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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Several imprisoned dissidents are released due to poor health. Raúl Castro takes over the tourism industry and heads a national campaign against corruption. The Cuban government gives dissident Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo authorization to travel, but not to dissident leader Oswaldo Payá.

Economy: An intense drought affects the Eastern part of the island. Long power outages affect the country. Big expectation surrounds the drilling for oil in the platform.

Exile Community: South Florida's Cuban-American community is divided over the Bush administration's policies. Cuban Americans rally in protest against new travel regulations.

Foreign Affairs: The European Union Ministers reiterate diplomatic sanctions against Fidel Castro's regime. Cuban rafters reach Honduran and Mexican coasts. Namibian president, Sam Nujoma, visits the island. Jamaica Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Keith Desmond St. Aubyn Knight arrives in Cuba.

US-Cuba Relations: An investigation is requested into a Cuban government operation to filter approximately \$3.9 billion in the banking system using a Federal Reserve program. Cuba clarifies its position on former US president Ronald Reagan. The US government introduces regulations that further tighten the embargo against Cuba. Fidel Castro warns President Bush against launching a military attack on Cuba.



Domestic Affairs

June 1: Cuba celebrated June 1 st, International Children's Day, with special programs to entertain and educate in daycare centers and schools across the island. Official commemoration of International Children's Day on the island began after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 1/6/04)

June 2: The Second International Congress on Dengue and Yellow Fever is underway in Havana. Some 500 delegates from 43 countries are attending this event sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Tropical Medicine Program. The director of the Pedro Kourí Tropical Medicine Institute pointed out that officials from the World Health Organization and authorities from other nations are presenting the latest advances on a dengue vaccine, as well as progress on the epidemiological control of the disease. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/6/04)

June 2: Two overseas professors have reported that migration of Jamaicans to Cuba has surpassed 300,000 persons, and their descendants have created many active communities that survive in modern Cuba. Professors Graciella Chailloux and Robert Whitney were speaking in the Intra-Caribbean Migration series at the University of the West Indies (UWI). (*Prensa Latina*, 2/6/04)

June 2: The wife of Cuban dissident Diosdado Gonzalez Marrero - sentenced to 20 years in prison after a summary trial last year during Havana's harshest opposition crackdown in years - said she fears for the life of her hunger-striking husband. Earlier in Miami, an exile group said that one of the 75 dissidents sentenced to long prison terms in Cuba last year has sewed his mouth shut to protest the conditions of his imprisonment. Alejandrina Garcia de la Riva, a resident of Matanzas province, said she spoke by phone with her husband, when he told her he was about to join the hunger strike initiated by fellow political prisoner Normando Hernandez. "He told me he was going to go on strike that very moment and that Leonel Grave de Peralta and Jose Daniel Ferrer were joining them," said Garcia. Gonzalez, 41, is being held at Kilo Cinco y Medio prison in the western province of Pinar del Rio, along with the three others on hunger strike, all among the 75 pro-democracy activists, independent journalists and human rights advocates sentenced in April 2003 to up to 28 years behind bars. (*EFE*, 2/6/04)

June 3: Cuba's more-than-centenarian Chinese community celebrates its heritage, especially the culinary part, in Havana's Chinatown to mark the 153rd anniversary of the arrival of 206 "coolies" aboard the Spanish frigate Oquendo. Sponsored by the Chinatown Promotion Group of Havana and the Federation of Cuban Culinary Associations, the festival brought together more than 70 delegates from China, Spain, France, Canada, the United States, Peru, Vietnam, Panama and Ecuador. (*EFE*, 3/6/04)

June 3: Twelve years after Cuba's constitution was revised to prohibit religious discrimination, the Church is thriving in the communist nation of 11 million people. That's according to the Reverend Jim Cowell, former pastor of First United Methodist Church in Fort Collins, who traveled to Havana, Cuba, to attend an international evangelism summit of 120 Methodist and Wesleyan leaders. Christianity is alive and well in the Caribbean nation, he said. "When people have been oppressed, religion becomes very important (...) It provides a hope - a sense that God is concerned about them - and a sense of community," Cowell says. Since the early 1990s, churches - both Catholic and Protestant - have experienced a tremendous resurgence. In the 1990s, many Catholic parishes saw Mass attendance double or triple, and there was a 30 percent increase in the number of men studying to be Catholic priests. An even greater explosion has occurred in Cuban Protestant churches in recent years. (*Coloradoan*, 3/6/04)

June 4: It was reported in Santa Clara, that Cubans will have access to 11,000 new scientific electronic magazines as of October. That opportunity will be possible by virtue of a cooperation agreement between Belgium's Council of Flemish Universities and the Central University of Las Villas. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/6/04)

June 5: About 11,000 third age elderly students are currently registered in the University for the Elderly Program, a project that contributes to improving quality of life in old age. The 4-year old initiative, promoted by the Ministry of Higher Education and Cuba's Union of Workers, among other institutions, involves 450 professionals with 5,000 professors and lecturers, Granma daily informed. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/6/04)

June 6: Hemingway's long-time Cuban home is sinking into serious and general decline - along with its priceless contents, which include some 9,000 books, thousands of long-playing records, more than 3,000 photographs and 2,000

documents, including hundreds of letters and at least a few manuscripts, whose contents are largely unknown. Most of the papers are stored in the house's basement. A host of American scholars is already tackling the delicate and arduous task of identifying the books and documents, conserving them physically and archiving them digitally - not necessarily in that order. This project, which may cost upward of \$500,000 (U.S.), has been permitted to go ahead by Washington, in spite of the embargo it has imposed on Cuban trade and investment for more than 40 years. Nonetheless, Americans are still barred from involving themselves in efforts aimed at restoring the house that contains these documents, a house where Hemingway lived for almost the entire last two decades of his life - a house that is starting to fall apart. (*Toronto Star*, 6/6/04)

June 7: Oswaldo Payá, general coordinator of the dissident organization Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, issued an official note denouncing the raids performed by Cuban State Security agents against four Varela Project activists. The houses of Luis Enrique Junquera, Yamil Sánchez, Juan Carlos Alpízar y Juan Luis Rodríguez were searched, documents related to the Varela Project confiscated, and the four activists arrested. Two of them were released and the other two have been held incommunicado. (*NetforCuba*, 10/6/04)

June 8: The “riquimbili”, Cuba's noisy but effective home-made motorbike, is an ingenious improvisation to cope with a chronic public transport shortage the island has faced since the collapse of Soviet communism in the early 1990s. The riquimbili is cobbled together from scrap-yard parts of old motorbikes mounted on a light bicycle frame, usually powered by a 50 cc to 125 cc two-stroke engine obtained on the black market. Anything from water pumps and electricity generators to portable fumigator motors will do. Power boosters from old Soviet military tanks are preferred for reliability and strength. The transmission, controlled with a makeshift clutch, is frequently just a simple roller rubbing against the wheel, or a belt system, though prized riquimbilis use motorbike chains. Their fuel efficiency is unbeatable. Most do 120 miles per gallon (50 km per liter) of gasoline. Riquimbilis are illegal and their owners face frequent fines. Cuba's communist government says the do-it-yourself bikes are too dangerous to be on the road, and authorities only issue number plates for factory-made motorbikes. (*Reuters*, 8/6/04)

June 8: Leonardo Bruzon Avila, a Cuban dissident who spent 27 months in jail without trial, was freed and vowed to keep fighting human rights abuses under communist rule. "I want to continue fighting for the defense of human rights in Cuba," the 49-year-old former librarian told the press at his home in Havana. Bruzon was arrested on February 22, 2002 for inciting public disorder after trying to organize a memorial ceremony to honor four Cuban exile fliers killed when Cuban fighters shot down their two small planes flying near the island in 1996. Bruzon's health deteriorated in jail where he went on four hunger strikes to demand a trial. In April he was transferred to a hospital weighing 85 pounds (39 kilos), he said, adding that he was suffering from a bone disease. He walked with difficulty when he was released. Carlos Alberto Domínguez, an independent journalist who was kept in prison without a trial for two years, was also released. (*Reuters, NotiCuba*, 8/6/04)

June 9: Raúl Castro has taken over the Cuban tourism industry, according to a video that since last May has been circulated among party officers and economy executives. The video indicates a tendency towards re-centralization of the economy, including tourism. In the hour-long videotape, Raúl Castro speaks during a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) and, after openly criticizing management practices in recent years, confirms he will now be in charge of the industry – Cuba's main source of hard currency. (*El País*, 9/6/04)

June 9: Four Cuban dissidents held in prison without trial for more than two years have been released. They include Leonardo Bruzon Avila, 49, a human rights group leader whose cause has been championed across the world. The other three men released were Carlos Alberto Dominguez, a journalist, and Emilio Leyva Perez and Lazaro Rodriguez Capote, members of the small Pro Human Rights Party. The four were among 88 dissidents in Cuba granted the status of "prisoners of conscience" by Amnesty International. They were arrested on 22 February 2002 for trying to organize memorial ceremonies for four Cuban exiles whose aircrafts, were shot down near the island in 1996 by the Cuban authorities. (*BBC*, 10/6/04)

June 9: The Cuban government released a fifth imprisoned dissident due to health reasons. Miguel Valdes Tamayo, the 47-year-old head of the outlawed Fraternal Brothers for Dignity dissident group, was sentenced to 15 years in prison last April along with 74 other dissidents and human rights activists. He told the press that he is suffering from hypertensive cardiomyopathy which, if it gets worse, might require a heart transplant. Valdes Tamayo said that he had no plans to leave Cuba, but rather continue working in the human rights movement as much as his health would allow. He said he was not tortured in prison, but he was threatened with beatings and he was struck many times by the guards. (EFE, 9/6/04)

June 10: Cuban Parliament President, Ricardo Alarcon, has called for the third ordinary period of Cuba's sixth People's Power National Assembly (unicameral Congress) to session on July 1, according to a report in Granma daily. (Prensa Latina, 10/6/04)

June 10: Cuba has opened in its southeastern hills the first museum dedicated entirely to medicinal plants, a farm where more than 300 species used to cure various ailments are being grown by a natural-remedy autodidact. The museum is the result of long years of study by Enrique Otero Fernandez, a 76-year-old Cuban farmer who loves folk medicine, the official Communist Party newspaper Juventud Rebelde reported. (EFE, 10/6/04)

June 11: Cuban Vice President Raúl Castro was among the individuals and institutions receiving the National Award for the Environment. The distinction, presented by the José Martí Memorial, recognizes contributions to the prevention and/or solution of environmental problems and for making an impact on the management of natural resources, production and services. (Radio Habana Cuba, 11/6/04)

June 11: A group of wives of jailed Cuban dissidents approached a son of Fidel Castro to plead for their relatives during a reception hosted by the Portuguese Embassy in Havana. Dressed in white—as they do in their protests—the women spoke to Antonio Castro for about 10 minutes. “ We asked him to be true to his Hippocratic oath,” said Laura Pollán, married to Héctor Maseda, who is serving a 20-year sentence. Castro is a physician with Cuba's national baseball team. (AP, 12/6/04)

June 14: "The Motorcycle Diaries," a portrait of Ernesto "Che" Guevara as a young romantic, was being shown in as the director and several of the film's actors marked what would have been the late revolutionary's 76th birthday. "There is no other place I want to be than here," Mexican actor Gael Garcia Bernal, who played the role of Guevara, told a Havana news conference. The film, produced by Robert Redford and directed by Walter Salles, traces Guevara's early adventures when he and his friend Alberto Granados traversed South America on a motorcycle in 1952. (AP, 15/6/04)

June 14: Residents—including members of the alternative press—in the island's capital and the town of Colón, in Matanzas, founded in Havana, the First Investigative Unit of the Independent Press. Facilitated and directed by correspondents of LUX- INFO-PRESS, the group is headed by the independent reporters Orlando Carlos García Pérez, Hector Alonso Santos, Mercedes Toledo Mesa, Ines Guerra Ochoa and Caridad Roudette, after concluding a course in investigative journalism at the facility of the Cuban Independent Teachers Union. (Puente Informativo, 14/6/04)

June 14: Oswaldo Paya, one of Cuba's best-known government opponents, accused authorities of harassing activists involved in a new project aimed at sparking discussion about possible changes on the island. Paya, lead organizer of the Varela Project democracy drive, said in a statement to international news media that activists in the new National Dialogue project have been visited at their homes by state security agents trying to persuade them not to take part. In a written statement faxed to news organizations in Havana, Paya maintained the project was "persecuted because of the well-founded fear that the people will support it." (AP, 14/6/04)

June 17: Cuba's ruling Communist Party has launched a drive against corruption in government and business, and what it views as a creeping capitalist ideology in the ranks, party sources said. Thousands of officials, bureaucrats and

executives of state-run companies are being told to stop corrupt practices or risk their jobs and party membership. "There are those who have copied capitalist methods so well that they have become capitalists themselves," Communist Party political bureau member Jose Ramon Machado Ventura told party leaders in western Matanzas province. Machado Ventura, long a defender of hard-line ideology, is in charge of the campaign as head of the National Commission to Fight Corruption and Illegalities. He is a close associate of Castro's younger brother and chosen successor, Defense Minister Raul Castro. (*Reuters*, 17/6/04)

June 18: Cuban authorities freed two more imprisoned dissidents for health reasons, and both men called for the release of their fellow prisoners of conscience. Released from prison were Carmelo Diaz Fernandez and Orlando Fundora Alvarez. Both belonged to the "Group of 75" dissidents - independent journalists and human rights activists. Diaz has liver disease and high blood pressure and was admitted to the prison hospital at Combinado del Este four months ago. His friend Fundora, who underwent two operations in prison for intestinal problems, has a bleeding ulcer, angina pectoris and a replacement valve in his heart. He went on a hunger strike in April after being hospitalized in August 2003. The two releases raise the number of freed political prisoners to eight so far this year. (*EFE*, 18/6/04)

June 19: The announcement made by Cuban Armed Forces Minister (FAR), Raúl Castro, that he will personally supervise the operations of the tourism industry and other key economic sectors, has sparked speculation on the future of Carlos Lage, who up to now had been in full charge of the Cuban economy. Marzo Fernández, a former high-ranking Cuban official who worked in the economic sector, said that in the last few weeks several of Lage's closest collaborators have been removed from key ministerial positions and political posts. He cited as examples the case of dismissed Tourism minister, Ibrahim Ferradaz, and former Mayor of Havana, Conrado Martínez. "There's also the case of Economy Minister, José Luis Rodríguez, who is said to be suspended as part of the so called 'pyjamas plan'," he added. These officials, mostly civilians, have been replaced by retired army officers who, according to Fernández, answer to Raúl Castro. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 19/6/04)

June 20: On Father's Day, a group of women related to the 75 Cuban dissidents jailed a year ago once again demanded their release and, encouraged by the recent release of six of them, some said that they are beginning to see "a ray of hope." After attending mass, as they've been doing for several months now, nearly twenty wives and mothers, dressed in white and some wearing T-shirts printed with photos of their husbands, re-enacted a mile-long protest walk along 5 th Avenue's median strip. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 21/6/04)

June 20: Recent cuts to Havana's water supply are part of a batch of "special measures" announced by the authorities in the face of water shortages brought about by a prolonged drought, indicated the local media. "Surface and underground water resources supplying the City of Havana have decreased and, in some cases, depleted altogether, and continue to shrink," reported the weekly *Tribuna de La Habana*. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 21/6/04)

June 21: In an open letter released to the media, Blanca Reyes Castañón, wife of dissident poet Raúl Rivero, currently serving 20 years in prison, accused Fidel Castro of using recent US sanctions as an excuse "to hold political prisoners hostage" and decried a cut in the number of family visits her husband is allowed. She denounced that, while they had been allowed almost on a monthly basis prior to the sessions of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, the next scheduled visit will not take place until August. (*Europa Press*, 21/6/04)

June 21: The stifling heat gripping the city of Havana for some weeks now reached a record high of 36.3 Celsius, the National Meteorology Institute informed. The hottest day on record in Havana was May 2, 1923, with 35.8 Celsius, also reported on August 26, 1998, it was revealed. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/6/04)

June 22: The wife of jailed Cuban dissident Oscar Espinosa said agents from State Security refused to give him a letter from Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Miriam Leiva told the press she planned to show Espinosa the letter during her visit on June 20 to the military hospital where her husband is being held when the agents took the

letter from her. The Spanish premier responded to a letter Leiva sent him where she explained her husband's situation and commended the Socialist leader for his victory in Spain's March general elections, she explained. (*EFE*, 22/6/04)

June 22: The 6th International Digital Art Exhibition and Colloquium got underway in Havana. The exhibit includes many works by Cuban and foreign artists from 30 countries, including Mexico, Chile and Brazil. Sponsored by the Pablo de la Torriente Brau Cultural Center and the Dutch Cultural Collaboration Agency Hivus, the program includes contests in different categories, debates and lectures. The aim of the exhibition, as well as the Colloquium, is to promote artistic and cultural values through new technologies. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 22/6/04)

June 23: Cuban dissident Roberto de Miranda Hernandez, one of 75 mostly rights activists and independent journalists sentenced last year to lengthy jail terms on the island, was released for health reasons. De Miranda, a 59-year-old professor and head of an unofficial teachers' organization, told the press he was released due to a heart ailment, high blood pressure and cysts on a kidney. He said he was deeply moved to be reunited his family and friends, adding that more than 50 people stopped by his home. De Miranda's release brings to nine the number of dissidents freed from jail so far this year. Five of them are from the so-called "Group of 75," who were convicted of subversion and sentenced to prison terms of up to 28 years in March and April of last year. (*EFE*, 23/6/04)

June 23: Cuban dissident writer, Manuel Vázquez Portal, who was condemned to 18 years in jail during March-April 2003 crackdown on dissidents in the island, was released for health reasons. Vázquez Portal's release brings to ten the number of dissidents freed from jail in the last weeks, and is the sixth of the group of 75 condemned to long term sentences last year. (*AFP*, 6,04)

June 23: A letter released in Havana, by Elsa Morejon Hernandez, wife of prisoner of conscience, Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, denounced the critical situation this Cuban physician is facing at Prison Kilo 8, in the province of Pinar del Rio, 162 km. away from his home where he is serving a 25 year sentence after being sanctioned for committing crimes "against the sovereignty and the integrity of the Cuban territory." (*NetforCuba*, 30/6/04)

June 24: After having been released, dissident writer Manuel Vazquez Portal traveled to Havana, where he spoke with reporters. "I'm stunned," said Vazquez Portal, adding that he was surprised some of the prisoners with more serious health problems weren't released before him. "[Oscar] Espinosa Chepe should have been released before me", Vázquez Portal said. Vazquez Portal said he didn't know why he was set free, but his wife, Yolanda Huerga, said her husband evidently was released early because of his high blood pressure. He said authorities recommended he leave Cuba following his release, making clear they would not stop him if he wanted to go. Before being arrested, Vázquez Portal and his family had entry visas to the US and they wanted to leave. "Now, this is something I need to discuss with my family, but unless I am forced to do it [by Cuban authorities] I would like to stay." "I don't know. It's a long-awaited moment, like the last act in an opera," he added. (*El Nuevo Herald, The Miami Herald*, 24/6/04)

June 25: The Cuban government's decision to free six jailed dissidents in recent days is designed to avoid the embarrassment of having them die behind bars and is not an indication that it is loosening its grip on dissent, experts said. "The common denominator here is that all are in poor health," said Elizardo Sánchez, head of the Havana-based Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation. "It's apparent that the government is trying to avoid a mishap. They don't want anyone to die in jail." "The release of some and the imprisonment of others shows the power of the state to do whatever it wants whenever it wants to," said Damián Fernández, director of Florida International University's Cuban Research Institute. "These latest releases give the appearance of a thaw, an opening that is more a mirage than a reality," Fernández added. Also of concern is the fact that the six dissidents freed were sent home under an "extrajudicial license," meaning their convictions remain in effect and that they could be returned to prison at any time. (*The Miami Herald*, 25/6/04)

June 25: Cuban dissident Leonardo Bruzón Ávila denounced that he has been the victim of political harassment even after having been released from prison. Bruzón Avila told the independent press in Cuba that only three days after his release, a member of the Cuban State Security named Yan Santiago visited his house and told him not to keep talking about Cuban politics. The day after, Avila was taken to a "security house" where he was submitted to interrogation by this agent and another named Aramís. A third "interview" took place two weeks later. (*Cuba Verdad*, 25/6/04)

June 25: Though shunned by the communist state that controls all Cuban media and big-venue concerts, Pedro Luis Ferrer, a 52-year-old Dylan-style singer-songwriter continues to delight a loyal following with melodic calls for change and audacious criticism of the one-party regime. Ferrer does not hold back in demanding a multi-party system and the release of poet Raul Rivero, sentenced to 20 years in prison, and dozens of other jailed dissidents. Ferrer's songs have not been heard on Cuban radio for many years, his concerts are not broadcast on national television and he cannot perform in large public venues, though his followers have recently been able to see him perform once a month at a Havana club known as "El Hueco" (the Hole). "I would have liked to have been invited to sign a letter calling for clemency for Raul Rivero, I would have signed one for Fidel Castro as well, because what the world needs is forgiveness," Ferrer said. "How are we going to become a nation that sustains itself on the basis of these harsh measures, that is trying to stop violence with violence, it is an excessive use of power." (*EFE*, 25/6/04)

June 27: The 35 year old political prisoner Migdalia Hernandez Enamorado, is requesting solidarity on behalf of her three daughters who desperately need both of her parents. Hernandez Enamorado and her husband Rafael Benitez Chui were arrested on March 19, 2003 soon after they arrived at a police Unit in Guantánamo to protest the arrest of two of their peers. Migdalia wants the entire world to know that every Sunday, since her arrest, her daughters Lissi, 12, and Migdalia, 10, go to El Combinado de Guantánamo and they stand in front of the prison until they are allowed to see their mother at a distance even though they are allowed to see her only for five minutes. (*Puente Informativo*, 27/6/04)

June 28: Prior to formal meetings of the National Parliament, the Parliament started sessions, with its members being informed about the performances of several state bodies,. Divided into 10 commissions, the members of the National Assembly of People's Power will analyze topics such as the results in food production, use of fertile lands and economic performance. Also included in the agenda will be the universalization of Higher Education, stemming from the establishment of colleges in the country's 169 municipalities. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/6/04)

June 28: The Catholic Church journal Palabra Nueva urged Fidel Castro's government to use the widespread domestic condemnation of the new measures from Washington against the island to open up to all Cubans, including political dissidents. "Why not carry out now that social project 'with all and for all' Cubans, including those who think differently and have different political views within Cuba and wish to participate?" asked in an editorial the director of the journal, Orlando Márquez. [[Cuba: La injerencia y la virtud](#)] (*Encuentro en la Red*, 28/6/04)

June 28: Cuba launched a new campaign to characterize the country's dissidents as Washington's puppets at a time when the United States was preparing to increase financial support for the island's opposition. "All of these people are puppets manipulated by the State Department of the United States," parliament Deputy Lazaro Barredo told a news conference called by the Foreign Ministry's International Press Center. Cuban authorities showed clips from a secret government videotape taken five years ago of veteran rights activist Elizardo Sanchez telling state agents that several other opposition members "were manipulated." The news conference also seemed aimed at further discrediting Sanchez, who has grown more active recently. "This is more of the same," Sanchez said of the videotape. "They are trying to distract the public with a fake scandal." His Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation has long been an important source of information for international rights groups. (*AP*, 28/6/04)

June 30: Opposition member Eloy Gutierrez-Menoyo, a repatriated exile who refused to leave the island for fear he wouldn't be allowed to return, said the government gave him a passport allowing him to visit Spain and come back. Gutierrez-Menoyo said in a statement distributed via e-mail to international media that he was leaving Havana for

Spain, where he had been invited to attend a congress of the Socialist Workers Party. Although his immigration status in Cuba remains unclear, Gutierrez-Menoyo said that the passport letting him go and return to the island was a positive sign. He previously was living in Havana without immigration documents of any kind. (*AP*, 30/6/04)

Economy

June 1: In Camagüey, with the largest cattle herd in Cuba, thousands of animals remain vulnerable to the intense drought affecting the east of the island, while others are receiving water from water tankers. According to the local press, the water shortage has caused the animals to lose, on average, 55kg of weight. Water levels in the wells have dropped between 4 and 5 meters, and only 687.000 m³ can be pumped from the 2.6 million m³ Cubano Búlgara dam, Camagüey City's main water source. Up until last April, some 20,000 heads of cattle had died due to the water shortage. (*AFP*, 1/6/04)

June 2: One of the world's largest deep-water drilling rigs has arrived off Cuba's northwest coast and is preparing to drill the first well in Cuba's virgin Gulf of Mexico waters, oil industry officials said. Spanish oil major Repsol YPF (REP.MC) hired the Eirik Raude, owned by Norwegian company Ocean Rig (OCR.OL), for \$195,000 a day to drill a single well 18 miles offshore in water more than a mile deep. A Repsol official said the rig was at the drill site. "The rig has arrived and will be ready to go in the next couple of days," said Bob Warrack, Ocean Rig senior vice president of marketing. "And I hope they strike oil, because it will be fascinating to see the reaction." Oil experts say Cuba's Gulf waters, like those of Mexico and the United States, could harbor large quantities of medium-grade crude. (*Reuters*, 2/6/04)

June 4: Cuba's latest sugar harvest came in at about 2.75 million tons, larger than last year but still tiny and less than officials had projected, the communist government announced. The Communist Party daily Granma quoted Vice President Carlos Lage as saying that the 2003-2004 harvest that ended this spring, was 2.9 percent smaller than previously forecast. The 2002-2003 harvest was about 2.4 million tons, according to government figures announced in late December. The previous two harvests were around 3.9 million tons. Lage blamed a drought in the island's east for the production of less sugar than hoped. But he said this year was more efficient than some others, with a drop in production costs and increased shipping speed. Cuba's sugar industry has been undergoing a major restructuring over the past several years as officials struggle to improve production and make a once-crucial industry more relevant. (*AP*, 4/6/04)

June 6: Cuba is protecting its marine ecosystems from erosion and pollution, and is taking action around the island to preserve forests, beaches and bays. Cuba celebrated World Environment Day with events centered in westernmost Pinar del Rio province, chosen especially in recognition of its attention to biological diversity. Pinar del Rio has the country's largest forest preserve and one-fifth of its territory is given over to more than 30 protected areas. (*EFE*, 6/6/04)

June 7: Some 300 rum producers, distributors, retailers and experts from 15 countries are attending the 1st International Rum Festival taking place in Havana. The fact that Cuba has a good reputation in the rum production and the launching of eight new rum brands in the international market, encouraged some 30 foreign companies to send representatives to the event, first of its type organized in Cuba. The festival -with its main venue at the Morro-Cabaña Historical Park- includes a trade fair, lectures, cocktail competitions, rum tasting and visits to factories and sugar cane plantations. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/6/04)

June 8: The Ribeirao Preto dental equipment supplier Dabi Atlante (Sao Paulo state) has signed a contract for the export of 1,700 equipment to the government of Cuba (US\$3.5mil) targeted at the new public health program. These exports involve 500 autoclaves, 500 x-rays equipment, 500 photopolymerizers ultralux, 2,000 amalgamators and maintenance kits. Dabi Atlante's professionals will undertake a training program to 30 Cuban engineers soon. (*Gazeta Mercantil*, 9/6/04)

June 9: Mother Nature has not been kind to Cuba lately, with a drought already over a year old, an unusual June heat wave and several severe local storms, including a tornado. Although Santiago de Cuba's tornado did not produce any deaths, it caused a great deal of material damage. Cuban tornados are not frequent. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/6/04)

June 11: Heavy rain which usually falls in May finally arrived in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba to the relief of local farmers and residents alike, although the drought that has ravaged crops and cattle herds remains critical. As the entire island enters the cyclone season meteorologists predict more rain to come, although this will not exceed the monthly average for June. Thus far the rainfall in the east of the island is at 70% of normal levels forcing water rationing measures in most towns and cities. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 12/6/04)

June 11: A Cuban-Namibian joint venture is bringing the loose-fitting guayabera shirt, worn by men in Cuba and much of the rest of the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, Colombia and Venezuela, to the African market. The binational textile factory is one of five joint ventures set up by Cuba in Africa, and the first company on that continent to produce guayaberas, a traditional garment that emerged in the Cuban countryside in the 18th century. (*IPS*, 11/6/04)

June 13: Cayo Largo, a pristine island of Cuba's southern coast has what you might expect: 17 miles of unspoiled beaches, eight hotels and a cozy marina. What's surprising is what Cayo Largo doesn't have - namely, native Cubans. Not a single Cuban lives on the island full time. Cubans work here in 20-day shifts, serving the thousands of foreign tourists who visit every month, then returning to their hometowns for 10 days. Hugo Senecal, 30, a businessman from Holland, said he is astonished by the place because it seems almost devoid of Cubans. "You never see them on the beach," he said. "It's not like Havana where Cubans tend to stick to you until they get some money out of you. Here we don't see Cubans at all." (*The Dallas Morning News*, 13/6/04)

June 14: Intense drought afflicting eastern Cuba for months has dried up one of the reservoirs that supplies the city of Holguin, leaving its 70,000 residents without drinking water, the local press reported. According to the weekly *Trabajadores*, the critical situation has forced authorities to enlist a fleet of 85 tanker trucks to deliver water. (*EFE*, 14/6/04)

June 15: Cuban authorities are looking for foreign partners to help fund projects such as building an alcohol distillery and producing lollipops to further develop the island's sugar industry. The government distributed a pamphlet of 26 such initiatives to delegates at the International Congress of Sugar and Sugarcane Derivatives. "We are looking for financing, technology and/or markets," Manuel Alonso Padilla, a Cuban sugar ministry official, told reporters at the event. "We will provide the infrastructure, top-notch labor, and engineering." Dozens of business representatives from Europe, Mexico, Brazil and Australia will discuss the proposed projects, some of them costing millions of dollars. (*AP*, 15/6/04)

June 16: The government of Argentina is assessing a proposal from Havana to barter \$US 100 million worth of Cuban medicines for its equivalent in Argentine food products, indicated the daily "Clarín". According to official sources quoted by the newspaper, the proposal was well received by Argentina's foreign ministry. The offer consists of vaccines against hepatitis and meningitis, as well as diagnostic equipment that would be earmarked for poorer sectors of the population. (*EFE*, 16/6/04)

June 16: Amid economic hardship and with the prospect of a scorching summer, with temperatures almost matching the 38.8 C record high set in April 1999, the Cuban government is taking steps to enforce energy conservation. A government memorandum was circulated instructing state enterprises “to unplug air-conditioners and non-essential equipment,” and schedule electric-powered agricultural irrigation between 10:00 pm and 10:00 am, to avoid peak consumption periods. A radio and television campaign calls for the conservation of energy in the residential sector which experts say is the biggest consumer. (*Reforma*, 16/6/04)

June 21: Iranian Ambassador to Havana Ahmad Edrissian and the Cuban Head of Iran-Cuba joint commission explored in Havana possible cooperation between the two countries. Given a 20-million euro loan by Iran to Cuba, Havana intends to expand trade with Tehran, he added. Edrissian said while Tehran and Havana have widespread political cooperation, their economic relations are not satisfactory. He further said that although Tehran and Havana have good cooperation in international fora, “the distance between the two nations has hindered their economic ties.” “However, recently important steps have been taken in this regard,” he added. The bilateral trade volume stood at US\$50 million in 2003. The exchange includes Iran’s purchase of sugar and medicine from Cuba, while Iranian export to Cuba consists of raw material for textiles, plastics, sugar cane production machinery and electrical parts, he stated. (*IRNA*, 23/6/04)

June 23: Indian BIOCON Biopharmaceuticals, the joint venture with Cuban research company CIMAB, has said it has added five more products to the proposed portfolio. These will now include two additional monoclonal antibodies and three cancer vaccines, according to an agreement signed by Biocon CMD, Ms Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, and Ms Patricia Sierra of CIMAB in Havana. Biocon said the commercialisation of these products would herald its entry into novel and proprietary products. (*The Hindu*, 23/6/04)

June 25: Energy authorities have indicated that the long power outages affecting the country are due to a breakdown in the high voltage mains and maintenance in one of the main power plants. During the last week, the number of “apagones”—Cuban slang for power cuts—increased on the island. In Havana, scheduled blackouts have lasted periods of six to eight hours, at different intervals, both during the day and night. (*World Data Service*, 25/6/04)

June 25: At present, Santiago de Cuba handles much of Cuba’s domestic bulk trade, including grain, cement and fuel, but with modern container-handling equipment would be ideally placed to take transshipment business on board as well. Much of the transshipment business in the Caribbean is derived from cargo either going to, or coming from, the US and while the latter’s embargo exists such trade would be out of bounds to Cuba. But that does not prevent transit cargo from using Santiago de Cuba or any other port in the country once the US is not involved — and Washington does not belong to the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) anyway. Captain Rawle Baddaloo, acting president of Plipdeco, the Point Lisas Industrial Port Development Corporation, and immediate past president of the Caribbean Ship-ping Association, is one of those who see great potential in Cuba. “Santiago de Cuba already regards itself as a Caribbean port, located as it is on Cuba’s Caribbean coast,” he says. “It clearly has the potential to become a competitor for transshipment cargo in the region. “It has a nice big harbour and the trade could develop in cargo moving among countries belonging to the ACS.” (*UK Limited*, 25/6/04)

June 28: The Spanish oil company Repsol-YPF has begun drilling for oil in waters 18 miles off Cuba's northwestern coast in an effort to reduce Havana's dependence on imports. Experts say Cuba must discover a deposit of light crude large enough to make it commercially feasible to spend more than \$1 billion developing any deep-water field in the Gulf. Some Spanish oil industry executives have been quoted as saying the odds of Repsol-YPF finding such deposits are only one in 25. A Repsol official put the odds at one in four. And a Repsol-YPF engineer working to sink the well, told *The Financial Times*, “The chances that we will find oil are better than winning the lottery or a casino jackpot. More like getting some of the numbers right or coming out ahead at the blackjack table on consecutive nights.” Drilling has been delayed twice since one of the world's largest deep-water rigs, the Norwegian-owned Eirik Raude, arrived.

Fidel Castro's younger brother and designated successor, Defense Minister Raul Castro, recently visited the Eirik Raude, as did Vice President Carlos Lage, oilmen said. (*The Miami Herald, Reuters, 28/6/04*)

June 28: The US administration's new measures to stiffen the four-decade embargo against Cuba will restrict the visits of Cuban-Americans, and could undermine the revenues that the island takes in through its fastest-growing industry: tourism. Studies carried out by the University of Colorado in Denver and the Brattle Group consulting firm indicate that if the travel ban was lifted, the Cuban tourism industry would see its revenues increase by nearly 576 million dollars in just the first year. Last month, sources at Cuba's Tourism Ministry admitted that the number of US citizens travelling to Cuba has fallen eight percent since the beginning of the year, due to the greater hurdles put in place by Washington. Visitors from the United States often fly to Cuba through a third country, and Cuban authorities refrain from stamping their passports on their way in and out. In 2002, of the 80,000 non-Cuban US citizens who visited the island, only around half had permission from Washington, according to analysts. A Travel and Leisure magazine survey among its US readers in 2003 found that Cuba was the favourite destination in the Caribbean. (*IPS, 28/6/04*)

June 29: The Jamaican government said it will continue to encourage business relations with Cuba, despite ongoing pressure by the United States to discourage investment by foreign companies in the communist nation. Jamaica regards Cuba as a "close and valued neighbor" as well as a "member of the Caribbean family" and hopes to further strengthen the two countries' trade and economic links, Foreign Minister Keith Desmond Knight told reporters during a two-day visit to Cuba. The visit by Knight, who is also foreign trade minister, came two weeks after Jamaican hotel chain SuperClubs announced it pulled out of two Cuban resort properties after threats from the US government that company executives would not be allowed into the United States. (*AP, 29/6/04*)

Exile Community

June 8: Democrat John Kerry enjoys a commanding lead over President Bush among Cuban Americans born in the United States and a decided edge among Cubans who arrived in the country after 1980, according to a new poll of Miami-Dade Hispanics that reveals deep divisions within a community traditionally viewed as staunchly Republican. The poll, commissioned by a Democratic group that is targeting Hispanic voters, shows Kerry with a 58-32 percent advantage among Cubans born in the United States, suggesting that the Massachusetts senator has an opportunity to siphon potentially critical support from Bush. But the poll shows Bush crushing Kerry among the largest -- and perhaps most politically active and vocal -- group of Cuban-American voters: those who arrived before the 1980 Mariel boatlift. Those voters -- who make up about two-thirds of all Cuban-American registered voters in Miami-Dade, according to the survey -- back the Republican incumbent overwhelmingly, 89 to 8 percent, with just 3 percent undecided. Among all Cuban-American voters, Bush leads Kerry 69 to 21 percent, with 10 percent undecided -- a massive lead, but a decline from 2000 when more than eight of 10 Cuban Americans helped Bush narrowly defeat Al Gore in Florida and win the White House. Kerry leads Bush 40 to 29 percent among Cubans who arrived in the United States after 1980, with 31 percent undecided. Among all Hispanic voters in Miami-Dade, Bush leads Kerry 60 to 29 percent, with 11 percent undecided. (*The Miami Herald, 11/6/04*)

June 8: Cuban born actor, Andy Garcia, is starting work on a new film set in Cuba in the 1950s and has chosen the Dominican Republic as the filming location. The actor/director was traveling to the Dominican Republic to begin filming this week, his publicist Stan Rosenfield said. He said the screenplay was written by Guillermo Cabrera Infante, a prominent Cuban writer who opposes Fidel Castro. (*AP, 8/6/04*)

June 8: A Minneapolis trademark and brand licensing company will launch next year a new casual apparel and footwear collection for men under the name of José Martí—Cuba's independence national hero. The company, Brand

Impact Group, will use the likeness of the 19th-century Cuban hero to penetrate the coveted Hispanic retail market. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 9/6/04)

June 9: The plan of a Miami company that has launched a line of clothing bearing the name of Cuban National Hero Jose Marti has met strong criticism and condemnation in Cuba. Such marketing goes beyond bad taste and is profoundly offensive to those who respect Jose Marti and his humility, avowed Cintio Vitier, honorary president of the Marti Research Center, who attended the Roundtable TV broadcast from Havana. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/6/04)

June 10: Cubans living in Tampa aren't embracing a federal policy limiting how often Cuban-Americans may travel to Cuba and how much they may spend there. "When it deals with family, there shouldn't be restrictions," said Jorge Luis Capedevila, a Cuban-born radio disc jockey for WQBN, 1300 AM. "With the restrictions, they are drowning our people. The action should be taken against [Fidel] Castro." (*The Tampa Tribune*, 10/6/04)

June 15: South Florida's Cuban-American community of about 600,000 is divided over the Bush administration's policies, with some hard-line exiles complaining that Bush has failed to take a tougher stance against Castro. A younger generation of Cubans who were born in the United States — or raised here most of their lives — are more likely to support engagement with Cuba. They are not solid Republicans like their parents. Many Cuban Americans abandoned the Democratic Party some 40 years ago, blaming President Kennedy for the debacle of the U.S.-backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba in 1961. The strong feelings remain, bolstered by President Reagan's anti-communist views and the Republicans' tough-on-Castro message. And, Jeb Bush, the president's brother, made converting Cubans his cause in the mid-1980s, before he became Florida's governor in 1998. The community is expected to vote Republican again on November 2. But if enough switch to Bush's Democratic rival, John Kerry — or decide to stay home on Election Day — the president will have to make up those votes elsewhere in Florida, a growing state of more than 17 million. (*AP*, 15/6/04)

June 17: A Cuban dissident who returned to the island last year after a long exile in Florida is calling on Cuban-Americans to vote for John Kerry in November in response to the measures recently imposed by the Bush administration. Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, a former revolutionary commander and leader of the group Cambio Cubano (Cuban Change), appealed to the "sensibilities of Cuban-Americans living in the United States" to back Kerry "out of love for their country of origin and the good of the United States." The measures the Bush government has said it will take against the Fidel Castro regime "fly in the face of the interests of Cubans on the island and will only make the Cuban government dig its heels in deeper," Gutierrez Menoyo said in a communique released in Havana. (*EFE*, 17/6/04)

June 19: Operators of charter flights to Cuba are scrambling to schedule flights to ferry hundreds of Cuban Americans back from the island before new travel regulations make them illegal visitors subject to \$7,500 fines as of June 30. The agencies are also trying to contact Cuban Americans already on the island who may not know that they have to return before the more restrictive rules take effect. "We encourage folks to use this time period to make travel arrangements to get back to the US," said Molly Millerwise, a spokeswoman for the Department of the Treasury. A traveler returning after June 30 will be subject to a \$7,500 fine, Millerwise said. First-time violators with mitigating circumstances have sometimes gotten off with a warning letter, she added. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/6/04)

June 20: A few hundred of Cuban Americans rallied in the streets of Miami, protesting against new travel regulations to be implemented on June 30. Demonstrators also made public their protests against limitations to remittances imposed by Washington. One of the participants carried a banner saying, "My family lives in Cuba, where does your family live, Mr. Bush?" (*Encuentro en laRed*, 20/6/04)

June 21: Federal immigration agents have arrested a Cuban man in Miami on suspicion he may have supervised a team of torturers who targeted dissidents opposed to Fidel Castro -- a charge strongly denied by his attorney. Jorge Felipe de

Cárdenas Agostini, 46, was picked up at his home in Miami and taken to the Krome detention center in West Miami-Dade, where he is in deportation proceedings, according to officials familiar with the case. Cubans, however, are rarely deported because the Cuban government generally refuses to take exiles back. (*The Miami Herald*, 21/6/04)

June 21: The Bush administration's measures tightening sanctions against Cuba has provoked heated debate in the South Florida exile community. "I'm pleased with the implementation of these measures. The new pressures imposed on (Fidel) Castro's economy reduce the dictatorship's financial resources to continue oppressing the Cuban people," US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen told the press. Concurring in that view were two other South Florida Republican lawmakers, brothers Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart. More praise for stiffening the embargo came from Ninaska Perez Castellon, head of the Cuban Liberty Council. "It's not about isolated measures," she said, "but rather a comprehensive plan that includes a diplomatic initiative in favor of democracy in Cuba." Jorge Mas Santos, head of the board of directors of the powerful Cuban American National Foundation, said the plan's most important aspect was the promise of more help for the internal opposition to Castro. (*EFE*, 21/6/04)

June 21: Some organizations in the South Florida exile community have been critical of the Bush administration's measures against Cuba. The Cuban American National Foundation's Francisco Hernandez pointed out that the group, while urging Bush to adopt "an effective strategy" against Castro, never sought tighter restrictions on Cuban-Americans traveling to their homeland or on the remittances they send to relatives there. Claiming to speak for more "moderate" elements of Miami's exile community, the groups Puentes Cubanos (Cuban Bridges), Cambio Cubano (Cuban Change) and The Time is Now flatly rejected the Bush package. Jose Basulto, president of Brothers to the Rescue, a group that uses small private planes to scour the Florida Strait for Cuban rafters in distress, characterized the latest set of actions as "more of the same." (*EFE*, 21/6/04)

June 27: Before strict new US regulations on travel to Cuba are to take effect, hundreds of Cuban-Americans lined up at Miami International Airport to get on board flights to the communist island. Many in the two hour-long check-in lines expressed frustration with the new rules ordered by President Bush, which limit family visits to once every three years instead of annually. Those caught in violation face a \$7,500 fine. The restrictions also have huge political implications in a presidential election year, especially in South Florida, where Bush and presumed Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry are vying for Cuban-American voters. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/6/04)

June 27: With his family looking on, José Contreras became the dominating pitcher the New York Yankees expected all along. Making his first start since his wife and children defected from Cuba last week, Contreras struck out a career-high 10 in six shutout innings, beating the New York Mets 8-1 in the opener of a day-night doubleheader. (*The Toronto Star*, 28/6/04)

June 28: The Cuban American National Foundation issued a statement criticizing the new rules ordered by the Bush administration, which limit family visits to the island. [[CANF Statement](#)] (*CANF Press Release*, 28/6/04)

June 29: Cuban-Americans who had hoped to take advantage of additional charter flights to Cuba before new travel restrictions go into effect were left in the lurch because the State Department denied the charter companies permission to take those passengers to the island. A few hundred people were unable to fly because news of the State Department denial did not reach many travelers who showed up thinking their flights were confirmed. For hours, the angry travelers gathered in a concourse at Miami International Airport chanting: "We want to fly! We want to fly!" (*Sun Sentinel*, AP, 30/6/04)

Foreign Affairs

June 1: Spain's governing Socialist party indicated that it hopes to improve bilateral relations with Cuba, ties that deteriorated during the previous conservative administration. The secretary of the ruling party's international committee, Trinidad Jimenez, met in Madrid with the vice president of Cuba's Council of Ministers, Jose Ramon Fernandez. Jimenez told the press that, during their meeting, Fernandez expressed his country's desire to "resume dialogue with Spain and the European Union." She added that her party considered relations with Cuba "extraordinarily important" because "we Spaniards have a lot in common with Cubans," including culture, trade relations and even family ties. But, for that to happen, the "will and effort of both countries" would be necessary, she added. (*EFE*, 1/6/04)

June 1: An urgent appeal to the UN Convention Against torture, and to the international public opinion, was made by Alejandrina García on behalf of her husband, political prisoner Diosdado González. Alejandrina requests urgent assistance due to inadequate treatment" received by her husband, a prisoner at Provincial Prison, Km 51/2, Pinar del Rio, where he is serving a 20 years sentence. She points out in the appeal that the prison regulations do not classify prisoners and that her husband is "in danger of being placed alongside prisoners of different categories whom authorities do not care if they have had a criminal past or bad conduct". (*NetforCuba*, 1/6/04)

June 2: Trade unions from 54 countries participating in the 92nd International Labor Conference taking place in Geneva have expressed their support for Cuba and condemned the measures announced by the US government to intensify the economic blockade of the island. Cuba's delegation to the meeting is being led by Pedro Ross Leal, General Secretary of the Confederation of Cuban Workers. (CTC) (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/6/04)

June 3: Mexico will not accept Cuba's request to reinstate their respective ambassadors as a first step to normalize relations until the Cuban government explains the reasons why Cuba intervened in Mexico's domestic affairs. According to Mexico's foreign ministry, Cuba has not replied to a diplomatic note sent last April 29 asking for an explanation. Mexican foreign minister, Luis Ernesto Derbez, promised his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Pérez Roque, to visit Havana early in July; however, if an explanation has not been forthcoming before then, the visit will take place without ambassadors being present. (*Grupo Reforma*, 3/6/04)

June 3: UNICEF Spain has launched a campaign against sex tourism with the support of several airlines which have agreed to show a sensitization video on board their planes, informed the companies. The Spanish Association of Airline Companies (AECA), which includes all Spanish airlines except Iberia, agreed to prioritize the tape viewings during flights to classic sex destinations like Cuba, Brazil, Camboya and Thailand. (*AFP*, 3/6/04)

June 4: The regional government of the Canary Islands is set to provide more than 300,000 euros (\$366,000) in aid to some 1,000 natives of the archipelago living in Cuba, officials said. The announcement was made during an official visit to the islands by Cuban Vice President, Jose Ramon Fernández. (*EFE*, 4/6/04)

June 4: Oman and Cuba pledged to strengthen their bilateral relations while exploring possibilities of joint ventures in various fields. Cuba's visiting Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Marta Morales, held talks with the top officials in the Sultanate. (*Oman News*, 4/6/04)

June 5: North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Choi Su Hon is in Cuba for a three day official visit with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations and will meet Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque. Choi Su Hon expects to meet also with Cuban Deputy Foreign Ministers Abelardo Moreno and José A. Guerra Menchero, as well as ministry officials Rafael Dausá and Aramis Fuentes. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/6/04)

June 5: Fidel Castro decorated famous Spanish dancer Antonio Gades with the Jose Marti Order, the highest award the Cuban State confers to distinguished personalities, at a private ceremony. After the ceremony concluded, Gades said he received the decoration with the satisfaction of sharing it with all those who anonymously defend the Cuban Revolution. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/6/04)

June 7: The Foreign Affairs Ministers of the member countries of the European Union (EU), are expected to revise its document under the name Common Position on Cuba at their meeting on June 14 and 15, 2004 in Brussels, the EU said. The Common Position of the EU countries on Cuba is a document in force as of 1996. The revision comes in a difficult moment for the Cuban-EU relations, affected recently by a series of arrests and sentences against dissidents, made by Cuban authorities in 2003 and continuing in 2004. The EU imposed diplomatic sanctions on Cuba at the end of 2003. Cuba answered to the diplomatic sanctions, rejecting the humanitarian aid of the EU for Cuba. (*Latin America News Digest*, 7/6/04)

Terrorism

June 12: A Miami TV station invited a group of representatives of US-based Cuban-American terrorists groups to appear in a show where they openly spoke of their plans for the use of violence and assassination in Cuba and Venezuela. During a program on Channel 41, members of the Commandos F4 not only justified armed attacks against Cuba and Venezuela but also admitted to having plans to assassinate the leaders of those countries. (*World Data Service*, 12/6/04)

June 30: A delegation of Colombian parliamentarians will travel to Mexico, Cuba and Venezuela, to request the presidents of those countries to intercede in favour of a negotiation between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas of a humanitarian agreement for the release of hostages. (*Europa Press*, 30/6/04)

US-Cuba Relations

June 2: Cubans turning on their television sets in recent days have picked up programming rarely seen on this communist-run island: US President George W. Bush defending his Iraq policy, American cartoons, news programs from Tampa Bay, Florida. But, this isn't a US government propaganda effort. It's a regular atmospheric phenomenon that occurs for several days or weeks at the start of each summer, allowing Cubans in some coastal areas -- especially those living in tall buildings -- to tune in to regular TV and radio programming from Florida, 90 miles (about 145 kilometers) to the north. (*CNN*, 2/6/04)

June 2: The US government expects to enact new Cuba travel and spending restrictions on June 30, nearly a month later than originally planned, a State Department official said. "We had talked about a June 1 date at one point," said Daniel Fisk, a deputy assistant secretary at the US State Department. "But at this point it looks like it's going to be June 30 by the time the regulations are promulgated, published and take effect." The Bush administration announced measures that would make it harder for Cuban Americans to travel to the communist-run nation and send money to relatives there. (*Reuters* 2/6/04)

June 3: The Mississippi Coast Trade Council has received its third license in 2004 to engage in travel-related transactions in Cuba. The Trade Council, representing South Mississippi, will be an agent for Gulf Medical International Trade LLC to identify trade opportunities in Cuba. (*The Sun Herald*, 3/6/04)

June 3: Senator John McCain said he struggle for freedom in Cuba remains strong despite brutal repression by the Castro regime. "Dissent in Cuba is alive and well," said McCain, (Republican-Arizona) "The pro-democracy movement has survived the repression organized by Castro to crush it. It has weathered the storm." McCain is chairman of the International Republican Institute, an organization dedicated to advancing democracy in Cuba and other countries

worldwide. McCain spoke to mark the release of "Dissenting Voices," an institute publication detailing the struggles of Cuba's pro-democracy movement since March 2003, when the Castro regime launched a crackdown. (AP, 3/6/04)

June 4: US Congressman Kendrick Meek asked Secretary of State Colin Powell that the 35 Cuban dissidents detained in the US Naval Base of Guantánamo be released while a third country willing to receive them is found, indicated the Democracy Movement—a Cuban exile organization in Miami. (AFP, 4/6/04)

June 4: New US travel restrictions could cut travel by Cuban Americans to the island by as much as 40 percent - despite new Cuban rules making it easier for them to visit relatives in the island, a Foreign Ministry official said. Under new US regulations, Cubans living in the United States will be able to legally travel to the island only once every three years, rather than annually. "In the end, it is the Cuban family that suffers," said Benigno Perez, head of the Foreign Ministry's Department of Consular Affairs and Cubans Living Abroad. Perez spoke in an interview with the press. The rules also limit which relatives Cuban Americans can send financial assistance to. Now, Cuban Americans will only be able to help their children, parents, grandparents and siblings on the impoverished island - but not their cousins, aunts and uncles. (AP, 4/6/04)

June 5: Forty operations were done in a week at Cimeq, one of Cuba's top hospitals, by a 42-member team of medical practitioners from Los Angeles and different cities in Florida. Cimeq usually performs 50 to 60 such surgeries a year, said Dr. Alfredo Ceballos, an orthopedic surgeon who coordinated the Americans' visit to the hospital. "This allowed us to take care of a large number of patients and significantly reduce the waiting list," Ceballos said. "And all without politics, or having to deal with money." Prostheses are limited in Cuba, a communist country under a U.S. embargo where hard currency to import goods from overseas is scant. (AP, 5/6/04)

June 6: Denouncing President Bush's crackdown on Fidel Castro as election-year politicking that "punishes and isolates the Cuban people," John Kerry said he would encourage "principled travel" to the island and lift the cap on gifts to its people. In his first detailed remarks on Cuba policy since clinching the Democratic presidential nomination, the Massachusetts senator sought to carve out a middle ground in what has been a dicey subject for him. He embraced the US trade embargo against Cuba and support for dissidents, but criticized Bush's restriction of travel and cash gifts to Cubans on the island as a "cynical and misguided ploy for a few Florida votes." Kerry said in a telephone interview that Bush's new hard-line policy restricting travelers to a single visit every three years "punishes and isolates the Cuban people and harms the Cuban Americans with relatives on the island while leaving Castro unharmed." "Selective engagement, not isolation, is the best way for the American people to send real, not just rhetorical, hope for a better future to the Cuban people," he said. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/6/04)

June 6: Cuba harshly criticized former President Ronald Reagan and his policies, saying he should "never have been born." In the first reaction to Reagan's death from the communist government, Radio Reloj said: "As forgetful and irresponsible as he was, he forgot to take his worst works to the grave," the government radio station said. "He, who never should have been born, has died," the radio said. The statement did not mention Cuba's relationship with the United States under Reagan, a staunch foe of communism. (CNN, 7/6/04)

June 7: At an International Labor Organisation (ILO) conference, the Cuban Minister of Labor and Social Security, Alfredo Morales Cartaya, denounced the US attempts to "manipulate" the international forum, and to destabilize his country. Cartaya said that one of the measures being implemented by the US is "the allocation of 59 million dollars for the funding and promotion of a 'fifth column' that will support aggressions" against Castro's regime. [[Speech by the Cuban Minister of Labor](#)] (EFE, 8/6/04)

June 8: Havana accused Washington of trying to bring the island nation "to its knees" by tightening the economic embargo with measures announced last month. A communique published in the government-run press abounded in negative characterizations of the US government and policies, including "fascists," "criminal," "perverse" and

"cynical." "The extreme right wing of the administration (of US President George W. Bush) is taking clear steps aimed at blocking income for our country from tourism and other services and to reducing to zero the possibility that Cuban residents in the United States can send remittances to their relatives in Cuba," the communique added. [[Denuncia Cuba nueva y cobarde medida](#)] (EFE, 8/6/04)

June 9: In a surprising operation, posing more questions than it answers, the Cuban government filtered US\$ 3.9 billion into the international banking system using a US Federal Reserve program for the replacement of deteriorated bills, as an investigation by the Federal Reserve bank of New York revealed. Some analysts believe the funds, which had been deposited in the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), could be a money laundering operation. However, the general opinion in government circles is that the money is simply income from tourism and remittances, said an official from the Federal Reserve. Last May, the Federal Reserve bank penalized UBS with a \$100 million fine. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 9/6/04)

June 9: A US congresswoman requested an investigation into what she described as a Cuban government operation to launder \$3.9 billion using a Federal Reserve program. Florida Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen told the press that she made the request to a congressional committee of the Federal Reserve and to Union Bank of Switzerland. "Today I sent a letter to Congressman Michael G. Oxley, chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, asking for a formal investigation into this maneuver by Cuba which, in an illegal way, has used the US Federal Reserve to launder \$3.9 billion," Ros-Lehtinen said. The Cuban government used a US program to replace deteriorated US bills and deposit the \$3.9 billion into the Swiss bank accounts of unknown owners. (EFE, 9/6/04)

June 9: A lawyer was sentenced to more than three years in federal prison for smuggling thousands of fine Cuban cigars into the US and selling them for a fat profit. Richard "Mick" Connors, 54, was also fined \$60,000 and placed on three years' probation. Connors was convicted in 2002 of smuggling, trading with the enemy, conspiracy and lying to a passport officer. (CNN, 9/6/04)

June 9: First baseman and outfielder Kendry Morales, considered by some to be Cuba's top young player, has defected to the United States, his stepfather said. Henry Núñez confirmed in an interview with the press that Morales, a switch-hitter said to be 20, had defected but provided no details. US immigration officials in Miami confirmed that Morales had arrived in the United States and was allowed to stay. (*The National Post*, *Sports Illustrated*, 9/6/04)

June 10: The organizers of a sailboat race from Key West to Cuba have been indicted on two counts of providing unlicensed travel services to the Communist island nation, the US Attorney's Office said. Peter Goldsmith and Michele Geslin ran the race in violation of the Trading With The Enemy Act, federal officials said. The most serious count of the indictment carries a maximum 10-year prison sentence. (AP, 10/6/04)

June 11: Cuba clarified its position on former U.S. president Ronald Reagan, saying Friday that a harsh editorial aired on state radio after his death was not the government's official opinion. "The Foreign Ministry has been instructed by the Revolution's leadership to clarify that the comments made by that radio station do not constitute an official declaration by Cuban authorities, nor do they express their positions," the statement published in Granma said. [[Información del MINREX](#)] (AP, 11/6/04)

June 12: The US government denied a visa to moderate Cuban dissident Dimas Castellanos, despite US policies that encourage links between the United States and Cubans opposed to Fidel Castro's communist government. The opposition group Arco Progresista, to which Castellanos belongs, said that the United States was targeting moderate dissidents who criticize US policy as well as the Cuban government. Castellanos, whom Arco Progresista described as a "prominent, social-democratic thinker," was invited to participate in a conference at the Institute of Cuban Studies in Miami at the end of June. "What's puzzling about the denial is that it comes from a government that says it supports the

promotion of human rights, the exercise of personal liberties (...) and the democratization of Cuba," Arco Progresista said in a statement. (AP, 12/6/04)

June 12: The President of the Communist Party of the United States Sam Webb met with the First Secretary of the Havana Division of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) Pedro Sáez Montejo on the fourth day of Webb's week-long visit to the island. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 12/6/04)

June 14: The 2004 Trafficking in Persons report, issued by the US Department of State, rated 10 nations in the Tier 3 category (the least favorable rating): Bangladesh, Burma, Cuba, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Guyana, North Korea, Sierra Leone, Sudan and Venezuela. [[Trafficking in Persons Report. Western Hemisphere](#)] (*Washington File*, 14/6/04)

June 15: A group of 19 Cubans who reached the Florida coast may be eligible for residency in the US, said the border patrol. (AFP, 16/6/04)

June 15: A Jamaican resort company has cut back its business in Cuba to avoid having top officers denied entry into the United States for investing in confiscated property, company officials and a lawyer close to the case said. They said SuperClubs Super-Inclusive Resorts has canceled three hotel management contracts - a move analysts said is likely to have a chilling effect on foreign investment in Cuba. "We now have two hotels in Cuba. Until two months ago we had five, but we've been closing contracts," said one SuperClubs official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. (*Reuters*, 15/6/04)

June 16: The Cuban government criticized the United States' decision to include Cuba in the list of negligent countries which do not prevent the illegal trafficking of thousands of persons every year. In a front-page note, the daily Granma described the classification of Cuba as a destination for sex tourism as a "cynical and shameful accusation." (*Notimex*, 16/6/04)

June 16: The US government published in the Federal Register regulations that further tighten the embargo against Cuba. The Department of Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control said in the Federal Register that the new regulations would take effect on June 30. The tough new rules allow Cuban-Americans to visit immediate relatives on the island only once every three years, instead of once per year. Visits can last no longer than 14 days, according to the published regulations. US citizens who are not Cuban-Americans are banned from visiting the island, just 90 miles (150 km) from Florida, with a few exceptions like journalists and legislators. And authorized visitors can now take only \$300 in cash to Cuba, down from \$3,000. The rules also limit to 44 pounds (27.5 kilograms) the amount of baggage travelers can carry to the island and reduce the daily spending limit from \$167 to \$50. [[Bulletin from the Office of Foreign Assets Control](#)] (*CNN*, 16/6/04)

June 16: During a conference of the Texas-Cuba Trade Alliance, Jim Stinehagen, in charge of Montana-based Yellowstone Bean Co., shared his exporting experiences with Texas businesspeople interested in cashing in on a reopened Cuban market. More than 11 million potential consumers live on the Communist-controlled island, according to Stinehagen. The conference focused on helping state exporters navigate through the strict regulations governing trade with Cuba. "Cuba once was one of the bigger markets for Texas," said Parr Rosson of the Center for North American Studies at Texas A&M University. Cynthia Thomas, president of the trade alliance, said that at one point before the embargo, all Texas rice was exported to Cuba. While agricultural exports to the island have been strong, Thomas said the export of medical supplies has been limited because Cubans' low incomes don't allow the purchase of high-priced American medical supplies. (*San Antonio Express News*, 16/6/04)

June 16: The US Interests Section in Havana confirmed that Cuban dissident Dimas Castellanos' visa request was denied, but issued a statement saying that "support or nonsupport for US policy is not a litmus test for receiving a US visa." It declined say why the visa was denied, citing confidentiality rules. "Our long-standing policy is to provide

uncensored information to Cubans," the statement continued. "We have provided informational materials to supporters of Arco Progresista, despite this organization's well-known disagreement with US policy." (AP, 16/6/04)

June 17: A senior Cuban official termed cruel and inhumane new US measures to limit the flow of dollars to the Communist-run Caribbean island. The tough new rules, to take effect on June 30, allow Cuban-Americans to visit immediate relatives on the island only once every three years, instead of once per year. Visits can last no longer than 14 days. Opponents of the sanctions in the United States say the Bush administration steps pander to Cuban-American voters in Florida, a key swing state in November's presidential election. "These regulations are a harsh blow to the Cuban family," Rafael Dausa, director of the Foreign Ministry's North America department, said on a state-run television talk show. Dausa charged that under the regulations there were no exceptions for humanitarian concerns and the right of Cuban-Americans to visit uncles, aunts and cousins was banned entirely. (Reuters, 17/6/04)

June 18: American luxury yacht owners and rough-hewn sailors alike have navigated around US travel restrictions through a loophole that allowed them to cruise legally if they could prove they hadn't spent a cent "trading with the enemy." Armed with letters from Havana's Marina Hemingway generously waving all docking, visa and cruising permit fees, hundreds of American pleasure boaters sailed home from Cuba's forbidden shores claiming they had been "fully hosted" by the marina. Now under new, tighter travel restrictions meant to strangle Cuba's economy and precipitate the end of Fidel Castro's 45-year rule, the Bush administration plans to eliminate the "fully hosted" provision as of June 30, a move many critics deride as a ploy aimed at pleasing Cuban American voters. (Reuters, 18/6/04)

June 21: Cuban exile activists are asking for the release of Cubans and Haitians who are being held, more than three years in some cases, at the US Naval Base at Guantánamo. The activists say the indefinite detention violates the detainees' civil rights. "The president of the United States needs to allow them to come here," said Cuban-American activist Ramon Saul Sanchez. "That's the bottom line." The Cubans and Haitians are refugees who were intercepted by the US Coast Guard at sea and transferred to Guantánamo to process their claims for political asylum. (Sun Sentinel, 21/6/04)

June 21: Tens of thousands of Cubans rallied, as Fidel Castro warned President Bush against launching a military attack on Cuba, saying it would provoke a mass exodus and an all-out ground war. Fidel Castro declared that in an invasion of Cuba, his hypothetical physical absence would not mean the slightest difference in the Cuban people's ability to fight and resist. "In Cuba's present condition to confront an invasion, my physical absence by natural or other causes would not hurt our ability, in any way, to fight and resist," the Cuban leader said in an open letter directed to US President George W. Bush read to more than 200,000 people in Havana. [[Segunda Epístola](#)] (AP, Prensa Latina, 21/6/04)

June 21: New federal regulations on studying in Cuba could cancel a proposed Indiana University course in geography and telecommunications. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control regulations prohibit students from traveling to Cuba for courses that last less than 10 weeks. That would block IU from offering the course scheduled to start next summer. It would have included 12 days of field work near Santa Clara, Bloomington's sister city in central Cuba. (AP, 21/6/06)

June 21: Andres Oppenheimer of The Miami Herald asked John Kerry what he thought of something called the Varela Project. Kerry said it was "counterproductive." It's necessary to try other approaches, he added. As he told Oppenheimer, the Varela Project "has gotten a lot of people in trouble (...) and it brought down the hammer in a way that I think wound up being counterproductive." (The New York Times, 21/6/04)

June 21: A Cuban rafter intercepted at sea who slit his wrists in an attempt to prevent his repatriation remained aboard a US Coast Guard patrol boat, according to an exile group lobbying for him to be allowed into the United States. The

Miami-based Democratic Movement, or MD, said it was doing everything possible to have Hector Martin Sanchez brought to a hospital in Miami, but noted that if authorities order him to be treated aboard the Coast Guard boat, he would probably be deported back to Cuba. (*EFE*, 21/6/04)

June 21: A go-fast boat with 21 Cuban refugees and two suspected smugglers aboard led the US Coast Guard on a three-hour chase, then brought the Cubans ashore at Big Pine Key before they could be intercepted. Earlier, 26 migrants, also Cuban, were discovered at Elliott Key. Their boat came ashore after a two-hour journey from Cuba, according to US Coast Guard representatives. (*The Miami Herald*, 21/6/04)

June 22: Jose Contreras' family defected from Cuba this week, and the New York Yankees pitcher left the team and traveled to Miami to reunite with his wife and two daughters. Immigration and Customs Enforcement spokesman Barbara Gonzalez said she did not know details on how the family got out of Cuba. Contreras, the former star on Cuba's national team, defected in 2002. Nicaragua twice granted Contreras' family visas, but the Cuban government denied permission for his relatives to leave the island. Contreras' family was informed in late 2002 that it would have to wait five years for a document required to leave. (*AP*, 22/6/04)

June 22: Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón has strongly condemned Washington's latest measures against Cuba, saying that the White House is trying "to destroy the Revolution by intensifying the blockade and economic war" against the island. Speaking at the University of Havana at a meeting between US and Cuban philosophers and social scientists, Cuba's top legislator said that a military attack against Cuba may not be imminent, but it cannot be discarded. Ricardo Alarcón said that not only has the United States not discarded the possibility of an invasion, but Washington has actually said that they might use force if all other actions to overthrow the Cuban Revolution fail. Alarcón said he was sure that all other actions would fail, as a military attack itself would also fail. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 22/6/04)

June 23: During her first electoral campaign visit to Miami, Teresa Heinz Kerry drew parallels between the Cuban exiles' experiences and the expulsion of her family from Mozambique, when this African country began to be ruled by a communist government. Heinz Kerry, the wife of Democrat candidate to the US presidency, John Kerry, also warned that to impose sanctions against a country is not always a good decision in international politics. During a session with the press about the last US sanctions against the Cuban communist regime, Heinz Kerry showed an inclination to maintain remittances, and to increase cultural exchanges and person- to-person contacts. "John [Kerry] is advising a policy of exchanges, so the Cubans could feel a good impact from Americans", she added. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 24/6/04)

June 23: US residents will no longer be allowed to send to Cuba clothing, personal hygiene items, fishing gear and other goods under new rules unveiled by the US Department of Commerce. Gift parcels are limited to food, vitamins, medicine, medical supplies and equipment, and receive-only radio equipment. Previously, the parcels could include such other items as seeds, veterinary supplies and soap-making equipment. Parcels containing items other than food are limited to once per month per household, instead of once monthly per individual. The recipient must be a grandparent, grandchild, parent, sibling, spouse or child of the donor. (*The Miami Herald*, 23/6/04)

June 24: Cuba bought 5,300 tonnes of US durum wheat during the week ended June 17, the US Agriculture Department said. In its weekly export sales report, the USDA said Cuba's durum purchase was the first since the USDA began reporting such data in 1973. (*Reuters*, 24/6/04)

June 24: In an interview with *The Miami Herald*, Senator John Kerry caused a controversy by seeming to slight the Varela Project, which tries to promote democracy by using the legal mechanisms of the state. ". . . It has brought down the hammer in a way that I think wound up being counterproductive," Kerry said. After the controversy broke, Kerry wrote an article explicitly endorsing the Varela Project. Jamie Rubin, one of his foreign policy advisers, said this week by telephone that the senator was most concerned that fervid US support fostered a perception that dissidents were tools of Washington. (*The Boston Globe*, 25/6/04)

June 24: Independent journalist Manuel Vázquez Portal, who was recently released from prison, called for the prevention of a war between Cuba and the United States, and urged Fidel Castro to put an end to his “obstinacy” toward the US and the European Union. In declarations to the press, he said that Castro’s “partisan entrenchment” in condemning the likelihood of an attack against the island “is not the solution” and that it is time for “sensible thinking” because a modern war is not fought with machetes but with missiles and “intelligent bombs.” (*Notimex*, 24/6/04)

June 24: The US government will give air charter companies and travelers more time to adjust to stringent new rules curtailing visits to Cuba, a top State Department official said. "We are in the process of formulating a response that we will make generally known to the travel service providers, the US Interests Section in Havana and to the public that those who are legally in Cuba will be able to make arrangements to come back to the US," said Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Dan Fisk, the top US diplomat for Cuba. "They will have to return by a certain date, but they will have sufficient notice," Fisk told Reuters, adding "it will be respectful of logistics and of the efforts needed to get people back from a country that has an information embargo." Fisk did not provide additional details. (*Reuters*, 24/6/04)

June 25: The University of Havana honored US writer Howard Zinn, known for his best-seller “The Other History of the United States”, with the Honoris Causa Doctorate in historic sciences. Cuban Congressional Speaker Ricardo Alarcon, Culture Minister Abel Prieto, and University of Havana rector Juan Vela, who personally gave the diploma to Zinn, attended the act. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/6/04)

June 25: The United States defended the new restrictions it plans to adopt against Cuba, saying these respond to "the needs of the Cuban people" and will help promote democracy on the communist-ruled island. The restrictions come from recommendations made in May by the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, created by the White House with the aim of fostering a transition toward democracy in Havana. At a press conference, State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said the US measures seek to respond to "the needs of the Cuban people," though he gave no further explanation. (*EFE*, 25/6/04)

June 26: Some 10,000 Cubans summoned by authorities rallied against tighter US sanctions to try to hasten the departure from power of Fidel Castro. The massive rally against the policies of US President George W. Bush was held in Jatibonico, 350 kilometers (215 miles) east of Havana. (*AFP*, 26/6/04)

June 27: Two small groups of refugees landed in the Keys within about 24 hours in homemade boats, according to the US Border Patrol. Two Cuban men in a homemade, wooden boat powered by an engine landed along Long Beach Road on Big Pine Key. The men, who departed from Havana, were taken into Border Patrol custody and transported to Krome detention center in Miami-Dade. Another group of three men landed in Marathon after departing from Villa Clara province on Cuba's north coast. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/6/04)

June 28: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said the new US restrictions against Cuba could hurt President George W. Bush's bid for re-election in November. "These measures, thought up to please the ultra-right in Miami and guarantee its support in the elections, could end up being costly for President Bush from the electoral point of view," Perez Roque said during a legislative session in Havana. "However, these measures come up against our people's resistance capacity and have raised in the United States themselves an enormous wave of indignation and opposition," Perez Roque told local television. (*EFE*, 28/6/04)

June 30: US officials said harsher Cuban sanctions that have angered those on and off the island are intended only to hurt Castro. Tightened restrictions on Cuba travel, remittances and gift parcels taking effect today mark the start of a "comprehensive, integrated strategy" intended to hurt Fidel Castro's government, not Cubans or Cuban Americans, US authorities say. "These are specific steps to signal to the regime that they cannot simply hold on," said a senior State

Department official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It's a sign of disapproval of the [Cuban] government's current and past behavior and to show that the behavior has consequences." (*The Miami Herald*, 30/6/04)

June 30: A group of well-known musicians criticized new US regulations that will further limit travel to Cuba, urging the United States to build bridges to the island instead of tearing them down. The musicians tied their comments to the release of "Bridge to Havana," a combination CD-DVD produced by dozens of US and Cuban artists during a song-writing workshop and cultural exchange program in Havana in 1999. The product "proves the brotherhood that exists between American and Cuban musicians," said a statement signed by "the unstoppable Cuban musicians," about 10 of whom held a news conference to call for a second such meeting of artists in Cuba. (*AP*, 30/6/04)

June 30: Fidel Castro said US President George W. Bush was given bad advice when he decided to impose new and highly unpopular restrictions cutting visits and money remittances to Cuba. "The least I can tell you is that Bush was ill advised," Castro told reporters at the Argentine Embassy where he met with a group of Argentine business leaders. Castro said the new US restrictions on Cuba "could work against his efforts to get reelected." "The measures injure the sensibilities of Cuban families," Castro said, adding that the US policy "was not well thought out." Despite Bush's hardening of the 42-year-old economic embargo on Cuba, Castro said: "Mentally, we're ready for any measure; either a message of peace or war." (*AFP*, 1/7/04)

June 30: In a statement on US politics towards Latin America, Democratic candidate John Kerry said that democracy should "flourish and spread as it never had before" in the Americas. "Only Cuba remained outside this new community of nations", Kerry said. "In Cuba, the angry red scar in a sea of democratic blue, we have seen a further deterioration, with widespread arrests of dissidents and human-rights activists". "In Cuba, we must support Oswaldo Payá and his brave colleagues on the Varela Project. I have honored principled dissent, civil disobedience and peaceful challenges to authority my entire adult life. Indeed, without dissent we could not have made progress toward civil rights in America, ended the war in Vietnam or defeated apartheid and communism abroad", Kerry added. "We should be working through the OAS, with our allies and with democratic friends worldwide to put pressure on the Castro regime to release political prisoners, allow room for political opposition and accede to initiatives such as the Varela Project, which will move Cuba toward democracy." (*The Miami Herald*, 30/6/04)