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*Centro de Estudios, Formación
y Análisis Social*



**ASOCIACION ESPAÑOLA
CUBA EN TRANSICION**

The Multiple Faces of Terrorism in Cuba

REPORT 10 | CEU-CEFAS

April of 2025

Authors

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Executive Director of the Spanish Association 'Cuba en Transición'

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Foreword

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Abstract

The Cuban dictatorship has resorted to political violence and terrorism since its inception. Over time, the intensity and expressions of terror have changed and become integrated into more complex strategies. However, the regime has never apologized, has never stopped protecting its perpetrators and has always sought to legitimize terror at an international level.

Castroism in Cuba resorted to terror and violence to establish its dictatorship in 1959 and has continued to be involved in criminal or violent acts in order to maintain its anti-democratic regime for more than 60 years. **Fidel Castro has been associated to political violence since his youth. The press of those years linked him to at least three assassinations**, but he was never convicted due to lack of evidence. But it was in the 1950s when it became clear that the emerging Revolution was going to **use terrorism as its main weapon to secure power**.

- The assault on the Moncada Barracks on July 26, 1953 was the major turning-point, which later gave rise to the **26th of July Movement**, a banner for revolutionary terrorism, an especially urban phenomenon in Havana.
- The Head of Action and Sabotage of the 26th of July Movement, Domingo René García Collado, acknowledged that **“this Revolution was carried out on the basis of terrorism.”** For example, on November 8, 1957, one hundred devices exploded at the same time in the country’s capital.
- In the years leading up to the triumph of the Revolution of 1959, the guerrilla war in Sierra Maestra escalated, leading to the hijacking of several airplanes to incorporate them into the Revolutionary Air Forces.
- After the triumph of the Revolution on January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro reinforced his international agenda to export his “method” to the rest of the continent and, to this end, created the National Liberation Directorate. **Cuba sponsored acts of urban terrorism** in Venezuela, guerrilla landings in Panama and the Dominican Republic, and **supplied arms to the Algerian terrorist group, the National Liberation Front**.
- In November 1962, the **United States expelled two Cuban diplomats**, Elsa Montero Maldonado and José Gómez Abad. They **were planning a terrorist attack that involved detonating 500 kilos of explosives** in large U.S. stores and Manhattan’s Grand Central Terminal on Thanksgiving weekend.

- In 1966, Fidel Castro succeeded in bringing together more than 500 leaders from Africa, Asia and America at the First Tricontinental Conference and, in his speech, he publicly advocated weapons as the means of achieving power.
- The alliance with the Soviet Union strengthened the military apparatus that the regime used to export its terrorist schemes. **The Cuban Army became the ninth most powerful in the world** and, in Africa alone, deployed some 70,000 men. Cuba provided military aid to **Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Syria, Grenada, and Nicaragua**, whilst the presence of Cuban military personnel fighting under the Syrian flag in the Yom Kippur War was also confirmed. At this time, Cuba strengthened its support for Palestinian terrorist organizations, particularly Al-Fatah.
- In Europe, the French Government expelled three Cuban diplomats in 1975 for their **collaboration with one of the most wanted terrorists in the world** at the time, Carlos the Jackal. **Dozens of ETA** (armed Basque nationalist and far-left separatist organization in the Basque Country) **members took refuge in Cuba in the 1980s.**
- After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Cuba not only maintained its links with terrorists, but also with drug-trafficking, whose workings were detailed by the CIA in a declassified report in 1989. Four high-ranking Cuban military officers linked to the Colombian M-19 Movement were indicted in 1982 by the United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida in the United States. **Fidel Castro appeared as a mediator with the Medellín Cartel** in another trial in the United States, in this case against Panamanian General Noriega.
- In 2025, Cuba still maintains certain links with terrorist organizations such as **Hamas** and **Hezbollah**, which are on the European Union's terrorist list. Cuba maintains a strong presence in Lebanon and the Head of Hezbollah's International Relations Committee visited the Cuban Embassy in Lebanon during demonstrations by Cubans against the regime in 2021. In 2019, the Cuban Ambassador to Lebanon, Alexander Pellicer Moraga, met with the Hamas representative in Lebanon. In 2023, the Cuban Ambassador to Lebanon, Jorge León Cruz, received a high-level delegation from the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

Terrorism in Cuba began as a weapon of war in order to achieve power, but later transformed into a political tool that has helped the regime to set up a Communist network throughout the world. Fidel Castro's objective was to export the Revolution to the world, including its methods and its agenda, and after the collapse of the USSR he set out to become the bastion of Marxism/Communism throughout the world. The regime continues to pursue this goal, with terrorist groups aligning themselves against the West and opposing what they describe as "imperialism," including the values represented by democratic nations. This agenda **obliges the European Union to reflect on its relationship with Cuba and its response to the regime, a country that the United States certainly does recognize as a sponsor of terrorism.**

Foreword

Cubans have been suffering the nightmare of the Communist dictatorship in their country for almost seven decades. During this period, numerous individuals have experienced shootings, drownings, and political imprisonment. Families have faced destruction, persecution, and exile, events that have sometimes been characterized as State terrorism. The terror imposed by the Cuban dictatorship, however, has transcended its borders and Cuba's influence has been seen in many countries, in many organizations and in many different ways.

During the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana in 1966, Fidel Castro brought together terrorists from all over the world and declared before more than 500 international leaders that the road to power was “bullets, not ballot boxes.” Today we know that those were not just words. This report documents dozens of terrorist acts that have a direct connection with the leaders of the Revolution and with Castro's political apparatus and the 26th of July Movement. Many of these attacks have been publicly acknowledged by former leaders of the Movement, as illustrated in the following pages. Terrorism in Cuba began as a means of achieving power and ended up becoming a *modus vivendi*.

In addition, the Cuban dictatorship has also become an international center for the support and promotion of terrorism. For years, the Cuban regime has been behind hundreds of robberies, kidnappings, attacks, and assassinations all over the world. Training, weapons, and financing has been provided from Cuba to thousands of terrorists from the most diverse organizations –the IRA, ETA, Italian Red Brigades, etc. It has served as a refuge and sanctuary for those who, after perpetrating attacks, have fled from justice; it has coordinated terrorist activity at a global level and has become an irreplaceable hub for transnational organized crime networks.

In the 1980s, more than thirty ETA members took refuge in Cuba. Cases such as that of Miguel Ángel Apalategui, a member of the *Comando Donosti*, have come to light. “Apala” was accused of attacking military personnel and Spanish Civil Guards. More recently, in the year 2000, the Tenth Ibero-American Summit was held in Panama and, at this forum, Fidel Castro refused to sign a declaration condemning ETA terrorism. Eleven years later, the terrorist group announced that it was laying down its arms and, currently, its political

heir, EH Bildu, is the decisive party in terms of the governability of Spain. The party currently maintains its relations with Cuba and, in 2024, signed a collaboration agreement with the Communist Party of Cuba.

Featuring concrete facts and data on the connections between the Cuban dictatorship and terror, this report addresses the developments and transformations regarding the use of violence and terror on the island and beyond. It highlights the exportation of terrorism as a revolutionary strategy, the continuation of terrorist activity during the Sovietization of Cuba and the regime's transformation into a model linked, to a certain extent, with drug-trafficking and organized crime.

The contents of this report show that the European Union must open its eyes and add Cuba to the list of terrorist organizations, at least out of solidarity with the Cuban people. Like the Spanish people, Cubans have, for many years, suffered the consequences of living in fear of crime and terror, a plight that has afflicted their streets for extended periods of time.

María San Gil,

Director of the Observatory for Victims of Terrorism CEU-CEFAS

1. Terrorism and Political Violence before the Revolution

“It was also the first time I saw columns, masses of people uprising, mixed, as was the case in the French Revolution; when people with picks, shovels, machetes and rifles, with everything, gathered together, attacked, assaulted”.

(Fidel Castro on El Bogotazo).¹

The phenomenon of terrorism is not new. Violence and the use of terror as a tool to achieve political objectives have been present in many periods and in many places throughout history.

Modern terrorism first emerged during the French Revolution, when the Jacobins used the guillotine to control the population. At that time, what was significant was both the use of terror by the public authorities and its political justification. Along these lines, Stalinism, Nazism and Castroism itself have been accused of implementing totalitarian terror. Gradually, however, the concept of terrorism, rather than referring to State practices, has been applied to insurgency activities carried out by violent organizations that use terror as a means of intimidating the population and achieving political objectives². Terrorism, says Fontaine, “is the weapon of the weak used by groups and individuals with limited conventional military power.”³

The Cuban Revolution was not the first to use terrorism in this sense. What makes Cuba different, however, is that the island did achieve its political objectives⁴. Before Fidel Castro came to power, Cuba had already witnessed a long tradition of “achievements” through political violence. The most immediate precedent was ABC, a secret organization founded in 1931 with the aim of overthrowing the dictatorship of Gerardo

1 Blanco, K. *Fidel Castro Ruz. Guerrillero del tiempo*. Chapter 9 reproduced on the website of Representaciones Diplomáticas de Cuba en el Exterior. Available at <https://misiones.cubaminrex.cu/es/articulo/fidel-castro-y-los-sucesos-del-9-de-abril-de-1948>

2 García de Cortázar, G. *La Historia y el terrorismo*. Manuel Jiménez Abad Foundation. Available at <https://www.fundacionmgimenezabad.es/la-historia-y-el-terrorismo>

3 Fontaine, R.W. *Cuba's Terrorist Connection*. The Heritage Foundation. Washington, 1988. Available at <https://www.heritage.org/americas/report/cubas-terrorist-connection>

4 Fontaine, R.W. *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. New York. 1988. p. 17.

Machado. ABC perpetrated assassinations, carried out attacks with bombs and explosives, attempted to assassinate Machado himself and used terror as a tool to destabilize the country.⁵

In order to force Machado's departure, ABC concluded that the most effective means was not so much the conventional use of armed forces or organized invasions from abroad, but the selective implementation of terrorist acts that would incite U.S. intervention. Public disorder and disturbances would highlight the inability of the Machado Government to ensure peace and public order and would open the possibility of a new American intervention.

This is what happened, although this time the United States did not make use of the Platt Amendment⁶. Instead, it decided to send a brilliant diplomat, Sumner Welles, to try to mediate in the resignation of the dictator, who would end up fleeing the country on the afternoon of August 12, 1933. For Fontaine, Machado's flight and the consequent success of the terrorist strategy implemented by ABC would help to shape the attitudes and beliefs of a whole generation of Cubans, including Fidel Castro.⁷

Violence and politics went hand in hand at university. Since the 1920s, this educational institution had become one of the most active centers of political activity, but also of violence. What began with mobilizations and clashes with the police would eventually turn into organized violence and terrorism⁸. This was the environment Fidel Castro found himself in when, in the mid-1940s, he dropped out of high school at the Jesuit-run Belén School to enroll in the Law School of the University of Havana. Carlos Alberto Montaner has described the gangster-type activities of those years:

There was corruption, violence, armed gang leaders, and the reign of revolutionary thuggery. It was the university of gangsters; the student leaders walked around with a pistol in their belts, and to rise to the top it was almost essential to take shelter in one of the most powerful and feared factions.

The young Fidel Castro, who belonged to one of these organizations, was involved in one of these scuffles where political rivalries ended in murder. His name appeared in the press of those years in relation to at least three assassinations or assassination attempts.

5 Some of the terrorist attacks and crimes carried out by ABC are listed in Álvarez, A. (2023) *Gerardo Machado and the beginning of terrorism in Cuba*. Available at <https://libreonline.com/gerardo-machado-y-el-comienzo-del-terrorismo-en-cuba/>.

6 The so-called Platt Amendment incorporated into the Cuban Constitution of 1901 by Senator Orville Platt empowered the U.S. government to intervene in the country to maintain order and stability, if necessary. The Platt Amendment was frequently used in the early years of the Republic of Cuba (1906, 1912, 1917 and 1920). See *Platt Amendment* (1903), in Milestones Documents, National Archives. Available at <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/platt-amendment>

7 Fontaine, R.W. *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* p. 18.

8 Suchlicki, J. (1968). *Stirrings of Cuban Nationalism: The Student Generation of 1930*. Journal of Inter-American Studies, Jul., 1968, Vol. 10, No. 3, Cambridge University Press. pp. 350-368.

- That of the President of the University Student Federation (FEU), Manolo Castro (to whom he was not related), who was riddled with bullets on January 22, 1948 on a street in Old Havana. Fidel Castro was detained, charged, and later released due to insufficient evidence.⁹

In *Viaje al corazón de Cuba*, Carlos Alberto Montaner recalls that Ernest Hemingway authored a story –*The Shot*– about the death of his friend, Manolo Castro, where the murderer was inspired by Fidel Castro. However, he concludes that “the historical truth is that Fidel did not kill Manolo. He was unavailable when contacted about the assassination attempt. When they went to look for him, they did not find him.”¹⁰

- Five months after Manolo Castro’s death, on July 4, 1948, Óscar Fernández-Caral, a university police sergeant, was assassinated¹¹. A witness pointed the finger at Fidel Castro. However, the witness recanted shortly thereafter and it could not be proven in court¹². Shortly before his death, Fernández-Caral accused Fidel Castro of having shot him¹³, a version supported by Brain Latell, who, in *Castro’s Secrets*, states that, after the sergeant’s murder, Fidel “never again” got involved in person. But the act was not proven in court.
- Finally, there are irrefutable testimonies of people contemporary to Fidel Castro who accuse him of the assassination attempt on the young student leader, Leonel Gómez, in December 1946. This consisted of a cold-blooded, premeditated shot from behind that left the young student leader seriously wounded in the lung.¹⁴

Fidel Castro’s link to political violence, however, was not restricted to the Cuban sphere. Before the 1950s, Castro participated in two international expeditions in which he gained direct experience of the use of political violence: in the Dominican Republic and in Colombia.

In 1948 he participated in the preparations for a frustrated invasion of the Dominican Republic from Cuba with the aim of overthrowing the dictator, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. The military training took place in Cayo Confites, in the north of the Province of Ciego de Avila, over a period of 59 days in the summer of 1947. The expedition was aborted and, as Fidel Castro later admitted, it was a complete failure.

9 Different news items about the assassination of Manolo Castro can be consulted in the *Diario de La Marina*. Some of them include the name of Fidel Castro. They are compiled in <https://www.latinamericanstudies.org/manolo-castro.htm>

10 Montaner, C.A. *Viaje al corazón de Cuba*. Plaza y Janés. Barcelona, 1999. p. 26.

11 News about the murder of Oscar Fernandez-Caral can be found in *Diario de La Marina*. Available at <https://www.latinamericanstudies.org/1948/DLM-7-15-1948-24.jpg>

12 Latell, B. *Castro’s secrets*. St. Martin’s Press. New York. 2013. p. 19.

13 Montaner, C.A. *Castro y Rasco: Vidas paralelas*. Diario de Cuba. 2013. Available at https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1382651531_5647.html

14 Latell, B. *Castro’s secrets*.... p. 18.

Almost a year after the frustrated Dominican invasion, Fidel Castro would participate in what became known as “the Bogotazo.” His trip, financed by the Argentine government of General Perón, would end up becoming what Norberto Fuentes called “his revolutionary baptism of fire.”¹⁵ Castro had gone to Colombia as part of a student delegation to attend the Ninth Pan-American Conference. A few days after arriving in Bogotá, the leader of the Liberal Party, Jorge Eliecer Gaitán, was assassinated with four shots. The event triggered a spiral of riots and violence that left hundreds dead in the Colombian capital. Fidel Castro did not stay in the hotel. Armed with rifles from a police station, he wandered the streets of Bogotá distributing anti-American propaganda. Pursued by the police, he managed to reach the Cuban Embassy, where they made arrangements for his return flight to Havana.¹⁶

After his return, it was not long before Fidel Castro took up arms again. On March 10, 1952, Fulgencio Batista staged a coup d’état that interrupted the constitutional order established in 1940. It also ruined the chances of Fidel Castro being elected in the legislative elections scheduled for the following month, despite his favorable position on the lists of the Orthodox Party. It would not be long before he returned to violence.

For months, Fidel Castro recruited a group of 1,200 men, whom he trained, organized into commandos, and gave shooting lessons on the outskirts of Havana¹⁷. This was the group he would use to attempt to assault two military bastions in the eastern part of the country on July 26, 1953: the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba and the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Barracks in Bayamo.

As is well known, the assault on the Moncada Barracks ended in resounding failure. With significant casualties. During the battle, eight assailants and twenty-two soldiers died¹⁸. Some were imprisoned and tortured; others, among them, Fidel and Raúl managed to escape; but they had no choice but to surrender. Finally, they were brought to trial together with the thirty-two assailants and sentenced to prison, where they remained until their pardon in April 1955.

During his time in prison, Fidel Castro wrote *La historia me absolverá* (*History Will Absolve Me*), an extensive plea in which he defended democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms. And upon his release, he took a public stand against the use of terrorism to put an end to the Batista dictatorship. On June 11, 1955 he published a letter, *Frente al terror y frente al crimen* (*In the Fight Against Terror and Crime*), in which he attacked those who planted bombs for serving Batista’s Government instead of fighting it¹⁹. The reality is that shortly thereafter Fidel Castro would not hesitate to use terror in order to consolidate his revolution.

15 See Fuentes, N. *Autobiografía de Fidel Castro. I. El paraíso de los otros*. Ediciones Destino, Barcelona. pp. 384 and ff.

16 *Bogotazo*. Cuba Insight. Cuban Studies Institute Publications. Available at <https://cubanstudiesinstitute.us/bits-of-cuban-history/bogotazo/>

17 Ramonet, I. *Cine horas con Fidel. Conversaciones con Ignacio Ramonet*. Office of Publications of the Council of State. Havana, 2006. p. 63.

18 Montaner, C.A. *Viaje al corazón de Cuba...*

19 Castro, F. *Frente al terror y frente al crimen*. La Calle. Havana, 1955.

2. The Revolution Was Achieved Through Terror

When this war is over, a much longer and bigger war will begin for me: the war I will wage against them. I realize that this is going to be my true destiny²⁰

On December 2, 1956, Fidel Castro and eighty-one other expeditioners disembarked from the *Granma*, an old 20-meter-long pleasure boat, in a place known as Los Cayuelos, near Las Coloradas Beach, in the eastern part of the country. Their strategy was to advance after the uprisings in Santiago de Cuba, led by Frank País, and at El Escambray, where Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo was operating. However, events did not go as planned. In the next two years, a conflict involving guerrilla tactics would occur in the Sierra Maestra mountains.

The myth of the bearded refugees in the mountains of the eastern region of Cuba was encouraged from the very beginning, with the collaboration of the international press, and it has lasted down to the present day²¹. From the outset, the rebels carried out actions that could be strictly categorized as terrorism:

- In June 1958, they carried out the kidnapping of a group of Canadian and American citizens. Their objective was to deter any attempt to attack Batista's Army, especially by air, which they succeeded in doing. U.S. pressure on the Batista Government forced the halting of the attacks for three weeks, which gave the guerrillas time to rest and recover.²²
- Fidel and Raúl Castro themselves ordered air hijackings to incorporate Cubana de Aviación planes into the Revolutionary Air Force²³. On October 21, 1958, the first air hijacking in Cuban history was conducted by members of Raúl Castro's rebel army²⁴. The five hijackers, posing as passengers of a Cubana de Aviación

20 Castro, F. *Letter to Celia Sánchez dated June 5, 1958*. Available at <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/es/correspondencia/de-fidel-celia-1958-fragmentos>

21 See DePalma, A. *The Man Who Invented Fidel: Castro, Cuba, and Herbert L. Matthews of the New York Times*. Public Affairs. New York, 2006.

22 Fontaine, R.W. *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* p. 25.

23 Porat, D. (2024). *Plane Hijackings between Cuba and the United States and the Opportunity for Diplomacy (1958-1973)*. *The Historical Journal* (2024), 67, 561-582. Cambridge University Press.

24 *El secuestro de aeronaves (2018). Ese día en la historia cubana*. Center for a Free Cuba. Available at <https://cubacenter.org/cuban-history-spanish/2018/10/19/este-dia-en-la-historia-cubana-secuestro-de-aeronaves/>

Viscount plane, took control of a flight from Miami to Varadero. The hijackers and twelve other passengers lost their lives when the aircraft crashed while attempting to land in Oriente Province. There were three survivors.²⁵

- But through the 26th of July Movement, founded by Fidel Castro after his release from prison, while the rebels continued to hide in Sierra Maestra, a bloody strategy of urban terrorism was implemented, which would play a crucial role in the development of events.

There are various testimonies and evidence indicating the activities of the 26th of July Movement during these years. Acts of sabotage, robberies and kidnappings were practiced; hundreds of bombs and explosive devices were planted and hundreds of people were wounded and killed. “This revolution was carried out on the basis of terrorism,” stated former terrorist Domingo René García Collado. García Collado was part of the Action and Sabotage group of the 26th of July Movement. Among other functions, he was assigned the task of building explosive devices to be planted in different places. The explosion of devices and bombs became commonplace in the evening in Havana and other cities. On one night, November 8, 1957, the 26th of July Movement set off a hundred synchronized explosions at nine o’clock at night in the Cuban capital.²⁶

During 1957 and 1958, the 26th of July Movement began to carry out terrorist acts in public places in Cuban cities, which corresponded to its slogan of the “three C’s”: *cero Cine, Cero Compras y cero Cabaret* (*Zero Cinema, Zero Shopping and Zero Cabaret*).²⁷

I will never forget the night in July 1958 when I was an eyewitness of how a revolutionary bomb placed in the Martí de Ciego Park in Ávila, on a Saturday night, killed three citizens from Ávila and wounded six. The bomb was intended to assassinate Andrés Rivero Agüero, Batista’s candidate for the Presidency, but the 26th of July Movement terrorist chickened out and, instead of placing it in the Santiago-Havana hotel, it was placed under a bench in the busiest square in the city.²⁸

On June 12, 1957, while he was preparing one of these sabotage actions, García Collado was blown up by a bomb. The incident left him without both legs and his left hand:

We planted bombs, burned sugar cane and (conducted) other kinds of sabotage. That was terrorism.

25 *Crash of a Vickers 755D Viscount off Antilla: 17 killed*. Bureau of Aircraft Accident Archives. Available at <https://www.baaa-acro.com/crash/crash-vickers-755d-viscount-antilla-17-killed>

26 *Cuba: La noche de las cien bombas y su contexto insurreccional*. Cuba Información (2012). Available at <https://www.cubainformacion.tv/cuba/20121113/46648/46648-cuba-la-noche-de-las-cien-bombas-y-su-contexto-insurreccional>

27 Castro, M. *Fidel Castro, el mayor terrorista nacido en América*. La Ilustración Liberal. Nº 56-57. Madrid. (2013).

28 Álvarez Quiñones, R. “El castrismo es terrorista desde sus orígenes” in *Diario de Cuba*. December 11, 2020. Available at https://diariodecuba.com/cuba/1607678071_27122.html

Domingo René García Collado was tried and sentenced to 14 years in prison in Pinar del Río. After the triumph of the Revolution, Fidel Castro himself went in person to free him and named him commander of the Revolution:

Well, Castro came (to Artemisa) on January 17, 1959. He spoke with an Assistant Captain that I had in the barracks and told him that I should come to the park, that he wanted to talk to me. I was able to enter the park, and the comrades took me. He hugged me and, in front of the people, he announced that he was giving me an immediate rank, which was that of Commander (maximum rank of the Rebel Army). That same day he named me Second-in-Command of the Pinar del Río Regiment. Escalona (Juan) was the Head of the Regiment.²⁹

He would not be the only revolutionary officer with a terrorist background. In August 1967, Commander Faustino Pérez detailed his participation in terrorist activities during a talk on the Revolution's hydraulic plans at the Latin American Seminar of Journalists. Until his death in 1992, Commander Faustino was a Member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and a Deputy to the National Assembly of People's Power. During his speech, he recounted the details of the actions carried out during those years, mentioning bombings, kidnappings, executions of what he called "informers" and sabotage.

An electricity station was destroyed by a bomb planted via a tunnel dug from a rented house, leaving the capital without power for three days. That had a tremendous impact as well. Imagine what it meant: the factories stopped, the Electricity Company couldn't operate, refrigerators didn't work, all those things.³⁰

In an interview published in *Granma* on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, Major General Samuel Rodiles Planas also provided details about his terrorist activities during those years.

Together with several comrades I set off firecrackers and bombs, the most important at the Cuban Electricity Company. I directed these operations as Assistant Chief of Action and Sabotage in Guantanamo. I also threw Molotov cocktails, painted walls with the acronym M-26-7, participated in the burning of sugar cane fields and other actions.

In August 1957, when Villa was imprisoned, I was appointed Chief of Action and Sabotage. I planned attacks against several traitors and informers. Some were successfully carried out, such as the one executed by Mario

29 Castro, M. *Fidel Castro, el mayor terrorista nacido en América*.

30 Pérez Hernández, F. (2003) *La Sierra, El Llano: eslabones de un mismo combate*. Cuadernos de Historia de la Salud Pública. Available at http://scielo.sld.cu/scielo.php?pid=S0045-91782003000200005&script=sci_arttext

Revelo and José Salgado (Tato) in October against “Gallego Morán,” a despicable and vile traitor who left the Sierra Maestra and joined the enemy, serving as an informer.³¹

Others were not rewarded with a position in the Armed Forces, since they died before the Revolution succeeded. This was the case of Sergio González López, *El Curita*, Chief of Action and Sabotage of the 26th of July Movement in Havana. *El Curita* was the main person responsible for the Night of the Hundred Bombs in Havana, the fire at the Esso Standard Oil Company refinery, the blowing up of the cables of the Bejucal Railway Station, the National Bus Station and the explosion at the Vento Aqueduct.

His legacy is often remembered through many tributes by the Cuban regime. Today, the former Plaza del Vapor and various State buildings bear his name, and the house where he was detained is considered a historic site.³²

The Cuban regime has never hidden its admiration and gratitude towards the terrorists who conducted the Revolution. Urselia Díaz Báez, a member of the Action and Sabotage groups of the 26th of July Movement died when the bomb she was planting in the toilets of the América Movie Theater in Centro Habana³³ went off. At this site there is a large plaque that reads:

In memory of Urselia Díaz Báez, who died heroically fighting against tyranny on September 3, 1957.

Terrorists Julio Pino Machado and Agustín Gómez-Lubián Urioste died in an analogous manner when, in May 1957, a bomb they were trying to place in the central building of the Provincial Government in the City of Santa Clara exploded. Today these terrorists lend their names to two elementary schools in Cuba and the house where Julio Pino Machado was born is a museum dedicated to the memory of this so-called revolutionary martyr.³⁴

31 Báez, L. *Entrevista al general de división Samuel Rodiles Planas*. Granma Special Issue for the 50th anniversary of the glorious Revolutionary Armed Forces (1996). Available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20070110065137/http://www.granma.cubaweb.cu/secciones/generales/art12.html>

32 Castro, M. *Fidel Castro, el mayor terrorista nacido en América*.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Entry: “Casa natal de Julio Pino Machado.” Ecured. Available at https://www.ecured.cu/Casa_natal_de_Julio_Pino_Machado

3. Foquismo: The Use of Terror during the Early Years of Revolutionary Cuba

Hatred as a motivation for fighting, the intransigent hatred directed to the enemy, which drives beyond the natural limitations of the human being and turns him into an effective, violent, selective, and cold killing machine. Our soldiers have to be like that; a people without hatred cannot triumph over a brutal enemy
(Ernesto Che Guevara).³⁵

From the very moment of the triumph and seizure of power by the 26th of July Movement, Fidel Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara set out to export the Cuban Revolution through insurgencies and armed expeditions throughout the continent.

During this initial phase, the strategy of *foquismo* was established. This approach, later propagated by the French theorist Régis Debray, proposed that revolution in Latin America could originate not necessarily from urban centers, but through a vanguard –a small group or “focus”– that would employ intensive tactics to foster the essential revolutionary conditions. In the case of *foquismo*, according to Carlos Alberto Montaner, “Communism will not bring about the Revolution. It will be the other way around. The Revolution will bring about Communism”³⁶.

For the purposes of this report, it is important to emphasize that an essential element in the implementation of this strategy is terrorism. The role of violence is recurrent and explicit and its defense is obvious. In these years Fidel Castro declared that *bullets, not ballot boxes*, represented the revolutionary way to seize power. He did not hesitate to harshly criticize those who –including many Communists– opposed the armed struggle, whom he called “traitors, rightists and deviationists.”³⁷

35 Guevara, E. *Crear dos, tres... muchos Vietnam*. First edition in pamphlet form as a special supplement to the magazine *Tricontinental*, organ of the Executive Secretariat of the Organization of Solidarity of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL). Havana. 1967.

36 Montaner, C.A. *Viaje al corazón de Cuba...* p. 170.

37 *Ibidem*.

These are key episodes and events promoted by the Cuban regime during this period:

- On April 19, 1959 Cuban and Panamanian guerrilla troops conducted an attempted invasion of Panama with the objective of replicating the revolution that had triumphed in Cuba a few months earlier. The armed expedition was led by Cuban César Vega, an old university friend of Fidel Castro's who had participated in the fiasco of Cayo Confites. The operation consisted of a group of around 82 Cubans, two Panamanians and one US citizen, and it was a failure from the very beginning. On May 1, César Vega capitulated before an OAS commission.³⁸
- Between June 14 and 20, 1959, over the course of one week, 198 combatants landed in the Dominican Republic with the objective of overthrowing the dictator, Trujillo. The revolutionaries had been previously trained at a camp located in Mil Cumbres, in the Province of Pinar del Río. Out of all the combatants, only six survived, four Dominicans and two Cubans.³⁹
- In August, a group of about thirty armed men, mostly Cubans and Haitians along with two Venezuelans, set sail to Baracoa intending to overthrow François Duvalier's government in Haiti. The Haitian volunteers had received three months' training at a base outside Havana. The Haitian Armed Forces were able to defeat the guerrillas and very few were able to escape. Shortly thereafter Haiti broke off relations with Cuba.⁴⁰
- In Nicaragua, Cuba supported several invasion attempts from Cuba with arms, ammunition, and Cuban fighters in order to overthrow the Government of Luis Somoza⁴¹. The Nicaraguan Government blamed Cuba and, in 1960, expelled the Cuban Ambassador and broke diplomatic relations with the island⁴². In response, in 1961 the Cubans created a Marxist-Leninist guerrilla organization that became known as the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). According to the brother of the late Carlos Fonseca Amador (the Stalinist Nicaraguan founder of the FSLN), it was the Cuban Ambassador to Nicaragua, Quintín Piño Machado, who set up the FSLN.⁴³

In June 1960, Begoña Urroz, a 20-month-old baby, was killed in Spain when a bomb exploded at San Sebastian train station. For many years, this attack was attributed to ETA. An investigation by the Memorial of Victims

38 Baeza Flores, A. *PANAMA: Castro's Intervention*. The History, Culture and Legacy of the People of Cuba. 2013. Available at <https://www.thecuban-history.com/2013/08/cuban-unwise-intervention-in-panama-on-april-1959-la-imprudente-intervencion-cubana-en-panama-en-abril-1959/>

39 Ferrero Blanco, M.D. and San Francisco, M. 1959: *Los intentos de derrocamiento de las dictaduras de Trujillo, Stroessner y Somoza*. Historia Actual Online, 39 (1), 2016. p. 18.

40 See Benemelis, J. *Las guerras secretas de Fidel Castro*. Downtown Book Center Inc. Miami, 2002. The first chapter referring to the war can be consulted at <https://cubamatinal.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/cubamatinal1.pdf>.

41 *Ibid.*

42 Ferrero Blanco, M.D. and San Francisco, M. 1959: *Los intentos de derrocamiento de Trujillo, Stroessner y Somoza*. p. 16.

43 Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department. Coordinating Cuba's Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas*. Cuban American National Foundation. Miami, 1988.

of terrorism conducted in 2020 concluded that the device had not been planted by the Basque terrorist group, but by DRIL (the Iberian Revolutionary Liberation Directorate) and the founding of DRIL leads us to Cuba.⁴⁴

DRIL was a merger between UCE (*Unión de Combatientes Españoles/Spanish Combatants' Union*) and MNI (*Movimiento Nacional Independiente/National Independent Movement*). UCE operated in Cuba and Venezuela, heavily influenced by Spanish-American Alberto Bayo. Bayo had participated as an instructor of the 26th of July Movement and, as he declared in 1959, “was training commandos who were going to act in Spain following the Sierra Maestra model”⁴⁵.

In fact, they staged an attack in Spain shortly afterwards under Jorge Muley Moré, Coordinator of Cuban Militancy and leader of the organization after Bayo's departure. Muley was the head of the commando that perpetrated the attack that would end the life of Begoña Urroz. After the assassination he ended up becoming Che Guevara's lieutenant.⁴⁶

- At the end of 1961, activities aimed at exporting revolution were systematized. With the aim of supporting guerrilla and terrorist activities abroad, Fidel Castro decided to create the National Liberation Directorate under the General Intelligence Directorate (DGI). Initially, three regionally organized Liberation Committees were set up: the Caribbean, Central America and South America.⁴⁷

During those years, it was estimated that hundreds of agents were trained by the National Liberation Directorate, which was advised by at least five Soviet intelligence agents⁴⁸. Among others, Dominicans, Guatemalans, Venezuelans and Chileans went to Cuba to receive training and then were later infiltrated back into their countries of origin.⁴⁹

- Also in 1961, Fidel Castro established relations with the Algerian National Liberation Front. Cuba supplied arms to the terrorist group through Morocco. Later, cooperation would be extended to health, education and military intelligence.⁵⁰

44 Aizpiorea, L.: *Fin de la polémica: DRIL mató a la niña Begoña Urroz*. El País, Madrid. 2020. Available at <https://elpais.com/espana/2020-06-23/fin-de-la-polemica-el-dril-mato-a-la-nina-begona-urroz.html>

45 Fernández Soldevilla, G. and de Pablo, S. : *Las raíces de un cáncer. Historia y memoria de la primera ETA (1959-1973)*. Tecnos, Madrid. 2024. p. 81.

46 De la Cal, L. *El jefe del comando que mató a la niña Begoña Urroz acabó de 'lugarteniente' del Che Guevara*. El Mundo. June 30, 2019. Available at <https://www.elmundo.es/cronica/2019/06/30/5d1673a7fdddf9b3a8b4648.html>

47 Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department. Coordinating Cuba's Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas*. Cuban American National Foundation. Miami, 1988.

48 *Cuban Subversion in Latin America since June 1964*. Intelligence Memorandum. Directorate of Intelligence. Central Intelligence Agency. 1965.

49 Suchlicki, J. and Pons, E. *Cuba's commitment to violence, terrorism and anti-Americanism*. Cuban Studies Institute. Miami. 2020.

50 Gleijeses, Piero. *Cuba's First Venture in Africa: Algeria, 1961-1965* in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 28, no. 1, 1996, pp. 159-95. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/157991>.

- In Venezuela, evidence of Cuba's collaboration with terrorist organizations soon became known: provision of weapons, training, street terrorism. Fidel Castro even held a confidential meeting in the middle of the Sierra Maestra with a conglomerate of Latin American leaders "to analyze the way to precipitate a war throughout the continent, starting from a Venezuelan focal point."⁵¹

The President of Venezuela, Rómulo Betancourt, decided to present to the OAS evidence of Fidel Castro's attempt to destabilize his government. As a consequence, in January 1962, the OAS, meeting in regular session, agreed to expel Cuba from the organization⁵². Castro's support for the Venezuelan guerrillas would continue with the determined backing of the Armed Forces of National Liberation (FALN). FALN sought to sabotage the democratic elections of 1963 by threatening to kill anyone who went to the polls to vote.⁵³

- In the summer of 1962, the US Government found irrefutable evidence of the presence of launching ramps for nuclear warheads capable of firing intermediate-range ballistic missiles against the United States. The downing of a United States U-2 spy plane over Cuban territory accelerated what would become known as the Cuban Missile Crisis, which could have led to World War III. Finally, the crisis was resolved by agreements between Presidents Kennedy and Khrushchev⁵⁴. In a wire addressed to Khrushchev during the Crisis, the Cuban leader appeared to propose a nuclear first strike on the United States.⁵⁵
- On November 20, 1962, the United States expelled Cuban diplomats Elsa Montera Maldonado and José Gómez Abad for conspiring to carry out a major terrorist attack planned for the Friday after Thanksgiving 1962. The alleged diplomats, who were a husband-and-wife team, were actually State Security agents. The plot was to detonate 500 kilos of explosives inside Macy's, Gimbel's, Bloomingdale's and Manhattan's Grand Central Terminal.⁵⁶
- In the early 1960s, the National Liberation Directorate was also responsible for providing support to so-called liberation movements in Africa. African leaders from Congo, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, Guinea, Tanganyika and Zanzibar –which overthrew the government in 1963– all received funding and military training at the island's facilities.⁵⁷

51 Benemelis, J. Quoted in Avendaño, O. *Días de Sumisión*. Ignedio, Lima/Caracas. 2021.

52 Avendaño, O. *Días de Sumisión*... p. 6.

53 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection*... p. 34.

54 See Hastings, M. *La crisis de los misiles de Cuba 1962*. Editorial Crítica. Madrid, 2023.

55 Fidel Castro's wire to Khrushchev on October 26, 1962 is available in the Wilson Center's digital archive. Available at <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/telegram-fidel-castro-n-s-khrushchev>

56 *Cuban Couple Charged With Sabotage Plan*. Ellensburg Daily Record. Associated Press. Nov 20, 1962. Available at <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=860&dat=19621120&id=TnsKAAAAIABJ&sjid=U0sDAAAAIABJ&pg=6964,5564977>

57 See, Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department. Coordinating Cuba's Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas*. Cuban American National Foundation. Miami, 1988. And Suchlicki, J. and Pons, E. *Cuba's commitment to violence, terrorism and anti-Americanism*. Cuban Studies Institute. Miami. 2020.

- In 1964, the National Liberation Army (ELN) was founded in Colombia. The promoters were a group of Colombian students who had received military training in Cuba and had prepared to return to Colombia and begin the guerrilla struggle. Fabián Vásquez Castaño would establish direct links with Ernesto Che Guevara in order to build the terrorist organization.⁵⁸
- In the spring of 1964 various ETA militants received military training at training camps in Cuba, where they received lessons in kidnapping, subversion and sabotage.⁵⁹
- In November 1964, the Latin American Conference of Communist Parties was held in Havana. There it was agreed to promote a campaign to channel active aid to guerrillas in Venezuela, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay and Haiti.⁶⁰
- In 1965 Ernesto Guevara, together with three hundred other Cubans, joined the guerrilla movement established in Zaire, as the Belgian Congo was then called. He would remain fighting in the country for about twelve months.⁶¹
- In 1966, the first Tricontinental Conference was held in Havana to create the Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America (OSPAAAL). Over twelve days, more than five hundred leaders from eighty-three countries attended the Conference. There were representatives from communist parties, radical movements and terrorist organizations from all over the world. Among those present were Palestinian, Irish, Basque, North Korean, Libyan, Uruguayan, Argentine, Nicaraguan, Dominican, Brazilian, Chilean, Venezuelan and Colombian terrorists.⁶²
- During this conference, Fidel Castro vindicated Cuba's role in supporting revolutionary processes around the globe and insisted that "bullets, not ballot boxes" were the way to seize power, providing the institutional means to promote his violent, anti-American agenda. He stressed that "conditions exist for an armed revolutionary struggle" and criticized those who opposed armed struggle, including various Communist leaders in Latin America, calling them "traitors, rightists and deviationists."⁶³

58 *Ejército de Liberación Nacional. El legado del Che dentro del ELN de Colombia*. 2008. Available at https://cedema.org/digital_items/2869

59 Sánchez, M. and Simón, M. *Historia de un desafío. Cinco décadas de lucha sin cuartel de la Guardia Civil contra ETA*. Península. Madrid. 2017.

60 Eckel, P. *The Havana CP Conference of November 1964*. CIA (319/00004-65). Available at <https://www.archives.gov/files/research/jfk/releases/2018/104-10338-10020.pdf>

61 Kruijt, D. *Che Guevara and guerrilla warfare*. *Globalizations*, 20(8), 1528-1539. (2022) <https://doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2022.2066055>

62 Montaner, C.A. *Viaje al corazón de Cuba...* p. 170.

63 Suchlicki, J. and Pons, E. *Cuba's commitment to violence, terrorism and anti-Americanism*.

- In January 1967, the Cuban regime published a work by the Frenchman Régis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution?*, an apology for violence and armed struggle. The book was translated into many languages and was widely distributed.⁶⁴
- In May 1967 an invasion attempt took place in Venezuela: the Machurucuto Raid. In this operation, some twenty Cubans and Venezuelans armed with weapons arrived on two boats in order to attempt to create a revolutionary front. It ended in failure.
- Also in 1967, with the support of Cuba and accompanied by a group of guerrillas (among them, many Cubans), Ernesto Che Guevara went deep into the Bolivian mountains. His capture and death on October 9, 1967 had a strong impact on Fidel Castro's confidence regarding the possibility of leading a continental revolution. As he points out "Guevara's death in combat in Bolivia in October 1967 effectively ended the era of the *foco* theory, which was based on the unrealistic assumption that no revolutionary preconditions are necessary to promote guerrilla insurgency."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department. Coordinating Cuba's Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas.*

4. The Validity of Terrorism during the Sovietization Years in Cuba

If the Cuban State were to choose to develop terrorist acts, to respond to terrorists with terrorism, we are sure that we would be very efficient terrorists ... Let no one think otherwise! If we were to decide to be terrorists, there is no doubt that we would be very efficient. But the fact that the Cuban Revolution has never resorted to terrorism does not mean that we have not given up on it. May this serve as a warning.
(Fidel Castro, speech delivered at the Carl Marx Theater in Havana on June 6, 1976).

Che Guevara's death caused a strong discredit of *foquismo* as a strategy to seize power. The various attempts to replicate the Revolution through rural guerrillas had failed, demonstrating that the Cuban model could not be automatically transposed to other contexts.

Around 1968 the Soviet Union began to apply cuts in aid and supplies of oil and raw materials as a means of applying pressure. For years, Moscow had been trying to subordinate Fidel Castro's actions to its own strategy. Faced with this situation, Castro had no option but to give in and align himself with the policy suggested by the Kremlin.

Cuba was thus subordinated ideologically, economically and operationally to the Soviet Union, but this did not mean the end of the use of terrorism as a political weapon. In Fontaine's words:

Castro's surrender to the Soviets, however, was far from the end of his terrorist-linked revolutionary journey. In fact, it is fair to say that his real career had only just begun. In other words, the shift towards Moscow made him a more disciplined, reliable and efficient tool for fostering violence, including terrorism, and this time on a broader and deeper scale.⁶⁶

In fact, Cuba's influence around the world increased to levels unimaginable just a few years earlier. Fidel Castro would considerably strengthen the capabilities of the country's conventional military apparatus. According to

⁶⁶ Suchlicki, J. and Pons, E. *Cuba's commitment to violence, terrorism and anti-Americanism...* p. 40.

Benemelis, “Castro’s massive and slow-moving army would be transformed into a specialized, trained, highly mobile force with exceptional fire power that totally depends on the USSR”⁶⁷

In fact, with Soviet aid, Cuba would build up the ninth largest army on the planet, an army larger than that of Brazil, Canada or Spain. The Cuban Armed Forces would eventually comprise 225,000 soldiers and infantry officers, 190,000 reservists and 500,000 militiamen. They also had a vast military arsenal: more than 60,000 tons per year of equipment and ammunition, 1,400 tanks, two frigates and another 60 vessels of different sizes, in addition to an Air Force that included 400 combat and transport airplanes and helicopters.⁶⁸

The military effort promoted by Castro was so significant that, in Africa alone, up to 70,000 men would be deployed.⁶⁹ Cuba would send military missions to Angola, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and some twenty countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, in the Arab sphere, Cuba would send military personnel to Algeria, Iraq, Libya, Syria, South Yemen and the Saharawi front.⁷⁰ In 1973, during the Yom Kippur War, it was discovered that a brigade of Cuban tanks was operating under the Syrian flag.⁷¹ In addition, in the 1970s, Cuba’s military assistance would extend to Grenada and Nicaragua.⁷²

At this point it must be stressed that the strengthening of Cuba’s conventional army and the expansion of its military presence throughout the world did not put an end to its connections with terrorism. Throughout this period:

- The collaboration between Cuba and Palestinian terrorist organizations would be consolidated. The Cuban regime’s support for Al-Fatah dates back to 1965.⁷³ We already know that a large delegation of Palestinians participated in the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana in 1966.⁷⁴ As of then –according to Abu Iyan, one of Yasser Arafat’s closest lieutenants– Palestinian terrorists were sent to training camps in Cuba, whilst agents of the Cuban General Intelligence Directorate traveled to different facilities to train Palestinians.⁷⁵ According to Fontaine, the number of terrorists trained in Cuban camps would increase from half a dozen

67 Benemelis, J. *Castro, Subversión y terrorismo en África*. Editorial San Martín. Madrid, 1988. p. 253.

68 Montaner, C.A. *Viaje al corazón de Cuba...* p. 172.

69 Benemelis, J. *Castro, Subversión y terrorismo en África...* p. 572.

70 *Ibid.* p. 563.

71 Metz, A. *Cuban-Israeli relations: From the Cuban Revolution to the new world order*. Cuban Studies, 1993, pp. 113-134.

72 Benemelis, J. *Castro, Subversión y terrorismo en África...* p. 561.

73 Álvarez Acosta, M.E. *Una aproximación a la política exterior de Cuba hacia África Norte y el Medio Oriente*. Política internacional, V (No. 4/2023), Havana, 2003, 103-119. Available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8422830>

74 Roig, P. *Cuba e Israel*. Cuban Studies Institute. Miami. 2018. Available at <https://cubanstudiesinstitute.us/espanol/cuba-e-israel/>

75 Benemelis, J. *Castro, Subversión y terrorismo en África...* p. 245.

in the 1960s to around three hundred by the end of the 1970s.⁷⁶ In 1968 terrorists were sent to camps in North Africa and Iraq and later, in 1972, specialized training camps were set up in Lebanon, Libya and Yemen.⁷⁷

- During these years, the explicit legitimization of terrorism as a tool to promote revolutionary activity was not renounced. As Roger Fontaine points out, each era had its own prophet. Che Guevara, a reference-point for rural guerrilla warfare, would be replaced by the Brazilian Carlos Marighella, who, with his *Mini Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, promoted terrorist techniques, including kidnapping and hostage-taking, sabotage techniques, urban guerrilla warfare, robbery and assassination. For Marighella “terrorism is a weapon that the revolutionary can never renounce.”⁷⁸

Fidel Castro was to send copies of this manual to all corners of the world. At Castro’s request, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, leader of the Italian Red Brigades and Editor of the magazine *Tricontinental*, would publish it in several languages and distribute it globally.⁷⁹

- Support for terrorism, however, was not limited to a theoretical approach. It is true that Cuba’s subordination to the Soviet strategy brought with it, among other consequences, a change in the General Intelligence Directorate (DGI); Manuel Piñero, alias “Barbarroja,” who was the main coordinator of relations with terrorist organizations in the region, left the Directorate. However, Fidel Castro managed to keep Piñero as the Head of the Directorate of National Liberation, which in 1974 was transformed into the Department of the Americas, in charge of providing the necessary resources to support terrorist groups in the region.⁸⁰
- In Uruguay, contacts and collaborations were established with the National Liberation Movement (MLN), better known as the Tupamaros, a Marxist-Leninist organization that used the Cuban Revolution as its model. Mauricio Rosencoff, who would assume the leadership of the organization after the arrest of Raúl Sendic, would have received both funds and directives from Cuban intelligence. In addition, several of the organization’s leaders were trained at camps located in Cuba.⁸¹

76 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* p. 115.

77 *Ibid.* p. 114.

78 *Ibid.* p. 46.

79 Benemelis, J. *Castro, Subversión y terrorismo en África...* p. 245.

80 Hudson, R. *Castro’s America Department. Coordinating Cuba’s Support for Marxist-Leninist Violence in the Americas*. Cuban American National Foundation. Miami, 1988.

81 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* p. 46.

- In Chile, Cuba's influence under the Allende Government was decisive. During those years, the Embassy's activity was frenetic and its influence reached La Moneda Palace.⁸²

Fidel Castro always offered support and advice to Salvador Allende –Barbarroja himself went to Santiago de Chile to advise him shortly before the military coup but from the Cuban regime they maintained in parallel close relations with the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR), a Marxist organization that criticized the alleged gradualism of the President and his inability to dismantle the so-called structures of the capitalist state. Cuba, together with North Korea, provided the MIR with intelligence support, weapons and military instructors, who trained them in areas such as document forgery, explosives handling, photography and camouflage techniques.⁸³

- In Argentina, the Cuban regime collaborated with various terrorist organizations. On the one hand, during those years, there was a Trotskyist organization called the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP), which carried out intensive terrorist activities, including kidnappings, robberies, and assassinations. On the other hand, the Montoneros had received training in Cuba. The DGI acted as the nexus between the two. And in 1974, the Junta de Coordinación Revolucionaria (JCR) was created with the purpose of coordinating terrorist and clandestine activities in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile and Uruguay.⁸⁴

In Peru, the Cubans established links with the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), a terrorist organization that, unlike Sendero Luminoso, focused its attacks on U.S. targets. Its members had been trained in Cuba and maintained connections with Cuban intelligence. A police raid carried out by Peruvian security forces found weapons, olive green uniforms and medicines whose origin was traced back to Cuba and Nicaragua.⁸⁵

- In Colombia, as already mentioned, the National Liberation Army (ELN) was founded by Colombian students during their stay in Cuba. Furthermore, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) emerged as a merger of several guerrilla groups under the leadership of the Communist Party.⁸⁶ And soon Cuba would establish relations with what –in the late 1970s– would become the most prominent organization: the April 19 Movement, known by its acronym M-19.

M-19, which received support and training from Cuba, was responsible for multiple robberies, assassinations and attacks. Its most notable actions include the seizure of the Dominican Republic Embassy, which

82 Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department...*

83 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* pp. 49 and 50.

84 *Ibid.* pp. 50 and 51.

85 Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department...*

86 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* p. 96.

culminated in the payment of a ransom for the release of the hostages and the asylum of the terrorists in Cuba; the assault on the Palace of Justice in Bogotá, which resulted in the assassination of important Colombian judges; and an attempted invasion orchestrated from Cuba in February 1981.⁸⁷

The Cuban Department of the Americas made great efforts aimed at promoting the activities of different factions and terrorist groups. To this end, a meeting between the leaders of FARC, ELN and M-19 culminated in the creation of a unified strategy.⁸⁸

However, the greatest innovation regarding their subversion strategies, in which Cuba played a central role, was the close alliance with drug-trafficking. According to evidence presented by the State Department, the DEA and the State of Florida, a joint network between Cuba, the guerrillas and drug-traffickers had been established since 1980 to facilitate the shipment of drugs to the United States and the supply of weapons to the Colombian guerrillas.⁸⁹

- In Nicaragua, the Cuban regime offered significant support to the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Cuba's role was key in terms of unifying the different guerrilla factions, the use of urban terrorism, the provision of arms and training and the sending of what were called "internationalists," many of whom were terrorists trained in Cuba.⁹⁰
- Five months after the Sandinista victory in Nicaragua, Fidel Castro assured the Salvadoran and Honduran rebels that they would be next. In El Salvador, the Department of the Americas worked to unify the various terrorist groups. As a result, in 1980 the Unified Revolutionary Directorate (DRU) was formed, which integrated the Popular Liberation Forces "Farabundo Martí" (FPL), the Armed Forces of National Resistance (FARN) and the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCES). Later, the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) would also join.

From Havana, an arms-supply network was established and intensive training programs were coordinated in preparation for what was called the "final offensive," which was scheduled for early 1981. Although the blitzkrieg proved to be a failure, Cuba continued its collaboration with the FMLN, which carried out intense terrorist activity, including an attempt to sabotage the March 1982 elections with a massive terror campaign.⁹¹

87 Hudson, R. *Castro's America Department...*

88 *Ibid*

89 *Ibid.* pp. 99-101.

90 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* pp. 63-64.

91 *Ibid.* pp. 66-70.

- In early April 1977, Castro traveled to Moscow, where he met with Brezhnev and they agreed to do everything possible to “promote Communist national liberation movements internationally.” Much of this effort was to focus on Central America.⁹²
- In Honduras, Cuba worked to unify various organizations and factions into the National Directorate for the Unity of the Honduran Revolutionary Movement (DNU-MRU). Although this effort was unsuccessful, Havana did not stop supporting the different groups, supplying them with weapons and training. Among these groups was the Popular Liberation Movement (MPL), known as the Cinchoneros.

According to Fontaine, since their foundation, the Cinchoneros’ activity can be classified as almost exclusively terrorist. After the failure of the hostage exchange during the seizure of the Chamber of Commerce Building in San Pedro Sula, the leaders found refuge in Cuba. Havana and Nicaragua also provided support for the Lorenzo Zelaya Popular Revolutionary Forces (FPR-LZ), which, among other acts, were responsible for the sabotage of the main power plant in Tegucigalpa.

In Guatemala, Cuba’s efforts also focused on unifying various organizations. In 1980, the National Revolutionary Union of Guatemala (UNRG) was established along with its armed wing, the General Revolutionary Command (CGR). The announcement was made in the presence of Manuel Piñero, Head of the Department of the Americas, and Ramiro Jesús Abreu, leader of the section responsible for Central America. This new organization integrated the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP), the Organization of the People in Arms (ORPA), the Rebel Armed Forces (FAR) and the Guatemalan Labor Party (PGT) into a single strategy. The agreement resulted in increased military training and assistance from Cuba. Weapons shipments were made from Nicaragua and included bazookas, mortars, machine guns and M-16 rifles.

The organizations had a presence in rural areas and in the main cities of Guatemala. In the cities, urban terrorism became the EGP’s main tactic. In 1981, this organization claimed responsibility for an attack with a bomb placed in the luggage compartment of a U.S. Eastern Airlines plane. Fortunately, the bomb exploded on the ground.⁹³

Costa Rica was also a target of terrorism backed by the Cuban regime. With Cuba’s help, hundreds of militants from the Popular Vanguard Party (PVP) were sent to Nicaragua to join the fight with the Sandinistas. Subsequently, many of them stayed in the country to direct the military training of Costa Ricans. From 1981 onwards, there was evidence of terrorist activities, such as kidnappings, murders, bombings and bank robberies, conducted by Costa Ricans and foreigners previously linked to Cuba.

92 Hudson, R. *Castro’s America Department...*

93 Fontaine, R.W. (1988). *Terrorism. The Cuban Connection...* pp. 72-75.

- After Michael Manley's victory in Jamaica in 1973, his political movement, the People's National Party (PNP), developed relations with Cuba for the military indoctrination of young Jamaicans. Between 1,000 and 1,400 young *brigadistas* traveled to Cuba to receive training in covert urban terrorism.

Shortly before the 1980 elections, a shipment of weapons and ammunition was sent from Cuba and utilized in actions against the Jamaican Labor Party. The Labor Party achieved a landslide in the elections and, after nine days, the new government broke off diplomatic relations with Cuba.⁹⁴

- Cuba played a key role in the establishment of a Marxist-Leninist regime in Grenada in 1979. The influence of the Cuban regime was intensified once Maurice Bishop came to power. Immediately, Fidel Castro appointed a senior intelligence officer from the Department of the Americas to coordinate activities and turn Grenada into a police state. Specialists were sent to advise the new forces, and a score of officers were sent to Cuba to train the field units. In addition, large quantities of weaponry were sent, which were also used in destabilization operations in Suriname.⁹⁵
- In Puerto Rico, a Free Associated State –an unincorporated territory of the United States since 1952– there is ample evidence of collaboration between Cuba and the various terrorist organizations that have operated both on the island and in the United States.

Cuba maintained a close relationship with MIRA. One of the founders of the Movimiento Independentista Revolucionario en Armas (MIRA), Filiberto Inocencio Ojeda-Ríos, who was recruited by Cuban intelligence during his visit to Cuba in 1961, received training in explosives and was in charge of a bomb and explosives detonation campaign. MIRA was responsible for 300 explosions, almost all of them in San Juan –capital city of Puerto Rico– until its dissolution in the 1970s.

After MIRA dissolved, Filiberto Ojeda founded FALN, a new terrorist group that primarily targeted locations in the United States, especially New York and Chicago. The FALN allegedly detonated over 130 bombs, including one at Fraunces Tavern in New York, resulting in four deaths and sixty-three injuries.

However, the terrorist organization that had the greatest impact was the Ejército Popular Boricua (EPB), known as the *macheteros*, which was responsible for assassinations, explosions and various acts of sabotage. Jorge Massetti revealed that he helped channel Cuban funds to finance this organization. In 1983, the *macheteros* hijacked a Well Fargo truck in Connecticut and stole more than \$7 million, which was then transported to Cuba. One of those involved in this robbery, Victor Manuel Gerena, found refuge in Cuba.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 87.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 90.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 133-135.

- Cuba's connection to terrorism in the United States goes beyond channeling terror through Puerto Rican militants. In 1967, during the second edition of the Tricontinental Conference, Fidel Castro chose Stokely Carmichael, the promoter of Black Power and the Black Panthers, as his keynote speaker. At that event, the Cuban leader announced his intention to initiate a guerrilla war in the United States, a commitment he declared that Cuba would officially support. However, the movement never achieved success, due, in large part, to internal disagreements.⁹⁷

Cuba also provided support to Weather Underground, a terrorist organization born during the years of turmoil and protests against the Vietnam War. Together with its sister group, the New World Liberation Front, these organizations were responsible for placing thousands of bombs throughout the country. Their bombings included attacks on the Capitol and the State Department headquarters, an attack that, although it left no fatalities, caused a significant impact, affecting 20 offices on three floors of the building.⁹⁸

- The links of Cuban intelligence services with terrorist groups abroad also reached Europe. Relations with the Red Brigades in Italy, ETA in Spain, and the IRA in Ireland have been noted.

In 1975, the French Government ordered the expulsion of three Cuban diplomats due to their collaboration with the terrorist Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, known as Carlos the Jackal –one of the most wanted terrorists in the world– involved in the murder of two French agents and a Lebanese informant in an apartment in the Latin Quarter of Paris.

Of Venezuelan origin, Carlos the Jackal began his relationship with Cuba during the years of the Tricontinental Conference. He spent some time in the military training camps that the DGI had set up in Cuba and always maintained his ties with Havana.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 137.

⁹⁸ *Weather Underground Bombings. Famous Cases and Bombings.* Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Available at <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/weather-underground-bombings>

⁹⁹ *France Expelling 3 Cuba Officials.* The New York Times, New York, July 11, 1975. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/07/11/archives/france-expelling-3-cuban-officials-diplomats-said-to-be-linked-with.html>

5. Cuba and the Fall of the Soviet Bloc: The Rise of Transnational Criminal Networks

Iran and Cuba, together, can bring the United States to its knees.

The US regime is very weak, and we are witnessing its weakness up close
(Fidel Castro during his visit to Iran, Syria and Libya. *France Press*, May 10, 2001).

As is well known, in the early 1990s, the collapse of the Communist system and the dissolution of the Soviet Union had a devastating impact on Cuba. The Cuban dictatorship had long since completed its Sovietization process, and its ideological, economic, and organic dependence on the USSR was total. But, with or without the USSR, Fidel Castro was not willing to amend his Revolution.

Since the time of Gorbachev's *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, Fidel Castro had rejected any attempt to open up Cuba, including the transition to a free market economy. It did not matter that the rest of the world had understood the economic fallacy of Communist centralism. Fidel Castro was determined to be an exception –to remain the last bastion of Communism. Shortly after Gorbachev's visit to Cuba in 1988, the Commander-in-Chief lashed out at those who proposed a *perestroika* for Cuba: "We have nothing to learn and we will not deviate one iota from this path," he said.¹⁰⁰

Indeed, by Fidel Castro's decision, Cuba became an exception, a sort of reserve of the Socialist system in a world that appeared keen to bury Communism. This immobilism affected the country's future development.

First, Cuba moved to find support and reaffirm its leadership in the so-called regional Left. In 1990, Fidel Castro and Ignacio Lula da Silva, who would later become President of Brazil, founded the Sao Paulo Forum. The objective was to create resistance, to bring together the organizations, parties and left-wing movements that remained after the Soviet collapse and to keep the flame of Marxism burning. The Sao Paulo Forum has developed the political mutation of the Latin American Left; it has contributed to the rise to power of many

100 Castro, F. *Speech delivered at the central act for the 35th Anniversary of the attack to the Moncada Barracks*. July 26, 1988. Available at <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/es/discursos/discurso-pronunciado-en-el-acto-central-por-el-xxxv-aniversario-del-asalto-al-cuartel>

of its candidates through electoral means; but it has also included terrorist organizations in its ranks such as the ELN or FARC and has conducted operations to destabilize democracies throughout the region.¹⁰¹

Domestically, Fidel Castro nipped any temptation for reform in the bud. This is how we can interpret the so-called Ochoa Case, which is considered to be the biggest political purge since the beginning of the Cuban Revolution, effectively liquidating any Cuban leaders who –rightly or wrongly– might have challenged Fidel Castro’s leadership. Alleging connections with drug-trafficking, the Cuban regime proceeded to arrest, bring to trial and subsequently convict General Arnaldo Ochoa, Antonio and Patricio de la Guardia, Amado Padrón and Jorge Martínez, as well as other officials.¹⁰² Today we know that the connections with drug-trafficking were much broader; they not only continued, but the regime’s links with drug-trafficking and criminal networks would become a structural element that ensured its viability.

Indeed, the end of Soviet subsidies forced the Cuban regime to find new ways to clean up the public accounts and finance the country’s public spending. The so-called Special Period opened a path for reforms. Sacrifices were demanded, reforms were promoted, dollar possession was legalized, and foreign investment channels were opened. There were small openings for self-employment and efforts to develop tourism and biotechnology industries. Years later, Raúl Castro would carry out a process of reforms aimed at strengthening the country’s productive capacities. The reality –as Jorge Sanguinetty points out– is that more than six decades after the implementation of Communism, Cuba continues to maintain a dysfunctional economy, one that suffers permanent instability and features a chronic dependence on large subsidies and foreign capital.¹⁰³

The Cuban regime found new ways to generate foreign currency to support the struggling economy.

- Remittances approved by Fidel Castro in 1993 came to represent one of the most important sources of income for the island. According to economist Pavel Vidal, in the 2005-2020 period, the economic exchange value of remittances sent to Cuba from the United States represented an average of 6.8% of the country’s GDP.¹⁰⁴
- The export of doctors and other professionals to more than sixty-eight countries brought in more than US\$7.7 billion and has become one of the main sources of income, surpassing that of tourism.
- The arrival of recurrent subsidies from third countries, particularly Venezuela, whose aid came to represent 22% of GDP.

101 On the Sao Paulo Forum see Peña Esclusa, A. *La Guerra Cultural del Foro de Sao Paulo*. Federación Verdad Colombia. Bogotá, 2021.

102 On the Ochoa case read Fogel, J and Rosenthal, B.: *Fin de siglo en La Habana*. Anaya. Madrid, 1994.

103 Sanguinetty, J. *The Cuban economy 60 years later*. Cuba in Transition: Volume 29. Papers and Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting. Available at https://www.ascecubadatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/v29-asce_2019_22sanguinetty.pdf

104 Vidal Alejandro, P. *El impacto económico de las sanciones estadounidenses a Cuba, 1994-2000*. Working paper. Real Instituto Elcano. Madrid, 2022.

- For the purposes of this report, however, what is relevant is that the Cuban regime strengthened its activities relating to terrorism and organized crime, since both would become an intrinsic and central part of the regime's strategy. Cuba has become an international player in the realm of transnational organized crime.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Cuba not only maintained its links with terrorism and drug-trafficking, but also turned these and organized crime into one of the pillars of the regime's viability. With regard to terrorist activities in the strict sense, the novelty of this last stage is that it is no longer possible to determine whether it is Cuba that sponsors terrorism or whether it is organized crime itself that controls the Cuban regime.

In this sense, Cuba has become what Moisés Naím calls a mafia State:

In the last two decades, a series of profound transformations in world politics and economics have driven the emergence of what I call mafia States. Countries in which the traditional concepts of "corruption," "organized crime" or government entities "penetrated" by criminal groups do not fully grasp the phenomenon in all its complexity, magnitude, and importance. In mafia States, it is not criminals who have taken over the state through the bribery and extortion of officials, but rather the State that has taken control of criminal networks. And not to eradicate them, but to put them at its service and, more specifically, at the service of the economic interests of the rulers, their relatives and associates.

In the early 1980s, a business and organizational network was created in Cuba in order to diversify what were called the "Commander's reserves."¹⁰⁵ The network coordinated a set of activities that escaped from the ironclad and centralized planning system. Many of these activities were part of the licit economy, but also served, among other things, to launder the proceeds of drug-trafficking. This network included CIMEX Corporation, Cubanacan, and the International Financial Bank, among others. And dependent on them was the Convertible Currency Department, which was created to conduct surreptitious activities capable of circumventing the U.S. embargo. At its head was Tony de la Guardia.¹⁰⁶

The researcher and director of Archivo Cuba, María Werlau, has described this business conglomerate in detail –managed by the Castro family's closest circle– which in turn maintained close connections with drug-trafficking, organized crime and money laundering.

The "Commander's Reserves" are reportedly fed through schemes that include: (1) an allocated percentage of income from tourism, remittances from abroad, and commercial operations in hard currency inside and outside Cuba; (2) hard currency earnings of Cubans employed abroad or conducting business abroad but under the

¹⁰⁵ *Las Reservas del Comandante*. From Cuba Monthly Economic Report. Special issue, August 1997. Available at http://www.futurodecuba.org/las_reservas_del_comandante.htm

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

authority or control of the Cuban State; (3) the sale of Cuban State assets to foreigners; (4) the sale abroad of art, artifacts, jewelry, antiques and other valuables taken when their owners leave the country; and (5) proceeds from drug-trafficking and criminal activities perpetrated by subversive and terrorist groups with the help of Cuban agents or coordinated by Cuba.¹⁰⁷

Cuba's connections to drug-trafficking have long been denounced and documented. Some go way back to Crescencio Pérez, the peasant who helped Fidel Castro settle in Sierra Maestra, the man who controlled the production and marketing of many crops, including marijuana. When some of the revolutionaries realized who their savior was and complained to Castro, he told them that for the time being they should depend on him. He would end up being a revolutionary hero.¹⁰⁸

In *El Gran Engaño: Fidel Castro y el Narcotráfico Internacional (The Great Deception: Fidel Castro and International Drug Trafficking)*, Uruguayan investigative journalist José Friedl takes a far-ranging look at the Cuban regime's connections to drug-trafficking; the role of the Department of the Americas and Commander Manuel Piñeiro in the early years of the Revolution and how they involved Salvador Allende in those activities; the agreement reached in the mid-1970s with M-19 in Colombia, which included the supply of arms and collaboration in drug-trafficking to the United States; the Panamanian connection with Manuel Noriega; the shadow of Cuba in the shipment of drugs through Nicaragua; the involvement in the drug-trafficking of Reinaldo and Rubén Ruiz, who made use of Varadero Beach Airport; or the case of the 7.2-ton shipment of cocaine on the part of a company controlled by the Cuban State.¹⁰⁹

There is a common thread, a recurring pattern, a persistent scheme that consists of a connection with high-ranking officials and military personnel that form part of the regime. This is because Cuba's links with drug-trafficking are not accidental, but structural. This was precisely one of the points highlighted in a secret CIA report, declassified in 1989, which highlighted the links between the Cuban Government and drug-trafficking.¹¹⁰

The report contained information regarding collaboration with prominent traffickers such as Carlos Lehder and Jaime Guillot, the use of air routes, ports, and sea lanes, as well as support for money laundering and connections with other governments. Most importantly, however, the report pointed out that the degree of

107 See Werlau, M. *Fidel Castro, Inc. A global conglomerate*. Cuba in Transition: Volume 15. Papers and Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Meeting. <https://www.ascecubadatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/v15-werlau.pdf>

108 Betancourt, E. *Cuba's Balance of Payments Gap, the Remittances Scam, Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering*. Cuba in Transition: Volume 10. Papers and Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting. Available at https://ascecubadatabase.org/asce_proceedings/cubas-balance-of-payments-gap-the-remittances-scam-drug-trafficking-and-money-laundering/

109 Friedl Zapata, José A. *El Gran Engaño: Fidel Castro, y su íntima relación con el narcotráfico internacional*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Santiago Apóstol, 2005.

110 The CIA report 'Cuban Government involvement in Drug Trafficking' was declassified in May 2009 and is available at <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP87T00217R000700140002-5.pdf>.

involvement of high-ranking officials in a power structure as monolithic as Cuba's made it improbable to think of isolated acts, suggesting instead a State policy carried out by the regime.

There are many and repeated cases of collaboration by high-ranking members of the Cuban authorities in drug-trafficking:

- In 1982, a U.S. court was in charge of analyzing the case relating to Cuba's links with Colombia's M-19. Four high-ranking military officers were linked: Admiral Aldo Santamaría, Head of the Cuban Navy and Castro's close collaborator; Fernando Ravelo, Ambassador to Colombia and later to Nicaragua; René Rodríguez Cruz, President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples, a close Castro collaborator, now deceased; and Gonzalo Bassols, a Cuban diplomat accredited in Colombia at the time.¹¹¹
- In 1989, a trial took place in Florida involving Robert Vesco, who was accused of drug trafficking. The trial disclosed information regarding connections between Cuban officials and drug trafficking, including the establishment of routes for drug planes through Cuban airspace. According to the accusation, Vesco obtained the approval of the Cuban authorities for this agreement. Later, former Deputy Chief of the Cuban Air Force, General Rafael del Pino, said in a Radio Martí interview that Raúl Castro's office must authorize any plane flying over Cuba and deviating from designated corridors.
- In the trial of Panamanian General Noriega, convicted in the United States for drug-trafficking in 1993, we come across the figure of Fidel Castro himself in his capacity as a mediator with the Medellín Cartel and the seizure of a cocaine laboratory in the country.
- In 1989, during the criminal trial in the case of Reinaldo and Rubén Ruiz, clear connections to the Armed Forces were confirmed. Reinaldo was a cousin of Captain Miguel Ruiz Poo, from the Cuban Interior Ministry. Cuban authorities allowed the Ruiz brothers to land at Varadero Beach Airport to refuel after launching the drugs off the Cuban coast near the Bahamas. Meanwhile, smugglers operating in speedboats would come from Florida to pick up the shipments. The Cuban Coast Guard radar monitored U.S. Coast Guard patrols to assist the sailors in avoiding detection.
- In the 1990s, Cuba, through its strong connections with Colombian terrorist organizations, played a significant role in the establishment of an entire drug-trafficking network in Venezuela. The fruit of this

111 Betancourt, E. *Cuba's Balance of Payments Gap, the Remittances Scam, Drug Trafficking and Money Laundering*. Cuba in Transition: Volume 10. Papers and Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting. Available at: https://ascecupadatabase.org/asce_proceedings/cubas-balance-of-payments-gap-the-remittances-scam-drug-trafficking-and-money-laundering/

association was the consolidation within the Armed Forces of the “Cartel de los Soles.” The group’s name comes from the “sun” decorations on the uniforms.¹¹²

The Cuban dictatorship contributed not only to the establishment of these links, but also to their expansion to new markets.¹¹³ During these years, Venezuela became one of the most important cocaine hubs in the world. Some 250 tons of cocaine are trafficked through Venezuela annually, representing between 10 and 15 percent of estimated global production.¹¹⁴ And Cuba, as Maibort Petit points out, “has been their mentor.”¹¹⁵

Indeed, since the rise to power of Hugo Chavez, Havana has played a particularly important role in Venezuelan affairs. To such extent that, in 2007, Hugo Chávez proposed a confederation of the two countries in order to become one, with this option being included in the constitutional referendum rejected that year by Venezuelans.¹¹⁶ In 2015, Leasmy Salazar testified in the drug-trafficking trial held in New York against the nephews of Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores. The former Head of Security and Personal Assistant of Hugo Chávez accused Diosdado Cabello of being the Head of the Cartel de los Soles. And he declared that the Cuban regime protects and serves some drug-trafficking routes from Venezuelan territory to the United States.¹¹⁷

- On May 19, 2019, the Panamanian Naval Services (SENAM Panama) announced that they had confiscated thousands of packages of cocaine hidden in bags of charcoal that came from Cuba and were destined for Turkey.¹¹⁸

Within this context of links with drug-trafficking, Cuba’s connections with terrorism have not ceased either. In fact, they have expanded to global proportions. To such extent that, today, it is not easy to conclude whether Cuba is a State that collaborates with terrorism or is simply a node in a transnational criminal network, the largest transnational organized crime conglomerate that has ever existed.¹¹⁹

112 Venezuelan journalist and political scientist Maibort Petit has extensively researched and documented the activity of the Cartel de los Soles. Among others, see Petit, M. *El cartel de los soles: La conspiración criminal de Hugo Chávez. Cocaína en Miraflores*. Washington DC. 2018.

113 Wutz, S. *Cartel de los Soles*. Center for a Free Cuba. Washington. 2021. Available at https://cubacenter.org/publications/2021/08/05/cartel-de-soles/#_edn4

114 Insight Crime. *La revolución de la cocaína en Venezuela*. 2022. Available at <https://insightcrime.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/La-revolucion-de-la-cocaina-en-Venezuela-InSight-Crime-Apr-2022.pdf>

115 See Petit, M. “Venezuela: un Estado que se convirtió en una organización criminal” in Spencer, D., Coutinho, L., Blanco, J.A., Petit, M., Sanchez Berzaín, C, Acha, H. *Guerra Infinita. Las caras del nuevo conflicto mundial*.

116 On Cuba’s role in Venezuela, see the report prepared by the Spanish Association Cuba in Transition, the Center for a Free Cuba and the Pan American Democracy Foundation. *El papel de Cuba en la tortura y represión de Venezuela*, September 2024. Available at <https://www.scribd.com/document/767662897/Informe-Papel-de-Cuba-en-La-Represion-y-Tortura-de-Venezuela>

117 Petit, M. *Cocaína en Miraflores. Crónica del narco poder en Venezuela*. Washington, 2018

118 Suchlicki, J. *Cuba’s commitment to violence, terrorism and anti-Americanism*. Cuban Studies Institute. Miami, 2020. Available at <https://cubanstudies-institute.us/principal/cubas-commitment-to-violence-terrorism-and-anti-americanism/>

119 See Sanchez Berzaín, C. “Castrochavismo: crimen organizado en las Américas.” In Spencer, D., Coutinho, L., Blanco, J.A., Petit, M., Sanchez Berzaín, C, Acha, H. *Guerra Infinita. Las caras del nuevo conflicto mundial*.

On May 17, 2012, the U.S. Congressional Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on *Cuba's Global Terrorism, Intelligence and Warfare Network*. Among the experts who spoke at the hearing was Christopher Simmons, founding Editor of Cuba Confidential, a news source on Cuban espionage worldwide.

During his presentation on terrorism in Cuba, Simmons highlighted three key points: the terrorism is orchestrated by the regime, it receives support from the regime, and it is connected through alliances with several terrorist organizations.¹²⁰

Over the years Cuba has continued to serve as a sanctuary that has provided a safe haven for dozens of terrorists from around the world:

- More than thirty ETA terrorists have found refuge in Cuba since the 1980s. Some went as part of an agreement with the Spanish Government. Many others were also hidden. Among them is Miguel Ángel Apalategui, alias “Apala,” member of the Comando Donosti, accused of the murder of another ETA leader, Eduardo Moreno Bergareche “Pertur”, as well as the perpetrator of several attacks against the military and Civil Guard members.

During that time, a Cuban counterintelligence officer trained the terrorists. In 1992, the Cuban Government authorized the founding of a sort of ETA headquarters in Havana.¹²¹

- Some terrorists trained in Cuba played a very prominent role in attacks perpetrated by ETA in Spain. Florencio Domínguez reveals that René Valenzuela, known as Gato, a MIR member and Cuban agent, planned the kidnapping of businessman Emiliano Revilla. The kidnapping of Emilio Revilla alone involved thirteen members of the MIR. An important part of this group had passed through Cuba, where they received guerrilla training. Seven cases have been reported, likely with more unreported.¹²²
- In 2011, ETA announced that it was laying down its arms. It never apologized to the victims, nor did it collaborate in the clarification of the unsolved attacks. Its political entity Bildu is currently represented in Spanish institutions, including the Spanish Parliament. In June 2024, several representatives of Sortu –part of Bildu– traveled to Cuba to sign an exchange and cooperation agreement with the Cuban Communist Party.

120 A full transcript of Christopher Simmons' congressional testimony is available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112hhrg74240/html/CHRG-112hhrg74240.htm>.

121 García Mostazo, N. and Álvarez, M. *Fidel Castro, aliado de guerrillas y protector de ETA*. Available at <https://www.libertaddigital.com/otros/revista/articulos/30141689.htm>

122 See Domínguez, F. *Las conexiones de ETA en América*. RBA Ediciones. Barcelona, 2010. p. 32.

- Cuba has also served as a residence and refuge for members of FARC and ELN. Among others, we can mention the following: Iván Márquez; Jesús Santrich; Rodrigo Londoño Echeverri, alias “Timochenko”; Israel Ramírez Pineda, alias “Pablo Beltrán”; Víctor Orlando Cubides, alias “Aureliano Carbonell”; Manuel Gustavo Martínez; Consuelo Tapias; Tomás García; Isabel Torres; Juan de Dios Lizarazo Astrosa, alias “Alirio Sepúlveda”; Luz Amanda Pallares, alias “Silvana Guerrero”; Vivian Henao; Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, alias “Gabino”; and Oscar Serrano. In January 2019, Colombia’s President asked Cuba to extradite several leaders. Cuba refused.¹²³
- In 2020, Havana rejected Colombia’s extradition requests to hand over ten National Liberation Army (ELN) leaders currently living in Cuba. One year the ELN perpetrated and claimed responsibility for a car bombing at the Bogotá Police Academy, leaving twenty-two dead and more than eighty-seven wounded.¹²⁴
- FALN terrorists responsible for the Fraunces Tavern attack in New York, which killed four and wounded over fifty, fled to Cuba and remain there. The regime continues to refuse to extradite William “Guillermo” Morales, one of the perpetrators.

The Cuban regime has not only not apologized for its collaboration with terrorism over all these years, but has continued to implement huge propaganda and diplomatic campaigns around the world to legitimize terrorism:

- During these years, the Cuban regime has been tremendously successful in transforming its long history of propaganda into a romantic revolutionary myth. The case of Che Guevara is paradigmatic. It was a deliberate campaign, aided by the KGB and its satellites, which became the most successful marketing campaign of modern times.¹²⁵
- Cuba has also repeatedly avoided issuing any kind of condemnation of Hamas. On the contrary, it has sought to legitimize its terrorist activity. After the October 7 terrorist attack on Israel, Cuba’s Foreign Ministry issued a statement blaming the violence on “Israel’s impunity” and calling the Jewish State an occupying power. Once again there was no condemnation of the Hamas terrorists.¹²⁶

123 Suchlicki, J. *Cuba’s commitment to violence, terrorism and anti-Americanism*.

124 Humire, J. and Suárez, J. *Cuba and Iran Are Still State Sponsors of Terrorism*. The Heritage Foundation. January 4, 2024. Available at <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/commentary/cuba-and-iran-are-still-state-sponsors-terrorism>

125 Interview with Maria Werlau. See Peñas, A. “El mito del Che ha sido la campaña de marketing más exitosa de todos los tiempos.” *Disidencia*, June 3, 2023. Available at <https://disidencia.com/el-mito-del-che-ha-sido-la-campana-de-marketing-mas-exitosa-de-los-tiempos-modernos/>

126 Humire, J. and Suárez, J. *Cuba and Iran Are Still State Sponsors of Terrorism*. The Heritage Foundation. January 4, 2024. Available at <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/commentary/cuba-and-iran-are-still-state-sponsors-terrorism>

- For years, Cuba has directed its propaganda machine against Israel and has not hesitated to legitimize terrorism in Palestine.¹²⁷ Cuba has served as a major propaganda player for the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization). After the terrorist attacks that massacred more than 1,200 people in Israel in October 2023, the Cuban Foreign Ministry issued a communiqué where he avoided condemning the attack and blamed Israel for the situation. The Cuban media terminals did a great deal of work to justify the terrorist attacks.
- On November 23, 2023, the Cuban dictatorship organized a pro-Hamas march of 100,000 people with banners and placards in support of the Hamas terrorists.¹²⁸
- Cuba's impact extended beyond its borders. In New York, on October 8, 2023, one day after the terrorist attacks in Israel, leftist militants held a protest in Times Square to celebrate the terrorist attack as a form of resistance by shouting anti-Semitic slogans and waving banners and placards. On October 11, 2023, *The People's Forum* (TPF) issued a statement justifying its October 8 demonstration in Times Square and reaffirming its support for the attack.

The Executive Director of *The People's Forum*, also a researcher at the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research, is Manolo de los Santos, whom many sources have intricately linked to Cuba.¹²⁹

- Subsequently, Cuba collaborated in the project that has been described as propaganda regarding the terrorist group. Víctor Pérez Velasco, author of "ETA y el cine" places "El cazador de dragones," a film co-produced and shot on the island in 2012, among the most radically indoctrinating.¹³⁰

But what is most relevant for the purposes of determining Cuba as a State that cooperates with terrorism are its links and collaboration with organizations recognized as such by European institutions. The cooperation of the Cuban regime with terrorist organizations is not minor because –as we shall see– participating, facilitating, or financing activities of a group would enable the Council of the European Union to include Cuban leaders and the organizations they lead on the so-called EU list of terrorists.

Indeed, Common Position 2001/931/CFSP on the application of specific measures to combat terrorism adopted by the Council on December 27, 2001 included, for the first time, restrictive measures against persons and entities

127 See Horowitz, I.L. "Cuba, Castro and Anti-Semitism" in *The Long Night of Dark Intent*. Routledge. London. 2008

128 Suarez, J. *El papel de Cuba en el terrorismo y los intentos fallidos de distensión*. Politics and Rights Review. Ottawa, February 7, 2025. Available at <https://politicsrights.com/es/cuba-terrorismo-distension/>

129 There is ample information on the biography, activity and relationship of Manolo de los Santos. See *Canary Mission, Manolo de los Santos*. Available at https://canarymission.org/individual/Manolo_De_Los_Santos. See also Díez, I. *Manolo De Los Santos: ¿El hombre de La Habana en New York?* Hyper Media Magazine. May 7, 2024. Available at <https://hypermediamagazine.com/actualidad-noticias-prensa-sucesos-cuba/personas-noticias-sucesos-analisis/manolo-de-los-santos-el-hombre-de-la-habana-en-new-york/>

130 https://www.escudodigital.com/expertos/entrevistas/victor-perez-velasco-el-cine-espanol-ha-sido-colaboracionista-con-terroristas-eta_50604_102.html

involved in terrorist acts. The measures include the freezing of funds and financial assets, judicial and police cooperation and the prohibition to provide, directly or indirectly, funds, financial assets or economic resources.

The most recent update of the so-called “EU terrorist list” was approved by the Council on January 20, 2025 and includes 14 individuals and 22 groups and entities, active both inside and outside the EU. It is important to underline that at least four organizations on this list maintain a close collaborative relationship with Cuba: Hamas, Hezbollah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Internal Security Directorate of the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security.

Reviewing Cuba’s links with these organizations is relevant, because the scope of application of the aforementioned Common Position on specific measures against terrorism extends to individuals, groups and entities involved in terrorist acts.

In defining the subjective scope of application of the Common Position, Article 2 distinguishes between persons and groups and entities.

Persons who engage in, attempt to engage in, or assist the commission of terrorist acts are considered as participating in terrorism. The latter is important because it is sufficient to facilitate the commission of an act of terrorism in order to be included on the list.

For the inclusion of groups or entities, what is relevant is their relationship with the persons described above. The aforementioned Article 2 establishes that groups and entities that are directly or indirectly owned or controlled by such persons are involved in acts of terrorism. In other words, those groups or entities controlled by persons who commit or attempt to commit, participate in or facilitate acts of terrorism are susceptible to the application of this Common Position.

Finally, the Common Position expressly includes mere participation in the activities of the terrorist group as a criterion for determining what constitutes a terrorist group. Section (k) of article 3 attributes the character of a terrorist act to “participation in the activities of a terrorist group, including the provision of information or material means, or through any form of financing of its activities, in the knowledge that such participation will contribute to the criminal activities of the group.”

Participation in the activities of a terrorist group (participation in the activities of Hamas, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Internal Security Directorate of the Ministry of Intelligence and Security of Iran), including the provision of information and material means is considered by the Common Position as a terrorist act. It is therefore necessary to review Cuba’s links with these organizations, which, in turn, are intricately connected to each other.

Let us not forget that in *Understanding Terror Networks*, Sageman argues that terrorist groups are no longer traditional hierarchical structures, but rather diffuse networks where individuals connect through common ideologies and act autonomously. Today, many groups operate in a more dispersed and flexible manner, taking advantage of communication technologies, social media, and digital media to coordinate activities, recruit new members and spread their ideology. The foundation of these networks was established at the Tricontinental Conference held in Havana nearly six decades ago.

Since then –and even before the founding of Hamas, Hezbollah, or the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in Iran– Cuba has been weaving remarkably close ties with the main players of international terrorist networks.

We have detailed throughout this report how: Cuba has maintained a close collaborative relationship with Al-Fatah since the 1970s; Cuba has offered military training in its training camps in Cuba to hundreds of Palestinian terrorists; Cuban instructors and advisors were sent from Havana to train Palestinians in Lebanon, Libya and Yemen; Cuba sent troops estimated at 3,000 men to support the invasion of Israel during the Yom Kippur War; and Cuba has offered propaganda and diplomatic support for Palestinian terrorism for six decades.¹³¹

The current network of mutual support between Cuba, Venezuela, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine goes far beyond that. They collectively constitute a transnational network that operates within organized crime in a decentralized manner, featuring numerous shared connections, some of which have been identified. Thus:

- Cuba's presence remains extraordinarily strong in Lebanon. The Communist dictatorship maintains formal relations with the EU-designated terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah. During the July 2021 demonstrations in Havana, when thousands of Cubans took to the streets of the island demanding freedom, Ammar Al-Moussawi, the man responsible for Hezbollah's international relations, visited the Cuban Embassy in Lebanon offering public displays of support for the dictatorship.¹³²
- Cuba, directly and through Venezuela, continues to provide intelligence to Hamas and Hezbollah.¹³³
- Hezbollah, following orders from Hasan Nasrallah, established a base of operations in Cuba.¹³⁴

131 Roig, P. *Cuba and Israel*. Cuban Studies Institute, Miami. 2017. Available at <https://cubanstudiesinstitute.us/international-relations/cuba-and-israel/>

132 Humire, J. and Suárez, J. *Cuba and Iran Are Still State Sponsors of Terrorism*. The Heritage Foundation. January 4, 2024. Available at <https://www.heritage.org/terrorism/commentary/cuba-and-iran-are-still-state-sponsors-terrorism>

133 Suchlicki, J. *Cuba's support for terrorism*. Cuban Studies Institute. Miami, 2022. Report presented at the *Latin American Security Concern* seminar held in Washington D.C. on November 30, 2022 and sponsored by the Inter-University Center for Terrorism Studies and the International Law Institute. Available at <https://cubacenter.org/news/2022/12/09/cubas-support-for-terrorism-by-nbspjaime-suchlicki-cuban-studies-institute/>

134 *Ibid.*

- In 2019 it transcended through a report published on the Hamas internet portal that the Cuban Ambassador to Lebanon, Alexander Pellicer Moraga, held a meeting with the Hamas representative in that country, Ahmad Abdel Hadi.
- In 2023, *Middle East Monitor* reported that Cuba's Ambassador to Lebanon, Jorge León Cruz, received Hamas' representative in Lebanon, Ahmad Abdul Hadi, and the Head of Hamas' Political and Media Relations Office, Abdul Majeed Al-Awad. The Cuban Ambassador reiterated that his country supports: "The legitimate right of the Palestinians to defend their land [...] the Palestinians are fighting for a fair cause."¹³⁵
- Reports indicate that Hezbollah terrorists may have military training camps on Isla Margarita, Venezuela, with support from Cuba.¹³⁶
- The Cuban G-2 worked together with the Venezuelan regime in the establishment of a system, Misión Identidad, in order to grant false nationalities to members of Hezbollah, amongst other initiatives.¹³⁷
- Cuba and Iran have been collaborating for years in multiple areas. According to *Prensa Islámica*, Cuba has shared with Iran its "extensive knowledge in intelligence" and has discussed cooperation "in electromagnetic weapons capable of sabotaging enemy communications."¹³⁸
- This relationship will intensify. Late last year, senior Iranian and Cuban officials met in Teheran to move towards the consolidation of a ten-year strategic partnership that will include the holding of the 19th Economic Cooperation Commission between the two nations.¹³⁹

The Cuban government continues to establish various connections with different forms of terrorism. We believe that our current knowledge is only a small part of a range of activities that occur without public awareness. We hope that this document will help to shed some light on the matter.

¹³⁵ Middle East Monitor, *Hamas delegation visits Cuban ambassador to Lebanon*.

<https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230225-hamas-delegation-visits-cuba-ambassador-to-lebanon/>

¹³⁶ Priego, A. *La influencia iraní en América Latina*. IEEE Opinion Paper 86/2022. https://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/docs_opinion/2022/DIEEO86_2022_ALBPRI_Iran.pdf

¹³⁷ Humire, J. *Why Cuba is a state sponsor of terror*. Cuba in Transition: Volume 25. Papers and Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting. Miami, 2015. Available at <https://www.ascecubadatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/v25-humire.pdf>

¹³⁸ Suchlicki, J. *Cuba's support for terrorism*.

¹³⁹ See *Desperate Iran Turns to Cuba for Help*. Jewish Breaking News. January 2, 2025. Available at <https://jewishbreakingnews.com/desperate-iran-turns-to-cuba-for-help/>

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