

### Communist Activities

#### Cuba: Expanding LDC Economic Services Program

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#### Summary

Cuba penetrates national economies and increases its presence and influence in much of the Third World by providing technical and economic services. We estimate that more than 20,000 Cuban technicians were assigned to development projects last year in some 29 LDCs. While several setbacks reduced the number of technicians abroad from the record level set in 1981, only 13,600 technicians were abroad five years ago. The personnel are concentrated in teaching and medical services and construction work, with others placed as civilian advisers to ministries and planning agencies. Although some technicians are provided free to many poorer LDCs, wealthier clients pay hard currency for their services. We estimate that Cuba charged an estimated \$150 million last year from its overseas personnel, an amount equal to about 10 percent of its total hard currency export earnings. Recent developments may slow the growth of its civilian presence in southern Africa and Latin America, but Cuba appears to be shifting its attention to commercial development activities in the Middle East.

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#### The Program

Havana uses its economic services program to achieve several objectives in the developing world:

- Initiate and strengthen relationships with LDCs of various political leanings.
- Exert direct influence on national bureaucracies.
- Earn hard currency.
- Communicate the Cuban version of Marxism to large numbers of Third World students through its teaching contingents.
- Enhance Cuba's international image as a champion of poorer nations.
- Gather intelligence and recruit agents of influence.
- Syphon off excess labor from the Cuban work force.

We estimate

that in 1983 more than 20,000 Cuban technicians were working in LDCs, nearly a 50-percent increase over the number abroad five years ago (see table). Medical personnel, teachers, and construction workers made up the large majority of Cuban civilians overseas, although Havana also placed some 4,200 other advisers and experts in a number of fields suited to economic development. The Cuban contingent abroad last year included:

- About 2,400 medical personnel in more than 20 LDCs, ranging from 750 people in Nicaragua to less than 25 in a number of Sub-Saharan countries. Most furnished basic health care in rural areas.

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**Cuba: Economic Technicians  
in Non-Communist LDCs, 1983<sup>a</sup>**

	Number of Persons
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,085</b>
<b>North Africa</b>	<b>3,890</b>
Algeria	275
Libya	3,500
Mauritania	15
Western Sahara	100
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa</b>	<b>9,170</b>
Angola	6,000
Benin	110
Burundi	20
Cape Verde	15
Congo	200
Equatorial Guinea	15
Ethiopia	1,000
Ghana	25
Guinea	240
Guinea-Bissau	80
Madagascar	35
Mali	10
Mozambique	1,000
Sao Tome and Principe	225
Seychelles	30
Tanzania	150
Uganda	15
<b>Latin America</b>	<b>6,315</b>
Guyana	35
Mexico	80
Nicaragua	6,200
<b>Middle East</b>	<b>610</b>
Iran	NA
Iraq	400
South Yemen	200
Syria	10
<b>South Asia</b>	<b>100</b>
Afghanistan	100

- About 5,000 teachers concentrated in Angola (2,000) and Nicaragua (2,000). Cuban teachers instructed at all educational levels, and some helped design school systems based on the Cuban model.
- More than 8,500 construction workers, with most employed on roadbuilding and housing projects; Angola, Libya, and Nicaragua each hosted more than 2,000 workers.

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Terms of employment vary by recipient. For poorer countries, such as Ethiopia and the majority of African recipients, Cuba provides free technicians or charges only a nominal amount. For others, such as Angola and Mozambique, there are reports that Cuba charges up to \$1,000 a month in hard currency for each technician. Wealthier LDCs—Algeria, Libya, and Iraq—pay Cuba up to \$2,000 monthly per person in hard currency. These payments are transferred directly to Havana. We estimate that Cuba charges a total of about \$150 million in foreign exchange a year from its paying customers.

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**First Major Setbacks for Cuban Program**

Havana's economic services program has been well received by most Third World clients. While Cuba has encountered some complaints about the quality of its personnel or their activities, it still has been able to increase its contingents abroad at a steady pace. Recently, however, Cuba's program has experienced unaccustomed setbacks:

- Grenada expelled nearly 700 Cuban technicians after the invasion, forcing Cuba to abandon construction of the airport that was its largest aid project abroad.
- Suriname ejected Cuban personnel in October because of concern that their presence might provoke a US intervention there as well.
- Havana chose to replace most women and older technical personnel in Nicaragua with young men who were able to defend themselves against rebel attacks or a foreign invasion.
- Cuba evacuated more workers from war zones in Iraq—a move that was criticized harshly by Baghdad and that cut deeply into Cuban hard currency earnings from Iraq.

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- Syria ordered Cuban sugar industry officials out of the country for incompetence.
- Angolan rebels this year have begun to mount attacks specifically against civilian technicians; in April there were 80 casualties in a bombing of a facility housing Cuban workers. [redacted]

Cuba probably will respond to these developments with more careful planning of its foreign activities and a tightening of control over its technicians to avoid the appearance of illegal or otherwise unacceptable behavior. Havana also may step up efforts to create more stable commercial and business ties as a way to maintain and then expand its presence. [redacted]

#### **Impact: Political Returns Emphasized**

Havana has tailored its services program to exploit opportunities for influence in the Third World while enhancing its international image. Castro has openly admitted that Cuba provides educational assistance to exert long-term influence on LDCs. Cuba expects to gain from its educational presence overseas through the rise to prominence of alumni of Cuban programs, as well as a broad diffusion of Cuban-trained students within the technical and political infrastructure of LDCs. According to open sources, Cuban teachers have influenced primary and secondary school systems in Ethiopia, Guyana, Nicaragua, and South Yemen using the Cuban model, which emphasizes Communist ideology. The Cuban press also has reported that educational personnel are selected for overseas duty on the basis of their loyalty and the strength of their Communist beliefs. They then receive six months of training on the political and educational goals of their mission, as well as on social and economic conditions of their assigned country. Other open sources report that in the last five years Cuban teachers in Angola have taught over 300,000 students. According to the press in Managua, 80,000 Nicaraguan students were taught by Cuban teachers in 1981. [redacted]

Economic technicians placed in ministries and planning agencies also advance Cuban policies in the LDCs. An estimated 4,200 Cubans are assigned as advisers to the economic bureaucracies of more than 20 Third World countries. These personnel, unlike most Cuban civilians overseas, work closely with host-country officials on a daily basis. They have been

hired to assist in economic planning, trade development, agricultural reorganization, mass communications, social and cultural affairs, and other specialties. In the course of their duties, they probably introduce or reinforce Communist concepts of social, political, and economic organization. We estimate that between 1,000 and 1,500 such advisory personnel are in Nicaragua, dispersed throughout every sector of government. Another 1,500 are in Angola and nearly 500 are in Mozambique. [redacted]

Cuban medical and construction personnel are usually less effective instruments of influence because they often operate in sparsely populated areas and their work is apolitical. Cuban construction workers live in self-contained camps near their jobsites, and most are motivated by material incentives. Still, Havana propagandizes the activities of its medical and construction personnel in the interest of international image building. The personnel themselves, particularly the medical technicians, also may have a positive impact on the rural populaces that benefit directly from their services. [redacted]

Havana also uses its presence in the Third World to gather intelligence and to recruit agents of influence. The extension of political-ideological influence was a main objective of plans personally supervised by Castro a few years ago to increase technical assistance to the Third World. [redacted]

Cuban economic technicians also are capable of playing a limited military role in their assigned LDC. For example, construction workers in Grenada had access to small arms, and Cuban teachers have had to defend themselves in Nicaragua. Technicians at Cuba's showcase sugar mill project in Nicaragua have drilled

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extensively to defend the site against rebel attack, [redacted] While their fighting skills are limited, Cubans are expected to be able to use small arms in response to hostile action because they often are stationed in dangerous areas. Most Cubans have had basic military instruction in the armed forces or militia organizations, [redacted] [redacted] all civilians sent abroad now receive an extra month of such training, [redacted] [redacted]

Managua has hinted about plans this year to replace some 1,500 Cuban teachers with Nicaraguans trained in Cuban institutes. Rebel activities have already caused the substitution of young Cuban men with recent military training for most women and older technicians.

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**Economic Spinoffs Growing in Importance**

Hard currency earnings from Cuba's activities abroad last year more than offset any negative impact the export of some skills might have had on Cuba's own economy. We estimate that Cuba charged about \$150 million for its technical assistance programs in the Third World last year.<sup>1</sup> Nearly a fourth of all Cuban economic technicians abroad worked under hard currency contracts in Arab countries; other receipts came from Angola, Mozambique, and Nicaragua. The export of labor also has slightly reduced unemployment in Cuba—a desirable side effect for a country whose rapidly growing 3-million-member work force is already underemployed. [redacted]

• In southern Africa, further progress in regional negotiations may reduce tensions and narrow the opportunities for Cuba to maintain large numbers of technicians in the area, particularly if Western influence begins to grow. Therefore, the Nkomati accords and Angola's Cuban troop withdrawal discussions are both threats to the substantial Cuban civilian presence in southern Africa. Also, Angolan rebels this year have announced they now will include civilian technicians in their attacks until all Cubans leave the country. More than one-third of Cuban technicians currently abroad are concentrated in the region. [redacted]

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Nonetheless, we expect Cuba to pursue all available opportunities to preserve its technical presence abroad. Through its program, Cuba has increased its influence abroad at low cost, maximized foreign exchange earnings, and eased unemployment at home. For their part, some economically desperate LDCs will continue to accept material assistance and aid personnel from almost any source, including Havana. In the event of Cuban troop withdrawals from major client states, Cuba may find it has to rely primarily on its economic technicians to preserve its Third World influence. [redacted]

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**Prospects**

We believe that recent events in the Third World may slow the growth of the Cuban technical services program, at least over the near term. These include:

- In Latin America, the expulsion from Grenada and growing problems in Nicaragua. In the wake of the public revelation of Cuban penetration of Grenada's military and economic establishment, we expect many potential recipients to proceed more cautiously in permitting a Cuban presence, particularly in the Western Hemisphere. In Nicaragua, even though the Cubans remain firmly entrenched,

While maintaining as much as possible its existing Third World ties, Cuba may now be trying to promote the commercial construction component of the program and forge more economic relationships in the Middle East and diplomatic ties in Africa. Despite financial constraints, Castro has ordered that no embassies in Africa be closed and that new ones be opened. [redacted]

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<sup>1</sup> In data released to its creditors, Cuba claims to have earned only about 10 percent of that figure from its civilian technicians overseas. Actual receipts could have been less than charges because of Third World arrearages in payments to Havana. [redacted]

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The head of Cuban overseas construction has publicly stated that Havana actively seeks a larger role in commercial construction activities. The important commercial relationship with Libya appears healthy, and this year Havana named high-level foreign assistance experts as ambassadors to Baghdad and Maputo. New construction projects in Congo and Angola already have been set up.

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[Redacted] in Kuwait and South Yemen, joint construction companies have been organized recently. All these activities will generate hard currency receipts for Havana while setting the stage for a growing presence in the Middle East and Africa.

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