

US embassy cable - 08HAVANA613 (original version)

REQUEST FOR HRDF FUNDS FOR CUBAN ORGANIZATIONS (original version)

Identifier:	08HAVANA613
--------------------	-------------

Origin: HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/index.php?do=search&embassy=39>" [US Interests Section Havana](#)

Created:	2008-07-31 21:16:00
-----------------	---------------------

Classification: HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/index.php?do=search&classification=2>" [CONFIDENTIAL](#)

Tags: HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/index.php?do=search&tags=PHUM>" [PHUM](#)
HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/index.php?do=search&tags=EAID>" [EAID](#)
HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/index.php?do=search&tags=CU>" [CU](#)

Redacted: This cable was redacted by Wikileaks. [HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/cable.php?id=164411&show=redacted>" [Show redacted version](#)] [HYPERLINK "<http://cables.mrkva.eu/cable.php?id=164411&show=compare>" [Compare redacted and unredacted version](#)]

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUB #0613/01 2132116
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 312116Z JUL 08
FM USINT HAVANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3574
C O N F I D E N T I A L HAVANA 000613

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL CATHERINE NEWLING
ALSO FOR DRL TERESA FRALISH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2013
TAGS: PHUM, EAID, CU
SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR HRDF FUNDS FOR CUBAN ORGANIZATIONS

Classified By: COM Jonathan Farrar for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Post requests approval of Human Rights Defender Fund (HRDF) funds for the following groups/individuals in Cuba. Increased repressive actions by the GOC have made the activities of these organizations and individuals increasingly difficult, but they continue to work with political prisoners and other victims of human rights abuses.

Absent efforts by groups like these, there would be no one working directly on issues of civil and human rights on the island. The information below is keyed to the format for the Global HRDF application form.

2. (C) The Damas de Blanco.

Part I

- (1.) P/E Counselor James Benson
- (2.) USINT Havana
- (3.) BensonJH@state.sgov.gov

Part II

- (1.) Laura Pollan
- (2.) Cuba
- (3.) Unknown, but around 1948
- (4.) None
- (5.) None
- (6.) Neptuno 963 e/Aramburu y Hospital; Centro Habana; La Habana, Cuba

(NOTE: Mail items may be delivered c/o the U.S.

Interests Section)

- (7.) (53) (7) 873-4165
- (8.) the Damas de Blanco
- (9.) The Damas de Blanco hold a peaceful march each Sunday to commemorate their loved ones currently imprisoned for political crimes. They also collect food, toiletries, and medicines for the prisoners. To the extent that they can, they provide support to other family members of political prisoners who might otherwise have no way to sustain themselves.
- (10.) Neither Ms Pollan personally nor the Damas as a group espouse violence or engage in human rights violations. Humanitarian assistance to them should be allowable under OFAC regulations that govern exports to Cuba.

Part III

(1.) The GOC has been cracking down on all of the dissidents of late, but seems to be taking special care to go after the Damas de Blanco. Some of the Damas have been beaten and arrested, and members of their support group have been threatened with arrest. As a result, it has become almost impossible for them to get the resources they need to continue to do their work.

(2.) Funds provided through the HRDF program would go toward providing food and clothing to the families of political prisoners, paying for transportation so that family members can visit their loved ones (NOTE: the GOC routinely sends political prisoners to prisons that are at extreme distances from their homes and families), and purchasing food, clothing and medicine for the prisoners themselves.

(3.) The Damas have received funding in the past, but we do not have any details on the sources or the amounts.

Part IV

(A) prison visits (transportation and supplies): \$3,600
for one year

(B) medicines and medical supplies: \$400
for one year

(C) support to dependents:
\$1,000 for one year

=====

TOTAL \$5,000.

Part V

(1.) Providing funds will be a serious challenge as the GOC will do everything in its power to block funding. Receiving funds from foreign sources makes an individual liable to prosecution and imprisonment under Law 88. That said, the Damas have gotten funds from family members in the U.S. via Western Union in the past. It is preferable that funding be in euros or another hard currency rather than dollars. Whatever funding comes in must first be converted into Cuban convertible pesos (CuC 1.00 equals USD 1.08) and then into ordinary Cuban pesos. In addition to the exchange loss, there is a 10 percent fine levied for changing U.S. dollars.

3. (C) The Colegio de Pedagogos.

Part I

- (1.) James Benson
- (2.) U.S. Interests Section Havana
- (3.) BensonJH@state.sgov.gov

Part II

- (1.) Roberto de Miranda
- (2.) Cuba
- (3.) Unknown, but around 1950
- (4.) None
- (5.) None
- (6.) Campanario No. 354, 1er piso, e/San Miguel y San

Rafael, Centro Habana, La Habana

(NOTE: Mail items may be delivered c/o the U.S.

Interests Section)

(7.) (53) (7) 863-0116 or (53) (05) 297-1318

(8.) The Colegio de Pedagogos

(9.) Led by former teacher and political prisoner Roberto de Miranda, the Colegio de Pedagogos is made up of active and unemployed teachers from throughout the island. In addition to proposing changes to the Cuban educational system, Roberto de Miranda and those working with him give classes to children of teachers fired for political beliefs and other victims of human rights abuses. They also provide food and shelter to such teachers while they are in Havana. They have begun working with unemployed teenagers in Centro Habana who otherwise face imprisonment under Cuba's "dangerousness" statute.

(10.) Neither Roberto de Miranda personally nor the Colegio de Pedagogos as a group espouse violence or engage in human rights violations. Humanitarian assistance to them should be allowable under OFAC regulations that govern exports to Cuba.

Part III

(1.) Since the GOC began cracking down on civil society groups in May 2008, state security has surrounded de Miranda's house, entered it and detained individuals being supported there and restricted his ability to work. Since a May 2008 public campaign against alleged USINT funding of "mercenaries" such as de Miranda by the GOC, it has become increasingly difficult for them to obtain the resources needed to continue their work.

(2.) HRDF assistance would allow the Colegio de Pedagogos to purchase food and medicine for individuals in need and obtain teaching materials to support the classes they are offering to children and youths from the street.

(3.) Most of the activities of the Colegio de Pedagogos have been underwritten by members of the group themselves, as well as donations from friendly embassies. We have no information regarding specific amounts or the identity of other organizations.

Part IV

(A) Support to Human Rights victims:

\$2,400 for one year

(e.g., food and public transportation)

(B) Other

\$ 600

for one year

(e.g., teaching supplies, pens, pencils, paper, art supplies)

=====
TOTAL

\$3,000

Part V

(1.) Providing funds will be a serious challenge as the GOC will do everything in its power to block funding. Receiving funds from foreign sources makes an individual liable to prosecution and imprisonment under Law 88. It is preferable that funding be in euros or another hard currency rather than dollars. Whatever funding comes in must first be converted into Cuban convertible pesos (CuC 1.00 equals USD 1.08) and then into ordinary Cuban pesos. In addition to the exchange loss, there is a 10 percent fine levied for changing U.S. dollars.

FARRAR