

Testimony of Caleb C. McCarry
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Before the
House Committee on International Relations
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
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2170 Rayburn House Office Building

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for inviting me to appear before the Subcommittee today to discuss the work of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba.

On July 10th, the President approved the second report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba and a Compact with the People of Cuba. The Commission is co-chaired by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Commerce Carlos Gutierrez.

The Compact with the People of Cuba and the Second Report's recommendations reflect America's resolve to stand with Cuba's brave opposition leaders, men and women, who speak for those Cubans who are forced into fearful silence but who remain free in their hearts and in their minds.

Compact with the People of Cuba

The Compact with the People of Cuba is a message of hope and reassurance to Cubans that they can count on our concrete aid in areas such as humanitarian needs, economic recovery and free and fair elections. The people of Cuba have a choice: Economic and political freedom and opportunity or more political repression and economic suffering under the current regime.

The United States stands ready to work with the people of Cuba to attain political and economic liberty. We pledge to help the Cuban people and a new Cuban transition government as it moves away from a totalitarian communist dictatorship and toward a free and representative democracy.

To support a Cuban transition government, we pledge to provide emergency food, water, fuel and medical equipment. We pledge to help rebuild Cuba's shattered economy. We pledge to respect the right of the Cuban people to be secure in their

homes. We pledge to encourage assistance from other countries, associations and private companies. And we pledge to discourage third parties from intervening to obstruct the will of the Cuban people.

We will do all this and more, provided we are asked by a Cuban transition government that is committed to dismantling all instruments of state repression and implementing internationally respected human rights and fundamental freedoms, including organizing free and fair elections for a democratically-elected new Cuban government within a period of no more than 18 months.

The Compact and the recommendations of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba are not prescriptions or dictates. Our support for a transition government only becomes possible when the President determines that there is a transition government in place, as determined by U.S. law, including the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act.

The Second Report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba

The Second Report of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba builds upon the recommendations of the Commission's first report and it represents the work of over 100 participants from 17 federal departments and agencies over the course of several months.

The report and its recommendations are intended to support the Compact with the People of Cuba. It sets forth specific assistance and programs the United States can offer to help Cubans rapidly recover their sovereignty through free and fair multi-party elections. It contains seven chapters and a series of recommendations designed to help Cubans secure real and lasting change in their country.

The Commission's recommendations include concrete support for democratic change in Cuba. The report recommends a substantial increase in our efforts, in concert with other nations, to empower Cubans to define a democratic future for their country. The report sets out a new two-year \$80 million program, aimed at stepping up our efforts along multiple fronts, including breaking the regime's information blockade and offering support for the efforts of Cubans to prepare for the day when they will recover their sovereignty and can select a government of their choosing through free and fair multi-party elections.

The report directs actions we can take now to develop appropriate plans to support a democratic transition tomorrow. The report broadly summarizes resources and

expertise the U.S. Government could make available to a Cuban transition government that releases all political prisoners, is committed to free and fair elections and asks for our help. The report recognizes that the international community and Cubans abroad will have an important role to play in Cuba's transition.

We are laying the groundwork to offer specific substantial assistance for a democratic transition in Cuba, including humanitarian aid and support for the recovery of those fundamental democratic rights and economic freedoms that lead to prosperity.

Role of the Community of Free Nations

When this report was announced on July 10th, President Bush said: "...we are actively working for change in Cuba, not simply waiting for change. I call on all our democratic friends and allies around the world to join us in supporting freedom for the Cuban people."

The United States is keeping our promise to marshal our resources and our expertise and to encourage all nations to join with us in supporting the right of all Cubans to define a future of freedom and democracy for themselves and for their country.

As a community of free nations, now is the time to intensify our efforts to stand with the Cuban people as they work to secure liberty, prosperity, and reconciliation when Cuba becomes free.

The Right of Cubans to Define a Democratic Future for their Nation

On July 10th, Secretary Rice said: "The Commission's Second Report keeps the promise that the United States has made to the people of Cuba. You have no greater friend than America. You can always count on our support and we will be ready to stand with you through the process of transformation to your democratic future."

Cubans in Cuba, at great personal risk, are already talking about a democratic transition for their country. It is what Cubans say about the future of Cuba that truly matters.

The opposition movement is creating momentum for democratic change in Cuba. With our offer of advice and assistance to all who seek democratic change in Cuba, we hope to add to this momentum. The report's recommendations also put the regime's henchmen that are orchestrating violent attacks on the opposition and other independent groups through so-called actos de repudio on notice that they will be denied U.S. visas.

Keeping Pace with Cubans

On July 10th Secretary Gutierrez said: “The Administration of President Bush is committed to accompany Cubans through a transition to political and economic freedom. The people of Cuba have suffered too much and for too long and deserve so much more than what they have today.”

This is an ongoing process to assist Cubans in their transition to freedom. We will need to update and adapt our preparations to keep pace with the Cubans themselves. This will ensure that when asked, we will be able to offer appropriate support that meets needs identified by Cubans. We hope that this report will find resonance with the people of Cuba, the world's democracies and the people of the United States. Together, we can reassure the Cuban people that they can count on democratic allies as they move to see their sovereign will ultimately expressed through free and fair multi-party elections.