



# CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

## Keeping things in perspective: Cuba and the question of international terrorism

*“For almost 40 years, we have isolated Cuba on the assumption that the tiny island is a center of terrorism in the hemisphere, and year after year we gain new evidence that it is the U.S. that has terrorized Cuba and not the other way around.”—Robert Scheer, The Los Angeles Times, July 14, 1998<sup>1</sup>*

By **Anya K. Landau and Wayne S. Smith**  
November 20, 2001

Since the heinous terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon this past September 11, there has been a concerted effort on the part of hard-line Cuban exiles in Miami and their political allies in Washington to describe Cuba as part of an international terrorist network and to suggest that the United States must act against Castro as part of its response to the September 11 attacks.

It is unfortunate that these groups would try to take advantage of the September 11 tragedy to advance their own narrow anti-Castro agenda, during a time when U.S. foreign policy most requires cooperation with all nations willing to work with us in the struggle against terrorism. A point-by-point response to these allegations is given below.

Moreover, our stand on terrorism must not be selective. Some of the same hard-line exiles who now accuse Cuba of involvement in terrorism have supported—and in some cases still support—Cuban exile terrorism in the U.S. and against Cuba. “Lawless violence and intimidation have been the hallmark of *el exilio* for more than thirty years,” writes Jim Mullin in an April 20, 2000 *Miami New Times* article chronicling Miami’s struggle with exile terrorism. “Of course it goes without saying that the majority of Cuban Americans in Miami do not sanction violence, but its long tradition within the exile community cannot be ignored and cannot simply be wished away.”<sup>2</sup>

The U.S. agenda regarding Cuba needs now more than ever to be constructive and to serve the interests of the American people. The Cold War is over, a fact President Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell have stressed in forging a new relationship with Russia. Cuba is no longer

supporting insurgencies abroad, its weaponry is obsolete and U.S. national security demands that we have reliable intelligence communications with our closest neighbors.

The Cubans are cooperating in drug interdiction and immigration issues and have offered to cooperate in the international effort to eradicate terrorism. Trying to link Castro to international terrorist activities without hard evidence merely detracts from the effort to come to grips with the real threats. Now that the Cuban government has pledged full support for United Nations initiatives to eradicate terrorism, we should engage it, just as we have many other nations with whom we have substantial disagreements.

### **To end terrorism everywhere**

If we truly want to ferret out terrorists anywhere in the world, history demands that we take a look much closer to home.

Militant hard-line exile activities in the late 70s and early 80s caused the FBI to designate Miami the “terrorist capital” of the United States. The terrorist activities in Miami included death threats, beatings, mob attacks, vandalism, extortion, bombings and outright murder. These activities are well documented by the Justice Department and the Miami-Dade police department.<sup>3</sup>

In a “Frontline” interview on February 8 of this year, Miami-based Francisco Aruca, founder of Marazul Tours and Radio Progreso, himself a Cuban

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exile who opposed the revolution and has been the target of exile terrorism, lamented the stranglehold the extremist segment of Cuban Miami has maintained on the Miami area since the 1960s:

From the moment they started realizing that the federal government was not going to invade Cuba and overthrow the government, they started practicing terrorism in Miami," revealed Aruca in the "Frontline" interview. "In the early 1970s, you are going to find that in a period of less than five years, close to 100 bombs went off in Miami, including at the FBI office. The bombs were placed by Cuban exiles who felt betrayed by the American government. People who were promoting a dialogue with the Cuban government were assassinated. If anything, the path of this segment of the exile community has been a very violent path in Miami.<sup>4</sup>

Though the Dade county police department and the Justice Department have documented many more cases of Cuban exile terrorism over the past forty years (reports by both agencies are referenced at the end of this paper), Mullin's article in the *Miami New Times* chronicled sixty-eight acts of Cuban exile violence in the Miami area alone from 1968-2000, including the bombings of:

- The Continental National Bank, where Bernardo Benes, who was one of seventy-five Cuban exiles who met with Fidel Castro to negotiate the release of 3600 political prisoners in Cuba, was an executive (in 1983);
- the Cuban Museum of Art (in 1988 and again 1990);
- the home of Maria Cristina Herrera, the organizer of a conference on U.S.-Cuba relations (1988- the bomb was discovered in her garage before it went off);
- Marazul Tours, which arranges travel to Cuba (1989 and again in 1996);
- Little Havana's Centro Vasco, prior to the performance of Cuban singer Rosita Fornes (1996);
- the Amnesia nightclub before a performance by Cuban singer Manolín (1999).<sup>5</sup>

The 1980s and 1990s saw bomb threats and explosions that were targeted against businesses that shipped packages to Cuba or arranged travel to Cuba and venues that featured Cuban musicians. Concert attendees were stoned by protestors after the 1999 performance of the Cuban band, Los Van Van. One person was injured and twelve were arrested.<sup>6</sup> During the Elián Gonzalez custody dispute, police

had to rescue a radio show host from Oregon when he was attacked by the crowd outside the home of Elián Gonzalez's Miami relatives. The man displayed a t-shirt that said "Send the boy home," and "A father's rights".<sup>7</sup>

Even the Archdiocese in Miami received threats when its Catholic Services coordinated and supervised humanitarian aid to Cuba after hurricane Lili in 1996.<sup>8</sup>

But the violence has not been limited to Miami; bombings and assassination attempts masterminded by notorious Cuban exile terrorist groups such as Alpha 66 (founded in 1961 and still training in the Everglades), Omega 7 (founded in 1974), The Cuban Nationalist Movement (CNM-founded in 1960), Movimiento Insurreccional de Recuperación Revolucionaria (MIRR-founded in 1959), and Commando of United Revolutionary organizations (CORU-founded in 1976), to name but a few, occurred throughout Latin America and in the U.S.—Miami, New York, New Jersey and Washington, D.C.—as well.<sup>9</sup>

One of the most startling attacks rocked Washington, DC on September 21, 1976. The car bombing on Embassy Row that killed Orlando Letelier, the former Chilean foreign minister who spoke out against the Pinochet regime, and his colleague, Ronni Moffitt, has been called one of the worst acts of state-sponsored terrorism carried out in the United States. The Chilean secret police (DINA) hired

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Cuban exile extremists, known to be sympathetic to the Pinochet government, to assassinate him. Five well-known exile terrorists were indicted: Jose Dionisio Suarez Esquivel (nicknamed 'Charco de Sangre'--Puddle of Blood), Virgilio Paz Romero, Alvin Ross and brothers Guillermo and Ignacio Novo.<sup>10</sup>

Suarez and Paz were fugitives from justice for twelve years until finally apprehended (Paz was featured on the television show "America's Most Wanted"). They both plead guilty to their involvement in the assassination and were sentenced to 12 years in jail and served half of that time.<sup>11</sup> Though U.S. law requires that non-U.S. citizens must be returned to their country of origin after incarceration, the two convicted terrorists were taken into INS custody because there is no deportation agreement with Cuba.

In August, *Miami Herald* columnist Liz Balmaseda noted that the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) had “diligently fought” to get Paz released from INS custody, adding that, “From the outside, it certainly appears like just another incident of terrorist coddling at the foundation. It’s no secret that foundation veterans enjoy alliances with some of the exile community’s most infamous terrorists.”<sup>12</sup>

A CANF spokesman insisted that they did so because trying a harder case could clear the way for easier cases to be won.<sup>13</sup> This is a convoluted explanation, at best, which in no way changes the fact that CANF succeeded in setting free a convicted terrorist.

Over the years, many exile terrorist attacks have also been launched against Cuba. Cuban exiles Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, who are regarded as heroes by extreme right-wing exiles (the City Commission of Miami declared a “Dr. Orlando Bosch Day” in 1983<sup>14</sup>), were charged and imprisoned in Venezuela for the October 6, 1976 bombing of a *Cubana* airliner off Barbados, an act of terrorism that resulted in the loss of 73 lives, many of them innocent young Cubans – including the entire Cuban fencing team.<sup>15</sup>

Two Venezuelans who deplaned after the first leg of the doomed flight, Freddy Lugo and Hernan Ricardo, were arrested by Trinidad police. Ricardo, who worked for Posada’s security agency, admitted that he and Lugo planted the bombs on the plane and that Bosch and Posada had masterminded the attack (It should be noted that when Venezuelan police raided Posada’s office they found a map of Washington, DC which showed Orlando Letelier’s daily route to work).<sup>16</sup>

Prior to the *Cubana* airliner bombing, Bosch was the leader of the Movimiento Insurreccional de Recuperacion Revolucionaria (MIRR), an anti-Castro terrorist organization that was known to conduct assassinations and bombings in the U.S. and abroad.<sup>17</sup> The MIRR also targeted foreign vessels trading with Cuba, and in 1968, Bosch was convicted in the U.S. of firing a bazooka at a Polish freighter docked in the port of Miami. Bosch was also convicted for threats made to the Mexican, British and Spanish heads of state for trading with Cuba.<sup>18</sup>

Bosch was released from an Atlanta prison in 1972, but he violated parole and left the country less than two years later. In November 1974, Venezuelan police linked Bosch to two bombings, arrested him and offered to return him to the United States. In February 1976, Costan Rican police arrested Bosch for plotting to assassinate Henry Kissinger on a visit to that country. Strangely, the U.S. declined both offers to have Bosch, who had violated his parole, extradited.<sup>19</sup>

After he was let go by the Costa Rican police, Bosch organized a meeting near Bonao, the Dominican Republic, in the summer of 1976, which was attended by the most dangerous anti-Castro militants, including Luis Posada, Jose Dionisio Suarez and Ignacio and Guillermo Novo. There, an umbrella group of exile terrorists was formed, the Commando of United Revolutionary organizations (CORU).<sup>20</sup> The Justice Department determined that CORU orchestrated at least sixteen bombings, kidnappings, assassinations and attempted

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assassinations in the United States, the Caribbean, Central and South America and Spain, including the 1976 *Cubana* airliner bombing.<sup>21</sup>

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In 1977 the House Select Committee on Assassinations questioned Bosch (who was by then in a Venezuelan jail for the *Cubana* airliner bombing) because of, as the committee put it, “the intensity and violence of his activities, which have always been widely publicized.”<sup>23</sup>

Bosch told the committee that he and Frank Sturgis, whom the committee identified as a “well-known anti-Castro soldier of fortune,” had cooperated in at least 11 air strikes against Cuba, for which American mercenary pilots were paid at least \$2000 per flight.<sup>24</sup>

While Bosch was jailed in Venezuela for his involvement in the airliner bombing, then-Miami Mayor Maurice Ferré—who is again running for that office—went to visit him in 1983.<sup>25</sup> After being released from prison, Bosch returned to the U.S. illegally in 1988 and was finally taken into custody for his U.S. parole violation.

Bosch attempted to gain asylum in the United States, and in 1989 the Justice Department considered his case. Among the evidence it considered was information linking Bosch to: more than thirty “acts of sabotage and violence” in the United States, Puerto Rico, Panama and Cuba; planning the murder of two Cuban diplomats in Argentina (who subsequently were kidnapped and disappeared); the bombing of the Mexican embassy in Guatemala in 1976; and package bombs to Cuban embassies in Lima, Madrid, Ottawa and Buenos Aires (the Justice Department examined documents that showed Bosch admitted this publicly).<sup>26</sup>

The Justice Department also cited evidence that, while in prison, Bosch had ordered bombings of Venezuelan property (he called for this publicly in a radio interview from prison) and had issued a letter entitled “Cuban Terrorism”. It also found that from 1977-1984, Bosch had continued contact with members of CORU and that during this time “he advocated acts of violence and sabotage.” (Both the FBI and the INS received bomb threats demanding Bosch’s release.)<sup>27</sup>

Under the preponderance of evidence, the Justice Department denied Bosch’s petition to remain in the United States. The associate attorney general, Joe D. Whitley stated in the decision that, “For 30 years Bosch has been resolute and unwavering in his advocacy of terrorist violence . . . He has repeatedly expressed and demonstrated a willingness to cause indiscriminate injury and death.”<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, former Florida senator Connie Mack, Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a strident anti-Castroite, and Jeb Bush (who was her campaign manager), all lobbied for Bosch’s release from INS custody. State senators, city commissioners, mayors and many other civic leaders in the Miami area vehemently protested the decision. The first Bush administration overruled its own Justice Department by having Bosch released from prison and allowing him to remain in the country.<sup>29</sup>

In a July 20, 1990 editorial, *The New York Times* wrote, “The release from jail of Orlando Bosch is a startling example of political justice. The Justice Department, under no legal compulsion but

conspicuous political pressure, has let him out, winning cheers from local politicians—and squandering American credibility on issues of terrorism.”<sup>30</sup>

In 1992, under the first Bush administration, Orlando Bosch received an administrative pardon<sup>31</sup> and he now lives in Miami. When questioned about the 1976 bombing carried out by the terrorist organization that he founded, Bosch declared, “you have to fight violence with violence. At times you cannot avoid hurting innocent people.”<sup>32</sup>

In 1985, Luis Posada Carriles, a CIA-trained Bay of Pigs veteran and explosives expert, “escaped” from prison in Venezuela by offering prison officials \$28,600. *The Miami Herald* reported that, “Posada’s friends broke him out of jail in a carefully planned plot, secretly spirited him across the Caribbean and took advantage of the clandestine contra world to stash him in Central America.”<sup>33</sup>

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*The Miami Herald* later confirmed that Posada had surfaced in Oliver North’s secret contra operation at the Ilopango airbase

in El Salvador, with the assistance of CIA operative Felix Rodriguez (*a.k.a.* Max Gomez)—another Bay of Pigs veteran—who was “a key figure in the Iran-contra scandal with close ties to then Vice-President Bush.”<sup>34</sup>

Rodriguez admitted that he harbored Posada at the request of a wealthy Miami resident—“an old friend”—who he said had also financed Posada’s escape from prison.<sup>35</sup> Rodriguez refused to answer questions before the Senate about notations in Oliver North’s notebooks that indicated a transfer of \$50,000 to Rodriguez from Jorge Mas Canosa (the late chairman and founder of the Cuban American National Foundation), also a Bay of Pigs veteran.<sup>36</sup> In his autobiography, Rodriguez calls Mas—who once offered to pay for an attorney for Rodriguez during the congressional inquiry into the contra operation—a “longtime friend.”<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, three Cuban exile leaders in Miami and two former members of CORU all told *United Press International* that it was Mas who helped finance Posada’s escape.<sup>38</sup> A federal law-enforcement official also acknowledged receiving reports of Mas’s involvement, but according to the *The Miami*

*Herald*, would not comment further.<sup>39</sup> The award-winning journalist and congressional investigator, Gaeton Fonzi,<sup>40</sup> wrote “More than one past member as well as a present associate claim Mas talked about both playing a role in raising the money to finance Posada’s escape and in helping the fugitive get his job with the illegal supply network.”<sup>41</sup>

Fonzi confirmed that a former CANF vice president, Jose Luis Rodriguez, acknowledged being solicited for and paying “his share” of Posada’s escape fund. Rodriguez even received one of Posada’s paintings—one of a palomino horse running free—as a remembrance.<sup>42</sup>

Posada, who was in hiding in El Salvador for a number of years, has publicly admitted to masterminding the string of 1997 bombings of tourist hotels in Havana, which resulted in the death of an Italian tourist. When asked by *The New York Times* about the bombing that killed the Italian tourist, Posada remarked, “It is sad that someone is dead, but we can’t stop. That Italian was sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Posada boasted, “I sleep like a baby.”<sup>43</sup>

In a taped interview with *New York Times* reporters Anne Louise Bardach and Larry Rohter in 1998, Posada stated that his activities were financed by the late CANF chairman Jorge Mas Canosa. Posada said that Mas controlled everything and provided him with upwards of \$200,000, often through other Cuban exiles. “He never said ‘this is from the foundation,’” recalled Posada. Rather, the money arrived with the message, ‘this is for the church.’<sup>44</sup>

CANF denied the allegations, and at a press conference one day after the story appeared in *The New York Times*, it produced a tape in which Posada contradicted himself in an interview by Univision Communications, Inc., a Spanish language television network. In the Univision interview with Rafael Orizondo, Posada stated that CANF had not financed his militant operations, and that he had not seen Jorge Mas Canosa in several years.<sup>45</sup>

*The London Observer* wrote that, “When the foundation produced the tape of the interview on the same day it was conducted, it aroused suspicions of a relationship between the foundation and Posada or between the foundation and the Miami television reporter.”<sup>46</sup> Anne Corley, spokeswoman for

Univision, initially confirmed that a CANF representative was present for the interview.<sup>47</sup>

The station later recanted when Orizondo said the report had been false. According to *The Miami Herald*, Orizondo would not comment, however, to questions such as, “Did one or more people from the foundation facilitate the interview? Accompany Orizondo to the site in the Caribbean? Remain in a room nearby? Did Orizondo travel to the interview aboard a foundation airplane?”<sup>48</sup>

A definitive “no” would have cleared up speculation that CANF had any connection to either Posada or to the reporter who recorded Posada’s denial.

Meanwhile, *The New York Times* stuck by its story, which was based on more than thirteen hours with Posada on tape and on over 100 sources—including CIA and FBI documents and Posada’s own autobiography.<sup>49</sup> The Cuban American National Foundation said it was “ninety-nine percent sure” that it would sue the newspaper,<sup>50</sup> but it never did.

Posada is again in prison (this time in Panama), one of four Cuban exiles accused of involvement in a November 2000 assassination attempt against Fidel Castro during the Ibero-American Summit in Panama. Also arrested were Guillermo Novo and Pedro Remón, both of Miami. The FBI considered them both principal members of Omega 7,<sup>51</sup> an anti-

Castro terrorist group active in New Jersey and New York, that a federal prosecutor once called “one of the most dangerous, most vicious and most feared terrorist groups in U.S. history.”<sup>52</sup>

Novo was the founder of the Cuban Nationalist Movement (a group which included Omega 7 members active in New York and New Jersey) and was implicated, along with his brother, Ignacio, in a 1964 bazooka

attack on the United Nations during a speech by Ernesto “Che” Guevara. In 1976, the Novo brothers joined the terrorist umbrella group CORU, which claimed the credit for more than 50 bombings in Miami, New York, Venezuela, Panama, Mexico and Argentina.<sup>53</sup> In 1979, Novo was convicted for his involvement in the 1976 Letelier assassination in Washington, D.C. He was later acquitted on appeal because his confession was obtained by planting another convict in the cell with him.<sup>54</sup> Novo went to prison for lying to a federal grand jury during the Letelier investigation.<sup>55</sup>

**Luis Posada Carriles on the 1997 Havana hotel bombings he planned: "It is sad that someone is dead, but we can't stop. That Italian was sitting in the wrong place at the wrong time...I sleep like a baby."**

In a bizarre public relations move, the Cuban American National Foundation hired the Novo brothers—after they served out their prison sentences—to work on its “Information Commission.”<sup>56</sup>

Pedro Remón, who previously served time in prison for refusing to testify before a federal grand jury about Omega 7 terrorist activities, was convicted for his involvement in the 1979 bombing of Cuba’s U.N. mission in New York City and for the attempted assassination of Raul Roa Kouri, Cuba’s former ambassador to the U.N.<sup>57</sup> Remón was also identified as the triggerman in the murders of Cuba U.N. diplomat Felix García and moderate Cuban exile Eulalio José Negrín (Negrín—a member of the December 1978 “dialogo” with Castro which succeeded in freeing 3600 political prisoners—was shot to death in front of his young son in Union City, New Jersey.<sup>58</sup>).<sup>59</sup>

The fourth man, who entered Panama with false documentation, is Gaspar Jiménez, a Cuban exile who was indicted in the 1976 car bomb attack on Emilio Milian, a prominent radio commentator who spoke out publicly against violence in Miami.<sup>60</sup> Milian survived the attack, but lost both of his legs in it. Jiménez served six years in a Mexican prison for the attempted kidnapping of Cuba’s consul to Merida—the consul’s bodyguard was killed in the attempt.<sup>61</sup>

According to *The Miami Herald*, Miami police have identified Jiménez as a driver and security guard for the medical clinic owned by Alberto Hernández, a former CANF board member (Hernández was the first CANF chairman after the death of Jorge Mas Canosa in 1997). “This is something invented by Castro,” Hernández has said. “As far as I’m concerned, he’s a nice person, good family man with grandchildren.”<sup>62</sup>

Panamanian officials found explosives in the car rented by the four men. In January, *The Miami Herald* reported that Posada had admitted to investigators that he was in Panama to kill Castro. The plan, he told investigators, was to fill a car with explosives and detonate them as Castro’s motorcade passed by.<sup>63</sup>

On June 23 and 24 of this year, two stridently anti-Castro Miami radio stations known for inciting protests, Radio Mambi WAQI-AM and La Poderosa WWFE-AM, held on-the-air fundraisers for the four detainees’ defense.<sup>64</sup>

Armando Perez Roura, director of Radio Mambi, explained his defense of exiles who use violence: “Independently of the strategies for struggle, the defense of those who fight for the freedom of Cuba is an obligation of all exiles when they are found to be in legal difficulties resulting from their acts.”<sup>65</sup>

Ramon Saul Sanchez, leader of the Democracy Movement and former member of the terrorist group Alpha 66, also asked listeners on a weekly radio show on La Poderosa to contribute.<sup>66</sup> Sanchez, who served 4 years in jail for refusing to testify about an Omega 7 attack in New York City, considers Remón—who plead guilty to participating in the New York City bombing—a “friend.”<sup>67</sup>

Sanchez told *The Miami New Times* this past July, “I cannot condemn somebody who is willing to risk his or her life for the well-being of other people, even if I disagree with the method they are employing.”<sup>68</sup> Sanchez also admitted he would not condemn anyone who landed in Cuba with weapons to try to overthrow Fidel Castro.<sup>69</sup>

Santiago Alvarez, a Hialeah developer, has also been raising money for the defense fund of the four men he calls “friends.”<sup>70</sup>

Alvarez denied allegations by the Cuban government that he had anything to do with the assassination plot last year, but would not comment on Cuba’s claim that he was involved in a more recent attempted commando mission by three Miami-Dade residents.

In April, Ihosvani Suris de la Torre, Santiago Padrón Quintero

and Maximo Padrera Valdés (also known in Miami as Máximo Robaina) landed on the island with AK-47 assault rifles, an M-3 carbine rifle with a silencer, and three semi-automatic Makarov pistols.<sup>71</sup> The three men, linked to the terrorist group Alpha 66, are viewed by Andrés Nazario Sargén, the leader of Alpha 66, as “patriots”. He regretted that they had not been able to link up with Alpha 66 groups in mountains and complete sabotage missions—such as “to burn down tourist locations.”<sup>72</sup>

The Cuban government released a taped conversation between Suris and a man they say is Alvarez. On the tape, Suris asks, “The other day, when you told me about the Tropicana [a popular tourist nightclub], do you want me to do something there?” Suris asks.

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The man the Cuban government says is Alvarez replies: “If you want to do that, so much the better. Makes no difference to me.”

Alvarez did not deny the charges. “I cannot comment on that right now. If I do say something, it will be on a more opportune moment. When I can analyze everything, I will have something to say.” Alvarez, a Bay of Pigs veteran, admitted he has a “certain responsibility” for the commando mission but would not comment further.<sup>73</sup>

When pressed as to whether Alvarez was a member of the CANF, executive director Joe Garcia replied that he didn’t know Alvarez, and that, “we have thousands of members.” Garcia did offer that Alvarez “is not a high-ranking member or director.” Garcia told the *Miami New Times* that CANF was not contributing to Alvarez’s defense fund, but admitted that some Foundation members may be contributing privately.<sup>74</sup>

Another illustrative example of the continuing support for terrorism among hard-liners in Miami comes from Pulitzer Prize-winning *Miami Herald* columnist Liz Balmaseda, who condemns a renewed campaign in Miami to get clemency for Valentine Hernandez, whom she calls “a classic Cuban terrorist plucked out of Miami’s most violent, bomb-ridden years.”<sup>75</sup>

Hernandez was part of the terrorist group called the Pragmatistas, “militant anti-Communists,” according to Balmaseda, “who filled their war coffers by committing extortions and brutal robberies of well-to-do exiles.”<sup>76</sup>

In 1973, Hernandez was charged with aggravated assault on Luciano Nieves, an outspoken exile who favored an opening to Cuba. On February 21, 1975, outside the former Variety Children’s Hospital, Hernandez—who was still a fugitive and was stalking Nieves—pumped half a dozen bullets into his victim’s chest. From his hospital bed, Nieves’ 11-year-old son heard the shots ring out that killed his father.

Hernandez fled justice while on trial for that offense, but was captured in Puerto Rico in July 1977. Hernandez remains the prime suspect in the January 7, 1977 murder of Juan Jose Peruyero, who

was president of the Bay of Pigs veterans’ association.<sup>77</sup>

Balmaseda, herself a Cuban American, deplors the fact that so many civic leaders and others in Miami see Hernandez as “some kind of wrongly-jailed exile patriot, instead of for the coward and the killer that he is.”<sup>78</sup>

She notes that over the years, various city commissioners, state legislators, local mayors and other civic leaders—including Miami-Dade Commissioners Javier Souto (then a state legislator) and Tomas Regalado (then a radio commentator who headed a 6,000-letter drive on Hernandez’ behalf)—have all lobbied for Hernandez’ early release. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Dexter Lehtinen wrote letters to then-governor Bob Graham, appealing to his “high sense of compassion for the plight of anti-Communists.”<sup>79</sup>

Hernandez’s “apologists” still haven’t given up, though, Balmaseda points out. In March, members of the Presidio Politico Historico Cubano announced on their weekly radio show on Radio Mambio-710

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AM that they are lobbying Governor Jeb Bush for his early release.<sup>80</sup> “It never ceases to amaze me,” writes Balmaseda, “how a character so dangerous commands such civic support.”

“Those who rally around Valentin Hernandez rely on our community’s amnesia and our weakness for revisionists,” she writes. The facts, she says, “reveal Hernandez and those who coddle him for what they are—the accomplices of terror.”<sup>81</sup>

All of these events provide only a few snapshots of the terrorism and support for terrorism that has pervaded Miami for 40 years, while the FBI and the CIA have done little or nothing to eradicate the problem. There have been myriad bombs, death threats, murders, and other sordid attacks all in the name of freedom, none of them taking into account the innocent lives that were “in the wrong place at the wrong time,” as Luis Posada Carriles so adroitly put it.

Francisco Aruca asserts, “The record is clear and documentation plentiful: innocent human beings blown up; political dissidents assassinated; businesses bombed; cultural institutions and homes destroyed. Under the guise of democracy and behind two flags too often desecrated for self-

righteous reasons, a fearful and intolerant environment has been nurtured.”<sup>82</sup>

“On the streets of Miami some of these perpetrators walk freely and with impunity,” writes Aruca. “They are often times the same nebulous forces that turn around and pander to both political parties which in turn seek their support at election time.”<sup>83</sup>

What all of the exile terrorist activities share in common is the belief that the cause overrides the laws of the United States. The terrorists’ actions have for years muted and misrepresented moderate voices in the Cuban American community and have marred the United States’ credibility as it seeks to condemn nations anywhere in the world that tolerate or harbor terrorists. It is time to make it absolutely clear that the United States will not tolerate acts of terrorism whether carried out by Middle Eastern fanatics or by hard-line Cuban exiles.

### **Does Cuba support international terrorism?**

In making their case that Cuba is part of an international terrorist network, hard-line exiles usually point first of all to the fact that the State Department has for years now maintained Cuba on a list of terrorist states. Strangely enough, Afghanistan was not on the list, even though the U.S. government knew all along that Osama bin Laden operated out of that country. That says something about the accuracy of the criteria for placement, as in an inverse way, the unconvincing case for keeping Cuba on does as well.

According to the State Department, Cuba is on the list because:

1. *It "harbors" Basque terrorists.* In fact, there are a number of Basque separatists living in Cuba. But Cuba is not “harboring” them. They came there originally as the result of an agreement between the Felipe Gonzales Government in Spain and Havana. For its part, the present Spanish government has made no effort to extradite any of the Basques living in Cuba today.

Furthermore, State Department officials have stated off-the-record that they have no credible evidence that these Basques are involved in any terrorist activity from Cuban territory. Hard-line exile lobbyists reject that finding and claim the Basques are mounting actions against Spain from Cuba. But if that were so, surely the Spanish government would have complained. It has not;

rather, it praised the Cuban government just last year for denying asylum to two ETA members.<sup>84</sup>

Spanish newswires reported that, “Interior Minister Jaime Mayor Oreja said he highly appreciated the response of Cuban diplomats in Madrid alerting the police.”<sup>85</sup>

2. *There are a number of fugitives from U.S. justice living in Cuba.* This is true, but largely because there is no operative extradition treaty between Cuba and the U.S., the old one having been inoperative for over forty years. In 1977, the Carter administration began a normalization process with Cuba. Negotiation of a new extradition treaty was discussed as one of the steps that needed to be taken. Unfortunately, the normalization process was stalled long before that step was reached.<sup>86</sup>

And again in off-the-record remarks, State Department officials acknowledge that they have no evidence that any of these fugitives are engaged in terrorist activities aimed at the United States or any other country from Cuban territory. Nonetheless, the presence of these fugitives is and will be a matter of concern to the United States. Surely, however, the best way to approach this particular problem would be to begin to negotiate a new extradition treaty,

with all that would imply in terms of moving towards a more normal relationship. This would be a two-way street, of

course, since Cuba would ask for the return of certain Cuban fugitives living in the United States.

3. *Cuba has contacts with the Colombian guerrillas and has facilitated meetings between them and the Colombian government.* That is true. Castro, at the behest of conservative Colombian President Andres Pastrana, has served in the role of “facilitator” in the peace process in Colombia.<sup>87</sup>

Pastrana has publicly stressed that Castro plays an important role in the peace process<sup>88</sup> and has thanked the Cubans for setting up meetings with the guerillas.

Further demonstrating their cooperation on matters of hemispheric security, in 1999 Castro and Pastrana signed agreements on drug interdiction and the extradition of Colombian drug traffickers held in Cuba.<sup>89</sup>

In 1996, Colombian rebels kidnapped and threatened to kill Juan Carlos Gaviria, the brother of OAS Secretary Cesar Gaviria (former President of Colombia). Gaviria called on Fidel Castro to mediate the crisis. Cuban emissaries negotiated the release of

**Colombian President Pastrana has publicly stressed that Castro plays an important role in the peace process.**

Juan Carlos Gaviria; as part of the agreement, the rebel kidnappers were exiled to Cuba.<sup>90</sup>

There are now growing tensions between the Colombian government and the FARC, and thus, new concerns about the peace process. The Colombian government nonetheless continues to regard Cuba's participation as helpful.<sup>91</sup>

Ironically, the U.S. has also had contacts with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN) and facilitated meetings between them and the Colombian government. Mexico, Venezuela and a number of other countries have also had a relationship with these groups.

The three arguments above are the only reasons the State Department has given in labeling Cuba a terrorist state.<sup>92</sup> However, this has not stopped zealous hard-line exiles from citing other issues and episodes in an effort to link Cuba to an international terrorism network or to label it a threat to the United States.

### ***Cuba's defunct nuclear plant***

One frequently heard charge in Miami is that the unfinished Cuban nuclear power plant has sinister purposes and could prove a threat to the United States. In fact, the plant, which was only about half completed and never had any nuclear reactors in operation, has been closed and mothballed for years.<sup>93</sup> The Cubans say they have no intention of going ahead with its construction (and have no funds to do so even if they wished). Categorically, it represents no threat to anyone.

### ***Biological warfare***

A companion charge is that Cuba is developing bacteriological weapons in its biotech industry. This stems largely from the assertions of a former Soviet Colonel, Ken Alibek, who claims his former chief, Maj. Gen. Yuri Kalinin, told him he thought Cuba had an active bacteriological arms program. In 1999, the State Department responded to this report, "We have no evidence that Cuba is stockpiling or has mass-produced any BW [biological warfare] agents."<sup>94</sup>

Cuba signed and ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention in 1997, an agreement which a number of countries, including Egypt, Israel, Kyrgyzstan,

Libya, Myanmar and North Korea have not ratified.<sup>95</sup>

A report in the *Nonproliferation Review* concluded, "The fact that Cuba has taken steps to enter the nonproliferation regime provides Washington and the international community with the clearest window toward a *rapprochement*, mainly in the field of technical cooperation with the Castro regime."<sup>96</sup>

If Cuba were developing biological weapons, there should be some evidence of it, yet dozens of American doctors and scientists – to say nothing of hundreds of Europeans, Canadians and Latin Americans – have been all through the biotech industry where this is supposedly taking place. They have discerned no trace of any such activity. Robert Zilliniskas, a senior scientist at the Center for Non-proliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, responded to the report that, "there's been no evidence they're doing anything."<sup>97</sup>

U.S. officials agreed that there is "no proof." *The Miami Herald* quoted one U.S. official, having just "checked with appropriate agencies" about the report, who said, "With all the intelligence we get from defectors and other means, there's never been evidence." Another official said, "We get lots of reports from defectors and others, but when we go to check them out it's always second and thirdhand, and the stuff doesn't check out."<sup>98</sup>

Unfortunately, such thirdhand reports are being re-circulated in the U.S. Congress. Before the House International Relations Committee on

October 24, Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen stated that, "Ken Alibek, the former head of the former Soviet Union and Russia's offensive biological weapons program, recently confirmed that the Castro regime has offensive biological weapons capability that it could use against the United States."

Her statement before that committee was misleading, because Alibek's so-called confirmation was actually just conjecture. In fact, Alibek's allegations concerning Cuba—comprising 3 pages in his 291-page book *Biohazard*—were based on his former boss's own speculation. "It was his opinion," Alibek has said, acknowledging that his former boss, in fact, "saw no weapons production [in Cuba]."<sup>99</sup>

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Another post-September 11 revival of the Cuba biowarfare question was based on an opinion piece written by Jose de la Fuente, former director of the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) in Havana. De la Fuente alleged that Cuba has sold to Iran biotechnologies associated with treating heart attacks, viral diseases and with the development of vaccines.<sup>100</sup> *The Miami Herald* reported that such technologies can also be used to develop biological weapons. De la Fuente stated that his concern was not that Cuba sold the technology but whether Iran would use the technologies to care for its population or to attempt to develop biological weapons.<sup>101</sup>

De la Fuente acknowledged that he had no cause to think that Cuba had sold the technology with malicious intent and that he could not "in any way confirm the use of this technology for anything other than [vaccines]."<sup>102</sup> The Cuban government stated categorically that, "Cuba has never produced anything that is harmful, nor will it ever, nor does it need to. People are looking for ghosts that don't exist."<sup>103</sup>

In fact, the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency's 1997 report on bioweapons proliferation named eight countries of concern: China, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Russia, Syria, and Taiwan (there were concerns that Taiwan might be experimenting with sophisticated biotechnologies acquired from the United States and others). The Canadian Security Intelligence Service reported the same in 2000, but included two more countries: Israel and Pakistan.<sup>104</sup>

On November 19, John R. Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control named six countries suspected of developing germ warfare: Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria, all but one of the nations on the "terrorist list": Cuba.<sup>105</sup>

Finally, there are the allegations of Cuban exile Agustín Blazquez, an artist, who speculates that Castro introduced West Nile virus into the United States via migratory birds. He provides no concrete evidence to substantiate the claim, but his allegations are circulated widely via email nonetheless.

But never mind the lack of evidence—or the unprecedented strain on U.S. law enforcement officials today—Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida) has publicly warned that Cuba may launch a bacteriological attack against Florida

and has called on the intelligence committees in the Senate and House, chaired by Senator Bob Graham and Congressman Porter Goss, both from Florida, to launch an investigation.<sup>106</sup>

### ***The Downing of the Brothers to the Rescue Planes***

There are those in Miami, and a few of their allies in the U.S. Congress, who maintain that the shootdown of the two Brothers to the Rescue planes in the straits of Florida in February of 1996 was an act of terrorism on the part of the Cuban government which constitutes sufficient grounds for labeling Cuba a terrorist state.

The shootdown was reprehensible. The Cuban government could have—and ought to have—warned the planes off or forced them down. It might then have taken the whole issue to the UN Security Council, pointing out that the failure of the U.S. government to halt these illegal flights was creating a dangerous situation in the Straits of Florida and asking the Security Council to take cognizance. It might then have avoided taking human lives and have had world public opinion on its side.

But if we are to call the shootdown a terrorist act, this would imply it took place without provocation or warning. But the fact is that Brothers to the Rescue planes had been penetrating Cuban airspace and overflying the island itself for months; the FAA began investigating Jose Basulto's group in August of 1995.<sup>107</sup> From July 7 to October 13, 1995 alone, the FAA and the State Department warned Brothers to the Rescue at least seven times in public and private statements that Cuba would defend its boundaries against any intruders.<sup>108</sup> Cuba, in response to the Brothers' continuing incursions into its airspace, had repeatedly warned that, "Any boats from abroad and any aircraft can be downed."<sup>109</sup>

On two separate occasions in January of 1996, Brothers to the Rescue overflowed Havana at low altitude dropping leaflets. It was at that point that the Cuban government lost patience and issued a warning that the next time these planes came into Cuban airspace they would be shot down. These warnings were repeated several times publicly and in private conversations with U.S. officials.<sup>110</sup>

In a meeting with Fidel Castro that same month, Hill staffers who were part of a CIP delegation to

**On November 19, John R. Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control named six countries the U.S. suspects of developing germ warfare: Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria, all but one of the nations on the "terrorist list"—Cuba.**

Cuba asked about the overflights. When they suggested that the offending planes were unarmed, Castro insisted that they could not be certain the planes were unarmed. Planes piloted by exiles from Miami had dropped incendiary devices and explosives over Cuban territory in past years, and they might do so again. Castro emphasized that the first duty of any government was to defend the national territory and that Cuba would defend its own. Cuba had warned the Brothers to the Rescue planes to stay away. If they did not, Castro maintained, Cuba would act accordingly.<sup>111</sup>

As Cuba historian Jane Franklin has put it, “Nobody from a foreign country would dare fly into U.S. airspace to drop leaflets over Washington. NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense) would be ready for a shutdown.”<sup>112</sup>

FAA official Charles H. Smith, testified (during the Miami trial of five Cuban spies who infiltrated exile organizations—see *intelligence operations* below) that he had warned Basulto even before his first leafletting flight in 1995—seven months before the shutdown—that Cuba “might force him to land or shoot him down.” Basulto’s response to the official was, “Chuck, you know I always play by the rules, but you must understand I have a mission in life to perform.”<sup>113</sup>

Basulto, a CIA-trained exile, began that mission by committing acts of sabotage in Cuba in the early 1960’s. *The Miami Herald* reported in March that Basulto testified that “he refused to help the U.S. government track illegal arms shipments to Cuba because he broadly supports Cuban exile groups bent on overthrowing Fidel Castro violently.”<sup>114</sup> *The Herald* noted this contradicted Basulto’s claim that he follows the teachings of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mohandas Gandhi.<sup>115</sup>

Aviation expert Charles Leonard testified that Basulto and other Brothers pilots had repeatedly flown into Cuba airspace to drop anti-government leaflets. Leonard also acknowledged that Cuba had repeatedly warned the government of the United States that planes that continued to undertake “provocative” flights might be shot down.<sup>116</sup> The U.N.’s International Civil Aviation Organization records also confirmed that Havana had issued these warnings. Leonard further acknowledged that the

United States had indeed passed these warnings on to Basulto.<sup>117</sup>

An internal FAA communication revealed that the U.S. State Department had warned that, “it would not be unlikely that the [Brothers would] attempt an unauthorized flight into Cuban airspace tomorrow....State has also indicated that the Government of Cuba would be less likely to show restraint [in an unauthorized flight scenario] this time around.”<sup>118</sup>

On the morning of the shutdown, the planes were warned by Havana tower. They were told they had entered the Cuban defense zone, which had been activated, and that they should turn back. They ignored multiple warnings, and Basulto told Cuban air-traffic control that he had the “right” as a “free Cuban” to be in the area.<sup>119</sup>

U.S. radar indicated that only one of the three planes had entered Cuban airspace at the time of the shutdown.<sup>120</sup> The two that were brought down were still over international waters. Cuba maintains that all three were in Cuban airspace. Interestingly,

Basulto's plane was the only one all sides agree was in Cuban airspace, yet his was the only one not shot down.

The Cubans should not have shot the planes down, but it was not an act of terrorism; rather, the incident would not have occurred if not for the incredible imprudence and repeated provocations on the part of Jose Basulto, who led his pilots toward the Cuban coast—despite urgent warnings to turn back.

University of Miami political scientist Max Castro agreed:

In the months prior to the attack, Brothers to the Rescue leader Jose Basulto had carried out a series of incursions into Cuban air space clearly intended to taunt, humiliate, embarrass and demoralize the regime, especially the military. [Basulto turned] what had been an organization engaged in an essentially humanitarian mission into a political weapon aimed at the Cuban regime [and this was] playing with fire -- and with people's lives.<sup>121</sup>

According to *The Miami Herald*, even family members of the fliers who were killed have blamed Basulto for the death of their loved ones. “I don’t talk to him,” Mirta Costa, mother of dead flier Carlos Costa, said recently.<sup>122</sup>

“If the Brothers were really saving lives, I would support that facet,” said Maggie Khuly, whose

**“Nobody from a foreign country would dare fly into U.S. airspace to drop leaflets over Washington. NORAD (North American Aerospace Defense) would be ready for a shutdown.”-Jane Franklin, historian**

brother, Armando Alejandro, Jr., was a crewmember in one of the downed Brothers to the Rescue planes. "They're really not doing that anymore, and I certainly do not support their political activities."<sup>123</sup>

### ***Intelligence Operations***

Press reports on since late September have noted the arrest of Ana Belen Montes, an analyst at the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. She was accused of passing information to Cuban Intelligence, some of it related to military maneuvers the Cubans thought might be directed at the island.<sup>124</sup> It is no secret that both nations have conducted intelligence operations against one another.

As Dr. Alberto Coll, Dean at the U.S. Naval War College, points out, "We also target Cuba; we send spies there to penetrate the Cuban government."<sup>125</sup> Indeed, Montes is also said to have revealed the identity of American undercover intelligence agents sent to Cuba.<sup>126</sup>

All of this is symptomatic of the kind of relationship that has existed between the two countries for the past forty years. That is unfortunate, but it has nothing to do with events of September 11. Although Florida Congressmembers Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Diaz-Balart were quick to say they were sure Montes' information had been passed to terrorist states, in fact there is no evidence that it was.

In fact, according to *The New York Times*, current and former U.S. officials have said that Montes was in a position to share information the U.S. intelligence community might have on Cuba's military and could possibly have shared information on U.S. contingency plans for taking the island by force. "I would think, if damage was done, it would be about what she learned about the U.S., how it was militarily prepared vis-à-vis Cuba," stated Rick Nuccio, a former advisor to the President on Cuban affairs.<sup>127</sup>

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) has said that the Montes case is reason enough to keep Cuba on the terrorist list. But, if conducting intelligence operations against the United States were cause for placing a country on the terrorist list, then Israel would long since have been on it—along with a lot of other states.

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The spy Jonathan Pollard, who was convicted of spying for Israel some years ago, severely compromised U.S. national security, as he gave up NSA code-breaking techniques, the identities of nearly a hundred U.S. agents in the Middle East, top-secret military and diplomatic codes and Mideast war-fighting plans. After years of denial, Israel finally admitted in 1999 that Pollard was a spy for Israeli intelligence.

Unfortunately, such operations are all too common a part of international relations, even among "friendly" nations. The Montes case is no exception and offers no justification whatever for keeping Cuba on the list.

Hard-line exiles also invariably point to the recent conviction of five Cuban spies in Miami as proof that Cuba is a threat to the United States. But these spies represented, at most, a "threat" to the hard-line exile groups they infiltrated. The five were tasked with discovering what possible terrorist activities any of these groups might be planning against Cuba. They had also hoped to gain access to a military installation in order to find out what possible operations the United States might carry out against Cuba. General Charles Wilhelm, chief of the

Pentagon's Southern Command until September 2000, testified that the spy ring never acquired any classified information and never compromised national security.<sup>128</sup>

The Cuban spies fully admitted to their mission. Given the number of exile terrorist activities over the years—and hostile U.S. policies ranging from the embargo to government funding for subversion of the Castro regime—they took it as a matter of their own national security.<sup>129</sup>

Espionage must always be a matter of concern, but in this case it posed no real threat to U.S. security and certainly did not provide cause for keeping Cuba on the terrorist list. Yet, given the forty-year history of terrorist activities and provocations against Cuba—activities that some of the most extreme elements of the Cuban exile community still pursue—it is not so surprising that Cuban intelligence sought to infiltrate some of these exile groups.

### ***The tragedy of the "13 de Marzo" tugboat***

On July 13, 1994, a groups of Cubans stole a small tugboat, the "13 de Marzo" in an effort to escape Cuba and cross the Straits of Florida. They

were pursued by other Cubans in nearby tugboats who overtook the tug, rammed it and turned high pressure hoses on it and its passengers. As a result of this attack on defenseless civilians, the tug sank and some forty men, women and children died. When Cuban Coast Guard vessels arrived, they rescued 31 survivors.<sup>130</sup>

There can be no justification for what occurred. Setting out to recover the stolen tug was one thing; ramming it and turning firehoses on the passengers was quite another.

The sinking of the tug is not, however, the kind of state-sponsored act that would justify placing Cuba on the list of terrorist nations; the State Department, accordingly, does not include it in its reasons for so designating Cuba.

To keep things in perspective, it should be noted that dozens of people are killed by the police in the United States every year, either by “mistake” or in an excess of zeal. And few in the United States can forget the killings at Attica or at Kent State University, both carried out by officers of the law. But again, these are not acts which would cause the United States to be labeled “a terrorist nation.”

#### ***Castro's rejection of the anti-terrorist resolution at the Ibero-American Summit***

Some anti-Castro exiles have made much of Castro's refusal to endorse an anti-terrorism resolution at the Ibero-American Summit in Panama in November of 2000—even suggesting that this reflects his sympathy for terrorists. The resolution pushed by El Salvador and Mexico focused on the activities of the Basque separatist group, ETA, but Castro wanted a broader resolution, one that would condemn other terrorist activities in the hemisphere (including those against Cuba).<sup>131</sup>

When El Salvador and Mexico insisted on a terrorism resolution focusing only on ETA, Castro refused to sign. His refusal, in other words, in no way indicated support for terrorism any more than did the unwillingness of Mexico and El Salvador to include reference to terrorist acts against Cuba. All were opposed to terrorism; they simply disagreed over the focus of the resolution.

Felipe Gonzalez, former prime minister of Spain, has suggested that the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> show that perhaps Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Azner was shortsighted in

criticizing Castro for insisting on a broader condemnation of terrorism during the summit.<sup>132</sup>

#### ***Alleged ties to IRA***

In August of this year, three suspected members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) were arrested in Colombia where they supposedly had been giving specialized training to one of the Colombian guerrilla groups. One of the three, Nial Connelly, was said to have lived in Havana for some years as a representative of the IRA. We cannot comment on the veracity of reports concerning the activities of these three in Colombia, but Connelly did in fact live in Cuba for a number of years.

According to the Cuban government, he was there as a representative of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the IRA, not the IRA, and had left Cuba and returned to Ireland some time ago. Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Fein, originally denied that any of the men were members of his organization—possibly simply to disassociate himself from the whole episode. However, recently, he has acknowledged that Connelly was Sinn Fein's representative in Cuba.<sup>133</sup> There is no representative of Sinn Fein in Cuba now, nor is there an IRA headquarters, as has been alleged by some fervent anti-Castroites.

#### ***Cuban ties in the Middle East***

Hard-line exiles have also made much of Cuba's ties in the Middle East. True, Cuba has long had relations with most of the Middle Eastern states—as have the United States, Great Britain and most other NATO countries. Cuba has not had close ties to Afghanistan, however, and none with Osama bin Laden (It should be remembered that he fought against the Soviets when they were Cuba's allies).

Perhaps the most serious study of Cuba's ties with the Middle East was prepared by a thoughtful Cuban defector, Domingo Amuchastegui.<sup>134</sup> It is being distributed by the Cuban American National Foundation, presumably as evidence of wrong-doing on Castro's part.

But if one reads the study carefully and examines Amuchastegui's conclusions, one might wonder why CANF considers this a useful document—from their standpoint, that is. The study chronicles Cuba's relationships in the Middle East—none of which appear threatening in today's context. It concludes that Cuba's extensive ties and

**Former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez suggested that the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks show that perhaps Spain was shortsighted in criticizing Castro for insisting on a broader condemnation of terrorism during the summit.**

influence in the Middle East should be worrisome to U.S. leaders because of the opportunities that might offer for Cuba to undercut U.S. policies in the region.

By the same token, Cuba's influence in the region could be turned to U.S. advantage, for Cuba has now taken an uncompromising position against terrorism, a phenomenon Castro says must be totally eradicated.<sup>135</sup> As has been said over and over again, the world changed on September 11. Russia, China, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are now our allies in the struggle against Osama bin Laden and the threat of terrorism in its broadest terms. Given Cuba's ties in the Middle East, it would be in the interests of the United States to open a dialogue with Cuba as well.

### *Castro's visit to Iran*

One allegation which does have some basis in fact relates to Fidel Castro's visit to Iran this past May. Standing next to Castro, Iranian spiritual leader Ali Khomeini proposed an Irano-Cuban cooperation to resist "U.S. hegemony." Castro agreed and added that the U.S. was "weak." Later, he said to a cheering crowd of students at Tehran University that "the imperialist king will fall."<sup>136</sup>

Logic would dictate that they did not actually call for Iran and Cuba to defeat the United States *militarily* – as of course they could not – but rather that U.S. hegemony, to which both Cuba and Iran see themselves as victims, would be overcome and the strength of the Iranian and Cuban systems would prevail.

The full meaning of Castro's all-too-familiar rhetoric makes even more sense when one considers part of the speech most reporters chose not to cite. Castro praised Iranians for deposing "the strongest gendarme of the region not with guns, but with your thoughts."<sup>137</sup>

Even so, it was a most unwise bit of bravado. Yet, given that the Taliban and Iran are mortal enemies, and that bin Laden's network of terrorists are trained in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, what relevance do these remarks have to the events of September 11?

It is worth noting that the United States did not rule out contacts with Iran because of Khomeini's statements. On the contrary, since September, according to a series of press reports, the U.S. government has opened lines of communication to

the Iranian government and has some hopes that Iran can be useful in the struggle against terrorism, which Iran has categorically condemned. Ali Khomeini has said Iran will not join in any campaign led by the U.S., but that it will cooperate fully with U.N.-led initiatives against terrorism.

### **Cuba's position against terrorism**

One must juxtapose Castro's unhelpful statements in Iran, moreover, with his specific reactions to the terrorist attacks on America. The U.S. media and U.S. officials have summarily ignored Cuba's solidarity with the American people and its support for an international coalition against terrorism.

On the afternoon of September 11, the Cuban government immediately condemned the terrorist attacks on the United States and offered "its sincerest condolences to the American people for the distressing and unjustifiable loss of human lives."<sup>138</sup>

The Cuban government immediately expressed its support for the American people. "At this bitter time, our people express solidarity with the U.S. people and express their total willingness to cooperate, as far as our modest possibilities allow,

with health institutions or any other type of medical or humanitarian body in that country to attend, care for and rehabilitate victims."

In addition to offering any medical or humanitarian assistance within its means to aid the victims, the Cuban government also immediately offered its airspace to U.S. aircraft that were still en route to the United States when the FAA closed American airspace.<sup>139</sup> On September 15, Castro led a rally of thousands dedicated to condemning the attacks and showing solidarity with the American people.<sup>140</sup> These gestures of solidarity received little or no press—in fact, some newspapers and news programs even omitted Cuba from lists of nations that had offered condolences to the United States.

The U.S. Interests Section in Havana was one of the few U.S. diplomatic missions not to close as a precautionary measure immediately after the September 11 attacks, which demonstrates that there is no terrorist threat to Americans in Havana.

Not surprisingly, in a September 22 speech reflecting on the Presidential address before the U.S. Congress, Castro expressed alarm at the prospect of an open-ended war that he feared would entail, as

**"The territory of Cuba will never be used for terrorist actions against the American people and we will do everything within our power to prevent such actions against that people."-Fidel Castro, Sept. 22, 2001**

President Bush had said, “every necessary weapon of war,” and that would take lives of more innocent people. The Cuban government has been very critical of the U.S. war in Afghanistan but it has also been at pains to make a clear stand against terrorism.

In the September 22 speech, Castro went on to categorically condemn terrorism as an “ethically indefensible phenomenon which must be eradicated.” Cuba, he added, is “opposed to terrorism but also opposed to war.” He also pledged that, “Cuba will never declare itself the enemy of the American people.”<sup>141</sup>

Very little attention indeed has been given to such remarkable comments by Castro as, “The territory of Cuba will never be used for terrorist actions against the American people and we will do everything within our power to prevent such actions against that people.”<sup>142</sup> Most significantly, Castro has reiterated Cuba’s “willingness to cooperate with every country in the total eradication of terrorism.”<sup>143</sup>

Moreover, in keeping with continued calls by the Cuban government for an international coalition to fight terrorism, Castro has pledged in a letter to U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan that Cuba will cooperate fully with U.N. initiatives to eradicate terrorism. Cuba has since ratified all twelve United Nations resolutions against terrorism that resulted from the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.<sup>144</sup>

### **Time for a new policy**

The world changed on September 11. Few could have imagined only a couple of months ago that the United States would now stand allied with Russia, China, India, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and, shakily, Pakistan, to name but a few, against the terrorist threat?

It is time to take a completely new look at our Cuba policy as well. In this new international context, Cuba is not our enemy. At a recent meeting on hemispheric security, U.S. Naval War College Dean Alberto Coll expressed his disappointment that, “some want to make Cuba a greater threat than it really is.”<sup>145</sup>

Not surprisingly, Castro has expressed reservations about an all-out-war, but, as noted above, he has categorically condemned terrorism and indicated Cuba’s readiness “to cooperate with every country in the total eradication of terrorism.”

Cuba is already cooperating with the United States in limited ways in drug interdiction and in immigration matters. The U.S. should now explore the possibility of exchanging information on terrorist activities. It should also remove Cuba from the list of terrorist nations and move toward a new and more cooperative relationship with the Cuban government.

And in the process, the United States government should take a clear and uncompromising stand against terrorism emanating from extremist exiles in Miami. In 1989, the Associate Attorney General of the United States stated in the case of convicted terrorist Orlando Bosch:

“The United States cannot grant shelter to someone who will, from that shelter, advocate the visitation of injury and death upon the property or person of innocent civilians. The security of this nation is affected by its ability to urge credibly other nations to refuse aid and shelter to terrorists, whose target we too often become.”<sup>146</sup>

“The conclusion is inescapable that it would be prejudicial to the public interest for the United States to provide a safe haven for Bosch,” Whitley said. “Appeasement of those who would use force will only breed more terrorists.”<sup>147</sup>

Just over a year after his release from prison, Bosch rallied 1,000 exiles in Miami to “send mix to the masons.” He explained, “Our people do not have any arms. They lack the mix for the insurrection.”<sup>148</sup> He received his pardon the following year.

Whitley’s words have an uncanny resonance more than 10 years later. With the spotlight now on international terrorism, the United States has an obligation to uphold the standards that it applies to other nations.

Serious disagreements will remain between our two governments, no doubt; there are contentious issues to negotiate. But if this administration is now committed to multilateral foreign policies, Cuba policy—the hole in our defense perimeter—must be reviewed. In this new international context, it most certainly does not serve the interests of the United States to treat Cuba as an enemy—and to do so simply because a single special-interest group in Miami demands it is less than responsible.

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As events unfold, CIP will continue to update this paper. It is intended to provide context to not only the U.S. struggle against terrorism but to U.S. policy on Cuba as well. We urge readers to consult the more than ninety resources we have listed below.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Scheer, Robert. A startling tale of U.S. complicity. *The Los Angeles Times*. July 14, 1998.
- <sup>2</sup> Mullin, Jim. The Burden of a Violent History. *The Miami New Times*, April 20, 2000.
- <sup>3</sup> The reports, also referenced at the end of this paper, can be accessed online at: <http://cuban-exile.com/menu1/protest.html>, or by going to the website <http://cuban-exile.com>, and accessing the "protest" and "groups" menus. See references at the end of this report.
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