

**STATEMENT BY
Todd J. Brown
Department of State
Assistant Director, International Programs Directorate,
Bureau of Diplomatic Security**

**BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WESTERN HEMISPHERE, TRANSNATIONAL
CRIME, CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND
GLOBAL WOMEN'S ISSUES**

January 9, 2018

Good morning Chairman Rubio, Ranking Member Menendez, and other distinguished members of the Committee.

Thank you for your invitation to appear today to discuss the health attacks involving U.S. diplomatic personnel and their families in Havana. Along with my colleagues, I share your concerns regarding the safety and security of our personnel in Cuba, and welcome any discussion that may lead to a better understanding of this issue and stronger safeguards for our employees.

From a security and investigative standpoint, we continue to work with Embassy Havana to aggressively counter, mitigate, and better understand who and what are causing injuries to our diplomatic staff. Unfortunately, this remains a perplexing case.

Our Regional Security Officer at Embassy Havana first became aware of potential health attacks involving Embassy personnel in late December 2016. In the early stages of trying to understand what may have been occurring, Post leadership and supporting offices in Washington believed it was likely a form of harassment by forces hostile to the United States and our presence in Cuba.

As more incidents were reported in early 2017 and greater awareness of the seriousness of symptoms became known, our level of concern and mitigation efforts rose exponentially. After senior level meetings with Cuban officials in

February outlining Cuba's responsibility to protect diplomats under the Vienna Convention, the Regional Security Officer received confirmation from Cuban counterparts that the Cuban government was conducting its own investigation into the matter.

Senior U.S. officials on Embassy Havana's Emergency Action Committee met frequently as part of our ongoing attempt to better understand the nature of the apparent attack and protect staff. Among other things, the Embassy deployed recording devices in staff residences in an effort to better identify or capture the possible source behind the threat, as many victims had associated the attacks with an acoustic event.

After further investigative attempts and expert analysis failed to identify the cause or perpetrator, the Federal Bureau of Investigation opened a case in early May. An FBI team has since visited Havana several times and met with Cuban officials. The FBI's investigation has interviewed victims and conducted surveys of the residences and hotel rooms. However, the investigation remains ongoing and we would refer all specific questions concerning the investigation to the FBI.

Thank you. I will be glad to answer any questions you may have.