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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

September 18, 1995

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WHY WE SHOULD VOTE AGAINST H.R. 927

Dear Colleagues:

H.R. 927, the "Cuban Liberty & Democratic Solidarity Act will probably be considered tomorrow, Wednesday, September 20. H.R. 927 will further tighten the embargo against Cuba and reinforce sanctions against foreign nations and businesses to stop trading with Cuba. I urge you to vote against it.

The overall effect of the bill on U.S. policy in the Caribbean may be best addressed by remarks made by Gen. John J. Sheehan, Commander in Chief, U.S. Atlantic Command, regarding a new security system for the Western Hemisphere during his keynote address to the Caribbean Security Symposium on April 18, 1995 in Coral Gables, Florida.

The following are excerpts from the General's speech as reported, quoted by, and commented upon by the U.S. Atlantic Command Press Release of the same date. I will be happy to make the release available to you; please call Ying Lee at 5-2261 for a copy.

"Cuba is not a military threat to the U.S. or the region; it is a social and economic collapse of Cuba that I am concerned with.... U.S. interests in the Caribbean are economic. The problems we deal with are illegal economic migration and drugs."

"The general pointed out that the hemisphere's security is not threatened by external enemies but rather by environmental degradation, rapid population growth, slow economic development and social imbalances."

"He also pointed out that the events of 1994 demonstrated that economic instability in the Caribbean and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, will manifest itself in the form of a flood of legal and illegal migrants to more developed nations. "

"Since my command, U.S. Atlantic Command, is responsible for caring for tens of thousands of Cuban and Haitian refugees that fled their countries last year and approximately 20,000 still remaining in temporary camps on the U.S. Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, I can assure you that the economic and, in one case, the political difficulties of the region will eventually become a major problem requiring vast resources for only temporary solutions."

I believe that the General's comments reflect the reality that tightened economic sanctions against Cuba will destabilize the region, to the detriment of U.S. security interests. I urge you to consider his comments and to join with me in opposing this bill.

Sincerely,

Ronald V. Dellums
Member of Congress