

Corporate Media Bias and the Case of the Cuban Five

By Jeffrey Huling

“The case of the Cuban Five is a shameful example of injustice in our country”
- Howard Zinn

Introduction

In 1998, the FBI arrested five Cubans in Miami for engaging in “espionage activity.” Oddly, the US government did not use the arrests to publicly demonize Castro, instead they stifled the potential political firestorm by placing the Five in solitary confinement for 17 months, — a violation of penitentiary regulations stipulating that isolation can be applied for a maximum of 60 days. Despite the prosecution’s lack of evidence, the Five were convicted in 2001 and placed in five different prisons deliberately spread across the US (California, Colorado, Wisconsin, Texas, and Florida). These tactics — the pre-trial use of solitary confinement and the dispersion of the Five after the trial — are such that anticipate and actively seek to stifle real or potential opposition. The fact that the Five are hailed in Cuba as heroes and freedom fighters intimates the US Government’s interest in quieting the case.

Although ostensibly arrested for engaging in espionage activity, the evidence presented at the trial clearly showed that the Five had no intention to gather US “intelligence.” Rather, they had attempted to infiltrate Miami-based terrorist organizations, gathering intelligence to prevent further attacks, both covert and overt, on Cuba. Since Castro overthrew Batista in 1959, Cuban exile communities have terrorized Cuba with assassination attempts, propaganda, and economic subversion — crop burnings, sugar mill bombings, and violent campaigns to disrupt Cuba’s tourist industry. More than 4,000 violent incidents have occurred against Cuba since the 1959 revolution. Many of the terrorist organizations responsible operated with the sanction of the US government, as they still do today. Yet, not many people are paying attention or have the ability to pay attention — blame this on the media.

In general, the corporate media (as well as some independents) has failed to adequately cover the case of the Cuban Five. When the case is “covered,” the reports are jaundiced and uninformed. To adequately cover the case would be to implicate the Bush dynasty in the sanction and production of known terrorists, and to expose the hypocrisy of the Bush administration’s “War on Terrorism.”

To properly understand the plight of the Cuban Five and why the US government continues to harbor terrorists, a brief history of US-Cuba relations is necessary.

Brief History of US Sponsored Terrorism on Cuba

US obsession with Cuba dates back to the American Revolution. It was John Quincy Adams, while Secretary of State, who said that taking Cuba is “of transcendent importance” to the political and commercial future of the United States.¹

By the turn of the 20th century, Cuba was economically dependent on the US. During the 1950s, this dependence aggrandized when Cuban sugar, through a quota system, was guaranteed a market in the US above world market price. The US purchased more than half of the sugar produced in Cuba while controlling 40 percent of its production, owned half of the arable land, and controlled 90 percent of Cuba’s utilities. The US also had investments in mining, oil refineries, rubber by-products, livestock, cement, tourism, and 1/4 of all bank deposits. 80 percent of Cuba’s imports were procured from the US. Most Cubans identified themselves with the American way of life and their sense of progress was measured by their ability to purchase American goods. Despite an Americanized economy, 1/3 of Cuba’s population remained impoverished. Economic stagnation coupled with American discrimination and racism towards Cubans led to a growing disenchantment with, and resentment of the US.²

With the revolution of 1959, Castro sought to weaken Cuba’s economic dependence on the US while promoting a Cuban identity removed from American influence. Tax policies and agrarian reforms were passed intended to reduce economic inequality, and to favor Cuban over foreign investments. US businesses opposed the wage increases, labor, and land reforms. Relations quickly deteriorated as many powerful US interests lost land to the Cuban government. For example, US sugar companies were threatened with the loss of over a million and a half acres of land.³

After Castro visited the US in April 1959, Vice President Richard Nixon suggested to his colleagues that a force of Cuban exiles be armed immediately to overthrow Castro.⁴ By May, the CIA began arming guerillas inside of Cuba while supervising bombing and incendiary raids piloted by exiled Cubans based in Miami.⁵ The next year “Castro and his rebel army fought counterrevolutionary groups ... who used air bases in southern Florida to engage in assassination attempts ... [to] burn crops, bomb sugar mills and attack ships bound for Cuba. The US failure to disavow these groups and prevent their activities was enough evidence for Castro to assert US complicity in these actions.”⁶

The Eisenhower administration secretly made a formal decision to conquer Cuba, but in such a way that the US hand would not be evident.⁷ With Cuba’s nationalization of all US businesses by August 1959, Eisenhower allotted \$13 million for guerilla warfare training to 400-500 Cuban exiles in Guatemala.⁸ Indirect terrorism would suffice for Eisenhower’s unseen hand, and these same US-trained Cuban exiles would be employed

¹ Chomsky, Noam. "Cuba and the United States: A Near-Half Century of Terror." Superpower Principles. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 28.

² Staten, Clifford L. The History of Cuba. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 84.

³ Roberts, J M. Twentieth Century. New York: Penguin, 1999. 657.

⁴ Thomas, Hugh. Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. 1210.

⁵ Chomsky, Noam. "Cuba and the United States: A Near-Half Century of Terror." Superpower Principles. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 29.

⁶ Staten, Clifford L. The History of Cuba. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 92.

⁷ Chomsky, Noam. "Cuba and the United States: A Near-Half Century of Terror." Superpower Principles. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 29.

⁸ Staten, Clifford L. The History of Cuba. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005. 96.

in April 1961 for the failed Bay of Pigs invasion under the Kennedy administration. Following the invasion, Kennedy continued his program of international terrorism, most notably, Operation Mongoose, which, according to Ray Garthoff, a former State Department specialist on the Soviet Union, included sending sabotage units into the country.⁹ During the height of the Cold War, the CIA's Operation Mongoose team blew up a Cuban factory, killing 400 people, according to Castro.

During the 1970s, the CIA continued to fund the exile community. On 6 October 1976, exiles blew up a Cubana Airlines plane after it departed from Barbados, killing 73 people, among them, the entire Cuban championship fencing team. The CIA, headed by George Bush, Sr., knew of the bombing in advance, but failed to warn Havana.¹⁰ Orlando Bosch, imprisoned with Luis Posada Carriles for the bombing, was released from a Venezuela prison in 1987 under pressure from US ambassador Otto Reich. Bosch then traveled to Miami where he was detained for a 1974 parole violation (Bosch was convicted in 1968 for firing a bazooka at a Cuban-bound freighter in Miami). Citing FBI and CIA reports that Bosch has caused "indiscriminate injury and death," including 30 acts of terrorism, the US Justice Department ruled that Bosch should be deported because of his terrorist activities. In spite of this, Bosch was pardoned by President Bush in 1989, after a campaign was launched to reverse the Justice Department's decision. Leading the effort was now current House Representative for Florida's 18th Congressional district, Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who at the time was running for Congress (her campaign manager was Jeb Bush, son of the president).¹¹ Raoul Cantero, grandson of former dictator Fulgencio Batista, was Bosch's lawyer and primary spokesman — he now resides as a Florida Supreme Court Justice. Although widely regarded as one of the most dangerous terrorists in the western hemisphere,¹² Bosch walks freely in Miami and even appears in television and radio programs bragging that he is still preparing attacks against Cuba.

Throughout the 1990s, the tourist industry became the main target for Miami-based terrorist organizations, with the bombing of tourist buses and hotels. The 1997 bombing that killed an Italian tourist was committed by Salvadoran terrorists financed in Miami, under the command of Luis Posada Carriles. Posada had escaped from a

⁹ Dobbs, Michael . "Document Details '62 Plans on Cuba; U.S. Weighed Military Move to Oust Castro." *Washington Post* 27 Jan. 1989: A14.

¹⁰ Blum, Willam. "The Unforgivable Revolution." *Superpower Principles*. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 52. William Blum cites these sources: a) *Washington Post*, 1 November 1986, pp. A1, A18. b) Jonathon Kwitny, *The Crimes of Patriots* (New York, 1987), p. 379. c) William Schaap, "New Spate of Terrorism: Key Leaders Unleashed," *Covert Action Bulletin* (Washington), No. 11, December 1980, pp. 4-8. d) Dinges and Landau, pp. 245-6. ? e) Speech by Fidel Castro, 15 October 1976, reprinted in *Toward Improved US-Cuba Relations*, House Committee on International Relationsm Appendix A, 23 May 1977. f) The CIA documents declassified by the Agency, sent to the National Archives in 1993, and made available to the public. Reported in *The Nation* (New York), 29 November 1993, p. 657.

¹¹ Franklin, Jane . "Terrorist Connections Resurface In Florida." *ZNet* 29 June 2002.

<<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=2049>>

¹² Chomsky, Noam. "Cuba and the United States: A Near-Half Century of Terror." *Superpower Principles*. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 42.

Venezuelan prison in 1985 (prison authorities were bribed), where he was charged along with Bosch for the Cubana airliner bombing of 1976.¹³ He was then secretly flown to El Salvador where he worked to ferry weapons to the Contras, an operation run by White House aide Oliver North.¹⁴

In 2000, Posada was imprisoned in Panama for plotting with three Cuban exiles to assassinate Fidel Castro while the leader was visiting Panama City during the Ibero-American Summit. After serving half of an eight-year sentence, Posada was pardoned by outgoing Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso “as a favor to Bush, whose reelection in November 2004 was riding on the continued backing of Miami Cubans.”¹⁵ In May 2005, Posada was detained in El Paso, Texas, for attempting to enter the US illegally. Despite declassified CIA documents detailing Posada’s connection to the 1976 bombing, the US refused to prosecute or extradite Posada to Venezuela, violating three international treaties signed with this country. Instead, a US federal grand jury indicted Posada in January 2007 on immigration violations and transferred him to a New Mexico prison. But in April he was released by US District Judge Kathleen Cardone, despite a government request to keep him jailed pending an appeal.¹⁶ On May 8, all charges were dropped against Posada, inciting a public uproar in Cuba. Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera, chief of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, blamed the White House for having “made all the efforts necessary to protect the bin Laden of the hemisphere, [out of] fear that he could have talked and recount the whole history about the US government links with his terrorists’ activities.”¹⁷ President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela demanded “that they extradite that terrorist and murderer to Venezuela, instead of protecting him.”

The Trial of the Cuban Five

Because of the constant threat of terrorism, the Cuban Five monitored the terrorist activities of exile groups and reported back to Cuba. They were arrested in Miami, Florida in September 1998, and charged with 26 counts of violating US Federal Law. The two main charges were conspiracy to commit espionage and conspiracy to commit murder, while the other 24 were minor and technical offenses, alleging the use of false names and the failure to register as foreign agents.

The first conspiracy charge alleged that three of the Five had agreed to commit espionage. A conspiracy is an illegal agreement between two or more persons to commit a crime — it need not occur. Circumstantial evidence is enough to demonstrate that there *must have been* an agreement to commit a crime, actual and direct proof is not necessary. The prosecution admitted that the Five lacked possession of a single page of classified government information, although the law requires the presence of national defense information in order to prove the crime of espionage.

¹³ According to Noam Chomsky (Superpower Principles, 42), the airline bombing was financed by Jorge Mas Canosa, head of the tax-exempt Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF). CANF is a Miami-based anti-Cuba lobby group, dedicated to overthrowing the Cuban Government of Fidel Castro.

¹⁴ Barger, Brian. "Posada: accused airline bomber still at large." United Press International 4 Sep. 1998.

¹⁵ Williams, Caroll J. "Cuban jet bombing suspect ordered free on bail in U.S." LA Times 7 Apr. 2007.

¹⁶ Williams, Caroll J. "Cuban jet bombing suspect ordered free on bail in U.S." LA Times 7 Apr. 2007.

¹⁷ "Judge throws out charges against anti-Castro militant." CNN 8 May 2007.

<<http://www.cnn.com/2007/LAW/05/08/posada.charges/index.html>>

The prosecution relied on the fact that Antonio Guerrero worked in a metal shop of a Navy training base in Southern Florida, implying that he was attempting to access national defense information. But the Navy base was completely open to the public, and Guerrero had never applied for a security clearance, had no access to restricted areas, and had never tried to enter any. The FBI had Guerrero under surveillance for two years before the arrests, but there was no testimony from the agents about any wrongdoing.

Antonio Guerrero's mission was to "discover and report in a timely manner the information or indications that denote the preparation of a military aggression against Cuba on the basis of what he could see by observing open public activities."¹⁸ This information was available to any member of the public, which cannot form the basis of an espionage persecution. However, the jury still made the conviction.

The conspiracy to commit murder charge alleged that Gerardo Hernandez conspired with other non-indicted Cuban officials to shoot down two planes flown by the exile group Brothers to the Rescue (BTTR). BTTR had repeatedly crossed Cuban airspace during the '90s dropping propaganda pamphlets. Despite warnings from Cuba, that had subsequently informed the US of the airspace infractions, BTTR continued to fly with the indifference of US officials. In 1996, two BTTR planes were shot down by the Cuban Air Force killing four men. Cuba alleges the planes crossed into Cuban airspace, ignoring verbal warnings. The US maintains they were shot down over international waters. In a recording played at the trial of the Five, "the pilot of one of the planes could be heard laughing as the planes deliberately violated the order to turn back [from the Cuban Air Force]."¹⁹

Gerardo Hernandez and his colleagues were advised by Cuba to stay off BTTR planes for a few days, during which the planes were shot down. This coincidence was enough for the prosecution to argue that Hernandez was involved in a conspiracy to kill the men in the planes, although no evidence of this was presented. The trial judge ruled that in order to convict Hernandez, the prosecution had to prove that before the planes took off, Hernandez was involved in a plot to down the planes before they reached Cuban waters. In response, the prosecution conceded it had no evidence and that the ruling "created an insurmountable obstacle for conviction."²⁰ The jury still convicted Hernandez.

In June 2001, after only five days of deliberation, 12 jurors in a Miami Court returned guilty verdicts on all 26 counts. The defense's request for leniency was ignored, and all were given the maximum sentences. Gerardo Hernandez received two life sentences plus 15 years, Antonio Guerrero and Ramon Labanino received life in prison plus 10 years and 18 years respectively, Fernando Gonzalez 19 years, and Rene Gonzalez 15 years.

After the convictions, all five immediately appealed. In March 2004, they met with three judges from the US District 11th Court Circuit, who, after considering the bias in Miami towards Cuban nationals, granted the defense a change of venue and a new trial

¹⁸ Weinglass, Leonard. "The Trial of the Cuban Five." *Superpower Principles*. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 120.

¹⁹ Weinglass, Leonard. "The Trial of the Cuban Five." *Superpower Principles*. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 121.

²⁰ Weinglass, Leonard. "The Trial of the Cuban Five." *Superpower Principles*. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005. 122.

on August 9, 2005. But the court decision was quickly stifled when the US government — in a very rare review process — had the appellate case re-heard by all members of the 11th Circuit, who subsequently overturned the three judges' original ruling for appeal, thus ignoring the bias which undermined the legitimacy of the original court decision.

Florida International University professor Dr. Lisandro Perez comments that “the possibility of selecting twelve citizens of Miami-Dade County who can be impartial in a case involving acknowledged agents of the Cuban government is virtually zero.”²¹ A poll taken in 2000 shows that 49.7 percent of Cuban-Americans in Miami-Dade wanted direct US military action against Cuba, as opposed to only 8.1 percent of Americans nationwide.²² Law dictates that if a fair trial is impossible in the location given, the venue must be changed.²³

In May 2005, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention of the United Nations Human Rights Commission declared the Five's imprisonment as arbitrary, urging the US government to resolve the situation. Pleas from other international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, and support committees in 97 countries have also sought the release of the Five. Many consider them political prisoners, who had only attempted to defend their country from terrorism.

Organizations have also condemned the US's refusal to grant visas to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández. In June 25, 2002, after waiting five years to visit her husband, Adriana was finally granted a visa. However, upon her arrival in the US, Adriana was arrested by the FBI, interrogated for 11 hours and expelled to Cuba.

In 2006, Amnesty International sent an open letter to the government of the United States, disapproving of their refusal to grant visas to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez, stating that “in the absence of a clear and immediate threat posed by such visits, this measure is unnecessarily punitive and contrary both to standards for the humane treatment of prisoners and to states, obligation to protect family life.”²⁴ The letter also raised questions about the guarantee of due process in the Miami trial.

Despite worldwide support for the Cuban Five, the US has maintained its harsh position. Today, the Five remain incarcerated in five separate prisons throughout the US, while ex-CIA mercenaries Orlando Bosch and Luis Posada Carriles — widely considered the two most dangerous terrorists in the Western Hemisphere — are provided sanctuary by the US government.

Content Analysis: Corporate News Coverage of the Cuban Five

The fact that hardly anyone in the US knows about the case of the Cuban Five is telling enough of its coverage. Not only are the corporate media outlets to blame, but some of the independents are as well, like *In These Times*, *The Progressive*, and *Mother Jones*. In the corporate news coverage — rare as it is — there are observable tendencies

²¹ Superpower Principles: The Trial of the Cuban Five, Leonard Weinglass.

²² Smith, Wayne S. “A Sad Day in the History of American Justice: The Trial of the Cuban Five.” Superpower Principles. Ed. Salim Lamrani. New York: Common Courage Press, 2005.

²³ Superpower Principles: The Trial of the Cuban Five, Leonard Weinglass.

²⁴ Lee, Susan . Published in "An open letter to the State Department: The US is Violating the Rights of the Cuban Five." Counterpunch 26 Jan. 2006.

of bias against Cuba. The tone of the articles tend to demonize the Five, while the information presented often neglects Cuba's opposing viewpoint and defense of their actions.

The *New York Times*' (NYT) reporting is bereft of context and glaringly one-sided — Cuba's perspective is apparently unworthy of consideration. Since the 1996 incident, Cuba has maintained that the downing of the two BTTR planes occurred over Cuban airspace,²⁵ not over international waters as the US asserts. NYT obsequiously assumes the planes were shot down over international waters.²⁶ An excerpt from one article reads: "F.B.I. officials said their investigation of Cuban intelligence gathering in South Florida began after Brothers to the Rescue, known for making mercy flights between Florida and Cuba searching for people in boats fleeing Cuba, lost two planes in an attack by Cuban fighter jets in 1996."²⁷ There is vital information missing from the article, thus misleading readers. Brothers to the Rescue (BTTR) were not shot down while rescuing refugees,²⁸ as readers might assume, they were seeking to penetrate Cuban airspace for political motives. To their credit, one NYT article mentions that "Cuba has vigorously defended five of the spies who fought and lost their cases in federal court ... insisting that the men sought only to thwart terrorism by radical exiles, like a spate of Havana bombings in 1997 that killed an Italian tourist."²⁹ But NYT takes the issue no further.

The Associated Press (AP), a wire service providing articles for many newspapers, covered the case of the Cuban Five relatively well. Profiles of the Five are provided along with most of the developments in the court case. Context is there, as well as the Cuban perspective. For instance, AP includes various arguments from the Five's defense team, who contend that Cuban-American relations are in such a state that this alone would affect the outcome of the trial. The Five were necessary to Cuba as the "United States was either unwilling or unable to prevent them from supporting terrorist attacks in Cuba." Attorney Mendez cited a "string of eight bombings in Cuba over a four-month period in 1997" as "only part of a 40-year history of raids, bombings and arms smuggling missions that justified the agents' undercover work in South Florida."³⁰ AP also reports that jurors heard evidence of Miami-based terrorist organizations that "bomb Cuban hotels and smuggle weapons into Cuba," while the warnings of those attacks were "forwarded to the FBI about Miami-based support and financing for terrorism in Cuba."³¹

AP also describes the charges against Hernandez and the proper context surrounding the 1996 incident, making it explicit that BTTR were flying into Cuban

²⁵ Rohter, Larry. "Cuba Blames U.S. in Downing of Planes." *The New York Times* 27 Feb. 1996: 14.

²⁶ See June 9, 2001 article "5 Cubans Convicted in Plot to Spy on U.S.," December 13, 2001 "Leader of Cuban Spy Ring Given Life in Prison," and August 10, 2005 "New Trial Ordered For 5 Accused Spies."

²⁷ Navarro, Mireya. "10 People Are Charged With Spying for Cuba." *The New York Times* 15 Sep. 1998: 18.

²⁸ Three other NYT' articles mislead readers in the same vein. See the May 8, 1999 article "Cuban Spy Suspect Faces Murder Charges," November 27, 2000 "Spy Trial to Start for Five Accused of Aiding Cuba" and December 13, 2001 "Leader of Cuban Spy Ring given Prison."

²⁹ Golden, Time. "White House Wary of Cuba's Little Spy Engine That Could." *The New York Times* 5 Jan, 2003: 3.

³⁰ *Prosecutor: Spy ringleader helped Cuba attack Miami planes*, Associated Press, Catherine Wilson, May 30, 2001.

³¹ *Defense: Agents never ordered to get US secrets and didn't*, Associated Press, Catherine Wilson, May 31, 2001.

territory on “a mission to drop 500,000 political leaflets.”³² Defense attorney Paul McKenna “offered evidence the attack was in Cuban airspace and insisted Cuba was concerned only with its own territory after repeated incursions by the Miami group for nearly two years.”³³

Since the arrest of the Cuban 5, *The Washington Post* has mentioned them in nine articles. Only two of the articles made the front page, while the rest were buried deep within section A, the exceptions being one article on the front of the Style section and one on the front of the Metro section. Most of WP articles lack in context and balance, implicating the Five as gang of spies, while others make efforts to provide Cuba’s viewpoint.

The article published September 15 1998 quotes US attorney Thomas E. Scott twice, who says the Five were determined “to strike at the very heart of our national security system.” Unfortunately, Cuba’s viewpoint is not presented. It is not until the convictions in June of 2001 that another major article appears. This one appears on page 12 of section A, which reports the guilty convictions of the Five as “a committed band of spies working to infiltrate South Florida’s military installations and Cuban exile community.” *Post* reports that “There were no Cuban Americans or anyone with close ties to the large Cuban American community here on the 12-member jury, which deliberated for five days,” but the article does not mention the anti-Castro bias prevalent in Miami-Dade County. WP does include that the defendants considered themselves “Cuban patriots, trying to protect their country from Cuban American extremists in South Florida”. It is also reported that their “spying” on military installations did not actually threaten any national security.

One article to make the front page in 2006 headlined “Cubans jailed in U.S. as spies are hailed at home as heroes”. The article reports that “American officials tend to paint Cuban agents as infiltrators bent on undermining U.S. national security. But the Cuban government asserts they are men of courage, sent to the U.S. to ferret out terrorism plots by Cuban exile groups waging war against President Fidel Castro.” This is the kind of balanced reporting that should encompass every article. There are other quotes from Cuba, expressing anger at the continued incarceration, as Antonio Lage was quoted: “‘Hypocrites, that’s what Bush and the Americans are — hypocrites,’ he said. ‘They talk about fighting terrorism, but they keep these heroes in prison for trying to stop the terrorists in Miami.’”

Throughout the nine articles in the *Post*, there is a general demonizing of the Cuban Five as terrorists, clandestine agents, and enemies of the State. There are redeeming points like the June 2006 article, which shows both opposing viewpoints of the case. But much is being left out of the story, such as the context surrounding the 1996 incident, which implicated Gerardo Hernandez in the conspiracy to commit murder charge.

The television coverage of the case is virtually non-existent. CBS and CNN aired brief reports, but nothing comprehensive. CNN featured US attorney Tom Scott (quoted by the *Washington Post*) who said, “the spy ring was tasked by the Cuban government to

³² *Cuba: five convicted agents were heroes protecting their nation*, Associated Press State & Local Wire, Anita Snow, June 20, 2001.

³³ *Chance for conviction clouded in shadowy world of spies*, Associated Press, Catherine Wilson, June 6, 2001.

strike at the very heart of our national security system.” But no defense lawyer was included on behalf of the Cuban Five, no opposing viewpoints presented.

Conclusion

The Case of the Cuban Five should be known to every American concerned with injustice or the actions of their government. But that information must be available for the public to obtain. If it is not, then freedom of thought is undermined — it narrows with the closing limits of obtainable knowledge. When the mainstream media is influenced by corporate interests and entertainment, and the independent media is too timid to confront controversial issues, the outcome is an uninformed public with a distorted perspective.

Media coverage in general and its priorities are reflected in the lack of both quantity and quality of coverage of the Cuban Five. To provide the proper context of the case would be to implicate the US government in the sanction of known terrorists like Bosch and Posada, and to expose their connections to the Bush administration. This should call into question the legitimacy of Bush’s “War on Terrorism.” Not to mention the legitimacy of the US judicial system in general, that exonerates terrorists like Posada and Bosch while condemning the Cuban Five who fight against terrorism.

For almost 9 years, the Cuban Five have waited in prison for a fair trial. Adriana Perez, the wife of Gerardo Hernández, is still prevented by the US government from seeing her husband. The media are responsible, not only to the Cuban Five and their families, but to the American public, who depend on and put faith in their news outlets for fair, objective, and comprehensive reporting. The failure of the media deserves the harshest censure, while the Cuban Five deserve nothing less than the loudest cries of social protest.

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