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CUBAN INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES INIMICAL TO US INTERESTS

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Middle East

Cuban efforts to expand its influence in the Middle East enjoyed a measure of success until the war between Iran and Iraq forced the Castro regime, as chairman of the Nonaligned Movement, into the role of mediator. Relations between Havana and Baghdad soured as the Iraqis perceived a Cuban tilt toward Iran.

[REDACTED] As in Africa, Cuba will continue to protect its interests in the Middle East and, to earn hard currency, will try to increase its non-diplomatic presence there.

The presence of [REDACTED] Cubans in Libya, mainly involved in the fields of construction and public health, suggests a warmth in bilateral ties that is deceiving. Castro's and Qadhafi's egos have clashed on more than one occasion and neither appears to place much trust in the other. At the same time, Cuba is anxious to develop access to Libya's wealth and, in addition to increasing the number of Cuban workers in Libya, Castro may be willing to provide Cuban support for Libyan adventurism as a means of ingratiating himself with Qadhafi. The relationship has already paid off for Cuba in terms of Libyan financial support for Havana's allies in Grenada and Nicaragua.

Havana has good relations with the PLO [REDACTED] The Cubans apparently were incensed at Moscow's failure to help the PLO in the recent debacle in Lebanon, but Havana itself was in no position to provide more than propaganda support and backing in international forums. Cooperation with the PLO enhances Havana's ability to engage in subversion worldwide and increases the likelihood that Cuba's clandestine resources will be used selectively to help achieve PLO goals. However, the PLO is not a monolithic organization. It is a coalition of several disparate groupings, with variations in ideology, ranging from moderate to Marxist-Leninist, some of which are well-disposed to the Cuban connection.

Cuba also has provided training for Polisario forces and continues to maintain a medical team of about 200 Cubans at a Polisario camp in Algeria. We suspect there may be a handful of Cuban military advisers there, but Algeria's reluctance to permit Havana to increase its assistance means that Cuba's support will be limited mainly to propaganda and backing in the UN and Nonaligned Movement. The Castro regime, nevertheless, is strongly committed to backing the Polisario in its war against Morocco.