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Ambassador Bolton Bay of Pigs Veterans Association-Brigade 2506

Thank you, Colonel [Johnny] Lopez de la Cruz, for your kind introduction, and for the invitation to address the Bay of Pigs Veterans Association this afternoon. I am delighted to be here in Miami among such brave and distinguished company.

If I could, I would like to ask all of the brave Brigade 2506 veterans to stand. It is an honor to address you all today.

The veterans of Brigade 2506 remind us all of the true cost of freedom and liberty, the true nature of communism and socialism, and the true face of patriotism, honor, and courage.

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This afternoon, we are also proudly joined by many other inspiring members of the exile communities. Thank you all.

Each one of you, our Brigade veterans and exile community members, have borne witness to the horrors of socialism and communism. Nearly six decades ago, many of you willingly put your lives on the line to fight these poisonous creeds in Cuba, in order to free the Cuban people from Castro's oppressive reign.

Today, we honor the 58th Anniversary of your extraordinary valor and sacrifice on behalf of your beloved homeland. For two brutal days in April 1961, from the "Battle of the Rotunda" to the legendary "Last Stand," Brigade 2506 held the line for all of Cuba against the forces of despotism and oppression.

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Your heroic legacy is forever etched into the national memory of Cuba. In the United States (the 75th anniversary of which we will celebrate this June 6), your courage reminds us of the brave men of Bunker Hill, Belleau Wood, and Normandy. Around the world, the name Brigade 2506 invokes a profound sense of national pride, a deep admiration, and a hope against all odds.

On April 17th, fifty-eight years ago today, the first men of this brave band of patriots landed on Cuban soil under the cover of darkness. You could see tracer rounds flying overhead in the night. The jagged edges of unexpected coral reefs hindered your landing craft. In this historic battle to liberate a nation, you were severely outmanned and outgunned. Still, in the face of these impossible

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odds, you charged forward for your country, for your people, and for your freedom.

The men of Brigade 2506 fought so fiercely over those harrowing days in April that Castro thought your small force of several hundred Cuban exiles, about 1400 total, was in fact an army of five to eight thousand men. Within the first day of fighting, Castro ordered 20,000 troops to advance on the Bay of Pigs.

For every brave man of Brigade 2506 fighting for freedom, Castro needed 14 men willing to defend tyranny.

The United States will never forget the sacrifices you and your brothers in arms made on those hallowed beaches, nearly six

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decades ago. We will honor your courage, and the memory of all those lost, through our actions today—by boldly confronting the evils of socialism and communism in this Hemisphere.

Let me be clear: The Trump administration will NEVER, EVER abandon you. We will ALWAYS have your back.

The remarkable story of Brigade 2506 helped inspire President Trump’s hard-hitting Cuba policy. During the 2016 campaign, he visited you here in Miami; he heard your heroic accounts; he saw your stirring pictures; and today he is proud to stand by your side.

As the President said in February, “the twilight hour of socialism has arrived in our Hemisphere.” The “Troika of Tyranny” —

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Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua—is beginning to crumble. And, as I noted at the Freedom Tower last fall, the United States looks forward to watching each corner of this sordid triangle of terror fall: in Havana, in Caracas, in Managua.

As I call them, the three stooges of socialism—Maduro, Ortega, and Diaz Canel—cannot forever cling to power against the will of their citizens.

The people began this movement in Cuba fifty-eight years ago, and the people are going to finish it.

Across this Hemisphere, the righteous flame of freedom will burn brightly again because of them, and because of you.

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And, as the freedom fighters in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Venezuela carry on your noble legacy, I promise you today, the United States will be with them ONE HUNDRED PERCENT—just as we have been with them from DAY ONE of this administration.

In June of 2017, President Trump announced the cancellation of the horrible, misguided deal the Obama administration struck with the dictatorship in Havana.

Under our new policy, National Security Presidential Memorandum-5, we are enforcing all sanctions transparently, aggressively, and effectively. We are supporting the Cuban people by promoting freedom of assembly and expression, and we are steering American dollars away from Cuba's military, security, or

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intelligence services—the main instruments of the Cuban regime’s repression.

As you know, the President’s 2017 policy announcement was only the beginning. Since then, we have imposed even further sanctions, tightened restrictions, and scaled back U.S. personnel at Embassy Havana in response to the vicious attacks on American diplomats.

From now on, no regime will target American citizens with impunity.

Under this administration, we don’t throw dictators lifelines. We take them away.

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The Obama administration utilized secret back channels to Cuba, and even provided them with secure American telecommunications equipment, cutting-edge resources normally reserved for our most trusted allies.

Under President Trump, there are no longer secret communications channels with the dictatorship in Havana—and we took that precious equipment back.

President Obama allowed our Major League Baseball, and the Cuban Baseball Federation, to do business together. The Obama administration claimed that the Cuban Baseball Federation was not controlled by the Cuban government.

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We know that this is false. The Cuban Baseball Federation is of course an extension of the Cuban regime, and the United States will not condone any form of human trafficking, no matter what dishonesty is used to camouflage it.

To justify its policy of normalizing relations with Cuba, President Obama said Cuba QUOTE “poses no genuine threat.”

Tell that to the American diplomats who were attacked in Havana.

Tell that to the terrorized people of Venezuela.

The reality is that the Obama administration sought to normalize relations with a tyrannical dictatorship that targets

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American citizens, murders and tortures political opponents, and tramples upon every freedom known to man.

The Obama administration shockingly claimed that they were “normalizing” relations with the Cuban people, not the Cuban regime.

We will not allow America’s national pastime to enable Communist dictators.

I am certain you would all agree that you do not improve relations with an imprisoned people by appeasing their captors. You improve relations with the oppressed by taking an unapologetic stand against their oppressors.

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When Fidel Castro died in 2016, President Obama issued a statement noting the “enormous impact of this singular figure” and the “countless ways” he “altered the course of individual lives, families, and [the] Cuban nation.”

President Trump, on the other hand, rightfully called Castro what he was QUOTE “a brutal dictator who oppressed his own people for nearly six decades,” whose legacy “is one of firing squads, theft, unimaginable suffering, poverty and the denial of fundamental human rights.”

President Trump did not need to wait, and I quote again from President Obama’s statement, for “HISTORY [to] record and judge”

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Fidel Castro. President Trump could see the truth. He could make the call. He knew about you, and your incredible legacy.

Tragically, the Obama administration's misguided Cuba policy provided the Cuban regime with the necessary political cover to expand its malign influence and ideological imperialism across the region.

It was the escape-valve Cuba so desperately sought to rebrand itself on the international stage in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

While the last administration wanted to improve relations with the tyrants in Havana, and to convince the world that they posed no

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threat, the Cuban regime tightened its grip and extended its tentacles.

In no uncertain terms, the Obama administration's policies toward Cuba have enabled the Cuban colonization of Venezuela today.

For years now, the Cuban regime has suffocated Venezuela's independence and directly contributed to the current crisis for its own gain and survival. At this moment, Havana continues to prop up Maduro and help him sustain the brutal suffering of the Venezuelan people.

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As President Trump has said, Maduro is quite simply a “Cuban Puppet.”

Cuba has carefully trained Venezuelan security forces in repressive tactics to harass and terrorize innocent civilians. Recently, the Cuban Foreign Minister has admitted that there are nearly 20,000 Cuban thugs in Venezuela. In fact, there could well be more. These Cubans are not there to help Venezuelans, as he claims, but to support Maduro and his repressive security services.

The Cuban regime has spread its ideological influence into Venezuela and throughout the Maduro regime. Maduro’s repressive tactics—including stifling all dissent, arbitrary detentions,

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centralization of all government authority, and fomenting distrust among citizens—are straight out of the Castro playbook.

We know that the roots of the Venezuelan colectivos and armed paramilitary groups can be found in Havana.

And, as we speak, thousands of Cuban doctors in Venezuela are being used as pawns by Maduro and his Cuban sponsors to support his brutal and oppressive reign.

Millions in Venezuela are currently starving. Children are dying. Hospitals have no power, no food, no water, and no medicine. Only three years ago, officials from the Obama administration stood proudly in front of a mural of Che Guevara in Havana, plastered over

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the Cuban Ministry that runs the National Revolutionary Police Force, which terrorizes the Cuban people. The glamorization of communist murderers must end now. It is unacceptable.

I ask all those who romanticize these tyrants to consider the anguish of the “damas de blanco/ladies in white” or the victims of repression in Venezuela. Talk to the mothers of the murdered and disappeared. View the photographs of the emaciated children. And then, perhaps most importantly, take a look at yourself.

Our President, President Trump, HAS in fact talked with the mothers. He HAS seen the photos. And, today, he is AGAIN taking action.

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The Trump administration is proud to announce several further measures we are adopting to reverse the consequences of the disastrous Obama-era policies, and finally END the glamorization of socialism and communism.

We are standing with the freedom-loving patriots of this region.

We are correcting the mistakes, and undoing the damage.

When I was in Miami in November of last year, I promised you that this administration would conduct a serious review on terminating Helms-Burton Title III Waivers.

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Today, following that serious review, I am pleased to stand before you and announce that President Trump decided to END the Helms-Burton Title III Waivers, once and for all.

Americans who have had their private and hard-earned property stolen in Cuba will finally be allowed to sue.

Further, for the first time in many years, we will be taking actions to implement Title IV of Helms-Burton. Anyone who traffics in property stolen from Americans will not be issued a visa to the United States. They are not welcome here.

Today, we are also announcing five additions to the Cuba Restricted List, which prohibits direct financial transactions with

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entities tied to Cuba's military, intelligence, and security services and personnel. These additions include Aerogaviota, owned by the Cuban military, among others. This U.S. action should be a signal to all that working with the Cuban military and intelligence services will NOT be tolerated.

We are also announcing that the Department of the Treasury will implement further regulatory changes to restrict non-family travel to Cuba, or in other words, "veiled tourism." These new measures will help steer American dollars away from the Cuban regime, or its military and security services, who control the tourism industry in Cuba.

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Through the Treasury Department, we will also implement changes to end the use of “U-turn transactions,” which allow the regime to circumvent sanctions and obtain access to hard currency and the U.S. banking system.

We will also be announcing new limits on remittances to Cuba. Under the last administration’s failed policies, such limits were COMPLETELY lifted under the assumption that capital inflows would benefit the Cuban people. Yet, the situation for Cubans has in fact worsened, not improved. We know that families in the United States want to help their loved ones in Cuba, and we want Cubans to get the support they need and deserve. For this reason, our new limits will be \$1,000 dollars per person, per quarter. The Cuban people are

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forced to survive on a paltry living wage, and we know that these remittances are critical to families.

The United States is also cracking down on Cuba's support for Maduro and his cronies in Venezuela. As we announced last week, we have imposed sanctions on four companies and nine vessels that transported oil from Venezuela to Cuba in recent months. This follows our action earlier this month to sanction 35 vessels, and two companies, involved in shipping subsidized oil from Venezuela to Cuba. Yesterday, one of these ships, "The Iron Point," was denied entry to a United States port for the first time.

Our hard-hitting sanctions on these vessels are "two-fers," weakening both the Maduro and Diaz Canel regimes. Cuba should

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have to pay market prices for oil—no more subsidies for Communist dictators!

This afternoon, I am also pleased to announce new sanctions against the Central Bank of Venezuela to restrict U.S. transactions with this bank and prohibit its access to U.S. dollars. The Central Bank of Venezuela has been crucial to keeping Maduro in power, including through its control of the transfer of gold for currency. The United States will use its economic tools to the maximum capacity to constrict Maduro and ensure that his cronies no longer pilfer what rightfully belongs to the people of Venezuela.

These steps against Venezuela's Central Bank should be a strong warning to all external actors, including Russia, against

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deploying military assets to Venezuela to prop up the Maduro regime. The United States will consider such provocative actions a threat to international peace and security in the region. Recently, Russia has conducted several military flights to Venezuela carrying 35 tons of unknown cargo and 100 military personnel.

The Venezuelan people, numerous countries in the region, the United States, and many others have condemned these actions.

This incredible region must remain free from internal despotism and external domination. The destinies of our nations will not be dictated by foreign powers; they will be shaped by the people who call this Hemisphere home. Today, we proudly proclaim for all to hear: the Monroe Doctrine is alive and well.

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The United States is supported by a coalition of likeminded nations across this Hemisphere, including Brazil, Colombia, Argentina, Peru, the Bahamas, Haiti, and Saint Lucia—all members of the OAS. We stand united in our defense of democracy, sovereignty, security, and the rule of law in this region, and we remain hopeful for the coming of a free Hemisphere—from the snowcapped Canadian Rockies to the glistening Strait of Magellan—the first free Hemisphere in human history.

President Obama's administration thought that being tough on the Castro regime strained relations with partners in the region, and beyond, and prevented progress toward peace, stability, and cooperation throughout the Hemisphere. The opposite has proven

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true. And, we see the truth today in the region and around the world.

In the past few months, more than 50 nations have joined the United States in recognizing President Guaido as the legitimate leader of Venezuela. And last week, the Organization of American States took an important step by approving a resolution to officially recognize Guaido's representative to the OAS—yet another strong signal of regional support for Guaido and the Venezuelan people. The Hemisphere and the world are in fact coming together today, but under the banner of liberty, not the false promise of conciliation with communism.

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Our growing coalition stands ready and willing to provide humanitarian assistance to thousands of starving Venezuelans. Last week, Vice President Pence announced that the United States will provide nearly 61 million dollars in new humanitarian assistance. As President Trump has said, Maduro's regime must end this catastrophe and allow aid to reach the suffering people of Venezuela. The walls are closing in. There is no turning back. The people will prevail.

And when they do, we know that Cuba will be next.

And soon after, we pray, the third member of the Troika, Nicaragua, will also at last be free.

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The Nicaraguan people continue their tireless fight for liberty in the midst of Ortega regime violence, repression, and trampling of freedom of speech and expression.

In November, President Trump issued an Executive Order targeting the Ortega regime and its supporters engaged in corruption, human rights abuses, dismantling of democratic institutions, and the exploitation of people and public resources. Specifically, the United States issued sanctions against Vice President Rosario Murillo—the ringleader of repression in Nicaragua—and her close adviser.

Today, I am also pleased to announce that the United States will also sanction Bancorp—the Ortega slush fund. We are going

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after the pocketbooks of Ortega's family, who continue to live off the misery of the Nicaraguan people.

This afternoon, we are also announcing sanctions on Laureano Ortega, who has been groomed as a successor by the regime and has engaged in vast corruption under the guise of leading Nicaragua's investment agency.

This is just the beginning. As long as the people of Cuba, Venezuela, and Nicaragua stand for freedom, the United States will stand with them.

Around the world, President Trump has embarked on a bold new course.

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Naïve beliefs have now given way to clear-eyed common sense.

We are no longer surrendering American liberty in the name of global governance.

We are no longer selling out our friends to appease our adversaries.

And, we are no longer sacrificing the interests of the American people to pursue idealistic fantasies—in Havana, Tehran, or anywhere else.

Under this administration, no regime that chants “Death to America” will get a deal with America.

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No communist dictatorship that threatens American lives will receive an American lifeline.

We are defending American strength, American friends, and American sovereignty.

All of you are an important part of this effort. We will need your help in the days ahead. We must all reject the forces of communism and socialism in this Hemisphere—and in this country.

We have a responsibility to tell the truth about the dangers of these evil, collectivist ideologies, the immense human suffering they cause, and the perils of their spread. Together, we can finish what

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began on those beaches, on those famous days in April, fifty-eight years ago today.

We can unite our region, not in appeasement of brutal dictators, but in DEFIANCE of their cruel aims. We can usher in the first free Hemisphere in human history—for Nicaragua, for Venezuela, for Cuba, for America!

When that blessed day arrives, our thoughts will return to a brave band of Cuban exiles, who raced into danger in the darkness, who faced down oppression against all odds, who never gave up on their beloved homeland and its rightful destiny.

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Our nation and this region are forever in your debt. Thank you all, and I hope to see you again soon.