

Cuba and Venezuela Face US and Colombia

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Cuba's living example of 45 years of successful resistance to US military aggression and economic boycott is extremely damaging to Washington's goal of world empire for several reasons. In the first place Cuba's success refutes the notion put forth by the "center-left" that "small", "undeveloped" countries cannot resist imperial powers, or sustain a revolution in the face of "globalization". Secondly the survival of the Cuban revolution refutes the idea that Caribbean or Latin American countries located proximate to the US must conform to the dictates of Washington. Thirdly, Cuba demonstrates that the US empire is not invincible. Cuba has defeated almost all major aggressive military, political and diplomatic attacks.

Diplomatically, Cuba is recognized by almost all countries in the world, and receives the support of over 150 countries (versus 3 for the US) in opposition to the US embargo in the United Nations. Economically, Cuba has trade and investment relations with all major European, Asian, African, Latin American and North American nations (except the US). Militarily, the Cuban armed forces and intelligence agencies have defeated every US-sponsored terrorist attack on the islands for the past half-century in addition to raising the political cost for any potential invasion. In response to a half century of failures, the Bush Administration has escalated its aggression: practically eliminating all US travel to Cuba, blocking almost all family remittances, and tightening trade restrictions on food and medicine. While these harsh measures have had some negative effects on Cuba, they have also provoked opposition among some conservative sectors of the US public. Many Cuban exiles who would normally support Bush have been antagonized because they cannot provide economic assistance to aging family members. Agricultural interests (from 38 states) which supported Bush are furious at the new restriction on trade. Liberal and conservative enemies of the Cuban revolution who hoped to subvert the revolution via cultural and ideological penetration are upset by the travel and cultural restrictions.

In other words the harsher and more extreme the measures adopted by the Bush Administration against Cuba the greater Washington's isolation. This is true externally as well as internally. Let us examine several illustrations.

The US exploited the jailing of over 70 US paid propagandists, labeling them "political dissidents", initially securing the support of the European Union. A year later, the EU has broken with Washington and renewed and expanded its cultural and economic ties with Cuba.

While the US tightens its trade embargo, Cuban trade and investment ties with China and the rest of Asia, Venezuela and the rest of Latin America, Canada and Europe have expanded and deepened. The US restrictions on family remittances has been weakened by family members sending money via "third countries such as Mexico, Canada, Dominican Republic etc. Canadian, European, Latin American and Asian visitors have topped 2 million

annually and new influxes of investment have made up for most of the shortfall from the restrictions on remittances.

Finally Washington's attempts to limit Cuba's access to energy sources after the fall of the USSR have been defeated by the far-reaching trade and investment agreements with the Venezuelan government of President Chavez. The Chavez regime provides Cuba with petrol at subsidized prices in exchange for Cuba providing a vast health and education program for the poor of Venezuela. The Cuban-Venezuelan political and economic ties have undercut US efforts to force the Caribbean and Latin American countries to break with Cuba. As a result of past and present failed policies of directly attacking Cuba, the Bush administration has turned toward destroying Cuba's strategic alliance with the Chavez regime.

The Two Stage Strategy

US strategy toward destroying the Cuban revolution is increasingly following a "two step" approach: first overthrow the Chavez government in Venezuela, cut off the energy supply and trade links and then proceed toward economic strangulation and military attack. The "two step" strategy against Cuba, involves the elaboration of a calibrated action plan to overthrow the Chavez government.

Washington's anti-Chavez efforts up till 2005 have resulted in severe defeats. These efforts have largely been based on an "insider" approach, utilizing the local ruling class, sectors of the army and the corrupt trade union bureaucracy. Not only have Washington's domestic instruments been defeated but they have been severely weakened for future use. Washington's support for the failed military coup resulted in the loss of several hundred counter-revolutionary officers who were forced to resign. Bush's support for the petroleum elite's lockout led to the expulsion of thousands of oil officials allied with Washington. The defeat of the referendum to expel Chavez, mobilized, politicized and radicalized millions of poor Venezuelans and demoralized Washington's middle class supporters. The result of these failed policies has been to turn Washington's attention to an "outsider" strategy: the key to which is incremental military intervention in association with the terrorist Uribe regime in Colombia.

The US strategy against Cuba involves a joint US-Colombian attack of Venezuela backed by internal terrorists and the ruling class. This indirect attack on Cuba, involves complex, external preparation in cooperation with Colombia. First of all Washington and Uribe have greatly strengthened military bases surrounding the Venezuelan border. Secondly "trial military incursions" involving both Colombian military and paramilitary forces occur on a regular basis testing Venezuelan defenses. In 2004 six Venezuelan soldiers were killed, a number of Venezuelan officials were bribed to kidnap a Colombian resistance leader and numerous cross border attacks killing and kidnapping Colombian refugees took place in Venezuela. Thirdly the US has provided nearly \$3 billion dollars in military aid to Colombia, tripled the size of its armed forces (to over 275,000), greatly increased its air force combat units (helicopters, fighter bombers), provided advanced military technology and several thousand official and "contracted" military specialists. Fourthly Washington has recruited the Gutierrez regime in Ecuador, invaded Haiti, established military bases in Peru and the Dominican Republic, and has engaged in navy maneuvers just off the Venezuelan coast in preparation for a military attack. Fifthly Colombia (under US tutelage) signed a joint military-intelligence cooperation agreement on December 18, 2004 with the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense, providing the US with "inside information" and serving as a possible source of

infiltration of the Venezuelan Armed Forces to counter pro-Cuban officers.

The Triangular Strategy

The US is relying on a “triangular strategy” to overthrow the Chavez regime: A military invasion from Colombia, US intervention (air and sea attacks plus special forces to assassinate key officials) and an internal uprising by infiltrated terrorists and military traitors, supported by key media, financial and petrol elites. The strategy involves seizing state power, expelling the Cuban aid missions and breaking all agreements with Cuba.

Prior to this concerted military strategy, Washington has designed a propaganda campaign against the Cuban-Venezuelan alliance, Venezuela’s attempts to rectify the enormous military deficit with Colombia by purchasing defensive arms, and raising the specter of Venezuela’s “subversion” of Latin American regimes. The key to US policy is to prevent Venezuela from joining Cuba as an alternative social welfare regime to the US neo-liberal clients in Latin America. US aggression escalates as the agrarian reform expands, Venezuela prepares self-defense and Chavez diversifies trade and investment ties. Cuba’s powerful support for Venezuela’s social welfare programs has consolidated mass support for the Chavez regime and is a main base of defense for the radicalization of the process.

As Venezuela confronts Washington’s threats, it consolidates its ties with Cuba. The fate of the two projects become intertwined and bound together in a single common anti-imperialist alliance, despite the differences in social systems and political composition.

Strengths of the Venezuelan-Cuban Alliance

The US “external” strategy toward Venezuela and its “two step” approach toward Cuba face powerful limitations.

First of all the Colombian regime faces a powerful internal opposition: 20,000 veteran guerrilla fighters and millions of Colombians sympathetic to the agrarian reform program, independent foreign policy and political freedoms of the Chavez regime. It is very dangerous for Uribe to start a “two-front war” which might open the way to attacks on the principle cities including Bogotá.

The US is heavily tied down militarily in Iraq and puts a higher priority on war against Iran/Syria than Venezuela. The US intervention would be limited to air and sea attacks and Special Forces.

The war would mobilize millions of Venezuelans in a war of national liberation, defending their own land homes, neighborhoods, families and friends. Moreover popular liberation wars radicalize the population and frequently lead to the confiscation of counter-revolutionary property. A failed invasion could push Venezuela toward greater socialization of the economy and eliminate the domestic elite.

Moreover, US economy and multi-nationals stand to lose a reliable supply of petroleum in a tight market and billions of dollars in investments weakening the US position in the global energy market.

An invasion would likely to lead to a joint military defense pact between Venezuela and Cuba, which would counter-US policy in the Caribbean. Such an invasion would also be likely to provoke major unrest and instability throughout Latin America, threaten US clients and

undermining neo-liberal regimes and policies.

For all these reasons, Washington's attempts to pursue the external, two step policy toward Venezuela and Cuba, while extremely dangerous to both countries, could have a boomerang effect, setting in its wake a new wave of anti-imperialist struggles throughout the region.

Up to now the escalation of US diplomatic and economic aggression against Cuba has led to the greater isolation of the US in Europe and throughout the Third World. An escalation of military aggression against Venezuela as part of a "two-step strategy" against Cuba could have even more severe consequences the expansion of the revolutionary struggle in Colombia and the rest of Latin America.

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