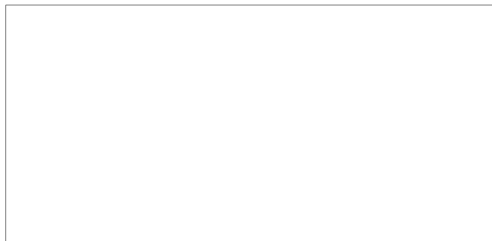


Floor speech by
Rep. Les Aspin
Monday, June 2, 1980



Mr. Speaker, the arrival in Florida of more than 50,000 Cuban emigres, with the possibility that many tens of thousands more will follow, is more than just another refugee story. Whether you believe in the Open Arms Policy enunciated by the President on April 13, or the Closed Doors Policy enunciated by the President eleven days later, we can all agree that the resources of the United States are being taxed, the welfare of millions of citizens in Florida affected, and the very lives of the emigres are at risk.

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Clearly, this is a situation where advance notice from intelligence sources could have made an enormous difference. In that regard, I have good news and I have bad news to report.

The good news is that the Central Intelligence Agency was on its toes and provided well reasoned, well supported analyses, clearly warning of the situation which has now developed, and that the Agency did this as early as last January.

By January 31, the CIA concluded, and so reported, that Cuba was likely to resort to massive emigration, on the scale of a hundred thousand or more persons. CIA believed that in this way, Castro could relieve political pressures building up as a result of Cuba's miserable economic conditions. The CIA reported: "The Castro regime may again resort to large-scale emigration to reduce discontent caused by Castro's deteriorating economic condition."

On four other separate occasions, the CIA reported similar views, using as its vehicle a variety of intelligence publications, such that one way or another word reached every rank of reader from working level to the President.

By early February, the State Department learned that the Cuban government was considering resorting to massive emigration if the United States did not move faster to process the backlog of former political prisoners awaiting exit to the United States, and deal effectively with the question of Cuba boats being hijacked to Florida.

There is no question that the U.S. government was adequately warned.

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The bad news is that the U.S. government never took advantage of its lead time, conducted a relatively weak defensive diplomatic strategy, and failed to organize for the human flood it should have known was coming. The Administration recognized that the consequences of opening the doors wide would be "catastrophic" -- but rather than mobilize, the U.S. simply suggested to Cuban officials that if they would only wait a few months until the new Refugee Act of 1980 was in place, we would begin to move people out at the rate of perhaps a thousand a month.

During March, there were more Cuban threats both public and private, about a wave of emigration. On March 8, Castro stated in a speech:

We hope they will adopt measures so they will not encourage the illegal departures from the country because we might also have to take our own measures. We did it once We were forced to take measures in this regard once. We have also warned them of this. We once had to open the Camarioca port We feel it is proof of the lack of maturity of the U.S. government to again create similar situations.

The CIA also reiterated its assessment: The U.S. government, however, bet all of its money on the fondest hopes (Cuban agreement to our proposal), and did virtually no planning to hedge against the predicted outcome (Cuban decision to release a flood of emigrants).

The only interagency planning session the government called on the subject was on April 3 -- a full two months after the first CIA warning. That meeting ratified our effort to get the Cubans to be reasonable and to let us process people under the 1980 law, but it did nothing to plan for what would happen if the policy failed, as it in fact did. Even after the Peruvian Embassy was mobbed on April 4, U.S. planning continued along the course already laid down, and the interagency machinery seems to have been locked on a course no longer aimed at the problem.

Not until the moment Castro did what he had threatened to do, and what the CIA had forecast he was being forced to do out of economic and political necessity, did the U.S. government prepare to face the reality.

Mr. Speaker, Time magazine's May 19 edition says, "Even though Castro has twice previously opened the gates for Cuban refugees, his latest announcement that anyone could leave Cuba came without warning. There was no immediate guidance from the highest levels." Only one of those sentences is correct.

What could we have done had the Administration made better use of the warning the intelligence community provided?

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First, the Administration could have defined its own policy better. We could have avoided the embarrassment of the Administration's sequence of closed-door/open-door/closed-door pronouncements. We have alternatively tried to bluff the Cuban-American community into foregoing the effort to rescue their relations, and the Cuban government into thinking that we were prepared to go the limit. Every time our bluff has been called, we changed policy.

Second, we could have done a better job of trying to hold back the floodgates. As a first step, we could have addressed the complaints that the Cubans were privately making to us. We should, in fact, have speeded the processing of the backlog of former political prisoners who were out of jail, with nothing to anchor themselves to and no place to go unless they were accepted by other countries; and we should have found some reasonable response to the problem of the hijacking of Cuban vessels by persons seeking to get to Florida -- just as we demanded in the 1960s that Castro do something about the hijacking of American planes to Cuba. If we had acted in a fast, concrete way to deal with these issues, it is arguable that we might either have defused the problem or at least denied Castro a pretext for what he did.

Third, we could have developed a well-prepared publicity campaign. Given what has happened, the United States should be looking a lot better and the Cubans a lot worse. Our position should have been clear and reasonable from the beginning, with no change of course. We could have tried to take the initiative from Castro starting from the earliest hint that he might be planning something like this. Instead, we relied entirely on quiet diplomacy, and allowed him to seize the initiative. We could have tried to steal a march on Castro: smoke him out; get him to pin himself down by statements denouncing as inaccurate assertions that things in Cuba were getting so bad that he might have to export a percentage of his populace.

Fourth, we should have been ready for the arrival of thousands of refugees. Even while we were playing the game of diplomacy, a scenario for handling a mass of people should have been put together. We should have been ready to receive and process them in an orderly way, and to screen them quickly -- getting out a good deal more information about

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the kinds of people coming over so we could deal with Castro's effort to blacken the reputation of these new arrivals by seeding them with undesirables.

Fifth, we could have had a better international effort to mobilize other countries. Once events were already white-hot with the Peruvian Embassy jammed with ten thousand people, we moved fast and lashed together an international approach. But it has been overwhelmed. Castro, at will, has broken our effort to make this an international issue and has converted it, to his benefit, into something between him and us. We might especially have tried to generate concern in Latin America by sharing some of our information and analyses with them. Expressions of concern should have been hitting the Cuban government right and left, before matters broke out of control, in an effort to take some insurance against a Cuban initiative.

Mr. Speaker, in the past there have been instances of intelligence failures leading to bad U.S. policy. In this case, we have had an intelligence success that nevertheless seems to have made little impact on the consequent behavior of our government. The reasons for this are outside the responsibility of an intelligence oversight subcommittee -- but the question deserves an answer.

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PRESS RELEASE FROM CONGRESSMAN LES ASPIN
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ASPIN FLAILS ADMINISTRATION FOR IGNORING CIA SCOOP ON CUBA

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wis.) today charged that the Carter Administration had converted a great intelligence success into a great national disaster by ignoring repeated CIA warnings that Fidel Castro was prepared to flood Florida with refugees.

Aspin said the United States government had advance warning from Cuba -- given both in the open and behind closed doors -- that Castro was angry that Washington wasn't processing his political opponents out of Cuba as fast as possible and that he was threatening to retaliate by opening the floodgates of emigration.

"In addition," Aspin said, "Castro made clear that he was mad at us for doing nothing to stem the frequent hijackings of Cuban boats by people fleeing to Florida -- an ironic twist considering that we pressed Castro fervently in the 1960s to stem the hijackings of American planes to Cuba."

Aspin criticized the administration for failing to respond to either of these complaints and for ignoring the repeated warning that date from January that Castro would overwhelm the straits with refugees if we didn't do something.

"The point is not that the Administration should have bent over backwards to please Castro," Aspin said. "The point is that with several months warning, the administration didn't even bother to plan for a possible refugee influx.

"Instead we have been treated to the spectacle of a floundering administration declaring first a closed door policy and then an open door policy and then a closed door policy again.

"We pay the CIA to find out what is about to happen around the globe. And we flay the CIA when it fails to ferret out major developments.

"But when the CIA hands the events of May to the administration on a silver platter in January, there is not one possible excuse for the amateur and fumbling policy we have been witness to these last weeks," Aspin said.

Along with his speech on the House floor, Aspin released the text of a report on the Cuban refugee issue prepared by the House Intelligence Oversight Subcommittee of which Aspin is chairman.

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THE CUBAN ENIGMA: WAS THERE
A U.S. INTELLIGENCE FAILURE?

If there was confusion in Florida, its origins could be traced partly to Washington. At least 10 agencies were automatically involved in such a large-scale refugee program. Even though Castro has twice previously opened the gates for Cuban refugees, his latest announcement that anyone could leave Cuba came without warning. There was no immediate guidance from the highest levels. (TIME magazine, May 19, 1980, p. 16.)

The Oversight Subcommittee of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence has undertaken the task of examining whether the United States Government's mismanagement of the massive influx of Cuban refugees into this country has been the result of a failure on the part of the government's intelligence entities to provide adequate warning or if the problems have been caused as a result of the policy-makers disregard of clear indications of what was about to happen.

The Subcommittee held a hearing on May 21, 1980, with witnesses from the Central Intelligence Agency and the State Department to clarify the issues raised below:

- Was the United States Government taken by surprise by the action of the Castro regime in opening Mariel?
- What were the first indications that the Castro regime would take such dramatic action?
- Was the intelligence community on top of the situation?
- Were the policy-makers aware of the situation that was brewing?
- What was the response of the policy-makers?

On January 8, 1980, the CIA had reported on the economic, social and political situation in Cuba:

Until mid-1977 public dissatisfaction over food shortages, inadequate public services, and lack of housing had been expressed through such passive means as absenteeism and low productivity. The trend since then has been toward more open displays of frustration -- crime, vandalism, illegal departures, and even some isolated antigovernment activity and sabotage.

By late 1979, Raul Castro -- the regime's ideological hardliner -- was demanding the suppression of counter-revolutionaries. Last month, security forces instituted an unusual series of identification checks and mass arrests in the Havana area. The operation, along with the appointment of hardliner Ramiro Valdes as Minister of Interior -- underscored the regime's determination to crack down.

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The decision to use harsh tactics results from Havana's recognition that no short-term solution to its socioeconomic dilemma exists.

As early as January 31, the Cuba Analytic Center of the CIA, responsible for assessing the political, economic and social conditions in Cuba, forecast that "The Castro regime may again resort to large-scale emigration to reduce discontent caused by Cuba's deteriorating economic condition." The State Department received this article in draft form on January 30 and coordinated it prior to publication.

The January 31 article continued:

The increase in emigration largely reflects a deterioration in the Cuban standard of living over the past year and the bleak prospects for substantial improvements any time soon. The consumer problem has been magnified by exposure to Western affluence through recently instituted visits by exiles from the U.S., by the enhanced expectations of a new generation of Cubans born and educated under the Castro revolution, and by persistent government warnings that austere conditions will persist for at least another decade.

During the 1960s, Cuba resorted to large scale emigration to rid itself of opponents of government policies and to reduce demand for scarce goods by the least productive members of the population. Some 200,000 were allowed to leave between 1960 and 1962, and over 300,000 between 1966 and 1971. The revival of such a policy could reduce popular discontent

The Subcommittee has learned that from this point right up until the first emigres began arriving in Key West in April, the Cuba Analytic Center repeatedly warned that a "Camarioca"* was a likely occurrence.

The CIA witness before the Subcommittee on May 21, 1980, summarized the basis for the forecast of a possible large-scale exodus from Cuba. He testified that:

Cuba's current anti-U.S. propaganda campaign and the continuing refugee exodus from the island are responses to economic, social, and political pressures that have been building since 1977:

- The Cuban economy stagnated, and the already austere standard of living has deteriorated even further.
- A rapidly expanding labor force has created a labor surplus, and many recently graduated Cuban youths have been unable to obtain jobs.

*Camarioca is the port that the Castro regime opened in October 1965 to virtually unrestrained emigration. The chaos that immediately ensued led to the agreement by Cuba and the United States to regularize the flow of refugees by creating the Varadero-Miami airlift.

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- The visits by obviously prosperous exiles living in the U.S. -- which brought badly needed hard currency, have damaged public morale.
- The incidence of crime, of poor job performance, and of political discontent and minor acts of dissidence were on the increase.

By late January 1980, it became apparent that the Castro regime might resort to large-scale emigration to help alleviate some of these pressures. This assessment was reached for three reasons.

First, there was strong evidence of a sharp increase in the numbers of Cubans desiring to leave the island. The number of Cubans who left the island by illegal and often dangerous means such as forcing their way into foreign embassies and by boat to Florida rose from approximately 25 in 1978 to about 440 in 1979.

Second, the Castro regime relaxed its emigration policy in 1979, Havana authorized the exodus of an estimated 15,000 Cubans during 1979 -- over five times the 1975-1976 average.

Third, the use of emigration on a massive scale had been utilized by Cuba before as a political and economic safety valve. Some 200,000 were allowed to leave between 1960 and 1962, and over 300,000 between 1966 and 1971.

On February 21, the State Department learned that discussions about reopening Camarioca were taking place within the Cuban government and that Cuba wanted the U.S. to allow more Cubans to migrate to the U.S. The CIA viewed this as confirmation of their earlier warnings.

On March 8, the Cuban government in a speech delivered by Fidel Castro raised the possibility of a Camarioca by publicly criticizing the U.S. for encouraging illegal departures from Cuba by way of hijacking boats to Florida. The Cuban government felt that while they have responded to U.S. wishes with regard to skyjackings, we have not responded to them in kind for maritime hijackings or other illegal departures from Cuba. Castro stated:

We hope they will adopt measures so they will not encourage the illegal departures from the country because we might also have to take our own measures. We did it once We were forced to take measures . . . in this regard once. We have also warned them of this. We once had to open the Camarioca port We feel it is proof of the lack of maturity of the U.S. Government to again create similar situations.

At this stage the State Department believed "that the reopening of Camarioca did not seem imminent."* The State Department instructed the U.S. Interests Section in Havana to brief Cuban officials on the Refugee

*Testimony - Witness, Department of State, 5/21/80.

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Act of 1980 which would allow the admittance of 1,000 Cubans per month in FY 1980. The State Department's view was that this act, which it expected to become effective in April 1980, would provide the outlet the Castro regime was looking for.

On Friday, April 4, following the removal of Cuban guards from the Peruvian Embassy, Cubans by the thousands began invading the embassy grounds. By Sunday evening, April 6, more than 10,000 persons were seeking refuge in the embassy. On April 9, the CIA again forecast accurately that the numbers present at that embassy represented but a fraction of the total numbers that would gather should large-scale emigration be Castro's answer to the crisis. The article states:

Cuba views large-scale emigration as a safety valve for domestic discontent, in this case caused by economic difficulties. The removal of the security force from the embassy last weekend was probably calculated to precipitate a crisis and force the U.S. and other countries to accept sizeable numbers of new refugees.

The article continues:

Pressure is likely to build on the U.S. to accept many of the would-be refugees.

All of these warnings from the Cuba Analytic Center of the CIA were circulated in the State Department, the NSC, and higher.

Meanwhile, other indicators continued to appear. The March 16 issue of Bohemia, a major Cuban magazine, repeated Castro's March 8 speech (referred to above). On April 14, the article was brought to the attention of the State Department and was summarized as saying that "if the U.S. and others attempt to stimulate illegal exits, Cuba would take its own measures such as opening the Port of Camarioca as it had in the past."

On April 14, Granma, the daily newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee reported:

Recently we pardoned more than three thousand counterrevolutionary prisoners and the first thing we did was authorize them to leave the country along with many thousands who had served in prison for similar reasons. The U.S., which had the main moral responsibility for these former counterrevolutionaries didn't display any haste in receiving them. Camarioca was, and can certainly again be . . . if the Yankees insist on provoking it . . . the undefeatable proof our generous immigration policy.

The State Department continued to hold that the Refugee Act of 1980 was the only legal means of dealing with the situation.

The CIA's analysis from January on was correct. The situation in

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Cuba was ripe for massive emigration, the raw intelligence was clear and the warning was provided from the working levels to the policy-making levels of the government.

The failure to deal with this situation is not one that belongs to the intelligence community; if anything the CIA was giant steps ahead of actual events. A situation has occurred that our government should have and could have been ready for. With warnings coming from all directions -- from analysts, from raw intelligence, from public statements -- the United States should have been ready. In holding onto the Refugee Act of 1980 as the best policy, the policy-makers prepared only for the best possible case. In ignoring the warnings, "worst case" alternative policy was not developed. Alternative measures should have been spelled out should the repeated warnings of a more than likely possibility become a reality.

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ADDITIONAL VIEWS OF
CONGRESSMAN C. W. BILL YOUNG OF FLORIDA

Although Castro has done his best to pretend that the Cuban refugee problem is the fault of the United States, the evidence is clear that it was caused first of all by the lack of freedom and poor economic conditions in Cuba, and second by a deliberate decision of Cuba to expedite departures faster than the United States could absorb the refugees.

Castro has also done his best to inhibit other countries from helping to resettle the refugees. This problem is not solely an American problem; it is a world problem. I feel that the administration has not only been caught short despite the CIA warnings, but has done little to insist that other countries help shoulder the burden.

On May 9, 1980, I had the opportunity to visit Key West and Eglin Air Force Base to watch the processing of the Cuban refugees and to talk to the intelligence personnel working on the security problems caused by the rapid inflow of refugees. I was accompanied by Herbert Romerstein a professional staff member of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence.

We were briefed on the significant counterintelligence problems caused by the large number of refugees, but were impressed by the spirit of cooperation shown by the working level CIA and FBI personnel. This spirit of cooperation was shown in every aspect of the refugee processing. Despite bureaucratic problems created in Washington, the men and women on the scene did a magnificent job. We watched as Marines, Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard personnel worked with Customs, Immigration Service, Boarder Patrol and local authorities to speed the processing and ease the plight of the refugees.

Almost 100,000 Cuban refugees have already arrived in the United States. There are estimates of at least another 150,000 waiting to leave Cuba. This is clear evidence of the failure of Communism in Cuba.

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