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FOR DEMOCRACY

OIL FOR REPRESSION

THE \$63.8 BILLION AUDIT OF CUBA'S
INTELLIGENCE OCCUPATION IN VENEZUELA



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The military operation executed by the United States on January 3rd in Venezuela not only ended with Maduro's capture but with **32 Cuban agents killed in combat, proving the remarkable presence of Havana's regime in Caracas.**

Since 2000, Venezuela has traded its oil for regime survival through the 'Oil for Repression' model. This exchange enabled the **Group of Coordination and Liaison (GRUCE)**, a Cuban intelligence node to replace sovereign Venezuelan command with a foreign-run security architecture, paid for with oil.

Venezuela has paid Cuba \$63.8 billion (at present value) to finance its own repression. This forfeited capital could have funded 67% of Venezuela's announced oil-sector investment requirement or rebuilt Venezuela's collapsed power and water grids three times over. By prioritizing the 'Oil-for-Repression' model, the regime traded the nation's industrial future for a Cuban-designed praetorian guard. This \$63 billion stolen opportunity makes dismantling the GRUCE more than a political necessity, it is a prerequisite for economic recovery.

Since 2008, the GRUCE overhauled Venezuela's defense and intelligence systems, replacing traditional doctrine with Cuban counterintelligence frameworks and pivoting the state's mission from public safety to regime preservation, turning its security forces into a praetorian guard now serving as the final foothold for Delcy Rodríguez's administration.

While recent events have been shaping the political and economic landscape in Venezuela, as of the date of this report, the Cuban influence remains. As of February 2026, Cuban security advisers and medical personnel have begun departing Venezuela under intense U.S. pressure; however, this operational withdrawal does not equate to institutional dismantlement. The doctrinal legacy of the GRUCE, embedded in the organizational culture, protocols, and personnel of the DGCIM (General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence) and (SEBIN Bolivarian National Intelligence Service), remains the primary structural barrier to any genuine democratic transition.



Five structural realities define why the GRUCE's dismantlement is non-negotiable for any genuine transition:

- **Dismantling GRUCE as a Prerequisite:** Any 'transition' remains a cosmetic exercise as long as the GRUCE remains embedded in the security apparatus. Swapping the executive face while preserving a foreign-run counterintelligence heart is not democratization, but regime mutation.
- **The 'Invasion by Invitation' Paradox:** The \$63.8 billion subsidy to Havana was a deliberate surrender of sovereignty for an insurance policy against the Venezuelan people. The current U.S. naval blockade has severed this financial lifeline, but the 'Stay-Behind' network of enforcers, led by **Gustavo González López, Alexander Granko, and the Cabello family (Diosdado and Alexis)**, ensures the architecture of repression survives Maduro, serving as Delcy Rodríguez's sole leverage against a country demanding change.
- **Replacement over Reform:** The DGCIM and SEBIN are 'Cubanized' beyond repair. A genuine opening requires the Western Hemisphere to recognize that these institutions cannot be reformed; they must be abolished and replaced by professional forces decoupled from Havana's doctrine.
- **The Amnesty Paradox:** Delcy Rodríguez's 'Amnesty Law' is a tactical release valve, not a democratic pivot. By trading prisoner release for legitimacy and investment, the regime protects its repressive core. This gesture leaves the DGCIM and SEBIN architectures intact, ready for reactivation.
- **Weakened but with Regional Influence:** Despite being weakened by U.S. actions, the Caracas-Havana axis projects threat through proxy organizations like the Tren de Aragua, endangering Latin American democracies.

This report provides an overview of the Oil for Repression scheme and serves as the first in a series exploring the depth of Cuban influence and support for the Venezuelan regime.



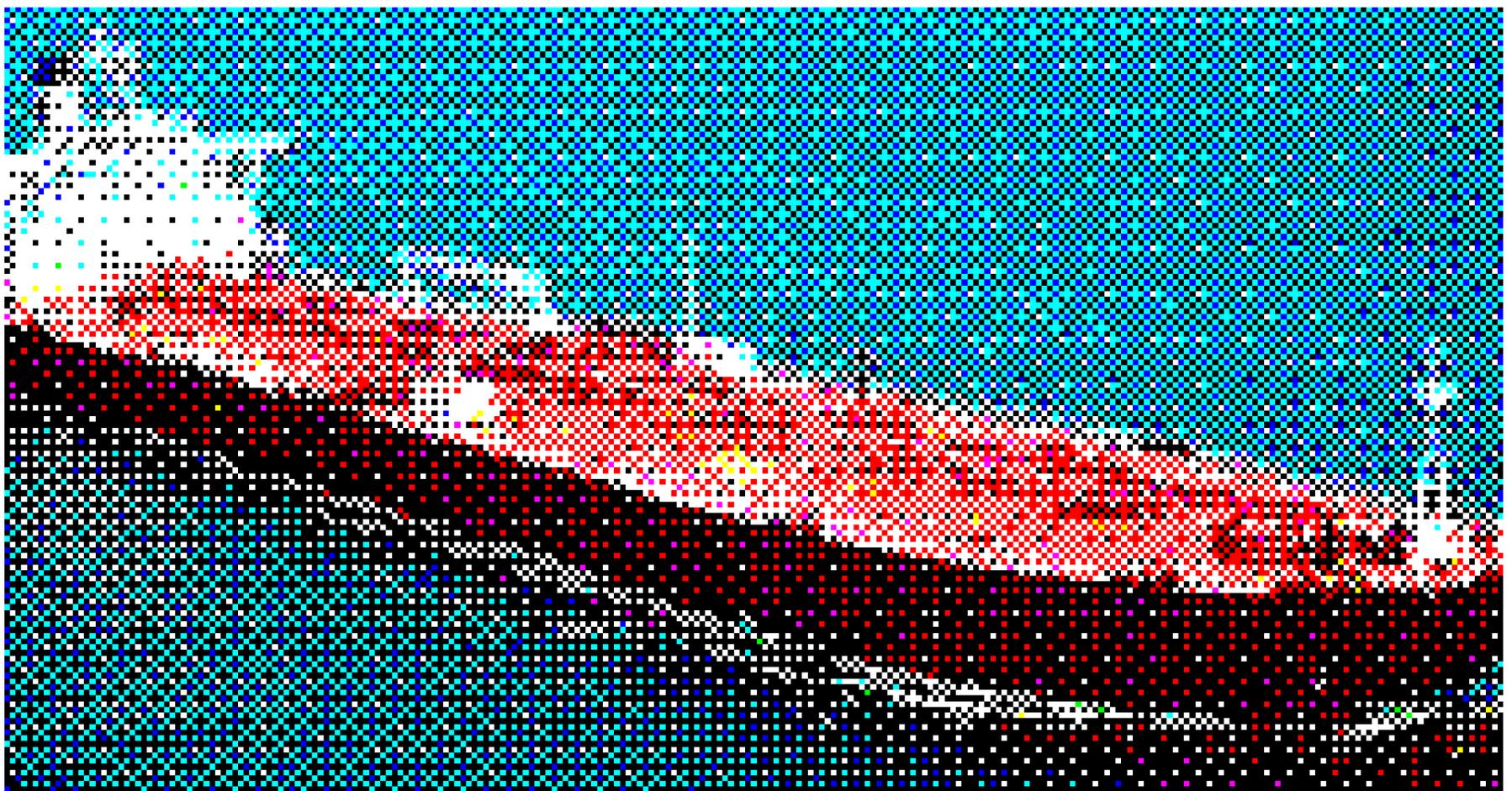
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THE \$63.8 BILLION BILL FOR REPRESSION

The primary payment mechanism for the security, intelligence, and control architecture implemented by Cuba in Venezuela was not cash, but rather the nation's energy mortgage. This unequal exchange oil in return for intelligence and repressive services consolidated a structural dependency that has cost Venezuela more than:

\$63.8 billion in oil subsidies (at present value).

Cuba's invoice to Venezuela is significantly greater when accounting for bilateral and regional projects under the Petrocaribe framework, founded in 2005 by Caracas and Havana. These investments spanned critical infrastructure, including refineries, petrochemical complexes, and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) regasification facilities in Cuba.



Petrocaribe was an oil alliance launched in 2005 by Venezuela –under Cuban influence– that supplied Caribbean and Central American countries with petroleum under preferential financing terms. It functioned as a geopolitical instrument, allowing beneficiary states to defer a significant portion of payments over long periods at low interest rates in exchange for political and economic alignment.



For example, in just three Petrocaribe infrastructure projects in Cuba reported in 2009, Venezuela invested a nominal \$3.759 billion, which represents a real cost of \$5.75 billion in constant 2026 dollars. Similarly, debt relief operations in 2005 and 2006, such as the purchase of Cuban refinery debts exceeding a nominal \$80 million, equate to more than \$130 million today.

While this research focuses primarily on direct oil shipments, the total financial drain is much larger. When combining historical oil subsidies with these infrastructure outlays and debt assumptions, **it is a conservative estimate that Venezuela has transferred a nominal \$44.5 billion to Cuba. Adjusted for inflation, this 'Repression Bill' reaches a staggering \$63.8 billion** in constant 2026 dollars a sum that effectively bankrupted the Venezuelan state to secure the survival of its authoritarian architecture.

Signed in October 2000, the Venezuela-Cuba agreement was presented as a humanitarian exchange. However, its implementation revealed a payment scheme designed for the asymmetric transfer of resources:



Extreme Financial Conditions:

15 year terms, 2 year grace periods, and interest rates of 2%.



Non-verifiable Bartering:

The 'payment through services' clause allowed for the arbitrary valuation of medical missions and, fundamentally, intelligence and security consultancy. The opacity in the valuation of these services is the keystone that allows the payment for repression to be disguised



EVOLUTION OF VENEZUELA'S OIL PAYMENTS

During the period from 2000 to 2025, it is estimated that Venezuela has sent nearly \$40 billion (in constant terms) to Cuba through oil transfers. This figure is based in part on historical data compiled by the U.S. Cuba Trade and Economic Council, which documented Venezuelan oil exports to Cuba from 2000 through 2016, including volumes and terms of the original cooperation agreements.

In subsequent years, the estimate incorporates data from reputable economic sources, think tanks, and specialized media that track Venezuelan oil shipments, tanker movements, and PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A) export reports. These include analyses of export volumes and trends through the late 2010s and early 2020s, reflecting the decline in shipments amid falling oil production, economic crisis, and international sanctions.

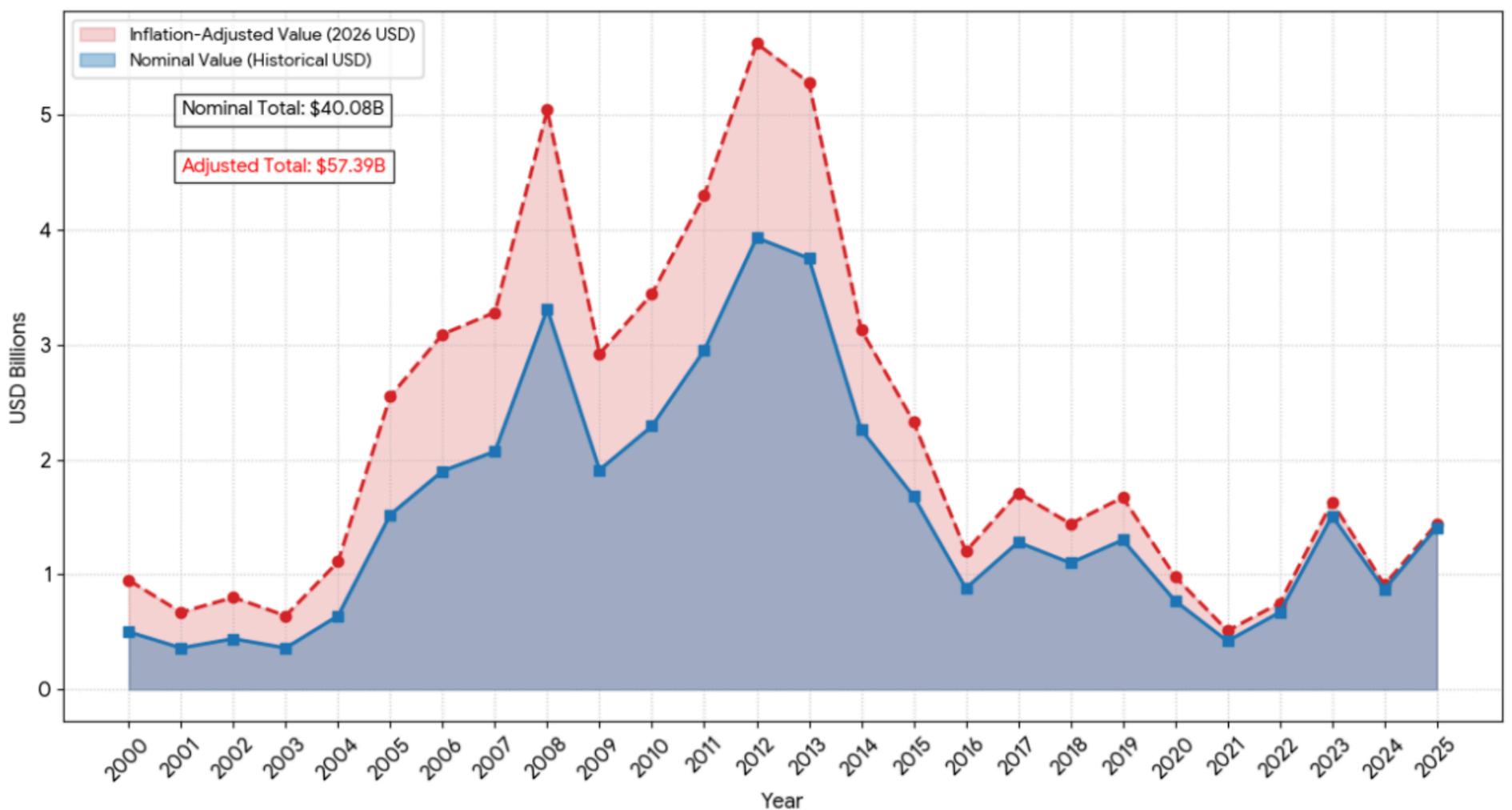


Figure 1: Estimated value of Venezuela-Cuba oil exports (Reconstruction based on data from OPEC, PDVSA, and journalistic sources).



The Integral Cooperation Agreement of 2000, signed by Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro, laid the foundation for Venezuela’s oil exports to Cuba. Under this agreement, **Venezuela initially committed to sending 53,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil.** The arrangement operated as a barter system: Cuba could finance much of the oil by providing long-term services, including medical personnel, teachers, and other professionals, under very favorable financial terms loans with low interest rates (1–2%) and repayment periods of 15–25 years.

In 2004, the agreement was renewed, maintaining the 53,000 bpd baseline and establishing a guaranteed minimum price of \$27 per barrel to protect Cuba from rising international oil prices.

From 2005 to 2012, **Venezuela increased shipments to Cuba, peaking at 115,000 bpd in 2008** and **averaging around 105,000 bpd until 2012.** These exports were central to Venezuela’s energy diplomacy and were further reinforced through mechanisms like Petrocaribe and ALBA (The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America), using subsidized oil as a tool of political and ideological influence.

Starting in 2013, exports declined due to PDVSA’s falling production and deteriorating refineries, dropping to around 69,000 bpd in 2016 and roughly 55,000 bpd in 2017, causing fuel shortages and electricity rationing in Cuba.

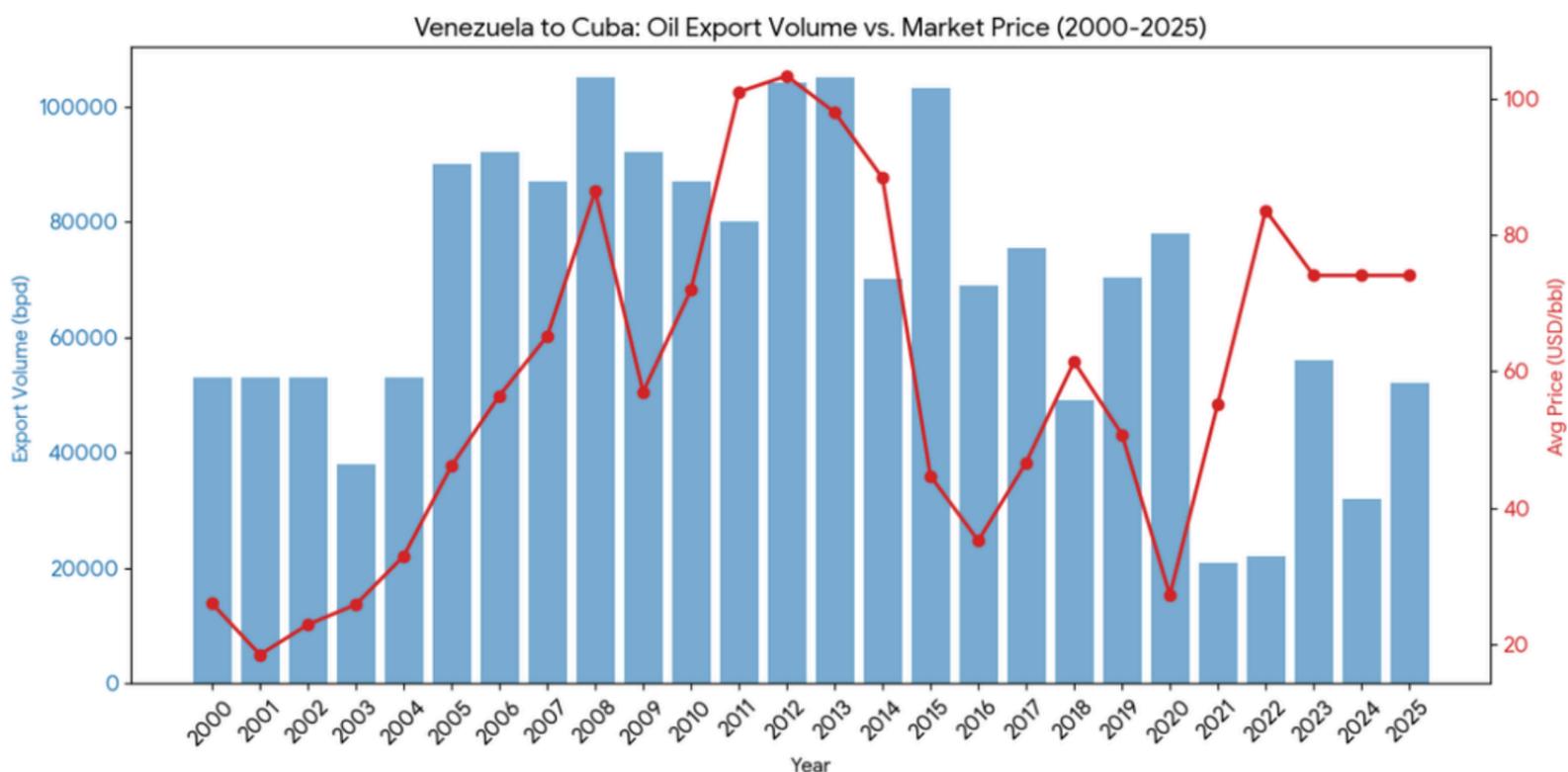


Chart 2: Estimated value of Venezuela’s oil exports to Cuba (reconstruction based on OPEC, PDVSA, and journalistic sources).



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The decline continued through the early 2020s. In 2024, exports averaged 32,000 bpd, while in 2025 shipments recovered to 52,000 bpd, reflecting both occasional increases in deliveries and Venezuela’s partial prioritization of Cuba despite broader economic and market pressures. When analyzing the transfer of wealth to the Cuban regime, the nominal figure of \$40 billion (nominal terms) significantly underestimates the real economic impact. By adjusting historical oil shipments to constant 2026 dollars, the cumulative cost of the security and repression architecture **rises to \$57.4 billion**, which adding the direct conservatives flows of Petrocaribe investments, amount to **\$63.8 billion**.

OIL SHIPMENTS FROM VENEZUELA TO CUBA

Year	Export Volume (bpd)	Avg. Price (USD/bbl)	Nominal Value (USD Billions)	Adjusted Value (Constant 2026 USD Billions)
2000	53,000	25.91	0.50	0.95
2001	53,000	18.41	0.36	0.67
2002	53,000	22.81	0.44	0.80
2003	38,000	25.76	0.36	0.64
2004	53,000	32.88	0.64	1.11
2005	90,000	46.15	1.52	2.55
2006	92,000	56.45	1.90	3.09
2007	87,000	65.20	2.07	3.28
2008	105,000	86.49	3.31	5.04
2009	92,000	57.01	1.91	2.92
2010	87,000	71.97	2.29	3.44
2011	80,000	101.06	2.95	4.30
2012	104,000	103.42	3.93	5.62
2013	105,000	98.06	3.75	5.28
2014	70,000	88.42	2.26	3.13
2015	103,226	44.65	1.68	2.33
2016	69,000	35.15	0.88	1.20
2017	75,350	46.66	1.28	1.71
2018	49,000	61.41	1.10	1.44
2019	70,359	50.77	1.30	1.67
2020	78,000	27.15	0.77	0.98
2021	21,000	55.24	0.42	0.51
2022	22,000	83.69	0.67	0.75
2023	56,000	74.12	1.51	1.63
2024	32,000	74.12	0.87	0.91
2025	52,000	74.12	1.41	1.44
TOTAL			\$40.08	\$57.40



THE INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF REPRESSION

The institutionalization of Cuban influence within the Venezuelan state is not a byproduct of informal proximity but the result of a deliberate, contractual re-engineering of the Venezuelan security apparatus. At the center of this architecture is the Group of Coordination and Liaison (GRUCE).

The Genesis of GRUCE (2007–2008): A Response to Internal Frailty

The decisive pivot toward a Cuban-run security architecture followed Hugo Chávez's first major electoral defeat in the 2007 constitutional referendum. This loss, coupled with signs of unrest within the Armed Forces, catalyzed a "*new military thought*" focused on neutralizing internal dissent rather than external defense.

May 2008 Agreements Documents revealed that the Cuban and Venezuelan defense ministries signed two reserved cooperation agreements. These granted Cuba the authority to:

- **Restructure FANB** (Venezuela's armed forces, per their acronym in Spanish) **segments** and train Venezuelan intelligence agents in Havana.
- **Redesign military intelligence missions** to prioritize the surveillance of Venezuelan officers.
- **Establish the GRUCE**, a committee of eight Cuban "military specialists" tasked with inspecting Venezuelan units and training soldiers.

In particular, one of the agreements allowed Cuban officials to oversee the "assimilation" and "modernization" of Venezuela's military, which led, among others to a proliferation of senior officials to dilute power and the possibilities of coups or uprising.





THE 2008 INTELLIGENCE LAW: A DIRECT TRANSFER OF THE CUBAN MODEL

The so-called “Ley Sapo” (Snitch Law) represented a conceptual turning point, as it sought to consolidate a security model inspired by the Cuban doctrine of “Integral Defense.” This law aimed to fuse civilian, military, and social intelligence under direct political control. Far from being an isolated regulation, it was the juridical expression of a totalitarian ideological and doctrinal convergence between Havana and Caracas. Its objective was to transform “national security” from a state service into an instrument of political control dedicated exclusively to the preservation of the ruling elite.

The legal text reflected three fundamental characteristics that reveal the preponderance of the Cuban approach:

- **Social Intelligence and Mandatory Collaboration:** The law established the principle that all citizens and private entities were required to provide any information requested by intelligence agencies on any subject. This replicated the Cuban schemes of neighborhood surveillance and social monitoring networks (CDRs).
- **Institutional Centralization:** The National Intelligence and Counterintelligence System (SNIC) was designed under the direct coordination of the presidency, mimicking the decision-making concentration typical of highly politicized security apparatuses. In parallel, reserved military cooperation and the creation of the GRUCE underpinned the tight articulation between military intelligence and Cuban advisory.
- **Political-Ideological Focus:** State security was formulated as the defense of the “Revolution” or the “revolutionary government,” effectively equating the protection of the national interest with the preservation of political power.

While the law was rejected by broad sectors, including jurists, media, and human rights organizations, leading President Chávez to suspend its application on May 31, 2008, **its most significant impact remained doctrinal and operational.** Many of its principles persisted in practice through institutional reorganization, the normalization of social surveillance, and the consolidation of agencies whose primary functions are centered on internal control.



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THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF POLITICAL INTELLIGENCE

The transition from DISIP to SEBIN marked another critical turning point in the re-engineering of the Venezuelan repressive apparatus. This shift signified the institutionalization of a new paradigm of political intelligence, directly inspired by the Cuban model of the Ministry of the Interior (MININT).

SEBIN was officially established via Presidential Decree No. 6.287, published in the Extraordinary Official Gazette No. 5.891 on June 4, 2008. Its creation coincided with the promulgation and subsequent suspension of the "Ley Sapo" (Intelligence Law). This timing demonstrates that SEBIN was not an isolated administrative reform, but rather a central piece of a comprehensive restructuring of the national security system aimed at internal control and the defense of the political project.

Doctrinally, the change from DISIP to SEBIN involved a move away from an intelligence logic linked to public safety toward a politico-strategic organ dedicated to the preservation of the regime. SEBIN adopted a vertical and centralized structure, with a heavy emphasis on political intelligence, social surveillance, and the preemptive control of dissent.

Unlike DISIP, whose formal mandate centered on crime prevention, SEBIN prioritized the protection of the "Bolivarian political process" a concept fundamentally aligned with the Cuban state security model, where the stability of those in power is indistinguishable from national security.





The Doctrinal Rebirth: From DIM to DGCIM

The most profound institutional impact of the GRUCE was the 2011 transformation of the Military Intelligence Directorate (DIM) into (DGCIM). This was not a mere name change; it represented a fundamental shift in doctrine:

- **Internal Focus:** The DGCIM's primary mission was redirected from external threats to the monitoring of internal military communications, the infiltration of units with informants, and the neutralization of potential intra-military conspiracies.
- **Cuban Methodology:** This redesign was modeled directly after the Cuban Intelligence Directorate, utilizing Cuban-designed training manuals, interrogation protocols, and organizational frameworks.

The "Triangulo Duro" (Hard Triangle): 2013–Ongoing

Following the consolidation of power under Nicolás Maduro and the creation of the Strategic Center for Security and Protection of the Homeland (CESPPA) in 2013, the GRUCE expanded its reach into a "triángulo duro" (hard triangle) of repression:

DGCIM:

Manages surveillance and repression within the military and, increasingly, civil society.

SEBIN:

Targeted civil society, political opposition, and the private sector.

GRUCE:

Acted as the connective tissue, ensuring operational and doctrinal consistency while serving as a direct reporting line to Havana.



THE HUMAN COST OF THE MODEL

The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), established in 2019, has consistently documented that the Venezuelan state's repressive apparatus functions as a coordinated structure designed to crush dissent.

In its detailed report on intelligence services (A/HRC/51/CRP.3), the Mission concluded that **SEBIN and DGCIM executed illegal detentions, torture, and other cruel treatments “against real or perceived opponents and their relatives.”** These actions were part of a plan designed and validated by the highest levels of political leadership.

The report further emphasizes that the internal structures and dynamics of these agencies remain intact, and many responsible officials have not only retained their positions but have been promoted as a reward for their crimes.

The sheer volume of political prisoners illustrates the human impact of this repressive architecture. Between 2014 and 2023, comprehensive reports from Foro Penal and Freedom House indicate that:

- The cumulative number of political arrests since 2014 exceeds 18,000.
- This reached a historic peak in 2024, following protests over the presidential election, when nearly 2,000 political detainees were recorded, an unprecedented figure.

Figura. El Helicoide



PATTERNS OF SYSTEMATIC TORTURE

The consequences of the GRUCE–DGCIM–SEBIN nexus are starkly visible in the technical details of the FFM reports.

Patterns of systematic torture against political detainees in centers such as El Helicoide (SEBIN) and Boleíta (DGCIM), dozens of clandestine sites, and state prisons include:

- Severe beatings with bats and blunt objects.
- Electric shocks to genitals and sensitive areas.
- Asphyxiation with plastic bags, water, or toxic substances.
- Mutilations of feet and under the fingernails.
- Rape and sexual violence with objects.
- Forced exposure to extreme temperatures, constant light, or total darkness.
- Death and rape threats against detainees and their families.
- Forced feeding of excrement or vomit.

The FFM concludes that the Venezuelan state executes crimes against humanity as a deliberate policy of control, operating through an architecture of institutional lethality that combines direct physical violence with biological exhaustion.

The 2018 assassination of Fernando Albán while under SEBIN custody which refuted the official suicide narrative established a precedent for extreme torture and the physical elimination of high-profile targets. This strategy has since evolved toward methods of greater administrative opacity, as evidenced in late 2025 by the death of political prisoner Alfredo Díaz. By systematically denying medical care to detainees, the DGCIM–SEBIN apparatus achieves the permanent elimination of dissenters through "white deaths," ensuring the repressive efficacy of the GRUCE-designed model while attempting to maintain a margin of deniability before the international community.



Fernando Albán



Alfredo Díaz



THE SOCIAL IMPACT: INSTITUTIONALIZED FEAR

As highlighted by the Wilson Center, Maduro's security decisions are "based in part on the opinions and instructions of Cuban advisors," with much of this intelligence cooperation coordinated specifically through the GRUCE.

The daily result for Venezuelan society is the **massive institutionalization of fear**. In a country where arbitrary detentions and torture are used as instruments of political control, citizens learn that free expression carries a lethal risk.

The FFM defines this strategy as "persecution on political grounds" aimed at creating a generalized climate of terror. This targets not only political leaders but also students, unionists, NGOs, and even the family members of dissidents, a pattern of arresting relatives to exert pressure and instill fear. The ultimate social consequence is a traumatized nation characterized by widespread self-censorship and a diaspora fleeing not only poverty but the omnipresent risk of state-sponsored repression.



Photo. Diosdado Cabello y Alexander Grangko



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THE CURRENT INFLUENCE OF CUBAN INTERFERENCE IN VENEZUELA

Investigations spanning the 2024–2025 period demonstrate that Maduro's, now Delcy's, regime remains fundamentally dependent on this foreign security architecture to navigate political crises and preempt systemic fractures within the governing coalition.

The **GRUCE** is a mechanism for the **strategic delegation of repressive capabilities**. Through this arrangement, the Venezuelan state effectively imports specialized social control methodologies from Cuba in exchange for granting Havana unilateral access to sovereign strategic intelligence and critical material resources.

The paradigm of this "**Oil for Repression**" model was crystallized during the recent extraction of Nicolás Maduro by U.S. military forces. The Cuban government has formally acknowledged the deaths of 32 of its military and intelligence operatives during the operation conducted in Caracas in the early hours of January 3, 2026. These personnel were officially designated as being on mission within Venezuelan territory under the mandates of the **Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR)** and **(MININT)**.

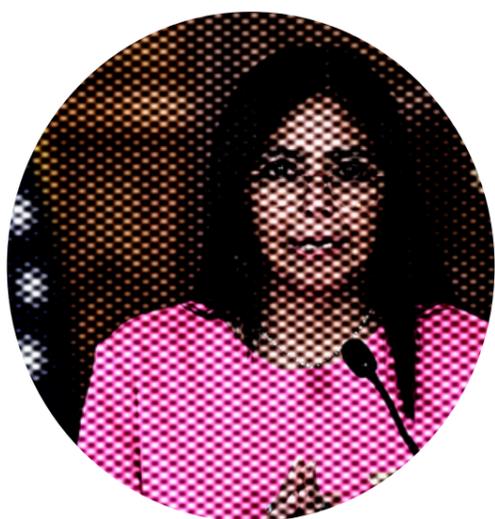
Significantly, this was no marginal contingent. These operatives constituted the elite core of Cuban security specialists who formed the final, innermost ring of Maduro's protection at **Fuerte Tiuna**, the nation's premier military installation. The fact that, in Maduro and Cilia's terminal moment, their primary defense was composed of Cuban military personnel rather than Venezuelan nationals serves as the definitive evidence of Havana's deep penetration and de facto tutelage over the highest echelons of Venezuelan decision-making.

According to some reports, a month after the military operation on January 3rd, Cuban security advisers have begun departing Venezuela, with some removed from DGCIM posts, and Rodríguez has replaced her Cuban bodyguards with Venezuelan personnel. However, the reasons remain ambiguous, whether by her order, Havana's recall, or U.S. pressure remains unclear. That ambiguity is itself revealing. Critically, Cuban military advisers continue operating in Venezuela and Cuban professors remain embedded in UNES (Venezuela's National Experimental University of Security). An operational withdrawal of some personnel does not dismantle the doctrinal and institutional legacy the GRUCE spent 15 years constructing.



THE CIVILIAN-INTELLIGENCE AXIS

It is imperative to note that this subordination extends far beyond the military theater. The civilian power circle that sustained Maduro and which currently seeks to maneuver in the vacuum left by his capture, maintains deep, organic ties to the Cuban state apparatus.



Delcy Rodríguez

Reports identify the current figurehead of the de facto transition as a primary beneficiary of a long-standing, symbiotic relationship with Cuban intelligence. By utilizing these foreign services, Rodríguez successfully neutralized internal rivals and provided Maduro with a "vetted" stream of intelligence regarding potential defections and loyalties within the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV). Delcy publicly supported Cuba's 2021 repressions and served as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 2014-2018, establishing a close personal relationship with Havana.



Jorge Rodríguez

Functioning as the architect of the regime's communicative and negotiating strategy, Jorge Rodríguez has acted as the administrative bridge between the Venezuelan civilian high command and the pervasive network of Cuban advisors embedded within the presidency, public media, and intelligence services. He remains the principal orchestrator of the regime's official narrative and its crisis management protocols.



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DELCY RODRIGUEZ: CONTINUITY OF THE CRIMINAL REGIME

The rise of Delcy Rodríguez to the interim presidency on January 5, 2026, marks the consolidation of a parallel power structure that she meticulously built over the last decade. Far from a merely political figure, Rodríguez has served as the primary architect of a systemic financial ecosystem designed to bypass international sanctions while securing the regime's survival.

Rodríguez transformed PDVSA from a technical state entity into a shadow financial tool. Under her influence, especially as Minister of Economy and later Minister of Petroleum (2024), she pioneered the use of opaque circuits, sea-to-sea oil transfers, and cryptocurrency (specifically USDT/Tether via Sunacrip) to move assets.

This strategy resulted in an estimated \$17 billion in uncollected accounts between 2019 and 2023 per calculations by Transparency International in its Venezuelan Chapter funds effectively diverted into a network of "shell" intermediaries. To protect these economic interests, Rodríguez has integrated the repressive apparatus directly into her inner circle. On January 6, 2026, she appointed General Gustavo González López the former SEBIN chief sanctioned for human rights abuses as the Commander of the Presidential Guard and head of DGCIM. This appointment ensures that the GRUCE-backed surveillance and counterintelligence architecture remains the primary guarantor of her administration, neutralizing internal PSUV rivals and shielding the financial networks that sustain the Caracas-Havana axis.

Rodríguez has begun distancing herself operationally from Havana replacing Cuban bodyguards and advisors with Venezuelan personnel from DGCIM posts. This tactical distancing, however, should not be misread as ideological rupture. A leader who spent a decade building her power base through Cuban intelligence does not abandon that architecture by changing her security detail. The GRUCE-designed institutions she now commands remain intact, and the enforcers she appointed on January 6 González López are themselves products of that system. She is managing the optics of the alliance, not dismantling it.



THE MILITARY AND PARTISAN PILLARS

On the military and partisan front, the symbiosis is anchored by
Diosdado Cabello and **Vladimir Padrino López**:



Diosdado Cabello

As a foundational pillar of the PSUV, Cabello has institutionalized a privileged relationship with Havana, often framing the Cuban experience not merely as a partnership, but as the doctrinal "school" for the Bolivarian Revolution.



Vladimir Padrino López

As the military steward of this alliance, Padrino López has been the indispensable partner for integrating Cuban "total war" and internal surveillance doctrines into the Fuerza Armada Nacional Bolivariana (FANB). His tenure has been defined by the permanent embedding of Havana's officers within the General Staff, the DGCIM, and other high-value strategic units.



THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

We analyze some particular implications of the Oil for Repression scheme:

1. The Impossibility of Institutional Gradualism for Democratization

The DGCIM and SEBIN cannot be "reformed" because their organizational culture is now entirely Cuban. From the interrogation protocols and "White Rooms" to the systematic surveillance of mid-level officers, these institutions are designed for political subjugation, not public safety.

- **The Persistence of the Enforcers:** The continued presence of operational figures like Alexander Granko Arteaga and the return of González López to the DGCIM inner circle prove that the "technical" knowledge of domestic repression remains intact. Moreover, the presence of Alexis Rodríguez Cabello as head of SEBIN and the presence of Diosdado Cabello as Minister of Interior signals that the repressive apparatus remains intact. These individuals represent a permanent deterrent against internal military dissent as well as political dissent.
- **Total Replacement:** any transition that allows this specific network to remain is merely a regime mutation. These institutions must be abolished and replaced with a professional force that is entirely decoupled from Havana's doctrine and influence.



ALEXANDER GRANKO ARTEAGA



GONZÁLEZ LÓPEZ

As long as the enforcer axis Rodríguez, Cabello, Granko, and González-López, retains operational control through the Cuban-modeled SEBIN and DGCIM, any 'economic opening' is a mirage. There is no security for investors, nor freedom for Venezuelans, within a structure designed for subjugation.

As U.S. Naval Academy professor John Polga-Hecimovich noted following the February 2026 Reuters report: 'The Cubans played a key role in keeping the Chavista government in power. The coup-proofing worked brilliantly. The machinery was already built. Removing some of the builders does not demolish the machine.'



THE IMPLICATIONS FOR VENEZUELAN AND FOR A DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

2. The Abdication of National Sovereignty

The most profound legacy of the Oil for Repression model is the total abdication of Venezuelan sovereignty through what is termed "Invasion by Invitation." Unlike a conventional military conquest, the Venezuelan state deliberately traded its primary strategic asset oil to allow the Cuban regime to colonize its security and intelligence apparatus.

Any redemocratization process should involve the expulsion of foreign actors under secret schemes such as has happened with not only Cuban but also Iranian, Russian, Chinese or Belorussian actors and a re-foundation of institutions that are beyond reform and repair.

3. Beyond security, the Cuban influence is structural

Other economic areas and government sectors in Venezuela still have structural Cuban influence, including such as identity, agriculture, and tourism or other sectors of the government and economy.



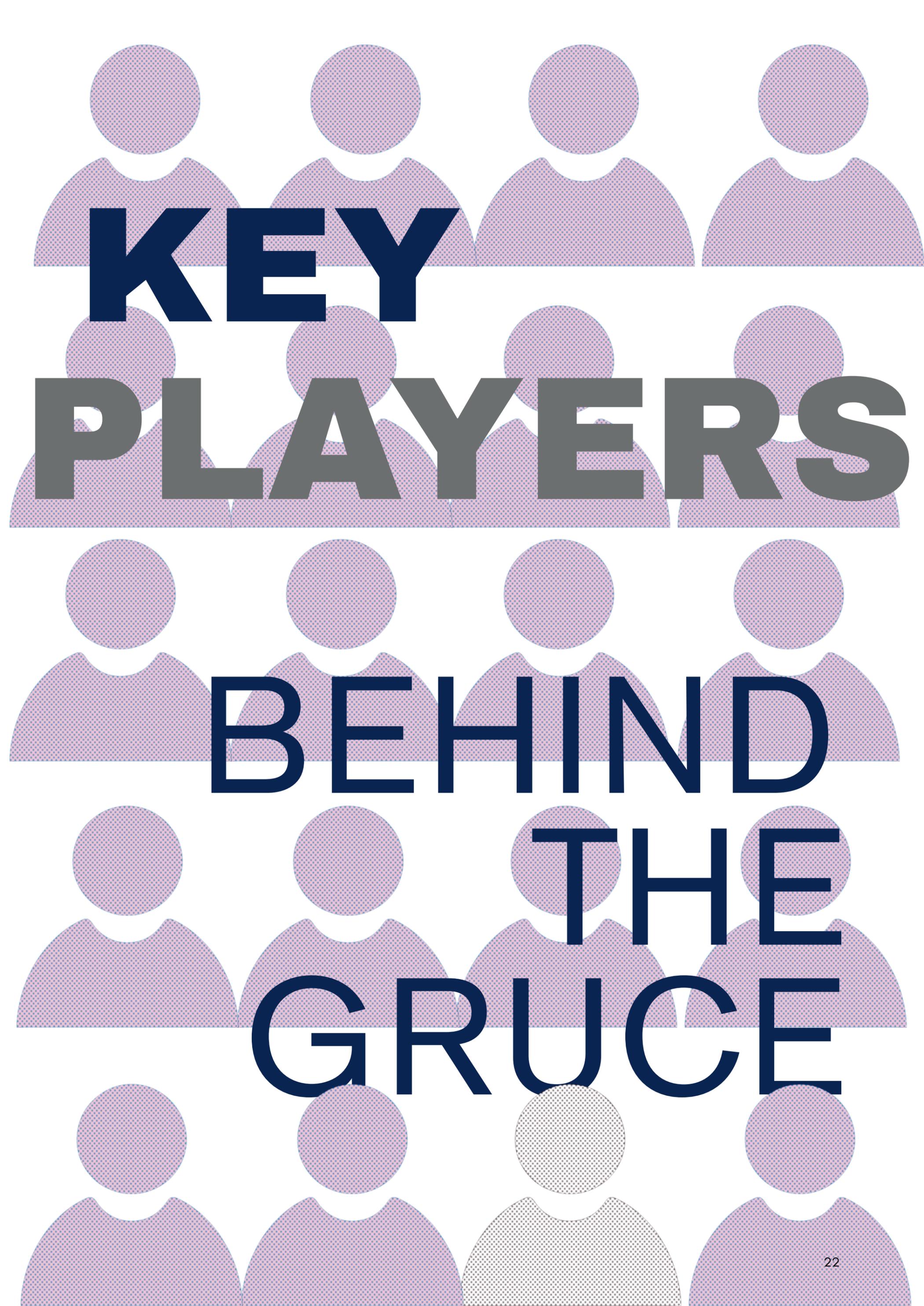


WHAT WOULD THE VENEZUELAN AND CUBAN AUTOCRACIES LOOK LIKE WITHOUT OIL FOR REPRESSION?

Dismantling the GRUCE would serve as a potential "silver bullet" because it targets the primary survival mechanism of both the Venezuelan and Cuban regimes simultaneously. In particular, dismantling of oil shipments (currently ongoing through U.S. influence) could lead to:

- **Havana's Economic Asphyxiation:** Without subsidized Venezuelan crude, the Cuban regime faces an immediate collapse of its ability to maintain domestic control, a dependency compounded by reports that Cuba had been re-selling Venezuelan oil to finance its own repressive apparatus.
- **Caracas's Intelligence Partial Collapse:** Without the GRUCE "liaison officers" in Fuerte Tiuna, the Venezuelan internal surveillance system, the "Stay-Behind" network led by figures such as **Gustavo González López, Alexander Grancko, Diosdado Cabello**, and **Vladimir Padrino López**, loses parts of its strategic brain **but remains fully functional**. Although a significant process has been made, the structure still remains and there is no freedom, law or liberty if the GRUCE and its promoters are not dismantled.
- **The Gradual Disappearance of Socialist Dictatorships in The Region:** a dual crisis in Havana and Caracas would directly sever and limit the influence that both regimes have had over other socialist autocracies in the region like Nicaragua and the anti-western agenda in Latin America. Already weakened regional platforms such as the ALBA would definitely disappear without its two founders.

As of February 2026, this scenario is no longer hypothetical. The U.S. oil blockade is actively strangling Cuba's economy, and Cuban security personnel have begun withdrawing from Venezuela. However, a partial withdrawal is not a dismantlement. These dynamics remain contingent on one critical condition: that the institutional architecture of the GRUCE, not merely its personnel, is fully dismantled. Without that, what we are witnessing is regime adaptation, not regime collapse.



KEY

PLAYERS

BEHIND

**THE
GRUCE**



A. THE CUBAN AXIS (Strategy, Doctrine, and Oversight)



Fidel Castro Ruz: Ideological architect of the "Oil for Repression" strategic alliance (1999-2006).



Raúl Castro Ruz: Commander-in-Chief of the FAR and President during the 2008 secret agreements that deployed the first GRUCE specialists.



Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez: Current Cuban leader; oversees the GRUCE as a permanent feature of the bilateral security architecture.



Ramiro Valdés Menéndez: Historical G2 Chief; "master of political repression" and senior advisor on the implementation of the control model in Venezuela.



Julio Casas Regueiro: Minister of the FAR from 2008; oversaw the initial military deployments to Venezuela.



Álvaro López Miera: Current Minister of the FAR; co-signatory of the 2008 agreements establishing the GRUCE.



Leonardo Andollo Valdés (Major General, FAR): Second Chief of the General Staff; high-level Strategic Director of the GRUCE and coordinator of all Cuban military work in Venezuela.



Juan Francisco Alfonso Doval (Colonel, FAR): Core member of the GRUCE's operational gear within Venezuelan territory.



No available photo



Ramón Alfredo Lausao Gallardo (Brigadier General, FAR): Chief of the General Staff of the GRUCE; operates in civilian clothes during military exercises.



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Alejandro Ronda Marrero (Brigadier General, FAR): Coordinator and Liaison Officer for the GRUCE; expert in covert operations.

Raúl Quintas Meneses (CIM Officer): Director within the GRUCE specializing in military counterintelligence.



Joaquín Quintas Solá : Part of the elite inner circle; documented in maneuvers alongside the GRUCE leadership.



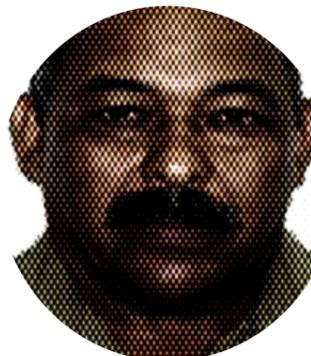
A. THE CUBAN AXIS (Strategy, Doctrine, and Oversight)



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**Liván Luis Manzano
Hernández (Teniente
Coronel, CIM):**
Regional GRUCE Chief
(Central/Llanos regions).

**Juan Carlos Tamargo
Baniela (Brigadier General,
FAR):** Identified as a tactical
chief of the GRUCE.

**Raúl Rodríguez Lobaina
(High-Ranking FAR Officials):**
Part of the elite inner circle;
documented in maneuvers
alongside the GRUCE leadership.



B. THE VENEZUELAN AXIS (Political Command and Execution)



Hugo Chávez Frías (1999–2013): Founder of the model; signed the 2008 secret agreements.



Nicolás Maduro Moros (2013–2026): Consolidated the "Triángulo Duro" (SEBIN-DGCIM-GRUCE). Captured/Extracted on Jan 3, 2026.



Delcy Rodríguez: Vice President (2018–2022/2026); Primary civilian liaison with Cuban intelligence. Sworn in as Acting President (Presidenta Encargada) on Jan 5, 2026, following a Supreme Court (TSJ) order.

Ministers of Defense (Supervisors of DGCIM)



Gustavo Rangel Briceño (2007–2009): Signatory of the 2008 agreements.



Ramón Carrizales (2009–2010)



Carlos Mata Figueroa (2010–2012)



Henry Rangel Silva (2012)



Diego Molero Bellavia (2012–2013)



Carmen Meléndez (2013–2014)



Vladimir Padrino López (2014–Present): Longest-serving minister; enforcer of the Cuban "Total War" doctrine.



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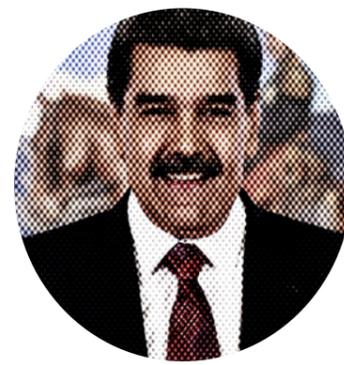
VICE PRESIDENTS (Supervisors of SEBIN)



Ramón Carrizales
(2008–2010)



Elías Jaua (2010–2012)



Nicolás Maduro (2012–2013)



Jorge Arreaza (2013–
2016)



Aristóbulo Istúriz (2016–2017)



Tareck El Aissami (2017–2018):





C. AGENCY DIRECTORS (Operational Leadership)

DGCIM (Formerly DIM until 2011)



Hugo Carvajal Barrios
(2004–2011 / 2013–2014):
Managed the 2008
transition and initial
GRUCE embedding.



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Figuera Peralta (2011–2013)



Iván Hernández Dala (2014–2026):
Chief of DGCIM and the Presidential
Guard for over a decade. Removed
on Jan 6, 2026.



Gustavo González López (Jan 6,
2026–Present): Appointed by
Acting President Delcy
Rodríguez as Director of DGCIM
and Commander of the
Presidential Honor Guard.



**Rafael Antonio Franco Quintero
(Brigadier General):**
Former Director of Investigations at the
DGCIM. He was the primary architect of
the "darkest stage" of DGCIM torture,
directly implementing the "White
Room" protocols designed by Cuban
advisors.



Alexander Granko Arteaga
(Colonel, DGCIM):
Head of the Special Affairs Unit (DAE).
Granko is the most visible face of the
DGCIM's brutality. Known as the "arm of
the GRUCE," he has institutionalized
torture and extrajudicial operations
(including the El Junquito massacre) as
standard military procedure. His continued
presence in 2026 is the ultimate proof that
the "transition" is a facade.



D. SEBIN (Formerly DISIP until 2009)



**Rodríguez Chacín /
Carlos Luis Aguilera /
Víctor Castillo (2008–
2010)**



**Miguel Rodríguez Torres (2010–
2014)**



**Gustavo González López (2014–
2018):** Led during the 2014/2017
crackdowns.



**Manuel Cristopher Figuera
(2018–2019):** Defected in 2019.



Gustavo González López (2019–2024):
Re-appointed under Cuban supervision.



**Javier Marcano Táбата
(2024–2026):** Removed on Jan 6, 2026.



TIMELINE OF THE GRUCE AND INSTITUTIONAL RE-ENGINEERING

Period / Year	Strategic Milestone	Institutional Impact on Venezuelan Security
2007-2008	Strategic Pivot: Chavez's defeat in the 2007 referendum leads to a "new military thought" focused on neutralizing internal dissent.	Secret military agreements (May 2008) allow Cuba to audit the Venezuelan military and train intelligence agents.
May 2008	GRUCE Foundation: Formal creation of the "Group of Coordination and Liaison" (GRUCE).	A committee of 8 Cuban specialists is embedded in the FANB to inspect units and institutionalize permanent foreign oversight.
2009-2010	Operational Deployment: Expanded Cuban military attaché office and the arrival of GRUCE personnel in Fuerte Tiuna.	The GRUCE moves from paper to practice, establishing a reporting line from the Venezuelan Ministry of Defense directly to Havana.
2011-2012	Institutional Birth of DGCIM: Transformation of the DIM into the General Directorate of Military Counterintelligence.	Intelligence priorities shift toward internal surveillance of officers. The DGCIM is redesigned using Cuban G2 counterintelligence doctrine.
2013-2014	Leadership Consolidation: Gen. Andollo Valdés is identified as the chief of mission.	The GRUCE acts as a "Political Commissariat," monitoring officer ideological loyalty and managing military crises.
2015-2018	The Repressive Triangle: Consolidation of the DGCIM-SEBIN-GRUCE nexus.	Systematic surveillance and selective repression are expanded to civilian agencies (SAIME, Ports, Airports) under Cuban supervision.
2019-2024	Documentation & Crisis: Reuters and UN reports detail the depth of Cuban re-engineering of the DGCIM	Global recognition of the "Cubanization" of Venezuelan intelligence. DGCIM and SEBIN are identified as torture hubs coordinated by foreign advisors.
2025-Present	Final Integration: The Jan 3, 2026 event confirms the presence of Cuban agents in the President's inner security ring.	The GRUCE doctrine remains the primary structural barrier to a democratic transition, ensuring regime survival through shared intelligence.



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