

America's War on Terrorism against Cuba

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On September 19, 1960, Fidel Castro and Malcolm X had an historic meeting in Harlem's Hotel Theresa. Fifty years later people packed a meeting hall in the Adam Clayton Powell State Office Building across 125th Street to commemorate that meeting. Among them were Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla and Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations Pedro Núñez Mosquera.

What a different kind of commemoration we could have had if such important leaders as Malcolm X, Patrice Lumumba, Martin Luther King, Jr., Fred Hampton and countless others had not been assassinated. When Malcolm X met with Fidel Castro they talked about Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba of the Congo, a leader whose importance for Africa and all of us was globally recognized. Only five days earlier, Lumumba had been overthrown by Colonel Joseph Mobutu with the support of the CIA. Four months later Lumumba was executed. And in less than five years assassination took away the life of Malcolm X himself.

How did Fidel Castro escape more than 600 assassination attempts? That's no exaggeration; there really have been more than 600 attempts to kill Castro. And the answer to that question is: Because Cuban intelligence agents have risked their lives for more than 50 years to try to prevent assassinations and other terrorist actions aimed at the Cuban people. Five of these brave agents, known as the Cuban Five, have been held in U.S. prisons on phony charges for 12 years.

The FBI started trying to kill Castro in 1958 while he was still in the Sierras, before the triumph of the Revolution. The CIA began its campaign to kill him immediately after the Revolution seized power.

Even as Fidel Castro and Malcolm X were meeting in Harlem, the CIA was recruiting the Mafia to aid in assassinating Castro. Washington launched a State of Siege, including invasion, armed infiltration attacks, bombings, arson, sabotage, and bans on trade with Cuba and travel to Cuba.

The War of Terror forced Cuba to distort its economy by having to develop its Revolutionary Armed Forces and the popular militia to defend the country constantly. From this dynamic between terrorists and their targets came two opposing agencies: On the one hand, an army of terrorists based in the United States and on the other, Cuba's State Security Department or G-2, which trained intelligence agents to find out and stop plans by that army of terrorists.

Cuba has never had the option of sending its armed forces to invade the United States in order to eliminate terrorist groups like the ones included at the end of this article. Instead, G-2 has had to infiltrate agents into those groups to uncover their plans. Fabián Escalante,

former head of the State Security Department, has written extensively about this “silent war against terrorism.”

People here in this country did not know about that decision in August 1960 to recruit organized crime for help in killing Castro until 1975 when, in the wake of the Vietnam War, the Senate Select Intelligence Committee conducted hearings that included testimony about the recruitment of Mafia assassins. That Senate Committee, by the way, did not deal only with Cuba but with CIA involvement in other assassinations, including that of Patrice Lumumba.

Plans for invasion at the Bay of Pigs and plans for another invasion, Operation Mongoose, were kept secret from people in this country, but G-2 found out about those plans right away.

Because Cuba was ready for the invasion, the Bay of Pigs invaders were defeated in less than 72 hours. When Cuba released more than a thousand of the invaders who were captured, they joined other Cuban émigrés to be given further training by the CIA. From 1963 through 1966, about 300 CIA agents like E. Howard Hunt worked out of a CIA station based at the University of Miami, training thousands of Cuban émigrés who became the core of the network of terrorists who continue to operate to this day.

Some Bay of Pigs veterans enrolled at Fort Benning, Georgia, for CIA training that gave them commissions as Army lieutenants. Fort Benning was not then the site of the School of the Americas, which did not move to Fort Benning from Panama until 1984; the CIA was training terrorists at many bases.

Two trainees at Fort Benning who became major terrorists were Luis Posada Carriles and Jorge Mas Canosa. Posada told *New York Times* reporters that “the CIA taught us everything – everything.” “They taught us explosives, how to kill, bomb, trained us in acts of sabotage.” In that interview, published on the front pages of *The New York Times* on July 12 and July 13, 1998, Posada acknowledged Jorge Mas Canosa, chair of the Cuban American National Foundation, as his financier.

The Cuban American National Foundation was created by President Ronald Reagan who anointed Mas Canosa as its leader. This organization, comprised of Cuban-American millionaires, was the most powerful and influential of all the terrorist groups, with its own military arm aimed at assassinating Fidel Castro and overthrowing the Cuban Government while at the same time engineering both the Torricelli Act and the Helms-Burton Act that tightened the trade embargo against Cuba in the 1990s.

Luis Posada became a CIA hitman, specializing in trying to kill Castro during visits abroad – for example, in Chile in 1971. But in 1976 the Senate investigation resulted in a report that the Ford Administration knew would recommend that the CIA stop assassinating people all over the Globe. So the CIA privatized its assassination business. Posada was removed from the CIA payroll in February 1976 to become a free-lance assassin financed by wealthy Cuban-Americans, especially Jorge Mas Canosa.

Posada went on a rampage of terror, linking up with Orlando Bosch in the Commanders of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU), devoted to terrorism against Cuba and any institutions and individuals considered friendly to Cuba. In the last six months of 1976, CORU set off 50 bombs in several countries.

Their most murderous bombing came on October 6, 1976, when Posada and Bosch masterminded two explosions that blew up a Cubana Airlines passenger plane, killing all 73 people aboard – the first time in the Western Hemisphere that terrorists aimed to kill all passengers and crew on a civilian airliner. The next time that happened was on 9/11/2001.

In 1998, FBI agents went to Havana where Cuban officials gave them literally reams of information gathered by Cuban agents about terrorists based in the United States. But instead of arresting the terrorists, the FBI arrested Cubans who had gathered the evidence. The Cuban Five — Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González — were tried and convicted in Miami. The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, in an opinion that unfortunately was later overturned, provided legal recognition of the fact that the city of Miami is so inflamed with passion against Cuba that it is unfit as a site for the trial of any case involving Cuba where the defendant is not in favor of overthrowing the Cuban government.

As Fidel Castro pointed out, “The most tragic aspect of all this for the U.S. people is that while [Héctor] Pesquera [the head of the FBI in Miami] and his troops were maliciously devoting all their time to the persecution, arrest and rigging of the trial of the Cubans, no less than 14 of the 19 responsible for the September 11 attacks on New York’s Twin Towers and other targets were living and training exactly in the area for which Pesquera was responsible.”

Fortunately G-2 agents like the Cuban Five continued their work and uncovered another plot to kill Castro in the year 2000. Most of the hundreds of attempts to kill him have gone unnoticed, but Fidel Castro made sure to call attention to this one.

After arriving in Panama City to attend an Ibero-American Summit meeting, Castro held a news conference to announce that Luis Posada and three Cuban-American co-conspirators were planning to assassinate him by bombing the auditorium at the University of Panama where he would be speaking. He even revealed where the police could find the would-be assassins. G-2 agents not only saved the life of President Castro yet again but also the lives of hundreds of people, mainly students, who packed the University of Panama auditorium to hear Castro speak.

Nevertheless Posada and his co-conspirators – Gaspar Jiménez, Guillermo Novo, and Pedro Remón – were charged and convicted not with attempted murder but with less serious charges, and they were pardoned in 2004 by Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso on her way out of office as she headed for her comfort zone of life in Miami. Posada’s three co-conspirators immediately returned to Miami as heroes.

Posada had to be smuggled into Miami a year later because he is a naturalized citizen of Venezuela, not a U.S. citizen. He, too, was welcomed openly as a hero. Arrested on charges of violating immigration laws, Posada continues to avoid murder charges here in the United States. He had escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 when he was awaiting trial for the murder of those 73 people aboard that plane back in 1976. Since Posada surfaced in Miami, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has repeatedly asked for his extradition to face trial on those charges of murder. The so-called Justice Department has made no response to that request.

Now Posada is charged with perjury for lying to Immigration officials, and his trial keeps being postponed. Perhaps the Justice Department hopes he dies before he tells what he

knows about the CIA as his lawyer has threatened that he will do if taken to trial. Keeping him on the waiting-for-trial list provides some cover for the Justice Department's refusal to recognize requests for extradition.

Lawyers for the Cuban Five continue to try to find some avenue of achieving some kind of justice in their case, but in the United States it is perfectly legal to harbor terrorists while imprisoning counterterrorists. Luis Posada and Orlando Bosch walk free among terrorists in Miami while the Cuban Five remain in prison.

Meanwhile, Cuba must continue to defend itself against acts of terror by groups which include the following partial list.

Alpha 66: Responsible for 100s of continuing raids against Cuba and countless assassination plots against Cuban leaders, especially Fidel Castro. In the 2007 documentary, "638 Ways to Kill Castro," Miami businessman Antonio Veciana, recruited in Cuba by the CIA in 1960 and one of the founders of Alpha 66 in 1961, brags about the times he was close to killing Castro. **Comandos F4**, a split-off from Alpha 66 in 1994, concentrates on raids and trains in the Everglades for invasion.

Comandos L: Founded in 1962. After a raid in which shots were fired at a tourist hotel in Cuba, the head of Comandos L, Tony Bryant, announced at a televised Miami news conference in January 1993 that they planned more raids against Cuban targets.

PUND (Democratic National Unity Party): One of its main leaders, Frank Sturgis, was one of the Watergate burglars arrested in 1972, leading to the revelations that brought down Nixon. In 1994 when Cubans captured seven PUND members after they landed in Cuba and shot to death a Cuban fisherman, PUND representatives in Miami boasted to the press about plans for more attacks.

Omega 7: Created in 1974, Omega 7 operated for years with impunity as its members murdered people who promoted dialogue with Cuba, in New Jersey (Eulalio José Negrín) and in Puerto Rico (Carlos Muñiz Varela), and carried out bombing attacks. When Cuban UN diplomat Félix García Rodríguez was shot to death in New York City in 1980, the FBI was forced to arrest some Omega 7 terrorists because of the international outcry. The head of Omega 7, Eduardo Arocena, carried out at least one biological weapon attack; Arocena testified in his murder trial that he took "some germs" to Cuba. Omega 7 was also involved in drug trafficking. Arocena is the rare Cuban-American terrorist who was actually tried, convicted and imprisoned on multiple counts of murder and drug-dealing. Campaigning in Miami in 2008, Republican presidential candidate John McCain and Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman indicated that Arocena would be pardoned if McCain became president.

CORU (Commanders of United Revolutionary Organizations) Organized by Orlando Bosch, Luis Posada, and others in 1976 when George H.W. Bush was CIA director. In addition to acts discussed in this article, Posada boasted to *The New York Times* that he masterminded a bombing campaign against tourist sites in Havana in 1997. Both Bosch and Posada have repeatedly tried to kill Fidel Castro.

CANF (Cuban American National Foundation) The Reagan Administration created CANF because it wanted a "respectable" Cuban-American lobby to carry out Washington's policy of trying to starve the Cuban people into submission. Jorge Mas Canosa and the other millionaires delivered money and Cuban-American votes to legislators in Congress and

throughout Florida and New Jersey while at the same time receiving money from Congress through the National Endowment for Democracy. CANF was able to create both the **Torricelli Act** and the **Helms-Burton ACT** and guide them through Congress to become the law of the land. In the same year, 1962, that CANF orchestrated the Torricelli Law, it created its own unlawful paramilitary arm dedicated to killing Fidel Castro and overthrowing the Cuban Government. Although CANF maintained it was nonviolent, its support for violent acts of terrorism was well-known. Luis Posada in his book, *The Paths of the Warrior*, named Mas Canosa, Pepe Hernández and Feliciano Foyo as financial supporters. He told New York Times reporters about Mas Canosa's financial contributions to him. In 2006 an angry former member, multimillionaire José Antonio Llama, explicitly exposed the covert arm. He described how he and other CANF members had planned to assassinate Fidel Castro in Venezuela in 1997, a plot for which they were arrested, tried, and acquitted, thanks to the "prosecution's" strategic decision not to use a blatant confession.

Oh, yes, and then of course there are these:

U.S. Congressional Acts: Representative Torricelli (D-NJ) stated on October 20, 1993, that the purpose of the trade embargo is to **"wreak havoc on that island."** The trade embargo, fully established in 1962, tightened by the TORRICELLI ACT in 1992 and tightened further by the HELMS-BURTON ACT of 1996, is a government-approved campaign of terror. In 1999 Cuba filed a lawsuit charging the U.S. government with killing 3,478 Cubans, wounding and disabling more than 2,000 others, and costing Cuba \$181.1 billion. The damages continue to mount.

CIA (U.S. Central Intelligence Agency): Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961; constant attacks and sabotage during the plans for another "secret" invasion, Operation Mongoose, in 1962, leading directly to the October Missile Crisis; constant covert activities, including assassinations, since 1958 against Cuba and Latin American countries friendly to Cuba.

FBI (U.S. Federal Bureau of Intelligence): According to Fabián Escalante in his book, *Executive Action: 634 Ways to Kill Fidel Castro*, the FBI plotted to kill Fidel Castro as early as 1958. The FBI has promoted terrorism, including deliberate failure to prosecute many known terrorists.

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