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Pope Francis meets with Cuban bishops during their 2017 "ad limina" visit to the Vatican. The bishops of Cuba have postponed their planned "ad limina" visit to Rome Feb. 16-20, after government authorities announced that airlines could no longer refuel due to U.S. tariff threats against countries supplying oil to the island nation. (CNS/L'Osservatore Romano)

Junno Arocho Esteves

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The bishops of Cuba have postponed their planned *ad limina* visit to Rome after government authorities announced that airlines could no longer refuel due to U.S. tariff threats against countries supplying oil to the island nation.

According to the Spanish news agency EFE, Vatican sources said the bishops would be unable to travel to Rome for the visit, scheduled for Feb. 16-20, "because current conditions do not allow it."

Catholic bishops are required to fulfill an *ad limina apostolorum* ("to the threshold of the apostles") to pray before the tombs of Sts. Peter and Paul and report on the

state of their dioceses to the pope. Canon law recommends *ad limina* visits take place every five years, but the visits usually take place every seven to 10 years, given the number of bishops around the world and the pope's busy schedule.

The last *ad limina* visit by the Cuban bishops was in May 2017, nearly nine years ago.

Several news sites reported that the bishops announced the postponement Feb. 8.

U.S. President Donald Trump issued an executive order Jan. 29 stating that the Cuban government's policies posed "an unusual and extraordinary threat" to the United States and threatened to levy tariffs against any country "that directly or indirectly sells or otherwise provides any oil to Cuba."

Following the Trump administration's directive, the Cuban bishops published a message Jan. 31 warning that the "elimination of all possibility of oil entering the country raises alarm bells, especially for the most vulnerable."

Citing St. John Paul II, the bishops said that "Cuban people cannot be deprived of ties with other peoples" especially when "isolation indiscriminately affects the population, increasing the difficulties of the weakest in basic areas such as food, health, or education."

After the release of the bishops' message, Pope Leo XIV said he was troubled by the news "regarding an increase in tensions between Cuba and the United States of America, two neighboring countries."

"I echo the message of the Cuban bishops, inviting all responsible parties to promote a sincere and effective dialogue, in order to avoid violence and every action that could increase the suffering of the dear Cuban people," Leo said during his Sunday Angelus address Feb. 1.

In a brief Feb. 12 statement, the Cuban bishops' conference cited "the worsening socio-economic situation in the country, which is causing so much instability and uncertainty" as the reason to postpone the visit.

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