

Jeane Kirkpatrick asks Ashcroft to prosecute Cuban officials for international terrorism

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On the fifth anniversary of the February 24 downing of the Brothers to the Rescue aircraft by Cuban MiGs, where three U.S. citizens perished along with a U.S. resident, ten public figures headed by the former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Jeane J. Kirkpatrick, are asking in a letter to Attorney General John Ashcroft, that he "put an end to the impunity that those responsible for these crimes have enjoyed" until now, in this "tragic and urgent" affair.

The U.S. citizens Armando Alejandro, Jr., Mario de la Peña and Carlos Costa, along with Pablo Morales, a legal U.S. resident, were killed in mid-air on February 24, 1996, while the two aircraft were performing a humanitarian mission and flying in international airspace.

The letter was delivered to Secretary Ashcroft on February 22nd, also signed by Dr. Modesto Maidique, President of Florida International University (FIU); Everett Briggs, former U.S. Ambassador to Portugal; Dr. Irving Horowitz and Hanna Arendt, Distinguished Professors at Rutgers University; the businessman and "Chairman" of the Center for a Free Cuba, Manuel Jorge Cutillas; the businessmen Néstor Carbonell and Nicolás Estrella; the professors Jaime Suchlicki, of the University of Miami, and Enrico Mario Santi, of the University of Kentucky, as well as Frank Calzon, Executive Director of the Center for a Free Cuba.

At the time of the shoot-down, President Clinton promised, "those responsible for these deaths will be brought to face justice." Those who carried out the murders were duly identified as the Pérez brothers, pilots in the Cuban Air Force, while the tyrant Fidel Castro publicly assumed direct responsibility for the act.

The president of Brothers to the Rescue, José Basulto, has alleged that the Clinton administration had foreknowledge of the act that might be perpetrated and that when it was perpetrated, it had enough time to prevent it, either by warning BTTR about the takeoff of Cuban MiGs, or by taking out their interceptors – as existing procedures warrant – but it did neither of the two to prevent it.

[Letter text translated from Spanish, not original English]

The letter says that shortly after the incident, "The United States presented evidence to the United Nations and in a hearing before the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). ICAO confirmed that two unarmed, defenseless, small civilian aircraft were destroyed by Castro's missiles in international airspace, as the U.S. had denounced."

The letter goes on to say "In a civil trial initiated by the families of the downed aviators, a U.S. District Court found the Cuban government guilty and liable for damages." It also says that in the upcoming trial of five Cuban officials in Florida, evidence has come forward that the murders were premeditated, "But those who pulled the trigger, their superiors whose orders can be heard on a tape recording, and the highest authorities who approved this act of state terrorism, have still not been charged."

"On this anniversary of the attack, we are asking you to examine the facts, and if the evidence confirms it, bring those responsible to face justice," say the letter's signers to Attorney General Ashcroft, finally advising him that "Putting an end to the impunity that

those responsible for these crimes have enjoyed will help deter the committing of terrorist of actions against Americans around the world.”

As part of the upcoming trial of the five employees of the Castro government who spied in the United States for the Castro regime, referred to in the letter headed by Dr. Kirkpatrick, the recordings of the pilots who chased the two small aircraft have come to light again in an impressive way, where they are vociferously asking for permission to down them, and having obtained it, their vulgar exclamations of satisfaction with the consummated act, after having committed the murder.