

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 13, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We commend your unprecedented, bold action in support of U.S. national security interests in our hemisphere. We strongly agree that America First requires securing our borders, ending the flow of lethal narcotics into the country, and eliminating transnational malign influences that endanger Americans.

Aligned with these objectives and policies, we wish to highlight a longstanding injustice that, under your leadership, your administration is uniquely positioned to resolve once and for all. We respectfully request the Department of Justice consider indicting Raul Castro who is responsible for the cold-blooded murders of three Americans and a U.S. permanent resident in the 1996 Brothers to the Rescue shootdown of two civilian aircraft by Cuban Mig fighter jets, and consider whether Interpol “red notices” should be issued against him.

It is our understanding, based on public information, that on February 24, 1996, Raul Castro ordered a Cuban Mig fighter jet to engage and obliterate two Brothers to the Rescue civilian aircraft over international waters. Flying those planes were three American citizens, Armando Alejandro, Jr., Carlos Costa, Mario de la Pena and Pablo Morales, a legal U.S. resident. Those four brave men were flying small civilian aircraft over the Straits of Florida to identify and help rescue Cuban rafters making the perilous escape from totalitarian Cuba. We believe that the following facts are instructive regarding Raul Castro’s complicity in the crime:

- Raul Castro Ruz is the brother of the late tyrant Fidel Castro and the former Director of the Cuban Secret Services, Commander-in-Chief of the Cuban Air Force, President of the Ministry of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces and Deputy Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party.
- In an audio recording of a conversation which took place just weeks after the shooting and obtained by *The Miami Herald*, Raul Castro can be heard discussing giving the orders to shoot down the Brothers to the Rescue aircraft: In the recording, Raul Castro can be heard saying: “I told them [Cuban Mig pilots] to try to knock them down over [Cuban] territory,” and “Knock them down into the sea when they reappear.”
- In an interview that appeared in *Time Magazine* on March 11, 1996 with Reginald K. Brack, Jr., Chairman of Time, Inc., Fidel Castro identified Raul Castro, the Cuban Defense Minister at the time of the shootdowns, as part of the chain of command that decided to target the Brothers to the Rescue planes.
- On November 14, 1997, U.S. District Judge James Lawrence King found Cuba guilty in civil court of planning the shootdown before the actual attack.

- A jury in criminal trial presided over by U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard on June 10, 2001 convicted Cuban spy Gerardo Hernandez of conspiracy to commit murder because of his role in providing information to the Cuban regime on the flight plans of Brothers to the Rescue.
- While serving two life sentences in U.S. federal prison, President Obama commuted Hernandez's sentence in 2014 as part of his appeasement policy toward Cuba. To date, he is the only person that has ever been held to account for the heinous attack.
- On August 21, 2003, a U.S. grand jury indicted the two Cuban fighter pilots, Lorenzo Alberto Perez-Perez and Francisco Perez-Perez, and their commanding general, Ruben Martinez Puente, then head of the Cuban Air Force, on murder charges for the 1996 shootdown ordered by Raul Castro. They were charged with four counts of murder, one count of conspiracy to kill U.S. nationals and two counts of destruction of aircraft.
- The two civilian aircraft that were destroyed were unarmed Cessnas, shot down in international waters by Cuban military MiGs. The International Civil Aviation Organization confirmed in its report that the Cuban regime acted unlawfully because the unarmed planes were not over its territory or in its airspace.

We greatly admire your sage leadership in restoring security, freedom, and justice to U.S. foreign policy, particularly your administration's long overdue attention to the Western Hemisphere. Your capture of fellow tyrant Nicolas Maduro and his wife so that they can be brought before American justice, as well as your strong action to secure our borders and end lethal narcotics trafficking, will have a generational impact in protecting Americans. We believe unequivocally that Raul Castro is responsible for this heinous crime; it is time for him to be brought to justice.

Thank you for your attention to this matter of paramount importance to our community, to the regime's countless victims, and to U.S. national security interests, and we look forward to working with your administration in promoting these crucial priorities.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress

cc: Hon. Pam Bondi, Attorney General of the United States