

## **Brothers Fight New Fees After \$2.8B Cuba Torture Award**

Share us on: By **Carolina Bolado**

Law360, Miami (April 20, 2016, 10:44 PM ET) -- A Cuban exile family won a \$2.8 billion judgment award against the Cuban government for alleged torture and harassment by Fidel Castro's security forces have asked a Florida state court to block their former counsel from seeking to collect additional fees.

In a suit filed April 6 in Miami, Alfredo and Gustavo Villoldo claim their former attorney, Jeremy Alters of [Morelli Alters LLP](#), is still telling others he is representing them in an effort to cash in on fees from the multibillion-dollar judgment.

“Despite the fact that Alters was terminated by plaintiffs and fails to understand the foundation of plaintiffs' claims, Alters continues to hold himself out as counsel and/or an agent for the plaintiffs, including hiring third-party law firms to lobby on behalf of plaintiffs,” the Villoldos said. “There is simply no basis for him to make these unauthorized representations, and it should be stopped immediately.”

The Villoldos' father, Gustavo Villoldo Argilagos, died of an apparent suicide in 1959 after being threatened and accosted by Ernesto “Che” Geuvara, who headed Castro's security forces at the time, because of the family's wealth and ties to the U.S.

Alters sued Castro and the Cuban government on behalf of the brothers in 2008 under the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act and the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act and got a default final judgment that was fatally defective because it did not fulfill the jurisdictional requirements under the FSIA, according to the complaint.

The Villoldos said rather than fix the jurisdictional problems, Alters voluntarily dismissed the case in 2010 believing that the only solution for the brothers would be through a political resolution by the government. The brothers fired him shortly thereafter and hired Andrew Hall of [Hall Lamb & Hall PA](#) to represent them, according to the suit.

Alters agreed to accept a \$175,000 payment from the Villoldos under a settlement that includes a right to a possible future payment if the U.S. State Department directed a payment on the \$2.8 billion judgment at the time Cuba is removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism through the lobbying efforts of Alters, according to the suit.

Cuba was removed from the list on May 29, 2015, but the Villoldos say no payment was directed to satisfy

their judgment.

“Therefore, the plain language of the agreement precludes additional payments to Alters under the parties’ settlement agreement,” the Villoldos said.

In January, Alters admitted that he had made no efforts to obtain payment on the judgment until after Cuba was removed from the list, according to the suit.

“I found out he was still working on it, and he didn’t tell me what he was doing,” Hall told Law360. “When I found out what he was doing, I made it very clear to him that he was not the Villoldos’ counsel. We filed a lawsuit to force him to stop holding himself out to have any relationship with them.”

Hall says he has recovered between \$11 million and \$13 million of the judgment so far.

Alters could not immediately be reached for comment Wednesday.

The Villoldos are represented by Andrew Hall of Hall Lamb & Hall PA.

Counsel information for Alters was unavailable.

The case is Villoldo et al. v. Alters et al., case number 2016-008682-CA, in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Florida.

--Additional reporting by Max Stendahl. Editing by Philip Shea.