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LETTER DATED 13 MAY 1980 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES a.i.  
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF CUBA TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to communicate with you in order to request you to have the annexed texts circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Ernesto LOPEZ PAZ  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.

ANNEX I

Note dated 12 May 1980 from the Government of the Republic of Cuba

A disturbing incident occurred on the afternoon of Saturday, 10 May, about 20 miles north of Samá Bay, Province of Holguín.

At 5 p.m., a Cuban fishing boat, Ferrocemento No. 165, sent a radiotelephone message stating that it was under attack by a pirate ship and had already been hit by a number of bullets.

Reconnaissance and combat aircraft took off for the site immediately. At 5.38 p.m. they sighted a vessel proceeding northward, towing Ferrocemento No. 165, which had called for help, and Ferrocemento No. 54, both of which had evidently been seized. At that time all communication with the fishermen had been lost.

Our aircraft, after repeatedly overflying the vessels and signalling to the pirate ship, and in view of the fact that the latter did not halt and continued towing our fishing boats, proceeded to fire warning shots at 5.50 to make it halt, but the warning was ignored. Minutes later the aircraft returned to base because their fuel had been exhausted. However, since the situation remained grave, with obvious risk to the lives of our fishermen, according to the interpretation of the circumstances at the time, our air force again sent aircraft to the site of the incident, in an attempt to prevent completion of the seizure; these aircraft opened fire on the pirate ship, damaging it so that it sank at 7.19 p.m.

During the night from Saturday to Sunday, other fishing vessels and surface units of our Frontier Guard Force which had gone out to find and rescue the kidnapped fishermen found Ferrocemento No. 54 at sea; it had been abandoned and showed a number of hits by firearms and other signs of an attack. When Ferrocemento No. 165 - which was known to have been attacked and damaged, since it was the vessel that had sent the communication asking for help - was not found during the night, the intensive air search was continued, and as a result, the vessel was sighted on Sunday morning very close to the shores of Ragged Island, which belongs to the Bahamas.

Evidently the crew of the aggressor vessel, or part of that crew, landed in one of the captured fishing boats.

There is no information available concerning the fate of the eight fishermen on board the two Cuban Ferrocemento boats.

About noon on Sunday, the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to the Government of the Bahamas, informing it in detail of what had happened and asking it to locate and release the crewmen of the fishing boats and arrange for their return to our country and to see to it that those responsible for the events in question were arrested and tried.

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During Sunday night the international press media began to circulate rumours to the effect that a Bahamian patrol vessel had been sunk on Saturday afternoon by Cuban aircraft. If the report is true, the vessel may be the one which was sunk by our air force and whose crewmen fired upon the Cuban fishermen and were kidnapping them, creating every appearance of a pirate attack, of the kind that has occurred many times before in the area. At no time did our pilots identify the vessel as a Bahamian patrol vessel, and they regarded it exclusively as a pirate ship.

If the facts should be as reported, it would then become necessary to explain what reason the patrol vessel had for firing on the Cuban fishermen in international waters, only 20 miles from our coast, what reason it had for seizing the two vessels and their crewmen, what reason it had for ignoring the warning shots and, most important, where the eight Cuban fishermen are.

This entire area of small Bahamian islands near Cuba has been extensively used by the enemies of our country for making pirate attacks against Cuban vessels and against our coast. They have used every kind of registration and flag for this purpose. This naturally creates insecurity and risk for the area.

If the vessel sunk was in fact a Bahamian patrol vessel, we sincerely regret the incident, since it has always been the aim of our Government to maintain the best relations of friendship and mutual respect with this neighbouring country. We therefore hope that all the circumstances and factors that gave rise to the episode can be duly clarified and settled in a friendly and honourable manner between the authorities of Cuba and the Bahamas.

We shall never act arrogantly towards the Bahamas. It is a small and newly independent country, and it will always be able to count on our solidarity and our respect.

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ANNEX II

Editorial from the newspaper Granma, constituting the official position  
of the Government of the Republic of Cuba, 13 May 1980

Saturday's incident north of Samá Bay, 20 miles from the Cuban coast, cannot have happened by chance. It follows a series of earlier occurrences: the events at the Embassy of Peru, the incident at the Yankee Interests Office, and the monstrous attempt to murder 570 Cuban children at the Le Van Tam day-care centre.

It has now been reliably learned that a Bahamian patrol vessel, without prior warning, attacked with gunfire two Cuban fishing boats, Ferrocemento No. 165 and Ferrocemento No. 54, which were completely unarmed and in international waters. Furthermore, it then boarded them and towed them away. This had never happened before. There had, of course, been numerous pirate attacks in that area, but never an attack of this kind by a Bahamian patrol vessel.

The hand of the CIA cannot be absent and surely must be behind this. On other occasions, Cuban fishing boats have been seized by vessels of the Government of the Bahamas on the pretext that they were fishing in Bahamian waters, which, according to the map, are certainly very close to those of Cuba. The waters of the two countries have not yet been precisely delimited. The Government of Cuba always accepted every claim made by the Bahamas and settled each problem in a spirit of respect and friendship. What is really inexplicable is that two Cuban fishing boats were criminally attacked in international waters by a Bahamian patrol vessel, creating every appearance of a pirate attack, which gave rise to the incident.

We do not blame the Government of the Bahamas. The CIA works through agents. Fully organized mafias of Yankee gangsters, which monopolize smuggling, gambling and drugs, are operating in the Bahamas. The Government of the Bahamas itself is a victim of the actions of these elements. The policy of that Government with regard to Cuba has not been unfriendly, and it is clear to us that it too has wished to develop good relations with our country.

Yesterday, Monday, a delegation headed by Pelegrin Torras, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and Raúl Roa-Kouri, the Ambassador accredited to the Bahamas, travelled to that country to hold discussions with the authorities and clarify matters.

Our delegation spoke with the eight Cuban fishermen who are now at Nassau. The latter explained in detail what had happened. In our judgement, responsibility rests entirely with the illegal, incorrect and unjust action of the Bahamian patrol vessel. It is very difficult to suppose that this is not one more provocation organized by the Yankees.

It appears that four crewmen of the sunken patrol vessel disappeared in the action.

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What some people want is to create a conflict between Cuba and the Bahamas. This suits the purposes only of imperialism. It is our duty to frustrate this manoeuvre.

We reaffirm once more that the Bahamas, as a small and newly independent neighbour country, can count on our full respect and consideration.

It does not, nor can it as yet, have much experience in dealing with such situations. Cuba cannot and will not assume a position of arrogance or strength or overbearing force with regard to any Caribbean neighbour; indeed, we would rather be humiliated ourselves than humiliate any of our fraternal neighbours.

We have won and will continue to win our glory and our place in history through our heroic struggle against the Yankee imperialism which oppresses all our peoples.

For that reason, we shall do everything necessary to explain to the Government of the Bahamas, once and a thousand times, the events that have taken place and the fact that Cuba had not the slightest intention of sinking its patrol vessel, nor the slightest responsibility in the events that resulted in the sinking of that vessel.

If there have been any victims, we are prepared to aid the members of their families. If there has been material damage, we are prepared to forget the damage we ourselves have suffered and consider ways of making reparation. What is most important of all is that everyone should know that the honour of a Caribbean people is our honour and that its sons are our brothers.