

[THE EMPIRE AND THE INDEPENDENT ISLAND. Part V](#)

The Guantanamo Naval Base since the Triumph of the Revolution.

Since the triumph of the Revolution, the Revolutionary Government has denounced the illegal occupation of that portion of our territory.

On the other hand, since January 1st, 1959, the United States turned the usurped territory of the Guantanamo Naval Base into a permanent source of threats, provocation and violation of Cuba's sovereignty, with the aim of creating trouble for the victorious revolutionary process. Said Base has always been present in the plans and operations conceived by Washington to overthrow the Revolutionary Government.

All kinds of aggressions have come from the Naval Base:

- Dropping of inflammable materials over free territory from planes flying out of the Base.
- Provocations by American soldiers, including insults, the throwing of stones and cans filled with inflammable materials and the firing of pistols and automatic weapons.
- Violations of Cuban jurisdictional waters and Cuban territory by American military vessels and aircraft from the Base.
- Plans for self-aggression on the Base that would provoke a large-scale armed struggle between Cuba and the United States.
- Registering the radio frequencies used at the Base in the International Frequency Registry in the space corresponding to Cuba.

On January 12, 1961, the worker Manuel Prieto Gómez who had been employed at the Base for more than 3 years was savagely tortured by Yankee soldiers on the Guantanamo Naval Base, for the "crime" of being a revolutionary.

On October 15 of that same year, the Cuban worker Rubén López Sabariego was tortured and subsequently murdered.

On June 24, 1962, Rodolfo Rosell Salas, a fisherman from Caimanera, was murdered by soldiers at the Base.

Likewise, the devious intent of fabricating a self-provocation and deploying American troops in a "justified" punitive invasion of Cuba has always been a volatile element at Guantanamo Base. We can find an example of this in one of the actions included in the so-called "Operation Mongoose", when on September 3, 1962 American soldiers stationed in Guantanamo would shoot at Cuban sentries.

During the Missile Crisis, the Base was reinforced in terms of military technology and troops; manpower grew to more than 16,000 Marines. Given the decision of Soviet Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev to withdraw the nuclear missiles stationed in Cuba without previously either consulting or informing the Revolutionary Government, Cuba defined the unshakeable position of the Revolution in what came to be known as the "Five Points". The fifth point demanded withdrawal from the Guantanamo Naval Base. We were on the brink of a thermonuclear war, where we would be the prime target as a consequence of

the imperial policy of taking over Cuba.

On February 11, 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson reduced the number of Cuban personnel working at the Base by approximately 700 workers. They also confiscated the accumulated retirement funds of hundreds of Cuban workers who had been employed on the Base and illegally suspended payments of pensions to retired Cuban workers.

On July 19, 1964, in a blatant provocation made by American border guards against the Cuban border patrol sentries, Ramón López Peña, a young 17-year-old soldier, was murdered at close range while he was on guard in the sentry-box.

On May 21, 1966, and in similar circumstances, soldier Luis Ramírez López was murdered by shots from the Base.

In hardly three weeks of the month of May in 1980, more than 80,000 men, 24 vessels and some 350 combat aircraft took part in Solid Shield-80 exercises; as part of its dynamic, this included the landing of 2,000 Marines at the Naval Base and the reinforcement of the facility with an additional 1200 troops.

In October 1991, during the 4th Communist Party Congress in Santiago de Cuba, planes and helicopters from the Base violated Cuban air space over the city.

In 1994, the Base served as a support station for the invasion of Haiti: American air force planes used Base airports for this. More than 45,000 Haitian emigrants were kept on the Base until mid-1995.

Also in 1994, the well-known migration crisis was produced as a result of the tightening up of the blockade and the tough years of the Special Period, the non-compliance with the Migratory Agreement of 1984 signed with the Reagan Administration, the considerable reduction in the number of visas granted and the encouragement of illegal emigration, including the Cuban Adjustment Act signed by President Johnson more than four decades ago.

As a result of the crisis created, a declaration made by President Clinton on August 19, 1994 transformed the Base into a migratory concentration camp for the Cuban rafters, in numbers close to 30,000.

Finally, on September 9, 1994 a Joint Communiqué was signed by the Clinton administration and the Cuban government. This saw the United States committing to prevent the entry into its territory of intercepted illegal emigrants and to issue a minimum of 20,000 annual visas for safety travel to the United States.

On May 2, 1995, as part of the migratory negotiations, the governments of Cuba and the United States also agreed what on this occasion was called a Joint Declaration establishing the procedure for returning to Cuba all those who continued trying to illegally migrate to the United States and were intercepted by the U.S. Coast Guard.

Notice the specific reference to the illegal emigrants intercepted by the Coast Guards. Thus the basis had been laid of a sinister business: the traffic of persons. The Murderous Act was maintained, thus turning Cuba into the only country in the world subjected to such harassment. While approximately 250 thousand people have safely traveled to that country, an incalculable number of women, children and people of all ages have lost their lives as a result of the prosperous traffic of emigrants.

Following an agreement by the two governments, as from the migratory crisis of 1994, regular meetings between the military commands of each side were initiated. A strip of mined territory would sometimes be flooded by tropical rainstorms and overflowing rivers. On many occasions our sappers had put their lives in danger to save persons who were crossing the restricted military zone in that area, even with children.

The Guantanamo Naval Base since the enactment of the Helms-Burton Act.

This Act, signed by President William Clinton on March 12, 1996, in its Title II about “Assistance to a Free and Independent Cuba”, Section 201 related to the “policy toward a transition government and a democratically elected government in Cuba”, establishes in its Point 12 that the United States must “be prepared to enter into negotiations with a democratically elected government in Cuba either to return the United States Naval Base at Guantanamo to Cuba or to renegotiate the present agreement under mutually agreeable terms”. Something worse than what was planned by military governor Leonard Wood, who had landed on foot along with Theodore Roosevelt in the proximity of Santiago de Cuba: the idea of having an annexationist of Cuban descent administrating our country.

The War in Kosovo in 1999 resulted in a great number of Kosovar refugees. The Clinton government, embroiled in that NATO war against Serbia, made the decision to use the Base to accommodate a number of them, and on this occasion, for the first time, with no previous consultation whatsoever as usual, it informed Cuba of the decision made. Our answer was constructive. Even though we were opposed to the unjust and illegal conflict, we had no grounds on which to oppose the humanitarian aid needed by the Kosovar refugees. We even offered our country’s cooperation, if it should be needed, in terms of medical care or any other service they might need. Finally, the Kosovar refugees were never sent to the Guantanamo Naval Base.

The manifesto called “The Oath of Baraguá” of February 19, 2000 expressed that “in due time, since it no longer constitutes a prioritized objective at this moment even though the right of our people is very just and cannot be waived; the illegally occupied territory of Guantanamo must be returned to Cuba.” At that time, we were involved in the struggle for the return of the kidnapped boy and the economic consequences of the brutal blockade.

The Guantanamo Naval Base since September 11.

On September 18, 2001, President Bush signed United States Congress legislation authorizing the use of force as a response to the September 11 attacks. Bush used this legislation as a basis to sign a Military Order on November 13 of that same year which would establish the legal bases for arrests and trials by military tribunals of individuals who didn't hold U.S. citizenship, as part of the “war on terrorism”.

On January 8, 2002 the United States officially informed Cuba that they would be using the Guantanamo Naval Base as a detention center for Afghan war prisoners.

Three days later, on January 11, 2002, the first 20 detainees arrived, and the figure reached the number of 776 prisoners coming from 48 countries. Of course none of these data were mentioned. We assumed they were Afghan war prisoners. The first planes were landing full of prisoners, and many more guards than prisoners. On the same day, the government of Cuba issued a public declaration indicating its willingness to cooperate with medical assistance services as required, clean-up programs and a fight against mosquitoes and pests in the area surrounding the base which is under our control, or any other useful, constructive and humane measure that might come up. I remember the data because I was personally involved in details concerning the Note presented by the MINREX in response to the United States Note. We were very far from imagining at that moment that the U.S. government was getting ready to create a horrendous torture center at that base.

The Socialist Constitution proclaimed on February 24, 1976 had set forth in its Article 11, section c) that “the Republic of Cuba repudiates and considers as null and illegal those treaties, pacts or concessions concerted under conditions of inequality or which disregard or diminish her sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

On June 10, 2002, the people of Cuba, in an unprecedented process of popular referendum, ratified the socialist content of that Constitution of 1976 as a response to the meddling and offensive expressions of

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the President of the United States. Likewise, it mandated the National People's Power Assembly to amend it so that it would expressly state, inter alia, the irrevocable principle which must govern the economic, diplomatic and political relations of our country with other states, by adding to the same Article 11, section c): "Economic, diplomatic and political relations with any other State may never be negotiated under aggression, threat or coercion by a foreign power."

After the Proclamation to the People of Cuba was made public on July 31, 2006, the U.S. authorities have declared that they do not hope for a migration crisis but that they are pre-emptively preparing to face one, with the use of the Guantanamo Naval Base as a concentration camp for illegal migrants intercepted in the high seas being a consideration. In public declarations, information reveals that the United States is expanding its civilian buildings on the Base with the aim of increasing their capacity to receive the illegal emigrants.

Cuba, for her part, has taken all possible measures to avoid incidents between the armed forces of both countries, and has declared that she is abiding by the commitments contained in the Joint Declaration on migratory issues signed with the Clinton administration. Why is there so much talking, threats and brouhaha?

The symbolic annual payment of \$3,386.25 for the lease of the territory occupied by the Guantanamo Naval Base was maintained until 1972 when the Americans adjusted it themselves to \$3,676. In 1973, a new adjustment was made for the value of the old U.S. Gold dollar, and for that reason the cheque issued by the Treasury Department was since then increased to \$4,085.00 each year. That cheque is charged to the United States Navy, the party responsible for operations at the Naval Base.

The cheques issued by the government of the United States, as payment for the lease, are in the name of the "Treasurer General of the Republic of Cuba", an institution and official who, many years ago, have ceased to function within the structure of the Government of Cuba. This cheque is sent on a yearly basis, through diplomatic channels. The one for 1959, due to a mere confusion, was entered into the national budget. Since 1960 until today these cheques have not been cashed and they are proof of the lease that has been imposed for more than 107 years. I would imagine, conservatively, that this is ten times less than what the United States government spends on the salary of a schoolteacher each year.

Both the Platt Amendment and the Guantanamo Naval Base were unnecessary. History has shown that in a great number of countries in this hemisphere where there has not been a revolution, their entire territory, governed by the multinationals and the oligarchies, needs neither one nor the other. Advertising took care of their mostly ill-trained and poverty-stricken populations by creating reflexes.

From the military point of view, a nuclear aircraft carrier, with so many fast fighter-bombers and escort ships supported by technology and satellites, is several times more powerful and can move to any point on the globe, wherever the empire needs it the most.

The Base was needed to humiliate and to carry out the filthy deeds that take place there. If we must await the downfall of the system, we shall wait. The suffering and danger for all humanity shall be great, like today's stock market crisis, and a growing number of people forecast it. Cuba shall always be waiting in a state of combat readiness.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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