

## FOCAL's Research Forum on Cuba

### Chronicle on Cuba

June 2009

#### Highlights

**Domestic Affairs:** Cuba announces the resignation of its central bank chief. Smaller bean rations and longer bus lines are among the new hardships hitting Cubans. A corps of inspectors pursues fraud in the consumption of electricity in Havana's residential sector. A video on the dismissal of former vice president Carlos Lage and former foreign minister Felipe Perez Roque circulates in the island. An official note announces over 31 confirmed new cases of the Influenza A H1N1 virus.

**Economy:** The Cuban government establishes "exceptional measures" to save energy. Factories are closing down and production is being cut at other workplaces as the international financial crisis weighs on in the island. Cuba's government announces new labour measures to "stimulate jobs". Cuba's trade deficit soared by 65 percent in 2008.

**Exile Community:** The Cuban Studies Institute (IEC) warns about threats received in Havana by its president, Dagoberto Valdes. Exile groups announce in Miami a new stage of the campaign "I do not cooperate".

**Foreign Affairs:** El Salvador and Cuba formally re-establish diplomatic ties. Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo visits the island. The Organization of American States (OAS) agrees to lift a provision that suspended Cuba from the group. Havana makes clear does not want to rejoin the OAS. Bolivian President Evo Morales arrives in Havana for a working visit. European Union nations want to deepen dialogue with Cuba. The Cuban Government condemns the military coup in Honduras.

**Security:** Military units from Cuba joined Venezuelan and ALBA nation forces in a parade commemorating Venezuela's historical battle in Carabobo.

**US-Cuba Relations:** Cuba agrees to resume talks with the Obama administration on legal immigration. A former State Department official and his wife have been charged with spying for Cuba. Fidel Castro harshly criticizes the Obama Administration in several of his columns. The US Supreme Court declines to hear an appeal by five convicted Cuban spies. The National Endowment for Democracy hands out its annual Democracy Award to five Cuban dissidents.

#### Lo más relevante

**Asuntos domésticos:** Cuba anuncia la renuncia del jefe de su banco central. Raciones menores de granos y largas colas para esperar el ómnibus son parte de las nuevas privaciones los cubanos. Un cuerpo de inspectores persigue los fraudes en el consumo eléctrico del sector residencial de La Habana. Circula en la isla un video sobre el despido del ex vicepresidente Carlos Lage y el ex ministro de exteriores Felipe Pérez Roque. Una nota oficial anuncia más de 31 nuevos casos confirmados del virus de influenza A H1N1.

**Economía:** El gobierno cubano establece “medidas excepcionales” para ahorrar energía. Cierran fábricas y se reduce la producción en otros centros mientras la crisis se deja sentir en la isla. El gobierno cubano anuncia nuevas medidas laborales para “estimular el empleo”. El déficit comercial de Cuba alcanza un 65 por ciento en 2008.

**Comunidad de exiliados:** El Instituto de Estadios Cubanos (IEC) alerta sobre las amenazas recibidas en la Habana por su presidente, Dagoberto Valdés. Grupos del exilio anuncian una nueva fase de la campaña “Yo no coopero”.

**Asuntos exteriores:** Cuba y El Salvador formalmente reestablecen relaciones diplomáticas. El presidente paraguayo Fernando Lugo visita la isla. La Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) acuerda levantar una resolución que suspendía a Cuba de su membresía. La Habana deja claro que no desea reingresar en la OEA. El presidente de Bolivia llega a La Habana en visita de trabajo. Las naciones de la Unión Europea desean profundizar el diálogo con Cuba. El gobierno cubano condena el golpe militar en Honduras.

**Seguridad:** Unidades militares de Cuba se unieron a fuerzas venezolanas y de naciones del ALBA en una parada militar en conmemoración de la histórica batalla de Carabobo.

**Relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos:** Cuba acuerda reiniciar conversaciones con la administración Obama sobre migración legal. Un ex funcionario del Departamento de Estado y su esposa son acusados de espiar para Cuba. Fidel Castro lanza severas críticas a la administración Obama en varios de sus artículos. La Corte suprema de Estados Unidos rehúsa revisar la apelación de cinco cubanos sentenciados por espionaje. La National Endowment for Democracy le otorga su Premio anual sobre Democracia a cinco disidentes cubanos.

## **Domestic Affairs**

**Junio 1:** Varios jóvenes gays arrestados el pasado 15 de mayo en la isla, horas antes de las celebraciones oficiales por el Día Mundial contra la Homofobia, fueron sentenciados a penas de entre dos y cuatro años de cárcel, denunciaron en un comunicado la Fundación LGBT "Reinaldo Arenas" y el Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos LGBT. Las organizaciones no especificaron el número de encarcelados. Los jóvenes formaban parte de un grupo de 58 homosexuales detenidos en una redada denominada "Operación Pío", los cuales fueron obligados a firmar actas policiales, multados y devueltos a sus provincias de residencia. La Fundación LGBT "Reinaldo Arenas" y el Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos LGBT denunciaron que 16 jóvenes que exigieron razones por la

detención "fueron golpeados (...) y forzados a firmar en contra de su voluntad (...) actas de advertencias", en una estación policial de Centro Habana, bajo la amenaza de ser enviados a prisión si no lo hacían. Según el comunicado, las actas de advertencia decían que los homosexuales fueron apresados "en posesión de armas blancas", que "se prostituían en el momento de la detención" y que "asediaban el turismo". "La policía nunca probó (...) tales cargos", dijeron los activistas en su nota (*Cubaencuentro*, 1/6/09).

**Junio 1:** Un llamado internacional de bloggers a criticar al gobierno cubano mediante la Internet atizó el fuego entre los opositores y defensores del sistema político isleño en la red. La convocatoria fue lanzada hace algunos días para que el 1 de junio las personas que tengan páginas personales en internet cuelguen una entrada con tres puntos de demanda a las autoridades cubanas: liberar a los presos políticos, levantar las prohibiciones que impiden a sus ciudadanos entrar y salir de su país y por último eliminar las prohibiciones de acceso privado a Internet. Según un comentario en la bitácora *Octavo Cerco*, que administra Claudia Cadelo, el llamado se originó en varias páginas europeas lideradas por José Luis Sito, Armando Añel y Margarita García Alonso. Entre las páginas que se hicieron eco al interior de la isla, estuvo además *Generación Y*, de Yoani Sánchez, quien sin embargo lamentó que la idea nacida en el exterior no fuera "consensuada o discutida" con los que escriben desde la isla. "Quizás el llamamiento se hubiera visto enriquecido, entonces, con otras demandas o con un orden diferente de prioridades", expresó la mujer en su página que se encuentra filtrada y no puede verse al interior de Cuba. Del otro lado, la llamada no pasó desapercibida y fue sutilmente contestada por los defensores del sistema cubano. La periodista Norelys Morales quien administra la página *Islamia* colocó el mismo fotomontaje que identifica a la convocatoria pero con sus propios tres puntos de reclamación, esta vez al gobierno de los Estados Unidos: fin del bloqueo contra Cuba, del apoyo al terrorismo para socavar a la revolución y abstenerse de la "guerra mediática" contra la revolución (*AP*, 1/6/09).

**Junio 2:** El VI Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC), inicialmente anunciado para celebrarse durante el segundo semestre del año, pudiera quedar postergado en virtud de las dificultades económicas y el aumento de la inconformidad popular que encara la dirigencia del país. Fuentes consultadas dentro de Cuba --entre ellas varios militantes comunistas-- coincidieron en señalar como poco probable que el cónclave partidista pueda realizarse en los meses finales del 2009, como informó el pasado año el gobernante Raúl Castro, quien ostenta el cargo de segundo secretario del Comité Central del PCC. "Ha pasado mucho tiempo desde que se anunció el Congreso, pero en las reuniones del núcleo [del PCC] no se habla nada de eso", dijo un veterano miembro partidista que pidió el anonimato. "Creo que no queda tiempo para hacer un evento de este tipo en medio de todos los problemas que tenemos ahora encima". La convocatoria no ha sido divulgada, no se ha informado a los militantes sobre los preparativos del evento y ni siquiera el máximo líder de la organización, el gobernante retirado Fidel Castro, se ha referido a la cita partidista en los artículos de actualidad que aparecen en la prensa oficial bajo el rótulo de "reflexiones" (*El Nuevo Herald*, 2/6/09).

**June 3:** Cubans are in no mood to party as Raul Castro, the president, turns 78. They are suffering the toughest austerity measures since the post-Soviet crisis of the 1990s, despite

diplomatic achievements that have left the US isolated in its tough policy towards the Communist nation. It has been just over a year since Mr Castro took over from his ailing brother Fidel with a pledge to improve people's lives and remake one of the most statist economies in the world. But now the population is being called on to sacrifice by a government many view as old and bureaucratic. Cubans this week jostled one another in ever longer lines waiting for buses, sweated to meet mandated reductions in power consumption and grumbled over a 50 per cent reduction in lunch portions served at work place cafeterias. The austerity measures that took effect on Monday have stirred up memories of the dark days after the Soviets fell, called the Special Period, when 18-hour blackouts and food shortages traumatised the population. Cubans are once more confronting darkened stores and offices that are going without air conditioning into the early afternoon. The government has threatened to black out entire provinces if they do not reduce power consumption. Rafael Hernandez, editor of the often critical Temas Magazine, said that Raul Castro faced not only the international financial crisis, but "an inefficient domestic economic model due to its extreme centralisation and waste, where a dysfunctional bureaucracy resistant to change has prospered". The state-run media have increasingly taken the bureaucracy to task for a range of shortcomings, including its failure to implement wage reform and move crops from the fields to consumers (*Reuters*, 3/6/09).

**June 3:** Pastor Omar Gude Pérez, whom supporters allege is a victim of religious persecution, is facing seven years in prison by request of a state prosecutor. Authorities have charged Pérez with "illicit economic activity and falsification of documents." His trial was expected to begin before the end of May. According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide, those close to the pastor believe he is being targeted because of his religious activity and leadership of a rapidly growing Christian movement. The prosecutor's petition goes on to accuse the pastor of "counter-revolutionary conduct and attitudes." Christian Solidarity, a humanitarian organization that specializes in religious freedoms, said that Pérez has already spent almost one year in prison without being given a trial. The leader of a non-denominational, non-political religious movement in Cuba known as the "Apostolic Reformation" was first detained May 22, 2008, when authorities originally attempted to charge him with "human trafficking." Those charges were thrown out in March by a local court that cited a lack of evidence. The case was then referred to Havana and in early April the family was notified of the new charges. The new charges are reported to involve a name change on his birth certificate, which was changed after his mother remarried. "Since Raul Castro took power in early 2008, there has been an increase in reported violations of religious liberty. Another pastor and denominational leader, the Rev. Roberto Rodriguez, of Placetas, Cuba has also been the subject of legal proceedings against him and members of his family" (*ANS*, 3/6/09).

**Junio 3:** Las fuertes lluvias que afectaron la isla en los últimos días provocaron varios derrumbes en la capital, además de inundaciones y el cese de las actividades en algunos centros de trabajo. Según un reporte del periodista independiente Roberto de Jesús Guerra, "fuentes oficiales del grupo de Rescate y Salvamento confirmaron en Centro Habana alrededor de ocho derrumbes" y al menos "tres personas heridas". Guerra indicó además que las autoridades "tuvieron que parar el tráfico de autobuses de varias rutas que

circulan por el túnel de Línea y la calle Línea, en el Vedado habanero, por las inundaciones en esa zona baja y penetraciones del mar". "Militares obligaron a ciudadanos que permanecen en edificaciones viejas, a que abandonaran los locales, que ya han sido declarados no habitables por el deterioro en que se encuentran", añadió el reporte (*Cubaencuentro*, 3/6/09).

**Junio 4:** "Las luces y el sistema de climatización en parto, parto y recuperación también serán apagadas mientras no se encuentren allí los pacientes", publica el diario oficial *Granma* en un reportaje sobre el "ahorro energético" en el Hospital Ginecobstétrico América Arias. Según el rotativo, el América Arias, más conocido como Maternidad de Línea y uno de los centros de ese tipo más importantes de la capital, "se ha propuesto evitar el derroche", "tras rebasar los planes de consumo eléctrico en los dos últimos meses". Una doctora que pidió el anonimato explicó que cuando los salones no están climatizados "se convierten en un ambiente expuesto a los gérmenes", teniendo en cuenta el clima de la isla, donde existe un elevado nivel de humedad y altas temperaturas. La médica consideró que en el caso del hospital ginecobstétrico "una paciente se puede poner de parto de repente, y en ese momento estaría apagado todo el sistema de climatización". La especialista relató que en "temporadas de apagones" sucede que hospitales se han quedado sin electricidad debido a que el área donde se ubican ha sido desconectada. Incluso, hospitales supuestamente "protegidos", como el oftalmológico Pando Ferrer (Liga contra la Ceguera), dedicado a la Operación Milagro, se han quedado sin electricidad hasta que la planta del centro entra en funcionamiento. La doctora Idalmis Ruiz dijo que "normalmente, mientras no estén en funcionamiento, los quirófanos pueden estar sin climatización, excepto en los casos que tengan almacenados materiales y medicamentos que requieran una determinada temperatura, como anestesia". No obstante, sostuvo que "hay un riesgo" en el caso de los hospitales ginecobstétricos, porque un parto puede tener determinadas "complicaciones" que requieran llevar a la paciente al quirófano, y con 40 grados de temperatura no reúne las condiciones adecuadas (*Cubaencuentro*, 4/6/09).

**June 4:** Seven Cubans who set out for the United States in a rickety plastic foam boat wound up instead in front of the US mission to Cuba. The would-be migrants drew gawkers - as well as the attention of Cuba's coast guard - because their journey ended along the rocks lining Havana's heavily traveled Malecon seafront boulevard near the US Interests Section. Coast guard craft surrounded the disabled little boat around midday, so the seven men jumped in the water and clambered out over the rocks, to be picked up by police. "Our tiller broke and we had to turn back," Margoí Díaz, 33, told the press as he sat in a military vehicle on the Malecon (*AP*, 4/6/09).

**June 4:** Cuba announced the resignation of its veteran central bank chief as the communist-ruled state grapples with a deepening economic crisis. Francisco Soberon Valdes, who held the cabinet-level post for nearly 15 years and shaped the Caribbean country's monetary policy, was stepping down with immediate effect, a government statement said. Soberon was one of the last holdovers from the government of former Cuban leader Fidel Castro. The resignation comes as Cuba's state-run economy has been hard hit by the global financial crisis and a drop in revenues from tourism and nickel, its

leading export. Soberon was replaced at his "own request" by Ernesto Medina, who has served as president of the state-run International Finance Bank since 2003. A foreign banker with operations in Cuba said Medina was "a capable career banker" who could be expected to follow Raul Castro's policies. Soberon's departure had been expected in Cuban financial circles for quite some time due to rumors he was at odds with the new government's top economic advisers (*Reuters*, 5/6/09).

**June 6:** Some 100,000 people suffer from Alzheimer's disease in Cuba, with the figure expected to double by 2020, the official *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper reported. Over the next 15 years, Cuba's population over the age of 80 "is going to increase in an accelerated way and will reach nearly half a million people, of whom an estimated 40 percent will have this disease," the president of the Cuban Alzheimer's Association, Juan de Jesus Llibre told the newspaper. If a cure is not found for Alzheimer's in the next few years, Cuba could have 200,000 people afflicted with the neurological disorder by 2020, Llibre said. Alzheimer's has become "a growing health problem" and "an urgent research priority" due to the aging of Cuba's population, *Juventud Rebelde* said (*EFE*, 6/6/09).

**June 7:** The Public Health Ministry confirmed the fifth case of AH1N1 flu in Cuba, state media reported. The patient is a 62-year-old Canadian tourist who arrived from Toronto in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba on June 2. The case was detected because the tourist had a fever and a cough when he went through the airport passport control, and he was hospitalized and the rest of the passengers on his flight "are being kept under epidemiological observation." The earlier cases of swine flu in Cuba included three Mexican youths who are studying on the island and a Canadian baby, who also came from Toronto, but all of them were treated and released by health authorities in May (*EFE*, 7/6/09).

**Junio 8:** Un nuevo llamado al ahorro lanzado a través de la prensa oficial, ante las "excepcionales condiciones que vivimos", advirtió a los cubanos que habrá una reducción de las importaciones. El director del diario *Granma*, Lázaro Barredo, avisó en un artículo que "no vamos a poder importar todas las materias primas, equipos y bienes de consumo que necesitamos y que quisiéramos tener, de la misma manera que tendremos que reajustar las enormes erogaciones en combustibles y alimentos". El director del *Granma*, órgano oficial del Partido Comunista, puso como ejemplo los neumáticos, que no se amortizan hasta el final (30,000 kilómetros): muchos cubanos no piensan que gomas nuevas "significa el gasto de decenas de millones de dólares para importarlas, cantidades de divisas de las cuales no se dispondrán en lo inmediato". "Una de las cuestiones que más demanda la difícil coyuntura económica es que enfrentemos esa mentalidad gastadora" de muchos cubanos, afirmó. Barredo anunció que "estos días transcurren numerosos análisis tensos dentro de todo el aparato gobernante que llevarán adelante reajustes inevitables". El gobierno reajustó a 2,5% el crecimiento del Producto Interno Bruto (PIB) para este año, previsto inicialmente en 6%, mientras que el economista Pavel Vidal, del Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana, consideró que como mucho crecerá 1% (*ANSA*, 8/6/09).

**June 8:** The individual quotas of three rationed food products -- beans, peas and salt -- have been reduced, effective June 1, according to the Progreso Weekly's blog. An official note by the Ministry of Domestic Trade, posted in every grocery store, states that the quotas of beans and peas, each set at 20 ounces per family member per month, have been cut to 10 oz. The salt quota -- 2 kilograms every three months for a 3-to-4-member family -- has been reduced to 1 kilogram. Black beans can be purchased in farmers' markets for 10 ordinary pesos (US 38 cents) per pound; kidney beans for 12 pesos (US 45 cents) per pound, but salt is sold only in convertible-peso stores, for the equivalent of US 70 cents per kilogram, the blog says. "Many Cubans wonder if the rationing of what's already rationed will be limited to beans, peas and salt, or if this is the beginning of new cutbacks," Progreso Weekly's Havana correspondent writes. "Some people understand that peas are rationed because they are imported -- but beans? They don't understand the motive (*The Miami Herald*, 8/6/09)

**June 9:** In an attempt to reach technological independence, Cuba has placed its bets on open-source software. This was made evident at the presentation of the Nova Operative System 2.0, during the 2009 International Convention of Informatics. This application, based on the GNU/Linux open-source software, allows users to do their office work, play music and video files as well as web browsing among other features, and will be improved before its release. Angel Goñi, specialist from the University of Informatics Sciences (UCI) announced that the Cuban Consulting and Informatics Security Enterprise will develop an antivirus for Nova (*ACN*, 9/6/09).

**June 11:** Cuba confirmed its sixth case of Influenza A H1N1 after detecting the disease in a 65-year-old Cuban women, who recently visited the United States. In an official note published by Cuban official newspapers *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde*, the Public Health Ministry explains that the Virology Lab of the Pedro Kouri Institute confirmed the case associated to the current epidemic affecting the world. The sick woman is a resident from the municipality of Habana del Este who visited the United States from May 3rd-31<sup>st</sup> (*ACN*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** Smaller bean rations and longer bus lines are among the new hardships hitting Cubans in their already difficult lives as the world economic crisis tightens its grip on the communist island. Holding an empty palm leaf basket, 67-year-old Luisa Suarez said she was already resigned to a recent government directive to reduce monthly rations. "Of course it affects us, but we're used to suffering," said Suarez, standing at a counter in an Old Havana shop with 1950s appliances and paint peeling off the walls. A sign in black letters, as in all stores, explained that bean and pea rations were dropping from 30 to 20 ounces (850 to 567 grams), and that salt rations would be practically halved. "They told us that this was due to the difficult economic situation, but we don't know if it will extend to other products," said the store owner, who declined to be named. "What international crisis? In Cuba we've been in crisis for 50 years," a 28-year-old dentist told the press wryly, declining to be named. "I'm tired of hearing justifications for the problems we always have." "Take the bad luck away. We're sure the bad times won't come," rang out the lyrics of a popular reggaeton tune. Sweating behind the window of a Havana shop, 44-year-old Yakelin Rodriguez was not so sure. Under a new energy savings plan

introduced this month, and amid sweltering heat, she can only turn on air conditioning for four hours in the afternoon. "I'm about to die in this heat," Rodriguez said (*AFP*, 11/6/09).

**Junio 11:** El Departamento de Seguridad del Estado organizó un acto de repudio contra Lourdes Esquivel, esposa del opositor José Díaz, arrestado en tres ocasiones durante los últimos siete días, y cuyo paradero se desconoce. Además, el hijo del matrimonio Silva-Esquivel fue encarcelado en la prisión de Valle Grande, acusado de atentado. José Díaz es presidente del movimiento Opositores por una nueva República (*Cubanet*, 17/6/09).

**Junio 12:** Elizabeth de Regla Alonso, responsable de relaciones públicas del movimiento Opositores por una nueva República denunció que Dagoberto Vergel y Lázaro Martín Vergel, presidente y subdelegado del Movimiento 24 de febrero, fueron detenidos y conducidos a la unidad de la policía de Santiago de Las Vegas. Según Alonso, a los arrestados les hicieron firmar actas de advertencia y les mostraron sus expedientes, listos para procesarlos en cualquier momento. Agregó Elizabeth que al día siguiente aparecieron en el pueblo varios ómnibus repletos de paramilitares listos para realizar actos de repudio, pues el movimiento debía reunirse (*Cubanet*, 17/6/09).

**Junio 12:** El opositor pacífico José Pérez fue apaleado y encarcelado en Santa Clara, según denunció su esposa Ana María García. Ana María explicó que José estaba protestando frente a la unidad de instrucción policial de la Seguridad del Estado junto a otros activistas, para exigir la libertad inmediata del opositor Jorge Luis García Pérez (Antúnez), su esposa Iris Tamara Pérez y Ernesto Mederos. "El jefe del sector de mi barrio esposó a mi esposo y le propinó una paliza; luego lo arrestó y la Seguridad del Estado le revocó la libertad condicional de una condena pendiente de 7 años de cárcel, impuesta en 2003," señaló la señora García. José Pérez, de 43 años, es miembro de la Coalición Central Opositora (*Cubanet*, 17/6/09).

**June 13:** The Molecular Biology Laboratory of the Pedro Kouri Institute (IPK) has confirmed the seventh case of Influenza A (H1N1) associated with the current world epidemic. She is a 12 year-old Cuban girl, residing in Las Vegas, United States, who arrived in Cuba on June 8, the date on which she began to show symptoms of catarrh and fever. The following day she went to the polyclinic where she was evaluated and it was decided to admit her for study and to receive the established treatment (*ACN*, 13/6/09).

**Junio 13:** La burocracia, la falta de experiencia y la resistencia administrativa están bloqueando la aplicación de una reforma salarial puesta en vigor por el gobierno para elevar la productividad del trabajo, afirmó un experto de la isla. "Ha habido resistencia y falta de preparación" y "en muchos sitios ha faltado la motivación al trabajador y la organización necesaria", señaló el presidente de la oficialista Asociación de Economistas de Cuba (ANEC), Roberto Verrier, en una entrevista publicada por el diario *Juventud Rebelde*, órgano de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas. El periódico dijo que, pese a la "voluntad gubernamental de fortalecer" el nuevo sistema de pagos por resultados del trabajo, su aplicación "ha encontrado escollos burocráticos" (*AFP*, 13/6/09).

**June 14:** Cuban dissident blogger Yoani Sanchez says the island is headed for "inevitable" change since former leader Fidel Castro retired, and Cubans have become more outspoken than ever in their criticism of the government. "Change is coming, it's as inevitable as rain in the summer and cold in the winter," Sanchez told the press. She said President Raul Castro lacks Fidel's persuasive charisma and faces a big leadership test as the global economic squeeze piled fresh daily hardships on Cubans. Sanchez spoke about the dire state of Cuba's economy, and said people's willingness to accept more sacrifices on behalf of what she calls a "dying" regime was under question as perhaps never before. "On the street you hear opinions or criticism now that you never would have heard two, three, four or five years ago. People are waking up," said Sanchez. "It's a slow process, of course, and sometimes it's not that visible. But the amount of criticism, of inconformity and frustration is coming out now. It's irreversible. I think this is an irreversible process," she said. "I don't believe, I really don't believe, that this society can accept another Special Period," said Sanchez (*Reuters*, 14/6/09).

**Junio 15:** Cuba empezó a usar abiertamente una variedad de arroz desarrollado especialistas con una mayor presencia de hierro y zinc en los granos, lo cual ayudará a prevenir la anemia. El grano llamado IACUBA-30 será diseminado en la isla a partir del municipio de Florida en la provincia de Camagüey --a unos 500 kilómetros al oriente de la capital--, como parte del proyecto internacional Agrosalud, en el que intervinieron el Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical de Colombia y la Agencia Canadiense de Desarrollo Internacional, informó el semanario *Trabajadores* (*AP*, 15/6/09).

**June 15:** Cuban Justice Minister Maria Esther Reus reaffirmed the country's resolution to fight drug trafficking and illicit using. "We ratify our support to the cooperation against the illegal narcotics," Reus said at a seminar on judicial cooperation among Latin American nations. The seminar will strengthen Latin American nations' joint efforts against the use of drugs, and will open a new phase of Cuba's cooperation with the United Nations Office against Drugs and Crime, said Julio Alfonso, director of international affairs from the Cuban Justice Ministry (*Xinhua*, 17/6/09).

**June 16:** Cuba confirmed its eighth and ninth cases of Influenza A (H1N1) after detecting the disease in a Canadian 4-year-old girl and a Cuban-American 12-year-old boy who arrived in Cuba on June 6 and 7, respectively. In an official note published by Cuban official media, the Public Health Ministry explains that the Virology Lab of the Pedro Kouri Institute (IPK) confirmed the cases associated to the current pandemic affecting the world. The 12-year-old boy is a resident in Tampa, Florida, that is staying in the municipality of Habana del Este. The four-year-old Canadian arrived in the eastern province of Holguin with her parents (*ACN*, 16/6/09).

**June 17:** An official note published by Cuban official media announced that the Havana-based Virology Lab of the Pedro Kouri Institute (IPK) confirmed four new cases of the Influenza A H1N1 virus. The note adds that the disease was detected in an American four-year old boy who arrived in Cuba from Florida with his mother; a 73-year-old Cuban woman who traveled to the United States and returned to Cuba on June 11<sup>th</sup>; a 26-year-old Cuban man who arrived from Alacala de Henares, Spain; and a 45-year-old

Cuban woman who arrived from Toronto, Canada, on June 11<sup>th</sup>. The note explains that, with these four patients, the number of people infected, all of whom arrived from abroad, rose to 13. It also announced that, from now on, all reports on new cases will be published on Fridays (*ACN*, 19/6/09).

**June 17:** Cuban hurdler Dayron Robles set the world's season time when he clocked 13.04 seconds at the Golden Spike IAAF meeting in Ostrava, Czech Republic. Robles, 22, Beijing Olympic champion and world record holder, 12.87 sec set precisely in this field last year, won the race preceding American Dexter Faulk (13.13) and Bahamian Shamar Sands (13.38), reported several media outlets (*ACN*, 17/6/09).

**Junio 18:** Monseñor José Siro González, obispo emérito de Pinar del Río, afirmó que la revista *Convivencia* "en el fondo molesta" a las autoridades, al comentar las amenazas contra su director, el laico Dagoberto Valdés. "En el fondo está la situación de (la revista) *Convivencia*, que es una cuestión que molesta (a las autoridades)", dijo el prelado a desde su retiro en la localidad pinareña de Mantua. Dagoberto Valdés fue amenazado en plena calle por dos personas, aparentemente enviadas por la Seguridad del Estado, quienes le advirtieron que la iba a "pasar muy mal" y que le iban "a pasar por arriba si continuaba apoyando a las Damas de Blanco y a grupos contrarrevolucionarios". Valdés dijo a la prensa que temía "por el regreso de otros métodos". En 2000, *Granma* y la *Mesa Redonda* le calificaron varias veces como "calumniador sistemático, enemigo acérrimo de nuestra Revolución". "Hasta ahora, el método no había sido tan burdo, con amenazas en las calles", apuntó Valdés. El laico dimitió como director de la revista *Vitral* el 27 abril de 2007, como consecuencia de la crisis abierta por el nuevo obispo de Pinar del Río, monseñor Jorge Serpa. En enero de 2008 fundó *Convivencia*, un proyecto digital editado por antiguos y nuevos colaboradores. Según el obispo emérito de Pinar del Río, fundador de *Vitral* junto a Valdés, este tipo de amenazas "van creando un estado de crispación fatal" (*Cubaencuentro*, 18/6/09).

**June 18:** During a press conference held in Havana, Cuban Deputy Minister for Hygiene and Epidemiology, Dr. Luis Estruch, stressed that some 15 imported cases of the Influenza A H1N1 have thus far been reported in the country and that over 3,000 people have been submitted to study. Estruch explained that personal temperature sensors have been placed in 13 airports, which have made it possible to detect four of the infected people, while the rest were identified at homes or hotels. The deputy minister announced that Cuba has implemented an additional measure that consists in submitting all passengers arriving on the Caribbean archipelago under observation for 10 days (*ACN*, 18/6/09).

**Junio 18:** El Diálogo Nacional, impulsado por Oswaldo Payá y varios opositores, "no es para definir" si a los cubanos les "corresponden o no los derechos, sino para concertar un camino pacífico" hacia los cambios, afirmó un documento dado a conocer por los gestores del proyecto. "Haya o no diálogo, los cubanos todos, tenemos derecho a los derechos, porque somos seres humanos. Por lo que este proceso de Diálogo Nacional no es para definir si a los cubanos nos corresponden o no los derechos, sino para concertar un camino pacífico por el que podamos transitar dignamente para implementar los

cambios", añade el documento. Titled "Unidos en la esperanza" y firmado por Ofelia Acevedo Maura, Tania Maceda Guerra, Aida Valdés Santana, Juan Carlos González Leyva y Oswaldo José Payá Sardiñas, el texto se basa en aspectos como libertades de expresión, conciencia, movimiento y asociación; elecciones libres y derechos sociales y económicos ([Unidos en la Esperanza](#); *Cubaencuentro*, 18/6/09) .

**June 19:** The President of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC), Reverend Marcial Miguel Hernandez, affirmed his organization's commitment to the Cuban people and his solidarity with the cause of the five Cubans held in US jails. During a meeting with the press, Reverend Hernandez reiterated his support to "what has always been done in our nation in the benefit of the people," *Prensa Latina* news agency reported. The CIC President expressed his solidarity with Gerardo Hernandez, Rene Gonzalez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando Gonzalez, internationally known as the Cuban Five, who have been held in US prisons since 1998. The religious leader recalled that 10 years ago protestant churches held four public celebrations of national impact, an occasion to be recalled next July 11 with a religious cult. The CIC has also called on its congregations to join a voluntary work session throughout the country which "will serve as a testimony of the contribution by the churches to the needs of this nation," the Reverend said (*ACN*, 19/6/09).

**Junio 20:** La combinación de novedosos productos biotecnológicos con tratamientos tradicionales contra el cáncer abre nuevas expectativas entre los oncólogos cubanos, que trabajan en 56 proyectos, según informó un reconocido especialista local. "La biotecnología puede darnos nuevos instrumentos: interferones, anticuerpos monoclonales, vacunas (terapéuticas contra el cáncer)", de los cuales "esperamos más especificidad y menos toxicidad", señaló el director del Centro de Inmunología Molecular de La Habana, Agustín Lage, en la apertura del Congreso Oncología 2009. Lage destacó que el Polo Científico del Oeste de La Habana, que forman 53 institutos de investigación y producción, "realiza 56 proyectos de investigación" relacionados con el cáncer y tiene "más de 20 proyectos destinados a productos para el tratamiento de tumores malignos" (*AFP*, 20/6/09).

**Junio 23:** La Fundación LGTB "Reinaldo Arenas" denunció el arresto de siete jóvenes homosexuales el 21 de junio, en la playa del Chivo, en La Habana, acusados por los agentes de la Policía de reunirse en una zona pública. La organización citó a René Alonso, de 18 años, quien fue multado en la redada con treinta pesos cubanos y dijo que las autoridades comunicaron a los jóvenes que con su presencia en la zona estaban incurriendo en el delito tipificado como "exhibición impúdica". "Fuimos nosotros lo que nos resistimos a ser desplazados. Nos opusimos a irnos de la playa por la fuerza. Ellos no tienen derecho a sacarnos de la playa sólo porque seamos homosexuales", relató Alonso, según la Fundación LGTB "Reinaldo Arenas". El joven afirmó que otro homosexual, Andrés, "fue abofeteado con las manos esposadas". La dirección de la Reinaldo Arenas anunció en su nota que está a la espera de los 60 días establecidos para hacer público el fallo del Ministerio de Justicia, referido al caso de los ocho jóvenes condenados a dos y cuatro años de prisión tras ser detenidos horas antes de las celebraciones oficiales por el Día Mundial contra la Homofobia (*Cubaencuentro*, 24/6/09).

**June 23:** Changes planned for the upcoming academic year will improve the training of Cuban professors and students, affirmed in Santiago de Cuba the Education Minister Ena Elsa Velazquez. It is a priority to increase the quality of teachers in all educational levels, which will allow for a more comprehensive learning of students, said Velazquez to the press after her visit to the José de la Luz y Caballero Higher Pedagogical Institute (ISP). The 2009-2010 school year in Cuba will include several innovations, like the creation of the Marxism-Leninism and History Department and the opening of this speciality at the ISPs, where the subject was taught years ago (ACN, 23/6/09).

**Junio 23:** Mariela Castro Espín afirmó que cuando visitó el Vaticano pidió a San Pedro "prosperidad" para Cuba, "con y sin bloqueo", porque el levantamiento del embargo "por sí sólo no impulsará la prosperidad". "Una Cuba sin bloqueo es una Cuba próspera. Y, como le pedí a San Pedro cuando fui al Vaticano, prosperidad para Cuba. Primero, pensé pedir el fin del bloqueo, pero me dijo que esa sería sólo una parte de la solución. Prosperidad, con y sin bloqueo", dijo la hija de Raúl Castro en una entrevista. Sin embargo, admitió que "será fundamental perfeccionar los mecanismos de la democracia socialista, porque el levantamiento del bloqueo por sí sólo no impulsará la prosperidad. Tenemos que mejorar nuestro sistema social". Castro Espín dijo que sigue "apostando por el socialismo, pero por uno basado en un enfoque dialéctico, donde estamos obligados a atender todas las contradicciones que van surgiendo y marcando los cambios hacia el desarrollo". A la pregunta de cómo podría sumarse a los jóvenes que no sienten compromisos con nada ni con nadie, la hija del general respondió que "a través de mecanismos de participación" (Cubaencuentro, 24/6/09).

**Junio 24:** Cuba tendrá un verano caliente en clima, política, incertidumbre y penurias, a juzgar por lo que dicen el propio gobierno, la prensa oficial, la disidencia interna, "blogueros" alternativos, diplomáticos y empresarios extranjeros radicados en La Habana. No pasa día sin que los medios informativos cubanos, todos estatales, presagien años de vacas flacas que achacan a la crisis financiera global y al embargo comercial de Estados Unidos, eludiendo que la isla vive una penuria crónica desde que se desplomó la Unión Soviética. Hace casi un año, tras despertar expectativas de reformas y confesar que en Cuba hay un exceso de prohibiciones, Raúl Castro pidió a sus compatriotas que no se "acostumbraran" a recibir solo noticias buenas y pintó un sombrío panorama mundial que impactaba también en la isla. Lo hizo en la ciudad oriental de Santiago, al celebrar el 55 aniversario del comienzo de la revolución que encabezó su hermano. Muchos fechan entonces el fin de los intentos reformistas que dirigentes de algunos países esgrimieron para dar otra oportunidad a un gobierno que prometía cambios aún no concretados, según dicen la mayoría de los diplomáticos, empresarios y analistas consultados en La Habana (EFE, 24/6/09).

**Junio 25:** Iroel Sánchez, otrora miembro del denominado "grupo de los talibanes" y amigo cercano de Felipe Pérez Roque, fue destituido de su cargo al frente del Instituto Cubano del Libro (ICL), informaron fuentes del Ministerio de Cultura. "En días pasados, en una reunión en el Ministerio de Cultura, Iroel dio varios puñetazos sobre la mesa. Le hicieron una amonestación pública, pero sacó un panfleto y acusó a Abel Prieto de ser

‘poco ideológico’”, añadieron las fuentes. Una semana después, cuando en La Habana se esperaba la "renuncia" de Sánchez, el ministro de Cultura anunció su destitución. Fernando León Jacomino, hasta ahora vicepresidente del ICL, ha sido nombrado al frente de la institución, de forma interina. Iroel Sánchez Espinosa, graduado de Ingeniería en Sistemas Automatizados de Dirección en el Instituto Superior Politécnico José Antonio Echevarría, de La Habana, era considerado uno de los funcionarios más intransigentes del Ministerio de Cultura (*Cubaencuentro*, 25/6/09).

**June 25:** Communist Cuba may boast a doctor on every block and schools for all its children, but when it comes to telephones, computers and the Internet it lags behind other countries in the hemisphere, a government report showed. The National Statistics Office released 2008 telecommunications data showing there were 1.4 million telephones, fixed and mobile, in the country of 11.2 million inhabitants. This gave a total density of 12.6 telephones per 100 inhabitants, the lowest in the region, according to the United Nations International Telecommunications Union. Computers were also scarce at just 630,000 and most were believed to be in government offices, health facilities and schools. The report said 13 percent of Cuba's population had Internet access, but in most cases this was to a government Intranet. No data was available for access to the worldwide web, but diplomats and residents say it is severely restricted (*Reuters*, 25/6/09).

**June 26:** An official note published in *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde* newspapers announced that the Virology Lab of Havana-based Pedro Kouri Institute (IPK) has confirmed 31 new cases of the Influenza A H1N1 virus since last June 19. According to the note, 16 of these cases are people who arrived from abroad (11 from the United States, two from Mexico, two from Canada and one from Chile) while the rest are Cuban citizens that had direct contact with the former (*ACN*, 26/6/09).

**June 28:** A corps of inspectors will pursue fraud in the consumption of electricity in Havana's residential sector starting on July 1 as one of the measures implemented by General Raul Castro's government starting a month ago to save energy, the official *Tribuna de La Habana* newspaper reported. The inspectors will go out in pairs through the streets "and electric power cuts will be among the measures" that could be applied to families circumventing the service regulations, the newspaper said. Prevailing legislation establishes a fine of 500 Cuban pesos (equivalent to about \$23), the retroactive collection of outstanding fees for the illicitly-used power and a cut in electricity supply for 72 hours for first-time offenders who are found to be committing fraud, the newspaper said. Repeat offenders will be liable for fines of 1,000 pesos (about \$45), suspension of their electricity for 15 days and other penalties, the newspaper said. The head of inspections in the capital's residential area for the City of Havana Electric Company, Santiago Michelena, said that during the summer is when "more fraud" is committed, adding that up to the end of May authorities had detected 2,776 instances of violations (*EFE*, 28/6/09).

**June 29:** The Cuban Church San Pedro Apostol, in the city of Matanzas, has received the National Restoration Prize annually granted by the Cultural Heritage Council on the island. The award was officially given during a ceremony presided over by the head of

the Cuban Association of Architects and Construction Engineers (UNAIC), José A. Macías, and by the director for Heritage in central Matanzas province. The temple, of neoclassic style and located in Versalles neighborhood, opened its doors with a solemn mass on May 15, 1870 (*ACN*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** To record his next hit *El Micha*, one of the rising stars of Cuba's reggaeton music blending reggae, Latin and electronic rhythms, just has to knock on his neighbor's door. A microphone plugged into an old computer in an apartment in Havana's working-class suburb of Reparto Electrico serves as the studio where some of Cuba's most successful reggaeton songs are recorded. "Reggaeton is unstoppable because it is recorded at home. It is totally independent," says Michael "El Micha" Sierra, 27, a former basketball player whose bottom row of gold teeth flash when he gives one of his frequent broad smiles. With little official support or air time on state-controlled radio, the songs Cuban reggaeton artists record in makeshift studios lined with egg cartons for sound insulation are mostly transmitted through homemade CDs and on computer flash memory sticks. That is how the tropical fever of reggaeton is sweeping communist-ruled Cuba, captivating its youth and enraging a cultural establishment alarmed by the vulgarity of some of its lyrics. "Cubans know about music and if they picked reggaeton they have to be respected. The people are the ones who decide," said Sierra. Reggaeton, a cocktail of reggae, Latin and electronic rhythms, first emerged in Puerto Rico in the mid-1990s and has spread rapidly through Latin America (*Reuters*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** In another demonstration that it is impossible to hide anything in this socialist Caribbean island nation, the hottest video in Cuba today shows communist party bigwigs when they thought no one was watching - wheeling and dealing and mocking other party leaders. The release of the video by President Raul Castro appears to reflect his determination to root out certain vices and disloyalties, regardless of the rank of the people involved. While details of the scandal spread rapidly by word of mouth, not much is being said about the lessons arising from what was undoubtedly one of the most difficult situations faced by the Cuban government since the June 2006 retirement of former president Fidel Castro for health reasons. Viewed by now by thousands of members of the PCC and the Young Communist League, the video that is widely associated with the dismissal of former vice president Carlos Lage and former foreign minister Felipe Perez Roque also tarnishes a large group of the country's former high officials. They include Carlos Valenciaga, Fidel Castro's former personal secretary, former vice president of the Council of Ministers Otto Rivero, former PCC international secretary Fernando Ramirez, and the former ministers of basic industry and trade, Martha Lomas and Raul de la Nuez, respectively. As the video continues to circulate, and people retell hackneyed jokes about hidden microphones all over the place, the question that remains unanswered is why relatively respected leaders took to behaving as if their positions of power made them automatically unassailable (*IPS*, 30/6/09).

**Junio 30:** La Secretaría Pro Tempore de la Agenda para la Transición Cubana teme por la vida del preso político Ariel Sigler Amaya, quien se encuentra en lamentable estado de salud en el hospital provincial de Cienfuegos, según indica un comunicado de la organización. El grupo llama a la comunidad internacional y a la Cruz Roja a exigir al

gobierno cubano que facilite atención médica adecuada a Sigler Amaya, condenado a 20 años de cárcel en la Primavera Negra de 2003 y "cuyo único delito es el luchar de forma pacífica por las libertades públicas". Según la Agenda para la Transición Cubana, Sigler Amaya, quien "era un atleta en perfectas condiciones físicas", desde que está en prisión "no ha dejado de deteriorarse. Tanto es así, que del atleta que fue no queda nada; la depauperación le ha convertido en un endeble anciano". "Tememos que de no socorrérsele a tiempo pueda llegar a perder la vida", apunta el texto, fechado el 28 de junio en La Habana, y firmado por Félix Bonne Carcassés, Francisco Chaviano González, Gisela Delgado Sablón y René Gómez Manzano (*Cubaencuentro*, 30/6/09).

## **Economy**

**June 1:** The Cuban government will cut power supplies to companies and organizations that do not observe the "exceptional measures" set to take effect on June 1 to save fuel and relieve the deteriorating economy of the communist-ruled island. Havana's director of economy and planning, Jorge Luis Villa, said that each enterprise has a plan for using electricity whose observance "conditions" whether it may continue to consume energy, the official weekly *Tribuna de La Habana* said. "The government could decide to cut off electricity to those who do not comply and who will then have to give an accounting of the deficiencies detected," Villa said. General Raul Castro's government announced "exceptional measures" for reducing the consumption of electricity and warned of a return to blackouts if the goal isn't achieved. The plan includes closing at 6:00 p.m. all enterprises that do not provide goods or services directly to the public. Amusement parks will also cut back on the hours they are open, the use of air conditioning will be limited to five hours a day, and cold storage facilities will be disconnected for two hours a day. The use of electric ovens is banned from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. in bakeries and some industries, while sanctions on consumers committing fraud will be increased (*EFE*, 2/6/09).

**June 1:** Cubans faced power blackouts, longer waits for buses, uncomfortable working conditions and skimpier lunches as the government introduced austerity measures to cope with a growing economic squeeze. The measures followed two weeks of warnings by the Communist-run government that it could not meet rising electricity demand due to a cash crunch that has forced it to restructure debt and put off payments to foreign businesses. All provincial governments and most state-run offices and factories, which encompasses 90 percent of Cuba's economic activity, were ordered to reduce energy consumption by a minimum of 12 percent or face mandatory electricity cuts. The state-monopolized retail sector and many government offices were ordered to keep air conditioners turned off until 1:30 p.m., turn off some lights and shut off freezers for at least two hours a day, local media reported over the weekend. Long lines formed at bus stops in Havana as the number of bus runs were cut, and trains between the capital and provinces were reduced by a minimum of 50 percent, although more passenger cars were added to each trip. Food allocations for lunches and snacks at most state workplaces were cut by 50 percent, except for workers in heavy industries like mining and construction, food industry sources said. "Everyone is worried and talking about how bad it might get, and if the blackouts are back," a Havana resident who works for the power sector said.

Cubans typically get free state-provided meals when accompanying hospitalized relatives, but the new rules put a stop to that, except for people traveling from out of town, hospital sources in Havana said. A US businessman who sells meat products to the Cuban government under an exemption to a US trade embargo, told the press, "They have cut their orders by more than 50 percent for the rest of the year" (*Reuters*, 1/6/09)

**Junio 2:** Cuba tiene sólo tres de sus 15 puertos comerciales trabajando "de manera estable", por una disminución de buques y mercancías, como consecuencia de la crisis económica internacional, informaron dirigentes del sector. "Hemos tenido menos barcos, y cuanto menos barcos recibamos, por supuesto, menos ingresos vamos a tener (...) además del impacto de recibir mucho menos carga que en períodos anteriores", declaró a la televisión oficial Lázaro González, director de la Asociación Portuaria de Cuba. Los puertos que están trabajando establemente son los de La Habana, Santiago de Cuba y Cienfuegos, los más importantes de la isla (*AFP*, 2/6/09).

**June 2:** The Cuban-Venezuelan fishing venture of the Bolivarian Alternative for the America (ALBA) began operating already, with two tuna fishing boats, the Venezuelan Agriculture and Land Ministry informed. The project is part of the ALBA food programs, and the two boats are the first of a fishing plan looking toward food security, one of the objectives of President Hugo Chavez's government. As part of cooperation in the sector, Venezuelan fishermen and aquaculture workers returned to their country after taking an intense course in Cuba on fishing management, environment, and business management (*Prensa Latina*, 2/6/09).

**June 2:** CUBALSE, Cuba's main supplier of goods and services to foreign residents, tourists and diplomats, will be terminated by late August, a news agency reported, citing an unpublished decree from the Council of Ministers. "With the objective of reducing costs, increasing the power of negotiation, concentrating the work of the entities that furnish services, and achieving greater efficiency and dependability, it becomes necessary to shut down the enterprise," the decree says, according to the AP. The decree, dated May 26, says that the liquidation of CUBALSE and the transfer of its activities and goods to other state-run companies must be completed within 90 days. Its gasoline stations will be turned over to Cuba Petróleos, while its restaurant services and car providers will go to the CIMEX Corporation. Real-estate rental offices and the agencies that provide employees for foreigners will go to Palace of Conventions Enterprises. Wholesale merchandisers will be handled by Almacenes Universales. CUBALSE, short for Cuba al Servicio del Extranjero (Cuba at the Service of Foreigners), was established in 1974 from what had been the Service Enterprise for the Diplomatic Corps. (*The Miami Herald*, 2/6/09).

**Junio 3:** Una manada de búfalos salvajes se ha convertido en la pesadilla de los campesinos de la provincia cubana de Pinar del Río, porque invaden y devoran cultivos de tabaco y hortalizas sin que las autoridades hayan podido detenerlos, informa el diario oficial *Granma*. Decenas de agricultores han decidido "no participar en la próxima campaña de tabaco si no hay garantías para sus plantaciones", mientras otros pasan la noche "espantando" a los animales para "lograr algo" en sus terrenos, indica el periódico,

portavoz del gobernante Partido Comunista. "Las pérdidas nos impiden cubrir nuestros compromisos (...). Hoy tenemos atraso en la contratación para la próxima cosecha. La gente se niega, pues teme no poder cumplir", afirmó el presidente de una cooperativa, Casimiro García, citado por el diario. El drama de los búfalos comenzó después de que en 1987 un grupo de 26 animales fue liberado en las sabanas del sur de Pinar del Río, a unos 175 kilómetros al oeste de La Habana. Los bóvidos se reprodujeron de manera salvaje, se fueron desplazando en busca de alimentos y ahora se calcula que de 10,000 a 12,000 pastan por el campo a sus anchas. "El escaso control, además de limitar la explotación, ha creado en torno al búfalo una imagen de agresividad y destrucción", precisa *Granma*, y añade que "la lentitud de las respuestas hace que el costo de la solución sea cada día más alto". En opinión del director del Grupo Técnico Ejecutivo del Programa de Búfalos, Santiago Brito, "serán necesarios cuatro o cinco años" para cambiar la situación (*EFE*, 3/6/09).

**June 4:** Venezuela plans to spend \$70 million on an undersea fibre optic cable to Cuba in order to improve telecommunications. President Hugo Chavez's government nationalized Venezuela's largest telephone company two years ago and has been planning to lay the undersea cable to its Caribbean ally. The government issued a statement that said Chavez has approved \$70 million for the undersea cable. Venezuelan officials say the cable will run 1,555 kilometers (966 miles) and will have a capacity to handle millions of call at once, as well as television signals and Internet connections (*AP*, 4/6/09).

**June 4:** Spain's Castor Plus has formed a joint venture with the Cuban government to produce paper at a plant in the central province of Sancti Spiritus, the firm's president told the press. Castor Plus plans to invest 7 million euros (\$9.9 million) initially and another 5.5 million euros (\$7.8 million) later, with the goal of producing some 40,000 tons of white paper in the first year, Carmelo Zubiaur said. The firm eventually will produce nearly 100,000 tons and earn more than \$104 million in annual revenue, according to a feasibility study (*EFE*, 4/6/09).

**Junio 7:** El gobierno de Raúl Castro aprobó un programa de descentralización del comercio agropecuario cubano, bajo égida estatal, que implantará experimentalmente el 1ro. de agosto en dos provincias, en busca de mayor eficiencia, informaron funcionarios del sector. En La Habana, mayor productora del país, y Ciudad de La Habana, la mayor consumidora, la comercialización estatal de productos pasará del Ministerio de Agricultura a 23 empresas (18 en La Habana y cinco en Ciudad de La Habana), las que tendrán recursos y autonomía de gestión, dijeron los funcionarios a *Juventud Rebelde*. La insuficiente producción agropecuaria, que obliga a gastar anualmente más de \$1,500 millones en importación de alimentos, presenta crónicos problemas de organización, falta de envases y transporte, que provocan pérdidas en los productos ya cosechados. Las nuevas empresas estatales, que anunciaron contar con capital, transporte y envases suficientes, establecerán los contratos con los productores agropecuarios estatales, cooperativos y privados, para comercializar (*AFP*, 8/6/09).

**June 8:** The Cuban Government has conceived the idea of upgrading several refineries and ports to be able to process 4 million barrels per day that regional countries will need.

"Our project is intended not only to survive but also to make us self-sufficient and allow us to develop further, even if the results of the planned drillings are not the most encouraging," a CUPET engineer said. "It is a project with a future," he said. If in a 5- to-10-year period Cuba manages to raise its refinement capacity to 350,000 barrels, it would be able to shed its dependence on Venezuela. Cuba could also process crude oil from Russia, Angola, Brazil and from Cuba's own deep-sea wells. "The strategy is intelligently designed because the future of the oil sector will depend on the available capacity to refine crude oil and transform it into fuel," said Jorge R. Piñon, former president of Amoco Oil Latinoamerica and researcher at the University of Miami's Center for Hemispheric Policy (*The Miami Herald*, 8/6/09).

**June 8:** Venezuela's shipments of crude oil and refined products to Cuba gained 32 percent in 2008. Sales to Cuba climbed by 28,000 barrels a day to 115,000 barrels a day, state oil company Petroleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA, said in an annual report on its Web site. Cuba pays for much of its Venezuelan oil through sending thousands of doctors, sports trainers and other advisers to Venezuela and its allies. Cuba received twice as much crude oil in 2008 as a year earlier as a joint venture with Venezuela restarted a refinery in the Cuban city of Cienfuegos (*Bloomberg*, 9/6/09).

**June 9:** Cuba has rolled over 200 million euros in bond issues that were due in May, as the country's central bank asked for another year to repay foreign holders of the debt, financial sources in London and Havana said. The move is yet another sign the Communist-run nation is suffering a cash crisis, as it struggles with sharp declines in revenues from tourism and key exports due to the global economic crisis. The two-year euro-denominated bonds of 150 million euros and 50 million euros that were rolled over were issued on the London Stock Exchange on May 3, 2007, at interest rates of 9 percent and 8.5 percent respectively. They were held mostly by Cuban entities, though some foreign banks with a history of providing credit to the island also participated. "Apparently the Cuban Central Bank asked one more year for repayment to these foreign entities," a European diplomat said. The statement was confirmed by one of the non-Cuban debt holders, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The issue with maturity in 2009 had been subscribed 85 percent by Cuban banks and 15 percent by foreign banks and entities," the diplomat said. The central bank, which named Ernesto Medina as its president following Francisco Soberon's resignation, has also been working to restructure some of its active debt, estimated at around \$11 billion (*Reuters*, 9/6/09).

**June 10:** Oil exports are now Cuba's second leading export, overtaking pharmaceuticals, and produced \$880 million in revenues in 2008, according to a Foreign Trade Ministry report. A table in the report said nickel accounted for 39 percent of exports, oil for 22 percent and pharmaceuticals 9 percent, followed by sugar and tobacco products each at 6 percent and other products 18 percent. The government reported exports, excluding tourism and other services, were \$4 billion in 2008, but has yet to publish any details. Cuba consumes a minimum of 150,000 barrels per day in petroleum products, of which up to 92,000 bpd comes from regional energy giant Venezuela. The rest is pumped from the northwest coast along with natural gas for power generation. Cuba has exported small amounts of the heavy crude it produces, but this would not account for the big jump in

2008 exports, local and foreign analysts said. The analysts said a likely explanation would be exports from a joint venture refinery with Venezuela opened in December 2007, which processed 65,000 bpd in 2008 for local consumption and export to area countries (*Reuters*, 10/6/09).

**June 10:** New plans of cooperation will be discussed during the 6th Petrocaribe Summit that takes place on June 11-12, in Saint Kitts and Nevis. According to *Granma* news daily, participants in the meeting will not only assess advances in the field of energy cooperation but they will also analyze the design and implementation of new plans in the agriculture and food production sectors. Delegations from Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Lucia, Suriname and Venezuela will participate in the summit as full members of Petrocaribe while Costa Rica and El Salvador will attend the meeting as observers (*ACN*, 10/6/09).

**June 14:** Cuban factories are closing down and production is being cut at other workplaces as the international financial crisis weighs on the import-dependent Caribbean island, the official media said. A growing shortage of foreign exchange has forced the Communist-run country to drastically cut imports and local budgets, impose power quotas on state-run companies, restructure debt and put off payments to foreign suppliers. The state-run *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper, the only national Sunday publication, said a tire factory had shut down since February due to a lack of rubber imports while an aluminum packaging plant cut output for similar reasons. The newspaper said the plants were examples of a wider problem "in other sectors of the Cuban state company sector," which encompasses 90 percent of economic activity. Other workplaces were having difficulty obtaining spare parts, the newspaper said, and still others were being forced to scale back output after a recent government measure mandating a 12 percent reduction in power consumption (*Reuters*, 14/6/09).

**Junio 15:** Cuba is going through a "very deep and difficult" crisis due to the inefficiency of its management system, the low productivity of its workers, high unemployment among young people and the effects of global recession, economist Alfredo Jam said. "We're at a truly complex moment in our history," the recipient of Cuba's National Economics Prize said at the International Accounting, Auditing and Finance Conference that in Havana with some 400 specialists from 12 countries in attendance. He said that a high proportion of Cuba's potential workforce is not working because young people reject "jobs that give them income but no satisfaction." Jam believes that the communist-ruled island has a reserve of workers for vital sectors like agriculture and construction, but added that "people don't get moving." He added that, "wages have to stimulate efficiency" (*EFE*, 16/6/09).

**June 15:** Cuban Vice-President Esteban Lazo met with representatives of the Young Communist League (UJC), students and grassroots organizations, as well as with heads of ministries and institutions involved in recreational programs whom he urged to use energy efficiently during the coming summer. Lazo said that the organizations should

offer the Cuban people, especially the youth, a vacation plenty of leisure, cultural and sports activities, but making better use of resources, savings and with austerity (ACN, 15/6/09).

**June 19:** Cuba received 1.2 million foreign visitors during the first five months of the year, up 2.1 percent from the same period in 2008, the government's ONE statistics office said. Tourism is holding up despite the global recession, the communist government's media outlets have been saying this week. Cuban tourism authorities say a record 2.3 million visitors came to the island last year, a gain of 9.3 percent over 2007, and they predict a total of 2.5 million tourist arrivals in 2009. Most of Cuba's tourists come from Canada, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain, France and Mexico. The island's economy is currently struggling and tourism is looming ever larger as a vital source of hard currency (EFE, 19/6/09).

**Junio 20:** El proceso de distribución de terrenos estatales en usufructo a campesinos es "un reto" para el Estado y no significa privatizar las tierras, dijeron fuentes oficiales. Las áreas entregadas a los "usufructuarios" siguen siendo estatales, aseguró en rueda de prensa Adolfo Rodríguez Nodal, jefe del Programa Nacional de la Agricultura Urbana. No obstante, agregó, "estamos fortaleciendo todo tipo de propiedades en la agricultura, sin subestimar ninguna, porque lo importante es producir alimentos", precisó. Un decreto del gobierno en 2008 abrió la posibilidad a 100,000 campesinos de recibir en usufructo parcelas de hasta 26,8 hectáreas que permanecían ociosas (ANSA, 20/6/09).

**Junio 20:** Las autoridades deportivas de Cuba estudiarán cuánta energía se consume en un juego de béisbol y han propuesto partidos más cortos y en horario diurno para ajustarse a los planes de recorte energético que se aplican en la isla, informó el diario oficial *Granma*. "Vamos a ver hasta cuánta energía eléctrica se consume en una hora de juego", dijo el vicepresidente del Instituto Nacional de Deportes (INDER), Antonio López, quien anunció que se realizará un estudio en ese sentido en los estadios del país. López indicó que un grupo de especialistas trabajará para "verificar las pizarras y el sistema de iluminación de los estadios", conocer cuál es "exactamente" su consumo y buscar "variantes" que reduzcan el gasto eléctrico, como la instalación de sistemas modernos de alumbrado (EFE, 20/6/09).

**June 21:** Cuba needs "to balance the economy" and promote efficiency and the search for external income given the impact of the global economic crisis affecting it, the official *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper reported, citing several economists. "There has to be work to balance the economy and seek internally all those mechanisms that promote efficiency and foreign income in a more accelerated manner," the economists said in an analysis of the situation confronting the communist island's economy. The article warns that the main means of transmission of the crisis such that it affects the Cuban economy is "trade," and that the fluctuations in demand and supply of goods and services and of their prices, as well as the contraction of credit, weigh on the daily life and economic activity on the island. Economy and Planning Minister Marino Murillo, one of those people consulted by the paper, said that the crisis "has complicated the obtaining of price

facilities and credit sources," but he added that "nobody is going to be unprotected," although "inevitably" they will feel the restrictions on consumption (*EFE*, 21/6/09).

**Junio 21:** Sudáfrica condonará la deuda cubana a fin de impulsar el contraído comercio bilateral entre ambos países, que cayó de 50 millones de dólares a mediados de los años 90 a sólo cinco millones actualmente, informaron funcionarios de ambos países. "Se lleva a cabo la negociación final para formalizar el acuerdo de condonación por parte de Sudáfrica, del adeudo de Cuba con esa nación, lo cual facilitará que se abran nuevas puertas a los negocios bilaterales", expresó el semanario *Opciones*, citando al viceministro local de Comercio e Inversiones, Ramón Ripoll. La publicación no precisó el monto del adeudo (*AFP*, 21/6/09).

**Junio 22:** Colombia está interesada en la búsqueda de petróleo en aguas cubanas del Golfo de México, lo que puede concretarse durante la visita que inicia a la isla su ministro de Minas y Energía, Hernán Martínez, informó la agencia oficial *Prensa Latina*. La agencia indicó la posibilidad de que Ecopetrol "se vincule a la exploración petrolera" en la zona económica exclusiva de Cuba en el Golfo, de 112,000 km cuadrados, divididos en 59 bloques petroleros. Martínez se reunirá en La Habana con la ministra de la Industria Básica, Yadira García, "a fin de explorar áreas de interés común", señaló la agencia, tras precisar que el ministro colombiano viaja acompañado del presidente de la estatal petrolera colombiana Ecopetrol, Javier Rodríguez (*AFP*, 22/6/09).

**June 22:** Studies on the Cuban population carried out late 2008 yielded that there will be 100,000 less citizens in the country by 2025. The research led by Cuban experts showed that population growth in the Caribbean archipelago is undergoing a period of stagnation that will give way to a decline, mainly as a result of aging and decrease in births. Thus, from 2008 to 2025 the number of inhabitants will fall by a little more than 100,000 people, while experts predict that the Cuban population will be below 11 millions by 2032, *Granma* newspaper reported (*ACN*, 22/6/09).

**Junio 22:** Cuba busca impulsar la siembra del frijol, un alimento básico en la dieta local y que actualmente debe comprarse en el mercado internacional a precios elevados, indicó el periódico oficial *Granma*. "Tierras aptas, conocimientos técnicos, experiencias y semillas, crean el ambiente ideal para transformar una producción que jamás debió caer tanto", comentó el rotativo en un artículo. Cifras de la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas indican que en 2004 se produjeron casi 133,000 toneladas y que en 2008 sólo se reportaron 97,000 toneladas. En tanto, la isla compra unas 60,000 toneladas de la leguminosa al año, según *Granma*. No mencionó precios. "La siembra y acopio del frijol, considerado uno de los platos favoritos en la mesa del cubano, eran cada vez menores y no quedó otra alternativa que acudir al mercado internacional", explicó. "Dada la situación de hoy y lo estratégico de eliminar tal dependencia, el Ministerio de la Agricultura incluyó el frijol en su abarcador programa de sustitución de importaciones", informó el periódico, que llamó a los productores a no dejar de intercalar esta producción entre otros cultivos y sostener sus dos cosechas anuales. Sin embargo, reconoció que para que los campesinos se animen se debería "estimular con precios más atractivos a los productores de base" (*AP*, 22/6/09).

**June 23:** Cuba's energy authorities have reduced 18,000 tons of fuel destined to power generation without blackouts, *Granma* newspaper reported. Electricity Company official Ricardo Gonzalez confirmed the reduction regarding the increasing consumption in April and the first two weeks in May. Such equivalent fuel economy, reached thanks to a national energy saving, made blackout program to people unnecessary. Gonzalez warned on the imminent vacation months, July and August, with high temperatures and consumption of fans, air conditionings and refrigeration (*Prensa Latina*, 23/6/09).

**Junio 25:** El viceministro del Transporte Eduardo Rodríguez informó que el volumen de cargas de importación disminuyó en un 10% en el primer trimestre de 2009, lo que achacó al impacto de la crisis económica internacional. "Llegamos a la crisis después del paso de tres huracanes", más un "largo período especial" y en medio del embargo de Estados Unidos, dijo el funcionario a periodistas, y agregó que esta situación ha golpeado los proyectos de modernización del transporte marítimo. Rodríguez calificó de "seria" la afectación a la economía, e indicó que las cargas de importación operadas cayeron los tres primeros meses de este año. De acuerdo con la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE), en 2008 se procesaron unos 17,7 millones de toneladas, un 4,6% más de 2007. El 57,4% era de importaciones, el 14,4 de exportaciones y el 28,2% de cabotaje. Rodríguez explicó que las principales mercancías compradas y transportadas son alimentos y combustibles, y destacó que la baja no fue mayor debido a la voluntad del gobierno de Raúl Castro de sostener las adquisiciones en el exterior de estos rubros para la población. El funcionario opinó que la crisis agudizó los efectos del embargo y los huracanes, que provocaron pérdidas por unos 10,000 millones de dólares, especialmente en la vivienda, la agricultura, las comunicaciones y el transporte (*AP*, 26/6/09).

**Junio 27:** Cuba debe desarrollar la agricultura a base de tracción animal para lograr ahorro de combustible, pero también tendría que mejorar el pago a los boyeros, recomendó un experto. El uso de los bueyes "en la agricultura cubana recobra el interés que jamás debió perder", escribió Juan Varela, un especialista en agro en el periódico oficial *Granma*.n "Los tiempos actuales de crisis financiera mundial, obligan a alternar lo moderno y lo tradicional. Nuestro país posee suficiente capacidad y experiencia para salir airoso y no dejarse vencer por los problemas y las justificaciones", agregó. Según Varela, el Ministerio de Agricultura cuenta con 265,120 bueyes "listos para trabajar", los cuales "son capaces de suplir e incluso superar a la maquinaria en infinidad de labores y cultivos" (*AP*, 27/6/09).

**June 29:** Cuba's communist government announced new labour measures to "stimulate jobs," enable employees to increase their income and allow most workers to have more than one job. The reforms seek "the rational use of human resources" and are included in a decree approved on June 26 by President Raul Castro and the Council of State, according to a communique published in the official media. "An important part of this ruling is linked to the rational use of human resources and hiring to ease the effects of an aging population, stimulate jobs throughout society as well as providing workers with the chance to increase their income," the note said. "The comprehensive regulation particularly mentions the possibility of multiple employment that will allow workers,

after fulfilling the duties of their main jobs, to accept other employment for the corresponding wage,” the communique said. Banned from holding second jobs are health-care personnel, researchers, educators and auditors, “except for the exercise of teaching jobs, scientific research and other undertakings that are approved by the express decision of the authority or agency that designated or chose them” (*EFE*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** “Aceros Inoxidables” Enterprise in eastern Las Tunas province surpassed its steel bar export plan for 2008 by five percent, which represents a 37 percent growth compared to the previous year. The production of steel bars is a good source of hard currency income for the Caribbean country; therefore, raising its added value becomes a priority for the workers of this sector. This Cuban company’s products are commercialized mainly in Latin America, with high levels of profitability in its exports (*ACN*, 29/6/09).

**June 30:** Cuba's trade deficit soared by 65 percent in 2008, driven by a doubling in the value of oil imports, higher costs of food imports and a decline in key export nickel, according to a government report. Exports totaled \$4 billion, similar to 2007, while imports increased 41 percent to \$15.4 billion, leaving a deficit of \$11.4 billion, the National Statistics Office reported on its web page. Oil-rich Venezuela saw exports to its socialist ally soar to \$5.3 billion from \$2.9 billion in 2007 as it increased oil shipments and prices peaked, making the South American country by far Cuba's most important commercial partner. Cuba's arch enemy, the United States, also benefited from higher prices as food exports, allowed since 2000 under its long-standing trade embargo, hit a record \$860 million, compared with \$608 million in 2007. Despite trade sanctions in place since 1962, the U.S. held its ranking as the island's fifth-largest trading partner. China remained Cuba's second partner at over \$2 billion, followed by Spain and Canada as in recent years. The trade data has to do with the trading of goods and does not include key income sources such as tourism and the export of medical services, primarily to Venezuela (*Reuters*, 30/6/09).

**June 30:** Cuba and Portugal will strengthen bilateral economic and scientific-technical complementation and development after signing a collaboration agreement in this regard in Havana. The document was penned by Joao Gomes Cravinho, Portuguese Secretary of State for Foreign Business and Cooperation, and Dagoberto Rodriguez Barreda, Cuban Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister. The Portuguese representative highlighted the traditional relations between the two nations and underscored their interest in increasing exchange in sectors like biotechnology, pharmaceutical industry, tourism, culture and renewable energy, field in which his country has experienced the largest growth within the European community, he said. Gomes Cravinho explained that Cuban exports to Portugal in 2008 were of the tune of 34 million euros. He added that although Portuguese exports to Cuba in the same period did not reach this figure, it was bigger than in 2007 (*ACN*, 30/6/09).

## **Exile Community**

**June 1:** In the 30 years since former Cuban rebel commander Huber Matos got out prison, he has been to countless international conferences, summits and soirees to protest against the Cuban government he helped bring to power. The 90-year-old activist and blogger is a member of a Miami delegation that will have him once again, he says, shouting into the wind. He will be at the Organization of American States general assembly in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, to publicly oppose the growing -- and some say unstoppable -- movement to allow his homeland back into the hemispheric group. Matos' opposition follows the announcement by the State Department that Cuba has accepted an Obama administration request to resume talks on legal immigration of Cubans to the United States and direct mail service between the two countries. Cuba's readmission to the OAS is expected to be taken up by the 34 active member states during the group's 39th regular session in Honduras. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will be representing the United States. "You go there to present the Cuban problem to the general public," Matos said. "But really you know that they are hypocrites, that there is little loyalty to principles, and that you are not going to get anything out of it." Why go? "You have to be there to tell your truth" (*The Miami Herald*, 1/6/09).

**Junio 2:** Organizaciones del exilio agrupadas en una Asamblea de la Resistencia, consiguieron conversar en San Pedro Sula, Honduras, con el secretario general de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), José Miguel Insulza, y ser acreditados para asistir a la Asamblea General del organismo. De acuerdo con un comunicado del Directorio Democrático Cubano, uno de los grupos, los exiliados entregaron a Insulza una carta firmada por 800 activistas y ciudadanos cubanos de la isla, que rechazan la posible readmisión de La Habana en el organismo. "Hemos venido aquí a presentar el anhelo democrático del pueblo cubano en todos los frentes y por todos los medios y no cejaremos en ese desempeño", dijo Sylvia Iriondo, presidente de Madres y Mujeres Anti Represión por Cuba (MAR por Cuba), según citó el Directorio. Los exiliados "manifestaron a Insulza la necesidad de reconocer a la resistencia cubana como la verdadera voz del pueblo cubano durante la reunión", añadió el comunicado (*Cubaencuentro*, 3/6/09).

**June 2:** A majority of Cuban Americans support President Barack Obama and back his moves to improve relations with Cuba, according to a new poll that suggests the community's staunch support for a tough US stance against the Castro government may be eroding. The survey said 64 percent of respondents favor Obama's directive to lift all restrictions on remittances and visits by Cuban Americans to family in Cuba. Twenty-seven percent of respondents said they were opposed to the measure. The telephone survey of 400 Cuban-American adults in Florida, New Jersey and other states was conducted in Spanish and English on April 15-16, days after Obama announced his administration would relax sanctions against Havana. The margin of error is plus or minus 5 percentage points. "Ten years ago, you wouldn't have seen anything near these numbers. Now it's the reality of where the community is," said Fernand Amandi, a pollster with Miami's Bendixen & Associates, a Democratic firm that did the survey. "It's unprecedented to suggest that the community for the first time is aligned with a Democratic president when it comes to Cuba policy" (*The Miami Herald*, 2/6/09).

**Junio 4:** Un grupo del exilio cubano en Miami dijo que se encuentra en alerta ante la posibilidad de que el gobierno de Cuba "fabrique" algún incidente con balseiros para propiciar una crisis con Estados Unidos. Ramón Saúl Sánchez, presidente del Movimiento Democracia, explicó que permanecen atentos tras conocerse que guardacostas de Cuba y miembros del Ministerio del Interior de la isla interceptaron a siete hombres que intentaron viajar Estados Unidos en un bote rústico de madera y corcho. Los hombres fueron interceptados en el Malecón de La Habana frente a la Sección de Intereses de Washington en la isla, una situación que Sánchez calificó de "raro incidente". "El Movimiento Democracia permanece atento tanto por lo que puedan peligrar los derechos de estos cubanos, si son verdaderos balseiros, como por la posibilidad de que el régimen cubano busque fabricar algún incidente para propiciar una crisis con Estados Unidos, país con el que no le conviene iniciar una política de distensión", afirmó Sánchez (*EFE*, 4/6/09)

**June 7:** Just five months after being granted political asylum in the United States, the Cuban pianist Alfredo Rodriguez won a place on the slate of performers at the 31st annual Playboy Jazz Festival. And that's not all. The jazz/classical enthusiast is also working on his first album with an industry icon: Quincy Jones. It all started three years ago when Rodriguez applied to play at the Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland. The Cuban government approved his application, and Rodriguez was later asked to play at festival founder Claude Nobs' house, where he presented an arrangement of Cole Porter's "I Love You." Among the guests that night was Jones. "I was completely blown away," recalled Rodriguez, who speaks some English but also uses an interpreter. Upon returning to the United States, Jones stayed in contact with Rodriguez through the former's production company. Seizing the chance to pursue his craft stateside, Rodriguez defected while in Mexico doing a show with his father, a well-known singer in Cuba with the same name. Making his way to the Texas border, Rodriguez officially entered the States on January 15. Born in Havana, the 23-year-old Rodriguez began playing the piano at age 7. With musical influences ranging from Bach and Beethoven to mentor Jones and Thelonious Monk, Rodriguez later honed his skills as a producer and musical director. He has collaborated with a host of Cuban artists including Gaston Joya, Michael Olivera, musicians in the Buena Vista Social Club and his father (*Billboard*, 7/6/09).

**Junio 18:** El Instituto de Estadios Cubanos (IEC) alertó sobre las amenazas recibidas en plena calle por su presidente, Dagoberto Valdés. "Condenamos indignados" esos "groseros métodos de intimidación porrista", dijo en un comunicado el IEC, con sede en Miami. Valdés, residente en Pinar del Río, dijo a *Cubaencuentro.com* que dos personas, aparentemente enviadas por la Seguridad del Estado, se le acercaron en la calle y le dijeron que la iba a "pasar muy mal" y que le iban "a pasar por arriba" si continuaba "apoyando a las Damas de Blanco y a grupos contrarrevolucionarios". "Consideramos vergonzoso que en un momento en que la crisis nacional reclama la cooperación y talento colectivo de todos los cubanos, el gobierno insista en la represión y la intolerancia", dijo el IEC en su nota. "Si bien hemos reclamado que Estados Unidos levante las restricciones a los intercambios académicos con Cuba, también exigimos que las autoridades cubanas pongan fin a la represión de las libertades de pensamiento, expresión e investigación académica en la isla", añadió el Instituto (*Cubaencuentro*, 19/6/09).

**Junio 22:** Una veintena de grupos del exilio en Miami anunciaron la nueva fase de la campaña de "Yo no coopero" con el régimen, bajo el lema "Todos somos resistencia". "La resistencia a la dictadura castrista está creciendo y cada día tenemos más noticias de nuevas personas que se suman a este movimiento" cívico, dijo Sylvia Iriondo, presidenta de Madres Antirepresión por Cuba (MAR). Según Iriondo, el objetivo de esta nueva fase es llamar a la unidad de los cubanos que residen en la isla y en el exilio para que se sumen a la "resistencia" que impulse "el cambio democrático en Cuba". Por otra parte, la Asamblea de la Resistencia, que agrupa a más de 50 organizaciones en Cuba y el extranjero, expresó su compromiso en la defensa de los "derechos del pueblo cubano frente a la tiranía castrista" y señaló que la resistencia comienza con la "actitud del pueblo reclamando sus derechos" (*Cubaencuentro*, 22/6/09).

## Foreign Affairs

**Junio 1:** La Asamblea General de la OEA que se celebra en Honduras es una oportunidad para que el Gobierno estadounidense de Barack Obama "rectifique" la política hacia América Latina, y en particular hacia Cuba, asegura el periódico oficial *Granma*. "No se trata de analizar si Cuba debe o no ingresar a la OEA (Organización de Estados Americanos), sino de reparar una injusticia histórica", dice un artículo del diario del gobernante Partido Comunista. "Es hora de pasar de las palabras a los hechos y dejar a un lado la retórica anticubana. No existen razones para que Estados Unidos mantenga el bloqueo y no restablezca sus relaciones con la isla", agrega *Granma*. El artículo, titulado "El 'futuro' de la OEA se parece al pasado", recuerda que el presidente cubano, general Raúl Castro, y su hermano y antecesor Fidel, han reiterado en los últimos meses que el Gobierno de La Habana jamás regresará a ese organismo que lo suspendió en 1962 (*EFE*, 1/6/09).

**Junio 1:** Cuba debe seguir fuera de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) mientras el régimen castrista persista en negar los derechos fundamentales de sus ciudadanos, declaró la organización de defensa de los derechos humanos Human Rights Watch (HRW). "La OEA no debería levantar la suspensión de Cuba como miembro pleno hasta que no termine la sistemática negación de las libertades fundamentales de los cubanos", señaló HRW en un comunicado. La OEA analiza en su XXXIX Asamblea General, en San Pedro Sula (Honduras), el caso de Cuba, suspendida de la organización en 1962 a causa del régimen instaurado por Fidel Castro (*AFP*, 2/6/09).

**June 1:** With the United States at one pole and Venezuela at the other, the countries of the Americas stood divided over ties with Cuba as they gathered in Honduras for annual talks. Despite marathon negotiations in Washington and San Pedro Sula, envoys to the 34-member OAS said they had reached no compromise over how and when to readmit communist Cuba to the body from which it was suspended in 1962. "We have arrived at the deadline, and it's passed," a senior diplomat told reporters on the condition of anonymity, referring to the failure to clinch a compromise before the two-day OAS General Assembly begins at 9 am on June 2. And few, if any, of the envoys could predict the outcome of the event in the Honduran economic hub, north of the capital

Tegucigalpa. The United States wants Cuba to release political prisoners and improve basic rights before it can return to the fold. Venezuela -- Havana's closest regional ally, backed by fellow leftists Bolivia and Nicaragua -- sets no conditions. A more flexible plan for the readmission of Cuba than that proposed by Washington has generated support from 26 of the 34 countries, such as more moderate leftist countries like Brazil and Chile, those close to the negotiations say (*AFP*, 2/6/09).

**June 1:** El Salvador and Cuba formally reestablished diplomatic ties, broken since the Cuban revolution 50 years ago. The move came after former journalist Mauricio Funes -- the first leftist leader elected here in 20 years -- was sworn in as president of El Salvador. In his first act as new leader, Funes said he was restoring full diplomatic relations with Cuba, becoming the last Latin American nation to do so. Senior diplomats from both countries signed an accord officially reestablishing relations broken since 1961. El Salvador's newly installed foreign minister, Estaban Lazo, said "they should never have severed ties with Cuba," referring to his predecessors. Funes, the first leftist to be elected president of El Salvador, also vowed to renew and expand ties with the United States, at the ceremony attended by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (*AFP*, 1/6/09).

**June 2:** The future of Cuba's relations with Botswana and those it maintains with the rest of Africa and the world is "brilliant", Botswana Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Phandu Skelemani, asserted in Gaborone. Relations between Cuba and Botswana have been encouraged since Cuban Ambassador to Gaborone Jorge Luis Lopez Tormo presented his credentials recently. Any help Cuba could give to Botswana has been given. If we needed doctors, they came. If we needed sports trainers, they came, the Minister explained. Cubans, despite being subject to totally incorrect sanctions by the United States, have decided that it is not enough to develop alone, Skelemani said (*Prensa Latina*, 2/6/09).

**June 2:** Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo thanked the Cuban people and Government for their solidarity with his nation upon arriving in Havana for an official visit at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, Raul Castro. "More than ever, we need a united and supportive Latin America and I think that, in this sense, Cuba has been an example for us all," Lugo told reporters at the Jose Marti International Airport in Havana. After expressing his joy for being in Cuba, the Paraguayan leader said he hopes this visit can contribute to the strengthening of bilateral bonds of friendship and solidarity between Cuba and the South American country. Lugo recalled that this is the first official visit of a Paraguayan president to the Caribbean nation, which he described as the "cradle of solidarity in the Americas" (*ACN*, 2/6/09).

**June 2:** Cuba came closer to ending its 47-year suspension from the Organization of American States, but after working throughout the weekend, diplomats failed to come up with a way to readmit the communist nation in a way that satisfies both its leftist allies and those who insist on democratic principles. Honduran President Manuel Zelaya said the divisive issue threatens the very existence of the OAS, a hemispheric group founded in 1948 that serves as the region's principal multilateral forum. If Cuba isn't let back in, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega suggested Latin American nations should form a

breakaway group that excludes the United States and Canada. Several nations proposed resolutions that would lift Cuba's suspension, but with different conditions. When ambassadors could not come up with a consensus, a team of foreign ministers including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton locked themselves behind closed doors to hammer out a compromise. "The Organization of American States can continue to exist, or collapse for lack of will," Zelaya said. At a news conference, Ortega railed against the OAS and its primary funder, the United States. Sources close to the talks say Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia are blocking any moves by Washington to put conditions on lifting Cuba's suspension. Another source who was included in the discussions said Nicaragua had little support. Honduras proposed the 1962 suspension be lifted, and that the next step on whether Cuba should formally engage the organization would take place only if Cuba and the OAS desired it (*The Miami Herald*, 3/6/09).

**June 3:** Fidel Castro had nothing good to say about the Organization of American States in his public pronouncement. "The OAS," he said, "was an accomplice in all the crimes committed against Cuba" and doesn't deserve to exist. Alluding to President Obama, Castro said that "it is naive to think that the good intentions of a president of the United States justify the existence of that institution, which opened the doors to the Trojan horse that supported the Summits of the Americas, neoliberalism, drug trafficking, military bases and economic crises. "Ignorance, underdevelopment, economic dependence, poverty, the forcible repatriation of those who emigrate in search of a job, the theft of brains and even the sophisticated weapons of organized crime were the consequences of the interventions and plunder from the North." After quoting liberally from the speeches in Honduras and news agency reports, Castro ends by saying: "Cuba is not an enemy of peace, or reluctant to exchanges and cooperation among countries with different political systems, but it has been and will be intransigent in the defense of its principles" ([The Trojan Horse](#); *The Miami Herald*, 3/6/09)

**June 3:** After two days of intense negotiations, the Organization of American States agreed to lift a cold war provision that suspended Cuba from the group but also accepted a list of conditions, backed by Washington, that Havana would have to meet before being allowed to return. The compromise was a stunning about-face for the 34-nation group, which had been in what appeared to be an intractable stalemate that threatened to polarize the hemisphere. On one side, Washington had opposed any measure that would have ended Cuba's suspension - imposed in 1962 - without requiring that the island nation agree to abide by the organization's democratic principles before being allowed to return. Venezuela and Nicaragua led the opposition to any provision that set conditions for Cuba's return. However, Venezuela and Nicaragua suddenly backed away from their hard line. A Latin American diplomat said that the risk of losing United States support for the organization, which gets 60 percent of its funds from Washington, weighed heavily on the group's thinking. In the end, each side claimed victory, hailing the compromise as historic, even though it was largely symbolic. The resolution, for example, says that Cuba cannot return unless it asks to, and Havana has said repeatedly it has no interest in rejoining the group, which President Raúl Castro has denounced as a tool of American domination ([OAS Resolution on Cuba](#); *The New York Times*, 4/6/09).

**Junio 3:** La Habana aplaudió la decisión de la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) de anular la suspensión a Cuba como miembro activo de la organización. En una declaración oficial leída en la televisión oficial cubana, el gobierno dijo que la derogación de esta expulsión supone "un día histórico y de reivindicación para los pueblos de nuestra América". "Pese a presiones, condicionamientos y maniobras de Estados Unidos, la fuerza formidable de la América Latina que está naciendo hizo posible el desagravio, la rectificación histórica, la condena implícita al oprobioso pasado". Sin embargo, Cuba reiteró que no piensa integrarse en la organización, a la que considera un "ministerio de colonias yanqui". "Cuba no ha pedido ni quiere regresar a la OEA, llena de una historia tenebrosa y entreguista, pero reconoce el valor político, el simbolismo y la rebeldía que entraña esta decisión", añade la declaración (*BBC Mundo*, 4/6/09).

**June 3:** Cuban President Raul Castro Ruz presided over the official welcoming ceremony for visiting Paraguayan head of state Fernando Lugo at Havana's Revolution Palace. Also members of the Paraguayan delegation are Foreign Minister Hector Lacognata and Health and Social Wellbeing Minister Esperanza Martinez, among other officials. The Cuban delegation was made up of First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, Health Minister Jose Ramon Balaguer and Culture Minister Abel Prieto, all of them are members of the Political Bureau of Cuba's Communist Party. Presidents Fernando Lugo and Raul Castro held official talks at the Revolution Palace with the attendance of First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura (*ACN*, 4/6/09).

**June 4:** The Honourable Peter Kent, Canada's Minister of State of Foreign Affairs (Americas), issued the following statement welcoming the consensus resolution lifting the 1962 suspension of Cuba from the Organization of American States (OAS): "It gives me great pleasure to join with member states of the Organization of American States in a historic decision with significant implications both for the future of the OAS and for the inclusiveness of this hemispheric body". "I would like to reiterate Canada's strong support for the democratic principles of this organization. It is our hope that Cuba will embrace these principles. I am pleased that the spirit of consensus—a touchstone convention of this organization—has prevailed in our deliberations". "This historic resolution lifts the 1962 suspension and sets out a process for Cuba's eventual return to active participation in accordance with the principles, purposes and practices of the organization. Member states reiterated that our efforts would be guided by the OAS Charter and fundamental instruments relating to democracy, human rights, security, non-intervention, self-determination and development". "Canada played an active role as a member of the working group in the negotiations resulting in this historic resolution" (*ISRIA*, 4/6/09)

**Junio 4:** El gobierno de Uruguay concedió una visa de turistas por 90 días al cardiólogo Ramón Crespo Almería y su esposa Ivette, oftalmóloga, así como a uno de sus hijos, menor de edad, que viaja con el matrimonio. Alfredo Toledo, ex presidente del Sindicato Médico del Uruguay (SMU), informó: "Crespo Almería, que es cardiólogo, en realidad tenía mucha influencia en Cuba y nosotros lo conocimos en congresos médicos en La Habana, donde nos ayudó mucho. Además, fue presidente de la comisión de salud del Parlamento Latinoamericano y miembro de la Asamblea Nacional de Cuba". Según

Toledo, "todo comenzó a gestarse cuando recibimos correos electrónicos de Ramón donde nos pidió ayuda para ingresar al Uruguay y donde proyectan radicarse", pues el matrimonio está actualmente en París. "Suponemos que sólo tenían los permisos para viajar a París y retornar a La Habana", dijo Toledo a propósito de las gestiones con el gobierno de Uruguay, donde intervino "expeditivamente" la cancillería uruguaya (*AP*, 4/6/09).

**June 4:** Cuba welcomed the lifting of a Cold War-era ban on its membership in the Organization of American States as "a major victory", but made clear Havana does not want to rejoin the group. "I think it's a major victory for Latin America and the Caribbean and for the Cuban people as well," said Ricardo Alarcon, head of the Communist-ruled island's parliament. Asked if Cuba would seek re-entry to the OAS, Alarcon said the consensus vote at an OAS general assembly meeting in Honduras, changed nothing. Former Cuban leader Fidel Castro has said repeatedly that Cuba had no desire to rejoin the OAS, which he has described as an instrument of neoliberal economic policies and US intervention in Latin America. "I don't know how many times we've said the same thing. What happened yesterday does nothing to change what we thought yesterday, the day before yesterday and even today," Alarcon told reporters (*Reuters, CNN*, 4/6/09).

**June 4:** Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos received Cuban Ambassador Pedro Ross Leal, who was the bearer of a friendly message from Cuba. Dos Santos and Ross discussed bilateral relations, further strengthened in the wake of the visits by Dos Santos to Cuba (2007) and by Cuban President Raul Castro to Angola (February this year.) They also discussed the resolution recently adopted by the 39th General Assembly of the Organization of American States abolishing Cuba's exclusion from OAS. The Cuban diplomat also met with Angolan Foreign Minister Asuncion de los Angeles. Also attending was a visiting delegation of the Communist Party of Cuba led by Rodolfo Puente Ferro, at the invitation of the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola. Later, Puente Ferro and Cuban Ambassador Ross also met with President of the National Assembly of Angola, Fernando da Piedade Dias dos Santos (*Prensa Latina*, 4/6/09).

**Junio 4:** Fidel Castro se reunió durante dos horas con el presidente paraguayo Fernando Lugo, con quien conversó sobre salud, educación y las relaciones bilaterales, indicaron fuentes paraguayas. Castro recibió al presidente paraguayo en su casa, según informes oficiales de Paraguay. Lugo asistió a la reunión acompañado del canciller Héctor Lacagnata, y la ministra de Salud, Esperanza Martínez, con lo que concluyó su visita oficial de dos días a la isla, la primera de un mandatario paraguayo en medio siglo de revolución. El líder cubano, de 82 años, "se mostró interesado en la marcha del proceso político en Paraguay" y habló con los ministros sobre sus áreas, con particular interés en los casi 800 jóvenes de ese país que estudian medicina en Cuba, precisó la página de la presidencia de Paraguay (*AFP*, 6/6/09).

**June 5:** Paraguay's President Fernando Lugo ended his first visit to Cuba, after arriving from Honduras. Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez bid the Paraguayan head of State farewell at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport. Lugo's official agenda

included meeting with his peer Raul Castro, and touring the Latin American School of Medicine, where he talked with some 800 Paraguayan youth from his nation. Both leaders expressed satisfaction for the good state of bilateral relations, and ratified the will to strengthen them more (*Prensa Latina*, 5/6/09).

**Junio 5:** El Gobierno de Canadá dijo que Cuba tiene que aceptar "los principios y prácticas democráticas" para reintegrarse a la OEA, que derogó esta semana la suspensión que pesaba contra el país caribeño. El secretario de Estado de Canadá para Asuntos Exteriores en el continente americano, Peter Kent, dijo durante una conferencia telefónica que "la eventual reintegración (de Cuba) con completa participación será condicional a la aceptación de los principios y prácticas democráticas de la OEA". Kent sostuvo a través de un comunicado que Canadá había participado activamente en el acuerdo que permitió derogar la suspensión contra Cuba impuesta por la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) en 1962 y que Ottawa apoyaba totalmente la iniciativa. La declaración de Kent parecía contradecir declaraciones previas del portavoz del primer ministro canadiense, Stephen Harper, en las que afirmó que Cuba no podría reintegrarse a la OEA hasta que se transformara democráticamente. "No ha habido ningún cambio en la posición de Canadá", afirmó Kent a preguntas de los periodistas (*EFE*, 5/6/09).

**June 8:** Cuba is formally rejecting an offer to rejoin the Organization of American States, echoing the sentiments of Fidel Castro who has long maintained his island has no use for the group. The OAS voted to lift a decades-old suspension of Cuba's membership. A statement published in the communist newspaper Granma says the government is satisfied "with this expression of sovereignty and community" but repeats that Cuba "will not return to the OAS." It said the OAS has long supported Washington's hostility toward Cuba and that this country prefers to retain its independence ([Declaración del Gobierno Revolucionario](#); *AP*, 8/6/09).

**June 8:** The head of the Organization of American States said he was confident Cuba would eventually rejoin the 34-member organization, but that it would require more dialogue. Cuba's government welcomed the OAS move but said it was not interested in joining the institution, which it sees as an instrument of US dominance in the region. Jose Miguel Insulza, secretary-general of the OAS, told reporters in Montreal he expected that view to soften. "I expect things to change," Insulza said on the sidelines of an economic conference. "They were saying very bad things about the OAS before. They're not saying those bad things now. People change and I think that we always have to promote a dialogue," he said. Insulza said he planned to start talks with the Cuban government in a few months but said the OAS had no specific agenda or timeline for advancing the issue. "Right now we're looking more to the bilateral dialogue they are going to begin with the United States. I think that's the main issue today," he said (*Reuters*, 8/6/09).

**Junio 8:** Los cancilleres de Brasil, Celso Amorim, y de Colombia, Jaime Bermúdez, aseguraron que la decisión de Cuba de regresar o no a la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA) es soberana y calificaron de paso histórico la revocación de la resolución por la que se expulsó a la isla caribeña de ese organismo en 1962. Ambos ministros ofrecieron una rueda de prensa en la que señalaron que la OEA salió fortalecida

de su última Asamblea General celebrada en Honduras, donde se revocó la resolución sobre Cuba. Amorim afirmó que se logró corregir una situación "históricamente inadecuada" y se hizo de tal manera que la OEA resultó fortalecida. "Cuando a Cuba le interese entrar en la OEA lo va a decir, y si no le interesa lo va a decir también, tiene la libertad de hacerlo como todo Gobierno soberano, lo que sí era importante era enterrar un cadáver insepulto que hacía mal a Cuba, pero sobre todo a la propia OEA", advirtió. Bermúdez se "adhirió" a las palabras de su colega brasileño y agregó que si Cuba decide estar de nuevo en el sistema interamericano se iniciará un proceso de discusión, y si por el contrario lo rechaza "la OEA seguirá" (*EFE*, 8/6/09).

**Junio 10:** La Confederación Internacional Sindical rindió en Bruselas su informe anual en el que indica la restricción a la libertad sindical que padecen los trabajadores cubanos. En el informe se señala que los trabajadores cubanos se adscriben a un sólo sindicato, tienen restringida la libertad sindical, no poseen derecho de huelga y varios activistas sindicales independientes han sido condenados a largas penas de cárcel. La Confederación agrega en su informe que en Cuba los derechos sindicales están subordinados a objetivos políticos y que el Estado controla el mercado del empleo, decide los salarios y condiciones de trabajo en el sector estatal (*Radio Martí*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** The United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) adopted a report presented by Cuba to the HRC's Working Group before the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). According to *Granma* news daily, the HRC adopted on June 10 the Cuban report reviewed by the UPR on February 5th and 9th earlier this year. Juan Antonio Fernandez Palacios, Cuba's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Geneva, said the UPR allowed Cuba to put forth best practices, challenges faced in the country, and an opportunity to listen to all delegations. In the context of the UPR of Cuba there was a clear confirmation of the international community in condemning the US embargo against the island. The diplomat affirmed that the area of economic, social and cultural rights was universally supported. Of the 89 recommendations, Cuba fully accepted 60, and provided additional information and comments on 17. Cuba objected to a few recommendations due to "their incompatibility with the right to self determination of the Cuban people", according to *Granma* (*ACN*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** Bolivian President Evo Morales arrived in Havana for a working visit, at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, Raul Castro. "I come to ratify Bolivia's solidarity with the Cuban people and their Revolution," Morales said upon arriving at the Jose Marti International Airport in Havana. "I also want to take the opportunity to express our respect and gratitude for all the solidarity that our country and our cultural-democratic revolution have received from Cuba and its Government," he stressed. Morales reiterated his admiration for Fidel Castro. "I long to see him and to speak with him and also with President Raul Castro because I always learn something when we meet," he explained. The South American leader was welcomed at the Airport by Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla (*ACN*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** Seventy more Cuban doctors arrived in Zimbabwe and will soon be deployed to health centres around the country, Cuba's ambassador to Zimbabwe, Cosme Torres

Espinosa has said. This brings to 110 the total number of Cuban doctors who are in the country. Ambassador Espinosa paid a courtesy call on Vice President Joice Mujuru at her Munhumutapa offices. "We are just coming from the airport where we were receiving another group of doctors to Zimbabwe. "Right now we have a full brigade of Cuban doctors in Zimbabwe," Espinosa told VP Mujuru. Cuba, he said, wanted to widen areas of cooperation and he was inviting senior Government officials to visit Cuba for exchange programs. "We are also looking at areas to increase cooperation when we have our Joint Commission meeting. We in fact have opportunities in areas of tourism, science and technology, and information communication technology so we are inviting the Ministers to Cuba," Ambassador Espinosa said (*The Herald*, 12/6/09).

**June 12:** Bolivian President Evo Morales met with Cuba's Fidel Castro in Havana and said the ailing revolutionary icon was "very lucid" and looking much "stronger" than last year. "He appeared very lucid, very wise and stronger, because after my previous visit, months back, I was worried. But now I know that Fidel is feeling very well," Morales told reporters shortly before leaving Havana after a one-day working visit to the island nation. He stressed after his latest two-hour meeting that the former Cuban president, 82, was "as always, preoccupied with politics," society and economics. Morales also met with President Raul Castro to discuss bilateral cooperation, attended a conference at the University of Havana and played a game of soccer with Bolivians studying medicine in Cuba (*AFP*, 12/6/09).

**June 11:** The decision to maintain cooperation accords in fields like health, transportation, tourism and sport, is a reflection of the excellent relations existing between Cuba and the Republic of Namibia. At the end of the 10th Intergovernmental Session for Scientific and Technical and Economic Cooperation between the two countries, the implementation of exchanges in spheres like agriculture, forest development, construction works, energy and resettlement was also agreed on, as well as the continuation of the training of Namibian students in Cuba at different educational levels. The Session, held in Havana from June 8-11, was attended by a large delegation from Namibia, headed by the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources, Abraham Iyambo (*ACN*, 12/6/09).

**June 11:** The Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Denzil Douglas, met with visiting Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo, who is in this Caribbean country heading the Cuban delegation to the 6th Petrocaribe Summit. Douglas welcomed the Cuban delegation that also includes Ricardo Cabrisas, Vice President of the Council of Ministers, and Yadira Garcia, Minister of Basic Industry. He expressed his gratitude for Cuba's solidarity and sent greetings to Fidel Castro, and to Cuban President Raul Castro. For his part, Lazo ratified Cuba's interest in further developing cooperation ties (*ACN*, 12/6/09).

**June 12:** European Union nations want to continue and deepen dialogue with Cuba, while remaining concerned at the lack of progress on human rights, diplomats said. A draft text drawn up for EU foreign ministers to approve in Luxembourg on June 15 gives the clearest indication yet that Europe is working towards normalizing relations with a country once deemed a diplomatic pariah. EU nations believe "that the political dialogue

with Cuba should be pursued and deepened on a comprehensive, equal and result-oriented basis," according to the statement. The text also stresses that the "comprehensive dialogue" should not only be with the Cuban authorities but also "with representatives of civil society and peaceful pro-democracy opposition" (*AFP*, 12/6/09)

**June 14:** A dissident Cuban surgeon who had been denied permission to leave the island for more than a decade hugged her grandchildren for the first time after arriving to an emotional family reunion in Argentina. Dr. Hilda Molina, who quickly took advantage of the communist government's surprise decision to let her leave, was also met by her son, Roberto Quiñones, whom she hadn't seen in 15 years. She will visit her ailing 90-year-old mother, who was allowed to leave Cuba months ago. "Thank God and everyone who helped me," said Molina, a once-prominent neurosurgeon who became a political pariah after criticizing Cuba's health system. The surprise authorization was seen as a nod to Argentine President Cristina Fernandez, a Cuba ally, who along with her husband and predecessor, Nestor Kirchner, had been asking the Castros since 2003 to allow Molina to leave (*AP*, 14/6/09).

**June 15:** European Union nations want to deepen dialogue with Cuba, despite concerns over the lack of progress on human rights, EU foreign ministers agreed. The ministers, meeting in Luxembourg, gave the clearest indication yet that Europe is working towards normalizing relations with a country once deemed a diplomatic pariah. EU nations believe that "political dialogue with Cuba should be pursued and deepened on a comprehensive, equal and result-oriented basis," the ministers from the 27-nation group said in a joint statement. "We keep the door open for continued dialogue," said Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kohout, after chairing the talks as his country holds the rotating EU presidency. The text stressed that "comprehensive dialogue" shouldn't only be with the Cuban authorities but also "with representatives of civil society and peaceful pro-democracy opposition" ([EU Council Evaluation](#); *AFP*, 15/6/09)

**Junio 16:** La presidenta argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, recibió en la Casa de Gobierno a la médica disidente cubana Hilda Molina. La neurocirujana estuvo acompañada por su hijo, Roberto Quiñones; su nuera, la argentina Verónica Scarpatti, y sus nietos, Roberto Carlos, de 13 años, y Juan Pablo, de ocho. El diario argentino *La Nación* reportó que la mandataria escuchó a Molina por más de una hora. "Fue una conversación muy positiva. Le agradecí todo lo que habían hecho por mí", dijo la neurocirujana tras el encuentro. "No me puedo ir sin pedirle que como mujer, madre y estadista ayude a hacer más fluidas las relaciones familiares de los cubanos. Nosotros no podemos seguir teniendo que pedir permiso para salir del país", le expresó Molina, de acuerdo con *La Nación*. Kirchner le habría dicho que, a su manera, "silenciosa y perseverante", había gestionado para lograr su permiso de salida. *La Nación* dijo que la presidenta argentina tiene previsto escribir una carta de agradecimiento a Raúl Castro (*Cubaencuentro*, 19/6/09).

**Junio 16:** El gobierno de Cuba donó por duodécimo año consecutivo 2,500 toneladas de azúcar crudo a proyectos del Programa Mundial de Alimentos (PMA) en Colombia y Corea del Norte, informó en La Habana ese organismo de la ONU. En Colombia, el

azúcar será entregado a desplazados y a otros grupos vulnerables con limitado acceso a los alimentos, y en Corea del Norte será parte de una operación de emergencia, precisa un comunicado del PMA. En años anteriores, el azúcar ha sido enviado a la República Dominicana, Jamaica, Honduras, Haití, Etiopía y Angola, entre otros países, y el valor total de las contribuciones suma más de 8 millones de dólares, según el comunicado (*EFE*, 16/6/09).

**June 17:** Bedouma Alain Yoda, Minister of State, Foreign Affairs and Regional Cooperation of Burkina Faso, began an official visit to Cuba. Alain Yoda heads the delegation of his country to the 11th Session of the Cuba-Burkina Faso Intergovernmental Commission for Technical, Scientific and Economic Cooperation. The visitor will hold official talks with his Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, and with other government authorities (*ACN*, 17/6/09).

**Junio 17:** Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, hijo de Fidel Castro, discutió en Bruselas con la Comisión Europea diferentes posibilidades de cooperación mutua en materia de ciencia e investigación entre la UE y la isla. Castro Díaz-Balart, que es asesor científico del Consejo de Estado de Cuba, se reunió con el comisario europeo de Ciencia e Investigación, Janez Potocnik, así como con el titular europeo de Desarrollo y Ayuda Humanitaria, Louis Michel, encargado de las relaciones con La Habana. El encuentro se centró en el "potencial desarrollo de áreas de cooperación científica mutua" y no abordó en ningún momento aspectos políticos, indicaron fuentes comunitarias (*EFE*, 17/6/09).

**June 17:** Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla and Bdouma Alain Yoda, Foreign Ministers of Cuba and Burkina Faso respectively agreed that their countries currently share excellent relations. During official talks with Rodriguez Parrilla at the Cuban Foreign Ministry, the African official said that the Cuban Revolution has played and continues to play a key role in the liberation of the oppressed peoples. He pointed out that his country and Cuba have found common grounds during their talks in regards to development problems and current world situation. Bdouma Alain Yoda is paying a five-day official visit to Cuba, whose agenda include a meeting with Ricardo Alarcon, Cuban National Assembly President, among other activities. Cuba and Burkina Faso established diplomatic relations on December 11th, 1975 (*ACN*, 17/6/09).

**June 17:** Cuba became the 54th state to join the UN International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. Cuba's UN representative Abelardo Moreno delivered the signed document at United Nations headquarters, according to his spokesman, Alaim Pena. "This sovereign decision of the Cuban government illustrates its irrevocable commitment to the fight against terrorism under all its forms," a statement from the Cuban UN mission said. While joining the convention, Cuba made clear that the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, where some 230 'war on terror' detainees are held, is located on its territory against its will and that Havana bears no responsibility if the United States "deployed nuclear material or nuclear arms in this illegally occupied territory" (*AFP*, 18/6/09).

**June 18:** Colombia's Culture Minister Paula Marcela Moreno said she was pleased with her recent visit to Cuba and stressed that both countries must work towards the consolidation of bilateral cultural relations. The Colombian minister made her statements upon returning to her country after visiting Cuba. She explained that she met with her Cuban counterpart Abel Prieto and signed a memorandum of understanding to back cultural diversity and the preservation of heritage in both countries. The document also includes the development of community culture activity and artistic exchange (*ACN*, 17/6/09).

**Junio 18:** El vicepresidente primero y canciller panameño, Samuel Lewis Navarro, afirmó que Panamá y Cuba han consolidado y perfeccionado sus relaciones políticas, comerciales y culturales desde que fueron reiniciadas en 2005. "Este ha sido el periodo del perfeccionamiento de importantes instrumentos de cooperación y la formalización de múltiples encuentros de nivel", destacó Navarro en el acto de despedida del embajador cubano, Carlos Eloy García, el primero de ese país en Panamá tras el restablecimiento de las relaciones diplomáticas. Indicó que la consolidación de las relaciones se tradujo "en un significativo incremento en el comercio, la promoción recíproca de las inversiones, y los invaluable avances en el área de cooperación, especialmente en materia de salud, educación, deporte y energía" (*EFE*, 18/6/09).

**Junio 19:** Raúl Castro conversó sobre "asuntos de interés bilateral" con el embajador de México en La Habana, Gabriel Jiménez Remus, quien le entregó un mensaje del mandatario mexicano, Felipe Calderón, según un comunicado oficial. "El señor Jiménez Remus fue portador de un mensaje del presidente Felipe Calderón para el mandatario cubano", señaló el comunicado leído en el telenoticiario de la noche. En el encuentro, al que también "asistió el canciller cubano Bruno Rodríguez", Castro y Jiménez Remus "abordaron además otros asuntos de interés bilateral", añadió el texto oficial (*AFP*, 19/6/09).

**June 23:** Cuba and Bolivia will sign an outline agreement in the field of environmental cooperation, within the framework of the 7th International Convention on Development and the Environment to be held in La Paz from July 6th through the 10th. The accord will allow for the establishment of mechanisms to jointly make good use of institutional capacities on the basis of actions linked to social and climatic matters, announced the Bolivian Deputy Minister for Biodiversity, Water and the Environment, Pablo Ramos (*ACN*, 24/6/09).

**June 24:** The Venezuelan city of Maracay, in the state of Aragua, hosts an extraordinary summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), a Latin American and Caribbean bloc for integration and cooperation. During the meeting, Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda, will officially become full members of the organization that is already comprised of Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Honduras and Dominica. First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura heads the Cuban delegation, that also includes Ricardo Cabrisas, Vice President of the Council of Ministers, and Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla (*ACN*, 24/6/09).

**June 24:** The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez Frias, held that with the change in the name from Bolivarian Alternative for the People's of Our America into Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (Alba) and with the new projects emerged during the VI Summit of the Alba, it starts a new dynamic for this regional integration mechanism. At the end of the VI Extraordinary Summit of the Alba, carried out in Aragua state (north-central region of Venezuela), The President explained that this not only represents a name changing, but “a change of codes, sense and content.” “It has a great meaning, as said the Paraguayan Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Alba is not a theoretical proposal anymore, but a platform of territorial politics, geopolitics and of power,” Chavez stated. “We are building a new reality. The voice of the Alba will be heard more day after day, having a greater impact on the geopolitical reality of this Continent,” he added (*ABN*, 24/6/09).

**June 24:** The Bolivarian Alternative for Our Americas (ALBA) is the most honourable response to the patterns of the industrialized North, said Cuba's First Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura during the 6th Extraordinary Summit of the Regional Integration Mechanism, held in the Venezuelan city of Maracay. Consolidating this regional integration initiative is the only way to make the dreams of Latin American independence heroes come true, he pointed out, and expressed the satisfaction of Cuba, of President Raul Castro and Revolution leader Fidel Castro for the joining by Ecuador, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua and Barbuda of the ALBA. “We are now nine full members of this unitary project, which proofs its viability and sustainability, based on proposed concepts and concrete results,” he stressed and went to explain that the integration mechanism has allowed for the development of a political and social agenda initially focused on very sensitive sectors like health and education (*ACN*, 25/6/09).

**Junio 24:** El secretario general de la OEA, José Miguel Insulza, afirmó que la resolución que levantó la suspensión a Cuba quitó el "cerrojo" a su reincorporación al organismo americano, pero debe ser La Habana quien abra la puerta. La reintegración de Cuba en la Organización de Estados Americanos (OEA), dijo Insulza, depende de la voluntad de La Habana de aceptar los propósitos y principios del organismo interamericano. El titular de la OEA afirmó en una conferencia del Diálogo Interamericano que la resolución aprobada en la XXXIX Asamblea General de San Pedro Sula (Honduras) el pasado 3 de junio establece cómo Cuba puede cruzar la puerta. "El cerrojo está quitado, pero la puerta no está abierta. La resolución dice cómo entrar", señaló (*EFE*, 25/6/09).

**June 24:** It was 26 years ago and Cuba's then-leader, Fidel Castro, foresaw today's global economic crisis, a Cuban official said. During a conference of non-aligned countries in 1983, Castro said in a speech that "declining foreign trade, hunger and unemployment" would eventually take their toll on the global economy, Trade Minister Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz told a UN meeting on the world economic downturn. "The current state of the world economy and its gloomy outlook should lead to a profound reflection in governments and in the most lucid minds of the developed world," the minister quoted the former communist leader as saying 26 years ago. "That prognosis remains completely

valid," Malmierca Diaz told the UN General Assembly. "If anything has changed, it is that the issues then raised have worsened." Malmierca Diaz added that measures recommended by the G20 club of big developed and developing nations would not be sufficient to solve the global crisis "because they are not aimed at eliminating the causes of the crisis" -- namely capitalism (*Reuters*, 25/6/09).

**Junio 26:** Fidel Castro afirmó que lo que ocurra en Honduras, a partir del enfrentamiento del presidente Manuel Zelaya con la cúpula militar, la justicia y el Congreso, "será una prueba" para el mandatario estadounidense Barack Obama y la OEA. "Lo que allí ocurra será una prueba para la OEA y para la actual administración de Estados Unidos", dijo Castro en un artículo publicado en el sitio digital *Cubadebate*, donde dijo solidarizarse con Zelaya. "Zelaya no ha cometido la menor violación de la ley. No realizó un acto de fuerza. Es el Presidente y Comandante General de las Fuerzas Armadas de Honduras", dijo Castro ([Un gesto que no se olvidará](#); *AFP*, 26/6/09).

**June 26:** The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) released a statement condemning a coup attempt underway in Honduras against the democratically elected government of President Jose Manuel Zelaya. In the text, published by *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde* newspapers, the ALBA member countries express their deep concern over the recent events in the Central American nation. The note recalls that the coup attempt aims at obstructing a referendum scheduled for June 28 to consult Hondurans on installing a Constituent Assembly to reform the Constitution (*ACN*, 26/6/09).

**June 27:** The Commemorative Conference of the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hispanic-American Evangelical Congress of Havana presented Fidel Castro with a framed certificate and a letter of recognition during the closing ceremony of the event. Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo received the gifts from the hands of Brazilian Reverend Niltron Giese, secretary general of the Latin American Council of Churches. World Council of Churches' President Ofelia Miriam Ortega, gave Lazo a copy of a Bible dedicated inside to the Cuban president Raul Castro. The final document of the religious forum expressed the solidarity of the Evangelical Congress with Cuba by denouncing the US economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. It also demanded the immediate release of the five Cubans imprisoned in US jails (*ACN*, 27/6/09).

**June 28:** Cuba condemned the military coup in Honduras as "criminal, brutal" and demanded the immediate return to office of deposed leftist President Manuel Zelaya. Former Cuban president Fidel Castro called the coup "a suicidal error" and said there was no room for negotiations with its leaders. "Their resignation should be demanded and younger officers not beholden to the oligarchy should take over the military," Castro wrote in a column for Cuba's state media. "I denounce the criminal, brutal character of this coup," Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez told a news conference in Havana earlier in the day. Zelaya is viewed by Cuba's communist leadership as a leftist ally and former Cuban leader Fidel Castro had expressed backing for his efforts to hold an unofficial public vote to gauge support for his plan to hold a November referendum on allowing presidential re-election. "This coup has removed a legitimate and constitutional

government simply for wanting to hold a vote. There is only one constitutional government in Honduras, and one constitutional president who should return immediately without conditions," Rodriguez said. The minister denounced what he called the violent treatment of the Cuban and Venezuelan ambassadors by Honduran troops ([A Suicidal Mistake](#); *Reuters*28/6/09).

**June 28:** Honduran Constitutional President Manuel Zelaya was received at Managua's Airport by presidents of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), headed by the Nicaraguan head of state, Daniel Ortega. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez and Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa, welcomed Zelaya at the Augusto César Sandino International Airport, according to a report aired by *Telesur* television network. I will return to Honduras to occupy my post as president, said Zelaya during a press conference in San José before his arrival to Nicaragua to participate in a meeting of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA), made up by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Honduras, Cuba, Dominica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda and Ecuador. Cuba's Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla asked the international community, in particular the governments of ALBA, the United Nations, the Non Aligned Movement (NOAL) and the Rio Group, to condemn the coup against Zelaya (*Reuters, ACN, 29/6/09*).

**June 29:** An extraordinary summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) concluded in Managua, Nicaragua, with the approval of a declaration that urges the world to condemn the coup d'état against Honduran President Manuel Zelaya and to isolate the de facto regime that have seized power in that Central American country. The text, which was described as clear during the Cuban radio-TV program *Round Table*, ratifies that Manuel Zelaya is the constitutional President of Honduras. The nine members of ALBA - Venezuela, Bolivia, Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Ecuador, Honduras and Nicaragua – decided to withdraw their ambassadors from Tegucigalpa and urged all international organizations and other regional blocs to close ranks against the coup supporters. The ALBA countries also requested a statement of the UN Human Rights Council on the coup staged in Honduras. The ambassadors of Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela at the United Nations expressed their full rejection and condemnation of the use of force to drive out Jose Manuel Zelaya from power. They also requested the statements of the acting president of the Human Rights Council Alexa Van Meeuwen and from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay ([ALBA Declaration](#); *ACN, 29/6/09*).

**June 29:** Cuban President Raul Castro arrived in Nicaragua to participate in an extraordinary summit of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA), which is focusing on the coup d'état against President Manuel Zelaya, and the current situation in Honduras. Castro will also participate in a meeting of the Rio Group (*ACN, 29/6/09*).

**Junio 29:** Varios grupos opositores cubanos condenaron el golpe de Estado que sacó del poder al presidente de Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, y pidieron el retorno al orden

constitucional. El partido Arco Progresista (PARP) condenó la "interrupción del orden institucional en Honduras" y señaló en un comunicado que el hecho "constituye un regreso a fases" que "los progresistas cubanos" creían "ya superadas" en América Latina. Por su parte, Héctor Palacios, presidente de la Unidad Liberal de la República de Cuba (ULRC), dijo que "un golpe de Estado no ayuda en nada al futuro de la democracia en América Latina". El opositor liberal dijo además que a Zelaya "habrá que restituirlo en el poder", y alertó sobre las consecuencias negativas del golpe. La Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CDHRN), dijo estar "preocupada" por la situación en Honduras. "Confiamos en que, para salir de la crisis actual, se tome muy en cuenta la Carta Democrática Interamericana", señaló Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, presidente de la CCDHRN. Por su parte, la Agenda para la Transición, a través de Gisela Delgado, miembro de su secretariado pro tempore, calificó de la acción de los militares hondureños como "violatoria" y "anticonstitucional" (*Cubaencuentro*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** The Rio Group condemned the coup d'état perpetrated in Honduras and reaffirmed its unconditional backing for the only president of that Central American country, José Manuel Zelaya. The final declaration of the emergency meeting of member countries in Managua refused to recognize the de facto government installed in Tegucigalpa. The Rio Group particularly condemned the violence and injustice of Zelaya's kidnapping, and affirmed that his mandate was the only one that the Rio Group would recognize. President Raul Castro participated in the meeting ([Declaration by Rio Group](#); *Granma Internacional*, 30/6/09).



**June 29:** President Raul Castro strongly condemned the coup d'état perpetrated against the constitutional Government and President of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya. Speaking during a meeting of the Rio Group in Managua, Nicaragua, the Cuban leader sent a message of solidarity to the Honduran people. Raul recalled the aggression by the military against President Zelaya and Honduran Foreign Minister Patricia Rodas along with the ambassadors of Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba and he added that this attack against the political constitutionality of the Central American nation has to be unanimously and strongly condemned by the Rio Group ([Speech by President Raul Castro](#); *ACN*, 29/6/09).

**June 30:** The President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema, praised Cuba's cooperation with his country in various fields, and the results of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission. In a special meeting with Cuban Ambassador to Malabo, María Regueiro, the African head of state was generous in his praise of the services Cubans are voluntarily offering in Equatorial Guinea. Accompanying the Cuban diplomat for her meeting with Obiang Nguema were officials from the Biological and Pharmaceutical Laboratories (LABIOFAM), a Cuban leading enterprise in the

manufacturing of products to eliminate vectors causing thousands of deaths in Africa every year due preventable diseases (*ACN*, 30/6/09).

**Junio 30:** El nuevo gobierno de Honduras, encabezado por Roberto Micheletti, garantizó "el mejor trato" y la colaboración con los médicos y educadores enviados a ese país por el gobierno cubano. "Garantizo que los médicos y educadores cubanos que se encuentran en el territorio nacional recibirán, como han recibido, el mejor trato", dijo Micheletti, en una comparecencia por radio y televisión. "Velaremos por su bienestar y nos esmeraremos para que sigan teniendo una estadía grata" en Honduras, añadió. Por su parte, el ministro de Salud, Mario Villafranca, agradeció la cooperación de los médicos enviados por La Habana, que comenzó esta colaboración con Honduras desde 1998, cuando el huracán Mitch devastó ese país. Estos médicos "pueden contar con nuestra colaboración en los diferentes proyectos que ellos tienen relacionados a la salud de nuestro país", señaló Villafranca (*EFE*, 30/6/09).

**June 30:** Cuban President Raúl Castro arrived to Havana, after participating in Managua, along with heads of state from the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas and other personalities, in the actions to support Honduran constitutional president José Manuel Zelaya and condemn the military coup d'état that took place in that Central American country. In addition, the report, aired by the Cuban television newscast, informed that President Raúl Castro also attended the extraordinary session of the Group of Rio, during which he addressed participants (*ACN*, 30/6/09).

## Security

**June 17:** Cuban President Raul Castro greeted visiting Angolan Defense Minister Kundy Pahama at the headquarters of the Central Committee of Cuba's Communist Party in Havana. According to official *Granma* newspaper, Castro sent his regards and best wishes to his counterpart Jose Eduardo Dos Santos and to the Angolan people. Also present in the meeting were Army Corps Generals Julio Casas Regueiro and Leopoldo Cintra Frias, Minister and First Deputy Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, respectively (*ACN*, 17/6/09).

**June 21:** More details are emerging of the expulsion from Cuba of agents of Spain's National Intelligence Center (CNI) on May 15, in the aftermath of the dismissals of Carlos Lage and Felipe Pérez Roque. The Spanish newspaper *ABC* revealed that CNI agents were present at the parties where a friend of Lage's and Pérez Roque's secretly recorded their derogatory comments about the Castro brothers and other government officials. Citing unnamed sources, *ABC* says the CNI agents goaded the two men into uttering the criticism. The Spanish agents, as the newspaper phrases it, "made specific comments to elevate the tone of criticism voiced by the two politicians. The Cuban government soon found out about the meeting [...] and the CNI's performance. For that reason, it urged the agents to leave the island, while simultaneously withdrawing their diplomatic status" (*The Miami Herald*, 21/6/09).

**Junio 22:** Al menos 100 militares de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Cuba, entre oficiales, cadetes y tropa, ensayaron en Los Próceres su participación en el desfile conmemorativo al 188° aniversario de la Batalla de Carabobo y el Día del Ejército. El general Clíver Alcalá Cordones, comandante de la 41° Brigada Blindada del Ejército y Guarnición Militar de Valencia, había adelantado que 175 militares extranjeros, representantes de los países que integran el ALBA (Cuba, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Dominicana, Honduras, Ecuador, San Vicente y las Granadinas, además de Venezuela), desfilarían junto a la Fuerza Armada Nacional (FAN) en el Campo de Carabobo. No obstante, Rocío San Miguel, directora de la asociación civil Control Ciudadano para la Seguridad y Defensa, advirtió que “esta situación tan particular, sin precedentes” viola el artículo 187, numeral 11 de la Constitución Nacional, pues la Asamblea Nacional debe “autorizar” el empleo de misiones extranjeras en el país y “no hay publicado alguna en Gaceta Oficial que avale esta actuación” (...) Aseguró que el grupo de militares cubanos, “redoblando el paso y portando fusiles, hizo un recorrido desde la Academia Militar hasta la entrada del propio Fuerte Tiuna, portando la bandera de Cuba (...) mientras oficiales superiores filmaban la práctica” desde las tribunas de Los Próceres (*El Universal*, 23/6/09).

**June 24:** Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and other Latin American leaders have attended a military parade commemorating a battle that paved the way for Venezuela's independence. The celebrations took place in the central state of Carabobo, around 120 kilometers from Caracas. Military units from Cuba and Bolivia joined Venezuelan forces in the parade which included flyovers by the national air force. The celebrations mark the 188th anniversary of the Battle of Carabobo -- led by Venezuelan independence hero, Simon Bolivar (*El Universal*, *CCTV*, 25/6/09).

## US-Cuba Relations

**June 1:** Cuba has agreed to resume talks with the Obama administration on legal immigration of Cubans to the United States and direct mail service between the two countries in a move welcomed by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. "These talks are part of our effort to forge a new way forward on Cuba that advances the interests of the United States, the Cuban people and our entire hemisphere," she said. She added that the Obama administration was "very pleased" with the Cuban decision. The communist government notified the US on May 30 that it had accepted an administration overture made May 22 to restart the immigration talks, suspended by then-President George W. Bush after the last meeting in 2003. Cuba also expressed a willingness to cooperate with the US on fighting terrorism and drug trafficking, and on hurricane disaster preparedness. "These talks are in the interests of the United States and also in the interests of the Cuban people," Clinton told reporters here after talks with foreign and trade ministers from Latin America. "At the same time, we will continue to press the Cuban government to protect basic rights release political prisoners, and move toward democratic reform," she said (*AP*, 1/6/09).

**June 1:** A senior adviser with the USA Rice Federation was in Cuba recently to discuss opportunities with ALIMPORT, Cuba's food-buying agency. Marvin Lehrer, USA Rice Federation senior adviser on Cuba, has been in Havana since 2000 representing the group. In 2001, rice was the first US food commodity to exhibit products at a Cuban trade show. "Cuba is potentially one of our largest export markets, and we are committed to expanding US rice sales there," said Betsy Ward, USA Rice Federation president and CEO. Cuba imports about 600,000 metric tons of rice annually (*USA Rice Federation Press Release*, 1/6/09).

**Junio 2:** Fidel Castro calificó de "humillante y prepotente" la advertencia del gobierno de Estados Unidos de que sólo habrá un dialogo abierto con La Habana cuando haya en la isla cambios sobre derechos humanos y movimientos hacia la democracia. En un nuevo artículo de "Reflexiones", Castro comenta noticias de agencias internacionales de prensa que citan a un funcionario estadounidense que anunció que Cuba aceptó reabrir las negociaciones bilaterales sobre migración y el envío directo de correo, algo que hasta ahora no había sido ni confirmado ni publicado en la isla. También anota el líder cubano que la secretaria de Estado estadounidense, Hillary Clinton, dijo que el gobierno de Barack Obama estaba "complacido de reanudar las conversaciones con La Habana sobre esos temas". Pero Castro agrega que hubo "un exabrupto diplomático" al advertir los estadounidenses que "habrá un diálogo abierto tan pronto como haya (en Cuba) cambios sobre derechos humanos y movimientos hacia la democracia". "¿Cuál es la "democracia" y los "derechos humanos" que Estados Unidos defiende?. ¿Era realmente necesario lanzar esa humillante y prepotente advertencia?", pregunta. También comenta el ex mandatario cubano algunos detalles del discurso de toma de posesión que pronunció el nuevo presidente de El Salvador, Mauricio Funes, a quien reprocha estar muy pendiente de Clinton ([Los aplausos y los silencios](#); *EFE*, 2/6/09).

**June 2:** Representative Todd Tiahrt (R-Kansas), has introduced a resolution (H.Con.Res. 132) "expressing the sense of Congress that with respect to the totalitarian government of Cuba, the United States should pursue a policy that insists upon freedom, democracy, and human rights, including the release of all political prisoners, the legalization of political parties, free speech and a free press, and supervised elections, before increasing United States trade and tourism to Cuba." The resolution, introduced on May 20, was co-sponsored by Representatives Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Florida); Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Florida); Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Florida); Albio Sires (D-New Jersey); Dan Burton (R-Indiana); Connie Mack (R-Florida); Heath Shuler (D-North Carolina); and Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Florida). It was referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee (*US Fed News*, 2/6/09).

**June 3:** Militant Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles says the US government's new charges accusing him of lying about masterminding tourist-site bombings in Cuba amount to a "terrorism" case, and therefore a judge should give him more time to prepare for trial. Posada, a one-time CIA operative now living in Miami, faces trial in El Paso in August on charges of perjury, obstruction of justice and making false statements. Those charges, filed in April, stem from Posada's testimony during a government hearing to remove him from the country and his naturalization hearing to become an American citizen. "This

case is anything *but* a simple perjury and obstruction case," Posada's attorney, Arturo V. Hernandez, wrote in a new court filing. Posada, who has been under separate investigation by a federal grand jury in Newark, New Jersey, for the 1997 tourist hotel attacks that killed an Italian man, is asking the Texas judge to reset his trial for early 2010. Posada, 81, maintains he was not involved in the bombing campaign (*The Miami Herald*, 3/6/09).

**June 3:** Cuba's return to the Organization of American States will not be automatic, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said after the body voted to lift a 47-year ban on Havana. "Cuba can come back into the OAS in the future if the OAS decides that its participation meets the purposes and principles of the organization, including democracy and human rights," Clinton said in a statement. The new text adopted at the OAS summit in Honduras said that to complete its readmission Cuba would have to comply with "the practices, aims and principles of the OAS" which includes the democratic guidelines set out in its charter. Clinton had insisted in talks at the Honduras summit that communist-run Cuba should not be readmitted to the body without pre-conditions demanding democratic and human rights reforms. In a marathon talks the US delegation appeared to have failed to broker a deal for Cuba's return. But Clinton praised OAS officials saying: "The member nations of the OAS showed flexibility and openness today, and as a result we reached a consensus that focuses on the future instead of the past. "I am pleased that everyone came to agree that Cuba cannot simply take its seat and that we must put Cuba's participation to a determination down the road -- if it ever chooses to seek reentry. "If and when the day comes to make that determination, the United States will continue to defend the principles of the Inter-American Democratic Charter and other fundamental tenets of the organization." Alluding to the tough negotiations, Clinton said: "Many member countries originally sought to lift the 1962 suspension and allow Cuba to return immediately, without conditions. "Others agreed with us that the right approach was to replace the suspension -- which has outlived its purpose after nearly half a century -- with a process of dialogue and a future decision that will turn on Cuba's commitment to the organization's values" (*AFP*, 4/6/09)

**June 3:** Furious members of Congress threatened to cut off funding for the Organization of American States after top diplomats gathered here for its annual assembly repealed Cuba's suspension from the hemispheric group, ending a decades-old remnant of the Cold War. "The OAS is a putrid embarrassment," declared US Representatives Mario and Lincoln Diaz-Balart, both Miami Republicans, in a joint statement. The lifting of Cuba's 1962 suspension was the result of weeks of back-room brokering, plus an hours-long private meeting in San Pedro Sula with foreign ministers, including US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. It ended with the OAS' leftist bloc accepting a paragraph that refers to Cuba abiding by "practices, purposes and principles of the OAS," words that Cuba's allies had just the night before flat-out rejected, sources close to the negotiations said. In the end, representatives on both sides gathered here declared victory, although Cuba's rejoining the organization will not be automatic. Cuban-American members of Congress blasted the move as a betrayal. "Far from strengthening the OAS, today's resolution flies in the face of the organization's founding charter," Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, also a Miami Republican, said. "No US taxpayer funds should go towards supporting

this sham of an organization that once prided itself on its historic commitment to democracy and human rights" (*The Miami Herald*, 4/6/09).

**June 3:** Due to increased demand that flooded into Cuba Travel Services, Inc. offices on the heels of the Obama Administration lifting travel restrictions on Cuban Americans, Cuba Travel Services, Inc. will be launching its first non-stop weekly flight from Los Angeles to Havana starting June 30, 2009. Departing on Tuesdays at 11:00 am Cuba Travel Services, Inc. will be utilizing aircraft operated by Continental Airlines. "We are excited to resume the non-stop flights out of Los Angeles airport to Havana that were in such high demand prior to the Bush Administration's restrictions imposed on Cuban Americans that limited their ability to visit with their families in Cuba," said Michael Zuccato, General Manager of Cuba Travel Services, Inc (*BusinessWire*, 3/6/09).

**Junio 3:** El restablecimiento del correo directo entre Estados Unidos y Cuba ayudaría al gobierno de Washington a transmitir su mensaje en pro de la democracia a los cubanos, según dijo la Casa Blanca. El portavoz presidencial, Robert Gibbs, dijo en una rueda de prensa que el mandatario estadounidense, Barack Obama, está "satisfecho" de que Cuba haya aceptado reanudar las conversaciones sobre migración y sobre el vínculo postal, interrumpido desde hace décadas. "Creemos que son de interés para los dos gobiernos", dijo Gibbs, quien añadió que el servicio de correo directo haría la comunicación "más numerosa y fácil", y ayudarían a la administración de Obama a llegar al pueblo cubano. Actualmente el servicio postal tiene que pasar por un tercer país, pues no hay lazos directos (*EFE*, 3/6/09).

**June 4:** Congressional critics of the Organization of American States' decision to end Cuba's Cold War era suspension from the hemispheric group said they would push for cutting off US aid to the group if it accepts Cuba as is. Cuba welcomed the gesture to bring it back into the group, but said it's not prepared to ask for re-admission. Representative Connie Mack (R-Cape Coral), has introduced legislation to strip the OAS of US funding if the OAS embraces Cuba without pushing for change on the island, saying "if it wants to bring Cuba back in it can, but without the help or support of the US." But Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-Miami), a co-sponsor of the legislation, acknowledged the measure -- aimed at denouncing the OAS's decision during its gathering in Honduras -- would be difficult to achieve. New Jersey Democrat Senator Robert Menendez didn't say whether he would sponsor such a bill, but told reporters that if the OAS allowed Cuba back in the fold without the government in Havana demonstrating a commitment to democracy, "then I seriously would have to question why the US government would want to pay 60 percent of an organization that is not committed to democracy, human rights and the rule of law" (*The Miami Herald*, 5/6/09)

**June 5:** A former State Department official with top-secret security clearance and his wife have been charged with spying for Cuba over the past three decades, passing information by shortwave radio and correspondence exchanged in local grocery stores, federal prosecutors said. David Kris, the assistant attorney general for national security at the Justice Department, called the Myerses' activity for Cuba "incredibly serious." State Department officials said they were still assessing the potential damage to the

government's security and intelligence operations and declined to comment further. Within hours of the couple's appearance at US District Court in the District, a novel-worthy tale began to emerge from court documents and law enforcement sources, depicting an elderly couple of famed lineage, living in a Northwest Washington neighborhood and traveling abroad under code names, motivated by ideology to pass information to Cuban agents. The couple, Walter Kendall Myers, 72, and his wife, Gwendolyn Steingraber Myers, 71, were charged with conspiring to act as illegal agents and to communicate classified information to the Cuban government. They pleaded not guilty and were ordered held in jail pending further court proceedings. A spokesman for the State Department said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton "takes this matter, like any allegation of criminal wrongdoing, seriously." A senior administration official said counterintelligence experts discovered three years ago that there was a Cuban spy at the State Department. The department's diplomatic security bureau looked at "a fairly large population" and began winnowing it down. By the time of Myers's retirement, authorities were reasonably confident he was the suspect, the official said ([Criminal Complaint](#); *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, 6/6/09).

**June 6:** Fidel Castro called charges that a former US State Department official and his wife spied for the Cuban government for nearly 30 years "ridiculous" and described the case as an "espionage comic strip." Castro neither confirmed nor denied the veracity of the spy charges brought by US authorities against Walter Kendall Myers, 72, and Gwendolyn Myers, 71, or the US Justice Department's assertion that Kendall Myers used his top-secret security clearance to give classified information to Havana. But in a dismissive column posted on a website on which he writes about Cuba and world affairs, Castro said he could not recall meeting the couple at some point in 1995, as alleged by the US Justice Department. "At the time I met with thousands of North Americans for different reasons, both individually and in groups (...) so I can hardly be asked to remember details of a meeting with just two people," he wrote. His comments on the arrest of Walter and Gwendolyn Myers, announced by officials in Washington, were the first from the communist-ruled island ([A Ridiculous Response to a Defeat](#); *Reuters*, 6/6/09).

**June 8:** Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said she has ordered a review of security and vetting procedures that let a State Department employee suspected of spying for Cuba slip through the cracks. Ex-State Department employee Kendall Myers and his wife were arrested, suspected of spying for Cuba. Clinton told reporters she directed State Department security personnel to review "every possible security program we have, every form of vetting and clearance that we employ in the State Department, to determine what more we can do to guard against this kind of outrageous violation of the oaths that people take to serve our country here in the State Department." "We are concerned by the announcement of the arrests and the charges against these two individuals, one of whom, as you know, was a former State Department employee, along with his wife," Clinton said (*CNN*, 8/6/09).

**June 9:** The publicity machine to free the "Cuban Five" -- who are awaiting word from the US Supreme Court about the appeal of their Miami spy case -- has shifted into

overdrive. Ten Nobel Prize-winners, including German author Gunter Grass and Guatemalan peace activist Rigoberta Menchú, have joined supporters in filing "friends of the court" briefs seeking to overturn the 2001 convictions of the Cuban men. Websites, billboards, TV interviews and the Cuban newspaper *Granma* portray the five as "heroes" and their incarceration as an "injustice." The campaign is "aimed at the US government" by influencing public opinion, said Gloria La Riva, coordinator of the San Francisco-based advocacy group, National Committee to Free the Cuban Five. But those who pushed for the prosecution -- including relatives who lost four Miami loved ones in a Cuban government shoot-down of an exile group's planes during the Cuban Five's tenure -- label the PR as "propaganda." The Supreme Court could decide by the end of its term at the end of June whether to review the case, a flaming symbol of the hostility between the Castro-led nation and the United States (*The Miami Herald*, 9/6/09).

**Junio 9:** Fidel Castro, alternó alabanzas, dudas y críticas al analizar el discurso que pronunció el pasado día 4 en El Cairo del presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, dirigido al mundo musulmán. Tras citar gran parte del discurso en un nuevo artículo de "Reflexiones" de 3,500 palabras, el líder cubano anota que "no se puede culpar" a Obama de los problemas de Oriente Medio, pero pone en duda su decisión para resolverlos. "Es obvio -dice- que él desea encontrar una salida al colosal enredo creado allí por sus antecesores y por el propio desarrollo de los acontecimientos durante los últimos 100 años". "Son en teoría correctos" los planteamientos de Obama, acepta Castro, pero matiza que "es temprano todavía para emitir juicios sobre su grado de compromiso con las ideas que plantea, y hasta qué punto está decidido a sostener, por ejemplo, el propósito de buscar un acuerdo de paz sobre bases justas". "La dificultad mayor" de Obama, opina Castro, radica en "que los principios que predica están en contradicción con la política que ha seguido la superpotencia durante casi siete décadas" ([El discurso de Obama en El Cairo](#); *EFE*, 9/6/09).

**June 10:** Former State Department employee Walter Kendall Myers and his wife, Gwendolyn Myers, accused of being Cuban spies, will be held in custody until their trial, a US magistrate in Washington decided. The magistrate sided with federal prosecutors who argued during the detention hearing that the Myerses posed a flight risk, and that it would be impossible to get them back to the United States if they fled to Cuba. The couple has been held without bond since pleading not guilty to charges of conspiracy, wire fraud and acting as illegal agents for the government in Havana (*The Miami Herald*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** Cuba's UN ambassador in Geneva says Human Rights Watch and other groups are "mercenaries" paid by the US government. Juan Antonio Fernandez Palacios says groups criticizing Cuba in the UN Human Rights Council perform a "clown act." The groups had accused Cuba of trying to silence critics. HRW spokesman Philippe Dam said, "Human Rights Watch receives zero percent of its funding from public money, and 100 percent from private money. This is evidence that we are fully independent of any government, and that Cuba's remarks are totally unfounded." The New York-based group says Cuba violates the right to fair trial, free expression and political association (*AP*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** Rallies and other events are being organized around the world to demand the immediate release of five Cubans who remain imprisoned in the United States, since 1998. Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Rene Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez – internationally known as the Cuban Five – were arrested in Miami in 1998 accused of espionage. In San Francisco, California, a rally will be held on June 15, in front of the Federal Building. In Atlanta, a program on the Five will be held on June 11, and on June 12, supporters will rally in San Diego in front of the Federal Building. Other actions are scheduled in Miami; Auckland, New Zealand, and Huancayo, Peru. Meetings and actions have already been held in New York City, Minneapolis, London, and Vancouver. The US Supreme Court is expected to announce whether or not it will hear an appeal presented by the Cuban Five's defense team (*ACN*, 11/6/09).

**June 11:** A US Federal Judge in El Paso, Texas, agreed to delay a trial against Luis Posada Carriles, who is accused of immigration fraud and perjury charges. According to this decision, Posada Carriles, who the Cuban Government has accused of organizing several terrorist actions like the 1976 mid-air bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed all 73 people on board, will not stand trial until February 1, 2010. According to press reports, the judge made the decision in order to give Posada's lawyers "more time to prepare their case" (*ACN*, 12/6/09).

**June 14:** Fourteen Cuban migrants, including nine who were apprehended at sea after the US Coast Guard fired at a suspected smuggler's boat, were returned to Bahia de Cabañas, Cuba. The suspected smuggler, taken into custody about 70 miles south of the Dry Tortugas, was being held by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials in Key West. The eight passengers on his vessel, along with six others picked up about 47 miles southeast of Key West, were taken back to Cuba aboard the cutter Cormorant, Coast Guard officials said (*Sun Sentinel*, 14/6/09).

**June 15:** The US Supreme Court declined to hear an appeal by five convicted Cuban spies who argued that their trial should have been moved out of Miami because of a biased jury pool. Without comment, the justices refused to review a US appeals court ruling that the five intelligence agents, who are serving long prison sentences, had failed to establish a right to change the trial venue from Miami, the heart of the Cuban American community. FBI agents arrested the five in 1998. They were convicted in 2001 of 26 counts of spying on the Cuban exile community in Miami on behalf of Fidel Castro's government. The so-called "Cuban Five" are celebrated by many in Cuba as national heroes who were spying on armed exile groups in Miami to prevent attacks on their country. To hard-line, anti-Castro members of the Cuban exile community, the five were justly convicted, and Havana's support for them has been seen as an example of an anti-US agenda in Cuba dating back to Castro's 1959 revolution (*Reuters*, 15/6/09).

**June 15:** The Presidency of the Cuban National Assembly called for the reinforcement of the struggle in favour of the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States, until having the US administration set them free. The call comes on the heels of the announcement by the

US Supreme Court that it will not review the case. After learning about the decision of the US Supreme Court, the Presidency of the Cuban Parliament said that the decision by the top US judicial body responds to what the Obama administration asked the judges to do. "Once again the arbitrariness of a corrupt and hypocritical system shows, as well as its vicious cruelty against our five brothers," reads the document and goes on to stress that "our struggle will not cease a single instant until having the Five released. This is the moment to reinforce our action" ([Declaración de la Presidencia de la AN](#); ACN, 15/6/09).

**June 15:** A huge offshore drilling platform will soon be lumbering its way to Cuba, an event that could kick-start Cuba's bid for energy independence and pressure the Obama administration to allow American companies a piece of the action. Although arrival details are murky, a rig has been found after a long search and could be drilling off Cuban waters in the next six to eight weeks by an international consortium looking to unearth a Caribbean energy trove, according to industry and diplomatic sources. Kirby Jones, president of Washington-based Alamar Associates, which advises companies wishing to enter the Cuban market, said an oil find would change the dynamics of the US-Cuba relationship. "The implications for Cuba are huge and the implications for US relations are huge," Jones said. "It's the first time Cuba will have something of strategic importance to the United States." One industry source said the drilling platform could eventually be used by other foreign interests for drilling offshore -- especially if results are promising. But US companies will be missing out, unless the Obama administration moves soon to exempt American roughnecks from the embargo between the two old adversaries. Brian Petty, senior vice president of government affairs at the International Association of Drilling Contractors in Washington, said the industry is very keen on Cuba's prospects. Benjamin-Alvarado, of the University of Nebraska, said if Cuba became a big oil producer and refiner, the US could seek strategic arrangements where it could buy refined products from the country when US capacity is shutdown by hurricanes (*Reuters*, 15/6/09).

**June 16:** Millions of people around the world are living in bondage and the global financial crisis has made many more vulnerable to labour and sex trafficking, the US State Department said. In its annual "Trafficking in Persons" report, which tracks "modern slavery" like forced labor and the sex trade, the State Department said growing poverty around the world has sparked an increase in both supply and demand for human trafficking. "In a time of economic crisis, victims are more vulnerable, affected communities are more vulnerable," Luis de Baca said as he presented the report. The State Department expanded a blacklist of governments it believes are not doing enough to stop human trafficking to 17, out of 175 countries it monitors in the annual report. Chad, Malaysia, Niger, Mauritania and Zimbabwe were included among the worst offenders -- putting them at risk of losing some US aid. Cuba, Myanmar and North Korea have received the lowest ranking in each year they have been included in the report started nine years ago ([Country Reports: Cuba; page 116](#); AFP, 16/6/09).

**June 17:** A retired couple accused of spying for Cuba say they're willing to put up their house and sailboat for bond if a federal judge will let them serve house arrest. Walter Kendall Myers and Gwendolyn Myers say they're also prepared to be ordered to stay

away from Cuba's equivalent of an embassy if US District Court Judge Reggie Walton grants their request. The couple is due back in court to ask Walton to let them be released into the custody of Gwendolyn Myers' son. A federal magistrate sided with US prosecutors and ordered the couple jailed. The couple's lawyer will argue before Walton that "a combination of conditions can be set that will reasonably assure the Myers' appearance in this case." The couple was arrested June 4 and has been held without bond since pleading not guilty to charges of wire fraud, serving as illegal agents for Cuba and conspiring to deliver classified information. US Magistrate Judge John Facciola declared the couple a flight risk, suggesting they could flee to Cuba or its Cuban Interests Section in Washington (*The Miami Herald*, 17/6/09).

**June 17:** The head of Cuba's parliament said the US Supreme Court's decision not to consider an appeal by five convicted Cuban spies is "a great insult," but it won't jeopardize upcoming negotiations with Washington. Ricardo Alarcon told *The Associated Press* in an interview that no date has been set for immigration talks with the US, but he said that Raul Castro's government hopes to expand the agenda to include environmental issues and efforts against terrorism, drug smuggling and natural disasters. Yet Alarcon also called the US "an ignorant lion," criticizing the Supreme Court's refusal this week to hear an appeal by the so-called "Cuban Five," men convicted of being unregistered foreign agents by a Miami court in 2001. Their lawyers claim that anti-Castro sentiment kept them from receiving a fair trial in South Florida. Alarcon said the government will continue campaigning on their behalf, but he suggested that their legal status won't impede US-Cuban talks. "We share the sentiments of many who feel insulted by that decision, but I don't see why one necessarily has to affect the other," Alarcon said when asked if the high court's move could spoil negotiations (*AP*, 18/6/09).

**June 18:** Some US port cities are putting plans in place to increase travel and trade with Cuba - just in case relations with the communist island begin to thaw. In New Orleans, city officials met recently with trade and Cuba experts to discuss how to rekindle relationships in Cuba and bolster trade with the island if relations improve. Leaders also plan to take part in a trip to Cuba with Tulane University this fall. "We have the right geography, given where we're located, as well as historic ties," says Councilman Arnie Fielkow. "We need to start developing the relationships and getting ready for the time when the US brings down the embargo." Mobile, Alabama, is adding its representatives to a group of 60 state and trade officials visiting Cuba in July (*USA Today*, 18/6/09).

**June 18:** The Obama administration is working with Havana to finalize dates to resume long-suspended discussions between the two countries, as Cuban officials signal their interest in expanding the talks beyond migration. A State Department spokesman said that the agency is looking to confirm dates for the talks, which had been held twice a year until they were suspended in 2004 by the Bush administration (*The Miami Herald*, 19/6/09).

**June 18:** Hundreds of young Cuban workers, leaders and members of the Young Communists' League, students and members of the Jose Marti Pioneer Children's Organization, gathered at Havana's Jose Marti Antimperialist Tribune to condemn

the decision of the US Supreme Court of not reviewing the case of the Cuban Five (*ACN*, 18/6/09).

**Junio 19:** La Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (UNEAC) divulgó en La Habana una carta dirigida a los intelectuales de Estados Unidos, en la que les solicita "que difundan la verdad" sobre el caso de los cinco agentes de la isla presos en ese país por espionaje. La misiva, dirigida a los "intelectuales y artistas estadounidenses", insiste en que el presidente Barack Obama "tiene la potestad" para liberar a los cubanos y, de hacerlo, cumpliría con "un acto de elemental justicia" que sería coherente con su política de lucha contra el terrorismo. "Estamos convencidos de que si el pueblo de Estados Unidos conociera la verdad sobre los cinco pondría todo su empeño para que fueran definitivamente excarcelados y regresaran al seno de sus familias", indica el texto (*EFE*, 20/6/09).

**Junio 21:** Ricardo Alarcón reiteró que ve posible un "canje" entre cinco espías que cumplen condena en prisiones norteamericanas y opositores encarcelados en la isla. Preguntado acerca de si sería posible un intercambio de este tipo, Alarcón contestó "por supuesto que sí", y constató que "hay un interés de Estados Unidos por algunas personas que cometieron el mismo delito que los cinco compañeros, ser agentes de ellos, aunque para hacer distintas cosas". Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González y René González fueron detenidos en 1998 en Miami y condenados en 2001 a penas de cárcel de hasta doble cadena perpetua. La Habana reconoce que eran agentes secretos, pero que solamente obtenían información de grupos exiliados para evitar atentados terroristas. El funcionario recordó que ya hubo en 1979 un intercambio con Estados Unidos, cuando quedaron libres cuatro nacionalistas puertorriqueños a cambio de cinco espías norteamericanos encarcelados en la isla. No obstante, insistió en que el presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, debe decretar sin más la libertad de los cinco espías (*DPA*, 21/6/09).

**June 22:** President Barack Obama has talked about lifting this country's trade embargo with Cuba and if it happens, one company says they'll be forced to layoff more than 100 workers in the Richmond area. The cigar-maker Swedish Match has its North American headquarters in Richmond, Virginia, and it says opening the US market to Cuban cigars may jeopardize 120 jobs unless Americans play hardball with Communist Cuba. Gerry Roerty with Swedish Match says, "We estimate that 80% of the cigar consumers would switch to Cuban cigars once they're available in the US Market" (*CBS6*, 22/6/09).

**June 23:** The coordinator of the Christian Liberation Movement in Cuba, Oswaldo Paya, said the organization would continue promoting the Varela Project for peaceful democratization in Cuba, because to do otherwise would be to abandon those Cubans who have been imprisoned for reasons of conscience. "No tyrannical power, nor group of powers, can make us abandon this path. To do so would be to forget José Daniel and all our brothers and sisters in prison. To do so would be to forget our own people who are now without freedom, and we will not forget them, like the Hebrew people in captivity never forgot Jerusalem," Paya said in a letter accepting the National Endowment for Democracy's 2009 Democracy Award. In his letter Paya expressed gratitude for the

recognition of the courage and commitment of Jorge Luis García Pérez (Antúnez), José Daniel Ferrer García, Librado Linares García, Iván Hernández Carrillo and Iris Tamara Pérez Aguilera, all detained “for peacefully defending and promoting the rights of Cubans” ([Libres y amigos](#); *CNA*, 30/6/09).

**Junio 24:** El vicesecretario adjunto del Departamento de Estado de Estados Unidos para el Hemisferio Occidental, Craig Kelly, invitó a los países latinoamericanos a "animar" a Cuba para que realice progresos en la situación de los derechos humanos, ya que la isla no va en la "dirección" democrática de la región. Kelly se encuentra en Bruselas para tratar con representantes de la Comisión Europea y de la presidencia checa de la Unión Europea asuntos relacionados con América Latina, en la primera reunión de estas características que se celebra bajo el mandato del actual presidente estadounidense, Barack Obama. Kelly se refirió a la situación de los presos políticos en Cuba y señaló que "no está en la línea del resto del hemisferio", donde "tenemos gobiernos elegidos democráticamente". "Todavía hay prisioneros políticos en Cuba, y pensamos que en cualquier conversación entre la región, otros países y Cuba hay que subrayar el tema importante de los derechos humanos", indicó al respecto. "Estamos muy agradecidos por la mención, el énfasis de parte de los europeos sobre los derechos humanos en Cuba", agregó (*EFE*, 24/6/09).

**June 24:** Cuba's tourism industry will have enough capacity for the surge of American travelers expected should US lawmakers lift restrictions on visits to the island, said Miguel Figueras, an adviser at Cuba's tourism ministry. Cuba agrees with an estimate by the American Society of Travel Agents that 835,000 US tourists a year, excluding cruise ships or Cuban-American family visitors, would come after an end to the travel ban, Figueras said. Cuba aims to build 30 new hotels with 10,000 rooms and 10 golf courses by 2014 without counting on changes in US policy, he said. "The Americans are welcome here," Figueras said in an interview yesterday in Havana's historic Hotel Nacional. "You have to be prepared for that, but you can't make your development plans depend on whether this happens" (*Bloomberg*, 24/6/09).

**June 24:** Cuba said the detention of five of its nationals, who were convicted of spying in the US more than a decade ago, remained a major obstacle in normalizing ties with Washington. "As long as this injustice continues, it will be a formidable obstacle, insurmountable, for having normal relations between the two countries," the communist-ruled island's parliamentary president, Ricardo Alarcon, said on state television. The comments come a week after the US Supreme Court refused to hear the Cubans' case, effectively upholding their conviction by a lower court. Alarcon said their continued imprisonment indicated that "the United States continues to be an official supporter of terrorism against Cuba" (*AFP*, 25/6/09).

**June 24:** When the National Endowment for Democracy handed out its annual Democracy Award in Washington, all five recipients were Cuban, a first. Another first: None could attend the ceremony. Three are in prison. Two were arrested after holding a political meeting in a public park, according to the nonprofit organization, which gives money to pro-democracy causes. Cuban citizens are not allowed to leave the country

without government permission. "Dissidents feel more alone in Cuba, and they are often seen as obstacles to improving [US] relations there," said the organization's president, Carl Gershman. The awardees represent "a new Cuba, the Cuba of the future," he said. The winners: Jorge Luis Garcia Pérez, known as "Antúnez," who was arrested with his wife and fellow honoree, Iris Tamara Pérez Aguilera. García Pérez was a political prisoner from 1990 to 2007. Pérez Aguilera has led several women's movements promoting democracy. José Daniel Ferrer García, a youth activist. He was arrested during the "Black Spring," a crackdown on political dissidents in March 2003. Librado Linares García, founder of the Cuban Reflection Movement, an advocacy group that tracks human rights abuses and provides aid to political prisoners. He also was arrested in March 2003. And, Ivan Hernandez Carrillo, a political prisoner, labor activist and youth leader (*The Miami Herald*, 25/6/09).

**June 24:** Five Cuban dissidents who have collectively spent decades in jail for their pro-democracy activities were given a top award by the National Endowment for Democracy. But, unlike in past years, their representative was not invited to the White House, organizers said. Carl Gershman, president of the endowment, said the organization asked two weeks ago whether President Obama could meet with Bertha Antúnez, the sister of one of the dissidents, who was picking up the award on their behalf. Gershman said he never got a response. It was the first time in five years that the president had not met with the winner of the Democracy Award, according to the endowment, which is funded by Congress. "I am disappointed, and also surprised since the President said in the campaign that Libertad would be the touchstone on his Cuba policy," Gershman said in an e-mail, using the Spanish word for "liberty." An administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said the fact that Antúnez had not been invited to the White House should not be interpreted as a lack of interest from Obama, saying the president receives many such requests (*The Washington Post*, 25/6/09).

**June 25:** President Barack Obama called on Cuba's government to "unconditionally" release all of its political prisoners and allow them to "fully participate in a democratic future in Cuba." Obama cited three political prisoners who are the recipients of an award from the National Endowment for Democracy, a Washington based non-profit foundation. The president has said he is open to changing U.S. relations with Cuba if the communist country takes concrete steps toward democracy, including the release of dissidents. "It is my sincere hope that all political prisoners who remain jailed, including three of today's award recipients, will be unconditionally released," Obama said in a statement. Five Cubans were given the foundation's award. Three of them -- Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, Librado Linares and Ivan Hernandez Carrillo -- have been imprisoned since 2003. The other two are currently under house arrest: Iris Tamara Perez Aguilera and her husband, Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, who was released from prison in 2007. Obama said that they and other pro-democracy Cubans are "brave men and women who are standing up for the right of the Cuban people to freely determine their country's future" ([Statement of President Obama](#); *Bloomberg, AP*, 25/6/09).

**Junio 25:** El homenaje del presidente estadounidense, Barack Obama, a cinco disidentes ganadores del Premio a la Democracia 2009 es "muy positivo" y muestra su "serio compromiso" con la oposición en la isla, dijo uno de ellos, Jorge Luis García (Antúnez). "Que Obama haya hecho ese pronunciamiento es verdaderamente muy positivo, no sólo para los premiados, sino para el movimiento cívico opositor, para las fuerzas democráticas que dentro y fuera de Cuba estamos luchando por el cambio", declaró Antúnez desde Placetas (Vila Clara), donde vive. "Es positivo, porque es el presidente de Estados Unidos, apenas lleva unos meses en la Casa Blanca y ese homenaje denota que está tomando un serio compromiso para con las fuerzas democráticas dentro de Cuba", añadió Antúnez, de 44 años, 17 de ellos en prisión por sus actividades opositoras. Fue liberado en 2007 (*Cubaencuentro*, 25/6/09).

**June 27:** Tampa has much to gain if trade and travel with Cuba are opened. So said several speakers at an Ybor City seminar at the Italian Club, where about 120 business and political leaders gathered to discuss the issue. The event was hosted by the Alliance for Responsible Cuba Policy Foundation, a nonprofit anti-embargo group. Because of Tampa's historical ties with Cuba and the port's proximity to Havana, the city would be the perfect spot for trade, and an opening would bring Tampa lots of money, said Mike Mauricio, the owner of Florida Produce of Hillsborough County Inc. Tampa City Council member Mary Mulhern went to the workshop and said she would like to open up trade with Cuba, for the benefit of Floridians and Cubans. "The embargo not only has hurt the Cuban people, but it's hurt the cause of democracy," she said. However, about a half-dozen protesters outside the Italian Club disagreed. Holding "libre Cuba" flags, they said that the United States should only trade with Cuba when it is a democracy. "We would like to help Cuba when Cuba is free," said Orlando Rodriguez, president of the Cuban Historical and Cultural Center in Tampa (*St. Petersburg Times*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** Direct flights from Los Angeles to Havana will resume on June 30, two months after President Barack Obama decided to ease travel restrictions to Cuba. Cuba Travel Services will offer a flight every Tuesday. "We are excited to resume the non-stop flights out of LAX to Havana that were in such high demand prior to the Bush administration's restrictions imposed on Cuban Americans that limited their ability to visit with their families in Cuba," said Cuba Travel Services' general manager, Michael Zuccato. Most travel from the U.S. to Cuba has been banned since an embargo was imposed in 1962, but Cuban-Americans have been allowed to visit under various policies since then. Nearly five years ago, however, President George W. Bush's administration limited their trips to once every three years, and narrowed definitions of who could accompany them as family members. Obama repealed those travel restrictions in April (*Los Angeles Times*, 30/6/09).

**Junio 29:** Una jueza de Estados Unidos aplazó hasta el 1 de marzo de 2010 el juicio del anticastista Luis Posada Carriles a petición de sus abogados que alegaron necesitan más tiempo para preparar una debida defensa por la complejidad del caso, según un documento judicial. La magistrada jueza Kathleen Cardone postergó de nuevo el juicio que inicialmente estaba previsto para el 10 de agosto, luego se aplazó hasta el 1 de febrero del 2010 y ahora será en marzo de ese mismo año. Cardone precisó que el aplazamiento del juicio se debe a la complejidad del caso, la naturaleza de los cargos, y el

hecho de que "no es razonable esperar una defensa apropiada antes del 1 de marzo" (*EFE*, 29/6/09).

**Junio 29:** El secretario de Estado de Puerto Rico, Kenneth McClintock, dijo que su gobierno realizará todas las gestiones necesarias para los atletas de la isla puedan asistir a los Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe Mayagüez 2010. Según el funcionario, el gobernador Luis Fortuño comunicó a la secretaria de Seguridad Interna de Estados Unidos, Janet Napolitano, el interés de Puerto Rico de que se permita la participación de los deportistas cubanos en la justa. "El gobierno de Puerto Rico está haciendo todo lo que está a su alcance para que el mayor número de países pueda participar", señaló McClintock (*AP*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** Raúl Castro traveled to Nicaragua for a meeting of Latin American heads of state and delivered a speech about recent events in Honduras. The conflict "transcends the borders of Honduras and is an expression of the danger of returning to a past of military dictatorships that, with the support of the government of the United States [...] terrorized for decades the Latin American people, very especially those in Central America and the Caribbean, but with practically no exclusion", Castro said. "The government of the United States must act in correspondence with its pronouncements and assume them most seriously. I believe in the sincerity President Obama and his [secretary of State] can demonstrate, but they must demonstrate it with deeds, not with words", he said ([Speech by President Raul Castro](#); *The Miami Herald*, 29/6/09).

**June 29:** The Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, at the request of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), has granted the Friendship Medal to the Puerto Rican weekly newspaper *Claridad*, for having served as the voice of that country's independence struggles and for being a strong supporter of the Cuban Revolution. The distinction was received by Pablo Jose Rivera, president of the paper's Board of Directors, in a ceremony held at Havana's Friendship House. During the meeting, ICAP vice-president Basilio Gutierrez highlighted the work of the weekly newspaper in defense of Puerto Rican sovereignty, its role in the demand for the release of the five Cubans imprisoned in the US (*ACN*, 30/6/09).

**Junio 30:** El arzobispo católico Timothy Broglio, encargado de dar atención pastoral a los militares de Estados Unidos, ofició una misa en la ciudad cubana de Guantánamo y abogó por la reconciliación de ambos países, informó la Conferencia de Obispos de la isla. "Pidamos a Dios que un día podamos dar culto juntos, sin separaciones", dijo Broglio en la misa celebrada el pasado 24 de junio en la catedral de Guantánamo, en presencia de autoridades del gobierno cubano y dirigentes del Partido Comunista, precisa el sitio digital de los obispos. El prelado indicó que su visita a Cuba "es una oportunidad de asegurar el afecto del pueblo de los Estados Unidos de América para con ustedes". "Es verdad que la historia reciente de las relaciones entre nuestros respectivos gobiernos no es ni fácil ni feliz. Sin embargo, eso no tiene que formar una barrera entre creyentes de una parte del mundo u otra", añadió (*EFE*, 1/7/09).

