

Imprisoned for Fighting Terrorism

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Today marks 16 years that five Cuban men known as the Cuban Five have endured prison — 5,840 days — precisely for having fought terrorism in Miami.

The reason is, the terrorism the Cuban Five were fighting against has been supported and financed by the U.S. government, through the CIA and other means.

The Cuban Five were prosecuted by the U.S. government and convicted on espionage conspiracy charges, but their real “crime” was working to uncover and thwart terrorist plots of Cuban-American paramilitary organizations based in Miami.

In the name of fighting terrorism, the U.S. government has spent hundreds of billions of dollars in wars and occupations since 9/11.

But Washington should arrest and prosecute Cuban-American extremists in Miami who have carried out hundreds of terrorist attacks against Cuba.

And it should immediately free the Cuban Five, who took on the incredible mission of infiltrating those dangerous and deadly organizations in order to disrupt their armed attacks and save lives.

Long before the crime of 9/11, the Cuban people experienced the scourge of terrorism.

More than 3,400 Cubans have been killed and 2,000 wounded in armed attacks carried out by

Miami-based Cuban right-wing terrorists since the early 1960s, a fact unknown to most Americans.

Yet, the FBI has never placed any of those Cuban-American criminals on its “Most Wanted” list, nor its “Most Wanted Terrorists” list.

That is because the CIA trained and armed them — almost 4,000 Cuban right-wing exiles — to carry out bombings, assassinations and biological warfare against Cuba.

Because of its close proximity to Cuba, Miami became the central base of operations for right-wing Cuban exiles who fled Cuba after the 1959 revolution, many with nefarious histories who had acted as henchmen for U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Dozens of paramilitary organizations sprang from this massive CIA operation based in Miami, groups like Alpha 66, Omega 7, Comandos F-4.

The impunity granted to literally dozens of Cuban exile terrorists by the U.S. government is shameful.

One example was Batista torturer Esteban Ventura, chief of Havana’s 5th Police Precinct. Notorious for massacring many young Cubans in the 1950s, he escaped to Miami after Batista’s overthrow.

Washington repeatedly refused Cuba’s requests to extradite Ventura. He lived in Miami — sheltered by the U.S. government —until his death in 2001.

But a search of names on the Internet reveals a shocking and disturbing list of other men and their crimes: among them, Orlando Bosch, Guillermo Novo Sampol, Gaspar Jiménez, Pedro Remón Crispín, and the godfather of Miami terrorists, Luis Posada Carriles.

To this day, Luis Posada Carriles, walks the streets of Miami a free man, despite being the mastermind of the mid-air bombing of Cubana airlines plane on Oct. 6, 1976, killing 73 people.

Again, despite Venezuela’s repeated requests for Washington to extradite Posada Carriles to Caracas — where he engineered the Cubana bombing, the U.S. has refused.

With Miami paramilitary groups posing a constant threat to its people, the Cuban government had to act.

Starting in 1990, the Cuban Five entered the United States in order to monitor those extremist organizations and individuals. They successfully infiltrated the groups, gaining their confidence while in reality working to disrupt the plots.

The Cuban Five even reported to the FBI plots and crimes they had uncovered.

But instead of prosecuting the Miami extremists, the FBI raided the homes of the Cuban Five *anti-terrorists*, on Sept. 12, 1998 and arrested them. They have been imprisoned ever since.

The Cuban Five are Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González.

In a seven-month process that did not remotely resemble a fair trial, the five defendants were

denied several motions to move the trial out of Miami.

How could Miami be a neutral venue, a city that has awarded terrorists like Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles with medals and keys to the city, where bombings exploded frequently in the 1970s and 1980s, where 6-year-old Elián González was held captive for five months by the extremists?

The Five were held pre-trial in solitary confinement for 17 months, despite having no discipline issues. The Miami media went on a tirade against the defendants for two-and-a-half years, including during trial.

Later, it has been revealed through subsequent investigations, that dozens of Miami journalists in radio, TV and newspaper were on the U.S. government payroll, many of them actually covering the Cuban Five trial in the most prejudicial manner imaginable. This fact alone, Miami reporters creating a poisoned atmosphere against the defendants while secretly receiving U.S. government money, should nullify their convictions immediately.

Today, this new evidence forms the basis of their Habeas Corpus appeals.

But the same judge, the same court district, the same venue is where the appeals are being reviewed. Justice can hardly be expected there.

The Cuban Five never belonged a day in prison. In any other country, they would be honored as heroes for putting their lives on the line to save other people.

Two of the Five, René González and Fernando González, completed their sentences and returned home to their families in Cuba, but the remaining three, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, and Antonio Guerrero, are fighting for their freedom and justice.

They are not alone. Today, hundreds of support actions are taking place around the world and across the United States.

President Barack Obama has the power to undo an enormous injustice. Let the Cuban Five go home to Cuba now.

Gloria La Riva is coordinator of the [National Committee to Free the Cuban Five](#), formed soon after their convictions in 2001.
