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House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
January 7, 2015.

I hereby appoint the Honorable GLENN THOMPSON to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 6, 2015, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

POLICY CHANGES TOWARD CUBA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to strongly oppose the December 17 announcement by President Obama on policy changes toward the Cuban Communist regime. The Cuban regime from day one was planning on using Alan Gross as a pawn to receive concessions from the Obama administration, and their strategy worked.

In April 2013, when asked about a possible swap for Mr. Gross, Secretary

Kerry testified before Congress that "We have refused to do that because there is no equivalency. Alan Gross is wrongly imprisoned, and we are not going to trade as if it is a spy for a spy." That turned out to not be true.

President Obama unilaterally pardoned three convicted Cuban spies. These spies were responsible for the deaths of three American citizens and one U.S. resident, Carlos Costa, Armando Alejandro, Mario de la Pena, and Pablo Morales, whose Brothers to the Rescue planes were unjustly shot down over international air space on direct orders of the Castro brothers.

To make matters worse, we learned that the U.S. Government used resources to facilitate the artificial insemination of one of the wives of the Cuban spies. Good grief. So the White House ignores the fact that these innocent U.S. pilots were not able to have their own families, but rewards one of the persons responsible for their deaths.

Not only did the dictatorship achieve the return of five convicted spies, it was also able to attain major concessions from our President in order to support Cuba's struggling economy.

Cuba's largest supporters, Russia and Venezuela, are struggling due to their own fiscal crises, so the Castro brothers needed a bailout from a new source; and, sadly, they found one with President Obama.

By increasing tourism travel on the island, the Obama administration will be injecting millions of dollars into the pockets of the Castro brothers. The Cuban police state runs the hotels.

Let's examine the President's announcement very closely. First, the President claims that these new policy changes will empower the Cuban people. Well, the pro-democracy advocates on the island have stated that the changes will help their oppressor, not the people of Cuba.

Second, the issue is not only impacting the people of Cuba, it also poses a

greater threat to U.S. national security interests. Cuba is a designated state sponsor of terrorism and is an avowed enemy of the United States.

With these concessions by the administration, the Castro brothers will use some of their new economic stream to invest more funds into their espionage activities, activities that are aimed against our Nation. With the ability to garner more intelligence against the U.S., the Castro brothers are likely to hit the black market and sell this intelligence to the highest bidder. This is not a theory; it is a fact.

One example of this fact is the case of Ana Belen Montes. She was a convicted Cuban spy who worked for our U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, collecting information for Castro so that it can be sold to our enemies.

Third, the human rights situation on the island has not changed one bit. The President says that he got Raul Castro to agree to the release of 53 political prisoners, prisoners who should never have been in jail in the first place, yet the White House will not release the names of these 53 political prisoners. Why not? What do they have to hide? Plus what good is it for the Castro brothers to release these 53 when he doesn't stop capturing and detaining other prisoners, which he will?

What has been happening in Cuba lately in these past few weeks? Well, according to reports, more than 80 Cubans have been detained. The Cuban coast guard sank a boat recently in international waters that was carrying over 30 people, causing the deaths of some of them on board. Hezbollah celebrated President Obama's announcement after a meeting with the Cuban Ambassador to Lebanon.

Mr. Speaker, this misguided policy of the President will have serious implications for the United States and sends a signal to our enemies that we will cave and we will surrender at every

This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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