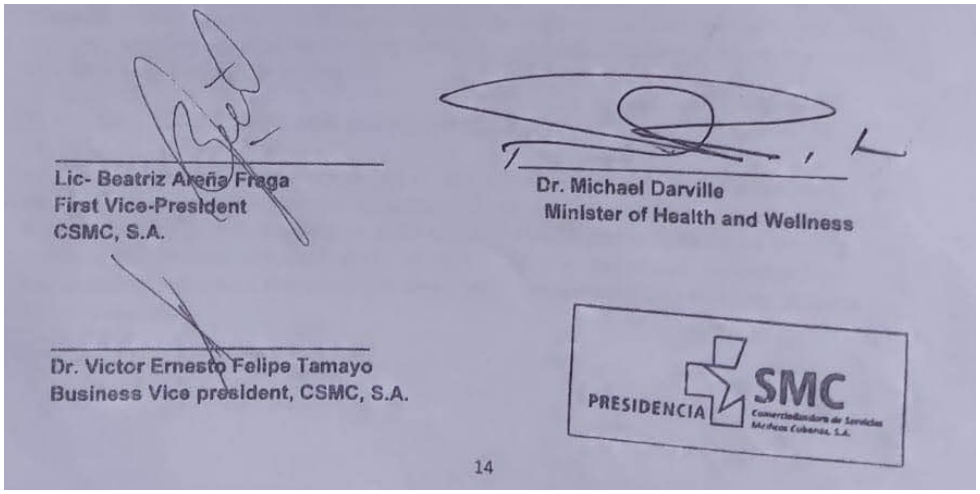
[51] As reported to Cuba Archive by other collaborators. Also see Annarela Grimal, "Trafficking of doctors in the Caribbean: The story of five Cuban women," CubaNet, Apr. 16, 2025.

[52] Testimony of Anonymous Source #2, op. cit.

[53] Testimony of Anonymous Source #3, by telephone and electronic correspondence with Maria Werlau, April 20-22, 2025.

[54] Testimony of Anonymous Source #2, op. cit.

[55] Cuba Archive also requested copies of all the agreements and a breakdown of all payments and expenses to host the Cuban workers.



Extract of the bilateral agreement Bahamas-Cuba, 2023.

Partnering with the totalitarian Cuban regime

All four Cuban collaborators interviewed for this report believed that certain high officials of both countries were profiting from the Cuban mission in The Bahamas.

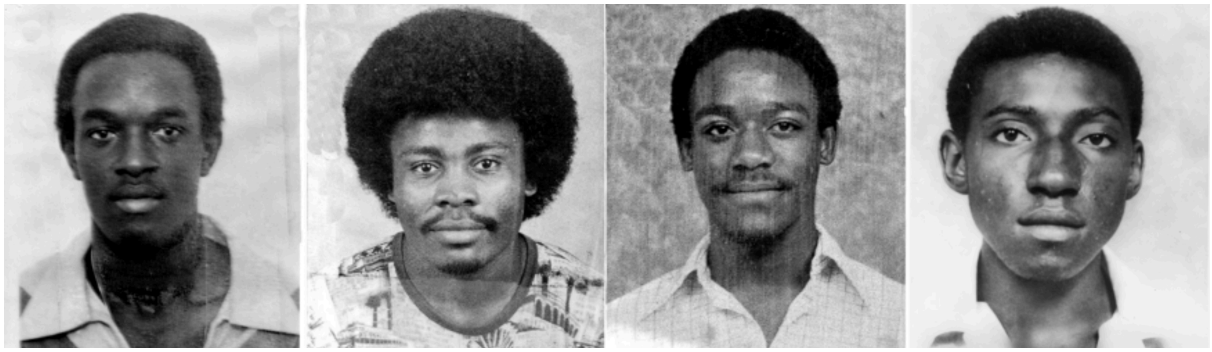
The Bahamian government has systematically ignored the human rights violations of the Cuban regime. To the contrary, its government employs Cuba's totalitarian state as a model, as it has several bilateral agreements in security encompassing training of customs professionals, prison officers, and dogs specialized in airport and ports of entry inspections.[56] This might explain why, for instance, collaborators who abandoned or overstayed their mission have been denied work permits[57] or why Cuban rafters who escape Cuba and reach the Bahamas are held in terrible conditions, mistreated, and at times even raped before most are deported back to Cuba, with Bahamian authorities keeping their cell phones.[58] Some of the Cuban nurses in the COVID brigade were assigned to a Nassau detention facility and witnessed these abuses, which led them to collect among the other Cuban nurses donations of soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and other essentials to provide the detainees.[59] For example, in 2024, 22-year-old Marco Antonio Alfonso Breto was deported to Cuba, where he was immediately incarcerated, despite having a well-founded request for political asylum. He had escaped Cuba while

[56] N. Barbosa León, op. cit.
[57] Testimony of Anonymous Source #3, op. cit.
[58] Bahamas Forgotten Detainees? Human Rights in Detention, Amnesty International, 2003, https://www.amnesty.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/amr140052003en.pdf; "Carmichael Road Detention Center / Bahamas," Press Release, Centro para la Justicia y el Derecho International (CEJIL),Nov. 3, 2017, https://cejil.org/en/press-releases/carmichael-road-detention-center-bahamas/; Ben Fox, "Cubans protest treatment in the Bahamas," Miami, Associated Press, Aug. 6, 2013; Testimony of Anonymous Source #4, op. cit.
[59] Testimony of Anonymous Source #4, op. cit.

serving a five-year sentence of correctional labor with confinement for participating in the island-wide peaceful mass demonstrations of July 11, 2021.[60]

Ambassador Rahming, Bahamas' Ambassador to Cuba,[61] has stated that "There is a lot of security in Cuba, and peace and harmony, something that Bahamians like."[62] He also gloats: "Our government, in all the votes taken at the United Nations against the blockade, stands by Cuba. … We are also against the inclusion of Cuba in the list of countries sponsoring terrorism because it hinders trade and normal relations between two neighboring nations and with other states."[63]

The seemingly paradoxical Bahamas-Cuba relationship fails a historical memory test. On May 11, 1980, Cuba's current Communist regime deliberately killed four young marines less than six weeks after the formation of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force (RBDF). The bodies of Fenrick Sturrup, Austin Smith, David Tucker, and Edward Williams were never found after Fidel Castro ordered two Cuban MIGs to sink the 103-ft. patrol boat of the Bahamian Navy, "Flamingo," with its crew of nineteen. It was towing two Cuban fishing vessels seized for illegally poaching lobster, stone crab and conch in Bahamian waters. The MIGs sank the vessel with rockets and strafed the survivors in the water.



Fenrick Sturrup, Austin Smith, David Tucker, Edward Williams

The following day, Cuba's jets buzzed the small island community of Duncan Town, after the survivors had taken refuge at Ragged Island. A Cuban military transport appeared and a helicopter actually landed. The seeming invasion to retrieve the Cuban poachers lasted hours and prevented the evacuation of the Flamingo's crew. The following day, an unarmed U.S. Coast Guard helicopter conducting a search for the missing marines at the request of the Bahamian government was put into violent turbulence by a Cuban MIG. After the U.S. scrambled two jets, the Cubans withdrew. At first, the Cuban government said the attack had been a confusion, but soon accused The Bahamas of

[60] "Bahamas devuelve a Cuba al preso del 11J que se fugó de la cárcel," La Habana, 14*ymedio*, Feb. 5, 2024.
[61] H.E. Dr Elliston Rahming, Bahamas Ambassador to the Republic of Cuba, https://bahamasembcuba.com/
[62] Nuria Barbosa León, "Cuba y Bahamas similares en lo diverso," *Granma*, Jun. 6, 2024. (Translation from Spanish by the author.)
[63] Ibid.

working for the CIA. Eventually, it offered a compensation of $100,000 each to the sailor's four families and $10 million to the Bahamian government.[64]

The four young victims are honored in a cenotaph in the Garden of Remembrance behind the Supreme Court in Nassau.[65] Each year on the anniversary of the attack, the RBDF holds a memorial ceremony attended by Bahamian dignitaries and the families of the victims. But the webpages on these ceremonies, including the latest in 2024, remember the "marines of the ill-fated HMBS Flamingo" without mentioning the names of the four victims or that they were killed by Cuba."[66] An RBDF page dedicated to the "The Flamingo Incident"[67] is no longer available.

The United States and Trafficking in Persons

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is a federal statute passed into law in 2000 by the US Congress and signed by President Bill Clinton, which has been enhanced with amendments on a number of occasions.[68] It requires for the US Department of State to report to Congress annually on worldwide trafficking in persons.

The annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP report) —and many earlier reports—has consistently ranked The Bahamas as a Tier 1 country that "fully meets the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking." Tier 1 is issued to select countries, a list of only 33 in the 2024 TIP report. Yet, both the 2024 and 2023 reports acknowledged that the Government of the Bahamas had agreements for Cuban workers to work in The Bahamas and that "Cuban medical professionals may have been forced to work by the Cuban government."[69]

Two "deserters" from Cuba's missions to The Bahamas have told Cuba Archive that they provided detailed accounts in person to officials at the US Embassy in Nassau of the abuses they endured and

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[64] Larry Smith, "Tough call: The story of HMBS Flamingo," *The Tribune*, May 15, 2013, "The jets roar in," *Time*, May. 26, 1980, p. 15. Graham Hovey, "Cuba Apologizes for MIG Buzzing," The *New York Times*, May 17, 1980. Rafael del Pino, Proa a la Libertad, 1990, pp.266-267. Alex Larzelere, The 1980 Cuban Boatlift: Castro's Ploy – America's Dilemma, National Defense University Press, 1988, p. 163. Maria Werlau (Cuba Archive), Conversation with Bahamas Ambassador to the U.S., Joshua Sears, Washington, DC, September 10, 2003. See CubaArchive.org/database for records of each of the four sailors, search for the individual names: Fenrick Sturrup, Austin Smith, David Tucker, and Edward Williams.

[65] https://www.bahamas.com/plan-your-trip/things-to-do/garden-of-remembrance-and-cenotaph

[66] Flamingo Memorial Ceremony, Royal Bahamas Defence Force, https://rbdf.gov.bs/flamingo-memorial-ceremony/

[67] This page, http://rbdf.gov.bs/the-flamingo-incident/#!, had been accessed by Cuba Archive in years past. No similar pages can be found for the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

[68] "Human trafficking, Key Legislation," United States Department of Justice, https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking/key-legislation.

[69] 2024 US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report, Bahamas, https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-trafficking-in-persons-report/bahamas/; 2023 US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report, Bahamas, https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bahamas

the forced confiscation of most of their salary by Cuban government authorities. Both requested political asylum in the US —individually, years apart— but were denied. At least those two testimonies are available to US officials to look into the trafficking; it is highly likely that there have been more.[70]

As the Bahamian government has been allocating at least around $13 million a year to subsidize Cuba with the export worker scheme, the US has awarded The Bahamas many millions of dollars in disaster relief, humanitarian aid, economic development, health and environmental support, and myriad exchanges and collaborations.[71] In 2023 alone, it provided at least $3.7 million, and in 2019, nearly $25.8 million after Hurricane Dorian, while also supporting an Inter-American Development Bank $100 million contingency loan to assist with humanitarian and reconstruction efforts.[72]

Conclusion

The Bahamas' bilateral agreements with Cuba lack transparency and accountability; they allow for foreign "health professionals" with unconfirmed credentials to work in the public health system, subjecting Bahamian citizens to potential harm, and appear to be depriving them of desirable employment as well as costing unjustified large amounts of money. Furthermore, they violate the rights of Cuban workers and basic standards of international law while subsidizing a dictatorship and exporting scarce human resources, negatively impacting Cuba's citizens.

The Bahamas' elected representatives and civil society ought to examine the evidence in this report and review copies of all agreements, annexes, memoranda, associated documents, work permits, expense reports, and receipts related to the Cuban missions, proceeding to demand appropriate measures. Cuban workers of the Bahamian medical and educational missions should be interviewed by Bahamian authorities in the presence of international observers —such as reputable experts in trafficking in persons and from the Interamerican Commission of Human Rights— guaranteed their present jobs and residence or political asylum; they should be required to tell the truth or face possible judicial consequences, as per the laws of The Bahamas.

If any current or future Cuban workers are indeed needed in The Bahamas, they should be hired directly and competitively, paid transparently in equal terms with other workers in similar positions, and treated in accordance to Bahamian laws and international law.

The international community has been mostly silent and even complicit regarding Cuba's business of modern slavery. The US government stands out in denouncing the trafficking of Cuba's export workers, however, it ought to take more effective action in accordance with the TPVA's call for sanctions. The classification for The Bahamas' in the annual TIP report should accurately reflect its

[70] Testimony of Anonymous Source #2, op. cit.

[71] "US Relations with The Bahamas," Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S, Department of State, Jul. 10, 2023.

[72] US Foreign Assistance: Bahamas, https://www.foreignassistance.gov/cd/bahamas/; "Bahamas: Response to Hurricane Dorian," Congressional Research Service, Updated Oct. 1, 2019 "Hurricane Dorian: IDB provides $100 million in emergency funding line to The Bahamas," Interamerican Development Bank, Sep. 6, 2019.

government's participation in the trafficking, and complicit Bahamian and Cuban should be sanctioned with visa restrictions —in line with Secretary Marco Rubio's announcement of an expanded policy—[73] and aid to The Bahamas should be conditioned to ceasing the trafficking.

Author: Maria C. Werlau, Executive Director of Cuba Archive

**Cuba Archive has published numerous reports on Cuba's medical brigades and the trafficking in persons/forced labor of Cuba's export workers. See the Cuba Salud project at CubaArchive.org or CubaSalud.org, pages in English and Spanish.*

www.CubaArchive.org
Free Society Project, Inc.

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[73] Marco Rubio, Secretary of State, "Expansion of visa restrictions policy for individuals exploiting Cuban labor," Press Statement, U.S. Department of State, Feb. 25, 2025.