

United States Senate

January 20, 2016

The Honorable Ashton Carter
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Carter,

I have read with great concern press reports that the Republic of Cuba has been invited to participate in the Caribbean Nations Security Conference to be held later this month in Jamaica. I understand from General John Kelly's comments in these reports that the invitation was extended to Cuba on the grounds that, following President Obama's announcement of normalization on Dec. 17, 2014 and the opening of our respective embassies in Washington and Havana last year, the Conference is an opportunity to jointly address our "very, very common challenges."¹

As you know, regardless of the diplomatic détente offered to Cuba by the Obama administration, the regime of Raul and Fidel Castro has been for more than half a century the implacable enemy of the United States. They have detained our citizens. They are harboring fugitives, including an Assata Shakur, who was convicted in 1977 of first degree murder in the case of New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster, from American justice. They have participated in violent, destabilizing activities through the region, notably in Colombia and Venezuela. They were only removed from the State Department's list of State Sponsors of Terrorism last year. They have been complicit in illegal arms transfers involving rogue nations like North Korea. And it was revealed earlier this month that a dummy American Hellfire missile was mistakenly transferred from Europe to Cuba in 2014, and they have yet to return it.

Given this reality, it seems recklessly premature to participate in a joint security exercise with Cuba this month, especially as they seem likely to only use it as a platform from which to demand the return of Naval Station Guantanamo Bay. I would like to know the rationale behind this decision, and I urge you to reconsider this invitation at the very least until the Hellfire is returned to the United States. I also warn you of my intention to insert language into the FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act prohibiting any future such joint exercises until Congress receives convincing assurances that the anti-American posture of the Castro regime has undergone a material change.

I look forward to a response no later than January 25th.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz

¹ Ben Fox, "Cuba to Attend Security Conference With US for First Time," ABC News, January 12, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/cuba-attend-security-conference-us-time-36242188>.