

CUBA: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON MILITARY PLANNING

A Monograph
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Aviation



19951024 129

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Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

AY 94-95

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE MAY 95		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED MEMORANDUM
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE CUBA: A STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON MILITARY PLANNING			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) LTC ROBERT A. HAMMERLEE, USA				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66007			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. ARMY COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF COLLEGE FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS 66007			10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution UNLIMITED			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words) SEE ATTACHED				
				
DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 5				
14. SUBJECT TERMS			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 55	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the social, political, economic, and military aspects of Cuba's national power in order to define the parameters that will govern the application of U.S. military power in a Cuban contingency.

The essence of a strategic assessment of Cuba comprises two phenomena. One is the diffusion of political power. The ruling elite is finding it increasingly difficult to control events to the extent that they once did. Power is shifting downward, being diffused to the other generational factions, the military, the church, and slowly, incrementally, to the people themselves. The second phenomenon is the acceleration of change throughout the country, driven primarily by the deterioration of the economy. As a result, the regime's traditional sources of legitimacy are disappearing. Unless the regime can revitalize the Cuban economy (which is doubtful), the prospect for a chaotic power succession is probable.

The study concludes that actions taken now, prior to the occurrence of convulsive violence, could allow the achievement of our political strategy without an armed intervention. The paper forwards the idea that the proactive development of a truly overarching grand strategy, military to military contacts, and the institution of an informational program, designed to allay historical fears, will significantly aid in the achievement of that goal. The organization and training of an Inter-American force should occur concurrently should intervention become unavoidable. Additionally, a new theater strategic concept should be considered. One that is focused on how best to shape change and achieve the fundamental goal of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Cuba. Certainly, the issue of destroying the Cuban military should be reconsidered; in deference to the role the Cuban military could play in providing post-succession stability and in the island's economic revitalization

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES

MONOGRAPH APPROVAL

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Title of Monograph: Cuba: A Strategic Analysis and its
Implications on Military Planning

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Accepted this 19th Day of May 1995

Accession For	
NTIS CRA&I	☒
DTIC TAB	☐
Unannounced	☐
Justification	
By _____	
Distribution /	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

ABSTRACT

The essence of Cuba's strategic assessment comprises two phenomena. One is the diffusion of political power. The ruling elite is finding it increasingly difficult to control events to the extent that they once did. Power is shifting downward, being diffused to the other generational factions, the military, the church, and slowly, incrementally, to the people themselves. This change is rupturing the Cuban Communist Party, creating the potential for a deep political struggle between increasingly confrontational factions. Crime, civil unrest, and opposition groups all portend a chaotic transition; only Fidel Castro holds the system together and his departure could occur at anytime.

The second phenomenon is the acceleration of change throughout the country, driven primarily by the deterioration of the economy. As a result, the regime's traditional sources of legitimacy are disappearing. The erosion of the Cuban social safety net, staggering unemployment, and the failure to provide basic living necessities have created a disillusioned, bitter, and angry population. The military, too, is showing signs of unrest. A growing number of military reformers are becoming increasingly resentful of the regime's population-control measures, its handling of African veterans, and the military's growing poverty. Unless the regime can revitalize the Cuban economy (which is doubtful), the prospect for an apocalyptic power succession is probable.

Cuba, in mimicking the Rwanda, Somalia, and the Haitian crises, is providing military planners with an adequate warning signal. The question is whether it is of enough significance to trigger beleaguered staffs into revisiting approved Operational Plans. In the case of the Cuba that exists in 1995, actions taken now, prior to the occurrence of convulsive violence, could allow the achievement of our political strategy without an armed intervention.

The proactive development of a truly overarching grand strategy, military to military contacts, and the institution of an informational program, designed to allay historical fears, will go a long way to the achievement of that goal. The organization and training of an Inter-American force should occur concurrently should intervention become unavoidable. Additionally, a new theater strategic concept should be considered. One that is focused on how best to shape change and achieve the fundamental goal of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Cuba. Certainly, the issue of destroying the Cuban military should be reconsidered; in deference to the role the Cuban military could play in providing post-succession stability and in the island's economic revitalization.

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Introduction

"The all-embracing power exercised by Castro and the apparent lack of possible 'heirs' to his rule, means that at the time of Castro's demise Cuba will plunge into a deep political struggle, accompanied by a violent, armed dispute among contending factions. The caudillo and charismatic orientation of his regime is likely to result in a power vacuum that presuppose violent confrontation. The factions which undoubtedly exist submerged within the armed forces, the government bureaucracy, the technocrats, and even within the Communist Party itself, will then assert themselves."¹

Jorge Mas Canosa,
President of the
Cuban-American National
Foundation

Cuba is in crisis. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent breakup of the Soviet Union has had a significant impact on Cuba. The government is facing the most serious economic crisis in its thirty-five year history and this crisis has impacted on every aspect of Cuban existence. The Cuban socialist state finds it increasingly difficult to govern its society. Shortages of consumer goods, food rationing, and unemployment are all contributing to the emergence of political discontent. In turn, the government is instituting increasingly repressive measures. An inability to predict political succession is also impacting on the uncertainty of Cuba's future. Castro's dominance and his intolerance of potential rivals has served to suppress the development of future leaders. As a consequence, Castro's immediate successor may very well find his primacy contested by a number of emerging second generation leaders. The most noted Cuban analysts agree that Cuba is in transition, but few can agree on the outcome. Regardless of the end product, the uncertainty of Cuba's future has increased the likelihood of U.S. military involvement.

This paper will answer the question: what is the current strategic environment of Cuba and how will this environment impact on any possible application of U.S. military

power on the island? The analysis will begin with an examination of the significant aspects of Cuban-U.S. foreign policy and the status of Cuba's strategic elements of power. From this examination, several considerations will emerge that must be taken into account in military planning, should armed intervention be necessary to achieve U.S. political objectives.

The paper concludes that the U.S. should prepare itself for an inevitable international assistance/military intervention in Cuba. It will establish that the United States should not intervene unilaterally in response to a humanitarian or an internal crisis. Instead, it will put forward several planning recommendations including that a regional, Inter-American force be established to assume the lead role in hemispheric crisis intervention and enhance to interoperability, language training, and unity of effort.

Geographic and Climatic Overview

Cuba is a long, narrow island approximately 1200 kilometers long and 191 kilometers wide at its broadest point. The island's 6,073 kilometer coastline is characterized by numerous bays, cliffs, sand and coral reefs, swamps, and mangroves. More than half of the island is flat or rolling agricultural-based terrain, with a median elevation of approximately 100 meters above sea level.

Cuba is the least mountainous of the Greater Antilles chain of islands; its three principle mountainous zones are separated by wide plains. The Sierra Maestra is Cuba's highest (and steepest) mountain system. Located adjacent to the southeastern coastline of the island, it stretches west from Guantanamo Bay for about 250 kilometers. The range contains Turquino Peak, the country's highest elevation at 2,180 meters. This mountain range is rugged, heavily dissected, and offers the best terrain on the island for guerrilla

operations. The other two mountain systems are located in Central Cuba (Sancti Spiritus and Cienfuegos Provinces) and the western highlands (Havana and Pinar del Rio Provinces). Numerous short, rapid rivers drain from these mountains.

Most of the country's 200 rivers flow northward or southward into the sea. Levels rise significantly during the rainy season (May-October), with seasonal flooding common. The longest river in Cuba is the Cauto River which originates near Santiago de Cuba and flows westward. Rivers are most numerous in the eastern provinces.

Climatically, Cuba is tropical with an average temperature of 77 degrees (F). There is little temperature variation and humidity averages 95 % at night and 65 % during the day. Average rainfall is fifty-five inches per year, with 75 % of the precipitation occurring between May and October. Visibility normally ranges between four and seven kilometers.²

Geostrategic Significance of Cuba

"Cuba is the key to the Gulf of Mexico, and also controls three entrances to the Caribbean-the Yucatan, Windward, and Mona Passages. . . between the three possible bases for attempted control of the Caribbean, no doubts can remain that Cuba is the most powerful, Jamaica next, and the Antilles least."³

Alfred Thayer Mahan

The Caribbean basin and Cuba have long been recognized as vital to the economic growth and security of the United States. Spain used the island as a base for its exploration of the southern U.S., England harassed U.S. shipping from her shores during the war of 1812, and the U.S. used the island as the hub for its anti-submarine warfare against German U-boats during World War II.⁴ The Soviets, too, recognized the importance of the island, particularly as a means to threaten the strategic rear of its cold war opponent.

The southern coast of the United States is its strategic rear. Fifty-six percent of all U.S. tanker service flows through gulf ports. Gramercy, Louisiana led all U.S. ports; with seven other gulf ports finishing in the country's top ten.⁵ These same ports are the primary Sea Ports of departure (SPOD) for U.S. armed forces during force projection operations. Additionally, the percentage of U.S. trade which utilizes the Caribbean trade routes is also substantial. Forty-eight percent of all U.S. foreign exports, moving via ship, flow through its southern ports and sixty-six percent of all imports flow over these routes.⁶ Additionally, five of the United States top trading partners are in the region. These include two in the top ten, Venezuela (5th) and Mexico (8th).⁷

Cuba continues to have the capability to interdict these routes and ports with either naval or air forces. Possessing three diesel submarines, hundreds of missile boats, special operations forces, and advanced Soviet fighters, Cuba can threaten or overtly attack shipping, ports, oil rigs, and other key facilities along the United States' southern coast.

U.S. - Cuban Foreign Policy

"Without Fidel Castro's advice and support, there would have been no Nicaraguan Sandinistas, no invasion of Grenada, no guerrilla movements from El Salvador to Uruguay to Chile, no destruction of democracy in Argentina and Chile, no Marxist Angola, Mozambique, or Ethiopia. In short, he devised virtually every twentieth-century technique with which the weak now fought the strong. From 1959 on, wherever the United States had a watershed foreign-policy crisis, Castro's formative hand could be found."⁸

Georgie Anne Geyer

U.S. foreign policy toward Cuba has always been associated with some degree of tension and controversy. The first major U.S. foreign policy decision concerning Cuba was the enactment in 1898 of the Teller Amendment that authorized U.S. intervention in Cuba's

war with Spain. The controversy over this amendment concerned the issue of whether the United States should annex Cuba after the war or whether Cuba should be granted her independence. After a lengthy and heated debate, the amendment stipulated that the post-hostility governing of the island would be left to the Cuban people.

Three years later, the Platt Amendment to the 1901 Army Appropriations Bill required that the Cuban Constitutional Convention agree to several preconditions as a prerequisite to the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the island. The amendment was controversial because it required Cuba to accept some limitations on its sovereignty; including the U.S. right to lease Guantanamo Naval Base. In addition, the amendment established the right of the U.S. to intervene in Cuban affairs to preserve Cuba's independence. The consequence of this right impacted significantly on future U.S.-Cuban relations.

The U.S. has occupied the island twice. First, from 1898 to 1902 and then again, from 1906 to 1909. In 1906, the Cuban government, under the provisions of the Platt amendment, requested U.S. intervention to defeat insurgents. Due to the refusal of the Cuban president to negotiate with the insurgents and his subsequent resignation, the U.S. established a provisional government. This step was a significant precedent, as the U.S. then recognized the demands of the insurgents rather than supporting and stabilizing the elected, democratic government. In addition, corruption became widespread. U.S. provisional government officials made millions at the expense of Cuba. In fact, in three years the provisional government managed to spend a treasury surplus of 23 million and to create a 50 million dollar bond indebtedness.⁹ The government also fostered an environment that enabled an inner circle of American and Cuban businessmen to make substantial fortunes. The roots of Cuba's history of corruption, repression, and stratified class structure can be traced to this provisional government, as can the creation of a new group of revolutionaries.

Following the 1906 precedent, several additional insurrections also targeted American property as a means to cause a U.S. intervention. Between 1902 and 1934, the U.S. intervened with military force seven times, either on the request of the government or to protect American property rights. The result of these recurring interventions was a groundswell of anti-U.S. sentiment sparked by a wealthy, corrupt U.S.-Cuban oligarchy, encroachments on Cuban sovereignty, and the perception that U.S. business was stealing the wealth of Cuba. Thus, from the beginning, U.S. affairs with Cuba, framed by the controversial Platt amendment, created a strong resentment among the Cuban population.

A more recent example of the U.S.'s inconsistent policy was the lack of support for President Prio in 1952. Prio, a devout anti-Communist and long time friend of the U.S., was the democratically elected president of Cuba. However, when former president and army officer, Fulgencio Batista staged a coup to overthrow the legitimate government, he obtained support from the U.S. ambassador. Again, the U.S. failed to show support for a democratic government and thereby failed to promote regional stability by assisting the constitutional government of Cuba.¹⁰

Since Castro's overthrow of the Batista regime in 1959, the objective of U.S. policy has finally remained consistent; specifically, the U.S. has sought to destabilize the Cuban government.¹¹ The tone of this policy was formulated during the final years of the Eisenhower administration and has essentially continued through eight presidents and thirty-five years. As Cuba established closer ties with the Soviet Union, the U.S.-Cuban relationship rapidly deteriorated. Eisenhower directed U.S. oil companies on the island not to process Soviet oil; causing Castro to nationalize the refineries. The U.S. responded by cutting off Cuba's access to the American sugar market. Finally, Eisenhower broke diplomatic ties on 3 January 1961, ten months after he had approved plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Although the invasion had been planned by the Eisenhower administration, the April 17, 1961 invasion took place during the Kennedy administration. Conducted by the 1500 CIA trained Cubans of the 2506 Brigade, the attack occurred on the south shore of Cuba. The ensuing battle represented the largest military engagement ever fought by the Cuban armed forces.¹² The landing encountered numerous problems from the beginning. Conducted at night, with limited air cover, at a poorly selected landing site, and without the element of surprise, the brigade was destroyed within 72 hours. Several Cuban experts have argued that U.S. support for the invasion, coupled with its failure to act decisively to ensure its success, gave the Soviets indications of a lack of U.S. resolve and served to accelerate their involvement in Cuba.¹³

The Cuban missile crisis in 1962 signified the next major policy turn for the Kennedy administration. Confronted with Soviet offensive weapons on the island, President Kennedy blockaded Cuba and demanded the withdrawal of the weapons. The Soviets complied, but in return obtained assurances that the U.S. would not invade Cuba. The result was a Communist regime, firmly entrenched, just ninety miles from U.S. borders. Additionally, 1962 saw the imposition of the U.S. embargo on Cuba. The initial objective of the complete economic and political blockade of Cuba was to "diminish Cuban support for insurgency abroad and to offset the subsidies the island received from the former Soviet Union."¹⁴

During the Carter Administration attempts were made to soften the U.S. policy to Cuba. In 1977, U.S.-Cuban interest sections were established in each respective capital. Following Washington's lead, eleven other Latin American nations also reestablished diplomatic relations. However, the Carter administration's efforts were slowed by Cuban military deployments to Ethiopia and finally, stopped with the Mariel boatlift. The boatlift

resulted in the emigration of over 129,000 Cubans; thereby creating a significant drain on Florida's social services and economy.

The Reagan years returned to more traditional U.S.-Cuban policies, although there was some movement on such issues as immigration, broadcasting problems, and the Cuban withdrawal from Angola.¹⁵ The administration increased its psychological campaign with increased air time for Radio Marti; a government sponsored, Spanish language broadcast targeted at the Cuban population. Travel restrictions were also imposed, again with the goal of limiting the island's access to hard currency. U.S. policy objectives were now centered around four major concerns: the use of Cuban territory as a forward base for Soviet military power; Cuba's continued role in aiding guerrillas in the Third World; the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Africa; and, the existence of a repressive dictatorship and the denial of fundamental rights to the Cuban population.¹⁶

In 1990 the Bush administration added three requirements to normalizing relations: Cuba must hold supervised, democratic elections; transition to a market economy; and reduce its armed forces. In citing this increased pressure on the Cuban government, Gillian Gunn, a noted Cuban expert, characterizes the policy as the "least likely (*option*) to further the cause of democratization or to protect long-term U.S. interests."¹⁷ A further tightening of the long-standing embargo occurred in 1992 with the enactment of the Cuban Democracy Act. Essentially, the bill prohibited foreign subsidiaries of U.S. companies from trading with Cuba. Additionally, it suspended foreign assistance to any country that provides assistance to Cuba and places sanctions on vessels calling at Cuban ports.¹⁸ Again, critics of the act believe that it strengthens Castro's position by allowing him to blame Cuba's failures on the U.S. and by justifying his demands for continued revolutionary sacrifice.

The U.S. policy toward Cuba continues to be based on the embargo. The objectives of the embargo have not changed since the Bush years: reduction of the Cuban military, reform of the economy, and providing fundamental human rights to the Cuban population. The policy is, however, simultaneously attempting to influence the Cuban population through a program designed to create greater political awareness and establish confidence in U.S. efforts. Enhancements in electronic communications, such as telephone and fax service, broadcasts by Radio, and now TV Marti, inform the Cuban population about internal conditions and the outside world. This policy is also supported by increased humanitarian donations to Cuban non-governmental organizations. Alexander F. Watson, the U.S. Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs claims, "This two track policy . . . meets our strategic as well as our humanitarian interests as a nation." He goes on to say, "These two tracks are clearly complementary. . . we must make it clear that the regime's denial of basic human rights is and will remain unacceptable to the United States, while still reaching out to the Cuban people."¹⁹

However, it appears that all U.S. governmental efforts are aimed primarily at destabilizing the communist regime. As the long awaited transition of power from Castro to his successor occurs, will it be peaceful or chaotic as Jorge Mas Canosa predicts? Certainly, a violent transition would increase an already significant refugee flow. In fact, the United States' fundamental concern after Castro's demise is to prevent another mass exodus of refugees. Robert S. Gelbard, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs, clearly articulated this as a vital interest:

"It is *vital to U.S. interests* that Cuba's transition to democracy be peaceful. A violent transition would carry severe risks. . . . from the U.S. point of view, convulsive change in Cuba carries the risk of a second Mariel boatlift or similar migration. We don't anticipate such an event now.

However, were such an event to take place, we would *act according to contingency plans* to prevent it from taking place. . . . "20

Continuation of the traditional hard-line policy by the Clinton administration carries a degree of risk. Certainly, the policy continues to isolate Castro, particularly from the hard currency his regime desperately needs. However, the embargo, tightened in 1992, has become an increasingly heavy burden for the Cuban people. Shortages of consumer goods have created a growing discontent in the population. Castro, an expert at turning adversity to his advantage, continues to blame the U.S. for the hardships. The result is that a frustrated population that has historically been anti-U.S. is now raising a new generation which will also be alienated from the U.S.. As frustration turns to desperation, the potential of Mas Canosa's violent and catastrophic transition increases.

This tension raises a number of interesting problems for military planners. One economic result of the embargo is a substantial reduction in Cuban defense expenditures. Fuel rationing, a virtual standstill in military procurement, and most importantly, considerable training and maintenance shortfalls, have all contributed to reducing the readiness of the Cuban Armed Forces (FAR). The social reality of the embargo, though, is a frustrated and increasingly desperate population, capable of violent revolution, with its resultant stream of refugees. Deputy Assistant Secretary Gelbard has indicated that to prevent another mass exodus from Cuba, the United States will intervene with its military; just as it has nine other times in this century. This time, however, U.S. forces will face an anti-U.S. population that is extremely capable of armed resistance.

The Strategic Environment

The People

Since the French Revolution war has become the business of the people. Clausewitz described war as a trinity, composed of the government, the military, and finally, the people. To the people he attributed "primordial violence, hatred, and enmity," which together should be regarded as "blind natural force." Determining the impact of the Cuban population on military operations requires an examination of the island's natural force.

The legacy of the 11 million Cubans who populate Cuba can be traced primarily to Spanish settlers and workers imported to assist in the sugar cane harvest. The natives that comprised the island's original population were destroyed during the first three hundred years of colonial rule,²¹ leaving an ethnic mixture of white (54%), black and mulatto (45%), and Chinese (1%). The result is a blending of Spanish and African cultures, influenced by the distinguishing traits of the Cuban culture. The ethnic mix significantly changed in 1959 and subsequent years. The migration of the predominately white middle and upper classes after Castro's accession to power changed the ethnic mixture to 62% black and mulatto, 37% white, and 1 % Chinese.²²

The Cuban population is young and for the most part urbanized. More than 55 percent of the population is under thirty-five and hence born after Castro and the revolution. In fact, youths aged fourteen to twenty-nine make up 45 percent of the island's working people²³. However, the power lies in the hands of the older generation, the fidelistas and raulistas (those that served under the command of Fidel and his brother Raul during the guerrilla campaign). The annual growth rate is currently one percent. About seventy percent of the population is urban, with Havana (2.1 million) being the largest population

center. Another 1.3 million people live in the remaining five cities with populations of over 150,000: Santiago, Camaguey, Holguin, Guantanamo, and Santa Clara²⁴.

Cuba has placed a great deal of emphasis on both health and education since 1959.

Establishing a national goal of at least a ninth grade education for every citizen, Castro developed a system of schools to achieve his goal.²⁵ He created a substantial network of universities and research centers that has produced over 350,000 university students. Medicine is one of the most preferred professions and Cuba has made great strides toward the goal of placing a doctor in every neighborhood, school, and factory.²⁶ Cuban expenditures on health and education compared with Latin American averages at the end of the 1980's were almost twofold in education and 2.6 times in health care.²⁷ The results are some of the best health and education statistics in the hemisphere: a life expectancy of 76 years (equal to the US); infant mortality of 12 per 1000 (better than Costa Rica); and a literacy rate of 99 percent.²⁸

Over 85 percent of Cuba's population is Catholic making the church the largest organized religion. Adoption of a constitutional amendment in 1992, changing the state from atheist to secular, enabled religious believers to belong to the Cuban Communist Party (PCC). This resulted in a fivefold increase in baptisms and an expanding popularity of the church. This expanding popularity may allow the church to emerge as a potential instrument of political change. In 1990, Cuba's Catholic Bishops issued a letter demanding democratic reforms. In 1993, the church again requested a national dialogue to save Cuba from social and economic collapse. Both moves infuriated the regime, leading Castro to take a number of steps to reduce the church's growing control over the population.

Another growing influence on Cuban society are Afro-Cuban religions. These religious cults have been handed down from generation to generation, imported to the island

with the slave trade. Traditionally, the practitioners of these cults were predominately black, working class Cubans, but since the white, upper class migration of the sixties, Afro-Cuban cultism is becoming increasingly popular throughout the entire population.

There are three major cults: the Santeria, the Palo Monte, and the Abakua. Most important of these is the Santeria. Actually a blend of Catholicism and African gods, practitioners of the religion offer bird and animal blood along with other 'gifts' to satiate the gods and receive their vision of the future. In his book Castro's Final Hour, Oppenheimer quotes the Vicar of Havana: "To understand Cuba, one has to understand Santeria. Cubans are very superstitious, magical people. Unless you know what they believe the Orishas (gods) have told them, you won't understand their behavior."²⁹ Recognizing the opportunity to manipulate the population by control of the religions, Castro has directed his intelligence services to infiltrate the cults and attempt to coop the priests. His success has been phenomenal. Some experts estimate that as many as half of all Santeria priests are counter-intelligence assets.³⁰

The reason for the Castro regime's almost total preoccupation with control of the masses and maintenance of order has been, of course, the withdrawal of the support of the former Soviet Union and the subsequent sharp deterioration in the Cuban standard of living. Castro's legitimacy has been hinged to the social safety net that he established to satisfy the basic needs of the people. By providing jobs, food, clothing, health care, education, transportation, child-care, and social security he insured the contentment and support of the people. Now, food is scarce, consumer goods are almost nonexistent, and unemployment is staggering.

In 1990, a "Special Period for Times of Peace" program was announced to deal with shrinking Soviet oil supplies (90 percent of the island's oil). The goal was to cut state

energy consumption by 50 percent. Bicycles were substituted for public transportation, oxen for farm tractors, and many of the country's factories were either shutdown or put on a reduced production schedule. Power outages became commonplace and were increased to eight hours a day in December 1992. Imports of air conditioners and other energy consuming appliances were suspended. The result of the 'special period' was an immediate and substantial decline in the quality of life of the working class.

The quality of life issues were compounded with the tightening of the U.S. embargo in 1992. The number of basic food items, rationed since 1981, grew to seventy-three,³¹ and long lines became a way of life. Shortages of personal care products, such as soap, shaving cream, deodorants, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, and toilet paper resulted in a significant drop in personal hygiene. The health care system also began disintegrating. Clinics and hospitals could not receive basic supplies, medicines, or equipment. Power outages hampered operations. Filth, hunger, and dwindling health care combined to create an environment ripe for disease and infections; all of which contributed to the growing disenchantment of the people with the government.

Another significant social problem is unemployment and underemployment. Virtually nonexistent in the early seventies, unemployment now runs over ten percent, with underemployment exceeding 40 percent.³² Over 50,000 soldiers were returned from Africa; tens of thousands of graduate students, construction workers, and civilian contractors were returned from former Soviet bloc countries; and a similar number of doctors, teachers, and military advisors were returned from Central American countries such as Nicaragua, Panama, and El Salvador. Experts estimate that over 100,000 people reentered Cuba's domestic job market in the early 1990's searching for jobs at a time when opportunities were

shrinking at an alarming rate.³³ The revolution created a mass of educated youths; a mass that is now a large, increasingly discontented, percentage of the population.

The growing discontent and internal tension is evident through a number of indicators. Divorce rates are growing rapidly, worker absenteeism is high, and a sense of hopelessness pervades the society. A population with access to a large number of weapons and with substantial military training is turning increasingly to crime and violence. Dissident groups are beginning to emerge and public confidence in the regime is swiftly waning. Probably the most illustrative, single indicator of the population's hopelessness is the number of illegal migrants that risk the shark infested waters of the Florida Straits to escape the island.

To counter the growing unrest and to assure the maintenance of order, the government has instituted a number of measures to control the population. With an informant network that is equal of that of the former East Germany, the government has moved quickly to stifle dissent. Rapid Action Brigades have been formed.³⁴ Similar to Noriega's Dignity Battalions, these 'citizen action groups' have become the regime's primary means of harassing and intimidating dissidents. Neighborhood committees, known as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, were revitalized to continue reporting counterrevolutionary acts and to provide a political education to the masses.³⁵ Vigilante patrols were also established to help the police in their fight against crime.³⁶ The results were predictable: numerous human rights activists and political dissidents imprisoned, a population consumed by fear, and the average citizen so preoccupied with daily survival that their is little time to organize opposition to an increasingly oppressive regime.

Clearly, Cuban society is changing in important and potentially destabilizing ways. The loss of the social safety net and the governments inability to meet the basic needs of

the people has resulted in the genesis of political opposition and of the mobilization of the masses against the regime. Disillusionment, bitterness, and discontent have created the specter of a mass uprising by a youthful and educated population with a substantial degree of military training. However, Castro's rapid institution of increasingly repressive measures has kept an opposition movement from jelling. Strong counterintelligence and informant structures have been effective in deterring organized resistance and fostering an environment of fear. However, if the social net continues to disintegrate and societal institutions, such as the Catholic church, rally the support of the masses against the regime, a violent transition of power could result.

Political

"... a two-tiered policy-making process exists in Cuba. On one level, Fidel decides; on the other, the state apparatus formulates policies. In the final analysis, if Castro's decision does not concur, or cannot be reconciled, with that of the bureaucracy, his word prevails."³⁷

Sheldon B. Liss

Political Structure

Cuba is a totalitarian state. The head of state is Fidel Castro, who is President of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers, First Secretary of the Communist Party, and Commander-in Chief of the Armed Forces. Castro exercises control over nearly all aspects of Cuban life through a network of directorates ultimately responsible to him through the Cuban Communist Party (PCC).

Executive and administrative power is vested in the fifty member Council of Ministers, headed by the president. In addition to Castro, there are ten other vice presidents on the council. Legislative authority rests with the National Assembly of People's Power,

which sits twice a year and consists of 481 members. When the assembly is not in session, it is represented by the thirty-one member Council of State. Cuba has no independent judiciary. The constitution specifically subordinates the judiciary to the National Assembly and in turn to the Council of State. The People's Supreme Court is the highest judicial body, and oversees a system of fourteen regional courts, representing each one of the provinces. Its members are appointed by the National Assembly and it exercises appellate review and original jurisdiction over cases involving high-level officials and state security.

The PCC is Cuba's only legal political party. It controls all government positions, including judicial offices. Generally, party membership is a prerequisite for high-level official positions and professional advancement. Modeled after the former Soviet Communist Party, the PCC is headed by a thirteen member Politburo and a nine member Secretariat. The structure of the party is pyramidal and its 14,000 cells serve as the basic organizational unit of the PCC.³⁸

The Political Climate

"In a succession crisis, the Cuban military could emerge as an institution largely independent of the Party, and as the decisive player in determining succession outcomes, whether or not the succession process is contained within the Party."³⁹

Edward Gonzalez

A political transition has already begun in Cuba. Nationalism has overtaken Marxist-Leninist dogma as the doctrinal basis of the regime;⁴⁰ Raul Castro and the military have been given a much more dominant role over the PCC;⁴¹ and a younger, more progressive, generation of leaders are slowly working their way into key positions.⁴² Only Fidel Castro remains an obstacle to true reform.

Castro's presence is pivotal to the stability of the country. He continues to be the key to the legitimacy of his regime and he alone maintains its cohesiveness in spite of the island's deteriorating condition. For most Cubans he alone, represents their revolution. Not only is he the President, he is also a national hero and icon. Many still recall life under the repression of Batista. Now, under Fidel, their quality of life remains far better than most of Latin America. The 'lider maximo' alone made Cuba's armed forces one of the most powerful in the hemisphere and it is he who stands up against the Yankee imperialists to the north. He has developed a strong nationalistic pride and in so doing he has acquired a deep personal loyalty from his people.⁴³

Although Castro never hesitates to leverage this loyalty, he continues to augment it with measures to maintain continued control over the population and government. His intolerance of potential rivals and his repression of any potential opposition are two of the most important of these. A researcher characterizes the situation succinctly, "Castro has given his opponents two options: silence or exile."⁴⁴

This intolerance of rivals and opposition has crippled the process by which a Castro replacement would normally emerge. The most recent candidate that had the backing of the powerful armed forces and was popular with the masses was General Ochoa. His execution for allegedly smuggling drugs and the resulting purge of his supporters once again eliminated a potential heir. Consequently, says Dr. Ed Gonzalez, Cuba's leadership is characterized "by its weakness, subservience, and relative obscurity."⁴⁵ He goes on to state, "it is from among this undistinguished top leadership group that Castro's immediate successor most likely will emerge,"⁴⁶ and among that group there is not an alternative political leader with a credible program. Of the possible candidates, most experts believe that his brother Raul is the most likely succession alternative. However, there is some question concerning

his leadership capabilities and whether other factions within the government would follow him or challenge him for control.

Undoubtedly, Castro's departure from the scene will precipitate a significant change in Cuba and his departure could occur at any time, as he is rapidly approaching the 70 year bench mark. Luis Aguilar, a professor of history at Georgetown University, states: "any weakening of Castro's health or mental capacity, not to mention his death, will provoke a deep and probably insurmountable crisis for the present Cuban elite, whose power depends almost entirely on Castro's presence and prestige."⁴⁷ Additionally, the fact that his regime has yet to transfer political power from one leadership generation to another makes the direction of political change anything but clear.

Three distinct leadership generations, according to Gillian Gunn, may compete for leadership in a post-Castro succession: the old guard, emerging official leadership, and the next generation.⁴⁸ Generally, the old guard are from Fidel's cadre of revolutionaries and are opposed to any radical changes in the status quo; they are Stalinist in their approach to reform. The emerging official leadership is generally regarded as the newer 'high profile' political leaders. They are in their late thirties to late forties and have claimed the middle ground, pursuing a moderate, compromising approach between the old guard and the next generation. The next generation is comprised of prominent academics and mid-level PCC and government functionaries. These are the reformists, advocates of new political and economic models, regardless of the revolution's ideological legacy.⁴⁹ At the moment, the old guard has the upper hand, although the emerging leaders are gaining ground. If the economy continues to disintegrate, though, the new generation may take on an increasingly important role.

Regardless of the outcome of succession, the military will play an important part in determining who ascends to the throne. It is quite possible that the military would stage a coup if they felt their institution threatened by revolution or total economic collapse. If it were to come to power, the FAR would probably support reforms; particularly if political reforms would reduce political tensions and establish a functioning civilian economy. The FAR wants an economy that is capable both of absorbing military personnel and of generating a hard currency flow. With such an economy defense expenditures could be increased. Nonetheless, the FAR would oppose, and possibly take steps to counter, any changes that threatened its existence.

The Economy

"Cut off from its former socialist commercial partners and the United States, and with an extremely limited amount of foreign exchange with which to make purchases in international markets, the Cuban economy can only continue to deteriorate."⁵⁰

Sergio Diaz-Briquets

Cuba is in the worst economic crisis in the history of Castro's thirty-five reign. The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union and its association of eastern bloc countries has had a devastating impact on Cuba. An annual Soviet aid package of 8.3 billion dollars, subsidized oil, and favorable trade relationships all came to a halt in 1991. Critical industrial, raw material, and food imports from Russia were reduced by 70 percent.⁵¹ During the period from 1989 to 1992, Cuba's economy declined by over 40 percent.⁵²

Since 1990, several steps have been taken by the regime to overhaul the economic system and pull the country out of its current economic depression. The first step was the

previously mentioned 'Special Period in a Time of Peace;' a second step was to try to attract foreign investment, particularly in tourism, biotechnology, oil exploration, and the nickel industry. Subsequent steps have included the dollarization of the economy, legalization of self-employment in several categories of trades and services, and the conversion of state farms into autonomous cooperatives in order to raise production.⁵³ All of these steps, however, have failed to halt the continuing deterioration of economic conditions.

Castro is now faced with two options. First, he can choose to continue piecemeal economic reforms. These avoid a transition to a market economy, adhere to the communist ideology, and most importantly, protect the political power base of the ruling elites. The downside is that the steps taken so far have not slowed the ever increasing downward spiral of the economy. In fact, several of these steps have contributed to the growing unrest of the island's population and its military.⁵⁴

The other option is to institute a rational, market driven, economic policy. This course of action would require a radical change in the political and economic landscape of Cuba. Privatization and reintegration into the global market economy would create a new ruling socioeconomic elite. Social programs for subsidized health care, education, and retirement would become self-sustaining or would cease to exist; the termination of such popular programs would cause further public discontent in Cuba. The communist party and the conservative hard-liners that currently control Cuba would have to accept a diminished role as the younger generation of reformers gained influence. Overwhelmingly, Cuba experts agree that, in the short term, implementation of this option is unlikely. However, Cuba's economic revitalization and the continuation of the government's legitimacy is inextricably linked to a radical change in the country's economic policies.

Recently, Castro has turned to the military for a possible compromise. As an alternative to privatization, he has asked the army to take a principle role in reorganizing the economy. In pursuing this option he is not threatened by any loss of control because any hard currency that results flows back into the coffers of the ruling elite. Gillian Gunn, as quoted by Dominguez, calls this step "anticipatory Sandinization" of certain state enterprises.⁵⁵ Dr. Dominguez goes on to explain the concept:

"After the February 1990 elections, the Sandinista government transferred property to its own cadres in reward for their services. There were no competitive bids for the property. There was no recognition of alternative property claims. No criteria of economic efficiency or developmental objectives were applied. The transfer of property from the state to private persons was justified in political terms. Such as a number of quasi private firms, closely linked to the state, including their use of what had been part of the public patrimony in their business. As a practical matter, the state formally remains the shareholder but the rights of that shareholder are exercised by individuals who serve, in effect, as the state's trustees. In their form of operation and control over the use of profits, these firms have become something other than mere state enterprises."⁵⁶

The most prominent task assigned to the army has been to increase food production and distribution. Experts now believe that over 50 percent of the country's food production comes from military farms.⁵⁷ They have reopened farmer's markets, reduced theft, and enhanced distribution. Although food supply still does not meet demand, it has increased substantially in the last year. Additionally, the Army's presence can be seen in virtually every other aspect of the economy. Construction companies are now run by military engineers and are building new hotels for the expanding tourist industry. Gaviota, one of the largest tourist agencies on the island, is military run and operates buses, airlines, hotels, marinas, and hunting preserves. Hard currency department stores are also managed by military officers.

In each case, the Army is using free market policies, including bonuses and productivity incentives, to get things done.⁵⁸ The military leadership is attempting to make the FAR the island's most progressive institution. Freed quotes one diplomat as saying, "It still falls far short of free enterprise, and it doesn't yet signal a switch to capitalism, but compared to what was going on, it is a hopeful change."⁵⁹

These steps have another interesting sidebar. They enhance the diminished prestige of the FAR and increasingly make the military the country's most efficient and powerful institution; an institution that is likely to survive any transition, be it peaceful or chaotic. Were the FAR to cease to exist, however, such as in the case of a military defeat, every FAR operated component of the Cuban economy would come to an immediate halt.

Cuba's economic prospects are not good. Last year's sugar harvest, which accounts for 75% of export earnings, was the lowest in three decades; the country's physical and productive infrastructure continues to deteriorate; and, without major reform, large scale foreign investment is unlikely. The regime's decision to maintain the state's centralized control over economic decision making and its piecemeal reforms are rapidly undermining Castro's bases of support. Cubans with access to dollars are becoming a new privileged class, while members of the communist party and the military are, by lack of access to these dollars, being penalized for their loyalty. The result is disillusionment and increasing social unrest.

The Cuban Military

"... behavior in any given society tends to be stable and only changes over very long periods of time. Even after major disturbances and periods of shock, there is a tendency toward resuming some degree of traditional stability in the general environment. Behavior will settle down into

traditional patterns. In the case of Cuba, the military has been the pre-dominant force in society for close to 500 years."⁶⁰

Rafael Fermoselle, The Evolution of the Cuban Military: 1492-1986

Military men and their institutions have played a significant role in Cuba's history and continue to do so today. With few exceptions, Cuba has been governed by soldiers since Columbus first discovered the island in 1492. Its colonial history began with Spain using the island as a base from which to explore, conquer, and govern the new world. Although Spanish domination of the island lasted over 400 years, other countries also exerted their influence during this period. England seized control of the island in 1762 and, in the year the British military governed the island, provided Cuba with sanitation, a police service, and a criminal justice system. Fifty years later, the British military once again used Cuba; this time to raid U.S. shipping and ports during the War of 1812. England's use of the island for attacks on the U.S. mainland began a series of confrontations between Spain and the U.S.(due to Spain allowing the Brits to use the island); confrontations that finally culminated in the Spanish-American War and Cuba's independence.⁶¹

Cuba's colonial history has had three major influences on present-day Cuban society. First, it created a strong heritage of Spanish traditions and culture. Second, and more importantly, it produced a Cuban ethos rich in militarism. Third, it fathered a caudillistic leadership firmly wedded to the concept that the maintenance of power is directly correlated to the control of strong armed forces. This ethos and caudillism allowed Fidel Castro to take an ill-equipped, untrained group of guerrillas and turn it into one of the most powerful armed forces in the hemisphere.

Today, with the exception of the U.S. military, the Cuban armed forces are the best equipped, best trained, and most combat-tested force in the region. It has at its disposal

hundreds of advanced combat aircraft and helicopters, three attack submarines, three blue water frigates, two amphibious landing ships, dozens of smaller missile and torpedo attack boats, mine-warfare ships, an impressive network of air defense radars and surface to air missiles, and twenty-six active, Armor, Mechanized, and Infantry Divisions. Cuba has proven its capability and willingness to employ its weaponry around the world and its leaders are tempered by the fire of combat.

Despite the breakup and subsequent withdrawal of military support by the former Soviet Union, Cuba continues to remain the region's second largest military, surpassed only by Brazil. The country persists in spending more per capita on its armed forces than any other nation-state in the hemisphere, reportedly spending over ten per cent of its 1989 budget on defense.⁶² Cuba's fifteen defense factories are still producing ammunition, mines, light weapons, and repairing tanks, planes, and other heavy equipment. Work is also continuing on a nation-wide network of tunnels designed to protect against air and naval strikes and to serve as a base from which to conduct guerrilla war.⁶³ Most importantly, Cuba's population remains mobilized and prepared to defend against any potential invader.

Over time, however, the prospects for the Cuban military, better known as the Fuerza Armadas Revolucionarias (FAR) are bleak. Most of the equipment is now old and the Soviet withdrawal of support is significantly impacting on the readiness and training of the FAR. Cuba has not received any new equipment from Moscow since 1990 nor any spare parts since 1991.⁶⁴ Fuel and ammunition shortages have resulted in the storage of a number of fighting systems and ships, an extensive reduction in air force training sorties, and a transition to sub-caliber devices for tank gunnery training. Trucks have been replaced with bicycles and horse drawn carts.⁶⁵ Budget reductions have precipitated a 30-40 percent reduction in its standing army and self-sufficiency in food production, forcing units

to grow food rather than train.⁶⁶ Assessments of little reduction in the island's overall defense capability may have some merit, though, as fourteen of the island's twenty-six active divisions are infantry and hence are less effected by the austerity measures. However, the capabilities of air, naval, and mechanized units have been significantly degraded.

Controlled by the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR), there are three major services of the FAR: the Army (ER), the Air Force and Air Defense (DAAFAR), and the Navy (MGR). Prior to force reductions, FAR strength estimates stood at 178,000. The Army comprises 81% of the total or approximately 145,000 (includes 15,000 ready reserves) soldiers. The Air Force's personnel figures are estimated at 18,500 or 10%, while the Navy roughly stands at 14,500 (includes 1000 marines).⁶⁷

Organizationally, the FAR is divided into three major geographical commands. Western command, headquartered in Havana, covers the capital and the provinces of Havana and Pinar del Rio. The Central Command headquarters is located in Matanzas and covers the provinces of Matanzas, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos, and Sancti Spiritus. While the Eastern Command is responsible for the provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo, Granma, Holguin, Las Tunas, Camaguey and Ciego de Avila. Its headquarters is located at Holguin. The Isle of Youth (Isla de la Juventud) has the status of an autonomous military region.⁶⁸

The FAR, in its metamorphic switch from a guerrilla army to a standing army, has adopted Soviet military doctrine that stresses offensive, combined arms operations supported by massed artillery. Using the principles of speed, maneuver, and initiative, the ground commander attempts to outflank or penetrate into the operational depths of the opponent. However, in the case of the FAR, the focus is on division operations and below.⁶⁹

The U.S. invasions of Grenada and Panama, coupled with the 1980 Soviet statement that they were unwilling to fight in Cuba, has forced Castro to focus his doctrine more towards defending the island from attack.⁷⁰ The decisive defeat of Iraq by the U.S. led coalition has accelerated this process. Cuban military doctrine is now increasingly becoming a blend of the conventional mindset and guerrilla warfare. According to Fidel Castro, "the defense capability of our Revolution depends upon combining the principles of military science of conventional warfare with the doctrine of organizing and preparing the population to launch, if necessary, the unconventional 'War of All the People'."⁷¹ The doctrine of the 'War of the People' envisions defending the island with an armed and trained population that supports, reinforces, or acts independently of the FAR.⁷²

To arm and train the population, Castro formed the Territorial Militia Troops or MTT. Styled after the Vietnamese concept of guerrilla struggle, this new organization continues to foster the garrison-state mentality that Castro so desperately seeks. The MTT, composed of approximately 1.5 million civilian volunteers, has the primary mission of fighting a war of attrition against a U.S. invasion in the hope of inflicting enough casualties to drain U.S. popular and congressional support. Additional missions include intelligence reporting, resupply, route and installation security, obstacle emplacement, and defense against airborne, air assault, and amphibious landings.⁷³ The following quote succinctly describes the doctrine's operational concept:

"In the final scenario, Cuba is totally occupied and wages a protracted war of resistance by the 'entire' people in the cities and the countryside. This involves ambushes, sabotage, sniping, and so on, by women, youth, old men, even children. The enemy can be superior to us in a conventional-type war, but he will never be able to face efficiently the struggle of an entire nation, because he would need millions of men to do that and would suffer millions of casualties in so doing. We have organized the country from one end to the other for all types of struggle, even for a situation of total occupation of the country."⁷⁴

Fidel Castro

The basic organization of the MTT follows the general military pyramidal concept, with ten volunteers forming a squad and squads forming platoons, platoons forming companies, and so on. Units are regionally and municipality based and fall within one of Cuba's 1300 defense zones. Each zone is controlled, not by the FAR, but by a defense council headed by the local First Secretary of the Communist Party (PCC). The MTT has its own chain of command and officer corps selected from its membership. At division and regimental level, though, regular FAR officers command MTT units.

Although MTT forces are said to be subordinate to the FAR, the reality is that the local PCC leadership is in charge. This creates several problems in implementing Cuba's new warfighting doctrine, in particular the problem of command and control. Shortages of communication equipment, limited mobility, non-professional, part-time leadership, and insufficient training all contribute to an inability of the FAR to synchronize MTT operations. Although the FAR will undoubtedly take advantage of MTT contributions, it will be difficult to combine static, light infantry, MTT unit operations with the offensively minded FAR. In fact, several experts believe that the formation of the MTT may have been driven by political and population-controlling considerations and by the perceived need of Castro to develop a counterweight to the power, influence, and prestige of the FAR.

The need for a counterweight to the military arose from the conflict that developed between the FAR and Castro in at least two areas. First, opposition arose concerning Cuba's Angolan involvement. Second, the FAR opposed the decision to build a communist-party organization within the military. As in the case of the formation of the MTT, this move was also perceived to be a control measure to stem the growing autonomy of the military.⁷⁵

Military opposition concerning Cuba's involvement in Angola resulted from Castro's inclination to command military operations from Havana. Reports indicate that during some key battles, such as the defense of Cuito Cuanavale, Fidel spent as much as 80% of his time planning each Cuban move. The general officers in command became increasingly frustrated with orders that did not take into account current situations and conditions.⁷⁶ There was also a growing discontent among the generals over the treatment of the 50,000 veterans returning from the war.⁷⁷

The decision to build a communist-party organization within the military also encountered significant opposition. Institutionally, the FAR has always been Cuba's primary pillar of strength. The FAR, not the PCC, was the direct descendant of the guerrilla army that overthrew Batista, and whose top leaders were the heroes and legends of the revolution. It was soldiers from the FAR who assumed control of the top government positions in the 1960's and 1970's. Castro turned to the organization and leadership of the military, once again, to attain his sugar production goals. Finally, it was the military that exported Castro's vision of revolution throughout Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa.⁷⁸ Thus, when Castro tried to reinforce the PCC's influence within the armed forces by requiring party membership for a successful career, military hard-liners took offense. Military leaders were concerned about the decision to reduce military representation in the Central Committee and about the possibility of losing the military professionalism that had made the FAR one of the most prestigious militaries in the hemisphere.

The rift between Castro and the military, resulted in the 1989 trial of Division General Arnaldo Ochoa and fourteen other senior officials. Ochoa, Cuba's most decorated and respected combat soldier, was convicted along with three other officers for allegedly smuggling cocaine. In reality, Castro used the drug trafficking charge as an opportunity to crack

down on senior leaders who were becoming increasingly vocal and represented a reform minded movement that was gaining strength within the military.⁷⁹ The Ochoa trial eliminated a potential rival and reaffirmed Castro's authority over the military; however, this authority now resulted from coercion, rather than from the loyalty granted to a charismatic leader.

The Ochoa incident and several key defections of Cuban military men demonstrated to the Castro brothers the growing unrest of the military. One top Cuban pilot who defected described the situation, "The military's growing poverty has damaged morale. Unlike civilians, soldiers cannot have U.S. dollars, work on their own, receive foreign packages or buy and sell goods."⁸⁰ Damian Fernandez, an expert on Cuba from the University of Miami, indicates that the pilot is describing the preconditions necessary for a revolt by the Cuban military. He goes on to say, "The Cuban military was pampered with special privileges at one point. Now they are being discriminated against economically . . ."⁸¹ A European defense expert describes the situation as: "There exists a new generation of military leaders, now lieutenant colonels and majors, that take pride in their profession and in their institution. They grew up after the revolution and are not emotionally tied to it or the communist party."⁸² These reformers, products of General Ochoa, do not want to see their institution destroyed. For the first time in thirty-five years, military loyalty to the Castro brothers is questionable.

The continuation of loyalty by military officers to Fidel Castro and to the revolution is essential for his political control. Without it, effective control is problematic. In recent months, several steps have been taken to regain the support of the military and highlight the importance of the FAR as an institution. First, and most consequential, is the Army's new role as the overriding force in reorganizing the economy. Additionally, the

Army leadership, as a result of the August 94 migration of 30,000 refugees, has replaced over fifty percent of the PCC leaders in rural areas with military men.⁸³ The same leadership also extracted a promise to insure that soldiers will not be used to disperse antigovernment riots or take part in the increasing repression of dissidents.⁸⁴ Collectively these steps have caused the FAR to emerge again, as Cuba's premier institution. Furthermore, they may also indicate that the military will become the decisive player in determining succession outcomes.

In conclusion, Cuba's military, historically the predominant force in society, still retains a substantial military capability. Although conventionally no match against an overwhelming, decisive stroke, the military retains the ability and the doctrine to rapidly transition to guerrilla warfare. Conducting light infantry operations, the FAR could embroil U.S. forces in a drawn out and bloody fight. MTT forces will assist by harassing and impeding U.S. operations, particularly in the urban and mountainous regions of the island. Its primary objective will be the attrition of U.S. forces; producing enough casualties to reduce American resolve and support.

Institutionally, the FAR remains dominant. However, a growing group of young military reformers is disenchanted with the current state of affairs in Cuba and will not allow the revolution to destroy their institution. Placing the military in charge of key enterprises may initially reduce tensions over economic discriminations. However, as the military continues to deteriorate due to lack of training, the potential for a coup may increase. Feroselle may be right: Cuba's military, the predominant force in society for almost 500 years, could assume its traditional pattern and emerge as the inheritors of Castro's Cuba.

Implications for Military Planning

"Planning need not produce plans to be successful; to be successful, planning must inform and facilitate the decision for which the planning was undertaken. Planning can be successful if it results in a decision not to act and in the absence of any plans. The product of planning is a better informed decision to act or not, with or without plans."⁸⁵

James A. Dewar
"A Time for Planning?
If Not Now, When?"

1994 was an extremely unpredictable year for military planners. Military deployments to Rwanda, Haiti, and Kuwait took military planners by surprise. In the case of Rwanda, the military watched the crisis build for a number of weeks on CNN, and yet failed to anticipate the political decision to provide U.S. military support to humanitarian relief efforts. The result was a confused, chaotic response. A response that again demonstrated the United States' inability to effectively synchronize its elements of national power into a coherent strategy. In both the Haiti and the Kuwait crises similar situations occurred. Events caused the President to order a military intervention, but, in a manner not previously anticipated. Planners were forced to assimilate rapidly ad hoc staffs, complete commander's estimates based on nonexistent or incomplete guidance from higher headquarters, and develop branches to existing plans or new plans altogether. Time for briefbacks and rehearsals at the operational level was virtually nonexistent. Surprisingly, the military results of both events were commendable, given the situation. In both situations, however, the opponent cooperated; Iraq did not attack nor did a guerrilla campaign unfold in Haiti. Had either occurred, a military catastrophe could have resulted.

Cuba is also in crisis. Preconditions to convulsive change continue to emerge on the island. The economy's deterioration is accelerating, creating a disillusioned and

frustrated population; the leadership continues to be divided over what political and economic policies to follow; and the ruling elite is becoming increasingly repressive and coercive. Castro's control over the population is also problematic and evidence of this is unequivocal. The emergence of black-markets, crime, prostitution, and civil disobedience all indicate explosive polarization. These trends and conditions create an environment in which a chaotic outcome is increasingly likely. Should a violent outcome to Cuba's power succession occur, it is inevitable that the military will play an integral part in achieving the U.S. strategy concerning the future of Cuba. It is imperative that military planners stay current on Cuba to avoid the mistakes of 1994.

How then, does the current Cuban strategic environment effect military planning? The uncertainty and dynamic change that has characterized Cuba since the withdrawal of Soviet support has brought into question any military contingency planning conducted prior to 1990. This dynamic change, particularly as it relates to the Cuban military, requires that theater planners revisit the Commander's estimate process and update their strategic concepts. Plans based on a defunct cold war strategy and constructed using a late eighties Cuban military paradigm may be shortsighted, indeed. Furthermore, a plan whose strategic concept includes a U.S. unilateral intervention and the destruction of the one remaining, functional Cuban institution could produce disastrous results. Possible outcomes include irreparable damage to U.S.-Latin American relations, unacceptable casualties, and the failure to achieve the strategic goal of instituting a stable, prosperous, and democratic Cuban government.

The first priority should be the prevention of a direct U.S. - Cuban military conflict. This paper has attempted to demonstrate the primacy of the Cuban military as an institution and the importance that it plays in the future stability of the country. Any

intervention should attempt to coop this institution rather than to destroy it. The conventional destruction of the FAR, a relatively easy task for the U.S. military, would create a power vacuum, cripple the economy, and potentially result in massive migration and as a rallying point for popular support of a guerrilla war. What initially appears as an appropriate and logical, short term objective would in fact create a significant obstacle to the achievement of the long term U.S. goal. Several key initiatives should be considered that collectively could prevent a U.S.-Cuban military confrontation, reduce the traditional anti-U.S. sentiment, and help establish the conditions necessary to achieve U.S. goals should an intervention be ordered.

Prehostility Initiatives

Military to Military Contacts

The key to Cuba's future lies in its military. Historically, the Cuban military has been the predominant force in society and the stability of any Cuban government is firmly wedded to the control and support of a strong military. At a minimum, the FAR will be a decisive player in determining the succession outcome. It is also reasonable to assume that it is entirely possible that the military could assume power in a post-Castro scenario. In any case, the FAR will have a substantial degree of influence on the future direction of succession governments. Thus, any relationships established with FAR prior to a post-Castro succession, be it violent or otherwise, would be a possible source of substantial U.S. influence.

The establishment of military to military contacts with the Cuban Armed forces is an area that should be explored. The intent would be to enhance a professional military ethic that is supportive of democracy and protective of human rights. This use of military channels has been very successful in assisting in the pro-democratic movements of other

republics in Latin America, given the fact that their militaries play a considerable role in the governance of their countries and in regime longevity. Department of Defense involvement would seem to be a natural way to encourage democracy and political reform within Cuba.

The initial stage of this initiative should begin with the inclusion of an experienced military officer in the U.S. Interests Section in Havana and a reciprocal FAR officer in Washington. Eventually, this initiative could be expanded to encompass the entire spectrum of military to military activities, including visits, schooling, and advisors. In effect, the U.S. military would replace the former Soviet Union's military as the primary mentor in the continued professionalization of the FAR. In fact, there is a precedence for this step. In 1981, a U.S. Foreign Area Officer, Major Dennis Quinn, made an official trip to Cuba and generated a great deal of interest among senior officers in the FAR.⁸⁶ Unfortunately, a reciprocal trip could not be arranged and the idea of manning the respective Interests Sections with a military officer perished.

Development of a Cuban Grand Strategy

The second recommended initiative is a lesson learned from recent Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW) and concerns synchronizing the elements of U.S. national power into a truly comprehensive strategy. The existing strategic environment in Cuba makes it imperative to include all U.S. executive departments in the proactive development of a coherent and encompassing strategy to achieve U.S. policy objectives. Any intervention in Cuba, if planned and executed within the scope of the current environment, will require intensive participation by multiple government entities and the cooperative efforts of all departments and agencies. Missions will cover the entire spectrum of MOOTW, including force and population protection; refugee reception, control, and processing; installation

security; public health; prison management; public and police force formation; humanitarian and nation assistance;⁸⁷ and possibly, peacekeeping or peace enforcement, should civil war transpire. Unfortunately, unless the nation is at war, the U.S. government lacks an effective institutional mechanism to bring its bureaucracies together in support of a focused grand strategy.

Former U.S. Atlantic Command Commander in Chief, Admiral Paul Miller suggests that Interagency Action Groups (IAG) should be established to manage the execution of policy.⁸⁸ Under Admiral Miller's proposal, the President would appoint a lead agency and Interagency Director to head the IAG, which would be responsible for integrating U.S. policy efforts. Furthermore, the IAG would author recommended Presidential Decisions and subsequent to approval, implement them. Regrettably, military planners must recognize that the integration of multiagency capabilities for field operations is unlikely to be done by interagency groups in Washington.⁸⁹ Therefore, joint planners must, through the power of their own personalities, try and instill a national-level, unity of effort in planning and execution.

Inter-American Force

The U.S. has a historic record of intervention in Cuba which is a deep source of resentment for Cubans and Latin American nations alike. During the last thirty-five years, Castro has capitalized on this resentment and used examples of U.S. aggression as a tool with which to rally the nationalistic fervor of the masses against the imperialist Yankees to the north. Given the historic resentment of Cubans to U.S. troops, consideration of the formation of a multinational force under the auspices of the Organization of American States (OAS) or the United Nations may provide a more acceptable political solution for an intervention force.

Using the 1965 Dominican Republic intervention as an example, today's planners could call upon the OAS Council to convoke the Meeting of Consultation and establish a multinational force. The purpose of this Inter-American force would be to establish peace and provide aid in hemispheric situations where internal conflict threatened the region's peace and security. In the Dominican Republic case, the force was a mix of a small Brazilian contingent with the majority of the force made up of U.S. troops. Due to the political acceptability issue surrounding U.S. hemispheric interventions, however, Brazil provided the commander, while the U.S. provided the Vice-Commander. Subsequent to the crisis, the OAS organized a Relief Operation Coordinating Center to handle the agencies involved in humanitarian activities.

Any intervention into Cuba should follow a similar model. Attempts to secure the willing participation of OAS members should begin now. Ideally an Inter-American force will be under the command of a non-U.S. commander, again for political considerations; Venezuela, Canada, Columbia, or Mexico are possible alternatives that most experts recommend.⁹⁰ Several European nations also have interests in the region and could be enlisted, including France (which has made inroads with Cuba), the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and of course, Spain.

Once the nations that are willing to participate in regional cooperative deployments are identified, training should begin for staff cadres. In the case of non-Spanish speaking participants, Spanish language skills must be developed. Two primary reasons dictate Spanish versus English as the language of choice. First, using Spanish will enhance regional cooperation and interoperability of a multinational staff; and second, it provides the communication skills necessary to quickly interact with the Cuban population. Latin American staff officers should also begin comprehensive staff and training development schooling,

thus reducing interoperability problems. Additionally, solutions to doctrinal issues concerning combined operational command and control, intelligence, fires, protection, and logistical support should be developed, exercised, and disseminated. Finally, a series of joint and combined exercises should also be developed and implemented to fully test the proposed solutions and to rehearse the capabilities of this Inter-American force.

Operational Law

Operational Law is defined as "that body of domestic, foreign, and international law that impacts specifically upon the activities of U.S. forces in war and operations other than war . . . It includes military justice, administrative and civil law, legal assistance, claims, procurement law, national security law, fiscal law, and international law."⁹¹ In the case of a military intervention into Cuba, a number of consequential legal issues will arise due to the nature of the island's strategic environment. The significance of these issues will require military planners to conduct a thorough "legal preparation of the area of operations."⁹²

The first issue concerns 'United States Persons'. A 'U.S. Person' is defined by executive order to be " a United States citizen, an alien known . . . to be a permanent resident alien, an unincorporated association substantially composed of U.S. citizens or permanent resident aliens, or a corporation directed and controlled by a foreign government or governments."⁹³ U.S. person status entails a range of constitutional protections including those relating to searches, invasion of privacy, detentions, and warrantless arrests. In many instances these rights extend beyond citizenship and the country's borders.⁹⁴ Thus, any activities that bring military personnel in contact with a 'U.S. person' during the conduct of military operations can potentially have legal repercussions.

In the case of a Cuban intervention, military contact with 'U.S. Persons' is a certainty. Cuba has an extremely large exile community residing in the United States. Experts estimate the population of Cuban-Americans now exceeds 1.2 million and that as many as 140,000 would attempt to return to Cuba at the time of a power succession within Cuba.⁹⁵ This reverse migration would include militant anti-Castro groups, exiles attempting to reclaim confiscated properties, émigrés attempting to assist relatives to escape the island, and possibly, even coalitions of Cuban-Americans wishing to establish a new government. Southern Florida would be the point of departure for the majority of this activity.

South Florida will also be the natural intermediate staging area for any military exertions on the island. Thus, U.S. military personnel will come in contact with "U.S. Persons" within the territorial limits of the U.S. and during operations on the Cuba itself. Any attempts by military forces to detain 'U.S. Persons,' such as militant Cuban-American comandos transiting the Florida Straits, will be challenged immediately. Planners can expect these and similar issues to surface quickly in both the news media and in U.S. Federal courts. In fact, actions of the U.S. government in detaining Cubans are already being challenged in court.⁹⁶

Real property will also be a contentious issue. Castro's nationalization of U.S. and corporate properties as well as his confiscation of private residences has created a morass of personal and private company claims. Questions surrounding domestic surveillance of private properties by military forces, damage of private properties, and the equitable resolution of property claims will impact on world opinion and the maintenance of support for U.S. presence on the island. Planners should consider developing a detailed overlay of confiscated public and private property to assist in resolution of these issues.⁹⁷

Psychological Operations (PSYOP)

The key to a successful intervention of Cuba, should the need arise, will be the reaction of the country's citizens. Youthful, educated, armed, and trained, the population, if improperly handled, could make Castro's vision of the 'War of the People' become reality. Although there is growing discontent and internal tensions, the government's rapid institution of increasingly repressive measures has kept his regime from collapsing. Additionally, Castro's ability to provide his people with the best social safety net in the hemisphere and his demands for revolutionary sacrifice, buttressed by U.S. actions such as the invasion of Panama, has kept the proud, nationalistic population essentially supportive of the aging leader.

The current strategic Psychological Operational (PSYOP) campaign is not helping. Military maneuvers and overflights constantly remind Cubans of the possibility of a U.S. threat. Miami radio stations, sometimes supported by Radio and TV Marti, threaten the return of the exiles and property restitution. Furthermore, they continuously promote the overthrow of the ruling elite, bombard the island with propaganda, and generally provide Castro with further opportunities to reduce the operational freedom of emerging opposition groups.

Military planners should develop proactive, strategic and operational PSYOP campaigns that develop greater political and economical awareness, establish a series of confidence building measures, reduce the likelihood of internal violence, and facilitate a peaceful political transition in Cuba. To be fully effective, this will require interagency coordination and integration at the national level. Some of the primary players will include the U.S. Information Agency (which has primary responsibility for conducting public diplomacy and for advising the government on policy implications of foreign attitudes and

perceptions), the CIA, the Board for International Broadcasting, and the Departments of State, Commerce, Transportation, Energy, and Justice.

A carefully developed and nationally synchronized psychological preparation of the area of operations would reduce the potential of a violent transition of power, while simultaneously preparing the population for the peaceful entry of a multinational force. Furthermore, the campaigns must diminish concern of returning exiles and guarantee an equitable solution to property claims, while simultaneously assuring the population of the sanctity of the islands sovereignty. Cracks are beginning to emerge in Cuba's support of its government. If carefully exploited, they could be used to enhance democratization and increase the receptivity of the people to the humanitarian and economic assistance needed to revitalize the Cuban economy.

Conclusion

The essence of Cuba's strategic assessment comprises two phenomena. One is the diffusion of political power. The ruling elite is finding it increasingly difficult to control events to the extent that they once did. Power is shifting downward, being diffused to the other generational factions, the military, the church, and slowly, incrementally, to the people themselves. This change is rupturing the Cuban Communist Party, creating the potential for a deep political struggle between increasingly confrontational factions. Crime, civil unrest, and opposition groups all portend a chaotic transition; only Fidel Castro holds the system together and his departure could occur at anytime

The second phenomenon is the acceleration of change throughout the country, driven primarily by the deterioration of the economy. As a result, the regime's traditional sources of legitimacy are disappearing. The erosion of the Cuban social safety net, staggering unemployment, and the failure to provide basic living necessities have created a

disillusioned, bitter, and angry population. The military, too, is showing signs of unrest. A growing number of military reformers are becoming increasingly resentful of the regime's population-control measures, its handling of African veterans, and the military's growing poverty. Unless the regime can revitalize the Cuban economy (which is doubtful), the prospect for an apocalyptic power succession is probable.

Cuba, in mimicking the Rwanda, Somalia, and the Haitian crises, is providing military planners with an adequate warning signal. The question is whether it is of enough significance to trigger beleaguered staffs into revisiting approved Operational Plans. In the case of the Cuba that exists in 1995, actions taken now, prior to the occurrence of convulsive violence, could allow the achievement of our political strategy without an armed intervention.

The proactive development of a truly overarching grand strategy, military to military contacts, and the institution of an informational program, designed to allay historical fears, will go a long way to the achievement of that goal. The organization and training of an Inter-American force should occur concurrently should intervention become unavoidable. Additionally, a new theater strategic concept should be considered. One that is focused on how best to shape change and achieve the fundamental goal of a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous Cuba. Certainly, the issue of destroying the Cuban military, an outdated cold war concept, should be reconsidered; in deference to the role the Cuban military could play in providing post-succession stability and in the island's economic revitalization.

Cuba has always been the key to the control of the Gulf of Mexico. Sitting astride critical sea lanes and within easy striking distance of the southern coast United States, the island has historically been tied to the security and economic well being of the United

States. For the last thirty five years, cold war planners focused on a national strategy of isolating Cuba's communist government, while the military prepared for an armed invasion of the island. Now, as accelerating change and power diffusion bode ill for the island's future, military planners must prepare for a wide range of contingencies that could apply in Cuba. As always, U.S. Forces must be prepared to counter any threat to U.S. sovereignty with decisive and overwhelming force. However, now, our military strategy and plans must include a number of graduated, flexible, and selective responses. Responses that are capable of reacting rapidly to any number of convulsive succession scenarios possible within Cuba.

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- ⁵ Russell, Rick L., "The Caribbean: U.S. Economic and Military Interests," Monterey, Ca.: Naval Post Graduate School, 1983, p 65.
- ⁶ *ibid.*, p 65.
- ⁷ *ibid.*, p 66.
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- ¹⁰ *ibid.*, p 255.
- ¹¹ Brenner, Phillip. From Confrontation to Negotiation, U.S. Relations with Cuba. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988, p 81.
- ¹² Fermoselle, p 15.
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- ¹⁴ Gelbard, Robert S., "Cuba: Current Assessment and U.S. Policy." Dispatch, Vol 4, No 33, Washington D.C., (August 16, 1993): p 577.
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- ²¹ Fermoselle, Rafael, The Evolution of the Cuban Military: 1492-1986. Miami, Florida: Ediciones Universal, 1987, p 3.
- ²² "Cuba." The World Fact Book 1993-94, U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Washington D.C., (1993): p 86-87.
- ²³ Oppenheimer, Andres, Castro's Final Hours. New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster Editorial, 1992, p 262.

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- ²⁷ Mesa-Lago, Carmelo, "The Social Safety Net in the Two Cuban Transitions," Transition in Cuba: New Challenges for US Policy. Miami, Fl.: Florida International University, 1993, p 624.
- ²⁸ United States Department of State, "Cuba." Background Notes, Vol IV, No 1, (February 1993): p 1.
- ²⁹ Oppenheimer, Castro's Final Hours, p 342.
- ³⁰ Robertson, J. Michael, "Caudillo Nationalism and the Cuban Transition." Strategic Review, Vol XXII, No 3, (Summer 1994): p 53.
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⁵¹ Gonzalez, Edward and Ronfeldt, David, Storm Warnings for Cuba. Santa Monica, California: National Defense Research Institute, Rand, 1994, p 2.

⁵² "Cuba." Background Notes, United States Department of State, Vol IV, No 1, Washington D.C., (February 1993): p 6.

⁵³ Gonzalez, *ob cit.*, p 5.

⁵⁴ Schulz, Donald E., On Negotiating With Castro. Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 10 November 1993 pp 2-4. Dr. Schulz has succinctly summed up the effect of these piecemeal economic reform policies in this nine page report. Of particular note is the impact of dollarization on the military (military officers were not allowed to have contact with relatives in Miami, other Cubans could receive up to 100 dollars a month from relatives). Schulz quotes interviews with defecting Air Force officers, "Cuban soldiers have been turned into second-class citizens and this has created enormous discontent." Several other experts agree. A FAR military officer has always held a very prestigious position in Cuban society and a number of perquisites went along with the profession. For the most part these have ceased to exist.

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⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p 12

⁵⁷ Freed, Kenneth, "Cuba's Army Becoming More Important than Party; The Military Commands the Economy as Communists Lose Credibility." Los Angeles Times, December 6, 1994, p 2.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p 4.

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⁶⁰ Fermoselle, Rafael, The Evolution of the Cuban Military: 1492-1986. Miami, Florida: Ediciones Universal, 1987, p 1.

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⁷² Handbook on the Cuban Armed Forces. Washington, D.C.: Defense Intelligence Agency, May 1986, 3-4,5.

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