

CUBA BRIEF



Information and Analysis from the
Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies
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CUBAN TROOPS IN SYRIA?

Staff Report

The Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies has received information that General Leopoldo Cintra Frias, Head of the Cuban Armed Forces, visited Syria recently leading a group of Cuban military personnel sent by Cuba in support of Syria's dictator Assad and Russian involvement in that country.

The Cuban military contingent will be primarily deployed in Syria manning Russian tanks provided to Assad by the Russians. It will also operate as a military force against Isis and other opponents of the Assad regime.

This is not the first time that Cuban military personnel have been involved in international military missions in support of Russian objectives. In the 1970's Cuba sent several hundred thousand troops to Angola and other African countries while the Soviet's provided weapons to support African leaders attempting to gain power in their countries.

In 1973, Cuba sent troops to Syria to support them in the Yom Kippur War against Israel. Cuba also sent military officers to observe Israeli military tactics and to advise Assad.

If this information about the presence of Cuban troops in Syria now is confirmed, it would indicate that General Raul Castro is more interested in supporting his allies, Russia and Syria, than in continuing to normalize relations with the U.S. Raul Castro has expressed publicly his support for the Syrian regime and his solidarity with Russian and Iranian objectives in the Middle East. This new Cuban internationalism reaffirms one more time that the Castro's

brothers are more interested in their role in the world in opposition to the U.S. than in modernizing Cuba and helping the Cuban people rise above their current misery.

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