

Official statement by the President of the Cuban delegation

Upon arrival at this historical Latin American land of Panama, I wish to extend my greetings to its patriotic and valiant people, today the legitimate owner of the Canal, of which they are better managers than those who owned it until not long ago. I thank you on behalf of Cuba, which like every other country in the world benefits from its services.

Like the other Latin American Heads of Governments, I have come to attend the 10th Summit in a spirit of cooperation toward its success for the benefit of our peoples, particularly, in the interest and for the prestige of Panama.

However, it is my duty to inform you that, just like in previous occasions when I have traveled to these summits, terrorist groups organized, funded and directed from the United States of America by the Cuban American National Foundation, an instrument of imperialism and the extreme right wing in that country, have been dispatched to Panama intent on my physical elimination. They are already in this city where they have introduced weapons and explosives.

I am making this denunciation now, and not before traveling here, to prevent anyone from believing that dangers or threats could intimidate Cuba's representatives.

As for the safety of our delegation, we do not feel in the least concerned. Our staff is aware of this; they are experienced, real veterans in fighting ambushes, treacherous plans and other aggressions from imperialism and its allies. Still, many Heads of States and Governments and their delegations are taking part in this meeting and, although the Panamanian authorities have worked thoroughly to guarantee everybody's safety, we know that the terrorists' plans include shooting and blasting with explosives wherever they find it useful to their goal. They do not mind if it is a collective vehicle where the leaders or their delegations are traveling or if these are gathered at any of the functions organized by the hosts.

The ringleader of the group, whom the leaders of the Cuban American National Foundation entrusted with this mission, is the notorious Luis Posada Carriles, a coward and absolutely unscrupulous man who blew up a Cubana Airlines craft after take off from Barbados with 73 passengers on board on October 6, 1976, for which crime he used Venezuelan mercenaries. On August 1985, he escaped from jail in Venezuela, to actively participate in the arm supplies scam for the dirty war against the government of Nicaragua, an operation managed from the White House that ended up in the Irangate scandal. The same man has been responsible for terrorist actions perpetrated in Havana hotels using mercenaries from El Salvador and Guatemala. During the 4th Summit held in Cartagena de Indias on the 14 and 15 of June 1994, they were very close to opening fire against us while we toured the old city as part of a caravan of carriages. Gabriel García Márquez was with me in the same carriage that day. In that case, I would have had the honor of dying in the company of a very outstanding author.

The Cuban American National Foundation gang, which planned to carry out an attempt in Margarita island during the 7th Summit held on November 8 and 9, 1997, was arrested by an American coast guard patrol when the gang's boat was still in the proximity of Puerto Rico, as it became suspicious of drug trafficking; thus, their weapons were seized, among them two .50 caliber semi-automatic rifles with telescopic sights, infrared devices and a 1500 meters range that could be used day or night. As it is known, the members of that group were acquitted after a spurious and deceptive trial in the courts of that colonized island.

In the light of all this, it became necessary to make this public denunciation.

We feel that it is the duty of the authorities in the host country to locate that terrorist and his

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accomplices to prevent them from escaping through any airport, or by road or sea, to arrest them and submit them to the corresponding court of law for the violation of both the national and international law. Surely, they will do everything possible to preserve the honor of their country and ensure the success of the Summit, which have been put in jeopardy by international outlaws acting with irritating contempt to make a mockery of the authorities and the people of Panama. Our delegation is willing to relinquish the information available.

At the same time, we appeal to the Panamanian people to provide the authorities with any information or clues that may help to seize the terrorists. We are surrendering to the press recent pictures of Posada Carriles with the request that they are published.

We hope that, despite such criminal plans, the Summit in Panama can be a resounding success.

Fidel Castro

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