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# US, Cuban Interior Ministry sign law-enforcement deal

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HAVANA (AP) — The Obama administration and Cuba's Interior Ministry have agreed to share information on international criminal activity such as terrorism, human trafficking and money laundering despite Republican objections to U.S. law-enforcement cooperation with President Raul Castro's government.

The State Department signed the memorandum of understanding Monday with the Cuban Interior Ministry, which is responsible for internal security in Cuba, including crackdowns on political dissidents. The signing in Havana was closed to the press but the State Department said it was witnessed by President Barack Obama's point man on normalization with Cuba, Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes.

In the wake of Donald Trump's presidential election victory, the Cuban government has launched a last-minute rush of deals with the Obama administration and U.S. businesses in an attempt to build as much momentum as possible behind normalization before Obama leaves office. Trump has promised to re-evaluate Obama's agreements with Cuba and

cancel those that he doesn't believe serve U.S. interests.

Trump has named several anti-Castro Cuban-Americans to his transition team. While they have not spoken publicly since joining the transition, Obama's pledge to share intelligence with Cuban state security has generated particularly heated criticism from Republican former diplomats and Cuban-American members of Congress.

The memorandum signed Monday commits the U.S. and Cuba to sharing information, carrying out joint investigations and possibly stationing law-enforcement officials in each other's countries. It was signed by Jeffrey DeLaurentis, chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, and Vice Adm. Julio Cesar Gandarilla, the newly appointed Cuban interior minister.

The Obama administration says it is in both countries' interests to fight international crime like human smuggling, drug trafficking and child sexual abuse.

"The goals of the President's Cuba policy have been simple: to help the Cuban people achieve a better future for themselves and to advance the interests of the United States," the National Security Council said in a written statement. "While significant differences between our governments continue, the progress of the last two years reminds the world of what is possible when we are defined not by the past but by the future we can build together."

On Thursday, the Obama administration ended a year of negotiations with the Cuban government by ending a 21-year-old "wet foot, dry foot" immigration policy that allowed any Cuban who made it to U.S. soil to stay and become a legal resident.

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