

# Hypocrisy: Thy Name Is Bush

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George W. Bush likes to present the “war on terror” as a clear-cut moral crusade in which evildoers who kill innocent civilians must be brought harshly to justice, along with the leaders of countries that harbor terrorists. There are no grays, only blacks and whites.

But evenhanded justice is not the true core principle of the Bush Doctrine. The real consistency is hypocrisy: violence which Bush favors – no matter how wanton the slaughter of innocents – is justifiable, while violence that goes against Bush’s interests – even an insurgency against a foreign military occupation – must be punished without remorse as “terrorism.”

In other words, if Bush hates the perpetrators, they are locked up indefinitely without charge and, at his discretion, can be subjected to “alternative interrogation techniques,” what most of the world considers torture. The rule of law is out the window. Wild West hangin’ justice is in. Even the ancient fair trial right of habeas corpus is discarded.

However, when the killers of civilians are on Bush’s side, they get the full panoply of legal protections – and every benefit of the doubt. Under this Bush double standard, therefore, right-wing Cuban terrorists Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, though implicated in a string of murderous attacks on civilians, get the see-no-evil treatment.

On April 19, the 79-year-old Posada was released on bail from federal custody for an immigration violation and allowed to fly to Miami where he will live at home while his case winds its way through the U.S. courts. Bosch, too, has been allowed to live out his golden years in south Florida with the help and protection of the Bush family.

But the evidence in U.S. government files is overwhelming that Posada and Bosch were the architects of the 1976 mid-air bombing of a civilian Cubana airliner, killing 73 people, including young members of the Cuban national fencing team.

Since the conspiracy was hatched in Caracas, Venezuela, where Posada worked as a Venezuelan intelligence officer, the Venezuelan government has sought Posada’s extradition. However, when a Posada friend testified at Posada’s immigration hearing that Venezuela practices torture, Bush administration lawyers let the unverified claim go unchallenged, leading the judge to forbid Posada’s deportation there.

So, the Bush administration, which has subjected its own terrorism suspects to such practices as painful stress positions and simulated drowning by “water-boarding,” wasn’t willing to take the chance that Posada might be abused in Venezuela, even though there was no real evidence that he would be.

## Justifying Terrorism

The Bush administration also took no note a year ago when Bosch publicly justified the 1976 mid-air bombing. The stunning TV interview of Bosch by reporter Juan Manuel Cao on Miami's Channel 41 was cited in articles on the Internet by José Pertierra, a lawyer for the Venezuelan government. But Bosch's comments caused him no further difficulty. [For Pertierra's story, see Counterpunch, April 11, 2006]

"Did you down that plane in 1976?" Cao asked Bosch.

"If I tell you that I was involved, I will be inculcating myself," Bosch answered, "and if I tell you that I did not participate in that action, you would say that I am lying. I am therefore not going to answer one thing or the other."

But when Cao asked Bosch to comment on the civilians who died when the plane crashed off the coast of Barbados, Bosch responded, "In a war such as us Cubans who love liberty wage against the tyrant [Fidel Castro], you have to down planes, you have to sink ships, you have to be prepared to attack anything that is within your reach."

"But don't you feel a little bit for those who were killed there, for their families?" Cao asked.

"Who was on board that plane?" Bosch responded. "Four members of the Communist Party, five North Koreans, five Guyanese." [Officials tallies actually put the Guyanese dead at 11.]

Bosch added, "Four members of the Communist Party, chico! Who was there? Our enemies..."

"And the fencers?" Cao asked about Cuba's amateur fencing team that had just won gold, silver and bronze medals at a youth fencing competition in Caracas. "The young people on board?"

Bosch replied, "I was in Caracas. I saw the young girls on television. There were six of them. After the end of the competition, the leader of the six dedicated their triumph to the tyrant. ... She gave a speech filled with praise for the tyrant.

"We had already agreed in Santo Domingo, that everyone who comes from Cuba to glorify the tyrant had to run the same risks as those men and women that fight alongside the tyranny." [The comment about Santo Domingo was an apparent reference to a strategy meeting by a right-wing terrorist organization, CORU, which took place in the Dominican Republic in 1976.]

"If you ran into the family members who were killed in that plane, wouldn't you think it difficult?" Cao asked.

"No, because in the end those who were there had to know that they were cooperating with the tyranny in Cuba," Bosch answered.

In an article about Bosch's remarks, lawyer Pertierra said the answers "give us a glimpse into the mind of the kind of terrorist that the United States government harbors and protects in Miami; terrorists that for the last 47 years have waged a bloody and ruthless war against the Cuban people."

## **CIA Files**

Beyond Bosch's incriminating statements, the evidence of his and Posada's guilt is overwhelming. Declassified U.S. documents show that soon after the Cubana Airlines plane was blown out of the sky on Oct. 6, 1976, the CIA, then under the direction of George H.W. Bush, identified Posada and Bosch as the masterminds of the bombing.

But in fall 1976, Bush's boss, President Gerald Ford, was in a tight election battle with Democrat Jimmy Carter and the Ford administration wanted to keep intelligence scandals out of the newspapers. So Bush and other officials kept the lid on the investigations. [For details, see Robert Parry's *Secrecy & Privilege*.]

Still, inside the U.S. government, the facts were known. According to a secret CIA cable dated Oct. 14, 1976, intelligence sources in Venezuela relayed information about the Cubana Airlines bombing that tied in anti-communist Cuban extremists Bosch, who had been visiting Venezuela, and Posada, who then served as a senior officer in Venezuela's intelligence agency, DISIP.

The Oct. 14 cable said Bosch arrived in Venezuela in late September 1976 under the protection of Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez, a close Washington ally who assigned his intelligence adviser Orlando Garcia "to protect and assist Bosch during his stay in Venezuela."

On his arrival, Bosch was met by Garcia and Posada, according to the report. Later, a fundraising dinner was held in Bosch's honor during which Bosch requested cash from the Venezuelan government in exchange for assurances that Cuban exiles wouldn't demonstrate during Andres Perez's planned trip to the United Nations.

"A few days following the fund-raising dinner, Posada was overheard to say that, 'we are going to hit a Cuban airplane,' and that 'Orlando has the details,'" the CIA report said.

"Following the 6 October Cubana Airline crash off the coast of Barbados, Bosch, Garcia and Posada agreed that it would be best for Bosch to leave Venezuela. Therefore, on 9 October, Posada and Garcia escorted Bosch to the Colombian border, where he crossed into Colombian territory."

The CIA report was sent to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, as well as to the FBI and other U.S. intelligence agencies, according to markings on the cable.

In South America, police began rounding up suspects. Two Cuban exiles, Hernan Ricardo and Freddy Lugo, who got off the Cubana plane in Barbados, confessed that they had planted the bomb. They named Bosch and Posada as the architects of the attack.

A search of Posada's apartment in Venezuela turned up Cubana Airlines timetables and other incriminating documents.

Posada and Bosch were charged in Venezuela for the Cubana Airlines bombing, but the men denied the accusations. The case soon became a political tug-of-war, since the suspects were in possession of sensitive Venezuelan government secrets that could embarrass President Andres Perez.

## **Lost Interest**

After the Reagan-Bush administration took power in Washington in 1981, the momentum for fully unraveling the mysteries of anti-communist terrorist plots dissipated. The Cold War trumped any concern about right-wing terrorism.

In 1985, Posada escaped from a Venezuelan prison, reportedly with the help of Cuban exiles. In his autobiography, Posada thanked Miami-based Cuban activist Jorge Mas Canosa for providing the \$25,000 that was used to bribe guards who allowed Posada to walk out of prison.

Another Cuban exile who aided Posada was former CIA officer Felix Rodriguez, who was close to then-Vice President George H.W. Bush and who was overseeing secret supply shipments to the Nicaraguan contra rebels, a pet project of President Ronald Reagan.

After fleeing Venezuela, Posada joined Rodriguez in Central America and was assigned the job of paymaster for pilots in the White House-run contra-supply operation. When one of the contra-supply planes was shot down inside Nicaragua in October 1986, Posada was responsible for alerting U.S. officials to the crisis and then shutting down the operation's safe houses in El Salvador.

Even after the exposure of Posada's role in the contra-supply operation, the U.S. government made no effort to bring the accused terrorist to justice.

By the late 1980s, Orlando Bosch also was out of Venezuela's jails and back in Miami. But Bosch, who had been implicated in about 30 violent attacks, was facing possible deportation by U.S. officials who warned that Washington couldn't credibly lecture other countries about terrorism while protecting a terrorist like Bosch.

But Bosch got lucky. Jeb Bush, then an aspiring Florida politician, led a lobbying drive to prevent the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service from expelling Bosch. In 1990, the lobbying paid dividends when Jeb's dad, President George H.W. Bush, blocked proceedings against Bosch, letting the unapologetic terrorist stay in the United States.

In 1992, also during George H.W. Bush's presidency, the FBI interviewed Posada about the Iran-Contra scandal for 6 ½ hours at the U.S. Embassy in Honduras.

Posada filled in some blanks about the role of Bush's vice presidential office in the secret contra operation. According to a 31-page summary of the FBI interview, Posada said Bush's national security adviser, Donald Gregg, was in frequent contact with Felix Rodriguez.

"Posada ... recalls that Rodriguez was always calling Gregg," the FBI summary said. "Posada knows this because he's the one who paid Rodriguez' phone bill." After the interview, the FBI agents let Posada walk out of the embassy to freedom. [For details, see Parry's *Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & Project Truth*.]

### **More Attacks**

Posada soon returned to his anti-Castro plotting.

In 1994, Posada set out to kill Castro during a trip to Cartagena, Colombia. Posada and five cohorts reached Cartagena, but the plan flopped when security cordons prevented the would-be assassins from getting a clean shot at Castro, according to a Miami Herald account. [Miami Herald, June 7, 1998]

The Herald also described Posada's role in a lethal 1997 bombing campaign against popular hotels and restaurants inside Cuba that killed an Italian tourist. The story cited documentary evidence that Posada arranged payments to conspirators from accounts in the United States.

"This afternoon you will receive via Western Union four transfers of \$800 each ... from New Jersey," said one fax signed by SOLO, a Posada alias.

Posada landed back in jail in 2000 after Cuban intelligence uncovered a plot to assassinate Castro by planting a bomb at a meeting the Cuban leader planned with university students in Panama.

Panamanian authorities arrested Posada and other alleged co-conspirators in November 2000. In April 2004, they were sentenced to eight or nine years in prison for endangering public safety.

Four months after the sentencing, however, lame-duck Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso - who lives in Key Biscayne, Florida, and has close ties to the Cuban-American community and to George W. Bush's administration - pardoned the convicts.

Despite press reports saying Moscoso had been in contact with U.S. officials about the pardons, the State Department denied that it pressured Moscoso to release the Cuban exiles. After the pardons and just two months before Election 2004, three of Posada's co-conspirators - Guillermo Novo Sampol, Pedro Remon and Gaspar Jimenez - arrived in Miami to a hero's welcome, flashing victory signs at their supporters.

While the terrorists celebrated, U.S. authorities watched the men - also implicated in bombings in New York, New Jersey and Florida - alight on U.S. soil. As Washington Post writer Marcela Sanchez noted in a September 2004 article about the Panamanian pardons, "there is something terribly wrong when the United States, after Sept. 11 (2001), fails to condemn the pardoning of terrorists and instead allows them to walk free on U.S. streets." [Washington Post, Sept. 3, 2004]

### **Posada Arrives**

Posada reportedly sneaked into the United States in early 2005 and his presence was an open secret in Miami for weeks before U.S. authorities did anything. The New York Times summed up Bush's dilemma if Posada decided to seek U.S. asylum.

"A grant of asylum could invite charges that the Bush administration is compromising its principle that no nation should harbor suspected terrorists," the Times wrote. "But to turn Mr. Posada away could provoke political wrath in the conservative Cuban-American communities of South Florida, deep sources of support and campaign money for President Bush and his brother, Jeb." [NYT, May 9, 2005]

Only after Posada called a news conference to announce his presence was the Bush administration shamed into arresting him. But even then, the administration balked at sending Posada back to Venezuela where the government of Hugo Chavez - unlike some of its predecessors - was eager to prosecute.

At a U.S. immigration hearing in 2005, Posada's defense attorney called as a witness a Posada friend who alleged that Venezuela's government practices torture. Bush

administration lawyers didn't challenge the claim, leading the immigration judge to bar Posada's deportation to Venezuela.

Venezuela's Ambassador Bernardo Alvarez accused the Bush administration of applying "a cynical double standard" in the "war on terror."

"The United States presents itself as a leader against terrorism, invades countries, restricts the civil rights of Americans in order to fight terrorism, but when it is about its own terrorists, it denies that they be tried," Alvarez said.

As for the claim that Venezuela practices torture, Alvarez said, "There isn't a shred of evidence that Posada would be tortured in Venezuela." Alvarez added that the claim was particularly ironic given widespread press accounts that the Bush administration has abused prisoners at the U.S. military base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

The Posada-Bosch cases point to one unavoidable and unpleasant conclusion: that the Bush family regards terrorism – defined as killing civilians for a political reason – as justified or at least tolerable in cases when their interests match those of the terrorists.

Terrorism is only a moral evil to the Bushes when the violence against civilians clashes with the Bush family's interests.

This blatant hypocrisy often has been aided and abetted by the U.S. news media, which intuitively understands the double standard and acts accordingly. The U.S. press corps downplays or ignores cases in which terrorism has connections to U.S. government officials – and especially to the Bush family.

*Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories in the 1980s for the Associated Press and Newsweek. His latest book, Secrecy & Privilege: Rise of the Bush Dynasty from Watergate to Iraq, can be ordered at [secrecyandprivilege.com](http://secrecyandprivilege.com). It's also available at Amazon.com, as is his 1999 book, Lost History: Contras, Cocaine, the Press & 'Project Truth.'*

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