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As combating international terrorism moves to the forefront of the U.S. foreign policy agenda, it becomes critical that the U.S. be able to deal with it effectively; to have clear and objective criteria for designating countries as terrorist states and to impose the sanctions (never unilateral though) that go with that designation. While the U.S government moves to develop such criteria, it is time to raise the question of whether Cuba belongs on the list at all. The U.S. agenda regarding Cuba needs, now more than ever, to be constructive and to serve the interests of the Cuban as well as the American people.

The Cuban government is cooperating in drug interdiction and immigration issues and has offered to cooperate in the international and bilateral effort to eradicate terrorism. Trying to link the Cuban government to international terrorist activities without hard evidence merely detracts from the effort to tackle the real threats. While there are some legitimate issues that need to be taken up between Cuba and the United States on the question of terrorism, putting Cuba on the list of terrorist states simply trivializes the credibility of the U.S. war against terrorism.

For forty-three years, U.S. policy towards Cuba has relied heavily on unilateral sanctions -- and has been a dramatic example of the failure of such sanctions to achieve their goals. Some of the sanctions, such as restrictions on the sale of food and medicine to the island, derive from Cuba being listed as a terrorist
The events of September 11 have rearranged diplomatic alliances around the World, but the relationship between Washington and Havana, tumultuous for over four decades, remains at best stubbornly unchanged.

Bush administration officials are pointing to Cuba as one of the few nations in the world that “missed the opportunity to join the international coalition against terrorism--a decision,” they say, that “will further isolate Cuba and solidify its status as a rogue state.” (Cason, 2001) The validity of this charge needs to be examined.

The Cuban Government’s Response

On the afternoon of September 11, the Cuban government pointedly condemned the terrorist attacks and issued this official declaration:

“... Due to historical reasons, as well as for ethical principles, our government strongly rejects and condemns the attacks made on the aforementioned facilities and gives its most sincere sympathies to the American people because of the painful and unjustifiable human losses that such attacks have caused. In this painful moment, our people join in solidarity with the American people and express their total willingness for cooperation,...” (Statement by the Government of the Republic of Cuba, 2001)

In addition to offering all medical or humanitarian assistance within its means, the Cuban government also immediately offered its airspace to U.S. aircraft that were still en route to the United States when the FAA closed American airspace. (Cawthorne, 2001) On September 15, the Cuban government led a rally of thousands to condemn the attacks and show solidarity with the American people. (Bauza, 2001)

On October 26, 2002 the Cuban government offered 100 million tablets of
Cipro, an antibiotic that protects against anthrax. On November 12, low-cost equipment developed in Cuba was offered to the United States to screen germs and break up anthrax strains. These gestures of solidarity received little or no press. In fact, some newspapers and news programs even omitted Cuba from the lists of nations that had offered condolences to the United States.

In a September 22, 2001 speech commenting on the U.S. Presidential address before the U.S. Congress, Fidel Castro expressed alarm at the prospect of an open-ended war that he feared would entail, as President Bush had said, “every necessary weapon of war,” and that would take the lives of yet more innocent people. The Cuban government is very critical of the U.S. war in Afghanistan and in Iraq but has also taken pains to take a clear stand against terrorism. (Castro Ruz, 2001)

In his September 22nd speech, Fidel Castro went on to categorically condemn terrorism as an “ethically indefensible phenomenon which must be eradicated.” Cuba, he added, is “opposed to terrorism but also opposed to war.” He also pledged that, “Cuba will never declare itself the enemy of the American people.” (Castro Ruz, 2001)

Interestingly, very little attention has been given to such comments by President Fidel Castro such as, “the territory of Cuba will never be used for terrorist actions against the American people and we will do everything within our power to prevent such actions against that people.” (Castro Ruz, 2001) Most significantly, Fidel Castro has reiterated Cuba’s “willingness to cooperate with every country in
the total eradication of terrorism.” (Castro Ruz, 2001)

While the US called for the formation of an international coalition to fight terrorism, Cuba made a point to engage directly with the United Nations. In a letter to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, Cuba pledged full cooperation with UN initiatives to eradicate terrorism. Cuba has since ratified all of the twelve United Nations resolutions against terrorism which resulted from the September 11th attacks. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 2001; Snow, 2001)

In addition, on March 17, 2002, the Cuban government issued a public statement where it confirmed that Cuba on November 29, 2001 had presented in Havana to the head of the Cuba Bureau in the US State Department an Aide Memoire containing several proposals made by the Cuban government to the government of the United States aimed at reaching bilateral agreements on migratory issues. They included the proposals to fight illegal migration and the traffic of people, to cooperate in the fight against illegal drug trafficking, and to develop a program of bilateral cooperation to fight terrorism.

At the round of talks on migratory issues between Cuba and the United States held in Havana on December 3, 2001, Ricardo Alarcón, Head of the National Assembly of People’s Power and leader of the Cuban delegation to the talks, again submitted to the American delegation these three proposals for bilateral agreements on migratory issues, on drug interdiction and on fighting terrorism. On that occasion, however, the American delegation claimed that the proposed agreements were beyond the framework of the migratory talks and suggested that they be presented
through existing diplomatic channels.

Taking into account that suggestion, on March 12, 2002, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Cuban Interests Section in Washington officially delivered three diplomatic notes to the U.S. Interests Section in Havana and the State Department in Washington, respectively, to which the texts of the agreements on migratory issues, drug-interdiction and the struggle against terrorism were appended.

After a visit to Cuba in January, 2002 Senator Arlen Specter\(^2\) (R-Pa) also advocated for U.S.-Cuba cooperation for drug interdiction and the fight against terrorism. (Gedda, 2002) He introduced an amendment in the Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2003 (S.2779) that failed to reach the Senate floor before recess due to the stalled appropriations process in 2002. This amendment would have established cooperation with appropriate agencies of the government of Cuba on counter-narcotics matters, including matters relating to cooperation, coordination, and mutual assistance in the interdiction of illicit drugs being transported through Cuban airspace or over Cuban waters.\(^3\)

So far, the American government has expressed no interest in such an agreement. On March 19, 2002 the top former U.S. drug enforcer Asa Hutchinson\(^4\), head of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), thanked Cuba but said Washington will continue anti-drug cooperation with Cuba only on a case-by-case basis.\(^5\) (Slevin, 2002) He said the Bush administration had decided that future
cooperation, arranged through telephone calls and other channels, would continue on an informal basis.

It was declared that “the deep divide in U.S.-Cuban relations will preclude any broad agreement until the government headed by Fidel Castro improves its record on such issues as democracy and human rights.” (Slevin, 2002) State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said the Cuban government had not cooperated on a range of other law enforcement cases and declared: "If the regime were to demonstrate a willingness to work across the board with us on law enforcement issues, then we might consider some more formal structure." "But that kind of global commitment from Cuba is completely absent," he added. (Boadle, 2002)

Contrary to Boucher, Hutchinson, former head of the DEA, said there have been several recent cases of Cuba deporting fugitives wanted by the United States. (Boadle, 2002; Snow, 2002a). The most recent were Rafael Miguel Bustamante Bolaños, who escaped from Taladega prison, Louisiana in October 1992, where he was serving time for money laundering and cocaine trafficking, Washington drug defendant Jesse James Bell and alleged Georgia child molester William Joseph Harris. Bell and Harris were extradited to the United States. Bustamante Bolaños was sentenced by the People’s Provincial Court in the City of Havana to life imprisonment on January 13, 2003. Later, in April 2002, Hutchinson, speaking to the Heritage Foundation, declared that the limited cooperation in maritime drug interdiction with Cuba was good. (Notimex, 2002)
The shipping of captured al Qaeda and Taliban fighters to the disputed U.S. Navy base at Guantánamo Bay in southeastern Cuba, and the cooperation by the Cuban government that followed, could have added an unforeseen dynamic of coexistence into U.S.-Cuba relations. Although the base, under U.S. jurisdiction since the Spanish-Cuban-American War in 1898, and an isolated Cold War outpost since Cuba’s 1959 revolution, has long been a bone of contention, Cuba has chosen to avoid confrontation over its use as a prison camp. The Guantánamo issue might have been considered the best example of what could have seemed to be an unusual trend of quiet cooperation and positive diplomacy between the two nations.

Cuba’s Defense Minister, General Raúl Castro Ruz, said on January 19, 2002 that a climate of mutual respect and cooperation could be observed in interactions between the two countries, although he admitted that U.S.-Cuban relations were "unpredictable." (Castro Ruz, 2002) According to Raúl Castro, Cuba is not only unopposed to the transfer of prisoners to Guantánamo, but is also willing to provide medical assistance if necessary. Raúl Castro added that after several decades marked by tension along the perimeter of the U.S. military base, the 1990s saw a warming of relations in the zone, including regular communications between U.S. and Cuban officials. (Castro Ruz, 2002) Raúl Castro said, “This minimal cooperation shows what might be in many other areas,” commenting that this new climate of cooperation could extend to the fight against drugs and terrorism, in which Cuba only disagrees with the United States regarding methods. "We are prepared to cooperate as far as possible," he added. (Castro Ruz, 2002)
The Cuban government is familiar with the subtleties of current U.S. and International laws and understands that no other place in the world gives the U.S. authority over prisoners while the U.S. prevents detainees from accessing legal rights usually accessible to prisoners on U.S. territory.

It is ironic that the U.S. government, by unilateral decision, sent prisoners accused of terrorism to Guantánamo, disputed territory of the Republic of Cuba, a state considered by the State Department to be a sponsor of international terrorism. According to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's pronouncement, the U.S. Guantánamo Naval Base in Cuba was "the least worst place" to hold prisoners from the Afghanistan war. (Seelye, 2002)

**The Bush Administration’s Reaction**

On January 28, 2002, the U.S. government dismissed speculation of improved relations.  
U.S. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said "Cuba has not taken any of the steps necessary to make improvement of relations possible." (Gedda, 2002) Later, in February, Vicki Huddleston, Former Chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba said Washington appreciated Havana’s stance on Guantánamo but "the problem for us is that nothing has fundamentally changed in Cuba." (Snow, 2002b) On February 6th, U.S. Secretary of State, Colin L. Powell declared in Congress that the relationship was not improving. (EFE, 2002b).

Cuba’s acceptance of the U.S. military’s holding of “war prisoners” (Combat enemies) from Afghanistan at the disputed U.S. Naval Base at Guantánamo Bay was characterized by James Carragher, former coordinator for Cuban affairs at the
State Department as a “charm offensive by Fidel Castro...” and Adolfo Franco, a Cuban American who used to work for Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), and who was appointed as head of the U.S. Agency for International Aid (AID) for Latin America and the Caribbean, called Havana's moves a "cosmetic overture." (MacSwan, 2002)

The officials were speaking in South Florida at a ceremony at which Franco handed over an AID check for $1,045,000 to the University of Miami to fund a project for the so-called “Cuba Transition Project”, which was denounced by the Cuban government as subversive and a way of earning easy money for some Cuban-Americans in that region of the USA. (U.S. Agency For International Development, 2002)

At the same time, the mere fact that those remarks were issued in that location, in a year when Jeb Bush was to be reelected as Governor of Florida, support the hypothesis that domestic politics, in fact, have been the driving force in U.S. policy towards Cuba.

The link between the Cuban issue and the U.S. electoral process, explained by the impact of the Cuban vote in Florida and New Jersey and the influence of the Cuban far-right lobby, has induced a relative disconnection of the Cuban case from general U.S. foreign policy objectives; namely the war against terrorism.

Furthermore, the Bush Administration escalated its rhetoric with an accusatory speech on May 6, the eve of former President Jimmy Carter’s visit to Cuba. Speaking to the Heritage Foundation, John R. Bolton, Undersecretary of
State for Arms Control and International Security, said the United States believes "Cuba has at least a limited offensive biological warfare research and development effort." (Bolton, 2002)

Washington’s inclusion of Cuba on the list of suspected promulgators of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) was probably an attempt to shore up domestic support for the anti-terrorism war by bringing the threat closer to home -- putting it in familiar territory, with a familiar enemy. (Bolton, 2002)

In a speech titled "Beyond the Axis of Evil," John R. Bolton declared:

“Cuba has provided dual-use biotechnology to other rogue states. We are concerned that such technology could support [bioweapons] programs in those states.” (Bolton, 2002)

It was very convenient for the Bush administration to sound the terrorism alarm the week before former President Jimmy Carter traveled to Havana on a humanitarian mission, but his officials were caught in a debate over public allegations that Cuba’s government is developing biological weapons. Did President Carter’s impending visit to Cuba have anything to do with the timing of the Bolton’s speech?

In Havana, on May 13, 2002 Former President Jimmy Carter said that Bush administration officials repeatedly assured him before his trip to Cuba that they had no evidence that Cuba had provided other nations with technology suitable for developing weapons of mass destruction. Carter said:

“With some degree of reluctant I would also like to comment on the allegation of bioterrorism. I do this because these allegations were made, maybe not coincidentally, just before our visit to Cuba." (Sullivan, 2002)
Carter declared he had asked for and received intense briefings from the State Department, the intelligence agencies of his country and high officials in the White House before his five-day visit to Cuba, which began on May 12.

"One purpose of this briefing was for them to share with us any concerns that my government had about possible terrorist activities that were supported by Cuba,” ..."There were absolutely no such allegations made or questions raised.” (Sullivan, 2002)

After John R. Bolton made the assertion, Secretary of State Colin L. Powell sought to clarify Bolton's comments, saying Cuba "has the capacity and capability to conduct such research," rather than actually possessing offensive bioterror weapons. (Rosenberg, 2002)

The whole situation was strange yet grave enough, since biological weapons are a serious matter, that Undersecretary of State Bolton was invited to explain his comments before the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Latin America on June 5, 2002. However, Secretary of State Powell sent another official, Assistant Secretary of State Carl Ford. Powell believed that Ford was an appropriate witness because, in his role as head of the State Department Intelligence and Research Bureau, he was able to discuss the administration’s evidence concerning Cuban activities.

Assistant Secretary of State Ford explained to U.S. Senators that Cuba’s biological weapons research is an “effort” and not a full-fledged weapons “program”... and that Cuba was far from the No. 1 concern of U.S. policymakers keeping tabs on hostile biological weapons programs around the globe.

Ford argued that the U.S. government has never suggested it had “proof
positive” the Cubans had a “program,” and that it feels very confident saying the Cubans “are working on an effort that would give them limited capability.” (Hearing of the Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, And Narcotics Affairs Subcommittee Of The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 2002)

As an editorial written in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution states:

“...Bolton tried to undercut Carter’s visit by charging that Cuba had developed the capacity to build biological weapons...It turned out to be true. Cuba does have pharmaceutical plants, much like pharmaceutical plants here in the United States, Europe, Asia and a lot of other places on the planet. And yes, those plants could potentially be converted to produce biological weapons, although there wasn't the slightest bit of evidence that Cuba had done so.”

It seems it has become customary for the Bush administration to play politics. In September 2002, a week before the U.S. Food & Agribusiness Exhibition in Havana opened, and when across the United States, politicians, port directors, executives and representatives of hundreds of business interests were preparing to converge September 26 in the capital of Cuba for a major exhibition of their goods for the first time in almost 43 years, Daniel Fisk, deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, asserted that starting September 11, 2001 Cuban agents systematically approached officials at U.S. embassies with false warnings of “pending attacks on U.S. and other Western interests.” (Fisk, 2002)

An issue as serious and essential to all as international cooperation in the fight against terrorism was thus manipulated for political purposes. Fisk, who previously worked to strengthen the embargo against Cuba as a staff member of the Foreign Relations Committee under Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC), accused Cuba of sending American law enforcement agents on “wild goose chases” by providing
erroneous tips about terrorist threats. “This is obstructionism,” Mr. Fisk said, “and I am concerned that it could one day cost innocent people their lives.” (Fisk, 2002)

The accusation, which Mr. Fisk aired at the “National Summit on Cuba,” where there were myriad discussions about the need for change in U.S. policy towards Cuba, marks the second time in 2002 that a State Department official has portrayed Cuba as a national security threat to the United States without releasing any evidence, and even though in 1998 the Defense Department announced its conclusion that Cuba constituted no threat to U.S. national security. (U.S. Defense Department, 1998). In fact, the Bush Administration omitted Cuba from a list of potential biological weapons producers in November 2001.

Even, when on May 21, 2002 the U.S. State Department's annual report on terrorism called Patterns of Global Terrorism was issued and Cuba remained on the state-sponsored terrorism list neither of the two aforementioned allegations were mentioned. (U.S. State Department, 2002)

According to the State Department, Cuba is on the list because:

- **It allows at least 20 Basque ETA members to reside in Cuba.** There are Basque separatists living in Cuba as the result of a 1984 agreement between the Felipe Gonzales government in Spain and Havana. For its part, the present Spanish government has made no effort to extradite any of the Basques living in Cuba today.
- **There are a number of fugitives from U.S. justice living in Cuba,** the majority of them linked with the Black Panther movement, who have been living in Cuba since the late-60’s and early-70’s. There is no existing extradition treaty between Cuba and the U.S. The creation of a reciprocal extradition treaty would allow for the extradition of these “fugitives”, as well as the return of certain Cuban fugitives living in the United States.
- **It provides some degree of safe haven and support to members of the Colombian FARC and ELN groups.** Cuba has contacts with the Colombian guerrillas and has facilitated meetings between them and the Colombian government. The Cuban government, at the behest of Colombian Former
President Andrés Pastrana and of the newly elected President Álvaro Uribe, has served in the role of “facilitator” in the difficult peace process in Colombia. Cuba, along with Spain, France, Norway and Switzerland, has been one of the five “friendly countries” assisting National Liberation Army (ELN) peace talks. Cuba is also among the 10 nations involved in the stalled negotiations with Colombia’s largest rebel group, the FARC, or Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. (Acosta, 1999; Toro, 2001; EFE, 2002a; Bauza, 2002) In September 2002, it was reported that the Uribe’s month-old government had been holding preliminary meetings in Cuba with the ELN to explore the possibility of peace talks, according to Luis Carlos Restrepo, the government’s chief peace negotiator. Cuba also facilitated meetings between the ELN and the Colombian government during 2001, in an attempt to broker peace in a country ravaged by a thirty-eight year civil war. (CNN, 2002)

- These three topics were almost identical to the 2001’s Patterns of Global Terrorism report, however, in the 2002 release it suggests that “Cuba may have harbored in the mid-1990s, members of a Chilean group, the Frente Patriótico Manuel Rodríguez”, wanted for murder in Chile. (U.S. State Department, 2002) In that report, there is not a word about the fact that in February 2002, the Chilean government sent a group of senators to Cuba to investigate if the wanted persons were on the Island. They came back absolutely pleased with Cuban clarification and convinced that Cuba was not harboring any Chilean terrorists.

- The other new argument has been done in a very imprecise way as if just to raise a doubt, not a fact, is “a Cuban spokesman revealed that Sinn Fein’s official representative for Cuba and Latin America, Niall Connolly, who was one of three Irish Republican Army members arrested in Colombia on suspicion of providing explosives training to the FARC, had been based in Cuba for five years.” (U.S. State Department, 2002) In August 2001 the Cuban government made an official statement which says that Niall Connolly had left Cuba and returned to Ireland. So what is the evidence or how do you connect Connolly’s activities in Colombia, whatever those were, with the Cuban government?

On May 20, 2002, the 100th anniversary of the Island’s formal independence from Spain, President George W. Bush missed an opportunity to make foreign policy history. It would have taken courage, as all foreign policy breakthroughs do, but he could have put U.S. relations with Cuba on a new footing. Instead of exercising foreign policy leadership, the president opted to play domestic politics.

Bush unveiled his "Initiative for a New Cuba", which was not and is not about
foreign policy. It was about shoring up support for the president and his brother, Governor Jeb Bush, in South Florida’s small but outspoken sector of the Cuban-American community, which greeted the president warmly on his arrival in Miami and hosted a $25,000-a-plate fund-raiser believed to have brought in $2 million for the Republican Party.

President Bush stated he would work to reinstate direct mail service, canceled by the United States in 1962. Mail reinstatement was ordered by Congress in 1992 but there have not been any negotiations on that issue between the Cuban and the U.S. governments. Bush also said he wanted to establish “university scholarships for Cuban students and the children of ‘political prisoners,’” and that he wanted to expand a program, first authorized by Congress in 1996, “to provide assistance to internal Cuban dissidents, through American religious and nongovernmental organizations.”¹¹ (DeYoung, 2002)

Under the Bush plan, “Cuba must hold free elections, allow political parties to organize and campaign, release all political prisoners and open the economy to capitalism”. (DeYoung, 2002) The "Initiative for a New Cuba" stemmed from a so-called review that began in January 2002 under the supervision of Emilio González, a Cuban-American, and deputy of the National Security Council to handle Caribbean affairs, including Cuba.

But the President essentially restated policies that have long been presidential policy or the U.S. law of the land. Bush also said he would veto further measures on trade or on lifting the ban that empowers the Treasury Department to
fine U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba.

Bush’s stance seemed aimed purely at a sector of Cuban-American voters in Florida who were vital to his brother’s success in November’s gubernatorial elections and, to the president himself when he seeks re-election in 2004.

Since 1996, with the approval of the Helms-Burton Act, the U.S. embargo of Cuba was codified, and only Congress can significantly change it. Bipartisan majorities in both houses have voted several times in recent years to end the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba and to allow the Cuban government to buy American food and medicine on credit. But the measures were killed in conference committees or dropped from bills at passage. Clearly, President Bush does not want to listen to the increasingly bipartisan clamor on Capitol Hill to lift sanctions against Cuba.

**Bipartisan Clamor On Capitol Hill To Lift Sanctions Against Cuba**

Since 1999, Congress has tried to change policy towards Cuba. The most important law approved so far has been *The Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act* (TSRA) of 2000. For the first time in more than 40 years, the Act authorized the direct commercial export of food and agricultural products under licensing procedures from the United States to the Republic of Cuba’s government-operated entities on a cash-only basis or with financing obtained through a third country entity.

In 2000 the House of Representatives and the Senate overwhelmingly approved two proposals by Rep. George R. Nethercutt (R.-WA) and then-Senator John D. Ashcroft (R.-MO), now U.S. Attorney General, aimed at lifting the embargo
on food and medicine. The measure was also intended to open up the possibility for the U.S. private sector to finance the purchase of those products. However, the Republican leadership in the House, under current Majority leader and then-Majority Whip, Tom DeLay of Texas, and backed by the three Cuban American legislators, Robert Menéndez, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Díaz Balart, inserted "compromise language" in conference committee, which banned public and private financing and codified into law travel regulations, previously mandated by Executive Order. Thus The Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA) of 2000 became a law.

After that, and in order to rescue the initial spirit of the 2000 Nethercutt-Ashcroft amendments, language to remove financing restrictions on the sale of US food and medicine to Cuba surfaced late in 2001 in the Senate’s version of the Farm Bill.

On December 18, 2001 the United States Senate, by a vote of 61 to 33, defeated an effort by Senator Bob Smith (R- New Hampshire) and Senator Robert Torricelli (D- New Jersey), which would have required Presidential certification that the government of Cuba was not involved in the support of acts of international terrorism as a condition preceding U.S. agricultural trade with Cuba.

On February 13, 2002, the Senate passed a farm bill that contained significant positive language on Cuba policy relating to the sale of food and medicine. This version of the farm bill contained language that would allow U.S. banks to finance the sale of food and medicine to Cuba. The House version of the
bill did not contain this language on Cuba and in the end, the final version of the
U.S. farm law negotiated by Senate and House lawmakers dropped the provision
that would have further eased the economic embargo against Cuba by allowing
private U.S. financing of food sales to Cuba.

A bipartisan group of House members then announced on March 21, 2002
their creation of a Cuba Working Group to press for removal of the ban on travel to
the island nation and for increased U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba. The group of
46 members is evenly divided between the parties. The bipartisan working group
also conducted its own review of policy toward Cuba, which was released on May
15, 2002 and states:

“American policy toward Cuba lacks support among the American public, the
Congress, the international community, and most importantly, inside Cuba... Moreover, the U.S. policy objective of a peaceful transition to a stable,
democratic form of government and respect for civil liberties in Cuba has
gone unmet. After four decades, the U.S. embargo has failed to produce
meaningful political and economic reform in Cuba”. (Cuba Working Group,
2002)

They also advocate among other measures:

- Revoking the travel ban,
- Allowing normal, unsubsidized exports of agricultural and medical
  products,
- Ending restrictions on remittances to Cuba,
- Sunsetting Helms-Burton in March 2003,
- Repealing Section 211 of the Fiscal 1999 Omnibus Appropriations Act
  (PL 105-277), which prevents the United States from accepting payment
  for trademark licenses that were used in connection with a business or
  assets in Cuba that were confiscated unless the original owner of the
  trademark has consented; and
- Expanding security cooperation between Cuba and the United States.
  (Cuba Working Group, 2002)
This came amid a flurry of moves -- including visits from January to December 2002 from U.S. senators, U.S. representatives, Governor George Ryan of Illinois for the second time, Governor John Hoeven of North Dakota, Governor Jesse Ventura of Minnesota, and members of think tanks, like the Cuba Policy Foundation, the Lexington Institute, the Center for International Policy, the Center for National Policy and the Washington-based Center for Defense Information. That, added to the first sales of food to Cuba in 43 years, might have hinted at a new era of rapprochement.

In another development, after Hurricane Michelle tore through the Island on November 4, 2001, the Bush administration offered to send a group of experts to Cuba to evaluate the damages and if necessary to send humanitarian aid. (Reuters, 2001a) Although the Cuban government politely declined the offer of aid, it did ask the Bush administration to approve a sale by U.S. companies of food items to restore Cuba's emergency reserves, which initially were used to assist those left homeless by the storm. (Reuters, 2001b; Johnson, 2001; Kaplan, 2001). That was made possible through the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA) of 2000 and was the first commercial transaction between the two countries since 1963, valued at around $235 million by the beginning of September, 2002.

The climax arrived when The U.S. Food & Agribusiness Exhibition took place in Havana from September 26-30, 2002. It involved 288 American companies, over 700 American business people, and many agriculture commissioners, department officials, and representatives of associations. This showed great interest on the part
of the US agricultural sector to reestablish commercial relations between the two
countries.

Companies from at least 104 U.S. Congressional districts were represented.
Companies from 33 states participated. Thus, the states of 66 Senators had companies present. Forty-nine Republican Congressional Districts and 55 Democratic districts were represented by at least one company. Twenty-nine Republican Senate seats were represented, along with 37 Democratic Senate seats. (Cuba Policy Foundation, 2002)

Archer Daniels Midland of Illinois was one of the event’s chief sponsors, while some key American exporters purchased exhibition space, including Tyson Foods and Riceland Foods, from Arkansas; ConAgra Foods; Perdue Farms of Maryland; Hormel Foods and Cargill of Minnesota; Radlo Foods of Massachusetts; and Marsh International of Indiana.

In addition, Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura, a critic of what he calls President Bush’s “isolationist approach”, personally promoted his state's food and farm products in Havana. U.S. Congressmen Sonny Callahan and Terry Everett of Alabama and Harold Rogers of Kentucky also attended the fair.

Last year alone, American food sales to the island reached more than $255 million. (Luhnow, 2002) That number places Cuba in the top 30 of some 228 countries making food purchases from American companies - up from 138th in 2001 and 180th in 2002. (Guerra, 2002)

The event came at a time when Congress was considering a number of other
modifications to the long-standing restrictions on travel and sale of goods to the island. These included three amendments approved by the House of Representative in the Treasury, Postal and General Government appropriations bill (H.R.5120) on July 23, 2002. They were:

- An amendment, offered by Congressman Jeff Flake (R-AZ), along with Congressmen McGovern, Moran of Kansas, Berman, Emerson, Delahunt, Paul, and Roemer to block the Treasury Department from enforcing travel restrictions and issuing fines to U.S. citizens who travel illegally to Cuba. The House voted 262-167 in favor of the amendment. (Roll Call No. 107-2-331).
- An amendment, offered by Congressman Jeff Flake (R-AZ), along with Congressman Delahunt to lift a cap on how many dollars U.S. citizens can send to Cubans each year. Current law limits individual remittances at $100 a month. The amendment passed, 251-177. (Roll Call No. 107-2-332).
- An amendment, offered by Congressman Jerry Moran (R-Kan) allowing the private financing of sales of commercial products to Cuba, passed on an unrecorded voice vote.

Also voted down 182-247 was an amendment introduced by House intelligence committee chairman Peter Goss (R-Fla) that would have conditioned an easing of the travel ban on a White House determination that Cuba did not possess biological weapons, did not transmit information on biological weapons to enemies of the United States and was not harboring any terrorist threats. (Roll Call Vote 107-2-330).

Congressman Cal Dooley (D-20th CA) on October 11, 2002 introduced a bill (H.R. 5616) to sunset the 1996 Helms-Burton Law on Cuba. The year 2002 saw no action on this bill, but Dooley's bill, if passed, would have terminated the provisions of the Helms-Burton Law which codified elements of the Cuban embargo which previously existed as executive orders.

The Helms-Burton Act strengthens international sanctions against Cuba;
allows for economic assistance to Cuba only at the time of a "transition government" or after a "democratically-elected" government is in place; allows U.S. companies and Cuban-born U.S. citizens to sue anyone using properties confiscated or nationalized from them after 1959; and denies U.S. entry visas to foreign executives and their families if their business in Cuba involves confiscated U.S. properties.

Included in the Senate Treasury and General Government Appropriations bill was language similar to that of the House with respect to Cuba travel. This language was included at the behest of Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND), and enjoyed broad support in the Senate. Additionally, as we mentioned before, U.S. Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) sponsored language on the 2003 Foreign Operations Appropriations bill calling for $1.5 million to be spent to fund narcotics interdiction efforts between the U.S. and Cuba.

However, 107th Congress adjourned in mid-November leaving a number of question marks related to the appropriations bills that fund all government spending. A heavy legislative calendar, which included the creation of a new Department of Homeland Security, as well as numerous procedural delays, caused the Senate to complete only two of the thirteen annual appropriations bills. Failure to pass the appropriations bills caused Congress to write a number of "continuing resolutions" which continue funding the government at this year’s levels. The expiration of the Congressional calendar prohibited Cuba measures from reaching the final stages of becoming law. Besides, President George W. Bush had indicated that he may veto the bill if it contained language easing the embargo on Cuba.
Nevertheless, the proposals to block the Treasury Department from enforcing travel restrictions and issuing fines to U.S. citizens who travel illegally to Cuba, to lift a cap on how many dollars U.S. citizens can send to Cubans each year, to allow the private financing of sales of commercial products to Cuba, to provide additional funds for cooperation with Cuba on counternarcotics, and to impose greater accountability by the U.S. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control in the process of issuing licenses for Americans to travel to Cuba in January 2003 were included in the FY2003 Omnibus Spending Bill. (H. J. Res. 2), which contained much of the money needed to keep the government afloat through Oct. 1, 2003, when the next fiscal year 2004 begins.

Office of Management and Budget chief Mitchell E. Daniels wrote on February 4, 2003 a six-page letter to Representative C.W. Bill Young, Florida Republican and chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, expressing that President Bush considered it "vitally important" to maintain the four-decade-old embargo of Cuba. Daniels noted that the White House found "objectionable" certain language in a working version of the bill, particularly provisions that would have weakened current sanctions against the Cuban government. "Lifting the sanctions now would provide a helping hand to a desperate and repressive regime, whereas the president's policy calls for reaching out to help the Cuban people," the Daniels letter said. “As noted in the July 11, 2002, letter from Secretaries [Colin] Powell and [Paul] O'Neill, the president's senior advisors would recommend that he veto a bill that contained such changes".(Johnson, 2002)
Pressures from the House Congressional leadership and a veto threat from the White House over the Cuba language led the spending bill's negotiators at the Conference Committee to ultimately eliminate all of the Cuba language. Congressional procedures empower a handful of lawmakers in the leadership to exert asymmetrical authority over the fate of legislation, even if this means doing away with terms endorsed by the majority, which had broad and bipartisan support.

The balance of power in U.S. politics is beginning to shift away from Cuban American hard-liners even in South Florida

The balance of power in U.S. politics is beginning to shift away from Cuban American hard-liners with the erosion of conservative support for traditional U.S.-Cuban policy. Since 1997, the Cuban American hard-liners have been affected by a vacuum of leadership after the death of the Chairman of the Cuban-American National Foundation (CAN-F), Jorge Mas Canosa, and in the summer of 2001 the CAN-F officially split.

The rift was viewed as ideological and generational, focusing on the leadership of Joe García and Chairman Jorge Mas Santos, the business-magnate son of Jorge Mas Canosa. These two have been trying to improve their image since the Elián González episode. They have also moved to widen the appeal of CAN-F among Democrats, as well as traditional Republican supporters to avoid the public relations disaster the Cuban American community suffered during the Elián saga.

The divisions within CAN-F led to the creation of a new group, very right wing, called Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba, which is comprised of the 22 resigned members of
the CAN-F board.

Despite those events, the CAN-F still has the ability to sustain pressure within American political circles. In Congress, the CAN-F is still the most vocal and influential institution lobbying on U.S. policy towards Cuba, and still has a bearing on the design of U.S.-Cuba relations. This lobbying effort, plus the presence of three active Cuban-American legislators, traditionally has constrained the debate on U.S. policy toward the island. But now, there has been a shift in U.S. public opinion, especially within the business community, the Catholic Church, some sectors of the Cuban community and humanitarian groups.

The issue of U.S.-Cuban relations is discussed in circles and by groups that have never been involved before. Growing numbers of corporate leaders, labor union officials, politicians and business associations, have taken a stand against the trade ban.

The deep process of transformation of the international system, the new actors advocating for a change of policy towards the Island, a weakened leadership within the CAN-F and demographic changes in the Cuban community in Miami suggest that the time is right for this shift in U.S. public opinion to be translated into a change in policy.

A very good example of this trend was the organization of The National Summit on Cuba on Washington D.C. on September 17, 2002, followed by Cuban American Advocacy Day. The speakers included: Retired General Charles Wilhelm, former Marine commander of the US Southern Front, who announced at the summit
that there is no reason whatsoever to view Cuba as a threat to U.S. security; Senator Chuck Hagel, Senator Christopher Dodd, Senator Byron Dorgan, U.S. Representatives Jeff Flake, George Nethercutt and Maxine Waters, and representatives from a broad range of academic professions and businesses. One of the sponsoring groups was the Americans for Humanitarian Trade with Cuba (AHTC), an umbrella organization which includes names like Rockefeller, Coors, Schlesinger, Lloyd Bentsen and the National Council of Churches.

The Cuban American Advocacy Day on Capitol Hill on September 18, 2002 was an incredible experience, breaking a pervasive political myth about Cuban-American support for the U.S. embargo on Cuba. Around 350 Cuban Americans from all over the United States, including 200 from Miami, flew into D.C. to call on the Senate to support freedom to travel to Cuba and an end to restrictions on humanitarian trade with Cuba. Previously, on March 28, 2002, various Cuban-American groups under a coalition called "The Time Is Now to Reassess U.S. Policy Toward Cuba" organized a milestone conference at the Biltmore Hotel in Miami, attended by about 250 people. Never had so many Cuban-American political activists gathered in the heart of Miami to express opposition to the 43-year-old trade embargo against Cuba. They were joined by a prestigious roster of current and former members of Congress, ex-ambassadors, former high-ranking military officers, business executives, and scholars. Among the topics up for discussion: existing restrictions on the sale of food and medicine to Cuba; how the United States would benefit from lifting the embargo; prospects for U.S.-Cuba cooperation
in the wars on drugs and terrorism; and how the 1996 Helms-Burton Law, which tightened the embargo, is hurting Cubans on the island.

This trend may be a reflection of Miami’s changing demographics or it may be politics, but it is certainly a recognition of a change in public opinion that extends to Cuban Americans.

For the first time in South Florida political history, during the 2002 midterm elections a Cuban-American candidate for the US Congress was challenging the United States’ embargo against Cuba. The candidate Annie Betancourt, a Democrat who ran and lost to Mario Diaz-Balart for the new District 25, in an open letter addressed to the *Miami Herald*, described U.S.-Cuba policy as having “failed miserably”. (Betancourt, 2002) With Mario Díaz-Balart, brother of Lincoln Díaz-Balart, now elected congressman, there are four representatives of Cuban origin in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Although actions are afoot in Congress to ensure further trade by lifting a restriction on U.S. financing of food and medicine sales to Cuba and to overturn the ban on travel to Cuba\(^1\), President George W. Bush has still not backtracked on his anti-Cuban government stance.

Regardless, some pragmatic steps have been taken by his Administration. Since George W. Bush took office he has suspended four times, for six months each time, Chapter III of the Helms-Burton Law, allowing U.S. citizens and companies to sue any foreign firms using Cuban property nationalized after the 1959 revolution. (*Reuters*, 2002) President Clinton used that authority nine times
after Helms-Burton took effect, and Bush has now decided four times -- contrary to pleas from hard-liner sectors of the Cuban-American community -- not to change that policy.

At the same time, the Bush Administration has maintained a Clinton-era policy of restricting privately-owned U.S. ships and planes from entering Cuban territory from the Florida coast or elsewhere unless a permit is granted by the U.S. Coast Guard, which in fact tries to avoid any “incident” or “accident” between the two countries that could jeopardize the already fragile security structure in U.S.--Cuba relations.¹⁴

In relation to these pragmatic positions, in January 2003 the White House received a letter by Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, in which she expressed her unhappiness about law enforcement of some parts of the U.S. embargo on Cuba and asked that more pressure be put on Cuba. Among other things, Ros-Lehtinen exposed her concern about the continuation of President Clinton’s wet foot/dry foot policy. It usually allows Cuban migrants who reach shore to be paroled into the country under the terms of the Cuban Adjustment Act, while typically sending back those interdicted at sea as part of an interpretation of the Migration Agreements signed by the two governments in 1994 and 1995. She also asked the President to restrict travel to the U.S. by Cuban’s officials. Ros-Lehtinen’s letter reflects growing discontent among some of Bush’s allies in the Cuban-American community who feel U.S. policy toward Cuba has not changed much since the Clinton administration. (Lorente, 2003)
An Eye To The Powerful Cuban American Lobby In Florida

Even if Congress approves changes to the embargo or travel restrictions, Bush has the right to veto them. He will have an eye on the powerful anti-Cuba lobby in Florida which proved essential to his election and the reelection of his brother Jeb Bush as Governor of Florida, and which may be key in his reelection in 2004.

Moreover, in 2001 the recess appointment of Otto Reich, a Cuban-American with close ties to the president and Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, a former employee of the Bacardi rum company, and a staunch critic of the Cuban revolution, as the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs – was hardly a conciliatory signal for Havana. As a matter of fact, this action had been considered a conciliatory gesture toward the right-wing Cuban-American lobby. (Marquis, 2002)

Senator Christopher Dodd (2001), the chairman of the Senate Western Hemisphere subcommittee, refused to schedule a confirmation hearing for Otto Reich and wrote in a letter to The Wall Street Journal that:

“...I believe Mr. Reich lacks good management skills, sound judgment, appropriate sensitivity to potential conflicts of interest, the confidence of other governments in the region, and the ability to bridge partisan divisions in the Congress, so that the United States can speak with one voice on urgent matters related to Latin America -- all prerequisites for the job. His poor managerial skills have been previously documented. While head of the Office of Public Diplomacy during the Reagan administration, Mr. Reich’s name was referred by the State Department Inspector General for disciplinary action related to his mismanagement of that office -- a small office in comparison with the Latin American bureau”. (Dodd, 2001)

So, President Bush was forced to make Mr. Reich a recess appointment to the State Department job after the then-Democratic-controlled Senate refused to
confirm him. The temporary appointment expired in November 2002 because under the rules governing recess appointments, Reich's term ran out at the close of the 107th Congress. Reich was in diplomatic limbo as an underused "special envoy" to Secretary of State Colin L. Powell on Latin American issues.

After the 2002 midterm elections and with the Republicans in the majority in both chambers of Congress, finally Otto J. Reich's nomination as Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs was stopped by the lack of support from new Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard G. Lugar, who explained to administration officials that Reich's nomination lacked bipartisan support. His opinion came after he claimed the top GOP spot on the panel following the retirement of Jesse Helms (R-N.C) (1973-2002), a strong supporter of Reich. On January 9, 2003 Bush named Reich as the Latin American envoy for the National Security Council (NSC), reporting directly to National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, a post that does not require Senate confirmation, and nominated to the State Department post the ultra-conservative, intolerant Roger F. Noriega, U.S. ambassador to the Organization of American States, previous aide to Helms and Republican staff member of the House International Relations Committee.

At the NSC, Reich's responsibilities would include coordination of "long-term policy initiatives" and strategizing for the advancement of U.S. goals in the hemisphere. His presence at the NSC could be even more threatening to sound principles of regional policymaking than was the case when he was at the State Department. This new position, created for Reich due to the abiding problems he
faced with the Senate, in reality represents an homage to the influence of Miami’s powerful right-wing Cuban leadership.

Daniel Fisk, the deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, is in charge of handling issues related to Central America and the Caribbean, a portfolio that includes Cuba. Fisk worked together with Reich when he was deputy coordinator of Central American Public Diplomacy in the Reagan Administration. Fisk played an important role in the writing of the Helms-Burton Act and his appointment was another step toward reappointing Helms’ staff in the State Department, many of whom dispersed after the announcement of Helms’ impending retirement in 2002.

Meanwhile, Mauricio Tamargo, also a Cuban-American, has been approved to become the chairman of the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. He was the chief of staff for Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and is in a position to vote in favor of legitimizing Cuban-American claims to property in Cuba.

On January 31, 2002, Adolfo Franco, as it was mentioned before, was sworn in as assistant administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Emilio Gonzalez, another Cuban-American is a deputy of the National Security Council handling Caribbean affairs, including Cuba. (Tamayo, 2002) As referred to above, the former Army colonel was in charge of conducting a review of Cuba policy. It went public formally in a Bush speech in Miami on May 20, 2002 in a mere repetition of the persistent failure of the last 43 years of policy towards Cuba.
The administration’s other Latin America appointees are conservative veterans of the Central America wars of the Ronald Reagan-George H. W. Bush years. One of the most notable is former Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Elliott Abrams\(^\text{15}\) (convicted twice for misleading Congress during the Iran-Contra scandal and pardoned by President Bush’s father in 1992), who was the National Security Council advisor on democracy and human rights during the first two years of the Bush Administration. Another is John Negroponte, who as ambassador to Honduras, ignored human-rights abuses by the Honduran army, is now ambassador to the United Nations. Also now on the Bush team is discredited Admiral John Poindexter, who confessed to perjury charges over the Iran-Contra scandal. Poindexter, who was Reagan’s national-security adviser, is now heading a Pentagon counterterrorism office.

A State Department and National Security Council, now comprised of political officials that have previously worked to strengthen sanctions against Cuba, put the Bush Administration in a better position to defend against Congress’ efforts to ease trade and travel restrictions. Even as this new challenge presents itself, there are other factors that may further complicate any progress in US-Cuban policy. On Capitol Hill, José Cardenas is taking over the Latin America portfolio on the majority staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. For much of the last decade, he has been a lobbyist for the Cuban American National Foundation’s drive to preserve sanctions. (Marquis, 2002)

Nevertheless, congressional representatives and senators, business
associations, churches, humanitarian groups, academics, sectors of the Cuban American Community and even Governors George Ryan, John Hoeven and Jesse Ventura all underscore the irrationality of maintaining a policy that has not brought the expected results. They point out the need to shift the present course of barely-existent Cuba-U.S. relations for the sake of America’s own political interests. But the political muscle of these new players advocating a change of policy has yet to be flexed.

February, 2003
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Hearing of the Western Hemisphere, Peace Corps, And Narcotics Affairs Subcommittee Of The Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subject: Cuba's Pursuit Of Biological Weapons: Fact Or Fiction? Chaired By: Senator Christopher J. Dodd (D-CT) Witnesses: Carl Ford, Jr., Assistant Secretary For Intelligence And Research, United States Department Of State Location: 419 Dirksen Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. Time: 10:00 A.M., Edt Date: Wednesday, June 5, 2002


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Notes

1 On 20 September President Bush made a speech to Congress in which he said: …[W]e will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.” See: “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People”, United States Capitol. Washington D.C., Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, 20 September 2001.

2 Senator Arlen Specter visited Cuba also in 1999.

3 Senator Arlen Specter have introduced in 1999 and 2000 similar proposals that would have provided assistance to Cuba by covering some of the costs of collaboration.

4 In November, 2002 Asa Hutchinson was appointed as undersecretary for border and transportation security at the Homeland Security Department.

5 Discussions held on June 21 1999 in Havana between U.S. and Cuban officials led to agreement on upgrading communications between the Cuban Border Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard, coordinating radio frequencies to facilitate ship to ship communications, stationing of a U.S. counter-narcotics specialist in Havana to coordinate with Cuban officials, and U.S. provision of technical expertise to assist in joint boardings and searches of vessels on a case-by-case basis. In May 2000 the U.S. counter narcotics specialist took up his responsibilities in Havana. See: Peter Kornbluh, “Cuba, Counternarcotics, and Collaboration: A Security Issue in U.S.-Cuban Relations”, Georgetown University Cuba Briefing Paper Series, Number 24, December 2000.

6 The court also sentenced Mauricio Francisco Noguera Salcedo, drug trafficker, to 23 years and Robert Lewis, accused of international drug trafficking to 25 years. See: GRANMA INTERNATIONAL, “Infamous international drug trafficker receives life sentence”. Tuesday, February 18, 2003.

7 See White House: Office of the Press Secretary: “Title III of the Cuban Liberty And Democratic Solidarity Act Fact Sheet”; January 17, 2002.

8 On March 19, 2002, Assistant Secretary Ford gave a testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee at a hearing addressing the threat of chemical and biological weapons, and he stated: “The United States believes that Cuba has at least a limited developmental offensive biological warfare research and developmental effort. Cuba has provided dual use biotechnology to rogue states. We are concerned that such technology could support BW programs in those states. We call on Cuba to cease all BW applicable cooperation with rogue states and to fully comply with all of its obligations under the Biological Weapons Convention.”.

9 Since September 21, 2001, the Report by the Defense Department (www.defenselink.mil/pubs/cubarpt.htm) has been challenged by hard liners who believe the intelligence report to be deeply flawed because of the involvement of senior analyst for Cuban affairs for the Defense Intelligence Agency, Ana Belén Montes. Speaking to the Heritage Foundation, John Bolton, Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, on May 6, 2002, delivered an speech named “Beyond the Axis of Evil: Additional Threats from Weapons of Mass Destruction”, where he impugned the 1998 report on Cuba which he characterized as “unbalanced”. He pointed that a major reason he considered the report to be biased was “Cuba's aggressive intelligence operations against the United States, which included recruiting the Defense Intelligence Agency's senior Cuba analyst, Ana Belen Montes”. Montes admitted in federal court on March 19, 2002 that she had passed information to Cuban Intelligence, some of it related to military maneuvers the Cubans thought might be directed at the island. In court she said: “I obeyed my conscience rather than the law... I believe our government's policy toward Cuba is cruel and unfair, profoundly unneighborly, and I felt morally obligated to help the island defend itself from our efforts to impose our values and our political system upon it”. Those reports usually combine the findings of separate agencies and departments. It seems highly unlikely that it was the report of one sole person, rather than the consensus opinion of different agencies involved in the policymaking process. As Alberto Call wrote in a paper called “From War to Politics: The Road Ahead for the Cuban-American Community” : "...Cuba has not posed any significant threats to the security of the United States. This is a judgment shared by all senior American military officials, including men such as Gen. Jack Sheehan, Gen. Charles Wilhelm, and Gen. Barry McCaffrey - all of them distinguished patriots, highly decorated Vietnam combat veterans, and officers of unquestionable integrity whose judgment is based on extensive experience and intelligence sources."
For a comprehensive study about Cuba and the question of international terrorism see: “Keeping things in perspective: Cuba and the question of international terrorism” By Anya K. Landau and Wayne S. Smith, November 6, 2001 CIP, Washington DC.

On January 17, 2002, the White House Office stated that Bush declared almost the same policy when he declared his Administration remains "firmly and fully committed to encouraging a rapid, peaceful transition to a democratic government," and..."also remains committed to use of the embargo and travel restrictions"..."As he indicated last July, the administration will oppose any effort to loosen sanctions against the Cuban regime until it frees political prisoners, holds democratic, free elections and allows for free speech” and ... "will increase the resources available to support civil society development and information exchange in Cuba;”..."We will be exploring new ways, including the use of cutting-edge technology, to increase the Cuban people’s access to Radio and TV Marti.” White House: Office of the Press Secretary: “Title III of the Cuban Liberty And Democratic Solidarity Act Fact Sheet”; January 17, 2002

Liberal Democrats, the pharmaceutical industry and Republicans from farming States, optimistic to sell food and medicine to Cuba, constituted the coalition.

In July 2001, the House passed legislation to end enforcement of the travel ban to Cuba by a margin of 240-186. The legislation did not become law, however, because it was removed in conference after the events of September 11th. Later, on February 11, 2002, Senator Byron Dorgan (D-ND), who has long been interested in seeing the end of restrictions on travel to Cuba, held a hearing in the Treasury and General Government Appropriations subcommittee. The focus of the hearing was to examine the licensing and enforcement practices of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the office within the Treasury Department that both grants travel licenses to Cuba and sends out fines to those who are caught traveling illegally. The senator, as chairman of the appropriations committee that funds the Treasury Department, questioned OFAC about their licensing and enforcement procedures. He focused on increases in the number of fines levied against illegal travelers, denials of licenses, delays in the process, and reports that OFAC has narrowed its judgments of who shall receive travel licenses.

Proclamation 6867 of March 1, 1996 declared a national emergency with respect to Cuba and the emergency authority relating to the regulation of the anchorage and movement of vessels. It was declared by Bush on February 27, 200, February 28, 2002 and February 27, 2003.

In December 2002, Elliot Abrams was appointed as President Bush’s director of Middle Eastern affairs at the National Security Council. See: http://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/07/politics/07ABRA.html?todaysheadlines