



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on January 9, 2025

## LA Mayor Roasted for Fire Dept. Budget Cut; Past Membership in Cuban Intelligence Front Resurfaces

Critics are raising more questions about far-left Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass as wildfires rage out of control in her city.

Bass was in Ghana when the fires started, and stood mute in front of a Sky News reporter as he pelted her with embarrassing questions. She cut \$17.5 million from the fire department and focused on tackling homelessness.

And now being resurrected is her past as a key operative for the Venceremos Brigade, a communist Cuban intelligence operation begun in the 1960s that infiltrated the American Left.



AP Images  
Karen Bass

### Bass Goes to Ghana; Ignores Fire Warnings

As Nero fiddled while Rome burned, as the story goes, Bass was in Ghana dancing to the beat of African drums for all we know. She was a member of President Joe Biden's delegation to the new Ghanaian president's inauguration.

*San Francisco Chronicle* columnist [Emily Hoeven explained](#):

As the flames crackled and spread, Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass was in Ghana for that country's presidential inauguration.

It's unclear when exactly Bass departed for Ghana — her office has not responded to my questions about the timeline of her trip. But it likely would have been sometime after Jan. 3, when President Joe Biden announced the four-member delegation he was sending to Ghana for the Jan. 7 inauguration.

By then, forecasts of dangerous fire conditions were already emerging.

On Jan. 4, the *Los Angeles Times* reported that a "potentially damaging" offshore wind event was anticipated to sweep across Southern California the following week, which could quickly fan flames in the parched region that hadn't received meaningful rainfall in eight months.

On Monday — the day before the Ghanaian presidential inauguration — the National Weather Service's Los Angeles office issued warnings for a "LIFE-THREATENING & DESTRUCTIVE WINDSTORM!!!" and "extreme fire conditions" beginning on Tuesday, prompting Gov. Gavin Newsom to pre-position critical firefighting resources in the area.

So as fires began their destructive rampage through Pacific Palisades, [now a 17,000-acre inferno](#), Bass was nowhere to be found.



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“If Bass wasn’t already in Ghana at that point, it’s difficult to understand why she still would have chosen to go,” Hoeven wrote. “And if she was already there, it’s difficult to understand why she didn’t immediately head back to Los Angeles.”

Not really. Maybe Bass isn’t too familiar with her mayoral responsibilities, despite a lifetime in politics. She was a U.S. congresswoman from 2011 through 2022.

Sky News reporter David Blevins caught Bass in an airport as she returned to the United States. His brutal question left her stupefied.

“Fire chiefs say that they’re really stretched to the limit and running out of water. What have you got to say to that?” asked Blevins. “Have you no response to that?” he continued.

He then followed with this barrage:

Do you owe your citizens an apology for being absent while their homes were burning?

Do you regret cutting the fire department budget by millions of dollars, Madam Mayor?  
Have you nothing to say today? ...

Elon Musk says that you’re utterly incompetent. Are you considering your position? Madame Mayor, have you absolutely nothing to say to the citizens today who are dealing with this disaster? No apology for them?

Do you think you should’ve been visiting Ghana while this was unfolding back home?

Bass hustled away.

## **Fire Department Budget Cut**

Bass is also under fire for massive cuts to the city’s fire department’s budget just months before the blazes began. She prioritized the city’s homelessness bureau.

For fiscal 2023-24, [Fox News reported](#), the city budgeted \$837 million for the fire department, “which was roughly 65% the size of the homeless budget of \$1.3 billion.”

But half that homeless budget, some \$665 million, went unspent. Meanwhile, from fiscal 2023 to 2024, Bass cut the fire department’s budget further, from \$837.1 million to \$819.6 million.

She wanted to cut \$23 million.

## **Venceremos Brigade Operative**

When Joe Biden [was imprudently considering](#) Bass as a possible veep candidate, her past with the Venceremos Brigade resurfaced.

Founded in 1969, the communist brigade was “one of the most ambitious intelligence operations of the Cuban regime against the United States,” [CiberCuba reported](#) (translated from Spanish here) in 2019:

As has been the case since the group’s inception, the regime is masking the true aims of this political initiative promoted by Fidel Castro himself, who took advantage of the historical situation to encourage its formation with the aim of actively influencing American society.



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During the late 1960s, Castro led, through the then General Intelligence Directorate (DGI), a process of deepening the work of indoctrination, subversion and intelligence within the United States, in accordance with his policy of exporting the revolution to the entire continent. The creation of the Venceremos Brigade was a key element in this process.

The group's targets were radicals like Bass and those in the Marxist Students for a Democratic Society.

As for Bass' membership, the future congresswoman and mayor was deeply involved in the group, [Tablet reported](#) in 2020 as Biden considered her.

"An event blurb in an October 1975 issue of the communist *Daily World* newspaper describes Bass, then 22, as 'leader of the Venceremos Brigade in southern California,' the website reported:

Bass herself explained her work for the brigade to a doctoral candidate working on a 1996 Ph.D. dissertation submitted to the Fielding Institute, titled "Women Activists of Diverse Backgrounds: A Qualitative Study of Perceived Influences and Values." "Another critical influence for Bass began, at age 19, and spanned the next five years: Cuba," reads the document, written by Dawn Noggle, who is currently the director of mental health services for the Maricopa County correctional system. "As a 'brigadista' and then organizer for the Venceremos Brigades, Karen visited Cuba every 6 months."

But the outfit wasn't just a cutout for Cuban intelligence. Citing experts, [The New York Times reported](#) that Venceremos cadres learned to make bombs on their trip to Cuba.

As *The New American's* [Bill Jasper wrote](#) in 2008 about a Venceremos veteran working to elect Democratic presidential candidate Barack Hussein Obama, the brigade "sent thousands of Americans to Cuba for training in propaganda, espionage, subversion, and terrorism."

Bass' work for the outfit caused concern among Democrats in Florida with heavily Cuban constituencies.

Then again, Bass isn't the first mayor of Los Angeles who joined the group. [So also](#) did former [Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa](#).



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