

NEWS
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CUBA POLICY

DOLE DETAILS STEPS PRESIDENT CLINTON SHOULD HAVE TAKEN: STILL WAITING FOR ENDORSEMENT OF HELMS-DOLE-BURTON SANCTIONS CASTRO FEARS MOST

The entire world is now aware of Fidel Castro's attack on unarmed, American civilian aircraft in international airspace. The U.S. Coast Guard has now called off its search for survivors. Four American citizens have been murdered by Fidel Castro's fighter jets. "Brothers to the Rescue" is a Florida-based humanitarian group which flies the Straits of Florida searching for the desperate product of Fidel Castro's Communist system: refugees in makeshift boats seeking to escape repression. For these efforts, four Americans gave their lives. It's time to honor their memory with real action against Fidel Castro's tyranny.

The apologists for Fidel Castro have already come up with excuses -- Brothers to the Rescue had penetrated Cuban airspace in the past, Cuban flight control personnel gave warnings, and on and on. It now appears that Castro even has a planted double agent who will perform a theater of absurd for the world.

But these diversions cannot obscure the basic reality. The reality is there can be no excuse for this act of aggression. The reality is that Castro's crimes now include an illegal international air assault against American citizens. The reality is that the time is long overdue for serious action against Castro's Cuba. It should not take the murder of four American citizens for the Clinton administration to understand that warming up to Fidel Castro is wrong.

The Clinton administration has been strong in its rhetoric. Yesterday, President Clinton said, the shoot down was a "flagrant violation of international law...And the United States will not tolerate it." But the strong words were not, unfortunately, followed with strong action.

Clinton Strong Words Not Matched With Strong Action

Yes, President Clinton is taking a case to the United Nations to seek international sanctions. I hope the Clinton administration has the same success that the Reagan administration had in 1983 in building an international coalition against the brutal Soviet attack on Korean Airlines flight 007 -- under the able leadership of U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. The Clinton administration has had no success to date in internationalizing the embargo on Cuba. The Clinton administration has spent little time and effort in such efforts, focusing instead on isolating and invading Haiti -- the poorest country in the hemisphere.

What President Didn't Say

Yes, President Clinton suspended charter flights to Cuba. But for months, the Clinton administration has looked the other way as the travel ban to Cuba has been regularly violated.

Yes, President Clinton has said there will be further restrictions on Cuban officials in the United States. But these officials are already supposed to be under strict control. And the Clinton administration allowed Fidel Castro to enter the United States last year ~~as the great satisfaction of the~~ liberal elite who wined and dined the hemisphere's last dictator in New York.

Yes, President Clinton said he wanted to work with Congress to "promptly reach agreement" on legislation to enhance the embargo on Cuba. But the Clinton administration led the charge against such legislation for more than a year -- orchestrating a Senate filibuster and issuing veto threats. The Congress is waiting for the Clinton administration to follow through on President Clinton's promise.

(more)

Yes, President Clinton said he would support more funding for Radio Marti to break Castro's information stranglehold on the Cuban people. But he was silent about TV Marti, and the Clinton administration has dragged its feet in making the technical improvements to TV Marti which would allow it to be seen by more Cubans.

More Steps President Should Have Taken

President Clinton did not even restore the status quo to include sanctions which he eased last year. On October 6, 1995, President Clinton announced a series of steps easing the embargo on Castro's Cuba. At the time, I said the Clinton administration gave Castro a propaganda victory and may have prolonged the Castro dictatorship.

There are many unilateral steps President Clinton could have and should have taken yesterday: announcing serious enforcement of the travel ban, opening a Treasury Department office in Miami, denying visas for Cuban government and party officials, and increased Federal Bureau of Investigation actions against Cuban agents in the United States.

Cuban Liberty "Libertad" Bill: Action This Week

But the most important step was not taken -- an unequivocal endorsement of the Helms-Dole-Burton Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act. This legislation was passed by the Senate on October 19, 1995 by a vote of 74-24 and passed by the House 294-130 on September 21, 1995. The conference committee will meet tomorrow morning to reconcile differences between the two versions, and I expect Senate action before the end of the week.

The "Libertad" bill strengthens the embargo on Cuba, offers real incentives for democratic change and takes real action to deter foreign investment in Cuba. The conference legislation will enable American citizens to use American courts to pursue claims against those who use confiscated property in Cuba. The conference legislation will also deny visas to officials who confiscate American property. Finally, the conference report will codify the existing embargo on Cuba, conditioning the end of the embargo on democratic change in Cuba. I also expect the conference report to include a strong condemnation of Castro's terror in the skies.

I know the conferees are receptive to one proposal by President Clinton -- authorizing the use of frozen Cuban assets to compensate the families of the latest victims of Castro's regime. That is a good idea. In fact, the conference may look at other uses for the frozen assets -- financing Radio and TV Marti, for example, or supporting the democratic opposition in Cuba.

As I indicated earlier, we stand ready to hear from the Clinton administration on the "Libertad" legislation. I hope President Clinton will finally endorse the tough sanctions that Castro really fears. Then the administration's actions will match their rhetoric.

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* Remarks delivered on Senate floor, approximately 2:45 p.m.