

Cuba

Response to Information Request Number:	CUB00002.REF
Date:	18 May 2000
Subject:	Cuba: Movimiento 24 de Febrero
From:	INS Resource Information Center (RIC)
Keywords:	Cuba, Dissidents, Organizations

Query:

Is the dissident organization *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* still active?

Response:

The *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* was named to commemorate the date in 1996 when Cuban fighter jets shot down two small civil aircraft flown by members of *Hermanos al Rescate*, Brothers to the Rescue, a Florida-based organization of anti-Castro Cuban exiles which seeks to assist Cuban *balseros*, rafters, who have fled Cuba. The principle founder and first president of the *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* was attorney Mario Remedios de los Cuetos, and the organization was included in the second *Concilio Cubano* membership list in August 1996 (Agencia de Prensa Independiente de Cuba, 19 June 1996; CubaNet, September 1996)

As has been reported by independent journalists and news agencies in Cuba, the *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* has remained active in the years since its founding in 1996. In June 1999, for example Mario Remedios and Rubén Camalleri, vice-president of the group, issued a statement in support of the numerous dissident organizations holding a hunger strike to demand respect for human rights and the release of political prisoners. Camalleri joined in the fast with other strikers in the home of Migdalia Rosado at *Calle Tamarindo 34*, 34 Tamarind Street, in Havana. (Cooperativa de Periodistas Independientes, 8 June 1999)

In October 1999, Remedios signed on behalf of the *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* a statement by ten dissident groups in Havana which invited foreign diplomats and journalists to a home in the capital for a meeting of the *Coordinadora Nacional de Presos y Ex Preso Políticos*, National Coordinator of Current and Former Political Prisoners, to demand freedom for people jailed on political grounds. (CubaNet: 13 October 1999)

In late November 1999, Aracely Remedios Rodríguez, daughter of Mario Remedios, reported that she had been detained and questioned by two State Security officials who appeared to threaten that medical care for her now 69-year-old father would be discontinued because of their dissident activities. Remedios Rodríguez stated to an independent journalist that her father's medical difficulties began in July 1997 when his heart suffered damage during five days of intense interrogation at the Villa Marista headquarters of State Security in Havana. (Agencia de Prensa Cuba Verdad: 30 November 1999)

In mid-December 1999, during a broad government sweep against dissidents to keep them from carrying out activities planned in conjunction with the *Día de San Lázaro*, it was reported that Mario Remedios, his daughter Aracely, and María García Delgado, another

member of the group, were temporarily held under house arrest. (Cooperativa de Periodistas Independientes: 16 December 1999)

Independent journalist reports in 2000 indicate that sometime between the end of 1999 and February 2000, Mario Remedios was replaced as leader of the *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* by Leonardo Miguel Bruzón Avila. On 24 February 2000, for example, in a report on the group's holding of a fast and prayer session to mark the fourth anniversary of the *Hermanos al Rescate* shutdown, Bruzón Avila was identified as the president. During the event, Oscar Lee Lozado, a member of the group, was arrested by police and released later in the day. (Cooperativa de Periodistas Independientes: 24 Febrero 2000)

In early April 2000 it was reported by independent news agency *Grupo de Trabajo Decoro* that State Security agents entered the home of Bruzón Avila on April 7th. He told independent journalists that the agents said he would be arrested and imprisoned if he went near hotels housing delegates to the Group of 77 summit being held in Havana. He was also warned to stay away from foreign diplomats, especially those working at the U.S. Interest Section in Havana. (Grupo de Trabajo Decoro: 12 April 2000).

In early May 2000, it was reported that the branch of the *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* in Havana province, based in the municipality of Quivicán, had organized a mass in a local church during which calls were made for the release of political prisoners. The report said that the event was organized by José Miguel Martínez Hernández, the president of the *Movimiento 24 de Febrero* branch in Havana province. (Grupo de Trabajo Decoro: 3 May 2000)

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