

# Castro's Story on The Zaire Invasion

By Jon Nordheimer  
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## Havana

President Fidel Castro charged early yesterday that President Carter was "manipulated and deceived" by elements in his own administration concerning last month's invasion of Zaire's Shaba Province by Katangan troops.

Castro blamed Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President's adviser on national security.

He said, however, that he would be willing to meet with Carter in an attempt to sort out the tangled circumstances behind the invasion and the allegations that flowed from it.

Castro denied with great passion and heat the charges that Cuba supplied the Katangan rebels and

trained them before the invasion in the middle of last month, and said that it has been the policy of his government to avoid "encouragement" of the Katangans since the cessation of the civil war in Angola in early 1976.

In the late-night interview in his office, Castro also said that the developments have caused Cuban-American relations to sink to the lowest point since Carter took office, although, he added, "it is not as bad as it was during the Nixon administration."

"It is not a half-lie," he said with regard to the charges in Washington that Cubans were involved in the Shaba invasion. "It is

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an absolute, total, complete lie."

Castro, when asked why Carter's "close advisers" would manufacture such allegations, said "I suspect these lies were manufactured to justify the intervention in Shaba," referring to the use of French and Belgian paratroops.

He was careful to avoid suggesting that Carter personally had taken a hand in producing what he called a "gross fabrication" about the Cuban role in Africa.

"It was a manufactured lie — manufactured in Brzezinski's office," Castro said. "I think Mr. Carter has been confused and deceived, but I do not think Mr. Carter has deliberately resorted to this himself.

"Without doubt," the Cuban leader said, "people inside his administration want to manufacture their own Gulf of Tonkin in order to intervene in Africa." He was referring to the incident involving American warships in the early stages of American involvement in the Vietnam war.

Castro gave this account of his exchanges with Washington in mid-May:

"Between the 11th and 12th of May the first news was released of the Shaba events," he said. "Between the 12th and 15th of May two statements were released by the U.S. government that contained the truth saying there was no evidence Cubans were involved in this operation.

"On the 15th, through the U.S. interests section here, we received a message coming from officials of the U.S. government on the highest level."

At first Castro resisted naming the source of this message, but later in the conversation he explained that he had been advised that his original message had been conveyed to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who in turn gave it to Carter, and that the return message apparently was the product of both men's thinking.

This exchange, he said, was in his opinion a "positive and constructive gesture" between the two countries. He said the message conveyed to him by the United States government contained "a kind response and expressed satisfaction of my talk with Lyle Lane," the chief of the diplomatic office that the United States maintains here.

(At that meeting, Castro denied any direct or indirect Cuban involvement in the Shaba attack, reportedly telling Lane he had heard rumors of an attack more than a month before and tried unsuccessfully to stop it through the Angolan government.)

Within hours, the Cuban leader charged, the content of his messages to Washington had been leaked to the American press.

"Not all of it was leaked," he said, "but part of it that we had given assurances to the U.S. government that we had no role in Shaba."

By that evening a State Department spokesman in Washington made the accusation that Cuba had a role in the Katangan invasion.

"It was a brutal way, a really gross and offending way that had no consideration at all for us," he

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continued, his voice showing occasional anger. "It was something really strange. If the U.S. had any doubts it could have conveyed those doubts to us through Mr. Lane, but it all happened within hours."

Regarding Brzezinski, the Cuban leader said that "in my personal view" the President's national security adviser made deliberate attempts to use the African problem to worsen Cuban-American relations. "He has used blackmail as an instrument against us," Castro said.

He said during the Senate debate earlier this year over the package sale of jet fighter planes to Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Israel, "someone within the administra-

tion" used the presence of the Cuban advisers in Southern Yemen to "convince the Senate on the advisability on the sale of the planes.

"All this gives me the impression someone inside the administration is making use of lies to manipulate Congress and the President," he concluded.

His voice rising with emotion, he reiterated his assertion that Cuba had not supplied arms, training or advisers to the Katangans, and in fact had deliberately avoided contact with them because Havana feared that an attack on Zaire would divert world attention from the struggle against the governments of Rhodesia and South Africa.

"We assist liberation movements in South Africa and Rhodesia and we do not deny that," he said.