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Chairman DeSantis, Ranking Member Lynch and Members of the Committee.

This Committee deserves praise for calling a hearing into President Obama's rapprochement with Cuba's military government a "foreign policy failure." Why is the rapprochement a failure? I believe it failed because it consisted of a series of unrequited unilateral concessions to the Castro regime that had negative consequences for US national security, foreign policy interests and traditional values, and which brought increased repression to the Cuban people while filling the coffers of the Cuban military, the Communist Party, and the Castro family.

Unlike previous, successful American initiatives, Obama's rapprochement with the Castro dictatorship identified the US with a nation's oppressor instead of the oppressed. Yielding to their demand, Obama removed Cuba from the State Department list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, even though it cooperates with Syria, Iran, North Korea, Venezuela, and harbors fugitives from US justice and members of foreign terrorist organizations from Europe and other regions.

The consequences to US interests and values of the "historic" Obama opening would have been even more costly to both US security and Cuba's eventual freedom had the 2016 US election not intervened. Exactly 7 months ago today President Trump's stated that "Effective immediately, I am canceling the last administration's completely one-sided deal with Cuba." I regret

to say, however, that our government has not yet fully accomplished our President's promise. Perhaps the Members of this Committee and others can ask why that is the case.

I can mention only a few of the reasons why I believe President Obama's Cuba policy failed because there are too many for one testimony.

Among other reasons, Obama's policy failed because he either misread or chose to ignore recent history. In his address to the nation of December 17, 2014 announcing the rapprochement, Obama said it was time to "end an outdated approach... that has failed to advance our interests". To start, the policy of isolating 90 miles from our shores not only made sense but contributed to bankrupting the Soviet Empire, by draining it of \$150 Billion over 30 years, from about 1960 to 1990. And it helped end Fidel Castro's support for violent subversion in Latin America and the Caribbean by raising the financial and political costs of Castro's terrorism.

Nevertheless, there is nothing wrong with reviewing a decades-long foreign policy if it is not considered to be producing the desired results. That is what President Ronald Reagan did when he took office in 1981: he ordered the US Government to fundamentally review our policy of containment toward the Soviet Union. But not for the purpose of throwing a lifeline to a sinking communist tyranny as President Obama did with Cuba.

Quite the opposite, Reagan oversaw the design of a comprehensive strategy designed to bring about the end of the "Evil Empire," the Soviet Bloc, without having to fire one missile. In a little more than 8 years the policy resulted in the liberation from communism of hundreds of millions of human beings, from Europe to Asia. It worked because Reagan knew the Soviet Union

and its allies were economically and morally exhausted, as was Cuba when Obama launched his misguided strategy.

The Reagan policy toward the Soviet Bloc could not stand in greater contrast to the Obama failure in Cuba. Reagan dared to call the Soviet Union an Evil Empire, even over the objections of some in his own State Department. Instead, Obama acted and spoke as if the democracy he headed and the oppressed Caribbean island he gleefully visited were morally equivalent. The image of the President of the United States doing the “wave” in a baseball stadium full of Cuban government security and other officials, and guffawing with the head of the ruling Castro dynasty was demoralizing to the brave members of the Cuban dissident movement. To drive home the point, after Obama’s departure Cuban political police visited prominent dissidents to show them pictures of Raul Castro and the US President and tell the Cubans that the US now supported the Communist Revolution, and not them, and that they should stop their opposition to the communist tyranny.

While Reagan undertook strong actions to support freedom fighters behind the Iron Curtain, such as the Solidarity labor movement in Poland, Obama did not even protest as the Ladies in White, mothers, wives and daughters of Cuban political prisoners were beaten as Air Force One landed in Havana on Obama’s “historic” visit. As has been documented by international human rights organizations, police repression against peaceful dissidents has intensified since the Obama “opening.”

When we see how Obama misunderstood Cuba we can understand why he would give the Castro family the diplomatic recognition that they craved for nearly six decades but did not receive from ten US presidents.

Perhaps President Obama saw nothing wrong in the world's leading democracy lending its prestige to a military dictatorship, the only one-party communist regime in this half of the world; led by an active-duty General, Raul Castro, who has bragged about ordering the deaths of American citizens; a one-party state which has not had free, multi-party elections in 58 years, and whose wealth for all that time has been controlled and spent by only two people, both members of the same family.

I said earlier that the Obama policy damaged US national security. One example: Obama ordered US intelligence agencies to share information with Cuba. This is baffling, since Cuba for decades has shared intelligence with adversaries and enemies of the US such as Russia, China, Venezuela, and with State Sponsors of Terrorism like Syria, Iran, North Korea, Qaddafi's Libya, and Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

It is perplexing when we know that the highest-ranking spy ever uncovered in the US Defense Intelligence Agency was Ana Belen Montes, a US-born spy working for the very intelligence agencies in Cuba that Obama considered worthy of US cooperation. And Montes was not the only one. Many Cuban spies have been captured in the US, some of them working in our government, including State Department employees Walter and Gwendolyn Myers.

In order to safeguard his Cuba rapprochement, Obama overlooked the biggest violation of the UN arms embargo against North Korea. This happened when a N.K. ship was discovered trying to traverse the Panama Canal while smuggling aircraft, missile components, and other armaments hidden under 10,000 tons of sacks of Cuban sugar. The banned weapons had been loaded at the port of Mariel by the Cuban military. This incident occurred while the Obama Administration was in the midst of

negotiating with Cuba. No action was taken against Cuba, but the US did sanction NK companies involved.

The White House did not explain the obvious discrepancy of why the arms “importer,” NK, was punished but not the “exporter,” Cuba, but it is clear that trying to achieve his first foreign policy success was more important to Obama than enforcing the North Korean arms embargo. This may help explain why the Kim Jong-un regime is today so disrespectful of international sanctions and condemnation.

Through increases in remittances, travel of Americans, and other preferences normally reserved for friendly countries, Obama gave Cuba much-needed relief for its decaying Marxist economy. That economy long ago stopped producing much of anything, and mostly lives from foreign assistance: first, massive Soviet and later, Venezuelan oil subsidies and outright gifts; from government-controlled export of human beings such as medical or other workers whose salaries are paid directly by the foreign country to the Cuban government, which in turn gives the worker a fraction of what the government receives; from billions of dollars in remittances from US relatives; from smuggling and other illicit businesses set up and managed first by Fidel Castro and later by a large Cuban intelligence apparatus.

So, what did the US receive from this “historic” rapprochement?

We did get the return of two prisoners, US citizen Alan Gross and a Cuban who allegedly spied for the US and had been imprisoned in Cuba. The Cuban citizen has not been seen or heard of since, something quite strange for a liberated US spy.

The case of Alan Gross is particularly strange. This elderly private contractor for USAID had been imprisoned in Cuba under spurious charges in the first year of Obama’s tenure, convicted in

a Stalinist trial of acts of aggression against the communist state. In fact, he had been taking over-the-counter satellite communications equipment and computers to the tiny Jewish community in Havana. The fact that the Obama Administration allowed Gross to – nearly literally – rot in a Castro jail for 5 years is troubling. Perhaps a jailed American was valuable as part of the “negotiating” strategy that would result in the rapprochement five years later.

Some 53 Cuban political prisoners were also released by Castro. But some were later re-arrested, and many thousand more since then. And the system that allows the government to do as it pleases is still in place. This is how Human Rights Watch refers to these Cuban prisoners:

“... The Orwellian laws that allowed their imprisonment – and the imprisonment of thousands before them – remain on the books, and the Cuban government continues to repress individuals and groups who criticize the government or call for basic human rights. Arbitrary arrests and short-term detention routinely prevent human rights defenders, independent journalists, and others from gathering or moving freely. Detention is often used pre-emptively to prevent people from participating in peaceful marches or political meetings.” (Human Rights Watch Report, November 16, 2016).

In exchange for two prisoners, we freed three Cuban spies, including one that had been convicted in US court of conspiracy to murder three US citizens and one Permanent Resident, who were killed over international airspace when Cuban Mig's shot down their unarmed Cessna's on direct orders of the Minister of Defense, Raul Castro, Barack Obama's host at the infamous baseball game years later.

What should we ask Cuba to do in exchange for normalization, which Obama did not? If Cuba wants normal relations with the

US, and the economic benefits that derive therefrom, we must demand that Cuba at least begin to: cut off ties with State Sponsors of Terrorism, and with enemies of the US such as North Korea and Syria. That it stop commanding and controlling repression in Venezuela against the unarmed population. That it does away with Soviet-style food rationing and production controls and instead allow the Cuban people the freedom to achieve the amazing economic prosperity that free Cubans have achieved in the US. That it dismantles the massive police state and surveillance apparatus, originally constructed with the assistance of the East German Stasi and Soviet KGB at the height of the Cold War. That it allows freedom of speech, free and independent newspapers, television and radio stations, magazines, labor unions, houses of worship (that it not bulldoze protestant churches it considers subversive), none of which freely exist today. That it allows private property and compensate those who had property confiscated without compensation, as required by international law.

Communism lost the Cold War and the 20th Century battle of ideas for very good reasons, and there is no justification why it should still survive in Cuba 58 years after it was imposed by force. The end of that oppressive system – and the liberation of the oppressed -- should have been the objective of the Obama rapprochement. Had he put the considerable resources of the United States to the end, he may not now be associated with yet another foreign policy failure.