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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Opening Statement

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Oversight and Government Reform Committee

Hearing on
“National Security Implications of U.S. Policy toward Cuba”

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Today, we have an opportunity to consider and debate a very important long-standing issue in U.S. foreign policy. The issue is whether to broaden our relationship with Cuba, and whether that decision is in the best strategic and security interests of the United States.

Before we address that issue, it is important to provide some context to our discussions.

Fifty years ago, Fidel Castro toppled a corrupt government and replaced it with his tyrannical regime. In true communist fashion, the Castro brothers have retained their power by stifling any and all dissent. They have imprisoned those who have tried to open Cuban society, and have murdered political opponents. All the while, the Cuban people have suffered from the failed economic conditions espoused by communism.

To cover their tracks and promote their agenda, the Castros control all print and broadcast media.

On the foreign policy side, Cuba's actions are fuelled by anti-American sentiment. The Cuban government has sent troops abroad to wage war against U.S. interests. Cuba has provided weapons to our enemies, and has ties with emerging dictators such as Hugo Chavez. It also has a long history of coordination with North Korea and Russia. Lest we forget, Cuba threatened the United States with nuclear holocaust by allowing the Soviets to place nuclear arms pointed towards Washington D.C. on its soil. Fidel Castro made that decision in 1962 and, while not currently acting as dictator, he still directly influences Cuban foreign policy today.

Just recently, Cuba stood silent while Venezuela and Russia conducted war game exercises off Venezuela's coast. This is yet another example of Cuba giving tacit, if not outright support, to those who seek to weaken our Nation.

In short, Cuba, under the Castro government, is the antithesis of what America stands for.

I believe that the United States owes no apology for standing against the Cuban government and its actions. There is no benefit to liberalizing our relationship as long as the Castros are in power.

Some oppose this view. We will hear today about possible alternatives that our government may pursue. While we do this, we must consider the costs of a policy intended to draw us closer to this nation. We must also evaluate the likelihood of success for these policies as well.

If the Obama Administration chooses to engage Cuba, it must not turn a blind eye toward its bad behavior. Holding political prisoners, forbidding free elections, government control of all major economic production, and maintaining a closed society goes against everything we, as a nation, stand for. It would be immoral to grant them the privilege of closer connections with the United States.

This is why I question the President's decision to lift travel and telecommunications restrictions on Cuba without precondition. At some point, I would like to hear from the Obama Administration because the end-game is not clear to me. The White House provided little information to the American people regarding this policy shift, and this Committee would benefit from a fuller explanation of the Administration's intentions.

Regardless of whatever U.S. policy prevails, it is essential that our government begins to plan now for the post-Communist era in Cuba. When this totalitarian regime finally gives way, and I believe it will, this nation must be ready to help guide Cuba in a direction that will encourage positive change. The United States must be ready to help facilitate the rapid transition to a democratically elected government.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

Thank you.