

## **We must call upon all peoples and governments of Our America to mobilize and remain alert in the defense of Venezuela.**

*SPEECH BY ARMY GENERAL RAÚL CASTRO RUZ, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF CUBA AND PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCILS OF STATE AND MINISTERS, AT THE 9TH EXTRAORDINARY ALBA-TCP SUMMIT, CONVENED IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE SISTER NATION OF VENEZUELA, HELD IN CARACAS, THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA, MARCH 17, 2015*

Esteemed Heads of State and Government of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America;

Esteemed Heads of delegations and guests;

Compañeras and compañeros:

ALBA brings us together today to reaffirm our firmest support for the Bolivarian people and government in the face of the latest interventionist measures and threats from the U.S. government against Venezuela.

The facts demonstrate that history can not be ignored. The relations between the United States and Latin America and the Caribbean have been marked by the “Monroe Doctrine” and the objective of exercising domination and hegemony over our nations.

Bolívar had anticipated that the United States, “seems destined by Providence to plague America with misery in the name of Liberty” and Martí fell in combat before concluding the letter in which he explained the “duty of preventing the United States from spreading throughout the Antilles as Cuba gains its independence, and from overpowering with that additional strength our lands of America.”

Later came the military interventions, the coup d’états, the maneuvers to overthrow nationalist or progressive governments, the backing of bloody military dictatorships, the undercover operations, the support for terrorism and subversion, as well as the appropriation and plundering of our resources to perpetuate dependence and underdevelopment.

The triumphant audacity to carry out a socialist revolution just 90 miles from the United States, has meant immense sacrifices, suffering, loss of life and material deprivation for the Cuban people, subject to, since that very revolutionary triumph, 56 years ago, every kind of hostility, including the support and organization of armed bands in the mountains from the end of that same year of 1959 - that is, since the very year of the triumph of the Revolution - the Bay of Pigs Invasion in 1961 and the formalization of the blockade in 1962, all with the stated intention of defeating the Revolution and changing the political, economic and social order we freely chose and subsequently confirmed in a constitutional referendum.

The result has been a resounding failure, the harming of our people and the complete isolation of the United States in its intentions, as recently recognized by President Barack Obama on announcing a new policy and resolving to open another chapter. However, his government spokespeople insist on clarifying that the objectives persist and only the methods change.

The triumph of the Bolivarian Revolution was an extraordinary milestone in the history of Venezuela and the whole region, which had begun to awaken from the long neoliberal slumber. An era of change commenced in the continent and other nations decided to embark on the path towards full independence and integration and again take up the flags of our national heroes.

Alba, Unasur, CELAC were born, which united, in their diversity, previous groupings and initiatives of genuine Latin Americanist and Caribbean calling, founded on principles of solidarity, cooperation, social justice and defense of sovereignty.

PetroCaribe was an extraordinary, generous and humanistic contribution of President Hugo Chávez Frías. Now they want to destroy PetroCaribe to threaten its member states, submit them to the oil multinationals and separate them from Venezuela. They do not realize that our peoples have decided, irrevocably, to continue our unstoppable advance and fight for a multipolar and just world, where those who were historically excluded have a voice, hope and dignity.

U.S. imperialism has attempted, without success, practically all possible formulas to destabilize and subvert the Bolivarian Chavista revolution, to recuperate its control of the largest oil reserves on the planet, and deliver a blow to the integrationist, emancipation process underway in Our America.

The arbitrary, aggressive, unjustified executive order issued by the President of the United States regarding the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela's government, describing it as a threat to its national security, shows that the United States is able to sacrifice the peace and the direction of hemispheric and regional relations, for reasons of domination and domestic politics.

The idea is untenable that a country like Venezuela - which has shown so much solidarity, never invaded or harmed any other, and contributes in a significant and altruistic manner to the energy security and economic stability of a considerable number of nations of the continent - could represent a threat to the security of the greatest super-power in history.

We support the honorable, valiant, constructive position taken by President Nicolás Maduro, (applause) who, despite the seriousness of this threat, has extended his hand to the President of the United States, to initiate a dialogue based on international law and mutual respect, which could lead to the unconditional revocation of President Obama's executive order and the normalization of relations. (Applause) Alba and CELAC should join in this proposal.

Today Venezuela is not alone, nor is our region the one it was 20 years ago. We will not tolerate the violation of sovereignty or allow peace in the region to be broken with impunity.

As we have reiterated, threats to the peace and stability of Venezuela represent threats to regional stability and peace, as well.

The peace which Venezuela today demands and which we all need, a "peace with justice, with equality, the peace on our feet, not on our knees, is peace with dignity and development," as Maduro said, is the peace to which we committed ourselves in the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted by the II CELAC Summit in Havana.

Our country's position under these circumstances remains unchanged. I reiterate the firm solidarity of the Cuban Revolution with the Bolivarian Revolution, with constitutional President Nicolás Maduro and with the civic-military union which he heads. (Applause) I reiterate our absolute loyalty to the memory of Comandante Hugo Chávez Frías, the Cuban Revolution's best friend. (Applause)

As has been stated, we reaffirm once again, "The Cuban collaborators present in the sister country, will continue to fulfill their duties under any circumstances whatsoever, to the benefit of the fraternal, noble, generous people of Venezuela."

The United States must understand once and for all that it is impossible to seduce or buy Cuba, or intimidate Venezuela. Our unity is indestructible. (Applause)

Nor will we concede one iota in the defense of sovereignty and independence, or tolerate any type of interference or conditions on our internal affairs.

Nor will we cease to defend just causes in Our America and the world, nor will we ever abandon our brothers in the struggle. We have come to close ranks with Venezuela and Alba, and reaffirm that principles are not negotiable. (Applause)

To defend these convictions, we will attend the 7th Summit of the Americas. We will present our positions, with firmness, clarity and respect. We will reject with determination any attempt to isolate or threaten Venezuela, and demand a definitive end to the blockade of Cuba.

Cuban civil society will be the voice of those without a voice, and we will expose the mercenaries who will appear there as Cuba's civil society

We must call upon all peoples and governments of Our America to mobilize and remain alert in the defense of Venezuela. Solidarity is the foundation of unity and regional integration.

Thank you very much. (Applause)