

Seeking More Cold War with Cuba

The neocons who dominate Official Washington speak most loudly through their flagship newspaper, The Washington Post, almost always seeking confrontation rather than cooperation in addressing the world's problems, such as Cold War-era hostility toward Cuba, as ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar explains.

By Paul R. Pillar

A *Washington Post* editorial proclaims in its headline, "Failure in Cuba," with a bank head that declares, "Mr. Obama's opening is not leading to positive change." One should not expect anyone, including editorial boards, who have been opposed to a policy departure to change their own position quickly. But what the *Post* has to say about Cuba illustrates some unfortunate tendencies that have warped policy debate on other issues as well.

The biggest problem is the failure to ask, "What's the alternative?" And to ask as well, "Why should the alternative be expected to bring any better results, especially on the very criteria on which the policy at hand is being criticized?"

This failure was quite apparent in much of the opposition to the agreement to limit Iran's nuclear program, an agreement that was clearly superior to the only real alternative, which was the absence of an agreement, on most of the very topics that opponents themselves were raising, from the size of uranium stockpiles to the frequency of international inspections.

With regard to Cuba, this deficiency of the argumentation is even more glaring because the alternative to Mr. Obama's opening, i.e., a continued attempt to isolate and ostracize Cuba, has had an enormously long time to show what it can, or cannot do. In fact, it's had half a century to show that; the United States instituted a full economic embargo on Cuba in 1962.

The U.S. embargo and attempted isolation of Cuba are the archetype of a failed policy. That policy has failed to bring about hoped-for change either small (the *Post* editorial talks about rates for wi-fi service in Cuba) or large (fundamental political change in the Castro regime) or much in between (including various human rights issues).

The inconsistency of the standards being applied in the editorial, as far as time and expectations are concerned, is ludicrously large. Evidently half a century, through ten different U.S. administrations, is deemed insufficient time to judge whether the policy of isolation can ever achieve any useful results. But the editorial criticizes President Obama's opening for not bringing about a

“sea change in Cuba” during the brief time it has been in effect. The announcement of the move to restore diplomatic relations was barely more than year ago, and embassies were reopened only six months ago.

Another flaw in the argumentation that we have seen before is to pin everything on one policy change and to fail to take account of other important conditions. The big, important condition regarding U.S.-Cuban relations is that the economic embargo is still in effect. The Obama administration has been limited to changes it can make through executive action; the embargo stays in effect as long as a majority in Congress refuses to end it.

When the *Post* editorial writers complain about meager Cuban purchases of U.S. goods and little evidence of opportunities coming to the private sector in Cuba, that is properly considered an indictment of the continuing embargo rather than, as the editorial portrays it, a deficiency in the steps the administration has taken.

Repeated references in the *Post*’s piece to “unilateral concessions” made to Cuba reflects another unfortunately all-too-common tendency, which is to consider any hardship in a country with a regime we don’t like to be good in its own right, and thus any lessening of economy-damaging sanctions or embargoes as a loss for the United States.

Damaging someone else’s economy is of value only if helps to bring about some other desirable change in the other country’s policies or behavior, which the embargo of Cuba has manifestly failed to do. The embargo has hurt ordinary Cubans most of all, and that hurt is of no positive value to the United States. Neither has it done any good for U.S. credibility worldwide, given that it is the United States, not Cuba, that has been isolated politically on the issue.

Before President Obama started to redirect it, U.S. policy toward Cuba had been (and with the embargo, still is) like an ugly and embarrassing time capsule. The embargo and attempted isolation are as antiquated as those 1950s-era American-made cars that the Cubans somehow manage to keep running.

The policy has been the political remnant of one particular generation of Cuban-Americans who have had legitimate grievances against the Castro regime but have gotten stuck making one big gesture and never moved on to think about what works and what doesn’t. The gesture lives on in the next generation most conspicuously in the person of Marco Rubio, whose stubborn defense of the embargo is inconsistent and illogical.

It would be good both for the United States and for the Cuban people if further generational change and political evolution can move this issue out of the 1960s

and into the Twenty-first Century, where it belongs.

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Obama's Gitmo Failure

As President Obama approaches his final year in office, he has yet to fulfill one of his earliest promises, closing the Guantanamo Bay prison. It remains a grievance used by terror groups as a recruiting tool, but the prison has other legal and political problems, writes Marjorie Cohn at TeleSUR.

By Marjorie Cohn

President Barack Obama has yet to fulfill the promise he made in his Jan. 22, 2009 executive order to shutter Guantanamo "no later than one year from the date of this order." Any individuals remaining there at the time of closure, Obama wrote, "shall be returned to their home country, released, transferred to a third country, or transferred to another United States detention facility in a manner consistent with law and the national security and foreign policy interests of the United States."

However, after threatening to veto the final draft of the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) partly because it forbids the transfer of Guantanamo detainees to the United States and tightens barriers to sending them to other countries, Obama caved. A White House spokesperson said Obama would sign the legislation, which passed overwhelmingly in the House and Senate. Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vermont, was one of three senators to vote against the bill.

Nearly seven years after Obama's promise, 112 men remain at Guantanamo, half of whom have been cleared for release. Obama has released 54 prisoners and is reviewing the cases of others still being held.

In March 2011, Obama designated 46 men to remain in indefinite detention without trial, but promised periodic review of their cases. Arbitrary detention violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a treaty the United States has ratified, making it part of U.S. law under the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The periodic reviews didn't start until November 2013, spurred by hunger strikes

at the prison. The reviews continue to be conducted. As a result of those reviews, 14 additional men were cleared for release and five of them have been released.

In April 2013, Obama said, "I think it is critical for us to understand that Guantanamo is not necessary to keep America safe. . . . It hurts us in terms of our international standing. . . . It is a recruitment tool for extremists. It needs to be closed." Yet it remains open.

One of the transfer restrictions required the Secretary of Defense to notify Congress 30 days before a transfer that it would be good for national security. But to avoid being personally responsible if a detainee were to become a terrorist, former Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel hesitated to allow transfers.

Obama is reportedly preparing a plan to speed up transfers of half the remaining Guantanamo prisoners to their home countries or other willing nations. The plan will also set forth new security protocols to prevent detainees from returning to terrorist activities once released.

Military experts are conducting surveys of prisons in the United States for possible transfer of detainees. They include the military prison at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas; the Naval Consolidated Brig in Charleston, South Carolina; and the U.S. Supermax prison in Florence, Colorado.

In spite of the NDAA, Obama has the power to close Guantanamo. Former White House counsel Gregory Craig and Cliff Sloan, former special envoy for Guantanamo closure, maintain, "the president does not need Congress's authorization to act." They wrote in the Washington Post, "Under Article II of the Constitution, the president has exclusive authority to determine the facilities in which military detainees are held. . . . The determination on where to hold detainees is a tactical judgment at the very core of the president's role as commander in chief."

According to Craig and Sloan, "Congress's purported ban on funding any movement of detainees from Guantanamo Bay to the United States restricts where 'law-of-war' detainees can be held and prevents the president from discharging his constitutionally assigned function of making tactical military decisions. Accordingly, it violates the separation of powers."

Lt. Col. David Frakt, who has represented Guantanamo detainees before the military commissions and in federal habeas corpus proceedings, concurs. "When the Obama administration really wants to transfer a detainee, they are quite capable of doing so," Frakt wrote in JURIST. He said Obama should direct his Attorney General to inform the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals that the Department

of Justice no longer considers the cleared detainees to be detainable.

Col. Morris Davis, former Chief Prosecutor for the Terrorism Trials at Guantanamo, personally charged Osama bin Laden's driver Salim Hamdan, Australian David Hicks, and Canadian teen Omar Khadr. All three were convicted and have been released from Guantanamo.

"There is something fundamentally wrong with a system where not being charged with a war crime keeps you locked away indefinitely and a war crime conviction is your ticket home," Davis wrote to Obama.

Of the 780 men held at Guantanamo since 2002, only eight were tried and convicted of war crimes. Of those, just three remain at Guantanamo.

Many of the detainees reported being assaulted, prolonged shackling, sexual abuse, and threats with dogs. Australian lawyer Richard Bourke, who has represented several Guantanamo detainees, charged they have been subjected to "good old-fashioned torture." Detainees who engage in hunger strikes are subjected to force-feeding, a practice the UN Human Rights Council has called torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. At least seven men have died at the prison camp.

The United States has illegally occupied Guantanamo since 1903, after Cuba's war of independence against Spain. Cuba was forced to include the Platt Amendment in the Cuban constitution. The amendment granted the United States the right to intervene in Cuba as a prerequisite for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the rest of Cuba. That provision provided the basis for the 1903 Agreement on Coaling and Naval Stations, which gave the United States the right to use Guantanamo Bay "exclusively as coaling or naval stations, and for no other purpose."

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed a new treaty with Cuba in 1934 that allows the United States to remain in Guantanamo Bay until the U.S. abandons it or until both Cuba and the United States agree to modify their arrangement. According to that treaty, "the stipulations of [the 1903] agreement with regard to the naval station of Guantanamo shall continue in effect."

That means Guantanamo Bay can be used for nothing but coaling or naval stations. Article III of the 1934 treaty also says that Cuba leases Guantanamo Bay to the United States "for coaling and naval stations." Nowhere in either treaty did Cuba give the U.S. the right to utilize Guantanamo Bay as a prison camp.

Former Cuban President Fidel Castro has long maintained that Guantanamo is part of Cuba and that the U.S. illegally occupies it. One of Cuban President Raul

Castro's requirements for normalization of relations with the United States is the return of Guantanamo to Cuba.

If there is probable cause to believe a detainee committed a crime, he should be sent to the United States for trial in federal court. The remaining detainees should be returned to their countries of origin or third countries if that is not feasible. After shuttering the prison camp, Obama should return Guantanamo Bay to Cuba, its rightful owner.

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Addressing the Cuban Five Injustice

America's hypocrisy on terrorism included the U.S. government prosecuting and imprisoning five Cuban agents who were actually trying to thwart terrorist operations in Miami. President Obama's prisoner swap with Cuba finally addressed that upside-down justice, as Marjorie Cohn reports.

By Marjorie Cohn

In the course of delivering his historic speech dramatically altering U.S.-Cuba policy, President Barack Obama briefly mentioned that the United States released three Cuban agents. These men are members of the "Cuban Five," who were imprisoned for gathering information on U.S.-based Cuban exile groups planning terrorist actions against Cuba.

Without their release, Cuba would never have freed Alan Gross. And Obama could not have undertaken what ten presidents before him refused to do: normalize relations between the United States and Cuba.

On June 8, 2001, Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez and Rene Gonzalez were convicted of criminal charges, including conspiracy to commit espionage, and conspiracy to commit murder, in a trial in U.S. District Court in Miami. They were sentenced to four life terms and 75 years collectively.

In a 93-page decision, a three-judge panel of the Eleventh Circuit US Court of Appeals unanimously reversed their convictions in 2005, because the anti-Cuba

atmosphere in Miami, extensive publicity, and prosecutorial misconduct denied them the right to a fair trial. The decision of the three-judge panel was later overturned by a decision of all the Eleventh Circuit Judges, sitting en banc, so the convictions stood.

But the Cuban Five have steadfastly maintained their innocence and there has been a worldwide campaign to free them. In Cuba, the five men are considered national heroes.

Since the Cuban revolution in 1959, anti-Cuba terrorist organizations based in Miami have engaged in countless terrorist activities against Cuba and anyone who advocated normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba. Terrorist groups including Alpha 66, Commandos F4, Cuban American National Foundation, Independent and Democratic Cuba, and Brothers to the Rescue, have operated with impunity in the United States with the knowledge and support of the FBI and CIA.

One witness at the trial testified that Ruben Dario Lopez-Castro, who was associated with several anti-Castro organizations, and Orlando Bosch, who planted a bomb on a Cubana airliner in 1976, killing all 73 persons aboard, "planned to ship weapons into Cuba for an assassination attempt on [Fidel] Castro."

The three-judge appellate panel noted, "Bosch has a long history of terrorist acts against Cuba, and prosecutions and convictions for terrorist-related activities in the United States and in other countries." Luis Posada Carriles, the other man responsible for downing the Cuban airliner, has never been criminally prosecuted in the United States. Declassified FBI and CIA documents at the National Security Archive show that Posada Carriles was the mastermind of the airplane bombing.

Several terrorist acts in Havana were documented in the panel's decision, including explosions at eight hotels and the Cuban airport. An Italian tourist was killed and people were injured. Posada Carriles has twice publicly admitted responsibility for these bombings.

In the face of this terrorism, the Cuban Five were gathering intelligence in Miami in order to prevent future terrorist acts against Cuba. The men peacefully infiltrated criminal exile groups. The Five turned over the results of their investigation to the FBI. But instead of working with Cuba to fight terrorism, the U.S. government arrested the five men.

Former high-ranking U.S. military and security officials testified that Cuba posed no military threat to the United States. Although none of the five men had

any classified material in their possession or engaged in any acts to injure the United States, and there was no evidence linking any of them to Cuba's shooting down of two small aircraft flown by Cuban exiles, the Cuban Five were nonetheless convicted of all charges.

A poll of Miami Cuban-Americans reflected "an attitude of a state of war . . . against Cuba" which had a "substantial impact on the rest of the Miami-Dade community" where the trial was held. Dr. Lisandro Perez, Director of the Cuban Research Institute, concluded, "the possibility of selecting twelve citizens of Miami-Dade County who can be impartial in a case involving acknowledged agents of the Cuban government is virtually zero."

The appellate panel concluded: "Here, a new trial was mandated by the perfect storm created when the surge of pervasive community sentiment, and extensive publicity both before and during the trial, merged with the improper prosecutorial references." Nevertheless, the five men never received a new trial.

Fernando Gonzales and Rene Gonzales were released and returned to Cuba after serving most of their 15-year sentences. Hernandez was serving two life sentences. Labanino and Guerrero had a few years left on their sentences. The latter three men were released as part of the historic deal.

The Door Is Now Open

In his speech, Obama mentioned the hypocrisy of the U.S. refusal to recognize Cuba while we enjoy normalized relations with Communist China and Vietnam. He announced several other new measures designed to normalize relations between the United States and Cuba. But Obama did not lift the U.S. blockade of Cuba, which consists of economic sanctions against Cuba and restrictions on Cuban travel and commerce.

Every year for 23 consecutive years, the United Nations General Assembly has called on the United States to lift the blockade, which has cost Cuba in excess of \$ 1 trillion.

The U.S. trade embargo of Cuba was initiated during the Cold War by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in response to a 1960 memo written by a senior State Department official. The memo proposed "a line of action that makes the greatest inroads in denying money and supplies to Cuba, to decrease monetary and real wages, to bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of the [Castro] government." As Obama stated, that strategy has been a failure.

During the Clinton administration, Congress passed the Helms-Burton Act, which tightened the blockade. Obama promised to try to work with Congress to repeal

this legislation.

Because of the significance of the Cuban exile community in Miami, and the strategic importance of Florida in U.S. elections, no U.S. president has dared to normalize relations with Cuba. As Alice Walker wrote in *The Sweet Abyss*, “Many of our leaders seem to view Florida’s Cuban conservatives, including the assassins and terrorists among them, as People Who Vote.” Obama has taken a courageous step in shifting U.S. policy toward Cuba.

In their simultaneous speeches on Wednesday, both Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro thanked Pope Francis for his efforts in helping to engineer the historic deal. CNN reported that bells were ringing in churches all over Havana. This is a wonderful day indeed.

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Cuba Inches Toward New Future

Exclusive: The half-century-old U.S. embargo on Cuba is a relic of the Cold War and a stunning example of American hypocrisy given U.S. trade with China. But even those old walls are finally cracking with Cuban economic reform and U.S. companies wary of other investors getting the jump, writes Andrés Cala.

By Andrés Cala

Expectations are high for Cuba in 2014, as it moves from flirting with potential international business partners into match-making in a globalized world of trade, commerce and investment a marketplace that a decades-old U.S. embargo has largely kept closed to Cuba.

For now, it appears the U.S. embargo is not going anywhere as politicians of both parties fear offending the shrinking but still powerful right-wing Cuban community in the pivotal swing state of Florida. But Cuba and its hopeful trading partners are counting on the gradual and profitable opening of the island’s economy and the gradual expansion of a new entrepreneurial middle class in the country of 11 million people.

This past week, the European Union approved a plan to seek a stable political and economic partnership agreement with Cuba. It was not exactly a breakthrough,

but rather what some Europeans see as the beginning of a long process, which will be conditioned on democratic gains inside Cuba and improvement on human rights.

The EU said its decision was coordinated with the Obama administration, but the outreach suggests that Europe feels it can no longer wait for U.S. hostility toward Cuba to subside without letting other global powers get an inside track on Cuba's economic potential. The EU's move also puts the United States in the role as the last enforcer of Cuba's isolation.

In another diplomatic coup for Cuba, heads of state flocked to Havana last month for a summit of Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. Also there were United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and Organization of American States Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza, marking the first official visit by an OAS head to Cuba, which was effectively suspended from the OAS in 1962 and has declined to return despite an invitation in 2009.

The U.S. and Canada were not invited to the regional bloc's summit. CELAC, one of the legacies created by the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez in 2011 to exclude the U.S. from these regional deliberations, seeks to increase Latin American integration. This recent gathering attracted more leaders than any recent Americas or Ibero-American summit.

But diplomatic support alone is not going to bring about the economic growth that Cuba badly needs, with the survival of its socialist revolution at stake, according to its leader Raúl Castro. Still, friendlier relations with other countries are a prerequisite for attracting foreign investment.

Cuba's challenge is to match its relatively well-educated and healthy population with foreign capital to build the pillars of a new socialist economic model. This successful matching depends on changes to rules governing business and their timing, a complex equation that also includes domestic politics and foreign policies.

Investors find Cuba particularly attractive because it has the public infrastructure for an export-driven economy helped by its location along the Caribbean transit corridor and it has the strong potential for a surge in domestic consumption

But there's also skepticism from many countries that Cuba can make the transition to a successful business model in a smooth and orderly fashion, with expectations that any democratic reform in Cuba will only be gradual and may be dependent on economic growth. Presently, foreign investment is trickling in, still relatively minute at \$1.5 billion.

The economy also is in relatively poor shape, with an official 2013 growth rate of 2.7 percent, compared to the target of 3.6 percent. Foreign investment fell below projections, too, missing the target by nearly 15 percent, growing at a disappointing 7.1 percent. Foreign direct investment was only 8 percent of the economy, explaining the Cuban government's concern about boosting those numbers.

Last Frontier

Cuba's recent flirtations with foreign investors began with Raúl Castro's ascent to leadership in 2011, replacing his ailing brother Fidel. State-owned companies began to entertain offers from more friendly countries, such as Russia, China, Brazil and Venezuela, which also offered generous credit for vital infrastructure upgrades.

Much of the political and legal framework for this expected foreign interest has been set in place and will culminate this March with the much anticipated approval of a thorough overhaul of foreign investment rules and a sweeping economic paradigm shift.

Cuba, which has shunned foreign investment and prioritized self-sufficiency since the *barbudos* the bearded revolutionaries marched into Havana in 1959, is now open for business with the vital goal of attracting more hard currency, which the regime has historically starved for. The plans also call for decreasing public spending.

Raúl Castro is pushing economic changes that will ultimately displace hundreds of thousands of public jobs in favor of foreign capitalist projects and a newly empowered self-employed and small entrepreneurial class. The government said foreign investment would play "a major role" in Cuba's new economic model, not just a "complement."

In accordance with the plan, the public workforce shrank by 1.5 percent, while employment in the non-state sector expanded 6 percent. State company productivity also improved slightly, increasing more than wages, but still far from what foreign investors would like to see.

Still, the prize for outside businesses is potentially huge. Cuba is set for a surge in foreign investment and what is expected to be a gradual expansion of a new bourgeois class, one that is starving to consume after decades of scarcity. What is uncertain is how the regime navigates this transition, whether like the chaotic collapse of communism following Russia's glasnost or China's embrace of a capitalist economy under the strict control of the Communist Party.

Pessimists expect yet another failed attempt to fix the chronic economic pain in Cuba, while optimists see a bonanza. The more likely result is somewhere in the

middle, as the regime won't risk opening its doors too quickly but will nevertheless press ahead with reforms as an urgent response of the regime's survival instinct.

New Law, New Port

Currently, Cuba's problem is that it has the welfare state of a northern European country offering its people quality health care, housing and educational opportunities but an economy that is inadequate to sustain those programs into the future. Cuba's economic model has produced a highly qualified labor force but operates under a state-controlled economy that can't provide the necessary job opportunities.

According to many analysts, the state needs to spend less while increasing revenue from other sources, all while improving local productivity and maintaining political stability. With little access to credit, Cuba's only real choice is to seek foreign investment, public and private.

Addressing legislators in December, Raúl Castro called for the extraordinary March vote on revamping Cuba's economic model, saying "you have to strengthen the country's capacity to generate many of the products that we currently import."

The government already decreed the creation of special economic zones where foreign companies will be able to set up manufacturing and other industries, ranging from oil exploration to assembly plants, at very advantageous terms.

The shining new emblem of the strategy is the Mariel Port and its accompanying special economic zone. During last month's visit, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff was on hand to inaugurate the new installations built with a nearly \$1 billion credit from the Brazilian government. Brazilian infrastructure company Odebrecht won the contract.

A unit of the same company was also the first foreign administrator in Cuba's once prized sugar cane industry, a deal which is already working as a template for the vital agriculture sector. Earlier this month, a British company announced a similar but much smaller deal in the coffee industry.

Local cooperatives no longer on the government payroll get funds, equipment and training to improve efficiency, and the foreign companies benefit from the crop yields, whether it's lucrative mountain coffee beans or a revival of the moribund sugar industry that once supplied much of the Soviet bloc's needs.

A major drawback for investors is that the state will retain control of labor, which basically means companies will pay standard wages in dollar currency and

the Cuban government will deliver a fraction of the equivalent in pesos to employees, acting as a labor middleman. This arrangement exists on top of high social security taxes.

Analysts say Cuba will soon have to reform its labor rules, but it needs to first narrow the current abyss between the dollar-earning and peso-earning Cubans. Investors, in any case, will demand terms that don't condemn projects to the same inefficiency that plagues state-owned enterprises, including the agriculture sector.

And the U.S.?

Washington is expected to follow along the path blazed by Latin America and Europe, but it's not clear when that will happen. At present, it does not appear that a change in U.S. attitudes toward doing business with Cuba is imminent or even in the planning stage. But the two main drivers now are political and economic, trumping outdated ideological calculations.

Politically, young Cuban-Americans increasingly don't share their parents' and grandparents' hatreds and are seeking a more pragmatic reengagement with Cuba based on culture and family. The best illustration of this was the 2012 U.S. presidential election when Obama swept the Hispanic vote nationally but also in Florida, the stronghold of Cuban-Americans.

A more recent and perhaps equally powerful sign came from one of the most prominent anti-Castro leaders, Alfonso Fanjul, a sugar mogul who made his empire in the U.S. from scratch after his family had all its plantations expropriated in Cuba. A close friend of the Clintons and a top political contributor to both Democrats and Republicans, Fanjul timidly suggested there is room for flexibility.

Fanjul suggested that if Cuba offers appropriate investment reforms to secure investment and returns, he would be willing to invest in Cuba's sugar industry. In making his comment, Fanjul was echoing a public opinion shift that leaves the anti-Castro hawks more isolated.

In Miami area, 64 percent of the people support reestablishing relations with Cuba, similar to the attitudes across Florida and higher than the nationwide level at 56 percent, according to a poll by the non-partisan Atlantic Council.

U.S.-based oil companies are also calling for easing of sanctions on Cuban investments to permit exploring Cuba's Gulf of Mexico waters for oil, like their competitors already are. Those explorations have so far come up empty, but there are lots of opportunities in small and depleting wells using oil recovery techniques which U.S. companies are well placed to supply.

Still, it's clear that the Obama administration and its successors will find it complicated to reverse the more than half-century-old policy of hostility toward Cuba.

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How Terror War Hurts Cuba Policy

The U.S. list of "terrorist" states has long been a sick joke, most notably by including Cuba (for domestic political reasons) and excluding Saudi Arabia (for financial reasons). Now, the list is undercutting policy goals, notes ex-CIA analyst Paul R. Pillar.

By Paul R. Pillar

Last week the government of Cuba announced that it was ceasing nearly all of the consular services that it provides in the United States. The reason was that the sole U.S. bank that had been willing to handle an account for Cuba is no longer willing. With no bank account, the Cuban interests section cannot do such things as accept payment for visa fees.

This development will curb what had been growing travel between the United States and Cuba. The impairment of travel is a bad thing not only from the point of view of the Cuban government, which needs revenue from tourism, but also the current U.S. government, which appropriately sees greater travel and unofficial contacts as relief for separated families as well as encouragement for the sorts of free economic and political ideas that have been stifled under an isolated Castro dictatorship.

The key constraint is Cuba's continued place on the official U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. That list, created under a 1979 law, long ago ceased to bear much resemblance to actual patterns of state sponsorship of terrorism, in terms of which countries are on the list as well as which ones are not.

Cuba, which has been on the list longer (since 1982) than any other country currently listed, is one of the most glaring anomalies. The most recent official U.S. report on state sponsors of terrorism, the one for 2012, gives no reason to conclude otherwise. The report states that there is "no indication that the Cuban government provided weapons or paramilitary training to terrorist groups."

There are some retirees of the Basque terrorist group ETA (which appears on the verge of disbanding) in Cuba, but the report notes that the Cuban government evidently is trying to distance itself from them by denying them services such as travel documents. Some members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have been allowed into Cuba, but that was because Cuba was hosting peace talks between the FARC and the Colombian government.

The U.S. sanctions mechanism run by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) in the Treasury Department is so effective and formidable that it strikes fear into the hearts of banks and other private-sector organizations that might otherwise consider dealing with a listed state, regardless of how flimsy are the reasons for a state being on the list and how much the current U.S. administration might actually welcome commerce with it.

A lawyer in Miami who has worked on matters related to the international banking and the sanctions against Cuba observes, "Banks are very nervous about any type of misstep about money flowing to any country on the OFAC list, because the fines, even if you only make a small mistake, are huge. You have to scrutinize everything coming in and out. The problem is, who wants to take that on? You just can't make money on these accounts."

This problem regarding Cuba reflects three unfortunate patterns that also have infected the American approach to certain other states as well, such as Iran.

First is the tendency to think that isolation and pressure are the only sound way to deal with regimes that for one reason or another we don't happen to like. The counterproductive nature of the decades-long unilateral U.S. embargo of Cuba has gradually come to be recognized, and is reflected in the Obama administration's welcoming of U.S.-Cuban travel.

That the embargo has long outlived whatever usefulness it may have had is reflected in how diplomatic isolation of the United States on the matter is at least as prominent as any economic isolation of Cuba. Each year the United Nations General Assembly passes a resolution condemning the embargo. This year's vote was 188 in favor, two opposed (the United States and Israel), and three abstentions (Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Palau). But enough of the old pro-isolation thinking resides in American politics for Cuba to remain on that state sponsor list.

Second is the chronic misuse of counterterrorism as a banner under which to pursue some other agenda. Those pursuits have included such things as launching costly wars of choice abroad and extending unchecked executive power in the United States, as well as making archaic anti-Castro gestures. The costs of such misuse include not only the warping of debate regarding those other initiatives

but also the discrediting of real counterterrorism.

Third is how sanctions and their use to inflict economic punishment have come to be used as if they were an end in itself rather than a tool to help accomplish some other objective. Give the folks at OFAC and Treasury credit for how well and how diligently they perform the task assigned to them.

The fear in private-sector institutions that makes it hard for Cuba to find a banker and that will keep sanctions against Iran from unraveling are evidence of how well those officials do their job. But if the objectives that sanctions are supposed to help achieve are to be achieved, there needs to be as much attention to winding sanctions down or taking them off as there is to winding them up and keeping pressure on.

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JFK's Embrace of Third World Nationalists

Exclusive: The intensive media coverage of the half-century anniversary of John F. Kennedy's murder was long on hype and emotion but short on explaining how revolutionary JFK's foreign policy was in his extraordinary support for Third World nationalists, as Jim DiEugenio explains.

By Jim DiEugenio

Most knowledgeable people understood that the 50th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy would be marked by an extraordinary outpouring of media programming commemorating his life and death. But the volume probably exceeded expectations.

There were even programs aired that were not announced in advance, e.g., "The Assassination of President Kennedy" produced by Tom Hanks and his Playtone production company, which featured an aged and very ill-looking Vincent Bugliosi, author of *Reclaiming History*, one more defense of the Warren Commission's report.

Perhaps the longest 50th anniversary program was the two-part, four-hour "JFK" on

the PBS series "American Experience." It was largely based on the work of historian Robert Dallek, who has written two books about Kennedy, *An Unfinished Life* and *Camelot's Court*. Combined, the books amounted to over 1,100 pages of biography and analysis.

Although Dallek did much work on Kennedy's medical records, there were some commentators who wondered if the historian was actually diligent enough in informing his readers about Kennedy's policies, especially his foreign policy initiatives. In fact, in the introduction to the second book, Dallek suggests that he wrote the second tome because he couldn't understand why an intervening poll showed President Kennedy as, far and away, the most admired of the last nine presidents. Dallek mused: Did I miss something?

Having read both of Dallek's books, I would venture to say that, yes, he did miss something. Actually, more than just something. He missed a major part of the story that the general public however vaguely, however inchoately somehow *does* understand about President Kennedy. Namely this fact: There is as much a battle over who JFK was, as over the circumstances of his assassination.

Those two continuing controversies who was Kennedy and who killed him would lead some to ask if there may be a relationship between the two questions. In other words, was Kennedy killed because of the policies he tried to enact as president, particularly in the foreign policy sphere? However, in Dallek's quest to discount this angle, he once wrote an article for *Salon* about Kennedy that was titled, "Why do we admire a President who did so little?"

But is that really the case? There is a growing body of scholarship that holds that, even though Kennedy was cut down after less than three years in office, he achieved quite a lot and was trying for even more. Authors like Irving Bernstein, Donald Gibson, Richard Mahoney, John Newman, James Bill, Philip Muehlenbeck and Robert Rakove have all tried to detail the serious achievements and goals Kennedy had while in office.

A Foreign Policy Revolution

Further, most of these authors have tried to demonstrate two foreign policy shifts that Kennedy set in motion but that his assassination reversed. The first were the series of changes that Kennedy made in the policies which preceded him, those of President Dwight Eisenhower and his foreign policy team, consisting largely of the Dulles brothers and Richard Nixon.

The second series of changes occurred after Kennedy was killed and Lyndon Johnson took office. These changes essentially returned to the *status quo ante* established by the Dulles brothers. Because the subject of Kennedy's entire

presidency would take a book to review, let us concentrate here just on a few segments of his foreign policy that still resonate today.

To understand the import of President Kennedy's foreign policy ideas, one needs to contemplate the photo of Kennedy getting the news of the murder of Patrice Lumumba. The black African revolutionary leader of Congo was shot to death on Jan. 17, 1961, just three days before Kennedy was to take office, although his death was not confirmed for several weeks.

Eisenhower would not have reacted with the distress shown on Kennedy's face because, as the Church Committee discovered, Lumumba's murder was linked to the approval of a plan by Eisenhower and CIA Director Allen Dulles to eliminate him. (William Blum, *The CIA: A Forgotten History*, pgs. 175-176) Former CIA officer John Stockwell wrote in his book *In Search of Enemies* that he later talked to a CIA colleague who said it was his job to dispose of Lumumba's body. (Stockwell, p. 50)

To fully understand the difference between how Kennedy viewed Africa and how Eisenhower, the Dulles brothers and later Lyndon Johnson did, one must appreciate why Eisenhower and his national security team felt it necessary to eliminate Lumumba. As Philip Muehlenbeck has noted in his book *Betting on the Africans*, Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles essentially ignored the tidal wave of decolonization that swept through Africa in the Fifties and Sixties. Nearly 30 new nations emerged in Africa during this time period.

Even though most of this transformation occurred while Eisenhower was president, the United States never voted against a European power over a colonial dispute in Africa. Neither did Dulles or Eisenhower criticize colonial rule by NATO allies. Not only did the White House appear to favor continued colonial domination, but with the nations already freed, they looked upon the emerging leaders with, too put it mildly, much condescension.

At an NSC meeting, Vice President Nixon claimed that, "some of these peoples of Africa have been out of the trees for only about fifty years." (Muehlenbeck, p. 6) And, of course, John Foster Dulles saw this epochal anti-colonial struggle through the magnifying glass of the Cold War. As Muehlenbeck writes, "Dulles believed that Third World nationalism was a tool of Moscow's creation rather than a natural outgrowth of the colonial experience." (ibid, p. 6) Therefore, to Eisenhower and his team, Lumumba was a communist.

Kennedy's Anti-Colonialism

To Kennedy, however, Lumumba was a nationalistic leader who was trying to guide

his country to independence, both politically and economically. Lumumba wanted Congo to be free of economic exploitation from foreigners. Kennedy agreed with that idea. As his Under Secretary of State for Africa, G. Mennen Williams, succinctly stated, "What we want for the Africans is what the Africans want for themselves." (ibid, p. 45) The Kennedy administration's policy deliberately made European interests secondary.

The crisis in Congo was exacerbated by the fact that Congo's Katanga province contained abundant natural resources, including gold, copper and uranium. Therefore, when the Belgians abruptly left, they ensured that their departure would leave behind enough tumult so that certain friends in Katanga, like Moise Tshombe, would ask for their return. The problem was that Prime Minister Lumumba had no desire to ask.

So, in July 1960, Lumumba went to Washington to seek help in kicking the Belgians out. When Lumumba arrived, Eisenhower remained on a golfing trip in Newport, Rhode Island. (Mahoney, *JFK: Ordeal in Africa*, p. 38) And, it was clear from Lumumba's discussion with other officials that America was not going to help him expel the Belgians. Then, Lumumba turned to the Russians, who did supply military assistance. (ibid, p. 40)

This development played into the hands of CIA Director Allen Dulles, who declared that the "communist" Lumumba must be removed. He was killed on Jan. 17, 1961, apparently by a firing squad organized by Belgian officers and Katangan authorities (although his fate was covered up for several weeks).

There are some writers, like John Morton Blum and the late Jonathan Kwitny, who did not believe the timing of Lumumba's murder to be a coincidence, just three days before Kennedy's inauguration. It may have been done then because the CIA suspected that Kennedy would side with Lumumba, which, when his new plan for Congo was formulated, was clearly what JFK was going to do. (Mahoney, pgs. 65-67)

Kennedy decided to cooperate with Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold at the United Nations to try and save the country's independence. Kennedy wanted to neutralize any East-West competition, to stop the creation of an economic puppet state in Katanga, and to free all political prisoners. Not knowing Lumumba was dead during the first weeks of his administration, Kennedy meant to restore Lumumba to power. If Lumumba's death was accelerated to defeat an expected policy change by JFK, in practical terms, it was successful.

Who Was Gullion?

The man Kennedy chose to be his ambassador to Congo was Edmund Gullion, who was

the one who had altered Kennedy's consciousness about Third World nationalism. There are some writers who would maintain that perhaps no other person had as much influence on the evolution of Kennedy's foreign policy thinking as did Gullion. Yet, Gullion's name is not in the index to either of Dallek's books on Kennedy.

Edmund Gullion entered the State Department in the late 1930s. His first assignment was to Marseilles, France, where he became fluent in the French language and was then transferred to French Indochina during France's struggle to re-colonize the area after World War II.

Kennedy briefly met Gullion in Washington in the late 1940s when the aspiring young politician needed some information for a speech on foreign policy. In 1951, when the 34-year-old congressman flew into Saigon, he decided to look up Gullion. In the midst of France's long and bloody war to take back Indochina, one that then had been going on for five years, Gullion's point of view was unique among American diplomats and jarringly candid.

As Thurston Clarke described the rooftop restaurant meeting, Gullion told Kennedy that France could never win the war. Ho Chi Minh had inspired tens of thousands of Viet Minh to the point they would rather die than return to a state of French colonialism. France could never win a war of attrition like that, because the home front would not support it.

This meeting had an immediate impact on young Kennedy. When he returned home, he began making speeches that highlighted these thoughts which were underscored by the Viet Minh's eventual defeat of the French colonial forces in 1954. In criticizing the U.S. Establishment's view of these anti-colonial struggles, Kennedy did not play favorites. He criticized Democrats as well as Republicans who failed to see that the United States had to have a positive appeal to the Third World. There had to be something more than just anti-communism.

For instance, in a speech Kennedy gave during the 1956 presidential campaign for Adlai Stevenson, the then-Massachusetts senator said: "The Afro-Asian revolution of nationalism, the revolt against colonialism, the determination of people to control their national destinies. In my opinion, the tragic failure of both Republican and Democratic administrations since World War II to comprehend the nature of this revolution, and its potentialities for good and evil, had reaped a bitter harvest today, and it is by rights and by necessity a major foreign policy campaign issue that has nothing to do with anti-communism."

Stevenson's office then sent a wire to Kennedy asking him not to make any more foreign policy speeches for the campaign. (Mahoney, p. 18) Considering that Stevenson was the darling of the liberal intellectual set, this handwringing may

come as a surprise, but his campaign's worries reflected the political realities of the day.

The Algerian War

In 1957, Kennedy found the perfect time and place to launch a rhetorical broadside against the orthodoxies of both parties on colonialism and anti-communism. By that time, France had inserted 500,000 troops into Algeria to thwart a bloody, terrifying and debilitating colonial war. But because the Algerians fought guerrilla-style, using snipers, explosives and hit-and-run tactics, the war degenerated into torture, atrocities and unmitigated horror.

When the grim facts on the ground were exposed in Paris, the Fourth Republic fell and World War II hero Charles DeGaulle returned to power. When Sen. Kennedy rose in the Senate to address the painful subject of Algeria, the war had been going on for three years. As yet, no high-profile U.S. politician had analyzed the issue with any depth or perspective for the public.

On July 2, 1957, Kennedy started the speech with an understanding tone, observing that many American leaders had chosen not to say anything since this was an internal French matter and France had been America's first ally. Kennedy then switched gears, noting that a true friend of France would not stand by and watch France tear itself asunder in a futile war, one that would only delay the inevitable. He then got to his real point:

"Yet, did we not learn in Indochina that we might have served both the French and our own causes infinitely better had we taken a more firm stand much earlier than we did? Did that tragic episode not teach us that, whether France likes it or not, admits it or not, or has our support or not, their overseas territories are sooner or later, one by one, inevitably going to break free and look with suspicion on the Western nations who impeded their steps to independence?"

I have read this fascinating speech several times, and there is one part of the speech that today stands out like a beacon in the night for today's world. Kennedy understood the history of North Africa. That is, its conquest by the Ottoman Empire and the resultant fact that many, many native Algerians were Moslem. Therefore, he added the following:

"In these days, we can help fulfill a great and promising opportunity to show the world that a new nation, with an Arab heritage, can establish itself in the Western tradition and successfully withstand both the pull toward Arab feudalism and fanaticism and the pull toward Communist authoritarianism."

This acute perception that America needed to do everything possible to moderate emerging Arab nationalism so that it did not degenerate into "feudalism and

fanaticism" is something Kennedy would act upon once he gained the White House.

As historian Allan Nevins wrote, no speech by Sen. Kennedy had attracted more attention than this one, and much was negative. Naturally, those he criticized harshly attacked Kennedy: John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower and Nixon. But again, as in 1956, Stevenson and another fellow Democrat, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson, also attacked him. Kennedy's staff collected the many newspaper editorials the speech generated: 90 of the 138 responses were negative. (Mahoney, p. 21)

The World's Reaction

But the reaction abroad was different. Many commentators in France were impressed by Kennedy's insights into the conflict. And in Africa, Kennedy became the man to see in Washington for visiting African dignitaries. The Algerian guerrillas hiding in the hills were exhilarated by Kennedy's breadth of understanding of their dilemma. They listened excitedly as the results of the 1960 presidential election were tallied.

Many books and films have been written and produced about what Kennedy did while in office in the foreign policy sphere. Most books concerning his assassination deal almost exclusively with Vietnam and Cuba. In the second edition of *Destiny Betrayed*, I tried to make the argument that, to understand Kennedy's view of the world, it was necessary to broaden the focus.

In fact, the first foreign policy crisis that Kennedy reviewed once in office was neither Cuba nor Vietnam. It was the conflict in Congo. And as we can see from his reaction to both African crises, Kennedy had learned his lessons from Gullion well, to the point that he was willing to endanger relations with European and NATO allies in order to support Third World nationalism.

But there was another case where Kennedy did the same, the giant island archipelago of Indonesia, which the Netherlands had colonized since the late 1500s. After World War II, a guerrilla war challenged a restoration of colonialism and Indonesia won its independence in 1949. But, as with Katanga in Congo, the Dutch decided to keep control of the eastern island of West Irian because of its wealth.

In 1958, the Dulles brothers tried to overthrow Achmed Sukarno, the nationalist president of Indonesia, but the coup attempt failed. The shoot-down of American pilot Allen Pope exposed the coup as being organized and run by the CIA. Sukarno kept Pope imprisoned after the change of administrations.

President Kennedy invited Sukarno to the U.S. for a state visit. He wanted to discuss the release of Pope, so he asked CIA Director Allen Dulles for the

report on how Pope was captured. Dulles gave him a redacted copy. But even in this form, Kennedy discerned what had happened. He exclaimed, "No wonder Sukarno doesn't like us very much. He has to sit down with people who tried to overthrow his government." (DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed*, p. 33)

Because of Kennedy's different view of the issues at hand, he was able to achieve a much improved relationship with Indonesia. He secured the release of Pope, put together a package of non-military aid for Indonesia, and finally, with the help of Robert Kennedy and veteran diplomat Ellsworth Bunker, West Irian was released by the Netherlands and eventually returned to Indonesia.

Embracing Nationalism

What is clear from these examples is that Kennedy was a proponent of nationalism: the belief that native peoples living in areas emerging from colonialism and imperialism should have control of their own natural resources. This concept challenged the system of European imperialism that the United States also joined after the Spanish-American War at the end of the 19th Century.

The Dulles brothers, with their strong ties to the Eastern Establishment and, through banker David Rockefeller, to the Council on Foreign Relations, had been a part of this imperial system. One way was through their service to giant American international conglomerates at the Wall Street law firm of Sullivan and Cromwell. John Foster Dulles had joined the firm in 1911 and became the managing partner at a relatively young age. Later, he brought his brother Allen into the firm where he made senior partner in just four years.

But, beyond that, the Dulles brothers were born into power. Their grandfather, through their mother, was John Watson Foster, Secretary of State under President Benjamin Harrison in 1892. Their uncle, Robert Lansing, served in that same office under President Woodrow Wilson.

After World War I, through Wall Street financier Bernard Baruch, the Dulles brothers gained entry to the Treaty of Versailles. There, from the ruins of the Ottoman Empire, they were instrumental in setting up the mandate system in the Middle East. This made it easier for their corporate clients, which included the Rockefeller family trust, to set up oil exploration deals in these European-supervised principalities.

This is one reason the Dulles brothers favored the monarchical system in the Middle East. After all, if Arab nationalism advanced, it ran the risk of handing the oil riches of the Middle East to the people who lived there rather than to British and American petroleum companies.

The best-known example of the Dulles brothers' strategy was the 1953 CIA-backed

coup in Iran that ousted nationalist leader Mohammad Mosaddegh and returned the Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, to power. The Shah then amassed an appalling human rights record by deploying his CIA-trained security service, the SAVAK, against his political enemies.

As author James Bill notes in his book, *The Eagle and the Lion*, the Kennedy brothers disdained the Shah's monarchical rule. At one stage, they commissioned a State Department paper on the costs and liabilities of returning Mosaddegh to power. To counter the negative image held by the Kennedys, the Shah launched a series of economic and social reforms called the White Revolution but they were unsuccessful.

After Kennedy's death, the pressure on the Shah was relaxed due to the closeness of presidents like Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter to the Rockefellers. But history would see Kennedy as prescient for his 1957 warning about how neo-colonialism could lead to "fanaticism." The prime example was the Iranian revolution that overthrew the Shah in 1979.

Working with Nasser

In contrast to the Eisenhower administration, President Kennedy had a much more favorable view of the nationalist leader of Egypt, Gamel Abdel Nasser, who held a special place in the geography of Middle East and African leaders. Because of the Suez Canal and his charismatic leadership of Arab nationalism and pan-Arab unity, Nasser emerged as a central figure in both regions.

Under Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles had poisoned the American relationship with Nasser by trying to pressure him into joining a U.S. military pact against the Soviet Union. Nasser replied that such an arrangement would cost him his standing with the Egyptian people. (Muehlenbeck, p. 10)

Keeping with his non-aligned status, Nasser also decided to recognize China's communist government. John Foster Dulles with his myopic "you're either with us or against us" attitude cut food shipments to Egypt and cancelled support for the Aswan Dam project.

This provoked Nasser's occupation of the Suez Canal and the subsequent tripartite invasion of Sinai by England, France and Israel. But this blatant reassertion of European colonialism was too much for Eisenhower who joined with the USSR at the United Nations in demanding that the invaders leave. But much damage between Egypt and the West had already been done. The Russians stepped in to supply the necessary loans to construct Aswan.

The next chess move by Dulles looks even worse today than it did then. Realizing that these events had built up Nasser even further in the eyes of the Arab

world, Dulles turned toward King Saud of Saudi Arabia and tried to use him as a counterweight to Nasser's nationalism. Dulles arranged to have Saud do what Nasser would not: sign onto the Eisenhower Doctrine, a treaty which would, if needed, forcibly keep the Russians out of the Middle East.

Many saw this as a clever geopolitical tactic to keep Nasser in check. But it was perceived in the Middle East as Dulles allying himself with royalty and against nationalism. (ibid, p. 15) It was a repeat of what the Dulles brothers and Eisenhower had done in Iran in 1953.

Kennedy wanted to reverse this perception of the United States aligning itself with the old order. He told National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy that rebuilding the American relationship with Egypt would be a priority focus of his administration. He was determined that Egypt would stay non-aligned, but he also wanted to end the idea that the United States was close to the Saudis.

To Kennedy, charismatic and influential moderates like Nasser represented the best hope for American foreign policy in the Middle East. In a reference to what Dulles had done with the Aswan project, Kennedy said: "If we can learn the lessons of the past, if we can refrain from pressing our case so hard that the Arabs feel their neutrality and nationalism threatened, the Middle East can become an area of strength and hope." (ibid, p. 124)

Repairing Egypt Ties

Kennedy tried to patch up the U.S.-Egypt relationship by doing something that seems rare today. He chose his ambassador to Egypt on pure merit, Dr. John S. Badeau, who headed the Near East Foundation and probably knew more about the history of Egypt than any American.

Badeau already knew Nasser and the Speaker of the National Assembly, Anwar El Sadat. This, plus the way Kennedy changed American policy in Congo, helped to tone down Nasser's anti-American and anti-Israeli rhetoric. Kennedy then went further. After Syria left the United Arab Republic in 1961, Kennedy made hundreds of millions of dollars in loans to keep the Egyptian economy afloat.

In Kennedy's view it was important for America to favor men like Nasser and Sadat over the monarchies of the Middle East because it was the nationalists, and not King Saud, who could capture the popular support of the public and channel it in a positive and progressive way. Or, as author Philip Muehlenbeck writes, "For Kennedy the Saudi monarchy was an archaic relic of the past and Nasser was the wave of the future." (ibid, p. 133)

Like the Shah, Saud exemplified brutality, corruption and civil rights abuses. So, Kennedy did something symbolic to demonstrate the new U.S. attitude. In

1961, King Saud was in a Boston hospital for a medical condition. Kennedy did not visit him, even though the man was in his hometown. Instead, Kennedy went south to Palm Beach, Florida. After constant badgering from the State Department, Kennedy did visit Saud afterwards when he was in a convalescent home. But he couldn't help registering his disgust by telling his companion in the car, "What am I doing calling on this guy?" (ibid, p. 134)

During the civil war in Yemen, Nasser backed Abdullah al-Sallal against the last Mutawakkilite King of Yemen, Muhammad al-Badr. Saudi Arabia supported the king to stop the spread of Nasser's influence and prevent the rise of nationalism. To demonstrate his alliance with Nasser over Saudi Arabia, Kennedy recognized al-Sallal, even though the leaders of England and Israel criticized Kennedy about it. (ibid, p. 135)

As historian Muehlenbeck notes, this conflict ended with a truce only because of the mutual trust and admiration between Kennedy and Nasser. Kennedy was so sympathetic to Nasser and Algerian leader Ahmed Ben Bella that the Senate passed an amendment limiting his aid to the two leaders.

Kennedy's policies, at the very least, delayed the rise of anti-Americanism in the region. At best, they showed why future presidents should not forge ties to the reactionary monarchy in Saudi Arabia, which essentially has contributed to terrorist groups to preserve its power. Like no president before or since, Kennedy risked relations with traditional allies over the issue of nascent nationalism.

Portugal and Africa

Due to Prince Henry the Navigator's success in expanding Portuguese interests into Africa in the 1400s, Portugal became the first country to develop the African slave trade and retained considerable colonial possessions in Africa over the next five centuries.

Just two months after Kennedy was inaugurated, Liberia sponsored a United Nations motion to begin a reform program so that Angola could gain its independence from Portugal. Kennedy had his UN representative Adlai Stevenson vote for Liberia and against Portugal, France and England.

Further underscoring this sea change in U.S. policy, American was now voting *with* the Soviet Union. Even the *New York Times* understood something big was afoot, calling it a "major shift" in traditional foreign policy by Kennedy. (ibid, p. 97)

Kennedy understood that he had to embrace anti-colonialism in order to compete with Russia in the non-aligned world. As he learned from Gullion in Vietnam,

America could not be perceived as a counter-revolutionary country. If the U.S. went against the powerful emotions of nationalism, there would be little alternative but to support fascist dictators or even send in American combat troops, which Kennedy considered counter-productive and didn't want to do.

Therefore, when the Angola vote was cast, Kennedy was trying to show the developing world that the USSR was not the only great power in the Caucasian world to oppose colonialism. (ibid, pgs. 97-98) In other words, for Kennedy, this was not just the right thing to do; it was the practical thing to do. And it was another clean break with Eisenhower and the Dulles brothers. The best they would do in these types of situations was to abstain from voting.

To say the Angola vote was not popular with Establishment forces is putting it mildly. Acheson again criticized Kennedy. Portuguese demonstrators in Lisbon stoned the U.S. embassy. But Kennedy understood that it would send a clear signal to the leaders of the developing world, a reversal of an earlier era of disdain for African nationalists. A few years before, when Julius Nyerere of Tanganyika went to New York to lobby for such a UN resolution, he was limited to a 24-hour visa and an eight-block travel radius.

But Kennedy went beyond just supporting a UN resolution. He offered to raise U.S. foreign aid to Portugal to \$500 million per year for eight years if Portuguese President Antonio Salazar would free all of its African colonies. Since aid to Portugal was very minimal at the time, this was a staggering amount of money. Today it would be about \$16 billion. After Salazar turned down the offer, Kennedy sent aid to the rebels in Angola and Mozambique. (ibid, pgs. 102,107)

Kennedy was even willing to risk relations with a major ally France over the issue of colonialism. In theory, French President DeGaulle had granted many of the former states of the French colonial empire freedom in 1960. But, after analysis, it was clear that DeGaulle planned to keep optimum influence in these states, a process called neocolonialism.

For instance, DeGaulle favored the states that would stay aligned with France with large amounts of aid. Those that decided to go their own way were given paltry sums. So, Kennedy targeted those countries ignored by DeGaulle, giving them more than \$30 million by 1962. (ibid, p. 161) DeGaulle also backed the Belgian lackey Moise Tshombe in the Congo crisis.

Viewing these strategies as a continuation of European imperialism in Africa, Kennedy decided to compete with France, even if it meant weakening his relationship with DeGaulle. As Muelhenbeck notes, in November 1963, Kennedy commissioned a study of methods to compete with France and to formulate

countermeasures designed to undermine the French grip in Africa.

Worrying About Laos

Before Eisenhower left office, he had two meetings with President-elect Kennedy. Contrary to what most might think, he did not tell Kennedy that the most looming and important foreign policy area was Vietnam, Congo or Cuba. He told him it was Laos. (Arthur Schlesinger, *A Thousand Days*, p. 163)

Eisenhower and his advisers painted the picture in stark Cold War terms, warning against any kind of coalition government that would include communist representation. The talk got so stark and martial that Kennedy ended up asking how long it would take to put a division of American troops into the area. (ibid)

On Jan. 3, 1961 Eisenhower said that "if the communists establish a strong position in Laos, the West is finished in the whole southeast Asian area." (David Kaiser, *American Tragedy*, p. 32)

As historian David Kaiser later noted, the Eisenhower-Dulles definition of what a communist was often included people who, by objective standards, were actually neutralists. Later on, as Kennedy would show, if properly handled, these neutralists could actually become American allies.

But in the Dulles-Eisenhower Cold War meme as with Egypt's Nasser you were either in the U.S. camp or against it. As Kaiser noted, it was this attitude that had left Indochina in such a highly agitated, militaristic state by the end of Eisenhower's term in office. In fact, Eisenhower had approved war plans for Indochina as early as 1955. (ibid, p. 34)

The Dulles brothers never pursued a diplomatic resolution in Indochina, just as they never pressured France to the bargaining table in Algeria. Fitting their globalist and imperialist views, the Dulles brothers dismissed the idea of rapprochement over both large and small issues. All their energies seemed to be expended in political offensives and plans for war, hence this presentation to Kennedy on Laos.

But Kennedy did not take the advice. He reversed the policy again and parried an attempt to insert American troops by asking for estimates of how many men the North Vietnamese and Chinese could place into this conflict in their neighboring area. The estimates came back at 160,000 men within 30 days. (ibid, p. 40)

On the same day those estimates were returned, at his first press conference, Kennedy stated that he wished to establish in Laos "a peaceful country, an independent country not dominated by either side but concerned with the life of

the people within the country.” (ibid)

Dissatisfied with the military option, Kennedy then went to the State Department and called upon Ambassador Winthrop Brown, who told the President that the Laotian army was simply not capable of fighting a civil war on its own. Kennedy asked him what he would propose instead. Brown said he would offer up a neutralist solution with a coalition government, noting that this is what U.S. allies in Europe favored. In fact, the allies thought that this was the only solution, and they felt the communist Pathet Lao should be included. (ibid)

Kennedy, who Isaiah Berlin once called the best listener he ever met, signaled to the Soviets a willingness to arrange a peaceful settlement. Kennedy would use the military option only as a bluff to strengthen his hand at the bargaining table. (ibid, p. 41) Although his military advisers continued to push for the introduction of combat troops, and even the use of atomic weapons, Kennedy continued to brush this advice aside.

In fact, Kennedy gave a press backgrounder where he himself argued against the military option from his 1951 experience with Gullion. Kennedy argued that if the Laotian government fell and the U.S. had to intervene, U.S. troops would likely be opposed by China and the Viet Minh. Kennedy added, “The French had 400,000 men and could not hold. I was in Hanoi in 1951 and saw for myself.” (ibid, p. 47)

After telling the Russians to get the Pathet Lao to stop their offensive in May of 1961, a truce was called. A conference was then convened in Geneva to hammer out conditions for a neutral Laos. By July 1962, a new government, including the Pathet Lao, was constructed.

Kennedy later explained his position to rival Richard Nixon: “I just don’t think we should get involved in Laos, particularly where we might find ourselves fighting millions of Chinese troops in the jungles. In any event, I don’t see how we can make any move in Laos, which is 5,000 miles away, if we don’t make a move in Cuba which is only 90 miles away.” (Schlesinger, p. 337)

Onward to Vietnam

So, there was a context of anti-colonialism and diplomacy in understanding President Kennedy’s resistance to the pressure from his military advisers when they pushed for sending combat troops to Vietnam. As with Laos, Kennedy bucked that advice and never dispatched combat troops, although he increased the number of U.S. military personnel advising the South Vietnamese army from about 900 under Eisenhower to about 16,000 by 1963.

The declassified files of the Assassination Records Review Board further

illuminate this story of tension and intrigue over Vietnam policy, first highlighted to the American public by Oliver Stone's 1991 film *JFK*. As it turned out, Kennedy was not just fighting his military advisers on the Vietnam issue. He was opposed by many of his civilian advisers, too.

In April 1962, Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith volunteered to get a message to North Vietnam through Indian diplomats about a possible truce in return for a phased withdrawal of American forces. Almost everyone at senior levels of the Kennedy administration opposed Galbraith's venture. The one man who liked the idea was Kennedy, who instructed Assistant Secretary of State Averell Harriman to follow up on the proposal.

Apparently, Kennedy did not understand that, although Harriman was in charge of the Laotian talks, he was not in favor of the same solution in Vietnam. Thus, Harriman subverted Kennedy's intentions on this assignment. In the wire to Galbraith, Harriman struck out the wording of the language on de-escalation with a heavy pencil line. It was changed into a threat of American escalation in the war if North Vietnam refused to accept U.S. terms. When Harriman's assistant tried to reword the cable to stay true to Kennedy's intent, Harriman changed it back again. He then simply killed the telegram altogether. (Gareth Porter, *Perils of Dominance*, pgs. 158-59)

In 2005, Galbraith confirmed to *Boston Globe* reporter Bryan Bender that he never received any instructions about his proposal from President Kennedy.

By 1963, as confirmed by Assistant Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric and Defense Department analyst John McNaughton, Kennedy had decided that he was going to use Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara as his point man to go ahead and implement a withdrawal from Vietnam. McNamara's instructions to begin planning the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel had been relayed to Saigon in summer 1962.

At a key meeting in Hawaii in May 1963, McNamara was presented with an update on the planning for the withdrawal. He deemed the plans too slow and asked them to be speeded up. (James DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed*, pgs. 366-367) But the point was that the plan was in place. Kennedy activated it in October 1963 by signing National Security Action Memorandum 263, stating that the withdrawal would begin in December of 1963 and be completed in 1965.

In other words, Kennedy's plan for a military withdrawal wasn't just some vague notion or, as New York Times executive editor Jill Abramson recently wrote, a belief among his admirers "rooted as much in the romance of 'what might have been' as in the documented record."

In a letter to the New York Times in response to Abramson's JFK article, James K. Galbraith, a professor of government at the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas and son of the late John Kenneth Galbraith, challenged Abramson's characterization of Kennedy's withdrawal plan.

Galbraith wrote, "The record shows that on Oct. 2 and 5, 1963, President Kennedy issued a formal decision to withdraw American forces from Vietnam. I documented this 10 years ago in Boston Review and Salon, and in 2007 in The New York Review of Books.

"The relevant documents include records of the Secretary of Defense conference in Honolulu in May 1963; tapes and transcripts of the decision meetings in the White House; and a memorandum from Gen. Maxwell Taylor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Oct. 4, 1963, which states: 'All planning will be directed towards preparing RVN [South Vietnamese government] forces for the withdrawal of all U.S. special assistance units and personnel by the end of calendar year 1965.'"

Kennedy on Cuba

The last major area of foreign policy that Kennedy was changing was Cuba. After the Missile Crisis in October 1962, Kennedy and Fidel Castro opened up a back channel through three intermediaries: ABC reporter Lisa Howard, State Department employee William Attwood, and French journalist Jean Daniel.

This attempt at secret communication and a *détente* between the two countries was in high gear in the fall of 1963. In his last message relayed to Castro through Daniel, Kennedy made one of the most candid and bold statements ever to a communist head of state. He said to Castro, "In the matter of the Batista regime, I am in agreement with the first Cuban revolutionaries. That is perfectly clear." (ibid, p. 74)

When Castro got this message, he was overjoyed. He exuberantly told Daniel that Kennedy would go down in history as the greatest president since Abraham Lincoln. Three days later, Castro got the news that Kennedy had been shot. He was thunderstruck. He put down the phone, sat down and repeated over and over, "This is bad news this is bad news this is bad news."

A few moments later, a radio broadcast announced that Kennedy was dead. Castro stood up and said, "Everything is changed, everything is going to change." (ibid, p. 75)

As it turned out, Castro was not just speaking for himself. It's true that Lyndon Johnson did not continue the Cuban back-channel negotiations, and that promising diplomatic attempt died along with Kennedy. But Castro was probably not aware that all the ventures described above were about to change back, more

or less, to where they were under Eisenhower.

Kennedy's attempt to withdraw from Vietnam was first stopped, and then reversed in three months. With NSAM 288, in March 1964, President Johnson signed off on battle plans for a huge air war against North Vietnam. In other words, what Kennedy refused to do for three years, LBJ did in three months. Less than 18 months after Kennedy's death, Johnson inserted combat troops into Vietnam, something Kennedy had never contemplated and specifically rejected eight specific times. This would result in the deaths of over 2 million Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans.

Johnson also reversed Kennedy's policy in Congo. Kennedy had stopped the attempt of Katanga to secede through a UN special military mission. But by 1964, the CIA was unilaterally flying air sorties over the country to stop a leftist rebellion. White-supremacist and right-wing South Africans and Rhodesians were called on to join the Congolese army. The pretext was that the Chinese were fomenting a communist takeover.

This rightward tilt went unabated into 1965. By then, Josef Mobutu had gained complete power. In 1966, he installed himself as military dictator. The enormous mineral wealth of Congo would go to him and his wealthy foreign backers. (ibid, p. 373)

The same thing happened in Indonesia. Without Kennedy's backing of Sukarno, the CIA began plotting a second coup attempt. A Dutch intelligence officer attached to NATO had predicted it less than a year earlier in December 1964. He said Indonesia was about to fall into the hands of the West like a rotten apple. (ibid, p. 375)

The coup began in October 1964 and ended with General Suharto, long known for his willingness to cooperate with colonizing countries like Japan and the Netherlands, becoming the country's leader. Sukarno was placed under house arrest, never to return to power.

Suharto then led one of the bloodiest pogroms in modern history, targeting the PKI, the communist party in Indonesia, but also slaughtering many other Indonesians including ethnic Chinese. The death toll was about 500,000, with many of the victims decapitated and their bodies dumped into rivers.

Like Mobutu, Suharto became a long-ruling dictator (holding power for three decades) and becoming an incredibly wealthy man by selling out his country to foreign businesses. Again, unlike what Kennedy had envisioned, the wealth of Indonesia would not go to its citizens, but to Suharto, his cronies and foreign corporations.

This pattern repeated itself almost everywhere. Africa went back to being neglected. Kennedy's truce in Laos was shattered as the country descended into a civil war that featured heroin trading by the CIA's Air America fleet. U.S. policy toward the Middle East embraced the Shah of Iran and his oppressive policies, sowing the seeds for the first explosion of Moslem fundamentalism in 1979.

Mideast Blowback

Rather than Kennedy's disdain for the corrupt and repressive Saudi monarchy, that leadership was dubbed "moderate" and given the label "Arab ally." With Saudi Arabia's oil wells and deep pockets, its power and wealth attracted the friendship and loyalty of influential Americans, including the dynastic Bush family and its closely associated Carlyle Group.

Meanwhile, as demonstrated by author Steve Coll and other investigators, the Saudis provided cover and funding for Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorists. The fanaticism that Kennedy warned about in 1957 if the United States did not break with European colonialism and neocolonialism came back to inflict destruction on U.S. targets, including attacks on U.S. embassies in Africa and eventually on New York and Washington.

When Kennedy designed his foreign policy, he was very deliberate about his plan to move in a new direction. In 1957, he said the single most important test of America was the way it was going to separate itself from European imperialism. Though Kennedy often talked as a Cold War hardliner during the 1960 campaign and the early days of his presidency he was intent on creating a foreign policy that would shatter the confines of the Cold War.

Before the 1960 convention, Kennedy told adviser Harris Wofford that if Sen. Stuart Symington or Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson was the nominee, "we might as well elect Dulles or Acheson; it would be the same cold-war foreign policy all over again." (Muelhenbeck, p. 37)

Under Secretary of State George Ball amplified this by saying, that after World War II, America was thought of as a status-quo power, while the Soviets were thought of as being on the side of the oppressed and revolution: "The Kennedy Doctrine challenged this approach. If America failed to encourage the young revolutionaries in the new countries, they would inevitably turn toward the Soviet Union. America should therefore, stop trying to sustain traditional societies and ally itself with the side of revolution."

Authors such as Larry Sabato assert that Kennedy left no lasting legacy and that is becoming the chic conventional take on his aborted presidency. What Sabato

and these others fail to note is the remarkable changes Kennedy made in the Eisenhower/Dulles imperialist foreign policy in less than three years. They also ignore how fast the policies were snapped back by the old order operating through the CIA and President Johnson. If you don't note these clear changes, then you can say they did not occur.

But the people Kennedy was aiming his policies at certainly understood what happened on Nov. 22, 1963. In Nairobi, Kenya, over 6,000 people crammed into a cathedral for a memorial service. The peasants of the Yucatan peninsula immediately started planting a Kennedy Memorial garden. Schools in Argentina were named after Kennedy. Nasser sunk into a deep depression and ordered Kennedy's funeral shown four times on Egyptian television.

In the Third World, the public seemed to instantly know what had really happened and what was about to occur. A progressive and humane foreign policy was about to revert back to something oppressive and profit-oriented. A brief three-year glow of hope was ending.

Because of the laziness and corporate orientation of the mainstream media, it has taken many Americans 50 years to figure out what the rest of the world knew instantaneously. And despite today's conventional wisdom obsessing on Kennedy's "shallowness" and "celebrity" the discovery of what Kennedy truly represented to the rest of the world during his "thousand-day" presidency is beginning to register in America.

Jim DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era. His most recent book is [Reclaiming Parkland](#).

How the World Was Saved

Exclusive: A half-century ago in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the world teetered on the brink of annihilation, pushed by a mix of nuclear adventurism, misunderstanding and fear. *The Armageddon Letters* compiles the messages that defined and defused the crisis, writes Jim DiEugenio.

By Jim DiEugenio

In 2009, Professors James Blight and Janet Yang were part of the team that gave us the documentary film and book *Virtual JFK*. Both the film and book explored the issue of whether or not, if President Kennedy had lived, the Vietnam War

would have turned into the monumental disaster it did under President Johnson.

In other words, did President Johnson break with Kennedy's Vietnam policy after the latter's murder in Dallas in 1963? The two works, especially the book, were extremely valuable contributions to the scholarship in this field. The book was the oral record of a two-day conference between both scholars and actual policymakers of the era, e.g. Johnson's aide Bill Moyers.



After reviewing briefing books with the latest declassified documents on the subject, a vote was taken on the question. Half the respondents said Kennedy would not have escalated and would have withdrawn from Vietnam. Thirty per cent said he would have escalated as did Johnson, and 20 percent said it was too difficult to state an answer. (*Virtual JFK*, p. 210)

If one understands the ways of academia, this was a real success in the field. Because if such a vote had been taken prior to the 1992 publication of John Newman's milestone book, *JFK and Vietnam*, the likely result would have been perhaps 10 percent for a Kennedy withdrawal and 90 percent for there being no change by Johnson in Kennedy's policy.

The Newman volume began the sea change that was culminated by *Virtual JFK*. And this is all to the good because the declassified records align with the vote tally of the book.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the event that Blight and Yang have literally spent decades studying. Actually they have gone beyond just studying it. The married couple has taken part in a living, breathing field inquiry. They have pursued declassified records, and interviewed personages all over the world.

They even have promoted conferences on the subject with the people who were involved in the 1962 event. They have done that at least four times: in Antigua, Havana, Moscow and Florida. Therefore, they have been able to listen in person to all three voices of the fateful triangle that produced the crisis: Cubans, Russians and Americans.

McNamara's Shock

How important has the work of creating these conferences been? Robert McNamara, Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, believed in them so much that he attended every one of them until his death in 2009. At more than one of them, there have been revelations that changed the picture we had of the crisis.

For instance, the intelligence the CIA had on the actual missiles in Cuba has been proven to be inaccurate. The Agency could not figure out exactly how many missiles had been transported through the blockade, or how many had operable warheads during the 13 days of the October 1962 crisis. (Blight and Yang, pgs. 257, 275)

This uncertainty encouraged hawks in Kennedy's cabinet, like Paul Nitze, to try to persuade the president to invade Cuba. Afterwards, Nitze would say that the colossal dangers of the Missile Crisis were exaggerated, existing mostly in McNamara's head. (Ibid, p. 277)

In 1992, at a Blight/Lang conference in Havana, Nitze was proven to be completely and utterly wrong. For the first time Soviet Gen. Anatoly Gribkov revealed that *all* the missiles en route to Cuba had been transported onto the island *before* the blockade went up. (ibid, p. 257)

Gribkov had been the military architect of the deployment. As part of his opening remarks he said that the Russians had deployed 162 missiles in Cuba before the blockade was constructed. Gribkov's deployment included not just medium- and long-range missiles targeting American cities. It also included two types of what have been traditionally termed "tactical nuclear weapons." These were cruise missiles with a range of about 90 miles, and ground-to-ground Luna missiles. The latter were of the 25-30 mile range.

Gribkov also stated that, in his judgment, the Russian commander on the island, Gen. Issa Pliyev, would have used them if Kennedy had listened to Nitze and launched an amphibious assault on the island. If that had happened, the entire American invasion force would have likely been incinerated. This would have undoubtedly led to an American nuclear strike against the island.

Whatever missiles survived on the island would have been launched against the United States. And this strike would likely have been coupled with a Russian

counterstrike. Finally, in the last Doomsday Act, America would have launched against the USSR. Civilization, as we know it, would have ended.

McNamara was in attendance at this 1992 meeting. When he heard this information about the tactical nukes and Pliyev's operational decision, he was stunned. He ripped off his translating headset and started waving his arms in disbelief. (ibid, p. 279) As the man who would have ordered that amphibious assault, he obviously was unaware that it would have been the last order he, or anyone else, ever gave.

One of the reasons that Blight and Yang have worked so hard to render as much information as possible on the Missile Crisis is their long relationship with the late Robert McNamara. That relationship began back in 1985. It ended in 2005 when McNamara gave his last public talk about the crisis at Blight's then place of employment, Brown University. (Blight and Yang, pgs. 3-6)

Anti-Nuclear Message

In the twilight of his life, McNamara, like Fidel Castro, had taken the crisis literally upon his shoulders as his life's cause for "abolishing nuclear weapons before they abolish you." (ibid, p. 5) At this last appearance, McNamara's learning curve on the crisis had taught him just how dangerous hawks like Nitze were in Kennedy's ExComm. (ExComm is the term used to describe the group of Cabinet members and advisers Kennedy gathered around him for advice during the crisis.)

McNamara warned his young audience that they were lucky to be alive today. For, through Gribkov's stunning revelations, it was now apparent that if President Kennedy had made one wrong move, "the world would have been destroyed instantly or made unlivable in October 1962. And something like it could happen today, tonight, next year." (ibid)

This is the warning that the book, *The Armageddon Letters*, opens with, a call from the grave by McNamara. The book closes with a similar warning, except it's from someone on the other side of the conflict, someone who is still alive. After Fidel Castro's near fatal illness of 2007, he stepped down from his presidential office. Today, like McNamara, after living through the Missile Crisis, his life's cause is to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

With his son Fidelito he spends much time as a blogger against nuclear weapons, spreading the word of Albert Einstein about the horrors that nuclear explosions could render to the atmosphere and how this could lead to nuclear winter. Castro biggest worry in this regard is the Middle East. Castro thinks this is the danger spot today for a repeat of October of 1962: "That is where some nuclear

catastrophe can begin. Obama or Netanyahu or Ahmadinejad might screw up or get confused and then, who can believe that the war would not go nuclear?" (ibid, p. 237)

Between these two quite moving warnings, Blight and Yang have done something that serves as the capstone to their work in this field. They have assembled all the known correspondence between the three principals during the Missile Crisis. That is the letters from both Castro and Kennedy to Nikita Khrushchev, and those from the Russian Premier to both men.

Interspersed with these first-person accounts, the book fills in what happened as a result of the actions in the letters; and also, and perhaps most importantly, what occurred afterwards, in 1963-64. A point that too many commentators ignore.

As many commentators have written, there were two reasons that Kennedy reacted as he did when the installation of the missiles was confirmed by U-2 photography. First, the Russians continually lied about what their intentions were, and also about the actual nature of the weapons.

As early as April 22, 1961, Khrushchev wrote to Kennedy, "We have no bases in Cuba, and we do not intend to establish any." (ibid, p. 49) That was just five days after the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and three days after the invasion failed. However, 16 months later, Kennedy was reading reports that a large, multi-site missile installation was under construction and that hundreds of Soviet managers and workers were on the island working on them.

Further, that part of this installation included SAM sites, that is, surface-to-air missiles. Kennedy concluded that the purpose of these would be to protect offensive missiles, i.e., those meant to attack the United States. It was these types of weapons that Kennedy had repeatedly warned the Russians and Cubans about.

JFK's Warning

Kennedy did not want Cuba to become a forward staging base for an advance attack by the Soviets on America. Therefore, on Sept. 4, 1962, Kennedy made a speech warning Khrushchev about this in public. But he also told his brother Robert to warn Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin that offensive missiles would not be tolerated in Cuba.

What the book makes clear is this: Dobrynin had been deliberately cut out of the loop. Khrushchev and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko did not inform Dobrynin about the nuclear installation prior to it occurring. This was part of a systematic plan to conceal in advance, and then to lie about the installation

once it was achieved. (p. 254)

On Oct. 17, 1962, when Kennedy asked Gromyko face-to-face about the installation, and Gromyko lied, Kennedy understood the size and scale of the gamble Khrushchev was taking. In one stroke, the Russians would close the missile gap and assemble a first-strike force in Cuba.

Kennedy's corollary to this, one that is manifest throughout the transcripts of the ExComm meetings, is that Khrushchev's real goal was to announce the huge installation and then negotiate a deal: Russia out of Cuba for a surrender of West Berlin to East Germany. (See *The Kennedy Tapes*, edited by Ernest May and Philip Zelikow, pgs. 678-79, 691)

In fact, in Khrushchev's very first letter to Kennedy Nov. 9, 1960 he concludes with his desire "to settle the German issue" at the earliest date. (Blight and Lang, p. 40)

As the book makes clear, the Cubans did not agree with this secrecy and lying. Both Castro and Che Guevara predicted that if the secret mission was exposed Kennedy would suspect the worst. (Blight and Lang, p. 60) This disagreement among the communist leaders implicitly relates to the size and scale of the installation.

If, for example, a mutual defense treaty had been announced and the Russians stated they were only shipping a limited amount of defensive tactical atomic weapons into Cuba, Kennedy would have had a hard time resisting the deployment. After all, both he and President Dwight Eisenhower had approved the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961.

What made Kennedy and Soviet specialist Llewellyn Thompson suspicious of the Berlin motive was the presence of the nuclear triad the Russians had assembled. For *in addition* to the medium- and long-range missiles, the Soviets had also given the Cubans IL-28 nuclear bombers *plus* submarines that carried nuclear torpedoes. This arsenal was simply too huge and lethal to be simply a defense against another invasion.

Soviet Deceit

But as we see by reading the correspondence, through all of September and well into the October crisis, Khrushchev refuses to acknowledge that the missiles are there for offensive purposes. As Castro and Che Guevara predicted, this simply stiffened Kennedy's resolve.

As the authors write, Kennedy grew angry and resentful about all the lying, especially at Gromyko's, since Kennedy figured (correctly) that the foreign

minister had to have known the full size and scope of the installation. Kennedy felt betrayed by the Russian premier who had first congratulated him upon his election victory and with whom he had discussed plans for making Cuba part of an overall plan for peaceful coexistence between the East and West. (Blight and Lang, p. 48)

Therefore, in Kennedy's first letter to Khrushchev after the ExComm was convened, Kennedy told the premier that he always feared that Khrushchev would not comprehend the depth of his resolve on the issue of Berlin: "I stated that an attempt to force abandonment of our responsibilities and commitments in Berlin would constitute" an "action on your part which in a major way disturbed the existing overall balance of power in the world." (Kennedy letter of 10/22/63)

Kennedy then reminded Khrushchev that he had already warned him about any such deployment the month before. At this point, not knowing that all the missiles had already been delivered, the ExComm decided upon its strategy of the blockade. If that did not work, Kennedy had moved aircraft carriers into the Caribbean and a 150, 000-man army into Florida.

But Kennedy was quite aware that any kind of miscommunication or mistake could provide a trigger for Armageddon. He therefore decided to move the blockade line back from 800 to 500 miles off the coast of Cuba. (Blight and Lang, p. 90) He also ordered low-level U-2 over-flights of Cuba to determine when the missiles had become operational. (ibid, p. 91)

On Oct. 23, Kennedy penned a letter to Khrushchev accusing him of secretly delivering nuclear missiles into Cuba. He then alerted him as to when the blockade would go into effect and warned him not to try and circumvent it.

On the deliverance of this letter, Khrushchev was finally convinced that Kennedy had fully discovered the scope of the installation. He then became enraged at General Pliyev, for he found out that the Russian commander had not camouflaged the construction sites to prevent their aerial discovery. (ibid, p. 92)

Pliyev replied that the sites would now be camouflaged to disguise the progress of the construction. But Khrushchev now realized that the warnings to him by Castro and Che Guevara were well-founded, for he had left himself no fallback position.

Therefore, Khrushchev ordered all missiles to be fueled and readied; all pilots to stand by at their nuclear bombers. He even issued orders to run the blockade. A few hours later, knowing that all the missiles were on the island, he changed his mind and told the Russian ships to stop at the quarantine line. There was no

need to challenge it. In fact, as Blight and Lang make clear, the last ship carrying the nuclear warheads into Cuba had just avoided the construction of the blockade by a few hours. (ibid, p. 93)

Popular Misconceptions

This is a central point of misunderstanding about the crisis. In popular renditions of the event in the television film *The Missiles of October*, and the feature film *Thirteen Days* the moment on Oct. 25 when the Russian ships stopped at the quarantine line is depicted as a culminating victory for the United States.

For the reasons stated above, this is not historically accurate. The missiles were already on the island, as were the warheads. And then, Khrushchev ordered Pliyev to camouflage the missile sites. Therefore, the U-2 flights could not really detect when the missiles were ready to be set in the silos and launched. This is an important point, for some members of the ExComm had determined that the setting of the missiles in the silos was the point of no return. According to that view, America would have to send an air strike to preempt the launches. In fact, McNamara was the first to advocate this position. (May and Zelikow, p. 57)

At this point in the crisis, President Kennedy and his brother began to enact a tactic to impress upon Khrushchev just how desperate the situation was, even after the Russians ships had stopped. In his letter of Oct. 25, Kennedy hinted to the Russians there were forces inside the ExComm and Pentagon that he might not be able to control much longer. He coupled this with the fact that since Khrushchev had lied to him, this had made Kennedy look foolish in their eyes. (Blight and Lang, p. 98)

At around this time, Kennedy authorized his brother to visit Ambassador Dobrynin to extend an offer that JFK had been talking about for at least two days: An exchange of the American Jupiter missiles in Turkey for the Russian missiles in Cuba. Bobby Kennedy also subtly insinuated that his brother would not be able to hold off the ExComm hawks much longer. Complicating this was the fact that the Cubans were now firing anti-aircraft missiles at the American overflights.

This message seems to have worked. For upon receipt of Kennedy's letter, Khrushchev began to formulate an exchange: he would pull the missiles out of Cuba. In return, Kennedy would make a no-invasion pledge of the island, plus withdraw American missiles from Turkey. (Blight and Yang, p. 101)

After a brief discussion with Gromyko, Khrushchev called in his stenographer Nedezhda Petrovna and dictated the long letter in which he outlined a solution

to the crisis. This particular letter only included a demand for a no-invasion pledge. Incredibly, even at this late date, Khrushchev was still saying that Kennedy was wrong about the offensive missiles in Cuba. And the Soviet leader tried to compare the medium- and long-range missiles, which could fly as far as 2,400 miles and deliver an explosion eight times as powerful as Hiroshima, with a cannon. (Khrushchev's letter to Kennedy of Oct. 26, 1962)

But Khrushchev also revealed to Kennedy that the reason he decided to obey the blockade was because the missiles were already inside Cuba. In this particular letter, the demands for removal of the Jupiters was not mentioned. That night Khrushchev did not leave the Kremlin. (Blight and Lang, p. 107) The reason was that he did not want to miss any reply by Kennedy.

The Key Trade

The next day, after getting an intelligence report about Kennedy's willingness to consider a trade of the missiles, he summoned Gromyko again. He now asked that an amended version of the first letter be sent, adding a request for the missile exchange as a part of the negotiations. (ibid, p. 108) Khrushchev also heard about this from Dobrynin through RFK.

That afternoon, Oct. 27, Defense Minister Rodion Malinovsky spoke to the Presidium. He said that all the warheads had now been mounted on the ICBM's and were ready to be launched. (ibid, p. 109) Recall, this was two days after the Russians had agreed to abide by the blockade.

Therefore, in reality, the blockade had worked only as a cooling-down measure. In practical terms, it had almost no effect. The Russians had their first strike in place and ready to deliver. Malinovsky then went on to game plan how the nuclear exchange would work. He gave special attention to how the Soviets could target American allies in Europe.

Clearly irritated at this kind of talk, Khrushchev interrupted to ask him if Pliyev understood that no one could order the launching of the missiles in Cuba except him. Malinovsky reassured him that this was the case. (ibid)

But at that moment, something unforeseen occurred. Due to a misunderstanding in orders, Castro was allowed to use the Russian installed SAM's to effect the only fatality by enemy fire of the crisis. This was the shooting down of Rudolf Anderson, America's best U-2 pilot, over Banes, Cuba. Khrushchev feared this would send a terrible message to Kennedy that the U.S. president might read it as a sign that the Russians were behind it as a prelude to an air war over Cuba.

In fact, when news of this event was delivered to Kennedy, the hawks in the ExComm did use it to press him into an air strike against the SAM's, for there

was a plan in place to do just that in case this happened. By then, even McNamara had grown hawkish. He moved to take out the SAM site at Banes and then begin an air war over Cuba. (May and Zelikow, pgs. 571, 575)

But Kennedy now had Khrushchev's second letter. After listening to these pleas for retaliation, JFK turned the discussion around to formulating a reply to this new letter and how to approach the added request for the removal of the Jupiters. Kennedy, who had rejected an air war at the beginning of the crisis, was rejecting one near the end.

In fact, this second letter was essentially what Kennedy wanted to hear. RFK had assured Dobrynin that the Jupiters would be removed after negotiations with Turkey. And Kennedy was willing to take the no-invasion pledge.

Continuing Crisis

But as Blight and Lang demonstrate, this was still not the end of the crisis, because Khrushchev had not negotiated the agreement with Castro's input. And Fidel had actually proposed the day before, to the Russian representative Aleksander Alekseev, that he was willing to launch a preemptive first strike at America to prevent any invasion. (Blight and Yang, p. 116)

When Khrushchev got Castro's request, plus the news that the Russians had permitted Castro to use their radar equipment to shoot down Anderson, he was convinced that matters were now slipping beyond his control. He relayed orders that, under no circumstances, was any Russian equipment to be used to fire at any American plane flying over Cuba. He also ordered the missiles to be removed from the silos.

Khrushchev did not trust Fidel Castro, who he considered immature and suicidal, to take part in the negotiations, or even have knowledge of them. At this point, Khrushchev was intent on convincing Kennedy that the President's tentative positive reply to Khrushchev's offer, which was also sent on Oct. 27, was amenable to him.

Kennedy indeed was eager to end the crisis. So much so that he gave instructions to Secretary of State Dean Rusk to have the United Nations announce a trade for the Jupiters if the Russians needed public assurance for it. (ibid, p. 134) This turned out to be unnecessary. Robert Kennedy assured Dobrynin the Jupiters would be removed, and they were. (ibid, p. 136) The deal was in place and announced by Moscow on Oct. 28.

But there was still turbulence to be met on both sides. Air Force Gen. Curtis LeMay was pushing for an air attack since he believed that the missiles would become fully operational on Oct. 29. Therefore, he thought that they could be

knocked out before then without a counterattack from the island. (ibid, p. 141)

With what we now know, this shows just how poor the intelligence was on the American side. Kennedy always felt both admiration and pity for McNamara for dealing with these Pentagon hawks during the crisis.

On the island, Castro felt betrayed by his Russian allies and abused by the Americans. Khrushchev had promised Kennedy on-site inspection to see if all the nuclear weapons had been removed, including the bombers and submarines. But Castro would countenance no inspectors in Cuba no matter who they were.

And when United Nations Chairman U Thant arrived, Castro made this clear to him. Castro even sent an ultimatum to the UN with five demands to be met before he would even consider inspection. (ibid, p. 148) Because of this, the blockade continued for weeks around Cuba. Castro was so recalcitrant that the Russians sent one of their finest diplomats, Anastas Mikoyan, to Cuba to make sure he would not scuttle the deal. (ibid, p. 178)

Kennedy and Khrushchev finally worked out an arrangement in which the ships carrying back the weapons would be checked by helicopter at sea. This made the crisis drag on well into November.

Mikoyan's mission was not very successful. He managed to convince Castro not to resist the removal of the IL-28 bombers. But that was about it. In fact, the veteran diplomat was surprised at the depth of resentment Castro held toward the Russians.

For example, Castro complained to U Thant that he only heard about the final agreement in a radio broadcast from Miami. And during the process of the Soviet withdrawal, Castro was forbidden to use anti-aircraft guns against over-flights. By Nov. 15, he refused to cooperate with that particular policy any longer. (Letter from Castro to U Thant of Nov. 15, 1962)

Divided Allies

The authors understand that it was this split between Havana and Moscow that allowed the crisis to end up with a totally unexpected turn, one that none of the main actors could have predicted. In the last chapter of the book, the authors explain that Castro had become so suspicious of Russian assurances that he tried for a normalization of relations with the United States.

This initiative began about a month after the removal of the last missiles from Cuba. When Kennedy first got news about Castro's interest in a rapprochement, he was also quite interested. And as several authors have described, a fascinating and intricate backchannel was then created to avoid the communications from

going public. Both sides understood that, if that occurred, it could be fatal to their progress.

On Kennedy's side the couriers were ABC reporter Lisa Howard, American diplomat William Attwood, and French journalist Jean Daniel. In just 11 months, Kennedy and Castro were talking about sending Attwood into Mexico in order to fly to Cuba to begin preliminary discussions for détente. (James DiEugenio, *Destiny Betrayed*, Second Edition, p. 74)

The last stage of the discussions consisted of a long communiqué from Kennedy in which he actually said that he was in agreement with Castro and Che Guevara's ideas about the Batista regime which preceded the Cuban revolution. (ibid, p. 17) Kennedy went on to say that he understood the terrible exploitation, colonization and humiliation the history of Cuba represented to its citizens. He also understood that America had played a significant role in all this.

The problem now was that Cuba, because of its Soviet ties, had become part of the Cold War and this had led to the Missile Crisis. Kennedy felt that Khrushchev understood this aspect of the tensions. The U.S. president wanted to know if Castro did. If so, they could proceed.

When this message was personally delivered to Castro through Daniel, Fidel was overjoyed. He said, "Suddenly, a president arrives on the scene who tries to support the interest of another class." Elated, Castro spent the better part of three days with Daniel. He told him that Kennedy would now go down in history as the greatest president since Lincoln. (ibid, p. 75)

On the third day, Castro got the news that Kennedy had been shot in Dallas. He hung up the phone and said over and over, "This is bad news this is bad news this is bad news." A few moments later a radio broadcast stated that Kennedy was dead.

Castro stood up and said, "Everything is changed. Everything is going to change." He was correct. This was the end of the last and best hope for normalization of relations between Castro's regime and the United States. Some observers, like Attwood and the late Arthur Schlesinger, suspect that the fact that the CIA was monitoring the backchannel may have led to Kennedy's death.

Lost Hope

But this was not the only significant aftereffect that Blight and Yang note. Both Kennedy and Khrushchev realized how close the world had come to nuclear war. They had been seared by the experience. The leaders attempted to attain closer relations between the two countries. A hot line was established to avoid crisis communication by letter. A test ban treaty was worked out to limit

development of more nuclear missiles. And work was begun on serious arms limitations talks.

In the summer of 1963, Kennedy alerted the world to his intent with his famous American University speech. There he announced that a d'Ã©tente with Russia had to be achieved or we would run the risk of another nuclear crisis.

As long as Kennedy was alive, this goal was in sight and Khrushchev was safe. After Kennedy was killed, Khrushchev wept, for he understood that the Kennedy-Khrushchev plan for peaceful coexistence was dead, too. (Blight and Lang, p. 230)

Robert and Jackie Kennedy also understood it. In November 1963, through special diplomat William Walton, the surviving Kennedys sent a message to Moscow telling Khrushchev that their plans for peace would now be put on hold. The suspicion was that President Kennedy had been killed by a large rightwing conspiracy and Lyndon Johnson was much too close to big business interests to pursue the ideal of reversing the arms race and seeking a meaningful peace.

Bobby Kennedy resigned as Attorney General in 1964 and later ran for the U.S. Senate from New York. From that office, he mounted a run for the presidency in 1968 after Johnson, deeply scarred by the Vietnam War, announced that he would not seek reelection. If RFK had won if he had not been assassinated, too the Kennedy-Khrushchev vision might have resumed. (David Talbot, *Brothers*, pgs. 32-33)

The problem from the Soviet side was that once JFK was dead, Khrushchev was vulnerable to the likes of Leonid Brezhnev, who had looked upon his venture in Cuba with nothing but scorn. (Blight and Lang, p. 191) In fact, the charges that caused Khrushchev's demise were drawn up by Dmitri Polyansky, a member of the Presidium and an ally of Brezhnev's who became his deputy after Khrushchev's overthrow. Some of the Brezhnev-Polyansky charges specifically named Khrushchev's "hare-brained scheme" in Cuba which had brought the world to the brink of catastrophe. (ibid, pgs. 221, 274)

By adding this coda, by showing how enemies in both countries may have brought down both men while they were trying to cure some of the failings that caused the crisis, Blight and Yang step outside the box, since most traditional historians will not come close to such subjects. They did the same with *Virtual JFK*. They deserve praise for having the courage and honesty to do so.

Jim DiEugenio is a researcher and writer on the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and other mysteries of that era.

Warnings from the Cuban Missile Crisis

Special Report: Amid the trivia of American politics, voters can forget that they are entrusting the winning candidate for President with the nuclear codes, the power to annihilate all life on the planet, a reality that reporter Don North witnessed up close a half century ago in the Cuban missile crisis.

By Don North

Saturday, Oct. 27, 1962, now known as “Black Saturday” was the day I arrived in Havana to report on the Cuban missile crisis, completely oblivious that 50 years later it would be considered “the most dangerous moment in human history,” the day we came closest to nuclear Armageddon.

My rendezvous with this existential crisis began on Oct. 22, in a New York bar where I had arranged to meet friends and incidentally to watch a TV address by President John F. Kennedy that was supposed to have something to do with Cuba. I had visited Cuba as a freelance journalist six months earlier and was fascinated by the country.

Kennedy’s TV address was a shocker. “Unmistakable evidence has established the fact that a series of offensive missile sites is now in preparation on that imprisoned island,” Kennedy said looking grim. A hush fell over the bar and waiters stopped serving to hear his words.

After 50 years of study and analysis we now know that in addition to the nuclear-armed missiles, the Soviet Union had deployed 100 tactical nuclear weapons which the Soviet commander in Cuba could have launched without additional approval from Moscow.

A U.S. naval blockade of Cuba had begun the day before Kennedy’s speech. “A strict quarantine on all offensive military equipment under shipment to Cuba is being initiated,” the President said.

As Kennedy spoke the U.S. Strategic Air Command (SAC) had gone to DEFCON-3, (Defense Condition Three) two steps down from nuclear war, and dispersed its nuclear-armed bomber fleet around the United States. The Cold War had suddenly grown hot.

A truthful history of those dark days was the first casualty. Although tape recordings of White House meetings on the crisis were made, they were kept classified until ten years ago, as many of the participants worked to burnish or obscure their position at that time. Bobby Kennedy made a pre-emptive strike on

history by writing and publishing his book, *Thirteen Days*, a self-serving recollection of the crisis.

We now know that JFK's covert war against Cuba dubbed "Operation Mongoose," a campaign of harassment and sabotage had contributed to the war of nerves that led the Russians to step in to the defense of Cuba. However, as transcripts of the taped White House meetings of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExComm) would reveal when declassified decades later, JFK used cool political skill and all his intellect to prevent a possible nuclear war.

As he told the ExComm members, as he ordered the dangerous naval blockade to go into effect, "What we are doing is throwing down a card on the table in a game which we don't know the ending of."

The taped record of how JFK played his hand trying to contain the chaotic forces of history in the face of unyielding pressure from hawkish advisers like Generals Curtis Le May and Maxwell Taylor shows the crisis was a supreme test of the President's ability to maintain an open mind, while holding to his entrenched abhorrence of war.

It is a cautionary tale to remember as we fear a possible future showdown with a nuclear-armed Iran and are about to choose a President in an election 50 years after the missile crisis of October 1962. Sound judgment and emotional stability can make the difference between a peaceful compromise and a catastrophic war.

Hugh Sidey, a journalist who was a friend of Kennedy and covered the White House for Time magazine at the time of the crisis, had this to say in appraising JFK's leadership: "Once in the Presidency there is virtually no time for re-education or introspection that might show a President where he is right or wrong and bring about a true change of mind. Events move too fast. A President may pick up more knowledge about a subject or find an expert aide on whom he can rely, but in most instances when he is alone and faced with a crucial decision he must rely on his intuition, a mixture of natural intelligence, education, and experience."

Self-Assigned to Havana

Although a few weeks earlier I had finally landed a job as a news writer on the NBC evening news, I was ready to chuck it for the opportunity to report from a key city during the missile crisis where few foreign journalists were based. I walked across the street from NBC studios in Rockefeller Center to the Life magazine office.

Although I hadn't worked for Life before and only owned an inexpensive Kodak, I was ushered in to see a senior editor and was immediately loaded down with

several Leica camera bodies, an assortment of lenses and a brick of fast 35mm film. Life didn't have a man in Havana and for this story they would risk taking a chance on a youthful broadcast news writer with some Cuba contacts willing to travel into ground zero for American ICBM's and bombers.

"Don, you're our man in Havana now," said the editor in a well-cut gray suit. "Get some good shots, write some snappy cut lines and give us the story of Havana at the center of the storm."

New Yorkers were scared. Newspapers carried illustrations of New York and Washington as targets within the range of the Soviet ICBMs now operational from Cuba. Lines formed at grocery stores and gas stations. Friends made plans to drive their children to relatives' homes in less vulnerable areas of the country.

My sister Helen had recently arrived from Canada to work as a nurse at the Roosevelt Hospital in central Manhattan. We shared a small apartment. I was reluctant to leave her alone in a city perhaps facing a devastating enemy attack. Her hospital was already planning for handling casualties.

My first stop was Miami to consult with my friend Miguel Acocca, Time magazine's man in the Caribbean. Miguel said I had two choices. The first was to link up with the U.S. Second Marine Division preparing landing craft in Key West for an invasion of Cuba. It would be called Operation Scabbards and be comparable to the Normandy landings in 1944. It would involve eight divisions, around 120,000 troops, and land on a 40-mile front between Mariel and Tarara Beach, east of Havana.

Or my second choice was to try to get on a Cubana Airlines flight left outside Cuba when the blockade went into effect, that would be returning to Cuba in the next few days from Mexico City.

I knew Mario Garcia-Inchaustigi, the Cuban ambassador in Mexico. We had shared many a rum and coke at the Delegates Lounge in the United Nations when he was the Cuban delegate and I was an announcer for U.N. General Assembly sessions. If there was any chance of a visa and a ticket on that flight, Mario could arrange it. I cabled the Embassy explaining my situation and took the next flight to Mexico.

With a visa in hand, purchasing a ticket on the Cubana flight was easy. The only passengers confirmed were members of an East German soccer team. Boarding the flight I was aware from monitoring recent radio broadcasts that it was a sensitive time to be arriving in Havana. The first Soviet ship to test the American blockade, the *Grozny*, was reported about to encounter U.S. Navy ships.

Earlier, in a radio broadcast Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had warned, "if the United States carries out the piratical actions, we shall have to resort to means of defense against the aggressor to defend our rights."

Along with the youthful soccer team from East Berlin, there were five other international journalists on board the flight: a fellow Canadian Robert MacNeil of NBC; Gordian Troeller, a Luxemburger and his wife Marie Claude, both working for the German magazine *Der Stern*; Atsuhiko Horikawa, Washington correspondent of the Japanese *Yomiuri Shimbun*, a Tokyo daily; and Alan Oxley, a British freelancer who worked for CBS News and lived in Havana.

Not Welcome in Havana

Walking from the plane into the dark, hot, humid Havana air was not unpleasant and costumed guitarists strummed a welcome as we entered the passenger terminal. A giant poster declaring that Cuba was "en pie de Guerra" (on war alert) graced the terminal building.

Inside, men in battle fatigues with side arms or carrying machine guns eyed arriving passengers suspiciously. My visa was stamped and I was directed to an adjacent room where my fellow journalists were being held. In a few minutes, soldiers with machine guns at the ready ordered us in Spanish to take our luggage and board an army truck waiting outside.

We were driven to the center of Havana to a small, modern hotel called The Capri. The officer in charge informed us politely in English that we were to be "guests of the Cuban government." We were given room keys and escorted under armed guard to rooms on the ninth floor. Two guards with machine guns were posted outside our rooms.

The Capri Hotel was located in the heart of downtown Havana, a few blocks from the Havana Hilton and the old Hotel Nacional. I lay in my bed trying to sleep but kept thinking about a U.S. Pentagon study of nuclear war effects on different size cities. If the worst happened overnight and U.S. ICBMs dropped a one megaton bomb on Havana, it would vaporize my hotel leaving a crater 1,000 feet wide and 200 feet deep. The blast would destroy virtually everything within a 1.7 mile radius.

Of the two million inhabitants hundreds of thousands living in central Havana would be killed instantly. Tens of thousands more would die of radiation within hours. Fires would rage across the rest of the city as far as the Soviet military headquarters in El Chico, 12 miles from city center.

But confined to our hotel, we were oblivious to the momentous events unfolding on Black Saturday:

-A U.S. Air Force U-2 reconnaissance aircraft had been shot down while on a mission to photograph the Soviet missiles. The pilot, Major Rudolf Anderson, was killed.

-A U.S. Air Force U-2 accidentally strayed into Soviet airspace near Alaska and Soviet interceptors gave chase.

-Defense Secretary Robert McNamara reported the Soviet ship *Grozny* was steadily approaching the Cuban quarantine line.

-Six low level U.S. "Crusader" reconnaissance flights had been forced to turn back by Cuban ground fire while photographing missile sites.

-The U.S. Navy located and dropped practice depth charges to force four Soviet "Foxtrot" nuclear armed submarines to surface.

-The Soviet Union and the United States both conducted atmospheric nuclear tests on this day.

-Two Cuban exiles dispatched by the CIA under the Mongoose program had set explosive charges at the Metahambre copper mine in Pinar Del Rio. The two were captured by Cuban police.

Any one of these incidents could have provoked a nuclear response in the tense "eye-ball to eye-ball" atmosphere that prevailed that day. Twenty-four Soviet SAM sites were now operational.

But there were stories within each of those stories. For instance, the CIA flew slightly better U-2's than the U.S. Air Force; they had a more powerful engine and could fly 5,000 feet higher. President Kennedy preferred to have Air Force pilots flying over Cuba than CIA pilots as fewer questions would be asked if they were shot down. The CIA reluctantly agreed to lend several of its U-2's to the Air Force and they were repainted with Air Force insignia.

As one U-2 approached the missile site at Banes, in Western Cuba near Guantanamo, an order came from Soviet military headquarters in El Chico near Havana, "Destroy target number 33. Use two missiles." A proximity fuse detonated the SAMs as they closed in, spraying shrapnel and killing Major Rudolf Anderson instantly.

Declassified Soviet sources have confirmed the missile was not cleared to fire by the Kremlin. Furious, Krushchev ordered no further firings take place without his direct orders. In Washington, Air Force Gen. Curtis Le May ordered rocket-carrying fighters readied for an attack on the SAM site. The White House ordered Le May not to attack unless he had direct orders from the President.

"He chickened out again," Le May growled. "How in hell do you get men to risk their lives when the SAMs are not attacked?"

Thousands of miles away, a U-2 flying out of Eielson Air Force base in Alaska on a mission to monitor air samples during the Soviet nuclear test that day became disoriented and flew some 400 miles into Soviet airspace. The pilot was Captain Chuck Maltsby.

The Soviets could well have regarded this U-2 flight as a last-minute intelligence reconnaissance in preparation for nuclear war. Soviet MIG aircraft tried to intercept the U-2 flying at 75,000 feet but could not reach that altitude. Alaskan Command sent up two nuclear armed F-102 interceptors to protect the U-2.

When President Kennedy was later told about the incident he replied, "There's always some sonofabitch who doesn't get the word."

Six U.S. Navy "Crusaders" flying at tree-top level under Soviet radar headed westward to photograph the missile sites of Pinar Del Rio. Antiaircraft guns manned by Cuban crews opened fire as the Crusaders approached the San Cristobal missile site. The pilots, aware of multiple hits, aborted the mission and flew home to Key West.

Soviet submarine commanders were highly disciplined and unlikely to trigger their nuclear torpedoes by design, but we now know the unstable conditions on board the subs raised the specter of an accidental nuclear launch. U.S. Navy ships had located four Soviet "Foxtrot" submarines lurking in the waters south of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Each day the subs had to surface to charge their batteries and report to Moscow. Once located the subs were forced to surface by U.S. Naval ships dropping hand grenades and practice depth charges.

On "Black Saturday," Oct. 27, 1962, one sub B-59, commanded by Captain Valentin Savitsky, had been chased for two days. His batteries were low and he had not been able to communicate with Moscow. Temperatures in the sub reached as high as 140 degrees, food was spoiling in the refrigerators and water was low and rationed. Carbon dioxide levels were becoming critical and sailors were fainting from heat and exhaustion.

Submerged several hundred feet the sub came under repeated attack from the *USS Randolph* dropping practice depth charges. The explosions became deafening. There is no greater humiliation for a submarine captain than to be forced by the enemy to surface. Forty years later, a senior sub officer on B-59, Vadim Orlov, described the scene as Captain Sevitsky lost his temper.

"Savitsky became furious. He summoned the officer in charge of the nuclear torpedo, and ordered him to make it combat ready. 'We're going to blast them now,' said Savitsky. 'We will perish ourselves, but we will sink them all. We will not disgrace our Navy.'" Fellow officers persuaded Savitsky to calm down and a decision was made to surface in the midst of four American destroyers.

A Spy and Journalist Out of Their Depth

In Washington, a Russian KGB officer and an ABC News reporter inserted themselves in the drama. Aleksandr Feklisov, the KGB station chief, had approached ABC News State Department correspondent John Scali with a plan to dismantle missile bases in Cuba in return for a U.S. pledge not to invade. Scali ran it past Secretary of State Dean Rusk and got his approval.

Their meddling was a classic case of miscommunication between Washington and Moscow at a time when a misstep could have led to nuclear war. By Scali's account it had been a Soviet initiative. Feklisov presented it as an American one. What Scali thought was a feeler from Moscow was in reality an attempt by the KGB to measure Washington's conditions for a settlement.

Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin said he had not authorized this type of negotiation and refused to send Feklisov's messages to Moscow. Feklisov could only send his negotiation report with Scali by cable to KGB headquarters. There is no evidence the cable was ever read by Khrushchev or played any part in Kremlin decision-making. Yet, the Scali-Feklisov meetings would become part of the strange mythology of the Cuban missile crisis.

I later came to know Scali as a very undiplomatic diplomatic correspondent given to outbursts of temper. I was a correspondent for ABC News in Vietnam and not supportive of the war. Scali was a hawk whose Vietnam visits were choreographed by President Lyndon Johnson and Gen. William Westmoreland. He often trumpeted his role as mediator in the missile crisis and was later named U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations by President Richard Nixon.

Before "Black Saturday" ended President Kennedy got more bad news. The CIA determined for the first time that five out of six medium-range missile sites in Cuba were fully operational. With the sand in the glass almost gone that evening, Kennedy sent his brother Robert to meet with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin to warn him U.S. military action was imminent. At the same time, Khrushchev was offered a possible way out. Pull his missiles out of Cuba and the U.S. would promise not to invade and also withdraw missiles from Turkey.

Radio News

In Havana, our Japanese colleague Horikawa had a powerful Zenith shortwave radio

and we spent a lot of time Sunday listening to news broadcasts from Miami. Khrushchev had "blinked." Moscow radio broadcast a long letter Khrushchev wrote to Kennedy agreeing to remove the missiles from Cuba under U.N. inspection. Kennedy in return agreed not to invade Cuba. The crisis between the world's superpowers was waning. However, Fidel Castro was furious over the settlement and felt betrayed by his Soviet friends.

We continued to be his guests. We were fed regularly, but monotonously from the hotel kitchen. It was mostly "arroz con pollo," chicken with rice. It helped to wash it down with Bulgarian red wine at \$5 a bottle. And to make meals an even more festive occasion we ordered Cuban cigars and Russian Vodka at a nominal price in U.S. dollars. Periodically on the Miami NBC radio station, it was reported that six international journalists who had flown into Havana had not been heard from and were considered "missing."

On Monday, another day passed and no one came to see us. The guards did not communicate. We spent a lot of time trying to be journalists, jotting in our journals whatever we could observe from our room windows. Looking down toward the harbor, we could see a lot of ships, including Soviet freighters that had passed through the blockade.

On the Malecon, the seaside street, we could see an anti-aircraft battery manned by Cuban soldiers. Regularly, U.S. Navy "Crusader" reconnaissance planes flew over our hotel very low. But we never saw the anti-aircraft battery engage them as the speedy jets screamed overhead.

Platoons of "milicianos," male and female civilians on military duty, often marched through the streets in view of our hotel. On Cuban radio or even the hotel sound system, patriotic music interrupted by urgent announcements of news bulletins and excerpts from speeches of Fidel kept the country charged up for war. Cubans were told regularly to expect an invasion by the United States.

Whoever was in charge seemed to have forgotten about us. We were never mistreated, but simply held incommunicado. From the first day we began plotting ways to draw attention to our dilemma.

One afternoon I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw two old friends from my childhood in Canada drinking at an outdoor café just below my window. Doug Buchanan and Rod McKenzie were pilots for International Air Freighters flying Toronto to Havana. We hastily wrote a letter addressed to the Havana Associated Press office listing our names, nationalities and the circumstances of our house arrest and tossed it through the window louvers to the old friends lurking below.

As fate would have it, the letter floated down nine stories and came to rest on the roof of a guard post below. The two pilots perhaps emboldened by rum and cokes climbed up to the roof of the guard post to retrieve the letter, whereupon the guards seized them and marched them off at gunpoint.

The next day, Alan Oxley, the British journalist whose home was Havana, spotted a girlfriend in a bikini sunning herself on the roof of an apartment building adjacent to our hotel. Alan shouted to her to bring her baby and try to visit us in the hotel. Within an hour she arrived pushing a baby buggy and the guards allowed her in to visit with Alan. Before she left we slipped the letter to AP into the baby's diaper but the crafty guards searched on the way out and found the letter.

Phone Home

The following day, Horikawa, the Japanese journalist suggested a new plan to make contact with the outside world. The phones in our rooms were all dead, shut off at the switchboard. We screwed off the plates in the wall where the phone wires entered and found a gathering of multicolored wires. With a razor blade we slit each of the wires and inserted the phone terminal connections.

Our theory was that by trial and error we would eventually tap into wires connected to another room and the call would register at reception as coming from another room. We intercepted conversations in Russian, Spanish and Chinese, before finally tapping into phone lines of an empty room. At last we got a dial tone and called the number for the Associated Press. The AP already knew who we were, but promised to contact the Embassy of each of us being held.

All the wires were somehow jammed back into the wall as if they had never been tampered with. It was just in time, as the hotel manager and receptionist came to the ninth floor and ordered the guards to inspect an empty room where they claimed telephone calls were being made. Later that day, the Miami radio station reported our names and that we were being held under house arrest in The Capri.

'Shove Ha'penny'

Still no one came to visit and time passed very slowly. Robert MacNeil, who had recently come from assignment in London, had a pocketful of British half pennies and introduced us to the popular pub game in Britain called "Shove Ha'penny." It involved hitting a half penny with your palm and sending it into a pattern of lines on the table. First person to fill the rows wins the game. We played for hours.

On our fourth day of confinement, Oct. 30, we heard on the radio that Castro had rejected the Washington-Moscow settlement. U Thant flew in to Havana to attempt

to persuade him but failed. Three days later, on Nov. 4, the Soviets sent in their prime negotiator, Anastas Mikoyan, to reason with Castro. By then, we had been under house arrest for nine days.

Free at Last

Raul Lazo, a young junior officer at the Cuban Foreign Ministry, quietly called on us that evening and simply said we were free to go and report as we liked. "I hope you will forgive us for having detained you. Please understand the crisis made it necessary," he said.

To celebrate our freedom, Robert MacNeil and I checked out the thriving nightclub in The Capri, whose loud music had kept us awake while under house arrest. The big Havana hotels still featured lavish floor shows, typical of pre-revolutionary decadence with leggy dancers in brief costumes. Tables were crowded with well-dressed couples drinking rum or vodka. The air was heavy with aromatic Cuban cigar smoke.

Enjoying our first night of freedom we took a late night stroll that took us past the Havana TV station. A large black limousine pulled up and out stepped Commandante Che Guevara wearing army fatigues, his signature beret with a red star and a large Cohiba cigar clenched in his teeth. Che had been in his military headquarters in a limestone cave in Pinar Del Rio throughout the crisis. This was his first night back in Havana. A small group of admirers quickly surrounded him and he signed a few autographs.

I approached with my flash camera and said, "Por favor, Commandante." Che smiled without removing his cigar and I shot a close-up head shot against the night background. (Later at home in New York, the photo when processed was sharp and clear and I fancied becoming a millionaire from poster and t-shirt sales. Alas, the color slide of Che later went missing when an airline lost my suitcase.)

Lively bars with bands and dance floors were open late that night. Robert and I took a table and ordered a final Daiquiri to toast our freedom. A friendly waiter discovered that we were Canadian journalists. A few minutes later a spotlight hit our table as the master of ceremonies said, "Bienvenidos, amigos periodistas Canadiense."

Then, the spotlight swung to a table just behind us. "Bienvenidos, companero sovietico," said the announcer. Sitting in the spotlight was Yevgeny Yevtushenko, the famous Russian poet. We sent him a drink and introduced ourselves. Yevtushenko was working on a heroic film about Castro. He had written a poem that would appear on the front page of *Pravda*, the Moscow daily:

America, I'm writing to you from Cuba,

*Where the cheekbones of tense sentries
And the cliffs shine anxiously tonight
Through the gusting storm.
A tabaquero with his pistol heads for the port.
A shoemaker cleans an old machine gun,
A showgirl, in a soldier's laced-up boots,
Marches with a carpenter to stand guard.
America, I'll ask you in plain Russian;
Isn't it shameful and hypocritical
That you have forced them to take up arms
And then accuse them of having done so?
I heard Fidel speak. He outlined his case
Like a doctor or a prosecutor.
In his speech, there was no animosity,
Only bitterness and reproach. America, it will be
difficult to regain the grandeur that you have lost

Through your blind games, While a little island,
standing firm, became a great country.*

First thing Monday morning all six of us who had been held in The Capri turned up at the Foreign Ministry as instructed to obtain press credentials so we could cable or phone our reports. We were told the officials responsible for press accreditation were out of town and to try again "mananna."

Dangerous Company

On my first trip to Havana, in March 1962, I had met Larry Lunt, a friendly American who owned a large ranch called Finca San Andres in Pinar Del Rio province, about a hundred miles west of Havana. He had been very helpful to me and had brought me along to many Embassy parties. I spent several weekends as his guest at the ranch.

Larry was a World War II and Korean War veteran and had been a rancher in Wyoming until moving to Cuba in 1955. He had not been a fan of Batista and was pleased when Castro took over in 1959. Soon he was appalled by Fidel's move to Communism, but in conversations with me did not harshly denounce the regime or its ruinous economic policies. I repeatedly called a number I had for Larry's apartment in Havana. It never answered and I assumed he was at his ranch without a phone.

The maxim that a person is known by the company he keeps is especially true in Cuba. In numerous trips to Cuba as a journalist and a tourist I always assumed the phones in my hotel were bugged, but I never felt I was under surveillance. Certainly Larry Lunt was under surveillance when I befriended him in March 1962. Unknown to me Larry Lunt was a CIA agent.

I read a newspaper in 1965 that reported Lunt had been arrested and imprisoned in Havana. There were no other reports that came to my attention until I learned of a book he had written and published in 1990 *Leave me my Spirit*. It's a remarkable memoir of Lunt's 14 years in a Cuban prison and his work as a CIA agent.

Lunt had been recruited and trained by the CIA before moving to Cuba. Under the agency's guidance, he bought the farm as a base for secret operations. In his book, Lunt described running numerous Cuban agents who were in a position to provide intelligence. His ranch covered hundreds of acres and was ideal for air drops of saboteurs, arms, explosives and ammunition. He had provided early reports that the San Cristobal missile site photographed by U-2's in October 1962 was a Soviet intermediate-range missile site.

Each month, Larry relayed a report from one agent who was an engineer at the Matahambre copper mine near his ranch. The mine produced 20,000 tons of copper a year, mostly for export to the Soviet Union. The CIA in its "Operation Mongoose" unsuccessfully tried to sabotage Matahambre 25 times. Even during the October crisis, two agents who had planted bombs at the mine were captured by Castro forces.

In 1979, Lunt was released and deported in an exchange of prisoners. Many spies in Cuba had been executed for lesser crimes than Lunt. However, his book is an eloquent view of inhuman conditions in Cuban prisons and of his unconquerable spirit that helped him to survive.

Pacifying Fidel

Every day we assembled at the Foreign Ministry in quest of Cuban press cards and every day we were told to try again tomorrow. Fidel was furious with his Soviet

friends for caving in to U.S. demands and had even rejected a Soviet proposal for international inspection. U Thant had come and gone from Havana, and on Nov. 2, Krushchev's principal deputy Anastas Mikoyan arrived in Havana to persuade Fidel to agree to inspection and removal of the Ilyusian-28 bombers.

Castro grudgingly met Mikoyan's plane, but refused to meet with him for days. At the bar of the Havana Libre Hilton, I chanced to meet a Canadian pilot who had flown in with Mikoyan's plane. In 1962, Canadian pilots were required on flights out of Gander airport in Newfoundland. He would be pleased to keep me informed on Mikoyan's schedule and planned departure date which would indicate his tough negotiations with Castro were over.

The Hilton bar was probably the most conspicuous watering hole in Havana and again if Cuban intelligence was noticing the company I kept, it would not enhance my daily request for a press card.

One of the most well-informed and influential diplomats in Havana was Dwight Fullford, second secretary at the Canadian Embassy. I learned he had pressed the Foreign Ministry hard for my release from house arrest. On the fourth evening after my release from the hotel, Dwight and his wife Barbara invited me for dinner at a popular Havana restaurant. We had just met on a street corner and Dwight excused himself to buy cigarettes.

Standing on the corner talking with Barbara, I was astonished to see a black limousine pull up and two men in suits jump out. They grabbed me forcefully, shoved me into the car and in a screech of tires sped away leaving Barbara to explain the sudden disappearance of their dinner guest. Dwight, like the responsible diplomat he was, went back to the Embassy to again work the phone lines on my behalf to the Foreign Ministry.

I was taken to a small jail near the harbor which was used for immigration cases. Within an hour most of the journalists held in The Capri had been rounded up and again became guests of the government, this time in a grimy cell. The next morning a diplomat from the Canadian Embassy dropped by to say the Cubans had decided to deport us to Mexico, the only place Cubana Airlines was flying that week.

There was a hitch. The Mexicans had refused to receive supposed criminals from a Cuban jail. The diplomat said he was working on it.

The next three days passed slowly behind bars. We scratched our names and the date on the cement wall along with thousands of other past prisoners. A young Nicaraguan who spoke excellent English said his name was Raul and tried to engage us in constant conversation. He was obviously a government plant and we

regaled him with glowing admiration for the Cuban revolution, Fidel and Che, hoping he would report on us favorably.

There was a TV set mounted high on the wall that we could view through the bars. Each evening of our stay they broadcast a serial based on Ernest Hemmingway's *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. In his later years Hemmingway had lived in Havana and his books were still popular there.

One morning our luggage that we had left in the hotel when we were seized was brought to our cell. Nothing seemed to be missing from mine, but books, letters and private papers had notes pinned to them with Spanish translations written on stationery of the Cuban Security police. For some reason I had brought along a small song book from the University of British Columbia, my alma mater. Several of the songs, like a Scottish drinking song, had been labeled as secret code.

The next morning, the head guard announced we would be released later that day. However, pointing at the substantial beard I had grown since arriving in Cuba, he said, "Senor North, before you can be released you must shave your beard. In Cuba only Fidelistas have beards and you're not a Fidelista."

I protested but he was adamant. No shave, no freedom. A dull Gillette was produced with no shaving soap or hot water and with a gun in my back I stood at the sink and painfully shaved.

Mexico had agreed to issue transit visas and we were booked on a flight to New York leaving two hours after our arrival. We were deported without ceremony.

Summing Up Fifty Years

Perhaps the best book looking back on the dark days of October 1962 is *One Minute to Midnight* by journalist Michael Dobbs. In summing up how catastrophe was averted, Dobbs wrote:

"Despite all their differences, both personal and ideological, the two men had reached similar conclusions about the nature of nuclear war. Nikita Krushchev and John Kennedy both understood that such a war would be far more terrible than anything mankind had known before. They also understood that a commander in chief could not always control his own armies. In short they were both human beings flawed, idealistic, blundering, sometimes brilliant, often mistaken, but ultimately very aware of their own humanity."

Despite everything that divided them, they had a sneaking sympathy for each other, an idea expressed best by Jackie Kennedy in a private letter she sent to Krushchev following her husband's assassination:

“You and he were adversaries, but you were allied in a determination that the world should not be blown up. The danger which troubled my husband was that war might be started not so much by the big men as by the little ones. While big men know the need for self-control and restraint, little men are sometimes moved more by fear and pride.”

In retrospect it is clear the United States needs its President not to be so overdosed with his own testosterone or so obsessed by his own insecurities that he not only understands the meaning of nuance but is actually prepared to conduct relations with the rest of the world in a balanced, thoughtful manner.

Ultimately it means showing the judgment of a John Kennedy rather than the belligerence of a Gen. Curtis LeMay. The danger today may not be as high as in October 1962, but it is not hard to imagine that another nuclear crisis could arise.

In 50 years, we have learned a great deal about the events of October 1962, but do we know the full truth even today? The British think tank, Royal Institute of International Affairs, in writing on this subject concludes:

“We believe that even if we knew every detail about the crisis it would not mean we could write a definitive history, even if that history were to be written from the perspectives of each participant in turn. The reason for this is that motivations and intentions are rarely revealed and are usually inconsistent across time if not at each specific moment.”

In March 2001, at a conference on the missile crisis held in a hotel at the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, I interviewed Arthur Schlesinger who had been a close adviser and speech writer for Kennedy at the time of the crisis. Schlesinger told me:

“History is an argument without end. No historian would use the word definitive because new times bring new preoccupations and we historians realize we are prisoners of our own experience. As Oscar Wilde used to say, one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it.”

Don North has covered some of the most dangerous stories of the past half century, including the Cuban missile crisis and conflicts in Vietnam, Afghanistan, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the Middle East. North's upcoming book, *Inappropriate Conduct*, will be published in November, the story of a Canadian war correspondent in Italy in 1944 who operated at the risky front line between truth and propaganda in wartime.

Cuba's Post-Castro Future

Exclusive: With Fidel Castro now 86 and his brother Raul at 81, big changes appear inevitable in Cuba over the next few years. Cuban-Americans are ramping up investment plans, assuming the U.S. government will finally lift the embargo. But the future may not be all that's expected, reports Don Ediger.

By Don Ediger

For more than 50 years, Cuban-Americans have been looking for ways to end the Castro regime. Today their plans are being re-shaped in ways that would have been all but unthinkable only a few years ago and these plans will be affected by the outcome of U.S. presidential elections.

Most Cuban-Americans now believe that a transition to democracy may require a period of many years. In the meantime, a growing number of them are exploring ways to profit from a country that has been off limits for most American companies.

The key to this new strategy is an option that until recently wasn't even open to discussion ending the U.S. embargo. That's more likely to happen, Cuba experts say, if Barack Obama is reelected, because Democrats are traditionally more open to options regarding the embargo. There's also growing doubt about whether outlawing Cuban imports actually hurts the regime.

"Personally, I think that the embargo is a completely failed policy," says Miami attorney Antonio Zamora, referring to the 50-year-old law that was imposed after the Castro regime expropriated private property. In all those years, Zamora points out, only a few property owners have ever been compensated.

Though largely overlooked by the media, major shifts in Florida demographics make repeal of the embargo much more likely. Numbering more than one million, Cuban-Americans have been the largest Hispanic group in Florida, and for many years they overwhelmingly favored keeping the embargo in place. To win elections in Florida the country's largest swing state politicians of both parties have traditionally promised to uphold the embargo for fear of alienating Cuban voters.

Now that's changing. Hispanics from Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Mexico and other Latin American countries are growing faster in numbers than those from Cuba. And while Cuban-Americans are mostly Republicans, others in Florida are heavily Democratic.

Moreover, Cuban-Americans themselves are changing their mind about the embargo. According to a recent study by the Cuban Research Institute at Florida International University (FIU), most Cuban-Americans in Miami would agree with Zamora that the embargo hasn't worked well. In fact, 47 percent would like to see the embargo lifted.

"This is probably the first presidential election in which Cuba is not a top issue for the Cuban-American community," says Andy Gomez, senior fellow at the University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies. A member of Mitt Romney's staff phoned Gomez last year to get his advice on the topics that Romney should address when he visits Miami. Gomez's answer wasn't Cuba but jobs and the economy.

It's not that Cuban-Americans are no longer interested in Cuba, Gomez says, but that they are "tired of the same thing over and over again."

There's a growing consensus among Cuban-Americans that lifting the embargo won't help the Castros retain power as some once thought because the regime has been thoroughly entrenched for more than five decades. When Fidel Castro became ill six years ago, some experts thought the end was near, but today they discuss a variety of scenarios.

As Jose Gabilondo of FIU's Cuban Research Institute explains it: "The logic of the U.S. embargo is 'Let's create conditions of civil unrest in Cuba by creating conditions of economic hardship such that there will be a popular uprising that will lead to a revolution.' I reject that approach. I don't think it makes sense."

The other approach, Gabilondo says, "is to realize that transition is already happening in Cuba slowly, and one deal at a time."

A Vietnam-Style Scenario

The most likely scenario, many experts believe, is for Cuba to follow a path similar to Vietnam's continuing as an authoritarian socialist state but also opening up trade with the United States.

Several Cuban-American groups are already gearing up for this possibility, which comes with the prospect of huge profits for American companies once the embargo is lifted. There's also a sentiment in the community that opening up trade might also provide the Cuban government with an incentive to be less repressive.

But while Raul Castro the current leader of Cuba appears to be more open than his brother to economic reform, Jorge Duany, director of FIU's Cuban Research Institute, emphasizes that neither Castro wants more than one party, free

elections or a free-market economy.

A small step in economic reform came two years ago when the Cuban government authorized 99-year commercial leases, and as of last year, Cubans could also sell their houses. But private businesses are still very difficult to start with a two-year backlog of license applications.

Just a few days ago there were signs that the Castro government is trying to take advantage of the changes in U.S. politics and strategy of the Cuban-American community:

–The government in Havana reiterated its willingness to negotiate the release of Alan Gross, an American contractor who has spent more than 2 1/2 years in jail on charges of trying to install Internet technology to undermine the government.

–The Cuban government has raised its profile as mediator in Colombia's peace talks with FARC, the communist guerrilla group that Cuba has supported. If mediation succeeds and FARC becomes a legitimate political party, the U.S. is likely to remove Cuba from its list of terrorist nations a step that makes it easier to lift the embargo.

The embargo forbids American companies from importing goods from Cuba and from selling anything but agricultural goods to the country. American firms are currently allowed to *export* agricultural products to Cuba.

The embargo doesn't affect the ability of Americans to send up to \$10,000 a day to Cuba, a provision that lets Cuban-Americans help family members who remain on the island. These remittances total more than \$2 billion a year.

Lucrative Market

The stakes are high for post-embargo trade. Cuba has a gross domestic product (in purchasing power parity) of about \$114 billion, putting it in a league with Ecuador and New Zealand. Companies from dozens of countries including Spain, France, Venezuela and Canada are already profiting by trade with Cuba.

Miami attorney Zamora, who gives legal advice to companies in the U.S. and throughout Latin America, said these are some of the major opportunities for American companies:

–Construction. Many houses, for example, are in need of repair.

–Resorts, including retirement communities, golf courses and other sports facilities.

–Oil refineries (assuming the success of continued oil exploration).

-Infrastructure, especially highways, ports and power plants. (Earlier this month, some five million residents of western Cuba were without electricity after a massive blackout.)

-Biotechnology and health-care facilities.

-Travel to, from and on the island.

Many businesses, especially in Florida, are already preparing for trade and investment in post-embargo Cuba, and several Cuba trade groups have started up in Miami and Tampa, among other cities.

Trade advocates point out that if U.S. companies don't start doing business in Cuba, foreign corporations are almost certain to step up their activities there. The French, for example, pulled back their investments when European economies tanked several years ago. They now hope to increase investment in Cuba from a recent level of 150 million euros (about \$196 million) to 250 million euros (about \$327 million) a year.

Business people and the Cuban-American community are well aware, however, that the transition of power in Cuba may be far from smooth. Though the odds seem to be against a violent revolution, there are too many unknowns to rule out any scenario.

That's because Cuba hasn't been a top priority in the U.S. since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's powerful ally. The priority is now even lower since another of Cuba's allies, Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez, has been suffering from cancer and may not have long to live.

Gomez, the senior fellow at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, says when he speaks with intelligence officials in Washington, he's often amazed at how little they know of secondary players in Cuba. Over the last few years, in fact, U.S. intelligence agencies have frequently relied on the Cuban-American community for information.

The Cuban-American community has often been relied upon for information about conditions in Cuba because Cuban-Americans can travel to Cuba to visit relatives and, while there, talk with a wide spectrum of the population.

But little is known for sure about the second tier of Castro bureaucrats and even less about would-be revolutionaries who would try exerting power after Fidel and/or Raul is out of the picture. The Cuban military, experts say, could also play a major role in the transition, and the Catholic Church is a relatively new wild card in the game.

Since Pope John Paul II visited Cuba in 1998, the church has experienced a resurgence on the island and could prove to be a behind-the-scenes force for democracy. On the other hand, the church has tried to stifle some democratic changes such as a proposal backed by the daughter of Raul Castro to allow same-sex marriage.

Cuba's Future

The mix of political and cultural pressures could create, over the next five years, a curious blend of business investment and ideological restrictions. So, in 2017, you might find yourself at an American airport waiting for a plane to Varadero, a resort area in northern Cuba where your parents live in a retirement community.

Ironically, the plane will fly over Key West, where you once vacationed at the cost of nearly three times what you will spend in Cuba.

While waiting for the plane, you mull over the idea of going to Havana during your upcoming 10 days on the island. You have some contacts there who might be helpful in setting up a branch of your public relations firm. The market is growing in Cuba, and start-up costs are low.

You also hope to drive with your parents to the nearby port city of Mariel, where two famous Parisian chefs recently opened a couple of restaurants. Prices, you hear, are less than half of what they charge in Paris.

There's just enough time to stop by the airport newsstand for a couple of magazines your parents will enjoy reading. You reach for some American news magazines but then quickly put them back when you remember that the Cuban government has banned all U.S. news publications.

Oh, well, you say to yourself, that's part of the price of a new Cuba.

Don Ediger is a veteran journalist who has worked for The Miami Herald, Associated Press, BusinessWeek and the International Herald Tribune, among other publications. He is currently a resident of Miami.

What's Wrong with Florida?

In recent years, Florida has been the scene of high-profile political and legal scandals, from Election 2000 to the delayed justice in the Trayvon Martin slaying. But it's also known as a place intolerant of dissent, especially if

someone praises Fidel Castro or criticizes Israel, says Lawrence Davidon.

By Lawrence Davidson

In the early 1500s, the Spanish Conquistadors came to the shores of what is now known as Florida (or “flowery land” in Spanish). At the time, the area was populated by groups of Paleo-Indians whose lives were about to change drastically for the worse.

The Conquistadores were out for gold and other riches and enslaved the natives to assist in the search. Along with the soldiers and adventurers came Spanish priests whose goal was strictly ideological: the conversion of the natives to Catholicism. About this the natives would also have no choice.

From that time onward the sunny and flowery land of Florida proved a place both of wealth and ideological intolerance. Even when the Spanish lost control of the territory, first to the British and then to the United States, this duality persisted.

In the early decades of the 19th Century, for instance, those pesky Indians remained a problem. So, Andrew Jackson, a rigid-minded fellow if there ever was one, thought he had the answer to this problem when he waged war against the Seminole Indians who had the audacity to both resist white settlement and harbor runaway black slaves.

Eventually he was proved correct. Well-armed racism won the day and from the 1830s into the 1850s the process of forced eviction-cum-slaughter of the natives proceeded apace. By 1845, when Florida became the 27th state of the Union, things were relatively in hand with most of the remaining Seminoles pushed back into the Everglades.

Over the years the gold that the Conquistadors sought transformed itself into citrus fruit and tourism. Today the tourist business brings in over 77 million people a year to Florida and is worth over \$57 billion annually to the state’s economy.

Three-quarters of U.S. oranges are from Florida, as is 40 percent of the world’s orange juice. Yet, overlaying all this wealth, just like an unhealthy tan, is the persistence of Florida’s ideological obsessions. In contemporary terms, there are two that stand out and we will begin by looking at one that is back in the news.

Obsessions

1. **Cuba** – Florida has a very high percentage of Cuban-Americans. One-third of

the population of Miami has Cuban roots and in at least 18 other cities and large towns in the state the percentage approaches half. A high number of these people are staunchly anti-Castro. Among the older generation this attitude borders on fanaticism.

One can see this reflected in the behavior of the state's political representatives in Congress who fight tooth and nail against any moderation of U.S. sanctions against the Cuban nation despite the fact that those sanctions help impoverish the country's people, a state of being that Cuban-Americans then blame on the Castro government.

For this point of view to be maintained, right-wing Cuban Americans have had to approach history in a highly selective way. When Fidel Castro took over in Cuba in 1959, the country was an economic and social wreck.

It was ruled by the dictator Fulgenacio Batista who had established ties with U.S. Mafia families. Gambling and prostitution were major growth industries under his regime. Poverty deepened, illiteracy was widespread, crime was rampant but nonetheless Batista was seen as an ally of Washington. That is because he ran an anti-communist secret police, trained and armed by the U.S., which acted as the regime's Gestapo and SS combined.

When Castro took over in 1959, these conditions changed. But to do this he had to nationalize resources and this step was opposed by a small upper-class and a portion of the middle-class. It was this group that initially fled to the U.S. Subsequently, they have chosen to forget most of Cuban history prior to Castro's revolution.

These Cuban exiles also have a deadly resentment of those who hold a different view. They regularly try to ruin anyone who has the audacity to publicly disagree with them. That is how fanatics behave.

Take the recent case of Ozzie Guillen, the outspoken manager of the Miami Marlins baseball team. Guillen made the mistake of saying that he respected Fidel Castro in a recent interview with Time magazine. The result was a "political firestorm" in Miami.

Within hours the politicians of South Florida (sounding like the priests of the Conquistadors) were calling for his head. The team suspended him for five games and Guillen himself publicly apologized for "betraying the Latin community" and begged forgiveness in a most groveling way.

Nonetheless, elements of the Cuban-American community entered into an orgy of hate and threatened to boycott (and therefore economically destroy) Miami's baseball team unless Guillen was fired.

2. **Israel** – Florida, and particularly the southern part of the state, has the second-highest Jewish population in the U.S. (the first is in New York). Notably, most of them are elderly retirees of passionate Zionist persuasion.

One of Miami's main streets is Yitzhak Rabin Boulevard. Next to the issue of pensions, Israel is what commands their interest. That is why all the Republican primary candidates (except Ron Paul) who visited the state fell over backwards in their support for Israel.

No prominent Florida Jewish resident has yet been silly enough, or brave enough, to go public with anti-Zionist declarations, or, perhaps, statements of admiration for Yasir Arafat. And after an example was made of Ozzie Guillen, the probability of anyone doing so has to have diminished. This is because the right-wing elements of these two communities are allied and feed off of each other.

Back in the 1980s, when the Cuban-American community leaders decided to set up a formal lobby, originally known as the Cuban American National Foundation, they went to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, otherwise known as AIPAC, for advice and guidance. That relationship has continued ever since. [For more information, see my book, *Foreign Policy Inc.*]

A living representation of this on-going alliance is Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, U.S. Representative for Florida's 18th Congressional District and currently the longest-serving woman in Congress. That status has also made her chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Ros-Lehtinen describes herself as a "strong supporter of Israel," including its illegal settlements, and she has worked hard to cut funds for any United Nations agency that recognizes Palestinian statehood. Of course, she also hates Fidel Castro.

Over-exposure to this "sunshine state" can obviously get you a bad burn, particularly if you are of an open mind and value the principle of free speech. But that is the way it goes when communities form around repugnant ideological cores that then come to characterize their very identity.

For many of the Cuban-Americans in Florida, to have something good to say about the Castro regime, even if it can be historically substantiated, is the same as betraying their community. For many Jewish Americans in the same state, having something critical to say about Israel and Zionism, even if it is fact-based, is the same as declaring yourself an anti-Semite or perhaps a "self-hating Jew."

What is particularly scary about all of this is that the entire prejudicial mind-set is carried forth unquestionably and in lock step by millions of people.

In the old days, Americans often would point fingers at the Soviet Union or the Chinese communists (and now the “Muslim world”) for this sort of totalitarian-style thinking and intolerance of dissent. And all the while, it was growing right in America’s sunny backyard.

Lawrence Davidson is a history professor at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. He is the author of *Foreign Policy Inc.: Privatizing America’s National Interest*; *America’s Palestine: Popular and Official Perceptions from Balfour to Israeli Statehood*; and *Islamic Fundamentalism*.
