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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: In an atmosphere of social unrest, dissidents perform several peaceful demonstrations in Havana. Cuban authorities organize government demonstrations against the oppositionists. Over 40 dissidents are sent to jail. Cuban health authorities urge Havana residents to take extra hygiene precautions after the deaths of eight children. Fidel Castro warns against demonstrations by the opposition.

Economy: Soil erosion and deforestation are the top environmental problems facing Cuba. Cubans suffer almost daily 6 to 10 hours blackouts. Hurricane Dennis kills at least 16 people, damages or destroys 15,000 homes and causes an estimated \$1.4 billion in property damage. Fidel Castro announces that Cuban economy will grow 9% in 2005.

Foreign Affairs: Fidel Castro rejects aid coming from the European Union to assist Cuba for damages caused by Hurricane Dennis. France invites Cuban authorities to its Bastille Day reception. The European Union voices deep concern over Cuba's latest clampdown on dissidents. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announces that 100,000 Latin Americans will undergo eye surgery in Cuba in 2005, as part of the island's Milagro (Miracle) Medical Program.

Security: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez says that any "imperialist" attack from the US would be resisted by the Venezuelan and Cuban nations as one.

US-Cuba Relations: In the aftermath of Hurricane Dennis, Fidel Castro turns down a US offer of \$50,000 in aid for emergency supplies. A UN panel rules that the US' detention of five Cubans convicted of being foreign spies is arbitrary and in violation of international law. A US immigration judge denies a request for bail from Luis Posada Carriles.



Domestic Affairs

July 2: Cubans across the island practiced emergency drills for hurricanes and other natural disasters, part of a two-day activity called Meteor Exercise 2005, local media reported. The drills, organized by the Cuban government and local social groups, focused on hurricanes but also reacted to potential earthquakes, fires or toxic leaks. Authorities gathered,

on the first day of the exercise, to coordinate plans, focusing on evacuation strategies to avoid loss of human life and ways to diminish economic damage to buildings and infrastructure. (*AP*, 3/7/05)

July 2: Citoprot-P, a new product designed in Cuba to treat diabetic ulcers, will be introduced into treatment regimens in hospitals throughout the country. The cutting-edge drug, designed by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center (CIGB), was produced in close collaboration with the Angiology Institute, and is the only preventative alternative to amputation of the extremities in diabetic patients presenting with these lesions. According to CIGB experts, the medication stimulates granulation and epithelization, and reduces surgical treatment thus limiting more invasive surgery due to relapses. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/7/05)

July 4: The Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) and the National Assembly of the People's Power signed an agreement aimed at curtailing the clandestine market of prescription drugs by authorizing government district representatives ("delegados") in areas where pharmacies are located to oversee control of prescription drugs in short supply. Representatives of the People's Power now have the right to go through invoices, according to the official media. (*Cubamet*, 4/7/05)

July 4: Experts from 30 countries are attending the 5th International Convention on Environment and Development in Havana's International Conference Center. With participants from Latin America, Spain, Italy and Portugal, the event will address issues like water basin management, coastal eco-systems, protected areas, environmental education and more. US participants were denied visas to attend. Parallel events include the 4th Congress on Protected Areas, 5th Congress on Environmental Education for Sustainable Development, 1st Congress of Environmental Management for Business, Tourism and Environment and the International Symposium on Management of Hydrographic Basins and Resources. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/7/05)

July 5: Cuba's communist government has jailed 13 more political opponents this year, most on charges of "dangerousness," a veteran rights activist reported. The report released by the Havana-based Cuban Commission on Human Rights and Reconciliation said the total number of political prisoners as of June 30 was 306. The charges against those jailed highlight the government's practice of making ambiguous accusations against its opponents, said Elizardo Sanchez, the activist who runs the non-governmental commission, which releases reports every six months. The list includes most of the 75 dissidents arrested in a roundup on the opposition in March 2003, even though 14 of those were freed on parole last year. Of those 14, two of them were taken off the list because they left Cuba after their release. Sanchez said the other 12 remained on the list because they could be returned to custody if they violate parole. [[Informe de la CCDHNRN](#)] (*AP*, 5/7/05)

July 5: The Cuban Communist Party has asked its members to up their "combative spirit" in the face of different types of problems, such as corruption, according to the official daily *Granma*. "Increased foresight capacity and unyielding attitude are required to stem mismanagement, lift members' combative spirit and solidify revolutionary ethics, which are incompatible with theft, double standards and other expressions of corruption", informed the paper. *Granma* offered a summary of the party's meeting of the municipal committee of Plaza de la Revolución, one of 169 similar meetings taking place throughout the island since May 28 and due to conclude in early September. Without providing any details, the daily referred to incidents of corruption at a public company, a hotel, a cigar factory and technical school. (*AFP*, 5/7/05)

July 6: Glass bottles were thrown at the Provincial Traffic Control Office in Cienfuegos. The incident seemed to be part of popular protests due to discomfort generated by constant and long power cuts. Every half hour, bottles could be heard crashing against the walls of the police office while the neighbourhood was in a blackout. (*Cubamet*, 7/05)

July 6: Cuba's Communist regime is conscripting members of Committees to Defend the Revolution in a campaign against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that transmits dengue fever, which killed 158 people on the island during a 1981

epidemic. "With the increase in the infestation index, the appearance of (...) flying adult mosquitoes, together with the current climatological situation that facilitates their reproduction, it is necessary to apply all measures in the interest of safeguarding our population from a dangerous evil," according to the most recent edition of "Tribuna de La Habana". Health authorities have not released any official information about the number of dengue fever cases detected so far this year, but the media are calling upon the public to cover water containers, eliminate standing water, change the water in flower vases and vases used for religious purposes and maintain adequate hygienic conditions in animal troughs. (*EFE*, 6/7/05)

July 7: The President of the Cuban Olympic Committee (COC), José Ramón Fernández, indicated that Havana would present its candidacy to host the 2016 Olympic Games. The Cuban capital had sought to hosting the 2012 Games, but its aspirations were cut short after being dropped by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) after the first round. (*Europa Press*, 7/7/05)

July 8: Cuba is blaming major league baseball for the sport being dropped from the 2012 Olympics. Cuba has won three of the four gold medals since baseball was first played at the Olympics - in 1992, 1996 and 2004. The United States won the gold in 2000, with Cuba getting the silver. "Those who bear most of the blame are the owners of the professional leagues who refuse to free up their ball players to compete," Cuban Baseball Federation president Carlos Rodríguez told the press. "It's a shame because this decision will disappoint millions of young people who practise and love this sport," Rodríguez added. (*Canadian Press*, 8/7/05)

July 8: Hurricane Dennis bore down on the US Gulf Coast after slamming Cuba, sweeping away coastal homes and sending waves crashing over Havana's seawall. "It's arrived, with all its diabolical force," Fidel Castro said on state television. He said 10 people died in southeastern Cuba, including one child who fell into roiling waters as the mother tried to cross an old bridge. As the storm passed east of Havana, waves of up to 10 feet crashed over the city's Malecon seawall. Fierce gusts of wind tore huge chunks of concrete off dilapidated colonial buildings and shattered glass globes from antique street lamps in the city's old section. Downed trees and utility poles littered roads. Most of the damage in and around Havana and nearby beach towns appeared limited to uprooted trees and ripped lampposts and highway signs. Cuban television showed Defense Minister Raul Castro, the president's brother, touring storm-damaged areas along the southeast coast. Dozens of humble wooden homes in sparsely populated rural areas had been reduced to mounds of kindling. Corrugated metal roofs had been ripped off and twisted by the roaring winds, before being scattered across the countryside. A wooden sugar mill was missing its roof and parts of its sides. (*AP*, 9/7/05)

July 9: Fidel Castro praised the organization, discipline and commitment of the Cuban people as they faced Hurricane Dennis, which hit the island hard from east to west, causing 10 dead and considerable material damage. "We are optimistic about solving our problems," stressed Fidel Castro who congratulated the authorities, grassroots organizations and the population in general for their attitude in the face of the destructive hurricane. He also assessed the benefit Dennis could have brought to the drought-stricken island in term of feeding reservoirs and damps up. As he spoke on TV, vicepresident Carlos Lage toured several of the hardest hit areas in Cienfuegos Province, where Dennis made its landfall, and in Matanzas. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/7/05)

July 12: Cuban Health Minister Jose Ramon Balaguer presided over the second graduation of the Salvador Allende Nursing School in Havana. The minister congratulated the 1,458 students graduating, of whom 819 are women, and urged them to strive to become ever better in their vocation. (*AIN*, 13/7/05)

July 13: Several dozen dissidents commemorating a deadly 1994 tugboat sinking clashed with a larger group of government supporters who shoved and shouted them down. Nine dissidents were detained after the run-in near La Punta. No major injuries were reported. The midday incident occurred after the dissidents chanting "Justice, liberty!" commemorated the 11th anniversary of the sinking of the 41 would-be immigrants who drowned 11 years ago in a tugboat sinking in Havana Bay, by tossing white flowers into the sea and carrying posters with photos of the dead that

proclaimed, "These are the victims of a cruel tyrant who claims to defend women and children." The dissidents were walking inland along Prado, a major boulevard in central Havana, when government supporters began shouting revolutionary slogans at them. Several dissidents were shoved, but no one was reported hurt. The dissidents carried signs with photographs of people who died in the tugboat sinking, which opponents blame on the government and which authorities maintain was an accident. A second protest took place close to "Hermanos Ameijeiras Hospital" by a group of individuals who shouted slogans against Castro and the Cuban government. A group of workers armed with pipes and sticks contested the protesters. A few of the protesters were hurt in the head. (*Sun Sentinel, BBC, La Jornada, Reuters, AP, 13/7/05*)

July 13: A group of more than 200 pro-government demonstrators assembled near a park where two dissidents had declared a hunger strike to protest their alleged eviction from a friend's home by government officials. Moisés Leonardo Rodríguez and Roberto Guerras, members of the dissident organization Corriente Martiana, had said that they would remain in the park indefinitely. Government supporters, who arrived in buses and trucks, shouted angrily, "This street belongs to Fidel! Viva Fidel! Down with the mercenaries!" and unfurled a Cuban flag. After one man was surrounded and pushed into a police car that sped away, the group quickly dispersed. Several government supporters refused to answer questions about their demonstration. (*Sun Sentinel, BBC, La Jornada, La Hora, 13/7/05*)

July 13: Some 5,000 students, civil servants and state workers massed in the center of Havana in a show of support for Fidel Castro, in reaction to the two dissident protests of La Punta and Hermanos Ameijeiras Hospital. Waving pro-Castro banners and yelling pro-government slogans, the regime supporters stayed for more than an hour. "The counter-revolutionaries (...) the anti-patriotic ones, must know that we will be organized," shouted Hassan Perez, an official from Cuba's Young Communists Union, as politburo member Pedro Saez looked on. "We will not be provoked," Perez yelled. "This street belongs to Fidel," shouted a group of hospital workers, who also chanted "We're here for you, Fidel, for whatever is needed." (*AFP, 13/7/05*)

July 13: Fidel Castro sent a message of congratulations to the group of Cuban teachers who arrived in Cuba after successfully completing their part in the literacy campaign and assessing the educational missions in Venezuela. Carlos Valenciaga, member of the Council of State, transmitted the greetings of the leader of the Revolution to the 68 educators, who spent two years in that South American country. Recognitions with which they returned to the island included the Order of Merit in Work, First Class, and the Medals Francisco de Miranda (1st, 2nd and 3rd Class) and Friends of the Homeland of Bolívar. (*Granma International, 13/7/05*)

July 13: Cuban Pianist Harold Lopez-Nussa, was awarded First Prize in the "Piano Soloist Contest", as part of the 29th Montreal International Jazz Festival, Canada. The second prize went to the American Max Haymer, followed by Philippe Baden Powel de Aquino, from Brazil, and Nial Djuliarso, from Indonesia. The Montreal International Jazz Festival has been internationally recognized for its quality and the variety of its programming. (*AIN, 13/7/05*)

July 13: Lizette Vila, the only Cuban among the 999 women from 150 countries collectively nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize, told the press that as long as diversity is viewed in terms of "otherness", "there can be no harmony, and exclusion will continue to exist." Nearly 20 years ago, Vila began working in Cuba with the disabled, transvestites, people living with HIV and alcoholics. One of Vila's best known works as a filmmaker is the documentary "Y hembra es el alma mía" (And My Soul is Female), a ground-breaking exploration of the lives of transsexuals and transvestites in Cuba. She has won two Coral Prizes and two critics' awards at the Havana Festival of New Latin American Cinema. Vila has also represented the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba on a UN special commission on the legal and social rights of women from 1996 to 2002. The campaign, "1000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005", was launched in 2003 at the initiative of Ruth-Gaby Vermot-Mangold, a member of the Swiss Parliament and the Council of Europe, with the support of Swisspeace (the Swiss Peace Foundation). It has since earned the backing of a worldwide network of organisations, including a number of United Nations agencies. (*IPS, 13/7/05*)

July 14: At least 11 protesters who participated in demonstrations in Havana commemorating a deadly 1994 tugboat sinking remained in custody, according to a human rights activist on the island. Elizardo Sánchez, head of the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation in Havana, said his organization confirmed the detention of 11 people, including two women, but have reports of as many as 20 arrests. "There are no charges against them and they remain incommunicado from family members," Sánchez told the press. Sánchez said the repressive actions -- veiled as counter-protests -- were carried out in four separate incidents, three of them along the Malecón and a fourth near the Plaza de la Revolución that involved "punching and kicking" by rapid-response brigades. Sánchez believes that "tempers are flaring" as the country continues to struggle with extended blackouts and a shortage of food, made worse by Hurricane Dennis, and used as examples a few incidents in different provinces regarding the throwing of stones and bottles against government facilities. Cuban media has maintained silence about the protests. (*The Miami Herald, La Jornada, Netfor Cuba*, 14,15/7/05)

July 14: Cuban Foreign Affairs minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, defended government supporters who launched a counter-protest against several dozen dissidents commemorating a 1994 tugboat sinking in Havana Bay, in which 41 would-be immigrants drowned. The United States "pays, stimulates, organizes and directs these provocations, which of course prompt the due reaction of our people, who are the owners of their streets," Pérez Roque said. The foreign minister said he didn't know if any of the activists were detained. International reporters, including an Associated Press Television News team, witnessed two dissidents being detained after the run-in, and human rights activist Elizardo Sanchez said at least 10 activists were detained, based on reports by family members and witnesses. (*AP*, 14/7/05)

July 14: Cuba's top sports official said he will work with the International Baseball Federation to ensure that the sport returns to the Olympics. "We have to reflect, look for alternatives," National Institute of Sports president Humberto Rodriguez told the press. "We cannot give up the battle as lost." Baseball and softball were dropped from the 2012 London Games after an IOC vote in Singapore. They are eligible to apply in 2009 for re-entry in 2016. (*AP*, 14/7/05)

July 14: Dozens of teenagers jailed at the Ivanov Penitentiary in Cotorro, Havana, have been on a hunger strike for several days in demand of their rights, according to a family source. The inmates, aged 16 and 17, are demanding, among others, that physical and verbal abuses stop, no more transfers to the "Combinado del Este" prison for adults as punishment, better food, and observance of family visits every 21 days. Most of the prisoners are part of some 400 young people from Havana who were sent to jail as part of the "Operación Contención", a police round up. (*Cubanet*, 14/7/05)

July 14: Maidelín Guerra, wife of political prisoner Mario Enrique Mayo, told the press that her husband began a hunger strike demanding his immediate release from prison. Mayo, 40, a lawyer and independent journalist, was imprisoned on March 2003 and sentenced to 20 years in prison for allegedly "committing acts against the independence and the territorial integrity of the State". He directed an independent press agency in Camagüey to denounce violations of human rights in Cuba. Amnesty International recognized Mayo as a prisoner of conscience on July 2003. He is serving his term in Kilo-7 prison, Camagüey. (*ADC, Press release*, 15/7/05)

July 15: The City of Havana will host festivities for the Day of National Uprising, which this year marks the 52nd anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks, commanded by Fidel Castro on July 26, 1953. The Cuban Communist Party's Political Bureau made the selection, in recognition of the work and efforts of the Havana population throughout the year. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/7/05)

July 15: With one teacher for every 36 people in the country, Cuba is an example to follow for other nations in the world, asserted Luis Ignacio Gómez, Cuba's Education Minister. The Cuban expert compared the Cuban rate to that of developed countries which usually have one teacher for every 50 to 80 people. Speaking at a graduation ceremony in Matanzas, Gomez said there are no limits on the training of teachers in Cuba. (*Ahora.cu*, 15/7/05)

July 17: Matilde Gerez Guevara, sister of dissident Julio Antonio Valdés Guevara, one of the "Group of 75" oppositionists who was released from prison, demanded the Cuban government to let him leave the country and expressed concerns over his health. Valdés Guevara, 53, a human rights activist, leader of the "Golfo de Guacanayabo" opposition group, and one of the promoters of the "Varela Project" has fulfilled all the formalities to emigrate to the US, however he still needs an exit permit from the Cuban government to be able to travel, said his sister. "I ask the government to let my brother leave", she added. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 17/7/05)

July 18: Arco Progresista, a group of moderate dissident organizations, warned that Cuban society is "reaching the point of no return for a social explosion" and called for prudence and a "national solution". "Society is boiling because Cubans are demanding change", said spokesperson Manuel Cuesta Morúa in a signed statement, in reference to protests staged in different places of the Cuban capital resulting in at least ten people being arrested, according to a human rights commission. (*AFP*, 18/7/05)

July 19: Three Cuban dissidents, including one who was released from jail in November after 15 months behind bars, were rounded up and jailed, a rights organization said. Marcelo Lopez Banobre, vice president of the outlawed Cuban Committee for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, was being held at a police station in Centro Habana, his colleague and the group's president, Elizardo Sanchez, told the press. Sanchez said that even as Lopez Banobre was detained, two other dissidents, Anaika Paneca and Luis Angel Medina, also were arrested in Havana. Lopez, 41, was one of the 75 dissidents jailed in a roundup that started in March 2003 and then sentenced to lengthy prison terms. Lopez was the first of the dissidents jailed after that major sweep to be let out on parole and now rearrested. Sanchez said the government recently had boosted its repressive operations. "There is an unprecedented police deployment, both uniformed and plainclothes, and there are thousands of them," Sanchez said. (*AFP*, 19/7/05)

July 19: Cuba's dissident "Women in White," mostly wives and mothers of political prisoners, say they are being increasingly harassed by pro-government mobs, with police standing by while they are insulted and shoved. Berta Soler, wife of jailed democracy advocate Angel Moya, told the press of an incident, when she and six other members of the group, known for their white clothing, went to visit Isabel Ramos outside the capital. Ramos, mother of Arturo Suarez, who was sent to jail 19 years ago for his attempted hijacking of an airplane to escape the island, is on a hunger strike to press for improvement of what she says are inhumane conditions of her son's imprisonment. As the women left Ramos' home, they were surrounded by a throng of several dozen supporters of Fidel Castro who shouted insults at the dissident women and chanted pro-government slogans. "The police stood by a block away, just watching," said Soler, whose husband was sentenced to 20 years in the Spring 2003 crackdown on peaceful dissent that saw 75 people jailed. Fourteen of those prisoners have since been released, ostensibly on medical grounds. "If anything happens to any of us, it will be the responsibility of the government," said Soler. (*EFE*, 19/7/05)

July 20: Three Cuban dissidents have been released from jail after being rounded up by authorities, who held them for several hours and warned one of them specifically against protesting the government, a prominent government opponent said. Marcelo Lopez Banobre, vice president of the outlawed Cuban Committee for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, was held at a police station in Havana, as were dissidents Anaika Paneca and Luis Angel Medina, the group's president, Elizardo Sanchez, told the press. Sanchez said that Paneca, who was arrested at her home in the town of San Miguel del Padron, was arrested explicitly for taking part in the protests involving dozens of dissidents in Havana on July 13. (*AFP*, 20/7/05)

July 20: In Cuba, a small and poor nation proud of having produced a disproportionate number of acclaimed classical dancers, the path toward tutu and toe-shoes on a Parisian or New York stage begins early, with students as young as 4 receiving instruction at one of several "baby-ballet" schools. Cubans's passion for classical ballet has been fed by the National School of the Arts - created after the triumph of the 1959 revolution - and by the success of the Ballet Nacional de Cuba, led by venerable lead dancer and choreographer Alicia Alonso. Cuban ballet stars, and others, took their first steps under the tutelage of Cuba's Centro ProDanza, founded in 1988 under the direction of Laura Alonso,

daughter of Alicia and Fernando Alonso. ProDanza operates from an impressive academy in Havana's Vedado neighborhood as well as in a renovated tobacco factory in the rundown district of Marianao, where locals were initially skeptical about the project. Today, more than 500 children and adolescents are now studying classical ballet and contemporary dance at the Marianao facility. (EFE, 20/7/05)

July 21: Cuban dissidents plan to hold a protest in front of the French embassy in Havana, one week after France normalized relations with Fidel Castro's regime. The Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society (APSC) said the protest would call for the release of "all political prisoners," including six who were detained during a demonstration. But dissidents appeared to have chosen France's embassy to show their displeasure at French and European Union policies toward Castro's regime. "We will demand the liberation of the detainees and we will show to the European Union what happens with dialogue (with the Cuban government)," said Marta Beatriz Roque, head of the (APSC). (AFP, 21/7/05)

July 21: As Fidel Castro looked on, Elian Gonzalez, the shipwreck survivor whose custody battle morphed into a US-Cuban political wrestling match, graduated from the sixth grade in Havana. The ceremony at a Havana park, during which Castro spoke for an hour, was transmitted live on state radio and television. "His academic performance is very good," Castro said of Elian, now 11, calling him a symbol of advances in Cuban education after personally handing Elian his diploma. "He is a disciplined boy and respectful." Castro added that he's honored to be friends of Elian Gonzalez. "I have the privilege to be his friend," he said. (AFP, EFE, 21/7/05)

July 21: The Cuban oppositionist group Comité "Pro-Cambio" has launched an initiative aimed at replacing the current political system with a "modern and capitalist model based on solidarity". Angel Polanco Torrejón, president of Comité "Pro-Cambio", founded in January and considered illegal by the government said to the press that the project is supported by 43 organizations based in Cuba and five others in the US and Puerto Rico. [[Iniciativa Pro Cambio](#)] (EFE, 21/7/05)

July 21: Cuba launched a massive civil monitoring operation in response to a series of opponents' protests in Havana a few days prior to the July 26 celebrations, [of the 1953] armed attack that marks the start of the revolution led by Fidel Castro. The so-called "National Security Watch" ("Ejercicio Nacional de Vigilancia") is being led by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), an organization created by the government in the 1960s to curb actions against the communist government on the island. (Reuters, 21/7/05)

July 22: A small protest was staged outside the French Embassy urging the release of those arrested during the demonstrations of July 13, while at least four other opposition activists were arrested in other parts of the [Havana] city. A small gathering of some 15 people protested outside the French diplomatic mission, in the residential neighbourhood of Miramar, without authorities' intervention. The Assembly to Promote Civil Society (APSC) called for the protest. (La Jornada, 22/7/05)

July 22: Cuban dissident leader Marta Beatriz Roque and more than a dozen other activists were arrested in a new crackdown on the Cuban opposition by Fidel Castro's regime, dissidents and relatives said. Roque, a 59-year-old economist, is president of the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society, which had organized a protest in front of the French Embassy in Havana to demand the release of political prisoners from Cuban jails. Many of those detained were leading figures in the group. "She was detained by state security agents shortly after leaving her home. About 20 dissidents have been arrested," said Elizardo Sanchez, president of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation. (AFP, BBC, 22/7/05)

July 22: Cuban police released dissident leader Martha Beatriz Roque and two other women but continued holding other opponents of Fidel Castro detained in a roundup, a human rights group said. Roque, a 59-year-old economist who has been jailed twice since 1997 for criticizing communist rule in Cuba, was freed without charges, said veteran activist

Elizardo Sanchez of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights. Roque and her driver were seized as police rounded up members of her opposition movement prior to a demonstration they had called outside the French Embassy in Havana to demand the release of political prisoners in Cuba. "They were detained arbitrarily, with no warrants, without charges and not allowed to make telephone calls to their families who did not know where they were," Sanchez said. He said that at least 22 people were detained and that most were still being held including Roque's top two political associates, lawyer Rene Gomez Manzano and engineer Felix Bonne. (*AP*, 22/7/05)

July 22: Sweltering summer heat in the 90s, blackouts of more than 12 hours and water shortages have increasingly frayed Cubans' nerves, challenging Fidel Castro's government as he prepares for July 26 th celebration marking the launch of the Cuban revolution. "Amid the miscellaneous promises and speeches of triumphs that cannot be demonstrated, Cubans are losing patience," dissident Manuel Cuesta Morua said this week. "Cuba is annoyed." While Havana residents said the situation eased somewhat - at least in the capital where the celebration is being held - Cubans worry about the rest of July and August, the year's hottest months. And they hope for good news on July 26 th, when Castro is expected to address the nation. "It won't take much more time," Castro said of the power problems when he spoke at the primary school graduation of Elian Gonzalez, who returned to Cuba from Miami five years ago after a high-profile international custody battle. "You can trust what I say," he said. (*Seattle Times*, 22/7/05)

July 23: Cuban dissident Martha Beatriz Roque, who was arrested for calling a demonstration in Havana, said upon her release that she will continue to protest and demand freedom for all dissidents. Roque, 59, heads the outlawed Assembly to Promote Civil Society or APSC, along with Rene Gomez Manzano and Felix Bonne Carcasses, who were arrested along with 20 other activists from the group when they organized a rally in front of the French Embassy in Havana. "I declare myself totally responsible for what happened. I convened the rally to call for the release of those arrested on July 13, because we cannot continue piling up prisoners," the economist told the press after her release. According to her estimate, 22 members of the Assembly were arrested and 16 remain behind bars. As the arrests were taking place, hundreds of pro-government demonstrators engaged in "acts of patriotic reaffirmation" in front of the homes of dissidents, preventing them from leaving. (*EFE*, 23/7/05)

July 24: Cuban health authorities urged Havana residents to take extra hygiene precautions as they investigate the deaths of eight children from an unknown cause. A government communique said that there had been an increase in digestive and respiratory illnesses reported in the Cuban capital coinciding with power, cooking gas and water problems, in part caused by Hurricane Dennis, which passed a few miles east of Havana. "In this context eight deaths among minors have occurred which are being meticulously investigated," the communique, broadcast during the government's nightly television newscast, said. While children die at high rates in developing countries from various diseases, such deaths are rare in Cuba, which takes pride in a relatively well-developed and free health care system. (*Reuters, CNN*, 25/7/05)

July 25: The Catholic community of Santiago de las Vegas celebrated the day of Santiago the Apostle with the inauguration of the recently restored chapel of the Holy Sacrament. The mass was presided over by Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino, Archbishop of Havana. A procession carrying an image of the Apostle riding on horseback marched through the town's streets. (*Cubanet*, 25/7/05)

July 25: Cuban authorities have freed 23 dissidents, a leading human rights activist said. In all 33 people were detained on July 22. The dissidents had planned to attend a protest that day outside the French Embassy to press European nations to lobby for the island's political prisoners. Cuba's government has not commented on the roundup of dissidents. (*The New York Times*, 25/7/05)

July 26: Fidel Castro marked the 52nd anniversary of his revolution, gathering his staunchest supporters around him amid growing public discontent aggravated by sweltering heat and breakdowns in the communist island's aging electrical system. Castro's government acknowledged that many are unhappy. "There is complete consciousness of the

dissatisfactions, insufficiencies, shortages and, above all, of the challenges we must overcome ahead," Pedro Sáez, the Communist Party chieftain for Havana, said in the party's Granma newspaper. An opinion piece in the government-run Granma newspaper acknowledged: "We are living in difficult times." "There may be no paint to beautify facades, or asphalt to fill in potholes," the editorial said. "There's no transportation to go to the beach with the children and the summer TV programming is interrupted with blackouts that bother and irritate." Nevertheless, "there's a celebration in Havana," it said. "And as tense as things are now, it is the same Havana of yesterday, today and tomorrow." (*AP*, 26/7/05)

July 26: Leaders of the opposition movement on the island began plotting their next move to bring international attention to their plight. "The detentions are completely arbitrary," said prominent dissident Martha Beatriz Roque, who was released from custody without charges. "We cannot allow the government to continue to treat us this way." "There must be a response, not only from the opposition but from everybody," Roque told the press in a telephone interview, declining to reveal whether any new anti-government protests were planned in the coming days. However, she hinted they could be organized at a moment's notice. "All I can say is that opposition groups all over the island are on alert," Roque said. "They are waiting for the call to take to the streets. I see the strong possibility of civil unrest." (*The Miami Herald*, 26/7/05)

July 26: Communist Cuba marked the 52nd anniversary of the start of Fidel Castro's revolution without a traditional outdoor mass rally. In the darkest, bluntest warning to Cuban dissidents yet, Fidel Castro said that "acts of treason" would not be tolerated and warned that attempts to destabilize would be confronted by the population "whenever traitors and mercenaries go one millimeter beyond what the revolutionary people (...) are willing to permit." Castro again accused government opponents of being paid US mercenaries playing a dangerous "game." "The much-publicized dissidence, or alleged opposition in Cuba, exists only in the fevered minds of the Cuban-American mafia and the bureaucrats in the White House," Castro said to resounding applause. But even as Castro tried to minimize the relevance of dissidents, the 78-year-old ruler acknowledged that a lengthy drought, a crippling energy crunch and devastation from Hurricane Dennis has made life more difficult on the island, and he asked the Cubans to be patient. [[Discurso de Fidel Castro](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 27/7/05)

July 27: Members of the Cuban opposition expressed their concern about the possible use of repressive special legislation known as the "Gag Law" - which establishes prison terms of up to 20 years - against at least three recently-arrested dissidents. Special Law 88, approved in 1999, was used for the first time against most of the 75 opposition members sentenced to prison terms of up to 28 years in spring 2003, the largest wave of repression against dissidents on the communist island in decades. The Cuban Committee for Human Rights announced that the police had told relatives of dissidents René Gómez Manzano, Oscar Mario González and Julio César López - all of whom were arrested in July 22 - that the trio would be prosecuted under the "Law for Protection of the National Independence and Economy of Cuba," as the measure's full title reads. (*EFE*, 27/7/05)

July 28: A group of dissidents from Villa Clara who tried to leave Cuba via Guantánamo Bay have been transported to a prison, although leaving the country without an exit visa is not a punishable crime. Luis Enrique Junquera García, Juan Carlos Alpízar Rodas, Alexis Sotolongo Díaz, Didier Arencibia Pérez and Orlando Rodríguez Salazar, all members of the Liberal Party of Cuba, tried to leave June 25. Alexis Lázaro Pérez Bernal, a relative of one of the men, said he had been advised that the group was being held at the Aguadores prison in Santiago de Cuba. (*Cubanet*, 28/7/05)

July 30: A Russian aeronautical company revealed that Cuba purchased two Ilushin 96-300 for \$100 million, one of them to be used exclusively for Fidel Castro's travels. According to the Director of the VASO Company, Alexandr Rubtson, the purchase of the two aircrafts by Cubana Airlines was made possible thanks to credit obtained from Russian and foreign banks. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 30/7/05)

Economy

July 2: As part of a program for the protection of river-based ecosystems, the Guantánamo-Guaso river basin has been restored by planting hundreds of trees along the banks of the river. The initiative, sponsored by various Cuban institutions, includes reforestation, soil protection and environmental education. The program aids the recovery of the southern coastal area in the easternmost province of the island. It is a 1,752-square kilometer area of semi-desert caused by high sun radiation levels and evaporation, exacerbated by a shortage of rain. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/7/05)

July 4: The Cuban Transport Ministry is applying an intensive program to improve transportation by repairing equipment and making new investments, Transport Minister Carlos Manuel Pazos asserted. Manuel Pazos made the remark in a meeting with deputies belonging to the Parliament Services Commission. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/7/05)

July 5: Soil erosion and deforestation are the top environmental problems facing Cuba, according to an official speaking at an international environmental conference in Havana. In opening remarks, the island's vice minister for the environment, José Díaz Duque, said repeated abuse and mismanagement of the land has led to serious erosion throughout Cuba. He also pointed out that when Christopher Columbus came to America in 1492, forests covered 95% of the island. Today, it's less than 25% covered, he said. Contamination, loss of biological diversity and a limited water supply due to an ongoing drought are also plaguing the Caribbean island, he said. (*AP*, 5/7/05)

July 5: A true quality smoke is now available on the shelves in Shanghai's first Cuban cigar shop. "We would like all cigar lovers to treat this like a home. To spend time and trade cigar knowledge," said manager Jeffrey Yu. Other "Casa del Habano" stores are already open in Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Beijing. (*China Daily*, 22/7/05)

July 5: After two months of almost daily blackouts, Cuban authorities announced that the trouble would drag on for weeks -- at least until the end of July -- in the middle of Cuba's sweltering summer. "There is still a great deal of risk; there are a lot of limitations and there are still warning signs we can identify at all (power-generating) plants," Basic Industry Minister Yadira García said on state television. García, a member of the Cuban Communist Party's politburo, last October replaced then minister Marcos Portal amid a prolonged energy crisis that Fidel Castro said revealed that the national power system was "weak." (*AFP*, 5/7/05)

July 6: Cuba plans to close at least 40 of 85 sugar mills and take 33 percent of plantations out of production, industry and trade sources said, in the second major downsizing of the industry since 2002. "Ministry employees were told at least 40 mills were closing, with the resulting elimination of around 75,000 jobs up and down the line," a local expert said. "But the decision may not be final as many technicians believe it would be a strategic error to close so many mills and are appealing the decision," he said. The downsizing comes in the wake of this year's record-low crop and the prospect that next year's will be more or less the same. "They plan to wind up with between 40 and 45 mills, though for now many will not be dismantled," said a foreign trader, saying he had reviewed the restructuring plan. Industry insiders said only around 50 mills opened this year during the January to May milling season. The government has not commented directly on the harvest and future plans. (*Reuters*, 6/7/05)

July 6: The Attorney General's Office uncovered at least 16,000 offences in state enterprises after conducting more than 1,740 audits in the last three years, indicated the Office's Audit Director, Caridad Sabó Herrera. In a report by the official daily Granma, Sabó Herrera said that the most common illegalities are unauthorized sales by employees and a surge of illicit agreements between companies and individuals. (*Notimex*, 6/7/05)

July 7: Ecuador's Deputy Foreign Minister Marcelo Fernandez travelled to Cuba to explore ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two Latin American countries. Fernandez will participate at the Sixth Cuba-Ecuador Joint Intergovernmental Commission for Bilateral Economic and Scientific Cooperation underway in Havana. This will be

the first joint commission to be held by authorities of the two nations after the dismissal of former Ecuadorian President Lucio Gutierrez last April. (*AIN*, 6/7/05)

July 8: Fires in Cuba are increasing, putting biodiversity on the island at risk. According to Colonel Manuel Lamas, of the Forest Ranger's Office, in the 1960s there was an average of 158 forest fires a year, in contrast with 367 fires already reported in 2005, destroying 12,037 hectares. (*AP*, 8/7/05)

July 8: Hurricane Dennis tore down power and telephone networks in central Sancti Spiritu and Matanzas provinces. The 170-kilometer per hour gales damaged radio communication towers and power networks in Sancti Spiritus, vice-president of the provincial government Fidel Perez Luzbel said to the press. (*AIN*, 8/7/05)

July 10: Cuba continued recovery efforts in the wake of Hurricane Dennis, which killed at least 10 people and caused extensive damage across the island. Granma, Sancti Spiritus and Cienfuegos, in the central and eastern sections of the island, were among the provinces most affected by the storm. Santiago de Cuba, in eastern Cuba, also suffered damage, especially Baconao, a UN World Biosphere Reserve, which lost an estimated 80 percent of its species. The tourist city of Trinidad, on the south-central coast, was hit hard by the storm, especially its coastal sector. Some 70 percent of the houses in the coastal town of Casilda, a few kilometers from Trinidad, were damaged by the powerful winds from Dennis and the storm surge caused by the hurricane. In Camagüey province, in Cuba's agricultural heartland, Dennis damaged or destroyed more than 2,191 homes. In Havana, some 1,828 houses were damaged by the storm, including 30 that collapsed. Most of the structural damage in the capital region occurred in Regla, Habana del Este, Marianao and Cotorro. In Aguada, a small city off Cuba's central highway, 6,000 homes were damaged and another 400 were demolished. Orlando Díaz, a local Communist Party official, said. Díaz said 666 people in the city remained in shelters and another 5,722 were living in the homes of relatives and friends. One fourth of the city's 46 schools were damaged as well as a sugar mill, Díaz said. (*EFE, Sun Sentinel*, 10/7/05)

July 11: Hurricane Dennis killed at least 16 people in Cuba, damaged or destroyed 15,000 homes and caused an estimated \$1.4 billion in property damage when it pummeled the island, Fidel Castro said in an hours-long speech. Castro said that one and a half million citizens were evacuated and that if Dennis had directly hit Havana, the damage would have accounted for more than three billion dollars. He said the hurricane totally wiped out 100 hectares of crops, while 11,000 hectares planted with banana were lost and almost the entire citrus fruit harvest in central Matanzas perished. More than seven tons of mango fruit were also destroyed. Castro said that over 73,000 birds died, with severe damage sustained by the ecological system, particularly in Central Cienfuegos and eastern Granma province. In this last province, 6,536 coconut trees were torn down, and 20,000 hectares of forests were damaged. Most of the houses at the historical place of La Comandancia, in La Plata, Sierra Maestra, were destroyed. The citrus industry in central Cuba was devastated, he added. During his long speech by national TV and radio, Fidel Castro said that 21 hotels were severely damaged. Roads and railroads were severely damaged as well as 160 health facilities and 96 sports centers and 69 cultural institutions. Castro said that nearly 300,000 tons of foods in stock were damaged by hurricane Dennis. Over 73,000 chickens were lost. (*AIN, EFE, La Jornada, Prensa Latina, Granma*, 12/7/05)

July 11: Fidel Castro announced that all Cuban cities will soon receive power generators to help address energy challenges facing the island. The power generators are necessary in peak electric hours, said Castro, speaking on a TV news-commentary program spotlighting damage to the nation's energy producing capacity inflicted by the recent passage of hurricane Dennis. Castro noted that the power equipment is of high quality, automated and must be used only in "the most urgent circumstances" and in an "organized way". (*AIN*, 11/7/05)

July 11: Fidel Castro stressed the need to save water currently being lost in an inefficient network of pipelines. Castro said that nearly 60 percent of the water being pumped is lost and that investment is needed to increase water efficiency. During the Round Table, a TV and radio broadcast, on the damage inflicted by hurricane Dennis, Fidel Castro spoke with Victor Gaute, the first secretary of the Communist Party of the central province of Matanzas. Gaute explained that

the province received 320 millimeters of rainfall over a 24-hour period – twice the amount it usually receives throughout the entire month of July. That situation has put authorities and experts on watch for possible flooding. The Communist Party leader said crucial sectors are beginning to recover, such as the Cuban Canadian Energas power plant, which helps provide gas and water to the municipality of Varadero, Cuba's largest tourist resort. (*AIN*, 11/7/05)

July 11: Hurricane Dennis' crushing 12-hour stay in Cuba wreaked havoc on the nation's already precarious housing shortage, wiping out tens of thousands of much-needed homes, the island news media reported. According to official Cuban government estimates, some 1,800 homes were damaged in Havana alone. In Santiago de Cuba to the east, 5,241 homes were reported damaged -- 659 of those completely wrecked. Cuba's Communist Party newspaper, *Granma*, reported that 25,000 homes were partially or totally destroyed in all. And the paper acknowledged that the figure did not include the hard-hit towns of Guamá and Tercer Frente, where communication problems, swollen rivers and blocked roads have kept officials from getting a damage report. Some media reports put Dennis' damage even higher. Citing "preliminary press reports," the Agency France Press said that nearly 80,000 homes were damaged: 34,000 in Granma; 26,000 in Cienfuegos; 4,000 in Santiago de Cuba; 8,200 in Sancti Spíritus; 3,200 in Matanzas; and 1,800 in Havana. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/7/05)

July 12: Leisure Canada Inc. announced the signing of surface extension rights for the Company's Monte Barreto property in Havana. The extension letter was signed by Carlos Lage Davila, vice-president of Cuba. Located in the heart of Havana's affluent business district, the 400,000 square foot Monte Barreto project is the last significant piece of undeveloped waterfront property in the Cuban capital. Phase One of the 800-room Monte Barreto five-star all-suites hotel will be built to capitalize on increasing business travel to Cuba as well as high-end tourism to Havana. The Company currently has the rights to develop 4,200 hotels rooms, timeshare condominiums and two PGA championship golf courses in Cuba. (*Market News Publishing*, 12/7/05)

July 13: Cuban telecommunications are on the mend after winds from hurricane Dennis snapped cables, toppled telephone poles and wreaked other damage in that sector. A notice from Cuba's Telecommunications Company (ETECSA) said many localities from the provinces of Sancti Spíritus, Granma, Villa Clara and Matanzas have already been connected to long distance service. In eastern Santiago de Cuba some progress has been made. A total of 4,031 telephones had their service interrupted in Cienfuegos. Havana province and the capital were patching together local networks, but around 7 000 phones are still out of order. (*Prensa Latina*, 13/7/05)

July 15: Venezuela approved \$20 million in funding for an electricity project in Havana. The "Banco de Desarrollo Económico y Social de Venezuela" (Bandes) announced in a communiqué that the project would cost \$93 million and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEP) is cofinancing it. No further details on the project were provided. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 15/7/05)

July 15: The people now at the helm of the oldest copper mine in Latin America, located in eastern Cuba and shut down in 2001, want it to be recognised as a national and global heritage site. That goal is a key part of the plans for rehabilitating an ecosystem damaged by the mining industry, drawn up by experts from the governmental agency Geomining of the East, and for revitalising the village of El Cobre, which emerged from the exploitation of the metal reserves discovered there in 1530. The environmental damage is immediately visible, and reversing it requires patience and a healthy budget. "This was farmland, with many groves of fruit trees, but all that was lost. The area was degraded and the change to the environment was total," engineer Alina Yasell told the press. The mine is inside a hill 12 km from Santiago de Cuba, capital of the province of the same name. It was at its peak in the first half of the 19th century, when it produced 67,000 tonnes of copper. Four years ago, scant production and low prices for the metal on the global market led to the mine's closure. (*IPS*, 15/7/05)

July 18: The Cuban power system, brought down by powerful hurricane Dennis, was reconnected after 15 days of intense work, local TV informed. The power plant increased its generation capacity to 300 megawatts. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/7/05)

July 22: The National Bank of Argentina (BNA) and Cuba's food import company (Alimport) have signed an agreement to launch a collateral credit fund, marking an important step in trade cooperation between the two countries. Under the deal, the two sides will implement their commitments on bilateral trade signed in 2004 to bring their two-way trade value to 200 million USD a year. The agreement also allows Cuba to transmit revenues from selling pharmaceutical products and medical technology to a collateral mortgage fund branch opened at the Argentina Bank for Investment and Foreign Trade. The Cuban side will use the fund to buy food from Argentina. (*VNA*, 22/7/05)

July 22: Cuba expects to cut its unemployment rate of 1,9% in half through professional development courses financed by the State, said the official daily Granma. "The objective this year is to continue creating jobs in order to cut current low unemployment rates in half", said the newspaper. (*La República*, 22/7/05)

July 25: A programme for planting trees in yards and courtyards has become popular in drought-stricken eastern Cuba, as part of the effort to fight soil degradation and erosion. "Reforestation is the only hope for the future," said Teodosio Hernández, who heads a programme to plant fruit and lumber trees in the semi-arid southern coastal area of the eastern province of Guantánamo, 1,000 km from Havana. Planting trees is combined with the cultivation of crops like sweet potatoes and beans, both of which are staples among rural residents in the region. The project, which got underway in 2003 on state-owned and private land in nine farming communities, awakened greater interest than was expected, and the tree nursery will be expanded so that seedlings can be made available to anyone interested in planting trees in their yards. Ministry of Agriculture studies indicate that 12 percent of all agricultural land in Cuba is desertified to some degree, a proportion that will rise to 15 percent by 2015. (*IPS*, 25/7/05)

July 26: Cuba stopped importing incandescent light bulbs, according to a Foreign Trade Ministry (MINCEX) regulation published in the Official Gazette. The MINCEX resolution 190 of 2005 says that "in order to contribute to Cuba's energy/saving policy, it is considered sensible to cancel imports" of these products. They are "incandescent lamps and tubes, except ultra-violet or infrared rays, others of lower electricity consumption or equal to 200 watts that use an over-100-volt tension." On April 21, Fidel Castro publicly announced the official decision to eliminate incandescent light bulbs in Cuba to replace them with others of lower power consumption. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/7/05)

July 26: Fidel Castro said his government was revolutionizing Cuba's aging electrical system, asking a nation weary of recent breakdowns to be patient while his government works to fix the problems. "We will overcome. Have a little bit of faith," the Cuban leader said in an address of nearly four hours marking the 52nd anniversary of his revolution. [[Discurso de Fidel Castro](#)] (*AP*, *AIN*, 27/7/05)

July 26: The Cuban economy will grow around 9 percent this year due to increased centralization and alliances with Venezuela and China, Fidel Castro announced in an upbeat address. "During the first half, the economy grew 7.3 percent and the estimate is for around 9 percent growth this year," Castro said during a marathon speech marking the 52nd anniversary of the start of his revolution. According to the UN Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Cuban economy grew about 3 percent in 2004, below the 5 percent growth announced by Cuba, which uses its own methodology to calculate gross domestic product. [[Discurso de Fidel Castro](#)] (*Reuters*, 26/7/05)

Exile Community

July 4: Cuban painter Guido Llinás, a pioneer of Abstract Expressionism in Latin America, died in Paris at 82. His paintings were displayed in many exhibits in Havana and abroad during the 1930s and 40s. However, it was in the 1960s when he became internationally renowned as a master of Abstract Expressionism. Llinás had left Cuba due to disagreement with the government of Fidel Castro and moved to Paris in 1963. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 5/7/05)

July 11: Leaders in both the Cuban-American and Haitian-American communities were divided over how -- or whether -- humanitarian aid should be sent to their respective, politically beleaguered homelands. Opposed to tough US rules tightening remittances and travel to Cuba, Silvia Wilhelm, executive director of the Cuban American Commission for Family Rights, said a letter-writing campaign was under way to have the travel restriction rescinded for a few months. The proposed freeze, she said, would allow those with family in Cuba to travel to the island to assist in disaster relief. Wilhelm said for those who can't visit, the government should also consider broadening the items that Cuban-Americans can send to the island. In a joint statement, US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Lincoln Díaz-Balart and Mario Díaz-Balart, all Miami Republicans, encouraged local residents to donate to local organizations licensed to send unlimited amounts of humanitarian aid to Cuba through non-governmental organizations. Still, some were skeptical about the effectiveness of non-governmental organizations, saying aid would end up in the wrong hands or simply refused by the communist government. "Every time the exile community has wanted to send aid, Castro has said he doesn't want it," said Ninoska Perez Castellon, a conservative commentator on Radio Mambí. She also said that some relief supplies sent after Hurricane Lillie wound up in tourist gift shops in Havana. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/7/05)

July 12: The commemoration of the anniversary of Cuba's deadly sinking of a tugboat packed with fleeing refugees was cancelled due to bad weather conditions. Ramón Saúl Sánchez, the president of the Democracy Movement, told the press that because of adverse "weather conditions" his group had decided not to hold the traditional flotilla it has staged each year in the Florida Strait to pay homage to the 37 victims of the July 13, 1994, sinking of the "13 de Marzo." In place of the normal commemoration, the group had planned to hold a ceremony on Miami's Biscayne Bay with boats, helicopters and small planes that would have dropped thousands of flowers onto a "cemetery" of crosses floating on the waves. (*EFE*, 13/7/05)

July 12: Ramón Saúl Sánchez, the president of the Democracy Movement, an organization of Cuban exiles based in Florida, called on Washington to suspend the travel and shipment restrictions to Cuba "so that those Cubans who have gone to the island within the last three years can travel there again." "We have to concentrate on achieving the political will on both sides of the Florida Strait so that the exiles can directly help the Cuban people," said Sánchez, while noting that his proposal to dispatch aid to the storm-ravaged island had caused a "political storm." While Consenso Cubano, a recently-created coalition of exile organizations, supports the temporary lifting of the restrictive measures, other groups and South Florida's three Cuban-American US legislators, Republicans Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and brothers Lincoln and Mario Diaz-Balart, strongly oppose the idea. (*EFE*, 13/7/05)

July 14: Cuban poet and journalist Raúl Rivero was awarded the 2005 International Thought and Humanities Award granted by the Spanish Cristóbal Gabarrón Foundation. Rivero was chosen from among 29 candidates from Cuba, the United States, Spain, France, Israel, Mexico and South-Africa. The prize was granted in recognition "of his tireless fight in favour of the freedom of expression of every human being, a fight that has turned him into a symbol of that freedom". Raúl Rivero is one of the 75 dissidents rounded up by the Cuban government and sentenced to prison terms of up to 28 years in 2003. In late November 2004, he was granted a special release from prison on health grounds and in April arrived in Madrid with his family. (*Europa Press*, 14/7/05)

July 14: Plataforma Internacional Cuba Democracia Ya! (a movement advocating changes in Cuba) pleaded in Madrid for the Spanish government and the European Union to intervene in the wake of the events that took place in Havana when supporters and opponents of Fidel Castro's regime clashed. The Plataforma called on Madrid and Brussels to intercede to "prevent peaceful demonstrations taking place in different parts of Cuba ending up in a blood bath, as

could have happened when about 20 peaceful dissidents were harassed by paramilitary forces in Havana". (AFP, 14/7/05)

July 29: Before an audience of Cuban-American legislators, exile leaders and other supporters of US-Cuba policy, newly appointed Coordinator for transition in Cuba, Caleb McCarry said, "It is the responsibility of the civilized world to act to see that the Cuban family is reunited under political and economic freedom." Speaking on Miami's Radio Mambi, McCarry summed up his appointment with the words he said will soon be shouted from every corner of José Martí's Cuba: "Viva Cuba libre." Many Cuban Americans welcomed McCarry, calling him "a friend" of the exile mission to oust Castro. "He knows our cause well," said Horacio García, a director of the Cuban Liberty Council. "They chose a person with commitment and passion." "He's extremely bright and thoroughly knowledgeable on the issue of Cuba," said Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart, Republican-Miami. "He knows who's who and he knows where we need to go." (*The Miami Herald*, 29/7/05)

Foreign Affairs

July 1: Revolutionary fighter Che Guevara's daughter has written a book about Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez based on interviews in which they discussed his childhood, family and relationship with Fidel Castro. "It is always thrilling to know a bit more about a human being who has decided to transform society, especially when that transformation is meant to improve the lives of his people," Aleida Guevara wrote on the book's back cover. The book, published by Ocean Press and titled "Chavez: Venezuela and the New Latin America," was presented in Havana by the author and Adán Chávez, Venezuela's ambassador to Cuba and also the president's brother. (*Las Vegas Sun*, 2/7/05)

July 2: Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Rafael Daussá is starting a working visit to the city of Salamanca, Spain, host of the Ibero-American Summit to be held in October this year. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/7/05)

July 3: Sir Richard Branson, the billionaire head of the Virgin Group, has been hailed as a "true revolutionary" by the communist Cuban government. The "tribute" was paid by Cuba's minister for tourism during a lunch with Mr. Branson in Havana, after Virgin Atlantic's first direct flight to the Caribbean island. Manuel Marrero Cruz told the British tycoon he was "a brave man" because he was prepared to do business with Cuba while America was still punishing his country with a trade embargo imposed 45 years ago. "You are a true revolutionary because you have stood up to the Americans just as Cuba has done for decades," Mr. Cruz said. (*The Sunday Telegraph*, 3/7/05)

July 3: The 25th International Caribbean Festival began in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba and is dedicated this year to Venezuela, its people, culture and history. Over 300 Venezuelans will share their dance, theatre, music and other artistic manifestations with their counterparts in the region. The "Fire Festival", as it is also known, will have the participation of over 2,700 creators and intellectuals from Haiti, Curacao, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Trinidad and Tobago, Costa Rica, Bermudas, Colombia, Argentina and other Caribbean nations. (*AIN*, 4/7/05)

July 3: The Canadian group Westwinds Jazz and Concert Band made their debut in Havana at the Almendares Park amphitheater together with locals Bobby Carcases, AfroJazz and Novel Voz. The jazz band's presentations are being coordinated by the Havana offices of the Canada-Cuba Sports and Cultural Festivals and are part of the commemoration of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries. (*AIN*, 3/7/05)

July 4: Since 1990, communist Cuba has treated free of charge 18,000 Ukrainian children for hair loss, skin disorders, cancer, leukemia and other illnesses attributed to the radioactivity unleashed by the 1986 power plant explosion in Chernobyl, the worst civilian disaster of the nuclear age. Up to 800 children travel to the Tarará Pediatric Hospital each year for at least two months, accompanied by parents or tutors. Some stay years. Most get treatment for hair loss, spending 15 minutes a day under an infrared light after a lotion made from human placenta is applied to their heads.

Hair grows back in 60 percent of cases, said Dr. Giraldo Hernández. Many children suffer from vitiligo, a patchy loss of skin pigmentation, which is treated with another placenta-based lotion and lots of sunlight on the beach. Psoriasis is also common. More serious cases of cancer require chemotherapy or surgery. Six leukemia patients have received bone marrow transplants in Cuba. (*Reuters*, 4/7/05)

July 4: Mayors from 11 countries converged on Cuba's second largest city for the fourth meeting of mayors in support of Santiago de Cuba. The visiting municipal officials hail from Mexico, the US, Spain, Martinique, France, Italy, Portugal, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Jamaica. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 5/7/05)

July 5 : Strategies to strengthen relations between Cuba and the Caribbean Community were on the agenda at the 26th CARICOM Summit of Heads of State, which finished on the island of Saint Lucia. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 5/7/05)

July 5: The Canadian women's baseball team is helping baseball-mad Cuba into the international women's game by playing the Cubans in a five-game exhibition series starting on July 7 in Havana. Manager Andre Lachance of Burlington, Ontario, rounded out the Canadian roster by adding 10 players to the team at the conclusion of the Canadian women's championships in Mississauga, Ontario. Lachance said it was important to field a team this year in order to have an event before next year's World Cup, but also to help Cuba prepare for the World Cup. (*Canadian Press*, 5/7/05)

July 6: Renowned Canadian ecologist David Suzuki delivered a master conference at the 5 th International Convention on Environment and Development, taking place in Havana. Some 150 experts from 25 countries, including Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Argentina, Italy, Portugal and Spain, are attending the event. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/7/05)

July 6: For the first time, the Dominican Republic will host the ministerial meeting of Cariforum - a regional organization made up of 15 Caribbean member-nations of Caricom, Haiti, Cuba and the host country. The 14th Cariforum Ministerial Meeting will be held July 14-15 and will focus on the future of European cooperation with the Caribbean region, said Onofre Rojas, the European Funds national coordinator in Santo Domingo. (*AIN*, 7/7/05)

July 6: Cuban Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas arrived in China on a working visit. Upon his arrival in Beijing, Cabrisas held talks with Chinese Health Minister Gao Qiang on mutual cooperation in that field. He also met with Tang Ruoxin, president of the Sinosure company which is in charge of commercial relations with foreign enterprises. Following a meeting with Chinese entrepreneurs who maintain economic and commercial relations with Cuba, Ricardo Cabrisas continued with his working agenda in China, which includes a tour of the central Henan and eastern Fujian provinces. He will be meeting with trade officials in those Chinese territories. (*AIN*, 7/7/05)

July 8: Fidel Castro sent his condolences to British Queen Elizabeth II for the terror bombings in London, saying his nation knew what it was like to suffer from terrorism. "We have received with profound consternation the news of the attacks using explosives on the public transportation system in London, which has cost dozens of lives and hundreds of wounded," Castro wrote in the note published in the Communist Party daily Granma. "At this hour of mourning for Great Britain, let me express to you and your people our deepest condolences," the letter said. "Let me assure you that the people of Cuba, who have been the victims of terrorism for more than four decades, share your pain and reject this unjustifiable attack against the British people." (*AP*, 8/7/05)

July 8: Air Supply is performing for two nights in Cuba, adding the communist country to a list of exotic venues including North Vietnam, Lebanon and mainland China. Vocalist Russell Hitchcock said the rock group produces music that is able to transcend language. "We're always very excited to take our music to places we've never been before," he said at a news conference in Havana. Cuba invited Air Supply to the island, indicating a new pattern of encouraging rock and pop music in a country where rockers were once chastised for having long hair. (*Canadian Press*, 9/7/05)

July 9: Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez has offered his country's support to Cuba in a gesture to help the island on its efforts to deal with the damage inflicted by hurricane Dennis. "We are confident that the Cuban people will come out of this stronger than before, as it has always done before," Chavez noted in a message in which he also offered Caracas' aid to Haiti, where the hurricane left 22 dead. Chavez spoke at a rally in which he praised the work of Cuban teachers who are helping in the Venezuelan Literacy Program. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/7/05)

July 10: Hurricane Dennis interrupted a five-game women's series between Canada and Cuba. Canada won the first two games before the storm pounded the island, killing 10 people. Latinoamericano Stadium, where the series was to be played, is now being used as a shelter for local citizens. (*The Globe & Mail*, 11/7/05)

July 11: During an appearance on state television evaluating damages inflicted to the Caribbean island, Fidel Castro said the European Union could save its money to assist Cuba, because his government was only accepting humanitarian aid from "friendly" nations such as Venezuela. (*AP*, 12/7/05)

July 11: The Committee to Protect Journalists is very concerned about the deteriorating health of several imprisoned Cuban journalists who have been jailed for more than two years, and it renews its call for the immediate and unconditional release of the 23 writers and editors unjustly jailed for reporting and commenting on the news. In a series of interviews with relatives of the jailed writers and editors, CPJ has found that several journalists who were ill before being jailed have seen their health worsen in prison, while others have contracted new illnesses behind bars. [[Health of jailed Cuban journalists deteriorates](#)] (*CPJ Press Release*, 11/7/05)

July 12: In the wake of Hurricane Dennis, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has released \$50,000 in aid for Cuba. An OCHA spokesperson in Geneva said that the funds "will help with emergency response coordination and the purchase of relief items". (*EFE*, 12/7/05)

July 12: France has invited Cuban authorities to its Bastille Day reception, breaking ranks with other European Union countries opposed to rewarding a communist government that silences dissent. Invitations were sent to Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and other members of Cuba's Communist government and cultural milieu for the July 14 event, a French diplomat said. In compensation, French ambassador Marie-France Pagnier will hold a working meeting with dissidents and European ambassadors at her residence. "It was a dead-end. We could not invite both the government and dissidents at the same time. So we are going to invite some Cuban authorities," said French press attache Renaud Collard. French diplomats expect other EU members to follow their lead over the next year until EU policy on Cuba comes up for review. But other European diplomats said inviting Cuban dissidents for "a cup of tea" was not enough. "It is ironic that Bastille Day, when the French revolution began, is being used to befriend the last authoritarian regime in the Americas," said one diplomat who asked not to be named. (*Reuters*, 12/7/05)

July 12: Panama and Cuba could make progress toward re-establishing diplomatic relations during the upcoming Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) after ties were broken in 2004, said Panamanian foreign minister Samuel Lewis. Lewis recalled that during the November 2004 Ibero-American Summit in Costa Rica, Cuba and Panama agreed to re-establishing consular relations, as a first step towards full diplomatic relations. (*AP*, 12/7/05)

July 12: The remains of Cuban Captain Hermes Peña Torres, a bodyguard of Argentinean- Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Ché Guevara, were identified in the province of Salta, Argentina, where he died in April 1964, confirmed Raúl Juan Reynoso, an Argentinean Federal Judge in Orán. Peña Torres was a member of the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP – Guerrilla Army of the Poor). His remains were found in the cemetery in the Northern city of Orán, less than 50 kilometres away from the Bolivian border. (*La Tercera*, 13/7/05)

July 12: A Venezuelan cargo ship with hurricane emergency aid is scheduled to arrive in Cuba, officials said. Fidel Castro expressed appreciation for aid from Venezuela, "a sister country with which we have excellent relations," during

a seven-hour television broadcast detailing damage left by Dennis. Cuban officials estimate they need at least 400 million dollars just to rebuild or repair the affected homes. That money might come from "savings" or possibly "we'll have to ask for help from friends," Castro said. A Venezuelan ship transporting items that include some 1,000 tonnes of diesel, 20,000 roofing sheets, and 50 electricity pylons is due to arrive in Cuba, Castro said. (*EFE*, 13/7/05)

July 13: Cuba's communist government is expanding a humanitarian mission that has already sent a fifth of the island's doctors to work in Venezuela, committing more aid to its close ally as Cuba receives massive shipments of Venezuelan oil. The Venezuelan government says the program involves about 20,000 Cubans, including more than 14,000 physicians -- an estimated 20 percent of Cuba's doctors. Fidel Castro has pledged to have up to 30,000 health care workers in Venezuela by the end of the year. But so many doctors have gone to Venezuela that some Cubans complain health care on the island is suffering. Castro insists they are mistaken, and that there are enough doctors to go around. Both countries, he says, are reaping the benefits of cooperation. "This is the first time I've left Cuba, and I've never seen anything like this," said Dr. Leonardo Hernandez, 27, checking the pulse of a Venezuelan 2-month-old boy in a home where wires dangled from light fixtures and concrete walls were covered in grime. When he and his colleagues arrived two years ago, they found malnourished children and widespread diarrhea. Now, they say, vitamins are making the children healthier, and there have been vast improvements in sanitation. Cuban doctors who accept an invitation to work in Venezuela receive an extra stipend of \$186 a month from the Venezuelan government, while Cuba continues to pay their families their regular salaries, commonly in the range of \$25 a month. (*AP*, 13/7/05)

July 13: Cuban dissident leaders told French Ambassador, Marie-France Pagnier, that the European Union (EU) is giving in to the government of Fidel Castro, without any gestures of political opening. "It's a prerogative of the French government, (but) virtually all oppositionists believe it's an erroneous policy to marginalize the dissidents and favour the government", said Vladimiro Roca, a representative of All United. Also present were Elizardo Sánchez, of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, Martha Beatriz Roque, president of the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society; Oswaldo Payá, of the Christian Liberation Movement; and Manuel Cuesta, of Arco Progresista. (*AFP*, 13/7/05)

July 14: Mahamoudou Ouedraogo, Minister of Culture, Arts and Tourism of Burkina Faso, signed a cooperation agreement with Cuba that broadens bilateral relations. "Cuba represents a model to follow in fine arts, particularly sculpture and painting, but also in literature and the performing arts," he said in talks with Cuban Deputy Culture Minister Ismael Gonzalez. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/7/05)

July 14: Mexico "views favourably" the policy of "inclusion, not isolation" adopted by Madrid toward Cuba and Venezuela and wishes that the cases of these two countries be addressed in the context of the next Ibero-American Summit, said Mexican foreign minister, Luis Ernesto Derbez. At a joint press conference with his Spanish counterpart, Derbez said that both countries agree "on the need to find solutions, within the Ibero-American community, to regional issues, particularly vis à vis Cuba and Venezuela, in an appropriate institutional framework that fosters dialogue and cooperation as opposed to other methods". (*AFP*, 14/5/07)

July 14: After months of snubbing Europe by refusing to attend diplomatic cocktail parties, the Cuban government broke the ice by sending Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and other well-known Cuban figures to the French Embassy for its Bastille Day celebration. Perez Roque spent about an hour at the event, joined by Abel Prieto, the island's culture minister; Alicia Alonso, the director of the National Ballet of Cuba; and Eusebio Leal, Havana's city historian. "I think it's clear that the policy of confrontation with our country (...) has failed, and our presence here is testimony to that," Perez Roque told the press as his car was leaving the embassy. "I've come here with a feeling of national pride and dignity, and they've treated me well." A day before the Bastille Day celebration, the French government invited several dissidents to its embassy, a gathering Perez Roque called "irrelevant." He said the activists are "mercenaries" paid by the United States whose time has passed. (*AP*, 14/7/05)

July 15: France moved beyond EU nations toward normal relations with Cuba, inviting Communist officials to a Bastille Day celebration for the first time in two years, reversing an EU policy of inviting dissidents instead. "France seeks to open frank and constructive dialogue, which is indispensable to understanding and progress," said French Ambassador Marie-France Pagnier. "The time has come to take the honest, courageous and sometimes difficult and painful steps to build the foundation for this dialogue," she said. "I am sad," said Portugal's ambassador, Mario Rodino de Matos. "It is a success for France, but I would have preferred that the European Union keep a unified position," he said, as other European diplomats regretted in private France's loner role. (AFP, 15/7/05)

July 15: Hundreds of Venezuelan doctors have marched through the country's capital, Caracas, demanding the expulsion of Cuban doctors. President Hugo Chavez says he invited the medical staff into the country to provide free health care for the poor. But Venezuela's doctors, who are also asking for better wages, say the Cubans are taking their jobs. They say the government is trading its oil revenues to pay for some 20,000 Cuban doctors and dentists. Dressed in white medical gowns and bearing national flags, some 400 doctors and medical staff carried banners reading 'No More Cubanisation!' as they marched. (El Universal, BBC, 15/7/05)

July 15: The European Union's revolving presidency - currently held by Great Britain - expressed its concern about recent incidents in Havana when the Cuban regime broke up a peaceful ceremony by dissidents. The EU presidency's office said in a short communique released by the British Embassy in Havana that it viewed with "concern" the manner in which Cuban authorities broke up a small peaceful demonstration on July 13 along the capital's coastal Malecón highway. The statement recalled that on June 13 the EU Foreign Relations Council had condemned the actions of Cuba's communist government against freedom of expression and assembly on the island. (EFE, 15/7/05)

July 18: Reporters Without Borders deplored the use of violence by State Security and National Revolutionary Police on the Isle of Youth against Lamasiel Gutiérrez Romero, an independent journalist of the Nueva Prensa Cubana news agency, who was roughed up, held for seven hours and fined for resisting the authorities as she was about to travel to the Cuban mainland on 14 July. [[Authorities rough up independent journalist](#)] (RSF Press Release, 18/7/05)

July 19: Mexico should demand an explanation from the US as to how the alleged terrorist Luis Posada Carriles passed through its territory to get to the US, said the president of Cuba's National Assembly of the People's Power, Ricardo Alarcón. He added that while Cuba has no evidence to suspect a Mexican government conspiracy to allow Posada to use its territory to reach the US, it is a serious issue when a fugitive accused of terrorism can enter a national territory undetected. (El Universal, 19/7/05)

July 20: Argentina will send humanitarian aid to mitigate the damages caused by ravaging Hurricane Dennis, said the Foreign Ministry in a communiqué. The communiqué also indicates that the White Helmets Commission will send 820,000 purification tablets to the island to treat 2.5 million litres of water for human consumption. (AFP, 20/7/05)

July 22: Venezuelans' support for Fidel Castro's model of government and the installation of socialism in the Southern nation has been growing, two recent polls show, although a majority remains critical of the Cuban system. A poll released by the Caracas-based Datanálisis company showed 11.6 percent approved using Castro's Cuba as a model for Venezuela, while 63.2 percent said they were opposed. Another nationwide poll, carried out by Seijas & Asociados in late May and early June, showed that about 48 percent of respondents preferred a socialist over a capitalist system, with less than 26 percent preferring the latter. Datanálisis director Luis Vicente León warned, however, that the various poll results must be analyzed "with tweezers" and do not necessarily mean that Venezuelans want a Cuban-styled system in their country. Venezuelans, León said, associate the Cuban system not with socialism but with communism, which the majority abhors. "There remains a very high level of rejection of extreme models such as communism," he said. (The Miami Herald, 22/7/05)

July 22: Officials of the Inter-American Press Association agreed at their quarterly review of press freedom in the hemisphere that countries warranting special attention are the United States, Mexico, Cuba and Venezuela. On Communist Cuba, IAPA said that "official censorship has increased" along with discrimination against independent journalists. The organization also publicly asked the Cuban government to release 24 imprisoned journalists, 12 of whom have serious health problems or have contracted illnesses in prison and are being denied access to adequate medical attention. [[IAPA Press Release](#)] (EFE, 22/7/05)

July 24: France called for the immediate release of Cuban dissidents rounded up two days ago prior to a planned protest outside the French embassy in Havana. "The French authorities are following this situation with the greatest attention so that all those arrested be freed without delay," the French foreign ministry said in a statement. The protest was aimed at encouraging France and other European Union governments to keep pressure on Havana to release dissidents jailed in 2003. France said it would continue to work with its European partners to press for the release of all political prisoners in Cuba and the respect for human rights. "It is determined to pursue its efforts relentlessly to achieve this goal through contacts with the Cuban authorities and maintaining a close and regular dialogue with opposition groups and civil society in the country," the statement said. (Reuters, 24/7/05)

July 24: The European Union voiced deep concern over Cuba's latest clampdown on dissidents, lamenting a renewed hardening of stance in Havana six months after the EU suspended sanctions against the island state. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, welcomed news that key opposition figure Marta Beatriz Roque had been released, but condemned the rounding up of more than a dozen dissidents. "The European Commission remains extremely concerned about the current political situation in Cuba," it said in a statement. "Recent events appear to show a clear hardening in the attitude of the government of Cuba." "While the Commission is pleased at news of the release of Martha Beatriz Roque, the arrest of a number of Cuban dissidents on (Friday) nevertheless illustrates the extreme social tension in Cuba at the present time." (ANSA, 24/7/05)

July 25: Recent crackdown on dissidents in Havana prompted the leader of the European Parliament's centre-right, Hans-Gert Poettering, to write to the UK presidency calling for a "clear reaction" to the arrests at member state level. "The EU policy towards Cuba has failed. It was a mistake of the Council not to continue the diplomatic sanctions that were lifted in January 2005", Mr Poettering wrote. "It was wrong as there has been no progress with regard to the human rights situation and political freedom in Cuba", he added. The criticism comes on top of Polish Members of the European Parliament, Boguslaw Sonik and Jacek Protasiewicz's attacks on the EU's approach to Havana in May. A UK foreign office spokesman said that while relations between London and Havana are hardly warm, "the UK has a policy of constructive engagement with Cuba, of dialogue with both the government and with civil society". EU opinion on Cuba remains slightly divided despite the unanimous decision to keep talking to Castro, however. (EUObserver, 25/7/05)

July 25: Reporters Without Borders roundly condemned the arrest of independent journalist Oscar Mario González of the Grupo de Trabajo Decoro news agency, who was detained at the same time as at least 15 other dissidents on the morning of 22 July. Referring to the 21 other journalists already being held in dreadful conditions in prisons throughout the island since 18 March 2003, the organisation said González had become "the 22nd example of the deplorable state of press freedom in Cuba." (RWB, Press Release, Canadian News Wire, 25, 28/7/05)

July 25: The Czech Republic protested against the arrest of over 20 Cuban dissidents on July 22, and called on the Cuban government to observe basic human rights and to release all political prisoners, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The Czech Republic has been an outspoken critic of the dictatorial regime in Cuba for a time. "The Foreign Ministry of the Czech Republic voices a deep concern over the latest wave of reprisals against the members of political opposition and civic society in Cuba," reads the statement. (CTK, 25/7/05)

July 26: Fidel Castro said that "Operation Miracle", through which Havana contributes toward the recuperation of sight by tens of thousands of Latin Americans, will now include the nations of the Caribbean Community (Caricom). Castro made the disclosure in a speech marking National Rebellion Day in recognition of the attack on the Moncada Barracks, which preceded the Cuban revolution. He said the Cuban-Venezuelan "Operation Miracle" is a humanitarian triumph that would allow thousands of poor Venezuelans to have cataract and other eye operations in Cuba. Castro said that the first set of patients from the Caribbean have already been treated in Havana. (*CMC News Agency, 27/7/05*)

July 26: Waving signs, launching fireworks and chanting "Viva Fidel," more than 1,000 people protested in front of the US Embassy in Mexico to mark the 52nd anniversary of the start of the Cuban revolution. Braving a driving rain, demonstrators gathered at a monument to national hero Benito Juárez, then marched dozens of blocks before invading the nation's capital's well-kept Reforma Avenue and erecting a makeshift stage in front of metal barriers guards set up to protect the embassy. Police blocked traffic for more than an hour as a string of organizers shouted discourses praising Fidel Castro and attacking a decades-old US embargo on the Communist island. (*AP, 26/7/05*)

July 27: The European Commission - the EU's executive - acknowledged that the bloc's rapprochement with the Cuban Communist regime has not served to mitigate repression on the island, but it has brought about "positive things" by reinforcing the role of the internal dissident movement, a high ranking official said. "It is true that suspending, in January 2005, the sanctions imposed in June 2003 has not alleviated repression on the island. But neither were results obtained in the 18 months the sanctions were in effect," Amadeu Altafaj, spokesman for European Development and Humanitarian Aid Commissioner Louis Michel, said. According to the spokesman, the new EU policy, championed by Spain, has fostered "some positive elements," as "dialogue and contacts with the dissident movement have intensified over these months," and "for the first time in many years, the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba was held, on May 20." (*EFE, 27/7/05*)

July 27: In Caracas, before a group of Uruguayan business people, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, said that Cuba should be able to attend the Summit of the Americas that will take place in Mar del Plata, Argentina. "Demands for Cuba's participation in the next Summit of the Americas would be a real show of courage, unity and bravery on the part of the peoples of the Americas", said Chávez during the opening ceremony of the First Venezuela-Uruguay Macro Negotiation Round. "If one of us doesn't go, nobody goes", he added. (*World Data Service, 27/7/05*)

July 27: Mexico's foreign secretary said that there are "no problems" in his country's relations with Cuba despite tensions that strained bilateral ties last year. Luis Ernesto Derbez's comments came after Mexico announced that it had received Havana's approval of Jose Ignacio Piña as the country's new envoy to Cuba. Since February, there has been no Mexican ambassador assigned to the communist island, but Derbez said that this had not affected tourism, investment, legislators' visits or cultural relations between the two countries. (*EFE, 27/7/05*)

July 28: Fidel Castro was absent from the 4th Presidential Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) that is taking place in Panama. Responding to the press, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said that all coordinating mechanisms are valid, and can contribute to solve problems like the foreign debt strangling Latin America and the Caribbean. "The Venezuelan effort to establish PetroCaribe to supply oil on easy payment terms to Caribbean countries is very important." Thirteen of the 15 members of the narrower Caribbean Community group, or Caricom -- mainly island nations -- have already signed onto Venezuela's oil initiative. Cuba managed to get a clause condemning the US economic boycott inserted in a draft resolution of the summit declaration, which also stated support for greater representation of developing countries on the UN Security Council. The Cuban delegation also presented a proposal for a special declaration on terrorism, which ministers should formally approve. (*The New York Times, Prensa Latina, 28/7/05*)

July 29: Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage met with Panamanian President Martin Torrijos within the framework of the 4th Presidential Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS), that opened in Panama. Cuba and Panama

resumed consular relations shortly after Torrijos took office. Havana had severed diplomatic links last year in reaction to outgoing Panamanian president Mireya Moscoso's pardoning Luis Posada Carriles. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/7/05)

July 29: Cuba regarded the 4th Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and the Declaration of Panama, as very positive, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said. In a conversation with journalists, he assured the meeting had a very constructive and comprehensive character, most clearly demonstrated by the Panama Declaration which rejects terrorism as well as condemn the over 40-year-old US economic blockade of Cuba. Perez Roque said that co-operative meetings such as this assist the search for solutions to regional problems such as external debt, development, and terrorism. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/7/05)

July 29: The World Council of Churches (WCC) general secretary Dr. Samuel Kobia started a pastoral visit to Cuba, responding to an invitation from the island's Council of Churches. Kobia's agenda includes meetings with religious leaders and visits to sites of social interest in several Cuban provinces. The World Council of Churches, founded on August 23, 1948 in Amsterdam, has its current headquarter in Geneva and assembles 342 churches in over 100 countries, as well as 400 million Christians from the evangelic and protestant faiths. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/7/05)

July 29: Cuban foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, said relations with Mexico remain "troubled". "Relations with Mexico have been affected; there are no normal relations between Cuba and Mexico, there can't be because (...) Mexico sided with the United States in a campaign against Cuba at the UN Human Rights Commission", he said to the media. (*AFP*, 29/7/05)

July 31: Ecuador's president, Alfredo Palacios, thanked Cuba for her support to social programs implemented by local governments in an effort to upgrade the living standards of poor people. Palacios attended the signing of several cooperation agreements on different branches between the Consortium of Ecuador's Provincial Councils (Concope) and Cuba, under the auspice of the United Nations. Ramiro Gonzalez, Pichincha's civil governor and CONCOPE's highest representative and the Cuban ambassador, Ileana Diaz Arguelles, signed the agreements promoting economic, scientific and technical cooperation. (*Prensa Latina*, 31/7/05)

July 31: Cuba's Vice President Carlos Lage affirmed that the Venezuela's initiatives, Petrocaribe and Miracle Mission, were very well received by the IV Summit of Caribbean States Association (ACS) that met in Panama City. This type of ACS conference is essential to discuss the present world political situation and the fight against poverty, injustice and the pernicious effects of colonialism, Lage told *Prensa Latina* and a group of special Cuban envoys. (*Prensa Latina*, 31/7/05)

July 31: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announced that 100,000 Latin Americans will undergo eye surgery in Cuba this year, as part of the island's Milagro (Miracle) Medical Program, which he said will also include patients from the United States as well. During his weekly radio and TV appearance, President Chavez said the Cuban medical initiative is a free-of-charge eye surgery program for poor Latin American and Caribbean people. Chavez said patients from the US were also being included since the Bush administration continues to exclude a sizeable portion of the population from health care. The Venezuelan leader said the Milagro project is one of the initiatives of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), and is being jointly implemented by Venezuela and Cuba in order to offer assistance to those who most need it. (*AIN*, 1/8/05)

Terrorism

July 3: The United States must close its Guantanamo Bay prison, says a new report by a top European body. The treatment of about 500 terrorism suspects at the prison has encouraged hatred towards the West and bolstered membership of the al-Qaida network, the report by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

concluded. The OSCE commissioned the report from its human rights representative, Belgian senate president Anne-Marie Lizin. (*AlJazeera*, 3/7/05)

July 9: Interpol suspects three Irish men sentenced to 15 years in prison for training guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), and who disappeared a year ago, might be hiding out in Cuba. "We have intelligence reports to that effect. Consequently the Colombian Secret Service (DAS), through Interpol, has requested its Cuban counterpart" to take pertinent action, Victor Cruz, Interpol's Director in Bogotá, told local Caracol Television. (*AFP*, 9/7/05)

July 13: Military investigators found evidence of degrading and abusive treatment by interrogators at the prison for terrorist suspects at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee said. Senator Carl Levin said their investigation, which looked into FBI allegations of abuse of prisoners, shows that the purpose of the abuses recorded by investigators was to gather intelligence -- and indicated that the problem was not an isolated one. "It is clear from the report that detainee mistreatment was not simply the product of a few rogue military police in a night shift," said Levin, Democrat-Michigan. (*CNN*, 13/7/05)

July 30: Former US President Jimmy Carter said the detention of terror suspects at the Guantánamo Bay Naval base was an embarrassment and had given extremists an excuse to attack the United States. Mr. Carter also criticized the US-led war in Iraq as "unnecessary and unjust." "I think what's going on in Guantanamo Bay and other places is a disgrace to the USA," he told a news conference at the Baptist World Alliance's centenary conference in Birmingham, England. "I wouldn't say it's the cause of terrorism, but it has given impetus and excuses to potential terrorists to lash out at our country and justify their despicable acts." (*The New York Times*, 30/7/05)

Security

July 8: Any "imperialist" attack against either Cuba or Venezuela would be resisted by both nations as one, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said in an apparent reference to the United States. "The Cuban and Venezuelan peoples and revolutions are one and the same," the left-wing leader said during a ceremony at which he awarded decorations to more than 90 Cuban teachers who had worked in a Venezuelan literacy program. "The world should know, in case there's anyone out there who hasn't realized it yet (...) that any imperialist attack against one of us will be an attack against both," he said. (*Swissinfo.News*, 9/7/05)

July 18: The Cuban army is staging military exercises to mark the 52nd anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks on July 26, 1953, considered the start of the revolution. The three-days exercises are taking place in Havana province. Tanks, armoured vehicles, artillery and anti-aircraft units are participating in the manoeuvres. Reconnaissance, engineering, communications and special operations units are also taking part in the exercises, as well as fighter planes and helicopters, Cuban media reported. (*EFE*, 20/7/05)

July 29: Venezuela's Brigadier General Eduardo Antonio Centeno Mena, director of the Simon Bolivar Higher Army School, highlighted the nature of relations between his country and Cuba upon arriving in Havana. After arriving at the Jose Marti International Airport heading his country's delegation, Centeno Mena said he is satisfied with the exemplary links between both nations. The Venezuelan officers were welcomed by the director of the Máximo Gómez Revolutionary Armed Forces Academy, Division General Urbelino Betancourt Cruces and Central Army's General Staff chief Brigadier General Rafael Bello Rivero. The delegation's agenda in Cuba includes celebrating a graduation ceremony, as well as visiting Cuban military schools and units. (*World Data Service, Prensa Latina*, 29,30/7/05)

US-Cuba Relations

July 4: The Naples Rugby Football Club will compete against the Cuba National Rugby Football team in Havana. "There's no political agenda". "We wanted to go to Cuba because of the mystique of it," Sean Reddick, part-time rugby player, full-time trial lawyer, said. The Naples team has invited Fidel Castro to attend. Reddick insisted there's no political agenda. (*The Miami Herald*, 4/7/05)

July 4: The US Pastors for Peace set off its 16th occasion protest caravan against the US embargo through Canada and the US, reported *Granma* newspaper. During their tour, the organization's members aim to collect 80 tons of humanitarian aid, particularly medical equipment, school items and computers, which will be donated to Cuba. (*AIN*, 4/7/05)

July 4: James C. Cason, the head of the American mission in Cuba, defended his outspoken advocacy of dissidents during a July 4 celebration, marking the last public address of his three-year tour on the island. Responding to criticism he has continuously provoked Fidel Castro's government since arriving here in 2002, Cason took issue with "those who think it's more dignified to protest the Cuban regime's repression behind closed doors." "Is it provocative to point out that Cubans live under one of the most repressive regimes in the world?" Cason asked several hundred people at an American Independence Day celebration at his official residence. [[Speech by Chief of Mission James C. Cason](#)] (*AP*, 5/7/05)

July 4: Cuban musicians, writers and artists celebrated in Havana the 229th anniversary of the US Declaration of Independence. In the activity, held at Havana's Amadeo Roldán Theater, Cuban musicians performed pieces from universal composers like Erich Kleiber, Igor Stravinski and Leopoldo Stokowski, among others. The program included all music genres, as well as merged US and Cuban rhythms. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/7/05)

July 5: Conservative American farmers, businessmen and some Republican lawmakers are likely to oppose the US policy limiting trade with the island. As Congress voted down amendments to the policy, those pushing for more interaction with Cuba questioned how the embargo can endure. "Will someone please explain this policy to me?" Dwight A. Roberts, the Texan president of the US Rice Producers Association, asked a news conference in Havana after describing financial losses to thousands of rice growers when US restrictions were tightened. This year, he said, the association will sell less than a third of the rice it exported to Cuba in 2004. "The policy just doesn't make sense," said Roberts, who visited Cuba in late June. (*AP*, 5/7/05)

July 6: James C. Cason, head of the American mission in Cuba, said he believes he accomplished everything he could during nearly three years in Havana, and will leave the island September 10 with a clear conscience. "We've been as appropriately aggressive as we could be," Cason told the press at his luxurious home in a residential suburb of Havana. "I have no regrets." Cason said that his successor is someone who will carry out US policy in the same devout, unwavering fashion. "Fidel said there couldn't be anyone worse than me," said Cason. "He may be sorry." (*AP*, 6/7/05)

July 7: Michael Parmly, a career US diplomat with experience in promoting democracy and human rights, will replace James Cason as the State Department's top man in Havana, Cuba experts familiar with the matter say. Parmly, a 26-year State Department veteran, served in 2001 as a deputy assistant secretary for democracy, human rights and labor, focusing on Europe, Africa, Latin America and South Asia. He recently returned from several months as the State Department's representative on the Provincial Reconstruction Team in the Afghan province of Kandahar, one of the redoubts of the former Taliban regime. He also teaches a course on Europe at the National War College. Parmly served as a peace corps volunteer in Colombia 1973-1975, but has no diplomatic experience in Latin America. This is in contrast to Cason, who was the policy director in the Western Hemisphere bureau at the State Department and a diplomat in Jamaica and Honduras before taking on his job in Havana three years ago. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/7/05)

July 7: The game between the Naples Rugby Football Club and the Cuban National Club on the Fourth of July in Havana was canceled, according to Kenneth Dunne, match secretary of the Naples club. Dunne, who was not part of

the 45-person contingent that made the trip to Cuba, said he did not know the reason for the cancellation. Doyle Junker, the father of player Dax Junker, who traveled with the team, said his son told him it was the Cuban side that canceled the match. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/7/05)

July 11: The United States expressed its condolences to the families of those in Cuba who lost their lives as a result of Hurricane Dennis. In a statement issued by the State Department, the U.S. Interests Section in Havana informed the Cuban government that they "were prepared to provide immediate humanitarian assistance of emergency supplies to help those Cubans affected by the hurricane". Also, they offer "to deploy an assessment team to Cuba to independently help determine what relief supplies were most needed". [[US Assistance to Cuba for Hurricane Dennis](#)] (*Office of the Spokesman*, 11/7/05)

July 11: Fidel Castro's communist government, laboring to recover from widespread damage caused by Hurricane Dennis, turned down a US offer of \$50,000 in aid, American officials said. US State Department officials in Havana and Washington said the offer was made for emergency supplies. "Unfortunately, the Castro government declined the offer," State Department spokesman Tom Casey said in Washington. During an appearance on state television, Fidel Castro said Cuba would accept no American assistance while the US trade embargo of more than 40 years remains in place. "We would never accept," said Castro. "If they offered \$1 billion we would say no." Nevertheless, the Cuban leader said, "we are grateful" for the offer. (*AP*, 11/7/05)

July 11: The Coast Guard has increased patrols and aerial surveillance off the South Florida coast, preparing for a rising number of migrants from hurricane-battered Cuba trying to make it to the United States. "The cutters are out in force," said Coast Guard Cmdr. Timothy Ciampaglio in Key West. Two out-of-town Coast Guard patrol boats have been sent to the Keys, federal Customs and Border Protection planes and helicopters are assisting with more aerial surveillance flights and the Florida Highway Patrol is checking boats towed southbound on state roads to see if they might be used by smugglers. (*Sun Sentinel*, 12/7/05)

July 11: One of the four opening rounds of next spring's World Baseball Classic will take place in Florida, but it remains uncertain whether the powerful Cuban national team will participate in the 16-team, 18-day event, officials for the fledgling tournament said. All-Star pitcher Danys Baez of the Tampa Bay Devil Rays, who defected from the Cuban team during the 1999 Pan American Games, said Cuba has dominated international competition the past three decades because it has faced inferior competition. But in the World Baseball Classic, Cuba would play Panama and Puerto Rico in the first round, and if it advanced to the second round it likely would face the Dominican Republic or Venezuela. Another obstacle could be the tournament schedule, which has Cuba playing all its games on US soil, increasing the threat of defections. (*The Miami Herald*, 12/7/05)

July 11: The United States' detention of five Cubans convicted of being foreign spies is arbitrary and in violation of international law, according to a UN panel ruling, The UN Commission on Human Rights Arbitrary Detentions Working Group has adopted a resolution of its investigation into the case of the five Cubans imprisoned in the US. Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez, Fernando González Llort, Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar and René González Schwerert have been imprisoned in the US for almost 7 years. The UN Working Group, in Opinion No. 19/2005, noted three aspects of the detention and arrest of the five Cuban agents that made their detention arbitrary. Firstly, they were held in solitary confinement for 17 months, weakening their ability to mount an adequate defense, secondly most of the evidence against them was with-held, undermining an equal balance between the prosecution and the defense, and thirdly, the trial was held in Miami where it was impossible to select an impartial jury in a case linked with Cuba. (*Prensa Latina, Canadian Press*, 12/7/05)

July 12: As efforts to weaken US sanctions on Cuba seemed to gain strength on Capitol Hill last year, a young Cuban-American lobbyist and a first-term congresswoman from Florida swung into action to quash the initiatives. Mauricio Claver-Carone, a director of the US-Cuba Democracy Political Action Committee, contacted more than 120

lawmakers, donated money to their campaigns and urged them to reject any easing of the trade and travel sanctions. With first-term Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Pembroke Pines Democrat, urging her brethren to vote against the initiatives, Congress rejected five of the initiatives. Together, Claver-Carone and Wasserman Schultz represent a reorganization of the Cuban-American lobby in Washington that seems to be recovering the clout it had when the late Jorge Mas Canosa ran the Cuban American National Foundation. (*The Miami Herald*, 12/7/05)

July 13: Cuban forward Maikel Galindo, a member of the country's CONCACAF championship Gold Cup soccer team, apparently has started the process to defect to the United States, immigration officials confirmed. Galindo was one of two players who did not show up for the team's 2-1 loss to Canada in Foxboro, Massachusetts, a Spanish-language television station reported. The other player, goalie Odelin Molina, has not approached immigration officials, said an immigration spokeswoman. (*The Globe and Mail*, 13/7/05)

July 13: The head of the State Department's Cuba desk in Washington since 2002 will swap jobs with the No. 2 man at the US Embassy in Venezuela in a move that one analyst said shows the administration sees the "same dynamic" at play in Havana and Caracas. Kevin Whitaker, the coordinator of the Department's office of Cuban affairs, will become deputy chief of mission in Caracas in September. Whitaker will be replaced by Stephen MacFarland, a career diplomat specializing in Latin America. (*The Miami Herald*, 14/7/05)

July 15: The State Department is making the unusual offer of giving expedited visas to the Cuban sons of Iraq war hero Sgt. Carlos Lazo so they can visit him in the United States, people familiar with the case said. The offer is the latest twist in a case that opponents of the US embargo against Cuba have highlighted as a symbol of the human cost of travel restrictions to the island. Lazo confirmed to the press that his sons, Carlos Manuel, 19, and Carlos Rafael, 16, have been invited to the US Interest Section in Havana for an interview to explore visa options. A National Guard medic who received a bronze star for helping injured troops while under fire in Fallujah, Lazo tried and failed to visit his sons last year, just before new regulations went into place that limited family visits at once every three years. Lazo had been visiting his sons regularly since 1994. (*The Miami Herald*, 16/7/05)

July 16: American filmmakers who shot a movie in Cuba and screened it at the American Black Film Festival may have violated the 45-year-old economic embargo. What may be the first American feature film made in Cuba since Fidel Castro's revolution screened at the American Black Film Festival on Miami Beach. Not since 1959, when actor Errol Flynn made his last picture, "Cuban Rebel Girls" (tag line: "Filmed during the heaviest fighting of the Cuban revolution"), has an American filmmaker shot a movie on the communist island, said the creators of "Love & Suicide", a romantic drama shot in Havana over 12 days in December 2003. Cuba has been off-limits to American filmmakers with commercial motives since the US government imposed an embargo against the island in 1960. Luis Moro, a Cuban American filmmaker from Los Angeles, filmed "Love & Suicide" while attending the 2003 Havana International Film Festival, which was screening one of his earlier movies, "Anne B. Real". Moro traveled to Cuba with about 10 Americans -- actors, a director, a cinematographer. While there, they used wireless microphones and a digital camera the size of a shoebox to film 15 hours of scenes in the streets and parks of Old Havana, in cabs, bars and homes. The filmmakers say they did not cooperate with the Cuban government. (*The Miami Herald*, 16/7/05)

July 17: Wayne Smith, former chief of the US Interests Section in Havana, spoke in Coral Gables urging normal relations between the United States and Cuba. During an event at the Biltmore Hotel, Smith called for a change in US policy toward Cuba beginning with the easing of travel restrictions and, ultimately, ending the trade embargo on the island. "We should reduce tensions, not aggravate it, making it clear to the Cuban government that we do not have hostile intentions toward them," Smith said during a 40-minute speech at a conference titled Cuba and the United States: Relations in Permanent Conflict, Causes, Effects and Solutions. "I did not say lift the embargo without conditions," he said. (*The Miami Herald*, 17/7/05)

July 17: Cindy Domingo has been to Cuba a dozen times, but hopes she isn't pushing her luck too far for her 13th trip, when she'll travel without US government permission to protest tight new restrictions on visiting the communist country. Domingo, a longtime Seattle activist dedicated to humanitarian and feminist causes, will accompany three other Seattle-area women on the July 21 trip and expects to join hundreds of other defiant travelers in a "travel challenge." Domingo has been an active organizer for women's rights since attending the UN International Conference on Women in 1995. She sees Cuba as the site of great progress for women in labor, medicine and farming. She gave presentations at international conferences in Havana in the previous two years. (*Seattle Post*, 17/7/05)

July 18: The number of US travellers to Cuba has dropped more than 60% since last July (2004). This is the harshest consequence of tougher restrictions imposed on dealings with the island by President George W. Bush's administration to promote a democratic transition on the island. For the precarious Cuban economy this represents losses of \$95 million, excluding other restrictions on packages and family remittances. According to figures from the Treasury Department and organizations linked with the air travel industry, in the past 12 months some 55,000 people travelled from the United States to Cuba, about 35.7% of the number that had been visiting the island annually before the travel restrictions were imposed. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 18/7/05)

July 19: Louisiana State economic development officials are planning a third trip to Cuba in the hope of stirring up more business between the island nation and Louisiana businesses. This time, neither Governor Kathleen Blanco nor Mike Olivier, secretary of the Department of Economic Development, will be making the trip. Among the nine participants traveling to the communist nation on July 28th and 29th will be officials with the Port of South Louisiana, a medical equipment supplier in New Orleans, a dairy products producer and a rice shipment company. (*AP*, 19/7/05)

July 19: US farm and trade groups are urging Senate lawmakers this week to overturn a Treasury Department ruling they say has slashed agricultural exports to Cuba by altering how the country pays for US food orders. Congress authorized food sales to Cuba in 2000 if paid for in cash, a rare exception to the overall US trade embargo dating from 1963 against the Communist-ruled island. However, the Treasury Department issued a rule in February 2005 requiring Cuba to pay for American goods before they leave a US port. Senate panels are scheduled to meet to consider a bill funding the Treasury Department and other federal agencies beginning October 1. Farm groups are lobbying for lawmakers to include an amendment, which would roll back the Cuba trade rule. (*Reuters*, 19/7/05)

July 20: A lawyer for anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles is asking an immigration judge to throw out the US government's case against his client, arguing that it hangs on hearsay testimony that Posada masterminded the bombing of Cuban tourist sites and other terrorist acts. Attorney Eduardo Soto is also fighting Posada's deportation, saying that his client has had a relapse of skin cancer and has a worsening heart condition. US immigration authorities declined to comment on the motion. (*The Miami Herald*, 20/7/05)

July 20: The US Treasury Department and a key senator remained deadlocked over a Cuba trade dispute that is holding up Senate approval of officials to fill vacant senior jobs at the Treasury. Montana Democratic Senator Max Baucus, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, told four Treasury nominees at a hearing that he continues to be upset at an export rule change that makes it harder for agricultural producers to ship goods to Cuba. Baucus has threatened to block Treasury nominees until the rule is reversed. (*Reuters*, 20/7/05)

July 21: A humanitarian group's annual caravan to Cuba was interrupted when border officials started confiscating electronic items on aid-filled school buses trying to cross into Mexico. The group Pastors for Peace draws international attention each year to the US economic blockade on the communist country. Customs and Border Protection officials have in recent years cleared the group to cross the border, where they skirt US travel restrictions to the impoverished island by flying from Mexico. (*Daily Sentinel*, 21/7/05)

July 24: The European Union decision towards Cuba has only brought about more repression, and the policy should be reconsidered, one Cuban-American leader in Congress, Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, said. Mr. Diaz-Balart, a Republican of Florida, will be introducing legislation in the House to that effect, a spokeswoman said. "The resolution," Mr. Diaz-Balart said, "will denounce the most recent barbaric acts of repression by Castro's terrorist regime and call for greater solidarity from the international community with the Cuban people." The resolution will also call on the European Union to re-examine its current policy of "constructive" engagement with the Castro regime before the scheduled revisiting of the subject in June 2006, and urges America's representative to the United Nations to work with the world body's Human Rights Commission and other diplomatic organizations to secure international condemnation of the most recent crackdown. (*The New York Sun*, 25/7/05)

July 24: A new TV station backed by Venezuela's government began transmitting in various countries across Latin America. The Telesur network, which organizers call a Latin alternative to large media outlets like CNN, was being seen in Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil and Cuba as well as Venezuela, Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez said. The station, funded by Venezuela and also backed by Argentina, Uruguay and Cuba, has drawn concern in the US Congress, where House members last week approved a measure to transmit radio and television broadcasts to Venezuela to ensure citizens receive "accurate news." (*AP*, 24/7/05)

July 25: Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles used a false Salvadoran passport to fly to South Florida in the spring of 2000 -- about six months before using the same passport to travel to Panama, where he was arrested in connection with an alleged plot to kill Fidel Castro. Posada's April 26, 2000 trip to Miami, revealed in documents from the US Department of Homeland Security, may become a point of contention during deportation proceedings that resume for Posada, who has been accused of acts of terrorism. Use of a false passport to enter the country is a deportable offense in its own right. (*The Miami Herald*, 25/7/05)

July 25: A US immigration judge has denied a request for bail from the militant Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles. Judge William L. Abbott cited allegations that Posada is a terror suspect and concerns he would flee if granted bond. Listing a series of terror allegations against Posada over the years, Abbott said even Posada's participation in operations against Cuba in the early 1960s could be considered terror under today's standards. Abbott's statement seemed to catch by surprise Posada's lawyer, Matthew Archambeault, who interpreted it to mean the judge would include the Bay of Pigs invasion -- sponsored by the US government -- as an act of terror under today's definition of terrorism. Another issue Abbott cited was Venezuela's extradition request for Posada. He said that according to US law, a person detained in the United States for being illegally in the country and who is suspected of terrorism in another country must remain in custody. The judge rejected a request by Posada's lawyers to throw out the government's evidence against Posada on the ground it's hearsay. Abbott said hearsay was admissible in immigration court. (*BBC, The Miami Herald*, 25/7/05)

July 25: Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman announced that he will lead a 10-member trade delegation to Cuba from August 13 to 17. The visit will provide the chance to explore export opportunities for the state's agricultural products, as well as medical supplies. This will be the Governor's first trade mission since taking office in January. (*Southwest Nebraska News*, 25/7/05)

July 26: Fidel Castro commemorated the 52nd anniversary of his revolution by taking aim at his nemesis, the Bush administration, and bitterly accusing it of financing and promoting recent anti-government dissident demonstrations. Addressing an auditorium full of Communist Party leaders and handpicked supporters, Castro called the top US diplomat in Havana a "grotesque character," and sternly warned that future protests planned by Cuba's dissidents will be thwarted "as many times as necessary." Castro accused the US administration of promoting subversion and destabilization in the island through the leading role of its Interests Sections in Havana. He said the administration of US President George W Bush has used over a hundred million USD for that purpose, pursuing multiple aggressions against Cuba, including interference with radio and television transmissions. [[Discurso de Fidel Castro](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 27/7/05)

July 26: Pastors for Peace religious foundation leader Lucius Walter conveyed a special greeting to Fidel Castro, on the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barrack. Speaking from McAllen border crossing in Texas to the press, Walker said the 16th Friendship Caravan to Cuba members joyfully welcomed July 26th. Lucius Walker noted he remained at the McAllen border crossing to demand the US administration return a portion of the humanitarian aid to Cuba that North American authorities seized there. Customs agents and the Department of Commerce are holding a bus transporting 12 computers, printers, wires, scanners and other electronic means, he denounced. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/7/05)

July 26: In what authorities believe is a first, 19 migrants apparently smuggled from Cuba landed in an upscale residential area of Sanibel Island on Florida's Gulf Coast. The group, which included three women and a young child, was taken by the US Border Patrol to its Pembroke Pines station and later released. No boat was recovered at the landing site. It's the first time in recent memory, and perhaps ever, that smugglers have unloaded Cuban migrants as far north as Lee County, adding hours to a run that typically ends off the Florida Keys. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/7/05)

July 26: Cuba and Venezuela are attempting to install leftist governments throughout Latin America and are closest to achieving their objective in Bolivia, a Defence Department official said. Roger Pardo-Maurer, a deputy assistant secretary who specializes in Western Hemisphere issues, said Bolivia has become the main target of the two leftist Caribbean countries because revolutionary conditions exist there. "There is no question" that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez is "providing money and moral support" for Opposition forces in Bolivia, who are led by a populist congressman, Evo Morales. While Chavez provides the resources for the Bolivian Opposition, Fidel Castro provides the direction and organisation, Pardo-Maurer said. "They are trying to steer this revolution toward a Marxist-socialist populist state," said the Pentagon official, speaking to a gathering at the conservative Hudson Institute. (*Jamaica Observer*, 27/7/05)

July 27: US Undersecretary of State for Latin America Affairs, Roger Noriega accused Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and Fidel Castro of meddling in Bolivia. Noriega said that the Bolivian government is fully aware of the problem. The target of Noriega's attack was Bolivian presidential candidate and leader of coca farmers Evo Morales whom Noriega alleges is being backed by Chavez Frías and Castro. "It's no secret that Evo Morales reports to Caracas and Havana," Noriega said. (*Venezuelanalysis.Com*, 28/7/05)

July 27: Venezuelan Vice-president José Rangel Vicente affirmed that his government asked the US Justice Department to pass the case of Luis Posada Carriles on to the federal system. In a communiqué, Rangel affirmed that his government's request seeks Posada Carriles standing trial for the sabotage of a Cubana passenger plane in 1976, which killed 73 people, and not for the minor crime of violating US immigration regulations. (*Granma International*, 27/7/05)

July 28: The US administration of George W. Bush has created a new post, naming Caleb McCarry 'Cuba transition coordinator'. McCarry, a veteran Republican Party activist and old Latin America hand, is tasked with accelerating the demise of the regime of Fidel Castro. Introducing Mr McCarry at the State Department in Washington, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said the US was working with advocates of democratic change on the island. "We are working to deny resources to the Castro regime to break its blockade on information and to broadcast the truth about its deplorable treatment of the Cuban people," she said. The post was recommended in a 2004 report on Cuba by a commission headed by Ms Rice's predecessor Colin Powell. [[Announcement of Cuba Transition Coordinator](#)] (*BBC, The Guardian, Latin News Daily*, 29/7/05)

July 28: Stefan E. Brodie, president of Bro-Tech Corp., a company that manufactures water-purification materials under the name Purolite, pleaded guilty to engaging in illegal trade with Cuba. As part of a plea agreement, Brodie, 63, admitted to a single charge relating to the payment of travel expenses for a Bro-Tech salesman to travel to Cuba in the mid-1990s. He was fined \$10,000 and sentenced to one year on probation by US District Judge Mary A. McLaughlin in

Philadelphia. Brodie's plea brought to an end a tangled criminal prosecution that began five years ago. In 2000, a federal grand jury issued a 77-count indictment against Stefan Brodie; his brother, Donald, Bro-Tech's vice president; James E. Sabzali, company marketing director; and Bro-Tech, charging they violated the 1963 Cuban trade embargo. The company had sold water-purification materials to Cuba in the 1990s. The government charged that the sales violated the federal Trading with the Enemy Act. (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 29/7/05)

July 29: Roger F. Noriega, an outspoken critic of Cuba and Venezuela who has been assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs for the past two years, announced his resignation, saying he had served in government long enough. He resigned a day after the administration named Caleb McCarry, a Republican Congressional staff member, to a new position: "transition coordinator" for Cuba, with the mission of hastening a transition to democracy there. That took primary responsibility for Cuba, one of Mr. Noriega's favored issues, away from him. (*The New York Times*, 29/7/05)

July 29: "The Secret War. Crime Chronology 1959-2002", a revealing testimony of CIA assassination attempts against Fidel Castro, was launched at the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists headquarters. The book by retired Major General Fabian Escalante Font includes considerable information about terrorist acts by US governments and the CIA from 1959 to 2002. Cuba's Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon stressed at the ceremony that the publication is very timely and contains important thoughts on political crime just when notorious terrorist Luis Posada Carriles has been arrested in the US for migration charges. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/7/05)

July 29: A religious group that gathers humanitarian aid for Cuba urged US authorities to release 12 Canadian computers seized at the US Mexican border under American sanctions against Cuba's communist government. The 43 boxes of computer equipment donated by Canadians were en route to Cuba in an annual caravan organized by the Pastors for Peace group when they were seized by US border officials at McAllen, Texas. "These were Canadian computers that were confiscated by US customs," said Genevieve Mutschler, a volunteer from the Canadian province of British Columbia. "They were sent from Canada in support of Cuba in its struggle against the US embargo." (*The New York Times*, 29/7/05)

July 29: A top senator ended a seven-month standoff on Treasury Department nominees after the Bush administration clarified new rules that the lawmaker said made it harder for US companies to sell food to Cuba. "I pushed the Treasury Department hard so that agricultural exporters could continue to sell their products to Cuba," Senator Max Baucus, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee, said in a statement. "I'm optimistic that this clarification will provide US agricultural exporters in Montana and elsewhere with another option to restart sales to Cuba." Agricultural sales to Cuba fell by about 25 percent in the first five months of the year compared with the same period in 2004 after the Treasury Department ruled in February that Cuba had to pay US companies before the shipment left a U.S. port, instead of after docking in Havana. Baucus said the new requirement -- an interpretation of "cash in advance" regulations governing sales to Cuba -- was especially difficult for small exporters. Under the deal, the payment will still have to be made before the boat leaves a US port, but Treasury clarified that it can be held in a foreign bank that acts as a seller's agent until the shipment reaches Cuba. (*The Miami Herald*, 30/7/05)

July 29: Exporters may face fewer complications in selling US farm goods to Cuba under a Treasury Department clarification, one trade group said, but another doubted it would make any difference. The clarification said vessels could leave US ports as soon as a foreign bank confirmed receipt of payment. That could be slightly faster than rules in effect since February, experts said, and would spare sellers the expense of using letters of credit. "It should speed the process up and, therefore, facilitate additional trade," said Kirby Jones of the US-Cuba Trade Association. "The unknown is how the buyer (Cuba) reacts." Sales of US food exports to Cuba have fallen 25 percent since new rules took effect, requiring Cuba to pay for US foods before they were shipped. John Kavulich of the US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, which monitors trade between the nations, said the option highlighted by Treasury was "nothing new." (*Reuters*, 29/7/05)

July 30: Cuban Parliament Speaker Ricardo Alarcon dismissed recent personnel changes in the US State Department's Western Hemisphere bureau, saying they will not affect long-standing tensions between Cuba and the United States. Alarcon joked that Roger Noriega, head of the bureau who consistently takes a hard-line stance against Cuba, would be sorely missed. "I'm going to miss him a lot if he doesn't appear before cameras talking, saying dumb things. He's really a very funny person," he said. Noriega is to be replaced by Thomas Shannon, a career diplomat and Latin America expert at the National Security Council. (*The New York Times*, 30/7/05)

July 31: Tensions have escalated between Cuba's government and dissidents, but both sides bitterly rejected Washington's appointment of a "transition coordinator" to speed Fidel Castro's downfall. "Surely he will receive a juicy salary in his new job, but Caleb McCarry -- I assure you -- will retire without setting foot in Cuba," Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said in Panama. Cuban opposition leaders were at least as forceful in their reaction. "Any transition in Cuba is for Cubans to define, lead, organize and coordinate," said Oswaldo Paya, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement and promoter of a petition seeking democracy in Cuba. Other dissident groups that opposed the appointment on the same grounds were the Progressive Arch and the Cuban Human Rights and National Reconciliation Commission. "It will allow the Cuban government to raise the specter of foreign interference in the internal affairs of our country," said Elizardo Sanchez of the commission. "This appointment (...) constitutes an attack on our national sovereignty," said Manuel Cuesta Morua, spokesman for the Progressive Arch. (*AFP*, 31/7/05)