

## **Cuba's intervention in Venezuela**

**Presentation prepared by Maria C. Werlau  
for the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States  
to consider "The Role of External Actors in Venezuela"  
Meeting of Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019, 10AM**

Cuba has essentially occupied Venezuela, not with a traditional military force but by asymmetric means, strategically placing assets to control its economy, security forces, information, communications, and society in general. This conclusion is based on an extensive investigation I undertook in recent months, to be published as a book later this month.

With this study, I set out to explore how Cuba —much smaller in size and population, ruled by a military dictatorship committed to a failed ideology, and commanding a parasitic, disastrous, economy— managed, without firing a shot, to usurp the sovereignty of the much richer Venezuela, transfer its "revolutionary" imprint, and destroy its democracy and economy.

To comprehend this, it's essential to understand the nature and history of the Cuban regime, its permanence, its long-term strategy to establish a Venezuelan subsidiary, and the expansive range of its intervention there.

Venezuela had long been the jewel in the crown of Fidel Castro's historic obsession to expand the Cuban revolution in the region and spread its influence throughout the world. Controlling Venezuela —for its oil and mineral wealth, privileged location, and geostrategic importance— was the spearhead of Fidel Castro's long "continental project." For two decades, Cuba gave Venezuelan guerrillas money, soldiers, weapons, training, safe haven, and logistical and strategic support to overthrow their country's democratically elected governments (as it did in most of the region and in other hemispheres). Having failed with armed insurrections, it changed gears to a covert, but no less committed, strategy. Its intelligence service maintained many clandestine influential agents in Venezuela's political parties, government, armed forces, institutions, and society in general. Hugo Chávez was, directly or indirectly, one of its engenders.

Chávez developed a symbiotic relationship with Fidel Castro, who understood —no doubt with a hefty intelligence dossier— how to skillfully manipulate him since his first visit to Cuba in 1993. The synergy of their grandiose dreams and mutual interests shed a secret plan of revolutionary integration with Cuba's ideological and strategic direction and the deployment

of its repressive architecture, financed with Venezuela's oil wealth. Nicolás Maduro, politically-trained by and loyal to Cuba, was Chávez's perfect successor.

Cuba is present in all of Venezuela's economy and society —armed forces, security apparatus, presidency, ministries, migration services, electoral board, commercial registries, airports, border crossings, ports, banking system, telecommunication company, state enterprises, and in all industries including petrochemical, mining, and construction. Venezuela pays Cuba for its occupation. Cuban state companies, most of them belonging to its military conglomerate or intelligence service, are paid through collaboration agreements to manage and/or provide services to Venezuelan entities. Cuba even serves as intermediary for Venezuela's software and medical imports.

It is impossible to know, at least from open sources, how many Cubans are in Venezuela at the service of their government. They began to arrive as soon as Chávez assumed the presidency and many have not entered officially. Cuban military in Venezuela often dress as civilians and some have likely been trained to pass as Venezuelans or from other nationalities. According to official sources (altogether unreliable), around 46,000 Cuban "collaborators," 21,500 in the health sector, are working on "more than 200 projects," which leaves 24,500 in unspecified capacities. Others have estimated up to 100,000 Cubans and from 4,500 to 20,000 in a security capacity. Some civilian "collaborators" are agents or collaborators of Cuban counterintelligence services; all have orders to promote the bolivarian project, monitor each other, inform on their environment, and even take up arms to fight for the revolution.

The genesis for all this is an integration plan that Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro embarked on that appears to have been set well before Chávez became president: Venecuba or Cubazuela. Perhaps unbeknownst to the Venezuelans, Cuba always plotted to secure the dominating role. It includes the following:

1. Integration of the Security and Armed Forces.

A physical presence in numbers is not what's important but, rather, that Cubans are making decisions in the most sensitive and strategic areas. Venezuelan officers may not even enter certain Cuban command posts in their own country.

In 2007, Venezuela's Armed Forces adopted the Cuban military doctrine of a militarization society and "war of all peoples" as well as the concept of "fatherland, socialism, or death." The Armed Forces have been subordinated with strong ideological-political indoctrination, purges --direct and indirect-- fear and repression (through very strong military counterintelligence), and the buying of loyalties copied from the Cuban model of political and economic military hegemony. (Venezuela's armed forces reportedly administer two thirds of the economy.)

Cuba also has a preponderant role in all the security forces (intelligence and counterintelligence services, National Guard, police, paramilitaries) that control and repress society. It helped develop the motorized paramilitaries, "colectivos," trains and helps coordinate them, and is involved in torturing and interrogating regime opponents.

## 2. Integration of information and communications.

Cuba exercises a virtual occupation of Venezuela in controlling the databases of ministries, agencies, state companies, electoral system, migration services, etc. and comprehensive data on the citizens. Cuba keeps the source codes and has real time control of communications through an underwater fiber optic cable connecting the two countries. Venezuela's new identity, "fatherland," card, required to vote, access social services and subsidized gasoline and food, was developed by Cuba. It also developed and runs programs of electronic surveillance and cyber-repression aimed at opponents, retired members of the armed forces, and celebrities that even monitor their connections on social networks.

## 3. Economic integration.

The first of successive Comprehensive Cooperation Agreements was signed in October 2000 to integrate hundreds of projects, including the most sensitive industries such as financial and food production and distribution. The integration essentially consists of control and subsidies for the Cuban regime. There is little information of any real successes.

## 4. Judicial integration.

Venezuela's constitution and laws were changed and some even allow Cuba judicial controls in Venezuela.

## 5. Ideological integration.

A secret strategy was put in place to radically transform Venezuela over three generations by teaching people to behave differently in economic, political, and social terms. Former president of PDVSA, General Guaicapuro Lameda, received his "ideological induction" from Fidel Castro in Havana in 2000 and has described in detail Fidel's "recipe" of collective impoverishment, political manipulation, and repression.

## 6. Socio-cultural integration.

The Cuban branch of “santería” was deliberately transferred to Venezuela and became the extra-official religion of the bolivarian revolution. Devised to manipulate Chavez's affinity for the religious and occult, it is used as an instrument of sociopolitical control to infiltrate and manipulate Venezuelan society and foster cultural transformation.

7. Criminal Integration, which has two aspects:

A. Internally: predatory integration.

The Bolivarian regime has brought plunder and ostentation to its maximum expression in adopting the Cuban prototype of socialism: imposed poverty on the people through centrally-planned "social" ownership of the means of production and distribution but with enclave or captive capitalism ("state capitalism") for the elite in power.

The Cuban regime has also traditionally exploited its citizens for profit. One of its specialties has been forced migration, used to generate state revenues and influence other countries through destabilization. It was transferred to Venezuela with similar repercussions and other schemes may eventually be planned, such as Cuba's exports of forced or compelled labor and products derived from the blood and body parts of unaware citizens.

B. Externally: criminal integration, as mafia states

Cuba has for decades been involved in all sorts of illegal activities --drug trafficking, money laundering, etc.—and enabled the insertion of Venezuela's bolivarian leadership into an international criminal cartel and opened doors for its establishment of relationships with transnational actors who share nefarious interests. These enemies of liberal democracy and of the United States are: 1.) states such as Iran, China, and Russia, that provide Venezuela loans and investments, sell weapons, help with geostrategic and military coordination, and craft international political support, and 2.) non-state actors: Mexican and Colombian drug cartels, Russian mafias, Hezbollah, ELN FARC, and others that operate in the mining arch border area with Colombia Margarita island, and other areas. These networks of external actors have varying relevance to the Venezuelan situation but altogether guarantee a constant flow of resources, share strategies, intelligence, and asymmetric comparative advantages (in technology, biotechnology, etc.) For instance, a Venezuelan-Cuban joint venture delivers false passports to Islamic agents, potential terrorists, and criminals; several have been involved in terrorist attacks in Europe and hundreds have been identified trying to enter the United States.

The ideological imprint for all this is 21st century socialism, a revolutionary, populist, anti-capitalist, and anti-U.S. template essentially derived from Fidel Castro's playbook. Its cradle is the Foro de Sao Paulo, created in 1990 by Fidel, with Lula da Silva's support, to rethink, revive, and coordinate the radical left after the collapse of Soviet communism. The Foro abandoned the idea of an armed route to power and embarked on revolutionary transformation through elections and dismantling of democratic institutions and bourgeois structures from within. Its inspiration seems to come from the Italian neo-Marxist Antonio Gramsci's ideas on cultural hegemony.

With Chavez generously dispensing oil riches, the Cubazuela plan was expanded with the 2004 creation of the ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of the Americas) for hemispheric integration under 21st century socialism. It advanced a good deal and is greatly weakened, however, the influence, commitment, and tactics of its proponents should not be underestimated.

Cuba's comparative advantages, derived from a unique "brand," or set of tools, from its totalitarian model, explain its successful Venezuelan intervention. The Cuban regime does not have to respond to term limits, free elections, balance of powers, bureaucratic or institutional demands, scrutiny from media and civil society, and other limitations present even in the weakest democracies. The Communist Party of Cuba can design strategies, implement methodologies, and direct international propaganda, disinformation, influence, and penetration with absolute cohesion and long-term planning. Cuba's intelligence services operate without legal or ethical limits, systematically manipulating interests, predispositions, and weaknesses, even resorting to the most perverse blackmail. Communist Cuba has consistently dedicated massive material and human resources to this for decades, consolidating a huge infrastructure for surveillance, repression, and influence that is actively deployed internally and externally. This "soft power on steroids" has evident asymmetric value and poses grave threats to the region. It has assured Cuba support and impunity for its legendary international interventions and crimes against its own people. It was also able to secure international inertia on Venezuela until very recently.

\*See full video of the session at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqYKsdxzfzR8&t=15s>

*Contact: Maria C. Werlau, Tel. (973)219-7000, [info@CubaArchive.org](mailto:info@CubaArchive.org).*

---

OEA/Ser.G  
CP/INF. 8274/19 rev. 1  
30 April 2019  
Original: English

The Chair of the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States, Ambassador Carlos Trujillo, Permanent Representative of the United States, presents his compliments to the permanent representatives of the member states and has the honor to advise them that, at the request of the permanent missions of Colombia, the United States and Venezuela, ([CP/INF. 8273/19](#)), he has called a special meeting of the Council for 10:00 a.m. on Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019, in the Simón Bolívar Room, to deliberate on “The role of external actors in Venezuela.”

The Chair kindly requests the delegations' cooperation in ensuring that the meeting starts on time.

## DRAFT ORDER OF BUSINESS

### SPECIAL MEETING TO DELIBERATE ON “THE ROLE OF EXTERNAL ACTORS IN VENEZUELA” ([CP/INF. 8273/19](#))

Date: Thursday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Place: Simón Bolívar Room

1. Adoption of the draft order of business (CP/OD-2225/19)
2. Presentations:
  - Mr. Carlos Alberto Patiño, Professor, Universidad Nacional de Colombia
  - Maria Werlau, Executive Director, Cuba Archive
  - Vladimir Rouvinski, Professor, ICESI, Cali, Colombia
  - Jose Gustavo Arocha
3. Comments by representatives of member states

## Speakers

**José Gustavo Arocha** is a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Venezuelan Army and former political prisoner from 2014 to 2015. He holds a Master in Public Administration from Harvard University, and graduated with a degree in Organizational Development from Universidad Católica Andres Bello, Venezuela, in 2003. He has provided advice and logistical services to high-profile Venezuelan dissidents and regime critics since 2002. Following his forced resignation from the Armed Forces in 2009, Arocha founded a political consultancy GIS company (GeoFenix). In 2014, he was detained by government security services under the pretense of treason, was imprisoned for eight months, kept in solitary confinement, and tortured in an underground prison known as “The Tomb.” Since escaping captivity in March 2015, he has resided in the United States.

**Carlos Alberto Patiño** is a professor at the National University of Colombia and the Institute of Political Studies and International Relations. Since 2008, he has been an advisor for the Armed Forces of Colombia, with a focus on global trends, international and transnational conflicts, and security and defense challenges. He holds a PhD in philosophy from the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, and master’s degrees in linguistics and philosophy from the University of Antioquia. He is an alumnus of the U.S. National Defense University William Perry Center.

**Vladimir Rouvinski** is Director, Laboratory of Politics and International Relations, and Associate Professor, Department of Political Studies, at Icesi University in Cali, Colombia. He holds PhD in International Development and Cooperation from Hiroshima University in Japan. Before joining Icesi University in 2007, Vladimir worked with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS), Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, DC, as well as education and research institutions in Russia, Japan, Germany, and Colombia. Vladimir’s area of expertise is Russian and Asian countries relations with Latin America.

**Maria C. Werlau** heads the Free Society Project, a non-profit think tank to advance human rights through research and scholarship. Its leading initiative, *Cuba Archive*, works on transitional justice issues, loss of life and trafficking in persons. Her extensive publications on Cuba cover a wide range of topics including policy, international law, human rights, foreign investment, security, and economic issues. She is author of an upcoming book on Cuba’s intervention in Venezuela. Ms. Werlau is a former Second Vice President of Chase Manhattan Bank (having worked for the bank in Venezuela and Puerto Rico) and consultant on international affairs. She has a B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and a Masters in International Affairs from Universidad de Chile.

-END-