

Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

[Public Law 104–114]

[This law has not been amended]

【Currency: This publication is a compilation of the text of Public Law 104–114. It was last amended by the public law listed in the As Amended Through note above and below at the bottom of each page of the pdf version and reflects current law through the date of the enactment of the public law listed at <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/comps/>】

【Note: While this publication does not represent an official version of any Federal statute, substantial efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of its contents. The official version of Federal law is found in the United States Statutes at Large and in the United States Code. The legal effect to be given to the Statutes at Large and the United States Code is established by statute (1 U.S.C. 112, 204).】

AN ACT To seek international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba, to plan for support of a transition government leading to a democratically elected government in Cuba, and for other purposes.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the
United States of America in Congress assembled,*

* * * * *

SEC. 4. [22 U.S.C. 6023] DEFINITIONS.

As used in this Act, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) AGENCY OR INSTRUMENTALITY OF A FOREIGN STATE.—
The term “agency or instrumentality of a foreign state” has the meaning given that term in section 1603(b) of title 28, United States Code.

(2) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES.— The term “appropriate congressional committees” means the Committee on International Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate.

(3) COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY.—The term “commercial activity” has the meaning given that term in section 1603(d) of title 28, United States Code.

(4) CONFISCATED.—As used in titles I and 111, the term “confiscated” refers to—

(A) the nationalization, expropriation, or other seizure by the Cuban Government of ownership or control of property, on or after January 1, 1959—

(i) without the property having been returned or adequate and effective compensation provided; or

(ii) without the claim to the property having been settled pursuant to an international claims settlement agreement or other mutually accepted settlement procedure; and

(B) the repudiation by the Cuban Government of, the default by the Cuban Government on, or the failure of the Cuban Government to pay, on or after January 1, 1959—

(i) a debt of any enterprise which has been nationalized, expropriated, or otherwise taken by the Cuban Government;

(ii) a debt which is a charge on property nationalized, expropriated, or otherwise taken by the Cuban Government; or

(iii) a debt which was incurred by the Cuban Government in satisfaction or settlement of a confiscated property claim.

(5) CUBAN GOVERNMENT.—(A) The term “Cuban Government” includes the government of any political subdivision of Cuba, and any agency or instrumentality of the Government of Cuba.

(B) For purposes of subparagraph (A), the term “agency or instrumentality of the Government of Cuba” means an agency or instrumentality of a foreign state as defined in section 1603(b) of title 28, United States Code, with each reference in such section to “a foreign state” deemed to be a reference to “Cuba”.

(6) DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT IN CUBA.—The term “democratically elected government in Cuba” means a government determined by the President to have met the requirements of section 206.

(7) ECONOMIC EMBARGO OF CUBA.—The term “economic embargo of Cuba” refers to—

(A) the economic embargo (including all restrictions on trade or transactions with, and travel to or from, Cuba, and all restrictions on transactions in property in which Cuba or nationals of Cuba have an interest) that was imposed against Cuba pursuant to section 620(a) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 U.S.C. 2370(a)), section 5(b) of the Trading with the Enemy Act (50 U.S.C. App. 5(b)), the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (22 U.S.C. 6001 and following), or any other provision of law; and

(B) the restrictions imposed by section 902(c) of the Food Security Act of 1985.

(8) FOREIGN NATIONAL.—The term “foreign national” means—

(A) an alien; or

(B) any corporation, trust, partnership, or other juridical entity not organized under the laws of the United States, or of any State, the District of Columbia, or any commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States.

(9) KNOWINGLY.—The term “knowingly” means with knowledge or having reason to know.

(10) OFFICIAL OF THE CUBAN GOVERNMENT OR THE RULING POLITICAL PARTY IN CUBA.—The term “official of the Cuban Government or the ruling political party in Cuba” refers to any member of the Council of Ministers, Council of State, central committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, or the Politburo of Cuba, or their equivalents.

(11) PERSON.—The term “person” means any person or entity, including any agency or instrumentality of a foreign state.

(12) PROPERTY.—(A) The term “property” means any property (including patents, copyrights, trademarks, and any other form of intellectual property), whether real, personal, or mixed, and any present, future, or contingent right, security, or other interest therein, including any leasehold interest.

(B) For purposes of title I11 of this Act, the term “property” does not include real property used for residential purposes unless, as of the date of the enactment of this Act—

(i) the claim to the property is held by a United States national and the claim has been certified under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949; or

(ii) the property is occupied by an official of the Cuban Government or the ruling political party in Cuba.

(13) TRAFFICS.—(A) As used in title 111, and except as provided in subparagraph (B), a person “traffics” in confiscated property if that person knowingly and intentionally—

(i) sells, transfers, distributes, dispenses, brokers, manages, or otherwise disposes of confiscated property, or purchases, leases, receives, possesses, obtains control of, manages, uses, or otherwise acquires or holds an interest in confiscated property,

(ii) engages in a commercial activity using or otherwise benefiting from confiscated property, or

(iii) causes, directs, participates in, or profits from, trafficking (as described in clause (i) or (ii)) by another person, or otherwise engages in trafficking (as described in clause (i) or (ii)) through another person, without the authorization of any United States national who holds a claim to the property.

(B) The term “traffics” does not include—

(i) the delivery of international telecommunication signals to Cuba;

(ii) the trading or holding of securities publicly traded or held, unless the trading is with or by a person determined by the Secretary of the Treasury to be a specially designated national;

(iii) transactions and uses of property incident to lawful travel to Cuba, to the extent that such transactions and uses of property are necessary to the conduct of such travel; or

(iv) transactions and uses of property by a person who is both a citizen of Cuba and a resident of Cuba, and who is not an official of the Cuban Government or the ruling political party in Cuba.

(14) TRANSITION GOVERNMENT IN CUBA.—The term “transition government in Cuba” means a government that the Presi-

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dent determines is a transition government consistent with the requirements and factors set forth in section 205.

(15) UNITED STATES NATIONAL.—The term “United States national” means—

(A) any United States citizen; or

(B) any other legal entity which is organized under the laws of the United States, or of any State, the District of Columbia, or any commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States, and which has its principal place of business in the United States.

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TITLE III—PROTECTION OF PROPERTY RIGHTS OF UNITED STATES NATIONALS

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SEC. 302. [22 U.S.C. 6082] LIABILITY FOR TRAFFICKING IN CONFISCATED PROPERTY CLAIMED BY UNITED STATES NATIONALS.

(a) CIVIL REMEDY.—

(1) LIABILITY FOR TRAFFICKING.—(A) Except as otherwise provided in this section, any person that, after the end of the 3-month period beginning on the effective date of this title, traffics in property which was confiscated by the Cuban Government on or after January 1, 1959, shall be liable to any United States national who owns the claim to such property for money damages in an amount equal to the sum of—

(i) the amount which is the greater of—

(I) the amount, if any, certified to the claimant by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission under the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949, plus interest;

(II) the amount determined under section 303(a)(2), plus interest; or

(III) the fair market value of that property, calculated as being either the current value of the property, or the value of the property when confiscated plus interest, whichever is greater; and

(ii) court costs and reasonable attorneys’ fees.

(B) Interest under subparagraph (A)(i) shall be at the rate set forth in section 1961 of title 28, United States Code, computed by the court from the date of confiscation of the property involved to the date on which the action is brought under this subsection.

(2) PRESUMPTION IN FAVOR OF THE CERTIFIED CLAIMS.—There shall be a presumption that the amount for which a person is liable under clause (i) of paragraph (1)(A) is the amount that is certified as described in subclause (I) of that clause. The presumption shall be rebuttable by clear and convincing evidence that the amount described in subclause (II) or (III) of that clause is the appropriate amount of liability under that clause.

(3) INCREASED LIABILITY.—(A) Any person that traffics in confiscated property for which liability is incurred under paragraph (1) shall, if a United States national owns a claim with respect to that property which was certified by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949, be liable for damages computed in accordance with subparagraph (C).

(B) If the claimant in an action under this subsection (other than a United States national to whom subparagraph (A) applies) provides, after the end of the 3-month period described in paragraph (1) notice to—

(i) a person against whom the action is to be initiated,

or

(ii) a person who is to be joined as a defendant in the action, at least 30 days before initiating the action or joining such person as a defendant, as the case may be, and that person, after the end of the 30-day period beginning on the date the notice is provided, traffics in the confiscated property that is the subject of the action, then that person shall be liable to that claimant for damages computed in accordance with subparagraph (C).

(C) Damages for which a person is liable under subparagraph (A) or subparagraph (B) are money damages in an amount equal to the sum of—

(i) the amount determined under paragraph (1)(A)(ii),

and

(ii) 3 times the amount determined applicable under paragraph (1)(A)(i).

(D) Notice to a person under subparagraph (B)—

(i) shall be in writing;

(ii) shall be posted by certified mail or personally delivered to the person; and

(iii) shall contain—

(I) a statement of intention to commence the action under this section or to join the person as a defendant (as the case may be), together with the reasons therefor;

(II) a demand that the unlawful trafficking in the claimant's property cease immediately; and

(III) a copy of the summary statement published under paragraph (8).

(4) APPLICABILITY.—(A) Except as otherwise provided in this paragraph, actions may be brought under paragraph (1) with respect to property confiscated before, on, or after the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) In the case of property confiscated before the date of the enactment of this Act, a United States national may not bring an action under this section on a claim to the confiscated property unless such national acquires ownership of the claim before such date of enactment.

(C) In the case of property confiscated on or after the date of the enactment of this Act, a United States national who, after the property is confiscated, acquires ownership of a claim

to the property by assignment for value, may not bring an action on the claim under this section.

(5) TREATMENT OF CERTAIN ACTIONS.—(A) In the case of a United States national who was eligible to file a claim with the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949 but did not so file the claim, that United States national may not bring an action on that claim under this section.

(B) In the case of any action brought under this section by a United States national whose underlying claim in the action was timely filed with the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949 but was denied by the Commission, the court shall accept the findings of the Commission on the claim as conclusive in the action under this section.

(C) A United States national, other than a United States national bringing an action under this section on a claim certified under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949, may not bring an action on a claim under this section before the end of the 2-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(D) An interest in property for which a United States national has a claim certified under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949 may not be the subject of a claim in an action under this section by any other person. Any person bringing an action under this section whose claim has not been so certified shall have the burden of establishing for the court that the interest in property that is the subject of the claim is not the subject of a claim so certified.

(6) INAPPLICABILITY OF ACT OF STATE DOCTRINE.—No court of the United States shall decline, based upon the act of state doctrine, to make a determination on the merits in an action brought under paragraph (1).

(7) LICENSES NOT REQUIRED.—(A) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an action under this section may be brought and may be settled, and a judgment rendered in such action may be enforced, without obtaining any license or other permission from any agency of the United States, except that this paragraph shall not apply to the execution of a judgment against, or the settlement of actions involving, property blocked under the authorities of section 5(b) of the Trading with the Enemy Act that were being exercised on July 1, 1977, as a result of a national emergency declared by the President before such date, and are being exercised on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(B) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, and for purposes of this title only, any claim against the Cuban Government shall not be deemed to be an interest in property the transfer of which to a United States national required before the enactment of this Act, or requires after the enactment of this Act, a license issued by, or the permission of, any agency of the United States.

(8) PUBLICATION BY ATTORNEY GENERAL.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Attor-

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ney General shall prepare and publish in the Federal Register a concise summary of the provisions of this title, including a statement of the liability under this title of a person trafficking in confiscated property, and the remedies available to United States nationals under this title.

(b) AMOUNT IN CONTROVERSY.—An action may be brought under this section by a United States national only where the amount in controversy exceeds the sum or value of \$50,000, exclusive of interest, costs, and attorneys' fees. In calculating \$50,000 for purposes of the preceding sentence, the applicable amount under subclause (I), (II), or (111) of subsection (a)(1)(A)(i) may not be tripled as provided in subsection (a)(3).

(c) PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided in this title, the provisions of title 28, United States Code, and the rules of the courts of the United States apply to actions under this section to the same extent as such provisions and rules apply to any other action brought under section 1331 of title 28, United States Code.

(2) SERVICE OF PROCESS.—In an action under this section, service of process on an agency or instrumentality of a foreign state in the conduct of a commercial activity, or against individuals acting under color of law, shall be made in accordance with section 1608 of title 28, United States Code.

(d) ENFORCEABILITY OF JUDGMENTS AGAINST CUBAN GOVERNMENT.—In an action brought under this section, any judgment against an agency or instrumentality of the Cuban Government shall not be enforceable against an agency or instrumentality of either a transition government in Cuba or a democratically elected government in Cuba.

(e) CERTAIN PROPERTY IMMUNE FROM EXECUTION.—[Omitted—Amends another Act]

(f) ELECTION OF REMEDIES.—

(1) ELECTION.—Subject to paragraph (2)—

(A) any United States national that brings an action under this section may not bring any other civil action or proceeding under the common law, Federal law, or the law of any of the several States, the District of Columbia, or any commonwealth, territory, or possession of the United States, that seeks monetary or nonmonetary compensation by reason of the same subject matter; and

(B) any person who brings, under the common law or any provision of law other than this section, a civil action or proceeding for monetary or nonmonetary compensation arising out of a claim for which an action would otherwise be cognizable under this section may not bring an action under this section on that claim.

(2) TREATMENT OF CERTIFIED CLAIMANTS.—(A) In the case of any United States national that brings an action under this section based on a claim certified under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949—

(i) if the recovery in the action is equal to or greater than the amount of the certified claim, the United States national may not receive payment on the claim under any

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agreement entered into between the United States and Cuba settling claims covered by such title, and such national shall be deemed to have discharged the United States from any further responsibility to represent the United States national with respect to that claim;

(ii) if the recovery in the action is less than the amount of the certified claim, the United States national may receive payment under a claims agreement described in clause (i) but only to the extent of the difference between the amount of the recovery and the amount of the certified claim; and

(iii) if there is no recovery in the action, the United States national may receive payment on the certified claim under a claims agreement described in clause (i) to the same extent as any certified claimant who does not bring an action under this section.

(B) In the event some or all actions brought under this section are consolidated by judicial or other action in such manner as to create a pool of assets available to satisfy the claims in such actions, including a pool of assets in a proceeding in bankruptcy, every claimant whose claim in an action so consolidated was certified by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949 shall be entitled to payment in full of its claim from the assets in such pool before any payment is made from the assets in such pool with respect to any claim not so certified.

(g) DEPOSIT OF EXCESS PAYMENTS BY CUBA UNDER CLAIMS AGREEMENT.—Any amounts paid by Cuba under any agreement entered into between the United States and Cuba settling certified claims under title V of the International Claims Settlement Act of 1949 that are in excess of the payments made on such certified claims after the application of subsection (f) shall be deposited into the United States Treasury.

(h) TERMINATION OF RIGHTS.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—All rights created under this section to bring an action for money damages with respect to property confiscated by the Cuban Government—

(A) may be suspended under section 204(a); and

(B) shall cease upon transmittal to the Congress of a determination of the President under section 203(c)(3) that a democratically elected government in Cuba is in power.

(2) PENDING SUITS.—The suspension or termination of rights under paragraph (1) shall not affect suits commenced before the date of such suspension or termination (as the case may be), and in all such suits, proceedings shall be had, appeals taken, and judgments rendered in the same manner and with the same effect as if the suspension or termination had not occurred.

(i) IMPOSITION OF FILING FEES.—The Judicial Conference of the United States shall establish a uniform fee that shall be imposed upon the plaintiff or plaintiffs in each action brought under this section. The fee should be established at a level sufficient to recover the costs to the courts of actions brought under this section.

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The fee under this subsection is in addition to any other fees imposed under title 28, United States Code.

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SEC. 305. [22 U.S.C. 6084] LIMITATION OF ACTIONS.

An action under section 302 may not be brought more than 2 years after the trafficking giving rise to the action has ceased to occur.

SEC. 306. [22 U.S.C. 6085] EFFECTIVE DATE.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subject to subsections (b) and (c), this title and the amendments made by this title shall take effect on August 1, 1996.

(b) **SUSPENSION AUTHORITY.**—

(1) **SUSPENSION AUTHORITY.**—The President may suspend the effective date under subsection (a) for a period of not more than 6 months if the President determines and reports in writing to the appropriate congressional committees at least 15 days before such effective date that the suspension is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

(2) **ADDITIONAL SUSPENSIONS.**—The President may suspend the effective date under subsection (a) for additional periods of not more than 6 months each, each of which shall begin on the day after the last day of the period during which a suspension is in effect under this subsection, if the President determines and reports in writing to the appropriate congressional committees at least 15 days before the date on which the additional suspension is to begin that the suspension is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

(c) **OTHER AUTHORITIES.**—

(1) **SUSPENSION.**—After this title and the amendments of this title have taken effect—

(A) no person shall acquire a property interest in any potential or pending action under this title; and

(B) the President may suspend the right to bring an action under this title with respect to confiscated property for a period of not more than 6 months if the President determines and reports in writing to the appropriate congressional committees at least 15 days before the suspension takes effect that such suspension is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

(2) **ADDITIONAL SUSPENSIONS.**—The President may suspend the right to bring an action under this title for additional periods of not more than 6 months each, each of which shall begin on the day after the last day of the period during which a suspension is in effect under this subsection, if the President determines and reports in writing to the appropriate congressional committees at least 15 days before the date on which the additional suspension is to begin that the suspension is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

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(3) PENDING SUITS.—The suspensions of actions under paragraph (1) shall not affect suits commenced before the date of such suspension, and in all such suits, proceedings shall be had, appeals taken, and judgments rendered in the same manner and with the same effect as if the suspension had not occurred.

(d) RESCISSION OF SUSPENSION.—The President may rescind any suspension made under subsection (b) or (c) upon reporting to the appropriate congressional committees that doing so will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

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