

SOLDIERS WITH CORRECT OPINIONS

It is not known how many people in the United States write to Obama and how many different topics are presented to him. It's clear that he cannot read all the letters and deal with everything because he wouldn't be able to fit it into a 24-hour day or a 365-day year. What is certain is that his advisors, backed up by their computers, electronic equipment and cell, answer all the letters. Their contents are recorded and there are pre-written answers supported by the multiple declarations of the new president during his campaign to be nominated and elected.

Anyway, the letters have influence and bearing upon United States policy since we are not dealing, in this case, with a corrupt, lying and ignorant politician as his predecessor was, who hated the social advances made by the New Deal.

For that reason I fixed upon a news cable published yesterday on April 14, originating from Washington, provided by the DPA news agency.

It stated that a group of high-ranking retired U.S. military were urging President Barack Obama to 'support and sign' a law to end the prohibitions on travel to Cuba by all U.S. citizens, arguing that the embargo against the island is of no use for political purposes or for Washington's security.

In a letter released today in Washington, the 12 retired high-ranking officers, among them the 'drug czar' during the Clinton administration, Brian McCaffrey and Colin Powell's former chief of staff Lawrence B. Wilkerson, warn that the embargo has caused a significant diplomatic movement against U.S. policy.

As military professionals, we understand that the interests of the United States are better attended to when the country is capable of attracting the support of other nations to our cause, the soldiers insist in the letter sent to Obama on Monday, the same day that the U.S. president announced the end of the travel restrictions and remittances for Cuban-Americans, but not for all American citizens as progressive sectors want.

In the opinion of these soldiers, the 'Law on Freedom of Travel to Cuba' presented before the House of Representatives by the Democrat Bill Delahunt 'is an important first step towards the lifting of the embargo'.

They add that this is a kind of policy 'with more possibilities for bringing change to Cuba' and also for changing Washington's international image.

Throughout the world, leaders are demanding a real political change based on the hopes you inspired in your campaign, the soldiers maintain.

They add that Cuba provides a handier element to demonstrate that change and furthermore it would be a manoeuvre that would be deeply etched into the minds of our partners and rivals in the world.

Placed as it was among 315 pages of cables, the news would appear to be somewhat insignificant. However it deals with the crux of the problem that motivated four reflections in less than 24 hours, revolving around the Summit of the Americas which will be starting within 48 hours.

In the United States, wars are unleashed by the politicians and they have to be fought by the soldiers.

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The young and untried Kennedy decreed the blockade and the Bay of Pigs invasion, organized by Eisenhower and by Nixon who knew less of war than he did. The unexpected twist of fate led him to new and unwise decisions that ended up in the October Missile Crisis from which he nevertheless emerged gracefully although traumatized by the risk of a nuclear war that hovered at his elbow, as the French journalist Jean Daniel told me. "He is a thinking machine", was the praise he added about the president who had greatly impressed him.

Later, enthused with the Green Berets, he dispatched them to Vietnam where the U.S. was supporting the restoration of the French colonial empire. Another politician, Lyndon Johnson, carried that war to its final consequences. In that inglorious adventure, more than 50,000 soldiers lost their lives, the Union squandered no less than 500 billion dollars when the value of the dollar in gold fell 20 times, killed millions of Vietnamese and multiplied the solidarity for that poor Third World country. Conscripts had to be replaced with professional soldiers, removing the people from military training and thus weakening that nation.

A third politician, George W. Bush, protected by his father, carried out the genocidal Iraqi war that hastened the economic crisis, making it more serious and profound. Its cost in economic figures is at trillions of dollars, with a public debt that will fall upon the new generations of Americans, in a world which is convulsed and full of risks.

Those who affirm that the embargo affects the security interests of the United States, are they right or not?

Those who wrote the letter are not appealing to the use of weapons, but to the war of ideas, something which is diametrically opposed to what was done by the politicians.

In general, the American soldiers who defend the economic, political and social system of the United States have privileges and are very well paid, but they are concerned about not taking part in the stealing of public funds, something that would lead to their disrepute and to the total lack of authority for their military endeavours.

They do not believe that Cuba constitutes a threat to the security of the United States, as we have been attempted to be portrayed before American public opinion. It has been the governments of that country which have transformed the Guantánamo base into a refuge for counter-revolutionaries or emigrants. Worse than all this, they transformed it into a torture centre that made them famous as a symbol of the most brutal negation of human rights.

The soldiers also know that our country is a model for the fight against drug trafficking and that never have any terrorist actions been allowed against the people of the United States from our territory.

As the Black Caucus from the U.S. Congress was able to discover, including Cuba on the list of terrorist countries is the most dishonest thing that has ever been done.

We give thanks to those who wrote the letter to Obama, just as we thank senators Lugar and Delahunt, the Caucus and other influential members of Congress.

We do not fear dialogue; we do not need to invent enemies; we do not fear the debate of ideas; we believe in our convictions and with them we have known how to defend and continue defending our homeland.

With the fabulous advances of technology, war has become one of the most complex sciences.

It is something the American soldiers understand. They know it isn't a matter of issuing orders along the lines of the old wars. Nowadays one will possibly never see the adversary's face; they can be thousands of kilometres apart; the deadliest of weapons are fired by programmes. Men hardly participate. Decisions are previously calculated and bereft of emotions.

I have met several of them, by now retired, who dedicate themselves to the study of the military

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sciences and warfare.

They express no hatred or dislike of the small country which has struggled and resisted, faced with such a powerful neighbour.

In the United States these days there is a World Security Institute in existence; our country maintains contact with it and carries out academic exchanges. 15 years ago what existed was the Centre for Defence Information (CDI). It made a first visit to Cuba at the end of June in 1993. Between that date and November 19, 2004 nine visits were made to Cuba.

Until the year 1999, the delegations were mainly made up of retired military.

On the October 1999 visit, the composition of the delegates began to change, and the military became less of a presence. From the fifth visit, all the delegations were presided by the prestigious researcher Bruce Blair, expert in security policies and specializing in nuclear control and command forces. He is consulting professor at the universities of Yale and Princeton. He has published many books and hundreds of articles on the subject.

This was the way I met soldiers who had taken on important roles in the U.S. armed forces. We did not always agree with their points of view, but they were always pleasant. We had extensive exchanges about historical events in which they had participated as the military.

Visits continued in 2006, but I had had the accident in Santa Clara and later on I became seriously ill.

Among the twelve retired soldiers who signed the letter to Obama, one of them had taken part in those meetings.

I learned that in the last meeting to take place, they frankly said that the military had no intention of militarily attacking Cuba; that there was a new political situation in the United States coming out of the administration's weakness on account of its disaster in Iraq.

For the comrades who met with the Americans it was evident that they felt they were being poorly led and they were embarrassed by what was happening even though nobody could provide guarantees about the president of the United States' adventurous policy which he kept up right to his last day in office. That meeting took place in March of 2007, 14 months ago.

Bruce Blair must know much more than I about the thorny subject. I was always impressed by his brave and transparent behaviour.

I didn't want this information to stay in the files waiting for a time when it would no longer be of interest to anyone.

Fidel Castro Ruz

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