

**HEARING BEFORE THE
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SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
“The President’s New Cuba Policy and U.S. National Security”
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Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you and the Committee Members for affording me this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the President’s New Cuba Policy and U.S. National Security.

Let me begin by saying a word about our history of secret negotiations with the Castro regime - we aren’t very good at them.

While there certainly are occasions when it is necessary and appropriate for the United States to hold confidential conversations with other governments, secret negotiations involving major policy shifts should be very rare, and appropriate leaders of Congress should be made aware of them as soon as possible. A secret negotiation, by its very nature, rewards the more intransigent side. And often the more open side ends up more concerned with **reaching** an agreement, rather than what is **in** the agreement.

When dealing with any nation that doesn’t share our beliefs and values, it is important to consider both the intent and the capabilities of its leadership.

Intentions

It is not difficult to determine the intent of the Cuban leadership. We have a fifty-five year history of unrelenting opposition to our national interests and our core values. Further, from its earliest days the Castro regime has done everything in its power to export its brand of tropical authoritarianism across the hemisphere and beyond, causing untold misery.

But has the Castro regime now abandoned the rhetoric and policies of the past? Has it begun a process of liberalization and democratic reform that merits a response from us? Has Cuba abandoned its support of pariah and terrorist states

and organizations? Sadly, there is no evidence of such a spirit of reform taking root.

In the days following the announcement of this latest agreement Raul Castro reaffirmed Cuba would remain communist and he accelerated the pace of arrests of human rights activists – over 100 peaceful human rights defenders were reportedly arrested this past weekend alone. A further forty were arrested just two days ago, on the same day he pinned medals on the five convicted spies returned to Cuba.

Further, General Castro has demanded we unilaterally lift all sanctions, return Guantanamo, pay billions in compensations for the economic hardship his own statist policies have caused and remove Cuba from the list of states sponsoring terrorism.

Meanwhile, Cuba continues to support terrorism and criminality throughout the world. The 240 tons of military hardware intercepted on its way to North Korea in 2013 is, of course, just what we are aware of. The Cuban government supports the growing repression and chaos in Venezuela with thousands of Cuban agents in all areas of the military, security forces, and strategic sectors. A hemispheric project spearheaded by Cuba and funded by Venezuela known as “Twenty-first-century socialism,” is an overtly anti-U.S. program predicated on class war that advocates gradually co-opting constitutional mechanisms, usurping the democratic process, dismantling individual liberties, and obliterating U.S. influence and presence in the hemisphere. Their goal is to gradually bring about a radical Marxist-Leninist transformation of society by slowly undermining capitalism, democracy, and “bourgeois” institutions and values from within. But Cuba’s ambitions transcend Latin America. In 2011, Italy's respected *Corriere della Sera* reported that Hezbollah terrorists had established a permanent “bridgehead” in Cuba to provide logistical support for upcoming activities planned in the hemisphere. Last November, the Center for a Secure Free Society reported on a Venezuelan and Cuban program to bring militant Islamists into Canada and the U.S. and to send illicit funds from Latin America to the Middle East. Not surprisingly, Cuba’s Ambassador to Lebanon met in Beirut with a leader of Hezbollah late last year and declared the recent agreement to be “a popular victory against colonial hegemony.”

Raúl Castro has characterized Cuba’s relations with Iran as “excellent”, building on the foundation Fidel Castro established years ago when he declared in Tehran that, “Iran and Cuba, in cooperation with each other, can bring America to its knees.” Cuba has had a nuclear cooperation agreement with Iran since as far back as 1991. Iran, in turn, has provided hundreds of millions in financing for diverse

programs in Cuba including biotechnology cooperation that includes dual use technologies.

Capabilities

Aside from intent, we must consider capabilities. Here again the Cuban regime has steadfastly followed a clear pattern - when the regime has resources it steps up its anti-democratic actions both at home and abroad. In the early days, this took the form of basing missiles aimed at the US and serving as a proxy for the Soviet Union in Africa and Latin America. When the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of funding in the early 90s, the regime scaled back its adventurism. Not coincidentally, this was also a time when some economic reforms were enacted, such as farmers' markets and selected small businesses. As Fidel Castro stated at the time, these were actions they were forced to take. And true to form, as things stabilized, these reforms were stunted and withdrawn. The pattern is unmistakable, when the regime has resources it acts in ways counter to our national interests, when it is denied resources; it must pull back and can do less damage.

As is well known, all economic activity in Cuba runs through and is controlled by the regime; money that flows into Cuba by definition goes to support and strengthen the state apparatus. One of the contributions of Fidel Castro to 20th century totalitarianism is that he understood that if you control the economic life of the individual, you control the political life of that individual – and thus society at large. In a country where there are no rights under the law, where your job, your house, your ration card, and your children's education are dependent on the will of the state, there are few protections available to anyone who wants to be able to read, speak and assemble freely, to form a union, to start a business. This total control is one of the keys to the regime's longevity.

Control of the economy provides resources with which Cuba works to export its brand of authoritarianism. Mr. Chairman, one of the common misunderstandings about our embargo is that it was intended to promote "regime change". Embargoes can be effective in promoting changes in democratic societies, where citizens have a way to express their displeasure to the political leadership. In authoritarian societies, however, there is no mechanism for people to express their will and the elite are isolated from hardship. Neither Fidel nor Raul has missed a meal in the past half century. What an economic embargo does, what it is designed to do, is to deny unearned resources that would be used against that nation's own citizens and neighbors. This is the reason the new agreement is of concern. When we provide,

even with the best of intentions, additional money to the regime, absent fundamental reform, absent a change in the intentions of the regime, we are funding activities that run directly counter to our national security interests. Is there anyone who doesn't believe that Cuban agents are promoting the violent crackdown on democratic activists in Venezuela?

Cuba as a State Sponsor of Terrorism

As damaging as providing rewards with no guarantee of reform is, the nature of the regime is to always seek more - as evidenced by Raul's recent pronouncements. His demand that we remove Cuba from the list of nations that support terrorism, a list Cuba has deservedly been on continuously since 1982, is accompanied by no commitment to reform on his part. The Cubans expect us to take this action in return for a few platitudes, if that. And why wouldn't Raul expect this? This has certainly been our pattern.

It is my hope that Congress will take a substantive role here. Any agreement must protect and advance our interests, not solely Cuba's. A basis for agreement should at a minimum include:

1. The return of scores of felons who have fled U.S. justice, starting with Joanne Chesimard and to include the chief bomb-maker of the Puerto Rican terrorist group that killed Americans in New York and the dozens of Cubans involved in medicare fraud who have stolen millions from US taxpayers;
2. The removal of all intelligence and internal security officers from Venezuela, Nicaragua, and other nations in this hemisphere;
3. The extradition to the U.S. of General Rubén Martínez Puente and MIG pilots Lorenzo Alberto Perez-Pérez and Francisco Pérez-Pérez, indicted by a federal grand jury for the premeditated murder of four civilians flying for the US-based humanitarian organization Brothers to the Rescue;
4. The expulsion from Cuba of unrepentant members of FARC, ETA, Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations;
5. Provision of full information on arms shipments to North Korea and the punishment of those officials responsible for this violation of UN sanctions;
6. Support sanctions against Iran; and
7. Stopping Russian and Chinese intelligence agencies from using facilities such as the Lourdes Signal Intelligence facility.

All of these actions could be immediately undertaken by Cuba and would demonstrate a desire to improve relations with the United States. A failure to act on these matters will demonstrate the regime has no interest in reform and intends to continue to operate as a state that supports terrorism.

The Future and US Interests

Mr. Chairman, Cuba is home to a large number of brave and dedicated men and women who, despite unimaginable hardship and great personal risk, continue to speak out in support of the basic human rights we so often take for granted. These men and women are the future of Cuba. It is they who we should continue to stand with, not the supporters of a crumbling dictatorship. Cuba will once again be a great friend and neighbor of the United States and a valuable trading partner. That day will come when the Cuban people again have control over their own destinies. But that day will be sadly delayed if we choose to provide unwarranted recognition and unearned resources to the Castro brothers and their military high command.

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee.