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Cuban Training Programs for LDC Youth [redacted]

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Summary

The education of Third World students in Cuba over the past 20 years has been an important element of Cuban foreign policy and of Cuban penetration of developing countries. Havana has actively sought a leading role in the Third World (through the Nonaligned Movement, for example) and has publicly stated that training assistance is a major means to project its influence. By teaching thousands of LDC personnel, at levels ranging from primary to graduate school, Cuban leaders apparently hope to lay the groundwork for a proliferation of Marxist ideology and, by extension, Cuban foreign policy aims. Both the low relative cost of such education aid and the personal interest of Fidel Castro—who, [redacted] makes all final decisions on educational programs—make it likely that this type of assistance will flourish in the future. [redacted]

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Growth of the Program

More than 50,000 LDC nationals from 80 countries have traveled to Cuba for all types of schooling. Beginning in the early 1960s, Havana invited a few hundred students each year from friendly regimes and leftist insurgent groups in less developed countries to study in Cuban university programs or in cadre and technical training programs. Until the mid-1970s, students came from only some 15 to 20 countries, mostly in Latin America, and foreign university students never numbered more than 1,500 [redacted]

Since then, an activist Cuban foreign policy toward Sub-Saharan LDCs, new education programs tailored for foreign students, and the addition of new physical facilities have together attracted many more foreign students. We estimate, based on multiple open and classified sources, that about 26,000 LDC students from some 70 countries now attend educational institutions in Cuba. More than 7,000 LDC students are enrolled in Cuba's expanding university system, about

3.5 percent of Cuban university enrollment. The total number of LDC students account for about 1 percent of the entire Cuban school population. Africans have assumed increased importance in the foreign student body. In the mid-1970s, Cuba began to accept several thousand elementary and high school students from the "fraternal" countries of Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Namibia. Students from African countries now represent 70 percent of the foreign student body. [redacted]

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The Schools

In addition to 23 primary and secondary schools currently set aside exclusively for foreign students, Cuba has more than 70 educational facilities that could train foreigners. LDC students in postsecondary schools are concentrated at five of the Communist

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Table 1
Cuba: LDC Students on the Isle of Youth, 1982

	Number of Persons
Total	13,720
North Africa	570
Western Sahara (Polisario)	570
Sub-Saharan Africa	10,760
Angola	2,400
Congo	600
Ethiopia	3,400
Ghana	600
Guinea-Bissau	120
Mozambique	2,400
Namibia	1,195
Sao Tome and Principe	25
South Africa (African National Congress)	20
Latin America	1,790
Nicaragua	1,790
Middle East	600
South Yemen	600

Party schools, the four major Cuban university campuses (especially the University of Havana), and a number of vocational institutes run by functional ministries, such as Public Health and Construction.

The Isle of Youth. Cuba has pioneered youth training for foreigners at its Isle of Youth facility, originally set up to train Cuban students. No other national aid program offers such extensive scholarships to LDC students at the primary and secondary levels. Through generous budget allotments and the efforts of its most highly skilled teachers, Havana during the past 10 years has turned an island 50 kilometers south of the Cuban mainland into a showcase for its educational system. There are now 23 schools for foreigners on the Isle of Youth, training nearly 14,000 primary and secondary school students from 12 LDCs (table 1), as well as 36 schools for 18,000 Cuban children.

The Communist Party Schools. We estimate that about 500 LDC personnel are currently receiving comprehensive schooling in

active measures—propaganda, political agitation, intelligence, and covert action. About 100 of the cadre students are enrolled at the Cuban Communist Party's highest level training institute, the Nico Lopez National Party School. These students spend two to four years at the school; those attending several less prestigious cadre facilities¹ may be in programs as brief as six weeks.

All cadre schooling is tightly controlled by the Cuban Communist Party and is geared specifically toward producing Third World political activists with Marxist motivations. These scholarships are granted by the party to LDC Communist or leftist organizations. Occasional funding is arranged through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA). Usually an LDC trainee in this program is already associated with a leftist political movement and has demonstrated intellectual and leadership abilities.

The Universities. Some 7,000 LDC students were enrolled in Cuban universities in 1982. Foreigners attend all of Cuba's four major universities, but more than three-fourths are enrolled at the University of Havana. Most of the students are from Marxist LDCs such as Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Nicaragua (table 2). Aside from indoctrination and requirements for physical labor, the courses of study in Cuba resemble those in the same fields at universities in other countries. Cuba offers university scholarships in more than 190 specialties. Courses run for four to six years, including a year of preparatory and language studies to provide a uniform educational base for students from divergent backgrounds and to integrate them into Cuban university life. To graduate, a university student spends 4,000 to 5,000 hours in classes and participates in 1,000 hours of physical labor at factories, farms, or other productive facilities directly associated with Cuban universities.

¹ The Niceto Perez National Cadre School, the Julio Antonio Mella National Cadre School, the Lazaro Pena Labor School, the Fe del Valle National Cadre School.

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Table 2
Cuba: LDC Academic and Technical
Students in Cuba, 1982^a

	Number of Persons		Number of Persons
Total	12,575	Argentina	10
North Africa	45	Belize	30
Algeria	5	Bolivia	10
Libya	30	Brazil	5
Morocco	5	Colombia	10
Tunisia	5	Costa Rica	5
Sub-Saharan	7,235	Dominica	25
Angola	2,800	Dominican Republic	5
Benin	40	Ecuador	5
Botswana	15	Grenada	330
Burundi	15	Guatemala	5
Cameroon	5	Guyana	200
Cape Verde	50	Haiti	5
Congo	145	Honduras	10
Equatorial Guinea	15	Jamaica	190
Ethiopia	900	Mexico	20
The Gambia	30	Nicaragua	4,020
Ghana	40	Panama	50
Guinea	300	Peru	10
Guinea-Bissau	60	Puerto Rico	5
Madagascar	30	St. Lucia	30
Mali	5	St. Vincent	20
Mauritius	5	Suriname	20
Mozambique	1,700	Uruguay	15
Nigeria	125	Venezuela	10
Rwanda	40	Middle East	110
Seychelles	20	Jordan	10
Sierra Leone	10	Lebanon	20
Sudan	5	North Yemen	5
Tanzania	500	PLO	30
Uganda	200	South Yemen	20
Zambia	40	Syria	25
Zimbabwe	140	South Asia	115
Europe	15	Afghanistan	85
Malta	5	Bangladesh	5
Portugal	5	India	10
Spain	5	Nepal	5
Latin America	5,055	Pakistan	5
Antigua	10	Sri Lanka	5

^a Excludes students in Cuba attending courses with durations of less than six months.

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Because the Cuban university system is geared to fill Cuba's economic development needs, it generally produces personnel who possess skills that can be put to immediate use on their return home. This is reflected in the distribution of foreign students by field, which is similar to that found in the Cuban university system as a whole:

Agriculture	40 percent
Engineering	35 percent
Medical sciences	20 percent
Natural sciences	3 percent
Social sciences	2 percent

The Technical Schools. Cuba's technical schools also accept thousands of LDC students every year for both short- and long-term training. The comprehensive courses are four years in duration, and the most popular ones for foreign personnel are in construction, engineering, fishing, and sugar production and other agricultural subjects. Like Cuban universities, these schools require a high school diploma for entry. Some LDC trainees continue on into technical cadre training. If a student has shown above-average potential, he may enroll in an industrial cadre school, where he will receive management training.

The Educational Program

An Ideological and Political Experience. As in other Marxist countries, Cuban education is highly politicized. The Cuban press has stressed that the role of education should be "to train highly qualified professionals capable of organizing, developing, and guiding the economy, science, and culture based on Marxist-Leninist principles and a genuine proletarian spirit." Educational policy in Cuba is subject to rigid central planning, overseen directly by Castro,

The Ministers of Education and Higher Education are members of the Party Central Committee and participate in the highest level decisions about education. Scholarships to foreigners are initiated at the Politburo level, included in annual education plans, and implemented by the Ministries of Education and Higher Education.

The pervasiveness of the Communist Party guarantees that students at all levels are steeped in Marxist-Leninist theory. All Cuban university professors must

have completed advanced political training at the Nico Lopez School and must have been party members for a minimum of six years.

Students in social science fields receive the heaviest doses of ideological training. at Havana University students study Marxist-Leninist ideology during the first year; in the second year, political application of Communist theory; and in the third and fourth years, worker organization and participation. The study of military affairs is compulsory in some programs; for example, a Doctor of Medicine degree requires 400 hours of military training.

Scholarships and Recruitment

Foreign students studying at higher schools in Cuba generally receive all-expense scholarships from the Cubans. These include small stipends for university and party school undergraduates and about 10 pesos a month for Isle of Youth students. In addition, Cuba provides all foreign students with free tuition and medical care, most educational materials, clothing, and transportation within Cuba. The home government or the sponsoring party is usually responsible for getting the student to or from Cuba and occasionally provides a supplemental stipend. CEMA organizations also fund some university scholarships for LDC students.

Havana has often recruited foreign students through illegal channels that are designed to bypass LDC controls on study abroad. In the early 1960s, when few countries, particularly in the Western Hemisphere, maintained legal ties with Cuba, Havana actively recruited students without the knowledge of their home governments. Because the employment prospects of a graduate from a Cuban university were dim, Cuba concentrated its resources on political cadre training, including guerrilla warfare. Students from only 12 non-Communist LDCs studied in Cuba in the early 1960s; of these, only three countries had diplomatic relations with Havana. Recruited through local Communist parties, students from Latin America traveled to obtain documentation and transportation to Cuba. Africans and students from the Middle East and South Asia traveled to Cuba

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In recent years, however, Cuba has been relying more and more on bilateral cultural and education agreements, or, if one exists, on a joint cooperation commission with an LDC to administer its foreign scholarship program. After Cuban officials discuss the country's needs with their LDC counterparts, they offer specific scholarships through the Ministry of Education, the Communist Party, and special interest groups such as trade unions, women's groups, and industrial ministries. Since 1975, 39 developing countries established relations with Cuba, and LDC officials became more responsive to Cuban offers. This has meant that Cuba has become increasingly willing to work through established LDC channels in awarding scholarships.

Outlook

Because of several recent developments, we do not foresee any major cutbacks in the Cuban educational program:

- The Cuban school population is decreasing at the rate of about 200,000 trainees a year, according to Cuban data. This creates more openings for foreign students.
- Cuba has announced plans to construct 15 to 20 more schools for foreign nationals on the Isle of Youth that could house 14,000 additional students.
- Some 82 developing nations now recognize Cuba, compared with 43 before 1975, greatly expanding the pool of eligible students.

The costs of the Cuban education program for LDCs are low, especially when compared with the educational programs of other countries. Based on Cuban data, we calculate that the Cuban budget is less than \$10 million annually to train foreigners. There are no

significant hard currency expenditures associated with the program; transportation expenses, the only hard currency component, are defrayed by the student, his government, or his party.

The major limiting factor to an expansion in the program, (particularly on the Isle of Youth) would be problems in recruiting students from LDCs as word filters back of the disadvantages of going to Cuba to study. Not all LDC students are satisfied with their Cuban experience. Occasionally they have rebelled against the strict regimen, forced labor, Spartan living conditions, and indoctrination. Over the past two years, several hundred have been expelled for misbehavior. Angolans on the Isle of Youth have been most troublesome, destroying a school and part of the surrounding citrus groves during riots in 1981.

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