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Castro: Not Entirely a Soviet Puppet

The major theme running through the mini-crisis over Soviet troops in Cuba was that Fidel Castro is nothing more than a Kremlin puppet.

President Carter's orchestration of this old sweet song took the form of an assertion: "In every international dispute, on every international issue, the Cuban regime automatically follows the Soviet line."

But a secret report by the State Department's bureau of intelligence and research strikes a discordant note in the familiar puppet tune. The report, dated April 13, 1978, concludes that while Castro has aligned himself with many Soviet policies over the years, he "remains something of a maverick who still conceives of himself as a leader of the Third World."

The State Department analysts addressed themselves to Castro's adventures in Africa, dating back to his first dispatch of "technicians" to train troops of emerging nations in the mid-1960s, and continuing through his major military involvements in Angola and Ethiopia a decade later.

"The extent to which the Soviet Union can direct and/or restrict Cuban activities in Africa is a moot question," the report states. One the other hand, the analysts conclude, "Castro probably could not be forced to give more than token support to a Soviet policy which he believed to be contrary to Cuban interests."

The report pictures Castro as a sort of gun-toting missionary. "In opposing Western 'economic imperialism,' the remaining vestiges of European colonialism and white minority regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia, Castro

brings to his mission an almost messianic zeal," the report states.

Rejecting the notion that Castro salivates every time the Soviets ring a bell, the State Department analysts have this view of the Soviet-Cuban relationship: "Soviet policy probably determines the outer boundaries of Cuban options, in the sense that Cuba would not undertake an initiative directly opposed by the Soviet Union, and any large-scale Cuban military operations require Soviet logistical and financial support."

Noting that "Cuba is much less constrained than the Soviet Union by global strategic and economic interests," the reports concludes that Castro thus has greater freedom to intervene in other countries' affairs than the Kremlin does.

Interestingly, the experts found that Castro seems less concerned with the strict Communist-line orthodoxy of a revolutionary regime he helps than with its "potential or actual ability to oppose the forces of 'capitalist imperialism.'"

The report lists Castro's "major aspirations" in Africa, after his support of the successful rebel faction in Angola in 1975, as concentrated in southern Africa, where colonialism remains dominant. He wants the overthrow of the white-minority regime in Rhodesia, removal of South African control of Namibia (South-West Africa) and, eventually, destruction of the white-dominated regime in South Africa itself, the experts predicted.

Weapons Waste — Navy officials are forbidden to hire their own lobbyists to push for particular appropria-

tions in Congress, but when a pet project is involved the regulations sometimes are thrown out like so much bilge water.

A case in point is the development program for a controversial eight-inch naval gun designed for relatively short-range bombardment, as in amphibious assaults or other close-in operations.

Younger Navy officers felt that such a weapon was an anachronism in the age of long-range missile launchers. The Marines and nostalgic oldtimers among the Navy brass argued that the new gun could fill a vital function even in push-button warfare.

But a secret General Accounting Office report we have seen found that officials in charge of the program had fudged on its early test reports, making the weapon appear better than it actually was. After an expenditure of \$41.7 million, the Navy decided to scuttle the program.

But Warren Kitterman, technical director of the gun program at the Naval Weapons Testing Laboratory in Dahlgren, Va., refused to strike his colors. Kitterman decided to take his baby's case to Congress.

Kitterman worked through Universal Systems Inc., a naval consulting firm that had received some \$400,000 in contracts from Kitterman's office.

Navy records show Kitterman upped the budget on a Universal contract by more than \$25,000 for "additional engineering time." What the money actually went for, sources told us, was the hiring of a military consultant, Sam Martin, to lobby for the eight-inch gun on Capitol Hill.