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The Tale of Chinese Military Bases, Once Again

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The Cuban government has once again been compelled to deny the outlandish claim regarding the existence of Chinese military bases in Cuba. The island's foreign minister responded on social media to the news, which, to the surprise of some, was revived by CNN. The network could have activated its correspondent in Havana to verify once more the absurdity of such a fabrication.

### **Cuban Foreign Minister Denounces New Manipulation Against Cuba**

The story of Chinese military bases, a staple of digital warfare, is a recurring nightmare promoted by so-called experts of serious speech and appearance, who appear conveniently in line with the dictates and needs of Washington.

This topic resurfaces periodically, depending on political circumstances. This time, it was raised by one of the usual suspects in the unconventional war against the Cuban people, the controversial

legislator Carlos Giménez, who has been called a traitor by his own constituents and migrant relatives in Florida.

In an act driven purely by propaganda, Giménez took center stage again during a hearing of the Subcommittee on Maritime Transportation and Security under the House Committee on Homeland Security, held on May 6.

At present, it seems evident that the anti-Cuban faction in Congress, led by the ever-active Mr. Rubio—whom Vice President Vance humorously suggested only needs to be named Pope—seeks to draw the attention of the White House tenant. They appear eager to push for harsh new sanctions on Cuban families.

Since at least January 20, several efforts have been made to distract President Trump from the serious international issues he faces. These efforts range from the slanderous campaign against Cuban medical cooperation, which found little traction among Caribbean leaders, to repeated demands to sever all ties with the so-called Rebel Island: zero remittances, zero flights, zero anything.

Mr. Rubio, for his part, has revived an old story about an alleged U.S. fugitive supposedly residing in Cuba since 1976. One might well respond, “Seriously?” especially given the many pressing problems of today that overshadow events from nearly fifty years ago.

### **Shadow Play in Military Attire**

Now it is the turn of the "sinister Chinese bases in Cuba." Given the ongoing confrontation with China, what better way to vilify Cuba than by linking it to something as provocative as the installation of military bases—not for trade but for electronic espionage, as has been claimed.

To lend even a veneer of credibility to a story consistently denied by both Cuban and Chinese authorities, old academic hawks in the United States have revived warnings about threats to national security.

This includes geopolitical analyst Ryan Berg, director of the Latin America Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). The CSIS has been pushing the base hypothesis for years.

Berg, known for his anti-Cuban and reactionary views, promotes the concept of “nearshoring”—the idea that American companies based in Asia should relocate to nearby countries. In other words, a notion closely aligned with former President Trump’s calls to bring manufacturing back to the United States.

Other contributors to the so-called “research” include Matthew P. Funaiolo, Brian Hart, Aidan Powers-Riggs, and Joseph S. Bermudez Jr. The latter, an imagery analyst, has previously mistaken civilian facilities operated by ETECSA or ordinary buildings in Cuba for supposed military installations.

Always part of this narrative are figures like Gordon Guthrie Chang, well-known for his anti-China rhetoric; the diminished and infamous Senator Ted Cruz; and John Bolton, the former National Security Advisor remembered for all the wrong reasons. Of course, Mr. Rubio is also included.

### **The Recycled Legend: A Brief History**

Accusations of Chinese bases in Cuba date back as far as 2010, when the U.S. Army War College’s Strategic Studies Institute reported monitoring China-Cuba relations. Even then, the report stopped short of suggesting any actual bases.

The issue resurfaced in 2019 during the first Trump administration, when declassified intelligence reports suggested the existence of a Chinese espionage unit in Cuba. However, the reports lacked specifics, leaving ample room for speculation and disinformation.

Another chapter unfolded in the summer of 2023 during the Biden administration, again amid tensions with China.

True to its far-right editorial stance, *The Wall Street Journal* cited anonymous sources claiming that China and Cuba had a secret agreement to build an electronic espionage base. A later report added the supposed existence of a military training base on Cuba’s northern coast.

Compelled by the severity of the Journal’s claims, John Kirby, then

spokesman for the National Security Council, acknowledged the existence of certain reports but declined to provide details, stating only that they were inaccurate. In other words, he effectively dismissed the allegations.

Naturally, Mr. Rubio—then still a senator—was quick to respond, issuing a joint statement with Senator Mark Warner. Both were serving as leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee and expressed concern about the alleged Chinese facilities.

The saga continued in December 2024, when the CSIS published yet another report, seemingly in hopes of garnering support from Trump for further anti-Cuban actions. This report claimed to detect technological upgrades at the alleged bases and even added a fifth site near Santiago de Cuba.

Throughout this entire period, various experts and former U.S. intelligence officials have questioned both the CSIS reports and the broader accusations.

Scholars such as Evan Ellis of the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute dismissed the likelihood of China establishing military bases in Cuba, calling it a "significant escalation" that does not align with current realities. He also questioned whether China even possesses the capabilities required for such installations. Chris Simmons, former chief of counterintelligence for the Defense Intelligence Agency, believes Chinese espionage is real but rejects the notion of Chinese military installations on Cuban soil.

Other American academics, including William LeoGrande (an expert on U.S.-Cuba relations at American University), Michael Shifter (president of the Inter-American Dialogue), and Jorge Duany (professor at Florida International University), give zero credence to these claims. Some have described them as outrageous and tied more to the ongoing U.S.-Cuba confrontation than to any actual threat. Even James Lewis, another researcher at CSIS, has stated that there is no evidence of Chinese installations in Cuba.

A quick scan of available data, even using artificial intelligence, leads to

a prevailing conclusion that reflects common sense and the dominant consensus: there is no verifiable proof that Cuba has hosted Chinese military bases.

What the CSIS and the Miami political clique fail to mention is that there *is* a foreign military base in Cuba—one installed against the will of the Cuban people. The U.S. base at Guantánamo remains the only place on Cuban soil where torture has taken place or where migrants have been detained without due process.

One final observation, or perhaps a curiosity: it seems the enemies of the Cuban Revolution have run out of creative new justifications. As for the Chinese base allegations, the next developments may hinge on how Trump's current clash with China unfolds—and whether it gives way to some degree of rationality, for the sake of both economies and global stability. Otherwise, those pushing this narrative may find themselves left hanging once again.

We shall see.

True to Cuban humor, the story has sparked a wave of memes. The most telling one: “The only Chinese bases in Cuba are the ones on baseball fields.”

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Díaz / CubaSí Translation Staff**

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