

Observation no: 160 War over Angola

Country-year: Cuba 1974

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

No.

Castro became the president of Cuba after winning a guerrilla war against the Bautista regime.

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

Yes.

Fulgencio Batista removed Carlos Prio Socarrás from power during a military coup in 1952.

3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?

No.

Castro was a law student prior to becoming a Marxist rebel.

4. Are ethnic, sectarian, or racial criteria used to exclude segments of the population from the officer corps?

No.

The population of Cuba is generally ethnically mixed, and thus such as requirement would be difficult to implement. There are indications of racism in the military, but this did not translate into official policies prioritizing race.¹

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

Yes.

The Cuban government is a Communist state which was openly backed by the Soviet Union. Officers had to support Communist ideology.² Additionally, most members of the officer corps begin their career "during their teenage years at one of ... several ...

¹ Suchlicki, Jaime. *The Cuban Military Under Castro*, Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989, p. 113-114.

² Klinghoffer, Arthur Kay. *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World*, Boulder, CA: Westview Press, 1980, p. 18-19.

military academies. Party influence plays a significant role in determining which Cuban youth are admitted to these schools.”³ Furthermore, all leadership of the armed forces has to demonstrate personal loyalty to Castro.⁴

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

Yes.⁵

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

Yes.

Officers, along with the general Cuban population, were instructed in Communist ideology.

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

No.⁶

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

While sources indicate that several members of the military sat on the Cuban Politburo as of 1965, the government was composed of various elements in addition to the military.⁷

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

Yes

The *Tropas Especiales* provide leader security.⁸

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

³ Suchlicki, Jaime. *The Cuban Military Under Castro*, Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989, p. 112.

⁴ Edward Gonzalez, *Cuba under Castro: the Limits of Charisma* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1974).

⁵ Suchlicki, Jaime. “RE: Question about Cuban military.” Message to the author, 11 Mar. 2013. E-mail.

⁶ Suchlicki, Jaime. “RE: Question about Cuban military.” Message to the author, 11 Mar. 2013. E-mail.

⁷ Suchlicki, Jaime. *The Cuban Military Under Castro*, Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1989, p. 12.

⁸ Suchlicki, Jaime. “RE: Question about Cuban military.” Message to the author, 11 Mar. 2013. E-mail.

Yes.⁹

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

No.

Although military purges occurred after Castro assumed power in 1959 and 1960, there is no evidence that purges have occurred since.¹⁰

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

No

However, the Castro brothers occupy dual positions in the military, the government, and the party, thereby assuring that information is “exchanged,” if only because their leadership is vested in the same individuals.¹¹

⁹ Suchlicki, Jaime. “RE: Question about Cuban military.” Message to the author, 11 Mar. 2013. E-mail.

¹⁰ *Handbook on the Cuban Armed Forces* (Defense Intelligence Agency, 1979), available online.

¹¹ *Handbook on the Cuban Armed Forces*.