

**STRATEGY
RESEARCH
PROJECT**

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**CUBA AFTER CASTRO: ISSUES AND STRATEGIC
CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF UNITED
STATES ARMED FORCES**

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**Cuba After Castro: Issues and Strategic Considerations
for the Employment of United States Armed Forces**

by

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: LTC Michael R. Wood

TITLE: Cuba after Fidel Castro: Issues and Strategic
Considerations for the Employment of United States
Armed Forces

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 1 April 1998 PAGES: 44 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

Cuba is an important interest of the United States and at times, a vital one. The situation in Cuba is tenuous, considering the strained political, social, and economic conditions, and exacerbated by questions about Castro's health. This paper proposes and analyzes strategic considerations for the potential employment of United States armed forces in a post-Castro Cuba. It describes possible scenarios as well as the issues, interests, and players that strategic decision-makers need to be aware of in order to understand the dynamics of United States and Cuba relations. The issues include the potential for mass refugee migration, internal conflict that could spill into the region, and demands that the United States intervene for humanitarian reasons. This paper will provide decision-makers another source from which to develop more cohesive military strategies with regards to the potential future changes in Cuba and the high probability of United States involvement.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to recognize the help and assistance of a number of people who freely gave of their time to provide guidance, advice, resources, and support during this project. Dr. Gabriel Marcella, project advisor, was key to focusing my efforts into the United States strategic military aspects of a post-Castro Cuba. His experience in Latin America and his insights into the issues were invaluable. Dr. Donald E. Schulz, also from the Army War College, provided me very useful references as well as valuable advice based on his extensive experience as a Latin American scholar. Finally, I wish to thank Ms. Janice Jacobs from the Department of State. She took time out of her busy schedule to provide very useful information about United States policy towards Cuba, the sensitive nature of Cuban-American domestic politics, and the impact of the Helms-Burton Act.

Those already familiar with the scenarios discussed in the first part of this paper may opt to scan or skip these and go directly to the strategic considerations. All that being said, the scenarios provide some original insight based on the author's personal experience with many of the themes that are discussed.

"A Cuba: Tan próxima y tan lejana. Tan desafiante y difícil."

("To Cuba: So close and so far. So defiant and difficult.")¹

The history of the United States and Cuba is uniquely intertwined and it will be even more so when Fidel Alejandro Castro Ruz, the President of Cuba and father of the Cuban Revolution, is no longer in power.² Since he is 71 years old, his departure is not far off. Social, economic, and political discontent could bring it about sooner than later.

This project is not intended to predict the future. Nor will it discuss possible post-Castro scenarios at length, since this has been done extensively by highly respected scholars. It will use these scenarios to propose the strategic considerations for the use of United States military forces in a Cuba after Castro. This includes discussion about the possible branches (the "what-ifs" of military plans) and sequels (the "what next" of military plans).

This paper first discusses the two scenarios, then the historical, political, social, and cultural factors. Understanding the interaction of these factors is necessary to assess the options and potential uses of United States military forces in any post-Castro scenarios.

SCENARIOS

The two scenarios are the hard and the soft fall from power of Fidel Castro.³ The hard fall is associated with either the death, overthrow or attempt to overthrow Castro, and the possible turmoil that could ensue following any of these events. The hard fall is the worst scenario from the standpoint that it has the greatest potential for violence, inviting outside intervention, and causing a mass exodus of illegal immigrants or refugees to the United States. Ironically, if it remains internal and occurs swiftly, it also has the highest probability of causing a total "clean sweep" of all *Fidelistas* - Castro's supporters.⁴

The soft fall is more peaceful. It could be as simple, as the transfer of power to Castro's designated successor (i.e. brother Raúl), to the assumption of power of some other Cuban political force and the establishment of a new form or transition government. The soft fall is the preferred scenario because it lessens the probability of bloodshed, minimizes uncontrolled immigration, and the pressures to intervene militarily with combat forces. On the other hand, it has the highest probability of maintaining the current regime and not supporting United States interests.

The soft fall is the most likely scenario. Castro, his supporters, and his enemies know that there is too much to risk and lose in a hard fall unless they are backed into a corner or violence supercedes reason. A soft fall also has the highest

probability of occurring because a violent end to Castro is unlikely. Security around him is good. Even among disaffected Cubans, he is still respected for his staunch nationalism and rejection of any foreign domination.⁵

The major implication of the soft fall is that it provides the best opportunity to influence Cuba after Castro is gone. Even if the regime continues under another *Fidelista*, it will not be obliged to maintain as hard a stand and may be more amenable to dialogue. A soft fall provides both the United States and Cuba time to develop foreign policy options while not being distracted by instability or threats to national interests.

The major tasks that will have to be accomplished after a soft fall depend on the type of government that emerges. If it continues as a "Castroist" regime, the primary task of the United States and the world will be to convince its leaders to accept democratic reforms through political pressure and economic incentives. After accomplishing that, the tasks would be the same if a democratic government emerged from the soft fall. Those tasks would focus on getting the country on its feet economically and politically.

Cubans will expect a democratic government to improve their lives. They will be patient and maintain the confidence in the new government if it makes concrete efforts to do this. The economy will have to be given a boost through massive financial

aid and creative approaches to resolving foreign debt and restitution for the previous regime's confiscation of properties.

Politically the tasks would focus on maintaining the legitimacy of the government, reforming the military under civilian control, and addressing Cuban-American demands and concerns. All these tasks are complex and do not have easy solutions. Resolution will require a thorough understanding of the issues, patience, and keen negotiating skills.

These scenarios are not necessarily dependent on the death or departure of Castro. In a possible variation of the hard fall, an attempt to remove Castro forcibly by assassination, arrest or forced exile fails. Castro, although weakened, has enough support from his loyalists and elements of the armed forces to attempt a counter coup. This could plunge the country into the same turmoil that Castro's death could ignite among the Castro and anti-Castro factions. There can be many variations of these scenarios and they could occur independently, sequentially, or even appear to be nearly simultaneous. Additionally, what may initially appear to be a hard fall could quickly change into a soft fall and vice-versa.

"Once the United States is in Cuba, who will get it out?"

Jose Marti, The Father of Cuban Independence⁶

HISTORICAL ISSUES

Proximity has had a significant impact on the relations between Cuba and the United States. As recently as the late 1980's, Cuba was a Soviet base. This was not the first time an enemy of the United States had used Cuba. During the War of 1812, the British used Cuba to launch and supply military operations against the young American republic.⁷ Today, there is concern that it will serve as a base for drugs, alleged weapons of mass destruction, and other military operations if relations between the two nations sink to all time lows or if Cuba feels threatened. Additionally, for the past thirty-eight years, there have been concerns about the possibility of massive uncontrolled immigration.

The first direct involvement in Cuban affairs occurred in 1898 when the United States declared war on Spain as a pretext to gain more influence in Cuba.⁸ It is important to note that because of the concern for instability and the possible effects on the mainland, the United States was initially not enthusiastic about Cuban independence.⁹

Cuban independence finally occurred on May 20, 1902. This was almost three years after the end of the Spanish American War,

another foreign occupation (United States forces), and only after Cuba agreed to the terms of the Platt Amendment.¹⁰

The United States required that the terms of the Platt amendment be incorporated as a Cuban constitutional clause. They included the right to intervene at any time in order to maintain a stable government, the right to acquire lands as necessary for security reasons (i.e., Guantánamo Bay), and the prohibition of Cuba from entering in agreements with foreign nations.¹¹ The Platt Amendment was finally abrogated in 1934, after the United States occupied Cuba three times from 1906 to 1909, a short period in 1912, and from 1917 to 1923.¹²

Castro uses history to rally Cubans around him. He constantly reminds them of the "ugly Americans" who violated and will continue to violate Cuba's independence and sovereignty. One long-time Cuban insider noted that the CIA grossly underestimated the Cubans' resolve to support Castro, the revolution, and safeguard their nationalism.¹³

History provides two recurring themes that have characterized Cuba's politics, especially in foreign affairs: extreme nationalism and an almost phobic hypersensitivity about United States encroachment.¹⁴ The well-known Latin American aphorism, "The United States never remembers and Latin America never forgets," definitely applies to the history of the United States and Cuba.¹⁵

UNITED STATES AND CUBAN NATIONAL POLICIES AND INTERESTS

United States Foreign Policy

Cuba holds the distinction of being the only country in the world to which the United States is committed by law and policy to replace (albeit peacefully) its government.¹⁶ This unique place in United States foreign policy is a result of the historical relationship and the passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996, better known as Helms-Burton.¹⁷

This act codifies specific actions and sanctions aimed at the overthrow of Castro and his regime. The key point is that this act makes the United States Congress, not the President, the force behind any changes to how the United States deals with Cuba.¹⁸ More importantly, even if Castro leaves the scene (a requirement under Helms-Burton) and a new more liberal and democratic government takes over in Cuba, Cuba must meet the specific criteria in the law before the crippling United States embargo and sanctions are lifted.¹⁹ These include the return of all confiscated property to United States companies and exiled Cubans, to include reparations for losses. This means that at a time when economic aid and support will be critical as a new government tries to get on its feet, it will face the same embargo that applied to the Castro regime until it complies with Helms-Burton. Janice Jacobs, the Deputy Office Director of the

there are over six thousand "certified" claims by over three hundred United States companies against the Cuban government. This does not include the private citizen claims of Cuban-Americans and recent immigrants that are estimated at well over 200,000 (some estimates are as high as 400,000).²⁰ These claims will require arbitration, legal oversight, and negotiations. Disputes about who or what owns property that was confiscated almost forty years earlier need to be resolved, but not as a precondition for support.²¹ Like the use of the Platt Amendment, current United States Cuba policy continues to focus on Cuban internal affairs.

United States National Interests

United States national interests, in addition to complying with Helms-Burton, are the avoidance of uncontrolled migration, maintaining stability and peace, facilitating trade and economic development, promoting democracy and human rights, and preventing the use of the island as a drug base.²²

Uncontrolled immigration is a serious concern. The most troublesome mass exodus of Cubans occurred in 1980, when over 120,000 Cubans, many hardened criminals, flooded into Florida. This became known as the "Mariel" boatlift.²³ In August 1994, following some of the most serious domestic unrest since the revolution, Castro allowed 30,000 to leave and another 5,000 left illegally.²⁴ The United States intercepted this exodus and many

were returned to Cuba or sent to holding camps in Guantánamo or Panamá.²⁵

The concern for another mass migration increases during a hard fall scenario. Some estimates put the number of Cubans in this case at anywhere from ten to twenty times that of the 1980 exodus.²⁶ An indicator of the numbers was noted in 1996, when over 500,000 Cubans applied for visas to the United States after Castro relaxed travel restrictions.²⁷ The massive number of refugees will overwhelm the Navy or Coast Guard, strain south Florida's capabilities to absorb them, and be beyond the capabilities or desire of most countries to take care of in refugee camps. In 1994, only Panamá approved a United States request to accept refugees. Six months later after Cuban riots, Panamá wanted them out and refused to accept additional refugees.²⁸ Although the United States and Cuba agreed in May of 1995 to work with each other on the refugee problem, Castro could unleash boat people as a weapon, as he did in 1980, or it could be driven by massive social unrest.²⁹

The drug concern is especially troublesome because of proximity. Cuba could become a premier base for air and sea-launched drug carriers. A more liberal and open regime would have more difficulty controlling drug flow in and out of the country. For the time being, Castro maintains a hard anti-drug policy. Indicators are that major drug trafficking is not occurring from Cuba.³⁰

Indicators are that major drug trafficking is not occurring from Cuba.³⁰

Cuban Foreign Policy

Even with more openness and Castro allowing the Pope's visit in January 1998, the basic tenets of Cuba's foreign policy and interests have not changed in thirty-eight years. First, Castro wants to ensure the survival of the Cuban revolution. Secondly, he wants to maintain power as well as his international prestige and Cuba's influence in world affairs. Thirdly, Castro will remain viscerally anti-American while trying to develop a viable economy under the continuing United States economic embargo. Finally, he will continue to support (albeit more moral rather than substantive) national liberation movements.³¹

Although there appear to be attempts to seem more open and less totalitarian, the indicators are that Cuba under Castro will not change dramatically nor will its fundamental interests. Too much time and energy have been invested in the revolution to change now. There will be no admission of its failure as long as Castro is alive. His pride, now accented by his advanced age, will not permit this.

THE PLAYERS

Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro is Cuba and the revolution. Castro "is the 'glue' that holds the regime together and binds the masses."³² José Luis Llovio-Menéndez, a one-time minister who defected in the early 80's, understood Castro's personality. In describing Castro, he wrote: "In all other ideological positions Fidel deviated over the years, but in the theme of defiance and conflict with the United States, he has been constant."³³ He values power, prosperity, and sovereignty, in that order.³⁴ He sacrifices prosperity and the economic well being of Cubans in order to maintain his sovereignty, pride, and defiance of the United States. In a May 1977 interview with Barbara Walters, Castro made it clear that he intends to remain in power until he dies.³⁵ He desires no transition other than that the regime transition to another *Fidelista* (preferably his brother) and the revolution continues. Castro's death will be an event commonly referred to in military terminology as a "decisive point." It will be decisive because it is one of the catalysts that will propel events.

Castro is as misunderstood and as hard to gauge today as he was forty years ago. The United States should remember that he was willing to risk nuclear war in 1962 in order to stand up to the United States and save face. Castro has always seen struggle, intransigence, and defiance as valuable and practical. He values

confrontation to bolster his popular support. He demonstrated this when he ordered the 1996 "Brothers to the Rescue" aircraft shoot-downs.³⁶ He will continue this behavior and his successors may try to assume the same *modus operandi*.

Factions Within the *Fidelistas*

Although all Cubans for political and even personal survival openly declare themselves as *Fidelistas*, there are indications that there are some other influential or potentially powerful officials who privately hold other views. The three broad categories are the *duros* or the hard-liners, the *centristas* or centrists, and the *reformistas* or reformers.³⁷

The differences in the groups are based on methods, rather than ends. They are all ardent nationalists and agree, in principle, that the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) retain power, that the "social safety net" as established by Castro under the socialist form of government remain in place, and that Cuba retain its independence from the United States.³⁸

The *duros* or hard-liners are the hard-core veteran *Fidelistas*. They control the party and security apparatus. They espouse the hard-line consisting of opposition to any internal political deviation, ultra nationalism, a visceral anti-United States stance, and anti-open market economic views.³⁹ They have the most to lose upon Castro's departure if the new regime is more reform minded and amenable to concrete dialogue with the

United States. They also have the most to fear from any social retribution because they are associated with the unpopular internal security agencies such as the Special Troops Battalion, State Security, and other Interior Ministry (MININT) forces.⁴⁰ Their primary goal is to ensure the status quo, even under stricter conditions if necessary.

The *centristas* or centrists are *Fidelistas* that are pragmatic communists. They believe that there can be changes, especially economic improvements through organizational and technical fixes.⁴¹ Philosophically, they are the same as the hard-liners. The difference is that the former believe everything is fine, while the latter believe that some things can and should be done better without major fundamental or philosophical changes. Interestingly, the most prominent *centrista*, even if he is a "closet" one, is Castro's brother Raúl who is also the Minister of Defense.⁴² As Fidel's brother, he can be more open about his views and it appears that his lifelong loyalty to his brother has paid off. Although Raúl is considered inflexible, coercive and is known to be a strong advocate of violent summary justice, he is a pragmatist when it comes to economic affairs.⁴³

The *reformistas* or reformers are the least influential and have the most to lose if Castro or the hard-liners decide to crack down on any group they consider a threat. They propose change through "marketization" and privatization.⁴⁴ They believe that the best way to ensure the survival of the revolution is by

fundamental change, similar to what Gorbachev tried.

Consequently, they are at odds with both the hard-liners and the centrists because they are not in agreement with the basic tenets of the revolution. Their influence ebbs and flows with respect to Castro's crackdowns on "anti-revolutionary" sentiments. Their influence should not be discounted. These are the players who may be most open to the economic and social reforms promoted by the United States.

The Cuban Military

The Cuban military (Revolutionary Armed Forces-FAR) is the strongest institution in Cuba, socially and politically.⁴⁵ The active duty strength is estimated at 80,000 to 100,000 soldiers, sailors, and airmen. There are 135,000 trained reservists, and 1,000,000 in the territorial militias. The paramilitary forces number approximately 32,000. These forces (all under the MININT) consist of 15,000 State Security, 4,000 border guards, 10,000 Revolutionary National Police, 600 of the Special Battalion of Police, and 2,000 Special troops.⁴⁶ Whatever individual or faction the FAR supports is virtually unassailable. How the FAR will react in a post-Castro environment depends on the perceived threats against the nation or to the FAR's special status in Cuban society. Some indicators show that the FAR is not willing to use force against a popular revolt and has in the past pressured Castro to make some economic concessions to the Cuban

people. There is also bad blood between the MININT and the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR).⁴⁷

If Raúl is the designated "crown prince" after the death of Castro, his position is guaranteed as long as the FAR is loyal. The FAR is not happy with the social and economic conditions in Cuba or the change in its status from expeditionary combat veterans to entrepreneurs. But it still supports the revolution. The FAR plays a key role in Cuba's economy and since 1989 oversees government-run farms, tourist-related businesses, and construction brigades. The military has become less secretive while befriending the public, thus earning more popular support and further cementing its institutional status.⁴⁸

The FAR is proud, professional, nationalistic, and relatively well trained. Yet, it is not the same force of the 1970's and 80's with regards to numbers and readiness. Moreover, it has a limited offensive capability.⁴⁹ If the FAR believes that the sovereignty of Cuba is threatened, it is likely that it will fight. The situation may be totally different if the FAR perceives an internal threat. How much the armed forces risk at the expense of plunging the country into a long and bloody civil war remains to be seen.

Cuban Society

A noted Cuban scholar has stated that Cuba has suffered a "total disintegration" of society and the family.⁵⁰ Civil society

beyond the family clan, and short of the state is absent.⁵¹

People lack self-direction other than what the state sets forth and many are extremely apathetic about anything short of their meager existence. To complicate matters, even the state has been unable to fulfill its obligations (health care, jobs, social and economic well being) since the loss of Soviet support.

This is significant to note if Cuba tries to transition to a democracy. Unlike other countries that went through this transformation, Cuba does not have the political culture, experience, and society in place to effect this transition. Recall Spain after Franco, Argentina after the military junta, and Poland and Czechoslovakia after the fall of communism. These countries succeeded because the civil society was mature, developed, and capable of assuming its responsibilities. Considering the years of dictatorship under the Batista regime, followed by almost forty years of the revolution, Cuban society is very ill prepared to transition to democracy without major guidance and support. Society may demand the continuance of a totalitarian or at best a strong socialist government if change does not meet its expectations.

The Church

The Catholic Church has, until recently, played a minor role in Cuba since the revolution. With the recent visit of the Pope in January 1998 and the country's change in status from an

atheist to a secular state in 1992, the Church has gained back some of the influence it lost after the revolution.⁵² It could become a viable and important player because it is an institution that Cubans trust and rally around to show their opposition to the government's policies. As an active player in a post-Castro Cuba it could mediate between factions and be the only institution, other than the FAR, that could assist in organizing society and providing direction and guidance.

Opposition Groups

It is difficult to determine how many opposition groups exist in Cuba, since many are repressed before they even get off the ground. Some estimates range as high as over 128 dissident organizations.⁵³ There are a few that have been able to be vocal enough to be recognized outside of Cuba. It is worthwhile to note them and the leaders, because like Lech Walesa of Poland or Václav Havel of the Czech Republic, they could emerge as possible leaders if Cuba transitions to democracy.

The most important organizations are "Concilio Cubano" (Cuban Council). Leonel Morejón is the founder and has been in and out of prison and house arrest. "The Dissident Working Group," whose core members are René Gomez Manzano, Vladimiro Roca, Marta Beatriz Roque and Felix Bonne. "Corriente Agronomista" (Agronomist Current), founded by René Gómez Manzano

is another. Other prominent political prisoners are Jesús Chamber Rodríguez and Juan Carlos Castillo Pasto.⁵⁴

Cuban-Americans

No group involved in Cuban foreign and domestic policies can evoke more emotions from both sides of the Florida straits than Cuban-Americans. They are a political force in the United States and are noted for their emotional and visceral hatred of Castro and unyielding anti-Castro position. More than one million Cuban-Americans live in the United States, representing five per cent of the total Hispanic population. Sixty-five percent live in the Miami area.⁵⁵ The largest and most influential organization is the Cuban-American National Foundation. Until his death on November 23rd, 1997, its leader was Jorge Mas Canosa, a very wealthy and influential Cuban-American who had aspirations to return to Cuba, and become the first post-Castro president.⁵⁶

Cuban-Americans desire to return, bring about democracy, and reclaim properties that they had to leave behind or were confiscated by Castro. Unfortunately, Helms-Burton makes the settlement of these claims a precondition, codified by law, prior to the lifting of the economic embargo on Cuba. Unless Cuban-Americans become less demanding about the timeframe for the settlement of these claims and lobby to amend Helms-Burton, they could be partly responsible for the continued suffering of the Cuban people after the departure of Castro and communism.

Cuban-Americans have the legal right to return to Cuba and submit claims for their properties. But, this must be done respecting the sovereignty of Cuba. Since June 1993, the United States has officially stated that the Neutrality Act applies to Cuba. This act recognizes the sovereignty of nations and their borders. It supports actions to counter the illegal entry and exit into and out of the United States.⁵⁷ A mass "reverse" migration or exodus of Cuban-Americans to Cuba at the first sign of Castro losing power could result in a catastrophic response from Cubans. One Cuban scholar stated that after the end of Castro, one of the most significant contributions by the Cuban-Americans is to renounce any initial ambitions to hold office of any kind in a post-Castro Cuba.⁵⁸

Other players who could play a key role include the United Nations (UN), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the numerous Latin American and Caribbean economic organizations such as the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM)⁵⁹. There are also nations that have access and good relations (Castro tends to at least listen to them) with Cuba. These are Spain, Mexico, Canada, Venezuela, and Italy.⁶⁰

Now that the historical perspectives, national interests, and the players of each country have been discussed, this primer will serve as the foundation for understanding the discussion on strategic military considerations in each of the scenarios. This understanding is essential whenever the employment of United

States armed forces is contemplated. It is especially crucial in the case of Cuba because of the potential employment of forces so close to the United States and in a very politically sensitive operation.

ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIC MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

General

The considerations that apply to both hard and soft fall scenarios are:

1. Emphasis on establishing legitimacy (via the UN, OAS, etc.) and avoidance of the perception of a unilateral use of force, unless the United States is directly threatened.
2. Multinational make-up of the force.
3. High demand for logistical and humanitarian supplies.
4. High demand for personnel, either in a "on the ground" peacekeeping or enforcement role or in providing the main support for any operation. Especially crucial will be special operations forces (particularly Civil Affairs (CA) and Special Forces) and civil support units (medical, engineer).
5. Close coordination with interagency (e.g., Department of State, Department of the Treasury); non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (e.g., International Red Cross) and private voluntary organizations (PVOs) (e.g., Doctors without Borders).
6. Demands from Cuban-Americans to be involved with or without United States approval.

The United States combatant command with the responsibility to command and control all United States forces involved in Cuba is the United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) headquartered in Miami. It is responsible for the strategic military direction involving the use of any United States forces in Cuba or waters and airspace outside the United States territorial limits. The Commander in Chief of USSOUTHCOM (USCINCSOUTH) would be part of the upper level leadership of any multinational military headquarters established either under UN, OAS, or other auspices.

Hard Fall

The three general tasks that the United States faces in this scenario are contain, alleviate, or resolve the crisis.⁶¹ The United States could choose to accomplish all or only certain tasks depending on national objectives.

The hard fall has the highest probability of involving United States forces in direct combat with the FAR or other armed groups in Cuba because of the potential violence associated with this scenario. Castro intends to remain in control until his death. If he is in power and is removed or an attempt is made to remove him by force, then internal conflict is inevitable. His supporters would certainly seek to maintain control and exact retribution against internal and possibly external threats.

Although the probability of a Cuban attack against the United States is very low, it increases during a hard fall if Cuba

believes that the United States is behind an attempt to remove Castro. Such a desperate attack (a "Götterdämmerung") could be Castro's last act of defiance.⁶² This "if I go down, you'll go down with me" attitude manifested itself on previous occasions such as during the near suicidal and failed attack on the "Moncada" military barracks in 1953 and during the Cuban missile crisis.⁶³ An example of a "Götterdämmerung" is an attempt to sabotage or destroy a nuclear power plant such as the one located at Turkey Point, Florida. Some analysts are also concerned with the possible use of some type of weapon of mass destruction (WMD), particularly biological.⁶⁴ At this point, Castro would not be concerned with the overwhelming military superiority of the United States or the severe repercussions that attacking the United States mainland would generate. The United States may not have time to get the support of the world, the UN or other players if the threat is such that an attack is imminent and preemption may be the only option. The decision to use military force in a timely manner is critical if Cuba resorts to a strike against the United States mainland or Guantánamo Naval Base. Another challenging branch of this situation occurs if Castro's enemies conduct an attack in order to make it appear as if it was a Cuban attack. The purpose would be to force a United States response and involvement. As long as Castro does not have to go down fighting or his enemies don't see it as the only way to

involve the United States directly in order to defeat Castro, the probability of such events are low.

Military responses in these examples depend on the situation. Responses within the territorial United States are under the direction of the local, state, and federal authorities. United States military forces provide support as directed by the National Command Authorities (NCA). Responses outside of the United States should, if at all possible, be UN or OAS-sponsored. Initially, maximum use of precision engagement from the air, sea, and land as well as information warfare assets should be used to minimize casualties and collateral damage. The multinational force should avoid the direct introduction of ground combat troops unless their use is essential for success. These forces could face anything from just remnants of the FAR or rebel groups, to the entire FAR and even the populace, if they perceive the intervention more as an invasion rather than as a means of stopping the fighting or responding to other threats. Ground forces could face a very hostile and organized populace and casualties on both sides could be high.

Futurist Ralph Peters stated that, "Dying states will resort to violence against their own populations in last gasp efforts to maintain power."⁶⁵ The deterioration of a hard fall to such a point that the populace begins to suffer greatly could lead to demands for military intervention. The reasons are similar to those that involved the United States in Bosnia. As one Cuban

expert noted, we cannot afford to have, 'the splatter effect of a Yugoslavia 90 miles from the United States.'⁶⁶ To repeat, every effort should be made to make this a UN-mandated or an OAS-sponsored response under a multinational headquarters. The United States role should focus primarily on support and direction rather than direct involvement on the ground unless the United States ground presence (like Bosnia) is essential for success.

If the force is obliged to conduct a forcible entry and peace-making operations, then these become combat operations to force the warring parties into a truce or some form of cease-fire. Based on the response of the populace or the condition of the FAR, these could be costly operations. Military and civilian casualties could be high as well as collateral damage. Decision-makers have to consider the timing of such an operation so that it meets its intended goal of stopping the fighting rather than escalating it. As one RAND study pointed out, careful consideration should be given to trying to impose a peace during a civil war in Cuba.⁶⁷ Once the fighting stops, the situation is similar to that facing the Stabilization Force (SFOR) in Bosnia, i.e., disarming the belligerents and enforcing the peace.

The requirements for these operations are significant. A multinational headquarters for command and control as well as logistical and personnel support structures for the force would have to be established. Communications between forces and within

the multinational staffs would be challenging due to languages, unfamiliarity with each country's respective operational procedures, and differences in communications systems. Memorandums of agreement would have to be hammered out that include the above as well as the rules of engagement (ROEs). The military objectives would have to be agreed upon and understood by all in order to ensure they support the political ones. Finally, an exit strategy (based on objectives) should be devised without the imposition of a timeline.

At the multinational level, the best command and control (C2) structure is a parallel command versus a lead nation organization.⁶⁸ For political reasons and especially Cuban and Latin American historical sensitivities, this should not be a United States led operation, although the majority of the resources and support would be United States sponsored. The parallel C2 structure should have the UN or OAS provide the overall political direction with a non-American at the helm. United States forces, as per law, would remain under the command of a United States commander (i.e., USCINCSOUTH) but could be placed under the operational control of allies or coalition forces.

Command and control is always challenging and more so in the hard fall scenario because of the proximity of Cuba to the United States. The United States Atlantic Command (USACOM) has the combatant command authority over all United States military

forces in the United States, except special operations forces. USACOM would have to direct its respective components to respond (in case of an air or sea borne attack against the United States) in conjunction with the coordination and in some cases, the approval of the respective local, state, and federal civil authorities. A terrorist attack falls under the jurisdiction of local authorities, but they would need the support of the military especially in a WMD incident. Coordination between USSOUTHCOM, USACOM, and authorities at the federal, state, and local level would be vital.

The most favorable situation involving United States forces would result from a cease-fire, brokered among the warring factions. As discussed in the transition from a combat "peace-making" force to a peacekeeping force, the United States involvement should be as a multinational peacekeeping force under UN or OAS mandate. The role, if asked to do so, would be to serve as buffer between the combatants as negotiations take place. It should not be an open-ended presence and the United States as well as the other forces should depart if combat among factions reinitiates. Based on the political atmosphere in Cuba and the availability of a large enough multinational force, the United States may assume a less involved support role and not provide "on the ground" peacekeepers.

Cuban-Americans will have strong opinions during these events. The majority will support the policies that are in the

best interests of the United States, but there may be individuals or groups who will try to interfere. Some will feel a need to either alleviate the suffering of their fellow Cubans or get family and friends out. Others may have military objectives. If the opportunity to defeat Castro arises, Cuban-American paramilitary groups may launch strikes against the island or provide personnel, equipment, and supplies to the anti-Castro forces. The last thing that Cuba desires in the midst of an internal strife is to have Americans interfering. The United States cannot afford another "Bay of Pigs" while simultaneously trying to stop the potential flood of refugees. It would be sheer chaos.

The United States must not permit any of these activities to occur. First, Cuba would see it as an act of aggression. Secondly, the world would condemn any United States support of these activities. Finally, it complicates an already delicate situation and could propel the United States into direct combat unnecessarily. An example of such an incident is when Cuban forces pursue outsiders helping the anti-Castro forces and fire into or enter United States territorial waters.

Local authorities working in conjunction with state and federal agencies, including the Coast Guard, would have to control the illegal departure of vessels and aircraft from United States ports and airfields. By law, a visa and a permit are required to enter Cuba from the United States. Local and state

authorities would need the help of their respective state National Guards to cover all the possible departure points. The federal (military) jurisdiction to intercept, turn back and even detain personnel violating Cuban territory begins outside the territorial limits of the United States. Clear ROE are necessary to ensure these actions are in accordance with the law and use the least amount of force necessary to accomplish the mission. This politically sensitive and potentially dangerous operation will require a combined effort at every level in order to be successful.

The other benefit of these actions is to send a signal to Cuba. Reciprocity between the United States and Cuba, which is now taking place with respect to illegal migration, would continue. Cooperation between the Cuban and the United States Coast Guards has been key to stemming the flow of refugees to Florida.⁶⁹ It would be crucial to continue this assistance if the Cuban authorities have the means to at least mitigate a mass illegal immigration during a hard fall. These confidence building measures are essential. They demonstrate the good faith of the United States and communicate that although the preference is for an end to the Castro regime, it has no intention of using force to replace it. Because of the key role the FAR will play in any post-Castro scenario, the cultivation of these relationships is important as a basis of reciprocity and trust between the United

States and what may be the only stabilizing force in a post-Castro Cuba.

Soft Fall

This scenario ranges from Castro dying, Raúl assuming power and the revolution continuing, to a genuine change of government in dire need of stability and outside support. In the latter, the United States as part of an invited multinational stabilization and support force encounters a Haiti vice a Bosnia situation. Although similar activities would have to be accomplished as in a peacekeeping role, emphasis would be more on civil-military operations and support of the UN or OAS efforts to aid the stabilization and internal development efforts. The United States military would provide key civil-military assets, direction, and humanitarian assistance in order to shore-up the new government as it develops credibility, legitimacy, and the support of the populace. This is crucial to the survival of the government. Otherwise, the probability is high that because of social unrest, the FAR or others may attempt to restore a totalitarian state.

Special considerations include the use of Spanish speaking members of the armed forces like the Puerto Rican Reserve Components (RC) which include Army Reserve and National Guard units. It would be necessary for the Department of Defense to request a Presidential Selective Reserve Call-Up (PSRC). The PSRC authorizes the call-up of CA units, most of which are in the RC

(97%), as well as other reserves for up to 270 days in order to meet operational requirements.⁷⁰ Stabilization operations, as experience showed in Panama and currently in Haiti and Bosnia, take much longer than expected. Cuba would be no different.

The involvement of the FAR in any of the above activities would be important. The FAR should take a prominent role in rebuilding the country and providing support under preferably a civilian democratic government.⁷¹ This allows the FAR to remain engaged, regain its credibility, and maintain its self-respect.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the strategic military considerations for using the armed forces of the United States in a Cuba after Castro. Two scenarios were presented as well as the background, issues, and players, in order to understand the dynamics of United States relations with Cuba. This paper built on the vast amount of analysis already done on "what may happen in Cuba" and added the "what should be done" from a military standpoint. The focus was not on policy, although at the strategic level, military actions are closely tied to national strategy and therefore, there is some overlap of issues and considerations.

It is hard to predict when Castro will leave the scene. Even harder to predict is what will happen afterwards. The United States must, nonetheless continue assessing the strategic considerations as military force employment options are developed

and refined. Ultimately, the goal is to meet the United States national strategy of "promoting a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba and forestalling a mass migration exodus that would endanger the lives of the migrants and the safety of our nation."⁷²

There are complex political considerations that must be addressed. They affect foreign policy and because of Cuba's unique relationship with the United States, domestic policy as well. Decision-makers must assess the benefits of any short-term political gain with the long-term effects of not preparing for and dealing head-on with the issues raised in this paper. The tendency to ignore Cuba until something happens could be a very costly mistake. The dynamics are such that time is not on the side of the United States. If contingencies are not developed or at least war-gamed now and periodically updated and refined, it may be too late once events take place. What makes this task so difficult is the tightrope it walks between domestic and foreign policy. Additionally, there is the involvement of many players, many domestic, that are normally not involved in United States military operations.

This paper raised difficult issues and provided apolitical strategic military recommendations. It provides leaders another source of information and analysis to complement the development of proactive United States options for a Cuba after Castro.

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ENDNOTES

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