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## Research Forum on Cuba

# Chronicle on Cuba

## September 2005

### Highlights

**Domestic Affairs:** Cuba is a country rated "high" in human development, the UN Development Program reports. The Cuban government announces the creation of a group of doctors ready for dispatch to natural disasters around the globe. Political prisoner Victor Rolando Arroyo is critically ill after being on a hunger strike for over 20 days.

**Economy:** Cuba's vice president, Carlos Lage, announces a plan to build 150,000 houses. Cuba plans to shut down more sugar mills and replace them with food processing facilities, the Sugar Ministry says. Cuba and Canada sign a memorandum of understanding for cooperation in the sector of agriculture.

**Foreign Affairs:** Cuba calls the UN summit an "unforgivable sham". Fidel Castro meets an important Chinese delegation led by China's vice-president for development and reform, Zhang Xiao Giang. The European Union says it is seriously concerned about three political prisoners in Cuba who have been on hunger strike and demands the liberation of all political prisoners in the island.

**US-Cuba Relations:** Fidel Castro offers to send medical aid to the United States in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, but the US government rejects the offer. The number of Cubans leaving the island illegally by sea to the US is at its highest since the 1994 rafters' crisis. Cuba accuses the US government of protecting Luis Posada Carriles.



### Domestic Affairs

**September 1:** Blind human rights activist, Juan Carlos González Leiva, denounced that he was the victim of an angry demonstration in front of his house by mobs organized by Cuban authorities. Forces of State Security and the Cuban Police used the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution to lead a mob of over 200 people that shouted obscenities and governmental slogans. They banged the doors and windows of Leiva's home and threatened him. Leiva denounced that since August 6 he has suffered more than 15 demonstrations, and other acts of repression like detainments, fines, and citations. He also said that his telephone is interrupted continually, for entire days and nights.  
(*Netfor Cuba*, 11/9/05)

**September 5:** According to Lisandra Lafitta, wife of physician and political prisoner, Dr. Luis Milán Fernández, her husband has been arbitrarily confined since February 18, 2005, to a psychiatric ward of the Boniato Prison Hospital in Santiago de Cuba. Dr. Milán Fernández is a man free of mental ailments. Sentenced to a 13-year prison term, he is forced to share a cell with patients suffering a variety of mental disorders, two or three of them sleep in Dr. Milan's prison cell. Some of these patients, due to their aggressiveness have annoyed and provoked him. Upon the complaints presented by Dr. Milan and his wife for this imprisonment in a psychiatric ward with mental patients, the authorities at the Boniato Prison said that, "it's the ward with the best conditions, spacious, and where he is able to remain alone for a period of time." (*NetforCuba*, 5/9/05)

**September 6:** Cuban authorities denied permission to hold several religious events related to the feast of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre but authorized 60 processions across the island to honor the patron saint of Cuba. The Cuban Catholic Bishops Conference (COCC) said the celebration of the feast of the Virgin on September 8 would include a procession through the streets around the Church of Our Lady of Charity, in Havana, where Cardinal Jaime Ortega will celebrate Mass. On that same day, processions are planned in the Havana neighborhoods of Calabazar, Batabanó, Tumba 4, Wajay, Jaruco and Bejucal, among others. Processions are also planned on September 7-8 in the Dioceses of Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, Ciego de Avila, Camagüey, Bayamo-Manzanillo and Holguín, while church officials are still awaiting permission to stage a procession in Matanzas. The COCC said authorities denied seven permits to stage religious processions, two of them in the Diocese of Bayamo-Manzanillo, on the grounds that they were "not convenient." Five permits were denied to the Archdiocese of Camagüey based on the fact that "there was no tradition" of processions in some cases and that "a procession has already been authorized in the same municipality" in others. (*EFE*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** Cuban government opponent Oswaldo Payá again called on public opinion to condemn the treatment afforded political prisoners in Cuba, as one of the dissidents jailed in the crackdown of the spring 2003 has gone on hunger strike after being transferred to a cellblock with hardened criminals. Payá, leader of the outlawed Liberation Christian Movement, or MCL, said in a communique released in Havana that Jose Daniel Ferrer García, now being held at a prison in the eastern province of Camagüey, earlier spent 84 days in a punishment cell for protesting his placement among ordinary convicts in another penitentiary. (*EFE*, 6/9/05)

**September 7:** Cuba is still a country rated "high" in human development, the UN Development Program reported. The Human Development Index (HDI) the organization publishes every year is an indicator that takes into account three dimensions of human welfare: income, education and health. Cuba was ranked 52 on the HID, the same as last year, after fellow Latin American nations Argentina, ranked 34, Chile, 37, Uruguay 46 and Costa Rica, 47. It ranked above Mexico, ranked 53, and Panama, 56, in the "high" category, with the other countries of the region placing among nations in the "medium" category. With a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) estimated at \$5,400, Cuba devotes 6.5 percent of its GDP to health and 9 percent to education. The island's economic and technological shortcomings are revealed in the section on technology, as only 64 out of 1,000 Cubans have a basic telephone line, three have cell phones and nine have Internet access, according to 2003 figures. Women occupy 16.2 percent of Cabinet-level jobs and 36 percent of seats on the National People's Power Assembly. [[UNDP Human Development Report 2005](#)] (*EFE*, 7/9/05)

**September 7:** The leader of the Catholic Church in Cuba, Cardinal Jaime Ortega, rejected as "truly outrageous" a Communist government official's charge that Cuban bishops served the interests of the United States. Ortega, archbishop of Havana and president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Cuba, said statements made by Cuba's envoy to the Vatican, Raul Roa, were "insulting." "Ambassador Roa uses disrespectful and sometimes offensive language never before employed in public by a Cuban ambassador to the Holy See," the cardinal said in a statement. In an interview with an Italian news agency, Roa said the Catholic Church hierarchy served Spanish colonial rule and, after the Spanish-American war of 1898, continued in the service of a foreign power, the United States. Ortega was most annoyed by Roa's remark that Cuban priests are closer to the people and the socialist work of the government,

while some bishops are "closer to the people in Miami, the Cuban emigres." "His opinions about the Cuban bishops and their distance from the priests are unacceptable and false," the cardinal said. (*The New York Times*, 7/9/05)

**September 7:** Fidel Castro returned to Havana after taking part in the Petrocaribe Summit that took place in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The head of state and his delegation were received at the José Martí international airport by Castro's brother, Raúl, and other officials. (*AFP*, 7/9/05)

**September 8:** A group of Cuban dissidents led by activist Oswaldo Payá launched a project to survey fellow government opponents to determine what they have in common and where there are points of contention. A document with dozens of questions on communist Cuba's future was being distributed to more than 100 activists in Havana and other cities across the island, said Ernesto Martini, a dissident who works closely with Payá. The survey, called "Common Ground," addresses topics including freedom of expression, equal rights for Cubans and foreigners, and even the abortion debate. Those participating will indicate whether they agree with each statement, disagree, or wish to propose modifications. "The people of Cuba should know what groups within the diverse civic movements think and want for our country," a statement announcing the survey said. (*AP*, 8/9/05)

**September 8:** Cuban Cardinal Jaime Ortega said that relations between the Catholic Church and the State are continuing "the status quo, but without there being any problem", despite his rejection of statements by the Cuban ambassador to the Holy See. The also archbishop of Havana celebrated a mass in the church of the Sanctuary of the Virgin de Regla, in Havana, on the occasion of the festivities of the Patron Saint of Cuba, Our Lady of Charity, which was celebrated on the island with religious services and public processions. (*EFE*, 9/9/05)

**September 11:** The well known Cuban composer and conductor, Manuel Duchesne Cuzán, one of the mainstays of the symphonic movement on the island, died of cancer in Havana at the age of 72. He was one of the founders of the National Symphonic Orchestra in 1960, which he directed for more than two decades. (*Granma*, 11/9/05)

**September 12:** A group headed by well-known opposition leader Martha Beatriz Roque accused Cuban authorities of confiscating medicine and cash intended for a jailed dissident's family. The Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society said in a statement sent to international media that state security agents seized the medicine and local currency worth about \$296 (euro240) earlier in the day when they detained and questioned Carlos Jimenez. Jimenez, an assembly member, had been on his way to deliver the items to the family of imprisoned dissident Rene Gomez Manzano. "Every day, the Cuban government becomes more fascist," the assembly said, accusing island authorities of "not allowing humanitarian aid to be given to prisoners." There was no immediate response from the Cuban government. (*AP*, 12/9/05)

**September 13:** Cuba announced it would create an organization of doctors ready for dispatch to natural disasters around the globe as it continued to wait for a response to its offer to send physicians to the United States to aid the Hurricane Katrina relief efforts. The doctors "continue training intensely at the Latin American Medical School, waiting for a response that has yet to arrive, and may never come," said a government statement on the front page of *Granma*, the Communist Party daily. The group's objective will be to "immediately cooperate (...) with any country that suffers a catastrophe [like Katrina], especially those confronting (...) hurricanes, flooding and other natural phenomenon," the *Granma* statement said. The new organization was to be formally created at a graduation ceremony of Cuban medical students. (*CNN*, 13/9/05)

**September 13:** Cuban homosexual males organized the first film festival on sexual diversity, an event also intended to contribute to the fight against AIDS. The festival is an opportunity to discuss topics regarding male homosexuals and it has a preventive approach since it allows to speak "aloud" on HIV/SIDA, said Yoel Vega, a coordinator of the project "Men who Have Sex with Men" (HSH). Outside a movie theatre in Havana, young people distributed leaflets, condoms and posters to the audience. (*AP*, 13/9/05)

**September 13:** Cuban authorities and parents are shifting their attention from universal primary education to the quality of education received by Cuban schoolchildren. Cuba already has achieved the UN Millennium Development Goal (MDG) set in 2000 that all children receive primary education. "The question now is no longer quantity, but rather quality. Many families have begun to pay for private tutors to ensure that their children are learning what they need to learn, and that didn't happen 10 years ago," said Aurelio Castellanos, a 43-year-old teacher. A month of private classes in Spanish or mathematics can cost around 40 Cuban pesos or two dollars, a high price in a country where the average monthly salary is roughly 300 pesos. During the worst years of the economic crisis in the 1990s, the shortage of teachers was solved by the introduction of intensive, short-term training courses to prepare recent secondary school graduates to teach in primary schools. This made it possible to ensure a maximum class size of 20 students at the primary level. However, it also means that of the 38,881 teachers in the Cuban school system today, 12,553 are young and relatively inexperienced graduates of these intensive training courses. Fidel Castro acknowledged July 24 that despite all the advances made in the school system, the country is "still a long way from achieving all of the educational results" that could be hoped for. (*IPS*, 13/9/05)

**September 14:** Of every 100 Cubans 14 years of age and older, 65 live in couple, 43 of them married and 22 in free union, according to a demographic study. The study was presented by expert Elena Benítez, of the Centre for Demographic Studies at the University of Havana, during the VI Ibero-American Conference on Family, which took place in Havana's International Conference Centre. In her presentation, Benítez indicated that the tendency of increasing consensual unions is influenced by factors that go from the economic and social independence reached by women and the rejection of formalisms, up to material needs like the scarcity of housings and social and economic problems in Cuba. (*AFP*, 14/9/05)

**September 15:** Actors from 16 countries are attending XII International Theater Festival in Havana. Participating countries include Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Germany, Spain, Italy, France, Belgium, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Greece, Switzerland, South Korea and Cuba. Twenty-two facilities and 17 alternative places host the 195 scheduled functions throughout the city. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/9/05)

**September 15:** The independent journalist and political prisoner Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona has been held incommunicado for four months in the prison Combinado de Guantánamo. "I have not been able to see my husband for the past four months; I am very concerned because Arroyo is suffering from high blood pressure that is out of control and at the present time has blisters all over his body". "According to relatives of other prisoners my husband's physical deterioration is alarming," said Elsa Gonzales. His isolation extends to denying him access to all mail, no telephone calls and most importantly, not allowing his wife to pass the medications he needs. (*Puente Informativo*, 15/9/05)

**September 17:** Cuba won its eighth straight Baseball World Cup with a 3-0 shutout of South Korea. It was the 24th title for Cuba since the competition began in 1938. South Korea was the last team to beat Cuba in the World Cup, in 1982. (*Toronto Star*, 17/9/05)

**September 19:** The Henry Reeve International Contingent of Disaster and Epidemic Physicians, a team of 1,586 physicians, was officially inducted by Fidel Castro at the graduation ceremony for 1,903 new doctors from Cuban medical schools. If wealthy nations ever decide to collaborate in the combat against the pandemics of poor countries, they'll need professionals like those in the Henry Reeve brigade," declared Fidel Castro, citing Cuba's first world infant mortality and life expectancy stats as evidence of the island's medical success. [[Speech by Fidel Castro](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 20/9/05)

**September 19:** Fidel Castro said that Cuba is on the way to reduce infant mortality to less than four per thousand births and to increase the life expectancy of her people. Addressing the graduation ceremony for 1,903 physicians from Cuban medical schools, Castro stressed that, "we are going to be the first Latin American country to reach this figure, even better than that of Canada." In addition, he said, this will take place in half the time it took Switzerland and Japan

to raise their life expectancies from 70 to 80 years, because today we are at 77.5 years. [\[Speech by Fidel Castro\]](#)  
(*Prensa Latina*, 20/9/05)

**September 19:** Cuban authorities prepared to evacuate thousands of people in advance of the arrival of Tropical Storm Rita, which was expected to become a hurricane before reaching the island. Cuban authorities have put evacuation plans into action to remove residents and tourists from areas near sea level along the island's northern coast, as well as from zones prone to flooding. In the areas at risk from the storm, workers are clearing drains, sewers and terraces, removing debris and securing doors, windows, roofs and fresh water supplies. Also, warehouses and businesses are stocking up on food and basic materials. (*EFE*, 19/9/05)

**September 20:** Protestant Christians in Cuba are concerned about new regulations on house churches that may restrict religious freedom. This month, new regulations concerning house churches in Cuba drawn in April 2005 will take effect. The new laws, called Directive 43 and Resolution 46, mandate that all house churches register with local officials to obtain permission to operate. House churches that do not receive authority to hold services do not have legal permission to operate. Cuban Protestant Christians are expressing concern because it is unlikely that all house churches will receive authorization to hold service before October. There are approximately 10,000 to 15,000 house churches in Cuba, according to Cuban Protestant pastors. The house churches are usually affiliated with "well-established denominations," acting as a satellite church for the main congregations. (*The Christian Post*, 20/9/05)

**September 20:** Former political prisoner Miguel Sigler Amaya, his wife Josefa Lopez Peña, and their two children, were all arrested as they were boarding the plane that was to take them into exile. As they were boarding a plane at Havana's International Airport, Sigler Amaya and his family were taken to a police office close to the airport. Sigler Amaya had been arrested on March 18, 2003, and condemned to 26 months in prison, but was released due to severe health conditions. His wife, Josefa Lopez Peña participated in demonstrations carried out by the "Ladies In White" (Damas de Blanco), a group of women comprised political prisoners' relatives who peacefully and publicly pray and demand the freedom of their loved ones. Josefa also practiced independent journalism and her articles were widely published in media web pages such as Payolibre and, most recently, in *Bitácora Cubana*. (*Bitacora Cubana News Release*, 20/9/05)

**September 20:** In the September issue of "Geology", scientists from Spain, Cuba, and Mexico reported that they have discovered a highly disturbed bed of fossils that dates from the end of the Cretaceous era. "It was difficult. The site is located opposite a military base. So it's almost impossible to get a work permit," Laia Alegret, a team geologist at the University of Zaragoza in Spain, said in an interview. The discovery was outside Santa Clara, a city in central Cuba whose nearby air base drew scrutiny in 1962 when American spy planes spotted Soviet jets and anti-aircraft missiles. It turned out that the base held Soviet bombers and a half-dozen atom bombs. A rocky outcrop on the hill showed an exposed bed of sedimentary rock made up of broken bits of minerals and fossils. Examination with microscopes showed numerous signs of cosmic violence, including quartz deformed by high temperatures and pressures, as well as tiny spheres of glass, both clearly debris from a spectacular fireball. (*The New York Times*, 20/9/05)

**September 21:** Agriculture Minister Alfredo Jordán Morales, who rose from humble beginnings to hold a ministerial post and sit on the ruling politburo of Cuba's Communist Party, died from cancer, state media reported. He was 55. Jordán continued to work in his position until his death, Cuban television and the domestic National Information Agency said. Jordán had headed Cuba's Agriculture Ministry since 1993, at the height of the severe crisis known as the Special Period that followed the loss of the island's former trading partners in Eastern Europe. (*The New York Times*, 22/8/05)

**September 22:** An imprisoned Cuban activist rounded up in a crackdown on dissidents two years ago has been hospitalized after 14 days of a hunger strike, his wife said. Víctor Rolando Arroyo, 55, stopped eating on September 8 to protest mistreatment at the prison in eastern Cuba where he is serving a 26-year-sentence, Elsa González said in a

telephone interview with the press. González was waiting to visit her husband, whom she said she has not seen for four months. The hunger strike was confirmed to her by Cuban authorities, she said. Another political prisoner, Felix Navarro, joined the hunger strike in support of Arroyo and has not eaten for nine days, Navarro's daughter said. "We are very worried," said Sayli Navarro. "These men are not young, and they have made clear that they will maintain this until the end." Another political prisoner, José Daniel Ferrer García, has gone also on hunger strike for 15 days to protest bad conditions in jail. Ferrer, a member of the Christian Liberation Movement in Cuba, received a 25-years sentence in March 2003. (*The New York Times, El Nuevo Herald, 22/9/05*)

**September 23:** About 70,000 Cubans have committed suicide by various means, all quite deadly - hanging, wrist-cutting, jumping out windows, a shot in the head. Over the last half century, a rough but realistic estimate is that some 100,000 Cubans have taken their own lives. In the early 1980s the Cuban Health Ministry announced that the suicide rate in Cuba had risen over the figure of 20 per 100,000 per year. In little over a decade, the index of deaths by suicide had doubled - in 1969 it was eight per 100,000 - and Cuba had thus gained one of the highest rates in the Western Hemisphere. More Cubans had been killing themselves than had the people of most other nations, and the phenomenon approached the suicide rates of Nordic countries such as Denmark, Finland and Sweden, or of some of Cuba's then European allies, such as Hungary, Russia and the Baltic republics. A 1990s study carried out in Miami questioned the statistics released by the World Health Organization, according to which the Cuban government had succeeded in containing this trend - at a rate of about 2,000 suicides per year. According to the study, the real rate was a good deal higher than that, but similarly high figures were also characteristic of Miami, with many more suicides than among other Hispanic communities in the United States. (*El País, 23/9/05*)

**September 28:** The inescapable eyes and ears of the Cuban Communist regime, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), charged with knowing what everyone in the neighborhood is up to, celebrated their 45th anniversary with exhortations to remain vigilant against "imperialism." Raul Castro, brother and designated heir of Fidel Castro, presided over the ceremony to mark the passage of 45 years since the creation the CDRs. Castro, 79, was not present for the festivities at Havana's Karl Marx Theater, but he did send a message to the block committees, known collectively as the CDR. Raul Castro did not speak at the celebration at the capital. The Havana ceremony concluded with an address from Cuban Communist Party leader Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, who said that when confronted with "imperialist actions," the island will respond in the same way as it did in 1960, when the CDR were established as part of a system of "collective revolutionary vigilance." (*EFE, 28/9/05*)

**September 28:** Josefa López Peña, wife of former political prisoner Miguel Sigler Amaya, was beaten on the street five days after she and her husband were taken off a plane bound for the United States. López Peña, a founder of the Ladies in White movement, said she was going to the Havana home of another member, Aida Valdés, when a young man got off his bicycle and started to beat her on the back of her head with an object he had in his hand. "Who are you? Why are you hitting?" she said she asked her assailant. "This is a warning that we've wanted to give you for a long time," the man replied. López Peña received medical attention at a nearby hospital. She reported the incident the following day to police. "I fear for our lives in Cuba," she said. "We hold State Security responsible for anything that might happen to us in the future." (*Cubanet, 28/9/05*)

**September 30:** Cuban specialists discussed the challenges that an aging population entail for the island. The workshop "The Aging of the Population and its Impact on the Cuban Reality", that took place at the Association of Cuban Economists (ANEC), revealed how the aging of the population is already having an impact on all the spheres of economic and social development on the island. During the meeting, Juan Carlos Alfonso, director of the National Statistics Office (ONE) indicated that the main reasons of this situation are the low levels of population growth and fertility. In Cuba, 14.5 per cent of the population is over 60 years old. (*Juventud Rebelde, 1/10/05*)

**September 30:** According to Elsa González, the wife of political prisoner Victor Rolando Arroyo who has been on a hunger strike for over 20 days, the degenerative process of Arroyo's system has accelerated, and a renal shut down is

expected at any moment. Arroyo's wife said that, he was sleeping when she came closer to his bed, "and woke up as soon as I spoke to him; he did not let anyone touch him but with a quick movement the doctor was able to take his pulse, he had tachycardia". "His eyes were very hollow and he had no saliva in his mouth"- affirmed Elsa González, who is torn for she knows that they are leaving her husband to die. (*Puente Informativo*, 30/9/05)

**September 30:** Cuban Catholic Cardinal Jaime Ortega expressed his concern about the situation of three political prisoners on hunger strike and asked them to put an end to that kind of protest. "They have all their right to protest, but not that way". "I understand their desperation and anguish, and that is why we should do whatever is possible to make them stop that kind of protest", Ortega made these comments after a ceremony in which the publication of Havana's archdioceses "Palabra Nueva" granted its annual awards. "If the Cuban authorities have access to these statements, I would also tell them that they should try by whatever possible human mean to feed these persons," Ortega added. The political prisoners on hunger strike are Víctor Rolando Arroyo, José Daniel Ferrer García, and Félix Navarro, sentenced to 26 years in March 2005. Ortega also said that the nomination of the "Ladies in White" to the Sajarov award was something "natural". "They have a very peaceful attitude in their demands in favor of their relatives (...) they protest in a peaceful and correct way", the cardinal said. (*AFP*, 30/9/05)

## Economy

**September 1:** Fidel Castro highlighted the importance of saving fuel, in moments in which oil prices are still increasing in the international market. Castro spoke during the 5th ordinary session period of the 6th legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power (Parliament). He pointed out in his intervention that no one in the world is sure oil prices will be reduced in any way. "Few countries will be able to pay if oil reaches 150 dollars a barrel," he added. "Maybe US and Europe may buy it, but the Third World countries would only have the chance to devour one to each other." He said that Cuba is not one of the countries with a worse situation, and compared the island with other nations with lower economic resources, such as Haiti. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/05)

**September 1:** Cuba is carrying out a far-reaching housing construction project to recover from the damage caused by hurricanes and to resolve the domestic housing shortage, according to Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage Davila. In his briefing to a special session of the National Assembly of People's Power, Lage said that 150,000 houses would be built, and 380,000 conservation and restoration works would be accomplished in late 2005 and through 2006. The Cuban vice president explained that the State, unions, social and workers' bodies would distribute houses, and financial assistance would be provided only to people with low incomes and economic difficulties. New rates will be put in effect for acquiring the houses, built by those who need them. Doctors working abroad, who will have priority in acquiring their new homes, should buy construction materials with their savings from salaries in US dollars. (*BBC, Prensa Latina*, 1/9/05)

**September 2:** The Industrial Bank of Venezuela in Cuba will provide \$87 million in financing for the purchase of Venezuelan products and inputs, mostly for the construction and petrochemical industries. The manager of the Bank, Gerardo Reyes, said that the Cuban Ministry of Construction would receive \$10 million for the purchase of ceramics, tiles, and bathroom fittings for the homes devastated by hurricane Emily. (*El Universal*, 2/9/05)

**September 4:** Cuba's second-most famous revolutionary, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, has become the stuff of packaged tourist tours, a popular draw for an island that in the past decade has begun to transform itself into a tropical vacation mecca. About 800 visitors each day make the trek to the city of Santa Clara, about 150 miles east of Havana to visit a museum and memorial dedicated to the Argentine who fought alongside Fidel Castro in Cuba's 1958-59 revolution. The remains of Guevara, who died in 1967 while attempting to foment a revolution in Bolivia, are interred at the site.

Parked tour buses line a tree-shaded plaza fronting the sprawling complex, which sits high atop a hill on the outskirts of the city. (*The Atlanta Journal*, 4/9/05)

**September 4:** A total of 367 fires have damaged some 12,000 hectares (30,000 acres) of Cuban forests so far this year, resulting in losses estimated at some \$14 million, the official daily *Juventud Rebelde* reported. Specialists from the Cuban forest protection service quoted by the paper said that 90 percent of the fires started due to negligence or human error. (*EFE*, 4/9/05)

**September 6:** Six months after Fidel Castro promised that every Cuban household would get an electric rice cooker and other appliances, most Cubans are wondering where they are. In announcing the plan earlier this year, Castro took to the stage like a television game show host touting Chinese-made rice cookers, fans, stoves, washing machines and other electric appliances that would soon be available. The goods were considered evidence of communist Cuba's recovery from the deep economic crisis the Caribbean island sank into following the demise of the Soviet Union. But so far few have been sold, though some state stores have begun offering pressure cookers made in China and Brazil, and some residents are growing impatient. The delays are being blamed on the country's decrepit electricity grid as officials fear that the onslaught of new electric appliances will cause power failures and fires. Previously, the sale of electric stoves and cookers had been banned due to energy shortages. (*Reuters*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** The overseas arm of India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp. has successfully bid on two blocks in Cuba's potentially rich Gulf of Mexico waters, a company executive said. "We are very interested and simply waiting for the final signing before beginning work," the senior executive from ONGC Videsh Ltd. said, asking that his name not be used. He was in Cuba as part of a delegation led by India's junior foreign minister, Rao Inderjit Singh. High oil prices and the international scramble to buy up potential resources has increased interest in Cuba's largely unexplored Gulf of Mexico waters, a Cuban industry source said. He said contracts for the blocks would be signed with India in September and other blocks would go to another Asian country's state-run oil company soon. (*Reuters*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** Cuban Tourism Minister, Manuel Marrero Cruz, left for Spain to attend the 5th Conference on the sector opening in the city of Zamora, Spain. The meeting is the prelude of the upcoming 15th Iberian American Summit. Some 13 ministers of tourism and official delegations from the 22 countries are taking part in the meeting. (*AIN*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** Cuba remains the leader in the international market for hand-rolled cigars, continuing to export more than 100 million of the smokes annually despite a drought in recent years, a top tobacco company executive was quoted as saying. The number cited by Oscar Basulto, president of the Cuban-Spanish firm that markets the island's cigars abroad, was made in a report to Cuba's parliament, and carried by the government's business weekly *Opciones*. (*Canadian Press*, 6/9/05)

**September 7:** Cuba plans to shut down more sugar mills and replace them with food processing facilities, the Sugar Ministry said, in the first official confirmation many mills would be closed. "This period, through 2007, includes the closing for the next harvest of another group of mills that will be temporarily preserved," the Communist party daily *Granma* said, reporting on a meeting between ministry officials and workers. Warehouses and workshops will be put to other uses and "more than 100 factories to produce pastas, chocolate, candy, process soy beans and corn will replace mills," *Granma* said. The downsizing comes in the wake of this year's estimated 1.3 million tonne crop of raw sugar, the lowest since 1908, and the prospect that next year's will be more or less the same. Cuba is importing sugar from Colombia to meet contracts and cover its 700,000-tonne domestic consumption. In 2002, 71 sugar mills were closed. (*Reuters*, 7/9/05)

**September 8:** Indonesia and Cuba discussed their bilateral relations particularly in the economic and trade sectors in a meeting of the 4th Indonesia-Cuba joint commission in Jakarta. The working groups of the two delegations in the first

day of the meeting agreed to enhance direct trade between the two countries. Indonesia-Cuba trade in 2004 reached over USD1.3 million, which included Indonesian exports to Cuba worth US\$1,375,370 and imports from that country worth US\$2,352. The balance of trade between the two countries is in Indonesia's favour with a surplus of US\$1,373,018. The obstacles often faced in enhancing the bilateral trade include the high transportation cost because of the great distance between the two countries, and the lack of direct shipping routes and corresponding banks. (*ANTARA News*, 8/9/05)

**September 9:** Cuba will not take advantage of Venezuelan credit facilities designed for the member nations of Petrocaribe, but instead decided to continue with the Integral Agreement of Cooperation that was signed for the first time in 2000 and due for renewal next October. (*El Universal*, 9/9/05)

**September 9:** State-owned China Minmetals Corp. expects to form a joint venture in Cuba, investing up to \$600 million to exploit the world's third largest reserves of nickel, a Hong Kong newspaper reported. The South China Morning Post quoted Zhou Zhongshu, president of China's largest metals trader, as saying the project was expected to come on stream by 2007 or 2008. Last November, Minmetals signed a memorandum of understanding to start up the Las Camariocas nickel project in Cuba, which it said should produce 68,000 tonnes of ferro-nickel annually. Cubaniquel of Cuba would own 51 percent of the plant and Minmetals 49 percent. (*Reuters*, 9/9/05)

**September 9:** Over 300,000 hectares of cane will be replaced with other cultivation in the second stage of the restructuring process undertaken by the Cuban Ministry of Sugar (MINAZ). The lands will be sown with vegetables, seasonings, fruits and timber-yielding trees to strengthen production for the domestic market and reforestation in the country. Through the information provision and discussion process lead by the MINAZ, farmers and agronomists learned that transport, health services, and food provision will continue under the charge of this Ministry. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/9/05)

**September 9:** The OPEC Fund for International Development signed a US\$10 million loan agreement with Cuba to co-finance the modernization and expansion of the electricity network in Havana. The aim of the project is to improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery, with a view to boosting the country's socio-economic development. Under the project, Havana's high voltage transmission system and medium and low-voltage distribution network will be fully rehabilitated through the repair and construction of substations and power lines. Other works will include the installation of lightning protector cables and modernization of the underground networks in Havana's historic district. Meters, power lines and other equipment connecting the distribution network to approximately 435,000 households, as well as major industrial and commercial premises, will be completely upgraded. Public safety will be enhanced by installing new street-lights and repairing existing ones. (*OPEC Fund for International Development Press Release*, 11/9/05)

**September 11:** Iran will export electrical equipment worth five million dollars to Cuba. The agreement to export the equipment is in its final stages. The Export Development Bank of Iran (EDBI) is to finance the contract. (*MNA*, 11/9/05)

**September 12:** Moa Nickel, a nickel and cobalt mining partnership in Cuba between Metals Enterprise and Sherritt International Corp, will spend \$450 million to expand laterite nickel mining capacity by 16,000 tonnes per year (tpy) by the first quarter of 2008. The brownfield project at Moa in Cuba will yield an additional 16,000 tpy of nickel and cobalt capacity, with the proportion breaking down roughly into a 10:1 ratio of nickel and cobalt, Peter Cordingley, manager of technology at Sherritt, told MB's 4th International Nickel, Stainless & Special Steel Forum in Bilbao, Spain. The laterite mine produced 32,000 tonnes of nickel and cobalt in 2004 and is on track to produce the same volume in 2005. "We have the advantage that we are investing in an area where we have significant reserves and know the ore characteristics very well," said Cordingley. "This enables us to have a rapid start-up and ramp-up process, as we will be adding parallel technology that is already in use in our current laterite mine." (*Metal Bulletin News*, 12/9/05)

**September 12:** A herd of 20,142 oxen is expected to guarantee the agricultural works in the Cuban province of Las Tunas, in the wake of the acute crisis of agricultural machinery that faces this territory, reported the local press. According to the provincial deputy-delegate of agriculture in Las Tunas, Eng. Alexis Velázquez, in the province only 20 percent of tractors are operational, which is a "serious challenge" for those responsible of organizing, executing and ensuring food production. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 13/9/05)

**September 13:** South Korea's main trade promotion agency said it has set up an office in Cuba, paving the way for more local companies to advance into the major trade hub of the Caribbean area. The trade office opened in Havana, with which South Korea has no formal diplomatic relations, the Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA) said. "South Korean companies have high interest in Cuba, as it is a strong economy with outstanding expertise in medical, information technology and biotechnology industries," Hong Ki-hwa, the president of KOTRA, said at a launching ceremony held in Havana. (*Yonhap*, 13/9/05)

**September 14:** Approximately 250,000 Cubans from different fields took part in cooperation activities in other countries from 1963 to 2004. That figure will increase this year with the 37,000 professionals who presently work in 108 nations. The Vice-Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation (MINVEC), Ricardo Guerrero, said that at present 24,824 collaborators on health represent 70.4 % of the 37,000 professionals and technicians who offer their services in countries of Latin America, the Caribbean, North America, Africa, Europe and Asia. (*AFP*, 14/9/05)

**September 15:** Cuba and Canada signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for cooperation in the sector of agriculture, the Cuban embassy to Canada said. Under the agreement Canadian agriculture companies will develop common projects with the Cuban state-run food importer Alimport and other Cuban agriculture companies. A delegation from Cuba, led by the president of Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, visited. It is not clear so far if Cuba will buy foods from Canada in the immediate future. The Memorandum was signed by the Cuban ambassador to Canada, Ernesto A. Sentí, and the Canadian ambassador to Cuba, Alexandra Bugailiskis. (*EFE, Latin American News Digest*, 15/9/05)

**September 16:** Venezuelans are flocking to Havana by the planeload for free eye operations under a medical program funded by their country that is helping Cuba pay for oil imports and keep its socialist economy afloat. More than 70,000 Venezuelans have been operated on for cataracts and other eye ailments this year and the goal is 150,000 by the end of 2005, a Cuban health official said. On Aug. 20, a record 1,648 eye operations at some 20 hospitals were performed in one day, the health official said. Hotels and educational campuses have been taken over to house Venezuelan patients who get free air travel to Cuba, lodging and food while they are in Havana, courtesy of the Venezuelan state. They are driven around in new buses from China, often escorted by police on motorcycles. The VIP treatment underscores the priority President Fidel Castro has given to a program that is paying for vital shipments of 90,000 barrels a day of Venezuelan oil and gasoline, which represents an energy bill that exceeds \$1.5 billion a year at today's high prices. (*Reuters*, 16/9/05)

**September 19:** A major swine breeding company from Prince Edward Island, Canada, has secured an export contract with Cuba. York Point Farms Inc. is the major supplier for a genetic upgrade of the Cuban swine industry and will install a nucleus and multiplier pyramid system. Company President Donald MacDonald said the contract will see 15,500 females and 500 males shipped to the Caribbean country. While Prince Edward Island will be the primary supplier, there will also be animals provided by breeders from Ontario via Donaldson International Livestock Ltd. and Quebec via Comtois International Export Inc. MacDonald said the deal with Cuba is the largest single breeding stock order in Canadian history with a value over \$5 million. (*AgriSuccess Express*, 19/9/05)

**September 20:** Indian ONGC Videsh Ltd, the overseas arm of state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corp, has acquired a 30 per cent stake in seven oil and gas blocks in Cuba, which hold more than 4 billion barrels of oil reserves. Spain's Repsol-YPF is the operator of some of the blocks and the remaining is with Norway's Norsk Hydro. "OVL has entered

into an agreement with Repsol-YPF of Spain to acquire 30 per cent participating interest in deepwater exploration blocks in Cuba," a company press release said in New Delhi. (*India Business*, 20/9/05)

**September 20:** Venezuela could soon provide working capital to companies that have signed deals with the Cuban government but need funds to increase production, a Venezuelan minister said. In another step to help the Cuban government meet its needs for various goods, Venezuela will create special programs if necessary so local companies can supply Cuba's demand, Edmee Betancourt, minister of light industries and trade told reporters. Betancourt said the specifics of such a financing initiative are still being worked on. So far, companies have failed to sell enough goods and services to the island nation, Betancourt said, and added that she hopes a Venezuela-Cuba business roundtable this week will help increase trade between both nations. (*Dow Jones*, 20/9/05)

**September 21:** Preliminary reports said that Hurricane Rita severely affected the electricity service in the western Cuban provinces of Matanzas, Havana, and the City of Havana. Over 157 electric lines, out of 515, were damaged, as well as water and gas services. International flights were suspended, and schools were closed. Over 230,000 persons were evacuated. No deaths were reported. (*AIN*, 21/8/05)

**September 22:** The International Transport Fair (FIT 2005) was inaugurated at Havana's EXPOCUBA exhibition center, attended by over 30 representatives from several countries. According to Transport Deputy Ministers Inocencio Alejandro García and Raquel Fundora, the fair is dedicated this year to Latvia and Venezuela, both of which will have leading roles in the exhibition along with China. (*Prensa Latina*, 22/9/05)

**September 22:** Venezuelan businesses signed deals to sell US\$36.7 million worth of goods to Cuba that will include exports of shoes, underwear, artificial leather and industrial products to the communist country. More than 280 companies, cooperatives and other commercial organizations participated in the government-sponsored forum aimed at boosting trade between the two countries. "The businesses were satisfied, they were given financial advice and they will be accompanied through the whole process so that they can respond to Cuban demand," said Venezuelan minister of light industries Edmee Betancourt in a statement following the forum. The businesses signed letters of intent worth US\$36.7 million dollars in deals, but that sum does not include other agreements signed earlier whose value has not yet been calculated, the statement said. (*AP*, 22/9/05)

**September 23:** North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly vice president, Yang Hyong Sop, praised the fulfillment of the agreements signed between Cuba and Korea. During a meeting in Havana with Cuba's minister for foreign investment and economic collaboration, Marta Lomas, the Korean leader expressed his interest in strengthening mutual relations in the agricultural and public health sectors. (*AIN*, 23/9/05)

**September 24:** Venezuela and China are considering projects to alleviate the serious problems of public and freight transport in Cuba. During the IX International Fair of Transport (FIT-2005), dedicated to China and Venezuela, representatives of the sector discussed projects of future cooperation and business opportunities. The Asian delegation showed interest in the reconstruction and modernization of Cuban ports and in railway transport. Luis Vásquez, technical superintendent of the marine division of Petróleos de Venezuela S. A. (PDVSA), affirmed that his company will help with "the transport of hydrocarbons to Cuba and to all the countries that are signatories" of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). (*AFP*, 24/9/05)

**September 26:** An UK High Court judge hearing a case over vintage Latin music has traveled to Cuba to hear evidence from witnesses. The English High Court has come to Havana to hear witnesses in a case which asks who owns the UK publishing rights to some of Cuba's best-loved songs. Examining the evidence is Mr Justice Lindsay. Last May, mid-way through a case in London, the British judge made the decision that justice would be best served if he came to Cuba, after an attempt to hear from several Cuban witnesses via video link failed, due to technical problems. He is

presiding over a case which has been brought by the US-based Peer Music. Peer Music says that its legitimate copyright has been unlawfully taken over by the Cuban state-owned Editora Musica de Cuba (EMC). (*BBC*, 26/9/05)

**September 26:** A plant to produce humanized monoclonal antibodies to treat neck and head cancer, developed by Cuban scientists, opened in Beijing. The Chinese-Cuban Biotech Pharmaceutical Company will produce and commercialize hR-3 antibody, obtained by scientists of Cuba's Center of Molecular Immunology (CIM). The hR-3 has Cuban and Chinese medical registry plus patents issued in Canada, the US, China and various European countries. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/9/05)

**September 27:** Prior to the 45th anniversary of the establishment of official ties, China and Cuba are stepping up cooperation in all fields. This is the prevailing sentiment after four and a half decades of relations in politics, economy, trade, science and technology, in spite of historic and cultural differences in the construction of socialism according to their respective national realities. Cuban ambassador to Beijing Alberto Rodríguez Arufe lauded the excellent bilateral visits by top-level leaders, as well as both nations' contacts to exchange ideas, opinions and experiences. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/9/05)

**September 28:** Korean Hyundai Heavy Industries Co., the world's largest shipbuilder, said it has won a US\$330 million order for electric power generators from Cuba. "Hyundai Heavy is to deliver 244 packaged power generators with a combined capacity of 510 megawatts to Cuban authorities in charge of electricity by the end of 2007," a Hyundai official said. (*Yonhap News*, 28/9/05)

**September 28:** South African Foreign Affairs Minister Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma held bilateral political discussions with her Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque, in Havana, the foreign affairs department said. Dlamini-Zuma is in Cuba leading a senior South African government delegation to the 4th Session of the Joint South Africa-Cuba Bilateral Commission on economic, scientific, technical and business cooperation, a statement read. The South African delegation includes South Africa's ambassador to Cuba, Thenjiwe Mtintso, the Directors-General of Health, Public Works and Social Development, and high ranking foreign affairs officials. (*South African Press Association*, 28/9/05)

**September 28:** Cuba continues to be plagued by an energy crisis and blackouts, despite major investments to modernize a service that now extends to nearly 96 percent of the country's 11.2 million inhabitants. An increase in domestic production and an agreement with Venezuela to import oil under highly favorable terms have brought an end to the severe shortages of the mid-1990s, which led to an abrupt plunge in Cuba's power-generation capacity. Nevertheless, the National Electric Power System (SEN) is still not able to maintain a stable supply of electricity, due to repeated breakdowns in its main thermoelectric power stations. (*IPS*, 28/9/05)

**September 28:** The 23rd session of the Viet Nam-Cuba intergovernmental committee for economic, scientific and technological cooperative was convened in Havana, Cuba. The Vietnamese delegation was led by Nguyen Hong Quan, Minister of Construction and President of the Viet Nam-Cuba subcommittee; and the Cuban delegation was led by Marta Lomas Morales, Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation and President of the Cuba-Viet Nam subcommittee. The two sides informed each other of the socio-economic development in their respecting countries. (*VNA*, 29/9/05)

## **Exile Community**

**September 15:** A former political prisoner in Cuba, who says he was repeatedly tortured with drugs and electric shocks, sued Fidel Castro's government for \$50 million in damages in a case aimed partly at exposing what Castro opponents call his brutality toward dissidents. Nilo Jerez said in court papers that the torture in the early 1970s made

him sterile and continues to cause "distress, anxiety, fear and apprehension." "It is time to have justice," Jerez told reporters outside the Miami-Dade County Courthouse after filing the lawsuit. (*AP*, 15/9/05)

**September 19:** A US federal judge has dismissed a wrongful death suit filed against Cuba and Fidel Castro by the sister of a man executed in 2003 for his role in a ferry hijacking. US District Judge Patricia Seitz acknowledged in her ruling that the sister, Yordanis Montoya Isaac, had presented a "sympathetic case." But Seitz said she could award no damages because neither Montoya nor her brother, Jorge Luis Martinez Isaac, were US nationals when the execution took place. Montoya had sought more than \$75,000 in damages from Cuba for the April 11, 2003, execution of her brother in the hijacking earlier that month of the Baragua, a 45-foot Cuban ferry carrying 50 passengers. (*The Gainesville Sun*, 19/9/05)

**September 28:** Elián González, who now refers to Fidel Castro as "a father," says in a new television interview that his Miami relatives held him against his will during his sojourn five years ago. Elián's Miami relatives immediately labeled the statements propaganda produced under pressure from the Cuban government. "He is a brainwashed little kid afraid of Castro, just like everyone else," said Armando Gutiérrez, former spokesman for the González family. Gutiérrez said he never heard Elián say he wanted to return to Cuba during the countless hours he spent with the boy. Elián's uncle, Delfín González, said he sees the boy on television, making speeches in support of the Cuban government and shakes his head. "The exile community here predicted that would happen," he said. "It's no surprise to me. But when you live in the devil's house, you have to do what he says." (*The Miami Herald*, 30/9/05)

## Foreign Affairs

**September 1:** The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reports that authorities arrested Albert Santiago Du Bouchet Hernández, director of the independent Havana Press agency, and sentenced him to a year in prison. His August 6 arrest became public recently, adding to the 24 other independent, Cuban journalists in jail. Both Du Bouchet and Oscar Mario González, who has been held without trial since July 22, were apparently punished for covering a congress organized by the Cuban opposition in May. The congress gathered more than 100 activists, who discussed strategies to create a democratic society in their country. (*CPJ Press Release*, 1/9/05)

**September 1:** El Salvador, mentioned as a possible destination for a Cuban anti-Castro alleged terrorist in the event his deportation is ordered by a federal judge in Texas, has said it doesn't want him. Salvadoran President Tony Saca said that in his country, "we do not receive terrorists." He was referring to Luis Posada Carriles, jailed in Texas on illegal immigration charges and subject to deportation proceedings. "Our government is a responsible government," Saca told a press conference. "We do not receive terrorists nor are we interested in associating ourselves with people who have been involved with acts that clash with the law." (*EFE*, 1/9/05)

**September 1:** The Slovak Embassy in Cuba did not hold a reception to mark the Slovak Constitution Day. This means that Slovak diplomats celebrated the public holiday neither with dissidents nor representatives of Fidel Castro's regime. According to Foreign Ministry spokesman Juraj Tomaga, we thus "use one of the possibilities that the European Union has given us." This is a reaction to the conduct of Cuban official places, which ignore the Slovak ambassador to Cuba as the representative of a country that criticizes Castro's regime. Mutual relations worsened after the statements made by Parliament Speaker Pavol Hrusovsky, who was interested in the state of health of imprisoned opponents of the regime and openly supported Cuban dissent. Apparently, this is also a reaction to several meetings of representatives of the Slovak Embassy with Cuban dissidents. (*Bratislava Sime*, 1/9/05)

**September 2:** Two members of the European Parliament criticized the European policy of engaging in dialogue with the Cuban government, a strategy they contend is not producing the desired results. Italians Emma Bonino and Marco

Pannella said in a communique that, despite the Spanish government's efforts to foster a constructive dialogue with Fidel Castro's regime, the latter has freed "only 14 of the 75 dissidents jailed in April 2003, while several thousand remain in Cuban prisons for exercising freedom of speech and conscience." (*EFE*, 2/9/05)

**September 2:** With the signing of an agreement to strengthen cooperation, the 11th session of the Cuba-Laos Joint Commission concluded in Vientiane, the capital of that Indochinese country. The Cuban delegation led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, Ramon Ripoll Diaz, was received by Thongloun Sisoulith, Deputy Prime Minister and President of the Planning and Cooperation Committee. (*AIN*, 2/9/05)

**September 5:** Cuba presented a report before the United Nations on what has and still needs to do with regards to the Millennium Goals. The Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, Martha Lomas, handed the document to the local UN mission. The island "has completed" seven goals, particularly the ones that have to do with education and children's and youths' health; three other are at an "advanced" stage, like those linked to the eradication of certain illnesses, and four are in "early stages", for example, the application of technologies. The report admitted that "economic growth is the main limitation" of the Caribbean nation. (*AP*, 5/9/05)

**September 5:** Fidel Castro traveled to Jamaica for a summit of the PetroCaribe Regional Energy Integration Initiative. The gathering was called by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Jamaica's Prime Minister Percival Patterson and is expected to conclude with the approval of a joint communiqué and a press conference. (*AIN*, 5/9/05)

**September 5:** The three fishermen from Yucatan accused of illegal entry to Cuba and human trafficking, were sent back to the prison for foreigners "La Condesa", south of Havana, after being held for more than two months at Cuban state security's headquarters known as "Villa Marista". On August 26, Cuban authorities authorized for the first time Mexican Consul, Víctor Arriaga Weiss, to visit the prisoners. The Mexican embassy in Havana had not had contacts with the three since June 13. (*El Sol de México*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** Indian Foreign Affairs Minister, Rao Inderjit Singh, concluded an official visit to Cuba, aimed at further strengthening relations between both countries. Before leaving the island, the Indian government official met with Cuban officials on political relations, and visited the International Neurological Restoration Center and the old section of Havana among other places of interest. Minister Inderjit Singh gave a press conference at the end of his visit, during which both countries signed a bilateral cultural exchange program and considered new ways to enhance commercial and economic relations. (*Ahora*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** A delegation of mayors and city councillors from Bolivia, supporters of coca leader and presidential candidate Evo Morales, praised in Havana the Cuban model which, according to them, "suits their country very well". "The Cuban model suits Bolivia very well; we do not intend to become communists or totalitarian, but we are going to try something", affirmed Adriana Gil, a councillor and leader of the youth of the opposition Movement Towards Socialism (MAS) led by Morales. Gil is part of a delegation of 72 mayors, 20 councillors and social leaders from Bolivia on a visit in Cuba. (*AFP*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** The Prime Minister of Jamaica, Percival Patterson, praised Fidel Castro's history of human generosity despite huge challenges. Addressing the opening of the Petrocaribe Summit at the Ritz Carlton Hotel, Patterson set aside protocol and his address in English to welcome the Cuban head of state in Spanish and convey gratitude. "Allow me to laud President Fidel Castro, whose history of human generosity has never declined despite the huge challenges his government and people have faced in the past five decades," Patterson said. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/9/05)

**September 7:** Grenada said that a number of Cuban teachers would be arriving on the island under a bilateral agreement with the authorities in Havana. An official statement said the Memorandum of Understanding involves the

assignment of the T.A. Marryshow Community College as the base for the teachers, whose main focus would be to deliver instruction in the community skills programs being coordinated by the Ministry of Education. (*BBC*, 7/9/05)

**September 9:** Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe is to exchange notes with Fidel Castro on how to stand up to "US imperialism" during a state visit to Cuba. "Historically the two countries have been very close and this is the president's sixth visit to Cuba which gives you a sense of how close we are," Mugabe's spokesman George Charamba told the press. Mugabe last visited the Caribbean island in 2002. (*AFP*, 9/9/05)

**September 9:** More than two hundred intellectuals from Spain have signed an open letter addressed to the US General Attorney demanding the immediate release of the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States. Thousands of public figures including several Nobel laureates from around the world have already signed the document, reported Prensa Latina news agency. (*AIN*, 9/9/05)

**September 9:** Diplomats working on a pivotal document on the management overhaul of the United Nations and updated approaches to terrorism, development and human rights have locked horns just days before it is to be presented to more than 170 world leaders for their endorsement. A senior United Nations official, speaking anonymously because of the need to maintain neutrality among member states, identified the principal spoilers as Cuba, Egypt, India, Jamaica, Pakistan and the United States. "There is progress on a lot of small stuff, but no deals on the big stuff," he said. "The spoilers are taking hostage the rest of the world, because Africa, Europe, large swatches of Asia, Latin America all want this deal, but the unholy alliance are holding out for their pet projects." (*The New York Times*, 10/9/05)

**September 9:** Fidel Castro attended the signing of a cooperation agreement between Bolivian and Cuban municipalities, Cuba's official press reported. Castro, 79, did not speak at the ceremony, the upshot of the First Cuba-Bolivia Meeting of Municipalities, which took place in Havana on September 4, the front page of *Granma* said. The agreement was signed by the speaker of the National People's Power Assembly, Ricardo Alarcón, Havana Mayor Juan Contino and 71 mayors making up the Bolivian delegation. The purpose of the agreement is to boost mutual friendship and cooperation and includes Cuba's pledge to award scholarships to poor Bolivian youth to study medicine in Cuba. It also includes free treatment in Cuba to Bolivians with visual problems and joint programs in education, sports, agriculture and services to children, youths and the elderly. (*EFE*, 10/9/05)

**September 11:** The president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe started a state visit to Cuba at the invitation of Fidel Castro. His busy agenda in the island includes official meetings with Fidel Castro and with other Cuban officials. Mugabe is accompanied by his wife Grace Mugabe, as well as an important delegation including Foreign Minister Simbarashe S. Mumbengengwi and other high-ranking officials. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/9/05)

**September 12:** Reporters Without Borders voiced great concern about the plight of Cuban journalist Oscar Mario González Pérez of the Grupo de Trabajo Decoro independent news agency, who is still awaiting trial more than 50 days after his arrest on 22 July in Havana. "González has been held in four different police stations since his arrest and still does not know what will become of him," the press freedom organisation said. "Is this a new method the Cuban authorities are using to break a dissident? It is just as absurd as arrest without good reason and constitutes harassment, especially as the victim is a 61-year-old man in frail health." [[González Pérez judicially harassed](#)] (*RWB Press Release*, 12/9/05)

**September 12:** Parliamentarians from the European People's Party nominated in Brussels the "Ladies in White"--the group of wives and mothers of political prisoners in Cuba--for the 2005 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought that grants the European Parliament. This is one of 10 proposals that will be presented officially in the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament. Subsequently, the three official candidates will be selected by vote. (*Notimex*, 12/9/05)

**September 13:** Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe expressed his satisfaction over his official visit to Cuba. Minutes before boarding the plane, President Mugabe told the press that his visit allowed for an exchange of ideas with his comrade Fidel Castro and expressed his gratitude for the Cuban medical personnel working in his country. After praising the work of almost 200 Cuban medical personnel in Zimbabwe, the African leader ratified his country's solidarity with the island and its leaders and condemned Washington's blockade against Cuba. The distinguished visitor ended a tight program which included official talks with Fidel Castro. (*Ahora*, 15/9/05)

**September 13:** After bitter and divisive negotiations, the 191-member General Assembly approved an agreement to reform the UN that is a shadow of the ambitious agenda laid out by Secretary-General Kofi Annan only six months ago. In a press conference, an embattled Mr. Annan acknowledged that many critics will judge the deal -- to be endorsed by some 170 world leaders -- to be a failure, "but they'll be wrong," he said. The US Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, has come under particular fire from non-governmental organizations for playing hardball in the negotiations, while Cuba and Venezuela refused to endorse the agreement in the General Assembly. (*The Globe & Mail*, 14/9/05)

**September 14:** Cuba has revealed irregularities and a lack of transparency in the negotiating process for the approved document to be submitted to a summit of heads of state and government at the UN. Abelardo Moreno, Cuban deputy foreign minister, affirmed during the closing of the 59th Session of the UN General Assembly that the document contains omissions and distortions of issues previously agreed upon or which do not appear, and that this is the result of pressure from the United States. Likewise, Moreno criticized one of the paragraphs in the section titled "Responsibility for protecting populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." The deputy minister described as negative the non-inclusion of the disarmament issue, at least in language similar to that used in the Millennium Summit, and warned that it "could create a disastrous precedent for the UN's work." (*Granma International*, 14/9/05)

**September 14:** The presentation of the ambassadors of Mexico and of Peru marked a new phase in the diplomatic relations between Cuba and these countries, after long tensions between their governments. The ambassadors of Mexico, José Ignacio Piña, and of Peru, Martín Yrigoyen, presented to the Cuban government the credentials that ratify them as heads of their respective diplomatic missions on the island. (*Reuters*, 14/9/05)

**September 16:** Cuban Public Health Minister Jose Ramón Balaguer described as useful the health networks recently approved at a meeting with ministers and officials from 22 countries in Granada, Spain, prior to the 15th Ibero-American Summit in October. The Cuban Minister said that having each network addressing a specialty will help enhance cooperation among the member countries. He spoke of Cuba's experience in the field of transplants and exchanges with other countries in the cases of heart, lung and liver transplants, something the networks may help improve. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/9/05)

**September 16:** Cuba called the UN summit an "unforgivable sham" with the powerful nations seeking to transform the United Nations into an instrument of global dictatorship. Addressing world leaders, Parliamentary speaker Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, once Cuba's UN ambassador, mentioned the United States by name just once but clearly directed his comments at the Bush administration. Instead of meeting the UN Millennium Development Goals on poverty, hunger, primary education, infant mortality and AIDS, the powerful had tried to divert the summit into a war on terrorism and to reduce the UN secretariat "to a tool for their designs," Alarcón said. (*Tehran Times*, 18/9/05)

**September 17:** Fidel Castro met an "important Chinese delegation" led by China's vice-president for development and reform, Zhang Xiao Gang, a Cuban government statement said. In what was described as "a cordial and friendly meeting", Castro and Zhang discussed the state of development in their two countries and joint projects agreed to in an earlier visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao. During Hu's visit last November, the two leaders signed 16 agreements for

economic and commercial cooperation. Though the Chinese delegation had been holding meetings on the island, the meeting with Castro was the first news of the visit that the Cuban press reported. (*AFP*, 17/9/05)

**September 17:** Cuba, which is the next chair of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), has expressed strong support for India becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, conveyed his country's position when he met External Affairs Minister K Natwar Singh, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly's session in New York. During their 45-minute meeting, the two ministers discussed the bilateral relations, especially in the economic field, with a view to strengthening them. (*The Hindu News*, 18/9/05)

**September 18:** The 15 Mpumalanga student doctors in Cuba could be the last group from this South African province doing medical studies in the Caribbean. The South African Mpumalanga Health Department is investigating the possibility of enrolling future medical students at local universities to cut costs. The Department spends over R30 000 per annum for each student studying in Cuba. Medical students on a study break say much of their medical equipment, that the Cuban government are supposed to supply, have to be supplied by the provincial government. These items are hard to find in Cuba. The decision by the Mpumalanga government will not affect other provinces making use of the Cuba deal, as every province decide for themselves. (*SAB*, 18/9/05)

**September 18:** Prince Saud Al Faisal, Bahrain's Foreign Minister, received separately in New York his counterparts from Norway, France, Cuba and Turkey, Jan Petersen, Philippe Douste Blazy, Felipe Pérez Roque, and Abdullah Gul respectively. (*BNA*, 18/9/05)

**September 18:** Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque pledged to cooperate "closely" with Spain to ensure the forthcoming Ibero American Summit is a success, amid Spanish officials' plans to seat Fidel Castro at the negotiating table at the meeting in Salamanca. The summit on October 14 and 15 will be the 15th time that representatives from Spain, Portugal and 21 Latin American countries gather to discuss inter-regional development, trade, investment and socio-cultural cooperation. On the last four occasions, Castro has been absent. Pérez Roque did not confirm in a meeting with Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos whether the Cuban leader would be present this time around, indicating that a decision would only probably come at the last minute. Spanish officials are eager for Castro to be present at the meeting, seeing his attendance as the consolidation of recent improvements in Spanish-Cuban relations. (*El País*, 19/9/05)

**September 19:** The "Ladies in White", the group of wives and relatives of political Cuban prisoners, said it is "a great honor" to be among the 10 candidates proposed for the the Sakharov Prize that awards the European Parliament. "We want the world to know that all we do is for love and for the freedom of these men", said Laura Pollán, wife of Héctor Maseda, sentenced to 20 years of jail during the trials against 75 dissidents in 2003. (*EFE*, 19/9/05)

**September 19:** Nearly 80,000 Venezuelans have undergone eye operations at Cuban hospitals this year as part of the "Mission Miracle" program, Fidel Castro said. The Cuban leader mentioned the figure during an official ceremony marking the creation of a medical foreign legion comprising more than 1,500 physicians trained and equipped for overseas humanitarian missions. He said that since January, more than 83,600 Venezuelan and Caribbean nationals with vision problems have been treated in Cuba. The majority of the patients, 79,450, were from Venezuela, with the balance coming from various Caribbean countries. The volume of Venezuelan medical "tourists" is so great that Cuban authorities have designated particular hotels for the exclusive use of visitors from the Andean nation. In fact, some of those lodging facilities have been converted into "hotel-hospitals." (*EFE*, 20/9/05)

**September 21:** Cuba's government has picked new diplomats to represent Havana as its new ambassadors to Britain and to the UN, according to the official Granma newspaper. René Mujica Cantelar, a history graduate of the University of Havana who served as Cuba's ambassador to Belgium from 1996 to 2002 was appointed ambassador to Great Britain. In the 80's, Mujica had been also a diplomat at Cuba's Interest Section in Washington. Juan Antonio

Fernández is the new Cuban Ambassador to the UN. Fernández had been the head of the Multilateral Affairs Department of the Cuban Foreign Affairs Ministry. (AFP, 21/9/05)

**September 21:** Jamaican immigration and police officials were questioning at least 13 Cubans, who were picked up at sea off the coast of the southern parish of Clarendon. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs said it would hold discussions with officials from the Cuban embassy on the issue. The Cubans said they had been stranded at sea following a mishap with their vessel. They said they had fled Havana and were trying to reach the United States. (Caribbean Media Corporation, 22/8/05)

**September 23:** The Committee to Protect Journalists is concerned about the health of jailed independent journalist Víctor Rolando Arroyo who went on hunger strike for two weeks and is now in the prison hospital, his sister Blanca Arroyo told CPJ. Arroyo refused food to protest mistreatment at the Guantánamo Provincial Prison, in eastern Cuba, where he is serving a 26-year sentence. He is one of 24 independent journalists behind bars in Cuba. (CPJ Press Release, 23/9/05)

**September 23:** Yang Hyong Sop, a leader of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea, began a week-long visit to Cuba, the Cuban government announced. The vice president of the assembly's presidium is to meet with Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, and Marta Lomas, Cuba's minister of foreign investment and economic cooperation. The visit coincides with the 45th anniversary of the re-establishment of ties between the two countries, Cuba's National Information Agency said. (AFP, 23/9/05)

**September 24:** The Inter-American Press Association (IAPA) held Cuban authorities responsible for the deterioration of Víctor Rolando Arroyo's health, who is on a hunger strike in the provincial prison of Guantánamo. Arroyo, sentenced to 26 years in prison on April 4, 2003, went on a hunger strike in this southeastern prison, where 25 independent journalists serve their sentences. "On top of sentencing a journalist to over 20 years in prison for the crime of writing, we regret prison guards add their abuse to the injustice of the government's sentence", said the IAPA in a press release. (AP, 24/9/05)

**September 25:** The relatives and wives of the so-called Group of 75 Cuban dissidents thrown in prison here in 2003 sent a letter to Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero asking him to intervene on their loved ones' behalf. Some 30 women - known as the "Women in White" for the color of the clothing they wear at their protest activities - signed the letter. Miriam Leyva, the wife of Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who was released from prison earlier this year for health reasons, showed the press the letter to Zapatero she and her colleagues delivered to the Spanish Embassy in Havana. They state in the letter that their relatives "have not committed any crime, but rather attempted to exercise their right to freedom of expression, and achieve respect for human rights and democracy in Cuba." "Therefore, they must be freed immediately and unconditionally," argues the letter, which is also directed at the other heads of state and government who will participate in the Ibero-American Summit in Salamanca, Spain, in October. (EFE, 25/9/05)

**September 25:** In 2005, Mexico will seek a migratory agreement with the government of Cuba in order to ensure an orderly flow of persons, informed the Mexican newspaper "La Jornada", according statements by the new Mexican ambassador to Cuba, José Ignacio Piña. "La Jornada" informed that in recent years illegal migration of Cubans to Mexico "has become a matter of top priority". (AFP, 25/9/05)

**September 26:** Academics, activists and prominent figures are attending in Havana the World Jubilee South Assembly and World North-South Meeting on Resistance and Alternatives to Foreign Debt. Both events will take place at Havana's International Conference Center, and among guests are Nobel Peace Prizewinner Adolfo Perez Esquivel and Latin American Social Sciences Council general secretary Atilio Boron. Jubilee South is a network of people's organizations and social movements, NGOs, research centers and figures from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the

Caribbean, whose main aim is to promote study, criticize and resist the credit extortion that scourges Third World countries. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/9/05)

**September 26:** Cuba announced to the American nations a joint plan with Venezuela to graduate some 200,000 doctors at universities in the two countries for students of diverse origins in the next 10 years. Health minister, José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera, said before the annual assembly of the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) that the first students of the so-called Latin-American School of Medicine graduated in August. (*AP*, 26/9/05)

**September 27:** Reporters Without Borders voiced deep shock at the public beating which a pro-government group gave Guillermo Fariñas, the editor of the independent Cubanacán Press agency, in the central city of Santa Clara, after he took part in a protest against the arrest of a dissident. "This extremely violent attack on Fariñas shows that Cuban independent journalists are not just under threat from the government but also from ultra-revolutionaries, who in this case vented their anger on Fariñas as the political police looked on," the press freedom organisation said. The attack came after Fariñas and some 15 other government opponents demonstrated outside a police station to demand the release of Noelia Pedraza Jiménez, a fellow dissident who had just been arrested. (*RWB Press Release*, 27/9/05)

**September 27:** Cuban Defense Minister Raúl Castro discussed challenges facing Cuba and North Korea, two of only five remaining communist states in the world, in a meeting with the vice president of North Korea's parliament, state-run media reported. Castro, who is the younger brother of Fidel Castro, and other top officials received Yang Hyong Sop and his delegation, the Communist Party daily *Granma* said in an article on its front page. They talked about shared experiences "in the construction of socialism" as well as "the fight to preserve...national independence in the face of constant imperialist aggressions," *Granma* said. (*AP*, 27/9/05)

**September 28:** Eight young Bermudians have flown to Cuba to begin university studies, courtesy of the Cuban government. One of the eight — Iman Gibbons — is planning to study medicine, something he has been unable to do because of lack of funds. The scheme was arranged by Bermuda Friends of Cuba, whose president is Paululu Kamarakafego, formerly Roosevelt Brown, who told the press the opportunity for the students came about because of his friendship with Lazaro Fleitas, who runs the Cuban Institute of Friendship in Havana. Mr. Fleitas, who visited Bermuda some years ago, was unavailable for comment by email. (*Bermuda Sun*, 28/9/05)

**September 28:** Police arrested two Cubans and a Paraguayan in Asunción, Paraguay, in possession of fake passports, during an operation conducted by a district attorney investigating a forgers' network. The Cubans were identified as Iván Alonso Ramos and Robin Ríos Sánchez. The investigation began after the police noticed the number of more than 200 Cubans who have entered the country in the last few months. (*AFP*, 28/9/05)

**September 28:** Secretary General of the Organization of American States (OAS), Jose Miguel Insulza was in Ottawa for a one-day visit, at the invitation of Foreign Affairs Canada. He spoke with the Canadian magazine "Embassy" about the main issues and challenges within the OAS and in the hemisphere. Arguably one of the most contentious issues in the Organization's history has been Cuba, expelled from the OAS in 1962 and currently the only state in the hemisphere that is not a member. Mr. Insulza once again showcased his pragmatic approach: "The problem of Cuba in the OAS is that it is a divisive issue and you know what the result is going to be," he says. "We could discuss Cuba even though we know that we will arrive to no result. I have said that if we know it is divisive why bring it to the Organisation? Let us just leave it the way it is until we are ready and prepared to raise it again. We should engage with Cuba in some way, but I will not be ready to pay the price of dividing the OAS on Cuba." (*Embassy*, 28/9/05)

**September 29:** Fidel Castro has sent his "warmest fraternal salute" to the people and authorities of China, marking 45 years of bilateral ties. In a letter to President Hu Jintao published in the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma*, Castro said "we deeply value that, over these four and a half decades, our relations have been marked by warm feelings

of solidarity, and commitment to socialism and mutual support." China is Cuba's key number two trade partner after Venezuela. (AFP, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** Jiang Shixue, one of the top Latin America specialists in China said that fears about the alliance between the Chinese communist regime and Cuba and Venezuela are groundless. During the Conference of the Americas of The Miami Herald, in the United States, Jiang said that, in the case of Cuba, the nature of the bilateral relations is changing. Trade between China and Cuba has more than doubled in the last five years, but "today's China-Cuba relations are not like those of the early sixties, which were based principally on ideology", said Jiang. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** The Cuban Government is the only one of the 20 Ibero-American countries that has turned down an invitation by the Spanish Defence Department to take part in the traditional military parade on the occasion of Spain's National Day on October 12. Cuban diplomatic sources confirmed Havana's decision to not attend the traditional military parade because it is not the custom of "the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces" to take part in these type of events abroad. The Defence Department had invited all the Ibero-American countries, coinciding with the celebration in Salamanca of the XV Ibero-American Summit of heads of state and government. (*Europa Press*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** The death of the Puerto Rican nationalist leader, Filiberto Ojeda Rivers, in a shooting with FBI agents shocked Puerto Rican residents in Cuba, while the local media highlighted his figure as a "revolutionary". At the same time, during an event in Havana of organizations working to coordinate strategies for the cancellation of foreign debts of the developing countries, a declaration was passed condemning the "vile murder" of the leader. (AP, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** Cuba, Syria and Belarus joined the International Atomic Energy Agency's 35-nation board. The three nations were among 10 approved as new board members at the IAEA's 139-nation general conference as part of a rotation that results in some board seats changing hands each year. Although the board does not have permanent members, the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France, Germany, Canada and Japan effectively enjoy that status because of their nuclear or economic standing. (AP, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** The European Union said it was seriously concerned about three political prisoners being held in Cuba, who have been on a hunger strike to protest their conditions in detention. "The EU has noted with grave concern the situation of political prisoners, Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia, Victor Rolando Arroyo and Felix Navarro, all in extremely poor health," the 25-nation bloc said in a statement. "The EU calls on the Cuban authorities to take immediate action to improve the conditions of detention of these individuals and other political prisoners who are being held in circumstances that fall below the UN minimum standards for the treatment of prisoners," the statement added. The bloc also repeated a call for all political prisoners in Cuba to be released. [[Declaration of the European Union](#)] (*Reuters*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** Fidel Castro and the presidents of the United States, George W. Bush, and of Peru, Alejandro Toledo, are the least popular leaders among Latin-American elites, according to a poll by Zogby International. The poll, conducted last September for the University of Miami, was based on interview with 520 opinion leaders (politicians, businessmen, journalists and academics) in Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Venezuela. The results were presented during the Conference of the Americas, organized by the daily "The Miami Herald" in a hotel of Coral Gables, Florida. (AFP, 30/9/05)

**September 29:** The government of Paraguay granted asylum to two Cuban citizens, Robin Ríos Sánchez and Iván Alonso Branch. The two had been detained in possession of fake Paraguayan passports, and refused to go back to their country. The arrests were part of an investigation on the irregular massive entry of Cubans to Paraguay, approximately 200 since January, of which only 15 left the country legally. (AFP, 30/9/05)

**September 30:** Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez offered South American leaders \$5 billion from his country's oil industry, the world's No. 5 crude exporter, to set up a development bank to fund infrastructure. The leftist urged leaders to ask Cuba for help with education and health projects. "We want to share this oil with the most needy people in the world, starting with those of South America and the Caribbean," Chavez said. (The New York Times, 1/10/05)

**September 30:** Attendees at the North-South Meeting agreed on the untenable nature of the Third World foreign debt during an international forum winding up in Havana with delegates from 53 countries. The prevailing trend of the World North-South Meeting on Resistance and Alternatives to Foreign Debt has been to demand those governments make concrete political plans to deal with international financial organisations. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/10/05)

## **Terrorism**

**September 9:** The Cuban government is willing to facilitate peace talks between Colombian authorities and guerrillas if the nation requests it, Cuban Ambassador in Colombia, Luis Hernández Ojeda said in Bogotá. "Of that, there should be no doubt," the diplomat told RCN radio, adding that Cuba would also consider serving as "guarantor" if asked. "That is how we have behaved vis a vis peace processes in other countries," Hernández Ojeda said. Cuba provided its territory for peace talks between the Colombian government and National Liberation Army (ELN) guerrillas in 2002 and 2003. (*EFE*, 10/9/05)

**September 10:** Cuba's foreign minister honored the victims of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in the United States, but blasted Washington's "hypocrisy" in setting standards on who is a terrorist. In a statement made public, Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque expressed opposition to "all kinds of terrorism" as he remembered "the terrible death of thousands of innocent people in the attack on the Twin Towers, for which we offer a tribute in their memory." September 11 "is a day in which Cuba ratifies its opposition to all forms of terrorism," Pérez Roque said. He remembered Felix García, a Cuban diplomat with Havana's UN mission murdered in New York on September 11, 1981, allegedly by a hit squad of anti-communist Cuban exiles. Pérez Roque then blasted "Washington's hypocrisy" for refusing to extradite Luis Posada Carriles. (*AFP*, 10/9/05)

**September 13:** The number of Guantanamo Bay detainees taking part in a hunger strike has swelled to about a quarter of the prison population over the past month, according to Pentagon officials. Since August 8, the number of detainees refusing food has slowly increased from several dozen to 128, according to the Pentagon. Pentagon officials said the detainees are protesting their continued detention, but past detainee protests have occurred because of perceived treatment of the Quran by prison guards and treatment of the detainees by guards. (*CNN*, 13/9/05)

## **Security**

**September 19:** Nineteen years after the Cuban missile crisis nearly sparked a nuclear war, Fidel Castro asked the Soviet Union to redeploy atomic weapons to his island, says a new book based on reports by Moscow's KGB intelligence agency. The book is based on documents revealed by KGB archivist Vasili Mitrokhin. Mitrokhin and respected British historian Christopher Andrew first collaborated on a 1999 book about KGB operations against the United States and Europe. Their new book, "The World Was Going Our Way: The KGB and the Battle for the Third World", covers KGB operations in Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. Its most startling revelation about Cuba is that Castro, concerned that President Ronald Reagan was planning to attack Cuba in 1981, urged a senior Soviet army general visiting Havana to counter the deployment of US cruise missiles to Europe. "Castro made the extraordinary proposal that, if the deployment went ahead, Moscow should seriously reconsider reestablishing the

nuclear missile bases in Cuba dismantled after the missile crisis 19 years earlier," it says. The book does not elaborate or record the Soviet reaction. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/9/05)

## US-Cuba Relations

**September 1:** Cuba's parliament, led by Fidel Castro, set aside politics momentarily and stood for one minute in silent homage to the victims of Hurricane Katrina -- before quickly returning to normal business and condemning the US occupation of Iraq. "The whole world should feel that this tragedy is its own," National Assembly speaker Ricardo Alarcon said. "The news pained and saddened Cubans. In their name, we wish to express our profound solidarity with the people of the United States, state and local authorities and the victims of this catastrophe," Alarcon added. Castro, dressed in his trademark green military fatigues, stood with his head down for the minute of silence. (*Reuters, CNN*, 1/9/05)

**September 1:** The Cuban parliament declared that the US government will violate international terrorism accords if it does not extradite an anti-Castro militant to Venezuela for allegedly plotting a Cuban jetliner bombing that killed 73 people. The resolution, approved unanimously by lawmakers, comes as the Cuban-born Luis Posada Carriles fights attempts to extradite him from the United States to Venezuela, where he is a naturalized citizen and once served as a top intelligence official. (*AP*, 1/9/05)

**September 1:** What is taking place in the case of Luis Posada Carriles is a legal farce and an insult to the many victims of this international terrorist, noted a Granma newspaper editorial. Posada's attorneys are trying to take advantage of the Bush administration's growing hostility toward Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, by claiming he would not receive fair treatment in the South American country where he allegedly organized the bombing of a Cuban airliner that took the life of 73 persons. "It is evident that everything has already been settled between the defense and the prosecutors," assured Granma. (*Ahora*, 1/9/05)

**September 2:** Fidel Castro has offered to send help to the United States in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. At a nightly roundtable program on state-run television, Castro said his nation was ready to send 1,100 doctors and 26 tons of medicine and equipment. "Others have sent money; we are offering to save lives," he said. Castro -- an enemy of US President George W. Bush and frequent subject of condemnation from the White House -- said he would not comment on the US government's response to the tragedy because "this is not the time to kick an adversary -- while he's down." Castro said the doctors he was offering have international experience. (*CNN*, 2/9/05)

**September 4:** Fidel Castro put on display some 1,500 doctors equipped with medical supplies in hopes of persuading the United States to allow them to treat victims of Hurricane Katrina. Castro, in a televised meeting with the doctors, said the United States had not responded to his offer to send medical workers and 26 tonnes of supplies to the devastated US Gulf Coast. The Cuban leader read out news stories describing a lack of medical attention for Katrina refugees and those still trapped in Louisiana and Mississippi a week after the storm hit. "These doctors could all already be there providing their services," Castro said. "Forty-eight hours have passed and we still haven't received any response to our offer (...) we will wait patiently as many days as are necessary," he said. (*AP*, 4/9/05)

**September 6:** Cuba protested at the United Nations the US government denial for a second consecutive time of a visa for an island delegation to attend the 2nd World Conference of Speakers of Parliament in New York, which started on September 5. "The Cuban Mission to the UN likes to express its vigorous protest over the arbitrary decision and total disagreement with this attitude," said a statement delivered to the US mission to the UN. The Inter-Parliamentary meeting was scheduled for September 7-9 to follow-up the first conference of this kind, held in New York in 2000, along with the Millennium Assembly. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/9/05)

**September 6:** The United States gave longtime foe Cuba the cold shoulder over its offer to send more than 1,500 doctors to help victims of Hurricane Katrina, which created a humanitarian disaster after pummeling the US Gulf Coast. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said US officials were reviewing Cuba's offer but the US Department of Health and Human Services had indicated there was a "robust" response from US doctors who have volunteered to help. Asked whether this meant Cuba's doctors would not be needed, McCormack replied: "No, I'm not saying that. What I'm trying to do is describe for you the facts of what the response has been. And in terms of the international offers of assistance, our criterion is: What's needed?"

**September 6:** Cuban Foreign Ministry spokesman Jose Luis Ponce said that Cuba has yet to receive a response to Fidel Castro's offer to send to the US more than 1,500 doctors to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. Ponce said 1,586 Cuban doctors are "ready to go." He spoke to press in Montego Bay, Jamaica, where Castro was attending an oil conference. (AP, 6/9/05)

**September 7:** The White House answered Havana's offer of aid to help victims of Hurricane Katrina by saying it hoped Fidel Castro would "offer freedom to his people." Castro, who often deploys Cuban doctors abroad, has offered to send 1,586 doctors and 34 tonnes of medicine to the United States to help in the aftermath of Katrina, one of the worst natural disasters to strike the United States. White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the US State Department was handling overseas assistance offers but added: "In terms of Cuba, we would certainly hope that Castro would offer freedom to his people." The comments, which were not a rejection of Havana's offer, came after US State Department spokesman Sean McCormack did not rule out accepting the assistance, saying it would depend on the needs in the region. (AFP, 7/9/05)

**September 7:** Florida Republican Senator Mel Martinez said that the US government should accept Cuba's offer to send hundreds of doctors to treat victims of Hurricane Katrina, provided they are needed and "reasonably well-trained." Martinez, the first Cuban American to serve in the US Senate, said he wondered if it was "appropriate" for Cuba to send the doctors, because many had already been dispatched to Venezuela and there was a shortage of medical help on the island. Cuba sends Venezuela doctors as part of payment for subsidized oil. "But if we need doctors, and Cuba offers them and they provide good service, of course we should accept them," he said in his Washington office. "And we're grateful for that offer." (The Miami Herald, 7/9/05)

**September 7:** More than 50 Cuban migrants landed in the Florida Keys in recent days -- many of them rafters on homemade boats who likely took advantage of relatively calm seas to cross the Florida Straits, federal immigration officials said. On September 6 alone, three separate groups of Cuban migrants made it to Florida. US Border Patrol officials were also kept busy throughout the Labor Day weekend, according to US Border Patrol spokesman Robert Montemayor. "I would say they saw an opportunity because of the weather and that's why we are seeing these smaller endeavors," Montemayor said of the latest attempts by rafters. Those apprehended were allowed to remain because they had made it to dry land. (The Miami Herald, 7/9/05)

**September 7:** The second world conference of parliamentary speakers kicked off at the United Nations headquarters in New York with the notable absence of the Cuban delegation after Washington denied visas to the Communist island's officials. Havana is not participating in the meeting, which is sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), after the US government refused to issue a visa to the head of the Cuban National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcón, despite his having presented his visa request documentation in time. Alarcón sent a letter to IPU secretary-general Anders Johnsson in which he complained that the United States failed to fulfill its obligations as the host nation for the UN seat. This is not the first time that Washington, which is not a member of the IPU, has hindered the presence of Cuban lawmakers at international meetings on its territory. (The New York Times, 7/9/05)

**September 8:** The number of Cubans leaving the island illegally by sea is at its highest since the 1994 rafters' crisis, the top American diplomat in Havana said. The US Coast Guard has interdicted some 2,400 Cubans at sea so far this

fiscal year ending September 30, more than double the number from the previous fiscal year, James C. Cason, the chief of the US Interests Section in Havana, said in a statement. Cason announced that the United States has fulfilled its obligation this fiscal year by issuing travel documents to 20,075 Cubans. He said that access to the government-controlled Cuban press would allow the American mission to better inform Cubans of their legal emigration options, but that "the Castro regime prefers to keep Cubans uninformed about their emigration possibilities." Cason called on the Cuban government to stop denying exit permits to hundreds of Cubans who have received US travel documents. He said Cuba has denied the permits to some 533 people this fiscal year, including 171 doctors and other medical workers. (AP, 8/9/05)

**September 9:** John Kavulich summarized his decade as a top US expert on the Cuban economy by saying that he went "from being the anointed one to the disappointed one," Kavulich, former president of a group whose members included huge US companies interested in trade with Cuba, resigned as head of the U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, bitterly complaining about US and Cuban officials who put politics before profits, sleazy business practices and naive media reporting. In 2002 Kavulich made his final trip to Cuba, for the US Food & Agribusiness Exhibition, an unprecedented event that attracted 293 exhibitors from 32 American states. But as Cuban imports of US goods increased, Kavulich began going public with controversial issues. The trade council's newsletter was first to report that Havana was buying goods from specific US states in order to push their congressional representatives to vote for easing US sanctions on Cuba. It also first reported in 2003 that Havana was requiring US firms and some US politicians to sign "advocacy agreements" -- promising they would lobby Congress to ease the sanctions -- before Cuba would buy their goods. "I am witnessing an increasing lack of ethics (...) both in the United States and in Cuba." (*The Miami Herald*, 9/5/05)

**September 12:** Marisol Gari, an Orlando woman convicted of spying for the Cuban government, has been detained for possible deportation back to the island, her Miami attorney said. Louis Casuso told the press his client was detained two weeks ago and is now being held at a detention facility outside Miami-Dade County in the custody of US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which carries out deportation orders. If deported, Gari, 46, would be the third person linked to the infamous Wasp Network expelled since the FBI busted the group in 1998. The Wasp Network, or "La Red Avispa", was an alleged Cuban spy group uncovered by US agents. Five Wasp ringleaders were tried and convicted in Miami, though their case was recently reversed on appeal. Casuso said the deportation of Gari would be a betrayal of US government promises of protection in exchange for cooperation. Federal officials familiar with the case said US officials were sufficiently pleased to try to persuade immigration officials not to deport her. (*The Miami Herald*, 12/9/05)

**September 12:** An Orlando woman convicted of spying for the Cuban government and recently detained for possible deportation to Cuba, was suddenly released by immigration officials and allowed to return home, her Miami attorney said. Marisol Gari, 46, had been linked to the infamous Wasp Network uncovered in Miami-Dade by the FBI in 1998. The Herald published an article about Gari's detention. "I think that's why she was released, I can't think of any other reason," said her attorney, Louis Casuso. His client, he said, was driven back to her house in Orlando. "Her status now is that she's deportable, but she's home," Casuso said. A spokeswoman for US Immigration and Customs enforcement declined to comment on the case. (*The Miami Herald*, 13/9/05)

**September 12:** Cuba complained to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the United States had barred its national assembly speaker from attending a meeting of parliamentarians at UN headquarters in New York. Washington denied a visa request from Ricardo Alarcon of Cuba to attend the second World Conference of Speakers of Parliament, a meeting sponsored by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. While the United States, as host country for the United Nations, is obliged to give visas to foreign officials for official UN business, a US official said the conference of parliamentarians was not a UN affair even though it used UN facilities. (*Reuters*, 12/9/05)

**September 13:** The United States has still not responded to Cuba's offer of 1,600 doctors to help victims of Hurricane Katrina, Cuba said. The response "has yet to arrive, and may never come," said a front-page government statement in Granma, the ruling Communist Party daily. (*AP*, 13/9/05)

**September 14:** Ricardo Alarcon, president of the National Assembly of the People's Power (Parliament) of Cuba, arrived in New York at the head of the Cuban delegation to attend the UN Summit for Financing Development, which opened in New York. The Cuban delegation arrived late because of delays by US authorities in issuing visas to enable their entry into US national territory. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/9/05)

**September 14:** Within one 24-hour period this week, 109 Cuban migrants landed on several of the tiny islands that form the Dry Tortugas of the Florida Keys -- bringing the number of Cubans landing in South Florida so far this month to more than 150. Meanwhile, the number of Cuban migrants interdicted at sea while en route to South Florida hit more than 2,000 -- the largest number in a calendar year since 37,191 were rescued during the 1994 rafter exodus. Overall Cuban landings are up as well. Since October 1, 2004, more than 1,800 Cubans have reached South Florida's shores. That compares to 955 who made the trip between October 1, 2003, and September 30, 2004, according to recent Border Patrol figures. Homeland Security officials acknowledge the rise in landings and interceptions, but said they don't believe the increase portends a mass exodus. The increase could be attributed to "extremely calm seas out there," suggested Steve McDonald, a Border Patrol spokesman. (*The Miami Herald*, 14/9/05)

**September 15:** The US Treasury Department has refused a permit to the Rainbow Theatre group to travel to Cuba, where they were to perform during the 12th International Theater Festival in Havana. In a message to the event's organizers, Carlos Barón, the group's artistic director, expressed with deep regret and anger that "the US Treasury Department has denied us a permit to travel to Cuba and thus share with all of you during the upcoming International Theater Festival in Havana." (*Granma International*, 15/9/05)

**September 16:** The US Department of Homeland Security's US Coast Guard, 7th District, issued a press release informing of the repatriation of 34 Cuban migrants to Bahía de Cabañas, Cuba. The US Coast Guard Cutter Pea Island said that the migrants were rescued in four separate cases. (*US Fed News*, 16/9/05)

**September 18:** José Pertierra, a Washington lawyer representing the Venezuelan government, said in Miami that if Luis Posada Carriles is neither deported nor extradited to Venezuela the Cuban exile militant could end up testifying in the retrial of five Cuban spies whose convictions were recently reversed on appeal. "The five were sent [from Cuba] to penetrate extremist organizations in the United States that were financing the campaign of terror -- bombings [in Cuba] that Posada Carriles was organizing with money from Miami and the support of organizations in Miami," Pertierra said after addressing about 60 people, mostly sympathizers of the so-called Cuban Five. It isn't clear, however, just how closely the two cases are connected. Pertierra said the five convicted spies -- Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González and Antonio Guerrero -- were sent to Miami because of the 1997 bombings. But FBI documents indicated the Cuban agents had been under surveillance in Miami since at least 1994. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/9/05)

**September 19:** Fidel Castro lamented that the US government had not still responded two weeks after he offered to send nearly 1,600 Cuban doctors to help Hurricane Katrina victims, saying the team could have saved lives. "It hurts to think about it," Castro told several thousand doctors gathered for a combined graduation and the formation of Cuba's new international disaster team of experienced health workers. "Perhaps some of those desperate people, situated in the water and on the verge of dying, could have been saved," the Cuban leader said. "That's a hard lesson for those whose false pride and erroneous concepts have driven them not to respond, even late, to our offer," Castro said of American officials. (*The Guardian*, 20/9/05)

**September 21:** The United States snubbed Cuba's offer to send about 1,600 Cuban doctors to join relief efforts for the victims of Hurricane Katrina because enough American doctors have volunteered, a US official said. The offer of the Cuban government was not accepted because "there was not a match", State Department official Joseph Sullivan told reporters in Louisiana's state capital Baton Rouge. (*AFP*, 21/9/05)

**September 22:** Two 30-passenger aircraft will leave Miami International Airport in Florida with over 50 enthusiastic volunteers to travel to the island of Cuba to participate in a project whose goal is to build four playgrounds in one week for the children of Havana. These American volunteers will join local Cuban families to assemble and erect new swing sets, climbing structures, crawling tubes, triple twists, turbo towers, infant playhouses and many more pieces of the latest playground equipment. The project was the idea of an entrepreneur and real estate investor, Bill Hauf, who six years ago formed the nonprofit foundation "It's Just The Kids, Inc." to fulfill the unrealized dreams of children. (*Business Wire*, 22/9/05)

**September 23:** A group of six US intensive care specialists were impeded to attend the international event "Ventilation 2005" in Cuba. The scientists, from universities in Washington, Texas, Pittsburgh and Loyola, were to attend this forum on mechanic ventilation and blood gases in the central Cuban province of Santa Clara along with more than 300 specialists from ten countries. (*Prensa Latina*, 23/8/05)

**September 23:** Ten Cubans who navigated the choppy waters of the Florida Straits and endured the bad weather resulting from Hurricane Rita were intercepted just a few miles from the coast. The would-be immigrants were traveling in a makeshift vessel when US Coast Guardsmen spotted them and prevented them from making their way to US soil. Television footage revealed how the Cubans - men between the ages of 20 and 40 - eluded capture for two hours before surrendering to US authorities. Francisco Delarros Carralero, a relative of two of the Cubans, told the Miami outlet of Spanish-language Telemundo television that the would-be immigrants were traveling from Cuba's Puerto Padre to the southern coast of Florida. (*EFE, El Nuevo Herald, Sun Sentinel*, 23,24/9/05)

**September 24:** Some Cuban American leaders called for a review of the methods used to take 10 Cuban men into custody. The search of the Cuban rafters by the US Coast Guard was followed by Miami TV stations. Boats from the US Coast Guard and the Department of Homeland Security sprayed a water cannon at the 10 Cubans' homemade boat and repeatedly bumped it, spilling four of the men into the ocean at one point. Cuban American Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart said that if the United States was going to repatriate Cubans, then it should also blockade all oil going to the Caribbean island. "The free world never threw anybody back over the Berlin Wall," he said. "I denounce this policy." US Senator Mel Martinez called wet foot/dry foot a "failure." Martinez added: "The tactics employed today also need review and clarification, but one thing is abundantly clear -- these men were desperate to seek freedom. My heart goes out to them." Diaz-Balart said he is asking the Bush administration to implement a policy where all refugees picked up at sea get an asylum hearing on dry land at the US military base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. US Representative Mario Diaz-Balart said he would also be seeking answers about the way these particular migrants were treated by US authorities -- especially whether the boat from Homeland Security was justified in striking the Cuban men's boat. (*The Miami Herald*, 24/9/05)

**September 25:** The US Coast Guard has repatriated 107 Cubans it intercepted at sea in nine incidents over a 10-day period. One incident involved 34 people the Coast Guard found on a go-fast boat 27 miles south of Key West. Two of the people on board, suspected of being smugglers, are in the custody of Customs and Border Protection and the Coast Guard returned the rest to Cuba. (*Sun Sentinel*, 27/9/05)

**September 26:** Three groups of Canadian and American volunteers are preparing to fly to Havana to teach English to the Cubans. The 22-day programs are open to working or retired educators willing to pay their own costs, while donating their English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching skills. (*PR.Com*, 26/9/05)

**September 26:** Restoration has begun on the Cuban hilltop villa where Ernest Hemingway hung his hat and hunting trophies for 21 years, from 1939 to 1960. But as repairs progress, US conservationists say the project lacks funding and materials they are eager to supply -- assistance banned under the terms of the 40-year-old US embargo on travel and trade with the communist island. Boston-based Hemingway Preservation Foundation, which was denied a US license last year to help fund restoration efforts, sent a team of experts to Cuba to study needed repairs under a special travel license issued by the US Treasury Department. Even when they finish their feasibility study later this year, though, it's unclear how they will put their findings to work. The group will reapply to the Treasury Department for a restoration license in November, but has no guarantee of receiving one, Jenny Phillips, co-founder of the Foundation said. (*Sun Sentinel*, 26/9/05)

**September 26:** The extradition process of Luis Posada Carriles, presently detained in the United States, drew closer to an end with the judge giving the prosecution office two weeks to present its accusations against Carriles after his defence concluded its plea. An opponent of the regime of Cuba's Fidel Castro, Carriles is wanted in both Cuba and Venezuela on terrorist charges. (*Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 27/9/05)

**September 27:** The intensified US "economic war" on Cuba has meant more fines for Americans visiting the Communist-run island and foreign firms doing business there, a Cuban government report said. Sanctions adopted by the Bush administration since June 2005 to speed change in Cuba by denying it funds included a ban on the purchase of Cuban cigars and rum by US citizens, even in third countries, the report to the United Nations said. Pleasure craft owners leaving US ports for Cuban waters face fines of up to \$25,000 or five years in jail, it said. The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control fined 307 US citizens in the first quarter of 2005, compared to 316 in all of 2004, for unauthorized travel to Cuba, the report said. The number of US tourists who visited Cuba dropped 40 percent last year to 51,027 from 85,809 in 2003, it said. More dramatic was the drop in the number of Cuban residents of the United States who returned to visit, which fell 50 percent from 115,050 in 2003 to 57,145 last year. (*Reuters*, 27/9/05)

**September 27:** A US immigration judge ruled that anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles may not be deported to Cuba or Venezuela, citing the UN Convention Against Torture as a basis for the ruling. Immigration Judge William Lee Abbott drafted the decision, according to US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which said that Posada, 77, would remain in ICE custody as authorities considered how to proceed. "The judge's decision did not rule out the removal of Mr. Posada to another country," ICE spokeswoman Leticia Zamarripa said in El Paso. The ruling was announced one day after the judge gave ICE attorneys more time to refute the assertions of the defense that Posada would be tortured if he were deported to Venezuela. (*EFE*, 27/9/05)

**September 28:** Federal prosecutors asked the full 11th US Circuit Court of Appeals to reconsider the case of five suspected Cuban spies whose convictions and sentences were tossed out last month by a three-judge panel of the court. US Attorney R. Alexander Acosta said in a statement that the three-judge panel's decision runs counter to previous U.S. Supreme Court decisions in similar cases, although he did not elaborate. "Consideration by the full court is necessary to secure and maintain uniformity of decisions in the 11th Circuit" with the nation's highest court, Acosta said. The petition asks for rehearing by all 12 active members of the Atlanta-based 11th Circuit, which considers federal appeals in cases from Florida, Alabama and Georgia. The case could possibly reach the Supreme Court. (*Sun Sentinel*, 28/9/05)

**September 28:** Venezuela blasted as "vile and sinister" a US ruling that a Cuban exile wanted in connection with a 1976 airliner bombing could not be deported for trial in Caracas. "They have taken a decision as vile and sinister as the actual act of terrorism. Once more the US government has been unmasked as a farce in the war on terrorism," Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel told reporters. "The saga of the Bush family is always linked to terrorism," he said. Rangel said attorneys were working on a legal response to the decision. (*The New York Times*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** At a time when interceptions of Cuban migrants have doubled, the United States has accused Cuba's government of refusing to comply with 1995 migration accords designed to prevent another exodus to Florida. Cuba doesn't try to stop migrants on vessels while they are still in Cuban territorial waters, and it refuses to issue exit permits to many citizens who receive US travel documents allowed by the accords, according to a recent US State Department report. More than 500 potential migrants awarded one of the 20,000 entry visas the US grants each year haven't been allowed out. Among them: 171 doctors. Cuban officials, for their part, have accused Washington of dragging its feet on visas, trying to deliberately spark an exodus in an effort to topple the Castro government. (*The Miami Herald*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** Cuba accused the US government of protecting a Cuban exile wanted for the bombing of a passenger plane while prolonging the imprisonment of five Cubans accused of spying. In the case of Luis Posada Carriles, the decision showed the "falsehood and hypocrisy" of the US government's "supposed anti-terrorist crusade," Cuba's ruling Communist Party newspaper Granma said in an editorial, in the first official Cuban reaction to the ruling. "The same government that has unleashed wars and sent its soldiers to die in the name of the fight against terrorism is today protecting one of the most notorious terrorists of our times," the front-page editorial said. A US immigration judge ruled that Luis Posada Carriles, a former CIA operative and anti-Castro militant, could not be deported to Cuba or Venezuela where he is sought for trial in the 1976 downing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people. Meanwhile, the US Federal Office requested the revision of Atlanta Court of Appeals judgement in Florida, which last August 9 reversed the convictions of the five Cubans and demanded a new trial. "Cuba will continue denouncing the cruel kidnapping of Gerardo Hernandez, René Gonzalez, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando Gonzalez for them to be released," concluded the text. (*AFP*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** Baseball officials said they expect Cuba to participate in the first World Baseball Classic in March. "They're not formally in yet," said Gene Orza, the chief operating officer of the players association. "There's a process that you have to go through to play with the Cubans, through the United States government. The license has been applied for. We're hopeful for a favorable response. I personally don't believe that the participation of Cuba poses any problems," he said. (*AP*, 29/9/05)

**September 29:** Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy at the center of an international custody battle five years ago, calls Fidel Castro his friend but also says he hopes someday to see his Miami family again. "Despite everything they did, it was wrong, they are (still) my family (...) my uncles," the boy said in the interview with CBS's "60 Minutes". The boy in the interview said he considers Castro "not only as a friend, but also as a father." CBS spokesman Kevin Tedesco said "60 Minutes" interviewed Gonzalez for 70 minutes three weeks ago at a museum in Cardenas, Cuba, the boy's hometown. He said the boy's father was present, but there were no Cuban monitors or officials and no ground rules. In the interview, Elian said he had always told his US relatives he wanted to go back to Cuba. (*The New York Times*, 30/9/05)

**September 30:** Six of 10 Cubans whose search by the US Coast Guard was broadcast on television in Miami have been sent back to Cuba, officials said. Federal officials said the other four Cubans were taken to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for possible entry into a third country. The 10 were stopped by the US Coast Guard off Haulover Beach. (*NBC6Net*, 1/10/05)