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Cuba's vitriol

As Cubans end 51 years of living under the Castro brothers' rule, the regime continues to crack down on bloggers, artists, dissidents and others who dare question the communist dictatorship.

Sometimes it can seem that little will ever change. But it's clear that a new generation of Cubans raised on the government's anti-U.S. propaganda aren't buying it.

It's clear, too, that efforts in Congress to drop the U.S. travel ban on Cuba have stalled, and for good reason. Even those who have tried to work with Fidel and Raúl Castro to improve U.S.-Cuba relations are questioning the Cuban regime's true intentions.

The latest to do so is four-star retired Gen. Barry McCaffrey, former White House drug czar and SouthCom commander who has called for lifting the travel ban. He cancelled a Jan. 3-6 trip to the island after Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez went on the attack, calling President Obama an "imperial and arrogant liar."

The general noted that "this type of shallow and vitriolic 1960's public diplomacy makes Cuban leadership appear to be non-serious, polemical amateurs. President Obama is the most thoughtful and non-ideological U.S. chief executive that the Cubans have seen in 50 years. . . . [Rodríguez's] speech probably slammed the window shut on U.S. congressional and administration leaders being willing to support bringing Cuba back into the community of nations."

Gen. McCaffrey also pointed out that Raúl Castro "mentioned Cuba's recent 'war games' to prepare for U.S. invasion. What a laughable assertion of an external U.S. military threat."

That old Castro script would be laughable, too, if it hadn't caused so much suffering on both sides of the Florida Straits. The general deserves praise for calling it like it is.