



A Critical Analysis of Bush's New Cuba Policy May 2004

By Rachel Farley and Geoff Thale

On May 6th, the Bush Administration announced that it was adopting the recommendations presented by the "Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba," which the President had named in December of 2003. The new Cuba policy represents a significant tightening of the U.S. embargo against Cuba, with numerous new restrictions on U.S. citizens' rights with regard to Cuba, and especially on the rights of Cuban-Americans.

There are significant problems with the measures recommended by the Commission, which are laid out here. The measures have been conceived to respond to U.S. domestic political concerns, rather than as serious foreign policy steps. The measures will hurt Cuban-Americans, Cuban families, U.S. students, Cuban dissidents and others, but won't succeed in bringing down the Castro government. The policy proposals are expensive and a misuse of government resources. Some of them are provocative and dangerous. The policy overall is misguided and unlikely to bring change to Cuba.

1. The New Bush Cuba Policy is based on Domestic Politics

The Bush Administration's motivation for adopting these measures is fundamentally political. The Castro government is not a threat to U.S. security; the challenges it presents to U.S. policy in Latin America are political and diplomatic, and can be handled on that basis. The real human rights problems in Cuba can be addressed through a policy of engagement and criticism. There is no foreign policy rationale for tightening a forty-year-old embargo that has done nothing to

improve the human rights situation on the island. The political rationale has to do with appeasing hard-line embargo supporters in the politically important state of Florida, in an election year. These measures have been conceived, and are being implemented, to please a small but significant political bloc that could be key to the President's reelection.

Cuban-American hardliners in Florida have been pressing the Administration for stronger action against Cuba for some time. Most hard-line embargo supporters are first generation immigrants who came to the U.S. in the years immediately after the revolution. Many of them no longer have relatives in Cuba, or have lost all contact with family on the island. Measures that might impose real hardships on Cuban citizens are unlikely to affect them or their close relatives personally. Since they don't visit family, send remittances or take humanitarian assistance to the island, they and their relatives are not affected by the new restrictions imposed on Cuban-Americans by the President's new policy. This makes it politically possible for the Bush Administration to crack down on Cuban-American travel, remittances, humanitarian aid, etc., to appease the hard-line Cuban-Americans. It is notable that the new policy does not limit the per diems of business people going on agricultural sales-related trips, or take other measures that would limit U.S. agricultural sales to Cuba; the Administration doesn't want to jeopardize the President's standing with the agricultural export community or in farm states.

Just before the Commission, chaired by Secretary of State Colin Powell, released its

recommendations, Powell's long-time chief of staff was quoted in GQ magazine, saying that U.S. policy toward Cuba is the "[d]umbest policy on the face of the earth. It's crazy." ("Casualty of War," GQ, May/June 2004) This comment underscores the notion that efforts to strengthen the embargo were not decided based on what would be the most sensible foreign policy. Even U.S. Representative Robert Menendez (D-NJ), a strong supporter of the embargo against Cuba, criticized the timing of the new policy as political and said that the Administration is "playing election year politics with the lives of the Cuban people." ("White House Moves to Tighten Cuba Travel, Money Restrictions," Washington Post, May 7, 2004)

Unfortunately, the measures, though conceived for political reasons, will have real implications for Cuban-Americans here and their families on the island, for all U.S. citizens who wish to travel to Cuba, for already tense U.S.-Cuban relations, and for various sectors of Cuban society, including dissidents, the churches, and others. **The Bush proposals are doing damage to Cuban-Americans, to Cuban families, and to the possibilities for political opening in Cuba, for the sake of short-term domestic political advantage.**

2. The Bush Administration's political calculation may be wrong

Some analysts argue that the Administration has misjudged the Cuban-American community and its voting patterns and say that this political calculation may backfire. "What the President and his Cuba advisers fail to understand is that the Cuban-American community has changed and does not support the hard-line as it used to," said Ricardo Gonzalez, president of the Cuban Committee for Democracy, a Miami-based Cuban-American organization. He added that

"these new measures will fail and come back to haunt the Administration come November." ("CCD critical of Commission's Recommendations," CCD media advisory, May 6, 2004)

A recent poll by Florida International University in partnership with the South Florida Sun Sentinel and NBC 6 found that 68.3% of Cuban-Americans that arrived in the U.S. since 1985 supported unrestricted travel to Cuba. Bush may be assuming that most of this group does not vote, but there are efforts underway to register younger moderate Cuban-Americans in South Florida to vote. ("Concerns voiced over travel restrictions to Cuba," South Florida Sun-Sentinel, May 20, 2004)

Antonio Zamora, a Cuban-American living in Miami who participated in the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba and has since come to oppose the U.S. embargo says that "many conservative, anti-Castro Cubans in Florida . . . no longer support Bush" and he predicts that because of Bush's new policy toward Cuba, "His votes are going to be substantially reduced." ("Cubans in Bay of Pigs Regain Citizenship." Miami Herald, May 22, 2004) Indeed, over 200 Cuban-Americans in Miami gathered for a rally in protest of the new policy on May 20th. One of the attendees, Carlos Chediak, who voted for Bush in 2000 said, "I was a Republican. Today, I am a Democrat. I am 75 years old. To have to wait three years to go to Cuba to see my grandson? [Bush] lost many thousands of votes here." ("Bush Cuba policy stirs backlash in S. Florida," St. Petersburg Times, May 22, 2004) Others at the rally who voted for Bush in 2000 expressed similar sentiments.

3. Who is hurt by the new policy?

The new Bush Cuba policy will have little impact on Fidel Castro or his government, but will have a significant impact on Cuban-Americans, Cuban families and others.

The New Policy Hurts Cuban-Americans

The new policy hurts Cuban-Americans who have family in Cuba in a number of ways. It seriously cuts back on Cuban-Americans' visits to relatives in Cuba. Cuban-Americans will now only be able to visit their families in Cuba once every three years, whereas previously they could go once a year. Cuban-Americans newly arrived to the U.S. will not be able to apply for a license to visit Cuba until they've been in the country for three years. Also, the definition of "family visits" has been restricted-- Cuban-Americans can now only visit immediate family members and the trips are now limited to 14 days at a time. Ironically, this is a reversal of a move by the Administration last year to expand the definition of "close relative, . . . to include all relatives, whether by blood, marriage, or adoption, who are within three degrees of relationship with the traveler- e.g., great-grandparents and second cousins," which expanded the pool of relatives Cuban-Americans could visit. (From OFAC's Federal Register, Volume 68, N0. 56, March 24, 2003)

The per diem amount that Cuban-Americans can spend in Cuba has been reduced from \$164 to \$50 (based on the assumption that all Cuban-American stay in the homes of family members, rather than in hotels). Finally, Cuban-Americans must now apply for a specific travel license for every trip-- there is no longer a general license for Cuban-American trips.

Cuban-Americans in Miami and elsewhere have spoken out against these new

measures, saying the policies hurt them and their families. As Damian Díaz, 58, of Miami explained, because he had just visited his mother in Cuba for her 95th birthday, the new policy "means I won't be able to return to Cuba until my mother's 98th birthday. I'm not sure she's going to make it until then. It's absurd." ("Cuban exiles criticize U.S. policies," The Dallas Morning News, May 21, 2004)

The regulations implementing the Commission recommendations have not yet been written; they might provide some flexibility. But the Commission's recommendations included no mention of a special provision for Cuban-Americans to travel to the island in the case of a family emergency, such as a death in the family or a sick relative. Given the proposed narrowing of the definition of family members that Cuban-Americans will be allowed to visit, one wonders whether relatives who are not immediate family members will be counted when considering visits for family emergencies.

Many Cuban-Americans criticized the newly limited definition of family, and the impact that limitation will have on Cuban-Americans. Silvia Wilhem, the executive director of Puentes Cubanos, an organization that promotes cultural exchanges and engagement with Cuba, visits and sends regular much-needed remittances to her second cousins in Cuba. She noted, "The quality of life for these people in Cuba is very linked to me visiting them and me sending them remittances. By this new decree they're not even family members of mine that I can visit." ("Bush's new measures on Cuba bring mixed reactions," South Florida Sun-Sentinel, May 06, 2004)

As a group of six prominent Cuban-Americans from Florida and other parts of the

country said in an ad titled an “Open letter to the Cuban-American community” printed May 20th in El Nuevo Herald, the Spanish-language edition of The Miami Herald, the new policy measures “can only be described as egregious penalties on the Cuban family that will cause tremendous suffering and criminalize Cuban-Americans rightfully and justly determined to help their families back home.” Also on May 20th, a day that President Bush annually speaks out about U.S. policy toward Cuba, over 200 Cuban-Americans gathered in Miami to protest the new restrictions. Reportedly, a State Department official responsible for Cuba policy received so many emails opposing the measures that his computer froze. (“Rejection of Bush Sanctions on Cuba Overwhelm State Department Computer,” Prensa Latina, May 23, 2004)

The New Policy Hurts Families in Cuba

The new policy limits the amount of humanitarian assistance that Cuban-Americans can give to their families in the form of remittances, gift parcels sent to Cuba, and gifts brought on family visits. Remittances can only be sent to immediate family members under the new policy, and cannot be sent to any government official or Communist Party member. Gift parcels are now limited to \$200 in value and to one per month per household, rather than one per individual. They can now only contain “medicines, medical supplies, receive-only radios, batteries and food.” (Fortunately, there is no value limit on the food). Most travelers, including Cuban-Americans on family visits, now cannot take more than 44 pounds of luggage per person, limiting the amount of assistance they can bring to relatives on family visits.

According to the Commission report, these new policies regarding family visits “preserv[e] efforts to promote legitimate

family ties and humanitarian relief for the Cuban people.” It is preposterous to say that seeing only immediate relatives once every three years preserves or promotes family ties. It is inhumane to limit how often or for how long U.S. citizens can visit their relatives, how much assistance or charity they can give relatives, and to what family members. It is ridiculous to assume that all people visiting family members can stay with relatives and may not need to stay in hotels. According to Ricardo Gonzalez, president of the Cuban Committee for Democracy, an organization based in Miami, “To say that one visit every three years constitutes ‘promotion of family ties and humanitarian relief for the Cuban people’ indicates how little this Commission understands the importance of family in the Cuban culture.” He added, “The Commission’s recommendations add up to a fanciful dream of a post-Castro Cuba which carries a heavy price to be paid by Cuban families.” (“CCD critical of Commission’s Recommendations,” CCD media advisory, May 6, 2004)

The New Cuba Policy Hurts U.S Students and Academic Institutions

In May 2003, the U.S. government ended “people-to-people” travel to Cuba, a broad category of educational travel under which thousands of Americans traveled to the island each year. The only educational travel allowed since then has been students enrolled in a degree-granting academic institution in the U.S. that would give them credit at the home institution for their program in Cuba. This drastically reduced non-Cuban-American travel to Cuba from the United States.

Now, the Administration has further limited educational travel “to only undergraduate or graduate degree granting institutions and only for full-semester study programs, or for shorter duration only when

the program directly supports U.S. policy goals.” Travelers must be full-time students at an institution licensed to take Cuba educational trips; students can no longer go on academic trips with other universities or institutions. Additionally, educational institutional licenses will only be granted on an annual basis, eliminating the more common bi-annual license. Such restrictions on educational travel end the opportunity for thousands of students to travel to Cuba, learn, teach and exchange ideas. They also hurt academic institutions that have developed short-term exchange programs with Cuba as part of their educational program. Cutting short such opportunities is shortsighted and counter-productive. Making exceptions to those restrictions for students in programs that support U.S. policy is biased and unfair.

The New Policy Unduly Politicizes Contact between Sectors in Cuba and the U.S.

In the current fiscal year, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has a \$7 million program that channels money to U.S. NGOs and individuals to increase “the flow of accurate information to, from, and within Cuba.” By the end of fiscal year 2004, USAID will have committed more than \$33 million to this program since it began in 1996. This program provides funds to a small number of organizations that provide materials, training and humanitarian assistance to dissidents, independent journalists, and others in Cuba. It also supports organizations that disseminate information about Cuba abroad, provides some training to “future leaders of Cuba” in the United States, and supports studies to plan for Cuba’s future.

The new policy greatly increases the amount of assistance to dissidents and civil society groups in Cuba, adding \$29 million to the current \$7 million. This money will go for additional grants to NGOs to support

“democratic and human rights groups” in Cuba, scholarships for family members of political opponents, and to fund programs targeted at women, Afro-Cubans, religious groups and youth to develop or support “democracy-building efforts” and “civil society groups” in Cuba.

USAID’s program to support Cuban civil society has been heavily criticized. WOLA and others have argued that, given the stated U.S. goal of support for a “transition” in Cuba, programs funded by USAID will inevitably be seen by Cuban officials as part of an effort to undermine the Cuban government. This will taint the U.S. non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that accept these funds, and – far more seriously – taint the Cubans with whom U.S. government funded NGOs work. Indeed, last spring, the Cuban government arrested 75 Cuban dissidents, and among other factors, Cuban authorities pointed to the fact that most of those detained had received material assistance from USAID-funded NGOs or directly from the U.S. Interest Section. While WOLA condemns these arrests, the fact that the Cuban government used the arrestees’ acceptance of U.S. government assistance as proof of their guilt underscores the notion that direct U.S. aid to Cuban dissidents and civil society groups is counter-productive.

In addition, critics have argued that the program focuses far too narrowly on the most hard-line opponents of the regime in Cuba, and does too little to reach out to more diverse sectors in the country. They have questioned how much of the program’s activities have actually focused on support and training for dissidents and others inside Cuba, versus how much goes to support hard-line and exile organizations abroad that “disseminate information about Cuba.” And they have raised questions about the transparency of the program, including questions about what

groups are funded, what activities are carried out by those groups, how they are evaluated, etc.

This new assistance, especially in the context of the Commission's report, whose stated goal is to "hasten a transition" in government in Cuba, is highly politicized and could put the recipients at risk, tainting them as working with the U.S. government in its efforts to bring about a swift end to the Cuban regime. Specifically targeting certain groups, such as religious groups or women's groups, could also make the motives behind outreach efforts to these sectors by any U.S. organizations suspect in the eyes of the Cuban government, which could have a devastating impact on current programs that do good work without putting Cuban counterparts at risk.

For example, the Commission describes religious organizations in Cuba as the "fastest growing and potentially strongest alternatives to the Cuban state in providing basic services and information to the Cuban people." Specifically, it lauds the Catholic Church as genuinely independent, as are "certain authentically independent Protestant denominations." The report criticizes the Cuban Council of Churches, the main Protestant church consortium, as "a body tightly controlled by government authorities." The Commission urges the United States to "encourage a wider array of religious organizations" to work with counterparts in Cuba.

In the past, the Cuban Catholic Church has rejected what it has seen as attempts by U.S. officials to politicize the work of the Church and to counterpose that work to the Cuban government. The Commission appears to be doing this once again. In addition, the Commission's emphasis on working with U.S. religious organizations and NGOs that do not work with members of the Cuban

Council of Churches appears to politicize the work of the churches in Cuba, and to criticize and disparage the work of the mainstream Protestant churches in Cuba, and that of the many churches and humanitarian organizations in the United States that support them.

The New Cuba Policy Hurts Cuban Dissidents

Many prominent dissidents in Cuba have criticized the new policy, saying it actually puts dissidents at risk. Miriam Leiva, vice president of an independent journalists' society in Cuba, and wife of prominent jailed dissident Oscar Espinosa Chepe expressed her wholehearted opposition to the new policy in an article published by Salon.com. Commenting on the increased assistance the U.S. plans to direct toward dissidents, she wrote, "Did the Bush administration ask for the opinion of internal dissidents when the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba crafted its report? No. Will the measures hurt the Castro regime? No. Instead, the Cuban people will suffer from the effects of the measures and more political dissidents could be sent to prison." She also criticized the new travel restrictions on Cuban-Americans, saying it will "hurt the Cuban people more than it will hurt Castro." ("Whose country is it, anyway?" Salon.com, May 24, 2004)

Other dissidents have condemned the new policy saying it will be ineffective in bringing change to Cuba. Former political prisoner Vladimiro Roca commented, "I am a practical person, if in more than 40 years (the embargo) hasn't brought results, it won't bring them now." ("Bush's New Measures on Cuba Bring Mixed Reactions," South Florida Sun Sentinel, May 6, 2004) Still others say that the policy constitutes interference in Cuba's internal affairs. Oswaldo Payá, founder of the Varela Project, a petition drive calling for

greater political and economic freedoms in Cuba said, "It is not right, nor do we accept, any external element, whether from the United States of America, Europe or anywhere else, trying to design the Cuban transition process or supposedly becoming an actor in that process." (InterPress Service, May 11, 2004)

The new measures are not likely to significantly strengthen either the dissident movement or civil society more broadly in Cuba, and they are likely to generate a backlash from the Cuban government that will close rather than open political space on the island.

4. The policy is provocative and wasteful

Radio and TV Martí are anti-Castro U.S. broadcasts to the island that the Cuban government has blocked for years. One recommendation of the Commission is that the U.S. fly a military plane just outside Cuban airspace in order to stop the Cuban government from blocking these transmissions. In the short term, the government would immediately deploy a C-130 Commando Solo plane to do weekly radio and TV broadcasts to Cuba. In the longer term, it would acquire and refit a plane to do these transmissions full-time. The Commission recommends \$18 million for this purpose.

Radio Martí has been repeatedly criticized for the politicization of its programming, a politicization that has led to continuing drops in listenership in Cuba. It would seem more sensible to provide more balanced programming to increase the audience, rather than to put money into a military plane to do the broadcasting. TV Martí has been even more strongly criticized.

TV Martí has been an expensive boondoggle since its inception. In order to

comply with international telecommunications agreements that prohibit interference with domestic broadcast signals, TV Martí broadcasts only when Cuban television stations are off the air, usually between two and five in the morning. Cuba effectively jams its signal, so almost no one in Cuba sees the programming. Because the Administration remains committed to respecting international telecommunications agreements, efforts to overcome Cuban jamming, even if successful, are unlikely to significantly increase viewership.

Overcoming Cuban jamming by deploying an expensive and high-tech military aircraft off the Cuban coast is a provocative measure. The "Commando Solo" C-130 aircraft that the Administration proposes to deploy is a military plane that was used for psychological operations and broadcasting in the Balkans and other war zones. Flying it, even in international waters, off the Cuban coast seems a dangerously provocative step. Given the high levels of tension between the two governments and the stated intentions of the Bush Administration to promote regime change in Cuba, flying a military aircraft so close to Cuba would further raise tensions between the two governments, which could lead to confrontation. It is difficult to imagine that the goal of broadcasting to Cuba without interference justifies this sort of military provocation. This recommendation is very costly and could be a dangerous proposition.

5. The policy will be costly and take resources from important programs

Current Resource Allocation Priorities are Out of Whack

The amount of time and resources currently being spent to enforce the U.S. embargo on Cuba is absurd. With President Bush's new Cuba policy tightening the

embargo further, spending will have to be greatly increased to implement the new policies. In addition, U.S. government agencies, especially the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), are being saddled with heavy Cuba embargo enforcement duties at the expense of more pressing matters that affect our national security. In a recent letter to Members of Congress, OFAC reported that the Treasury Department currently spends much more of its staff resources and investigative powers going after violators of the U.S. embargo against Cuba than it spends tracking terrorist financing. It noted:

- OFAC has only four full-time employees investigating the financing behind Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Meanwhile, there are close to two-dozen full time employees tracking Cuba embargo violators.
- OFAC opened only 93 enforcement investigations related to terrorism between 1990 and 2003, while it opened 10,683 enforcement investigations for possible Cuba embargo violations.
- OFAC has collected over \$8 million in fines for embargo violations since 1994, "mostly from people who sent money to, did business with, or traveled to Cuba without permission," but has only collected \$9,425 in fines for terrorism financing violations in the same period.

The numbers are shocking and they point to greatly skewed priorities in the allocation of resources-- of time, money and personnel. The Administration should concentrate its resources on real terrorist threats like Osama Bin Laden, rather than on U.S. citizens who travel to Cuba.

The New Policy will be Very Expensive

The new policy would put **\$36 million** (\$7 million in current funds and \$29 million in new funds) into "Building Democracy by Empowering Civil Society" (including funding NGOs that support groups in Cuba; programs to support women, Afro-Cubans, youth, independent libraries, independent labor; civil society development; and material assistance.) An additional **\$5 million** will go towards public diplomacy efforts aimed at "Illuminating the Reality of Castro's Cuba" (including money to U.S. embassies to disseminate information abroad about U.S. policy to Cuba and funds for international or third-country conferences about U.S. policy to Cuba and "transition planning efforts"). In addition, the policy will commit **\$18 million** for the Office of Cuban Broadcasting to acquire a specially equipped aircraft to broadcast to Cuba, and for other media efforts, for a total of **\$59 million**.

This new \$59 million is the total amount of funds the Commission recommended in their report to carry out the new policy. There are numerous other recommendations in the report that will require increased funds to implement and all of the new restrictions will require more funding if they are to be enforced. The money necessary to implement and enforce these policies is not enumerated. Examples of activities that will require funding are:

- Increased "inspections of travelers and shipments to and from Cuba and continuing training of inspectors at all points of entry . . . on the identification of unlicensed travelers."
- Training for law enforcement officials at U.S. ports "to identify and fine violators of the import ban" to enforce the new policy that eliminates the previously

allowed import of \$100 worth of Cuban goods produced by state entities, such as rum and cigars.

- Increased maritime and air patrols in the region by law enforcement agencies.
- Enforcement of all the new restrictions on Cuban-American travel, remittances, and gift parcels.
- Review and granting or denial of all the Cuban-American family visit travel license applications. It is estimated that Cuban-Americans make 120,000 visits to Cuba each year (“Ignored Majority, The Moderate Cuban-American Community,” Latin America Working Group Education Fund, 2004)
- Licensing of remittance-forwarding service providers (previously companies were not required to be specifically licensed to send remittances to Cuba).
- “Rewards to those who report on illegal remittances that lead to enforcement actions.”
- “Sting” operations against “mule” networks transporting illegal remittances.
- “Action to “[a]ggressively pursue Title IV visa sanctions against those foreign nationals trafficking” in properties nationalized by the Cuban government to which U.S. nationals claim ownership.
- Establishment of a Cuban Asset Targeting Group of law enforcement officials “to investigate and identify new ways in which hard currency is moved in and out of Cuba.”

OFAC, the Treasury Department agency tasked with enforcing the embargo and

punishing violators, is also tasked with tracking the finances of terrorist organizations and individuals. So, the burden of increased enforcement will divert even more resources-- both financial and human-- from the war on terror for the Administration’s goal of regime change in another country. Administration officials have said that new funds will not be appropriated to implement this policy, but rather, funds already appropriated to other programs will be used for this purpose. This begs the question, from what other programs will money and human resources be pulled to implement this restriction-laden Cuba policy? And will the other duties of Homeland Security officials, airport and port inspectors, and law enforcement officials and the Coast Guard suffer as they shift to focus so heavily on Cuba embargo enforcement?

The Administration’s new policy, which tightens the embargo, requires that more U.S. taxpayer money be poured into enforcing a policy that has been ineffective, hurtful to the Cuban people, and restrictive of the rights of Americans, including Cuban-Americans, and whose enforcement diverts us from pursuing our real enemies.

6. The policy will fail

Besides being politically motivated, expensive and hurtful to Cuban-Americans, Cuban families, U.S. students and others, and posing possible risks for Cuban dissidents, the new Bush Cuba policy is likely to fail at its own stated goal of hastening the end of the Castro government and a transition to democracy in Cuba. A basic premise behind the Commission’s recommendations is that cutting off the flow of hard currency to Cuba will speed a transition in government there. This premise is simply wrong.

First, the economic impact of these measures may be limited. They do not cut off

remittances, which are important to Cuba's economy. Also, the Cuban government has economic relations with most other countries of the world and 90% of foreign visitors to Cuba do not come from the United States, so further restricting U.S. economic relations with Cuba is unlikely to severely damage the Cuban economy. Probably in recognition of this, the Commission recommends efforts to multilateralize the policy with diplomatic efforts to convince other governments to lessen their relations with Cuba and public relations efforts to convince people of other countries why they should not travel to Cuba.

These efforts are doomed to fail as well. While many governments have been more openly critical of Cuba for its human rights situation, and the EU has lessened diplomatic ties with the Cuban government somewhat, it is unlikely that any other country would stop its citizens from traveling freely to Cuba or force companies within its borders to stop doing business with Cuba. 179 countries

voted to condemn the U.S. embargo against Cuba at the UN General Assembly in 2003 (with only three countries voting not to condemn it), making it the twelfth consecutive year that the member countries have voted to express their opposition to the U.S. policy. Economic strangulation of the Cuban government will not bring about its demise.

In addition, the Castro regime has survived extreme economic times, particularly during the decade of the '90s, dubbed the "special period," after the fall of the Soviet Union. Experience demonstrates that the Cuban government is able to withstand difficult economic times. In fact, the embargo has not weakened the Castro government, although it has had an extremely negative impact on the Cuban people, especially in terms of their health and nutrition. Tightening the embargo further will once again impact the people while having little impact on Castro himself.

