

Posada Carriles: terrorist who killed 73 in plane bombing walks free

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“I vowed that if you harbor a terrorist you’re equally as guilty as the terrorist. That’s a doctrine. In order for this country to be credible, when the President says something, he must mean it.” President George W. Bush, April 10, 2007, American Legion Post 177, Fairfax, Virginia.

“Part of our doctrine is if you harbor a terrorist, you’re equally as guilty as the terrorists.” President Bush, April 5, 2007, Fort Irwin, California.

A cell door in New Mexico swung open Thursday and Luis Posada Carriles—a man wanted for an act of terrorist mass murder—went free, making his way to Miami escorted by US Marshals and his lawyer.

So much for the Bush doctrine. Washington is now openly harboring a terrorist who murdered 73 people by organizing the planting of a bomb on a civilian airliner in 1976. The Cuban passenger plane, which had originated in Venezuela, blew up over the Caribbean waters of Barbados. At that time, it constituted the most deadly act of terrorism ever carried out in the Western Hemisphere.

Among the dead were all 24 members of the Cuban fencing team, many of them teenagers, who had just won the 1975 Central American-Caribbean championship. Also killed were several Guyanese medical students, aged 18 and 19.

It is worth remembering these young victims as shock and sorrow is felt throughout the United States over the slaughter of a similar number of students of roughly the same age at Virginia Tech.

The release of Posada Carriles followed a ruling by the US Court of Appeals in New Orleans on Tuesday rejecting a government prosecutor’s motion that the confessed terrorist be kept in prison.

He has been in custody since May of 2005. The court refused to hold him, however, because he is not

charged with the crimes of mass murder, terrorism and assassination, but rather with run-of-the-mill immigration offenses: entering the country illegally and lying to US immigration officials.

He is now free on bail, awaiting a May 11 trial on charges of lying to immigration agents. The only penalty for such an offense is deportation.

No country in the world, however, will agree to take Posada Carriles off Washington’s hands, save two. The first is his native Cuba, whose citizens constitute the majority of his victims, and the second is Venezuela, where he became a naturalized citizen and secret policeman, and from which he plotted the 1976 airline bombing.

Venezuela formally demanded that the US extradite the terrorist to face trial for this crime in June of 2005 under existing treaties between the two countries. Since then, the Bush administration has simply ignored the extradition request.

As he awaited the completion of his trial and sentencing in the airline bombing case, Posada Carriles escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985, and had remained under US protection ever since, working with CIA operatives in Central America in the illegal “contra” war against Nicaragua.

Venezuela clearly has every legal right to demand that he be sent back to confront the verdict that he evaded more than 20 years ago. However, a US immigration judge, acting on behalf of the Bush administration, ruled that he could not be sent to Venezuela because he might face torture there.

This claim is both spurious and outrageous. There is no evidence of systemic torture in Venezuela. If this rule were applied consistently, no undocumented immigrant caught by border agents could be sent back to Mexico, Brazil or a number of other countries in

Latin America where abuse in prisons is equally if not more common.

Moreover, coming from the US government, which has both tortured and organized the “extraordinary rendition” of its detainees to countries specifically chosen because they will be tortured there, the invocation of international treaties against torture to shield Posada Carriles is breathtaking in its hypocrisy.

Finally, it is worth noting that Posada Carriles himself was employed as a senior official in the Venezuelan secret police, the DISP, in the early 1970s, when torture was endemic, and has been charged with both the torture and extra-judicial murder of leftist activists in that country.

Responding to the freeing of Posada Carriles, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez compared the fugitive to Osama bin Laden and described him as “the father of all terrorists on the American continent.”

“We demand that they extradite this terrorist and murderer to Venezuela rather than keep protecting him,” Chávez said. He continued by condemning Washington’s cynicism: “They say they fight terrorism, (but) there it is! Their mask keeps falling off.”

The Cuban government also reiterated its call for the extradition request to be honored. “For two years they have protected Posada Carriles with judicial subterfuges to evade their duty to extradite him to Venezuela or try him for terrorism,” Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban parliament, said Thursday.

The Bush administration refuses to extradite Posada Carriles, because he was Washington’s own terrorist, trained and paid by the CIA to carry out acts of terrorism. To place him on trial would threaten the exposure of a long history of international aggression and criminality organized by US imperialism, ranging from terrorist attacks on Cuba and assassination attempts against its President Fidel Castro to the airline bombing—which took place when Bush’s father was the director of the CIA—to the dirty wars in Central America in the 1980s.

So the Bush administration harbors the terrorist and, under the “Bush doctrine” is “equally as guilty” as this confessed and convicted mass murderer.

Cited as a reason for invading both Afghanistan and Iraq, and now again invoked in preparation for yet another war against Iran, this supposed principle—held

up to the mirror of Posada Carriles—is revealed as nothing more than cynical pretext for pursuing the aims and interests of America’s ruling elite by means of military force and massive state terror.



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