

Change of power in Cuba

On February 24, the newly elected Cuban parliament *Asemblea Nacional de Cuba* convened for the first time.

Its 614 member elected a new President of the State and the Council of State. As widely expected, Raùl Castro was named the new president of the Council of the State.

This decision did not constitute a surprise, given the previous announcement of Fidel Castro from February 19, where he declared that he will not pose as a candidate or accept the position of the President of the Council of the State.

The new Council of State may indicate a further direction in which Cuba will be moving. The election of other members has a pretty clear message.

The first Vice-President of the Council Jose Ramon Machado Ventura belongs to the hard line and his role will probably strengthen the orthodox party factions.

Among the rest of the Council, there were few surprises – most of the members were renovated, and the youngest member, Carlos Lage, is 56 years old.

The expected change in the future course of Cuba seems to be averted, at least for the moment. The first discourse of the new president did not give much room for the reform of political system, and while he admitted a number of economic problems that lie ahead of Cuba, he stressed that they will all happen within the framework of the existing communist system.

Sources:

Miami Herald, EFE, ABC, Cubanet