

CIA Agent Captured in Cuba

An employee of a CIA front organization that also funds opposition groups in Venezuela was detained in Cuba last week

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An article published in the December 12th edition of the New York Times revealed the detention of a US government contract employee in Havana this past December 5th. The employee, whose name has not yet been disclosed, works for Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI), one of the largest US government contractors providing services to the State Department, the Pentagon and the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The employee was detained while distributing cellular telephones, computers and other communications equipment to Cuban dissident and counterrevolutionary groups that work to promote the US agenda on the Caribbean island.

Last year, the US Congress approved \$40 million to “promote transition to democracy” in Cuba. DAI was awarded the main contract, “The Cuba Democracy and Contingency Planning Program”, with oversight by State and USAID. The use of a chain of entities and agencies is a mechanism employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to channel and filter funding and strategic political support to groups and individuals that support US agenda abroad. The pretext of “promoting democracy” is a modern form of CIA subversion tactics, seeking to infiltrate and penetrate civil society groups and provide funding to encourage “regime change” in strategically important nations, such as Venezuela, with governments unwilling to subcomb to US dominance.

DAI IN VENEZUELA

DAI was contracted in June 2002 by USAID to manage a multimillion dollar contract in Venezuela, just two months after the failed coup d’etat against President Hugo Chávez. Prior to this date, USAID had no operations in Venezuela, not even an office in the Embassy. DAI was charged with opening the Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI), a specialized branch of USAID that manages large quantities of liquid funds destined for organizations and political parties favorable to Washington in countries of strategic interest that are undergoing political crises.

The first contract between USAID and DAI for its Venezuela operations authorized \$10

million for a two year period. DAI opened its doors in the Wall Street of Caracas, El Rosal, in August 2002, and began to immediately fund the same groups that just months earlier had executed – unsuccessfully – the coup against President Chávez. The USAID/DAI funds in Venezuela were distributed to organizations such as Fedecámaras and the Confederación de Trabajadores Venezolanos (CTV), two of the principal entities that had led the coup in April 2002 and that later headed another attempt to oust Chávez by imposing an economic sabotage and oil industry strike that crippled the nation's economy. One contract between DAI and these organizations, dated December 2002, awarded more than \$10,000 to help design radio and television propaganda against President Chávez. During that time period, Venezuela experienced one of the most vicious media wars in history. Private television and radio stations, together with print media, devoted non-stop programming to opposition propaganda for 64 days, 24 hours a day.

In February 2003, DAI began to fund a recently created group named Súmate, led by Maria Corina Machado, one of the signators of the “Carmona Decree”, the famous dictatorial decree that dissolved all of Venezuela's democratic institutions during the brief April 2002 coup d'état. Súmate soon became the principal opposition organization directing campaigns against President Chávez, including the August 2004 recall referendum. The three main agencies from Washington operating in Venezuela at that time, USAID, DAI and the National Endowment for Democracy (“NED”), invested more than \$9 million in the opposition campaign to oust Chávez via recall referendum, without success. Chávez won with a 60-40 landslide victory.

USAID, which still maintains its presence through the OTI and DAI in Venezuela, had originally announced that it would not remain in the country for more than a two year period. Then chief of the OTI in Venezuela, Ronald Ulrich, publically affirmed this notion in March 2003, “This program will be finished in two years, as has happened with similar initiatives in other countries, the office will close in the time period stated... Time is always of the essence”. Technically, the OTI are USAID's rapid response teams, equipped with large amounts of liquid funds and a specialized personnel capable of “resolving a crisis” in a way favorable to US interests. In the document establishing the OTI's operations in Venezuela, the intentions of those behind its creation were clear, “In recent months, his popularity has waned and political tensions have risen dramatically as President Chávez has implemented several controversial reforms... The current situation augers strongly for rapid US government engagement...”

To date, the OTI still remains in Venezuela, with DAI as its principal contractor. But now, four other entities share USAID's multimillion dollar pie in Caracas: International Republican Institute (IRI), National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), Freedom House, and the PanAmerican Development Foundation (PADF). Of the 64 groups funded from 2002-2004 with approximately \$5 million annually, today the OTI funds more than 533 organizations, political parties, programs and projects, mainly in opposition sectors, with an annual budget surpassing \$7 million. Its presence has not only remained, but has grown. Obviously this is due to one very simple reason: the original objective has still not been

obtained; the overthrow or removal of President Hugo Chávez.

DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES INC. IS A CIA FRONT ORGANIZATION

This organization dedicated to destabilizing governments unfavorable to US interests has now made its appearance in Cuba, with millions of dollars destined to destroy the Cuban revolution. Ex CIA officer Phillip Agee affirmed that DAI, USAID and NED “are instruments of the US Embassy and behind these three organizations is the CIA.” The contract between USAID and DAI in Venezuela confirms this fact, “The field representative will maintain close collaboration with other embassy offices in identifying opportunities, selecting partners and ensuring the program remains consistent with US foreign policy.” There is no doubt that “selecting partners” is another term for “recluting agents” and “consistent with US foreign policy” means “promoting Washington’s interests”, despite issues of sovereignty. Clearly, all DAI activities are directly coordinated by the US Embassy, a fact which negates the “private” nature of the organization.

The detention of a DAI employee is a very important step to impede destabilization and subversion inside Cuba. This episode also confirms that there has been no change of policy with the Obama Administration towards Cuba – the same tactics of espionage, infiltration and subversion are still being actively employed against one of Washington’s oldest adversaries.

VENEZUELA SHOULD ALSO EXPELL DAI

Now that Cuba has exposed the intelligence operations that DAI was engaging in (recluting agents, infiltrating political groups and distributing resources destined to promote destabilization and regime change are all intelligence activities and illegal), the Venezuelan government should respond firmly by expelling this grave threat from the country. DAI has now been operating in Venezuela for over seven and a half years, feeding the conflict with more than \$50 million dollars and promoting destabilization, counterrevolution, media warfare and sabotage.

In an ironic twist, currently in the United States five Cuban citizens are imprisoned on charges of alleged espionage, yet their actions in US territory were not directed towards harming US interests. But the DAI employee detained in Cuba – working for a CIA front company – was engaged in activities intended to directly harm and destabilize the Cuban government. The distribution of materials to be used for political purposes by a foreign government with the intent of promoting regime change in a nation not favorable to US interests is clearly a violation of sovereignty and an act of espionage.

Development Alternatives, Inc. is one of the largest US government contractors in the world. Currently, DAI has a \$50 million contract in Afghanistan. In Latin America, DAI is presently operating in Bolivia, Brasil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haití, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Perú, República Dominicana and Venezuela.

[All references in this article to DAI in Venezuela are thoroughly documented in The Chávez Code: Cracking US Intervention in Venezuela by Eva Golinger (Olive Branch Press 2006).]

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