

APPENDIX III

ANTIAIRCRAFT DEFENSE AND REVOLUTIONARY AIR FORCE (DAAFAR)

The Cuban Air Force is the largest and better equipped in Latin America. The Soviet Union has provided the Cuban Government advanced training and sophisticated equipment over the past twenty five years to make the Cuban Air Force and Antiaircraft Defense System the best trained and equipped in the Western Hemisphere after the United States. It has between 18,500 and 20,000 members and over 350 aircrafts. It is organized into at least 12 fighter-bomber/interceptor squadrons and 24 SAM battalions. The Cuban Navy also has a helicopter force which includes at least 18 Mi-4 helicopters. The Army also has a sophisticated inventory of anti-aircraft equipment for support of its ground forces.

Mission

The Air Force is designed to provide air cover for ground forces and attack enemy targets in front lines as well as strategic support areas in the rear. It can also support operations over long distances, including transporting troops and supplying ground forces. Following the Soviet pattern, Cuba's frontal aviation is equipped for supporting combat operations of ground forces and is designed for attack. The role of defending ground troops is primarily a function of a well developed system of antiaircraft weapons including missiles. DAAFAR is not equipped for long-range operations and does not have long range bombers. But the radius of operation of the aircraft in the Cuban arsenal could be effectively used in most of the Caribbean, Central America and possibly in South of the United States. The capacity for transporting airborne troops and supplies has been increased in the past ten years as Cuban involvement in Africa and Central America conflicts has expanded.

History

Before the 1959 revolution, there were two air units in Cuba, one operated by the Army (Fuerza Aerea Ejercito) and the other unit by the Navy (Fuerza Aerea Marina de Guerra). Most of the planes were of WWII vintage and of American and British manufacture. Cuban pilots were trained for the most part by American instructors at Pensacola, Florida and in Texas.