

## **US attempts to undermine Cuba's government don't stop**

The U.S. government's project of "democracy promotion" in Cuba is continuing. Interventionist in intent and effect, it's a U.S. tool for ending Cuba's revolution.

Democracy promotion took shape as part of what in official Washington circles is called "track two". The term refers to implementation of foreign policy objectives through civilian or NGO activities facilitated by the government. They complement military and intelligence operations. Other countries besides Cuba are targeted through track two.

Track two initiatives applying to Cuba developed under the aegis of the Cuban Democracy Act ("Torricelli Act") of 1992 and, particularly, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act ("Helms – Burton Act") of 1996. These two pieces of legislation provide the main authorization for the U.S. economic blockade against Cuba.

The democracy promotion program has rested on congressional appropriations to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department. These agencies in turn have directed funds to entities that pass some along to operatives, many in Cuba, and keep the rest for themselves. The intermediaries include NGOs, organizations associated with universities, private companies serving the intelligence community, and the National Endowment for Democracy.

A current USAID web page says that democracy promotion for Cuba means "increasing the ability of Cubans to participate in civic affairs and improve human rights conditions on the island." The agency's Cuba work began haltingly during the second Clinton administration and gathered steam during the G. W. Bush and Obama administrations.

Journalist [Tracey Eaton](#) identified recipients of USAID funding, including: the "Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba – \$3.4 million from September 2011 to September 2014,"... "International Republican Institute – \$3.7 million from August 2008 to June 30, 2012," ... "International Relief and Development – \$3.5 million from September 2011 to September 2014, ... and "Creative Associates – \$7 million from August 2008 to June 2012."

Creative Associates recruited 12 young people from Peru, Costa Rica, and Venezuela to pose as tourists in Cuba beginning in late 2009. Handing out U.S. money, they befriended young Cubans to convert them into "change agents." Creative Associates also developed a social messaging system targeting young Cubans. The idea was that, once brought into the system through music or sports news, they would respond later on to calls for recruiting "smart mobs" to make demands on Cuba's government.

Alan Gross, arrested in Cuba in 2009, epitomized the USAID version of democracy promotion. On the last of his five trips to the island posing as a tourist, Gross brought dissidents high-tech communication equipment which he was going to install. For his pains, he had received almost \$600,000 from a USAID sub-contractor.

In all, the George W. Bush and Obama administrations dispensed some \$250 million for democracy promotion in Cuba, reports former U.S. intelligence official [Fulton Armstrong](#). The [New York Times alludes](#) to the “\$264 million the United States has spent in the last 18 years trying to instigate democratic reforms on the island.” The separately-funded Radio and TV Marti, broadcaster of U.S.-approved messaging to the Cuban people, received \$27 million for 2014.

Presidents Obama and Castro announced December 17, 2014, that bi-national relations would be improving, and indeed some U.S. restrictions have been eased and the two nations have re-established diplomatic relations. Yet democracy promotion interventions are continuing. Shortly after Barack Obama ended his historic visit to Cuba in March, 2016, for example, the State Department announced a \$753,989 community-internship program targeting “young emerging leaders from Cuban civil society” who would fill “internships” in the United States.

Recently the International Republican Institute sent eight anti-government Cubans to Myanmar so that “they could directly observe the ‘transition to democracy’ there.” Allegedly, CIA funds were used.

The proposed “Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2017” contains text that reads: “Of the funds appropriated by this Act under the heading Economic Support Fund, \$30,000,000 shall be made available to promote democracy and strengthen civil society in Cuba.” The proposed bill has received committee approval.

In a discussion on the [Cubadebate.cu](#) website, which she directs, [Rosa Miriam Elizalde](#) stated that, “‘Promotion of democracy’ sounds less dangerous than ‘subversion’ or ‘intervention in the internal affairs of another country,’ but whatever it’s called, the purposes leave no room for ambiguity.” And, “to use foreigners to carry out secret operations, distribute satellite equipment, and hand over cash for political action and to prepare people for political organizing wouldn’t be acceptable in the United States and it’s not in Cuba.”

For sure, U.S. intervention masked as “democracy promotion” violates any pretense of normal U.S. - Cuban relations.