

US removes Cuba from list of sponsors of state terror

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On Friday, May 29 the Obama administration removed Cuba from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list maintained by the US State Department. While this move was hailed by the Cuban state newspaper *Granma* as a long overdue “act of justice,” the decision in no way signals a deep-seated change on the part of the US ruling class, which still has as its long-term goal the reestablishment of Cuba as a US semi-colony. It is, rather, a tactical maneuver to undercut rival powers and establish a foothold on the island in advance of the Cuban regime’s reintegration of the country into the world capitalist market.

The decision to remove Cuba from the list was essentially a formality, as Cuba had made its removal a condition for the naming of ambassadors during the current negotiations over the normalization of diplomatic relations. On April 14, President Barack Obama submitted a request to the State Department for a 45-day review period, which expired May 29, the same day of the announcement. News reports indicate that the announcements of ambassadors will happen very soon.

The official statement from the State Department reads that countries get on the list because they “repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.” During a news conference a department spokesman, Jeff Rathke, said they had completed “certification that Cuba has not provided any support for international terrorism during the previous six-months; and that Cuba has provided assurances that it will not support acts of international terrorism in the future.”

Supposedly, the addition of Cuba to the list in 1982 was due to its having provided a haven for figures from the Colombian FARC and Basque ETA, as well as those accused of crimes in the US. Now the US

government says that Cuba has “become more distant” from these groups. However, as with every government addition or deletion to that list, the decision to add Cuba was at its core a political decision, and coincided with the Reagan administration’s own support of right-wing regimes against guerrilla movements such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the FMLN in El Salvador that enjoyed Cuban backing during this period.

The countries remaining on the terror list include Sudan, Syria, and Iran, all three of which are the subject of ongoing imperialist operations.

The hypocrisy of the US in calling Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism is stunning. The most heinous perpetrator of state terrorism is the United States itself, and Cuba has suffered repeated attacks planned or aided by Washington. Its operatives have included the notorious terrorists Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles, the latter of whom is still alive and residing in the US.

As part of a long career of terrorist acts, Bosch and Posada Carriles orchestrated what at the time was the most deadly act of terror in the Western Hemisphere when they planned and carried out the bombing of a Cuban airliner in 1976. The Cuban flight crashed, killing all 73 people on board, including all 24 members of the Cuban national fencing team, many of whom were teenagers who had just won gold medals at the Central American and Caribbean Championships.

Posada Carriles and Bosch both had extensive ties to the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations, including to figures who would later take positions in the administration of George W. Bush, such as Otto Reich and John Negroponte.

Otto Reich, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs under George W. Bush, ran the US Office of Public Diplomacy for Latin America and the

Caribbean from 1983 to 1986. That office was primarily tasked with producing propaganda on behalf of the right-wing “contra” mercenaries in Nicaragua, described by Human Rights Watch in a 1989 report as “major and systematic violators of the most basic standards of the laws of armed conflict, including by launching indiscriminate attacks on civilians, selectively murdering non-combatants, and mistreating prisoners.”

John Negroponte, Deputy Secretary of State and first Director of National Intelligence under George W. Bush, was also involved in support for the contras. However, he was notably also the US Ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985—a period during which Honduran military death squads operated with US support.

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As much as Cuba claims that the decision taking them off the list is simply a matter of justice, the Castro regime has certainly gone in a long way in giving a pass to the US on this matter. Perhaps this is no surprise given that the reconciliation between the US and Cuba has been mediated by Pope Francis.

Francis, the Dirty War Pope, then known as Jorge Bergoglio, was previously the Archbishop of Buenos Aires. He worked with the Argentine military junta to “cleanse” the Catholic Church of “leftists,” a goal supported by the Catholic Church hierarchy throughout the region.

Despite this history, Raul Castro has professed his admiration for the pope, and has even indicated he may rejoin the church. Last month Castro paid a visit to Francis at the Vatican, and had a private meeting that lasted around an hour. At a news conference, Castro fawned over Pope Francis, saying, “When the pope goes to Cuba in September, I promise to go to all his Masses, and with satisfaction.”

Castro continued, “I read all the speeches of the pope, his commentaries, and if the pope continues this way, I will go back to praying and go back to the church, and I’m not joking,” also saying, “I am from the Cuban Communist Party, that doesn’t allow believers, but now we are allowing it,” a change he described as an “important step.”

At this rate, the pace of Cuba’s reintegration into the world capitalist economy will accelerate. From the

perspective of the Castro regime, these developments can’t come quickly enough. Venezuela, on whom Cuba is highly dependent for fuel and assistance, is in dire financial straits. Already, American tourism to the island has increased by 36 percent, while new measures governing private cooperatives will allow for the hiring of non-partner employees.



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