

State Department report blames Cuba for social unrest: Rubio prepares total war at home and abroad

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On July 20, the US State Department published a 100-page document titled “Cuba: the Capital of 21st Century Communism.” Its thesis is that the civil rights movement, opposition to the Vietnam War, the New Left, the anti-colonial revolutions of the 20th century, the mass protests following the police murder of George Floyd and the present-day movements against ICE raids and the genocide in Gaza were all, in substantial measure, the handiwork of the government of a Caribbean island of less than 10 million people.

The report is an instrument to justify total war abroad and at home, including the genocidal economic blockade against Cuba that a small group of Democratic Representatives aptly called a “silent Gaza” after a trip to the island this month.

The historical narrative

The report is absurd on its face, turning the reality of the US-Cuban relationship inside out to advance its agenda. Cuba, a historically oppressed former semi-colony of the United States, is presented as the aggressor, even though the US has a GDP 300 times larger than the island nation and spends roughly 5,000 times more on its military. It ignores the thousands of terrorist attacks launched from the US, whose victims number roughly 3,500. Nor does it recount the innumerable CIA assassination attempts

And it makes no mention of the US economic blockade of the island, which has led to a 148 percent increase in the infant mortality rate between 2018 and 2025, claiming the lives of 1,800 Cuban babies. Thousands more have died because of the blockade depriving Cubans of essential medicines and sufficient nutrition. Things have only gotten worse in 2026 with the Trump administration’s blockade of all energy supplies.

It charges that the movement led by Fidel Castro was “a revolution against Western civilization itself,” but doesn’t go on to describe how this “civilization” manifested itself in pre-1959 Cuba. There is no mention of the bloodthirsty US-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista, which murdered and tortured tens of thousands, nor of the flourishing Mafia-run casinos and prostitution, not to mention an economy controlled almost entirely by foreign corporations and the grinding poverty faced by Cuba’s rural workforce, including the many toiling in the sugarcane fields.

Instead, the report presents a potted history of the 20th century, with Cuba becoming a chief protagonist of its second half. According to this account, Nikita Khrushchev’s 1956 secret speech and the suppression of the Hungarian workers uprising had shattered the authority of the Stalinist

Communist Parties, a process further compounded by Moscow’s doctrine of “peaceful coexistence” with the United States, which meant active opposition to world revolution. Into this vacuum stepped the Cuban Revolution of 1959.

The report acknowledges that Fidel Castro denied being a communist until 1961, and that the CIA had reached the same conclusion internally, but holds that his subsequent alliance with Moscow produced something other than Stalinist orthodoxy—a Marxism that did not wait for revolutionary conditions, but rather “made the Revolution.”

What Cuba advanced, the report argues, was a wholesale replacement of the traditional class struggle. The conflict “had expanded from a class war to a much larger civilizational conflict, demanding not just economic equality, but social, cultural, and even spiritual transformation.” Its revolutionary agent “was no longer the industrial proletariat, but the colonized nations and peoples of the Global South,” and its enemy “was no longer ‘capital,’ but Western civilization itself.” Citing the magazine *Jacobin*, the report calls this “essentially a decolonization of Marxist thought.”

The decisive turn, the report says, was when Havana allegedly decided to expand the anti-colonial struggle “into the imperial metropolises themselves, to the racially oppressed peoples living within the Western powers.” And here the document is explicit: “The black American in Detroit, in this telling, was not a ‘worker,’ first and foremost; he was a colonized subject, a revolutionary brother of the Vietnamese peasant and the Congolese rebel, a member of a distinctive Third World colony embedded in the heart of the empire.”

From this, the report derives its central claim: “It was Havana, not Moscow, that emerged as the capital of the new ideology of revolution.” Where the old left was built on “the party, labor unions, and Marxist theories of economic class struggle,” the New Left “was animated by Black Power, radical feminism, Third World liberation, and—above all else—the radical rejection of Western culture, history and identity in all its forms.” Cuba, it concludes, “has played an instrumental role in shaping America’s radical left from the 1960s through to today.”

The remaining chapters supply the mechanisms through which this “shaping” supposedly took place. Cuba exported guerrilla warfare across Latin America through the Tricontinental and OLAS conferences. It ran an espionage empire that placed agents inside the State Department, the Pentagon and the Defense Intelligence Agency. The Venceremos Brigade established by the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Cuban officials allegedly shaped the Weather Underground, which the report holds Cuba “actively facilitated” during a period in which the FBI attributed to the group 2,500 bombings in 18 months. Havana cultivated black nationalism as a weapon, from Robert F. Williams to Assata Shakur. And it built a network of “front groups”—supposedly ranging from the

Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples, to the National Network on Cuba, the National Lawyers Guild, the People's Forum, Code Pink, and even the Democratic Socialists of America.

The conclusion draws the line to the present. Cuba's aim, the report states, remains "a hemispheric Marxist revolution that erases the United States from the earth," pursued "not from without but from within—to turn Americans into instruments of their own nation's undoing."

It continues: "Many of the most significant upheavals in recent American political history—from the George Floyd riots to the rise of Antifa to the explosion of pro-terrorist activism on American college campuses—can be linked, in some way, shape, or form, to Cuban influence."

In some way, shape, or form. After a hundred pages, that is the causal claim.

What the narrative is for

This report did not appear in isolation. It was published four days after Secretary of State Marco Rubio convened at the State Department a "Ministerial on the Resurgence of Political Terrorism," attended by delegations from 66 countries. There, Rubio summed up the political framework behind the Cuba report. Those who oppose the existing order, he declared, "can call themselves anti-capitalists, or anti-imperialists, Communists, or anarchists, or Marxists ... But the fundamental character is always the same." He called upon "the people of the civilized world to defend themselves," and concluded: "It is time to crush this evil forever."

The machinery is already operating. In November, the State Department designated four European organizations—Antifa Ost, the Informal Anarchist Federation/International Revolutionary Front, Armed Proletarian Justice, and Revolutionary Class Self-Defence—as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, with rewards of up to \$10 million for information on their financing. Rubio has promised more. Executive Order 14404 has been applied to the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples and organizations associated with it. On July 21, the day after the report appeared, the House Ways and Means Committee issued compulsory subpoenas to the People's Forum, Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, and BreakThrough News over alleged ties to China.

But the report's final chapter reveals the full scope of what is being prepared. Titled "Anti-American Internationale," it presents Cuba not merely as the author of American protests but as the node connecting social unrest to the geopolitical adversaries of the United States. Havana, it charges, "continues to act as a force multiplier for a much broader anti-American coalition, positioning itself as a staging ground for a wide range of foreign adversaries to conduct operations against the United States," and functions as "a kind of concierge service for anti-American actors, providing them with access to domestic influence and intelligence within the United States." China and Russia, it asserts, have tripled their intelligence personnel on the island in three years, with China operating signals intelligence facilities. Iran is folded in through decades of intelligence cooperation and naval agreements.

This is where the report comes full circle. A demonstration against ICE in Chicago is traced to a nonprofit; the nonprofit to Havana; Havana to Beijing, Moscow and Tehran. Domestic opposition and geopolitical rivalry are fused into a single enemy, so that the working class at home appears as the internal detachment of the adversary abroad. Opposition to war becomes, by definition, service to the enemy in that war.

The report's falsity does not diminish its danger. It must be treated as a serious, official statement of state doctrine, not only for the United States, but for forging a network of mass repression internationally.

Capitalist governments frequently seek to re-direct class antagonisms outward against an external enemy and justify criminalizing anti-war opposition, even with brute force and police terror.

A fascist doctrine

The report is not an ordinary exercise in state propaganda. The language employed by Rubio and the report is that of Joseph Goebbels, particularly his speech at the Berlin Sportpalast in February 1943. Speaking after the destruction of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad, Goebbels demanded "total war"—the total mobilization of German society against an enemy he defined as simultaneously foreign and internal. The purpose of that speech was not to explain the crisis of German imperialism, but to transfer responsibility for it onto a fabricated enemy, and to license unlimited violence at home and abroad against that enemy. That is the practical conclusion of the DOS report.

The multinational character of this operation is among its most ominous feature. What Rubio assembled on July 16 was an incipient coordinating body with 66 governments who will share intelligence and take coordinated actions. The precedent is Operation Condor, formalized in Santiago in November 1975, under which the dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil, with the assistance of the CIA, pooled intelligence and death squads across national borders on the premise that opposition in each country was the local expression of a single international subversive network. Tens of thousands were murdered under that premise.

The breakdown of American democracy

It would be a fatal error to present this as the scheme of a single administration. The Trump government is not the cause of the crisis of American democracy. It is its outcome.

The forms of bourgeois democracy in the United States have been disintegrating for well over three decades, under both parties, because they can no longer contain the social antagonisms produced by a level of wealth concentration without precedent in modern history. In 2000, the Supreme Court halted the counting of votes in Florida and installed a president. The "war on terror" that followed produced indefinite detention without trial, Guantánamo Bay, torture for which no official was ever prosecuted, warrantless mass surveillance of the entire population, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012 and the assassination of American citizens by executive order under Obama. Each measure was introduced by one party and consolidated by the other.

Nowhere is this continuity clearer than in the legal instrument Rubio now wields. The Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act was signed by Bill Clinton in 1996. The PKK and the LTTE were designated by Clinton's Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, in 1997. When human rights organizations sought protection from prosecution for advising those groups on peaceful dispute resolution and petitioning the United Nations, it was the Obama administration that appealed, with Solicitor General Elena Kagan arguing the government's case. In *Holder v. Humanitarian Law Project* (2010), Chief Justice Roberts, joined by Scalia, Thomas, Alito, Kennedy and Stevens, upheld the criminalization of speech itself, on the grounds that advocacy on behalf of a designated organization lends it legitimacy. The penalty is up to 15 years.

As the *World Socialist Web Site* wrote at the time:

The US Secretary of State can designate any “foreign organization” as “terrorist” based on “classified information” establishing that it “engages in terrorist activity” which “threatens the security of United States nationals or the national security of the United States.”

Rubio is not merely the author of the narrative contained in this report. He is the officer empowered to convert that narrative into criminal liability—unilaterally, on the basis of secret evidence, without a court, a jury or any disclosure to the accused. The 100-page report and the designation authority sit in the same pair of hands.

Nor is new legislation required. The apparatus was built for him across 30 years by both capitalist parties. He requires only the assertion of a foreign tie, which is precisely what this report exists to supply. Once a domestic organization is declared an extension of Havana, it becomes reachable through a statute written for foreign entities—and the protections the Supreme Court once extended to members of the Communist Party, as Justice Breyer noted in dissent, are bypassed entirely.

Even the *modus operandi* is shared by both parties. Kagan argued the government’s case while being put forward as Obama’s nominee to the Supreme Court, where she now sits. Jay Clayton, the US Attorney for the Southern District of New York who launched the grand jury investigation into the organizations subpoenaed on July 21, has been nominated by Trump as permanent Director of National Intelligence—placing the prosecutor of American leftist organizations in command of the entire intelligence apparatus.

The *World Socialist Web Site* identified the character of this government on the day of Trump’s second inauguration, in a perspective titled “‘Führer’ Trump declares war on the world, and the working class,” which noted his announcement that criminal gangs in Mexico, El Salvador and Venezuela would be designated as foreign terrorist organizations, providing “a pseudo-legal justification for US attacks on those countries.” Eighteen months later, the same instrument has been extended to left-wing and anti-war organizations within the United States.

The report’s historical falsifications

The report’s evidentiary foundation is the institutional apparatus of McCarthyism itself—the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, the House Committee on Internal Security, the Senate Subcommittee on Security and Terrorism. Citing the transcripts of bodies that existed to manufacture subversion narratives is equivalent to writing the history of the Moscow Trials from the prosecutor’s summations.

The report layers uncorroborated defector testimony and anonymous officials: the allegation that Castro claimed the power to trigger race riots in American cities is introduced as something about which he “reportedly boasted,” according to what “one Senate testimonial later recounted.”

But the decisive refutation is chronological. *Brown v. Board of Education* was decided in 1954. Emmett Till was lynched in 1955. The Montgomery bus boycott began in December 1955 and lasted 381 days. Federal troops escorted nine students into Little Rock Central High School in 1957. The Bandung Conference met in 1955. India won independence in 1947, Indonesia in 1949, Ghana in 1957, Guinea in 1958. The Algerian war of independence began in 1954.

All of this preceded Castro’s leading his guerrilla fighters into Havana on January 1, 1959.

These movements arose from the conditions of the 20th century: from Jim Crow and lynch terror; from a conscript army sent to destroy a

peasant nation, at a cost of 58,000 American and some 3 million Vietnamese lives; from the greatest strike wave in American history in 1945-46; from the disintegration of colonial empires bankrupted by two world wars. To attribute them to Cuban direction is to revive, as official state doctrine, the segregationist theory of the “outside agitator” as the source of all unrest.

What the Cuban Revolution actually was

It is necessary to establish what took place in Cuba, against the narratives advanced by both Washington and Havana.

The report and the Cuban regime share an identical founding legend: that a small guerrilla force in the Sierra Maestra overthrew a state. The report presents this as a replicable model exported across a hemisphere under the direction of the strongman Castro.

Both are false. Of the approximately 20,000 Cubans killed under US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, some 19,000 died in the cities. The principal impetus for the dictatorship’s collapse came from urban, political strikes and mass resistance, the majority of it outside the control of Castro’s July 26th Movement. The guerrilla forces numbered at most a few thousand; the largest engagement of the war involved no more than 200 fighters. A substantial section of the Cuban bourgeoisie supported Castro, and Washington had imposed an arms embargo on Batista before the end.

Castro was not a Marxist and did not claim to be one. In April 1959 he declared in the United States: “I have stated in a clear and definite manner that we are not communists.” Only in late 1961, after nationalizations undertaken in response to American economic strangulation had made a break with Washington irreversible, did he announce his adherence to Marxism-Leninism and turn to Moscow and the Cuban Stalinists for aid and the means of creating a state apparatus that he did not possess.

The revolution was bourgeois in character, led by a petty-bourgeois nationalist movement, and produced a Bonapartist regime organized along military lines. This was the assessment of the International Committee of the Fourth International from the beginning. In 1961, while the Pabloite revisionists were hailing Castro as a model of “unconscious Trotskyism,” the ICFI wrote: “It is not the job of Trotskyists to boost the role of such nationalist leaders.”

There has been no restoration of capitalism in Cuba, because capitalism was never abolished. What has occurred since 1991 is the transformation of the regime into a broker of Cuban labor for foreign capital. In the 1990s, Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina oversaw an “economic opening with full guarantees for foreign investors.” Workers were contracted to these enterprises through the state—a strike-free labor force guaranteed by a police state trained in Stalinist methods. Today, the Castroite government has responded to the blockade through mass privatization and de-regulation.

The Trotskyist movement extends no political support to this regime. It jailed Cuba’s Trotskyists and destroyed their press. Julio Antonio Mella, who founded the Cuban Communist Party in 1925, broke with Stalinism in 1929 in solidarity with Trotsky’s struggle against the bureaucracy and was assassinated shortly afterward. The DOS document titled “The Capital of 21st Century Communism” is written about a state that imprisoned the Marxists.

Internationally, “Che” Guevara’s call for “two, three, many Vietnams” and Castro’s declaration at OLAS that guerrilla warfare was the sole solution for the continent led a generation of revolutionary-minded youth away from the industrial working class and into isolation and annihilation. Across the continent, these adventures and guerrilla methods supplied the

local militaries and imperialism with the pretext for dictatorship.

In Nicaragua—the “proof of concept” the report celebrates—the Sandinista Front took power in 1979 and evolved into a bourgeois nationalist apparatus at the service of foreign corporations.

The report’s assertion that “the Cubans have always seen revolution in America as an end unto itself” inverts the truth. The nationalist perspective of the Cuban regime, and of every tendency that promoted it as socialism, rested on the explicit rejection of the American working class as a revolutionary force. A genuine revolutionary movement in the United States, moreover, would have threatened Havana and Moscow no less than Washington.

At the same time, the working class must oppose unconditionally the war being prepared against Cuba. The fuel blockade and economic sanctions are criminal acts of imperialist violence against a small and oppressed country, responsible for the blackouts, the medicine shortages and the sharp rise in preventable deaths now afflicting the Cuban population. The aim is not democracy but the installation of a client regime and the seizure of Cuban resources, following the pattern already executed in Venezuela.

The defense of democratic rights

The International Committee of the Fourth International has irreconcilable political differences with the organizations named in this report. They are not organizations of the working class. Their orientation is to the Democratic Party and to sections of the state, and their politics of racial and national identity have functioned to divide workers.

Nonetheless, workers everywhere, must oppose Washington’s witch-hunt without reservation. The designations, subpoenas and prosecutions now being prepared are an attack on the democratic rights of the working class as a whole, and every precedent established will be turned against strikes, immigrants, and socialist-minded workers and students.

The State Department has produced a hundred pages on the danger of socialism not because it actually sees Havana as a threat, but because millions of workers and young people in the United States and internationally are turning toward socialism, and the ruling class cannot acknowledge the cause without indicting itself. The document is a measure of the ruling elite’s fear.



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