

# U.S. actions questioned

## U.S. tightens Cuban embargo, but fails to look at whole picture

by Adam Levenstein  
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Many people are unaware that this weekend two Cuban MiG fighters shot down two Cessna civilian aircraft over waters north of Havana. The United States government was quick to condemn such action, and called an emergency session of the United Nations to review the matter.

In order to accurately review the matter at hand, we must look at the actions of the planes that were destroyed. These planes, which belong to a right-wing Cuban paramilitary group in Florida known as Brothers to the Rescue, were 200 miles off of their recorded flight plan and were headed straight for Havana.

What were the intentions of these planes? For the past two or three years, planes belonging to the Brothers have, every week, thrown food to people fleeing the economic situation in Cuba, flown over Havana and dropped anti-socialist propaganda, and

sometimes even landed to pick up Cubans and take them to Florida. It is even rumored that they have distributed weapons to Cuban terrorist groups.

Every time the BR has gone on these missions, they have violated Cuban airspace. This particular group has been warned numerous times by both US and Cuban governments to refrain from violating Cuban airspace. However, these warnings have gone unheeded. When the Cuban air traffic control center warned these planes not to fly south of the 24th parallel, Jose Basulto (surviving pilot and founder of the BR) responded that he was aware of the violation, but he was going in anyway.

The next question which determines the justification of the Cuban fighters is whether the planes were in Cuban airspace when they were shot down.

It is certain that Basulto's plane was in Cuban airspace; this fact is not even disputed by the United States government.

Whether or not the two other planes were in Cuban territory is under scrutiny. The US government is insisting that the planes were in international waters, which would mean that the destruction of the aircraft was a violation of international law.

However, it is interesting to note that Cuban air traffic control has stated that they were indeed within Cuban airspace. The US Coast Guard even asked permission to enter Cuban waters to search for survivors immediately after the shoot-down. All wreckage found indicates that the planes were within Cuban waters.

But, some will argue, just because these planes were violating Cuban airspace does not give two well-armed fighters to destroy unarmed civilian aircraft. The question in this instance is one of patience.

"For two or three years we have tolerated this continued violation," said Ricardo Alarcon, president of the National Assembly, Cuba's parliament. "But patience wears thin. This was a violation of Cuban sovereignty."

In the wake of this incident, it is necessary for people to stop and think, "What would happen if a Cuban plane flew over Miami week after week and dropped

literature showing Fidel Castro as a hero?" The answer, of course, is that it wouldn't make it past the second week. The Cuban government in this instance has shown considerably more patience than the United States would.

The US government has used this incident as an excuse to tighten the embargo against Cuba. This embargo, primarily supported by right-wing Cubans in Florida, starves the people of Cuba on the basis of "trying to bring democracy to Cuba." The starvation of the people of Cuba is a violation of UN policy and is condemned by all but two nations; the United States and Israel.

In addition, the Clinton administration is boosting "Radio Marti," which is radio waves broadcast into Cuba that carry US propaganda. Interestingly, Radio Marti is named for Cuban hero Jose Marti, who fought his entire life against US influence in Cuba.

Also, the broadcast of Radio Marti is a violation of the same international law that the US is condemning Cuba for breaking. The right-wing Cubans in Florida, of course, don't feel this is enough; they would rather have the United States go into an all-out war with Cuba, which would

kill thousands of innocent people.

So who is justified? The Cuban government responded quickly and harshly against the repeated violation of Cuban airspace. Basulto, who violated both US and international law in his violation, has been claiming that this is "premediated murder." In an interesting contradiction, Basulto also acknowledges the fact that he was aware he was violating US, Cuban, and international law, as well as ignoring warnings by Cuban authorities not to proceed.

The United States, in its "punishment," has decided that the only answer is to try to starve the people of Cuba. The people living in Cuba obviously are not fond of this measure; in fact, this past summer there was a massive demonstration of 500,000 Cubans in Havana against the embargo.

Undoubtedly, the Cuban authorities overreacted; the situation could have been resolved by forcing the planes down with aerobatic maneuvers. On the other hand, in retaliation, the United States government is tightening the embargo that is starving 11 million people. I leave it for the reader to decide who is in the right in this particular case.

## Spring break '96...

## And how was yours?

by Mary Began  
Collegian Staff

I'm tired of society saying that people today - especially teens and young adults - don't care about anything that happens in this world because this past weekend my boyfriend and I cared not only about our lives, but the lives of the people surrounding us. Yes folks, we took action in the community and we're both only 19! Hooray for the Generation X-ers!

Picture this: Rt. 17 E. near Binghamton, 1996. I was traveling home for spring break with my boyfriend and his lovely mother (who's refused to acknowledge my existence for three years now) heading towards NY/NJ last Friday evening.

Just driving along, la-tee-da (it's a seven hour trip, not much one can do), and three big trucks in front of us start moving together in each of the three lanes. They've blocked the whole road so no one can pass them and drive very, very slowly.

I assumed there was an accident up ahead - a big one - and the police called the truck drivers in to regulate traffic. That seemed logical enough and we all agreed to it.

Traffic was doing it's usual thing, people honked at first, then realized that wouldn't do anything and so they shut their cars off for periods of time.

I looked back around me and out of the corner of my eye I noticed these two guys, excuse me - "young adults," in their car blasting music and drinking stuff

- a lot of stuff as thirsty as fish. I didn't question it until both my boyfriend and his mom noticed it and said something as well. But it wasn't water and it wasn't soda that they were gulping down - it was beer.

Can after can we watched them to our right. We were all amazed that they were so blatantly drinking, not just the passenger, but the driver as well who would put his can down to rest on the dashboard in plain sight.

My boyfriend flipped out. Mr. Politically Involved that he is, wrote down their license plate numbers and the make of the car and wanted to call the cops.

He used the car phone and called the operator. He told the operator the car information and the actions that occurred and the operator told him to keep an eye on the perpetrators.

The operator said we were coming to the area of all the confusion on Rt. 17 and that cops would be around there that we could alert. Not long after that, a police car came speeding by (not like they ever inch slowly or anything) and continued past the suspected criminal.

After 15 minutes or so, these guys merged in front of us and stayed there for awhile. We had just shut off the car again as did everyone else around us when out of nowhere, the driver of that beer bus stepped out of his car and went to his trunk. Mister - I have no brain cells left because I've drunk so much - opened his trunk and takes out a six-pack! Is this man stupid or what?

Now my boyfriend was having a spasm attack. He called back the operator and told them what occurred in blatant view. We were all riled up and yelling things out to the operator.

All of a sudden a K-9 police truck came roaring by, lights flashing, sirens blasting, and pulled over the car. Everyone was ecstatic.

The cop came and asked us if we were the ones who called and my boyfriend proceeded to climb over his mother to tell the officer all that happened. She didn't care and was spewing out things to the cop as well. Then the officer went over to the offenders.

The dog the cop left in the truck was going psychotic and barking so loudly - he knew there was trouble. We stayed long enough to see the cop ask for backup, get the guys out of the car and ask them how much they had been drinking.

"Just a little," said the passenger who couldn't even stand up straight without having to hold onto something. The cop smiled and we left.

Score one for the Generation X-ers!!!

The whole rest of the trip we really felt like we accomplished something great. My boyfriend felt that he should have been rewarded somehow and I just laughed. We cared and we should always care. We could have saved someone's life that night, if not our own.

I'm glad we participated in life and I feel society should take action as well. I just think we

# Get out and vote

by Nikki Gennuso  
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As campaign '96 gets underway, I've noticed a lot of people with some really bad ideas about voting. Most people just whine about how they really don't care about who is running the country, and how their vote is not going to make a difference.

These are the lamest excuses I've ever heard. Voting is a privilege that we as Americans have been graced with. It is our chance to let the big guys know how we feel.

As voters, we have the power to change who runs the country. In my opinion I think this is a pretty big deal.

Voting is also an obligation. If the whole country decided that voting was stupid and not worth it, we wouldn't have a democracy.

If you have a problem with the way the country is being run, then say so by voting. Voting is your chance to voice an opinion. If you don't vote, then you have no right to complain about the way the country is being run.

As young adults, (more importantly college students) it is

extremely important that our voices be heard. The government as a whole has a tendency to forget about us, look over our heads; when not doing that, they are criticizing us.

We can change this by showing the government that we do care, and we are intelligent enough to pick a candidate that we feel will represent our best interests. I don't care if you don't know jack about the candidates, it is not that hard to watch the news, or read the papers and find out just what these people are all about.

The 18 to 24 age sector has the lowest reported voter turnout. Why do you think the government thinks so badly of us? If we don't have the decency to express our opinions, we don't deserve the attention of senators, congressmen, or the president himself.

Get educated, and get off your butt. Go down to the registrar's office and register to vote. If we don't help them make decisions about what is best for us, then they will make the decisions for us--pretty scary, huh? Vote.

need to stop watching COPS episodes because next time, my boyfriend might flip out totally

and make a citizen's arrest. Oh well, at least my spring break started out interesting.

And how was yours?