

CUBA

If you look up "Cuba" in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, you will find a description of a well run, benign, welfare state with good medical care available to all. Cuba is described as the "First" communist nation in the Western Hemisphere, whose revolutionary ideals include providing a free and progressive education for anyone who wants one, guaranteed employment in a diverse and expanding economy, and a decent pension for the country's aged. I just thought you should be made aware of this. It appears the Encyclopaedia Britannica is privy to information no one else has. Like so many other "Cold War" Intel specialists, a large portion of my working life centered around collecting "Hard" data concerning the "Workers and Peasants Paradise" across the Florida Strait. The description above came as quite a surprise to me!

Though it began as liberal socialism, Fidel Castro's Cuban "communism" became a unique blend of Stalinism, anti-Americanism, and radical nationalism all wrapped up in a pervasive personality cult centered on Castro and his omnipresent bearded profile. Economic sanctions, pushed relentlessly by the United States, produced a stubborn resolve in Castro to resist the U.S. to the bitter end. The "bitter" end might have come swiftly except for considerable Soviet largesse. The Soviets purchased practically all of Cuba's sugar crop annually at above world market prices and guaranteed deliveries of vital petroleum products at a considerable discount. This, combined with regular Soviet arms shipments, and other economic support, allowed Cuba the appearance of a vibrant, healthy economy. In return for all this largesse, Cuba was expected to be the Soviet Union's "agent" in the Western Hemisphere and the Cuban Army was expected to act as the U.S.S.R.'s "enforcer" worldwide.

Castro's victory over the thoroughly corrupt regime of Fulgencio Batista y Zaldivar in 1958 was followed by a Soviet-supported Cuban campaign of guerrilla insurgency all over Latin America. This campaign only lost momentum with the failure of the Cuban revolutionary mission to Bolivia and the death of its leader, Che Guevara, in the late sixties. Cuba's military power and revolutionary energies were then turned elsewhere, especially toward Africa and the Middle East. Cuban specialists could be found training Palestinian "Freedom Fighters", I.R.A "Provos", and "Baader-Meinhof" terrorists. Cuban assistance was instrumental in maintaining the leftist regime in Nicaragua and Cuba provided arms and advisors to the Salvadorian rebels in the 1980's. They were also present during Prime Minister Michael Manley's leftist days in Jamaica, and Cuban "advisors" were caught in the crossfire when the U.S. and its Caribbean allies invaded Grenada in 1984. Cuban soldiers were a common sight in military training camps throughout sub-Saharan Africa as well, and it was here that Cuba's dominant position in the worldwide revolutionary movement was to reach its greatest extent when ten-thousand Cuban troops, fully armed and equipped, were dispatched to Angola by a massive Soviet airlift in 1975.

At its height, the Cuban mission to Angola exceeded twelve Motor Rifle regiments plus supporting arms, or approximately four, full strength, divisions. Fighting raged throughout the country from 1980 through 1991 between Angolan government forces and the UNITA guerrilla movement, directly supported by regular incursions by South African regulars and the Southwest African Territorial Force (SWATF). A cease-fire finally put an end to the fighting that closely coincided with the end of Soviet rule, and with it the financial support that made all Cuba's foreign military missions possible. For example, the Cuban military budget plummeted from US\$1.36 billion in 1990 to a mere US\$700 million in 1999. The Russians have not cancelled Cuba's debt to them, incurred during the "Cold War" years and it now stands at US\$15 billion, or more than the country's total annual GDP. According to an anonymous U.S. Defense Department spokesman, "Since the end of the U.S.S.R, the Cuban military has become a spent force." For example, Mexico's recent Chiapas revolt has been unable to obtain more than rhetorical support from Cuba.

An effort by the Clinton administration to mitigate U.S. sanctions during the 1990's met with strong opposition in congress. Mr. Clinton hoped that a more reasonable approach to the Castro regime would yield positive results. In March of 1996 two civilian aircraft, violating Cuban airspace, were shot down without warning, forcing the president into an abrupt about face. The sanctions were stiffened even further. Cuba has suffered shortages of everything from spare parts to skilled labor over the past decade, and for the first time, widespread hunger has become a problem.

FOREIGN WEAPONS

All foreign weapons are of Russian manufacture.

TABLES OF ORGANIZATION AND EQUIPMENT CUBAN FORCES (ANGOLA): 1980-1991

Generation: II, Air Superiority Rating: 30, Class: Conscripts, Base Determination Factor: 40%

Mechanized Infantry Company:	3xTL3 Infantry(C)/BTR-60
Engineer Company:	1xTL3 Engineer Infantry, 1xTMM Mobile Bridge, 1xMTU "AVLB"
Anti-Aircraft Company:	1x(ZSU-23/4 or SA-9 "Gaskin")
Tank Company:	3x(T-54 or T-55)
Recon Company:	2xBRDM-2[R], 1xPT-76[R]
Machanized Infantry Battalion:	1xTL3 Infantry(C) HQ/BTR-60, 3xMechanized Infantry Company, 1x120mm M-43 Mortar(3)/Truck, 2xAGS-17/BTR-60
Tank Battalion:	3xTank Company
Artillery Battalion:	3x122mm D30(3)/Truck, 2x122mm BM-21(8)
Motor Rifle Regiment:	1xTL3 Infantry(C) GHQ/Truck, 3xMechanized Infantry Battalion, 1xTank Battalion, 1xArtillery Battalion, 1xRecon Company, 1xAnti-Aircraft Company, 1xEngineer Company, 1xBRDM-2/AT-3

Notes: 1) One stand per infantry or engineer company may contain an attached AT-3 "Sagger" team (MP).
2) One stand per mechanized battalion may contain an attached SA-7 team (MP).
3) Beginning in 1987, one mechanized company per regiment may replace its BTR-60's with BMP-1's.
4) Not all artillery battalions included BM-21's.
5) Regiments performing security duties may "dismount" two of their three mechanized battalions.

TACTICAL NOTES

The Cuban "volunteer" forces in Angola turned what would have been a typical sub-Saharan guerrilla conflict into a much more conventional war. The Cubans comprised the only force capable of facing the South Africans on their own terms and pitched battles between these two forces became commonplace. A typical scenario for the Angolan War will consist of a raid or strike by government troops on a UNITA base (or the other way around), followed by a distress call by one side or the other. This will trigger a response by a heavily armed, mobile task-force from one side, answered by an equally well armed, mobile force from the other side. Variations on this theme make for both exciting individual games and interesting mini-campaigns as well. The Cubans displayed good cohesion and considerable aggressiveness throughout the war and tabletop actions between them and the South Africans should be fast-paced and fierce.

The Cubans often were tasked with defending important supply and transportation centers and should be deployed in-depth with plentiful mines and strong improved positions. In these cases, UNITA forces would sometimes mount full-scale assaults with the object of weakening local political resolve.

(For further information on the Angolan War, see the chapters on the armies of "Angola" and "South Africa".)

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

In theory, two million Cubans serve the "Fuerzas Armadas de la Revolucionarias" in a wide range of military and para-military organizations, or about twenty percent of the total Cuban population. In reality, Cuba maintains approximately seventy to eighty thousand men and women in uniform, around fifty percent of whom are in the Cuban army. On paper, the Cuban army consists of four armored divisions, seven mechanized divisions, and approximately seventeen infantry divisions. The vast majority of these units, however, maintain "cadre" status only and nearly all the army's combat gear is in storage in an effort to economize on maintenance. Recent intelligence reports surmise that, aside from a few battalions maintained for internal security, the main body of the Cuban army is totally incapable of any sort of deployment. Even a token force would require at least a month of preparation before it could take the field. The army suffers from critical shortages of every kind including food. Conscripts are lucky to receive two meals a day.

Cuba's spare parts inventory is practically non-existent and there is no cash available to purchase more. Weapon and aircraft serviceability is maintained to some degree through cannibalization, but this cannot go on indefinitely. There have been no deliveries of new equipment whatsoever to the Cuban army since 1997. Of the 250 or so aircraft listed below, it is believed that less than two dozen are operational. Armor and artillery units, in particular, are at pitiful readiness levels due to severely reduced training.

In November 2000, fifty Cuban opposition groups collectively asked for international support seeking a peaceful transition to democracy in their country. Spain and Portugal have sent envoys to a summit in Panama to explore this possibility. A semi-official visit by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter in 2002 has revealed a greater boldness on the part of Cuban opposition groups and some slight progress in the direction of democratic reform is hoped for. The "First" communist nation in the Western Hemisphere will probably be its last.

2002 CUBAN ARSENAL

Vehicles:	400xT-62, 600xT-54/55, 400xT-34, 250xBRDM-1, 400xBMP-1, 500xBTR 40/60/152
AT Weapons:	100xSU-100, AT-2 "Snapper", AT-3 "Sagger"
Artillery:	1200+Towed Guns and Howitzers (76mm, 85mm, 122mm, 130mm, 152mm), 82mm and 120mm Mortars, 122mm BM-21, 140mm BM-14, 240mm BM24
S.S.M's:	70xFROG-7
Anti-Aircraft:	400xZU-23, 36xZSU-23/4, 300x37mm M-39, 200x57mm M-60, 25xZSU-57/2, Unverifiable numbers of SA-6, SA-7, SA-9, SA-13, and SA-14 SAM's
Combat Aircraft:	80xMiG-21, 60xMiG-23, 6xMiG-29, (Helicopters) 46xMi-18, 10xMi-14, 12xMi-24, 40xMi-17
Small Arms:	Cuba maintains a full range of Soviet manufactured infantry weapons.

Note: Figures above reflect total estimated inventories. Most of this equipment is either unserviceable or unavailable on short notice.

POINTS OF CONTACT

Ministry of Defense (Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias) - Tel: 511157 (Operator Assistance required)