

Center for a Secure Free Society policy report



Canada on Guard

Assessing the Immigration Security Threat of Iran, Venezuela and Cuba

A re-release of an original 2014 policy report

PROLOGUE

By Joseph M. Humire

February 2017
Washington, D.C.

On June 4, 2014, the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS), a DC-based, national security think tank established in 2012, released its first major policy report: “*Canada On Guard: Assessing the Immigration Security Threat from Iran, Venezuela and Cuba.*” By 2017, our policy report has been cited hundreds of times and become a catalyst for further study and inquiry by top national security experts, leading media coverage and commentary, and executive and legislative action by the U.S. and other Western Hemisphere governments.

Based on conversations with Canadian authorities in 2011, the original “*Canada On Guard*” study started by analyzing an influx of irregular migration from Iran and the increasing presence of “Venezuelans” in Canada with Middle Eastern backgrounds. As part of our Future of North America Forum, SFS addressed this issue on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on October 26, 2012 and again at the Albany Club in Toronto on November 21, 2013. Members of the SFS executive team also raised this issue in testimony before the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration in 2012, for an immigration security study published by the Canadian Parliament in 2013. That same year, after the report was published, I addressed this immigration security concern in testimony before the U.S. House Homeland Security Committee and again in 2015 during a separate congressional hearing held by the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee.

At the time, the notion that members of terrorist organizations from the Middle East could be using Venezuela as a staging and transit point for entry into other countries throughout the Americas, namely in North America, was deemed an unconventional assessment at best. Some regional experts and scholars suggested this assessment was alarmist. Considering, however, that our report is based on a combination of field research in Latin America and access to five declassified intelligence and information reports from various countries throughout the region, I stand by the analysis. Among other noteworthy findings and conclusions in our report is the fact that between 2009 and 2011, Latin America, and Venezuela in particular, was the largest prior embarkation region for improperly documented Iranians migrating to Canada seeking refugee status.

This point took on greater significance in 2017 when President Trump signed an executive order “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States.” The President’s order, in essence, placed a temporary travel ban on refugees from seven nations in the Middle East and Africa where Islamist terrorist groups are prevalent. Despite varying interpretations, the intent of the executive order is to allow U.S. authorities time to address deficiencies in their ability to adequately vet and verify the outflow of refugees and other migrants from these particular countries.

While Venezuela is not included in this executive order, our report presents an argument that similar conditions exist in Venezuela’s immigration system posing a challenge

to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's ability to vet and verify the authenticity of Venezuelans coming to the United States. Data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service signals a 600 percent increase in U.S. asylum applications from Venezuela since 2014, making it the top nation of origin for asylum requests to the United States. To be clear, we understand and empathize with the tens of thousands of Venezuelans fleeing the country's devastated economy and rising insecurity. Our report does not suggest that a significant portion of those migrating from Venezuela to the U.S. or Canada have ties to Islamist terrorist groups, however, there is increasing and disturbing evidence that the Venezuelan government has become a state-sponsor of terror.

After our "*Canada On Guard*" report was published, additional evidence surfaced suggesting strong ties between the government of Venezuela and Islamist terrorist organizations. In 2015, a former Venezuelan legal attache to the Bolivarian Republic's embassy in Baghdad, Iraq provided an eyewitness account. The attache, Misael López-Soto, launched his own internal investigation into the matter and uncovered a web of corruption within the Venezuelan consular services and government reaching the highest levels of the Nicolás Maduro regime. According to López-Soto, several suspected members of the Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah received identification documents from the Venezuelan government concealing their true identity and establishing cover for their movements in and out of the Western Hemisphere.

Mr. López-Soto's testimony was featured in a joint investigation by CNN and CNN en Español who recently aired their findings on Anderson Cooper 360° and *Conclusiones* with Fernando del Rincon. The special segment called "Passports in the Shadows" concluded that one of the government officials potentially implicated in this illegal immigration scheme is Venezuela's current Vice President, Tareck El-Assami. "*Canada On Guard*" identified Tareck El-Aissami as the principal conduit between Iran, Syria, Hezbollah, and the Venezuelan government. Mary O'Grady of the Wall Street Journal, citing our report, described El-Aissami as "*one part master of Middle Eastern networking, one part honorary Cuban revolutionary, and one part highly ambitious chavista. A dream come true for Tehran and Havana, making [El-Aissami] a powerful man in Venezuela.*"

On February 13, 2017, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) named Tareck El Aissami as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker per the Kingpin Act of 2000. Similarly designated was Tareck's front man, Samark López Bello, along with 13 front companies based in the British Virgin Islands, Panama, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Venezuela. Our "*Canada On Guard*" report had earlier identified Tareck El Aissami's use of an international financial network as a source of illicit activities, and described his role in establishing a criminal-terrorist pipeline sending illicit funds and drugs from Latin America to the Middle East while funneling back Islamist militants and foreign fighters from Iran's feared Revolutionary Guards and Lebanese Hezbollah.

While focused on Canada, a similar argument and threat vulnerability is present in the United States. Based on nearly a decade of field research, it is clear that Iran and its terror proxies have used Venezuela as a gateway into the Western Hemisphere. It is also possible members of Islamist terrorist networks have entered the U.S. using Venezuelan documentation. This presents a significant vulnerability in our region's interlocking immigration security system, meriting the re-release of our original 2014 "*Canada On Guard*" policy report to help regional policymakers address this national security challenge.

Introduction

For decades, the peaceful and virtually ungarded continental perimeter around North America was the pride of both Ottawa and Washington. In a post-September 11th world, however, this cannot be taken for granted. The long border between the United States and Canada enjoys the largest trade relationship in the world.¹ The unhindered movement of goods, capital and labor across borders, however, can and has been, abused by international aggressors to exact violence on innocent civilians.

On September 11, 2001 a group of 19 men created havoc on the United States and, by extension, the rest of the Western world. Armed with box cutters and just enough flight training to take down four commercial aircraft, these 19 men murdered nearly 3,000 civilians. Similar attacks later took place in other relatively free societies such as England and Spain.²

Five years later, in June 2006, a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) counterterrorism raid in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) resulted in the arrest of 18 Islamists (later known as the Toronto 18) plotting a series of attacks in Southern Ontario. The Toronto 18 were charged with planning actions that included detonating truck bombs, opening fire in a crowded place, storming the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation building and Parliament Hill, as well as the Canadian Security and Intelligence Services (CSIS) headquarters.³

These terrorist incidents, among others, provoked a prolonged policy discussion about immigration security throughout North America. When discussing immigration security, however, the border is often thought of as the first line of defense. Most terrorist networks today operate in a transnational environment with cells in several countries moving and communicating on a daily basis. As such, immigration security or continental perimeter security does not begin at the border; it starts at embassies and consulates abroad which must remain vigilant to potential risk and

threats to their respective national security. This is critically important in a context where armed non-state actors have state sponsors who aid and assist in the trafficking of human and material aggression.

Relatively free societies, such as Canada and the United States, take prudent measures to provide entrance to legitimate migrants as part of a process of national integration and economic expansion. Law-abiding nations provide passports as measures to identify their citizens, ostensibly vetted against criminals and other harmful elements. On the other hand, radical authoritarian regimes use the power of the state to conceal the identities of spies, saboteurs, and terrorists, who abuse migration processes and diaspora communities abroad to pursue objectives through other means.

By providing illicit actors with legitimate passports and other documentation, these regimes subvert what there is of any international rule of law.

Known state sponsors of terror, namely Iran and Syria, along with terror-proxies like Lebanese Hezbollah, are increasingly facilitated by rogue regimes in Venezuela and Cuba (and other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean) creating criminal-terrorist pipelines from

south to north that exploit weaknesses within the refugee and migration process in Canada. These asymmetric conduits of mass destruction are complemented by soft-power strategies that potentially offer state-sponsors of terror international legitimacy and an aura of plausible deniability for their activities abroad.

The policy report delves into the emerging threat to North American immigration security building on several years of field research in Latin America and the Caribbean. The report highlights attempts to violate Canada's immigration system, examines Venezuela's role as a bridge for Iranian covert access to Canada, reviews the use of cultural exchange and other soft power projects to win support for state sponsors of terrorism, and presents preliminary policy recommendations for strengthening Canada's immigration and national security system.

Immigration security does not begin at the border, but rather starts at embassies and consulates abroad who must remain vigilant to potential threats to their national security.

Undermining Canada's immigration system

On September 7, 2012, the Canadian government broke diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran.⁴ Canada closed the Canadian Embassy in Tehran and expelled Iranian diplomats from Ottawa and surrounding areas. According to Prime Minister Stephen Harper Iran's regime is "unambiguously, a clear and present danger."⁵ Foreign Minister John Baird added Iran is "the most significant threat to global peace and security in the world."⁶

Canada's government clearly takes seriously its international responsibility to isolate a regime that openly pursues a nuclear weapons program, violates human rights, supports the brutal regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria, threatens the destruction of Israel and fails to protect foreign diplomats in their country. To date, Canada's actions are among the strongest taken by any Western nation.

One major concern, therefore, is the ability of Iran to circumvent Canada's sovereignty by undermining its immigration system and maintaining (or increasing) its covert presence in the country. Even more important is the assistance given Iran by countries openly hostile to freedom and democracy.

According to a July 2012 declassified intelligence report produced by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), Iran is the number one source country of improperly documented migrants⁷ to Canada who make claims for refugee status. The majority achieves such status. Most of these migrants arrive by air from third-party countries (very few arrive through land-border crossings) and seek residence in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), due to its large Iranian diaspora community. Since 2008, nineteen (19) of these Iranian nationals making refugee claims were found inadmissible to Canada on national security grounds, the majority of who were improperly documented.⁸

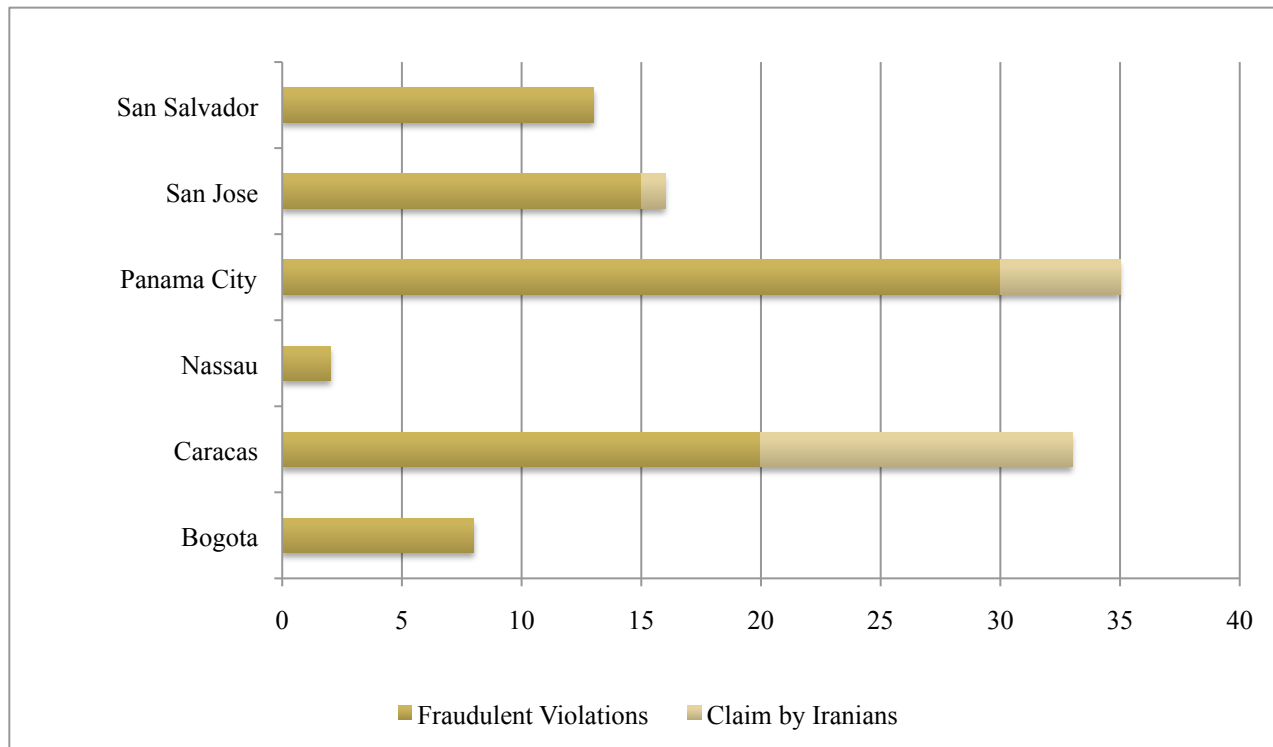
In a separate 2012 declassified intelligence report by its Liaison Unit in Miami, the CBSA summarized the extent of the problem with improperly documented passengers to Canada for the year prior:⁹

- In 2011, there were 119 improperly documented migrants within the jurisdiction of the CBSA Miami Liaison Unit, of which 88 involved fraud and were intercepted abroad. The other 31 were technical hits.
- The main type of document fraud was the counterfeit passport bio-data page.
- 29 percent of all improperly documented passengers to Canada via Miami and relevant cities within the CBSA Miami Liaison unit jurisdiction started their route embarking from Iran.

From 2009 to 2011, Latin America was the largest prior embarkation region for improperly documented Iranians migrating to Canada to seek refugee status.

In both CBSA intelligence reports what stands out is the role that Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) plays in facilitating the travel of Iranian irregular migrants into Canada. Each report highlights this role and documents several data points that illustrate the trend of this recent phenomena.

- In 2009 and 2010, LAC was the primary prior embarkation region for Iranians migrating to Canada with more than half attempting entry through this route.
- In 2011, this dropped to a not insignificant 32 percent, placing it behind Western Europe as the next preferred prior embarkation point for Iranians.
- Two of the four most prevalent cities used as prior embarkation points for Iranians migrating into Canada, are Mexico City, Mexico and Caracas, Venezuela.¹⁰
- The document of choice for most Iranians entering Canada was the Spanish or Venezuelan passport.

Figure 1. Total Fraudulent Violations per Airport in LAC in 2011

Source: pg. 14-15, CBSA Intelligence Report "2011 Miami Annual Review of Improperly Documented Passengers"

Using 2011, as a sample year, as depicted in Figure 1 above, LAC had a total of 86 fraudulent violations in six countries within the jurisdiction of the CBSA Miami Liaison Unit, with less than 60 percent being intercepted.¹¹ Of these fraudulent violations, at least seventeen (17) came from Iran, via Panama City, San Jose, and Caracas. Panama City had the most total fraudulent violations (30) for 2011, but only five (5) came from Iran. Caracas, on the other hand, had thirteen (13) of its twenty (20) total violations, or 65 percent, come from Iranians all making refugee claims. San Jose only had one (1) of its

fifteen (15) total violations come from Iran.

What these intelligence reports indicate is a pattern of repeated attempts by Iran to exploit Canada's otherwise lenient immigration and refugee process.¹² These declassified intelligence reports also indicate that Latin America and the Caribbean have become a prominent prior embarkation region of choice for irregular Iranian migration to Canada. Most importantly, the prevalence of improperly documented Iranian migrants embarking from Venezuela, specifically, suggests yet another concern.

Venezuela: Iran's bridge to Canada

Extending cooperation to Iran, Venezuela's radical socialist government has been instrumental in providing fraudulent passports and visas to Iranians and other Islamist extremists seeking to slip unnoticed into North America. Canada is particularly vulnerable to these schemes because of the high level of acceptance (86 percent) of refugee claims made on behalf of Iranians.¹³

As mentioned, from 2009 to 2011, Latin America was the largest prior embarkation region for improperly documented Iranians migrating to Canada who seek refugee status. According to the CBSA Miami Liaison Unit, the majority passed through Caracas, Venezuela. Officials indicated that airport and airline staff in Caracas are implicated in providing fraudulent documentation to recently arrived Iranians in Venezuela. In 2011, at least 65 percent of the fraudulent violations in Caracas involved Iranians making refugee claims to come to Canada.

According to Sebastian Rotella, an award-winning foreign correspondent and senior investigative reporter at *ProPublica*, a joint intelligence program is in place between Venezuela and Iran that provides systematic smuggling of arms, operatives and cash between Iran and Latin America.¹⁴ This recent phenomena is not a simple act of negligence on the part of Venezuelan authorities, but rather an orchestrated scheme that began in earnest when the late President Hugo Chávez came to power in Venezuela in 1998.¹⁵

Cuba enhancing Venezuela's immigration system

Throughout Hugo Chávez's 14-year tenure in Venezuela, the late autocratic President became known for his infamous Bolivarian missions. Named for Simón Bolívar, who played a key role in northern South America's independence from Spain, these missions are social

programs designed to sway the "hearts and minds" of Venezuela's popular sectors towards *Chavismo*, all the while tightening restrictions on civil liberties.¹⁶

At the core of Chávez's Bolivarian missions was a nationwide initiative known as *Misión Identidad* (Mission Identity) meant to provide national identity cards to all Venezuelans in order to facilitate access to the increasing number of social services provided by other government-run Missions.¹⁷ Like many of Chávez social programs, *Misión Identidad* also had a covert purpose.

In 2003, a year after Chávez survived a failed coup d'état; he launched *Misión Identidad* and immediately asked his

Cuban benefactors for help. Heading this effort was the infamous Cuban *Comandante* Ramiro Valdés, first chief of intelligence for Cuba's G-2 and a former Minister of Interior (MININT). *Comandante* Valdés recruited José Lavandero García, Vice Chancellor of the University of Information Science (*Universidad de Ciencias Informáticas*—UCI), a state university that reports to the Cuban Ministry of Information and Communications, led by Ramiro Valdés.¹⁸

Based in Venezuela since 2001, Lavandero García quickly drafted a 218-page proposal under the auspices of Albet Engineering and Systems, Inc., a Cuban state-owned firm that has become a primary software developer for the Venezuelan government. After four revisions, Hugo Chávez and Ramiro Valdés approved the plan in 2004 and Mr. Lavandero García began overhauling the information systems of the Venezuelan passport and naturalization agency, formerly known as ONIDEX (*Oficina Nacional de Identificación y Extranjería*).¹⁹

While the Cubans worked on the technical aspect of *Misión Identidad*, Chávez relied on a group of young aspiring politicians from the socialist student group "Utopía 78" based out of the *Universidad de los Andes* (ULA) in Mérida, Venezuela to join this Bolivarian mission and work alongside the Cubans.²⁰ In 2005, once the prototype system was complete, the initial managers

Regional intelligence officials estimate that at least 173 individuals from the Middle East were provided passports and national ID cards in Venezuela from the period of April 2008 to November 2012.

of ONIDEX implementing this new system were selected from this group.

Hugo Cabezas, the current Governor of Trujillo state in Venezuela, who had long-standing ties to Hugo Chávez dating back to the mid-1990s, was the original director general of ONIDEX in 2003. Cabezas led a team of handpicked individuals who oversaw ONIDEX's bureaucratic and political transition to what is now called SAIME (*Servicio Administrativo de Identificación, Migración y Extranjería*). SAIME has been in effect since 2009 and was initially managed by Dante Rivas Quijada, a direct disciple of Hugo Cabezas and close confidant of the Cuban regime. Designed and implemented by Cuba, SAIME has four times the capacity of the previous system. It has the capability of storing biometric data and much more sophisticated information security protocols.

Beholden to the Cuban regime and managed by Venezuelans sympathetic to the revolution, *Misión Identidad's* immigration system facilitates the entry of Cuban agents into Venezuela, embedding themselves into various facets of the Venezuelan social missions and national security apparatus. Aside from Cubans, this group also used SAIME to facilitate the travel of Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs), Colombian guerrillas, and Islamist terrorists. This has been done by Venezuela's Tareck El-Aissami, a key ally of Iran, Syria and Hezbollah.

Iran, Syria and Hezbollah's man in Mérida

Tareck Zaidan El Aissami Maddah is a 39-year-old Venezuelan politician, who was born into a wealthy, upper middle class family of Lebanese and Syrian descent in the town of El Vigía, in the state of Mérida, Venezuela. He was brought up with a radical ideology from an early age as his father, Zaidan El Amin El Aissami (aka Carlos Zaidan), is an ardent supporter of Islamic *Jihad* (or the Holy War) and maintains strong ties to Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, an Iraqi military commander and leader of the so-called "Iraqi Resistance."²¹

Tareck El Aissami, currently the Governor of Aragua state, has used his political prominence to establish intelligence and finance conduits with Islamic countries, namely in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Iran. El

Aisammi also used his close relationship with Hugo Chávez, and more specifically Chávez's older brother, Adán, to establish a political career that began in 2002 with stints as a PSUV (*Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* – Venezuelan United Socialist Party) congressman for his home state of Mérida. He also served as the Deputy Minister of Public Safety, prior to becoming the Minister of Interior and Justice from 2007 to 2012.

Like Hugo Cabezas, Tareck El Aissami was part of the "Utopía 78" student movement from the *Universidad de los Andes* in Mérida, and in 2003 worked alongside Cabezas in the *Misión Identidad* program. El Aissami's role, however, was focused on using his family's connections and proximity to Venezuela's political power to build bridges with Islamic countries in the Middle East.



From left to right: former Venezuelan Vice President José Vicente Rangel, former Interior Minister and current Governor of Aragua state Tareck El Aissami, and the current President and former Foreign Minister of Venezuela Nicolás Maduro, at the Ibrahim Al-Ibrahim Mosque in Caracas on January 6, 2009.

Over the years, Tareck El Aissami developed a sophisticated, multi-layered financial network that functions as a criminal-terrorist pipeline bringing militant Islamists into Venezuela and surrounding countries, and sending illicit funds from Latin America to the Middle East. His network consists of close to 40 front companies that own over 20 properties with cash, vehicles, real estate and other assets sitting in 36 bank accounts spread throughout Venezuela, Panama, Curacao, St. Lucia, Southern Florida (Miami) and Lebanon.²² This network became integrated with the larger Ayman Joumaa money-laundering network²³ that

used the Lebanese Canadian Bank to launder hundreds of millions of dollars and move multi-ton shipments of cocaine on behalf of Colombian and Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs).²⁴

El Aissami's role in this larger money-laundering network was to use his position as the Venezuelan Minister of Interior and Justice, with direct oversight over SAIME, to facilitate passports, visas and other documentation to members of Lebanese Hezbollah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, and other Islamist militants from the Middle East. In addition, Tareck El Aissami established a courier network managed out of the Venezuelan consulate in Amman, Jordan, through a close friend Husam Al Aissami.²⁵

Regional intelligence officials estimate that at least 173 individuals from the Middle East were provided passports and national ID cards in Venezuela during the period of April 2008 to November 2012, overlapping the tenure of Tareck El Aissami. Of the more notable persons of interest was the Suleiman Ghani Abdul Waked, the right hand man of Hassan Nasrallah, leader of Lebanese Hezbollah.²⁶ As well as Munther Yacoub, who was arrested in Canada in 2004 on charges of contraband smuggling to Iraq and other countries in the Middle East.²⁷

Considering the impact of 19 hijackers on September 11, 2001, or the potential carnage of the Toronto 18, it becomes ever more imperative to recognize that hundreds of potential threats can be embedded in North America through a combination of exploiting a lenient migration process in Canada and the aiding and abetting

of the governments of Venezuela and Cuba. Tareck El Aissami's pivotal role in providing legitimate passports and other documentation to hostile forces from throughout the Middle East should be of utmost importance to national security officials in North America. Of equal concern, however, is that members of civil society groups in Canada may be recruited – knowingly or unknowingly – to provide cover for these activities.



"...More than my mission as Minister [of Interior and Justice], I am the son of Arabs, I am Palestinian, I am Iraqi and today we are the force of resistance... our Bolivarian revolution also fights for a free Palestine and here, today we are all willing to give our lives [for this cause] if necessary..."

– Former Venezuelan Minister of Interior and Justice,
Tareck El Aissami on January 6, 2009

Cultural exchange: Iran and ALBA's 'Trojan Horse'

In 2004, Venezuela and Cuba created the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas, otherwise known as ALBA, a coalition of socialist and populist regimes whose unifying principle is hostility to the United States.²⁸ As part of its strategy to help build a multi-polar world, ALBA has allied itself with the equally anti-American Islamic Republic of Iran.

Given the well-documented and overt²⁹ connections between Iran and the member states of ALBA, it should come as no surprise that these countries engage similar soft power strategies in Canada.³⁰ These strategies include using diplomatic missions to solicit a broad base of support among students, who are, in turn, exposed to linguistic and cultural projects designed to reinforce anti-American sentiment; and recruiting high-profile professionals (e.g., scholars, doctors, politicians) who can serve as echo chambers in defense of a foreign regime.

The following review of the mobilization of Canadian groups in solidarity with the Bolivarian Alliance focuses specifically on the network these groups have built with the founding members of ALBA: Venezuela and Cuba.³¹ From a national security perspective, these solidarity groups should be understood as an extension of the state power of foreign nations in Canada, as well as nodes in a broader, inter-connected, transnational network that combines state and non-state actors.

The synergies of solidarity

Canada holds a central place in the origins of ALBA. It was at the Third Summit of the Americas, held in Quebec City in April 2001, that then-President of Venezuela Hugo Chávez broke ranks with hemispheric leaders. Chávez declared Venezuela's objection to the so-called 'democracy clause' of the Summit and raised concerns about the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).³²

Over the next eight months, Chávez consulted with then-President of Cuba Fidel Castro to design ALBA – an alternative to the FTAA that would encompass not only

trade but also social, political, and cultural issues. By December of 2001, after having declared Venezuela and Cuba to be 'one team,'³³ Chávez articulated an international vision for ALBA, the institutional framework for which was codified in 2004, with Venezuela and Cuba as founding members.³⁴

Unfolding in lockstep with the advance of ALBA were two seemingly independent initiatives that together would shape the advance of the Bolivarian agenda in Canada: 1) the Venezuelan government's creation of *Círculos Bolivarianos* (Bolivarian Circles), first in Venezuela and then internationally, including in Canada; and, 2) the founding of the Canadian Network on Cuba, a multi-sectoral solidarity project supported by the Cuban government's Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (*Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos* – ICAP). Each of these initiatives is discussed in turn, followed by a brief examination of the parallels between the soft power strategies of the Bolivarian Alliance and the Iranian regime.

Bolivarian Circles in Canada

In 2001, the Venezuelan government formalized the creation of Bolivarian Circles: small, state-sanctioned community groups designed to serve as the 'principle organizing unit of popular power.'³⁵ Initially confined to the domestic context, Bolivarian Circles were quickly incorporated as part of a broad-based campaign to cement international solidarity for the Venezuelan regime following the failed coup d'état against Chávez in 2002.

In Toronto, the Bolivarian Circle 'Louis Riel' was established in 2002,³⁶ followed by the Venezuela We Are With You (WAWY) Coalition in 2004,³⁷ and the Bolivarian Circle 'Manuelita Saenz' – all of which had members with direct connections to Canadian universities. In Quebec, the *Círculo Bolivariano* of Montreal was founded in 2002,³⁸ followed in 2005 by the Bolivarian Society of Quebec³⁹ and the *Coalición Bolivariana*.⁴⁰ In British Columbia, the Internationalist Bolivarian Circle 'Bob Everton' was founded in Vancouver in 2005 followed by Solidarity with Venezuela, based in Victoria, which began organizing tours 'to connect the international community with the Venezuelan people and their revolution.'⁴¹

Table 1. Bolivarian Circles in Canada⁴²

Organization	Founded	Based out of	Representative
Louis Riel (CBLR)	2002	Toronto	María Páez de Víctor
Círculo Bolivariano of Montreal	2002	Montreal	Carlos J. Level
Venezuela WAVY Coalition	2004	Toronto	--
Manuelita Saenz	2004	Toronto	Nicholas Lopez
Bolivarian Society of Quebec (SBQ)	2005	Quebec	Stéphanie Vaudry
Coalición Bolivariana	2005	--	--
Bob Everton	2005	Vancouver	Charles Boylan
Solidarity with Venezuela	2005	Victoria	--
<i>Avanzada Bolivariana</i> (Bolivarian Vanguard)	2012	Unknown	--
Hugo Chávez Peoples' Defense Front	2012	Chapters in Toronto, Montreal, Kitchener, Ottawa, Vancouver & additional rep. in First Nations communities	Pablo Vivanco & Santiago Escobar (Toronto) Joey Hartman (Kitchener)

Notably, Canada sent more delegates to the 2005 'Solidarity with the Bolivarian Revolution' conference in Caracas than any other country with the exception of Colombia.⁴³ While some of the original Canadian solidarity groups have since disbanded, others have grown, with a few moving laterally to merge with the U.K.-based Hands Off Venezuela,⁴⁴ and/or uniting under one of two Canada-based umbrella groups: *Avanzada Bolivariana* (Bolivarian Vanguard)⁴⁵ and the Hugo Chávez Peoples' Defense Front,⁴⁶ which runs political and cultural workshops in Canada and organizes the Norman Bethune brigade to Venezuela.⁴⁷ In 2014, members of various Bolivarian groups in Canada have been active in street and embassy protests to support the Venezuelan regime, which is facing increased scrutiny from the international community for human rights abuses against opposition protesters.⁴⁸

The founding documents of Venezuela's Bolivarian Circles underscore that 'the Supreme leader of Bolivarian Circles will be the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela' and 'the national and international headquarters for the registration of Bolivarian Circles will be the Palace of Miraflores [Caracas].'⁴⁹ Thus, the Bolivarian Circle 'Louis Riel' of Toronto is reportedly in

contact with 'patrols' from the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), from which it 'regularly receives information.'⁵⁰ Similarly, *Avanzada Bolivariana* pledges to be 'on permanent alert and in solidarity' with Venezuela,⁵¹ and the Hugo Chávez Peoples' Defense Front takes as its objective 'to support the diplomatic body of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Canada.'⁵²



The Consul General of Venezuela to Canada (second from the right) offers greetings to a meeting of the Bolivarian Circle Louis Riel in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

The Canadian Network on Cuba

Since 1993, Canadian solidarity groups have worked directly with the Cuban government's Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP)⁵³ to recruit participants for volunteer work/study brigades designed to sensitize Canadians to the Cuban revolutionary project while teaching them how to dance salsa and speak Spanish. University agreements between Canada and Cuba, jointly coordinated with ICAP, date back to at least 1996.

In 2002, the most active Cuban solidarity groups in Canada were centralized under the banner of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC), an umbrella organization that unites 23 member groups,⁵⁴ including multiple Cuba 'friendship' chapters, expat associations, registered political parties, a public-sector union, and a travel company specializing in cultural and educational tours to Cuba similar to those organized by Solidarity with Venezuela.⁵⁵ The CNC, which sent its largest-ever Canadian work/study brigade to Cuba in 2012,⁵⁶ is directly supported by ICAP.

Some CNC members are themselves coalitions, such as the Quebec-Cuba Solidarity Roundtable (*Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba—TCSQC*),⁵⁷ also founded in 2002. The TCSQC includes more than 20 member organizations (similar in profile to the broader CNC membership), as well as a number of groups in solidarity with the Bolivarian Alliance writ large.

In addition, there are a number of Canadian groups in solidarity with Cuba that are not members of CNC, most notably the Toronto Forum on Cuba,⁵⁸ which also endorses the 'Solidarity with Iran' (SI) campaign. The House of Latin America (HOLA), a Tehran-based organization founded in 2010 and supported by Cuba, organizes the SI campaign.⁵⁹ It is important to note that in 2013, a year after Canada declared Iran a state sponsor of terrorism and shuttered the Iranian Embassy in Ottawa,⁶⁰ the Iranian regime opened an 'unofficial'

consulate in Montreal and began shuttling paperwork back and forth to the Iranian Embassy in Cuba for processing.⁶¹

Similar to the way in which Canada's Bolivarian Circles are sanctioned by, and pledged to support, the Venezuelan government, the Canadian Network on Cuba, through its relations with ICAP, may be seen as an extension of the Cuban state. In addition to organizing and supervising Canadian work/study brigades to Cuba,

ICAP has been linked to the Intelligence Directorate (*Dirección de Inteligencia*) of the Cuban G-2.⁶² The close alliance between the Cuban government and the CNC has caused some members of the Cuban diaspora in Canada to limit their criticism of the Cuban regime, echoing concerns raised by members of the Iranian diaspora in interviews with investigative journalist Michael Petrou of *Maclean's* magazine.⁶³

Less than a year after Canada shuttered the Iranian embassy in Ottawa, the Iranian regime opened an "unofficial" consulate in Montreal and began shuttling paperwork back and forth to the Iranian embassy in Cuba for processing.

Iran's intrusion in Canada

In his investigation of Iran's influence in Canada, *Maclean's* Petrou⁶⁴ draws attention to the soft power strategies of the Iranian regime. Specifically, Petrou's research documents Iran's hub-and-spoke strategy of financing and supporting cultural associations, academic venues, and solidarity groups that have been designed to function as a *de facto* extension of Iranian state power in Canada.

In 2008, for example, a high-profile Iranian diplomat founded the Center for Iranian Studies in Toronto. According to Petrou, the center was bankrolled by the Iranian Embassy in Ottawa; however, no links to the embassy were disclosed on the center's website. While the center was officially dedicated to research and study, it provided no evidence of having held academic workshops or seminars. It was known for regularly contacting Iranian student groups with promises of tuition assistance and funding Farsi classes and cultural events.⁶⁵

In 2010, Petrou reported that Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad selectively targeted members of Canada's Iranian diaspora, including academics and political party officials, to attend a conference in Tehran. The conference was designed to demonstrate to the Iranian people the support enjoyed by Iran in the exterior and to correct 'media lies'.⁶⁶

In 2012, only months before Ottawa ordered Iranian diplomats to leave Canada, the Iranian embassy in Ottawa was active in organizing two intellectual events described by Petrou as pro-Islamic Republic propaganda sessions. The first, held at Carleton University, was dedicated to a celebration of the work of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and included teaching materials with an anti-Semitic tone. The event was co-sponsored by the cultural center of the Iranian Embassy and the Iranian Cultural Association, a student group at Carleton that was then led by the son of an Iranian diplomat.⁶⁷ The embassy's Higher Education Advisory sponsored the second event, the Iranian Students Convention. Following the publication of Petrou's initial story on the event and the release of a letter by Iranian-Canadian academics expressing concern about its political motivations, the convention was unexpectedly postponed.⁶⁸

Parallels in soft power strategies

As Michael Petrou's work reveals, the Iranian regime has strategically applied soft power strategies in a bid to expand its base of support in Canada. Petrou maps the connections between the Islamic Republic of Iran, their diplomatic mission in Canada, and Canadian academic and activist groups. The same strategies are being deployed to advance the Bolivarian agenda in Canada.

While framed in terms of academic and cultural exchange, Canada's Bolivarian solidarity networks are engineered and empowered to serve as 'truth commissions' working in alliance with the Venezuelan and Cuban governments. Parallels in the soft power strategies of the Bolivarian Alliance and the Iranian regime include:

- The opening (under diplomatic auspices) of **cultural centres** that promote revolutionary arts and culture and host public events sympathetic to the politics of the respective regimes.⁶⁹
- The sponsorship of **cultural exchanges**, which are often fully or partially subsidized by foreign governments and/or non-participating Canadian supporters. Such exchanges are marketed as an opportunity to get to know the "real" story behind the respective regimes. They are generally targeted to students, but may also recruit professionals (e.g., doctors).⁷⁰
- The sponsorship of **academic conferences and/or specific university courses** in Canada or abroad. These courses are sympathetic to the politics of the respective revolutionary regimes and may be funded and/or organized by these regimes.⁷¹
- The targeting of **professionals** (e.g., scholars, doctors, politicians) who become **Canadian opinion leaders** on questions concerning the respective regimes. Upholding regime-friendly positions, these opinion leaders are known to participate in everything from media interventions and parliamentary testimony to more subtle post-exchange "depositions".⁷²
- The provision of financial and/or political **support to solidarity groups** in Canada, including the organization of cultural events and street protests.⁷³
- The **surveillance** of the Canadian-based diaspora.⁷⁴

The mobilization of popular support for the ALBA bloc in Canada has unfolded apace with the domestic consolidation of solidarity groups with direct links to the governments of Venezuela and Cuba. It has also coincided with a period of greater integration between Iran and ALBA. The 'Solidarity with Iran' international campaign made Havana its first stop in 2010,⁷⁵ and more recently Cuba's ambassador in Tehran outlined a policy framework for greater integration between Iran and Latin America.⁷⁶

Policy Recommendations

Today, Canada is a fast growing nation with an expanding economy, which has led to a streamlined series of immigration reforms that better serve the human and labor needs of the country. A high-income, developed country with a population of just over 35 million, Canada's potential remains great.

Nevertheless, Canada's relatively open immigration policies combined with its policy exceptionalism toward Cuba (*vis-à-vis* the United States) – and Cuba's extended influence in Venezuela – presents certain vulnerabilities. Like Iran, Venezuela and Cuba engage in soft power statecraft in Canada. The challenge is to decipher if, and when, such soft power maneuvers constitute a credible national security threat. A *descriptive* account of the former (e.g., documenting the existence of cultural associations and solidarity groups) does not provide *direct evidence* of the latter. However, neither can the relationship be ignored.

Prior to September 11th, one of the largest Islamist-inspired terrorist attacks in the Western Hemisphere occurred in Buenos Aires, Argentina, when Lebanese Hezbollah bombed the AMIA Jewish cultural center in 1994, killing a total of 85 civilians and injuring hundreds more. According to Argentine authorities, this attack implicated at least seven high-ranking Iranian officials

who used very similar soft-power strategies to plan and prepare this operation over the course of a decade prior to the actual attack.⁷⁷ More recently, we know that Venezuela has sponsored seminars dedicated to analyzing the potential for socialist revolution in the US, and that these seminars have included anti-Semitic discourse.⁷⁸

These soft-power strategies may pave the way for future terrorist attacks. The combination of a streamlined immigration system allowing a freer flow of human capital into Canada and the existence of state and non-state actors whose intentions are hostile and antithetical to Canadian interests merit a prudent review of actual and potential flaws in any policy or system that can undermine national security interests.

Abuses of the immigration system are always possible. Concerted efforts to insert individuals and groups with ulterior motives in Canada must be taken seriously and countered effectively. The point is not to place obstacles in the free flow of goods, capital or labor, but to stand on guard⁷⁹ against legitimate threats from openly adversarial forces.

On the following page are recommendations to Canadian policymakers to address this threat:

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There must be a critical review by the Canadian government of the infiltration of antagonistic foreign governments in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the promulgation of their agendas through cultural, academic and other means that shape public opinion in Canada. Particularly with respect to the foreign governments affiliated with the ALBA bloc, notably Venezuela and Cuba.
2. Canada should enhance human intelligence (HUMINT) collection capabilities in LAC, sharing and receiving information with allied nations. It is unreasonable to rely exclusively on the work of immigration officers to spot and apprehend plausible terrorists and other subversives, not least because these officers are not privy to the ways in which foreign governments may manipulate agents already in Canada. Immigration security starts at the embassies and consulates abroad; hence information gathering must be improved one step ahead.
3. Hold public and private joint committee hearings among the Standing Committees on Citizenship and Immigration, Foreign Affairs and International Development (or Trade), and National (Security and) Defence, both within the Canadian Senate and House of Commons. These joint committee hearings within the Canadian Parliament should focus on further investigation of schemes facilitated by Iran and ALBA, and hear from governmental and non-governmental witnesses that have experience and expertise on this issue.
4. As an observing member of the Pacific Alliance political bloc, Canada should move toward becoming an official member, and spearhead efforts to introduce a Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) and Terrorism Caucus within the Pacific Alliance.¹

In 2013, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration completed *Standing On Guard for Thee: Ensuring that Canada's Immigration System is Secure*, a comprehensive security study regarding the Canadian immigration system.⁸⁰ The study itemized several recommendations to protect Canada's immigration system. Of particular note to our findings are:

- Recommendation 10: CBSA removing failed refugee claimants more quickly.
- Recommendations 13-17: Enhancing intelligence sharing amongst the services within Canada, as well as with allied countries abroad.
- Recommendation 19: Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) developing a list of priority countries for security screening.

Moreover, the recent security measures implemented by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), such as biometric visas with fingerprints and photos, better access to U.S. watch lists, and electronic travel authorization, help boost screening procedures to address the threat presented in this report.

The unappealing reality is that regimes which actively suppress freedom and individual liberty in their own countries often exploit the leniency and tolerance of free and open societies in order to undermine resistance to their agendas. These regimes will use seemingly innocuous activities, organizations and events to provide cover and concealment to actual or potentially hostile actors.

During World War II, the classical liberal economist Ludwig von Mises, long an advocate of open borders, warned his readers: "*As conditions are today, the Americas and Australia in admitting Germans, Italians and Japanese immigrants would merely open the doors to the vanguard of hostile armies*" (*Human Action*, pg. 820).

Today, the world is not engaged in global conventional warfare involving massive armies. The situation, however, is far from one of harmony between those that defend freedom and those that seek to destroy it. Immigration and the free flow of people between borders must be defended both on economic and political grounds, but free people must also be secure from the vanguard of hostile forces intent on undermining both freedom and security.

NOTES

¹ Canada and the U.S. reached US\$707 billion in total import and export of goods and services in 2012, making them the world's largest trading partners. Office of U.S. Trade Representative, "Canada," n.d., <http://www.ustr.gov/countries-regions/americas/canada> (accessed May 18, 2014).

² Referring specifically to the 2004 Madrid train bombings that killed 191 civilians, and the 2005 London bombings of the public transport system, killing 52 civilians. Both at the hands of Islamist terrorists.

³ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, "Toronto 18: Key events in the case," June 4, 2008, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto-18-key-events-in-the-case-1.715266> (accessed March 2014)

⁴ The Telegraph, "Canada breaks off diplomatic relations with Iran," Sept. 7, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/canada/9529386/Canada-breaks-off-diplomatic-relations-with-Iran.html> (accessed March 24, 2014)

⁵ William Marsden, "After receiving world statesman award Stephen Harper slams 'evil' dominated Iranian regime," National Post, Sept. 7, 2012, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/09/27/after-receiving-world-statesman-award-stephen-harper-slams-evil-dominated-iranian-regime/> (accessed March 24, 2014)

⁶ Paul Koring, "Iran remains 'biggest threat to global peace,' Baird says," The Globe and Mail, May 14, 2012, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/iran-remains-the-biggest-threat-to-global-peace-baird-says/article18659413/> (accessed March 23, 2014)

⁷ In a July 2012 intelligence report, the CBSA defines the term "improperly documented" as migrants who travel on false, forged, altered, stolen, improperly issued/obtained travel documents, those who travel as imposters on genuine documents, or those who arrive at port of entry undocumented.

⁸ Canadian Border Security Agency, Migration Intelligence Section, Intelligence and Targeting Operations Directorate, "Irregular Migrations of Iranians to Canada," July 2012 (declassified February 2013).

⁹ Canadian Border Security Agency, Miami Liaison Unit, "2011 Miami Annual Review of Improperly Documented Passengers," Feb. 9, 2012 (declassified August 2013).

¹⁰ The other two most prevalent cities used as prior embarkation points for Iranians entering Canada are London, England and Frankfurt, Germany.

¹¹ The CBSA Liaison Unit in Miami is responsible for territory that includes Florida (USA), Puerto Rico (USA), the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bahamas, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles (Bonaire, Curacao). It is composed of two (2)

Liaison Officers and a Liaison Assistant. There are 166 flight routes from that territory to Canada, for a total of 563 weekly flights during high season (winter months). See above, note 9.

¹² Stewart Bell, "Fears false Iranian refugees with 'sinister motives' may enter Canada as 19 are rejected on security grounds," The National Post, June 24, 2013, <http://news.nationalpost.com/2013/06/24/officials-worried-iranians-with-sinister-motives-may-enter-canada-as-undocumented-refugees-report/> (accessed March 3, 2014).

¹³ Iranian Refugee's Alliance, Inc., "Statistical data on Iranian refugees and asylum seekers," September 2013, <http://www.irainc.org/iranref/statistics.php> (accessed May, 2014).

¹⁴ Sebastian Rotella, "The terror threat and Iran's inroads in Latin America," ProPublica, July 11 (July 18 corrected), 2013, <http://www.propublica.org/article/the-terror-threat-and-irans-inroads-in-latin-america> (accessed May 3, 2014).

¹⁵ Venezuela has a record of providing training and giving refuge to non-state actors such as the Basque ETA: Lisa Abend, "Are Basque terrorists being trained in Venezuela?" Time, Oct. 5, 2010, <http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2023566,00.html> (accessed May 4, 2014);

Frances Martel, "Fugitive ETA terrorist sentenced to 3,000 years found in Venezuelan mall," Breitbart, May 22, 2014, <http://www.breitbart.com/Big-Peace/2014/05/22/Fugitive-ETA-Terrorist-Sentenced-to-3-000-Years-in-Prison-Found-in-Venezuelan-Mall> (accessed May 23, 2014).

¹⁶ Joel D. Hirst, *The ALBA: Inside Venezuela's Bolivarian Alliance*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing, May 2012.

¹⁷ Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, SAIME, "Qué es el SAIME?," n.d., <http://www.saime.gob.ve>, (accessed May 2014).

¹⁸ See, Adriana Rivera, "El cubano que diseño el SAIME," El Nacional (Caracas), Nov. 24, 2013, http://www.el-nacional.com/siete_dias/cubano-diseno-Saime_o_305369576.html (accessed December 19, 2013).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Utopia 78 was a socialist student movement born out of the 1992 graduating class of the ULA (Universidad de los Andes) in Mérida, Venezuela. Hugo Cabezas, the original leader of the group, established a relationship with Hugo Chávez after he was released from prison in 1994 through his older brother Adán Chavez, who taught political science classes at ULA.

²¹ Anna Mahjar-Barducci, "Venezuelan minister hangs out with Hezbollah," Gatestone Institute, Feb. 11, 2011, <http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/1878/venezuelan-minister-hezbollah> (accessed April 14, 2014).

²² Author interviews with Latin American intelligence officials (April 2014).

²³ Ayman Joumaa was indicted in November 2011 by a federal grand jury in the Eastern District of Virginia for being an international drug kingpin that directed Hezbollah's fundraising activities in the Americas.

²⁴ Jo Becker, "Beirut bank seen as hub of Hezbollah financing," The New York Times, Dec. 13, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/14/world/middleeast/beirut-bank-seen-as-a-hub-of-hezbollahs-financing.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1& (accessed April 22, 2014).

²⁵ Casto Ocando, *Chavistas en el Imperio: Secretos, Tácticas y Escándolos de la Revolución Bolivariana en Estados Unidos*, CreateSpace Independent Publishing, March 7, 2014.

²⁶ Another POI is Milad Bou Nassereddin, a relative of Ghazi Nassereddin who is listed as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist" by the U.S. Treasury Department.

²⁷ Free Republic, "Ontario man, businesses charged over Iraq deals," June 18, 2004, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1156198/posts> (accessed December 5, 2013).

²⁸ The nine official member countries of ALBA are Antigua and Barbuda, Bolivia, Cuba, Dominica, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Venezuela and Saint Lucia. While Iran, Syria and Haiti are observing members.

²⁹ Berta Joubert-Ceci, "Iran's president visits ALBA countries," Workers' World, June 18, 2012, http://www.workers.org/2012/world/iran_alba_0126/ (accessed December 8, 2013).

³⁰ For more on Iran's inroads in Latin America, read congressional testimony by Joseph M. Humire before the Committee on Homeland Security of the U.S. House of Representatives, July 9, 2013: <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/HM/HM09/20130709/101046/HHR-G-113-HM09-Wstate-HumireJ-20130709-U1.pdf>

³¹ Joel D. Hirst, op cit.

³² Summit of the Americas, "Declaration of Quebec City," n.d., <http://www.summit-americas.org/Documents%20for%20Quebec%20City%20Summit/Quebec/Declaration%20of%20Quebec%20City%20-%20Eng%20-%20final.htm> (accessed December 9, 2013).

³³ Stephen Johnson, "Building democracy in Venezuela," Heritage Foundation, May 6, 2002, <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2002/05/rebuilding-democracy-in-venezuela> (accessed December 8, 2013).

³⁴ Joel D. Hirst, op cit.

³⁵ Nelly Arenas and Luís Gómez Calcaño, "Los círculos bolivarianos: el mito de la unidad del pueblo," Revista venezolana de ciencias políticas, Caracas, January 2004, <http://www.saber.ula.ve/bitstream/123456789/24859/2/articulo1.pdf> (accessed January 2014).

³⁶ Aporrea.org, "El círculo bolivariano Louis Riel de Canadá esta listo para la contienda," April 10, 2012, <http://www.aporrea.org/venezuelaexterior/n215566.html> (accessed December 10, 2013).

³⁷ Venezuela We Are With You Coalition, "Statement of Purpose," September 2004, http://venezuelawearewithyou.blogspot.ca/2007/07/statement-of-purpose_16.html (accessed December 10, 2013).

³⁸ Círculo Bolivariano de Montreal, "Círculo Bolivariano de Montreal convoca marcha a favor del proceso," December 23, 2012, <http://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/n3135.html> (accessed December 10, 2013).

³⁹ Société Bolivarienne du Québec, "About," n.d., <https://www.facebook.com/sbqc.org/info> (accessed December 8, 2013).

⁴⁰ Coalición Bolivariana, "Somos," n.d. <http://www.coalicionbolivariana.net/qui%C3%A9nes-somos/> (accessed December 2013)

⁴¹ This website is no longer maintained; it is unclear if the group still exists: <http://web.archive.org/web/20120103155452/http://www.bolivariacentre.com/>

⁴² Information in this table was collected from websites and other open-source information related to the organizations mentioned. We cannot confirm that representatives listed are currently with their respective organizations.

⁴³ Miriam Martin, "British Columbia delegation reports back in Vancouver," Hands Off Venezuela, May 30, 2005, http://www.handsoffvenezuela.org/british_columbia_delegation300505.htm (accessed December 11, 2013).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Avanzada Bolivariana, "Canadienses despiden al comandante Hugo Chávez," September 3, 2013, <http://www.aporrea.org/venezuelaexterior/n224676.html> (accessed December 8, 2013).

⁴⁶ Hugo Chávez People's Defense Front, "About Us," n.d., <http://venezuelasolidarity.wordpress.com> (accessed April 8, 2014).

⁴⁷ Hugo Chávez People's Defense Front, Twitter page, <https://twitter.com/hcpdf> (accessed April 2014).

⁴⁸ Hugo Chávez People's Defense Front, "Canadienses demuestran su apoyo al presidente Nicolás Maduro (video)," February 26, 2014, <http://www.aporrea.org/actualidad/n246000.html> (accessed March 5, 2014).

⁴⁹ Nelly Arenas and Luís Gómez Calcaño, "Los círculos bolivarianos: el mito de la unidad del pueblo," Revista venezolana de ciencias políticas, Caracas, January 2004, <http://www.saber.ula.ve/bitstream/123456789/24859/2/articulo1.pdf> (accessed January 2014).

⁵⁰ Aporrea.org, "El círculo bolivariano Louis Riel de Canadá esta listo para la contienda," April 10, 2012, <http://www.aporrea.org/venezuelaexterior/n215566.html> (accessed December 10, 2013).

⁵¹ TeleSUR, "Latinoamericanos en Canadá marchan en defensa de la revolución bolivariana," January 28, 2013, <http://www.telesurtv.net/articulos/2013/01/28/latinoamericanos-en-canada-marchan-en-defensa-de-la-revolucion-bolivariana-7811.html> (accessed December 10, 2013).

⁵² Venezuela Solidarity, "Declaración de apoyo al pueblo bolivariano y a Nicolás Maduro," Ottawa, April 6, 2013, <http://venezuelasolidarity.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/declaracion-de-ottawa-06042013.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2013).

⁵³ Instituto cubano de amistad con los pueblos (ICAP), "Siempre con Cuba: el portal de Cuba para sus amigos," Havana, n.d., <http://www.icap.cu> (accessed December 10, 2013).

⁵⁴ Canadian Network on Cuba, "Mission and History," n.d., http://canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63&Itemid=91 (accessed December 8, 2013).

⁵⁵ This includes the Communist Party of Canada and the Marxist-Leninist Party of Canada as registered political parties, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers as a public sector union.

⁵⁶ Canadian Network on Cuba, "Largest ever Canadian brigade to Cuba," April 12, 2013, http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=241:largest-ever-canadian-brigade-to-cuba&catid=74:cnc-news-and-events&Itemid=140 (accessed December 7, 2013).

⁵⁷ TCSQC, "Table de concertation de solidarité Québec-Cuba," n.d., http://www.solidaritequebeccuba.qc.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogsection&id=5&Itemid=13 (accessed December 7, 2013).

⁵⁸ Toronto Forum on Cuba, "Home Page," n.d., <http://www.torontoforumoncuba.com/declarations> (accessed December 7, 2013).

⁵⁹ Toronto Forum on Cuba, "Solidarity with Iran SI," December 5, 2010, <http://www.torontoforumoncuba.com/misc-incorporated-links-for-articles/solidarity-with-iran-si-solidaridad-con-irn-si> (accessed December 10, 2013).

⁶⁰ Laura Payton, "Canada closes embassy in Iran, expels Iranian diplomats," CBC, September 7, 2012, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-closes-embassy-in-iran-expels-iranian-diplomats-1.1166509> (accessed, February 3, 2014).

⁶¹ Michael Petrou, "Unofficial Iranian consulate opens in Montreal," Maclean's, October 3, 2013, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/unofficial-iranian-consulate-opens-in-montreal/> (accessed December 10, 2013).

⁶² Around the World, "Senior Cuban official said to defect to U.S.," The New York Times, July 24, 1983, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/24/world/around-the-world-senior-cuban-official-said-to-defect-to-us.html> (December 8, 2013). Researchers suggest Venezuela's Bolivarian Circles are put to a similar, intelligence-gathering purpose, Kirk Andrew Hawkins, David R. Hansen, "Dependent civil society: Círculos Bolivarianos in Venezuela," Vol. 41, Number 1 2006 in Latin American Research Review, Johns Hopkins University: http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/latin_american_research_review/v041/41.1hawkins.html (accessed December 2013), and have also been used to identify militant youth who are later sent for training in Iran, Parliament of Canada, "Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade," April 5, 2005, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1732552&Language=E&Mode=1#Int-1197766> (accessed December 2013).

⁶³ Michael Petrou, "Iran's long reach into Canada," Maclean's, June 20, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/michael-petrou/irans-long-reach-into-canada/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013).

⁶⁴ Michael Petrou's work with Maclean's is available here, <http://www2.macleans.ca/author/mpetrou/>

⁶⁵ Michael Petrou, "Who's behind the centre for Iranian studies?," Maclean's, April 13, 2010, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/who-is-behind-the-centre-for-iranian-studies/> (December 2013).

⁶⁶ Michael Petrou, "Who loves Iran?," Maclean's, August 27, 2010, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/irans-espionage-outreach/> (accessed December 8-10-2013).

⁶⁷ Michael Petrou, "Carleton University teams up with Iranian embassy to honor Ayatollah Khomeini," Maclean's, June 6, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/who-is-behind-the-centre-for-iranian-studies/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013).

⁶⁸ Michael Petrou, "Iranian embassy postpones student convention; Canadian Research Council drops out," Maclean's, June 4, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/michael-petrou/iranian-embassy-postpones-student-convention-iranian-canadian-academics-urge-canadian-research-council-director-not-to-participate/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013).

⁶⁹ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross and Senator Linda Frum, "Terror in the peaceable kingdom: understanding and addressing violent extremism in Canada" Washington: foundation for the defense of democracies, 2012, http://www.defenddemocracy.org/stuff/uploads/documents/Peaceable_Kingdom.pdf, and Consulate of Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, "Conoce la agenda de tu centro cultural Simón Bolívar," n.d., <http://www.consulvenemontreal.org/contacto>. The same strategy is employed in Latin America Douglas Farah, "Testimony," n.d., <http://www.ibiconsultants.net/pdf/testimony-of-douglas-farah.pdf>

⁷⁰ Michael Petrou, "Iran's long reach into Canada," Maclean's, June 20, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/michael-petrou/irans-long-reach-into-canada/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013). Canadian Network on Cuba, "Volunteer Brigade page," n.d., <http://www.canadiannetworkoncuba.ca/brigade/> (accessed December 10, 2013). Coordinadora Bolivariana Solidaridad con Venezuela, "Evaluación de proyecto de brigadas a Venezuela," Xixón, Spain, May 2010, <http://www.coordinadorabolivariana.org/encuentros/Encuentro-3/3e-doco2.htm> (accessed December 8-10, 2013).

⁷¹ Michael Petrou, "Iran's long reach into Canada," Maclean's, June 20, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/michael-petrou/irans-long-reach-into-canada/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013); Suzanne Weiss and John Riddell, "Venezuela We Are With You Coalition," n.d., <http://www.socialistproject.ca/inthenews/venezuela.html> (accessed December 8, 2013); Queen's University, Cuba Handbook 2013, <http://www.queensu.ca/devs/undergraduate/workstudy/cuba-1/cubahandbook2013.pdf> (accessed December 8, 2013). There is currently an average of seven to ten universities offering for-credit courses in Cuba, including: University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, University of Saskatchewan, University of Toronto, Ryerson University, McGill University, Dalhousie University, and St. Mary's University.

⁷² Michael Petrou, "Islamists, Iran and the RCMP's 'cultural diversity'," Maclean's, October 26, 2010, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/michael-petrou/islamists-iran-and-the-rcmps-cultural-diversity/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013); Iran, and Avanzada Bolivariana, "Health" (video), n.d., <http://vimeo.com/50833908> (accessed January 12, 2014), and OpenParliament.org, "Human rights in Venezuela," n.d., <http://openparliament.ca/committees/international-human-rights/40-3/12/?page=1> (accessed December 8-10, 2013). ⁷³ Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Ministry of Popular Power for Foreign Relations, "Celebración del día de la solidaridad mundial con la revolución bolivariana y el comandante Hugo Chávez," July 22, 2012, http://www.consultorontario.com/noticias_19.html (accessed December 8-10, 2013). (Venezuela), Embassy of Cuba in Canada, "Cuba diplomatic," n.d., <http://www.cubadiplomatica.cu/canada/EN/Solidarity/withCubaformCanada.aspx> (accessed April 14, 2014). (Cuba).

⁷³ Hands Off Venezuela, "Canada/Quebec: Meetings in support of the Bolivarian revolution," September 20, 2010, http://www.handsoffvenezuela.org/canada_quebec_meetings_support_bolivarian_revolution.htm (accessed December 8-10, 2013).

⁷⁴ Around the World, "Senior Cuban official said to defect to U.S.," The New York Times, July 24, 1983, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/07/24/world/around-the-world-senior-cuban-official-said-to-defect-to-us.html> (December 8, 2013). Researchers suggest Venezuela's Bolivarian Circles are put to a similar, intelligence-gathering purpose, Kirk Andrew Hawkins, David R. Hansen, "Dependent civil society: Circulos Bolivarianos in Venezuela," Vol. 41, Number 1 2006 in Latin American Research Review, Johns Hopkins University: <http://muse.jhu.edu/login?auth=o&type=summary&url=/journals/>

atin.american.research.review/v041/41.1hawkins.html (accessed December 2013) and have also been used to identify militant youth who are later sent for training in Iran, Parliament of Canada, "Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade," April 5, 2005, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=1732552&Language=E&Mode=1#Int-1197766> (accessed December 2013);

Michael Petrou, "Iran's long reach into Canada," Maclean's, June 20, 2012, <http://www.macleans.ca/authors/michael-petrou/irans-long-reach-into-canada/> (accessed December 8-10, 2013). <http://www2.macleans.ca/2012/06/20/irans-long-reach-into-canada/> (Iran)

⁷⁵ International Action Center, "Solidarity tour! First stop: Havana – Immense solidarity with people of Iran," December 3, 2010, <http://www.iacenter.org/cuba/iran-si120910/> (accessed January 12, 2013).

⁷⁶ Periódico24.cu, "Cuban ambassador talks about ALBA in a seminar in Iran," December 16, 2013, <http://www.periodico26.cu/index.php/en/cuba-news/15106-cuban-ambassador-talks-about-alba-in-a-seminar-in-iran> (accessed December 27, 2013).

⁷⁷ For more on the AMIA case, read the 674-page indictment by Attorney General Alberto Nisman from the Investigations Unit of the Office of the Attorney General in Argentina: <http://www.peaceandtolerance.org/docs/nismanindict.pdf>

⁷⁸ Olympia Newton, "Venezuela forum debates prospects for revolutionary change in the U.S.," The Militant, December 3, 2007, <http://themilitant.com/2007/12/45/714503.html> (accessed March 3, 2014).

⁷⁹ Refrain from Canada's national anthem, "Oh Canada, we stand on guard for thee."

⁸⁰ To read the entire security study by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration (CIMM), see: http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=6038280&Language=E&Mode=2&Parl=41&Ses=1&File=102#_ftnref84



Joseph M. Humire, a global security expert specializing on transnational threats in the Western Hemisphere, is the executive director of the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS). He provides regular briefings to the U.S. Department of Defense and intelligence community on Islamic terrorism, transnational organized crime, and emerging threats in Latin America—and has briefed policymakers in various countries throughout the region. He has also testified multiple times before the U.S. Congress, as well as the European, Canadian, and Andean Parliament. His first book, *Iran's Strategic Penetration of Latin America* (Lexington Books), was published in October, 2014. A regular national security commentator for major Spanish-language media, including Univision, Telemundo, CNN en Español, and others, Humire is an opinion leader on the rise and threats of Islamic extremism. Prior to SFS, he was the Director of Institute Relations at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation and is a combat veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps with deployments to the Middle East, Africa, and a multinational training exercise UNITAS in Latin America and the Caribbean. After leaving the military, Humire earned a degree in Economics and Global Affairs from George Mason University. His unique blend of military experience, education in economics, and national security expertise—offers a fresh perspective to contemporary U.S. foreign policy and national security challenges.

SFS senior fellow, Fernando Menéndez, an economist and political analyst with expertise on Cuba, China, and Latin America, along with Victoria Henderson of the Canadian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis, contributed research and writing to this policy report.

Disclaimer

The opinions and views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the policy or position of the Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS).

About SFS

The Center for a Secure Free Society (SFS) is a global, next-generation, national security think tank advancing freedom and security worldwide. SFS publishes policy reports about important national security and foreign policy issues of interest. Drawing from field research, SFS brings international expertise to U.S. policymakers providing creative and effective policy solutions to emerging threats worldwide.

© 2017 Center for a Secure Free Society
All Rights Reserved

TEL: +1 (703) 628.6988

EMAIL: info@securefreesociety.org

WEBSITE: securefreesociety.org

TWITTER: Follow us @securefreesoc

FACEBOOK: Like us /securefreesociety

509 C Street, Northeast
Washington D.C. 20002

