

U.S. CITIZENS KILLED OR DISAPPEARED BY CUBA'S COMMUNIST REGIME 48 documented cases 1959 to date

Update of September 2018

Work in progress

See case details at database.CubaArchive.org

I. 22 U.S. citizens executed, assassinated, or disappeared

Executions by firing squad: 8
Extrajudicial Assassinations: 11
Forced Disappearance: 1
Politically induced suicide: 2

[In alphabetical order](#)



Armando Alejandro Jr., age 45. Assassinated extrajudicially February 24, 1996, international airspace over the Straits of Florida.

Vietnam War veteran and Transit Planner at Miami Dade County's Department of Transportation who was a passenger of an unarmed civilian plane shot down by Cuban MIGs over international waters while

on a humanitarian search and rescue mission for the non-profit organization "Brothers to the Rescue."



Howard F. Anderson, age 41. Executed by firing squad April 19, 1961, Kilo 5 ½ prison, Pinar del Río, Cuba.

Business executive, President of the American Legion of Havana, and avid sports' fisherman resident of Havana. Arrested in March 1961 and charged for as a CIA spy, he was sentenced to death in a sham trial. Prior to his execution, he was savagely tortured and his blood

forcibly extracted (the Cuban government was selling blood to other countries); his body was buried in mass grave. U.S. citizen Angus McNair and seven Cubans were executed that day. The United States forwarded a stiff protest to the Cuban Government declaring the executions violated "the elementary standards of justice practiced by the civilized nations of the world." Anderson's family sued the Cuban government for damages in U.S. federal court and in 2003 obtained an award of \$67 million.

Louis Berlanti and son, Fred Berlanti. Assassinated extrajudicially August 16, 1963, over Lake Okeechobee, Florida.

Louis was a contractor and real estate developer from Harrison, New York, who had suffered sizable real estate losses from property confiscations by the Castro government and had pledged half a million dollars to unseat it. He and his son Fred, a resident of St. Petersburg Beach, Florida, were members of the "United Organizations for the Liberation of Cuba." They were flying in a private airplane reportedly sabotaged by Cuban intelligence.

Francis Brown, age 68. Assassinated extrajudicially April 27, 1978, Guantánamo hospital.

Former World War II veteran who, when the Castro regime rose to power, worked as a diver at the U.S. Guantanamo Naval Base and had a Cuban wife and daughter. A co-worker alerted him that the Cuban regime had ordered him killed to blame the U.S. government and provoke a confrontation. He resigned from his job at the base to avoid being used as pawn, but remained in Cuba trying to get his family out. Falsely accused of kidnapping his own daughter and imprisoned after his release, he was under constant surveillance and control of the secret police. On the eve of a visit by a friendly U.S. African-American delegation, he developed high blood pressure and went to the hospital emergency room. Under control of State Security agents, he was given an injection that almost immediately caused him to foam at the mouth and die. His daughter believes he was killed to avoid a public relations' problem.



Frederic Richard Carter. Assassinated extrajudicially August 11, 1982, State Security headquarters in Havana.

Resident of Havana, Cuba, reportedly killed under arrest.



Earl Glenn Cobeil, age 36. Assassinated extrajudicially (war crime). U.S. Prisoner of War last seen alive October 1970 at "Heartbreak" prison, North Vietnam.

The Air Force lieutenant colonel from Pontiac, Michigan, was taken prisoner in 1967 after his jet was shot down over North Vietnam.

Transferred to the infamous prison "the Zoo", he was subjected to "the Cuban Program," a particularly vicious experimental domination technique of physical and psychological torture led by Cuban agents tested on 18 U.S. POWs held at the Zoo during a year in 1967-68. After weeks of vicious and unrelenting beatings and physical violence, psychological torture, and electroshocks, Cobeil lost his mind and bodily functions. Unresponsive for over two years (fed by prison mates), he was last seen at the "Heartbreak" prison before reportedly being transferred to a hospital. Survived by a wife and two children, his remains were returned to the U.S. in March 1974. POWs later identified the head of the Cuban torture team, whom they had named "Fidel," as Fernando Vecino Alegret, who later became Cuba's Minister of Higher Education. U.S. intelligence had tracked dozens of Cuban advisors in Vietnam during the war. Cuba was also selling Vietnam blood it forcibly extracted from individuals before their firing squad executions.

Benito E. Cortés Maldonado, age 39. Executed by firing squad January 12, 1959, Santiago de Cuba.

Policeman and pilot, U.S. citizen born in Puerto Rico, resident of Santiago de Cuba. Executed by firing squad without due process together with 71 members of the armed forces, police, and Batista supporters. The men were lined up in pairs in front of ditches and shot all through the night.



A bulldozer then filled the mass graves; some men were buried alive. Cortés left a widow and five children. His family insists he had not committed any crimes.



Carlos Alberto Costa, age 29. Assassinated extrajudicially February 24, 1996, international airspace over Florida Straits. A private pilot and Human Resources Administrator at the Miami International Airport who was piloting one of two civilian planes on a humanitarian search and rescue mission for the organization "Brothers to the Rescue" that were shot down by Cuban MIGs over international waters.

Andrew DeGraux Villafaña, age 19. Forcibly disappeared September 13, 1962.

U.S. citizen born in Cuba, resident of Trinidad, Las Villas, son of a U.S. F.B.I. agent residing in Cuba and student of auto mechanics who had organized a student strike. He joined the armed resistance against the Castro regime and was wounded in combat. Taken for medical care to a hospital in Trinidad, he was denied water and psychologically tortured. Transferred to a hospital in Cienfuegos, he came out of an operation, but the family was told he died that night and had been buried. They heard he had been executed.



Mario de la Peña, age 24. Assassinated extrajudicially February 24, 1996, international airspace over the Straits of Florida. Student of Aeronautics, pilot and flight instructor who was piloting one of two civilian planes on a humanitarian search and rescue mission for the organization "Brothers to the Rescue" that were shot down by Cuban MIGs over international waters.

Rafael del Pino Siero, age 50. Committed politically-induced suicide or was assassinated extrajudicially August 22, 1977, punishment cell, Combinado del Este prison, Havana. Florida resident, U.S. veteran and personal friend of Fidel Castro from the university in Havana. In 1959 he flew a plane to Cuba to pick-up defecting Cuban military officers. Captured, he was sentenced to 30 years in prison, where he was reportedly assassinated years later (the Cuban government claimed he committed suicide by hanging). In 2008, a Florida jury ruled awarded del Pino's family \$253 million, although Cuban government funds were not available in the U.S. to collect on the award.



Matthew Edward Duke, age 43. Assassinated extrajudicially May 14, 1960, near Mariel, in Pinar del Río province. Resident of Palm Beach, Florida. Pilot who flew to Cuba to pick up fugitive Batista army and police officers. His airplane shot down by the Cuban Air Force and, upon landing, he was shot to death by Cuban army soldiers. His body was turned over to the U.S. Embassy in Havana.



Robert Otis Fuller, age 25. Executed by firing squad October 16, 1960, San Juan Hill shooting practice field, Santiago de Cuba.

Former U.S. Marine officer, veteran of the Korean War, resident of Coral Gables, Florida executed with fellow Americans Anthony Zarba and Allen Thompson. They had landed with a group on October 1960 in Oriente province to help the anti-

Castro insurgency, but were captured and sentenced to death by a Revolutionary Tribunal in a summary trial lasting only 20 minutes. The appeal lasted 20 minutes and the execution was carried out that same day. Fuller's blood (and probably that of the other men) was drained immediately before the execution, as Cuba was selling blood in the world market. The U.S. government filed a diplomatic note of protest. Cuban writer Norberto Fuentes recounts how in 1987 Fidel and Raúl Castro were gloating about having had the Americans executed. On February 2003, Fuller's widow and daughter won a default judgment against the Cuban government in a Florida Court.

Angus K. McNair, age 25. Executed by firing squad April 19, 1961, Kilo 5 ½ Prison, Luis Lazo, Pinar del Río province.

Radiotelegraph operator for an anti-Castro rebel group from Coral Gables, Florida. He landed in Pinar del Rio province on March 21st 1961 to help start an anti-Castro guerrilla group, was captured and executed together with U.S. citizen Howard Anderson and seven Cubans. The U.S. sent a stiff protest to the Cuban government declaring the executions violated "the elementary standards of justice practiced by the civilized nations of the world."



William Alexander Morgan, age 34. Executed by firing squad December 3, 1961 at La Cabaña Fortress, Havana.

U.S. Army veteran, former paratrooper and commander in Castro's Rebel Army, resident of Havana, Cuba, sentenced to death in a sham trial for supplying arms to the anti-Castro guerrillas. Days after his death, Morgan's 23-year old Cuban wife was arrested and remained imprisoned until 1973. She fled Cuba for the U.S. in 1980 with her two daughters.

William Horace Patten, age 34. Executed by firing squad September 23, 1961, Shooting practice field, city of Camaguey.

Pilot for agricultural aerial-spraying formerly working in Camaguey, Cuba, who went back to start an anti-Castro guerrilla movement, was captured, and executed on charges of conspiracy against the powers of the state. His young wife unexpectedly learned of his death on Cuban radio.



Thomas Willard Ray, age 30. Assassinated extrajudicially April 19, 1961, Cuban airspace over the Bay of Pigs.

Air Force Captain and pilot with the Alabama National Guard resident of Birmingham. He was shot down over Cuba while piloting a plane on a C.I.A. covert mission in support of the 2506 Brigade during the Bay of Pigs invasion. For 18 years, the Cuban government kept his frozen

body as a war trophy at a Havana morgue, exhibiting and routinely desecrated it. His daughter led a campaign to recover his remains and secured their release in 1979. Prior to his burial with military honors, an autopsy determined he had survived the crash wounded but had been shot at close range execution-style. In 2004, Ray's daughter won a multimillion-dollar lawsuit against the Cuban government in a Florida court.



Brandon Ross, age 31. Killed November 17, 2013 in suspicious circumstances, possibly an extrajudicial killing. Brandon had traveled to Cuba for a one week visit (his first to Cuba) with his Cuban-born mother. They were staying at a private home rented to tourists in the Havana neighborhood of Vedado. The night November 21st, he told his mother he was going out

to see a cousin. She saw him again when asked by police to identify his body; his face had signs of a brutal beating (one eye blackened and bulging, the other one purple), a broken jaw and smashed forehead. Cuban authorities claimed he had fallen from the roof of the Hotel Nacional and had survived for 12 hours although the last photos on his camera show him at dawn. The Cuban government said an autopsy had been performed but the family was not given results and had the body immediately cremated, even though the family was arranging to transfer it to the United States. Brandon Ross' parents live in Canada; his father was posted as a diplomat in Havana from 1974 to 1976. Brandon was born in Canada, but had become a US citizen when he went to study in the U.S.



Allen Dale Thompson, age 36. Executed by firing squad October 16, 1960. Santiago de Cuba. He landed in Oriente province with two fellow Americans to help the anti-Castro guerrilla movement. Was captured and sentenced to death by a Revolutionary Tribunal. The summary trial, during which ten men were sentenced to death, lasted only 20 minutes. The appeal took 20 minutes and the execution was carried out that same day.

Fellow Americans Robert Fuller and Anthony Zarba were also executed. The U.S. filed a diplomatic note of protest. Writer Norberto Fuentes recounts a 1987 meeting at which Fidel and Raúl Castro gloated about executing the Americans.

Gustavo Villoldo Argilagos. Comitted politically-induced suicide February 16, 1959, Cuba. A prominent businessman with numerous holdings and properties, his family was targeted as "lackeys of the United States and Yankee imperialists" when the Castro brothers took power. Cuban agents abducted Villoldo from his home and subjected him to hours of torture and interrogations, beatings, food deprivation, and threats that he would be executed. Soon after his release, Ché Guevara paid him a visit to force him to choose either death by firing squad or the execution of his son. He took his own life in an overdose of sleeping pills rather than give Guevara and the Castros the satisfaction of killing him. In 2009, his family filed a lawsuit in Florida against the Cuban government for wrongful death, obtaining a final judgment of \$2.8 billion.



Anthony Zarba, age 27. Executed by firing squad October 13, 1960, Santiago de Cuba. Resident of Somerville, Massachusetts, who landed in Oriente province with two fellow Americans to help the anti-Castro guerrilla movement. Was captured and sentenced to death by a Revolutionary Tribunal in a summary trial lasting only 15 minutes, the execution carried out

immediately. Fellow Americans Robert Fuller and Allen Thompson were also executed. The U.S. filed a diplomatic note of protest. Writer Norberto Fuentes recounts a 1987 meeting at which Fidel and Raúl Castro gloated about executing the Americans.

II. 8 U.S. citizens killed in terrorist attacks sponsored or supported by Cuba



Frank Thomas Connor, age 33, (in photo), Harold Sherburne, age 66, Alejandro Berger, age 28, and James Gezork, age 32. Killed in terrorist bombing attack, January 24, 1975, New York City. The four men (three were bankers and one was a business executive were having lunch,

separately with clients or colleagues in the historic restaurant Fraunces Tavern of Lower Manhattan when a bomb exploded for which the Cuba-sponsored Puerto Rican nationalist terrorist group FALN (Frente Armado de Liberación Nacional) took credit. The perpetrators were not captured. In 1978, FALN bomb maker Guillermo (William) Morales accidentally set off a pipe bomb he was building, suffering injuries. Although no firm evidence could be found that linked him to the Fraunces Tavern attack, he was sentenced to 89 years of prison for possession of explosives. He escaped the following year from Bellevue Hospital's prison ward, fled to Mexico, and then to Cuba, where he is believed to enjoy safe haven from U.S. justice. From 1974-83 FALN was responsible for 72 bombings, 40 incendiary attacks, and 8 attempted bombings in several U.S. cities. Their financial crimes included a \$7 million armored car robbery in Hartford, Connecticut, whose leader, Victor Gerena, escaped to Cuba with the cash, aided by Cuban intelligence, and is also still believed to live there. Connor left a wife and two sons, ages 11 and 9.



Ambassador John Gordon Mein, age 54. Killed by terrorists, August 28, 1968 in Guatemala City. Mein was the first U.S. Ambassador murdered in office, killed by the

Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR), a pro-Castro Guatemalan guerrilla group that was sponsored and supported by Cuba. FAR guerrillas ambushed his chauffeur-driven car and ordered him out; when he attempted to run away, two rebels fired at least nine bullets into him with machine guns. FAR reported they had intended to kidnap Mein to use him as a bargaining chip to force the release of FAR rebel leader Carlos Francisco Ordoñez, who had been arrested in Guatemala City four days earlier. A French woman, Michele Firk, committed suicide shortly afterwards when police went to ask her about the Mein affair. Ordoñez's mistress and a member of the French Communist Party, she had flown from Paris to assist in the Mein kidnapping. A defector of Cuba's Directorate of Intelligence (DGI) reported she was a clandestine contact of Cuban intelligence.

Jou Baittiner, killed in a terrorist bombing September 17, 1980 in Asunción, Paraguay. Financial advisor to former Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza, who was living in exile in Paraguay. Baittiner was assassinated with Somoza and his driver when their car was attacked by a seven-person commando team of Argentine guerillas. Cuban defectors have reported that the plan to assassinate Somoza was devised in Havana with direct input from Fidel Castro.

Dan Mitrione. Assassinated extrajudicially August 8, 1970 in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Former police chief in Richmond, Indiana, who was working as a U.S. government security advisor (Office of Public Safety (OPS)) at the U.S. Embassy in Montevideo and helping train Uruguayan police. He was kidnapped July 31, 1970 by Tupamaro guerrilla commandos led by Cuban State Security agent Miguel Hevia Cosculluela. They accused him of being a torturer, tortured, killed him and left his body in the trunk of a stolen automobile on August 10, 1970. The terrorists demanded the release of around 150 imprisoned guerrillas and their safe passage to Peru, but Nixon administration had refused to negotiate his release. Mitrione left nine children.



Charles Steinberg, age 26. Killed August 3, 1977 in New York City in a terrorist bombing attack. The New York city resident and partner of an employment service died instantly when a bomb ripped through the first-floor personnel office of the Mobil Oil Corporation in the Mobil Oil Building of Manhattan. Seven other persons were injured in the bombing.

Cuba-sponsored Puerto Rican terrorist group FALN (Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional) claimed responsibility. Marie Haydée Beltrán Torres, a Puerto Rican nationalist, was convicted, and sentenced to life in prison for the bombing and released in 2009.

III. 16 U.S. citizens killed or missing in operations to monitor/counter the Castro regime



Rudolph Anderson Jr., age 35. Shot down during a surveillance mission, October 27, 1962. Bay of Nipe, Oriente Province, Cuba. U.S. Air Force Major and pilot assigned to Laughlan Air Force Base, Texas whose U-2 was shot down by a missile while flying over Cuba during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Then Soviet Premier Nikita Krushchev later wrote that Fidel Castro had ordered Soviet antiaircraft officers stationed in

Cuba to shoot down the plane and that they had complied without authorization from Moscow. Anderson had taken the first photos of Soviet missile silos in Cuba. He was survived by a wife and three children.



Leo Francis Baker, age 34. Killed in combat April 19, 1961 in Cuban airspace over Bay of Pigs, Las Villas province. Resident of Birmingham, Alabama, flight navigator with the

Alabama National Guard whose plane, piloted by Capt. Thomas Ray, was shot down during the Bay of Pigs invasion.



Nels L. Benton, "Benny." Killed accidentally, May 13, 1961, in Retalhuleu, Guatemala.

Veteran of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and WWII war hero native of Minnesota who was chief of testing for the CIA's Directorate of Plans' Technical Services Division. was a highly-respected expert in sabotage, special warfare, and counterinsurgency. On April 13, 1961, while he was training Cuban exiles for the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion in a camp in Guatemala, he was constructing a utility explosive charge when the material caught fire. While attempting to move the burning mixture away from other highly volatile materials to avoid injuring others, he suffered severe burns that led to his death four weeks later.



Robert Ellis Frost. Killed in combat February 18, 1960 over España Sugar Mill, Matanzas province.

Pilot killed in combat when his small plane was shot down by anti-aircraft fire when bombarding a sugar mill in an operation to support the anti-Castro resistance.

Wade Carrol Gray. Killed in combat, April 19, 1961, Cuban airspace. Flight navigator with the Alabama National Guard shot down during an air support mission for the 2506 Brigade during the Bay of Pigs invasion.



Paul Joseph Hughes, age 37, pilot, and Jay Hunter, co-pilot. Disappeared October 31, 1960 after taking off from Ft. Pierce, Florida, with the intention of bombing Cuba. The bombing operation on Halloween day was named "Operation Trick or

Treat," and the three homemade bombs they carried were named for three U.S. citizens executed in Santiago de Cuba a few days earlier (Robert Fuller, Tony Zarba and Allen Thompson). Hughes, a former navy pilot, was a soldier of fortune; he and Hunter had both been previously active in revolutionary activities with the Castro Rebel Army and later the revolutionary Armed Forces.

Clyde Benton, Pat, Hughes, age 37, and Thomas Stacey. Killed accidentally September 21, 1960 in the vicinity of Flores, Guatemala.

Hughes (in photo), a former U.S. Air Force officer from Louisiana, was a pilot working covertly out of Guatemala to support the anti-Castro armed resistance in Cuba. His B-25 bomber was reportedly shot down by the Guatemalan military when, returning from Cuba, he approached the Flores airport low on fuel and unable to communicate with the tower. Hughes had initially supported the Rebel Army under Castro and the revolutionary Armed Forces and left due to the repressive nature of the regime. He left behind a daughter. Stacey was his navigator, but there is no information on him.





Eugene Koch, age 22. Killed in combat, April 17, 1961, Bay of Pigs, Las Villas province. The former engineering student at University of Villanueva, Havana, was a paratrooper member of the 2506 Brigade killed in combat during the Bay of Pigs invasion.

William D. Pawley. Committed suicide, January 7, 1977, Miami, Florida. Businessman and C.I.A. agent resident of Miami, Florida, who committed suicide after U.S. Navy ships accidentally machine-gunned the infiltration boat *Flying Tiger II*, killing the entire infiltration team. He was in charge of a mission to smuggle Soviet defectors out of Cuba.



Mike Rafferty. Killed accidentally December 11, 1966, Florida Straits. Pilot resident of Florida, whose B-25 aircraft crashed into the ocean after bombing a refinery in Matanzas Bay in support of the Cuban anti-Castro resistance.

Alexander I. Rorke, Jr., age 37 (in photo) and Geoffrey Sullivan, age 28. Missing in action September 24, 1963, in Cuban airspace. The men disappeared in a Beechcraft bi-motor aircraft on in or in route to Cuba during a CIA-sponsored flight to deliver supplies to the anti-Castro resistance movement in the Escambray mountains. Their bi-motor airplane had taken off from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and refueled in Cozumel, Mexico. It was reported that the plane had been shot down over Cuban territory and that at least the pilot, Sullivan, had been tortured and imprisoned for over a decade before being executed.

Rorke was a freelance writer resident of New York city. In August 2009, his daughter won a lawsuit in Maine against the Cuban government and was awarded US\$21 million. Sullivan was a commercial pilot resident of New York City, N.Y. and a veteran of several flights to Cuba in support of the anti-Castro resistance.



Riley W. Shamburger Jr. Killed in combat, April 1961, Cuban airspace over Bay of Pigs. Air Force Major with the Alabama National Guard resident of Birmingham, Alabama. Shot down while piloting a plane in support of the 2506 Brigade during the Bay of Pigs invasion.



Ksawery Wyrozemski, Age 51. Killed accidentally February 12, 1967, Albertville, Congo. Resident of Fort Walton Beach, Florida, and CIA officer, chief of air operations for a covert program to stop a Communist takeover of the Congo by guerrillas supported by the USSR and Cuba. He died in an accident when a Congolese Army truck hit his jeep, leaving a wife and son.

IV. 2 Castro regime supporters, unexpected victims



Alexandra Pollack, age 37, and another U.S. citizen of unknown identity killed January 19, 1985 in an air disaster over San José de las Lajas, near Havana. 37 other passengers died in the crash of a Cubana de Aviación flight in route to Managua, Nicaragua, shortly after takeoff. Pollack was a Communist activist who had helped found the Committee in Solidarity with the People of

El Salvador (CISPES) and was officially visiting Cuba to deliver a speech. According to the FBI, she was working with/for Cuba supporting the activities of two terrorist organizations under the guise of international solidarity. **An unidentified U.S. citizen**, a diplomat stationed in Central America recruited by Cuban intelligence, also died in the crash. According to a defector from Cuban intelligence, he had traveled clandestinely to Cuba (with an assumed citizenship) to receive training in secret communications. Cuba officially reported the crash had been accidental and caused by a mechanical failure leading to an excessive lateral turn that "could have" caused a shift in the cargo affecting the plane's controls. Defectors from Cuban military and intelligence services later reported that the plane had been improperly loaded by Cuba with boxes containing tons of armament to supply the Nicaraguan Sandinistas, a practice banned from civil aviation. When the plane turned, the load shifted, putting undue pressure on the wires and cutting cockpit-to communication. To erase all trace of the cause of the accident, Fidel Castro ordered the area cordoned off and completely cleaned up.



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