

Cuba Chooses a New President

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

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stephenlendman.org

([Home - Stephen Lendman](#)).

Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

At age-86, Raul Castro is stepping down as Cuba's leader, serving as its president since February 2008.

Meeting on Wednesday, Cuba's National Assembly reportedly is poised to choose Miguel Mario Diaz-Canel Bermudez as Castro's successor – an official announcement not expected until Thursday.

Diaz-Canel was the only name proposed to assume the nation's top post as State Council chairman (president of the state).

National Assembly President since 2013, Esteban Lazo Hernandez will continue as parliament speaker.

Diaz-Canel will be age-58 on April 20. Since 2013, he served as First Vice President of the Council of State and Council of Ministers, Cuba's top position after its leadership.

He's been a Communist Party of Cuba Politburo member since 2003, from 2009 – 2013 serving as Minister of Higher Education.

An electronics engineer by training, he earlier served in the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces – in the 1980s, teaching at his Central University of Las Villas alma mater.

In 1993, he became politically active, the following year elected Villa Carta Province Provincial Party Committee First Secretary.

He's the first political figure other than Fidel and Raul Castro to lead Cuba since its 1959 revolution.

In February 2013, Raul said his just begun five-year term as Cuban president, ending in 2018, would be his last.

At the time, Diaz-Canel was seen as his likely successor, Castro selecting him as his top vice president, making him Cuba's likely leader when Raul stepped down, saying at the time:

Diaz-Canel's appointment as first in the line of succession "represent(ed) a definitive step in

the configuration of the future leadership of the nation," a moment of "historic transcendence."

Aged-86 at the time, Fidel was present for the announcement, making a rare public appearance since stepping down as Cuba's longtime leader because of his near-fatal illness.

He survived, recovered, passing away on November 25, 2016 at age-90.

Diaz-Canel is seen as a competent official, loyal to the system Fidel established. He appeared often on Cuban television, playing an increasingly important role in political affairs.

Older generation freedom-fighters greatly aged or passed. Diaz-Canel's ascension to power likely represents a combination of revolutionary continuity with changes he'll pursue.

It'll be a while to see the course he intends to follow.

Cuba's National Assembly asked for social media comments under #SomosContinuidad (We are continuity).

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Stephen Lendman is a Research Associate of the CRG, Correspondent of Global Research based in Chicago.

VISIT MY NEW WEB SITE: stephenlendman.org (*Home - Stephen Lendman*). Contact at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net.

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About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine:

US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

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