

Cuba denounces 'subversive' US texting program

April 6 2014

Cuba on Sunday slammed a "subversive" US texting application which, like a Twitter-like program Washington launched here, Havana said aims to foment political unrest.

"Piramideo," the latest program to be denounced, "encourages the creation of a network of 'friends'" state-run newspaper Juventud Rebelde said.

Piramideo users can send one SMS to message all members of their "pyramid" or friend network, said Hilda Arias, director of mobile telephone services for state-run telecommunications firm Etecsa.

But she told the newspaper that the real aim of Piramideo was to "create a sort of communication channel" between opposition groups and dissidents.

The article follows the disclosure last week of a US-created Twitter-style application—Zunzuneo—which Cuba claims was introduced here to undermine the government.

Havana denounced the US micro-messaging app as "illegal and covert."

Arias said the US Agency for International Development (USAID) "plans to give \$4.3 million to various companies to encourage creation of underground networks."

On Thursday, the White House acknowledged the existence of "Zunzuneo" which was also set up by USAID, but denied that the program was secret or intended to incite political unrest against the island's leaders.

White House spokesman Jay Carney said the program was a "development assistance" project targeted at Cubans facing government restrictions on information.

Cuba and the United States have not had diplomatic relations since 1961. Washington has maintained an embargo on the communist country since 1962.

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Citation: Cuba denounces 'subversive' US texting program (2014, April 6) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-04-cuba-denounces-subversive-texting.html>

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