

Various media have headlined the fact that President Obama felt compelled to reassure the Congressional Intelligence Committee that he had no intention of **freeing or swapping** prisoner Ana Belen Montes.

While it is disappointing that he is declaring he will not commute her sentence (he has had no hesitation to free numerous people imprisoned on drug charges, but when it comes to someone who simply acted on idealistic motives in the name of peaceful coexistence between Cuba and the US, he draws the line!), the second part of his "assurance" is a no-brainer.

Countries swap prisoners when each country is holding someone --usually an intelligence operative -- from the other country. The idea is that the prisoners each go to the country they are from or were acting on behalf of.

That's not what Obama is denying here. Members of the US police establishment and right wing have long wanted to re-imprison African-American Assata Shakur, who was long ago given political asylum in Cuba, which justifiably believed she was a victim of US racial oppression.. Some months back they spread rumors to that effect, saying there were thoughts of freeing Ana Belen in exchange for Cuba turning Assata over to the US.

That was never going to happen, and the Cuban government has said so repeatedly. You don't turn over someone you've given political asylum to in exchange for the freedom of a prisoner. You swap **prisoners**, as was done when US AID operative ("sub-contractor" was the euphemism used) Alan Gross and a Cuban who'd long been spying for the USA inside his own country were released in exchange for the release of the remaining three of the Cuban Five, who'd been imprisoned in the US for infiltrating Cuban-American terrorist groups in Miami.

The newspaper editors and congress members who've put out this spin about Assata and Ana Belen are not ignorant of this fact. They are spinning because it suits their purposes.

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