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Report On Soviet Aid To Cuba

by Barbara Khol

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According to an Aug. 9 report by Soviet independent news agency Interfax, the USSR is supplying Cuba with 1.5 billion rubles worth of "purely military assistance," and about 3 billion rubles in technical aid. Interfax cited figures by the National Academy of Sciences international relations research institute. The report mentioned that "it is not clear" whether the military assistance figure includes spending for the placement of Soviet submarines near Cuba, and military aircraft overflights in the area. In November 1989, Cuban debt to Moscow totaled 15.5 billion rubles, excluding an estimated 5 billion rubles written off by the Soviet government. In July, US Asst. Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson said that while the USSR had reduced aid to Cuba, Moscow continues to provide Cuba with goods valued at nearly \$3.5 billion per year. EFE cited a Soviet Economic Relations Ministry official who requested anonymity as saying that trade credits represent an "insignificant portion" of Cuban debt to the USSR. In addition, the official said most economic aid takes the form of preferential trade deals. For instance, according to the official, the USSR "purchases Cuban sugar at two to four times the world market price, while Cuba buys [Soviet] oil, machinery and equipment at 50% to 25% below world market prices." Another component of the Cuban debt to the USSR is comprised of Soviet financing of Cuban military presence in Africa. According to Institute figures, Moscow spent 2.86 billion rubles per year on Cuban troops in Ethiopia, and 2.028 billion rubles per year for Cuban military forces in Angola. (Basic data from AFP, EFE, 08/09/91) [Note: The US dollar-ruble exchange rate as reported by the Agence France-Presse was \$1.60 per ruble. In contrast, Spanish news service EFE reported \$0.565 per ruble.]

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