

Posted by Joan Russow

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US Trying to Salvage Summit by Removing Cuba from Terror List, CEPR Co-Director Says

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Contact: Dan Beeton, [202-239-1460](tel:202-239-1460)

Washington, D.C.- The Obama administration is attempting to “salvage the Summit of the Americas” and avert another summit disaster by removing Cuba from its list of “state sponsors of terrorism,” Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR) Co-Director

[Mark Weisbrot](#)

said today. This latest sign of a softening of U.S. policy toward Cuba “falls far short” of the change in relations that had been a U.S. goal before the summit: the reopening of embassies.

Obama’s announcement

[is expected](#)

to come as early as tomorrow

“The Obama administration is hoping to avert [another disastrous summit](#) like in Cartagena, or Bush’s 2005 summit in Mar del Plata, by announcing this widely anticipated move,” Weisbrot said. “It’s pretty minimal, though, withdrawing one insult that everyone saw as ridiculous to begin with.”

In recent days, the Obama administration has also attempted to walk back its [March 9 designation](#)

that Venezuela represents an “unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and foreign policy of the United States” in order to enact recent sanctions against Venezuelan officials. Deputy national security advisor Ben Rhodes

[explained](#)

“the United States does not believe that Venezuela poses some threat to our national security” in an April 7 press briefing, and President Obama

[told the EFE news agency](#)

, “We do not believe that Venezuela poses a threat to the United States, nor does the United States threaten the Venezuelan government.”

“What does it mean for the rule of law in the United States that the U.S. declares a ‘national emergency,’ and names Venezuela as ‘an extraordinary threat to U.S. national security,’ in

Obama Administration Downgrades Supposed Threats Posed by Cuba, Venezuela Ahead of Summit of the Americas

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order to enact sanctions and then the president says that no, actually, ‘we didn’t mean that?’” Weisbrot asked. “They made these declarations because they are required under U.S. law when imposing unilateral sanctions of this type. And the requirement is there for a reason: so that our government does not violate international laws and norms by imposing sanctions when there is no legitimate threat to the United States. These sanctions violate Article 19 and 20 of the OAS charter, and here is the U.S. government lecturing others about the rule of law.

“The Obama administration is clearly feeling pressure from the rest of the region, which has almost unanimously rejected the sanctions and the threatening rhetoric.

“These overtures to Cuba and Venezuela are not going to change anyone’s mind about Washington’s attitude toward the region,” Weisbrot said. “It’s like a half-hearted non-apology from the neighborhood bully after everyone has joined together and stood up to him.”

Both [UNASUR](#) (the Union of South American Nations) and [CELAC](#) (the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which includes all countries in the hemisphere except the United States and Canada), issued statements before the summit calling on President Obama to rescind the executive order imposing sanctions against Venezuela.

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