

[Special address by Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, President of the Republic of Cuba, at the "Jose Marti" Anti-imperialist Square. May 20,2005 \[1\]](#)

Date:

20/05/2005

My fellow countrymen:

What I will immediately read to you has been elaborated on the basis of numerous documents from our archives. I have had very little time, but many comrades have cooperated, as I promised yesterday to have this ready for today a 6:00 pm. I have chosen to give it the title of:

"A DIFFERENT BEHAVIOR"

April 12, 1997: A bomb explodes in the "Ach " discotheque at the Melia Cohiba hotel. It is the first of a series of terrorist attacks on hotels carried out by the ring created in Central America by Luis Posada Carriles and financed by the Cuban American National Foundation.

April 30, 1997: Special Forces from the Ministry of the Interior deactivate an explosive charge discovered on the 15th floor of the Melia Cohiba hotel.

July 12, 1997: Explosions occur almost simultaneously in the Capri and Nacional Hotels. Four people are wounded.

August 4, 1997: Terrorist bomb goes off in the Melia Cohiba hotel.

August 11, 1997: The board of directors of the Cuban American National Foundation publishes a self-satisfied, cynical message describing the bombs in the hotels as, quote "incidents of internal rebellion which have been taking place in Cuba over the last few weeks" and that "the Cuban American National Foundation [...] supports these without hesitation or reservations".

September 4, 1997: Explosions in the Copacabana, Chateau and Trit n Hotels, and in La Bodeguita del Medio restaurant. Fabio di Celmo, a young Italian tourist, is killed in the first of these.

Following the terrorist acts perpetrated from October 17, 1992 and April 30, 1997, a list is drawn up of 13 serious terrorist acts against tourist facilities, most of these financed by the Cuban American National Foundation. A report with this information is drafted and delivered to the president of the United States by an outstanding political personality who made a private visit to Cuba at the beginning of May. Numerous notes had previously been sent to the US government through the US Interests Section in Havana (USINT).

October 1, 1997: At 11:00 pm there is a phone call from Michael Kozak, head of the USINT, to MINREX to pass on information from a third country which indicated that there could be another bomb attack on a tourist facility in or around Havana within the next 24 hours, on October 1 or 2. He says he couldn't confirm this information but that he wants us to know about it.

October 2, 1997: The head of USINT is summoned to MINREX in the morning to get more details about the previous day's information and to thank him officially for having passed it on.

October 5, 1997: Kozak is summoned by MINREX so the Cuban side can read and then give him a copy of the following message:

"Regarding the information about a possible bomb attack on a tourist facility in Havana on October 1 or 2, we would like to say that although there was no explosion, it has been confirmed that this information was strictly accurate and the attack's characteristics were similar to earlier plans.

"Insomuch as this might be of interest and of use to US authorities, we wish to let them know that the source which provided them with this information has been shown to be truthful. We have acted with utmost discretion, as we were asked to do. We are very appreciative".

The head of USINT responds that the information given to him is useful; that they had obtained the information but that it was not possible to confirm it since it was a rumour; that now they can place more trust in the source; that he will travel to Washington the following Sunday and take this information with him, that he thinks it is positive; that if they obtain more from this source they will know what to do; that they have uncovered nothing more in the investigations conducted in the United States but that they are continuing with these in Central America, especially after an article published in The Miami Herald. He says that any information that Cuba has and that it can provide to the United States will be very useful. He ends by saying that "this is good".

March 7, 1998: The head of USINT asks to see someone at MINREX urgently to pass on some sensitive information. He says that he has information from a source of non-specified reliability that a group of Cuban exile has plans to carry out a bomb attack in Cuba between March 7 and 8; that he doesn't know where, when or the specific target but that according to the source, the explosives are already in Cuba.

March 9, 1998: The minister of foreign affairs meets with the head of USINT and reads him the following note:

"Concerning the information given verbally last Saturday March 7 about plans for terrorist attacks organized by Cuba exiles, possibly to be executed on 7 or 8 of this month and that the explosives were already in Cuba, we wish to let you know the following:

"1. That it has once again been shown that the US authorities' sources of information on these activities are absolutely reliable.

"2. That last Wednesday afternoon, March 4 two people from abroad were arrested and they were relieved of the explosives and other material they intended to use to carry out four terrorist attacks similar to those which have occurred previously, organized in the same way with the same methods. They were promised a payment in cash of a certain amount of money for each bomb.

"3. The Cuban authorities are trying to gather as much additional information as possible.

"4. These criminal acts are extremely serious and affect not only Cuba and the United States but also other countries in the region. We have a duty to prevent such acts being executed with impunity. This would not be difficult if Cuba and the United States coordinated, through the appropriate bodies, the fight against such actions. This has been done in some cases of drug trafficking with complete seriousness and discretion.

"5. Thus far we have not released this information to the public until we have taken certain measures and completed our investigations, but it will not be possible to avoid giving this information to the public when the time is right.

"6. We sincerely appreciate the information provided".

Once the reading was over, Kozak's initial reaction was to thank and congratulate the Cuban authorities for their efficiency. He added that if we had any more information or lead that they could follow to determine who was supporting or controlling these activities, it would be very useful if we could pass it on since the US government had already taken a firm decision to pursue and enforce the law regardless of who may be responsible for these acts. Kozak insisted that they still had no information about who was behind these acts, that there are several people with a record of such activities but that not all of them live, work or pass through Miami, or even through the United States; that some of them are in other countries, all of which made it more difficult to act against them; that the US government had it clear that these acts benefited no one. A USINT official also present added that they had thought what Colonel Rabeiro said about having recordings of telephone conversations between the Salvadoran and someone in Central America was very interesting and that this information would be very useful since it would make it easier to locate those who were controlling these activities. They added that after the wars in Central America there were many people from the extreme right still around in those countries who were involved in criminal activities. They did appreciate the importance of being able to corroborate that their source was reliable and they understood the importance of working together in this area. At the end of the meeting, he insisted again that it was useful to share any information.

April 18, 1998: In view of the positive exchanges mentioned above and knowing that writer Gabriel García Márquez would be traveling to the United States soon where he would meet with William Clinton, a reader and admirer of his books—as so many other people in the world—whom García Márquez had met before, I decided to send a message to the US president, which I personally drafted.

The message touched on seven subjects briefly and in synthesis. I shall limit myself in this report to that most directly related with the serious events taking place today, that is, the terrorist attacks against the Cuban people organized and financed from the United States. It was entitled:

SUMMARY OF ISSUES THAT GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ MAY CONFIDENTIALLY TRANSMIT TO PRESIDENT CLINTON.

Point 1 (literally)

"An important issue. Plans for terrorist actions against Cuba continue to be hatched and paid by the Cuban American National Foundation using Central American mercenaries. Two new attempts at setting up bombs in tourist resorts have been undertaken before, and after, the Pope's visit. In the first case, those responsible failed, they were able to escape and return to Central America by plane leaving behind the technical means and explosives, which were then seized. In the second case, three mercenaries were arrested with explosives and other means. They are Guatemalans. They would have received 1500 USD for every bomb exploded.

"In both cases they were hired and supplied by agents of the ring organized by the Cuban American National Foundation. Now, they are plotting and taking steps to set up bombs in planes from Cuba or any other country airline carrying tourist to, or from, Cuba to Latin American countries. The method is similar: to hide a small device at a certain place inside the plane, a powerful explosive with a fuse controlled by a digital clock that can be programmed 99 hours in advance, then easily abandon the plane at foreseen destination; the explosion would take place either on the ground or while the plane is in flight to its next destination. Really devilish procedures: easy to handle mechanisms, components whose detection is practically impossible, a minimum training required for their use, almost absolute impunity. Extremely dangerous to airlines and to tourist facilities or of any other type. Tools suitable for a crime, very serious crimes. If they were revealed and their possibilities exposed, they might become an epidemic as the hijacking of planes once became. Other Cuban extremist groups living in the United States are beginning to move in that direction.

"The American investigation and intelligence agencies are in possession of enough reliable information

on the main people responsible. If they really want to, they have the possibility of preventing in time this new modality of terrorism. It will be impossible to stop it if the United States doesn't discharge its fundamental duty of fighting it. The responsibility to fight it can't be left to Cuba alone since any other country of the world might also be a victim of such actions."

May 6, 1998: Gabo's meeting at the White House.

GABRIEL GARCIA MARQUEZ' REPORT ON THE MISSION REQUESTED TO CARRY A MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT CLINTON.

Exact copy without removing a single word.

At the end of March, when I had confirmed to Princeton University my literary workshop for April 25, I contacted Bill Richardson on the phone to ask him to arrange a private visit with President Clinton to discuss the Colombia situation. Richardson asked me to call him a week before my trip for the answer. A few days later I went to Havana, to get some data for a press report I'd write on the Pope's visit, when talking with Fidel I mentioned the possibility of a meeting with President Clinton.

It was there that Fidel came up with the idea of sending a confidential message on a sinister terrorist plan, which Cuba had just discovered, that could affect not only both countries but many others as well. He decided himself that it should not be a personal letter to avoid putting Clinton in the predicament of giving an answer; he preferred a written summary of our conversation on the plot and on other subjects of mutual interest. In addition to the text, he suggested two unwritten questions that I could raise with Clinton if the circumstances were propitious.

That night I became aware that my trip to Washington had taken an unforeseen and significant turn, and that I could no longer see it as a simple personal visit. Thus, I not only confirmed to Richardson the date of my arrival but I also announced him, on the phone, that I was carrying an urgent message for President Clinton.

Out of respect for the agreed secrecy I didn't mention on the phone who was sending it --although he must have guessed it-- nor did I let it transpire that a delayed delivery could be the cause of major catastrophes and the death of innocent people. His answer did not reach me during my week in Princeton, and that made me think that the White House was also considering the fact that the motive for my first request had changed. I even thought that the interview would not be granted.

As soon as I arrived in Washington on Friday May 1, a Richardson staff told me on the phone that the President could not receive me because he would be in California until Wednesday 6, and I had plans to travel to Mexico one day before that date, but they were suggesting that I meet with the President's director of the National Security Council, Sam Berger, who could receive my message on behalf of the President.

My malignant suspicion was that they were interposing conditions so that the message would get to the special services and not to the President himself. Berger had been present during my meeting with Clinton in the White House Oval Office, on September 1997, and his few words on the Cuba situation did not run contrary to those of the President, although I can't say he shared all his views without reservations. Therefore, I did not feel I was authorized to accept of my own volition the alternative of being received by Berger and not by the President, most of all because it was a very sensitive message, and it was not mine. My personal opinion was that it could only be delivered to Clinton personally.

The only thing I thought of at the moment was to inform Richardson's office that if the change of interlocutor was only due to the President's absence, I could stay longer in Washington and wait for his return. The reply was that they would let him know. Some time later I found in the hotel a telephone note from ambassador James Dobbins, director of Interamerican affairs at the NSC, but I chose not to acknowledge receipt while my proposal to wait for the president's return was being processed.

I was not in a hurry. I had written more than 20 useful pages of my memoirs in the idyllic Princeton premises, and the pace had not diminished in my impersonal room at the Washington hotel where I spent up to 10 hours a day writing. However, even if I refused to admit it, the true reason for my confinement was the custody of the message lying in the safety box.

At the Mexican airport I had lost a coat as I watched for my personal computer, the suitcase where I carried my drafts and diskettes of the book I was working on and the message's original without copies. Just the idea that I could loose it sent shivers down my spine, not so much for the loss itself as for the fact that it would have been easy to identify its source and destination.

Thus, I devoted myself to its custody while I continued to write, to eat my meals and to receive my visits in the hotel room whose safety box I was far from trusting, as it had no combination lock but a key that seemed to have been bought at a convenient store around the corner. I always carried it in my pocket, and after every inevitable occasion in which I left my room, I checked that the paper was still in its place and in the sealed envelope. I had read it so many times that I had practically learned it by heart, just to feel reassured in case I had to explain any of the issues at delivery time.

I always took it for granted that my telephone conversations in those days --as well as those of my interlocutors-- were tapped. However, I relaxed, as I was conscious of being a part of an irreproachable mission, one that was good for both Cuba and the United States. My other serious problem was that I could not discuss my doubts with anyone without violating secrecy.

The Cuban diplomatic representative in Washington, Fernando Ramirez, offered to be fully at my service to keep the channel with Havana opened, but confidential communications are so slow and hazardous from Washington --especially in such a sensitive case-- that ours could only be solved with a special envoy. The response was a gentle request to wait in Washington for as long as necessary to fulfill my mission, just as I had resolved; at the same time I was humbly asked to be most careful to avoid offending Sam Berger for not accepting him as an interlocutor. The funny end of the message left no doubt about the author, even without a signature: "We wish you can write a lot".

As chance would have it, former president Cesar Gaviria had fortunately arranged a private dinner for Monday night with Thomas 'Mack' McLarty who had just resigned from his position as President Clinton's advisor for Latin America, although he still was his oldest and closest friend. We had met the previous year, and Gaviria's family had since then planned the dinner with a double purpose: to discuss with McLarty the cryptic Colombian situation and to please his wife's wishes to clarify with me some points about my books.

The occasion seemed providential. Gaviria is a great friend and a smart councilor, a resourceful person as well informed on the situation of Latin America as anyone can be, and an alert and understanding observer of the Cuban reality. I arrived at his place an hour before the agreed time, and having no time for consultations I took the liberty of disclosing to him the essence of my mission so that he could give me some ideas.

Gaviria gave me the right dimension of the problem and brought some order into the puzzle. He showed me that the precautions taken by Clinton's advisors were only normal, given the political and security risks involved for a US President in personally receiving such sensitive information through an irregular channel. He didn't have to explain it for I immediately remembered a case in point: in our dinner at Martha's Vineyard, during the massive exodus of 1994, President Clinton authorized me to raise this and other hot Cuba issues, but he first warned me that he could not say a word. I will never forget how intensely he listened to me, and the great efforts he had to make not to reply to some highly charged subjects.

Gaviria also alerted me to the fact that Berger is a proficient and serious official one should be very mindful of when relating to the president. He also showed me that the mere fact of assigning him to

meet with me was a very special high-level deference, since private requests like mine would usually go for years to peripheral offices of the White House, or be transferred to junior officers in the CIA or the State Department.

Anyway, Gaviria seemed pretty sure that the text handed to Berger would make it to the President's hands, and that was essential. Finally, just as I had dreamed, he announced me that at the end of the dinner he would leave me alone with McLarty so that he would open a direct line for me to the President.

The evening was pleasurable and fruitful; it was just the Gaviria family and us. McLarty, like Clinton, is a man from the South and both are friendly and easygoing like the Caribbean people. At dinner ice was broken early, foremost about the United States policy towards Latin America, particularly concerning narcotics trafficking and the peace processes. Mark was so well informed that he knew even the smallest details of my interview with President Clinton last September, when we discussed in depth the shooting down of the planes in Cuba and where the idea was raised that the Pope could act as a United States mediator during his trip to Cuba.

McLarty's general position on relations with Colombia --for which he seems willing to work-- is that US policies are in need of radical changes. He said that the government was willing to make contact with any president elected in order to really work toward peace. But neither him nor the other officials I spoke with later have any clear thought about what those changes might be. The dialogue was so candid and fluent that when Gaviria and his family left us alone in the dining room, McLarty and I were like two old friends.

Unhesitatingly, I disclosed the content of the message for his President and he did not conceal his apprehension over the terrorist plan, even if unaware of the atrocious details. He had not been informed of my request to see the President but he promised to speak to him as soon as he came back from California. Encouraged by the easiness of the dialogue I dared to suggest that he accompanied me to the interview with the President, and I wished there would be no other officials, so that we could talk without reservations. The only question he asked me about that --and I never knew why-- was if Richardson was aware of the content of the message, and I said no. Then he ended the conversation with the promise that he would speak to the president.

Early on Tuesday morning I reported to Havana through the usual channel about the main topics discussed over dinner, and I took the liberty of asking a timely question: if at the end the President decided not to receive me, and if he gave the task to either McLarty or to Berger, which of the two shall I deliver the message to? The response seemed to be in favor of McLarty, but always careful not to offend Berger.

That day I had lunch at the Provence restaurant with Mrs McLarty, since our conversation on literature had not been possible during dinner at Gaviria's. However, the questions she had noted were soon responded and all that was left was her curiosity about Cuba. I clarified all I could and I think she felt more relaxed. When the time came for dessert, she phoned her husband from the table and he told me that he had not seen the President yet but he was hopeful of giving me some news during the day.

In fact, hardly two hours had passed when one of his assistants informed me through Cesar Gaviria's office that the meeting would be held the following day, at the White House, with McLarty and three senior officials from the National Security Council. I thought that if Sam Berger had been one of them they would have mentioned his name, and now I had the opposite concern, that is, I was alarmed that he would not be present. To what extent could this be due to my carelessness in a tapped phone call? But now that didn't matter much since McLarty had made the arrangement with the president who should be already aware of the message. Thus, I made the immediate and not consulted decision of not waiting any longer: I would go to the meeting to deliver my message to Mack McLarty. I felt so reassured that I reserved a seat for a direct flight to Mexico at five thirty the following afternoon. I was working on that when I received from Havana the answer to my latest consultation with the most

engaging consent that I have ever been given in my life: "We trust your talents".

The rendezvous was for Wednesday May 6, at 11:15, in the McLarty offices at the White House. I was received by the three announced officials of the National Security Council: Richard Clarke, leading director of multilateral affairs and presidential advisor on all subjects of international policy, especially for the fight on terrorism and narcotics; James Dobbins, senior director at the NSC for Interamerican affairs with the position of ambassador and presidential advisor on Latin America and the Caribbean; and, Jeff Delaurentis, director of Interamerican affairs at the NSC and special advisor on Cuba. There was no chance, at any time, to ask why Berger was not there. The three officials were gentle and highly professional.

I was not carrying personal notes but I knew the message in every detail, and in my organizer I had taken note of the only thing I was afraid to forget: the two off- text questions. Mack was about to finish a meeting in another room. While we waited, Dobbins gave me a rather pessimistic overview of the Colombia situation. His information was the same as McLarty's on Monday's dinner but he sounded more familiar with it. I had told Clinton the previous year that the US anti-drug policy worked as a nefarious magnifier of Colombia's historical violence. That's why it caught my attention that this NSC group --without referring to my specific phrase-- apparently agreed about changes. They were very careful not to give their views on the government or the current candidates, but they left no doubt that they found the situation catastrophic and the future uncertain. I was not happy about the purpose to amend the situation since various Washington observers of our politics had distressingly commented: "They are more dangerous now that they really want to help --one of them said to me-- because they want to stick their nose in everything".

McLarty entered, dressed in a neat suit and with his good manners, but with the haste of someone who has interrupted something of capital importance to take care of us. Nevertheless, he brought to the meeting a useful measured disposition and a dose of good humor. From the night of the dinner I had liked that he always talked looking straight in the eyes. It was the same during this meeting. After a warm embrace he sat in front of me with his hands on his knees and started speaking with a common phrase so properly said that it rang of truth: "We are at your disposal".

I wanted to clearly establish from the beginning that I would be speaking in my own capacity as a writer, without any other merit or mandate, on such an abrasive and engaging case as Cuba's. So, I started by making a precision that did not seem superfluous to me for the hidden recorders: "This is not an official visit".

They all nodded in agreement and their unexpected solemnity I found amazing. Then, in a simple way and a rather colloquial narrative, I related to them when, how and why I had had the conversation with Fidel that gave rise to the informal notes that I should deliver to president Clinton. I handed them to Mack McLarty in the closed envelope and I asked him to please read them so that I could comment on them. It was the English translation of seven topics written in six pages, double spacing: a terrorist plot; relative complacency over the measures announced on March 20 to resume flights from the United States to Cuba; Richardson's trip to Havana on January 1998; Cuba's arguments on refusing humanitarian aid; recognition for the Pentagon's favorable report on Cuba's military situation;--it was a report that said that Cuba posed no danger to the security of the United States-- approval of the solution of the Iraqi crisis; and appreciation over the comments made by Clinton in the presence of Mandela and Anan with regards to Cuba.

As you'll see, he lists the other points.

McLarty did not read them aloud as I had expected and he would undoubtedly have done if he had known the context beforehand. He read it to himself, apparently with the fast reading method that president Kennedy had made fashionable, but his changing emotions showed on his face as light in the water. I had read it myself so many times that I could practically know which of his expressions corresponded to the different points in the document.

The first point, about the terrorist plot, made him grumble and he said: "It's terrible". Later he suppressed a mischievous smile and without interrupting his reading he said: "We have common enemies". I think he said it referring to the fourth point, where a description is made of a group of senators plotting to boycott the passage of the Torres-Rangel's and Dodd's bills and appreciation is expressed about Clinton's efforts to save them.

At the end of his reading, he handed the paper to Dobbins and he to Clarke who read it while Mack extolled Mortimer Zuckerman, editor and publisher of the US News & World Report magazine, who had traveled to Havana last February. He made the comment in relation to something he had just read on point six of the document, but he did not answer the implicit question on whether Zuckerman had informed Clinton of the two twelve-hour conversations he had had with Fidel Castro.

The point that took practically all of the useful time after the reading was that of the terrorist plan, which made an impression on everyone. I told them that I had to overcome my terror over a bomb explosion as I was flying to Mexico after having learned of it in Havana. I then felt that the time had come to pose my first personal question suggested by Fidel: Wouldn't it be possible for the FBI to contact their Cuban counterpart for a joint struggle on terrorism? Before they could react I added a line of my own making: "I'm sure that you'd find a prompt and positive reaction on the part of the Cuban authorities".

I was amazed at the quick and strong reaction of the four. Clarke, who seemed to be closer to the subject, said it was a very good idea but he warned me that the FBI did not take up any case that showed up in the papers while the investigation was underway. Would the Cubans be willing to keep the case secret? As I was anxious to place my second question I gave them the type of answer that could bring a respite under the circumstances: "There is nothing that the Cubans like better than keeping secrets".

Lacking an adequate motive for my second question, I decided to put it as an assertion: cooperation in matters of security could open the way to a propitious climate leading to the resumption of Americans travels to Cuba. My shrewdness backfired, for Dobbins misunderstood me and said that that would be solved when the March 20 measures were implemented.

After the misunderstanding was clarified, I spoke of the pressure I feel from many Americans, from all walks of life, who come to me for help in making contacts for business or leisure in Cuba. In this context I mentioned Donald Newhouse, editor of various journals and chairman of the Associated Press, who treated me to a lavish dinner at his countryside mansion in New Jersey at the end of my literary workshop in Princeton University. His current dream is traveling to Cuba to discuss with Fidel personally the establishment of a permanent AP bureau in Havana, similar to CNN's.

I can't be sure but it seems to me that in the lively White House conversation it was clear that they did not have, or do not know, or didn't want to reveal any immediate intention to resume Americans travels to Cuba. However, I should emphasize that at no time there was any mention of democratic reforms, free elections or human rights, nor any of the political clichés with which Americans pretend to condition any project of cooperation with Cuba. On the contrary, my clearest impression of this trip is the certainty that reconciliation is beginning to grow as something irreversible in the collective consciousness.

Clarke called us back to order when the conversation began to drift and indicated --perhaps as a message-- that they would take immediate steps for a joint US-Cuba plan on terrorism. At the end of a long notation in his notepad, Dobbins concluded that they would communicate with their embassy in Cuba to implement the project. I made an ironic comment on the rank he was giving the Interests Section in Havana to which Dobbins responded in good humor: "What we have there is not an embassy but it is much bigger than an embassy". They all laughed with mischievous complicity. No other points were discussed, as it did not seem appropriate, but I assumed they would analyze them later among

themselves.

The whole meeting, including Mack's delay, lasted fifty minutes. Mack concluded it with a ritual phrase: "I know that you have a very tight agenda before you get back to Mexico and we have also many things ahead". He immediately followed with a short and concise paragraph, which sounded like a formal response to our effort. It would be reckless to try to give an exact quotation but the spirit and the tone of his words expressed his appreciation for the great importance of the message, worthy of the full attention of his government, of which they would urgently take care. Then, in the way of a happy ending, and looking straight into my eyes, he crowned me with a personal laurel: "Your mission was in fact of utmost importance, and you have discharged it very well". Neither my excessive honor nor my absence of modesty has allowed me to abandon that phrase to the ephemeral glory and the microphones hidden in flower vases.

I left the White House with the firm impression that the effort and the uncertainties of the previous days had been worthy. The annoyance for not having delivered the message personally to the President had been compensated by a more informal and operative conclave whose good results would be forthcoming. Likewise, knowing Clinton and Mack's affinities and the nature of their friendship dating back to grammar school, I was sure that sooner or later the document would end up in his hands in the familiar ambiance of an after-dinner.

At the end of the meeting, the Presidency of the Republic came across with a gallant gesture when outside the office an usher brought me an envelope with the pictures taken six months before during my previous visit to the Oval Office. So, on my way back to the hotel my only frustration was that until then I had not been able to discover or enjoy the miracle of the blooming cherry trees in that wonderful springtime.

I barely had time to pack and catch the five o'clock plane. The one that had taken me to Mexico fourteen days before had to return to base with a damaged turbine, and we waited four hours at the airport until another plane was available. The aircraft I took back to Mexico, after the meeting in the White House, was delayed in Washington for one and a half hour while the radar was repaired with the passengers on board.

Before landing in Mexico, five hours later, we had to over fly the city for almost two hours because one runway was out of service. Nothing like that had happened to me since I took a flight for the first time fifty two years before. But it couldn't be any different for a peaceful adventure that will occupy a place of privilege in my memoirs. May 13, 1998.

This is the end of that historic report.

May 9, 1998: The acting head of the USINT, John Boardman, is received at the MINREX. The purpose is to pass on a message on which they received instructions on the night of May 8 to deliver to Alarcón and MINREX. Undoubtedly, the message got there that same day or it had the effect that Gabo expected. So, the acting head of USINT says that he didn't know how, but that the government of Cuba had let the government of his country know that our authorities had well-founded concerns that organizations based in the United States had plans to carry out terrorist actions against Cuba, particularly in the tourism sector and most specifically attacks on passengers planes carrying tourists to and from Cuba.

The US government's reply which was being passed on by them was as follows:

* The US government has no information on links between US citizens and the terrorist acts in the hotels. The press has speculated but the US government has no information about this.

* The US government has sent numerous diplomatic notes indicating its willingness to analyze any information or physical evidence that the government of Cuba may have to back up this information.

* The US government wishes to reiterate that this is a serious offer. It is prepared to accept any information and to see when it would be possible for its experts to examine any physical evidence that the government of Cuba may have in this connection.

* The US government expresses its concern over these terrorist actions and is willing to act on this information to enforce the law and fight against international terrorism.

* The US government asks the government of Cuba to share appropriate information from other governments concerning the risk of terrorist acts on flights to Cuba from their territories.

May 11, 1998: Remírez [head of the Cuba Interests Section in Washington] informs that he was summoned by the State Department for a meeting with John Hamilton who raised the following points with him:

1. The purpose of the meeting was to reiterate USINT's request from the previous Saturday; this consisted of giving a reply to our concerns about terrorist activities against Cuba using double track diplomacy to speed things up.
2. They took our concerns about possible terrorist acts against tourist facilities and airplanes seriously, as they had on previous occasions.
3. According to investigations they had made there was nothing to indicate the existence of plans originating in the United States.
4. In the past, when we made allegations that people and/or organizations in the US might be involved in terrorist acts against Cuba, they had asked us for evidence since they wanted to investigate.
5. This time they would like to emphasize the seriousness of the United States' offer to investigate and take appropriate action on the basis of any evidence that we might have. This is not an attempt to put the ball back in our court nor is it a formal offer.
6. They in all seriousness would like to make a joint examination of any evidence we might have and to follow up on it for clarification. We thanked them for their offer assuring that we would pass it on to our authorities. We also asked them if the offer included cooperation between the two countries in an eventual investigation to which Hamilton replied that he supposed so. Hamilton repeated that this was a serious offer and not merely a diplomatic reply, adding that this important issue was the only purpose of the meeting.

May 12, 1998: MINREX summons the acting head of the USINT for a meeting and passes on the following response to the request they had made on Saturday 9 on behalf of the US government:.

Remember that Gabo's interview at the White House took place on the 8th. The response read:

"The information we have is reliable, but it came through sensitive sources that cannot be revealed. We cannot work as you suggest. We are satisfied knowing that you are on the alert and paying attention to the problem".

The acting head of USINT accepted this and thanked us for our prompt reply. He said he was willing to pass on any information that we considered relevant without compromising our source. His companion, who has been described as the USINT official in charge of matters concerning law enforcement and security, spoke and assured us that they would be following this affair very closely through all possible channels, through all their agencies and by keeping in contact with various groups. They also will check things out with other countries' security services. He said they think that "at this juncture, any threat of this nature is intolerable".

May 20, 1998: Alarcón receives a phone call from Hamilton who is in Washington. He explains that he is calling him personally because of the importance of the issue and that he wishes to make the following points:

- * About the risk of terrorist acts against planes flying to Cuba: They take the information passed on by Cuba very seriously and will adopt security measures on planes leaving from the United States.
- * In order to take any other action they would need to analyze the evidence we have in Cuba. They are willing to send US experts to Cuba to analyze it with us.
- * With the information received from us, they cannot warn other countries from which planes fly to Cuba. If we decide to issue such a warning we can tell these countries that the United States is willing to give immediate attention to requests for technical assistance to avoid any incidents.

June 3, 1998: Michael Kozak, head of USINT, meets with Alarcón. He says that an FBI delegation is preparing to travel to Cuba. He then hands him the text that the Americans are planning to circulate to the airlines so the Cubans can look it over. The text reads as follows:

"We have received unconfirmed information about a plot to place explosive devices on civil airliners which fly between Cuba and countries in Latin America. The people involved in the plot plan to leave a small explosive device on board an aircraft with the intention of activating it sometime during the flight. The explosive device, according to reports, is small, has a fuse and a digital timer that can be programmed 99 hours before it is to go off. The specific target, place and timeframe have not been identified.

"We cannot dismiss the possibility that the threat may extend to international cargo flights from the United States. The US government is still looking for additional information to clarify, verify or refute this threat".

June 4, 1998: Alarcón is instructed to respond that the delegation can come to Cuba after June 15.

June 5, 1998: Alarcón gives the head of USINT the Cuban response, which I also drafted myself, to the proposed American Information Circular, which literally reads:

"We did not ask you to issue any warning to air companies. That is not the way to deal with this problem; different kind of measures can and must be taken to deal with it. No one could guarantee discretion. An indiscretion in this case could make the investigation more difficult and place obstacles in the way of more efficient measures.

Actually, we took many measures guarding the aircrafts. For weeks we kept saying this until, of course, the blows they sustained with the arrests here, the uncovering of all their plans, and the confessions of the detainees allowed us to learn everything in detail, to denounce them, to break up their plans. It was Cuba that torn their plans to pieces. Then we said, and that's why I should explain it: This is not the way to face this problem for whose solution other measures can and must be taken.

"Moreover, the circulation of such a warning might create panic thus causing considerable damage to the Cuban economy, which is exactly what the terrorists want. This damage could also extend to the airlines.

"Therefore, we disagree with the issuance of a warning; we are seriously opposed to that. We can make a thorough analysis with your group of experts of the most advisable steps to take".

They really were kind or courteous enough to consult us about the note they would circulate, and we gave them our viewpoints.

At the meeting, the head of USINT suggested that there might have been some confusion over the first message (that they had thought we were asking them to issue a warning) or that there might be some legal obligation on their authorities to warn the airlines and thus avoid possible damage claims. He said that he would pass on Cuba's position to Washington and that they would not issue any warning.

June 6, 1998: Another meeting between Alarcón and the head of USINT. The latter delivers the US message in response to the document handed over the day before, which he had earlier read to Alarcón over the phone, and said:

1. The draft advisory provided to the Cuban side already is called an "Information Circular". Under the US aviation laws and regulations, information circulars are required to be provided to the internal security offices of air carriers whenever the US government has any credible information concerning a possible threat to aircraft.

They explain that there are laws and regulations that oblige them to inform. Well, actually we could have discussed how to do that, avoiding to provide all the data that we had included in our message.

2. The Federal Aviation Administration issues approximately 15-20 Information Circulars every year. These are not public documents.

Of course, these are public documents but if you circulate dozens and dozens of documents you arise concerns everywhere. There is no way to carry on a serious investigation, which is the important thing, to investigate, to prove, to uncover and to seize the culprits. Anyway, it's my duty to inform you of our arguments. I'm not aware of all those regulations, but it may be that they really felt obliged by law to inform.

3. Under our laws and regulations, we are required to go ahead immediately with notification to the airlines which have planes flying between the US and Cuba directly or via third countries, and to notify the third country governments. We have no option in this respect --they said-- as long as we believe the information to be credible.

Yes, the information was credible. We had what was required to know it, as proven by the responses we gave them that indicated, with all certainty, that the information they had passed on was true. In some cases the culprits had been arrested and in others they had escaped.

4. Given the nature of this information, and our obligation to cooperate with other countries to prevent attacks on aircraft, we continue to believe it's important that you or we notify airlines flying from other destinations and the responsible governments. Were it possible for the Cuban side to move up the meeting of experts to early next week (i.e. Tuesday or Wednesday), we would propose to make such notifications after we have had a chance to evaluate the information with the Cuban side. If such an early meeting is not feasible, we would proceed to make these notifications. Any further steps could be determined during the experts meeting on the week of June 15.

Actually, this note is from June 6. A meeting like that of the 15 cannot be improvised, it could not be arranged in two days, it required a minimum of five or six days, thus it could not be moved forward to the 7, it really took place on the 15, which had been the date agreed.

5. We appreciate the points made by the Cuban authorities that we seek to avoid damage to the investigation and the adverse impact on the air carriers and the Cuban economy. We are doing our best to respect these points within the limited discretion afforded by our laws and regulations and the priority we attach to preventing attacks on civil air carriers. Again, these Information Circulars are relatively routine and in our experience even when they become public they do not normally have significant or lasting impact on air travel of passengers or cargo".

In fact, I should say that they had been responding to the questions we raised. In my view, these exchanges they made in good faith, there was not a bad faith. We have tried to delve into this and we realize how much they insisted on certain legal procedures that forced them to do that.

That same day, Alarcón gives the head of USINT a new Cuban response from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs drafted in the following terms:

"We disagree. The probable publication of this information will damage the investigation, please the terrorists and encourage their plots against the Cuban economy.

"We do not know and we cannot understand the existence of obligations of a legal nature which, far from benefiting can adversely affect the efforts made to avoid any human victims or material damage.

"Any detailed publicity given of the procedures that might be used in these acts is an unquestionable error that could favor the plans by active or potential terrorist groups.

We didn't want them to go public with this, because they would be releasing technical data about the way to prepare such acts.

"We respect the American authorities' criteria, but we do not agree on how these activities should be countered; these must be analyzed, using the information available, with the required care and depth".

Now, everything is very clear. Unquestionably they feared that there might be such an act, a sabotage, and that having the information they had not passed it on to the airlines, even if this was absolutely useless. The airlines are in no position to face these events, they lack the means and the background information to prevent such a terrorist acts.

The head of USINT indicated that he had spoken with Mr. Dobbins, the official in charge of Latin America at the National Security Council, who asked for the following additional points to be raised:

* That they were obliged under American law to alert the companies that fly from the United States and those that fly to Cuba from other countries, because of international agreements. This decision to give out this warning showed that they took our information seriously and considered it reliable.

And they proved it with that tremendous concern that leads them to circulate the information right away.

* With regard to paragraph 4 of the document, Dobbins insisted that we didn't interpret it, in any way, as an element of pressure. What it is about is that while they are obliged to immediately inform the airlines that fly from the United States, the obligation with respect to those that leave from other countries, although it is there, does not put them under as much pressure, but they can't withhold it for a whole week. Theoretically, the meeting of experts could conclude that the threat wasn't that imminent, but as they start from the premise of seriously considering our information and giving it credibility, then they couldn't wait all this time without fulfilling their obligation.

I have no doubts, really, that these exchanges they made in good faith. They were serious; we both were, and it's only fair to admit it.

June 8, 1998: The Federal Aviation Agency issues the Information Circular. This is the circular we have been talking about. That is, practically that same day, or two days later they release it.

June 15, 1998: The FBI delegation arrives in Havana to meet with Cuban authorities.

June 16-17, 1998: Several joint meetings of Cuban experts and American FBI agents are held on the subject of plans for terrorist attacks. The US delegation is given copious information, both documentary

and testimonies. The material handed over includes 64 pages containing information from investigations into 31 terrorist acts and plans against our country, all of which took place between 1990 and 1998. Most of these actions could be traced back to the Cuban American National Foundation which also organized and financed the most dangerous actions, especially those carried out by the terrorist network led by Luis Posada Carriles in Central America. This information included detailed lists and photographs of weapons, explosives and other materiel seized in each case. Additionally, 51 pages with information concerning the money provided by the Cuban American National Foundation to different terrorist groups for terrorist acts on Cuba were given to the FBI. The FBI also received recordings of 14 phone conversations from Luis Posada Carriles in which he provided information about terrorist attacks on Cuba. Information was provided on how to locate Posada Carriles, such as his homes' addresses, places he frequented, the make and numberplates of cars he used in El Salvador, Honduras, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala and Panama. The FBI experts were also given 8 transcripts of conversations with terrorists arrested in Cuba in which they recount their connection to Posada Carriles.

FBI agents were also given 60 pages with files on 40 Cuban-born terrorists, most of who live in Miami and data on how to find them. They also took with them three 2-gramme samples of explosive substances from the bombs deactivated before they exploded in the Melia Cohiba hotel on April 30, 1997 and on a tourist van on October 19, 1997 as well as the explosive device confiscated from two Guatemalan terrorists on March 4, 1998.

They were also given 5 video and 8 audio cassettes with statements by the Central American terrorists who had been arrested for placing bombs in hotels. In these statements they tell of their connection to Cuban terrorist organizations which operate out of the United States and in particular their connection to Luis Posada Carriles.

The US side acknowledged the value of the information they had been given and made a commitment to give a reply with an analysis of these materials as soon as possible.

It is strange that almost three months went by without the serious response promised. Only some unimportant news are received.

On September 12, --mark my words, hardly three months had passed-- the five comrades, now heroes of the Republic of Cuba, are arrested. They were deployed in Miami and were our main source of information about terrorist activities against our country.

No terrorist was arrested anywhere, but our comrades were; they, who had supplied the information, although, of course, no information had been passed on that would reveal our sources. But they could certainly appreciate that we had serious, reliable information, and that our denunciations were very well founded, very accurate. Of course, theirs was not the only information, but it was among the most significant. One of them had the mission to follow the activities of Orlando Bosch, that same individual who was pardoned there, despite his monstrous crimes.

What had really happened? The top brass of the Miami terrorist mob had become aware of the contacts and information sharing between Cuba and US authorities about the brutal acts of terrorism that were being carried out with impunity against our country, and mobilized all their forces and influence --which everybody knows are considerable-- to go to any lengths to prevent any progress in this area.

Who was one of the main responsible for the breaking up of contacts? The chief of the FBI in Miami, Hector Pesquera. This officer had had the same job in Puerto Rico at the time when a commando organized directly by the paramilitary wing of the Cuban American National Foundation was arrested by the coastguard off that island and their boat and weapons were seized. Everyone knows the objective of that commando on Margarita Island, where an international conference was being held to which we were all invited, and we attended.

Pesquera was a member of the mob, and was a key factor in ensuring that this terrorist group had

complete impunity.

It is known that there was a certain degree of reluctance among the highest echelons of the FBI to break off information sharing with Cuba but that the clout and political influence of the mob's leaders prevailed. They even prevailed over the President of the United States, and the National Security Council, that was obvious.

There is no doubt that the FBI was already on the trail of the anti-terrorist group of Cubans whose information about the plans to blow up airplanes on the ground or in mid flight I had provided to the US President. Such horrendous acts could take the lives of both Cuban and US citizens, many of them traveling to the island on those same planes.

Pesquera, chief of the FBI in Miami, concentrated all of his efforts in identifying, tracking down and laying charges against the Cubans. The brutal treatment given to the Cuban patriots is common knowledge.

According to something published in the Nuevo Herald on September 15, 1998, the first people Pesquera informed that he had arrested our Five Heroes were Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Lincoln Diaz-Balart.

Pesquera, himself, made confessions on a Miami radio program, which prove how he had come from Puerto Rico with instructions to act, at all costs, against the group of Cubans who had infiltrated the Miami terrorist organizations. He said:

"I arrived here on May that same year, 1998. I was updated on everything there was. We then began to concentrate on this investigation. As far as intelligence is concerned, it shouldn't be there anymore, it should change course and become a criminal investigation".

That is, he has made his decision. He has his orders and he says that there is no need to continue the search for intelligence activity but rather turn the investigation into a criminal investigation against the Cuban patriots.

The line pursued by our country was quite different. In an October 19, 1998 interview with CNN's Lucia Newman in Oporto, Portugal, venue of an Ibero-American Summit, I literally said it, even when the legal monstrosities that we later learned about had not been committed ,yet. This was October 19, a month and a few days after they had arrested some of our comrades:

"For example, we are willing to assist in the struggle against terrorist activities that might affect Cuba or the United States.

"The United States is running a potential risk with the hundreds of extremist organizations, many of which are armed, within the United States itself. Some of the procedures used against Cuba could be used over there because some of them are well developed, sophisticated".

I mean here the methods, the procedures, and the technique.

"We have indicated as much to them, we have made it known to them, we have related our experiences to them, the terrorist methods that are used against our country. This is a contribution that might help them to defend themselves, because I consider it a very vulnerable country to such attacks".

The most tragic aspect of all this for the US people is that while Pesquera and his troops were maliciously devoting all their time to the persecution, arrest and rigging of the trial of the Cubans, no less than 14 of the 19 responsible for the September 11 attacks on New York's Twin Towers and other targets were living and training exactly in the area for which Pesquera was responsible, and right under his nose.

Speech at the Anti-Imperialist Tribunal "José Martí"

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Hardly three years after the arrest of our self-sacrificing and valiant comrades—who perhaps saved many American lives from Posada Carriles' horrendous Cuban American National Foundation funded plans with the information they collected and which Cuba placed at the disposition of US authorities—thousands of innocent Americans lost their lives, that most sad day of 2001. That is, hardly three years had passed since that arrest and thousands of Americans perished in New York, victims of a terrorist act, and most of the perpetrators had trained in Florida.

As my fellow Cubans and the international public can see, not one of the documents we have declassified has a single crossing out.

Before concluding I should say that the author of the report, Gabriel García Márquez, was consulted about it being published. Just yesterday I sent a message to Europe in which I said the following:

"It is indispensable that I discuss the subject of the message I sent with you about terrorist activities against our country. This will in no way damage the addressee and much less will it affect your literary glory.

"It is basically the message that I sent and the wonderful report you sent back to me which is written in your unmistakable style. These are like my memoirs and I think that yours would be incomplete if they did not include that message".

Everything I have narrated explains why at the start I spoke of "A different behavior".

Long live friendship between the peoples of Cuba and the United States!

Patria o Muerte!

Venceremos!

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