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THE ROLE OF CUBAN PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATIONS (PEOPLE'S MILITIAS) IN THE POST-CASTRO ERA

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Armed nonstate groups all over the world are directly challenging targeted governments' physical and moral right and ability to govern. This almost chronic chaos is exacerbated by traditional nationstate actors using nonstate popular militias, youth leagues, gangs, or their equivalents to help the take control, maintain control, or regain control of a given political-economic-social entity. It is in this context that popular militias have been organized, trained, and nurtured in Cuba. For 50 years, Cuba's popular militias (paramilitary organizations) have been expected to act as "midwives for new social orders" (as they did in Africa during the 1960s and early 1970s), and to help defend and maintain the revolutionary Socialist state. Anyone contemplating the post-Castro Era in Cuba will certainly have to take these paramilitary organizations into consideration.

Background: The Cuban Armed Forces and Paramilitary Forces.

The regular (conventional) Cuban armed forces (FAR, *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias*) have recently been reduced in size and now consist of 49,000 active duty personnel and over one million reserves. These forces are conventionally divided into the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and are under the political control of the Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR). The paramilitary forces consist of 26,500 personnel, and are divided between the Youth Labor Army (EJT, *Ejercito Juvenil*), the Territorial Militias (MTTs, *Milicias de Tropas Territoriales*), and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR, *Comites de Defensa de la Revolucion*). These paramilitary organizations fall under the political control of the Minister of the Interior (MININT). The intent of such a division of labor is to create multiple security organizations that are ultimately responsible to the Supreme Leader of the state through the MINFAR and the MININT. As such, and under their respective immediate political masters (depending on who they might be in a socialist succession or a democratic transition), they theoretically act as counterfoils to each other. At the same time, this division of labor is intended to ensure that the Supreme Leader of the Cuban state cannot be challenged by a single all-powerful military entity. Thus, legally and

organizationally, the Leader (whoever he may be) maintains and controls a complete monopoly of state power.

The FAR is structured, trained, and located to accomplish two missions: (1) the conventional defense of Cuba against U.S. aggression; and (2) to provide internal security. The paramilitary forces (EJT, MTT, and CDR) are organized and trained to provide strategic depth from which to regain control of the country if attacked by an external aggressor. In that connection, the paramilitaries are also prepared to fight a *Guerra de todo el Pueblo* (Guerrilla, or Peoples' War), in the event of conventional defeat by an external aggressor. Thus, even if the FAR should be defeated by an enemy force, the paramilitaries would be in a position to continue the fight to defend and/or to reestablish the threatened Socialist state.

Accordingly, training, doctrine, and inculcation of a revolutionary culture in the Cuban paramilitaries preclude the concept of a new and different (e.g., liberal democracy) type of government, and/or the dissolution of the current security apparatus. That is, there will be either no change in succession to another socialist government or there will be a period of political chaos in transition to a new and different type of government. Theoretically, it is expected that that chaos will be similar to that experienced in Russia after the Revolution of 1917 and before the consolidation of power by V. I. Lenin. This takes us to a further elaboration of the expected role of paramilitaries in Cuba after the end of the Castro Era.

Elaborating the Role of the Cuban Paramilitaries in the Event of a Post-Castro Period of Political-Economic-Social-Informational-Military Turmoil.

Left in dire straits, subject to depredation, and denied adequate and legitimate access to basic services and personal security, people become susceptible to the exhortations of demagogues, hate-mongers, revolutionary reformers, transnational criminals, and other individuals who might want to take control of the state. The concomitant turmoil can allow peoples' militias (paramilitary organizations) to operate with relative freedom of movement and action. In these terms, conflict and adversaries will have changed. Conflict will no longer only be an instrument of state action, but also of nonstate engagement. As a result, the adversary (and, center of gravity) will no longer only be a recognizable military force and a nation state's industrial-technical capability to support military operations. Rather, new adversaries will include nonstate actors and their various allies who can influence and control public opinion and political decisionmaking leadership. The basic reality of this new center of gravity is that information and the media – not military firepower or technology – is the primary currency upon which a People's War is conducted.

In this type of security environment, the general purpose of popular militias is to raise the level of direct popular action against "indigenous feudalism, aboriginal capitalism, sepoyan militarism, and *yanqui* imperialism." The intent is not to destroy an enemy military force. The objective of the paramilitary effort is – with popular support-- to wear down the enemy government and people to the point where their resolve is

dead. There is no need for a formal army. There are no maneuver forces, no design for conventional battle, and no obvious connectivity with other paramilitary actions elsewhere. Each engagement is particular to itself, but connected together through a system of networks and an overarching political idea – to depose an enemy regime and provide the leadership to reestablish a revolutionary Socialist state. Thus, “Political and moral factors are more decisive for victory than heavy armament and ironclad units.”

More specifically, the paramilitary organizations will accomplish their objectives over time, and in a minimum of seven phases. They will:

- Organize and train cadres of professionals for political leadership duties, political-psychological-military combat, and the creation of selected environments of chaos;
- Create a popular political party out of individuals of all persuasions who will work together to disestablish opposed societies and establish a new social democracy;
- Plan and execute covert and overt persuasion, intimidation, and coercion activities against targeted individuals and institutions;
- Organize, train, and develop local popular militias to fight and to defend their own localities;
- Foment regional conflicts;
- Confront – gradually – demoralized enemy military forces, and act as a catalyst to bring about their desired collapse; and,
- Impose or reestablish new Socialist governance.

This is not the rhetoric of a disappointed old man who will never see his revolutionary dreams fulfilled. Rather, this is the rhetoric of an individual that is performing the traditional and universal Leninist-Maoist function of providing a strategic vision and an operational plan for maintaining or regaining revolutionary power.

Conclusion and Recommendation.

The security environment in the Post-Castro Era can either remain quite stable, or become extremely volatile and dangerous. In either case, Cuba’s paramilitary organizations will require careful attention.

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