

Written Testimony of
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“Cuba’s Global Network of Terrorism, Intelligence, and Warfare”

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today about the threat posed by the Castro regime. I would also like to thank you and the Committee for your leadership on this key issue, one that sadly does not get the attention it deserves among the many competing foreign threats and policy priorities.

Underestimated and misunderstood for much of the last 53 years, Cuba continues to be a determined and deadly enemy of the United States. Its military and intelligence services continue their sustained offensive to carry their fight to our doorstep, most often using proxies to mitigate the risks posed by its reckless operations.

In many respects, Cuba can be accurately characterized as a violent criminal organization masquerading as a government. The island’s five intelligence services exist not to protect the nation, but to ensure the survival of the regime. More importantly from the perspective of today’s discussion, several of these services, as well as the Cuban military, continue to operate as profit-making entities. From the trafficking of U.S. secrets to running Cuba’s tourism industry, this self-serving and hypocritical capitalism guarantees a continuation of the status quo. The financial livelihood of the mid- and senior levels of these organizations is tied to the existence of the regime. By incentivizing espionage, especially when fueled by the Castro brothers’ visceral hatred for the U.S., Havana has nurtured an organizational culture prone to extraordinarily high-risk endeavors. I will address the most important of these now.

Intelligence Threat

The world’s sole “Intelligence Trafficker,” Havana provides America’s adversaries an endless stream of U.S. secrets collected by its Signals Intelligence (“SIGINT”) sites, complemented with reporting from traditional human spies. The brokering of this information, which reportedly now generates hundreds of millions of dollars annually according to defectors, is one of the primary revenue streams sustaining the regime.

Cuba's Directorate of Military Intelligence (DIM) runs one of the largest and most sophisticated SIGINT programs in the world. It collects against a wide range of U.S. government and commercial communications, as well as the satellite links between America and Europe. Specific targets are said to be all White House communications, key military communications nodes, NASA and U.S. Air Force communications associated with rocket telemetry from the Kennedy Space Center at Cape Canaveral and commercial services dealing with financial and commodity communications. The DIM intercepts communications carried on satellite downlinks, by short wave and High Frequency radio, and by microwave. All U.S. geo-synchronous communications satellites are subject to DIM targeting.

Staffed by approximately 1000 personnel, the DIM's SIGINT effort at Bejucal, west of Havana, is complemented by covert SIGINT sites in key Cuban diplomatic facilities. Given Havana's collection priorities, it is almost a certainty that covert SIGINT sites are based in Washington, DC and New York City.

The DIM's SIGINT efforts are then merged with the robust Human Intelligence ("HUMINT") capabilities of the Directorate of Intelligence (DI), the foreign intelligence wing of the Ministry of the Interior. At the height of the Cold War, the DI was ranked the fourth best service in the world. Now, more than 20 years after the crippling loss of its massive Soviet subsidies, the DI is still assessed as the fifth or six best spy service in the world.

Support to Terrorism

Havana takes a three-tier approach to its involvement in terrorism: regime-directed, regime-supported, and finally, alliances with current and former State Sponsors of Terror.

- *Regime-directed activities:* Bona fide terrorist acts, Cuban Intelligence Service (CuIS) targeting of the U.S. war on terrorism, and "Active Measures," i.e., the use of disinformation, threats, and/or violence to discredit opponents or otherwise manipulate the behavior of an individual or group.
- *Regime-supported activities:* Aid to any of the 40 groups the State Department currently lists as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs). Four entities are currently said to receive Cuban support -- Hezbollah, the Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA), and two Colombian groups -- the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN).
- *Allied State Sponsors of Terror:* Bilateral relations with countries determined by the Secretary of State to have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism. Cuba, Iran, Syria, and Sudan remain on the list. Iraq (under Saddam Hussein), North Korea, Libya (under Moammar Gaddafi) and South Yemen have been removed from the list.

Regime-directed activities

CuIS Targeting of U.S. Operations in Afghanistan

From April 2006 through at least April 2011, Cuba is suspected of targeting U.S. Counterterrorism (CT) operations in Pakistan. DI officer Gustavo Ricardo Machin spearheaded this mission. In his role as the Cuban Ambassador, he and his associates are believed to have served not only as information focal points, but also provided much needed context and insights on high-interest topics.

Machin had previously been expelled from the U.S., reportedly in retaliation for the 16-year career of Cuban spy Ana Montes, who was sentenced in October 2002. An expert in understanding and targeting the U.S. government, Machin is one of roughly four dozen “U.S. Targets” officers in the entire Cuban Intelligence Community. The placement of such a uniquely-qualified expert in Islamabad suggests the two countries exchanged intelligence on U.S. CT operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Cuba could have offered unparalleled information on U.S. strategic military, political, and economic plans for the region, as well as ongoing deployments. Conversely, Pakistan probably offered equally unparalleled reporting on the area’s U.S. and NATO tactical operations. The merger of this invaluable information would provide an adversary the ability to prevent, cripple, or degrade U.S. CT missions worldwide. Al-Qaeda’s extensive penetration of Pakistan’s primary security element, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, also makes it almost certain that U.S. secrets ended up in the hands of terrorists.

CuIS Targeting of U.S. Operations in Iraq

On May 13, 2003, the U.S. expelled 14 Cuban diplomats for espionage. This action was the largest expulsion of Cuban Intelligence Officers and the third largest ejection of diplomats in U.S. history. The expulsions occurred less than eight weeks after the U.S. and its coalition partners attacked Iraq.

A senior Pentagon official later told *Washington Times* columnist Bill Gertz that Havana provided Iraqi Intelligence with information on U.S. troop movements and associated military activities. This fact, coupled with the deadly nature of the intelligence Cuba provided to Iraq, strongly suggests that Havana’s passage of time-sensitive intelligence on U.S. forces pre-dated the start of the war. Cuba’s high-risk adventurism occurred on the heels of the revelations of Ana Montes’ treachery, including her efforts to kill U.S. and host nation soldiers during the secret war against leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. This strategic blunder made a major U.S. response a fait accompli.

Post-9/11 walk-ins

In the six months following the 9/11 attacks, 15-20 Cubans walked into U.S. embassies around the world and offered information on terrorism threats. Eventually, all were discredited

as Cuban intelligence agents or collaborators attempting to supply false information. These walk-ins were intended to tie up precious U.S. intelligence resources in “wild goose” chases that could cost lives at a time when Washington was reeling from the worst terrorist attacks in history. For comparison, Cuba normally sends about a dozen “walk-ins” to U.S. embassies around the world in any given year.

Operation Scorpion

On February 24, 1996, Cuban MiGs shot down two U.S. search and rescue aircraft in international waters. Codenamed *Operation Scorpion*, it was led by General Eduardo Delgado Rodriguez, the current DI Director. The targeted aircraft were flown by a humanitarian group called *Brothers to the Rescue*, whom the regime viewed as a destabilizing factor. Often cited as the world’s most successful search and rescue organization, *Brothers* was wildly popular with Cuban-Americans and on-island Cubans as well.

Four Americans died in this terrorist act. Subsequently, the U.S. government indicted General Rubén Martínez Puente (head of the Cuban Air Force) and pilots LTC Lorenzo Perez Perez and LTC Francisco Perez Perez, on murder and related charges. Additionally, Cuban spy Juan Pablo Roque was indicted for conspiracy to commit murder and espionage-associated crimes. He fled the U.S. and like the others, continues to enjoy the protection of the Cuban government. In contrast, another Cuban spy received justice. Gerardo Hernández, the leader in the massive *Wasp Network* spy ring, was arrested and convicted of conspiracy to commit murder.

Regime-supported

Hezbollah

On July 7, 2011, Ambassador Roger F. Noriega testified on Hezbollah operations in Latin America before the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence. In his excellent overview, the Ambassador reported that 80+ Hezbollah members served in at least 12 nations in the hemisphere.

Late last year, the Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* reported that Hezbollah was establishing a base in Cuba to extend its ability to reach Israeli targets in Latin America. Funded by a budget exceeding 1.5 million dollars, three of Hezbollah’s Mexico-based staff were relocated to the island. Almost immediately thereafter, 23 fighters personally selected by senior Hezbollah official, Talal Hamia, were to join them in Cuba. According to the report, Cuba was to initially be used for logistics, intelligence collection and the creation of false documents.

Despite this recent development, Havana will continue to use Venezuela as its preferred proxy to publicly distance itself from Hezbollah. That said, the pervasive presence of Cuban intelligence personnel in Venezuela now appears to be a double-edged sword. On one hand, it provides the Castro regime the ability to support its Hezbollah ally while hopefully maintaining

plausible deniability. Conversely, its huge and well documented intelligence support to the Chávez government virtually guarantees that Havana is intimately aware of Hezbollah operations throughout the region.

As Ambassador Noriega noted last summer, Chávez has “cooperated with Iran to provide political support, financing, or arms to Hezbollah, Hamas, or Palestinian Islamic Jihad in this Hemisphere and elsewhere. For example, Venezuela’s Margarita Island has eclipsed the infamous “Tri-Border Area” – the region where Brazil, Argentina, and Paraguay come together in South America – as a principal safe haven and center of Hezbollah operations in the Americas”

The FARC & ELN

According to the U.S. State Department, Cuba provides the FARC with medical care, sanctuary, and political consultation. However, other sources paint a more comprehensive degree of support.

In March 2008, Mexican authorities began investigating alleged Cuban agent Mario Dagoberto Diaz. This agent came to the attention of government authorities after Colombian military forces entered Ecuador and raided a FARC camp. During the attack, a top FARC official and at least 26 others guerrillas were killed, including four Mexican students. Authorities claimed Diaz led the Mexican students to the camp, but left before the attack. Mexican Intelligence subsequently identified Diaz as a FARC financial officer who had previously traveled to Ecuador in 2007. Mexican authorities claimed over the last two years, Diaz maintained five bank accounts each averaging 80,000 dollars.

Former CIA officer Brian Latell noted that Cuban Intelligence has strongly supported the FARC since the 1960s, but the “availability of massive amounts of Venezuelan money” had triggered considerable growth in the depth and breadth of Havana’s support.

The Havana-supported, pro-Cuban ELN was founded in 1965. Over the years, Havana has assisted, coordinated, or otherwise participated in unification efforts involving the ELN and other terrorist groups. According to the U.S. State Department, Cuba continues to provide the ELN with medical care and political consultation. Similarly, Cuba’s close ally -- Venezuela, provides sanctuary to ELN forces.

The ETA

Cuba provides sanctuary to approximately 20 ETA members granted asylum by Spanish authorities in the 1980s. However, media reports from May 2011 identified several senior ETA members wanted by Madrid who enjoy Havana’s support and protection. Thus far, Cuba has declined Spain’s requests for extradition. According to some defectors, Havana also allows the regime’s financial sector to launder ETA funds, for which it receives a commission.

Additionally, classified documents released by Wikileaks cited a State Department cable which reported “ETA members that assisted the FARC had spent time in Cuba.” The cable went on to note that ETA and FARC “enjoy rest and recreation in Cuba and receive medical care and other services.” The document also claimed the requirement for a secure safe haven will likely preclude the ETA and FARC from using Cuba to launch operational missions.

Alliances with State Sponsors of Terror

Iran

In 2007, Scott Carmichael, a senior counterintelligence officer with the Defense Intelligence Agency, confirmed continued intelligence sharing between Iran and Cuba. Additionally, Israeli sources reported that during the 2006 meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Iranian and Cuban intelligence officers discussed increased collaboration in targeting the United States.

Close ties between Tehran and Havana have reportedly existed since Iran's revolutionary leadership came to power in 1979. Additionally, Iran's Interests Section and its Mission to the United Nations appear inadequately staffed for significant intelligence collection. This shortfall likely makes Iran even more dependent on Cuban intelligence trafficking.

In 2006, career DI officer Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz visited with senior Iranian government officials. This meeting followed his October 2003 meeting with President Mohammad Khatami on expanded ties between Havana and Tehran. At the time, Cabrisas served under cover as a minister without portfolio. During their discussions, Khatami said reciprocal visits by officials of the two countries would lead to further expansion and consolidation of mutual ties. The meeting called for the recurring visits by officials, scientists and others to develop these enhanced ties.

Conclusion

Through its intelligence trafficking or own terrorist acts, Cuba has willfully and intentionally murdered Americans in the past and it will kill again. Furthermore, I believe Havana will covertly facilitate attacks on U.S. personnel, installations or interests using proxies to create situations in which it cannot be implicated as a sponsor. I also suspect Cuba will continue its efforts to cripple and degrade U.S. Counterterrorism operations. The Castro regime sees U.S. inability to respond to its aggression as a sign of weakness. As a result, the threat to our national security has increased because our failure to act only emboldens this dangerous dictatorship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

