

Brothers to the Rescue Will Fly to Shoot-down Site

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PABLO ALFONSO**

On Wednesday, Brothers to the Rescue will commemorate the third anniversary of the death of four of its pilots, downed by a Cuban MiG over international waters in the Straits of Florida, flying precisely over the spot where the aggression took place, said its president, José Basulto, on Monday.

"From there a communication will be sent to the people of Cuba via Radio Martí," announced Basulto at a press conference held at the offices of Brothers to the Rescue in Miami.

He added that on Tuesday at 8:00 p.m. a mass will be held at the Ermita de la Caridad church, in memory of the murdered pilots.

Basulto, who flew the third small aircraft and survived the shoot-down of the two Cessnas in the group on February 24, 1996, will travel aboard one of the aircraft that will fly at "Martyrs Point," in the commemorative act to be held there.

"I couldn't possibly send anyone to do this if I weren't going to be there," assured Basulto. He added that the United States federal aviation authorities (FAA) have been informed about the proposed flight.

"What we're going to do is perfectly within international norms," he insisted.

Basulto showed a voluminous record that, according to him, is a collection of sufficient documentation to ask for a congressional investigation, and accused Bill Clinton's government of "complicity and criminal negligence" in the shoot-down.

Basulto said that currently Brothers to the Rescue maintains contacts with dissident organizations within Cuba and is promoting a strategy of active peaceful resistance.

"Now we're trying to save 11 million people and not just a few rafters on the high seas," Basulto emphasized.

The aftermath of the shoot-down continues to create tension between Cuba and the U.S.

The families of three of the dead pilots are trying to collect an indemnification of \$187.6 million granted in 1997 by a federal court in Florida, either from the Cuban government's frozen assets or from regular payments (now blocked) that various U.S. telecom companies make to the Cuban [phone company] ETECSA, in order to assure long distance services. It's hoped that this week Judge Lawrence King will reach a final decision on the lawsuit. Cuba announced that it will partially cut off telephone service between the island and the U.S. on Thursday, February 25th, if the companies offering the service do not pay.

Photo: Montage in honor of Brothers to the Rescue (n)
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