

## Cuba's compulsory military service: human trafficking with a deadly toll

By Maria C. Werlau  
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Cuba is reportedly one of about 25 countries with compulsory military service and one of only two — along with the other communist dictatorship of North Korea— where minors must serve.<sup>1</sup> Resident citizen males 17 to 28 years old must serve for two years, and up to a year until age 45 in the mandatory reserve. In 2021, Cuba had 1,033,123 males ages 15 to 29, a large and captive pool with military training or eager to avoid the harsh mandatory service in Cuba's Armed Forces.<sup>2</sup> Most, are mired in poverty and hopelessness, willing to risk their lives to improve their lot and help their families.

### Cubans with the Russians against Ukraine

The Cuban regime's strategic and comprehensive alliance with Russia and its support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine<sup>3</sup> has opened a door for desperate Cubans to sacrifice their family's stability, their own physical and mental well-being, and even their lives to join sordid foreign battles. There is evidence that many Cubans have signed contracts as mercenaries of the Russian army in its occupation of Ukraine, promise around \$29,000 a year and the possibility of obtaining residency in Russia with their families and benefits unheard of in Cuba.



*Young Cubans in Russia. Photo courtesy: Alain Paparazzi  
Cubano/AmericaTeve*

A senior Army officer from Moscow told *The Moscow Times* that Cubans were part of foreign battalions involved in the conflict with Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> *The Intercept* published a list of 198 Cubans enlisted in the Russian

<sup>1</sup> "Countries with Mandatory Military Service 2023," <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-mandatory-military-service>

<sup>2</sup> In 2021, Cuba had 1,033,123 resident male citizens ages 15 to 29, 718,296 of which were between the ages of 20 and 29. Military age in Cuba is from 17 to 28 years old. (Cuadro 3.2 - Población residente por sexo, edades y relación de masculinidad, año 2021, Anuario Estadístico de Cuba de 2021, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información, <https://www.onei.gob.cu/poblacion-0>)

<sup>3</sup> "Cuban regime, together with ideological allies in Caracas & Managua vetoes Zelensky," Center for a Free Cuba, Jul. 17, 2023; "Cuba Brief: Panel on Russia's Cuban troops," Center for a Free Cuba, Sep. 27, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> "Un exoficial de las FAR en la guerra de Rusia contra Ucrania niega la trata con fines de reclutamiento," Miami, *Diario de Cuba*, Sep. 6, 2023.

armed forces, with copies of their passports, photos, and information obtained by the group Cyber Resistance upon hacking the email account of a Russian officer in Tula, Russia. *Político* spoke with several Cubans from Russia who had enlisted with Russia's Ministry of Defense who reported having taken the desperate decision "as their best shot at a better life," and some had not understood they would be sent to the battlefield.<sup>5</sup> The Miami-based Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba told *TIME* magazine that of the 746 recruits they had tracked, at least 62 appeared to be part of a highly-trained Cuban special forces team known as Black Wasps.<sup>6</sup>

**Cuba: 2021 resident masculine population in ages compelled into active or reserve military service**

| Age     |                  |                  |
|---------|------------------|------------------|
| 15 - 19 | 314,827          | 314,827          |
| 20 - 24 | 357,958          | 357,958          |
| 25 - 29 | 360,338          | 360,338          |
| 30 - 34 | 410,934          |                  |
| 35 - 39 | 362,590          |                  |
| 40 - 44 | 311,487          |                  |
| 45 - 49 | <u>439,695</u>   |                  |
|         | <b>2,557,829</b> | <b>1,033,123</b> |

*Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información, Rep. de Cuba. 3.2 – Población residente por sexo, edades y relación de masculinidad, 2021.*

In May 2023, the Ministry of Defense of Belarus had issued a statement of discussions underway regarding the training of Cuban military personnel in Belarus.<sup>7</sup> That same month, local media in the Russian region of Ryazan reported that several Cubans had been transferred to the war zone in Ukraine after having signed up for a year with the Russian army in exchange for payments in rubles equivalent to \$4,933 upon enlistment and a monthly salary of \$2,545.<sup>8</sup> Cuba is immersed in a grave economic and systemic crisis and the average monthly salary in Cuba is among the lowest in the world;<sup>9</sup> CP 4,219 (last official figure obtained) in 2022 was around \$33 at market value and after a pronounced devaluation, it now comes to around \$17 per month.<sup>10</sup>

At the end of August 2023, two young Cubans from Russia, together with their families in Cuba, reported that they had been deceived, stripped of their passports, and prevented from returning to Cuba. They said they had signed work contracts to carry out construction work in Russia in exchange for payments, life insurance, and the possibility of obtaining residency and eventual citizenship in Russia, as well as claiming

<sup>5</sup> Eva Hartog, "Deal 'with the devil': Meet the Cubans who've joined Russia's war on Ukraine," *Político*, Sep. 25, 2023.

<sup>6</sup> Vera Bergengruen, "How Russia is recruiting Cubans to fight in Ukraine," *Time*, Sep. 18, 2023.

<sup>7</sup> Nora Gámez Torres, "Migrantes cubanos combaten en Ucrania mientras Bielorrusia dice que entrenará a militares cubanos," *El Nuevo Herald*, May 27, 2023. (The Belarusian Defense Ministry reported that the conversations to discuss the training of Cuban military personnel in Belarus took place on May 18, 2023, when the Deputy Minister of Defense for Military Cooperation International of Belarus, Valery Revenko, met with Cuba's military attaché in Russia and Belarus, Colonel Mónica Milián Gómez.)

<sup>8</sup> "Nos torturaron, nos dieron golpes", denuncia joven cubano desde Rusia, *Martí Noticias*, Sep. 1, 2023.

<sup>9</sup> CP 4,219 (the last official figure obtained) in 2022 was around US\$33 at market value in 2022 but after a pronounced devaluation is around US\$17. ("Mercado Informal de Divisas en Cuba (Tiempo Real)," <https://eltoque.com/>.) A recent index by country that excludes Cuba (many indexes do not include Cuba), but at the current average salary of US\$17 per month (at market price) would be among the seven countries with the lowest salaries. See "Countries with the highest and lowest average salaries, 2023," *GeoWorld Magazine*, Aug. 25, 2023, <https://ceoworld.biz/2023/08/25/countries-with-the-highest-and-lowest-average-salaries-2023/>

<sup>10</sup> "Datos oficiales colocan a los sectores de la educación, la salud y la agricultura," *La Habana, Diario de Cuba*, May 26, 2023; Marisela Jiménez, "Precio del dólar en Cuba hoy duplica el que tenía hace un año atrás. Los salarios siguen iguales," *Directorio Noticias*, Aug. 16, 2023.

their families; however, they said they had been sent to the front lines and mistreated.<sup>11</sup> One of the mothers, whose son had been discharged from the army in Cuba for having only one kidney, said: “My son said that he preferred dying under the Ukrainian bombs than from hunger and sadness here.”<sup>12</sup> A former officer of Cuba’s FAR, the Spanish acronym for Revolutionary Armed Forces, who said he was the head of a company of 90 Cubans located in Ryazan, told the media that all his subordinates had served in the Active Military Service, that their departure from Cuba had not been stamped in their passports, and that they had agreed to work as part of the Russian Army, for 2 thousand dollars a month, but not participating in combat.<sup>13</sup>

Of the Cuban recruits who traveled to Ryazan in July and August 2023, five had reportedly entered from Belarus and the rest through Moscow.<sup>14</sup> *InformNapalm* reported having several indications of more Cubans in other locations and published a copy of the contract granting, upon signing for one year, a life insurance policy that would pay their families US\$21,000 if they died and benefits such as the opportunity to quickly purchase housing through the mortgage savings and loan system of the Russian Ministry of Defense, service-provided accommodation or rental compensation, free treatment in military medical institutions, life and health insurance, subsidized university studies for children, reserved jobs, and more.<sup>15</sup>

On September 5, 2023, the Cuban government issued an official statement that Cuba was not part of the war conflict in Ukraine and that the Ministry of the Interior was dismantling a network operating from Russia to recruit mercenaries.<sup>16</sup> Three days later, it was reported that criminal proceedings had been initiated against three “citizens,” belonging to the recruitment scheme “directed from abroad” and 14 recruits, all presumably Cubans.<sup>17</sup> Senior Cuban officials subsequently entered into public contradictions over Cuban mercenaries recruited by or for Russia.

According to article 129 of the current Cuban Penal Code:<sup>18</sup> “Whoever, without state authorization, recruits people in the national territory for the military service of a foreign State, incurs a prison sanction from four to ten years.” Article 135.1 penalizes mercenaryism (seeking to obtain payment or another type of remuneration or personal benefit to join military formations or private military companies to act in the territory of other States) with prison sanctions of ten to thirty years, life imprisonment, or death. The same sanction applies to anyone who directly or indirectly collaborates or directly participates in mercenaryism.

Many questions remain, including whether the Cuban State is directly involved and profiting from the scheme, as well as the number of Cuban recruits involved. Cuba has dramatically increased its imports from Russia since 2016,<sup>19</sup> strengthened its comprehensive alliance with Putin, and refused to support

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<sup>11</sup> N. Gámez, “Migrantes cubanos combaten en Ucrania,” op. cit.; “Familiares de jóvenes cubanos en la guerra de Rusia en Ucrania: ‘Tememos por sus vidas’, Miami, *Diario de Cuba*, Aug. 31, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> “‘Nos torturaron, nos dieron golpes,’ denuncia joven cubano desde Rusia,” *Martí Noticias*, Sep. 1, 2023.

<sup>13</sup> “Un exoficial de las FAR en la guerra de Rusia contra Ucrania niega la trata con fines de reclutamiento,” Miami, *Diario de Cuba*, Sep. 6, 2023. (Sub Lt. Lázaro González spoke with reports from América Teve of Miami.)

<sup>14</sup> Nora Gámez Torres, “Filtración prueba que Rusia está reclutando mercenarios cubanos para luchar en Ucrania,” *El Nuevo Herald*, Sep. 9, 2023.

<sup>15</sup> “Cuban mercenaries fighting against Ukraine on the Russian side – Ukrainian hacktivists collected evidence,” *InformNapalm*, Sep. 8, 2023, <https://informnapalm.org/en/cuban-mercenaries/>

<sup>16</sup> Declaración del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sep. 5, 2023, <https://cubaminrex.cu/es/declaracion-del-ministerio-de-relaciones-exteriores>

<sup>17</sup> “Detenidos 17 ciudadanos implicados en tráfico de personas a Rusia con fines de reclutamiento militar,” *Cuba Debate*, Sep. 8, 2023.

<sup>18</sup> Ley 151/2022 “Código Penal,” Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, Ministerio de Justicia, No. 93 Ordinaria, 1ro. de septiembre de 2022.

<sup>19</sup> From 2016 to 2021, Cuba’s imports from Russia increased 69.6% from \$191,168 in 2016 to \$627,961 in 2021 vis-à-vis an overall decline of total imports from the ten largest trade partners from \$1.6billion to \$1.3 billion.



United Nations resolutions condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, it is in a severe economic crisis and depends on aid, trade, and tourism from the European Union, Canada, and other countries that support Ukraine and could impose sanctions if the State's role is confirmed.

### The Angola war, a terrible precedent

Hundreds of thousands of Cubans have been cannon fodder for Cuba's international armed interventions led by the Castro brothers since the very beginnings of the revolutionary government in 1959. The military incursion into Angola from 1975 to 1991, involved 377,033 Cuban soldiers and 50,000 civilian collaborators, according to official reports.<sup>20/21</sup> What is much less publicized is that the so-called "Operation Carlota" was a profitable business for the Cuban State, mostly at the expense of the young men forced into military service.



*Repatriated remains of Cubans fallen in Angola, December 6, 1989. Photo: Prensa Latina.*

Angola reportedly paid Cuba \$1,000 per month per soldier<sup>22</sup> and around \$2,000 per month for each officer, depending on his rank.<sup>23/24</sup> Cuba received an estimated \$300 to \$600 million annually for these payments,<sup>25</sup> or \$4.8 to \$9.6 billion in 16 years of conflict. The former Soviet Union provided the military equipment, so those costs did not weigh down the Cuba's revenues. Moreover, high-ranking Cuban officials engaged in a highly lucrative trade, looting ivory, diamonds, precious wood, equipment,

For 2022, Cuba did not report exports or imports with Russia. (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información, República de Cuba.)

<sup>20</sup> Miguel Rivero, "Morir por Angola," Lisboa, *Encuentro en la Red*, Aug. 24, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> In the context of the Cold War, and with Portugal beginning the process of independence from its African colony, Cuba supported the self-proclaimed Angolan president Agostinho Neto, MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), to consolidate power. He was a historical communist and ally of the Soviet Union (USSR), which paid for all the war material. Enrique García, a former high official of the General Directorate of Intelligence of Cuba (DGI) who defected in January 1989, reports that Fidel Castro told his Politburo that the Kremlin had requested that Cuba send a military force to Angola and guaranteed that the USSR would provide the war material. (Enrique García, interview with Maria Werlau, San Juan, Aug. 21, 2017.)

<sup>22</sup> David B. Ottaway, "The peace process In Southern Africa," *The Washington Post*, Dec. 23, 1988.

<sup>23</sup> Luis Leonel León, "Testimonio de un cubano: "Angola, la guerra ajena que libramos"," *Diario las Américas*, Oct. 17, 2017; "Testimonio confidencial," in Carlos Pedre, *Angola, la guerra innecesaria*, CreateSpace, 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Officers above the rank of captain were paid only 600 kwanzas and senior advisors and officers received 900 to 1,000, with one kwanza being roughly equivalent to one US dollar. (Maria Werlau, telephone interview with Anonymous Source #2, a Cuban who had served 33 months in Angola, Aug. 22, 2017. Also see Francisco de los Riscos Murciano, General de Brigada de Ingenieros SEM, "Angola, un escalón en la estrategia cubano-soviética en Africa," Boletín de Información No. 213, Ministerio de Defensa (España), Jan.-Feb. 1989, [http://bibliotecavirtualdefensa.es/BVMDefensa/i18n/catalogo\\_imagenes/grupo.cmd?path=71717](http://bibliotecavirtualdefensa.es/BVMDefensa/i18n/catalogo_imagenes/grupo.cmd?path=71717).)

<sup>25</sup> "1970-91 - The Era of 'Internationalism,'" <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/cuba/far-history-2.htm>.



vehicles, and more.<sup>26</sup> Most of the soldiers were paid as if they were completing their mandatory military service in Cuba, a paltry seven Cuban pesos per month for privates (\$0.71 cents) and fourteen pesos for sergeants (\$1.43),<sup>27</sup> or \$8.5 to \$17 a year. Some, perhaps most, were in the battlefield for three years, unable to go home on vacation for the entire period.<sup>28</sup>

The Cuban government transported troops, as well as the sick and wounded on merchant ships with terrible conditions, hidden in the holds, as it violated international rules. The voyage could last up to 21 days.<sup>29</sup> Soldiers sent back to Cuba sick with malaria had to finish their service on the island.<sup>30</sup> The fallen were buried where they died, in a section of the cemetery in Luanda or at the end of an airport landing strip, directly in the ground, without ceremony and practically without clothes (the boots were reassigned).<sup>31</sup> Transport the bodies to Cuba was forbidden, which deepened their families' pain. It was only as the conflict was ending, during the negotiations' phase, the remains were transferred to the Island in the so-called "Operation Tribute," when on December 6, 1989, burials were held in each of Cuba's 169 municipalities.<sup>32</sup> The Cuban government has never published the official list of fatalities, but reports 2,085, including 204 civilians.<sup>33</sup> Veterans and some specialists insist that the real figure was higher.<sup>34</sup>

Thousands of Cubans returned from the war mutilated and traumatized, some with severe mental problems. The veterans have been treated very poorly and many currently live in misery.<sup>35</sup>

### Historical evolution of the compulsory military service in revolutionary Cuba

Law No. 1,129 was promulgated in Cuba on November 26, 1963, establishing the Compulsory Military Service (known as SMO for the Spanish acronym of "Servicio Militar Obligatorio"); military committees, recruitment commissions, and registration offices were also created.<sup>36</sup> Since the prior month of June, the government had submitted the proposed law for discussion in workplaces across the country;<sup>37</sup> this is standard methodology of the dictatorship to allege popular consent. The first call to the SMO was made in April 1964.<sup>38</sup> All males had to register at the age of 15, and adolescents just 15 and 16 years old were forced into military service.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Norberto Fuentes, *Dulces Guerreros Cubanos* (Middletown: Cuarteles de invierno, 2017); "O que Cuba deu - e o muito que levou - de Angola," Angola24horas.com, Apr. 2, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> M. Werlau, interview with Anonymous Source #2, op. cit.; Russ Stayanoff, "Third World Experience in Counterinsurgency: Cuba's Operation Carlotta, 1975," *Small Wars Journal*, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/third-world-experience-in-counterinsurgency>

<sup>28</sup> M. Werlau, interview with Anonymous Source #2, op. cit.

<sup>29</sup> José Antonio Fornaris, "Angola: muchas cosas por contar," La Habana, *CubaNet*, Mar. 7, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Adriana Normand, "'120 balas en el pecho': el Servicio Militar en Cuba," *Hypermedia Magazine*, Aug. 26, 2022.

<sup>31</sup> M. Werlau, interview with Anonymous Source #2, op. cit.; Carlos Pedre, telephone interview with Maria Werlau, Aug. 24, 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Osmaira González Consuegra, "Angola, 40 años después," *La Vanguardia*, Nov. 11, 2015; Miguel Rivero, "Morir por Angola," op. cit.

<sup>33</sup> O. González Consuegra, op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Jihan El-Tahri, "Cuba: una odisea africana," BBC Films/Independent Television Service (ITVS), 2007.

<sup>35</sup> Tania Díaz Castro, "Los muertos olvidados de La Guerra de Angola," *CubaNet*, Sep. 19, 2014; José Antonio Fornaris, "Angola: muchas cosas por contar," La Habana, *CubaNet*, Mar. 7, 2007.

<sup>36</sup> "Prestación del Servicio Militar Activo y en la reserva," *Cuba Defensa*, no date, accessed Sep. 15, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191124001930/http://www.cubadefensa.cu/?q=servicio-militar-ley&b=d1>

<sup>37</sup> "Versión de las partes esenciales de la comparecencia de televisión y radio de Raúl Castro sobre la ley de servicio militar obligatorio, Nov. 12, 1963."

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Maria C. Werlau, Interview with Anonymous Source #7, a Cuban who had to register in the 1970s, Sep. 2023. Also see comments by pastorgonzalez1191 and serafinbroges7421 in "El número de muertos en el Servicio

In 1973, the General Military Service Law and its Regulations, Law No. 1,255, were promulgated, requiring men from 16 to 27 years old to actively serve for three years and establishing a mandatory military reserve for those up to 45 years of age.<sup>40</sup> It modified the Compulsory Military Service Law, enhancing the notion of homeland defense and establishing it as a fundamental ideological value.<sup>41</sup> Concurrently, Presidential Decree No. 3732 was approved, which starting in 1974, was invoked to send hundreds of men to prison for refusing to serve in the military service.<sup>42</sup>

In 1991, the time of active service was reduced to two years,<sup>43</sup> as written in 1994 into Law 75, which is the basis for the current regulatory framework.

### Mandatory service

The Cuban Constitution, amended in 2019, requires military service “in accordance with the law” and provides that conscientious objection cannot be invoked to evade compliance.<sup>44</sup>

Law No. 75 of National Defense,<sup>45</sup> approved by the National Assembly of People’s Power on December 21, 1994, establishes (Art. 67) a two-year “Active Military Service” (SMA) for male resident citizens from January 1st of the year they turn 17 until December 31st of the year in which they reach the age of 28. They must register with their respective municipal military committee during the year they turn 16, and wait to be recruited. After completing the SMA, they enter the “Military Reserve Service” until the age of 45 (Art. 72) and may be mobilized for up to one year in one or more periods. Those called to active duty, including in the reserve, may perform military service in peacetime for no more than three years.<sup>46</sup>

Citizens of both sexes “who so wish and expressly state so” may voluntarily join the SMA if they meet the requirements; allegedly, thousands of young women have in recent years joined the Women’s Voluntary Military Service (SMVF for the Spanish acronym).<sup>47</sup> The SMVF has adjusted physical preparation and performance metrics, may be performed in multiple functions in the FAR, the Ministry of the Interior (MININT), and in productive tasks with the Youth Labor Army.<sup>48</sup>

### Prohibition from leaving the country

Since the 1960s, the revolutionary government has prohibited the departure from the country of military-age males, enforcing the restrictions strictly. For decades, men between the ages of 15 to 28 could not

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Militar enciende las alarmas de las madres en Cuba,” *AmericaTeVe Miami*, Aug. 7, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQWHwJie-SM>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid; y “Servicio Militar Obligatorio en Cuba, una tenaza que el castrismo se niega a aflojar,” Madrid, *Diario de Cuba*, Jun. 27, 2021.

<sup>41</sup> “Servicio Militar Obligatorio en Cuba, una tenaza,” op. cit.

<sup>42</sup> Victor Afanasiev, “Fuerzas Armadas y política revolucionaria: el caso de Cuba de 1959 a los años 90,” in Lillian Bobsa, *Soldados y ciudadanos en el Caribe*, FLACSO, Santo Domingo, 2002, p. 227.

<sup>43</sup> “Adecuaciones a la política de reclutamiento,” op. cit.; Hal Klepak, *Cuba’s Military 1990-2005: Revolutionary soldiers during counterrevolutionary times* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan), pp. 49 and 288; Cesar Gómez Chacón, “La reducción del tiempo del servicio militar activo; una prueba de confianza,” *Granma*, Apr. 14, 1991, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Constitución de la República de Cuba proclamada el 10 de Apr. de 2019, Gaceta Oficial, República de Cuba, <https://www.gacetaoficial.gob.cu/es/constitucion-de-la-republica-de-cuba-proclamada-el-10-de-Apr.-de-2019>

<sup>45</sup> Ley No. 75 de la Defensa Nacional, <http://juriscuba.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Ley-No.-075-De-la-Defensa-Nacional1.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> “Ley No. 75 de la Defensa Nacional Capítulo VII Servicio Militar,” *Cuba Defensa*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191124070051/http://www.cubadefensa.cu/?q=ley75-capitulo-vii&b=d1>

<sup>47</sup> “Servicio Militar Activo,” [https://www.ecured.cu/Servicio\\_Militar\\_Activo](https://www.ecured.cu/Servicio_Militar_Activo).

<sup>48</sup> In May 1983, the Military Council of the Ministry of the Armed Forces implemented an experimental plan to incorporate women into the armed forces and the Women’s Voluntary Military Service was born. In March 1984, the first Women’s Anti-Aircraft Artillery Regiment was created. (“Servicio Militar Voluntario Femenino,” [https://www.ecured.cu/Servicio\\_Militar\\_Voluntario\\_Femenino](https://www.ecured.cu/Servicio_Militar_Voluntario_Femenino).)

leave the country, even after completing the military service.<sup>49</sup> The current Migration Law restricts issuing passports for reasons of compliance with the military service or defense and national security.<sup>50</sup>

### Evasion

A new Military Penal Code was approved by Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power in July 2023 to enter into force 90 days later. Its Chapter III, Article 41, sanctions evasion of the military service with five years of prison and from six months to two years of prison those who inflict self-harm, intentionally contract an illness, falsify medical documents or otherwise engage in deception with that intention.<sup>51</sup>

The current Cuban Penal Code, Chapter XIV, titled "Violation of the Duties Inherent in Military Service," establishes the following prison sanctions (some also include monetary fines):

- Six months to one year for any authority, official, or public employee who prevents, hinders, or helps evade the military service of a subordinate, for anyone failing to comply with the obligation to register for active or reserve service, and for anyone engaging in any other acts to evade the military service.
- Six months to two years if fraudulent means are used for the evasion.
- Two years for reservists who fail to heed a call for service in the event of a possible enemy aggression.

Thousands who have evaded the SMO in recent decades, known as "deniers," have had to leave the country to avoid prison or moral and physical harassment; many have been sent to prison alleging other causes.<sup>52</sup>

The Military Prosecutor's Office considers suicide an attempted desertion that can be punished as such with more than 10 years in prison.<sup>53</sup>



*Cuban female voluntary recruits. Photo: Twitter/Panampost*

### Recruitment and waivers

Officially, recruitment is based on the needs of the FAR and the Ministry of the Interior in line with the characteristics and qualities of the young men, their interests, and the unit or specialty in which they would prefer to serve.<sup>54</sup> A discharge before completing the required term is used to encourage exemplary combatants.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Enrique García, interview with Maria C. Werlau, Miami, Sep. 2023. (The previous Migration Law of September 20, 1976 stated that Cuban citizens residing in the national territory could not obtain a passport or leave the country while subject to compliance with the provisions required for the military service. See Decreto-Ley No. 302, op. cit.)

<sup>50</sup> Decreto-Ley No. 302, Modificativo de la Ley No. 1312, "Ley de Migración," Sep. 20, 1976, Gaceta Oficial de la República de Cuba, Ministerio de Justicia, Edición Ordinaria, La Habana, Oct. 16, 2012, Year CX, No. 44.

<sup>51</sup> "Por ley, cinco años de cárcel por evadir el Servicio Militar en Cuba," Madrid, *CubaNet*, Jul. 21, 2023.

<sup>52</sup> "Servicio Militar Obligatorio en Cuba, una tenaza," op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> C. Trujillo Herrera, "Prohibida la depresión," op. cit.

<sup>54</sup> "Inscripciones, la preparación del reclutamiento y el cumplimiento del Servicio Militar Activo," *Cuba Defensa*, no date, accessed Sep. 15, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191124070126/>

<sup>55</sup> "Servicio Militar Activo," op. cit.



Law 75 only allows to exempt physically or mentally disabled people officially declared as such by a military medical commission. Decree Law No. 224 states that exemptions from military service obligations are made by a provincial recruitment commission, as proposed by a municipal commission, in cases that present obvious physical or mental deficiencies in the opinion of a medical commission.<sup>56</sup> The medical commissions must have specialists covering all medical branches including a psychologist evaluating all young people before starting the SMA and disqualifying or defining the limitations of each recruit. However, psychologists spend no more than a few minutes on each case, making it difficult to detect emotional problems.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, medical commissions are incentivized to accept, not decline, recruits. Therefore, this encourages corruption, as many families that have the money, or manage to raise it, pay for their son to evade the service.<sup>58</sup>

Decree Law No. 224 specifies that citizens exempted from military service in peacetime can be incorporated into the reserve if physically and mentally fit.<sup>59</sup> Likewise, the Ministry of the FAR may order mandatory alternative service as long as a corresponding military preparation is guaranteed.

Exemptions from military service have evolved over time. In 1976, the Communist Party Politburo approved a Resolution on Recruitment Policy that created a commission to propose a recruitment policy and its compliance. In August 1986, males graduating from primary school were called for service and in 1987, those accepted into the university had to defer their entry to first complete a one-year military service. Many university students were exempted from serving at all, although they had to receive certain military training during their university studies and had to join the reserves once they graduated.<sup>60</sup>

From 1994 onwards, all eligible young men must complete one year of SMA to access “a superior level of study.”<sup>61</sup> Currently, complying with the compulsory military service is a requirement for men seeking admission to higher education.<sup>62</sup> Those who complete their high school studies and are admitted to a university must serve for 14 months.<sup>63</sup> Cuban official media reports the “right” to a second opportunity for a university education for those who fulfill their military duty exemplarily and had not been able to enter the university earlier, with the FAR paying for their studies and providing a stipend.<sup>64</sup>

Anyone who pursues a higher education and has been exempted from the SMA must do “social service” by working for up to three years in an assigned State entity.<sup>65</sup>

### Social control, forced labor, and other hardships

From its beginnings, the stated objective of compulsory military service was to qualify the population militarily to prepare for a possible “foreign interventionist aggression.”<sup>66</sup> It was also presented from the

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<sup>56</sup> “Exenciones y aplazamientos,” *Cuba Defensa*, no date, accessed Sep. 15, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191124070115/http://www.cubadefensa.cu/?q=exenciones-sma&b=d1>

<sup>57</sup> Claudia Padrón Cueto, “No todos regresan a casa,” op. cit.

<sup>58</sup> A. Normand, op. cit.

<sup>59</sup> “Exenciones y aplazamientos,” op. cit.

<sup>60</sup> Maria C. Werlau, interview with Anonymous Source #1, Sep. 12, 2023.

<sup>61</sup> “Adecuaciones a la política de reclutamiento,” *Cuba Defensa*, no date, accessed Sep. 15, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20191124070028/http://www.cubadefensa.cu/?q=adecuaciones-sma&b=d1>

<sup>62</sup> Claudia Padrón Cueto, “Diplomática cubana niega ante la ONU que el Servicio Militar sea obligatorio en la Isla,” *CubaNet*, Ciudad de México, May 12, 2022. (Translation from Spanish.)

<sup>63</sup> “Servicio Militar Activo,” op. cit.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> “Youth Labor Army [Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo],” *Global Security*, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/cuba/ejt.htm>

<sup>66</sup> María Pérez Castillo, “Réquiem por el Servicio Militar Obligatorio,” *La Habana, CubaNet*, Dec. 7, 1998; “Los orígenes del Servicio Militar en Cuba,” *CubaNet*, Nov. 26, 2022.

start as an educational necessity for political purposes. In a speech on July 26, 1963, Fidel Castro said that “among every 30 or 40 boys in the basic secondary school, there are 4 to 5 who miss school. That is bad; many of them come from bourgeois or petty-bourgeois families, which do not instill in them a sense of study, which is bad because we are incubating parasites and, then, under socialism we will be developing an uneducated, ignorant, parasitic adolescent. Measures must be taken ... because socialist society must not allow the parasitic element to develop, tomorrow’s potential lumpen and, to deal with that, we will have two institutions: the school and the Compulsory Military Service.”<sup>67</sup> The Law of Precriminal Dangerousness that was until recently part of the Cuban Penal Code also allowed countless unemployed young people to be imprisoned for up to four years for “antisocial behavior,” which effectively kept them off the streets to maintain the “socialist social order.”<sup>68</sup> Recruits also receive large doses of ideological indoctrination, which has been clearly reflected in the law since 1973.<sup>69</sup>



*Young Cuban recruits. Photo: MINFAR/CubaNet*

Article 69 of Law 75 guarantees recruits in the SMA “social benefits” and for those declared sole or partly the breadwinners of their nuclear family to receive a social assistance benefit, however, everything is “in accordance with current regulations,” which are arbitrarily defined. Recruits are exploited as cheap labor, most forced to work long hours for paltry wages in agriculture, including harvesting marabou or cutting cane, carrying blocks for hotel construction,

fumigating against dengue and chikungunya, and in other hard tasks.<sup>70</sup> Their work hours are excessively long, often under the hot sun for ten to twelve hours a day or in humid caves with inadequate clothing and equipment. Accidents are rife from lack of training, protections, safety measures, and other negligence. Many are put to work as prison guards and, when mass protests erupted across Cuba in July 2021, thousands were mobilized and ordered to beat protesters with sticks.<sup>71</sup> Many who must interrupt their study plans, end up doing hard labor jobs afterwards, as they lack training, and are often marked for life.<sup>72</sup>

### Minors

Many recruits are assigned to remote units far from their families. Conditions are usually deplorable, medical care is scarce, food is very poor, and the recruits, including children who are still growing, often go hungry.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, the Camilo Cienfuegos Military Schools (“Camilitos”)<sup>74</sup> have since September

<sup>67</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, “Discurso pronunciado en la conmemoración del X Aniversario del 26 de Julio celebrada en la Plaza de la Revolución, Jul. 26, 1963,” *Fidel, Soldado de las Ideas*, <http://www.fidelcastro.cu/es/discursos/en-la-conmemoracion-del-x-aniversario-del-26-de-Jul>. (Translation from Spanish.)

<sup>68</sup> Luis Cino Álvarez, “La peligrosidad social: un préstamo del nazismo,” *La Habana, CubaNet*, Feb. 28, 2018; Raudiel Peña Barrios, “Medidas de seguridad predelictiva en Cuba: cuando 2+2 no son 4,” *On Cuba Magazine*, Nov. 19, 2015; Emilio Rodríguez, “Peligrosidad: una aberración del derecho penal cubano,” Santa Clara, Cubanacán Press, *CubaNet*, May 14, 2004.

<sup>69</sup> “Youth Labor Army,” op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> “Servicio Militar Obligatorio en Cuba, una tenaza,” op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Iván García, “Servicio militar obligatorio en Cuba debe ser abolido,” *La Habana, Diario Las Américas*, Mar. 6, 2023.

<sup>72</sup> A. Normand, op. cit. (The author has heard similar testimonies over the course of many years.)

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> The schools are named after Camilo Cienfuegos, a Cuban revolutionary commander who, along with Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Raúl Castro, participated in the 1956 Granma expedition. He was very popular and died under strange circumstances in October 1959.

1966, provided pre-military training to students 12 to 17 years old in boarding schools of the FAR. The schools help recruit high school students and train more than 70% of the eventual officers of the FAR (50% of the generals and colonels).<sup>75</sup>

#### Military Production Assistance Units, UMAP

From November 1965 to mid-1968, the government enforced a variant of the SMO in the Military Production Assistance Units (UMAP for the Spanish acronym). Young men considered social scourges or “deviants” were subjected to military discipline in forced labor concentration camps located in Cuba’s central provinces and the Isle of Pines. They wore the same SMO uniform, worked sixty hours a week with the same salary of seven pesos a month that the SMO soldiers received and had to serve for the same amount of time: three years (those is the UMAP could reduce the time of service with good conduct).<sup>76</sup>

Some 30,000 men,<sup>77</sup> mostly young, were subjected to slave labor for “reeducation” through hard work—most were homosexuals, conscientious objectors, professed a religion, and otherwise had “ideological problems,” while some were just common criminals.<sup>78</sup> Fidel Castro himself explained in 2006 that the UMAP were created to integrate three categories into military discipline: those who could not serve in the Armed Forces due to their low educational level, conscientious objectors who, by principle or doctrine, were not loyal to the flag or accepting of weapons, and homosexuals.<sup>79</sup> An international outcry likely explains the end of the UMAP.

#### The Youth Labor Army, EJT

On August 3, 1973, the General Military Service Law, Law No. 1,255, created the Youth Labor Army, (EJT for the Spanish acronym of *Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo*), a paramilitary organization attached to the Ministry of Defense, MINFAR.<sup>80</sup> This new workforce merged the Centennial Youth Column, created in 1968, with military units assigned to productive activities such as the sugar harvest, construction of countryside schools and industries, etc.<sup>81</sup> Since 1966, the FAR had been engaging more in productive activities and the Ernesto Che Guevara Invasion Brigade, created in 1967, had cleared large plots of land of marabou for agricultural use in the eastern part of the country.<sup>82</sup>

The EJT almost doubled the regular troops to date and notably increased the Armed Forces’ participation in the country’s agricultural economy. In the second half of the seventies, the EJT cut 3,000 million “arrobos” (an old Spanish measure equal to 25 pounds) of sugar cane, manually. In 1993, the EJT was put in charge of the comprehensive management of state farms and assumed their productive economic

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<sup>75</sup> Escuelas Militares Camilo Cienfuegos, [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escuelas\\_Militares\\_Camilo\\_Cienfuegos](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Escuelas_Militares_Camilo_Cienfuegos).

<sup>76</sup> R. Garcés Marrero, op. cit. (Se cita un artículo en el periódico *El Mundo*, Apr. 14, 1963.

<sup>77</sup> V. Afanasiev, op. cit.

<sup>78</sup> Roberto Garcés Marrero, “Los primeros años de la Revolución cubana y las Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAP),” *Historia Crítica*, No. 71, Jan. 1, 2019, <https://journals.openedition.org/histcrit/2298>; Abel Sierra Madero, “El trabajo os hará hombres”: Masculinización nacional, trabajo forzado y control social en Cuba durante los años sesenta,” *Cuban Studies* No. 44, 2016, pp. 309-349, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44111921>; M. Pérez Castillo, op. cit.

<sup>79</sup> Fidel Castro was interviewed by journalist Ignacio Ramonet in 2006 for his book *Cien horas con Fidel*. (See Javier Gómez Sánchez, “Hablar de las UMAP desde la Cuba de hoy,” *Cuba Debate*, Nov. 29, 2022.)

<sup>80</sup> “Youth Labor Army,” op. cit.

<sup>81</sup> “Resaltan en Cuba trascendencia del Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo a medio siglo de fundado,” *Agencia Cubana de Noticias*, Aug. 3, 023; EJT, <https://www.ecured.cu/EJT>.

<sup>82</sup> EJT, <https://www.ecured.cu/EJT>



management process.<sup>83</sup> The EJT has also built hundreds of kilometers of railway and completed numerous buildings.<sup>84</sup>

The National Defense Law 75 of 1994 made the Youth Labor Army part of the FAR's ground troops and formalized its main missions as productive activities, protection of the environment and use of natural resources, military preparedness and participation in the armed struggle, and "contributing to the patriotic, military, labor, sports and cultural education and training of young people," which can be understood as indoctrination.

EJT is, in essence, forced labor, or slavery, of young people unsuitable for military life due to health or other problems, for having a lower educational level or needing discipline and "reeducation" for "deviancy," antisocial behavior, or "ideological problems."<sup>85</sup> According to a report in the digital newspaper



*Recruits of the Youth Labor Army, EJT. Photo: Agencia Cubana de Noticias*

*14ymedio*, many young people who complete high school and obtain entry into the university for a degree are assigned to the EJT; after a few weeks of military training known as "la previa," (the prior), they are assigned to work.<sup>86</sup> They are civilian workers for the military, subject to military laws and regulations and receiving salaries and compensation as provided by the Armed Forces.<sup>87</sup> They live in military barracks and receive food and uniforms similar to recruits in the SMA.

The EJT is organized into unarmed divisions, regiments, and battalions, which are deployed to areas where labor is scarce due to low wages and poor

working conditions: agriculture, planting trees, construction, electrification, railway and road repairs, and running the State agricultural markets.<sup>88</sup> The EJT is also sent in internationalist missions; it has built military airports in Angola and Syria.<sup>89</sup>

Given the usually lacking unskilled labor experience, quality is affected and numerous injuries and accidents occur. The EJT does not have even the poor protection other workers may enjoy from the existing union structure captive to the State.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 227; "Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo en la reparación de vías ferroviarias," *TV Camagüey*, Jun. 20, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9CQrJYM6dY>

<sup>85</sup> Luis Cino, "Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo (EJT): otro ejemplo de explotación laboral en Cuba," *La Habana, CubaNet*, Aug. 3, 2020; "Youth Labor Army," op. cit.

<sup>86</sup> Marcelo Hernández, "Los 'esclavos sin derechos' del Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo," *La Habana, 14ymedio*, Sep. 26, 2018

<sup>87</sup> Artículos 45 a 49, *Ley 75 de la Defensa Nacional*, op. cit.

<sup>88</sup> Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo: cincuenta años de victorias, *Radio Bayamo*, Aug. 3, 2023.

<sup>89</sup> "Youth Labor Army," op. cit.

The recruits and their families denounce that the EJT “is a lucrative business where young people work hard in terrible conditions receiving good-for-nothing salaries.”<sup>90</sup> According to independent journalist Luis Cino, the EJT is “an abusive military institution, where for ridiculously low, symbolic, salaries instead of the seven pesos paid monthly to military service recruits, young people with health problems who cannot be regular soldiers are forced to work as if they were slaves.”<sup>91</sup> In fact, recruits are supposed to receive the typical salary of a civilian doing the same job and are entitled to one month of vacation a year.<sup>92</sup>

Baptist pastor Mario Félix Lleonart<sup>93</sup> was forced to defer his entry into the university for a year and serve in the EJT for eight months in 1993-1994. He related to the author how he was exploited as “cheap labor,” an experience he also described in his blog *Cubano Confesante*.<sup>94</sup> From April to July 1994, he and many other young men were treated like “slaves” and forced to work in Jagüey Grande, Matanzas, for a Cuban joint venture with two Israeli companies, Grupo B.M. and Waknine & Berezovsky Co. They were housed in concentration camps without running water, ate miserably, were deprived of their assigned lot of clothing and hygiene products, including soap, and did not get a single pass to go home in those three months. With dirty and tattered clothes, most of them barefoot and just a few with broken boots, they worked long hours in the hot sun chopping marabou with blunt machetes to prepare the soil for the planting of citrus trees. Their supervisors were MININT and FAR officers who had been sent to the EJT as a punishment.

A young recruit who escaped and was arrested committed suicide by jumping from a trailer truck transporting him with his hands tied behind his back to the feared “La Paula” military prison. Lleonart writes: “He could not bear to work as a slave for an Israeli company in collusion with the regime while his grandmother and his three-year-old daughter, totally dependent on him, were dying of hunger in Caibarién.” The abuse was so great that, one day, after working from dawn until 10pm having eaten only a meager lunch, the entire platoon ran away and agreed that no one would return for at least a week. Those who did return were put on trial in the camp’s theater. But the news of their nonviolent protest had spread throughout Cuba, exposing the high levels of corruption among the EJT’s top brass. Instead of punishment, they received what had been stolen from them.

#### Forced or coerced blood “donation”

Perennial blood collection campaigns in Cuba have a supposedly altruistic purpose but they actually seek to supply raw material for the State’s biotechnology industry for a multimillion-dollar export business of blood and plasma derived medicines.<sup>95</sup> Blood is collected aggressively in the Armed Forces and military units must meet donation quotas. According to a 2017 report, based on interviews with recruits from various military units in the province of Havana,<sup>96</sup> the FAR is the only sector of Cuban society that complies with the blood donation program because it treats it as a matter of national security. The main source of blood is SMA recruits; despite their poor diet and hard work regime, they are “practically forced

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<sup>90</sup> Marcelo Hernández, “Los “esclavos sin derechos” del Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo,” *La Habana*, 14 *ymedio*, Sep. 26, 2018.

<sup>91</sup> L. Cino, “Ejército Juvenil del Trabajo,” op. cit. (Translation from Spanish.)

<sup>92</sup> “Youth Labor Army,” op. cit.

<sup>93</sup> Mario Félix Lleonart Barroso, *Memory of Nations*, <https://www.memoryofnations.eu/en/barroso-mario-felix-lleonart-1975> (Pastor Lleonart left Cuba with his family in 2016 and lives in exile in the U.S.)

<sup>94</sup> Mario Félix Lleonart Barroso, “Por mis venas corre jugo de naranja,” *Cubano Confesante*, Aug. 12, 2013, <https://cubanoconfesante.com/por-mis-venas-corre-jugo-de-naranja/>; Mario Félix Lleonart Barroso, “EJT: trabajos forzados y mano de obra barata,” *Cubano Confesante*, Aug. 8, 2013, <http://cubanoconfesante.com/ejt-trabajos-forzados-y-mano-de-obra-barata/>

<sup>95</sup> Cuba has exported blood and blood products since the 1960s. Available international statistics indicate that Cuba exported \$826.4 million from 1995 to 2021. (See Observatory of Economic Complexity, [oec.world](http://oec.world).)

<sup>96</sup> Carlos Trujillo Herrera, “Donaciones de sangre, 'tarea de choque' para los reclutas del Servicio Militar,” *La Habana*, *Diario de Cuba*, Jul. 13, 2017. (The journalist reports that the names of the recruits were changed to avoid a military sentence for “collaboration with the enemy”).

to donate blood” out of revolutionary duty. The report describes how the entire structure of the military apparatus turns against recruits who refuse to donate “voluntarily”—they are detained, ridiculed, accused of being “counterrevolutionaries,” threatened with permanent retention for insubordination, and finally transferred to a military hospital where they are forced to give blood.

One former recruit related that soldiers must fast until they can donate blood on the designated days and entire units of starving youth must wait for transportation, sometimes for long hours and into the afternoon. He explained: “After a week of eating a pittance, you can’t spend a day fasting.” The bread with ham and a can of cola usually given to donors after the blood extraction “is what keeps people from rioting on the spot.”<sup>97</sup> Sometimes, recruits have been so hungry that they rush to donate blood just to access the meager snack.<sup>98</sup>

Home passes, routinely for two days every two weeks, are highly valued to alleviate hunger but some recruits must donate blood to secure them; others obtain “stimulus” passes for donating blood.<sup>99/100</sup>

### **The excessive human cost of compulsory military service in Cuba**

For decades, Cuba’s compulsory military service has been an ordeal that leaves recruits lasting physical and psychological wounds. It involves a long family separation, interrupted study plans, and an ordeal of exploitation, hunger, dirt, mistreatment, and punishment. In both the SMA and the EJT, military discipline is imposed mainly by humiliation, as superiors have a low cultural level and often mistreat and abuse the recruits.<sup>101</sup> Home passes are arbitrarily suspended and indiscipline leads to punishment cells and years-long prison sentences.<sup>102</sup> Deserters and escapees are severely punished, including with execution. Accidents are frequent and many are fatal. Untrained youngsters misfire their weapons, often causing injuries or death to themselves or their classmates.

In 2022, Cuban independent journalist Alberto Méndez Castelló wrote what veterans of Cuba’s military service and their families have long reported: “It represents 60 years of suffering for the entire Cuban family, and not only for the young conscripts, the hazards and sorrows of those teenage soldiers who end up in prison for desertion, or commit suicide, or die in accidents, destroying their families for the rest of their lives.”<sup>103</sup>

Deaths in Cuba’s compulsory military service for over six decades could be in the hundreds, perhaps thousands, in addition to the fatalities from the Angola war and other Cuban armed interventions. As there are no official figures or a historical and systematic documentation initiative, Cuba Archive’s Truth and Memory Project has been able to document very few cases, 54, mostly through recent media reports and

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<sup>97</sup> Maria C. Werlau, telephone interview with Anonymous Source #6, Apr. 19, 2021. (Presumably, in Cuba fasting is promoted before donating blood to ensure better blood quality. This contradicts what is recommended in many countries to safeguard the energy level and health of the donors.)

<sup>98</sup> Maria C. Werlau, telephone interview with Anonymous Source #5, Oct. 26, 2014.

<sup>99</sup> Maria C. Werlau, interview with Anonymous Source #3, San Juan, Aug. 11, 2016. (This individual was in the military service in the 1990s.)

<sup>100</sup> Maria C. Werlau, interview with Anonymous Source #4, San Juan, Aug. 14, 2013. (This individual was in the military service in the 2000s.)

<sup>101</sup> A. Normand, op. cit.; Luis Cino, “El servicio militar sigue siendo tan obligatorio como cuando lo implantaron en 1965,” *CubaNet*, May 15, 2022.

<sup>102</sup> Claudia Padrón Cueto, “No todos regresan a casa,” *CubaNet*, Jul. 25, 2022.

<sup>103</sup> Alberto Méndez Castelló, Cuba: a falta ejército, un contingente de uniformados, Las Tunas, *CubaNet*, Jun. 17, 2022. (Translated from Spanish.)



a new Facebook group,<sup>104</sup> of which 20 are from 2022 and 2023 alone and include 1 forced disappearance, 2 firing squad executions, 13 extrajudicial executions, 14 suicides, 2 from medical negligence, 19 from criminal negligence or accident, and 2 from other causes, one in which the cause of death was not reported by authorities. 4 were under 18 years of age, minors. (See the Annex.)



*Recent fatalities in Cuba's compulsory military service: Jonathan Aldana (2022), Ennier Hechavarría (2023), Ernesto Miranda (2023), Humberto Rodríguez (2023), Jaisón Martínez (2023), Alex Rodríguez (2023), Gabriel López (2023), Reiner Franco (2021), Daríel Cabrales (2023) y Carel Gutiérrez (2021).*

Given the above, young people who enter the SMA with mental problems worsen while many will develop them for the first time; in both cases, they are usually ignored. Recruits who suffer nervous break-downs are usually just sedated with medication and put to bed.<sup>105</sup> Many harm or mutilate themselves seeking a discharge; they cut themselves or swallow sharp objects, shoot themselves in the feet or hands, chop their ankle or knee with a machete, and even fracture their bones.<sup>106</sup> In 2019, the Supreme People's Court published in the Official Gazette that, given the "increase in acts of self-harm committed by soldiers," recruits who resort to this practice would be punished.<sup>107</sup>

Suicide, a cause of death that points to a high level of despair and hopelessness, is not officially reported but believed to be very high. It is one of ten leading causes of death in Cuba and constitutes the third cause of death for the age group required for military service.<sup>108</sup> In a rare presentation featured on the website of the Pan American Health Organization, PAHO, it was reported that around 70% of suicides in Cuba

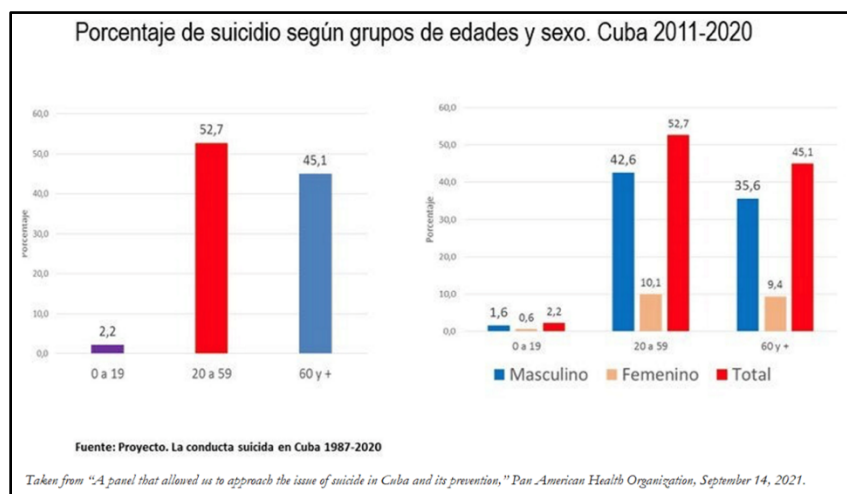
<sup>104</sup> "No más muertes en el servicio militar en Cuba," Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/113595827397082>

<sup>105</sup> Carlos Trujillo Herrera, "Prohibida la depresión en el Servicio Militar," La Habana, *Diario de Cuba*, Jul. 10, 2017.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid; A. Normand, op. cit.; Luis Cino, "El servicio militar sigue siendo, op. cit.; C. Padrón, "No todos regresan," op. cit.

<sup>107</sup> C. Padrón, "No todos regresan," op. cit.

<sup>108</sup> Matilde de la Caridad Molina Cintra<sup>1</sup>, "Caracterización demográfica de las edades jóvenes en Cuba," *Revista Novedades en Población*, Vol.18, No.36, La Habana Jul.-Dec. 2022; Claudia Padrón Cueto, "No todos regresan a casa," op. cit.



occur in men and a graph shows that the suicide rate of young men is much higher than that of women, especially in the age group 20 to 59 years.<sup>109</sup>

Cuba reports suicide as mortality due to "intentionally self-inflicted injuries" and does not report the suicide rate by age group in the Health Statistical Yearbook nor the cases of attempted suicide to PAHO.<sup>110</sup> It does report higher than the average suicide

rates for Latin American and the Caribbean, of 13.8 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2020, 13.1 in 2019, 16.1 in 2021 and 12.9 in 2022. According to PAHO, Cuba had the highest or one of the highest suicide rates in the region in four successive four-year periods from 1990 to 2009: 21.57 in 1990-1994, 18.97 in 1995-1999, 14.55 in 2000-2004 and 12.31 in 2005-2009.<sup>111</sup>

A study published in 1998, titled *Suicide in Cuba and Miami*, shows that the suicide rate in Cuba had almost tripled since 1969 and that Cuba was the country with the most suicides in Latin America, while Cubans in Miami committed suicide at a lower rate than the average Miami resident. In 2001, one of its authors, sociologist/psychologist Maida Donate, estimated that the current suicide rate was more than 20%, or 2,500 deaths per 100,000, well above the Latin American average, generally between 8% and 12 %. Health statistics in Cuba are typically manipulated and it was anonymously reported that in the emergency room records of a Havana hospital cases of attempted suicide are counted as surgeries.

A recent Facebook group, "No more deaths in Military Service in Cuba,"<sup>112</sup> administered by the father of a young man who died in the SMA with over 5,000 members, and helps relatives and friends report cases of death and express solidarity with each other. They have seen an improvement in the treatment of recruits in one of the units where they had denounced fatalities.

## Violations of Cuba's internal legislation and of international law

The Cuban State deliberately ignores international instruments signed, and even ratified, by the Republic of Cuba and Article 8 of Cuba's Constitution has a legal loophole, which reads (translated from Spanish): "Commitments made by the Republic of Cuba in international treaties are part of or are integrated, as appropriate, into the national legal system. The Constitution of the Republic of Cuba takes precedence over said international treaties." Individual or collective rights do not exist per se, as Article 5 of the Constitution establishes that the Communist Party is the superior and leading force of society and the

<sup>109</sup> "Un panel que permitió aproximarse al tema del suicidio en Cuba y su prevención," Sep. 14, 2021, Organización Panamericana de la Salud, <https://www.paho.org/es/noticias/14-9-2021-panel-que-permitio-aproximarse-al-tema-suicidio-cuba-su-prevencion>

<sup>110</sup> María C. Werlau, *The Pan American Health Organization and Cuba: a controversial collaboration*, Washington, D.C., Free Society Project/Cuba Archive, Oct. 27, 2022.

<sup>111</sup> *Anuario Estadístico de Cuba 2020 de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social*, ed. 2021, Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas e Información, República de Cuba, p. 24.

<sup>112</sup> "No más muertes en el servicio militar en Cuba," Facebook group, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1135958273970827>

State, as multiple constitutional provisions annul freedoms considered contrary to “the purposes of the socialist State” and “socialist legality.” Every “right” is implicitly conditioned and subordinated to these purposes.

Legal guarantees and protections or remedies for victims are, essentially, entirely lacking. The police state is not accountable to civil society, and the judicial system is subordinated to the executive branch and courts lack independence or impartiality and operate without adequate procedural guarantees. Even defense lawyers are all employees of the State. Independent organizations are banned and civil society actors, including human rights activists, are threatened, persecuted, imprisoned, forced into exile, and even killed or disappeared.<sup>113</sup>

Following are some internal laws and international treaties that Cuba’s military service specifically violates.

### Protections for minors

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, approved on November 20, 1989 and ratified by Cuba on August 21, 1991.<sup>114</sup>

The Convention guarantees the special rights of children at all levels and establishes (Article 1) that “a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.”

- Article 9. 1. “States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when ... such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child.”
- Article 32. 1. “States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.”
- Article 36. “States Parties shall protect the child against all other forms of exploitation prejudicial to any aspects of the child’s welfare.”
- Article 38. States Parties: 1. undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable to them in armed conflicts which are relevant to the child; 2. take all possible measures to ensure that persons who have not yet reached the age of 15 do not take a direct part in hostilities; 3. shall refrain from recruiting into the armed forces any person who has not reached the age of 15.

Cuba violates its own laws regarding minors. As of July 22, 2022, the new Family Code, Law No. 156,<sup>115</sup> stipulates in Article 29.1: “The full capacity to exercise rights and carry out legal acts is acquired upon reaching the legal age of 18.”<sup>116</sup> The legal age in Cuba was until recently 16, which the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child had long recommended increasing to 18. Before 2022, Law No. 116 of the Cuban Labor Code of December 20, 2013<sup>117</sup> also prohibited child labor and provided special protection to young people between fifteen and eighteen years old, but these provisions are systematically

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<sup>113</sup> Cuba Archive’s Truth and Memory Project documents deaths and disappearances attributed to the Cuban revolution. See <https://cubaarchive.org/truth-and-memory/the-project/>.

<sup>114</sup> Convention on the Rights of the Child, <https://www.ohchr.org/es/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

<sup>115</sup> Ley 156/2022, “Código de las Familias,” Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Gaceta Oficial No. 99 Ordinaria, Sep. 27, 2022, Ministerio de Justicia, República de Cuba.

<sup>116</sup> “La ONU recomienda a Cuba aumentar la mayoría de edad,” Ginebra, Agencias/*Diario de Cuba*, Jun. 21, 2011.

<sup>117</sup> Versión actualizada de la Ley No. 116, Código de Trabajo, de 20 de diciembre de 2013, publicada en la Edición de la Gaceta Oficial Extraordinaria No. 29, Jun. 17, 2013, Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular, Gaceta Oficial, Ministerio de Justicia, República de Cuba, Feb. 20, 2020.



violated. Chapter V on “Special Protection at Work for Young People from Fifteen to Eighteen Years” states, among others (translated from Spanish):

- Article 64. Employers in any sector are obliged to pay special attention to these young people so they may achieve their best preparation, adaptation to working life, and development of their professional training, guaranteeing them enjoyment of the same rights as other workers.
- Article 65. The workday of young people between fifteen and sixteen years of age cannot exceed seven hours a day, or forty hours a week, and they are not allowed to work on designated days of rest.
- Article 67. The employer has the obligation to facilitate the training and preparation of young people to perform their work under the mentorship of workers with established experience.
- Article 68. Young people between fifteen and eighteen years of age cannot be employed in jobs in which they are exposed to physical and psychological risks, work at night or underground or in the water, in dangerous heights or in closed spaces, with heavy loads, exposed to dangerous substances or to high or low temperatures or to noise levels or vibrations that are harmful to their health and integral development.

Since 1964, a few months after the law that made military service mandatory in Cuba from 16 to 28 years of age was enacted, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an organ of the Organization of American States,<sup>118</sup> reported several serious complaints of repeated human rights violations by the Government of Cuba. The Commission, in accordance with its statute, informed the Government of Cuba that, under Cuba’s Law 1, 129 of 1963, minors were recruited to perform compulsory military service and subjected to “a compulsory labor regime in an arbitrary manner in inhospitable and inappropriate places for their status as minors.” It also requested information regarding the complaint and, if the accusations were accurate, the adoption within domestic legislation of appropriate measures to promote faithful observance of human rights.<sup>119</sup>

Although Cuban law is unambiguous on the compulsory military service of minors, on May 11, 2022, the Cuban diplomat and Ministry of Foreign Affairs official Yisel González García stated before the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child that “it is a certainty that children are not and will not be recruited in Cuba,” referring to the military service, and said that Cuban law stipulates that “citizens of both sexes who so wish to and express openly may voluntarily join the military service.”<sup>120</sup>

### Labor rights

#### Cuba’s Labor Code, Law No. 116, of 2013

- Guarantees workers an employment contract, equal pay, daily and weekly rest and paid annual vacations, safety and health at work, and measures to prevent accidents and occupational diseases.
- Grants workers the right to work in safe and hygienic conditions and to be provided with personal protective equipment.
- Obligates employers to prevent, control, investigate, and report to the corresponding authorities work accidents or illnesses contracted at work and to provide services, in kind and monetary benefits, for accidents or illnesses at work.
- Regulates time for work, rest and personal needs, as well as night work, working hours, schedules, and breaks.
- Guarantees a minimum monthly wage for full-time work and provides that workers are not obliged to perform extraordinary work, except in compelling cases of social interest (which lists, such as for

<sup>118</sup> “What is the IACHR?”, <https://www.oas.org/en/IACHR/jsForm/?File=/en/iachr/mandate/what.asp>

<sup>119</sup> Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, Unión Panamericana, Washington, D.C., Oct. 22, 1964, ANEXO I, <http://www.cidh.org/countryrep/Cuba67sp/anexo.1.htm>

<sup>120</sup> “Funcionaria del régimen niega que en Cuba haya servicio militar obligatorio,” *ADNCuba*, May 12, 2022.

defense of the country, in cases of catastrophe, accident or breakdown of production or services, in urgent work when health or life is in danger.

### International instruments against forced labor and trafficking in persons

Forced labor is intrinsic to Cuba's compulsory military service, whether in the SMA or the EJT, and constitutes human trafficking perpetrated by the State. It has two aggravating factors: 1.) minors are exploited, and 2.) coercion or force are employed to collect blood, which is per se considered a form of human trafficking.

Given that the State is the perpetrator, official complicity is absolute and prevention, protection, and assistance to victims or witnesses of forced labor and trafficking in persons are non-existent.

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, of 2003 (one of three Palermo Protocols),<sup>121</sup> to which Cuba subscribed its "accession"<sup>122</sup> on June 20, 2013. Article 3. a) establishes that: "Trafficking in persons' shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, ... forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs." Subparagraphs c) and d) further define trafficking in persons as the exploitation of any person under 18 "even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article."

The Forced Labor Convention (No. 29) of the International Labor Organization, of 1930, ratified by Cuba in 1953. Forced or compulsory labour is defined as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily. Point a) any work or service exacted in virtue of compulsory military service laws for work *of a purely military character*."<sup>123</sup> Cuba's Penal Code, in its Chapter VI. "Forced or Mandatory Labor," section 6, reflects this same language.

Trafficking in Persons Victims Protection Act of the United States. This U.S. law reflects international agreements<sup>124</sup> which requires for the U.S. Department of State to report annually on how countries address human trafficking. In the latest Report on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), corresponding to 2022<sup>125</sup>, Cuba remained for the third consecutive year at the lowest level, level 3, along with 16 other countries not meeting minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking or making significant efforts to do so and highlights the unique role of the Cuban government in the trafficking. The report specifically addresses

<sup>121</sup> Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

<sup>122</sup> Art. 16 of the Protocol on TIP opens it for Accession. "Accession" is the act whereby a state accepts the offer or the opportunity to become a party to a treaty already negotiated and signed by other states. It has the same legal effect as ratification. Accession usually occurs after the treaty has entered into force. The conditions under which accession may occur and the procedure involved depend on the treaty's provisions. (As per Arts.2 (1) (b) and 15, Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties 1969]. In: Glossary of terms relating to Treaty actions, United Nations Treaty Collection, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/overview.aspx?path=overview/glossary/page1\\_en.xml](https://treaties.un.org/pages/overview.aspx?path=overview/glossary/page1_en.xml)

<sup>123</sup> C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29), [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C029#:~:text=The%20illegal%20exaction%20of%20forced,adequate%20and%20are%20strictly%20enforced](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C029#:~:text=The%20illegal%20exaction%20of%20forced,adequate%20and%20are%20strictly%20enforced)

<sup>124</sup> 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

<sup>125</sup> Trafficking in Persons Report: Cuba, <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/cuba/> (The report covers the period Apr. 1, 2021 to Mar. 31, 2022.)

Cuba's military service, stating that "government officials may be forcibly recruiting children to join community military brigades charged with repressing citizens," reporting the October 2022 suicide of a 16-year-old recruit, and calling for Cuba to "cease the recruitment of children for military activities."

The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, of 1984, ratified by Cuba on May 17, 1995.<sup>126</sup> Article 1 defines the term "torture" as "*any act by which serious pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person, for the purpose of to obtain from him or a third party information or a confession, to punish him for an act he has committed or is suspected of having committed, or to intimidate or coerce that person or others, or for any reason based on any type of discrimination, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by a public official or other person in the exercise of public functions, at his instigation, or with his consent or acquiescence.*" (Italics added for emphasis.)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Cuba's mandatory military service forces young people to defend a dictatorial system that robs them of fundamental rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>127</sup> embodies, in many of its articles, guarantees and rights that are stolen from all Cubans (legal guarantees and fundamental rights such as expression, thought, conscience, property and adequate standard of living), but the compulsory military service violates, in particular, the following articles:

- Article 3. Every individual has the right to life, liberty and security of person.
- Article 4. No one will be subjected to slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade are prohibited in all their forms.
- Article 5. No one will be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.
- Article 13.2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
- Article 22. Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.
- Article 23.3. Every person who works has the right to equitable and satisfactory remuneration, which assures him, as well as his family, an existence in accordance with human dignity and which will be supplemented, if necessary, by any other means of social protection.
- Article 24. Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

See the Annex in the following page on deaths and disappearances in Cuba's mandatory military service.

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<sup>126</sup> The Convention Against Torture, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-against-torture-and-other-cruel-inhuman-or-degrading>

<sup>127</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

Annex

## 54 cases of death or disappearance in Cuba's active mandatory military service: an initial documentation effort

Summary of work-in-progress as of September 15, 2023

1 forced disappearance, 2 firing squad executions, 13 extrajudicial executions, 14 suicides, 2 from medical negligence, 19 from criminal negligence or accident, 2 from other causes  
(\*4 were minors; 20 are for the years 2022-2023)

### Selected case profiles



**Maikol Arcia**, committed suicide May 28, 2023 at Unit 6244, San José de las Lajas. He was forced into the military service despite having a metal plate in his brain from an old injury. His grandfather had warned his superior that he had a mental disorder and would threaten with suicide, asking that he not be given any weapons. Ignoring the request, he was assigned to guard a weapons depot.



**Alexei Oyarzabal**, 16 years old, committed suicide October 14, 2022 at Camp El Cacahual, Sancti Spiritus. He had grown tired of his guard duties and of having been forced into the military. Witnesses reported that he put an AKM rifle in his mouth and blew his brains out.



**Dayron Pupo Mastrapa**, 22, died in Havana on August 17, 2022. He was in punishment for escaping to see his mother. Authorities said he had died of a massive heart attack but his body had all the teeth missing and other signs of trauma.



**Leo Pérez de Prado y Fabián Naranjo Núñez**, age 20, **Adrian Rodríguez Gutiérrez**, age 19, and **Michel Rodríguez Román**, died at a supertanker base in Matanzas August 5, 2022, from likely criminal negligence. They were ordered, violating safety rules, to fight a huge petrochemical fire with no experience or proper equipment. A lightning rod on one of the four fuel tanks had reportedly failed and a fire spread to adjacent tanks, causing huge explosions. It was later reported that the tank had been uncovered and at serious risk of fire.



**Elvis Martínez**, 18, died June 12, 2022 at a unit in Camagüey. According to authorities, he shot himself with an automatic rifle after an argument with a Major. His body had lacerations and two gunshot wounds, one under the chin.





**Annier González**, 18, 18, committed suicide Jul. 4, 2021 with the rifle given to him just a few hours earlier to stand guard by himself in a tower at the Combinado del Sur prison of Matanzas, having come from a long isolation for

Covid prevention after a short visit home. He had been in the military service for just 13 days and had never held a rifle in his hands. His father believes he panicked, as he was in an already altered state when he saw himself alone with a gun guarding a prison.



**Orlando Lago Vega**, 18, was shot dead on June 1, 2020 while sleeping at a military unit in Havana. The murderer had entered the military unit without a problem and the family suspected an individual who had threatened them

and was a friend of local police officers. Despite filing complaints with the authorities, the police did not investigate and tried to persuade them to withdraw the complaint against the suspect. In 2023, Orlando's father was sentenced to a year and six months in prison for insisting for his son's death to be investigated.



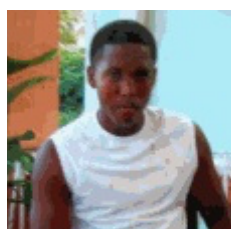
**Ariel Díaz Cardero**, 18, died on July 21, 2018 at Military Unit 6 of Matanzas. Authorities told the family he had died of a sudden heart attack but the death certificate listed a cause of death "unknown."

His parents were not allowed to be alone with the body. An investigation requested by the family ruled that he had suffered from myocarditis. His family ignores what caused his death.



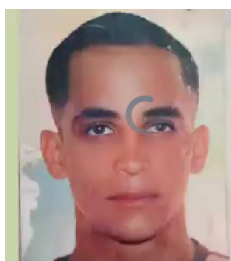
**Darío Andino León**, 18, was presumably murdered on November 18, 2014 at the Red Berets Military Unit of Cienfuegos. He had been in military service for 6 months in harsh conditions and, during a home visit, fled Cuba with neighbors in

a small boat. They were rescued after an ordeal at sea and returned to Cuba by the US Coast Guard. After a hospital stay, he was accused of desertion and isolated in a punishment cell. Days later, he had reportedly hanged himself with a sheet, although no clothing is allowed in the punishment cells.



**Dyron Carbonell Ramos**, 18, died at the Hermanos Amejeiras Hospital in Havana on March 22, 2010. He had been assigned to Military Unit 7577 at Managua, Havana province, and worked moving heavy

equipment in a humid underground facility without protective equipment and barefoot, surrounded by rats and bats. After developing a severe headache, pains, tremors, and a high fever, he was sent home. Successive doctor visits failed to determine a diagnosis and he died weeks later after a month in the hospital. The death certificate did not indicate a cause of death. His mother was harassed by police to stop insisting on seeing the autopsy report. She learned that another young man had died in Santiago de Cuba in similar circumstances.



**Alfredo Guerra Rivero**, 19, disappeared October 25, 2009 from Military Unit 2170 at Vaca Muerta, San Antonio de los Baños of Havana province. His family does not know what happened to him.



**Francisco Fernández Galván**, 22, was executed by firing squad without trial on April 20, 1979 in the Castillo de Atarés, Havana, for expressing opposition to the communist ideology. His father had been a political prisoner and had served a five-year sentence from 1963 to 1968. His death certificate cites other causes of death. When his father and a sisters went to see the prosecutor, he offered them money for their silence, which they rejected.

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## 54 documented victims of Cuba's compulsory military service

The majority were between 17 and 22 years old

Those marked with \* were minors, under 18

20, in green text, are from 2022 and 2023

See individual files at [CubaArchive.org/database](http://CubaArchive.org/database)

### Firing squad executions

**Fernández Galván, Francisco**. Castillo de Atarés, La Habana, Apr. 20, 1979

**Godoy, Juan**. Prisión La Cabaña, La Habana, 1964

### Forced disappearance

**Guerra Rivero, Alfredo**. San Antonio de los Baños, Oct. 25, 2009

### Extrajudicial killings

**Aldana Sánchez, Jonathan**. Jiguaní, Jun. 29, 2022

**Andino León, Darío**. Cienfuegos Nov. 18, 2014

**Arrate Morales, René**. Camagüey Jun. 6, 1980

**Chiu Padrón, Reinaldo**. Mar. 21, 2022

**Díaz Chávez, Roberto**. San José de las Lajas, Habana, Jul. 22, 1998

**Frometa Piña, Luis**. Habana, Sep. 1985

**Lago Vega, Orlando**. Jun. 1, 2020

**Llera Díaz, Antonio**. At sea, Apr. 16, 1966

\***López, Reynaldo** (age 17). Habana, Sep. 1986

**Martínez, Elvis**. Nuevitas, Camagüey, Jun. 12, 2022

**Miranda, Ernesto**. La Lisa, Habana, Mar. 2023

**Morales, Maikel**. San José de las Lajas, Habana, Oct. 11, 1997

**Pupo Mastrapa, Dayron**. Habana, Aug. 17, 2022

\***Viera, William** (age 17. Villa Clara, Feb. 1976

### Medical condition and/or denial of medical care

**Carbonell Ramos, Dyron**. Habana, Mar. 22, 2010

**Díaz Cardero, Ariel**. Matanzas, Jul. 21, 2018

### Suicide

**Abad Puñes, Jorge**. Jun. 24, 1969

**Arcia Hernández, Maikol**. San José de las Lajas, May 28, 2023

**Cámbara Cabrera, Liusbani**. Contramaestre, Santiago de Cuba, Jan. 2023

**Delgado Albelo, Yoelvis**. Camagüey, Apr. 21, 2011.

**González, Annier**. Matanzas, Jul. 4, 2021

**Guerrero Silva, Juan**. Gibara, Holguín, Jun. 2023

**López Avila, Gabriel**. San Germán, Holguín, Aug. 8, 2023

Martínez Rondón, Jaison. Mayabeque, Jan. 27, 2023  
 Moya Yanez, Víctor. Cárdenas, Matanzas, Oct. 18, 2014  
 \*Oyarzabal, Alexei (age 16). Sancti Spiritus, Oct. 14, 2022  
 Paz, Danilo. Apr. 2023  
 Ponce Monteagudo, Rubén. Habana, May, 5, 2020  
 Rodríguez, Alex Javier. Jul. 7, 2023  
 N/A, Brayan. Aug. 2022

**Criminal negligence & Accidents**

Bacourt, Roberto. Manicaragua, Las Villas, Feb. 1985  
 Cabrales Valdés, Dariel. Aguada de Pasajeros, Cienfuegos, Apr. 13, 2023  
 \*Díaz, Antonio (17 años). Habana, Nov. 21, 1973  
 Doval Pérez de Prado, Leo. Matanzas, Aug. 5, 2022  
 Gómez Ruiz, Jesús. Apr. 4, 2016  
 González Muñoz, Yelner. Feb. 27, 2022  
 González Vázquez, Eduardo. San Miguel de los Baños, Matanzas, Feb. 28, 2005  
 Gutiérrez, Carel. Artemisa, Nov. 20, 2021  
 Hechavarría Silva, Ennier. Holguín, Jun. 18, 2023  
 Hernández Clemente, Yosbel. San Miguel de los Baños, Matanzas, Feb. 28, 2005  
 Machín, Reynaldo. Manicaragua, Las Villas, Feb. 1985  
 Mesa Ruiz, Magdiel. San Miguel de los Baños, Matanzas, Feb. 28, 2005  
 Naranjo Núñez, Fabián. Matanzas, Aug. 5, 2022  
 Reynosa, Ulises. Camagüey, 1978  
 Rodríguez, Humberto. Jun. 15, 2023  
 Rodríguez Gutiérrez, Adriano. Matanzas, Aug. 5, 2022  
 Rodríguez Román, Michel. Matanzas, Aug. 5, 2022  
 Reynaldo N/A, Manicaragua, Las Villas, Feb. 1985  
 Sánchez Bencomo, Manuel. Pinar del Río, Nov. 20, 2009

**Attempting to flee Cuba by sea**

Pérez, Genovevo. 1966

**Cause of death not reported**

Franco Atencio, Reinier, Managua, Habana, 2021

*\*George Utset had led the effort to document deaths in Cuba's military service as well as, for years, for Cuba Archive's database of deaths and disappearances.*

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 to the Cuban revolution**

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