

A New Course for U.S.-Cuba policy: ADVANCING PEOPLE-DRIVEN CHANGE

Since the end of the Cold War our policy toward Cuba has remained static, reactive and focused on responding to developments following the demise of Fidel Castro. That policy, in our opinion, does not advance or promote the best interests of the United States or of the Cuban people; it relegates the U.S.'s role to that of passive observer rather than active supporter of the process of democratization for one of our closest hemispheric neighbors.

The recommendations listed herein chart a new direction for U.S.-Cuba policy, one that is guided by a deep understanding of the Cuban people, the impact of five decades of totalitarian rule, and a firm belief that the tides of change are swept in by the grass roots efforts of common people who have acquired confidence in their abilities and feel empowered in their responsibilities. Our recommendations are a break from the past because they seek to adapt to the realities of the present, which require a measured and incremental path that allows for adjustments along the way based on empirical evidence and evolving dynamics on the ground in Cuba.

That path is not one that can be assumed or applied solely by the United States. It requires Cuba's present rulers, or their successors, to understand that irrespective of changes to U.S. policy, the incorporation of grassroots reforms demanded by the Cuban people, are absolutely essential to the nation's future prosperity and stability.

As President Obama stated at the CANF Cuban Independence Day Luncheon on May 23, 2008, "after decades pressing for top-down reform, we need an agenda that advances democracy, security, and opportunity from the bottom up." The Cuban American National Foundation stands ready to contribute our best effort in support of a new U.S.-Cuba policy that advances the interests and security of the United States and helps the Cuban people in their quest for democracy and prosperity.

Gorge Mas Santos Chairman

A New Course for U.S.-Cuba Policy ADVANCING PEOPLE-DRIVEN CHANGE

I. Overview and Summary Recommendations

Over the course of half a century, United States foreign policy towards Castro's Cuba has evolved through four distinct phases. From 1959 until about 1964, U.S. policy was centered on *regime change*. Early on, the Administration of President John F. Kennedy was focused on the removal of Fidel Castro from power and to this end, provided U.S. support for the Bay of Pigs invasion and later approved a series of covert actions under Operation Mongoose, directed at destabilizing the regime.¹ However, increasing tensions with the Soviet Union and the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, caused Kennedy to drastically shift course, agreeing under the "Kennedy-Khrushchev Pact" to cease any interference in Cuba's internal affairs and pull out U.S. missiles from Turkey in exchange for an agreement that the Soviet Union discontinue nuclear arms shipments to Cuba.² The pact brought an end to the policy of regime change and as a result a policy of *containment* was instituted which remained in place until the presidency of Jimmy Carter in the late 1970's.

President Carter quickly embarked on a policy of *rapprochement* towards Cuba, an effort which complemented his attempt at extending a new kind of détente with the Soviet Union and its allies. He held a belief that direct dialogue with the Cuban leadership would achieve desired changes—namely Cuba's withdrawal from military involvement in Africa as a surrogate of the USSR. In a Presidential Directive signed by Carter shortly after he took office, he stated explicitly the new goal of U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba: "I have concluded that we should attempt to achieve normalization of our relations with Cuba." ³ Carter's attempt at rapprochement with Cuba culminated in the opening of diplomatic Interests Sections in the capitals of both nations.

Yet despite his extensive efforts to reach out to Cuba's leadership, and through direct engagement curb Cuban foreign intervention, inevitably those efforts proved fruitless as Cuba, in turn, increased its presence and military cooperation with the Soviet Union in various countries in Africa including Angola and Zaire. In 1978, after Cuba sent 16,000 troops to support the communist Ethiopian government in the Ogaden War against Somalia,⁴ then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance formally announced the Administration was turning away from trying to normalize relations with Cuba because of Cuba's additional

¹ Dominguez, Jorge I. "The Cuban Missile Crisis (Or, What was 'Cuban' about U.S. Decisions during the Cuban Missile Crisis .Diplomatic History: The Journal of the Society for Historians of Foreign Relations, Vol. 24, No. 2, (Spring 2000): 305-15.)

² Letter from Chairman Khrushchev to President Kennedy, Moscow, October 27, 1962.

³ Presidential Directive, NSC-6, March 15, 1977

⁴ George, Edward in: The Cuban Intervention in Angola, 1965-1991, Frank Cass, London, New York, 2005

actions in the African continent and later its support for communist insurgent groups in Latin American countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador. ⁵

Subsequent administrations have limited U.S.-Cuba policy to little beyond posturing for domestic electoral purposes or periodically responding to Castro's continuing efforts to undermine U.S. international objectives. Although President Ronald Reagan signed Radio Marti into existence and invaded Grenada where Cuban troops were stationed, his administration's efforts were mainly punctuated by a return to the containment strategy of the Cold War. During President Bill Clinton's tenure, there was an attempt to increase people-to-people contact as a vehicle to influence democratic change in Cuba, yet executive action under that administration was overwhelmingly characterized by *cautious reaction* to legislative initiatives and unforeseen international events. The 1994 Cuban rafter crisis and resulting wet foot-dry foot policy and the 1996 Brothers to the Rescue shoot-down led to the signing of the Helms-Burton bill, which codified significant portions of Cuba policy, such as the U.S. economic embargo, into U.S. law.

Under the Administration of George W. Bush, Cuba policy was defined by the desire to placate perceived domestic political interests, leading to the enactment of policies that lacked strategic thought or benefit and that ignored Cuba's increasingly influential role in Latin America and its active support for anti-American leadership in the region. Following the mass crackdown on the democratic opposition in Cuba in 2003, rather than increase direct aid to Cuba's opposition groups to counter the regime's attempt to obliterate their efforts, the Bush Administration instead enacted regulations which had the converse effect of cutting off vital Cuban-American remittances and the flow of support and humanitarian aid made possible by their remittances and travel to the island-nation. The Bush Administration often took to the bully pulpit to criticize the Cuban regime; however, its actions were not consistent with the rhetoric. Instead, the establishment of entities such as the Commission on Assistance for a Free Cuba⁶ and government positions like that of a Cuba Transition Coordinator, which were ill-defined and directed, became "achievements" it could point to on Cuba policy though in reality they were merely symbolic gestures with no meaningful effect on precipitating democratic change on-island.

This brings us to the present. With an ailing figurehead, a cadre of aging hard-liners thwarting any movement toward significant reform, and a mounting sense of desperation among a Cuban population increasingly unable to meet its basic needs, the results of the long term absence of a forward-looking U.S.-Cuba policy may soon become painfully obvious. Rather than the peaceful democratic transition we all desire, events may thrust the Cuban people into chaos thereby forcing the United States to take unilateral actions, at the very least in securing its own borders. It is therefore critical that President Obama's Administration adopt a policy that avoids this scenario by assisting the Cuban people in

⁵ Foreign Policy Magazine, Spring 1982, Letters to the Editor, Miles R. R. Frechette Office of Cuban Affairs Department of State

⁶ White House transcript of President's remarks establishing Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, , October 10, 2003

laying the groundwork for a peaceful transition to democracy via support for the development of a strong and vibrant independent civil society in Cuba.

Both President Obama and Vice-President Biden have made it abundantly clear that there will not be any unilateral lifting of the embargo absent significant moves on the part of the Castro regime towards freedom and democracy for the Cuban people. The Cuban American National Foundation concurs with the Obama Administration's position. To unilaterally lift the embargo without any significant evidence of irrevocable change in Cuba would be tantamount to sentencing the Cuban people to the continuation of the deprivation of economic, civil and human freedoms they have endured for the past five decades, and would continue to negatively affect the long term strategic interests of the United States in the region. A change in course can only be achieved by bolstering the resolve of the Cuban people so that they may achieve the prosperity, social and political stability that the Castro regime is incapable of delivering.

Nevertheless, the Castro government will not unilaterally and freely initiate a path toward democratic rule. It has had ample opportunity to voluntarily make such changes over fifty years of unbridled power; as Frederick Douglass so wisely said: "Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will." External and, more importantly, internal factors are critical in creating that demand for change. The Cuban people, supported by U.S. policy, must be empowered to speak out, organize, and peacefully enact democratic change. The Cuban American National Foundation believes that the President has the authority and prerogative to initiate the necessary changes in U.S.-Cuba policy within the parameters provided by current statutes.

To that effect, the Cuban American National Foundation recommends that the President pursue a proactive U.S.-Cuba policy that: (i) increases support for the development of Cuban civil society, (ii) increases people-to-people exchanges, (iii) improves communication to advance freedom of information, and (iv) engages in targeted bilateral and multilateral diplomatic efforts.

II. Objectives for a New U.S.-Cuba Policy

United States-Cuba policy should focus on (1) advancing U.S. interests and security in the region and (2) empowering the Cuban people in their quest for democracy and prosperity. These two objectives are intricately intertwined and one cannot be individually accomplished without the other.

The United States has direct national and security interests in promoting a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. The resurgence of anti-American forces in the hemisphere that view Cuba as their ideological paradigm has led to increased tensions between the United States and several of its Latin American counterparts. Most evident is that of the growing tensions between the U.S. and Venezuela and Hugo Chavez's increasing collaboration with rogue

nations like Iran that are potential threats to U.S. national security and the overall security of the region. ⁷

In addition, a stable and democratic Cuba will avoid a possible chaotic mass exodus of refugees that could cause significant disruptions in affected U.S. communities, and will promote lawful and controlled migration between the two nations. Further, a stable, democratic and prosperous Cuba will create the benefit of a regional partner in promoting democratic values, the rule of law, international human rights, and global prosperity. Both countries would have enhanced opportunities to cooperatively address common threats such as drug trafficking, international terrorism, organized crime, human smuggling, and environmental degradation. Such benefits and interests have not and will not be attained by maintaining the *status quo*.

To proactively and creatively support the Cuban people in their quest for democracy and prosperity, U.S.-Cuba policy must empower the Cuban people by encouraging independence from the State, self-sufficiency, and entrepreneurship. A vibrant civil society is the cornerstone to any successful democracy⁸ and is certainly a precursor to a peaceful and lasting democratic transition. By shifting U.S. focus onto the Cuban people, our commitment to them will match the robust and direct support previously extended to people suffering under repressive regimes, such as those in Eastern Europe, South Africa, Chile, and other countries where democratic change was achieved from the ground up.

The Cuban American National Foundation recommends the following policies, which can all be implemented by Executive action, to chart a course for U.S.-Cuba policy that promotes the best interests of both the United States and the Cuban people:

III. Recommendations

(i) Increase Support for the Development of Cuban Civil Society

It is a well established fact that Vaclav Havel's Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and labor union movements like Solidarity in Poland gave rise to the creation of independent civil society groups which eventually mounted successful challenges to their respective authoritarian regimes. In an Eastern Europe under communism, these independent civil society groups built islands of independent thought and action; they created popular movements that were well organized and became effective purveyors of truth and information to the general population. Their success was largely a result of their brave and determined efforts and a confluence of both internal and external political factors; yet without the determined support of nations like the United States, their triumph may have been delayed. The Cuban dissident

⁸International Peace Academy, April 2005, Civil Society and Democratic Transitions in the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda, Mashood Issaka and Batabiha Bushoki

⁷ CNN, April 10, 2008, U.S. terror report cites Venezuela, Iran

movement has proven to possess the same determination, courage and skill as their Eastern European counterparts; they only lack the effective, direct, and coordinated support the Europeans received.

In 2004, following the passing of President Ronald Reagan, former Polish President, Solidarity leader and Nobel Prize Winner Lech Walesa recognized the critical importance of that support when he wrote: "When talking about Ronald Reagan, I have to be personal. We in Poland took him so personally. Why? Because we owe him our liberty. This can't be said often enough by people who lived under oppression for half a century, until communism fell in 1989."

The United States has an extensive history of supporting the forces of democracy abroad. It did so in the 1980's in Eastern Europe to great success. It was likewise critical in the late 1990's and early 2000 in supporting efforts to topple Slobodan Milošević by infusing opposition groups such as the student movement Otpor and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia with significant direct aid. U.S. government assistance to these groups increased from \$10 million in 1999 to \$31 million in 2000, the year Milošević was ousted. Much of these funds were distributed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), and in great part, were in the form of direct cash assistance. 11

Today, USAID-based assistance for democracy promotion in Cuba is crippled by several factors, the most critical being a banning of cash aid or remittances to opposition groups on In 1997, a mid-level Clinton Administration official arbitrarily imposed a ban on cash aid claiming he was fearful the funds might be used to try to assassinate Fidel Castro. 12 The obviously flawed thinking that led to this department-level policy has gone unchallenged through the last two presidential administrations, even though Administration officials have recognized the counterproductive nature of such a policy. Roger Noriega, former Undersecretary of State for the Western Hemisphere during President Bush's first term and later U.S. ambassador to the OAS stated that the policy: 'created a ridiculous situation where we were spending ten times the cost of shipping to send in materials that could be bought on the market (in Cuba) if we just gave cash and got a receipt.'13 Yet the policy remained, and an extensive report published by CANF in 2008¹⁴, uncovered that over 80% of the grant monies destined for Cuba democracy promotion, ended up being spent in Miami, Washington, D.C. and internationally by U.S. based NGO's rather than on the intended recipients of such aid—Cuba's civil society groups.

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⁹ The Wall Street Journal, Friday, June 11, 2004, Remembering Reagan,

¹⁰ Template Revolutions: Marketing U.S. Regime Change in Eastern Europe Gerald Sussman and Sascha Krader Portland State University

¹¹ New York Times, September 20, 2000, Steven Erlanger, Milosevic, Trailing in Polls, Rails Against NATO

¹² The Miami Herald, Corral, Oscar, Is U.S. Aid Reaching Castro Foes? November 15, 2006

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ The Cuban American National Foundation, March 2008, Findings and Recommendations on the Most Effective Use of USAID-CUBA Funds Authorized by Section 109(a)of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Helms-Burton) Act of 1996

Not only do independent civil society groups create pressure for democratic change; studies on transitions from authoritarianism to democracy have demonstrated that the strength and viability of an enduring democratic transition is directly linked to the overall success of civil First, once a democratic transition begins to take place, civil society society groups. organizations are critical in representing mass interests and affecting government decisionmaking. Secondly, these organizations act as important conduits for the interpretation of information controlled and disseminated by the new government to the general populace and at the same time exerting some influence over the public. And finally, they are critical actors in helping to implement the decisions, policy and directives of a government embarking on a democratic process. ¹⁵

Cuba's independent civil society and opposition groups, as well as the Cuban populace in general, are in dire need of our support in order to continue to build a parallel society and institutions that are critical to pressing for democratic change and for ensuring an enduring democratic transition. To that effect we recommend the following:

Lift restrictions on Cuban-American family remittances.

Rationale: The implementation of additional restrictions on Cuban-American remittances by the Bush Administration in 2004 contradicts our stated policy of 'support for the Cuban people'. Cuban-Americans are in the best position to assess the needs of Cubans on the island and can most efficiently direct essential remittances to them. Not only will such a policy provide increased humanitarian aid but it will also permit the Cuban people to become more independent from the State in meeting basic needs and in creating and developing civil society. An increase in the level of remittances is critical at this juncture due to the impact of last season's hurricanes and the dire humanitarian situation on the ground in Cuba.

Lift the 2004 restrictions limiting certain items from humanitarian aid parcels and increase the weight limit of such parcels

In 2004, the Bush Administration restricted personal hygiene items, seeds, fishing equipment, and soap-making equipment from allowable humanitarian gift parcel items. Gift parcels were also limited to a maximum of 4 pounds per parcel per month sent through the United States Postal Service (USPS). The real effect of these measures has been to deprive Cuban-Americans the ability to send basic needs items to their family members in Cuba. The humanitarian crisis on the ground in Cuba today in the wake of last season's hurricanes makes the reversal of these additional restrictions all the more critical at this stage.

¹⁵ Civil Society and the Democratic Transition in Spain, Kerstin Hamann; Perspectives on Political Science, Vol. 27, 1998

▶ **Permit direct cash aid**—Change USAID-Cuba's internal policy of banning cash aid to independent civil society groups, dissidents, and the families of political prisoners in Cuba.

Rationale: The internal ban imposed in 1997 has remained and is perhaps the greatest obstacle to delivering efficient and substantive support to Cuba's opposition and independent civil society groups. Eliminating this ban would allow Cuban groups to receive direct aid in a much more expeditious manner and would also curtail the instances of abuse and misappropriation of funding that has been alleged with some U.S.-based NGOs receiving USAID grants.

▶ Impose a Cost-Share requirement for U.S.-based NGOs—USAID should implement and enforce a cost-share requirement for all U.S.-based non-profits seeking to obtain funding for Cuba democracy programs.

Rationale: Many of USAID's recipient organizations, the majority of which are located in Miami, have relied almost exclusively on government grants either through USAID or NED for their existence. This has created a situation where many grantees spend the majority of the government funds on salaries and overhead costs here in the United States and use very little in direct support of Cuban groups. (For more information, please refer to CANF report on Findings and Recommendations for USAID Cuba programs). ¹⁶ Imposing this requirement would ensure that the maximum amount of U.S. funds are going to support the efforts of those working for change on the island.

▶ Allow sub-granting to Cuba-based Independent Civil Society Organizations—USAID should allow and encourage sub-granting to independent civil society groups in Cuba by USAID-Cuba grantee organizations.

Rationale: The process of sub-granting to independent groups in Cuba will truly help build organic NGOs in Cuba—a vital part of establishing a functioning civil society that can take on the grass roots responsibilities of a democratic transition. It also provides for a more effective system of support delivery that would allow opposition or civil society groups to grow and carry out their programs.

▶ Require USAID-Cuba grantees to spend at least 70% of the funds in programs directed to aid Cuban Civil Society.

Rationale: A minimum of 70% of government funding received by grantee recipients should be dedicated to direct aid to the Cuban people. While some of the funding may be directed to salary, overhead costs, etc., the bulk of these types of expenses should be

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¹⁶ Findings and Recommendations on the Most Effective Use of USAID-CUBA Funds Authorized by Section 109(a) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Helms-Burton) Act of 1996, March 2008, The Cuban American National Foundation

obtained mainly through non-governmental sources, thereby guaranteeing that the maximum amount of public funds are destined for the intended recipients of USAID's program.

Promote the development and growth of microenterprises in Cuba by permitting private micro-loans.

Rationale: The growth of Cuba's independent economic sector is vital to the growth of an independent civil society as a whole and is critical to preparing and training Cubans for a post-Castro, democratic era. Permitting Cuban-Americans and others, under license, to send cash, building materials, agricultural implements and provide services to independent, private entrepreneurs not affiliated with the regime for the establishment of micro-enterprises, such as artisans and family-owned small businesses, and the building and repair of private family residences affected by last season's hurricanes would have an indelible and immediate impact on the growth of Cuba's independent economic sector and civil society as a whole.

▶ Permit the increase of private aid to pro-democracy groups.

We recommend that the following current regulations be amended to read as follows: -CFR § 515.570(d)(1) be amended to allow general licensing of unlimited remittances from non-governmental organizations and individuals subject to U.S. jurisdiction to members of pro-democracy groups as well as individual family members of Cuban political prisoners;

Rationale: In addition to providing U.S. government assistance to pro-democracy groups in Cuba, private citizens, organizations interested in supporting independent civil society groups and the families of political prisoners can and should play a very valuable role in effecting change in Cuba.

(ii) Increase People-To-People Exchanges

During the Carter and Clinton Administrations, people-to-people exchanges to Cuba were expanded, though for very different strategic reasons. In 1977, President Jimmy Carter announced the opening of general license travel to Cuba as a sign of rapprochement. That policy was reversed under the Reagan Administration and restrictions remained in place until 1995 when President Bill Clinton announced a new policy to "engage the Cuban people and promote the free flow of ideas." In 1999, following the visit of Pope John Paul II to Cuba, President Clinton further expanded people-to-people exchanges creating categories of travel licensing that included cultural and academic exchanges and announced the easing of restrictions governing cash remittances to the island. That policy was allowed to stand for the most part until 2004 when the Bush Administration significantly scaled back the Clinton era measures, eliminating categories of licensed travel and restricting Cuban-American family

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¹⁷ Federal Register, October 20, 1995, pp. 54194-54198

¹⁸ White house Press Office, January 5, 1999

visits and remittances. In 2004, the Bush Administration further restricted Cuban-American humanitarian gift parcels, prohibiting the inclusion of such items as toothpaste, soap, and clothing.

For the past five years, our policy, in practice, has run contrary to the stated goal of "support for the Cuban people." Rather than opening up avenues for the delivery of aid and information, we have managed to make it increasingly more difficult to get help to even those brave dissidents who risk their lives. A prime example of this is the restriction placed on limiting the types of aid allowed to be sent in gift parcels to the Cuban people. The Bush Administration explained their rationale for the policy stating that the purpose in limiting "such parcels decrease the burden on the Cuban regime to provide for the basic needs of its people." This statement not only incorrectly assumes the Cuban government is concerned about providing basic needs for its people but worse yet, instead of urging and assisting Cubans in becoming independent of the State, it has the reverse effect of having Cubans turn back to the State as their sole provider and source for basic goods and necessities.

Communist regimes have frequently used the deprivation of food and basic necessities as a way to control the masses. Maxim Litvinov, Soviet diplomat under Lenin's regime, was well known for utilizing the line "Gentlemen, food is a weapon." ²⁰ The Soviets were not the only ones to effectively use the deprivation of food and goods as a weapon. We have seen many examples throughout history, including the Serbian regime under Milosevic, the Iraqi regime under Sadaam Hussein, the North Korean regime under Kim Jong-II, and the Cuban regime under the reign of Fidel and Raul Castro.

In Cuba, the black market for goods and services has become increasingly important. Following last season's hurricanes, the regime's inability to provide enough to meet even the most basic demands has become much more evident. U.S. policy should then allow for direct support to the Cuban people with the purpose of assisting Cubans in meeting their most basic needs and equally as important, helping to break their dependency on the State.

Purposeful travel to Cuba is also an important element in transferring news and information as well as providing a means with which to deliver direct aid and support. Purposeful travel differs from other types of travel, such as commercial tourism, in that it explicitly seeks to put Cubans in contact with those interested in helping the development of an independent Cuban civil society and encourages the type of exchange that is both mutually beneficial and free of State control and manipulation.

Lift restrictions on Cuban-American family and humanitarian travel.

²⁰ Hoover Archives, Food as a Weapon, Bertrand M. Patenaude

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¹⁹ Federal Register / Vol. 69, No. 119 / Tuesday, June 22, 2004, pp. 34565-34567

Rationale: The implementation of additional restrictions on Cuban-American travel by the Bush Administration in 2004 has been counterproductive to our stated policy of 'support for the Cuban people'. These measures have limited the ability for Cuban-American family members to deliver humanitarian aid and to act as important conduits for objective news and information to the island. Now, more than ever, we need to provide effective vehicles of support and communication—Cuban-Americans are undoubtedly our greatest ambassadors of freedom to the Cuban people. We believe, however, that it is important to ensure that safeguards are in place to limit the abuse by individuals who may utilize the accessibility of frequent travel to Cuba for illicit purposes that circumvent U.S. law.

Promote and enhance travel to Cuba programs under the following licensing categories: Support for the Cuban People, Humanitarian Support, Academic Study, and Cultural Exchange. Promote travel by U.S.-based NGOs, student organizations and individuals focused on democracy-building to travel to Cuba under specific license of the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Rationale: Encouraging and increasingly purposeful people-to-people exchanges promote the ability to exchange information in a way that is beneficial to the development of Cuba's independent civil society. The ability for American institutions to travel to Cuba to provide support and training are critical in laying the groundwork for a civil society that is equipped to take on the responsibilities of an open and democratic system.

(iii) Improve Communication to Advance Freedom of Information

Western broadcasts into the former Eastern European bloc were significant in helping to deliver a message of hope and solidarity. They provided a vehicle for objective news and information to those living under the cloak of communist censorship. Radio Free Europe (RFE) was perhaps one of the most successful examples of how the free flow of news and information can have an indelible impact on supporting a transition to democracy. RFE began transmissions in the 1950's from a transmitter near Frankfurt, Germany and later from Munich to five Soviet satellite states: Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria. RFE's programming content focused on issues that pointed out the clear contradictions of communist practices with the exercise of individual freedoms. The discussion of topics ranged from the negative experiences of farmers with agricultural collectivization and the persecution of those attempting to exercise their right to practice a religion of their choosing to the government's restrictions over reading material and suppression of culture. ²²

Radio Free Europe boasted a huge audience throughout the Eastern bloc particularly in Poland where RFE played a critical role in "bringing down at least three party leaders and was instrumental in sustaining the Solidarity trade union when it was forced underground by martial law. During Nicolai Ceausescu's time, RFE was Romania's most popular source of

²² *Ibid*.

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²¹ Radio Free Europe: mission accomplished, December 2003, The Weekly Standard, Arch Puddington

news"23. The impact of Radio Free Europe in Hungary was documented in a 2006 study by A. Ross Johnson, a Hoover Institute Fellow and former director of RFE: Hungarians have testified to the positive role played by Radio Free Europe (RFE) for over 40 years in helping Hungary return to the community of free nations". What's more, Prime Minister Antal wrote to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) in June 1990: "Radio Free Europe has ... given us the gift of truth about our own country and the world at large, and has done so at a time when telling the truth was counted as a crime against the state."24

In 1989, Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa remarked that free radio transmissions to Poland, including those of the Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Europe, that the role they played in Poland's struggle for freedom "cannot even be described. Would there be earth without the sun?"25 In a 2002 interview, he again recalled the importance of the broadcasts and the drain of resources it caused Poland's communist regime to actively block and censor access. "To control the free flow of information, the Communists would have to increase the secret police by a factor of four. It would be a huge effort for police to control the channels you get on TV or the phone numbers you are allowed to dial. So technology helped end communism by bringing (in) information from the outside."26

Radio and television transmissions to Cuba can be similarly successful in helping to support a transition to democracy. Radio Marti was established by President Reagan in 1983 at the urging of this institution's founder and former Chairman, Jorge Mas Canosa, and began transmitting a signal to Cuba in 1985. The purpose was to emulate the work of RFE and VOA in the communist bloc by providing a source of news and information to the Cuban people. In 1990, Television Marti made its debut. The television station has never been able to transmit to a wide audience because the Cuban regime expends extensive resources in blocking its signal while the U.S. has failed to counter by employing technological advances in trying to overcome the jamming.

Radio and television transmissions to Cuba have a critical role to play in helping to precipitate democratic change. Yet through successive Administrations, a lack of proper oversight has allowed the Office of Cuba Broadcasting to veer off course. The General Accounting Office (GAO) recently documented some of the serious flaws that have led listenership ratings in Cuba to drop from a once impressive 70% to today's dismal 3% figure.²⁷ Prominent Cuban dissidents who represent an umbrella group called the "Agenda for a Transition" recently documented their own complaints regarding the content of programming and the quality of leadership at the Marti's. Dissident Vladimiro Roca stated that Radio Marti devotes over 80 percent of its programming to Miami issues and doesn't

 $^{^{23}\} Radio\ Free\ Europe:\ mission\ accomplished\ ,\ December\ 2003,\ The\ Weekly\ Standard,\ Arch\ Puddington$

²⁴ Setting the Record Straight: Radio Free Europe and the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, History and Public Policy Program Occasional Paper #3, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, October 2006 A.Ross Johnson, October 24 2006,

²⁵ The Washington Examiner, August 17, 2008, Editorial: Don't stop U.S. broadcasts to Russia and Georgia

²⁶Wired News, June 19, 2002, Lech Walesa: Tech Freedom Fighter, Julia Scheeres

²⁷ Broadcasting to Cuba: Actions Are Needed to Improve Strategy and Operations GAO-09-127 January 22, 2009

understand that its mission is to break the government's information monopoly about news in Cuba.²⁸

In order to restore OCB and help it implement its mission of serving as a conduit for objective news and information on Cuba and the world to the Cuban people, we recommend:

Lipgrade Radio and Television Marti. As the recent GAO Report explains, change at Radio and TV Marti is needed. These critical communication tools must return to their original purpose of disseminating truthful and balanced information and promoting democratic ideals to the people of Cuba. To that end, we recommend the establishment of an independent panel of experts to examine four specific issues: (1) the restructuring of the administration at the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, (2) the redesign of programming in order to increase the audience's knowledge of current events taking place within Cuba itself and focus their attention on the peaceful democratic activities of dissidents and opposition groups, (3) a technological overhaul to ensure that radio and television signals reach their target audience, overcoming the regime's attempts to block transmissions, and (4) explore the possibility of enhancing the mission of Radio and TV Marti programming to reach audiences throughout the Western hemisphere.

Rationale: Few things are more empowering than information. Just as Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe, with the direct support of the United States, played a key role in delivering freedom to Eastern Europe, Radio and TV Marti are essential to achieve freedom in Cuba. According to OCB reports, at one point nearly 70% of the Cuban population tuned in to Radio Marti. However, for the last several years the audience has been diminishing due to programming and management deficiencies. Now is the time to act to save and improve this immensely valuable tool in promoting democracy.

Telecommunications upgrades- The U.S. government should allow for the improvement, upgrading, and installation of telecommunications equipment that will facilitate increased telephone traffic between the United States and Cuba.

Rationale: Currently, calls to Cuba are subject to some of the highest international rates. We need to extend and improve all methods of direct communication that undermine Cuban regime-imposed censorship and that expose Cubans to news and information from abroad.

(iv) Apply Targeted Bilateral and Multilateral Diplomatic Efforts

Reestablish semi-annual migration talks.

²⁸ Knight Center for Journalism, CUBA/USA, Dissident Groups Boycott Radio/TV Marti for Placing Miami Over Cuba, January 21, 2009

Rationale: In 2004, the Bush Administration suspended semi-annual migration talks with the Cuban regime. The migration talks allowed for an opportunity to broach a wide range of issues that went beyond the discussion of visa allocation. The limited contact that has existed since then has been counterproductive in several ways. It has negatively impacted our ability to influence events; however limited that influence might be, it has closed down one of the few formal conduits of information that existed, and it has sent the wrong message to the international community.

Remove restrictions on CUBINT travel within the United States, contingent upon the Cuban government doing the same with USINT personnel inside Cuba.

Rationale: In 2004, the Bush Administration imposed restrictions on the travel of CUBINT and Cuba U.N. Mission personnel to a 25-mile radius surrounding their respective offices. The Cuban regime reciprocated by limiting USINT personnel movements to a 25-mile radius around USINT in Havana. The unintended consequence of this action has been that it has severely impacted the ability of USINT personnel to engage with the Cuban people, particularly those in the democratic opposition outside of the capital. Their interaction with members of the Cuban opposition and with the Cuban population as a whole is limited to those residing in Havana. This has resulted in the inability to provide adequate analysis of the situation on the ground.

Identify and open channels of communication with reform-minded individuals or groups in the military and government ranks

Rationale: In order to provide a powerful incentive to reformers within the regime to push for change, i.e. Government officials and members of the Cuban military who have not participated in crimes against the Cuban people, they must understand that the United States encourages their participation in a post-transition government. Such a clear message of support and friendship from the U.S. government will undoubtedly assist in strengthening any existing attempts at reform and promoting the emergence of new efforts.

Encourage, and develop international cooperation in support of Cuban civil society.

Rationale: Multilateral efforts by the international community will serve as additional sources of support to the Cuban people in building a civil society. Such cooperative international efforts resulted in successful peaceful transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe, South Africa, and Chile.

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