

It Makes No Difference Whether It's Rubio or His "Brothers"

By: Arnaldo Musa / Special for CubaSi
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Colombian President Gustavo Petro, referring to the confirmed plot to remove him from office, remarked that opportunistic Trump-aligned senator Marco Rubio should not have been involved in such a plan. According to Petro, the traitorous politician of regrettable Cuban origin represents a government already entangled with Iran, nuclear threats, the crisis in Gaza, and the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. “Why,” Petro asked, “would he waste time scheming a coup d’état in Gran Colombia?”

Throughout his statement, the Colombian head of state directly addressed U.S. congressmen and officials of Cuban origin residing in the United States who have publicly criticized his administration. Petro urged them to clarify the real goals of their actions, emphasizing that Colombia is not an enemy but, rather, a potential ally in resolving regional conflicts.

The president categorically rejected the accusations linking him to illegal activities such as drug trafficking or terrorism, stating that these

allegations are designed to undermine bilateral cooperation in matters of security. He stressed that there are actors interested in damaging Colombia's relationship with the United States, but insisted that a rupture in relations would not leave Colombia isolated, as European allies remain committed to fighting organized crime.

It is true that drug trafficking attempts to sow explosive divisions between Colombia and the United States. But it is important not to forget the Cuban-American elements, firmly rooted in Florida, who consider Rubio their heir for advancing destructive and openly subversive agendas against Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua. Rubio also influenced Panama's president to participate in imperialist plans against China, facilitated the near-complete entry of U.S. military enclaves into the isthmus, and fully exposed the Salvadoran president by using him in schemes against Nicolás Maduro's government.

And that is just part of the picture. Rubio and his Cuban-American allies are aptly described by journalist Randy Alonso in *Cubadebate*:

"Nothing new under the sun. These four congressmen represent Florida, the den where the most elite of the Latin American far right and the biggest thieves the region has known have taken refuge, the place where Bolsonaro once sought shelter, where a red carpet was just rolled out for Javier Milei and his chainsaw, the location from which numerous terrorist attacks against Cuba were organized, and where some of the leaders of the January 6, 2021, assault on the U.S. Capitol came from."

For Petro, the international conspiracy to depose him placed Mario Díaz-Balart at the center of the scandal. According to the Spanish newspaper *El País*, which is far from progressive, former Colombian Foreign Minister Álvaro Leyva, in coordination with leaders of the Colombian right, held unofficial meetings in Washington with Díaz-Balart to promote what Petro publicly described as an attempted coup. These meetings, which reportedly had eyewitnesses, were centered around portraying Petro as unfit to govern and pushing for his removal from office.

This case not only underscores diplomatic tensions between Colombia and the United States, it also confirms the enduring influence of political

pressure networks operating out of South Florida, defending long-standing interests and continuing to shape strategic decisions in Washington. Investigations into the existence, scope, and responsibility for the conspiracy against President Petro remain open in both Colombian courts and international forums, in an effort to determine why such a failed attempt was made to convince Colombians that their president was unfit to govern.

Before the Revelation

Even before *El País* exposed the scheme, Díaz-Balart had already met with former Foreign Minister Leyva and Colombian right-wing leaders. He later repeated the accusation that Petro was unfit to govern due to allegedly being a “drug addict,” a claim that was circulated to justify the plot to unseat him.

On January 26, Díaz-Balart posted a message warning of “serious consequences” if Petro failed to align with the policies of the Trump administration. “President Gustavo Petro is unnecessarily destroying the special relationship between Colombia and the United States. It is time for Petro to reconsider his stance toward the U.S. before the consequences become even more severe,” the far-right congressman wrote. His message came in response to Colombia’s refusal to accept deportation flights carrying migrants who had been subjected to degrading treatment, including being handcuffed despite having no criminal convictions or even formal charges. Petro condemned this treatment as inhumane, prompting outrage from then-President Donald Trump.

Fifteen days later, on February 11, presidential hopeful Vicky Dávila, closely aligned with big business and the Colombian far right, met with Díaz-Balart in the United States. “I told him that Colombia is not Petro, and that we must avoid sanctions at all costs. Sanctions would only harm our 50 million citizens and benefit Petro’s destructive political project,” she stated. Weeks later, Donald Trump imposed tariffs on Colombia and other countries. Dávila remained in the United States for a week.

Nearly two months afterward, on March 24, a group of Colombian congressmen openly opposed to Petro — including Katherine Miranda

(Green Party), Lorena Ríos (Colombia Justa Libres), Honorio Henríquez (Democratic Center), Juan Carlos Garcés (Party of the U), Mauricio Gómez (Liberal), Nicolás Echeverry (Conservative), and Carlos Abraham Jiménez (Radical Change) — traveled to the United States to meet with Mario Díaz-Balart and Henry Cuellar. Their goal was to reactivate a bipartisan committee that had been formed in 2009 during the Álvaro Uribe administration.

At the time, Petro was denouncing institutional sabotage by these parties, which had blocked labor reform in the Senate's Seventh Committee without even debating it. In response, he called for a national referendum, placing these congressmen in an awkward position and leading them to allege a "coup against Congress." Petro identified the main "ringleader," as he called him, as Senate President Efraín Cepeda, who also took part in the Washington meeting.

That day, Díaz-Balart declared, "We are deeply concerned about what is happening in Colombia. We are worried about the possible erosion of the rule of law. What remains highly positive, however, is the relationship with Congress." He also tried to equate Petro's government with "regional dictatorships like Nicolás Maduro's in Venezuela," the same government the Trump administration tried to topple through force in the failed *Operation Gedeón* in May 2020 — an armed incursion attempt involving former Venezuelan military officers and agents linked to the United States and Colombia, as reported by the BBC.

Díaz-Balart insisted that the meeting was meant to "strengthen this alliance that has greatly benefited both countries, fighting narcoterrorism and promoting the national security interests of the United States and Colombia, as well as working with the Colombian people to advance shared goals of stability, prosperity, and democratic governance." Efraín Cepeda, for his part, issued a vague statement referencing "bilateral issues" such as migration, drug trafficking, and trade relations. "The Colombian Congress has the full support of the United States Congress," he concluded.

The Power of the Miami Lobby

Beyond family connections, the Cuban-American political machine

continues to influence Washington's policies toward Latin America. Its most prominent figure is Marco Rubio. When Trump named him to his cabinet, Díaz-Balart declared, "(He will) do an exceptional job promoting a strong and focused foreign policy and will offer invaluable experience and counsel as National Security Adviser."

Both Rubio and Díaz-Balart have deep ties to political networks within the Cuban-American community. They share a staunchly anti-communist agenda and Cuban heritage, and are linked by one of the most powerful lobbies in Congress: the anti-Castro lobby. *Foreign Policy* magazine once described it as follows: "The most powerful lobby in Washington is not the NRA, it's the right-wing anti-Castro faction that has Obama's bureaucrats paralyzed and intimidated."

To illustrate their extremism: in 2014, when pop stars Jay-Z and Beyoncé celebrated their wedding anniversary in Cuba, Rubio demanded an investigation for allegedly violating the U.S. embargo on the island. Analyst William LeoGrande, a professor at American University in Washington, wrote in *Foreign Policy*, "That aggressive foreign policy lobby managed to prevent any rational debate about an outdated policy, intimidating anyone who dared question it."

Even academic papers have questioned the effectiveness of the Cuban lobby, which has failed for over five decades to achieve its ultimate goal of toppling the socialist government in Havana. It has also been criticized as a facade for other interests, masked as a human rights cause.

Researchers at the University of Denver summarized it this way: "U.S. policy toward Cuba is simply an extension of Florida politics by other means."

This hardline Florida stance, which has propelled the careers of figures like Mario Díaz-Balart and Marco Rubio, has played a role in various Latin American interventions. These range from military support for CIA-trained anti-Castro groups — defeated at the Bay of Pigs, in an operation orchestrated from U.S. soil — to recent attempts by mercenaries in the failed *Operation Gedeón* to capture Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela.

There are also more discreet forms of support, such as the **Cuban American National Foundation (CANF)**, a Miami-based organization

that has received U.S. government funding for over 40 years in efforts to influence politics on the island. Founded by a Cuban exile, CANF has been accused of financing terrorists like Luis Posada Carriles, who died in 2018. In a *New York Times* interview, Posada Carriles admitted to receiving more than \$200,000 from CANF's founder for his operations. Despite being accused of international terrorism, he died in Miami without ever standing trial for many of the attacks he carried out.

CANF has supported Marco Rubio and other conservative Cuban-American politicians. Over time, its agenda has expanded to target other countries such as Venezuela.

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