

WebMemo



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Cuba at the Crossroads: The Threat to U.S. National Security

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On September 17, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez launched the 2007–2008 Heritage Foundation series “Cuba at the Crossroads,” which explores the choices Cuba faces after the end of Fidel Castro’s 50-year reign. The next event in the series will focus on the threat that Cuba currently poses to U.S. national security through its activities in Latin America, intelligence operations, and relations with U.S. enemies.

At the Crossroads. Cuba at the Crossroads will provide a series of perspectives to support U.S. government planning for the transition that will occur in Cuba after the (perhaps imminent) death of Fidel Castro.

After 50 years of tyranny, will Cubans finally be free to build a market-based democracy? Or will the Castro regime’s apparatchiks cling to control of Castro’s totalitarian machinery? What will be the role of Venezuelan dictator and Castro protégé Hugo Chávez? Will the Cuban people be forced to endure 50 more years of life in a cruel command-economy police state?

Over the next few months, leaders from Congress, the Executive Branch, academia, and the media will come to Heritage to lead focused discussions on the potential role of the United States in shaping post-Castro Cuba, the future of U.S.–Cuba relations, and the role a newly democratic Cuba might play in the hemisphere.

Cuba’s Threat to U.S. National Security. The next event will feature a discussion of the many

ways that Castro’s Cuba threatens U.S. national security. A number of security issues stand out:

- Cuba is aggressively spreading anti-Americanism throughout Latin America and is deeply involved in backing and advising the increasingly totalitarian and virulently anti-U.S. regime of Venezuelan dictator-President Hugo Chávez.¹
- Since Raul Castro took the reins as acting head of state in 2006, Cuban intelligence services have intensified their targeting of the U.S. Since 9/11, however, U.S. intelligence agencies have reduced the priority assigned to Cuba.²
- Cuba’s Directorate of Intelligence (DI) is among the top six intelligence services in the world. Thirty-five of its intelligence officers or agents have been identified operating in the U.S. and neutralized between 1996 and 2003.³ This is strong evidence of DI’s aggressiveness and hostility toward the U.S.
- Cuba traffics in intelligence. U.S. intelligence secrets collected by Cuba have been sold to or bartered with Russia, China, North Korea, Iran, and other enemies of the United States. China is known to have had intelligence personnel

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www.heritage.org/Research/LatinAmerica/wm1669.cfm

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posted to the Cuban Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) site at Bejucal since 2001, and Russia continues to receive Cuban SIGINT information. Additionally, many Cuban intelligence agents and security police are advising Hugo Chávez in Venezuela.⁴

- Cuban intelligence has successfully compromised every major U.S. military operation since the 1983 invasion of Grenada and has provided America's enemies with forewarning of impending U.S. operations.⁵
- Beijing is busy working to improve Cuban signals intelligence and electronic warfare facilities, which had languished after the fall of the Soviet Union, integrating them into China's own global satellite network. Mary O'Grady of the *Wall Street Journal* has noted that this means the Chinese army, at a cyber-warfare complex 20 miles south

of Havana, can now monitor phone conversations and Internet transmissions in America.⁶

Recommendations for the Bush Administration and Congress.

- The Bush Administration should raise the priority of Cuba at all U.S. defense and intelligence agencies.
- The Bush Administration should increase funding for efforts by these agencies to counter the Cuban intelligence threat as the post-Castro transition approaches.
- Congress should hold hearings on ways that current threats to U.S. national security can be eliminated and market-based democracy can be promoted in post-Castro Cuba.

—James M. Roberts is Research Fellow for Economic Freedom and Growth in the Center for International Trade and Economics at The Heritage Foundation.

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