

Demonizing Fidel Castro: “Normalization” and the Thrust of Anti-Cuba Propaganda

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The Main-Stream Media (MSM) is targeting a young and diverse population through Fusion, a new multimedia news service launched in 2013 and it is described as a “news, pop culture and satire TV and digital network.” Fusion is an American digital cable and satellite TV network that is jointly owned by the Disney-ABC Television Group, a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company and Univision Communications Inc.

It is associated with ABC News and the Spanish-language news division of Noticias Univision. Fusion published an article featuring Juan Reinaldo Sanchez, a former bodyguard for Fidel Castro who was interviewed by the “Walter Cronkite of Hispanic media” Jorge Ramos called ‘Fidel’s Fortune: An Interview with Castro’s Former Bodyguard.’ It seems that there is a new media campaign to discredit Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution since the Obama administration and Raul Castro announced to the world that that their governments will restore diplomatic relations. Since the announcement, a divide among Cuban-Americans with those in favor of the embargo and those against it has taken place. However, Fusion with the MSM’s favorite “Hispanic journalist” (besides Geraldo Rivera of Fox News) Jorge Ramos has jumped on the opportunity to discredit the Cuban government on behalf of the anti-Castro Congress members, activists and Cuban-Americans who are mostly based in Florida and New Jersey. Ramos wrote:

The brothers Castro – Raul, the current president, and Fidel – still rule the island, and Obama’s momentous announcement has not changed that equation, nor will it. Many Cubans are well aware of this, especially Juan Reinaldo Sanchez, who for 17 years worked as Fidel Castro’s bodyguard, when Fidel was president. From 1977-1994, Sanchez protected the Cuban leader, and wrote about his experiences in a book, “Fidel Castro’s Hidden Life,” which was published earlier this year.

Ramos also mentions how loyal Sanchez was to Fidel Castro and the principles of the Cuban Revolution. He wrote

“Sanchez’s loyalty to Cuba and the communist regime was also impermeable. “I believed blindly in Fidel. To me, Fidel was the greatest – he was a god on a pedestal,” Sanchez told me. “I was not only willing to give my life for him, I was eager to do it.” According to Ramos, Sanchez claims that “he got to see firsthand how the communist dictator amassed a personal fortune, primarily through Cuban businesses whose profits, Sanchez said, went directly to the dictator.” And that “Castro has bank accounts in other countries, the central bank in Cuba maintains what officials call “the commander in chief’s reserves,” which not only include cash, but cars, trucks and other goods.” The article also

said that Sanchez had applied for retirement in 1994 but was thrown in jail for two years as punishment because he tried to leave Castro's security detail. Sanchez also said that he attempted eleven times to escape from Cuba but failed. Somehow he arranged for him and his family to come to the United States in 2008. Ramos asked him "why it took so long to tell his story" and Sanchez replied "I couldn't talk about this in Cuba", Sanchez said. "And it took me a long time to gather all the material [for the book]."

According to Ramos, Sanchez had told him that Castro is involved in drug trafficking because he overheard Castro and his Minister of the Interior, Jose Abrantes in a private conversation:

Sanchez also told me that part of Castro's fortune came from drug trafficking. Sanchez said that in 1989, despite the fact that Castro would forcefully insist in public that the Cuban government had nothing to do with drug trafficking, the bodyguard overheard a private conversation between Castro and José Abrantes, then minister of the interior, that directly implicated Castro in the drug business. "That's when everything fell apart for me, when everything crumbled" Sanchez said. "I spent more time with Fidel than I did with my own family, and after that moment I was in shock. I felt used, and angry."

Ramos says that he met Mr. Sanchez at a summit in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1991 protecting Fidel Castro and was physically assaulted by his security detail, although not by Sanchez himself. Ramos wrote *"when I approached Castro, microphone in hand, to try and ask a few questions. We walked a few steps, and when I started asking Castro about the lack of democracy in Cuba, I was punched in the stomach (though it wasn't Sanchez who hit me) and was knocked to the floor. Castro and his guards kept walking, never turning their heads."* Sounds like something out of a Hollywood mafia movie when bodyguards protect their mob boss from the paparazzi. However, Jorge Ramos and Juan Reinaldo Sanchez are not alone when accusing the Cuban government of drug trafficking or any other illegal activities. In 2009, Rens Lee, President of Global Advisory Services and a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI) published an article titled '*Cuba, Drugs, and U.S.-Cuba Relations*' which accuses the Cuban government of establishing relations with the Medellin cartel of Colombia:

Cuba's relations with the international drug trade are historically complex and controversial and deserve some mention here. The Castro regime, on its accession to power in 1959, largely wiped out what had been a flourishing domestic market for cocaine and marijuana that was closely associated with the mob-run Havana casino-nightclub scene. Despite this achievement, opportunistic ties with foreign drug-trafficking organizations apparently persisted. Allegations of Cuban state complicity in the drug trade date to the early 1960s, although hard evidence of a Cuban drug connection did not surface until the 1980s.

Such cozy relationships reached a height in the late 1980s, when a group of Cuban Ministry of Interior officials, led by MC department head Antonio de la Guardia, together with representatives of Colombia's Medellin cartel, coordinated some 15 successful smuggling operations through Cuba to the United States, which - according to Cuban officials - moved a total of six tons of cocaine and earned the conspirators \$3.4 million.

Also complicit in these activities, though tangentially, was Division General Arnaldo Ochoa Sanchez, a decorated hero of the Cuban revolution. An Ochoa

emissary met with Medellín cartel chief Pablo Escobar in 1988 to discuss a cocaine-smuggling venture and also a proposal to set up a cocaine laboratory in Cuba. The discussions also touched on another topic – and this is what Escobar really wanted most – the transfer of some surface-to-air missiles to the cartel in Colombia. The trafficking schemes never materialized, but in early 1990 the Colombian National Police discovered an assortment of 10 ground-to-air and air-to-air missiles of French manufacture (apparently originating in Angola) in a Bogotá residence belonging to an assassin employed by the Medellín cartel.

Mr. Lee says that there was “no hard evidence” of Cuban drug trafficking until the 1980’s but was involved in the drug trade since the 1960’s. However, there is “hard evidence” that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) was involved in the drug trade. Read “*Dark Alliance: The Story Behind the Crack Cocaine Explosion*” by Project Censored when it stated the facts on who was really behind the cocaine epidemic in the U.S. The article explains how Gary Webb’s investigative reporting led to the truth which the MSM wanted to bury. Mr. Webb was found dead from an apparent suicide with two (yes, two) gunshot wounds to his head. Project censored explained Mr. Webb’s findings:

A groundbreaking investigation at the dawn of the Internet age in 1996, the “Dark Alliance” series, like no other newspaper reportage had done before, documented the firm links between the United States government, Central American cocaine traffickers and a domestic U.S. cocaine epidemic that had ravaged entire American communities. It was a news story that shined the spotlight on U.S. government complicity in international drug trafficking and revealed the U.S. government’s much-vaunted “war on drugs” to be a sham.

But while the U.S. government agencies involved in those illegal activities — the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in particular — had plenty of reasons for wanting this story to go away, in the end it was elements of Webb’s own profession, the press, that had been offended most by “Dark Alliance” and worked hardest to not only debunk the findings reported in “Dark Alliance” but also to discredit and destroy the journalistic credibility of Webb himself.

The U.S. and Israel (who has consistently voted with the U.S. to continue its embargo) want “*regime change*” in Cuba. They want to remove Fidel and Raul Castro as do special business interests (both legal and illegal), the MSM and the Cuban-Americans in New Jersey and Florida because they say Cuba is a threat on many levels, including drug trafficking. However, the New York Times reported that the Pentagon’s own report in 1998 declaring that Cuba was not a danger to U.S. national security. In an article written by Steven Lee Myers titled ‘*A Pentagon Report Now Belittles the Menace Posed by Cuba*’ stated the following:

The Pentagon’s analysis, ordered by Congress last year, was no surprise, given Cuba’s economic implosion after the end of Soviet-era subsidies. But it still provoked anger among Cuba’s critics in Congress, who accused the Clinton Administration of softening its stand toward President Fidel Castro

Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, a Cuban-born Republican from Florida, said the Pentagon had “blatantly minimized” what he called “asymmetric threats” posed by Mr. Castro’s Government, including its support for drug traffickers.

Anti-Castro elements in congress were furious at the report as the New York Times explained what the Pentagon report had stated about Cuba's military capabilities in comparison to the U.S. military:

The report said Cuba's army could no longer mount "effective operations" since most of its equipment is in storage. It said the navy could not operate in force outside of territorial waters, while the air force, with fewer than two dozen Soviet-era MIG jets still able to fly, could not even defend Cuban airspace against a large attack. In fact, the report said, the military "must now grow its own food and raise money to pay for some of its own expenses."

The report also offered what may be the most understated reason that Cuba's military has never posed much of a threat to its big neighbor to the north: "The Cubans almost certainly calculate that any attack on U.S. territory or forces would draw a swift, forceful U.S. reaction."

The Cuban government is involved in drug trafficking and extortion according to Sanchez and other Anti-Castro activists. But I ask a few questions. First, how can the Cuban government who went "face to face" with the U.S. during the Cuban missile crisis (which was instigated by the Kennedy administration) with an embargo which began in 1960 manage to get "six tons of cocaine" into the US? How can the Cuban government ship a massive amount of drugs with U.S. intelligence agencies and the U.S. Southern Command's (SouthCom) surveillance apparatus that constantly monitors Cuba's actions? Why would Fidel Castro and the Cuban Revolution betray their ideals and principals so that they can make a profit through illegal drug trafficking? How would that look in the eyes of the international community? These accusations by the Western media outlets are absurd.

Cuba has one of the most severe penalties for drug traffickers in the world. In fact, the MSM has been reporting that Cuba and the U.S. has collaborated together to fight the "War on Drugs" in recent years. BBC News reported in 2012 that "*the US and Cuba severed diplomatic ties more than five decades ago. But officials on the ground acknowledge Cuba's contribution to the common war on drugs*" the report said. "[Without] a strong counter-drug stance, Cuba would be a prime area for drug smugglers, but its efforts are very effective," says Louis Orsini of the US coastguard, adding that the US would find it "really challenging" if Cuba became a direct conduit for illicit narcotics." The Associated Press published an article in 2013 titled 'Under the radar, Cuba and US often work together' and said:

The American government maintains a Coast Guard representative in Cuba, and the two countries work together to interdict suspicious boats. A U.S. diplomat involved in the process told The Associated Press that security officials on both sides are on a first-name basis, and that the Cubans happily accept FBI and Coast Guard baseball caps as gifts.

The report also said that Cuba has taken steps to work with U.S. counterparts against suspected drug traffickers in recent years according to Carlos Alzugaray, a former Cuban diplomat "*He said Cuba has in recent years taken a pragmatic approach, more often than not cooperating on drug enforcement and judicial issues, something he hoped would one day lead to better ties.*" The U.S. Department of State's own analysis on Cuba's War on Drugs released in 2013 is worth reading:

Despite its proximity to major transit routes for illegal drugs to the U.S. market, Cuba is not a major consumer, producer, or transit point of illicit narcotics. Cuba's intensive security presence and bilateral interdiction efforts have effectively reduced the available supply of narcotics on the island and prevented traffickers from establishing a foothold. The Cuban Border Guard (TGF) maintains an active presence along Cuba's coastal perimeter and conducts maritime counternarcotics operations and coastal patrols. Drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) frequently attempt to avoid Cuban and U.S. government counternarcotics patrol vessels and aircraft by skirting Cuba's territorial waters.

Cuba's domestic drug production and consumption remain negligible as a result of active policing, harsh sentencing for drug offenses, and very low consumer disposable income. Cuba's counternarcotics efforts have prevented illegal narcotics trafficking from having a significant impact on the island.

This is an interesting fact based on the U.S. government's assessment. The report also says that Cuba has a zero tolerance policy against corrupt government officials:

Cuba has strong policies in place against illicit production or distribution of narcotic or psychotropic drugs or other controlled substances, and laundering of proceeds from illegal drug transactions. Cuba professes a zero tolerance for narcotics-related corruption by government officials and reported no such corruption occurrences in 2012. As a matter of government policy, Cuba neither encourages nor facilitates illegal activity associated with drug trafficking.

It concluded that Cuba's 'War on Drugs' has been a success from taking hold on the island:

Cuba continues to dedicate significant resources to prevent illegal drugs and their use from spreading on the island, so far successfully. The technical skill of Cuba's security services gives Cuba a marked advantage against DTOs attempting to gain access to the island. Upgraded links between the United States, Cuba, and regional partners, along with improved tactics, techniques, and procedures, would likely lead to increased interdictions and disruptions of illegal trafficking.

✘ Fusion is following Washington's line along with the anti-Castro Cuban-American community to discredit and demonize the Cuban government. Although Cuba is not perfect, it has its principles especially when it comes to illegal drugs. Why would Fidel Castro risk his international reputation as fighter for human rights for the Cuban people by becoming a drug dealer? Why would Jorge Ramos make an accusation against Fidel Castro because a former bodyguard told him that he overheard a conversation about illegal drug trafficking? Ramos claims that he was punched in the stomach by Castro's body guards in 1991, but there is no documented proof. Don't you think that if it was true, it would have made international headlines? As for Sanchez's claim that Fidel Castro is living like a king is not believable. British MP George Galloway has publically accused the media and in particular, Forbes magazine of propaganda against Fidel Castro when he said that "*no responsible person in the world believes that Fidel Castro has a personal fortune of \$900 million,*" Galloway said, referring to the wealth Forbes magazine attributed to Castro" according to the Associated Press in a 2006 report.

The new U.S.-Cuba relations will be a battle in congress in terms of lifting the embargo. I would not be surprised that the “*new diplomatic relations*” will fail in the long term especially when both old and new accusations against the Castro government will continue to dominate headlines. Jorge Ramos and the Fusion media network has already jumped on board to make sure that the propaganda they unleash on the American public would have them believe that Fidel Castro and the Cuban government were allegedly involved in drug trafficking and other crimes against the Cuban people throughout its history. For the MSM, it makes sense. Why would anyone trust a drug dealer who taxes his people for his own benefit? As for the U.S. “War on Drugs” I guess the CIA and the DEA will continue to make sure that no illegal drugs reach U.S. Shores, after all that is what U.S. taxpayers expect from their government.

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