

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 HAVANA 07893 291626Z  
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S E C R E T HAVANA 7893

NODIS

E.O. XGDS-1 8/29/09 (SMITH, WAYNE S.) OR-M  
TAGS: PORG PDIP CU  
SUBJ: STATE OF US-CUBAN RELATIONS

1. S - ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY: CASTRO AIDE INDICATES CUBA EXPECTS NO SIGNIFICANT  
IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH US FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE.  
SAYS, EVEN SO, THAT CUBA INTENDS TO PLAY RESTRAINED ROLE IN  
NICARAGUA.

3. IN EXTENDED CONVERSATION AUG 22 WITH ALFREDO RAMIREZ  
OTERO, OSTENSIBLY MINREX OFFICER BUT IN FACT ONE OF  
PRESIDENT CASTRO'S PERSONAL AIDES, I POINTED TO RADICAL  
CUBAN DRAFT COMMUNIQUE AND INTEMPERATE LANGUAGE USED BY  
CUBAN PERMREP IN PRESENTING RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICO IN UN  
AS DIFFICULT TO SQUARE WITH CUBAN PROFESSIONS OF DESIRE FOR  
BETTER RELATIONS WITH US. LEAVING ASIDE DISAGREEMENTS  
OVER SUBSTANCE, TONE AND INTENT HARDLY ENHANCED PROSPECTS  
FOR NORMALIZATION. I SAID I HAD IMPRESSION PROPAGANDA  
ATTACKS AGAINST US WERE INCREASING AFTER NOTICEABLE DECLINE  
IN 1977 AND PART OF 1978. THIS WAS TO BE REGRETTEED.

4. RAMIREZ WENT THROUGH STANDARD PRESENTATION TO EFFECT  
THAT DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW WHICH PLACED US ON OPPOSITE  
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 HAVANA 07893 291626Z

SIDES OF BARRICADES ON MANY ISSUES ALSO MADE DIALOGUE  
ALL THE MORE IMPORTANT. HAVING COMPLETED PRO FORMA REPLY  
HOWEVER, RAMIREZ WENT ON TO NOTE THAT US-CUBAN RELA-  
TIONS WERE OBVIOUSLY GOING NOWHERE FOR TIME BEING.  
ATMOSPHERE WAS NOT PARTICULARLY GOOD AND CUBA HAD  
SEEN LITTLE DISPOSITION ON US SIDE TO IMPROVE IT  
DURING PAST YEAR. EVEN THOUGH US HAD USED RHETORIC

DURING SHABA INVASION OF MAY 1978 WHICH HAD BEEN INSULTING TO PRESIDENT CASTRO, LATTER HAD TURNED OTHER CHEEK, GONE AHEAD WITH DIALOGUE AND HAD MET ONE OF MAJOR OBJECTIVES OF US BY RELEASING POLITICAL PRISONERS. US HAD NEVER RESPONDED. CASTRO THEREFORE CONSIDERED BALL TO BE IN US COURT AND AFTER CAREFUL ANALYSIS HAD CONCLUDED THAT US UNWILLING TO MOVE AHEAD WITHOUT DEMEANING AND UNREALISTIC CONCESSIONS ON CUBA'S PART SUCH AS WITHDRAWAL OF ITS TROOPS EVEN IF AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS WHICH HAD INVITED THEM WANTED THEM TO REMAIN. RAMIEZ SAID IT WAS NO WONDER THEN THAT ATMOSPHERE HAD TO SOME EXTEND SOURED. AND NOW US SEEMED TO BE LAUNCHING CUBAN WITCH HUNT IN CARIBBEAN AND CENTRAL AMERICA EVEN THOUGH IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT CUBA WAS PLAYING A RESTRAINED ROLE IN NICARAGUA. CUBANS WERE NOT CERTAIN WHETHER THIS INDICATED US RELUCTANCE ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL GROUNDS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH CUBA -- AND THUS THE NEED FOR A PRETEXT -- OJWHETHER US LEADERS WERE PRISONERS, AS THEY SO OFTEN HAD BEEN, OF THEIR OWN FAULTY INTELLIGENCE.

5. RAMIREZ HASTENED TO ADD THAT HE DID NOT WISH TO SUGGEST ALL PROBLEMS WOULD HAVE BEEN SOLVED IF US HAD BUT MET CUBA HALF WAY. MANY BASIC PROBLEMS WOULD HAVE REMAINED. IN MANY AREAS, THE TWO HAD CONFLICTING INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES, AND AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF HOSTILITY AND SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 HAVANA 07893 291626Z

SUSPICION, CONFIDENCE AND UNDERSTANDING WOULD COME HARD.

US, FOR EXAMPLE, SAW NEW MIGS AS THREATENING. CUBA SAW THEM AS NORMAL AND NECESSARY UPGRADING OF ITS DEFENSE AGAINST CONINUED US THREATS AND AGGRESSIONS.

6. I SAID I FELT US HQF REACTED TO INTRODUCTION OF MIG-23S IN MEASURED, RESPONSIBLE WAY. WE HAD MADE IT CLEAR THAT WE WOULD NOT TOLERATE ANY VIOLATIONS OF OUR 1962 UNDERSTANDING WITH SOVIETS AND AT A GIVEN POINT THERE HAD BEEN A GOOD DEAL OF UNCERTAINTY AS TO THE CONFIGURATIONS AND PURPOSES OF THE MODELS INTRODUCED. THE US HAD TO ASSURE ITS SECURITY. IT HAD TAKEN THE STEPS IT FELT NECESSARY AND WOULD CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION CLOSELY. NOR WERE WE LAUNCHING A WITCH HUNT IN NICARAGUA. WE HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN ENCOURAGING SOMOZA TO LEAVE AND WERE IN FOREFRONT OF INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO HELP NEW GOVT RECONSTRUCT COUNTRY. WE HAD NO OBJECTIONS AT ALL TO CUBAN ASSISTANCE OF HUMANITARIAN NATURE -- TEACHERS, DOCTORS, ETC. THERE WERE, HOWEVER, DISTURBING REPORTS OF A GROWING NUMBER OF CUBAN MILITARY ADVISORS

AND A FLOW OF ARMS ABOARD THE ALMOST DAILY FLIGHTS BETWEEN CUBA AND NICARAGUA. WE WERE CONCERNED AS TO CUBAN INTENTIONS AND HAD MADE THOSE CONCERNS KNOWN TO THEM THROUGH PROPER DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS. THE CUBANS KEPT TELLING US THEY WERE PLAYING A RESTRAINED LOW-KEY ROLE IN NICARAGUA, BUT SOME OF OUR REPORTS SUGGESTED OTHERWISE.

7. RAMIREZ SAID SUCH REPORTS WERE INACCURATE; IF THE US HAD ANY EVIDENCE OF AN IMPROPER CUBAN ROLE IN NICARAGUA, IT SHOULD PRESENT IT TO THE CUBAN AUTHORITIES. WE SHOULD BE CAREFUL OF THIRD-HAND REPORTS. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT OUR CONVERSATION HAD POINTED UP THE DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES FROM WHICH WE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 HAVANA 07893 291626Z

APPROACHED VARIOUS ISSUES. IT WAS SO THAT EACH BETTER UNDERSTOOD THE OTHER'S VIEWS AND POSITIONS THAT WE SHOULD CONTINUE A DIALOGUE. IN THAT CONTEXT, HE WOULD LOOK FORWARD TO FUTURE CONVERSATIONS.

8. COMMENT THERE WAS NOTHING VERY NEW IN WHAT RAMIREZ SA J, BUT IT DID TEND TO CONFIRM INDICATIONS FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT THE CUBANS HAVE WRITTEN OFF ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH THE US FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. IF SO, SUGGESTIONS ON OUR PART THAT OBJECTIONABLE ACTIONS OR RHETORIC ON THEIRS WILL IMPEDE NORMALIZATION ARE LIKELY TO HAVE LITTLE IMPACT.

SMITH

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