

Wednesday, June 2, 2010, National Press Club, Washington, DC

Good afternoon,

My name is Gloria La Riva, I am coordinator of the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five. We are here today at the National Press Club in Washington, along with Mara Verheyden-Hilliard of the Partnership for Civil Justice, Heidi Boghosian of the National Lawyers Guild, and Brian Becker of the ANSWER Coalition, to present evidence of the U.S. government's misconduct in relation to the Cuban Five's case, and violation of the law banning domestic propaganda.

After our presentations, we will have a Question-and-Answer period.

I will present first.

For the first time, we are revealing today the payments made to the Miami journalists by the Office of Cuba Broadcasting and the Broadcasting Board of Governors, through Radio and TV Marti, during the time of the Cuban Five's detention and trial. The dates of these payments are from November 1999 to December 31, 2001. We are also presenting today, the articles written during that time period, while the Cuban Five were in Miami detention or on trial, as well as commentary by these government-paid journalists. Although we have requested information as far back as 1996, the BBG has only given us data from November 1999.

What makes the secret payments so egregious is that they were made by the same government that was prosecuting the five Cubans.

It is widely known that Radio and TV Martí are U.S. government propaganda. Their purpose is to try to influence the Cuban population against the Cuban government. It is also a thoroughly-documented fact that hardly anyone in Cuba sees TV Martí or hears Radio TV.

The largest audience by far of the U.S. State Department's propaganda, is right inside the United States, in Miami, Florida, through means of the government-paid journalists.

For U.S. journalists to pose as independent, but receive payment from the government agency that transmits U.S. propaganda, in effect assures that this highly-inflammatory U.S. propaganda is illegally communicated to the very audience from which the jury for the Cuban Five trial was picked.

Thus, the Cuban Five were denied the most elemental right to due process in court.

What we are disseminating today is a segment of the extremely prejudicial coverage that the Miami population was subjected to, including months before the trial began.

There remains much more to be uncovered, and which we will divulge as we obtain the information.

Mara Verheyden-Hilliard will detail more about our ongoing lawsuit and second FOIA to obtain more information, but first I would like to review just a sample of this highly prejudicial and false coverage, bought and paid for by Washington:

Wilfredo Cancio Isla was a reporter for El Nuevo Herald, the newspaper with the highest Spanish language distribution in Miami. He received \$4,725 from Sept. 30, 2000 to December 3, 2001. One article in that period was published the day the Jury began its deliberations at the conclusion of the trial.

Keep in mind that this jury was unsequestered. The jurors went home every day of the seven-month trial. And BEFORE the jury was selected, the future members of the jury, as part of the larger Miami community, were subjected to 26 months of inflammatory coverage about the Cuban Five.

On June 4, 2001, the very day that the jury began its deliberations on the question of guilt or innocence, Wilfredo Cancio's article appeared in El Nuevo Herald, with the headline, "Cuba used hallucinogens to train its spies."

The article claims, from an unnamed source – a supposed Cuban spy defector -- that Cuba gives its spies LSD and other hallucinogens, in order to train them for missions abroad. This claim is completely unsubstantiated. But that is not the real point of the story. The objective of the article is to taint the Five's case. In a very clever distortion, Wilfredo Cancio manages to link the Five to this outrageous charge, by quoting the anonymous man named Alex, as saying, "I can assure you that the Wasp Network is just a part of the espionage work that was conceived to infiltrate the United States on a long-term basis." As if to imply by mentioning them in an article about hallucinogens, that the Five were given drugs to control their minds.

This supposed "news" article had no evidence, just outrageous lies. Yet Wilfredo Cancio received government money. He also wrote an article that appeared in the same paper on April 19, 2001, in which a discussion between the judge, prosecution and defense took place with the jury removed. The defense team had requested permission from the judge to return for a second trip to Cuba to take testimony from additional witnesses. The prosecution complained about the defense request, and in a statement that would not have been allowed in a courtroom with the jury present, said, "Cuba is constructing a fabricated version of the facts."

The jury may not have been present, but this article and the headline, "The prosecution fears Cuban control in spy trial" was available for all to see, including the jury, in El Nuevo Herald. Written by government-paid Wilfredo Cancio.

Ariel Remos, who writes for Diario de las Américas, covertly received \$11,700 during the period of November 1, 1999 to December 12, 2001, the period of the Cuban Five's prosecution. He wrote extensively calling for Cuban President Fidel Castro's arrest for the plane shutdown. But the part we will concern ourselves with today, is in the documented period of his payments, where Ariel Remos wrote biased and hostile articles, interviewing only members of the exile Cuban community who have a longstanding enmity with the Cuban leadership. On the U.S. payroll he published in the U.S. press the demand for prosecuting Fidel Castro. In one article he also condemned Gerardo Hernández, whom the U.S. government was prosecuting. He refers to the charge against Hernández and then says that the chain of command begins with Fidel Castro. This theme was a steady drumbeat of hysteria from 1996 all the way through the conviction of the Five. He never disclosed that he was being paid by the U.S. It was a theme repeated continuously by the next writer, Pablo Alfonso.

Pablo Alfonso received \$58,600.00 from November 1, 1999 to December 31, 2001, during the prosecution of the Cuban Five. He wrote quite a few prejudicial articles immediately after the Five's arrest in 1998 through 2001 – which you can see from the documents here at the Press Club and on our website. Focusing on the documented period of payments, he gives voice to the rightwing Miami congress members, who lead a campaign to demand Fidel Castro's arrest and indictment, during the Five's prosecution, without disclosing covert payments from the United States government.

Enrique Encinosa is news director of Radio Mambí, one of the most biased and vitriolic radio stations, whose commentators have been known to openly welcome violence against people in Miami who advocate normalization of relations between the U.S. and Cuba. Encinosa secretly received at least \$5,200 during the period of the Five's prosecution, at the same time that he was a public commentator on the

station. Encinosa has a long terrorist past, and he has used the Miami and international airwaves to call for terrorist acts against the people of Cuba. Thus, the U.S. government was not only directly influencing the outcome of the Cuban Five's case by paying Encinosa, Washington knowingly financed a terrorist.

Helen Ferre received \$1,125 from February 21, 2001 to December 13, 2001, the period of the prosecution of the Five. She is editor of the opinion page of Diario Las Américas, which published Ariel Remos, and other biased articles against the Five, including an article by the notorious terrorist Orlando Bosch, who carries a veiled threat against at least one of the defense lawyers.

The Cuban Five, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, and René González were irreparably harmed by the sea of prejudice generated by the Miami media.

The government's role in financing much of the vitriolic media coverage means that the government has the obligation to immediately remedy this wrong. The Cuban Five must be freed.

[Note: The background facts about our research is the following: The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five submitted a Freedom of Information Act request in January 2009 for information on payments made to Miami journalists by the OCB and BBG, from the date of Jan. 1, 1996 to December 31, 2001. We requested information from the date 1996, because in February 1996, the Brothers to the Rescue planes invaded Cuban airspace, and were shot down by Cuba as an act of state to protect its territory. Several months after the Cuban Five were arrested in 1998, one of the Five, Gerardo Hernández, was unjustifiably charged with murder conspiracy for the shootdown. Several months after our FOIA request, the OCB released some preliminary information, including the payments received by the journalists we are naming today. But since then, the agency has denied our request for the contracts and other information. However, while we continue to conduct our research, the National Committee already has substantial information that shows a systematic policy of government manipulation of the media in Miami.]