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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Fidel Castro assures that he is recovering from intestinal surgery. Repression and harassment against the dissident movement increase. Cuba sets a tight security operation in Havana in anticipation of the arrival of leaders and delegates to the XIV Non-Aligned summit. An intensive campaign is underway against the mosquito that transmits dengue fever. Raul Castro emphasizes the battle against corruption at Cuba's labour union congress.

Economy: Cuban authorities are expanding the sugar industry to take advantage of the high global price of sugar. India's state-run oil company signs an agreement to explore Cuban waters in the Gulf of Mexico. Russia grants Cuba credit worth \$350 million.

Foreign Affairs: Cuba is elected president of the Non Aligned Movement during its 14th summit in Havana. Fidel and Raul Castro meet with foreign leaders during Havana's Non Aligned summit. The Spanish secretary of state for foreign affairs, Bernardino Leon, meets with dissidents in Havana. Esteban Lazo, vice president of the Cuban Council of State, leads the Cuban delegation to the 61st session of the UN General Assembly.

Security: The Chief of Congo Brazzaville's Armed Forces staff, Division General Charles Richard Mondjo, visits Cuba. Cuba and Russia sign a military agreement.

US-Cuba Relations: A US high-ranking official says Canada would play an important role in helping Cuba make a transition to democracy. A former President of Spain, the Costa Rican president, and a former Venezuelan President offer to mediate between the US and Cuba. The Bush administration proposes that Cubans hold a referendum to decide if they want to be ruled by Raul Castro.



Domestic Affairs

September 1: Official TV in Cuba showed new images of Fidel Castro, apparently recovering from the gastric surgery he underwent over a month ago. The Cuban leader was shown meeting the Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez, who made an unannounced visit to Cuba on his return from a visit to Asia. The taped images show Mr Castro sitting up in his bedclothes and taking part in animated conversation with Mr Chavez. Dressed in red pajamas, Castro appeared much more animated and alert on the video than in those made when Chavez made his first post-surgery visit to the Cuban

leader on August 13, his 80th birthday. The specifics of Castro's ailment and the nature of his surgery have been treated as a state secret. (*BBC, AP, 2/9/06*)

September 1: Some 1,500 Cuban children in eastern Las Tunas province will be immunized against five different diseases as part of the first stage in the administration of a new Cuban vaccine nationwide. Doctor Sergio Garcia, Head of the Immunization Program at Las Tunas Provincial Epidemiology and Hygiene Center, told reporters that all conditions are ready to administer the dose on children from 2 to 6 months of age in local health care centers. Known as Heberpenta, the new vaccine combats diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, hepatitis B and Haemophilus influenzae type B and will be applied in 494 polyclinics throughout the country to an estimated 50,000 babies during the remainder of 2006. (*AIN, 1/9/06*)

September 1: In an unusual repressive action, over 50 agents of Cuba's State Security (political police) in twelve vehicles broke into Dr. Darsi Ferrer's home in Havana. With guns drawn, the agents handcuffed him and took him under arrest. Dr. Ferrer's wife was away, caring for her ailing mother, and the police ignored his pleas to bring his five-year old son, Dariel, along until his wife could come for him. Instead, they took Dr. Ferrer away shirtless and barefoot, and left the child alone. According to the testimony of Ferrer's wife, the agents opened the gas main before shutting the door. Neighbors went for the wife and helped her break open a window, finding the child still alive, Ferrer's wife said. Two hours later, Ferrer was released. But in the afternoon of the same day, he was again detained near the US Interests Section, where he was about to enter for a visit. Dr. Ferrer is the founder of the Juan Bruno Zayas Health and Human Rights Center. On August 9, Ferrer distributed to the press the document "Transition Now", calling all Cubans to join in peaceful actions against Raul Castro's succession. (*Netfor Cuba, El Nuevo Herald, 2/9/06*)

September 1: Cuban musician Richard Egües, one of the most important artistic figures on the island and a former member of the Orquesta Aragón band, died at the age of 82 after a long illness. Egües, a pianist, flutist, composer and arranger, was born in the city of Santa Clara in central Cuba on October 26, 1924. From the time he joined Orquesta Aragón in 1953, the musician gave the band its unmistakable style with the way he played the flute. Egües composed what are today classics of salsa, such as "Sabrosón," "Gladys," and "El bodeguero," which became part of Nat King Cole's repertoire. The Orquesta Aragón was a top band at a time when Cuba's stages featured stars like the Matamoros Trio, Benny Moré, Enrique Jorrín, Pacho Alonso, La Orquesta América and Fajardo y sus Estrellas, among many others. (*Granma International, 1/9/06*)

September 4: More than three million children and youth filled the streets of the island with uniforms. Only in Sancti Spiritus, over 600 elementary, junior highs, and high schools opened to classes for the 2006-2007 year. The central province of Sancti Spiritus is one with a record registration of students, over 100,000 pupils of all levels attending classes on their first day after summer vacation. In Cuba, nearly 620,000 youth, the highest figure in Cuban history for a school year, entered university studies. (*AIN, 4/9/06*)

September 5: Fidel Castro said the worst part of a health crisis that made him shed 18.5 kilos (41 pounds) was over and that he would attend the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Havana, in a handwritten statement. "You can say the most critical moment is behind me," Castro said in the statement, published in the official daily Granma and accompanied by dozens of snapshots. "Today I'm recovering at a satisfactory pace. I'll be receiving distinguished visitors over the next few days," he wrote. "That doesn't mean that every activity (of mine) will be immediately covered by film and photos, although news coverage will always be provided." A thinner Castro appeared in pajamas and slippers sitting in a rocking chair in what looked like a hospital room in photographs on Granma's site. [[Mensaje de Fidel al pueblo de Cuba](#)] (*AFP, Reuters, 5/9/06*)

September 5: Cuba and the United States were awarded automatic Olympic berths by virtue of finishing first and second in the pre Olympic baseball tournament held in the island. The US won over Cuba in the last game held in the Latinoamericano Stadium in Havana. (*Toronto Star*, 6/9/06)

September 7: At least five patients who recently received surgery died of hospital-acquired infections at the Calixto García Clinical and Surgical Hospital, in the City of Havana. The hospital has ten operating rooms and performs the majority of surgeries in the country. Two hospital nurses are conducting an anonymous study of the deaths due to unspecified pathologies. Preliminary studies indicate that patients suffer complications after contracting infections because of leaks and moisture on the walls of the operating rooms, and a shortage of drinking water and cleaning products at the hospital. (*Cubanet*, 7/9/06)

September 7: The 19th Congress of the Cuba's Workers Central union (CTC) will be a transcendent event for absolute support to Fidel Castro and the Socialist Revolution, stated Pedro Ross Leal, general secretary of that organization. The CTC leader is on tour of the central provinces of Ciego de Avila, Sancti Spiritus, Cienfuegos and Villa Clara to meet with the delegates to this most important union event to take place September 24-27 in Havana. This Congress will take place at a historic moment marked by important advances in all fields, and also by the integration of the Latin American peoples, inspired in the ideas of Jose Marti and the Venezuelan liberator Simon Bolivar, Ross said. The Congress' central slogan will refer to the unity of workers in defense of the Revolution and socialism, he remarked. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/9/06)

September 7: The wife of political prisoner Francisco Chaviano condemned the "humiliating" treatment she receives when she visits her husband. According to Ana Aguililla Saladrigas, during her last visit, prison authorities told her she had to be searched and to "squat three times without underwear". "After my complaint and refusal, the second officer in command at the prison told me it was usual procedure", said Aguililla Saladrigas. Francisco Chaviano has been in jail for more than 12 years of a 15-years sentence. (*EER*, 8/9/06)

September 8: Cuban cardinal Jaime Ortega invoked Our Lady of Charity, patron saint of Cuba, so that "fraternal coexistence between all Cubans prevails and nothing disturbs the peace from within the country" these days. Ortega, archbishop of Havana, officiated a mass in the parish of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre and led a public procession of more than 3,000 people along the streets of Havana. (*EFE*, 10/9/06)

September 8: A radar device to detect meteorological events located on San Juan Peak in the Cuban province of Cienfuegos is being modernized to increase significantly its capacity, Granma newspaper reported. A team of experts have installed there a new magnetron, an apparatus in charge of measuring electromagnetic energy. The San Juan Peak meteorological station has been introducing technological improvements for several years, to detect with great precision meteorological phenomena. (*Prensa Latina*, 8/9/06)

September 9: Cuba set a security operation in motion that disrupted daily life in Havana in anticipation of the arrival of leaders and delegates from more than 100 countries attending the XIV Summit of Non-Aligned countries. Police presence and controls were tightened at the Conference Centre, the Summit venue; along Fifth Avenue, route that leads to the centre and where most embassies are located; the José Martí international airport; and Revolution Square, political hub of the island. In a communiqué published in the local media, the Organizing Committee of the Summit explained the traffic disruption in these areas and the prohibition of "concentration and movement of groups of peoples". (*AFP*, 10/9/06)

September 10: The Ladies in White, wives of political prisoners in Cuba, carried out their Sunday march in demand of the freedom of their relatives, challenging a government prohibition on the movement of people in preparation for the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). "If we accept everything they [the government] stipulate, we would then have to accept that our husbands be in prison because they put them there", said Laura Pollán, a member of the

Ladies in White. An official statement had restricted the movement of persons in neighbouring areas to the Summit. (AFP, 11/9/06)

September 10: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told the press that Fidel Castro continues to recover satisfactorily while he follows the preparations of the 14th Summit of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM). In a press conference that followed the inauguration of Havana's new press center, specially set up for the September 11-16 summit, Perez Roque pointed out that the leader of the Cuban Revolution officially presides over the Cuban delegation to the meeting, seconded by First Vice President Raul Castro. (ACN, 10/9/06)

September 11: The number of migrant women has been growing in Cuba, just as in any other country of the region and the rest of the world, local experts indicated. International trends are present in Cuba, stated Antonio Aja Díaz, a researcher at the University of Havana's Migration Study Center. He made the statement during the launching of the 2006 World Population Report, at the United Nations office in the island. There has been a process of feminization of migration in Cuba, especially after the early 1990s, when an economic crisis broke out. "While most people leaving the country temporarily or permanently had in the past lived in Havana, they now leave from other provinces as well", stressed Consuelo Martín, a Center's psychologist and researcher. "The list of countries of destination now includes Europe, Central America, Venezuela and Mexico", she added. Migration in Cuba has been a historical process conditioned by economic, political, legal, family, psychological, social and juncture-specific factors. Consideration should be given to the fact that this issue has been highly politicized after Fidel Castro took over in 1959, experts stressed. (SEM, 11/9/06)

September 12: In an interview with Telesur, a regional television channel, Raul Castro said his 80-year-old brother was still working hard. "Don't think that he is laying down in a bed," said Raul Castro, 75. "He is on the telephone giving orders." (AP, 12/9/06)

September 12: The start of the week-long 14th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) forced the Cuban government to suspend its spraying with military planes, but it has not cut short the intense offensive against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which carries the potentially deadly dengue virus. Although the government has kept mum on the spread of dengue fever in this Caribbean island nation, sources close to the Public Health Ministry told the press that several thousand cases have been reported in Havana alone, where special hospital wards have been created to care for the sick. The authorities say everything is under control, while emphasising the need to keep up the health and awareness-raising campaign. "Let's prevent the proliferation of the mosquitoes. Everyone must be aware of the problem," said the host of a show on the CH TV state-run channel. According to Dr. José San Martín Martínez, director of the Public Health Ministry's National Surveillance and Anti-Vector Unit, "there is no danger of a dengue epidemic" in Cuba. (IPS, 12/9/06)

September 12: A dog trained by prison officers at the Guanajay penitentiary in Havana attacked and injured Héctor Raúl Valle Hernández, a prisoner of conscience. The incident took place while Valle Hernández was sunbathing in the morning, reported José Miguel Martínez, also an inmate in Guanajay. A German shepherd trained to keep prisoners from escaping and used also by prison authorities to break up fights and other disturbances leaped on the peaceful government opponent tearing his right thigh, said the source. (Cubamet, 21/9/06)

September 13: Cuban state television has shown photos of a pajama-clad Fidel Castro chatting animatedly with an Argentine congressman, raising expectations that Castro will use the Non Aligned Movement summit to make his first public appearance since undergoing surgery in July. State television showed Castro sitting with Argentine Congressman Miguel Bonasso at a small table. Fidel Castro said he has started putting on weight again. "I lost 41 pounds, but I'm putting weight back on -- already almost half of what I lost," the leftist firebrand told Bonasso. "You have to do things one step at a time. You must remember that the machine being repaired is 80 years old," Castro joked, regarding the pace of his recovery. The interview with Bonasso, published in leftist Argentine newspaper Pagina 12,

showed that Castro was well enough to get out of bed to greet his visitor. "I can still talk pretty loudly if I want to," Castro was quoted as saying by the Argentine daily. National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon said that Castro "is doing well" and may participate at the Havana summit. (*AP, Reuters, 14/9/06*)

September 13: New Chinese traffic lights, anti-mosquito fumigation campaigns and half-finished paint jobs on crumbling houses reflect what many Cubans see as papering over the cracks of a dilapidated city to prepare for the Non-Aligned Summit. Residents say there had not been such a cleanup since Pope John Paul's historic visit in 1998 drew the world's attention to a city center that once was one of the jewels of the Spanish colonial empire and is now one of Havana's most rundown areas. For the first time in years, Communist authorities have painted white and yellow lines onto main roads to be used by dozens of visiting heads of states, finally giving the few Cubans who own cars a sense of what lane to drive in. Another novelty, along 5th Avenue, the main thoroughfare: traffic lights imported from China. They show both colors and, on large electronic display boards, a digital count-down of time between signals. Small potted trees have been planted along Havana's sea front promenade. Opposite, fresh paint glistens from some sides of crumbling houses while other walls remain untouched, showing up cracks and holes from decades of neglect. "This is all about the government just applying make-up to the city (...) It's all about entertaining the presidents. A lot of summit, summit, summit, and everything remains the same," said Miguel, a 66-year-old pensioner, who like many Cubans was nervous about giving his full name. (*Reuters, 13/09/06*)

September 15: Cuban leader Fidel Castro is recovering but still too ill to chair a summit of the Non-Aligned Movement of developing nations, Cuba's foreign minister said, meaning a much anticipated public appearance at the meeting is unlikely. "His health is improving continuously and his convalescence is satisfactory (...) but the doctors have insisted that he continue resting, and thus he will not lead the Cuban delegation at the summit," Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told the summit. State television showed Castro, 80, standing up briefly to greet friend and ally Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan president, on September 14. Chavez said later Castro was walking and singing. Castro also met UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan later on the same day. (*Reuters, 15/9/06*)

September 16: The Ladies in White, wives and mothers of Cuban political prisoners, marched silently for 45 minutes in Havana, to commemorate 42 months of their relatives' arrest. "We do not want to disrupt the Summit (of the Non-Aligned Movement), but we had to remember the date", said one of the participants during the march in the municipality of Centro-Habana, relatively far from where the meeting is taking place. (*AFP, 16/9/06*)

September 16: Dissidents Marta Cortizas Jiménez and Eugenio Leal García, members of the Cuban Socialist Democratic Current (CSDC) and of the editorial team of the digital magazine "Consenso" were brutally attacked and threatened with death by regime sympathizers, reported the Progressive Arch coalition in a communiqué. For Progressive Arch, "state terrorism against civil society and human integrity, has expressed itself as political terrorism in this case". (*EER, 19/9/06*)

September 17: No matter whether Fidel Castro returns to office or not, diplomats and dissidents say the post-Fidel era has already begun and some foresee an ideological tug of war between "tropical Taliban" and proponents of Chinese-style economic reforms. "Cuba has not been the same since July 31," said Miriam Leiva, a co-founder of the Ladies in White, a group of women whose husbands were arrested, tried and convicted in a large-scale crackdown on dissidents in 2003. Her husband, economist Oscar Espinosa Chepe, was released for health reasons 19 months later. Espinosa Chepe and Leiva aired their views in an interview in their tiny apartment in Havana. Both see economic reforms managed by the Cuban Armed Forces headed by Raul Castro as the best hope for the near future, a sentiment echoed privately by many Cubans who tend to complain more vociferously about economic misery than the political system. "What would be disastrous would be for the tropical Taliban to run the country," Espinosa Chepe said. The phrase refers to a younger generation of officials mentored personally by Fidel Castro. The phrase Taliban is borrowed from the Afghan militants whose narrow interpretation of Islam caused them to ban music and stone adulterers to death. To hear Cubans tell it, the list of true believers includes Otto Rivero, vice president of the Council of Ministers for the

Battle of Ideas, Hassan Perez, vice president of the Union of Communists, Miriam Yanet Martin, president of the Jose Marti pioneers youth group and Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. Outside experts agree the Armed Forces would be a better agent of change, if it were to come, than any other institution. "Unlike the Communist Party, the armed forces are widely popular," said Hal Klepak, a history professor at the Royal Military Institute of Canada and author of a book on the Cuban military. (*Reuters*, 17/9/06)

September 18: Relatives of political prisoner, Luis Enrique Ferrer García, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement in the Las Tunas province, denounced the harassment they have been suffering since Luis Enrique was sent to Mar Verde prison. His mother, sister, wife and young three-years old daughter Maria Libertad, have experienced difficulties with their visits to the prison because the State Security has threatened all the chauffeurs who rent their cars, so that they will not transport them. Also, arriving at the prison, these women have been seized and made the objects of mockery and humiliation by the guards, who have later placed a policewoman to accompany them throughout the whole visit. While in prison, Luis Enrique has been the object of intimidation by a very dangerous criminal who enjoys easy mobility within the prison and special advantages granted by the prison authorities. Some prisoners have admitted that the guards and the State Security have offered them special benefits if they agree to harass and provoke Luis Enrique, but most of them have refused. Luis Enrique received a 28-year-sentence in jail in April 2003. (*Puente Informativo*, 18/9/06)

September 18: Cuban dissident Oswaldo Paya said he fears the Havana regime will begin killing its opponents if it feels threatened, though he also detects in the events surrounding Fidel Castro's illness signs of impending rapid change on the Communist-ruled island. "More than Fidel's death, it is the ineffectiveness of the Castro system that will bring the regime down," Paya said in an interview published by the left-leaning French daily Liberation. According to Paya, the announcement of Castro's illness "has created great expectations. For the first time Cubans see a concrete possibility of change." A change that "will happen quickly and is inevitable," he said, since "the people can no longer bear the idea of living another year" in the situation of paralysis that has been brought on by the announcement of Castro's illness. People "will in turn start protesting. That will be a critical moment and the end may be fatal and bloody. I hope it's no more than a tense, gradual" change, Paya said, adding that all members of the opposition want a peaceful transition to democracy in Cuba. Dissident leader Vladimiro Roca, president of the Cuban Social Democratic Party (PSC), said he favoured a peaceful transition to democracy. "I want changes, no revolutions. I don't want any revolution. Revolutions are accompanied by blood and violence, and I want things to be quiet", Roca said in an interview to the Spanish daily ABC. (*EFE, EER*, 18/9/06)

September 18: Educational centres in Santa Clara, Las Villas province, have experienced some irregularities this school year. Shortages of teachers, water and awful sanitary conditions have forced the shutdown of the Bárbaro Alba School. The school sent all students home only two days after the school year began (*Cubanet*, 18/9/06)

September 19: Cuban dissidents demanded the government of Fidel Castro open-up and respect human rights, and criticized that the Summit of Non-Aligned countries "silenced" the situation on the island. "I do not believe that the Summit has been a success. For us it has been of no use because there has been no discussion of the problems of democracy and freedoms", said Martha Beatriz Roque, president of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba. Dissident Oswaldo Payá, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement, questioned whether the speeches in the Summit, by "justifying and silencing the harsh reality that many of their own peoples suffer, are not an outrageous agreement of the oppression and abuse of human rights of the peoples living under tyrannies". Progressive Arch, a coalition of social-democratic leanings, urged the government to open up to plurality and respect of human rights, and honour the Presidency of the Movement that the country will hold for the next three years. (*AFP*, 19/9/06)

September 20: Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro attended the closing ceremony of the Congress of the National Defense Civil Workers Union. At the event marking the 35 anniversary of the creation of the National Union of Civil Defense Workers, Raul Castro congratulated the delegates. During the meeting, participants elected the new union

secretariat. Also present were Interior Minister Corps General Abelardo Colome Ibarra, First Deputy Defense Minister Julio Casas Regueiro, Jose Ramon Machado Ventura and the General Secretary of the Cuban Workers Confederation Pedro Ross Leal; all are members of the Political Bureau of Cuba's Communist Party. (ACN, 20/9/06)

September 21: Cuba's foreign minister said he expects Fidel Castro to be fully back at the helm by early December and urged US intelligence chiefs to tear up their post-Castro scenario because his illness demonstrated Cubans' strong support for their government. Felipe Perez Roque said Castro's illness, which forced him to step aside as president on July 31, turned out to be a dress rehearsal for the time when the leader of Cuba's revolution dies. There were no street protests and the country remained "at ease, but vigilant and watchful," he said in an interview with the press. Asked whether he expected Fidel to be back in power for the postponed celebration of his 80th birthday on December 2, Perez Roque said Fidel's health is improving, "and I have no questions in my mind that we will be able to celebrate his birthday in December as he deserves." Did he expect Fidel to be back fully or on a lighter work schedule? "I think he will come back fully," Perez Roque said. "I have no doubts that his recovery is coming along quite well, and that Fidel will be able to fully devote his time to his duties without any impediments whatsoever," he said. But he said he expects Fidel's medical team to try "and put things in such a way that there will be no excesses that will harm his health." (AP, 21/9/06)

September 22: The status of the intensive campaign underway against the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito that can transmit dengue fever, was at the center of a meeting of presidents of the People's Power provincial committees of the island. The two-day gathering was presided over by Cuba's First Vice President Raul Castro and other top Communist Party and government officials. Participants analyzed the battle underway throughout the island against the mosquito, and the measures adopted to try and eliminate the dangerous vector. Speaking on the issue, Raul Castro said that the battle must be won at the grassroots level, with the active involvement of every citizen, and raising people's awareness about the risks stemming from the presence of mosquito breeding grounds. He made an appeal not to let up on the systematic eradication work, and to find rational solutions to whatever obstacles that may occur in this fight. To date, no figures have been released about the number of people affected by the disease, but doctors say cases have been detected in Havana and eastern cities like Ciego de Avila and Santiago de Cuba. Ricardo Alarcon, president of the National Assembly of the People's Power, was not reported to have attended the meeting. (*Granma, EFE, 23/9/06*)

September 23: Cuba's acting president Raúl Castro said his older brother Fidel is walking more frequently and his health is steadily improving after intestinal surgery, state-run media reported. He also said the elder Castro is paying close attention to Cuba's current battle against dengue fever, the Communist Party daily newspaper *Granma* reported in a front-page article. "At the mention [of Fidel], he also took the opportunity to say that he is getting better and walking more and more every day," the newspaper said. (AP, 24/9/06)

September 24: Over 1,400 delegates throughout the country started in Havana works of the 19th Congress of the Central Workers Union of Cuba (CTC). The event, which will take place for four days, is expected to debate an extensive agenda of important issues for the workers' movement and the nation's economic and social development process. Efforts of Cuban public health to raise life expectancy to 80 years and results reached during the revolutionary process are key issues. The education workers union, the most represented sector in this forum, has among its concerns the need to provide teacher uniforms and shoes and analyze the lack of teachers. The energy revolution, conservation and efficiency are topics analyzed by workers of the chemical, mining and metallurgical sectors. Nine commissions will start working on September 25. (*Prensa Latina, 24/9/06*)

September 25: The dissident coalition Progressive Arch will invite the UN Human Rights Commission to list groups like the Rapid Response Brigades, created by the Cuban government to suppress opponents, as "terrorist". Progressive Arch announced that it will bring before the organization "projects and activities against the association of persons— whether sanctioned by State or not— created to systematically and expressly threaten, intimidate, attack and destroy by means of violence and for political purposes", citizens "who seek peaceful social, economic, political or cultural

reforms". The initiative has been called "Action against Ideological and Political Terrorism against Difference". (*EER*, 26/9/06)

September 26: Labour discipline and business improvement were on the table in plenary sessions of the 19th Congress of the Central Workers Union of Cuba (CTC), taking place in Havana. Delegates from 19 national workers unions should approve 15 draft resolutions analyzed the day before in nine working commissions. First Vice President Raul Castro and Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party presided over the discussions. The country's economic, political and social issues, as well as payment systems for work results, socialization of economic information and salary increases were highlighted in debates. "Today, our country is in a position to make qualitative leaps forward in several vital sectors of society; the role of trade union organizations in achieving this goal is pivotal," said Pedro Ross, general secretary of the Cuban Trade Union Confederation (CTC) in his main report to the Congress. "This Congress represents a critical analysis of the performance of the Cuban labor movement over the last few years, and an expression of the desire of Cuban workers to give a resolute rejection to the negative remnants of the Special Period. Above all, it is a turning point in which the path to development is resumed amidst new conditions," Ross added. (*Prensa Latina, Granma*, 26,27/9/06)

September 26: New hip prosthesis technologies are being applied in Cuban medical facilities and in 2007 the generalized introduction of new knee technologies is expected, stated Dr. Rodrigo Alvarez Cambras, who chaired the recently concluded International Orthopedics and Traumatology Congress at the Plaza America Convention Center in Varadero, which was attended by 300 delegates from 10 countries. "Cuba has set the standards in orthopedics, our school has trained professionals from many countries in Latin American and other latitudes," the professor, also director of the Frank País International Orthopedic Scientific Complex, told the press. He recalled that in aspects such as the RALCA external fixators, which have been in use since 1971 throughout most of the world, and in sports traumatology, "we are the vanguard and reference for experts, even those from the most developed countries." (*Granma International*, 26/9/06)

September 26: The Attorney General's Office overruled a complaint filed by Ms. Amalia Rodríguez for the refusal to free journalist Oscar Mario González from prison. District attorney Francisco J. Fernández, head of the General Directorate of Controls, "overruled the complaint". On July 10, Rodríguez, a lawyer, had requested the release of Oscar Mario, who's been in detention without trial since July 13, 2005. (*Cubamet*, 26/9/06)

September 26: The World Baseball Classic was an important step in baseball's international development but is no consolation for the elimination of the sport from the Olympics, the president of Cuba's Olympic Committee said. Jose Ramon Fernandez urged the International Baseball Federation to unite all its forces in the fight to get baseball back on the Olympic roster. "The Classic can not be a substitute for baseball in the Olympics," Fernandez, also a vice-president in Cuba, told the press in an interview at the Council of Ministers headquarters. The International Olympics Committee eliminated baseball and softball from the 2012 London Olympics during a vote in 2005. Cuba, which considers baseball its national sport, vigorously protested the decision to drop baseball from the Olympic program. (*AP*, 27/9/06)

September 27: Raul Castro urged Cuba's communist labor union to lead the country's battle against corruption, saying workers are "the essential force" in fighting a wide range of vices. His speech, which closed the union's 19th congress in Havana, earned him a standing ovation from the crowd of about 1,400 people. The younger Castro, who appeared confident in his new leadership role, complimented the union for its dedication to the island's socialist ideals, at the same time chiding the leaders for failing to control rampant stealing from the state and worker apathy. "One of the most difficult challenges in this ideological work is succeeding in making the worker feel like a collective owner of the society's riches -- and acting accordingly," Castro said in remarks lasting under an hour. He said severe shortages created when Cuba lost economic support after the fall of the Soviet Union have prompted some of the stealing. "But it's also been due to our old and new errors," he said. "Some union leaders have not made the best decisions, nor employed the best work form." [[Discurso de Raúl Castro](#)] (*AP*, 27/9/06)

September 28: The dissident Assembly to Promote Civil Society (APSC), led by Martha Beatriz Roque, urged all dissident organizations in Cuba to “unite” and support a congress of independent libraries, which will last more than four months. “Given the current situation in the country, and the state of repression against internal dissidents”, this will be a very “unusual” congress, which will run from next October 10 to February 24, 2007 and will take place simultaneously in all independent libraries in the country, said Roque. (*AFP*, 29/9/06)

September 29: Pedro Luis Ferrer is still shaking things up with his new album.

Such has been the international success story of Buena Vista Social Club that most people can't see past these octogenarian superstars when it comes to Cuban music. However, for most of Cuba's population there is a very different musical landscape that includes hip-hop, reggaeton and heavy metal, not to mention contemporary folk troubadours such as Pedro Luis Ferrer, a singer-songwriter who paints surreal snapshots of Cuban life. The latter has just released *Natural*, the follow-up to last year's impressive *Although his parents were fervent supporters of Castro's revolution*, Ferrer isn't afraid to speak his mind on thorny social problems. "In Cuba we live with many contradictions. There is a conflict between the many good intentions to make society better and the impossibility of achieving it. The government and the administration haven't got it right, but I believe that this difficult situation is created by the constant interference of those who call themselves enemies of the Cuban revolution". "My parents fought against and suffered under the dictatorship of Batista. They saw in the revolution the victory of their dreams. But I also believe that one man doesn't need to govern a country for that many years, because men get older. Even if they were the best man in the world, to govern more than five years can damage any country." (*The Independent*, 29/9/06)

September 30: Fidel Castro sent special congratulations to the students and workers of the Information Technology University (UCI). During the opening ceremony of the 2006-2007 school year at the UCI, Carlos Valença, member of the State Council, transmitted Castro's message. In his message, Castro congratulated all the organizations that have contributed to the achievements of that university, the first students of which will graduate at the end of this school year. Fidel Castro highlighted that the UCI is an example of the value of an idea, the country's collective effort and its political willingness to develop this sphere. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/9/06)

Economy

September 1: Esteban Lazo, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba met with the Chinese Minister of Radio, Film and Television. The two officials held talks about topics related to audiovisual matters and expressed their satisfaction with the exchange, which began with a visit by Lazo to China in July, followed by a trip by the president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television, Ernesto Lopez. Cooperation between the two nations in this area is expected to produce several bilateral agreements. The first step has already been implemented with the broadcasting of Chinese Television in Cuba and the Cubavision Internacional channel in China. In both cases, transmissions are aimed at tourist resorts. Wang Taihua attended the inauguration of a TV broadcasting center at a beach resort in Cayo Coco, on the Cuban northern coast. The tourist resort now offers three channels broadcasting Chinese Television in Chinese, English and French. (*Granma*, *AFP*, 1/9/06)

September 2: Cuban Minister of Transportation Carlos Manuel Pazo Torrado in Havana called for expansion of technical cooperation with Iran. In a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Cuba Ahmad Edrissian, Torrado said Iran was an advanced country in various fields of transportation and expressed his country's willingness to boost cooperation with Iran in this respect. He said the upcoming visit to Cuba of the Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad would be an appropriate opportunity for the two countries to sign new agreements. Meanwhile, Cuban Minister of Basic Industries Yadira García Vera, in a meeting with Edrissian, expressed her country's readiness to sign industrial agreements with Iran. The minister said the two countries enjoy great potentials for expansion of industrial cooperation,

adding Cuba is determined to boost ties with Iran in different fields. The two sides discussed avenues for bolstering bilateral economic ties particularly in the fields of electricity, oil and cement. (*Tehran Times*, 2/9/06)

September 5: Several years after downsizing what was once Cuba's most important business, authorities have reversed course and are expanding the sugar industry to take advantage of the high global price of sugar and growing demand for ethanol. Ulises Rosales del Toro, Cuba's sugar minister, said that he expects sugar production to increase at least 25 percent this year and has vowed to triple production to 3 million tons in the next few years, according to Cuba's state-run media. Cuban authorities also plan a fivefold increase in the production of ethanol, a sugar-based fuel for automobiles that is increasingly attractive as gasoline prices soar. Analysts say the ambitious effort is full of pitfalls and doubt that Cuba has the capital needed to quickly boost sugar cane yields, modernize two dozen or more refineries to increase processing capacity, and build new ethanol distillery plants and other infrastructure to develop a viable export business. (*Chicago Tribune*, 5/9/06)

September 8: The first coffee beans of the 2006-2007 harvest in Cuba's Holguin Province have already been gathered in the municipality of Sagua de Tanamo, one of the largest producers in Cuba. The recently initiated season will have a workforce of about 7,000 harvesters, who will collect nearly 70 percent of the total crop in the territory, forth among all coffee growers on the island. The current estimate of production in the province is for 360,000 buckets, most of this to be harvested in the municipalities of Sagua de Tanamo and Mayari. The greatest production of coffee in Holguin comes from independent small farmers, who hold around 60 percent of the estates. (*Ahora*, 8/9/06)

September 8: Cuba's Assistant Foreign Trade Minister Pedro Luis Padron heads a delegation arriving in Brazil, to participate in the meeting of ministers and high-ranking officials of the G-20. The September 9-10 forum in the Copacabana Palace in Rio de Janeiro is intended to call world attention to the stagnation of negotiations of the Doha Round due to the position of the US and the European Union to preserve their protectionist agriculture policies. Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim will be the host of the meeting, where the G-20 is expected to increase its membership to 23 with the return of Ecuador and Peru. So far the members are Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, China, Cuba, Egypt, Phillipines, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, South Africa, Thailand, Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. (*Prensa Latina*, 8/9/06)

September 10: India's state-run oil company signed an agreement to explore Cuba's Gulf of Mexico waters for oil at a time when US companies and politicians are increasingly concerned over exploration in the area. Cuba Petroleum Director Fidel Rivero Prieto said upon signing the agreement that six foreign companies had signed for 16 of 59 blocks in Cuba's Gulf waters, two companies more than previously announced. Prieto refused to name the two other companies or which blocks they had taken due to possible US objections. "It is up to the companies to announce if they want," he said. India's Oil and Natural Gas Corp's (ONGC) overseas arm ONGC Videsh signed joint production agreements for blocks 34 and 35 covering 4,300 square kilometers (1,660 square miles). (*Reuters, Bloomberg News, The Globe and Mail*, 10/9/06)

September 10: The Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of Cuba and the Federation of Syrian Chambers of Commerce have agreed to promote bilateral trade. The negotiations were held in the National Hotel of Havana, and led by Frank Abel Portela Chacón, secretary general of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, and Bashar Nouri, secretary general of the Syrian federation. (*WDS*, 12/9/06)

September 12: Fidel Castro's health problems will not lead to any changes in Cuba's economic system, nor is there any interest in adopting a Chinese economic model here, the island's economics minister said. Jose Luis Rodriguez's comments appeared aimed at dispelling speculation that Raul Castro, the communist-run island's acting president while his elder brother recovers from stomach surgery, would open up the Cuban economy and take pointers from China if given full power. "If people are thinking that there could be a change in Cuba's policies toward an opening of the economy in the hypothetical case of the Comandante (Fidel Castro) remaining ill, I can firmly say no," Rodriguez told a

news conference. "It's not planned, nor is it the desire of the people," he said. As for communist China, its explosive shift toward a market economy in recent years is due to its own "very particular characteristics," and is not a relevant model for Cuba, Rodriguez said. The official said there is one Chinese example, however, that Cuba will likely follow: putting an end to its dual currency system. The plan, Rodriguez said, is to eventually merge the Cuban peso with the island's convertible Cuban peso. Cuba's economy grew a faster-than- expected 12.5 percent in the first half of 2006, boosted by a surge in the construction, transport and services industries, Rodriguez said. (*AP, Bloomberg*, 13/9/06)

September 19: Over 40 countries will be represented at the International Transportation Fair FIT 2006. This commercial exhibition will begin on September 26 in Expocuba, the biggest exhibition site on the island. In a press conference, Transportation minister Carlos Manuel Pasos assured that the 10th FIT exhibition includes the signing of a contract with Byelorussia for 100 new articulated urban transport buses, adapted to the Cuban climate, and part of them will be in the country by the end of this year. The Minister also said that the situation of public transportation is still "critical". He added that 8,000 buses were bought in China, 1,000 of which are already on the island. Cuba has invested one billion dollars in public transportation, not including locomotives and train wagons. (*Prensa Latina, EFE*, 19/9/06)

September 20: Export Assistance Canada accepted applications for Canadian companies that want to join its October 29 trade mission to Havana. The visit will coincide with Havana's International Trade Fair. Participating Canadian companies will have an opportunity to meet Cuban buyers and importers of industrial machinery, as well as purchasers of equipment and materials for the oil, gas and mining industries. Cuban government officials also will be on hand. "With the increasing prices of oil, gas and minerals such as nickel and copper, Cuba is implementing numerous projects of exploration and modernization of their production facilities," Export Assistance Canada said. "These industries are soaring and the demand for new or used machinery, as well as automation processes, is stronger than ever. Construction machinery is also in demand. Banking institutions, some of them doing business in Canada, are very active in Cuba to finance their orders (...) Given especially the absence of American competition, the opportunities for Canadian suppliers in Cuba in the oil, gas and mining industries are numerous." Products in demand in Cuba include industrial and construction machinery, machinery and equipment for exploration, refining and transportation of oil and gas, and machinery and equipment for exploration and production of nickel and copper. (*Metal Bulletin News Alert Service*, 20/9/06)

September 21: Colombia and Cuba have concluded with positive results the first round of negotiations aimed at strengthening and increasing the Economic Complementation Agreement between the two countries. Colombian vice Minister of Trade Eduardo Muñoz said that the three days of talks were successful. Muñoz noted that the groups of Health and Phytosanitary measures, Technical Obstacles to Trade, and Controversy Solution met during the first round of talks. The minister of Trade stated that the Controversy Solution group has already concluded its work, Health and Phytosanitary measures has still two points pending, while Technical Obstacles to Trade is the most delayed, but is committed to solve differences as soon as possible. Another Cuban technical delegation will arrive in Colombia on October 2-5 to focus on issues like Access and Origin Norms to markets and will solve aspects that were pending in the first round of talks. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/9/06)

September 22: A two-days meeting of the presidents of provincial committees of Cuban People's Power resumed in Havana. Presided over by First Vice President Raul Castro and other top Communist Party and government officials, the meeting took a look at the nation's priority housing program. It was reported that as of August, some 68,600 houses had been completed and that there is a firm commitment to reach the stated goal of 100,000 by the end of the year. Participants also evaluated the progress of the nation's energy revolution that involves both saving and new generation strategies. Reports were made on the replacement of old energy inefficient refrigerators and air conditioners in residential homes with new energy-saving ones. Current electricity consumption and demand was reviewed, as was progress in the installing of clusters of diesel generators and their synchronization to the national power grid, expected to be completed in October. Another issue discussed at the meeting was assistance to 107,272 Social Security recipients including low income people, retirees, the physically disabled and pregnant women with health risks. The distribution

of basic food items at the neighborhood stores and audits of the wholesaler's warehouses were also reviewed. (*Granma*, 22/9/06)

September 25: Cuba fired the heads of two of the country's most influential companies in a bid to bring the computing and telecommunications enterprises back under firm state control amid a national anti-corruption drive, industry sources said. Information Technology and Communications Minister Ramiro Valdes, 74, a former revolutionary hero, took over the sensitive sector that controls communist Cuba's communications, computing, Internet and software development late in August 2006. Valdes fired the president of Empresa de Telecomunicaciones de Cuba SA (Etecsa), Jose Antonio Fernandez, and the vice minister for information, Nelson Ferrer, for failing to control the fixed-line and mobile services monopoly, the sources said. Valdes also fired the president of the powerful state-run Copextel corporation which imports, assembles and distributes advanced communications, computing and other technology, the sources said. Copextel, with annual revenues of more than \$200 million, has been caught up in recent corruption scandals involving kickbacks from foreign companies. Etecsa's new president, Maimir Mesa Ramos, and Copextel's new boss, Antonio Orta Rodriguez, were both promoted from within the ranks. International studies have found that Cuba occupies last place in Latin America for both mobile phone and Internet penetration, and is fifth from last in terms of its number of fixed telephone lines. Cuba's 11 million people cannot buy a computer or subscribe to the Internet without a government permit, satellite television is prohibited, and mobile phones are available only for hard currency. (*Reuters*, 26/9/06)

September 26: The 7th Cuba-Russia Inter-Government Commission began in Havana, aimed at fostering economic, trade and scientific-technical cooperation. Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas presided over the Cuban delegation to this meeting, while Grigori I. Elkin, president of the Federal Agency for Technical Normalization and Metrology, led the Russian representation. This session takes place during the visit to Havana of Mijail E. Fradkov, president of the Russian Federation Government. The Russian delegation's agenda includes meetings with Cuban authorities from several ministries and officials from the Institutes of Civil Aeronautics and Hydraulic Resources. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/9/06)

September 27: A huge blaze broke out in the pumping section of the state-owned Níco Lopez refinery, located on Havana Bay 10 kilometers from the city center. The blaze at Cuba's biggest oil refinery in Havana left one worker dead and another injured, television reports said. It took firefighters five hours to put it out, as two workers injured in the blaze were taken to a nearby military hospital, where one of them later died. "We've got it under control," a fire department spokesman told the press. "The fire broke out in an area of the refinery where there's plenty of gasoline, when a van engine was turned on," he added. Another fire broke out 10 years ago at the same refinery, but it was extinguished in two hours without any injuries or major damage. The refinery, formerly owned by Esso and Shell, predates the 1959 Cuban revolution. Flames from the refinery, located on the fringes of Havana's port quarter, were visible all over the Cuban capital "for at least six or seven hours," a source said. (*AFP, Platts Commodity News*, 29/9/06)

September 27: Cuba's International Transport Fair opened with the goal of improving the island's ailing transport sector with the purchase of buses from Belarus and China and a new railroad deal with Venezuela, state-run media reported. Representatives from 40 countries have exhibitions at the event, which runs through Saturday. Venezuela, China and Russia rented out entire pavilions, and Iran is attending for the first time, according to Transportation Minister Carlos Manuel Pazo. Pazo told the government's business weekly *Opciones* that the event will try to ease transportation woes on the island but warned Cubans not to have "false hopes". Cuba's internal transport system steadily deteriorated after the crushing economic crisis of the early to mid-1990s caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Cuba's longtime backer. Cubans often spend hours waiting for buses that never come, or are already full when they arrive. The government stepped up recovery efforts early last year, importing 80 buses from China. It also repaired some 60 locomotives and 1,800 railway cars for transport across the island. The transportation minister said Cuba will

sign an agreement with Venezuela this week to form a joint-enterprise company to deal with railway development. A plan to purchase 100 buses from Belarus will also be announced, he said. (*AFP*, 27/9/06)

September 27: Negotiators from Cuba and the 15-nation Caribbean Community were in discussions to add hundreds of goods to those already exempted from import taxes under a free trade agreement. A deal signed in 2000 by the communist-led country and the regional bloc, also known as Caricom, slashed or eliminated duty on items including electrical products, construction materials and pharmaceuticals. Ken Valley, Trinidad's trade minister, said Caricom officials wanted to include more manufactured products such as furniture and agricultural goods, as well as tourism services. Caricom officials said Cuba wants to add some 200 products to the treaty. Cuban officials could not be reached for comment. (*AP*, 27/9/06)

September 28: President of the Russian government Mijail Fradkov started a visit to Cuba accompanied by a large governmental and business representation to fulfill a tight work agenda. Fradkov arrived at the Cuban capital accompanied by Deputy Ministers of Finance, Anton Siluanov and Economic Development and Foreign Commerce, Vitali Savelev. The Head of the Federal Service for the Technical-Military Collaboration, Mijail Dimitriev, and the Head of the Russia-Cuba Mixed Commission, Grigori Elkin, and other high-ranking officials are also part of the delegation. The Russian dignitary will hold official talks with Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro and sign various bilateral agreements in the headquarters of the island's Council of State. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/9/06)

September 28: Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Maguerramm Mamediarov began his first official visit to Cuba. On arriving in Havana, Mamediarov and his delegation said they will explore potential agreements on the energetic sector. They will also sign on the creation of a joint commission for bilateral cooperation. The Baku foreign minister met with Ricardo Alarcon, president of Cuba's National Assembly, and is expected to meet with Juan Almeida, vice president of Cuba's Council of State, and Basic Industry Minister Yadira Garcia. (*Granma, Prensa Latina*, 29/9/06)

September 28: Russia agreed to grant Cuba credit worth \$350 million and restructure some of its recent debt during a visit by Russia's prime minister, officials said. Cuban Defense Minister Raul Castro, who is acting president while his elder brother Fidel recovers from intestinal surgery, gave red-carpet treatment to Mikhail Fradkov, the highest-ranking Russian official to come to Cuba since a visit by President Vladimir Putin in 2000. Alexander Bochanov, the press liaison at the Russian Embassy in Havana, said that Russia had agreed to restructure some \$166 million of debt acquired in recent years. The \$350 million line of credit will be used to buy Russian goods and services. It is a 10-year loan with annual 4-percent interest, according to Russia's RIA Novosti news agency, which reported that Fradkov said the credit would be used to help modernize Cuba's energy sector and transportation system, reconstruct water conservation facilities and railroads, and design and deliver air navigation systems. But the question of Cuba's debt from Soviet times - the fantastic sum of 22bn dollars—remains unsolved. Havana does not want to recognize this at all. Russian officials insist that it must be paid, but during this visit they preferred not to broach the subject. (*AP, BBC*, 29/9/06)

September 28: Venezuela is planning to double its presence at the 24th Havana International Fair to take place in October, Havana, as the two countries continue to expand bilateral trade. Gustavo Marquez, the Venezuelan minister for Foreign Trade and Integration, made the statement during the official announcement of the fair. In 2005, Venezuela was represented by 57 private and public businesses and several ministers and financial institutions at the Expocuba fairgrounds. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/9/06)

Exile Community

September 4: About 10 women from Women for Human Rights International wanted their one-mile walk to Bayshore Drive to resemble the weekly walks of Las Damas de Blanco. Every Sunday, since 2003, Las Damas de Blanco have attended Mass at the Santa Rita church in Havana's Miramar neighborhood. After the service they walk peacefully through the streets, flowers in hand, displaying photos of loved ones languishing in Cuban prisons for dissenting with the country's totalitarian regime. During Sunday's "Walk for Dignity & Freedom," in Coconut Grove, Women For Human Rights International joined Las Damas de Blanco, or The Ladies in White, in calling for provisional Cuban President Raul Castro's unconditional release of the country's political prisoners. Women For Human Rights International was founded in Miami in 1988 to fight for social justice around the world. Like Las Damas de Blanco, the group hopes national and international communities will urge the Cuban government to grant amnesty to political prisoners. Organizers hope Sunday's walk will be the first of many solidarity walks to be held at least once a month, said Marivi Prado, president of Women for Human Rights International. The next walk will begin in downtown Miami, at a date yet to be announced. (*The Miami Herald*, 4/9/06)

September 11: Several Cuban-American business leaders are seeking to boost the Cuban entrepreneurial spirit with small business startup loans that they believe could help stimulate the island's economy, but the plan first has to overcome restrictions enforced by the US and Cuban governments. The idea is to give microloans to people who want to start businesses such as selling food in the street. But the plan is a long shot, said Carlos Saladrigas, co-chairman of The Cuba Study Group, a nonpartisan Washington-based organization that has pledged \$10 million in seed money. The Cuban government prohibits most private enterprise, while US law sets strict limits on sending money to the communist nation. Officials with the US State and Treasury Departments had no immediate comment on the proposal. And despite Fidel Castro's recent hand-off of power to his brother Raul, there is little sign of any major changes in Cuba's economic policies. "But we believe we have to take risks and seize opportunities, and we believe change is under way in Cuba," Saladrigas said. "Raul Castro is not a spring chicken, and collective leadership always harbors the seeds of reform." (*Sun Sentinel*, 11/9/06)

September 13: A Miami exile leader announced plans for a symbolic demonstration in the waters off Cuba. The reason: to get the group's call for democracy on the island heard by the 116 foreign leaders attending a summit in Havana. "We are asking for free elections in Cuba, not a succession of power from brother to brother as if Cuba were a dynasty," said Ramón Saúl Sánchez, head of the Democracy Movement. The group is staging its "maritime demonstration" to attract the attention of leaders from mostly developing nations attending this week's 14th annual summit of the Nonaligned Movement, which ends on September 16. At a press conference, Sánchez said the group's yacht, the 39-foot Democracia, will leave from Key West's Municipal Marina after midnight on September 15 and head toward the 12-mile limit of what Cuba considers its territorial waters. The Democracia will ferry electoral ballots, fly a white flag, display giant posters of Cuba's political prisoners and drop white roses on the water. Mirrors will be flashed toward the island. About 20 people will be onboard. (*The Miami Herald*, 12/9/06)

September 13: Huber Matos, a leader of the Cuban Revolution who later spent 20 years as a political prisoner of the Castro regime, hailed Costa Rican President Oscar Arias for urging an end to the US embargo to give a boost to democratization in Cuba. Matos said in a letter released in Miami that Arias's "formula (...) very probably does not interest the Castro (brothers)," but it is a way to "bring about a change on the island." In a commentary published last month in the Costa Rican daily La Nacion, Arias said that the lifting of Washington's four-decade-old economic embargo as well as the closing of the US Navy base at Guantanamo could bring about a democratic transition in Communist Cuba. Matos, 80, said that Arias's message seeks to support the democratic aspirations of the Cubans on the island and, in that sense, the lifting of the embargo is an opportunity that could "lead to the changing of the economic system," which would imply "a change in the political system." (*EFE*, 13/9/06)

September 19: Some Cuban exiles, upset about the firing of two El Nuevo Herald reporters and a freelancer who received thousands of dollars in US government pay as correspondents for Radio and TV Martí, protested the dismissals and launched an Internet campaign. "We reject the efforts of The Miami Herald to silence our voice in

Cuba," Remedios Díaz-Oliver of the Cuban Liberty Council said at a news conference. "These journalists were professional and ethical." Also a website urged visitors to sign an online petition and download a letter addressed to Gary B. Pruitt, president and chief executive of McClatchy Co., parent company of The Miami Herald and El Nuevo Herald. The letter requests that a panel be established to determine whether the Miami Herald Media Co. should have fired the three journalists. (*The Miami Herald*, 20/9/06)

September 20: Prominent Cuban intellectual, Mario Parajón, member of the legendary *Grupo Orígenes*, which exerted a profound influence on Cuban intellectual life in the second half of the XXth century, died in Madrid at the age of 77. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 22/9/06)

September 21: Italian filmmaker Angelo Rizzo, author of a recent movie depicting the death of an Italian tourist in 1997 during a wave of terrorist attacks in Havana, blamed the "anti-Cuban mafia" for the burning of two vehicles in front of his house, near Milan. In statements to the Cuban official newspaper Granma, the filmmaker said "the car burnings are related to my film; it's awful." (*ANSA*, 21/9/06)

Foreign Affairs

September 1: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announced that he visited his "comrade and brother" Fidel Castro before returning to Caracas as he wound up his international tour, and gave assurances that the Cuban leader "has recovered considerably." "We ended the tour right there in Cuba, where we got up early this morning to visit comrade Fidel Castro," Chavez told thousands of his followers in the Venezuelan capital a few hours after his return. The leftist Venezuelan president said that he talked with Castro for "more than two hours," with both analyzing "the world situation together with Raul Castro and other Cuban and Venezuelan comrades." (*EFE*, 1/9/06)

September 2: Despite the numerous challenges faced by Cuba over that last four decades, the continuing contribution which that country makes is staggering. This acknowledgement was made by the Barbadian Ambassador to CARICOM, His Excellency John Williams, during his featured address at a ceremony celebrating the return of participants of the Cuba Scholarship Programme. Among the Cuban assistant initiatives mentioned by the ambassador were the scholarship programme, the free eye care surgery programme and disaster management in the aftermath of a hurricane. Barbados Ambassador to CARICOM remarked that the establishment of the Cuban Scholarship Programme has allowed the youth of this region, and Barbados in particular, to develop their intellectual skills. The ambassador acknowledged that a number of students returned from Cuba prematurely at the programme's inception due to an inability to adapt to the societal, lingual and cultural differences. (*The Barbados Advocate*, 2/9/06)

September 2: Venezuela named former Foreign Minister Ali Rodríguez as Ambassador to Cuba. In a news conference, Rodríguez said the appointment by Hugo Chavez was a great honor. Rodríguez substitutes Adán Chávez, president Chávez' brother, in this diplomatic post. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/9/06)

September 2: The Cuban Foreign Ministry termed auspicious the debates of the Final Declaration of the 14th Non Aligned Movement Summit to be held on September 11-16. The draft document, submitted to Coordination Bureau in New York, contains basic concern over the complex international situation that particularly distresses developing countries. This Political Declaration regulates south-south cooperation like the Action Plan for Cuba's 2006-2009 leadership, aimed at revitalizing the NAM and helping preserve its ideals and principles. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/9/06)

September 4: Botswana and Cuba signed a two-year agreement to cooperate on health matters. At the signing ceremony, the Botswana Minister of Health Sheila Tlou said that under the agreement Cuba will provide 166

professionals as volunteers to Botswana. She said that Botswana appreciates the technical assistance that it had from Cuba over the years. (*Mmegi Online*, 5/9/06)

September 4: A Cuban medical brigade working in Indonesia has successfully concluded its humanitarian mission and will shortly return to Cuba. According to reports by Cuban ambassador Jorge Leon Cruz, some 135 health professionals, among them hospital staff and specialists, has so far assisted more than 103,000 patients in tent hospitals, donated by the island's government. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/9/06)

September 4: Most of the 116 members of the Non-Aligned Movement will be represented at the group's summit in Cuba on September 11-16, organizers said. The Communist Party daily *Granma* said many of those countries' heads of state or government will attend the event, but provided no specifics. Leaders who have officially confirmed attendance thus far include: Presidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono of Indonesia, Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan, Bashar Assad of Syria, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines, Leonel Fernandez of the Dominican Republic, Evo Morales of Bolivia, Alfredo Palacio of Ecuador and Fradique de Menezes of the west African island of Sao Tome. Others who have confirmed they will attend include Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh of India, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of Malaysia and Thaksin Shinawatra of Thailand. From the Caribbean, Prime Ministers Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent, Keith Mitchell of Grenada and Baldwin Spencer of Antigua have said they are coming. President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, among Cuba's closest allies, is also expected to attend the gathering, though he has not yet officially confirmed. (*AP*, 4/9/06)

September 5: Spain will open twelve new consulates around the world, including one in the city of Santiago de Cuba, said Foreign Minister, Miguel Ángel Moratinos. The new Spanish consulate in Cuba will be a "career" consulate—the highest rank. The opening is part of a reform aimed at "enhancing the foreign functions of the [Spanish] state". (*EER*, 5/9/06)

September 5: UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan will join more than 50 heads of state at the summit of the Non Aligned Movement in Havana, a foreign ministry official said. The United Nations was invited "as a courtesy" and Annan will participate as an observer, as in previous summits, Abelardo Moreno, Cuba's vice foreign minister, told journalists at a news conference. Moreno said the United States was also invited, but declined to say who would head that delegation. (*AP*, 5/9/06)

September 6: Canadian organizations of solidarity with Cuba ratified their support for the island's defense of its sovereignty against US threats. For almost 50 years, Washington has promoted "innumerable incidents terrorist, military and economic aggression, among them the immoral blockade," highlights a communiqué issued by representatives of 24 organizations of that North American country. Those groups constitute the Canadian Network of Solidarity with Cuba, which recently celebrated its third convention in which aspects related with the work of solidarity developed in Canada and abroad were discussed. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/9/06)

September 6: Bolivian President Evo Morales met with Cuba's ailing Fidel Castro during a day trip to the island, state television reported. Morales told Castro that Bolivians sent their affection for the 80-year-old leader recovering from intestinal surgery though they don't think he is really sick, just "undergoing repairs," according to a report on the Cuban daily public affairs program *Mesa Redonda*. "Fidel thinks that Evo is an exceptional leader," the program's moderator Randy Alonso said, reading from a statement. In the two-hour meeting the leaders discussed Bolivia's assembly to rewrite the nation's constitution as well as Cuban literacy and medical programs in the South American country. There are currently more than 1,600 Cuban doctors in Bolivia who have treated 1.4 million patients, according to the report. The Bolivian leader, who arrived early in the day and left for home in the evening, was greeted at the airport by Raul Castro, acting president while his older brother recovers. Vice President Carlos Lage and Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque also were there. The three had lunch with Morales, the report said. (*DPA, AP*, 6/9/06)

September 6: Two important parallel meetings are to take place in Havana in the framework of the upcoming 14th Non-Aligned Movement Summit (NAM). A Foreign Ministry source has confirmed that, in the morning of September 14, the representatives of the Landlocked Developing Countries, a forum of 31 nations, are to meet for the first time at the highest level. This session has been convened at the request of Laos and participants include the missions of Afghanistan, Mauritania, Bolivia, Botswana, Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mongolia, Nepal, Niger, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The effective participation of those states in multilateral trade and cooperation in relation to transportation, vital issues for territories without a sea exit, will be the central themes for discussion among delegates. On the other hand, in the afternoon of the same day, a meeting has been organized for the Group of 15 which, in fact, is constituted of 19 countries. They are: Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Egypt, Jamaica, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela and Zimbabwe. The battle for a more just and equitable system of world trade and the reduction of subsidies applied by the developed nations to protect their producers to the detriment of the poor nations, should feature on the agenda. (*Granma International*, 6/9/06)

September 7: A group of 12 Cuban rafters, including four women, was intercepted near Mexico's Isla Mujeres, to the east of the country, reported the naval authority. "The twelve Cubans said to have come from Pinar del Río, and were handed over to the National Institute of Migration. (*AFP*, 8/9/06)

September 7: Bolivian President Evo Morales said that Fidel Castro looked much improved during his recent visit to Cuba and that the iconic leader expressed his usual concern for the health and education of Latin Americans. "For me it's very satisfying and a great joy to see and have any kind of contact with comrade Fidel; he is always uplifting and encouraging. That how he has seemed to me," Morales said upon returning to Bolivia in comments that were broadcast by Cuban state television. Morales said that Castro expressed "concern for the education and health of Bolivians and Latin Americans." "During our chat, we talked about the ophthalmic centers, the full-service hospitals, results, about the literacy issue, concerned about how we can make faster progress," Morales said. Morales, a Socialist and Aymara Indian, also said that during his meeting with Castro the two talked about the revolutionary processes in Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela, which is governed by leftist-populist President Hugo Chavez. But Morales said that Castro's "permanent concern" was "for education, health, always thinking about life, about humanity." (*EFE*, 7/9/06)

September 7: Mexico's president-elect, conservative Felipe Calderón, said that during his administration he would attempt to improve relations with Cuba, Bolivia and Venezuela. Calderón affirmed that the intention of his future government is "to strengthen collaboration" (...) "despite our differences". "We will have respectful relations with all heads of state, without exception and without prejudice". (*AFP*, 8/9/06)

September 7: From Costa Rica, the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) called on the need for continued pressure on Cuban authorities to bring about democratic changes. In the group's opinion, the temporary transfer of power from Fidel Castro to his brother does not represent a significant political transformation. The group includes former presidents Luis Alberto Monge (Costa Rica), Armando Calderón Sol (El Salvador), Violeta Chamorro (Nicaragua) and Luis Alberto Lacalle (Uruguay). The ICDC urged the United Nations, the Organization of American States and the European Union "to maintain pressure on the island's authorities in order to ensure democratic transition takes place". (*Notimex*, 7/9/06)

September 10: Cuba's foreign minister said it was not certain that Fidel Castro will host a dinner for visiting leaders as noted in a schedule, raising doubts over whether the ailing leader would make his first public appearance since undergoing surgery. A dinner hosted by Castro for dignitaries attending the 14th Non Aligned Movement summit was mentioned in a schedule sent by the government to international media. But Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said he could not confirm the leader's participation in the September 15 event. "I cannot yet confirm his presence at the dinner," Pérez Roque said. "I can confirm that the head of the Cuban delegation at that moment will be offering those

dignitaries that dinner." "If Fidel is not there, then Raúl will act as host at the dinner," Pérez Roque said. [[Síntesis de la Conferencia de Prensa](#)] (AP, 11/9/06)

September 10: Developing nations will back Iran's disputed nuclear program during the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said. The 116-nation NAM, which groups almost two-thirds of the member states of the United Nations, will endorse Iran's right to use nuclear energy for peaceful ends, including the right to enrich uranium to produce electricity, he said. The Cuban minister criticized the "hypocritical double standard" of the United States and other Western nations who have tried to stop Iran's nuclear program. "The United States and its allies are against Iran developing the ability to produce nuclear energy, while many of these countries that are nuclear powers are perfecting their arsenals," Perez Roque said at a news conference. Perez Roque said the NAM supports total disarmament and the destruction of nuclear weapons. "We are opposed to nuclear weapons. But we are also opposed to the hypocrisy" of the nuclear powers, he said. (*Reuters*, 10/9/06)

September 11: Cuba's foreign minister opened a summit of more than 100 of the world's developing nations, saying the Non Aligned Movement is more needed than ever in such an "unjust world." Felipe Perez Roque said current global and political problems highlight the need for unity in the movement, originally developed during the Cold War and fighting for relevance in the 21st century. "Today we can affirm (...) that the movement is more necessary than ever," Perez Roque said in Havana. Senior officials started sessions at the Convention Palace, center inaugurated in 1979 on occasion of the sixth NAM summit conference. Discussions will deal on four basic documents: a Final Declaration, another of Principles and Purposes, one on cooperation inside the movement and a text addressing the working methods of the grouping. The first document will contain the stand of NAM in the face of the main current problems like Iraq, Israeli aggressions on Palestine and Lebanon, democratization of the United Nations, the rescue of multilateralism and the US blockade against Cuba. On this occasion, the Cuban delegation will present several cooperation programs in the fields of health, education and the rational use of electric power. The debating process will continue September 13-14 at foreign minister level, who will give the final touches to the documents to be approved on September 15-16 by the heads of state and government. [[Discurso del Ministro de Relaciones Exteriores de Cuba](#)] (AP, *Prensa Latina*, 11/9/06)

September 11: The Ladies in White requested a meeting with United Nations secretary general, Kofi Annan, who will attend the XIV Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement of countries (NAM) taking place in Havana. Laura Pollán, spokeswoman for the group, said that they have requested to meet with Annan and other leaders present at the Summit. Pollán, wife of Héctor Maseda, serving 20 years in prison, recalled that they sent some 90 letters to the embassies of NAM member countries so that they would be passed to their respective governments. (*EER*, 12/9/06)

September 11: Ailing Cuban dictator Fidel Castro is a "predator" of press freedom, said the Paris-based global press advocacy group Reporters Without Borders. In a statement, Reporters Without Borders added that the Cuban regime is showing "bad faith" regarding a draft of a final document that will follow a summit meeting of the world's non aligned nations, being held in Cuba's capital of Havana. The protection and promotion of human rights are among the objectives to be outlined in the document, the Paris group said. But the Cuban regime is disregarding human rights principles by doing "its utmost to limit coverage" of the Havana meeting by expelling foreign journalists from the country. [[Cuba reminded of goals of Non Aligned Movement](#)] (*Washington File*, 11/9/06)

September 12: A leading Cuban dissident slammed the Non-Aligned Movement, in the second day of a summit in Havana, for not making human rights a real priority, and failing to defend personal and political freedoms. "It is regrettable that the human rights issue is not a real and genuine priority in the Non-Aligned Movement," Elizardo Sanchez, who leads the Cuban Committee for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, said in a statement. In a draft of the summit's final document, NAM members call for promoting "all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all." Members do not, however, define their concept of human rights. Their political systems run the gamut from one party-communist rule as in Cuba, to royal rule, to theocracy, to western-style democracies. The NAM draft document calls democracy a "universal value," but stresses that for NAM members "there is no single model of democracy, that it

does not belong to any country or region" and demands respect for sovereignty and self-determination. Sanchez regretted that "most of the member governments of the NAM and especially its most active and 'historic' leaders persist in juxtaposing rights of the human person, and try to justify for example grave violations of civil and political rights with the supposed or real 'achievements' in the area of social rights." "It is worth mentioning the cases ... of Cuba and North Korea, where there are schools for all children, and no one is excluded from basic health care, but any moderately informed person knows the governments violate all civil, political and economic rights of their citizens," he added. (*AFP*, 12/9/06)

September 12: Negotiations among experts at the 14th Non Aligned Countries Movement Summit made significant agreements on most of the thematic positions, official sources confirmed. The conference spokesperson, Cuban Assistant Foreign Minister Abelardo Moreno, told the press that the program was proceeding fluidly and successfully among the 114 delegations. The Political Committee concluded its examination of texts pertaining to global and regional problems Moreno said, adding that all the paragraphs condemning actions against NAM states were approved; including those relative to Venezuela, Cuba and other nations submitted to aggression. He noted that similarly, the Economic Committee finished its review of economic and development matters, and is now analyzing all questions linked to human rights. On the theme of human rights in the Summit documents, Moreno stressed that the movement demands "the observance of all [rights] by all [countries]." He explained they are examining individual and collective rights, as well as the "third generation" of solidarity, food, development, and such rights. (*Prensa Latina*, 12/9/06)

September 12: Raul Castro, who is temporarily replacing his convalescing brother Fidel as Cuba's president, made his first appearance at the summit in Havana. Raul Castro was shown on Cuban television meeting with Laotian President Choummaly Sayasone. Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Felipe Perez Roque was together with Castro. (*AFP*, 13/9/06)

September 12: Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez invited his Bolivian counterpart to join him for breakfast with Fidel Castro, and suggested the ailing Cuban leader may serve up a health concoction he calls "tsunami." "I invite you Evo for a breakfast with Fidel, who is recovering," Chavez said in a message to Bolivia's Evo Morales, who was also to attend the ongoing Non Aligned Movement summit in Havana. "Fidel cooks well, he prepares something he calls 'tsunami', which is a combination of oatmeal, barley and wheat, and which he says saved his life," said Chavez. (*AFP*, 12/9/06)

September 12: Cuba backed down from its intention to present a plan of cooperation on health, education and energy, which it had announced as one of its contributions to the XIV Summit of the Non-Aligned countries. "The plan has not been presented", said to the media Cuban deputy foreign minister, Abelardo Moreno. "Cuba has no interest yet to present it". Sources at the meeting said that Cuba announced to the delegations the withdrawal of its proposal for cooperation, which had been expected two days earlier. (*La Jornada*, 13/9/06)

September 13: Raul Castro, defence minister since Cuba's 1959 revolution, has swapped his military uniform for a business suit to stand in as official host at Havana's airport to receive the 50-odd heads of state and government expected for the Non Aligned summit. Raul met with Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and held separate meetings with presidents Nguyen Minh Triet of Vietnam and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria. (*Reuters, Granma, AP*, 14/9/06)

September 13: Costa Rican President Oscar Arias launched The Miami Herald Americas Conference with an impassioned plea to Latin American nations to spurn populism and urge Cuba to take a democratic path. "Latin America has reached a crossroads," the 1987 Nobel Peace Prize winner told a dinner gathering at the Biltmore Hotel. "It can consolidate the gains that it has made through economic integration with the world, or it can slide backwards," he said, "falling captive to populist rhetoric and to the shrill voices of those who see globalization as the root of all evil." Latin America, he said, can strengthen its democratic institutions and "join together with one voice of hope so that the Cuban people can enjoy the liberty that has been denied to them." His remarks came after Arias wrote an

opinion piece in the La Nación newspaper of San José, Costa Rica, on August 29, urging Cuba to embrace democracy. No other Latin American nation has so far joined Arias in calling for democratic reforms in Havana. He said Cuba was, "plain and simple, a dictatorship" that had "robbed the Cuban people of their liberty" and "condemned to poverty a nation that could very well have been the first developed nation in Latin America." (*The Miami Herald*, 14/9/06)

September 13: Cuba sought consensus on the use of nuclear energy and the conflict in the Middle East as diplomats work to hammer out the declaration that will emerge from Havana's Non-Aligned summit. The foreign ministers of the 116 NAM members were supposed to have finalized the text a day ago. During a press conference, Cuba's deputy foreign minister, Abelardo Moreno, said that along with the release of the final document the leaders will sign another statement in which they will defend Iran's right to develop nuclear technology for energy production. While that stance has the general support of the NAM, several representatives gathered in Havana told reporters that some countries want the final document to demand that a clear legal framework be established for nuclear energy. Besides the delicate matter of the international standoff over Iran's nuclear program, consensus is still lacking on the definition of terrorism and on a statement about the conflict in the Middle East, Moreno acknowledged. (*EFE*, 13/9/06)

September 13: The spokesman for the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party at the Congressional Commission for International Cooperation, Eduardo Madina, emphasized that Bernardino León's trip to Cuba during the Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement has a "multidimensional" character, given the latest developments on the island that signal there might be changes "in the future". "Without a doubt, Spain will do everything possible so that the new leadership in Cuba follows the Cuban people's will, without interferences that might prevent the internal democratic process of Cuban society", he added. (*Europa Press*, 13/9/06)

September 13: In an interview with a leftist Argentine newspaper, Fidel Castro said that Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez, who has followed in the Cuban leader's footsteps to become Washington's fiercest critic in the region, had stopped the plunder of Venezuela's oil wealth and was putting it to good use in social programs. "Chavez has been building an indestructible model. He doesn't represent an extreme form of socialism, but a realistic one," Castro added. (*Reuters*, 14/9/06)

September 14: Bolivian President Evo Morales arrived in Havana to take part in the 14th Summit of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) until September 16. State television showed him being met at the airport by Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage. The distinguished visitor will also attend the first summit of the Land-Locked Developing Countries scheduled for this afternoon at this capital's Conventions Center. (*Prensa Latina, AP*, 14/9/06)

September 14: In his pajamas, Castro met separately with friend and political ally Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Castro and Annan "exchanged opinions about the relevance of the 14th Non Aligned summit," according to Cuba's communist youth newspaper. But there was no sign he would be well enough to participate in the two days of sessions with more than 50 heads of state and government. After the visit, Chavez said the Cuban leader was walking and singing and "almost well enough to play baseball." Still, even Chavez didn't say whether he thought Castro would make a formal appearance. (*AP*, 14/9/06)

September 14: Raul Castro presided over the Group of 15 developing nations on the sidelines of the summit, representing his nation at an international gathering for the first time as acting president. Raul Castro briefly praised Iran and other developing nations for trying to create "a better, more just world." But Chavez stole the show, saying Fidel Castro had given him permission to speak longer because Raul wouldn't talk much. Raul Castro seemed to take the jab in good spirits, giving Chavez a bear hug after the meeting. Trading the green fatigues he's long worn as Cuba's defence minister for a dark suit, Raul Castro briefly praised Iran and other developing nations for trying to create "a better, more just world." Chavez then pledged Venezuela's support for Iran if it is invaded because of its nuclear dispute with the UN Security Council. (*AP*, 15/9/06)

September 14: At a meeting of over the Group of 15 developing nations on the sidelines of the summit, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad gave a relatively mild speech, urging his fellow leaders to work together to achieve their full potential. Then Chavez took over, saying he didn't want to leave Havana without a statement reflecting resounding support for the Iranian, Cuban and Palestinian people. "Under any scenario, we are with you just like we are with Cuba," Chavez added. "If the United States invades Cuba, blood will run (...) We will not have our arms crossed while bombs are falling in Havana or they carry Raul off in a plane," Chavez said. (*AP*, 15/9/06)

September 14: The Spanish secretary of state for foreign affairs, Bernardino León, met Cuban dissidents in Havana, where he is attending the XIV Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement of countries (NAM) as a guest. At the Spanish embassy León met separately with Oswaldo Payá, of the Christian Liberation Movement; Miriam Leyva, member of the Ladies in White; Manuel Cuesta Morúa, of the social-democratic Progressive Arch; Marta Beatriz Roque, of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society; and Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, of Cambio Cubano. According to the dissidents, the talks focused on the situation of political prisoners and human rights in Cuba. (*EFE*, 15/9/06)

September 15: Renovation work on the building in Havana to house the Embassy of Antigua & Barbuda is moving at a fast pace to facilitate its opening by November this year. Prime Minister Spencer who was in Cuba attending the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement,(NAM) toured the facilities. Prime Minister Spencer said that he was very pleased with the renovation work being carried out by Cuban contractors and is looking forward to its completion very shortly. "The Embassy will be a significant addition to our relations with the Republic of Cuba. Over the years we have developed a strong bond with cooperation increasing yearly with more students being offered scholarships to study in Cuba. The embassy will serve as a significant link between our students in Cuba and Antigua and Barbuda." (*Antigua Sun*, 18/9/06)

September 15: Cuba took over the leadership of the Non Aligned Movement from Malaysia, with Defence Minister Raul Castro standing in for his ailing brother, Fidel. "We all wanted these inaugural words to be pronounced by Fidel Castro, but for reasons we all know he could not accompany us," Raul Castro said after accepting Cuba's new position with a round of applause from leaders and diplomats representing two-thirds of the world's nations. "Comrade Fidel has asked that I transmit to you his most cordial greetings," he said. He later urged the assembly to put up a strong, united front to challenge the dominance of more powerful countries. "The Nonaligned Movement now has to wage courageous battles against unilateralism, double standards, and the impunity granted to those in power, for a fairer and more equal international order in the face of neoliberalism," he said. [[Discurso de Raul Castro](#)] (*AP*, 15/9/06)

September 15: Having survived economic crisis sparked by the Soviet Union's collapse, Cuba is taking over leadership of the "non-aligned" nations hoping to capitalize on anti-US sentiment around the world. In recent years, Fidel Castro's government has developed strong alliances with oil-rich countries like Venezuela and Iran. Now, it aims to transform the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), founded in the 1960s as a counterweight to the Cold War superpowers, into an avowedly anti-US organization. Experts said the divided NAM has little clout. It includes US allies like India and Pakistan alongside Iran, branded by Washington as a member of the "axis of evil." "The NAM presidency is more important to Cuba than to other countries because of Cuba's constant effort to demonstrate that it is not isolated diplomatically in spite of US efforts," said Phil Peters, a Cuba expert with the Lexington Institute, a think-tank near Washington D.C. Julia Sweig, Latin America director at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, said the NAM could be the "perfect golden parachute" if Castro recovers. (*Reuters*, 15/9/06)

September 15: Fidel Castro met with his Algerian counterpart Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who is in Havana representing his country at the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. During their one hour meeting the two leaders discussed the Havana summit and pressing world political and economic issues. They also reviewed cooperation projects underway between the Cuba and North African nation. It was in Algeria that the Cuban medical cooperation program abroad began more than 40 years ago and today the island is still assisting in an important ongoing Algerian health

projects. Fidel Castro thanked President Bouteflika for the enduring solidarity of the Algerian government and people with the Cuban Revolution. (*Granma*, 16/9/06)

September 15: For the second time in less than a week, Fidel Castro met with Bolivian president Evo Morales. The two leaders talked about relations between their two countries, and the need to revitalize the Non Aligned Movement. (*Granma*, 16/9/06)

September 15: First Vice President Raul Castro met with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, in Havana for the 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The two leaders discussed the development of the NAM Summit, key events in international relations and United Nations reform. Accompanying Kofi Annan at the meeting were Ibrahim Gambari, deputy UN secretary general for Political Affairs; Vijay Nanbiar, under-secretary-general; Susan McDade, resident-coordinator of the UN Development Program in Cuba, and Alicia Barcena, who heads Annan's cabinet. Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage Davila, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Cuban ambassador to the UN Rodrigo Malmierca were present with Raul Castro at the talks. (*Granma*, 16/9/06)

September 16: An ailing Fidel Castro met with Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and Malaysia's Prime Minister Dato Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on the sidelines of the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Havana, Cuban state media and diplomatic sources said. Castro and Ahmadinejad discussed "Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy" and the "positive results" of the summit, according to the daily *Juventud Rebelde*. At a separate "fraternal encounter", Castro and India's Singh discussed the summit results, important global events, and the "excellent relations" between Cuba and India, according to *Juventud Rebelde*. Castro and Badawi talked about the works of the summit. Castro also remembered his trips to Malaysia, and talked with Badawi about its beautiful cities, according to Cuban daily *Granma*. (*AFP*, 17/9/06)

September 16: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said that enhanced cooperation between Iran and Cuba will increasingly strengthen the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). The President made the aforesaid remarks in a meeting with Cuba's First Vice President of the Council of State Raul Castro Ruz on the sidelines of the 14th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in the capital city of Havana. During the meeting at the end of which the two sides inked several cooperation agreements, Ahmadinejad noted the two countries' close and shared stances in the face of global and international issues and said that enhanced cooperation between Iran and Cuba, as two independent and important member states of the Non-Aligned Movement with special strategic positions in the Middle-East and Central America and Caribbean, would cause further strengthening of NAM. (*FARS News Agency*, 16/9/06)

September 16: Representatives of 118 Nonaligned Movement nations condemned Israel's attacks on Lebanon and supported a peaceful resolution to the US-Iran nuclear dispute in the final declaration of a summit that brought together some of the United States' staunchest foes. The final statements, many of which contain veiled criticisms of the US, were approved by unanimous consent after another round of speeches by leaders of the movement. "No one in the Nonaligned Movement thinks that the United States is responsible for all the problems, but many think that it is for some," Cuba's Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said. (*AP*, 17/9/06)

September 16: The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) demanded from its summit in Havana that the world give developing nations a greater voice, criticized "unilateralism" and the dependency of the poorest on the richest, and stated their decision to get stronger through modernization. Representing the host country, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque announced at a press conference the approval of five concrete projects and said that there will be "a before and after of the Havana summit." The most important is the renewal of NAM principles and the goals it is fighting for. The summit document "reaffirms the principles of the 1955 Bandung Conference while incorporating others which have become a guide in recent years, the result of changes in the world scenario and the modernization of the movement," Perez Roque said. He added that these principles include opposition to methods of coercion by any

country; the rejection of terrorism, aggression and war; and the ratification of the movement's role as a forum of coordination for promoting common interests and developing solidarity and cooperation. (*EFE*, 16/9/06)

September 16: Cuba's First Vice President Raul Castro affirmed the 14th Non-aligned Countries Movement Summit corroborated the group has decided to give priority to what binds its members together. When closing the presidential summit, the Cuban official highlighted the revitalization of the NAM principles and stances in the current international order as one of the main results of the conference. Raul Castro rated the meeting as excellent, and said the ratification of the NAM goals and standards provide the movement a solid ground to act in the world arena. [[Closing speech by Raul Castro](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 17/9/06)

September 16: Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and four other Caribbean leaders arrived in Cuba for the 14th Conference of the Non- Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit. Prime Minister Spencer along with Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerritt of Dominica, Prime Minister Owen Arthur of Barbados, Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves of St. Vincent & the Grenadines and Prime Minister Kenny Anthony of St. Lucia were greeted at the José Martí International Airport by Cuban government ministers and accorded a military salute. (*Granma*, 16/9/06)

September 17: Fidel Castro met with Ecuador's president Alfredo Palacio and two cabinet officials for nearly an hour, Palacio's spokesman told the press. The two leaders coincided on the success of the NAM Summit and discussed other important international and regional issues. Castro dedicated a considerable portion of the meeting with Palacios, a well known cardiologist in his country, to talk about the Operation Miracle eye-surgery program. Under the program 6,440 Ecuadorians have received eye operations, the majority at two ophthalmologic centers opened with Cuban support in the Ecuadorian states of Guayaquil and Cotopaxi. The presidents also talked about the progress of the Ecuadorian literacy program that uses the Cuban Yo Si Puedo (Yes I Can) teaching method, underway in different regions of the South American nation. (*AFP, Granma*, 17,19/9/06)

September 17: Raul Castro and Kim Young, President of the Presidium of North Korea's Supreme People's Assembly, analyzed in Havana the role of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the current international situation. Other topics of discussion included bilateral ties of friendship, cooperation and solidarity, which have historically existed between both peoples and governments, *Granma* newspaper reported on September 19. Kim Yong passed on a personal message by Kim Jong Il, General Secretary of the Workers Party, Supreme Commander of Korea Peoples' Army and President of the Korean National Defense Committee, who wished Fidel Castro a prompt recovery. Fidel Castro offered a gift to North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, North Korean official news agency reported. The gift was handed over to Kim Yong Nam, as he was in Havana for the NAM summit, North Korean news agency said. (*Prensa Latina, AP*, 18,19/9/06)

September 17: This year 167 Cuban doctors will be sent to Mozambique under the cooperation agreements between the two countries, according to Mozambican Health Minister Ivo Garrido, who is in Havana as part of the Mozambican delegation to the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. The group will join other Cuban doctors already in the country. How much longer those already in Mozambique will stay is one of the matters to be discussed at the next meeting of the Mozambique-Cuba Joint Commission, in 2007. Garrido added that by the end of 2008 Mozambique should have enough doctors of its own to send one to each of the 128 districts in the country. Currently only about half of the districts have a doctor. (*All Africa.Com*, 17/9/06)

September 18: Reporters Without Borders condemned the detention of Ahmed Rodríguez Albacia, 21, a member of the independent news agency Jóvenes sin Censura, who was arrested by state security agents without any grounds in Havana on September 15. "Rodríguez's detention raises the possibility of new arrests without trial like those of Oscar Mario González Pérez and Roberto de Jesús Guerra Pérez in July 2005 and Armando Betancourt in May 2006," the press freedom organisation said. "Rodríguez and his family have been the target of constant harassment in recent weeks and we call for his immediate release." Rodríguez was arrested when he went of his own volition to the police station

on Dragoneros street in central Havana, where he lives. On the morning before his arrest, Rodríguez had reported to the Cuban Human Rights Federation (FCDH) that members of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution and the state security's Rapid Response Brigades had surrounded his house and had threatened to "smash the heads" of him and his mother. (*RWB Press Release*, 18/9/06)

September 19: Esteban Lazo, vice president of the Cuban Council of State, led the Cuban delegation to the 61st session of the UN General Assembly where he met with presidents and delegation leaders. Lazo attended a lunch given by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan for leaders at the event. In other activities, Lazo met with the Reverend Lucius Walker, to whom he provided detailed information regarding the different tasks and priorities undertaken by the Cuban people at this juncture. For his part, the US reverend remarked on the work and actions of the Cuban solidarity movement, including an event at Church of the Intercession in Harlem, New York. (*Granma International*, 20/9/06)

September 20: Esteban Lazo, Vice President of Cuba's Council of State underscored the relevance of the 14th Summit of the Non Aligned Movement held in Havana, at the 61st Session of the United Nations General Assembly. Lazo, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of Cuba's Communist Party, told the UN General Assembly that during the Non-Aligned Summit "profound and fruitful debates were held, in an atmosphere of true understanding, unity and cohesion, which allowed for the adoption of documents of crucial importance to the future of the Non-Aligned Movement" [[Remarks by Esteban Lazo at the UNGA](#)] (*ACN*, 20/9/06).

September 20: A cargo ship in the Gulf of Mexico rescued nine Cubans in poor health who were heading to the United States and took them to Puerto Cortez on the North Coast of Honduras. A woman identified as Marisela Vázquez, died of starvation and will be buried in Puerto Cortez, 180 kilometres north of Tegucigalpa. "We were adrift 13 days in open seas. During that time, we drank our urine and ate whatever little raw fish we managed to catch", said José Félix Avelar at a press conference. (*AP*, 20/9/06)

September 20: The Organization of American States will not take up the Cuban leadership issue until an official proposal is presented by the United States or another member state, OAS chief José Miguel Insulza said. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutiérrez had proposed that Cuba hold an OAS-sanctioned referendum on its future leadership. "There is no proposal that we can officially evaluate," Insulza told *The Miami Herald*. The OAS, he noted, can only monitor elections when member states ask for the service. Cuba was suspended from the organization in 1962. (*The Miami Herald*, 21/9/06)

September 21: A record number of Jamaican students received scholarships to Cuba this school year. Beginning in 1979 when three students, including current junior government ministers Donald Rhodd and Wykeham McNeill went to study in Cuba, this year's all-expenses paid scholarships include 70 medical students, expanded from five last year; 40 in nursing; 11 in sports and physical education; nine in engineering; and seven in other areas. Speaking at the farewell ceremony for the students at the Jamaica Conference Centre, downtown Kingston, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Anthony Hylton, thanked the Cuban government, favorably contrasting the scholarships to the 'brain drain' of qualified Jamaicans absorbed by developed countries. Cuban Ambassador Gisela Garcia Rivera told her audience that the scholarships offered to students from developing countries - with 26,000 currently studying - were an important part of Cuban foreign policy. (*Jamaican Gleaner*, 21/9/06)

September 21: The Cuban media echoed Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez's speech at the United Nations. Both the state television and the written press covered extensive portions of the speech. The official daily "*Granma*" reported that the Venezuelan leader repeated his country's proposals to reform the UN, as well as the fragment of his speech in which Chávez said, "the devil is in the house", in reference to US president George W. Bush. (*EFE*, 21/9/06)

September 23: Fidel Castro issued his first statement on international affairs since he ceded power eight weeks ago on Venezuela. The statement said the Cuban leader reacted "with indignation" upon hearing that Venezuelan Foreign

Minister Nicolas Maduro was briefly detained at New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport on his way back from the United Nations General Assembly. Castro "extends his most vigorous protest of this vulgar provocation, which could take place again against any member of the Movement" of Non Aligned Nations, that Cuba heads, the statement said. This is the first time Castro has referred to non-Cuban affairs since he ceded power for health reasons to his younger brother Raul. (*The Miami Herald*, 25/9/06)

September 23: Referring to some difficulties with visa proceedings of the Venezuelan delegation to the UN General Assembly, the US State Department admitted that six visas could not be processed on time for Chavez' visit, but noted that the Venezuelans had swamped them with 229 visa requests, a large number for a Latin American delegation. "There were some citizens of Cuba as part of the retinue," one State Department official said. He agreed to be quoted only if his name was not revealed and he declined to disclose how many Cubans had applied for visas. Officials say the Cubans are not barred from entering the United States but require extra background checks. (*The Miami Herald*, 25/9/06)

September 25: A meeting between a top Spanish official and a group of Cuban dissidents has sparked a crisis in relations between Havana and Madrid, which threatens to undo any positive effects brought about by Spain's Socialist government's policy of dialogue with the Fidel Castro regime. Within a week, Cuba has cancelled two separate meetings with Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos and his number two, Bernadino León, after the latter had met Cuban opposition figures in Havana while the city was playing host to the international summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. The meeting with dissidents of various political tendencies took place in the Spanish embassy, but it seems to have been the timing which has most upset the government of Fidel Castro. On September 14, just hours after the meeting of León and opposition figures, the government temporarily headed by Raúl Castro suspended a meeting between the Foreign Ministry's number two and Cuba's European affairs spokesman, Eumelio Caballero. Less than a week later, a scheduled meeting between Moratinos and his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Pérez Roque was also canceled. The two foreign ministers were due to meet during the inauguration of the current session of sittings of the UN's General Assembly in New York. (*El País*, 25/9/06)

September 26: The International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC), founded in 2003 by former Czech president Vaclav Havel, urged Raúl Castro to carry out a transition towards democracy on the Caribbean island. In a letter titled "Transition, not Succession", the ICDC insisted on the right of the Cuban people to exercise their self-determination through genuinely free elections. (*EFE*, 26/9/06)

September 26: Namibia's Foreign Minister Marco Hausiku started his third visit to Cuba, fulfilling an invitation from his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque, Granma newspaper reported. Cuba and Namibia established diplomatic relations on March 21, 1990. Nearly 1,300 students from that African nation have been graduated in the island. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/9/06)

September 26: Cuba has failed to improve its human rights record, a UN expert said, citing censorship, the imprisonment of political activists, and restrictions on rights campaigners as particular concerns. "The situation doesn't seem today to be anything that could be described as improved, and I'm putting it mildly," Christine Chanet told the 47-nation UN Human Rights Council. Cuba immediately slammed the report as libelous, and accused Chanet of double standards, selectivity, and political manipulation. Chanet said that by working with other experts, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, her mission had been able to gather enough information to be able to make recommendations. These include stopping prosecution of opponents of the communist regime, lifting laws on freedom of expression and movement, and allowing rights organizations to enter and work in Cuba. Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Juan Fernandez Palacios, responded to the report by saying that the greatest contribution Chanet could make to human rights in the future would be to quit her post. Chanet's report prompted strong criticism from the envoys of China, North Korea, Russia, Iran, Belarus, Algeria, and Zimbabwe, all of whom accused the rights mission of double standards and called for the practice country-specific reports to be scrapped.

Only the European Union, the United States and Vietnam thanked Chanet for her report. [[Intervención de Juan Antonio Fernandez](#)] (AP, 27/9/06)

September 27: Czech Foreign Minister Alexandr Vondra criticised Belarus, Cuba and Myanmar over violation of human rights in his address at the United Nations General Assembly. "It is one of the sad ironies of our time that Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest in Myanmar 15 years after being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize," Vondra pointed out. He criticised Cuban regime of Fidel Castro for "jailing and harassing members of peaceful democratic opposition in Cuba." (CTK, 27/9/06)

September 28: Azerbaijan's Foreign Minister Elmar Maguerramm Mamediarov and his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque are due to sign in Havana an inter-ministerial accord for the exemption of visas. Mamediarov said they will also sign on the creation of a joint commission for bilateral cooperation. (Prensa Latina, 29/9/06)

September 30: The president of Azerbaijan sent a message to the ailing Fidel Castro wishing for his steady recovery and calling for stronger ties between the two countries, state-run media reported. Elmar Mamediyarov, Azerbaijan's foreign minister, delivered the message in a meeting with Juan Almeida Bosque, a vice president in Castro's Cabinet and a retired military officer who fought in the early years of the Cuban revolution, a front-page article in the Communist Party daily Granma said. Almeida has played a more visible role in diplomatic affairs as part of a collective leadership taking hold since the 80-year-old Castro ceded power to his younger brother, Defense Minister Raul Castro, on July 31. (AP, 30/9/06)

Security

September 14: A total of 130 security devices were installed in different parts of Old Havana in the lead up to the XIV Summit of the Non-Aligned countries. Some of these governmental spying eyes were installed along Obispo's boulevard, from the Floridita restaurant to the Armas Square. SEPSA, a Department of the Interior's company specializing in monitoring and security, installed the devices. (Cubanet, 15/9/06)

September 25: The Chief of Congo Brazzaville's Armed Forces (FAC) staff, Division General Charles Richard Mondjo, received high rank military honours during the first day of his official visit to Cuba. While reviewing the troops at Rescate de Sanguily Tank Unit, the official and his delegation were accompanied by Cuban Brigade general Eliecer Velazquez. Cuban Division general Samuel Rodiles Planas welcomed the Congolese military delegation at El Cacahual, where the visitors dedicated a wreath to Cuban hero Antonio Maceo. Division general Mondjo and his delegation were issued an invitation by the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces Ministry (FAR). In September 2003, Minister Delegate to Congo's Presidency, Division General Jacques Yvon Ndolou, visited Cuba and was received by Defense Minister Army general Raul Castro. (Prensa Latina, 25/9/06)

September 28: An intergovernmental agreement on settling Cuba's debt to Russia on earlier Russian credits has been signed during a visit to Cuba by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov. The sides also concluded an agreement on military-technical cooperation. Mikhail Fradkov told journalists that the military agreement is not covered by the credit which Russia is giving Cuba. "This means that Cuba will pay Russia directly for the military machinery which interests it," Fradkov explained, noting that, "the Cuban army has Soviet hardware which requires repairs and maintenance". According to the online publication Strategy Page, the agreement will allow Russian forces to use Cuban bases for intelligence collection, and other purposes. (ITAR TASS, Strategy Page, 28/9/06)

Terrorism

September 12: Converging on Fidel Castro's communist Cuba for a summit this week, members of the Non Aligned Movement complain of a double standard: powerful nations like the United States and Israel decide for the world who the terrorists are, but face no punishment for their own acts of aggression. A Cuban official said sarcastically that the US could one day accuse the entire Non Aligned Movement of supporting terrorism. "Reading some news reports (...) I'm left to believe that the axis of evil is growing," said Abelardo Moreno, Cuba's vice foreign minister. "Soon, the (axis of evil) will be made up of 118 countries." NAM's final draft could be muted during the debate. A North African diplomat described the section on terrorism as "alphabet soup," because it tries to include all members' perspectives. Debate is expected to get particularly lively after the arrival of outspoken anti-American leaders including presidents Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, Bashar Assad of Syria, and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. North Korea is sending its No. 2 leader, Kim Yong Nam. (*AP*, 12/9/06)

September 20: The Red Cross expects to meet for the first time 14 high-level terrorism suspects who were recently transferred from CIA secret prisons to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, at a visit to the camp, a spokeswoman said. Antonella Notari, chief spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said officials will arrive at Guantanamo for a scheduled two-week visit. The ICRC is the only neutral agency with full access to Guantanamo detainees. (*AP*, 20/9/06)

US-Cuba Relations

September 2: In what seems an unlikely undertaking for one of the world's last communist strongholds, Cuba is sinking more than \$5 million into restoring the hilltop villa overlooking Havana where "Papa" Hemingway lived, wrote and caroused from 1939 to 1960. As part of its effort to court hard currency tourists, the government is also playing up the Caribbean country's past as a haven for Mafia mobsters. Guests checking in at the Nacional hotel, which in its heyday was home to crime bosses such as Meyer Lansky and Al Capone, are invited to tour "the suites where the gangsters lived" and the cavernous room downstairs in which they had dinner. At Finca Vigia, the termite-ravaged villa where Hemingway lived, workmen were recently replacing sagging ceiling beams and fixing a leaky roof. Pilar, the 13-metre boat he used for the marlin fishing expeditions that inspired "The Old Man and the Sea", was also undergoing restoration. Anger has been provoked by Washington's refusal to allow the Boston-based Hemingway Preservation Foundation to commit funds to the restoration project. Hemingway enthusiasts consider the house and contents to be an American cultural gem, even though they are located on foreign soil. Washington argued that contributing money would violate trade sanctions against Cuba by helping to boost tourism and keep its communist regime in power. (*The Sunday Times*, 2/9/06)

September 5: The sharp political rhetoric between Washington and Havana, including allegations of Cuban government harassment of the US Interests Section in the Cuban capital, does not resonate at Guantánamo. Navy Captain Mark Leary, Guantanamo base commander, holds a monthly meeting with his Cuban counterpart -- an orderly ritual that has gone on for about a decade as a way of ensuring that the 17.4-mile fenced border remains calm. At the most recent meeting with Cuban Navy Captain Pedro Román Cisneros last month, "there was nothing brought up about Castro's health or anything like that," Leary said. "I thought if it was going to be brought up, it was going to be brought up by the Cubans," Leary said. It wasn't. Instead, the military men followed their typical "very pragmatic, very practical" dialogue about issues like construction projects near the fence. The US Navy's post-Castro immigration-control plan was not altered by the news about the power changeover either, Leary said. "We had actually been reviewing it," he said. "It's continually reviewed." (*The Miami Herald*, 5/9/06)

September 5: Canada would play an important role in helping Cuba make a transition to democracy, in the wake of Fidel Castro's recent illness, by showing the regime in Havana and the Cuban population that they could benefit from a change to democracy, said a high-ranking US official. In an interview with Quebec's daily *Le Soleil*, the Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Thomas Shannon, said "democratic countries that have links with Cuba, like Canada, are in a unique position to talk with the regime and the Cuban people". (*AFP*, 5/9/06)

September 7: Calling its action "a necessary public witness," the Alliance of Baptists, a Church World Service member denomination, has challenged a US government allegation that the denomination violated the terms of its license to travel to Cuba for religious work. The alleged violation could result in a \$34,000 penalty for the small denomination. The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) charged, in a July 5 letter to Alliance of Baptists Executive Director Stan Hastey, that five churches traveling on an Alliance license "provided itineraries that did not reflect a program of full-time religious activity." In explaining the Alliance's decision to fight the charge, Hastey called the government allegations "a political ploy to satisfy anti-Castro Cuban Americans," and declared, "It is important that the first national religious body cited for violations of policy respond publicly rather than settle quietly." (*CWS*, 7/9/06)

September 7: The United States will not attend the summit in Cuba of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that will gather some of its most hostile critics just 90 miles from US soil, the top US diplomat in Cuba said. Michael Parmly said the United States had not taken up an invitation to attend the summit of 116 developing nations as an observer as it has in the past, noting that Washington had a better relationship with previous host Malaysia than it does with communist Cuba. "We simply did not pick up the invitation," Parmly told the press. The summit is expected to endorse Iran's nuclear energy program and condemn Israel's bombing of Lebanon and US trade sanctions against Cuba. Parmly said he would be surprised if the summit did not come out with a statement in support of Iran, but Washington would consider such a statement "unfortunate." The United States attended the last summit in Kuala Lumpur as an observer with 30 other mainly industrialized nations and the United Nations. "South-South cooperation is an interesting idea. I hope that does not mean they think we are no longer interested in North-South cooperation. The more that is done on that score the better," Parmly said. (*The New York Times*, *Reuters*, 8/9/06)

September 8: At least 10 South Florida journalists, including three from *El Nuevo Herald*, received regular payments from the US government for programs on Radio Martí and TV Martí, two broadcasters aimed at undermining the communist government of Fidel Castro. The payments totaled thousands of dollars over several years. Those who were paid the most were veteran reporters and a freelance contributor for *El Nuevo Herald*, the Spanish-language newspaper published by the corporate parent of *The Miami Herald*. Pablo Alfonso, who reports on Cuba and writes an opinion column, was paid almost \$175,000 since 2001 to host shows on Radio Martí and TV Martí. *El Nuevo Herald* freelance reporter Olga Connor, who writes about Cuban culture, received about \$71,000, and staff reporter Wilfredo Cancio Isla, who covers the Cuban exile community and politics, was paid almost \$15,000 in the last five years. Alfonso and Cancio were dismissed after *The Miami Herald* questioned editors at *El Nuevo Herald* about the payments. Connor's freelance relationship with the newspaper also was severed. (*The Miami Herald*, 8/9/06)

September 8: The United States Interests Section in Havana denied visas to two Cuban economists to attend a meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Economic Association (LACEA) in Puerto Rico. The Cubans were scheduled to attend a board meeting of the economist's association at the end of August. The visas were denied with the pretext that the presence of the two professionals in Puerto Rico would be detrimental to United States interests. The US denied visas to Roberto Verrier Castro, first vice president of LACEA and president of the Cuban Association of Economists and Accountants, and to Esther Aguilera Morato, permanent secretary of LACEA and VP of the Cuban organization. (*Granma*, 8/9/06)

September 8: The Alliance of Baptists has filed a formal challenge to a Treasury Department fine for allegedly violating the United States' economic embargo on Cuba. Alliance officials sent the response on August 31 to the

department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, which monitors violations of the embargo. In July, OFAC officials informed Stan Hastey, the Alliance's executive director, that the group would be fined \$34,000 for violations of the terms of the organization's travel license to Cuba. The agency alleged that members of five church missions teams traveling under the license between 2003 and 2005 violated the embargo by engaging in tourist activities while in Cuba. The Alliance disputes those allegations. Hastey said that, of the members of his board who responded to his e-mail inquiry about whether to fight the fine, "no one dissented." The Alliance, a fellowship of 117 moderate-to-progressive churches with a \$374,000 budget, has a longstanding missions partnership with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches in Cuba. The partnership pairs local Alliance congregations with counterpart Cuban churches. (*ABP*, 8/9/06)

September 8: US law blocks most travel to communist-led Cuba, but the Caribbean nation will be represented at an international travel show in Orlando, Florida. A US-based group known as the Travel Industry Committee on Cuba will promote travel and business links with the neighboring island at a convention, September 10-12, spearheaded by the American Society of Travel Agents, the world's biggest travel agent group. More than 2,000 travel sellers and more than 1,000 consumers are expected at the show that will feature booths representing companies and countries from around the world. John McAuliff, coordinator of the Travel Industry Committee on Cuba, said by telephone that his group wants Washington to lift its 40-year-old restrictions on US travel to the island, just as it liberalized US food sales to Cuba. The move would open new business opportunities for US travel companies. (*Sun Sentinel*, 8/9/06)

September 9: Former President of Spain, Felipe González; the Costa Rican president, Oscar Arias; and former Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, offered to mediate between the United States and Cuba, said former US diplomat Otto Reich, who saw no need for this type of negotiation. "We are very thankful", but neither "the United States, nor Cuba need a mediator", said Reich. (*EFE*, 9/9/06)

September 9: Supporters of five Cuban men convicted in 2001 of spying on the United States for the Cuban government met to talk about their efforts to raise money and awareness of the defendants' long-running legal battle. Advocates of the so-called Cuban Five insist that Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando and René Gonzalez were not spying on anyone except right-wing exile organizations they believed to be planning attacks on Cuba. "In the case of these five men, as in the cases of many other prisoners, this government pays no attention to justice," said Andres Gomez, of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, speaking in Spanish. Prosecutors have long maintained that wiretaps, documents and witness testimony provided more than enough evidence of the five's guilt. About 70 people crowded into the Key Largo room at the Embassy Suites to listen to impassioned speeches by Gomez and Max Lesnik, director of Radio Miami. (*The Miami Herald*, 10/9/06)

September 11: Two anti-Castro activists in their 60s pleaded guilty to a weapons-conspiracy charge on the eve of their high-stakes trial in Fort Lauderdale federal court -- a jury proceeding that could have ended with imprisonment for the rest of their lives. Instead of running that risk, Cuban exiles Santiago Alvarez and Osvaldo Mitat cut plea deals on one count of conspiring to possess illegal weapons, which carries a five-year maximum prison penalty. The men, who remain in custody, face sentencing on November 14. Alvarez, 65, and his friend Mitat, 64, avoided the distinct possibility of going to trial before a Fort Lauderdale jury and being convicted of possessing illegal weapons, too. Those charges, coupled with the conspiracy charge in the original indictment, carried a maximum of 20 years in prison. Alvarez is a longtime associate of Posada, a former CIA operative who is accused by the Cuban and Venezuelan governments with masterminding the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner in which 73 people died. Alvarez arranged for travel documents for Posada and helped him come out of hiding in Miami in May 2005, even staging a press conference for the Cuban militant. (*The Miami Herald*, *AP*, 11,12/9/06)

September 12: Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles should be released from immigration custody because the attorney general has not classified him as a terrorist and his continued detention runs counter to a 2001 Supreme Court ruling barring indefinite detention for foreign nationals who cannot be deported, a federal magistrate ruled. In a 24-

page decision, US Magistrate Norbert Garney in El Paso, Texas, wrote that US Immigration and Customs Enforcement should put Posada under supervised release because the federal government had failed to find a country willing to take the 78-year-old exile, who has Venezuelan citizenship. "The court recommends that petitioner's request for habeas relief be granted and that petitioner be released subject to the terms and conditions of supervised release," Garney wrote. Garney's ruling is only a recommendation and will not lead to Posada's immediate release. He sent the recommendation to federal Judge Philip Martinez, who is expected to make a decision later -- either adopting or rejecting Garney's recommendation. (*BBC, The Miami Herald, 12/9/06*)

September 12: A journalist whose freelance contract with El Nuevo Herald was severed said the newspaper's managers had known for years that she got paid by the US government for Cuban cultural shows she hosted for Radio Martí. She said managers never made an issue of it before. Freelance writer Olga Connor was among three well-known El Nuevo Herald writers -- the others were full-time reporters Pablo Alfonso and Wilfredo Cancio Isla -- who were dismissed or had their contracts severed for having violated the company's ethics policy for their work for Radio and TV Martí. The government-financed broadcasts are aimed at bringing news, information and entertainment to the communist island in an effort to undermine Fidel Castro's 47-year-old regime. "At no time did any of the editorial management of the Herald indicate to me that this was considered a conflict of interest, and I continued writing for El Nuevo Herald until today," Connor wrote in Spanish in a letter to executives of The Miami Herald, El Nuevo Herald and the two newspapers' parent company, The McClatchy Co. (*The Miami Herald, 12/9/06*)

September 12: The Bush administration has created five interagency working groups to monitor Cuba and carry out US policy. The groups, some of which operate in war-room-like settings, were quietly set up after the July 31 announcement that the ailing Castro, 80, had ceded power temporarily to a collective leadership headed by his brother, Raul, US officials said. The groups' composition reflects both the administration's Cuban policy priorities as well as the belief that Castro's status as the island's undisputed leader is finished, regardless of the nature of his still-mysterious ailment. Eric Watnik, a State Department spokesman on Cuban issues, went further. Castro "will never come back to the position that he previously enjoyed," he said. US officials say three of the newly created groups are headed by the State Department: diplomatic actions, strategic communications and democratic promotion. A group that coordinates humanitarian aid to Cuba is run by the Commerce Department, and a fifth on migration issues is run by the National Security Council and the Department of Homeland Security. Many of the groups' members work out of the same State Department office in what one person familiar with the operation described as a "control room." The State Department is reluctant to give details on the new interagency groups, saying the focus should be on the democratic transition they're trying to achieve in Cuba rather than on the US government process. (*The Miami Herald, 12/9/06*)

September 12: Cuba has entered partnerships with four foreign companies to look for offshore oil in the Gulf of Mexico, as US companies are unable to compete for deals because of Washington's four-decades-long embargo on the Communist-run state. "We are beginning a new phase," Cuba's petroleum director Fidel Rivero Prieto said, upon signing two blocks with India's Oil and Natural Gas Corp.'s overseas arm ONGC Videsh. Industry sources said Malaysia's state-run Petroliam Nasional Berhad, Norway's Norsk Hydro ASA and an unidentified company, perhaps from Venezuela or China, have joined the search this year. US companies are barred from exploring for oil in Cuba's offshore zone. But the possibility of striking oil just 145 kilometres off US shores has companies urging Washington to ease the 1962 embargo against Fidel Castro's leftist government. Kirby Jones, president of US-Cuba Trade Association, said, "Cuba officials have stated many times that they are willing to discuss partnership with US energy companies." He said bills are pending in the US Congress to allow US companies "to enter into discussions with Cuban officials as soon as possible." A Cuban Foreign Ministry official said such discussions with US companies would be welcome. (*Reuters, 12/9/06*)

September 12: Nine Cubans who escaped from a Tijuana detention facility and fled to the San Ysidro border crossing reportedly have requested political asylum in the United States. Ten Cuban men and a man from Guyana, all of whom were facing possible deportation, broke through a fence at a detention center. The San Diego Union-Tribune reported

that nine of the Cubans made it to San Ysidro and requested asylum. It's unclear what happened to the other Cuban. The Cubans, who were smuggled into Mexico, had been in Mexican custody while officials decided whether to deport them to Cuba. (AP, 12/9/06)

September 12: Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles, who is one step closer to release from US immigration detention, wants nothing more to do with violence against Fidel Castro's communist government, his lawyer said. After a judge in El Paso, Texas, agreed that Posada should be released, his attorney Eduardo Soto said Posada would accept virtually any conditions, including a prohibition against contact with Cuban exiles in Miami who still seek Castro's violent overthrow. As proof, Soto gave reporters a written statement from Posada renouncing such attacks. "I consider that the Cuban government is in a very deteriorated condition, inexorably reaching its end, and I sincerely believe that nothing would help to go back to the past with sabotage campaigns and actions to precipitate its fall," Posada, 78, said in the statement. (AP, 12/9/06)

September 13: Cuba let loose a blistering indictment of US foreign policy as top diplomats from more than 100 developing countries at the Non-Aligned Summit hammered out policy stands to counter US might. "They would impose a genuine worldwide dictatorship through war and economic power," charged Carlos Lage, vice president of Cuba's Council of State, in a heated speech to delegates that lashed out at US "hegemonic power." Lage slammed the United States as a "morally decadent empire." "The ideas of limited sovereignty, humanitarian intervention, preventive war and regime change are fascist; they are not modern theories to defend freedoms and fight terrorism," he argued. Two days after the United States marked the fifth anniversary of the September 11 terror strikes, Lage appeared to lay some blame at Washington's feet. He argued that "terrorism is a consequence of injustice, lack of education and culture, and of poverty (...) and hegemonic power. It is not the consequence of radical ideologies." [[Discurso del vicepresidente Carlos Lage](#)] (AFP, 13/9/06)

September 13: Cuba blasted the United States, accusing it of protecting terrorists, and criticized a bid by a Texas judge to free Luis Posada Carriles, a jailed Cuban exile wanted in Venezuela for the 1976 bombing of a Cuban jet that killed 73 people. Ricardo Alarcón, president of the National Assembly and Cuba's former ambassador to the United Nations, said Washington is violating international accords by refusing either to extradite Posada Carriles to Venezuela as requested, or try him on the bombing charges. Alarcón said the refusal reflects a broader US plan against the communist-led island. He also cited a plea bargain in a federal court in Fort Lauderdale that reduced prison sentences to two anti-Castro activists and associates of Posada Carriles in exchange for guilty pleas to conspiracy charges. Prosecutors contended that Santiago Alvarez and Osvaldo Mitat, both staunchly anti-Castro Cuban exiles, maintained caches of weapons, including one in the Bahamas, to use in attacks on Cuba. "[That's] a strange way to remember the victims of September 11," Alarcón said at a news conference, noting both the plea bargain and bid to free Posada came on the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the United States. Alarcón spoke as Cuba hosts the 14th summit of the Nonaligned Movement. (*Sun Sentinel*, 14/9/06)

September 14: The Havana summit is being closely followed in Washington, amid concerns over the close relationship that Cuba and Venezuela seem to be developing with Iran. Two Republican senators warned about what they called a troubling alliance. Senators Mel Martinez of Florida and Rick Santorum of Pennsylvania at a news conference called for other nations at the summit to rebuff the trio. "We have a growing axis," Martinez said, which began with Cuba and Iran, but now includes the "increasingly undemocratic government of Venezuela." "These folks are leading a dangerous and negative alliance which I believe will have a very negative impact on the world," Martinez said, charging that the leaders of the three nations are "focused on anti-Americanism." Santorum suggested that the three will look to put aside their differences to concentrate on the United States. "The idea that you look at communist Cuba and the radical Islamists in Tehran and say, 'What do they have in common?' The bigger fight is not with each other, it's with us," he said. "This is a grave concern for us. It's not just the movement out of the Middle East, but an attempt to create multiple fronts in this movement." (*The Miami Herald*, 15/9/06)

September 14: When Michael Parmly, America's top diplomat in Cuba, looks out the window of America's only diplomatic outpost in Havana this is what he sees: a billboard calling President George Bush an assassin, showing a picture of the president with bloody teeth like Dracula. Another sign comparing the president and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to Hitler, still another with images of President Bush and Cuban exiled leader Luis Posada Carriles. The signs are clearly visible to the visiting world leaders. While there are no diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba, Parmly, the chief of the US Interest Section, says it's still diplomatically inappropriate and vulgar and that's not the only hostility he says his employees deal with. "Homes broken into it, urine on the floor, dogs being poisoned. Things like that," Parmly said. The Cuban government denies it's behind that, but the president of the Cuban National Assembly doesn't disavow responsibility for the signs. (*CNN*, 14/9/06)

September 14: While Cuban leader Fidel Castro's recent illness peaked the interest of major US firms, which once had grandiose dreams of investing in a free Cuba, they are not rushing to return to the drawing board of the 1990s, a leading Cuba expert said. Speaking at the Miami Herald's annual America's Conference, John Kavulich, senior policy advisor, US Cuba Trade & Economic Council, said even if Castro were to die, life in Cuba would not change drastically thanks to the Cuban government's relationship with Venezuela. "Venezuela is absolutely the key," Kavulich said during discussion moderated by Miami Herald Chief of Correspondents Juan Tamayo, who formerly covered Cuba. "Financially as long as (Chávez) backs Cuba, Cuba doesn't have to change." Kavulich said between 1994 and 2002, major US firms created Cuba teams, which reported directly to the CEOs, to explore business opportunities on the island. But after Cuba signed agreements with Venezuela and China, and the Bush administration hardened its policy toward the Castro government, these companies lost interest and began to look elsewhere. (*The Miami Herald*, 14/9/06)

September 15: The Bush administration proposed that Cubans hold a referendum to decide if they want to be ruled by Raul Castro, who is acting leader of the communist nation while brother Fidel recovers from surgery. Fidel Castro has long fiercely resisted any attempts by the US to interfere with his government, and Cuba is highly unlikely to accept the proposal, announced in Florida by US Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez. "I would say to the Cuban regime, 'why not ask the people?'" Gutierrez said at The Miami Herald's Americas Conference. "Why would a real leader be so insecure about giving his people a voice?" Gutierrez aides said the administration wanted the Organization of American States to organize the referendum. OAS officials had no immediate comment. Cuba has been excluded from participating in the group since the early 1960s, after Castro took power. Gutierrez, who was born in Cuba, said a referendum is not a "US-only idea" but one many countries around the world support. (*AP*, 15/9/06)

September 15: Cuba's acting leader Raul Castro took the world stage with a scathing attack on a US plan for regime change in the Americas' only one-party communist country. "The United States has gone to such an extreme as to present a (regime change) plan (...) that contains a secret additional part" approved by US President George W. Bush, Raul Castro charged as he took a high-profile international role for the first time since taking the reins of power temporarily July 31 after his brother Fidel Castro underwent surgery. Raul Castro, 75, blasted what he called the "irrational aspirations" of the United States to dominate the world, and slammed its "insatiable thirst for strategic resources." "We represent two thirds of the UN's members, but we are not the decisive force we could be in international relations," Raul Castro told NAM leaders. "Let us join forces closely (...) in the United Nations and other international forums to demand economic justice," Raul Castro said. [[Discurso de Raul Castro](#)] (*AFP*, 15/9/06)

September 16: A Bush administration proposal for a Cuban referendum on democracy created a split between two Cuban American lawmakers, one who backed it and another who called it "unfortunate." Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez, who is a Cuban American, officially unveiled the idea for a referendum on the final day of The Miami Herald's Americas Conference, held at the Biltmore Hotel. Gutierrez challenged the Cuban government to allow its people to vote in a referendum, asking if they want a democratic government, to be sanctioned by the Organization of American States. A report in The Miami Herald said the referendum would be on whether Cubans want to be ruled by Raúl Castro, but in his speech Gutierrez referred more broadly to democracy. "Let the Cuban people determine their own destiny," Gutierrez said, adding that they could "work with the [OAS] and others on a democratic referendum."

Miami Republican lawmaker Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, in a rare disagreement with the Bush administration, called the idea "unfortunate and inappropriate." Diaz-Balart alleged that a 2004 recall referendum in Venezuela won handily by leftist President Hugo Chávez was "fraudulent" yet, it was validated by OAS observers. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told The Miami Herald that Gutierrez had consulted with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice before making the proposal and that the referendum was "well within the boundaries of our policies." Florida Republican Senator Mel Martinez also backed Gutierrez. "We need to challenge the illegal transfer of power from one dictator to another," he said. (*The Miami Herald*, 16/9/06)

September 19: US President George W. Bush and UN chief Kofi Annan discussed ailing Fidel Castro's health and whether Cuba would become an "economic tiger" once he leaves the world scene, the White House said. Annan, who recently traveled to Cuba for the Non-Aligned Movement summit, gave Bush "a little briefing on his encounter" with Castro, national security official Mike Kozak told reporters. "They talked a bit about the future potential of Cuba as it develops and becomes a state with a free system and a free economy," said Kozak, whose brief is democracy, human rights, and international organizations. "This was not a long, deep, analytical thing. It was more, you know, 'what did you find in Cuba,' and then some general discussion about the future of Cuba. That wasn't a prediction on the health of the leader," he said. (*AFP*, 19/9/06)

September 19: The US government continues blocking with extreme measures the exchange between students from that country and Cuba. From October 2005 to date, only two Cuban academics were granted visas to enter US territory, *Granma* daily reported. An article released by the local daily recalled that Washington denied 65 Cuban experts the possibility of attending the conference of the Latin American Studies Association last March. According to the text, only those American students registered in an academic exchange program which has a license to travel, provided only by the Office of Foreign Assets Control from the Department of Treasury, can study in the Caribbean country. (*Prensa Latina*, 19/9/06)

September 20: INTL Consilium, a fund manager based in Fort Lauderdale, announced that it is sponsoring a seminar entitled "You Only Live Once: The Outlook for Economic Reforms in a Post-Fidel Cuba". The seminar will be on September 28th at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Miami, Florida. Confirmed speakers include some of the country's most recognized Cuba experts including Dr. Frank Mora (National Defense University), Mr. Phil Peters (The Lexington Institute), Dr. Jaime Suchlicki (University of Miami) and Dr. Damian Fernandez (Florida International University). "While an overnight transition is unlikely, the process of change in Cuba will have important implications for investors and businesspeople," said Charles Cassel, Managing Director and one of the firm's two founders. "As an emerging market fund manager, we place a premium on understanding those changes early on -- and the opportunities that often accompany them. Russia and Eastern Europe have seen enormous growth since the Berlin Wall came down in 1989. We are hopeful that Cuba -- and its people -- will likewise benefit from reform." (*Business Wire*, 20/9/06)

September 20: Cuba accused the US of spending more on harassing Cuba's business dealings than on investigating the finances of the September 11 terrorists. Vice President Esteban Lazo Hernandez told ministers at the UN General Assembly that the United States is orchestrating "severe reprisals" against companies doing business with Cuba. "The Bush administration has stepped up its brutally harsh measures against Cuba, with new economic sanctions that further intensify what is already the longest blockade human history has ever known," he said. "The very government of the United States recognizes that it is spending more today in persecuting and punishing those who have business dealings with Cuba than in monitoring the finances of those who attacked the Twin Towers." Lazo is part of the collective leadership running Cuba as Fidel Castro recovers from intestinal surgery. Lazo underlined Cuba's support for a country's right to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes, a reference to Cuban ally Iran. He also said that despite US "acts of aggression and the criminal blockade, the Cuban people shall never be defeated." (*AP*, 20/9/06)

September 20: Immigration authorities in Washington announced a plan allowing Cuban medical professionals to apply for US visas in third countries. An official who asked to remain anonymous told the press that the change in

policy was designed to promote family reunification. The regulations are part of Washington's decision to change its immigration policy to allow certain Cuban medical professionals in third countries to apply for visas at any US embassy or consulate. The measure will benefit doctors and other health professionals who have been sent by the government of Fidel Castro to work or study in third countries, as well as their spouses and children under 21. A substantial number of those sent abroad by Havana on medical missions have sought to avoid returning to Cuba at the completion of their assignments. [[Parole for Cuban Medical Personnel in Third Countries](#)] (EFE, 20/9/06)

September 20: Sixteen Cubans reached the United States in a rickety, old boat, but one man trying to cross the Florida Straits with them died, the Coast Guard said. The group reached Marquesas Key, and the Coast Guard learned in interviews with the migrants that one of their original group was missing. The body of a man in his 20s was recovered at sea a few hours later, Coast Guard Petty Officer James Judge said. The body was taken to the coroner's office, and a cause of death was not released. The 16 Cubans were turned over to the US Border Patrol. (*Sun Sentinel*, 21/9/06)

September 21: The president of Cuban National Peoples' Power Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon, denounced that US official declassified documents show the White House complicity in the death of former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier. Alarcon summed up at an act in Havana on occasion of the 30th anniversary of the death in Washington of Letelier, close collaborator of former President Salvador Allende, victim of the explosion of a bomb in his car. "Letelier and all terrorism victims will live whenever we are capable of make them live, demanding punishment for those murderers and their accomplices," Alarcon said. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/9/06)

September 21: Office of Cuba Broadcasting Director Pedro Roig, who oversees TV and Radio Martí, said that he runs his operation ethically and wants to start a national debate on whether journalists who work for news companies and also freelance for the government have a conflict of interest. Referring to a September 8 Miami Herald report that named several local journalists who had also been receiving payments from the US government for their work at TV and Radio Martí, Roig said his entity has nothing to hide because its very goal is to promote open debate on the island about Cuba's future. "I believe in the right that all human beings have to criticize their government without fear of repression," he said. "In the end there's one message, for Cubans to understand that in a free society, different problems and themes are discussed, passionately, but at the end of the day, no one is imprisoned, and no one is going to get an act of repudiation done against them (...) We have the right to make mistakes, like The Herald has a right to make a mistake." (*The Miami Herald*, 22/9/06)

September 22: A quest to see five Cuban men convicted in 2001 of spying on the United States freed from prison made it to the nation's capital, with advocates arguing the men were in this country to fight terrorism directed at Cuba. "These five men had come to the [United States] (...) to infiltrate these terrorist right-wing groups that have threatened us in Miami for decades," said Andrés Gómez, of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, at a news conference. He spoke in advance of a planned protest for October 23, where supporters of the so-called Cuban Five plan to push for their release -- and for the United States to extradite Luis Posada Carriles, whom they accused of fostering anti-Cuba terrorism. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/9/06)

September 25: Up to thirty percent of the food Cuba imports comes from the United States, that's more than from any other country. Despite the 47-year-old US trade embargo, today US companies are flocking to Cuba, all because of a loophole Congress approved in 2000 that allows for the sale of American food to Cuba. What started as a trickle has turned into a half billion dollar flood of sales each year. "I think it's substantial," said Kirby Jones of the US-Cuba Trade Association, in response to a question about US food sales to Cuba. "I think in the \$100's of millions or billions of dollars." (*CBS News*, 25/9/06)

September 25: Cuba protested a US decision to deny a visa to its health minister, who had planned to attend the annual meeting of the Pan American Health Organization. Dagoberto Rodriguez, Cuba's top diplomat in the United States, said the US action "violated the letter and the spirit" of the PAHO charter. He said it was the second year in a row that

the United States has prevented Cuba's top health official from attending the meeting. In a statement to the opening session of the meeting, Rodriguez called the US policy a "vulgar hoax." (AP, 25/9/06)

September 25: Desperate Cuban relatives in South Florida sought information about their loved ones detained at sea by the US Coast Guard -- at least 108 migrants, an unusually high number of Cubans beckoned by relatively calm seas. The dozens of migrants were being held on board Coast Guard boats pending analysis of their cases -- among the first to be questioned under new Bush administration rules unveiled in August that promised to inform relatives of the condition of those being held. Anxious family members crowded into the Miami offices of Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart to push for news about those they believe to be among the detainees. The group reportedly includes at least one minor, several mothers with infant children, and several doctors, according to family members and Díaz-Balart's office. (*The Miami Herald*, 26/9/06)

September 26: A 14-year-old West Miami-Dade boy ran away from home, boarded a plane and took a startling international flight alone to Havana, his father said. Alfredo Diaz, a 10th-grader at G. Holmes Braddock Senior High, cleared an American Airlines security check and boarded a Miami-to-Nassau flight on Thursday, even though the carrier requires escorts for anyone under 15. "I can't believe my son was able to go through all that security and no one stopped him or asked him about being so young and traveling alone," said the father, who is also named Alfredo Diaz. As identification Alfredo presented his alien registration card, which shows his birth date as December 8, 1991 -- three months shy of 15 years ago. From the Bahamas, Alfredo likely used his Cuban passport, which he sneaked from his dad's strong box, for the flight to Havana, Diaz said. (*The Miami Herald*, 27/9/06)

September 28: The United States government's coordinator for transition in Cuba, Caleb McCarry, said that Cubans have to decide their own future "without interference" from other countries in a process of transition to democracy. McCarry said that democratic countries like the United States and Spain can help open up the island to democracy, and told Cubans they "they have nothing to fear" from Washington, which will help them achieve democracy if the transitional government asks it to. "This is the first time in 47 years when anything has changed, a moment in which we all have to create expectations that a transition is inevitable, and that Cubans receive the same message: that they have the option of a better future, that they should not be afraid, and that freedom is possible, as is reconciliation," the US official said. McCarry wrapped up a two-day trip to Spain, where he met with officials from the Foreign Ministry and members of the FAES Foundation, a conservative political think tank presided by ex-Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar. The purpose of the meetings was "to consult with other governments, hear their criteria and explain our policy." (*EFE*, 28/9/06)

September 28: Venezuela said that it has asked the UN Security Council for help in its demands that the US hand over a Cuban militant accused of planning the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner. Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro said that his government is asking the Security Council to take action against Luis Posada Carriles, a militant foe of Cuban leader Fidel Castro who is wanted in Venezuela for allegedly plotting in Caracas the attack on the passenger flight that killed 73 people. "We came to ask the Security Council that it take part in the affair and to ask that US public opinion react to the (US government's) protection of this dangerous terrorist," Maduro told reporters at the seat of the UN in New York. Cuban born Posada Carriles, 77, a former CIA operative, has been jailed since May 2005 after entering the US illegally. (AP, 28/9/06)

September 29: Experts said economic reforms should be priority for Cuba's new president. The emerging government in Cuba will have its work cut out as it tries to match the rising expectations from military brass, the ruling elite and budding consumers, a panel of experts agreed at a seminar. In a city used to abundant Cuba conferences, what was remarkable about the seminar -- "You Only Live Once: The Outlook for Economic Reforms in a Post-Fidel Cuba" -- was that while the future of Cuba is still up in the air, participants are now speculating on what acting President Raul Castro will do -- and not about the actions of his ailing brother Fidel Castro. The seminar -- sponsored by INTL Consilium, a Fort Lauderdale-based fund manager -- played to a packed house at the Conrad Hilton Hotel in Miami. (*The Miami Herald*, 29/9/06)

