



## CUBA: THE TUGBOAT MASSACRE OF JULY 13, 1994

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In 1994, popular dissatisfaction with the Castro regime had deepened as Cuba endured a severe economic crisis amidst continued repression. Although the country's laws forbid citizens from leaving without government authorization and punishes violations with years of prison,<sup>1</sup> attempts to escape by any means had been growing exponentially.

On July 13, 1994, at around three in the morning under the cover of darkness, around seventy men, women, and children<sup>2</sup> boarded the recently renovated tugboat "13 de Marzo."<sup>3</sup> They planned to escape the island by making the ninety-mile journey across the Straits of Florida, hoping to reach freedom in the United States. Many also sought the means to send help back to the family they were leaving behind.

Eduardo Suárez Esquivel (Eddy), a computer engineer who had attempted unsuccessfully to

flee on several occasions, came up with the idea. Obsessed with the idea of finding a way out of Cuba, he convinced his brother in law, Fidencio Ramel Prieto, to take the tugboat and serve as skipper. Ramel, who was in charge of operations at the Port of Havana, served as one of its Communist Party secretaries and had twenty-five years of commendable service at the port. This gave him access to the tugboat, which belonged to the state enterprise Empresa de

Servicios Marítimos. With all vessels in Cuba under government ownership and tightly controlled to prevent escapes, this access was no small feat. Raúl Muñoz, a friend and fellow port worker who had been harbor pilot of the "13 de Marzo" and was now the pilot for another tugboat, was recruited to pilot the tugboat for the escape. Several more men joined in to develop the plot.

The plan included numerous family members and close friends. Only Ramel had the entire list of the approximately fifty-two passengers who were to go on the journey. The organizers were divided into groups and each had a leader. Each leader was in charge of getting his respective group to the pier on the designated day. To keep

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<sup>1</sup> Article 216 of Cuba's Penal Code punishes exit from the national territory not authorized by the government with up to eight years in prison. Article 117 punishes theft of any maritime or air vessels ("piracy") with ten to twenty years in prison or death.

<sup>2</sup> The exact number remains unclear to this day. Ramel, the skipper, reported to group leaders that 72 people had come on board. But, when the victims and survivors were later accounted for, only 68 were found -37 victims and 31 survivors.

There are several explanations for this discrepancy: 1. Ramel could have made a mistake counting, especially in the climate of fear and with the confusion that ensued when some who were expected did not show up while many who were not did. 2. Four people perished whose

families were not aware they were going on the tugboat and who had boarded unexpectedly, known only to others who died. 3. Four people also from the last-minute group, jumped into the harbor when the first hostile encounters took place and, in fear, have not come forward. 4. Four people were State Security agents that jumped, as previously planned, after the tugboat left the pier.

<sup>3</sup> The "13 de Marzo" took its name from a March 13<sup>th</sup> 1957 foiled attack by 42 young men members of opposition groups against the Presidential Palace. They had attempted to start a rebellion against Cuban dictator General Fulgencio Batista. Many were killed during the operation and four were assassinated afterwards.

maximum secrecy, the children were told they were going on an excursion.

On three previous occasions, a date had been chosen, but the escape had been aborted when insiders working at the port announced unexpected security measures deemed unfavorable. Unbeknownst to them, government authorities had been receiving information of the plan, in all probability by infiltrators. The spies are suspected to have been part of the actual planning group -in fact two did not show up for the departure. But, the information may have leaked out to spies through relatives who knew of the plot.

On the designated date, the group quietly boarded the tugboat in the middle of the night and the motors were started. Unexpectedly, people who were not on the list showed up, a few others who were to come did not. It was 3:15 A.M. when they began to make their way out of Havana's harbor. Immediately, a tugboat belonging to the same state enterprise initiated a chase.

The pursuing vessel first tried to drive the "13 de Marzo" into a dock. When that proved unsuccessful, it rammed it, attempting to push it towards the reefs by the mouth of the harbor near the Morro Castle.<sup>4</sup> As its crew maneuvered skillfully, the "13 de Marzo" avoided the attacks and kept sailing forward. People at nearby piers and at the Malecón, Havana's seawall, witnessed the attack and were yelling to let them go.

Just as the "13 de Marzo" cleared the harbor, two other tugboats that had been waiting for them in the dark, joined the chase. With their water cannons, they started spraying high pressure jets at the escaping vessel. The wooden "13 de Marzo" was now being hounded by three modern, larger, and heavier tugboats

made of steel –the "Polargo 2," "Polargo 3," and "Polargo 5." They were commandeered by Jesús Martínez Machín, a man named David, and one called Aristides, respectively.

As the "13 de Marzo" sailed ahead, the pursuing tugboats kept spraying high-pressure water and getting in its way to make it stop. After around forty-five minutes, when the "13 de Marzo" had reached approximately seven miles out to sea, the pursuing tugboats began ramming it. Although the "13 de Marzo" had stopped and signaled its willingness to surrender and turn back, the relentless attack continued. The pilot of the "13 de Marzo" attempted to radio an SOS, but the pounding water had damaged the electrical equipment. A vessel belonging to the Cuban Coast Guard had arrived on the scene, a Soviet-built cutter referred to as "Griffin."<sup>5</sup> But, it stayed back, simply observing the spectacle.

The adults brought out the children on deck to see if this would deter the incessant jet streams and collisions. In desperation, parents held their children up in the air and pleaded for their lives, putting them in front of the powerful reflector lights pointed at them. But, the attackers disregarded their cries and continued to bombard the powerless passengers with the high-pressure water. The mighty streams scattered them all over deck, ripped clothing off, and tore children from their parents' arms. Some were swept into the ocean immediately.

In a frantic attempt to find safety, some passengers went below deck to the cargo hold and the machine room, many carrying children. The "13 de Marzo" was now taking in water from the incessant ramming. Although it had stopped its engine, the "Polargo 5" rammed it decisively one last time and it began to sink. The doors to the machine room and cargo hold were blocked by the water. With the passengers pinned down,

<sup>4</sup> Old Spanish fortress that is a landmark of Havana.

<sup>5</sup> The name of a shoe polish used popularly to refer to these boats.

they desperately pounded on the walls and ceilings as the children wailed in horror. Frantically, Raúl, the pilot, tried unsuccessfully to open the trap door on deck as it was quickly filling up with water. Unable to make it budge, silence soon took over. Those trapped below had all drowned.

It was around 4:50 A.M. when the tugboat sank seven miles northeast of Havana harbor. Panic gripped the stunned survivors. Mothers tried to hold on to their children to prevent them from drowning, screaming for husbands and other relatives to help. They all clung to life in high seas in the dark of night. Many floated atop a large refrigeration box, others hung onto anything that floated by or simply treaded water.

The three boats then began circling the survivors, creating wave turbulence and eddies for around forty-five minutes. It was obvious they wanted to make sure no one would be left alive to bear witness to the horror. María Victoria García, who lost her ten-year old son, husband, and many other close family members later related: "After nearly an hour of battling in the open sea, the boat circled round the survivors, creating a whirlpool so that we would drown. Many disappeared into the seas... We asked them to save us, but they just laughed." One of the tugboats attempted to run over the floating refrigeration box holding many survivors. Fortunately, it was unsuccessful.

All of a sudden, the attackers stopped and the tugboat crews told survivors to swim toward the Cuban Coast Guard ships on the scene. Once on board, they noticed that a merchant ship with a Greek flag was close by, approaching Havana harbor. Survivors believe this is what made the attackers stop unexpectedly. Several Coast Guard vessels then moved in to rescue those who were left.

The exhausted groups of rescued passengers were kept at high seas almost until around 11A.M. When the order was received, they were all taken to a Naval Base at Jaimanitas, near Havana, where many high-ranking members of the military had gathered. The men were put into one cell and left there. The women and children were put in another cell, where they were interrogated. Early that evening the women and children were sent home and the men were taken to Villa Marista, Havana's State Security headquarters. Some were kept in detention several weeks and released to domiciliary detention. Two were kept for eight months. They were all given psychotropic drugs, visited by psychologists, and subjected to interrogations at all hours with the purpose of making them relay the story as an accident.

Reports of the number of victims varied from the start. Because some who were supposed to make the journey did not show up while many others unexpectedly joined in, the exact number who boarded and of those who perished remains uncertain. Finally, only thirty-seven people, individually identified, were confirmed missing by their grieving families and the thirty-one survivors. Many were related; most came from four neighborhoods of greater Havana -Cotorro, Guanabacoa, Marianao, and Arroyo Naranjo. Four more persons may have perished if, in fact, seventy-two passengers boarded, but they remain unidentified.

Despite intimidation and harassment, many survivors immediately denounced the premeditated ramming of the "13 de Marzo" and the deliberate aggression against them while they were unarmed and in no position to seriously resist capture. They recounted how the pursuers appeared to be taking orders from the Cuban Coast Guard cutter and that, at one point, a helicopter had flown over the scene.

The escapees never imagined their lives had been in danger. Even Ramel's son, who worked for State Security<sup>6</sup> and survived, reported never thinking they would suffer more than imprisonment if they were stopped. Unknowingly, however, they were taking a much larger risk than they had bargained for. Earlier that year, on April 28th, the tugboat "Polar 12" had been commandeered in Havana harbor and taken to Key West, Florida, with sixty-eight persons on board. On June 17th another tugboat, "The Mar Azul," had also been taken to Florida with seventy-four persons on board. Reportedly, both tugboats had been pursued by Cuba's Coast Guard, rammed by its vessels in international waters, and attacked with machine guns even though they carried many women and children as passengers. Because information in Cuba is tightly controlled and all media is owned by the government, these incidents were unknown on the island.

The Cuban government reported that thirty-two people drowned and thirty-one were rescued, but a list of victims was not provided. No bodies were returned to their families for burial and, if any were recovered, their location remains unknown. In fact, the authorities expressly refused to conduct search operations for the bodies. At State Security headquarters, agents mocked desperate relatives seeking bodies and told them that their loved ones were nothing more than "counter-revolutionary dogs."

When news reached the outside world, Rafael Dausá, the head of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, declared that survivors' accounts were "science fiction" and blamed the incident on the "thieves who stole the boat." Granma – government newspaper and organ of the Communist Party- published the official version

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<sup>6</sup> Dariel Prieto Suárez has graduated from Special Troops training and was a member of the "Red Berets." He had been assigned as driver to a General of the Ministry of the Interior at Villa Marista, the feared State Security headquarters. After the incident, while he was in

of the events - that the three pursuing vessels "had attempted to intercept the "13 de Marzo" and the maneuvers undertaken to that effect had resulted in a regrettable accident that had made the boat sink." In a subsequent story titled "Capsized tugboat robbed by anti-social elements," Granma blamed the "irresponsible act of piracy" on counter-revolutionary

radio stations of the "Miami nest of maggots" (referring to Cuban exiles) and on the United States' failure to abide by immigration agreements. A Granma editorial of July 23rd 1994 was titled "A bitter lesson for the irresponsible." In a speech on July 26th, Raúl Castro, the head of Cuba's Armed Forces, insisted that the tugboat was destined to sink because it had not been seaworthy and praised the Cuban Coast Guard for trying to prevent that. Cuban radio stations, which are all government owned, repeated similar explanations. Finally, on August 5, 1994, in a three-hour speech, Fidel Castro publicly praised the perpetrators for their exemplary behavior and patriotic acts and emphatically declared that they had no intentions to sink the boat.

Attempting to feed the cover-up, some of the imprisoned survivors were paraded in front of cameras to tout the government line and insist that the tragedy was their entire fault. Manipulated into apologizing publicly, they had, among other things, been told that the populace was ready to lynch them for killing so many children.

Apparently, the international community's reaction soon tempered the Cuban government's defiant tone. World leaders, including the Pope, made statements denouncing the deplorable incident and

prison and subjected to psychotropic drugs, he was forced to sign his resignation, dated back to July 12<sup>th</sup>, the day prior to the escape attempt. He remained in jail for over eight months.

expressed condolences to the victims. Cuba's Ministries of Interior and of Foreign Relations promised an investigation. Unsurprisingly, it has never been heard of again. Subsequent attempts by family members of victims and human rights activists on the island to open judicial processes via official legal channels have been ignored. In fact, the head of the operation, tugboat pilot Jesús González Machín, is said to have received a "Hero of the Cuban Revolution" award from the government.

Numerous reports by international organizations have condemned the massacre. On July of 1994, Amnesty International had called on the Cuban government to carry out an investigation of the incident and to bring justice if any government affiliate was involved. In 1997, Amnesty reported that there was sufficient evidence to indicate that it had been an official operation and that, if events occurred in the way described by several of the survivors, those who died were victims of extrajudicial execution. In June of 1995 the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Cuba requested from the Cuban government an investigation and called for those responsible to be processed and the families of victims to be compensated. On October of 1996, the United Nations denounced the absence of an investigation. That same month, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (O.A.S.) released a Special Report declaring that the Cuban state was responsible for premeditated murder.

Over time, as more survivors and witnesses left the island and their accounts were pieced together, it became apparent that the Cuban government had planned the murder. It was evident that spies had been infiltrated who offered early and detailed knowledge of the preparations. Reportedly, once the plot was

known, the decision had been made at the highest levels of government to not foil it by arresting the organizers or closing the entrance to Havana harbor. Instead, they would be allowed to steal the tugboat, so it could be sunk and an enduring lesson could be delivered to prevent further escapes from the island.

To cover up government involvement, only civilian vessels were employed in the attack and while only Coast Guard vessels rescued survivors. The O.A.S. report indicates that while this type of manipulation has been common Cuban government practice, "the attack against defenseless civilians was planned, orchestrated, and directed by the Communist Party and State Security with the direct participation of both."

On the island, survivors and family members of those who died were initially denied information and put under constant surveillance. Many were dismissed from their jobs. They have continued to endure systematic harassment by the authorities. Over the years, all survivors except one have managed to go into exile, some in voyages by raft. All bear the marks of deep trauma, feelings of senseless loss, and a sense of outrageous injustice.

On the island, the Cuban government continues to imprison, threaten, and intimidate those who seek to peacefully protest the sinking and remember those who died, usually in small ceremonies on the anniversary of the attack. Government-organized mobs, the Rapid Response Brigades, habitually scream insults and hit participants.<sup>7</sup> To prevent commemorative activities, members of political and human rights groups are arrested, mobs harass them and even intrude in their homes, and extensive police operations are mounted. Just this past February 27th 2007, five peaceful activists kept under arrest since the July 13, 2005 memorial

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<sup>7</sup> See film clip of one such incident at [http://www.cubaliberal.org/encuba/21072005-Represion\\_a\\_Familiares\\_de\\_victimas\\_](http://www.cubaliberal.org/encuba/21072005-Represion_a_Familiares_de_victimas_)

Remolcador\_13\_de\_Marzo.asp.

were tried for public disorder. René Montes de Oca, Emilio Leiva, Lázaro Alonso, and Manuel Pérez Oria were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and Roberto Guerra Pérez to one year and eight months. The defendants declared that they had merely attempted to render tribute to the tugboat victims and only screamed at attackers of the Rapid Response Brigade to not hit them while they formed a human chain to protect themselves.

What is perhaps the most puzzling aspect of this tragedy is that, as with similar past cases,<sup>8</sup> it has been largely ignored by world media. As a result, international public opinion remains essentially unaware of the systematic attacks perpetrated by the Cuban government on defenseless civilians trying to flee Cuba. Sadly, many world governments, leaders, and celebrities shamelessly disregard the most basic standards of accountability for the Cuban government. The Castro regime continues to enjoy a free pass to trample on the most fundamental rights of its citizens, including the most precious -the right to life. ♣

*\*Christina Werlau conducted extensive research and contributed to this report.*

## THE VICTIMS

Different reports and lists of the names of victims were cross referenced. Widespread discrepancies were found in the spelling of certain names and other details, such as age. Careful efforts were undertaken to reconcile all available information and report on victims and survivors

as accurately as possible. The list of names, photos, and addresses that follows was provided by Jorge A. García, who lost his son, grandson, and twelve other relatives. After the tragedy, he undertook an exhaustive investigation on all the victims and interviewed survivors. Subsequently, he was able to leave the island and smuggled this information with him. It became the basis of a book titled *El hundimiento del remolcador 13 de marzo*.

### 37 MISSING AND PRESUMED DEAD

Abreu Ruiz, Angel René. Age: 3.  
 Alcalde Puig, Rosa María. Age: 47.  
 Almanza Romero, Pilar. Age: 31.  
 Alvarez Guerra, Lissett María. Age: 24.  
 Anaya Carrasco, Yaltamira. Age: 22.  
 Balmaseda Castillo, Jorge Gregorio. Age: 24.  
 Borges Alvarez, Giselle. Age: 4.  
 Borges Briel, Lázaro Enrique. Age: 34.  
 Carrasco Sanabria, Martha Mirilla. Age: 45.  
 Cayol, Manuel. Age: 56.  
 Enríquez Carrazana, Luliana. Age: 22.  
 Fernández Rodríguez, María Miralis. Age: 27.  
 Feu González Rigoberto. Age: 31  
 García Suárez, Joel. Age: 20.  
 Góngora, Leonardo Notario. Age: 28.  
 González Raices, Amado. Age: 50.  
 Guerra Martínez, Augusto Guillermo. Age: 45.  
 Gutiérrez García, Juan Mario. Age: 10.  
 Levrígido Flores, Jorge Arquímedes. Age: 28.  
 Leyva Tacoronte, Caridad. Age: 5.  
 Loureiro, Ernesto Alfonso. Age: 25  
 Marrero Alamo, Reynaldo Joaquín. Age: 48.  
 Martínez Enriquez, Hellen. Age: 5 Months.  
 Méndez Tacoronte, Mayulis. Age: 17.  
 Muñoz García, Odalys. Age: 21.  
 Nicle Anaya, José Carlos. Age: 3.  
 Pérez Tacoronte, Yousell Eugenio. Age: 11.  
 Perodin Almanza, Yasser. Age: 11.  
 Prieto Hernández, Fidencio Ramel. Age: 51.  
 Rodríguez Fernández, Xicdy. Age: 2.

men, ages 16, 19, and 26 were shot by Cuban authorities for attempting to board a boat that had come from the United States to secretly take relatives back. Locals had witnessed the shooting, hundreds of people ran to the beach, and a spontaneous protest ensued during which police cars were pelted with rocks. The government dispatched three trucks of Special Forces troops and eight people are reported to have been killed.

<sup>8</sup> The Canimar Massacre and the Cojimar Massacre serve as examples. On July 6, 1980, a ferry on an excursion of the Canimar River in Matanzas province was hijacked by three youngsters in an attempt to take it to Florida. The surprised passengers were eager to make the journey to freedom. The Cuban government attacked the boat with firepower from air and sea and then sunk it. 57 passengers died, including 4 children. On July 1, 1993, at Cojimar beach, Havana province, three young

Rodríguez Suárez, Omar. Age: 33.  
 Ruíz Blanco, Julia Caridad. Age: 35.  
 Sanabria Leal, Miladys. Age: 19.  
 Suárez Esquivel, Eduardo. Age: 38.  
 Suárez Esquivel, Estrella. Age: 48.  
 Suárez Plasencia, Eliécer. Age: 12.  
 Tacoronte Vega, Martha Caridad. Age: 35.

### 31 SURVIVORS

Almanza Romero, Modesto. Age: 28  
 Bárgaza del Pino, Juan Gustavo. Age: 39  
 Cuba Suárez, Jorge Luis. Age: 23  
 Domínguez Alcalde, Julio César. Age: 30  
 Estévez Martínez, Dadney. Age: 3  
 Fuentes Díaz, Eugenio. Age: 29  
 García Suárez, María Victoria. Age: 30  
 Crespo Galego, Pedro Francisco. Age: 31  
 González Salinas, Juan Fidel. Age: 35  
 González Vásquez Frank. Age: 22  
 Hernández Avila, Jorge Alberto. Age: 33  
 Hernández Gutiérrez, Janette. Age: 21  
 Herrera Díaz, Daniel Erick. Age: 21  
 Labrada Tacoronte, Milena. Age: 3  
 Levrigido Gamboa, Arquímedes Venancio. Age: 52  
 Lugo Martínez, Román. Age: 30  
 Marrero Carrazana, Reynaldo. Age: 16  
 Martínez Fundora, Daysi. Age: 27  
 Martínez Gutiérrez, Gustavo Guillermo. Age: 37  
 Martínez Hidalgo, Yandi Gustavo. Age: 10  
 Morales Piloto, Armando. Age: 39  
 Muñoz García, Raúl. Age: 25  
 Perodín Almanza, Sergio. Age: 8  
 Perodín Pérez, Sergio. Age: 39  
 Prieto Suárez, Daríel. Age: 23  
 Prieto Suárez, Iván. Age: 27  
 Rojas Martínez, Susana. Age: 10  
 Tacoronte Verga, Mayda. Age: 30  
 Tuero Sierra, Jussany. Age: 29  
 Valdés Colón, José Fabián. Age: 17  
 Varela Amaro, Juan Bernardo. Age: Unknown

### Joel García Suárez

Joel García Suárez  
 Age: 20. Born November 14, 1973.  
 Resident of San Sebastián # 115 esquina a Aguacate.  
 Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.  
 Parents: Elisa Suárez and Jorge García.

Joel was very popular, especially among girls. He loved music and had graduated from vocational school as an audio technician. He ran a nightclub that had become all the rage among young people. It had to be closed after his death. Among those who also perished were his nephew, Juan Mario Gutiérrez, his brother-in-law, Ernesto Loureiro, his aunt and uncle, Estrella and Eduardo Suárez, his uncle by marriage, Fidencio Ramel Prieto, and two cousins -Omar Rodríguez and Eliecer Suárez Plasencia, who died with his wife, María Miralis Fernández, and their daughter Xicdy. His older sister, María Victoria, survived.



### Ernesto Alfonso Loureiro

Age: 25. Born September 24, 1968.  
 Resident of San Sebastián # 115 esquina a Aguacate.  
 Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana

After finishing his three-year mandatory military service, worked as the administrator at a grocery store. His stepson, Juan Mario Gutiérrez García, and his brother-in-law Joel García Suárez also perished. His wife, María Victoria García Suárez, survived.

### VICTIMS: MISSING / PRESUMED DEAD



### Juan Mario Gutiérrez García

Age: 10. Born August 2, 1983.  
 Resident of San Sebastián # 115 esquina a Aguacate.  
 Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: María Victoria García Suárez.

His grandfather writes that Juan Mario was very generous, creative, and a quick learner. Among his friends, he was considered a leader. His stepfather Ernesto Alfonso Loureiro also perished. His mother, María Victoria García Suárez survived.



### **Eliecer Suárez Plasencia**

Age: 12. May 18, 1982.

Resident of Calle 266 # 3916 entre 39 y 41. Arroyo Arenas. La Lisa. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Beatriz Plasencia Viera and Elio Suárez.

After his parents divorced, his mother remarried a lawyer, whom he soon began referring to as 'Papi'. His aunt and uncle took him with them to the "13 de Marzo" while his mother was gravely ill in the hospital, without her knowledge. He was an only child and she was devastated when she was finally told what happened. She remembers Eliecer as a joyful, affectionate, and friendly child, loved by all. They were very close, he would tell her everything, and he helped a lot around the house when she was sick.



### **Estrella Suárez Esquivel**

Age: 48.

Resident of Calle 266 # 3916 entre 39 y 41. Arroyo Arenas. La Lisa. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Estela Esquivel Rivera and Emiliano Suárez Sánchez.

Born in Artemisa. She worked in the newly built local hospital as a nurse and would take care of her sick father. She was one of twelve siblings. She died with her brother, Eduardo.



### **Omar Rodríguez Suárez**

Age: 33. Born December 14, 1960.

Resident of Calle 266 #3914, altos, between 39<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Street, Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Envida Suárez Esquivel and José Antonio Rodríguez Velásquez.

He had one other sibling, his sister, Omaidá Rodríguez Suárez. As a youngster, he was part of the communist young, later a soldier in the UJC. After finishing his mandatory military service, he worked in the Náutico dining hall, which was a part of the CUBALSE. Later, he worked as a warehouse manager and then for Cuba's electrical company and next for a bank. His wife, María Miralis Fernández and two-year-old daughter, Cindy Rodríguez Fernández also perished. He left behind their twelve-year-old daughter, Halen.



### **María Miralis Fernández Rodríguez**

Age: 27. Born October 29, 1966.

Resident of Calle 266 # 3914 (altos) entre 39 y 41. Arroyo Arenas. La Lisa. Ciudad Habana.

"Miralita" was born with liver problems and as a result was very sick as a child. She was a militant in the Communist Youth, UJC and an activist in her CDR, the neighborhood watch group Comité de Defensa de la Revolución. She was a dentist assistant and worked at a clinic in Marianao. Her husband, Omar Rodríguez Suárez and daughter, Cindy Rodríguez Fernández, also perished. They left behind their twelve-year-old daughter, Halen Rodríguez.





### **Eduardo Suárez Esquivel**

Age: 38. Born September 20, 1955.  
Resident of Calle 266 # 3916 entre 39 y 41. Arroyo Arenas. La Lisa. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Estela Esquivel Rivera and Emiliano Suárez Sanchez.

Eddy had been a militant of the Communist Youth and had done his mandatory military service, at the end of which he cut sugarcane for four months. He obtained his license in Computer Science and Mathematics and was exceptionally dedicated, working by day at the Ministry of Agriculture's Center of Statistics and studying by night. He was planning to start his family with his girlfriend, Daisy. Among his relatives who also perished were his sister, Estrella, and his nephew Joel García Suárez.



### **Jorge Gregorio Balmaseda Castillo**

Age: 24. Born January 14, 1970.  
Resident of Calle Oeste Edificio 5 apartamento 14 entre 20 y 21. Reparto Guiteras. Habana del Este. Ciudad Habana.

After finishing high school, Jorge enrolled in a culinary course at the Hotel Deauville and completed his 3-year mandatory military service. A militant of the Communist Youth (UJC), he worked as chef in the 'Villa Panamericana.' He boarded the "13 de Marzo" with his friend, who survived Iván Prieto, son of Fidencio Prieto.



### **Xicdy Rodríguez Fernández**

Age: 2. Born December 15, 1991.  
Resident of Calle 266 # 3914 (altos) entre 39 y 41. Arroyo Arenas. La Lisa. Ciudad Habana.

Her parents, María Miralis Fernández and Omar Rodríguez Suárez also perished. She left behind an older sister, Halen Rodríguez.



### **Fidencio Ramel Prieto Hernández**

Age: 51.  
Resident of Calle Oeste Edificio 5 apartamento 2 entre 20 y 21. Reparto Guiteras. Habana del Este. Ciudad Habana.

Ramel was Chief of Operations at the port in Havana, where he had worked for 25 years, beginning as a stevedore, then training in Bulgaria as a naval machinist and later in naval painting in England. Over the years, he had risen in rank, and was eventually sent to Holland, where he brought back to Cuba ten Polish-made tugboats, including the three Polgargos that chased the "13 de marzo." He was a longtime member of the Communist Party, Secretary of the Party at his workplace, and until shortly before his death, was head of the neighborhood watch group, the CDR, in his building. His two sons, Ivan and Dariel, accompanied him on the "13 de Marzo" and both survived. Dariel was a member of Cuba's State Security. He left behind his wife of 29 years, Esther, sister of Eduardo and Estrella Suárez.



### **Amado González Raices**

Age: 50. Born March 22, 1944.  
Resident of Corralfalso casi esquina a Aranguren.  
Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Olga Raices Machado and Enrique González.

“Espiguita,” as he was lovingly nicknamed, or “Amadito” as his mother sometimes called him, was the oldest of three siblings and the only son. After his parents were divorced, he had moved with his mother to Guanabacoa. Although he was interested in Public Relations, he had worked for ‘El Triunfo’, a local textile factory, for thirty-three years. He left behind his wife and their son. His nephew Joel García Suárez also perished.



### **Lissett María Alvarez Guerra**

Age: 24. Born June 21, 1970.  
Resident of Soledad # 166 entre Venus y Romay.  
Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.

Lissett graduated from Nursing School in 1987 and had worked at a medical facility. At night, she studied International relations and English. She was also writing a novel. At the time of her death, she was employed as a telephone operator. In 1988, she married Lázaro Borges Briel, and in July of 1990, they had a daughter, Giselle. Although she was not a militant in the Communist Youth, she was part of the neighborhood watch committee, the CDR, and a member of the Cuban Women’s Federation, FMC. Her husband, Lázaro Borges Briel, and their daughter, Giselle Borges Alvarez, also perished.



### **Augusto Guillermo Guerra Martínez**

Age: 45. Born October 6, 1948.  
Resident of Corralfalso casi esquina a Aranguren.  
Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Violeta Martínez and Alicia Guerra.

Augusto was working for Guanabacoa’s electrical company at the time of his death. What he really loved was car mechanics. Married, he had two sons, one of which had already fled Cuba. In the past, he had been arrested and served twenty-one days in prison for deserting his obligatory military service. His niece, Lissett María Alvarez Guerra, also perished.



### **Giselle Borges Alvarez**

Age: 4. Born July 9, 1990.  
Resident of Soledad # 166 entre Venus y Romay.  
Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.

Her grandmother recalls that Giselle loved to play with dolls and draw. Her parents, Lissett Alvarez Guerra and Lázaro Borges Briel, also perished.



### **Julia Caridad Ruíz Blanco**

Age: 35.

Resident of Kessel # 181 entre 4ta y 5ta Reparto Víbora Park. Arroyo Naranjo. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Ramona Blanco Amador and Francisco Gordillo Gutierrez.

The fifth of seven siblings and the youngest girl, "Cary" was considered the 'golden child' for her intelligence and great personality. She had earned four professional degrees in the humanities and music and had traveled all over Cuba and to the Soviet Union. She was involved in mass organizations and was a battalion commander and organizer for the neighborhood watch committee, the CDR. She died with her son, Angel René Abreu Ruíz. They were trying to reunite with her husband, Angel Abreu Varela, who had fled Cuba on a raft in 1992.



### **Angel René Abreu Ruíz**

Age: 3. Born September 29, 1990.

Resident of Kessel # 181 entre 4ta y 5ta Reparto Víbora Park. Arroyo Naranjo. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Julia Caridad Ruíz Blanco and Angel Abreu Varela.

Angel René perished with his mother, Julia. They had hoped to reunite with his father, who had fled Cuba on a raft in October of 1992.



### **Martha Mirella Carrasco Sanabria**

Age: 45. Born May 1, 1949.

Resident of Habana # 107 apartamento 205 entre Cuarteles y Chacón. Habana Vieja. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Sofía Sanabria Alfonso and Rafael Carrasco Merino.

Martha came from a very poor family and worked as a seamstress. She was married to Eladio Anaya and they had a daughter. Her daughter, Yaltamira Anaya Carrasco, and grandson, José Carlos Nicle Anaya, also died.



### **Lázaro Enrique Borges Briel**

Age: 34. Born December 11, 1959.

Resident of Soledad # 166 entre Venus y Romay. Guanabacoa. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Martha Briel González and Miguel Borges.

Lazaro, nicknamed "Felito" or "Felo", was the third of ten brothers and sisters. In his early years, he was part of the Communist Pioneers and later a militant of the Communist Youth, the UJC. He attended a technical school, became a mechanic, and worked as a mechanic's assistant for a refrigerator workshop. He had been sent to study in Germany for three years. Later, he worked in tourism. His wife, Lissett María Alvarez Guerra and their daughter, Giselle Borges Alvarez also perished.



### **Yaltamira Anaya Carrasco**

Age: 22. Born August of 1971.  
Resident of Habana # 107 apartamento 205 entre Cuarteles y Chacón. Habana Vieja. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Martha Mirella Carrasco Sanabria and Eladio Anaya.

"Yali" worked her last job as an administrator at a dry cleaning business before marrying Luis Nicle and having a son, José Carlos Nicle Anaya. She perished with her mother and son.



### **José Carlos Nicle Anaya**

Age: 3.  
Resident of Habana # 107 apartamento 205 entre Cuarteles y Chacón. Habana Vieja. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Yaltamira Anaya Carrasco and Luis Nicle.

His great grandmother, Sofia Sanabria, sustains that if she had known what was going to happen, she would have kidnapped José Carlos for the night to deter her daughter and granddaughter from boarding the "13 de Marzo" without the child. His grandmother, Martha Carrasco, and mother, Yaltamira Anaya, also perished.



### **Pilar Almanza Romero**

Age: 31. Born June 13, 1963.  
Resident of Calle 20 s/n entre ave.59 y ave.61 Reparto América. Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Ana Romero and Elpidio Almanza.

Although she suffered from glaucoma, Pilar worked as a seamstress. The second of four siblings, she married at the age of fifteen and had two sons. She died with her older son, Yasser Perodín Almanza. Her husband, Sergio Perodín Pérez, and younger son, Sergito Perodín Almanza, survived and now live in the United States.



### **Yasser Perodín Almanza**

Age: 11. Born July 10, 1983.  
Resident of Calle 20 s/n entre ave.59 y ave.61 Reparto América. Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Pilar Almanza Romero and Sergio Perodín Pérez.

"Yaselito" was a good student and had just finished the fifth grade. He perished with his mother, Pilar. His father, Sergio, and younger brother, Sergito, survived and live in the United States.



### **Jorge Arquímedes Levrígido Flores**

Age: 28. Born June 28, 1966.  
Resident of Pilar # 446 entre San Agustín e Isabel.  
Reperto Párraga. Arroyo Naranjo. Ciudad Habana.

Jorge had worked at a milk factory and as a taxi driver. At the time of his death, he was working at home with his wife's family collecting plastic containers for sale to a state enterprise. His wife, Yamile Areche, describes him as hard-working, joyful, and kind to her. She was five months pregnant with their first child at the time of his death. A few months after the massacre, their daughter, Yailé, was born.



### **Martha Caridad Tacoronte Vega**

Age: 35. Born February 23, 1959.  
Resident of Calle 32 # 10921 entre 109 y 111. Reparto "La Purísima". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Delia Vega Hernández and Eugenio Tacoronte Calzadilla.

Martha was the oldest of three siblings. She studied Organizational Communications. She perished with her three children: Mayulis Méndez Tacoronte, Yousell Eugenio Pérez Tacoronte, and Caridad Leyva Tacoronte. Her sister, Mayda Tacoronte Vega, survived.



### **Mayulis Méndez Tacoronte**

Age: 17. Born December 10, 1976.  
Resident of Calle 32 # 10921 entre 109 y 111. Reparto "La Purísima". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

She was in her third year at a technical school in Via Blanca studying Gastronomy for Tourism. She was to be married to Raul Muñoz García, who survived, on July 29th of that year. She died with her mother, Martha Caridad Tacoronte Vega, and two siblings, Yousell and Caridad.



### **Yousell Eugenio Pérez Tacoronte**

Age: 11. Born November 19, 1982.  
Resident of Calle 32 # 10921 entre 109 y 111. Reparto "La Purísima". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

A sixth grader at *Jose Antonio Echevarria*, Yousell was a member of the Communist Pioneers. His family describes him as a very noble child, who loved baseball and horses. He died with his mother and his two other siblings, Mayulis and Caridad. His father now resides in the United States.



### **Rosa María Alcalde Puig**

Age: 47. Born September 23, 1946.

Resident of Habana # 114 apartamento 5 bajos entre Cuarteles y Chacón. Habana Vieja. Ciudad Habana.

Rosa was from Santiago de Cuba, from where she had participated in the literacy campaigns in the mountains as a young woman. She received a scholarship to study in Havana and became a militant in the Communist Youth. She worked at the port of Havana where the tugboat "13 de Marzo" was kept. She was divorced and had a daughter and granddaughter, whom she supported. Her nephew, Julio Cesar Domínguez Alcalde, survived with his daughter. She was a friend of Martha Caridad Tacoronte Vega, one of the victims.



### **Caridad Leyva Tacoronte**

Age: 5. Born September 10, 1989.

Resident of Calle 32 # 10921 entre 109 y 111. Reparto "La Purísima". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.  
Parents: Martha Caridad Tacoronte Vega

"Cary" was the youngest of her siblings and, for that reason, spoiled by all. She attended nursery school, *Ojitos Alegres*. She died with her mother and two older siblings, Mayulis and Yousell. Her best friend and cousin, Mylena Labrada Tacoronte, survived.



### **Leonardo Notario Góngora**

Age: 28. Born April 20, 1966.

Resident of Calle 30 # 10312 entre 103 y 105. Reparto "La Magdalena" Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Delma Gongora Pita and Bernardo Notario García.

Leonardo was the third and three sons. A member of the Communist Youth, he took great interest in judo, which he pursued for some time. He attended a technical school to become an electrician and worked at a power plant at the time of his death. He was married to María del Carmen Pérez Roche, but had no children. He was a neighbor to the Tacoronte family.



### **Reynaldo Joaquín Marrero Alamo**

Age: 48. Born August 16, 1945.

Resident of Calle 102 # 9520 entre 97 y final. Cuatro Caminos. Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

Reynaldo worked as a mechanic and later as a truck driver. His wife knew of the planned escape, but stayed behind to care for his father. He perished with his stepdaughter, Yuliana Enriquez Carrazana and her five month old daughter, Hellen Martínez Enriquez. His son, Reynaldo Marrero Carrazana survived. He left his wife of nineteen years, Juana Carrazana Hernández.



### **Yuliana Enriquez Carrazana**

Age: 22. Born May 11, 1972.

Resident of Edificio 69 1er piso apartamento 24. Reparto "Alberro". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Juana Carrazana Hernández.

Yuliana was known as a very joyful person. She had studied Accounting and Planning at the Institute of Economy in El Cotorro, Havana. After working for the Economics Department of Cuatro Caminos, she married and stayed home. She perished with her stepfather, Reynaldo Joaquín Marrero Alamo and her daughter, Hellen Martínez Enriquez. Her husband, Juan Gustavo Martínez Gutiérrez, and her only brother, Reynaldo Marrero Carrazana, survived.



### **Manuel Cayol**

Age: 56. Born October 6, 1937.

Resident of Avenida 247 # 92A11 entre 92A y 94.

Reparto "La Cumbre". San Miguel del Padrón. Ciudad Habana.

"Manolo" was given only his mother's family name, as his birth father was not present in his life. He had worked as a truck driver and, according to his mother, was a great worker. But, after suffering a stroke, he was retired from work. He was friends with Pilar Almansa, who also perished. He left behind two children.



### **Hellen Martínez Enriquez**

Age: 5 Months. Born January 19, 1994.

Resident of Edificio 69 1er piso apartamento 24. Reparto "Alberro". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Yuliana Enriquez Carrazana and Juan Gustavo Martínez Gutiérrez.

The youngest passenger aboard the "13 de Marzo," she died with her mother, Yuliana. Her father survived.



### **Odalys Muñoz García**

Age: 21.

Resident of Calle 32 # 10909 entre 109 y 111. Reparto "La Purísima". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Eulogia Muñoz García and Raúl Fernández Pérez.

Odalys' father died when his children were only a few years old. Odalys had been a member of the Communist Pioneers and had taken great interest in other activities, particularly swimming. After finishing her secondary schooling, she attended a school for competitive swimming, where she earned many medals and diplomas and reached the national level in competition. Later, she attended a technical school where she studied to be an electrician and continued to work there after graduating. She left behind her boyfriend, Alexis. Her brother, Raul Muñoz García survived.



### **Miladys Sanabria Leal**

Age: 19. Born April 10, 1975.

Resident of Ave. 63 # 602 entre 6 y 8. Reparto "El Vedado". Cotorro. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Daisy Cabrera Valdes and Jorge Sanabria Leal.

She was one of three siblings and was very close to her father, who described her as spunky and affectionate. As a young child, she had been a member of the Communist Pioneers. She was studying Accounting and Planning at the time of her death. In 1993, she had married Daniel Erick, who was planning to go with his family on the tugboat. Daniel survived. Her family had no idea she was planning to leave that day. The day after the incident, when they were told the tugboat had been sunk but that survivors had been brought back. They searched frantically for her – at the hospital, State Security headquarters, and elsewhere. After getting no answers, they finally lost hope.



### **Rigoberto Feu González**

Age: 31. Born January 7, 1963.

Resident of Calle 25 # 8816 entre F y G. Cojímar. Habana del Este. Ciudad Habana.

Parents: Candida González Morales and Rigoberto Feu Rodríguez.

"Riguito" was born the second of three siblings. At an early age, he became active with the Communist Pioneers and remained very involved until the age of eighteen. His mother says he would sometimes come home with awards given to exemplary members. During his mandatory military service, he became a barber and learned how to drive. Afterwards, he went to school to obtain a hairstyling license, after which he worked at

several barbershops and hair salons. Though he was married to Marilyn Fernández Gomez at the time of his death, he had previously had a child, David, with another woman. His wife, Marilyn, was supposed to accompany him on the tugboat, but because her daughter had broken a foot two days before the trip, she stayed behind.

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