MOSCOW (Sputnik) - Nicaragua is a free and independent country that will not accept an agenda imposed on it by the United States, said Congressman and Chairman of the Production, Economy and Budget Committee of the Nicaragua National Assembly (Parliament), Wálmaro Gutiérrez, in an interview with Sputnik.

"Nicaragua is a moral country without knees, (...) it is not a state of the United States of America, we are not another star on the flag of bars and stars of the United States of America," said the also member of the ruling Sandinista National Liberation Front.
Gutierrez insisted that his country is "free, sovereign, independent and self-determined and that it manages its international relations with a lot of respect, with a lot of responsibility, and with a lot of solidarity."

In the congressman’s opinion, precisely these characteristics of Nicaragua represent the reason, why the United States approves new sanctions against it."

"We have been, exercising sovereignty, independence, self-determination for the benefit of the vast majority of the Nicaraguan people and most likely, that is what bothers some sectors of the US Government establishment," he said.

Gutierrez stressed that he considers Nicaragua to be "an exemplary country, a flagship country in the Latin American region."

Thus, he gave as an example that the country's GDP grew "in the last 11 or 12 years, before the phenomena of 2018, by approximately 5.3 percentage points", which was "an economic growth that had not been seen, first, in Nicaragua, in the republican history of our country, and second at the regional level having been one of the highest sustained growths" he highlighted.
The congressman expressed confidence that Nicaragua can reverse, this year, the negative trend in the economy, generated since 2018 especially, in his opinion, by the failed attempted coup of that year, as well as by the pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota in 2020.

"We believe that (...) we will have the possibility of closing [this 2021] with positive economic growth (...) which we evaluate will be between 2.5 and 3.5%, "he said.

The Government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic

Wálmaro Gutiérrez also stated that the significant investment made by the Government of Nicaragua in the development of health infrastructure allowed the Central American country to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic."

"If it were not for the very important investment in health — where we were able to guarantee the construction of 19 new hospitals and health centers of different types in our country — we would not have had the opportunity and the possibility to face (...) COVID-19, this devastating event that has brought even international powers to their knees," he said.

The Sandinista congressman said that "the incidence of deaths and infections in relation to the rest of the countries of the Central
American region — let alone Latin America — has been significantly lower."

Gutierrez stressed that the only way to overcome the pandemic is "through unity, it is through brotherhood, it is through fraternity, it is through reconciliation, through solidarity."

On 13th July, Nicaragua's Ministry of Health raised the death toll from COVID-19 to 193 and the number of confirmed coronavirus infections since the epidemic reached the country to 8,968.

The Nicaraguan government does not resort to confinement practices or restrictions on mass gatherings to combat COVID-19, claiming that such measures only harm the economy.

**U.S. sanctions**

In addition, he added that the sanctions that the United States imposed against a hundred Nicaraguans linked to the Government of the Central American country, are aggressive measures that seek to impose an agenda that Nicaragua will not accept.

"In principle, we reject and condemn any hostile act that a foreign country seeks to impose on another free, sovereign, and independent state, such as the State of the Republic of Nicaragua in this case," the Sandinista congressman commented regarding Washington's recent restrictions.
On Monday the 12th, the U.S. restricted visas for at least 100 members of Nicaragua's National Assembly and the Nicaraguan judicial system, including prosecutors and judges, as well as some of their family members.

According to the US State Department, the people targeted by those sanctions helped the government of Daniel Ortega carry out "attacks on democracy and human rights," including the arrest of 26 political opponents and activists, including six presidential hopefuls.

"We believe that these are obviously aggressive, unjust, disproportionate measures and that far from creating a climate of stability, what it does is weaken a relationship that should be one of cordiality, brotherhood and fraternity among nations," Gutierrez stressed.

The congressman recalled that the US Government has long "imposed aggressions, disguised as sanctions, on different people" in Nicaragua, with the aim of "trying to impose an agenda, to impose a narrative, which we, from no point of view (... ), agree with."

**Responsibility of U.S. agencies for the unrest in Cuba**

He also denounced that the recent demonstrations and unrest in Cuba are the result of the activities of U.S. government agencies aimed at destabilizing democratic states.
"We are facing a very similar scenario, in which U.S. Government agencies channel resources through non-governmental organizations, which (...) become instruments at the internal level, for the destabilization of democratic states," he replied to the question if he considers that the situation in Cuba is part of the US offensive that Nicaragua denounces.

The Sandinista congressman pointed out that "whether in Cuba, Venezuela or here in Nicaragua, these non-governmental organizations have been used under the logic and narrative of supposedly promoting democracy," but in reality what they are doing is leading to "the destabilization of peoples and democratic processes," he said.

"We believe that all the countries of the world, in the same manner in which they have systematically condemned the brutal blockade against Cuba in international forums, such as the United Nations, (...) in the same way, all democratic states and all democratic governments of the world should condemn this type of attack on the lives of the peoples of the world," he stressed.

Gutierrez pointed out the actions that, as he believes it, the US Government is taking to aggravate the social and political situation in Cuba, exhibits its "lack of morality."

Last Sunday in more than 20 localities, mass demonstrations took place, whose participants took to the streets criticizing the Cuban

The Government of Cuba accuses the United States both of causing through its restrictions, the terrible economic situation in which the island finds itself, and also, of being behind what it calls the "social explosion", through financing of opposition groups.