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HIGHLIGHTS

Domestic affairs: Cuban Communist Party and mass organizations debate the country's main problems. Fidel Castro appears in a video taped during Venezuelan President's visit to the island. Several dissidents are detained and further released without charges. Official press reports on different problems affecting Cuba's education and health systems. Cuba celebrates 40th Anniversary of Che Guevara's death in Bolivia. Nearly 8.2 million people, or 96.49 percent of registered voters, participate in municipal elections. A group of young people wearing wristbands with the word "cambio" is detained for hours.

Economy: Vice President Carlos Lage says Cuba's electric power generating capacity meets national demand. Bilateral commerce between Cuba and Russia increases by sixty per cent so far in 2007. In the eastern provinces, numerous houses are damaged, coffee crop suffers, and several thousand peoples are evacuated due to continuous rain and flooding. Cuba and Venezuela sign new economic accords. Cuban authorities acknowledge that housing construction program has failed.

Exile Community: Unidad Cubana issues "The Declaration from Miami", a plan for democratic action in Cuba. Writer Carlos Victoria dies in South Florida.

Foreign Affairs: High-ranking delegations from Guinea Bissau, Honduras, and Lesotho meet with Raul Castro in Havana. Fidel Castro meets for four hours with Hugo Chavez during the Venezuelan President's visit to Cuba. At a ceremony on the signing of economic accords with Cuba, Hugo Chavez says Cuba and Venezuela could form a confederation of states. UN Special Secretary for the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, arrives in Cuba. Cuban foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, says that Cuba would be willing to "renounce its sovereignty" to integrate "into a larger Latin-American and Caribbean bloc of nations."

US-Cuba Relations: A study on claims of expropriated assets by Cuba's government is conducted by Creighton University as commissioned by the US Agency for International Development. Several dozen Cuban migrants are interdicted at sea and repatriated by the

US Coast Guard. US President George W. Bush delivers a speech on policy toward Cuba. The UN General Assembly votes overwhelmingly to urge the US to lift its embargo against Cuba.

LO MÁS RELEVANTE

Asuntos domésticos: El Partido Comunista de Cuba y las organizaciones de masas debaten acerca de los principales problemas del país. Fidel Castro aparece en un video grabado durante la visita del Presidente venezolano a la isla. Varios disidentes son detenidos y posteriormente liberados sin cargos. La prensa oficial informa acerca de diversos problemas que afectan a los sistemas de salud y educación de Cuba. Cuba celebra el 40^{to} Aniversario de la muerte de Che Guevara en Bolivia. Cerca de 8.2 millones de personas, o 96.49 por ciento de electores registrados, participan en las elecciones municipales. Es detenido por varias horas un grupo de jóvenes que portaban manillas con la palabra “cambio”.

Economía: El vicepresidente Carlos Lage dice que la generación de energía eléctrica de Cuba abastece la demanda nacional. El comercio bilateral entre Cuba y Rusia aumenta un 60 por ciento en lo que va de 2007. En las provincias orientales numerosas viviendas son dañadas, la cosecha de café se afecta y varios miles de personas son evacuadas debido a continuas lluvias e inundaciones. Cuba y Venezuela firman nuevos acuerdos. Las autoridades cubanas admiten que ha fallado el programa para la construcción de viviendas.

Comunidad de exiliados: Unidad Cubana emite la “Declaración desde Miami, un plan de acciones hacia la democracia en Cuba. El escritor Carlos Victoria fallece en el Sur de la Florida.

Asuntos exteriores: Delegaciones de alto nivel de Guinea Bissau, Honduras y Lesotho se reúnen con Raúl Castro en La Habana. Fidel Castro sostiene una reunión de cuatro horas con Hugo Chávez durante la visita del presidente venezolano a Cuba. En la ceremonia por la firma de los acuerdos económicos con Cuba, Hugo Chávez dice que Cuba y Venezuela podían formar una federación de estados. Llega a Cuba el Representante Especial de la ONU para el Derecho a la Alimentación, Jean Ziegler. El ministro de Relaciones Exteriores, Felipe Pérez Roque, dice que Cuba estaría dispuesta a “renunciar a su soberanía” para integrarse a “un gran bloque de naciones latinoamericanas y caribeñas”.

Relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos: La Universidad de Creighton lleva a cabo un estudio acerca de las reclamaciones de bienes expropiados por el gobierno de Cuba según fue comisionado por la Agencia para el Desarrollo Internacional de EEUU. La guardia costera de EEUU intercepta en el mar y devuelve a la isla a varias decenas de cubanos emigrantes. El Presidente de EEUU George W. Bush pronuncia un discurso sobre la política hacia Cuba. La Asamblea General de ONU vota abrumadoramente en favor de que EEUU levante el embargo contra Cuba.



DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

October 2: Cubans are griping these days about low salaries and high prices, poor bus services and the maddening dual currency system. And for the first time in years, they don't have to whisper. Interim President Raúl Castro has called publicly for criticism, saying that the only way to fix the country's many problems is to air them. So this month, local branches of organizations such as the Cuban Communist Party, the island's lone labour union, pro-government neighbourhood watch groups and the University Student Federation are assembling around the country to debate shortcomings and suggest solutions. The debate has raised hopes that Castro is on the verge of enacting significant reforms and permitting more freedom of expression. But sceptics say such a debate was held before, and was cut off when the onslaught of grievances was more than the government wished to discuss. And despite Castro's cracking open the door long shut to public criticism, there seems to be one topic that is strictly out of bounds: ending the island's communist system. "This is going to be public venting, not serious change," said Alcibiades Hidalgo, a former Cuban ambassador to the United Nations and personal secretary to Castro. "Rather than being a real inventory of problems -- which they already know and don't need -- this is an exercise in political propaganda in order to put on a new, more understanding face." The meetings were officially called to analyze Castro's July 26 speech. (*The Miami Herald*, 2/9/07)

October 3: Cuba's "La Colmenita" Children's Theater Company was named UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador amid a several-minute-long standing ovation by the audience in a venue that proved small for all the people who gathered there to congratulate the group. Jose Juan Ortiz, UNICEF representative to Cuba, said that the company deserved this award for a group whose greatest value has been that of educating children and adults all over the world; "something we know they will continue to do." Nils Katsberg, regional director of UNICEF to Latin America and the Caribbean said that this award came as no surprise: "they have always defended the rights of children and have taken their message of love and peace everywhere." Carlos Alberto Cremata, the director of the company, said "we have always been great admirers of UNICEF and their work, and our children have always been their champions. We just hope we can live up to this title." (*Juventud Rebelde*, 4/10/07)

October 3: Ricardo Rodríguez Borrero, member of the Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs of Cuba, was arrested at Havana's inter-provincial bus terminal. According to Rodríguez, he was arrested for taking photos of vagabonds who sleep on the floor at stations and other public places. (*Cubanet*, 3/10/07)

October 3: Cuba's foreign minister told students at the University of Havana that the island's communist government must put flexibility ahead of dogma in adapting to new realities even if Washington ends its economic embargo against the Castro regime. Felipe Perez Roque made the comment during an exchange where several students mentioned

the serious problems in the economy and asked whether Cuba could resolve its unfinished business if the 45-year-old embargo were lifted. After insisting that the US policy has cost the island's economy nearly \$90 billion, the foreign minister said that Cuba cannot blame the embargo for the "problems, mistakes and setbacks" cited in a July speech by acting President Raul Castro, who stepped in when older brother Fidel fell ill 14 months ago. Damian Dickinson, a freshman studying engineering, asked the foreign minister Wednesday night: "What would happen if they ended the embargo and we continue with some of the very deficient management methods we have, if we continue with the waste, with the land we have without putting it into production as Raul said?" Perez Roque responded that in that case Cuba will have to adapt to the new reality. "We cannot be dogmatic. We have to be flexible," though without compromising on the "principle" of defending socialism. (*EFE*, 4/10/07)

October 3: Fearing another dissidents' demonstration, police and state security forces kept a close watch on several peaceful dissidents who were taking photos in the centre town Leoncio Vidal Park in Santa Clara. Jorge Luis García Pérez 'Antúnez', national coordinator of the Pedro Luis Boitel Political Prisoners' Association, said that "suddenly the park filled with social workers, all wearing blue and red T-shirts, but they did not approach us." (*Cubanet*, 8/10/07)

October 3: Troubadour Carlos Varela received a long ovation from more than 50,000 people attending a ceremony on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the death of Ché in Bolivia. The crowd assembled in the Leoncio Vidal Park of Santa Clara was astonished when Varela shouted: "The freedom of human beings can never be incomplete. Freedom is a whole, you either have it or you don't. If it is only partial, then it is not real." (*Cubanet*, 8/10/07)

October 4: The 12th Special Olympics World Summer Games, the most important sport event for people with mental disabilities, concluded its second day of competitions in the Chinese city of Shanghai. The Cubans in Shanghai include 23 athletes who earned their tickets to China at the National Special Games held last year. The delegation is comprised of the women's volleyball team and athletes in the men's and women's athletics, swimming, rhythmical gymnastics and table tennis. (*ACN*, 4/10/07)

October 4: Cuba settled the controversy that arose over the authenticity of the remains of Ernesto "Che" Guevara that are in the communist-ruled island, announcing that DNA tests had been conducted on the remains brought back from Bolivia, where the Argentine-born rebel was killed four decades ago. Jorge Gonzalez Perez, the Cuban specialist who led the team that recovered Che's body, said the evidence found at the burial site was sufficient to confirm that the remains found in the grave in Vallegrande were those of Guevara, but Cuba nevertheless conducted DNA tests to confirm the findings, the official Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported. Che's body was mutilated and buried at a site that remained secret until retired Bolivian Gen. Mario Vargas Salinas revealed in November 1995 that the remains had been buried in a mass grave in Vallegrande. Gonzalez Perez, currently chancellor of the Advanced Medical Sciences Institute in Havana, said the search for Che's body started soon after the general's disclosure. (*EFE*, 4/10/07)

October 4: The coalition Concertación Pro Diálogo y Reconciliación called on all dissident organizations to participate in an open debate on “The Future of the Nation: Dialogue, Alternatives and Proposals” with the objective of guiding a political transition. According to the invitation signed by Fernando Sánchez, president of the Organizing Committee and of the UUConcertaciónUU, proposals and programs from several dissident organizations have been included in the program as well as the document “History Will Absolve Me” (Fidel Castro, 1953). (*EER*, 5/10/07)

October 5: Cuba faces a progressively aging population, with 2,500 people over one hundred years, according to preliminary results on this issue published in Havana. Genetic, sex and emotional factors, in addition to easy adaptation to change and possession of healthy habits are some of the causes to increase the years lived, Doctor Roberto Diaz told the press. The opinion of the main expert on geriatrics and gerontology of the National Direction for Aged Adult at the Public Health Ministry is also based on results of a survey carried out on 270 centenarians in Havana. Results showed that over 55 percent of those surveyed came from parents who lived 80 years or more, were disease free and had people to care for them, making for more emotional stability and less depression. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/10/07)

October 6: At least 28 people were killed and 73 injured in Cuba’s deadliest accident in years after a train slammed into a bus, state television reported. Fifteen of the injured were in serious condition, the state news report said. The accident took place when a train that left from the island’s second city, Santiago de Cuba, headed for Manzanillo, in Granma province, the report said. It slammed into the bus at a crossing in Yara, about 500 miles southeast off Havana, the report said. Last June, 11 people were killed and 50 injured when a truck flipped over in the Santiago area. Buses and trains are almost always crowded in Cuba, which lacks adequate public transport. In rural areas, other vehicles like trucks are jammed and used as makeshift buses where none operate. (*AFP*, 6/10/07)

October 7: Cuba will create a school attached to the International Society of Orthopedic Surgery and Traumatology (SICOT), the fifth such center in the world. That action, experts said, is an acknowledgment of Cuba’s development in that field of medicine. The school will be located at the Frank País Hospital, in Havana, and will contribute to promoting professional exchange with a score of SICOT member countries. In addition to upgrading doctors’ qualification, the center will also improve the teaching quality and rank of Cuban and foreign professors. (*Cuba Headlines*, 7/10/07)

October 8: Fidel Castro paid homage to Ernesto “Che” Guevara as an “exceptional combatant” as many of the Argentine guerrilla’s relatives and former comrades gathered in central Cuba to mark the 40th anniversary of his capture and killing in Bolivia. Castro, who has not been seen in public since undergoing intestinal surgery and ceding power to his brother Raul more than 14 months ago, did not attend the low-key ceremony in Santa Clara — one of several tributes to the guerrilla leader being held around the Americas. Still, the ailing leader’s presence was felt when a government presenter read his message to several thousand people gathered before the towering bronze statue of Guevara built in

Santa Clara. A previously made recording of Castro reading a letter Guevara had written to him four decades ago was also broadcast over loudspeakers. "I halt in my daily combat to bow my head, with respect and gratitude, to the exceptional combatant who fell on the 8th of October 40 years ago," Castro wrote in the essay, which was also published in the Communist Party daily Granma. "I give him thanks for what he tried to do, and for what he could not do in his country of birth because he was like a flower yanked prematurely from its stem." [[Che](#)] (AP, 8/10/07)

October 8: Communist Cuba paid tribute to its poster boy, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, 40 years after the guerrilla fighter was captured and executed in Bolivia. About 10,000 Cuban workers and students gathered before a monument of the guerrilla fighter carrying a rifle in Santa Clara, the city in central Cuba that Guevara "liberated" in 1958 in the decisive battle of the Cuban revolution. Raul Castro, who fought with Guevara in the mountains during Cuba's revolution, attended the ceremony, but did not speak. Instead, another former comrade-in-arms, Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdes, gave the key address, which focused as much on domestic matters as it did on Guevara's legacy. "Che's ideas and the legacy of his comrades (...) are a living element that should remain present in our daily tasks," said Valdes, one of only three men who hold the honorific title of Commander of the Revolution and currently Cuba's Communications Minister. But Valdes also called on Cubans to remain united during what he called "more difficult and dangerous" times marked by Castro's illness and increased US government hostility toward the island. Echoing Raul Castro's numerous proposals for talks with American officials, Valdes also proclaimed that "we will not renounce the possibility of a dialogue if some day there are more realistic leaders in that country" while still remembering Fidel Castro's vow that "they never will have Cuba." Valdes headed the delegation that returned Guevara's bones from Bolivia a decade ago to Cuba. Guevara's youngest son, Ernesto, honored his father by roaring in on a wine-red motorcycle along with 37 members of Cuba's Harley-Davidson motorcycle club, all dressed in black and wearing chains around their necks. (Reuters, AFP, 8/10/07)

October 8: Former political prisoner Jorge Luis García Pérez "Antúnez" and his wife, Iris Pérez Aguilera, were detained by authorities in Placetas, Villa Clara province, when the couple was traveling to Santa Clara. The State Security officer, Julio Hernández Águila, together with an agent who said he was the second in command of the Unit for the Confrontation of Subversive Activities by the Enemy in the province, told Antúnez and his wife they were not allowed to travel to Santa Clara. Jorge Luis Pérez García, who is also President of the dissident organization Presidio Político "Pedro Luis Boitel", and his wife were detained for several hours and then set free. The day before, police agents detained dissident Omar Suárez García when he was traveling to Guayo, Sancti Spiritus, where Suárez would join a dissident meeting. The police confiscated Huber Matos' autobiography and documents Suárez had with him. (Cubanet, 19/10/07)

October 8: Another person died of injuries received in the bus-train crash that occurred in eastern Cuba on October 6, raising the number of fatalities to 29, medical sources said, adding that 35 of the more than 70 people injured in the tragedy remain hospitalized.

Authorities did not specify the age or sex of the latest fatality. Cesar Leon, the head of the command post set up at the Hospital Celia Sanchez in the province of Granma, told the press that among those still hospitalized are six children, adding that at least seven of the injured are in critical condition. Twenty-eight people were killed outright and 73 others were injured, 15 of them seriously, when a train hit a bus at a railroad crossing in eastern Cuba, state television reported. (*EFE*, 8/10/07)

October 9: From September 21 through 24, the State Security Department in Mayarí, Holguín, summoned some 23 persons with a record of having taken part in illegal attempts to leave the country, as well as truck drivers who would have transported rafts and boats to the coast. The purpose of the summons was to deny the rumour that the United States was going to open the naval base of Guantánamo to receive all those who wanted to emigrate from Cuba. (*Cubanet*, 9/10/07)

October 9: When 32-year-old Yoani Sanchez wants to update her blog about daily life in Cuba, she dresses like a tourist and strides confidently into a Havana hotel, greeting the staff in German. That is because Cubans like Sanchez are not authorized to use hotel Internet connections, which are reserved for foreigners. In a recent posting on "Generacion Y" Sanchez wrote about the abundance of police patrolling the streets of Havana, checking documents and searching bags for black-market merchandise. She and a handful of other independent bloggers are opening up a crack in the government's tight control over media and information to give the rest of the world a glimpse of life in a one-party, Communist state. Once inside the hotel, Sanchez has to write fast. Not because she fears getting caught, but because online access is prohibitively expensive. An hour online costs about \$6, the equivalent of two weeks' pay for the average Cuban. Independent bloggers like Sanchez have to build their sites on servers outside Cuba, and they have more readers outside Cuba than inside. That's not surprising, since only 200,000 Cubans, or less than 2 percent of the population, have access to the World Wide Web, the lowest rate in Latin America, according to the International Telecommunications Union. [[Generación Y](#)] (*Reuters*, 9/10/07)

October 11: At least 48 were injured after a public transport truck in Guantánamo overturned, five days after another accident in eastern Cuba left 29 dead. (*EER*, 11/10/07)

October 12: There will be fiestas in all schools across the country, but also a focus on responsibility and serious commitments, because the Pioneers will have the duty of choosing those who will represent them at various levels, reported Keyla Estévez García, the national vice president of José Martí Pioneer Organization. Keyla added the elementary school students will participate in their elections through direct vote, while those in secondary school will take part in a ticketing process. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 12/10/07)

October 13: The literary-cultural program "Readings in the Prado" is being held for the second time in Havana. Organized by the Cuban Book Institute and the Young Communist League (UJC), this event allows people to find a valid option for human and spiritual growth in literature. "Cien horas con Fidel" (One Hundred Hours with Fidel) has

become once more the most sought after book. Eliades Acosta, head of the Party's Central Committee Culture Department, was in charge of referring to the remarkable values of this book written by Ignacio Ramonet. The presentation took place in Havana's Central Park, where the book "Cuba y la lucha por la democracia" (Cuba and the struggle for democracy), by Ricardo Alarcón, will be at the center of attention. The interactive forum "Caliban before globalization", held at Havana's Main Computer Center, was another important moment of the intense day. Internet users from the United States, Spain, Mexico, Germany, France and Canada discussed Che Guevara's legacy, the role of books in culture, and that of artists, intellectuals and indigenous peoples in the struggle against neo-liberal globalization and cultural decolonization. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 13/10/07)

October 13: Fidel Castro, 81, appeared gaunt in a 17-minute video taped during a four-hour meeting with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and shown before his phone call on the Chavez show *Alo Presidente*, which was broadcast live on Cuba's state-run television and radio on October 14. Castro, who has undergone at least three major operations over 14 months for undisclosed intestinal problems, wore a red, white and blue track suit top over his pajamas and sat on a cushion in an armchair. [[Video](#)] (*Reuters*, 14/10/07)

October 14: Fidel Castro's voice was strong when he taunted the United States in a live telephone call to his Venezuelan ally President Hugo Chavez broadcast from Cuba. It was the first time Cubans have heard Castro speak live since he handed over power in July 2006 to his brother after intestinal surgery. He has not appeared in public since. In his one-hour telephone exchange with Chavez, Castro made no mention of his health or his political future. "I think I have to take some pill, but I will continue watching," Castro said before hanging up. Castro has "recovered," Chavez said, and he ate yogurt during their meeting the day before. "He is in good spirits and has a very good color," Chavez said. (*Reuters*, 14/10/07)

October 14: Cuban authorities arrested the driver of a bus that collided with a train on October 6, an accident that killed 29 people and injured 75 others, after determining he stopped his vehicle on the tracks as the locomotive approached, state media said. Cuba's official National Information Agency reported that a commission of transportation experts determined that bus driver Manuel Taurino Chávez Peña stopped the bus on the tracks for unknown reasons, shortly before it was slammed by the locomotive. The report said Chávez Peña was detained and "awaiting the correspondent legal process," but did not mention whether or how seriously he was injured. Twenty-seven of the injured remained hospitalized, including two in critical condition, the agency report said. (*The Miami Herald*, 13/10/07)

October 14: Cubans carried out a trial run of elections to guarantee the course of the first stage of the general elections, to be held October 21. About 270 people participated in this drill, to elect over 15,000 delegates to the Peoples' Power municipal assemblies, after a process of nomination of candidates in constituent assemblies. Authorities from the over 37,000 polling stations will prove functionality and operation of polling tables and

count of votes. The test was postponed in eastern Cuba due to the situation created in the weak of heavy rains affecting the area for the past several weeks, said María Esther Reus González, President of the National Electoral Commission (CEN). Speaking with the press, María Esther, who is also Cuba's Minister of Justice, explained that the heavy rains would limit the movement of participants in the activity, which has been re-scheduled for October 18th in the eastern provinces from Camagüey to Guantánamo. (*Prensa Latina, Periódico 26*, 14/10/07)

October 15: Dissidents Yulián Hernández López, member of the Prisoners and former Political Prisoners Club of Cuba, and Fidel García Roldán, of the February 24 Movement, were released from prison after fulfilling the full length of their sentences, according to Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, president of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation. (*EFE*, 15/10/07)

October 16: Cuban authorities announced a national campaign against the mosquito *aedes aegypti*, transmitter of dengue fever. The campaign “No truce with the enemy” was announced in public media after several cases of dengue were reported in Havana hospitals. (*EFE, AIN*, 16/10/07).

October 16: The Cuban science internet portal hosted by the Information Technology and Advanced Telematic Company (CITMATEL) won an award at the 2007 World Information Society Summit. CITMATEL President Beatriz Alonso told the press that her firm was one of 40 worldwide chosen for the award for best practices for quality and e-content by a panel of some 30 renowned multimedia and web specialists. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 16/10/07)

October 16: The Cuban government prohibited dissident lawyer René Gómez Manzano from travelling to Belgium to receive the 2007 “Ludovic Trarieux” International Award in recognition of his commitment to the defence of human rights. Gómez Manzano, 63, would have travelled to Brussels via Paris, but immigration authorities informed him that for now “he was not authorized to leave of the country”. (*El Nuevo Herald, La Jornada*, 17/10/07)

October 17: A new legislation on workplace security will come into effect in Cuba on January 2008, with the aim of improving the current policy of risk-control in the island. In statements to “Trabajadores” online newspaper, Esther Marquez, an official at the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, said the new legislation also seeks to introduce progressively a National Comprehensive System on Workplace Security. (*ACN*, 17/10/07)

October 17: The Cuban Customs agency published new regulations for the import of engines and bodyworks of cars and motorcycles, which will be able to be imported only by Cubans travelling on official missions. The new policy requires the importer to have the approval of his or her superiors. (*EER*, 18/10/07)

October 17: There are no campaigns or TV ads and only one party gets to field candidates in October 21 local elections in communist Cuba, the first without ailing Fidel Castro in charge. Yet Cubans are expected to turn out massively to elect 15,236 municipal council members in a pyramidal voting process that will culminate in a new National Assembly in March. The legislature, a rubber-stamp parliament until now, could well become an important resonance chamber for debate on Cuba's future as the 81-year-old Castro, who has led the country since a 1959 revolution, fades from the political stage. With Castro sidelined by illness and his low-profile brother Raul Castro running Cuba since last year, the Communist Party has urged young Cubans to stand in this year's elections to pump new blood into the country's political leadership. (*Reuters*, 17/10/07)

October 17: A coalition of liberal Cuban dissident groups is preparing a transition plan that would guarantee the people basic social services in a government change. The Liberal Union of the Republic of Cuba indicated that the draft project would guarantee free medical care and education during a process of change of government on the island. (*Radio Martí*, 17/10/07)

October 17: In a “Public Audience,” convened by the Presidency of the Cuba National Assembly, homage was paid to Raúl Roa García (1907-1982), the “Chancellor of Dignity,” on the centennial of his birth. Roa, who was the island’s foreign minister from the victory of the 1959 revolution until his retirement in 1976, was discussed and analyzed by friends, co-workers and disciples, who gathered to remember anecdotes and memorable episodes in his life as a student leader, university professor, intellectual, journalist and diplomat. Particularly noted were the contributions he made to the history of the Cuban Revolution, with a unique style that was characterized by its distance from any and all types of formalism. Disciple and friend Ricardo Alarcón, president of the National Assembly, recalled the “Doctor,” as Roa was known in the hallways of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, and called on people to keep his memory alive and to follow his legacy and work. “More than speeches and formal praises,” added Alarcón, “we should take advantage of Roa García as a source of education for our youth and leadership cadre —be they diplomats, representatives or in any other sphere— because he is a source of inspiration.” (*Juventud Rebelde*, 17/10/07)

October 18: The Cuban Radio and Television Institute's recent decision not to broadcast several video clips by national filmmakers has rekindled controversies surrounding the government's cultural policy and its effects on the media. E-mail protests from artists and filmmakers have revived the debate among local intellectuals that began in January and are coinciding with a series of public debates initiated by acting President Raúl Castro. The acting president inaugurated the debates in his July 26 speech, calling on people to question "everything we do, in order to constantly improve how we do it." Paradoxically, several of the video clips in question are works supported by other state or political institutions in the country. For one reason or another, the videos' circulation had been limited to small groups or screened once at a festival, never reaching the wider Cuban public that was intended as their main audience. Cuban filmmaker Pavel Giroud, who has been participating in an electronic debate about this issue with other Cubans within the past few weeks, said that “censorship works everywhere”. “Personally, I prefer that a

work of mine not be broadcast, rather than be told to change my shots or remove footage. Nor am I interested in hearing their explanations. The mere fact of being silenced is so serious that the reason why pales in comparison, because it will never be a good enough reason for the person who is silenced”, he said. (*IPS*, 18/10/07)

October 18: A second pilot test, which has been conducted prior to the October 21 municipal elections, was successfully completed in eastern Cuba. All the region, from Camaguey to Guantanamo province, was affected by heavy rains when the first pilot election was scheduled to be carried out. The 16,108 electoral colleges from the six Cuban provinces which could not participate in the testing of the island's electoral apparatus represent the 42.7 per cent of the 37,749 nation's voting stations. Over 15,000 delegates to the Municipal Assemblies are expected to be elected on October 21 from among more than 37,000 candidates that have been nominated by over seven million Cubans. (*ACN*, 18/10/07)

October 18: A group of dissident organizations announced the creation of the award Tolerance Plus, which its 2007 edition was granted to layman Dagoberto Valdés. For over 15 years, Valdés was the director of the Catholic journal “Vital” where he criticized important social and political issues affecting Cuban society. The organizing committee granted the award to Valdés due to his “merits and exceptional talent in promoting reconciliation, harmony and tolerance among Cubans”. (*AFP*, 19/10/07)

October 19: A survey conducted in Cuba for the International Republican Institute (IRI) indicates that nearly three-quarters of Cubans surveyed (73.9%) would like “to vote to decide who succeeds Fidel Castro” as President. The survey of 584 Cubans was conducted from September 5-October 4, 2007. [[Survey conducted in Cuba](#)] (*IRI Press Release*, 19/10/07)

October 19: After going through a rigorous training process, more than 200 canine teams are in place for the prevention and combating of drug trafficking and terrorism in Cuba. This was reported by Lieutenant Colonel Denis Fernández Sánchez, head of the National Department of Canine Technology of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MININT by its abbreviation in Spanish), during a tour of the national centers of canine breeding and training. Fernández Sánchez explained that this division, which is focused mainly on impeding the introduction and circulation of drugs within the country, has a prominently preventive function: surveillance and protection of roadways, docks, airports and other vulnerable areas. “We also have two schools with capacity to train more than 120 canine teams in each training period and two centers for breeding Springer Spaniels and German Shepherds of the highest genetic quality and with top aptitudes for training in six specialties,” he said. Fernandez also said that Cuba has a rescue team and canine teams to cover the needs for tracking operations, which are part of the division of crime scene investigation. (*Cuba Headlines*, 19/10/07)

October 20: When Cubans head to the polls for the first step in an electoral process that ultimately will choose the island's president, one candidate's name will be missing from the ballot: Gerardo Sánchez. The human rights activist in Havana's Playa neighborhood

wanted to see what would happen if he ran for a spot on the local municipal council, in what Fidel Castro once called "the most democratic process in the world." Sánchez wasn't hopeful: The election was organized by his local neighborhood watch group, the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, and last month's poll to choose whose name would appear on the ballot was by a show of hands, not secret vote. "All my neighbors had seen how many pro-government mob attacks there have been at my house, and they were panicked. Do you know what panic is? I mean panic," Sánchez said. "There were a little less than 100 people there, and I got four votes plus mine. I just wanted to prove what a circus that was." The next day, people came up to me and said, 'Sorry about that, man, but I couldn't let them see me vote for you,'" Sánchez said. "Like I was a thief or drug or weapons trafficker!" (*The Miami Herald*, 20/10/07)

October 20: On the eve of balloting, Fidel Castro hailed Cuba's electoral process as superior to that of its northern neighbor the United States, which also is in the throes of a protracted election campaign. "Our elections are the antithesis of those held in United States (...) There, first you have to be very rich, or have an enormous amount of money behind you," said Castro in an editorial in the official daily Granma. [[The Elections](#)] (*AFP*, 20/10/07)

October 21: Cubans voted to elect more than 15,000 municipal council members in the first elections since ailing Fidel Castro handed over power to his brother last year. Cubans lined up to cast ballots in urns guarded by school children for neighborhood candidates whose photograph and resume were posted on shop windows in a poll devoid of campaigning. State television urged Cubans to vote in the elections, the start of an electoral process that will culminate in a new National Assembly in March. The 600-seat assembly could formalize the retirement of Castro, whose failing health forced him to relinquish power 15 months ago for the first time since his 1959 revolution. "Long live Fidel and Raul," a television presenter said in a government statement that warned Cubans the elections were being held in the face of "hostility, threats and aggression" from Cuba's arch-enemy, the United States. Voting is not obligatory, but more than 90 percent of Cubans are expected to turn out. Failure to do so is frowned upon in local neighborhood committees. "These elections won't resolve the problems we have," said Edel, a student who asked not to be fully named. "The delegates can't do anything. Here everything is decided from above." "I am going to go and vote bright and early to get it over with," a 28-year-old woman law student told the press. "I don't want them coming and knocking on my door, and I don't want to end up with a record (...) (but) I'm not going because I think anything is going to change," she added. (*Reuters, AFP*, 21/10/07)

October 21: Leading dissident Martha Beatriz Roque said elections are not secret in Cuba since all candidates nominated for municipal positions were chosen by a show of hands at neighborhood gatherings — where no one dares nominate opposition leaders. "They are not democratic, so we can't call them 'elections,'" Roque, an economist who was jailed for opposing the government but released for medical reasons, said in a recent interview. (*AP*, 21/10/07)

October 21: Independent journalist Guillermo Fariñas was detained for several hours in Villa Clara after going to the polls, where he urged the people not to vote in the municipal elections. (*Cubanet*, 22/10/07)

October 21: Fidel Castro voted at the place where he has been recuperating for nearly 15 months, according to Cuban national television. The leader of the Revolution requested that one of the members of the electoral college where he is registered, in Havana, visit him with a ballot. After casting his vote, Castro referred to the outstanding qualities of both of the candidates in his voting district, expressing his confidence in the massive and enthusiastic participation of the people in the elections, "which constitute an overwhelming response to the threats" of US President George W. Bush. Castro issued a statement read out on television as voting began criticizing Bush for refusing to lift decades-old US sanctions on Cuba, which he called "genocidal," adding that Cuban "sovereignty is non-negotiable." [[Declaración del Comandante en Jefe](#)] (*Radio Habana Cuba, AFP*, 21/10/07)

October 21: Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro Ruz exercised his right to vote at his local voting station in Havana. The second in command cast his secret vote in a ballot box guarded by primary school students, as is customary in Cuban elections. The head of the district electoral commission Lauris Perez, told Raul that at that point 63 per cent of the voters listed had already balloted at this voting station, number 3 in voting district 107 in the municipality of Plaza de la Revolucion in the capital Havana. On his way out, Raul greeted voters and promised to pass on a get well soon message to Fidel sent by a neighbor. (*ACN*, 21/10/07)

October 21: Like every Sunday, the Ladies in White attended mass at Santa Rita Church and later walked along 5th Avenue in Miramar. Notwithstanding the tightened security as municipal elections of the Popular Power are underway, the women marched peacefully in demand of the immediate and unconditional release from prison of those sentenced to prison in 2003, as well as all political prisoners. (*Cubanet*, 21/10/07)

October 22: Over 8,174,350 Cubans voted in last elections to choose delegates to municipal government assemblies, a figure that represents 95.44 percent of all eligible voters, according to preliminary information released by the National Electoral Commission (CEN). During a press conference, CEN president Maria Esther Reuz said that preliminary figures may increase, since a second round of voting is scheduled for October 28 in some 2,971 districts where none of the candidates reached the stipulated amount of votes. As a result 12,265 delegates were elected, out of which 3,288 are women (26.81 percent); 2,053 are young people (16.74 percent); while 5,776 were re-elected. Reuz, who is also Cuba's Minister of Justice, said final results of the first round will be available after all statistics are concluded. (*ACN*, 23/10/07)

October 23: The Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs of Cuba (CRDHC) expressed serious concern over the astounding number of prisoners infected with tuberculosis in Cuban jails. According to Juan Carlos González Leiva, executive secretary of the CRDHC, there are more than 1,200 cases in the Canaleta prison, Matanzas. In the Kilo 7

prison of Camagüey the situation is very similar. The disease has spread due to lack of hygiene, overcrowding, poor diet and inadequate medical attention. He added that the spread of tuberculosis affects all Cuban prisons. (*Cubanet*, 23/10/07)

October 23: Moderate dissident leaders in Cuba criticized “the imperial appetite” of Venezuelan president, Hugo Chavez, and called on all Cubans to find “truly national solutions” to the problems on the island. Leaders of several groups concurred that “Cuba neither needs grotesque leadership, nor is it worth 100,000 barrels of oil a day,” in reference to Chavez’s suggestions regarding the union of the two countries. (*AFP*, 23/10/07)

October 23: Cuba is confident that it will send 305 athletes to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, although only 56 have obtained their places in 11 sports, a Cuban official said. Roberto Leon Richards, vice president of the National Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER), said Cuba aims to compete in 20 Olympic sports in 2008. (*Xinhua*, 23/10/07)

October 24: Imprisoned Cuban journalist Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, hospitalized last month, faces medical procedures today that family members said could further imperil his already fragile health. They also provided a first-person account by Hernandez Gonzalez of his brutal treatment in jail and his determination to survive the ordeal. As medical personnel prepared him for a colonoscopy, Hernandez Gonzalez's mother, Blanca Gonzalez, said she and her son's wife were trying to obtain outside medical advice regarding his illness. Since he was moved on September 14 from prison to Havana's Carlos J. Finlay military hospital, she said, Hernandez Gonzalez's health has continued to deteriorate. “Normando has received various treatments for parasites,” Blanca Gonzalez said. “He has been given other medication, but his wife does not know what these are. She has not been able to see any doctors at the hospital when she visits.” Hernandez Gonzalez is one of 59 writers arrested during a 2003 crackdown on dissident Cuban journalists. They were convicted of “endangering the state's independence or territorial integrity” and sentenced to 25 years in prison. (*Bloomberg*, 24/10/07)

October 24: Cuba said its public education system, one of the pillars of its socialist system, is suffering from an “exodus” of teachers due to low wages, poor housing and even lack of clothing. Education Minister Luis Ignacio Gomez detailed the loss of teachers at a hearing of a committee of the National Assembly, Cuba's legislature. “He recognized that the causes of the exodus include insufficient pay, not in accordance with the intensity and responsibility of the work teachers do,” the ruling Communist Party newspaper *Granma* reported. Among the various “material problems” faced by Cuban teachers, the minister cited “lack of housing, transport and clothing,” *Granma* said. He also said teachers were dissatisfied with the “low recognition” they received for their work. Cuba has the highest rate of teachers per population, one for every 36.8 inhabitants, *Granma* said. But the newspaper acknowledged that 50 percent of the teachers are young Cubans who have not finished their teacher training degrees. Some parents complain that the teaching resorts excessively to audiovisual courses and includes too much politics. (*Reuters*, 24/10/07)

October 25: Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon said it was impossible to say whether convalescing Fidel Castro would be in a condition to be re-elected next year as leader of the Communist island. "I cannot predict whether he is going to be available to be president of the state, but I also cannot say whether I will keep being a lawmaker," Alarcon said during a news conference on a visit to Quito. "Revolutionaries never retire," he said. (*Reuters*, 25/10/07)

October 25: The Cuban Government authorized ex-political prisoner Héctor Palacios, released from prison on medical parole, to travel to Spain with his wife, Gisela Delgado, to receive medical attention at the request of Spanish authorities. "We did not request to emigrate because we are not leaving the country for good, we were born here", said Palacios. "I am grateful to the Government of Spain (...) but I criticize it for not having sorted out the issue of human rights in Cuba," he added. The 66-year-old Cuban dissident, a sociologist, former member of the Communist Party of Cuba, and member of the illegal All United, suffers from serious health conditions. (*EFE*, 25/10/07)

October 26: Fewer than 4 percent of voters cast blank ballots in last municipal elections, Cuban election officials said, suggesting that a form of protest promoted by US exile groups gained little traction on the island. Nearly 8.2 million people, or 96.49 percent of registered voters, participated in municipal elections on October 21, beginning an election cycle that ends next year when legislators decide whether to keep ailing leader Fidel Castro atop the island's main governing body. National Electoral Commission Maria Esther Reus said only about 321,000 votes, or 4 percent, were blank. Reus did not specify how many of the winners are Communist Party members, but she said fewer than two-thirds of all candidates who ran belong to the party. The next step will be the constitution of the Municipal Assemblies of the Peoples' Power and the election of their respective presidents and vice presidents in mid November. The second stage of the current electoral process, yet to be defined, will be to choose provincial delegates and deputies to the People's Power National Assembly. (*Herald Tribune, Granma, Prensa Latina*, 26/10/07)

October 28: It may not be fun anywhere but visiting the dentist in Cuba is a still unhappier prospect marked by a lack of dentists, technicians, materials and even reclining chairs, an official newspaper reported. In Cuba's second internal criticism in as many weeks, a team of reporters from Juventud Rebelde, fanned out to 22 dental clinics in various provinces only to discover the problems were the norm, not exception in the free system of more than 1,000 facilities. "The majority of the 22 clinics lacked adequate professional and technical personnel, more than half had passed through crisis due to a lack of water, dentist chairs, materials to fill cavities, significant delays for dentures," according to the article headlined "Dentistry Dilemma." Other problems included services provided through underground clinics -- at a price -- and patients waiting for hours in offices with little air conditioning and few toilet facilities. The report followed by just a week a similar critical article on health care in general and publication of a story in the Communist Party newspaper, Granma, detailing teacher shortages and other problems in the education system. (*Reuters*, 28/10/07)

October 28: Cuba held second-round votes for local councils, choosing the last 3,028 delegates for Municipal People's Power Assemblies. A total of 167 of the nation's 169 municipalities would vote for those candidates who did not win the minimum 50 percent of valid votes in the first round of the elections. (*Xinhua*, 28/10/07)

October 29: Approximately 70 young people were detained while walking along a street in Havana for wearing bracelets bearing the word "change." Around ten were released, according to the Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs (CRDHC). (*EER*, 30/10/07)

October 30: A third round of elections will be held on October 31 in four municipalities for representatives to the local institutions of the Cuban government, the maximum electoral authority reported. Maria Esther Reus, president of the National Electoral Commission pointed out that this is the first stage of general elections in which 15,232 delegates were elected of the 15,236 members of the 169 Municipal Assemblies of People's Power. The official, who is also the Minister of Justice, expressed satisfaction over the successful second round selecting aspirants in whose municipalities the voting was annulled or in those where they did not reach 50 percent of the votes, as established by Electoral Law. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/10/07)

October 30: Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto said in Havana that the National Ballet of Cuba, led by Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso, is an example of foundational, indispensable and significant work for Cuban and universal arts. In the context of celebrations for the 60th Anniversary of the Cuban ballet company, Abel Prieto extended his congratulations to Alicia Alonso and the founding members of the company which, he said, "has left its ever-lasting imprint on Cuban, Latin American and international culture." "It is not usual to celebrate the 60th anniversary of an institution, which is an example of rigor, will and strength," said Abel who, along Alicia Alonso, presides over the promotion committee for the 60th birthday of the Cuban National Ballet, which will take place in 2008. (*ACN*, 30/10/07)

October 30: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, dispelling expectations of change in a post-Castro Cuba, promised "more revolution and more socialism" when the ailing Cuban leader is no longer around. "What I can predict is more revolution and more socialism in Cuba," Perez Roque told CNN in an interview at the United Nations. Nevertheless, Perez Roque said the 81-year-old Fidel Castro, who has not appeared in public since intestinal surgery forced him to hand over power to his brother 15 months ago, remains engaged. "Fidel Castro is entirely dedicated to the process of recovery of his health, which advances satisfactorily," he said. The man who has led Cuba since a leftist revolution in 1959 is going through a "fertile" period of his life dedicated to reading and writing, said Perez Roque, a protegee and former personal secretary of the Cuban leader. Asked whether he was recovering at home or in a hospital, Perez Roque refused to say. "For obvious reasons (...) I cannot provide information to those who have organized and executed more than 600 assassinations plots against him," he said in reference to plans by the CIA in the 1960s and Cuban exiles. Perez Roque said Castro has returned to a daily routine and is frequently consulted by other members of the Communist Party leadership.

"I saw him on Friday. I showed him my speech (to the UN General Assembly) and he made some suggestions," he said. (*Reuters*, 30/10/07)

October 30: In the heart of Balcón Arimao, a poor barrio on the fringes of the Cuban capital, a small evangelical church combines spirituality and community work, combating alcoholism, prostitution, crime and family breakdown. The Primera Iglesia Principio y Fin was started in the home of Marisol Sánchez and Felipe Barbón, the present pastors of this Pentecostal congregation, in 1999. According to statistics published by the *Revista Cubana de Medicina Militar* (Cuban Review of Military Medicine), 45 percent of Cubans over 15 consume alcohol, and the prevalence of alcoholism is between seven and 10 percent. Ministry of Justice figures, meanwhile, indicate that only 0.17 percent of the population uses illegal drugs. However, the use of so-called "gateway drugs" such as tobacco and alcohol is over 70 percent in some areas, according to experts. "Our vision has led us to work with people who have been in prison," said Barbón, who recognises the "high level of violence" among people in his barrio. "We come to the rescue of these men who come out of prison and are disoriented, not knowing how to go about relating to the community, which may spurn or harass them." According to Foreign Ministry figures, over 58 percent of young people in Cuban jails first broke the law when they were aged between 16 and 24, and 64 percent of them were neither working nor studying when they committed their crimes. (*IPS*, 30/10/07)

October 31: All 70 young people detained for wearing bracelets bearing the word "change" were released, but some other 40 have been arrested as part of the so called "operation lightning against pre-delinquent dangerousness," criticized the Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs of Cuba (CRDHC). The president of the School of Independent Educators, Roberto de Miranda, confirmed the arrests and noted that "they were not dissidents." "They wear the wristband (with the word 'change') because they want to better standards of living." (*EER*, 31/10/07)



ECONOMY

October 1: Authorities on the island have launched a Tourist Observatory to monitor this sector, which has been affected by problems that threaten its position in the Caribbean. "Its mission will be to monitor tourist activities, industry developments and tendencies and to offer recommendations to improve competitiveness," indicated the Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR). According to official figures, tourists' inflows dropped 3.6 % in 2006, frustrating the industry's plans of growing by 8 % that year. In 2007, the number of European visitors during high season (December - April) shrank, while the number of visitors from Canada, the island's main market, grew "a mere 1.6 %" in the first quarter, compared to the same period in 2006. (*AFP*, 1/10/07)

October 1: A Manitoba company offering "foreign surgery for the middle classes" is finding most of its patients come from the Maritimes and the United States, not its home

province. Choices Self Directed Healthcare will arrange for Cuban medical facilities to carry out a variety of surgical procedures — from cosmetic to neurosurgery — for patients from Canada and the US. The "medical tourism" service can help Canadian patients avoid long waits for surgery, while for U.S. patients, the main attraction is reduced cost. Company founder Daren Jorgenson says most of the company's clients have come from the United States and the Maritime region in Canada, not Manitoba. Choices Self Directed Healthcare will arrange for Cuban medical facilities to carry out a variety of surgical procedures — from cosmetic to neurosurgery — for patients from Canada and the US. (*CBC News*, 1/10/07)

October 2: Vice President of the Cuban State Council Carlos Lage praised the high quality of Yutong buses being supplied by China to this Caribbean island. Lage said that at the end of 2007, some 1,142 buses are expected to arrive in Cuba from China to be used for urban transportation. Over 500 Yutong buses have landed in Cuba so far this year and more will continue to arrive in the country in the next three years as part of a bilateral accord, Lage said. In early 2006, Cuba negotiated with China the purchase of 8,000 vehicles, including the Yutong buses, which have been praised as "excellent" by Cuban leader Fidel Castro for their low fuel consumption and high quality. (*Xinhua*, 3/10/07)

October 2: Jamaica Minister of Industry, Commerce and Investment, Karl Samuda, said that some 5,000 tonnes of cement should arrive in the island from Cuba within the next two weeks, to ease the current shortage. A team consisting of representatives from the Ministry, the Airports Authority of Jamaica and the Port Authority of Jamaica visited Cuba on September 27 to finalize arrangements for the importation of some 40,000 tonnes of cement, which will be arriving into the island on a phased basis. Addressing journalists at a post-Cabinet press briefing at Jamaica House, Mr. Samuda informed that the Port Authority of Jamaica is now in the process of finalizing arrangements to transport the cement. (*Jamaica Information Service*, 2/10/07)

October 3: Eight agricultural workers left their jobs because of delayed payment of their wages. The workers belong to the Basic Unit of Cooperative Production Luis Mercano, in Cinco Palmas, Granma. A worker from the cooperative said that days earlier five other workers from another unit left their jobs for the same reason. (*Cubanet*, 3/10/07)

October 3: Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Sinh Hung told Cuban Minister of Light Industry Jose Hernandez Bernandez that Vietnam was ready to co-operate with Cuba in areas in which the two country's offer complementary advantages, including education, health care and pharmaceuticals. The two countries should further promote co-operation not only at central but also grassroots levels, Hung said. Hung also used the occasion of the meeting to announce that Vietnam would invest in building a factory to produce energy-saving light bulbs in Cuba. (*Thai News Service*, 4/10/07)

October 4: Cuba today possesses an electric power generating capacity of 3,500 megawatts, which meets national demand, according to Vice President Carlos Lage. In three years, the country has attained an energy production potential of 1,600 megawatts

after installing batteries of synchronized generating plants that run on diesel and fuel oil. The national strategy is to produce an additional 1,700 megawatts using generators that run on fuel oil, given the reasonable costs involved, Lage said. From now on, efforts should be focused on attaining more efficiency in production and in the country's electric power system, as well as fuel conservation, along with effective control of resources, Lage stated. Likewise, he emphasized that the new Cuban method is in line with Fidel Castro's instructions, given it is more decentralized and features lower consumption, along with utilizing associated gas from oil production. (ACN, 4/10/07)

October 5: Cuba contributes to the increase of agriculture production in several countries around the globe with the export of over 3 million plants of yam, manioc, malanga and papaya produced in-vitro. The National Research Institute on Tropical Fruit Culture, based in the Cuban central province of Villa Clara, provides international consultancy and promotes cooperation in the field of agriculture through the exchange of technology. The plants produced by the Cuban scientists have high germination capability and are very resistant to common diseases due to their excellent genetic quality. According to the director of the research facility, Sergio Rodriguez, some of the countries that benefit from the island's cooperation are Bolivia, Venezuela, Ghana and Panama. (ACN, 5/10/07)

October 7: A Colombian delegation of important enterprises and institutions traveled to Cuba aiming to widen bilateral cooperation in energy issues. The Colombian delegation will have contacts with Cuban representatives as part of the mutual cooperation on rational use of energy and use of renewable energy between the Cuban Basic Industry and the Colombian Energy and Mining Ministry of Colombia. The agenda of the visit will be until October 10, includes the study of the Cuban integral experience on saving and efficiency, replacement of devices, equipments and water bombing. Colombian representatives are also interested in the saving of energy in non-residential sectors, installation, operation and maintenance of diesel and fuel oil, and other aspects. The Colombian specialists are equally interested in the experience applied by the Caribbean island in the development of micro hydroelectric plants and their contribution to the economy. Also they will exchange knowledge on the combined cycle technology of gas in Cuba, the experiences of cogeneration in the sugar sector in the island and they will visit the University of Cienfuegos, in the center of the country. The Colombian delegation is comprised of executives of important research centers and energy distributing companies CODENSA, EMGESA, Public Companies of Medellín, Electrificadora of the Huila and Distribuidora of the Pacific. (ACN, 7/10/07)

October 7: A total of 455 people from Rio Cauto, in the Cuban eastern province of Granma, were evacuated due to floods caused by strong rains. Major Luis Escalona, head of the Civil Defense section in the territory, said that nearly 300 residents in low zones had to be sheltered in houses near-by, and more than 150 went to governmental installations. He said the areas with greater floods are close to the limits between Rio Cauto and Las Tunas province. The rain registered during the first days of October was equal to 65 percent of the traditional amount fallen in the territory for the whole month. (ACN, 7/10/07)

October 9: Bilateral commerce between Cuba and Russia has increased by sixty per cent so far in 2007 as compared to the same period in 2006, sources from Cuba's Foreign Trade Ministry and the Chamber of Commerce said. According to the president of Cuba-Russia Business Committee, Alejandro Mustelier, "within a couple of years we will be able to assess concrete commercial gains within both countries." The organization has 66 import/ export enterprises. Current trade involves sectors such as transportation (mainly railroad transportation, aviation and automobiles), telecommunications, biotechnology (export of Cuban products including a vaccine to fight Hepatitis type B), and tourism (Russia is focused mainly on health and eco-tourism). Other Cuban products to add to the list are crude sugar, citrus fruits, cigars, rum, coffee, honey, liquors, and toiletries. For its part, Russia additionally trades in fertilizers, pneumatics, footwear and work clothes with Cuba. A substantial increase in trade is yet expected by the end of 2007. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 9/10/07)

October 9: Low-income Cuban families now have a greater chance of having a home of their own thanks to a prize-winning construction method that uses strong, locally-produced alternative materials. "The hurricane destroyed my house, but the one I have now is better and safer, and was built in around three months," Marilú Figueredo, a mother of three who lives in Manicaragua, a rural district in the central Cuban province of Villa Clara, told the press. She is one of the beneficiaries of a plan for repairing and building homes that were damaged or destroyed in 2005 by Hurricane Dennis, which caused damages to 120,000 homes in Cuba, 15,000 of which were completely levelled. "I think that if another hurricane comes, I won't have any problems," she said optimistically. The same confidence is shared by pensioners María Trujillo and Felicia Armenteros, and by Iluminada Rivero, who is divorced. The three women live in Quemado de Guines, a Villa Clara town that has been hit hard by hurricanes over the years. The women's new homes have replaced the precarious housing units they were living in two years ago. The new buildings are made of environmentally-friendly materials manufactured in their own towns at a low-cost, known as ecomaterials because they are both ecological and economic. The concept covers a broad range of building materials, whose common denominator is the use of local raw materials or the recycling of waste products like sugar cane bagasse. (*IPS*, 9/10/07)

October 12: Almost 11,000 people have been evacuated in the Cuban eastern provinces of Santiago de Cuba, Guantanamo, and Las Tunas, due to the continuous rains affecting the zone for nearly two weeks. Local authorities have provided shelters for nearly 4,962 residents in Santiago de Cuba, 4,000 in Guantanamo, and 1,237 in Las Tunas. In addition, floods caused by the overflowing of rivers and dams have affected communication between some localities. Over 450 houses have partially or totally collapsed in Santiago de Cuba. In this territory, Cuba's main coffee producer, an equivalent to 10,000 cans of coffee beans have dropped to the ground and 70,000 already ripe may be lost. Almost 3,400 intern students and 14,000 residents in the municipality of Niceto Perez are isolated due to the overflow of the Guantanamo river. (*Juventud Rebelde, EER, Prensa Latina, AFP*, 12/10/07)

October 12: More than 5,000 patients from 38 countries have received medical treatment in Cuba since September this year, at international clinics led by the government-run Cubanacan Tourism and Health Company. In statements to the press, Calixto Noche, commercial manager of the entity said that in addition to the services provided to tourists, another 1,700 people, including foreign residents in Cuba and members of diplomatic missions have been treated in the clinics located throughout the country. Calixto Noche said Cuba has contracts with nearly 40 countries, mostly in the American continent, except for the US and including the Caribbean and Europe. He mentioned Canada, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Mexico, Chile, Bahamas, Jamaica, Portugal, France, Germany, Italy and Spain have relations with the company Cubanacan Tourism and Health, which gave medical treatment to nearly 9,000 foreigners in 2006 in the specialties of orthopaedics, general surgery, aesthetics, cardiology and paediatrics, noted the expert. (*ACN*, 12/10/07)

October 13: Backed by aid from Venezuela and Cuba, the International Airport Development Company (IADC) will begin construction on a new US\$179 million airport in St. Vincent. Venezuela and Cuba have already pledged nearly 50 per cent of the funds needed to construct the airport at Argyle, an area on the Windward end of the island. Taiwan has also committed a US\$15 million grant and a US\$10 million soft loan for the project. (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 13/10/07)

October 14: Cienfuegos province is going to become a real center of industrial development in Cuba and all of Latin America, affirmed Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, as he “pre-inaugurated” the Camilo Cienfuegos oil refinery in the city of Cienfuegos. At a ceremony that also included the presence of Political Bureau members Carlos Lage and Yadira García, as well as Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, and Roberto Morales Ojeda, first secretary of the Party in Cienfuegos, and other leaders and guests, Chávez congratulated the workers of the Cuban-Venezuelan joint enterprise PDVSA-CUPET on the efficiency they have achieved during this initial stage. The refinery is expected to begin operating by the end of this year with a processing capacity of 65,000 barrels of crude daily. The Venezuelan president noted that the facility is a concrete example of the fulfillment of agreements signed by various countries as part of the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas). Chávez said that with the start of the refinery’s operations in December, the cornerstone will have been set for what will be a large petrochemical complex. At that time, he said, construction will begin on a re-gasifying plant using gas from Venezuelan sources. Another line of production mentioned by Chávez as part of this industrial center is the future construction of a fertilizer plant, which would not only supply Cuban agriculture with that product, but also would provide products for export to the Caribbean region. (*Granma International*, 15/10/07)

October 14: Some 300,000 bushels of ripe coffee beans in danger of getting lost, damage to houses, roads and the electricity, telephone lines, and water services are the preliminary results of the heavy and persistent rains that have been besieging Santiago de Cuba province for nearly two weeks now and which meteorologists have said will continue for some days yet. Some 4,000 residents of areas near water dams and likely to

flood have been evacuated, and brigades of electrical workers are trying hard to cope with the more than 200 breakdowns reported so far. But coffee growers have been the ones more hardest hit, with over 100,000 bushels of the beans on the ground, another 300,000 in danger of getting lost, and hundreds of workers being mobilized to try to salvage the crop, which is entering its ripening peak. The situation got worse when some 9,000 students who regularly contribute to the harvest at this time of the year were sent back home due to the weather. In the municipality of Santiago de Cuba more than 500 houses have suffered partial or total collapse, and a major breakdown in a main is affecting the water supply to the city. The Parada dam, with its more than 30 million cubic meter capacity, is a potential danger to some 400 houses and numerous nearby industries, including the "Antonio Maceo" Thermo-Electric Power Plant. In the provinces of Guantanamo and Granma, 4,000 and 1,500 people, respectively, have been evacuated. The nearby province of Las Tunas, meanwhile, has had 26 consecutive days of rain, a record for the region. Some 1,000 people have been evacuated and numerous houses damaged. The cattle-rich province of Camaguey, more to the center of the island, has also had a record of rainfall; more than 1,000 people have been so far evacuated and over 14,000 head of cattle have been taken to higher grounds. Nearly 500 houses have also suffered damage as a consequence of the rains. (*Periódico* 26, 14/10/07)

October 15: Cuba needs an investment of nearly \$934 million for repairing the 11,400 kilometers (7,000 miles) of highways that make up the island's main network, an official publication said. The weekly *Trabajadores* said that an investment of \$333.8 million would be needed to restore existing highways and another \$600 million to finish the National Freeway, planned to cross the island from one end to the other. The problems of foreign financing, the high price of oil derivatives, crumbling machinery and technological backwardness are some of the main problems facing the country, the highways chief of the Transport Ministry, Homero Crabb, told the weekly publication. "We can't buy equipment, spare parts or fuel in the quantities required," Crabb said, adding that Cuba is behind in the use of technology and resources to optimize works of preservation and maintenance, while machinery and asphalt plants are in a very bad state. Construction of the National Freeway was interrupted in 1989 at the beginning of the so-called "special period" brought on by the collapse of the socialist block and the end of generous subsidies from Moscow. (*EFE*, 15/10/07)

October 15: Cuba and Venezuela signed a raft of economic accords aimed at furthering cooperation, including plans for nickel and oil development and a billion-dollar petrochemical complex in Cuba. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and acting Cuban President Raul Castro presided over the signings, the latest in a series of such events. The two countries have already formed 19 joint ventures in many different sectors, especially energy. The new plans signed call for building a plant to turn liquefied natural gas back into gas and study the potential to build a fertilizer plant and other petrochemical plants around the refinery. The countries also plan to upgrade Cuban low-quality crude oil, and explore for oil in four offshore blocks in Cuba's Gulf of Mexico waters and two blocks along the north coast in western Cuba. A joint venture to mine nickel waste and turn it into ferro-nickel and letters of intent for the construction and fishing industries were also signed. Chavez signed a presidential decree authorizing formation of a joint venture to

build and administer an underwater fiber optics cable between the two countries meant to bypass the US embargo. [[Documentos rubricados entre Cuba y Venezuela](#)] (*Reuters*, 15/10/07)

October 15: The President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez Frías, suggested to members of the Cuban Executive to structure “aggressive” plans of agricultural production which allow to increase the possibilities of food self- supply in both nations. “We should give maximum priority and concentrate the best researchers for this, the best scientists, look for the best lands, to accelerate the building or acquisition of materials, tools, machinery, seeds, fertilizers; the organization of producers into associations, state units, joint units, in different production ways,” he added. He indicated that the idea is to break with the risky dependence that both economies have on this matter. Those proposals were issued during the signing of new agreements for a bigger economic integration between Venezuela and Cuba, under the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), in Havana. (*ABN*, 15/10/07)

October 17: Participants at the meetings of the Intergovernmental Ukrainian-Cuban Commission on questions of commercial and economic as well as scientific and technical cooperation, visited the ANTONOV Aeronautical Scientific/Technical Complex. This visit demonstrates the increased interest and aspiration of both parties for cooperation in the sphere of aviation. Cuba operates about 40 multipurpose AN-2 biplanes, 10 transport AN-26s and 2 regional passenger AN-24s. Deliveries of the aircraft to Cuba were started 35 years ago. Specialists of ANTONOV ASTC communicate with their operators, providing engineering services, in particular, on extension of service-lives of these airplanes. However, because of necessity to renew the existing fleet of the airplanes, the Cuban airlines expressed their interest in the new and future ANTONOV programmes. (*RIA*, 17/10/07)

October 17: At least 8,300 homes were damaged and more than 31,000 people evacuated in the provinces of Holguin, Las Tunas, Granma, Guantanamo, Camaguey and Santiago de Cuba due to the heavy rains that battered the island in the past two weeks, Cuban media reported, citing preliminary damage estimates. Cuban authorities are still assessing the destruction caused by the torrential downpours that flooded the country's eastern provinces and damaged thousands of hectares of crops, the official daily Granma said. The official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party said that water service has been restored in Cuba 's second city, Santiago de Cuba, where some 250,000 people had been cut off. Cuban authorities said that dozens of homes collapsed in the eastern part of the country, though thus far no deaths have been reported. The heavy rains have also damaged thousands of hectares of coffee, tuber, vegetable and plantain crops. (*EFE*, 17/10/07)

October 17: An estimated 150 million migrants, most of them living in rich Western Europe and North America, regularly send money to their mostly poor relatives in developing economies, according to the first study of its kind. About 10 percent of the world's population depends in some way on such remittances. Remittances have been growing at a 10 percent annual rate, according to the report by the International Fund for

Agricultural Development (IFAD), a Rome-based UN agency. IFAD commissioned the IDB, a multilateral lender for Latin America, and the Inter-American Dialogue, a Washington think tank, to help gather the numbers. The money flow has become "the world's most effective poverty alleviation program," said Donald Terry, a top official of the IDB. The study also took a stab at estimating remittances to places where the numbers are difficult to tabulate, like Cuba, Haiti, Iraq, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Somalia. The report estimated that Cubans received \$983 million in 2006 -- in line with Cuban government data over the past several years. Terry said he was "fairly confident" of the number's accuracy. Some Cuba-watchers have disputed Havana's figures and put remittances at \$400 million to \$500 million per year. (*The Miami Herald*, 18/10/07)

October 18: More than 1,200 companies from 50 countries have confirmed their participation in the 25th International Havana Trade Fair (FIHAV 2007), to take place from November 5 to 10. According to the President of the Organizing Committee, Abraham Maciques, the renting of areas for exhibition by foreign companies has increased by 13 percent over last year. The trade fair, which will be attended by representatives from the five continents, will be held in Cuba's largest exhibition center - ExpoCuba- located 25 kilometers southeast of Havana. (*ACN*, 18/10/07)

October 18: The Cuban government announced that it will set more accurate and modest targets for housing construction, after confirming that the program will fall short for the second consecutive year due to poor planning and a shortage of workers, according to an article in the official daily Granma. During a meeting of provincial authorities, Vice-president Carlos Lage instructed not to set a fixed number every year, but rather to focus priority on marginal areas and people in most need. In September, only half of the 70,300 units announced for 2007 had been finished, according to the president of the National Institute of Housing, Víctor Ramírez. Of 213,500 repairs, barely 56 per cent had been done. (*La Jornada*, 18/10/07)

October 18: Malaysia said it plans to develop a "halal" (permissible) meningitis vaccine jointly with Cuba within the next two years. The 3.6 million ringgit (one million dollar) vaccine is aimed at the thousands of Muslims who are infected with the disease during the annual Haj pilgrimage to Mecca. At present, most meningitis vaccines are produced from pig products, which are considered haram, or forbidden, by Muslims. The halal vaccine is a joint project between Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and the Finlay Institute in Cuba. Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Malaysia would provide two million ringgit for the project while Cuba would fund the remaining 1.6 million. Mustapa said 12 USM specialists and 30 Cuban experts would develop the vaccine from halal extracts of animals slaughtered according to Islamic tenets. (*Bernama*, 18/10/07)

October 18: Belizean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Lisa Shoman arrived to Havana at the invitation of Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. The visit is Shoman's first to the island and is aimed at reviewing bilateral ties, in particular, the state of cooperation; as well as strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two nations. Lisa Shoman heads her country's delegation to the 10th Session of the Cuba-

Belize Intergovernmental Commission to be held October 18 and 19 to sign new cooperation agreements in the framework of the Basic Agreement for Technical and Economical Cooperation. (*Periódico 26*, 18/10/07)

October 19: Cuba and Equatorial Guinea signed new agreements to expand bilateral relations in sectors such as healthcare, renewable energy, and special education. Technical protection of a laboratory to control and prevent cholera, technical assistance in the start-up of a psychiatric hospital and a center to treat children in the African country were committed to by Cuba. An accord signed between Cuba's Institute of Radio and Television (ICRT) and Equatorial Guinea's Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, pledged technical assistance from the Caribbean island to the Guinean Radio and Television Institute. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 21/10/07)

October 19: The President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, signed a decree establishing the Azeri part of the Azeri-Cuban Intergovernmental Commission for Cooperation, under the Minister of Economic Development Heydar Babayev. The other Azeri members are the deputy ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Industries and Energy, Culture and Tourism, Education, Health and of Youth and Sports, and the Councillor of Azerbaijan's permanent representative at the UN. The commission, established under the bilateral intergovernmental cooperation treaty signed in Havana in September 2006, is commanded to streamline cooperation and expand relations between Azerbaijan and Cuba. (*Azer Press*, 19/10/07)

October 19: State-owned Dubai Ports World, which relinquished control over six US ports in a political firestorm last year, is studying plans to build a container terminal in the Cuban port of Mariel, business sources said. DP World agreed in early October to do a feasibility study to build a \$250 million container terminal in Mariel that would start operating in 2012, a Havana port source told the press. "A deal is in the works. It is moving forward and they have signed various agreements," another person familiar with the plan said. In Dubai, DP World spokeswoman Sarah Lockie said she could not immediately comment. (*Reuters*, 19/10/07)

October 19: A heavy downpour in the already rain-battered eastern Cuban city of Camagüey caused a river to burst its banks and local flooding, state-run media reported. A total of 122 millimeters (4.8 inches) of rain fell in Camagüey, located 570 kilometers (350 miles) east of Havana, in just an hour and 45 minutes on soil that was already saturated by days of showers. The combination of excess water on the ground and the overflowing of the Jatibonico River resulted in flooding that prompted the mobilization of Civil Defense teams, according to officials cited by the Prensa Latina news agency. Heavy rainfall in Camaguey left at least 8,300 homes damaged, forced more than 31,000 people to evacuate, flooded sugarcane, coffee and vegetable crops and interrupted water, telephone and electricity service. The heavy rains in the province also caused damage to roads and cracks in six bridges. Ciego de Avila province reported that the amount of rain registered since May - 1,554 millimeters (61 inches) - is the highest in the past 10 years and 31 percent higher than the historical average for an entire year. (*EFE*, 19/10/07)

October 20: China imported 691,000 tons of sugar in the first seven months of this year, a growth of 5.3 percent year-on-year, according to General Administration of Customs. Of the total imports, 660,000 tons, or 95.5 percent, came from Cuba, Thailand, Guatemala, the Republic of Korea, Brazil and Australia. Imports from Cuba, Brazil and Australia went down, while those from Thailand and Guatemala went up. (*Xinhua*, 20/10/07)

October 23: Efforts to restore degraded island ecosystems are already producing results in the central Cuban province of Villa Clara, where scientists from different disciplines have been fomenting environmentally-friendly practices since the beginning of this decade. One of the restoration projects is in Cayo Conuco, a tiny island located seven kilometres across the water from Caibarién, a town in the north of Villa Clara. Cayo Conuco, which is joined to the mainland by a stone causeway, was recently covered only by thin, dry pasture. Now, the green leaves of native plant species have resumed their rightful place. Among the causes of ecosystem degradation that are common to Cuba and the rest of Latin America and the Caribbean, Jesús Matos Mederos, the head of the Cuban Group for Ecological Restoration (GCRE) and an expert with the National Flora and Fauna Protection Division, mentioned soil degradation, deterioration of environmental conditions, pollution of rivers and seas, deforestation and loss of biodiversity. Other negative influences on the environment, according to experts at the First Iberian-Latin-American Symposium on Ecological Restoration, held in Santa Clara, the capital of Villa Clara province, in 2004, are desertification, irrational exploitation of resources, the spread of invasive species, forest fires, monoculture, expansion of agriculture and stock-raising, and tourism activities in fragile or non-sustainable areas. (*IPS*, 23/10/07)

October 23: Turkish businesspeople from 22 companies departed from Istanbul to Havana to take part in the 25th Havana International Trade Fair (FIHAV). Turkey will have a pavilion of its own, substantially increasing its presence compared to the previous year, when only five companies took part in the fair. Organizer of the mission, Omer Giray, president of the executive council of Databank, told *Prensa Latina* he is satisfied with the response from Turkish companies to this call. Before departing, Giray highlighted the good health of commercial ties between Turkey and Cuba and recalled the credit for 12 million dollars extended in 2006 was completely spent and all the products arrived in the island without difficulty. (*Prensa Latina*, 23/10/07)

October 26: The Ministry of Domestic Trade (MINCIN) reported 270 million Cuban pesos (about \$11.6 million dollars) during 2006 by way of “losses and deficits,” reported the official press. The minister of the sector, Marino Muriño Jorge, said that the MINCIN “is looking into the causes that provoked these anomalies”. He also added that up to September, the number of companies reporting losses was reduced to 26, as opposed to the hundred in that situation during the same period in 2006. (*EFE*, 26/10/07)

October 28: Cuba will produce about 4 million tons of oil and natural gas this year, a top government official said in comments published by state media. It would be a slight increase over 2006. Touring the Nico Lopez refinery on the east side of Havana Bay,

Vice President Carlos Lage said Cuba "is in position to meet its plan of almost 4 million tons of oil and natural gas this year." The Communist Youth newspaper Juventud Rebelde quoted Lage as saying that modernization of the Nico Lopez facility has helped save nearly 1 million liters (26,000 gallons) of gasoline in just two months. The paper reported that upgrading the refinery took nine months and cost more than US\$4.3 million (€3 million). Cuba has been producing 85,000 barrels of petroleum and 120 million cubic feet (3.4 million cubic meters) of natural gas a day, a dramatic increase from a decade ago but still not enough to meet its needs. Lage said Cuba is forced to purchase some oil on the open market, and is feeling the worldwide pinch of spiking prices. "Even though we maintain the contract with Venezuela which gives us favorable commercial conditions, the country has to buy a certain amount of fuel on the international market," the newspaper quoted him as saying. "That's why saving energy is a prime responsibility at the moment." (*AP*, 28/10/07)

October 30: Tropical Storm Noel weakened as it moved across northeastern Cuba. Torrential rains drenched eastern Cuba, where double the average rainfall in October had reservoirs already filled to the brim and authorities worried about flooding. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damages. The storm knocked down trees on the coast of neighboring Camaguey, a beach resort hotel receptionist said, as it swept along Cuba's north coast. Forecasters warned of storm surges. Cuba evacuated about 10,000 people from inland areas threatened by floods and mudslides or rivers that could burst their banks. The evacuees included 3,000 students picking coffee in the hills of Santiago province. Tourists at coastal resorts were not affected. (*Reuters*, 30/10/07)

October 31: The enlargement and modernization works at the Camilo Cienfuegos oil refinery go as planned, so that it can start up operations in December, an executive of the Cuban-Venezuelan joint venture said. Julio Sanchez, coordinator of the Rehabilitation Project of the refinery, told reporters that the installation of an aluminium geodesic dome in one of the plant's five oil storage tanks would be completed soon. The Camilo Cienfuegos refinery will process 65,000 barrels a day during the first stage, and 108,000 barrels during the second stage. (*Prensa Latina*, 31/10/07)



EXILE COMMUNITY

October 2: Several Cuban exile organizations in Miami backed the call from dissidents on the island to oppose the municipal elections scheduled by the Cuban government for October 21. Janisset Rivero, a spokeswoman for the Cuban Democratic Directorate, said that in the framework of a campaign of non-cooperation with the regime, dissidents on the island "have come together in an unprecedented appeal to say No to the electoral farce." (*EFE*, 2/10/07)

October 8: In a new Cuba, the Communist Party is banned. The wrongs of Fidel Castro's almost 50-year regime will be set right with Nuremberg-style trials. And as the island's

future is carved out, Miami exiles would have a spot at the political table. Those are among the mandates issued by Unidad Cubana, a group that largely promotes the conservative ideals of South Florida's "historical exile" -- the long-time Cubans whose lives were derailed by Castro's rise to power. "This is a plan for democratic action for our country," popular Radio Mambí 710-AM host Armando Pérez-Roura told hundreds of exiles who packed into Manuel Artime Community Center in the heart of Little Havana on October 2. Dubbed "The Declaration from Miami," the guide for a free Cuba is the first to emerge since an ailing Castro handed power to his brother Raúl last year. It cautions that its goal is to prevent "last-minute" mistakes when -- not if -- Cuba's government collapses. First and foremost, the declaration denounces any idea that a monarchy-like succession from Fidel to Raúl would be tolerated by exiles as a green light to negotiate with Raúl's government. "That will not be allowed," Pérez-Roura said. [[Declaración de Miami](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 8/10/07)

October 9: The visit and treatment of nine Ukrainian children to the Miami Seaquarium are courtesy of Ukrainian first lady Kateryna Yushchenko, members of South Florida's Cuban-American community and others. The nonprofit Cuba Democracy Advocates wants to build solidarity with Ukraine's fledgling democratic government by helping to pay for prosthetics for about 30 low-income children from the former communist nation and by increasing medical exchanges. Many Cuban-Americans see Ukraine as a model for peaceful political change and want to support its government and recent criticism of political repression on the communist island. The Cuban-American community and the US government are keenly aware of the decades of medical treatment that Cuba provided for Ukrainians before pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko became president two years ago. Cuba treated thousands of Ukrainian children after the 1986 explosion at the Chernobyl nuclear plant. Since 2005, much of that aid has dried up, and relations between the two countries have cooled. (*AP*, 9/10/07)

October 12. Writer Carlos Victoria, one of the most prolific and singular writers of Cuban literature in exile, died in South Florida. He was 57. The death of Victoria, a renowned personality of the so-called Mariel Generation and a veteran copy editor at *El Nuevo Herald*, stirred friends, admirers and colleagues. He died at Palmetto General Hospital in Hialeah of complications from colon cancer. In 1971, Victoria was expelled from the University of Havana, where he had studied English language and literature. His crime: "ideological diversionism." In 1978, he was arrested by State Security and all of his manuscripts were confiscated. Without any possibility of publishing his writings in his native country, Victoria left in 1980 via the Mariel-Key West boatlift. Ever since, his stories have appeared in anthologies and literary magazines in the United States, France and Latin America, invariably praised by the public and the critics. His recognition as a writer was consolidated in 1991 when Editorial Universal in Miami published his book of tales "The Shadows on the Beach". His first novel, "A Bridge in the Darkness", won the Golden Letters award in 1993. Victoria built a very personal body of work that included several novels and Collections of stories, that were translated into English and French. "The Secret Voyage" was selected in France as the Best Foreign Book in 2001. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 13/10/07)

October 18: The Bay of Pigs invasion has been a low point for the US government since its failure more than four decades ago. Now, the men who volunteered for the mission are being remembered at an art gallery at -- of all places -- the CIA, which plotted the clandestine operation. Veterans of the ill-fated attempt to topple Fidel Castro -- Cuban exiles, CIA contract pilots and the families of four Alabama Air National Guardsmen who died in Cuba -- will gather at the Southern Museum of Flight in Birmingham, Alabama. There, an oil painting will be unveiled that depicts one of the successes of the covert operation: an April 1961 aerial attack on Castro's forces that took out an estimated 900 soldiers. "It's been viewed as an embarrassment, but the modern world is recognizing it's part of our history. That's all there is to it," said Jorge Del Valle, 63, who was 15 when he walked into a CIA recruiting office in Miami to sign up for the venture. "We have gained acknowledgment worldwide." (*The Miami Herald*, 18/10/07)

October 18: For decades, Miami Cuban-Americans have been a reliable Republican voting bloc and three GOP incumbents who represent that community in the House have rarely faced significant opposition. Now Florida Democrats are trying to mount a meaningful challenge, in part by convincing Raul Martinez, the colorful former Democratic mayor of Hialeah, to take on Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart (Republican), an eight-term incumbent and scion of a powerful Cuban émigré family. Martinez is exactly the kind of candidate Democrats would need to seriously challenge Diaz-Balart because their battle would take place in a district where cultural ties matter more than party affiliation, according to David Wasserman, US House editor for *The Cook Political Report*. "Democrats are looking more for a name than a moneyed or well-funded campaign," he said. Martinez, who like Diaz-Balart is a Cuban émigré, fits that bill after 25 years as mayor of Hialeah, which is the fifth-largest city in Florida, boasts a huge Cuban population and is 90 percent Hispanic. A battle between the two well-known Miami politicians would also test the claim by Florida Democrats that the political climate in Miami's Cuban-American community is changing. (*The Hill*, 18/10/07)

October 20: Cuban boxers Yan Barthelemy and Yuriorkis Gamboa make their US debuts at the Seminole Hard Rock arena in Hollywood. They are expecting an emotional evening in front of a partisan Cuban-American home crowd that will include Gamboa's wife and young daughter, who defected to Miami earlier this year. "I feel marvelous," Barthelemy, a light flyweight, said after a recent workout at Miami Fight gym in Doral. "It's like a little piece of Cuba here in Miami. My grandmother and uncle are here. I have a lot of friends from Cuba who are here. (...) It's been a very positive experience, much easier transition than I expected. "In Cuba, they paint Miami out to be a monster. They tell you (...) people won't care about you, especially if you're black. But it's been quite the contrary. People here have been great to me, both black and white. It almost feels like home." "Unfortunately, the situation in my country is unjust, but I love my country and wouldn't change my nationality for anything," Barthelemy said. "I'm not talking about the government, I'm talking about Cuba. I'm Cuban 100 percent. Very proud to be Cuban. Every time I stand up in the ring, I'm representing my colors, my country, my people, not the government, but the people of Cuba. I want to win for them and they motivate me." (*The Miami Herald*, 20/10/07)

October 24: Cuban exiles welcomed President George W. Bush's call to the international community to press for democratic reforms in Cuba, but said the US lacked a clear strategy to bring about such change. "We thank the president for taking time in this crucial moment in the struggle for Cuba's freedom to refocus public attention on the important role US policy can play in helping to precipitate a transition to democracy," the influential Cuban American National Foundation (CANF) said following Bush's speech. The lobby group added, however, that the ideas need to be supported by "concrete actions in order to become a reality." "Regrettably, we are still left today without a clear strategy to help bring about meaningful and lasting change," the CANF said in a statement. "After almost 50 years of tyranny, Cuba's people deserve and require more than good intentions."
(AFP, 25/10/07)



FOREIGN AFFAIRS

October 1: Cuba's First Vice President Raul Castro met in Havana with the President of Guinea Bissau Joao Bernardo Vieira who is on an official visit to the island. After the official welcoming ceremony held at the Revolution Palace, both leaders discussed bilateral ties and cooperation, as well as regional and international issues. Among the Cuban officials present in the ceremony were Vice President Esteban Lazo, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, Deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Rodriguez and Cuba's ambassador in Guinea Bissau Pedro Doña Santana. For Guinea Bissau: Foreign Trade Minister Maria da Conceicao Nobre Cabral, Director of the Presidency Joao Gomes Cardoso and Guinea Bissau's ambassador in Havana Abel C. Mendonca. (ACN, 1/10/07)

October 1: The Foreign Ministers of Cuba and Nauru, Felipe Perez Roque and David Adeang , expressed their satisfaction with the state of bilateral relations and urged strengthened links. We are certain that your stay here will give a boost to our ties, Perez Roque said during talks with his visiting peer, and added that in line with previous agreements, youngsters from Nauru will study at the Medical School for the Pacific Islands. The visiting official is scheduled to lead his delegation to the opening of the first Session of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/10/07)

October 1: A new batch of would-be doctors from the Eastern Cape are packing their bags for Cuba. Provincial health department spokesperson Sizwe Kupelo said the 25 students, selected from disadvantaged communities across the province, would be given an official farewell. He said the provincial government had sent more than 80 young people to study medicine in Cuba since 1998. About half a dozen had qualified and were now working in the province. The new batch would spend five years studying in Cuba, with a special emphasis on primary health care, then do a sixth year at a South African university before undertaking their two-year internship and one-year community service. (*News24.Com*, 1/10/07)

October 2: Fidel Castro revealed that just before the start of NATO's "unjustified attack" on Yugoslavia in 1999, he suggested to late Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic that he should resist the onslaught. In a new reflection entitled "The Empire's Illegal Wars," Castro explains that he sent the message to Milosevic through diplomatic channels in March 1999. In that dispatch, the Cuban leader described the impending air campaign by the North Atlantic alliance as "a great crime against the Serbian people and, at the same time, an enormous mistake by the attackers." "If such brutal and unjustified attacks in the heart of Europe are not halted, the world reaction will be even greater and much more rapid than that unleashed by the war in Vietnam," continued the message published on the front page of Granma, the official organ of the Cuban Communist Party. [[The Empire's Illegal Wars](#)] (*EFE*, 2/9/07)

October 2: The Bolivian soldier who executed Che Guevara 40 years ago has had his sight restored by Cuban doctors. "Four decades after Mario Teran attempted to destroy a dream and an idea, Che returns to win yet another battle," said Granma, the Communist party's official newspaper. "Mr Teran was treated under Operation Miracle. Funded by Venezuelan petro-dollars and staffed by Cuban doctors, it offers free eye treatment to poor people across Latin America". (*The Guardian*, 2/10/07)

October 2: A meeting on literature and art with a group of Cuban and Venezuelan writers took place at the Hotel Kafka School of Creative Writing, in Madrid on the occasion of Barcelona Book Fair. Cubans Marilyn Bobes, Jorge Fornet, Jorge Angel Hernandez, Francisco Lopez Sacha and Rogelio Riveron participated with their Venezuelan colleagues Edmundo Aray and Iris Tocuyo. The group is invited to the Liber 2007 International Book Fair. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/10/07)

October 2: Dr. Miguel Perez Cruz, Cuban Ambassador in Ghana called on UN Member States to support Cuba's move to end the embargo imposed on his country by the United States. At a press conference in Accra, Mr Cruz said Cuba would submit to the consideration of the United Nations General (UN) Assembly a draft resolution entitled "necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba" on October 30, and asked for support from members by voting in favour of the resolution. According to him, 183 member states voted in favour of the resolution last year, which constituted an almost unanimous proof of the International Community's rejection of the "genocidal policy of the US government against Cuba". (*Ghana News Agency*, 2/10/07)

October 2: A sharp increase in the number of Cubans migrating to the US through Mexico requires a new immigration accord between Mexico and the communist-run island, Cuba's ambassador to Mexico said. Manuel Aguilera de la Paz told reporters that such an agreement is one of the few remaining issues that needs to be resolved before the two countries can fully normalize relations. Aguilera de la Paz said both countries want migration to be "legal, orderly and not dangerous for immigrants." (*AP*, 2/10/07)

October 2: Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage Davila met recently with a delegation of Mexico's Labor Party led by Senator Alberto Anaya Gutierrez, the national coordinator of the political party. The Mexican delegation visited Cuba from September 23 to 29, invited by the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. During their stay the group held talks with Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, president of the Cuban parliament; Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz, member of the Secretariat of the Communist Party Central Committee; and other Communist Party, Foreign Ministry and Havana provincial legislature officials. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/10/07)

October 2: China and Russia were among the 47 members of the United Nations Human Rights Council to unanimously adopt a resolution that ``strongly deplores" the Myanmar government's crackdown on the country's biggest pro- democracy protests in almost 20 years. Other nations on the Human Rights Council supporting the resolution were Britain, Cuba, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and South Africa. (*Bloomberg*, 2/10/07)

October 3: Fidel Castro said that former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar made himself "military coordinator" for US President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush by encouraging Washington's interventions in the Balkans and Iraq. Castro again denounced Aznar in an article published in the Cuban Communist Party daily, Granma. The Cuban leader, who previously said that Aznar urged Clinton to order the aerial bombing of Serbian state media during NATO's 1999 war with Belgrade, accused the Spaniard of being "void of ethical principles" and of "assigning himself" the role of "military coordinator for the changeable presidents of the United States." Castro's article in Granma reproduces the response by late Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic to the message of solidarity sent by Castro on the eve of the North Atlantic alliance's campaign against the Yugoslav government in March 1999. [[Milosevic's response](#)] (*EFE, AFP*, 3/10/07)

October 3: The International Society for Human Rights (ISHR), with headquarters in Germany, stated that while the Military junta was suppressing peaceful demonstrations led by Buddhist monks in Myanmar, more than 20 people asking that political prisoners be treated with respect were arrested in Cuba on September 28. According to Martin Lessenthin, spokesman for that organization, in April 2003, "when the world focused its attention on the events in Iraq, the Cuban regime detained 75 persons, including journalists, dissidents and writers, and sent them to prison after swift summary trials and denying the aid of a defence lawyer." (*EER*, 4/10/07)

October 4: Spain will not invite Cuban dissidents to its national day festivities in Havana in order to prevent any possible damage to its ongoing dialogue with the Cuban regime, officials said. Madrid has entered into a new phase of dialogue with Cuba and the practice of inviting the dissidents has been dropped, Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratino said. "We have had success with the dialogue over human rights and concrete results. Political prisoners are free to walk the streets, we have the capacity to intervene and we are promoting the interests of our country," he told parliament. Moratino visited Havana in April to sign an agreement to renew cooperation without conditions. Spain is

Cuba's third-biggest trading partner and is a major investor in the island nation, especially in its tourism sector. (AFP, 4/10/07)

October 4: Bolivian singer songwriters Mario Ramirez and Cristhian Benitez, members of the duo "Negro y Blanco", confirmed their participation in the concert "Hombre y Amigo" (Man and Friend), to be held in Cuba to honor Ernesto Che Guevara. According to Ramirez, they were invited to the concert, scheduled from October 7-12 in the central Cuban province of Villa Clara, by Caribbean singer songwriter Vicente Feliú. They added that it would be a meeting with history, friends and the example of Cuba, which has resisted US attacks for more than 46 years. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/10/07)

October 4: Honduran President Manuel Zelaya announced that a large delegation will accompany him during his visit to Cuba on October 9-10. "I think this is the biggest Honduran delegation that has ever visited any country because it is a historic date and moment," the dignitary emphasized. It is the first time a Honduran president has officially visited the island. The main activity of the president will be the signing of the Maritime Demarcation Treaty between the two nations. Businessmen, officials, and journalists will be accompanying Zelaya, while Education Minister Marlon Breve will be accessing the Cuban literacy method, which has been successfully implemented in several nations to reduce illiteracy. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/10/07)

October 5: Fidel Castro revealed the content of two messages he sent in April 1999 to the then Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic when forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization attacked that country. In an article entitled "Second and Third Messages to Milosevic and his Reply," Castro also discloses Milosevic's reply to both messages. [[Second and third messages to Milosevic and his reply](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 5/10/07)

October 5: Guinea Bissau's President, Joao Bernardo Vieira said any country seeking development may count on Cuban cooperation. Upon returning to his country, Vieira said he was very satisfied with his most recent visit to Cuba. In an interview with Granma newspaper, Vieira said coming to Cuba filled him with pride and pleasure. "We talked a lot about past battles and sacrifices," said Vieira, who is known as "Commander Nino" of the Guinean guerrilla, after meeting with a group of Cubans who fought for the independence of the western African nation. Guinea Bissau's president said Cuba's international support is unforgettable, while he thanked Fidel Castro for sending Cubans to fight for the liberation of Africa. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 5/10/07)

October 5: The Holy See's No. 2 official, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, will go to Cuba, the highest level visit by a Vatican official to the Communist-run state during Pope Benedict XVI's tenure. Vatican officials, confirming Italian news reports about the visit, indicated that dates and other details for the trip by Bertone, an Italian prelate who is Holy See secretary of state, would be announced soon. It was not immediately known if Bertone would aim to pay a call on ailing Fidel Castro, who welcomed Pope John Paul II to Havana. The Caribbean island is approaching the 10th anniversary of his historic pilgrimage there in January 1998. (AP, 5/10/07)

October 8: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, decorated with Honor to the Merit to the Bolivian Doctor Dr. Gilberto Rodríguez Ochoa, to two Cuban doctors and a Venezuelan one. Chávez awarded such merit in tribute to Ernesto Guevara, to commemorate 40 years of his death, an act that took place at the Teresa Carreño Theater in Caracas. At this opportunity, the decorated doctors were the doctor Nerys Navas, Chief of the Ophthalmology Service of the Antonio María Pineda Central Hospital, located in Barquisimeto, Lara State; a Doctor from Miracle Mission, Miguel Angel Lima Quiroz; and the Vice-minister for Health of Cuba, Aldo de Jesus Muñoz. Before awarding the decorations, Chávez said “that awarding this decoration to the doctors that are today getting it, we are achieving what our father Fidel said: Let’s be like the Ché”. The Venezuelan president said he will broadcast his next Sunday television program, called “Alo Presidente,” from Santa Clara, Cuba, the site of a monument honoring Guevara. (ABN, Bloomberg, 9/10/07)

October 9: The Cuban ambassador to the United Nations, Rodrigo Malmierca, denounced the difficult social and economic situation of the world. Speaking to the plenary of the UN General Assembly, Malmierca noted that today, more than ever, the world needs the United Nations and a deep reform and democratization of this organization. The Cuban representative said that the current world crisis is characterized by an increase of poverty and hunger, arm conflicts, the spreading of diseases and the deterioration of the environment. After saying that development should have a predominant spot in the UN agenda, Malmierca said that Cuba applauds the determination of the UN Secretary General to turn the Millennium Goals into top and immediate priorities of his mandate. (ACN, 9/10/07)

October 9: The exhibition "Bolivar and Marti: Spirit and Independence of Latin America" was inaugurated at the Soka Gakkai Center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The exhibition includes photos, posters and videos that will allow the Malaysian people to learn more about Cuban National Hero Jose Marti and Venezuelan independence leader Simon Bolivar and also about the history and culture of these two nations and Latin America, in general. "This is the first step for the creation of the Bolivar/Marti cultural center and to show the Malaysian people more about the lives of these two heroes of Latin American independence," said Manuel Guzman, the Venezuelan ambassador to the Asian nation. For his part, the Cuban ambassador to Malaysia, Carlos Amores, praised the example of Che Guevara and also that of the five Cubans imprisoned in the US. (EFE, Radio Habana Cuba, 9,10/10/07)

October 9: UNICEF Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean Nils Kastberg extolled the progress of cooperation programs with Cuba and showed interest in extending some of the island's experiences through the area. During a press conference in Havana, Kastberg wondered if there is any other country in the world with a lower rate than that achieved by this Cuban region. He also considered the work by island authorities to raise awareness about the protection against HIV AIDS and the low infestation level in the country as "laudable." Kastberg said he spoke with Cuban leaders about the possibility to broaden and extend cooperation programs to other countries in the

area to fight chronic malnutrition and exchange health care and technical cooperation. (*Cuba Headlines*, 9/10/07)

October 9: The President of the Republic of Honduras, Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales, arrived in Havana for an official visit at the invitation of the Cuban government. This is Zelaya's first visit to the island. Cuba and Honduras reestablished diplomatic relations in January 2002. Since 1998, after hurricane Mitch devastated part of Honduran territory, nearly 1500 Cuban doctors and nurses have made their contribution in the Central American nation. During his stay in Cuba, the Honduran leader will hold official talks with Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro. He will also participate in the signing of a Treaty of Maritime Delimitation between Cuba and Honduras. (*ACN*, 9/10/07)

October 9: Cuba's First Vice-president Raul Castro welcomed Honduran President Jose Manuel Zelaya Rosales in an official ceremony in the Cuban capital. Zelaya's trip marks the first time that a Honduran president visits Cuba. The two countries re-established diplomatic relations in January 2002. The formal reception of the head of state took place in the Palace of the Revolution. Following the reception, Raul Castro and Manuel Zelaya held official talks. The large Honduran delegation accompanying President Zelaya includes Foreign Minister Milton Jimenez, other cabinet members, representatives of different political parties, executives of the chambers of commerce and the tourism industry, and community, business and labor leaders. Carlos Lage, executive secretary of the Council of Ministers; Felipe Perez Roque, foreign minister; Marta Lomas, minister of foreign investment and economic collaboration; Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz, head of the international relations department of the Communist Party Central Committee, and other Cuban government and political leaders were on hand to receive the Honduran president. (*ACN*, 9/10/07)

October 9: The signing of a Treaty of Maritime Delimitation between Cuba and Honduras had to be postponed, Honduran Foreign Affairs Minister told the press. "We have to wait for the final maps according to a sentence by the International Court of Justice in Le Hague on the dispute with Nicaragua", minister Milton Jimenez said. On October 8, the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the UN's highest court, granted Honduras sovereignty over four Caribbean islands, ending that nation's dispute with its neighbour. The court also redrew the maritime border between the two Caribbean nations. It awarded each party roughly half of the disputed territory, which offers rich fishing grounds and potential oil and gas reserves. (*El Nuevo Herald*, VOA, 9,10/10/07)

October 10: Honduran President Manuel Zelaya finished an official visit to Cuba, which he characterized as historic. During his stay the Honduran Head of State met with First Vice President Raul Castro at Havana's Revolution Palace. Both leaders held official talks related to Cuba's cooperation in the field of health as well as international and regional issues. The distinguished visitor carried out a tight program which included a visit to the Latin American School of Medicine where there are currently 500 Honduran students studying medicine. Zelaya got a first hand explanation on the island's literacy program called "Yo Si Puedo" or "Yes I Can" where hundreds of million people from Latin America and the Caribbean have learned to read and write. The Honduran

delegation also visited the Biotechnology Center and the Ministry of Basic Industry.
(Radio Habana Cuba, 10/10/07)

October 10: Yamilé Llánes, the wife of political prisoner Dr. José Luis García Paneque, is campaigning for her husband and other jailed dissidents, visiting Washington to tell her story to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, a part of the Organization of American States (OAS) that for the first time held a hearing on the 2003 crackdown. "Don't forget the Cuban people and their suffering," she told the IACHR commissioners. Human rights groups like the Miami-based Directorio Democrático Cubano and the Washington-based Center for a Free Cuba organized her visit to put a human face on the suffering of the dissidents and their relatives. Llánes told the IACHR that she lost her job after her husband was imprisoned and that her son required psychiatric treatment. Cuban pro-government organizations like the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution organized campaigns to portray the couple as "terrorists." "It is difficult to summarize in this testimony all that we went through," she told the IACHR. Of the 75 dissidents arrested in 2003, 59 are still in jail, according to Laida A. Carro, a Coral Gables activist who accompanied Llánes. Several were released for health reasons, four left Cuba, and one died because of what Carro said was the poor healthcare he received in prison. The IACHR was also analyzing testimony by members of the Directorio Democrático and the Cuban American Bar Association on behalf of Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet, another medical doctor imprisoned for political reasons. (*The Miami Herald*, *Radio Martí*, 9,10/10/07)

October 10: Cuba and Venezuela face the main troubles in terms of freedom of expression, according to Rafael Molina Morillo, the chairman of the Inter-American Press Association (IAPA). However, the official acknowledged that such freedom "is hard to be found absolutely." On the occasion of the IAPA 63rd General Assembly to be held on October 12-16 in Miami, the Dominican journalist reviewed during an interview with the press the top items in the meeting agenda. In his opinion, the reports on Cuba and Venezuela will be the most controversial ones. (*El Universal*, 10/10/07)

October 10: Italy deems it is time to lift sanctions against Cuba and its position to be "consistent" with that of the European Union (EU) with regards to "restoring a constructive dialogue" with the island. The undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Donato Di Santo, said that "considering the events taking place in Cuba," the Italian government believes "that it would be wise to eliminate the sanctions, which also happen to be inactive." (*Notimex*, 10/10/07)

October 10: Hungarian officials confirmed that 28 Cuban refugees, mostly men with a few women and children, landed in Budapest and will receive political asylum. They are part of a group of 44 Cubans captured at sea by the United States Coast Guard in recent years while trying to reach the United States. Of the refugees, 17 are reported to have held a three-week hunger strike in August to protest alleged poor conditions at Guantanamo and the unwillingness of US authorities to grant them asylum. The spokesman of Hungary's ministry of foreign affairs, Lajos Szelestey, told the press that "all in all, 28 people arrived in Hungary because the Hungarian government accepted the

request of the US administration." "And the decision was approved by all five parliamentary parties," he said. Cuba has condemned that decision, calling Hungary a "lackey" of the US. Hungarian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Szelestey however said only humanitarian considerations were behind Hungary's decision to accept the refugees. One aid worker believes it will take time for the Cubans to adjust to Hungarian society. The office manager of the Christian organization Hungarian Baptist Aid, David Gal, explained to the press that his group will help the refugees find housing and jobs and adapt to Hungarian culture. (VOA, 10/10/07)

October 11: Fidel Castro is recovering well, and despite remaining in the ward, lives among the Cuban people by writing - including the introduction to a Chinese translation of his biography and a note of congratulations to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China- the Cuban ambassador said. In the letter, the Cuban leader wrote: "Eighty-six years have passed since the establishment of the CPC. Now China has become an example and beacon of hope for other countries." "Castro has been getting better because he is a patient who follows his doctors' advice" and has strong beliefs, Carlos Hernandez told China Daily. "Despite falling ill, Castro has not stopped working and writes articles on topics ranging from social development, economy and the struggle against hegemony," Hernandez said. The ambassador also disclosed that the Chinese version of a biography about Castro is due for release soon. The book, "100 Hours With Fidel", is based on conversations between Castro and Ignacio Ramonet, a French journalist. What makes this book more readable is its preface, which was penned by Castro himself, the ambassador said, adding that it is also the only preface Castro has written for the book, despite dozens of other translations. (*China Daily*, 11/10/07)

October 11: Fidel Castro is "lucid" and mentally is "at full capacity," Honduran President Manuel Zelaya said following a two-day visit to Havana. Zelaya did not meet with Castro during his visit, but said he spoke with the Cuban leader by telephone for about half an hour the day before. "He has a very firm voice (...) and he is lucid, extremely lucid," Zelaya told reporters in Honduras. "Definitely, he is a person who is at full capacity, and I can testify to that." Castro called Zelaya at the hotel where he was staying in Havana, and "we talked about Honduras, Cuba, the various issues in Honduras which he is familiar with (...) coffee, corn and soy production, and the development of our economies," Zelaya said. (*AP*, 11/10/07)

October 11: Fidel Castro said that the world cannot afford to let the tragedy of NATO's war against Yugoslavia be forgotten due to the silence of those who were actors and accomplices of that brutal genocide. In his article entitled "A Silent Complicity," the Cuban leader reveals new details of that conflict, including an assessment of those happenings. In his essay, Castro considers that the attack by Western forces against Serbia, in 1999, was a severe humiliation for Russia. "Beyond Kosovo, a much more serious problem is emerging, to the detriment of Europe's and the world's interests. Russia has been humiliated terribly. NATO has already advanced to the borders of what was once the Soviet Union and it is promising to include other states of the former socialist block, and even Baltic countries that were part of the Soviet Union. Russians

have every reason to think they will not stop until they reach the walls of the Kremlin”, Castro wrote. [[A Silent Complicity](#)] (*Prensa Latina, La Jornada*, 11/10/07)

October 12: Chinese Olympic volunteers will travel to Cuba to upgrade their Spanish, according to the organizing committee of the Beijing Olympics. The group who are made up of Spanish Language graduates will spend four months on the island improving their interpretation techniques in order to offer their services to athletes and officials of countries whose official language is Spanish. The organizing committee reported that these volunteers are part of the 100, 000 that will be in charge of aiding the foreign participants during the Beijing Olympics. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 12/10/07)

October 12: The reception hosted by the Spanish Embassy in Havana for its National Holiday, where Cuban foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, and numerous other high ranking officials from the Cuban government were in attendance, confirmed the normalization of relations between the two countries. “Relations are at their best since 1996,” said Ambassador Carlos Alonso Zaldívar. Some thousand people attended the event. Cuban dissidents were not invited. (*El País*, 14/10/07)

October 12: Several Cuban dissidents criticized the Spanish government for not inviting them, for the third consecutive year, to the celebrations in Havana of Spain’s National Day. “Spain has adopted a policy of absolute priority to its economic interests in Cuba and of absolute disregard for the Cuban people. The position of the Spanish government is dismal,” said Oscar Espinosa Chepe, one of 75 dissidents sent to jail during the crackdown of 2003 and released from prison for medical reasons. Dissident Vladimiro Roca, president of the Social Democratic Party of Cuba, said to be feeling “much better” for not having been invited. “This way I do not have to see the face of an ambassador who has treated the Cuban people so badly,” he added. However, Elizardo Sánchez, president of the illegal Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN), said that, “Spain and the Spanish organizations recognize us in other ways.” “We need to understand that Spain is trying to sustain a difficult dialogue with Cuba.” (*AFP*, 15/10/07)

October 12: Asked about a meeting with the troika of the European Union (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia) in New York last month, the Cuban foreign minister said it was “positive,” “respectful,” in an atmosphere “of common search, of a space for a formal and structured dialogue.” “It was nothing else but an exploratory meeting that the EU requested,” said Felipe Pérez Roque. (*AFP*, 12/10/07)

October 12: Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, dismissed the possibility of a visit by Mexican president Felipe Calderón to Cuba “for the moment.” “We do not anticipate Calderón to visit Cuba immediately, but do not rule it out in the future, when relations between the two countries are fully normalized,” said the minister. (*AFP*, 12/10/07)

October 12: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announced plans to travel to Cuba to meet with his close friend and ally Fidel Castro. During a speech to an indigenous group

in western Venezuela, Chavez said his time there was limited, because he had to leave soon for Havana. "The one I have to see tonight is Fidel, but he'll wait for me," Chavez said. "From here I'm leaving for Cuba." Chavez said he planned to discuss efforts to advance a regional integration initiative known as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, and would meet with Castro's brother Raul "and the entire high government of Cuba." (AP, 12/10/07)

October 13: The president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, arrived in Havana late on October 12 for a working visit, accompanied by several ministers and notables, Granma daily reported. The objective of his trip is to examine progress of bilateral agreements and projects in the framework of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), the source added. As part of his visit, Chavez will transmit his Sunday program "Alo Presidente" from the central province of Villa Clara, which he plans to dedicate to heroic guerrilla Ernesto Che Guevara, the note concluded. (Prensa Latina, 13/10/07)

October 13: Fidel Castro, long absent from public appearances, met with his ally Hugo Chavez ahead of a broadcast by the Venezuelan president from Cuban soil. The two leaders in their talks focused "on the history of our two peoples, the solid and growing relations between Cuba and Venezuela, the situation in Latin America and the serious problems faced by humanity," the television report said. It said Castro shared with the Venezuelan president his recollections of the Argentine-born revolutionary Guevara, who was killed in Bolivia. The Venezuelan president also plans to meet with Fidel Castro's brother Raul, who officially took over the reins of power in Cuba on July 31, 2006, following the leader's operation. Accompanied on the trip by his ministers of foreign affairs, energy, agriculture, communication and tourism, Chavez was also due to review bilateral agreements with Cuba on health, education, sport and trade." "He will have a dialogue with the Cuban authorities and does not rule out signing some of the agreements that we have been working on," Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Roque told reporters. (AFP, 13/10/07)

October 14: Visiting Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez aired a new videotape of his meeting with Fidel Castro in which he sang revolutionary hymns to Castro and called him "father of all revolutionaries." On the videotape, reportedly made during a meeting of more than four hours, Chavez also gave Castro a painting he said he made while imprisoned in the early 1990s after leading a failed coup. The dark-colored painting showed the bars of his cell and a night scene beyond, with a full red moon and a guard tower in the distance. Castro told him he needed to sign his work. "No one knows the merit that this has, that you did this!" [[Video](#)] (AP, 14/10/07)

October 14: Fidel Castro held a telephone conversation, lasting more than an hour, with his friend and ally Hugo Chávez, president of Venezuela. To mark the 40th anniversary of the death of Che Guevara, Chávez broadcast his regular Sunday radio and television show Hello President from the Che memorial complex in Santa Clara, Cuba. Cuban radio and television also transmitted the program. Castro agreed with Chávez that Guevara's call for the creation of "two, three, many Vietnams" in Latin America had been answered,

even though the tactics were now different. "The world is full of Vietnams," Castro said, "in the face of a tyrannical power that is exercised over the planet." And he warned that the world was, "very close -- very, very, very close" to a nuclear war. Chávez suggested that, for instance, "Bolivia today is a Vietnam. Chávez warned Morales' opponents that Venezuelans "will not stand by with our arms crossed" if someone tries to assassinate him. "They had better be careful," Chávez added. The Venezuelan president also said Venezuela and Cuba share "just one government" and that "we joined ourselves together so that we will never be separated again." "Lage (Carlos) once said that Cuba has two presidents, and then I also said that Venezuela has two presidents", Chavez said. "But we are just one government", he added. "We are heading for a confederation of the Bolivarian, Marti and Caribbean republics," asserted the Head of State. "We will make this aggregate of countries from the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) and beyond into a power region of the world. Not one powerful country, rather a powerful region," stressed the South American president. (*The Miami Herald, Prensa Latina, EFE, 14/10/07*)

October 14: Reports presented to the Inter American Press Association denounced the governments of Cuba and Venezuela, accusing them of hampering independent news gathering through harassment and arrests of journalists. Reports on Cuba and Venezuela - based on information from IAPA members -- indicated that independent journalists are facing more curbs in Cuba while freedom of the press, long a valued tradition in Venezuela, is facing a grave threat. The state of the media in Cuba and Venezuela drew close scrutiny by participants at the Inter American Press Association's convention in Miami. A report on Cuba deplored harsh conditions in the detention of at least 27 journalists and outlined restrictions for working journalists. "Cuban authorities insist in their arbitrary behavior by reducing to one hour a day per journalist the access to the Internet from newspapers, magazines and other official media," according to the report read by Humberto Castelló, executive editor of *El Nuevo Herald*. At the meeting were Blanca González, mother of Normando Hernández, a Cuban journalist sentenced to 25 years in prison, and Olga Alonso, sister of journalist Ricardo González Alfonso, sentenced to 20 years. (*The Miami Herald, 15/10/07*)

October 15: Patrick Georges Pillay, Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Seychelles, started an official visit to Cuba, invited by his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque. The aim of his visit is to broaden links of friendship and cooperation existing between the two countries, *Granma* newspaper reported. His agenda includes holding official talks with Perez Roque, presiding over the 11th Session of Cuba-Seychelles Inter-Governmental Commission and visiting sites of scientific, economic and social interest. (*ACN, 15/10/07*)

October 15: Venezuela's Hugo Chavez met with low-profile acting President Raul Castro and signed a string of economic deals, ranging from oil production, refining and petrochemicals to tourism and the laying of a 1,000-mile underwater fiber optic cable from Venezuela to Cuba. Cuba's ruling Communist Party newspaper *Granma* highlighted the economic integration between the two allies, not the political fusion that Chavez touted during his visit. At the ceremony, "the parties analyzed the progress of unity

between the two countries," a report on Cuban state television said. "I reaffirm to you, dear brother, a feeling that we know perfectly well: Fidel's affection, respect and admiration for you, for Venezuelan and for our peoples of the Americas. It is my feeling as well and that of 11 million Cubans," Raul Castro told Chavez. "The fraternal public conversation with Fidel is deeply felt by our people, who appreciate patriotism and the internationalist convictions of a true revolutionary," Raul added, referring to the Venezuelan's on-air phone chat with Fidel Castro. "Cuba and Venezuela could easily form a confederation of states (...) This is no delirium," Chavez said at the signing of the accords. [[Raul Castro's speech](#)] [[Hugo Chavez' speech](#)] (*EFE, Reuters, Canadian Press, 16,17/10/07*)

October 16: Cuba's First Vice President Raul Castro Ruz saw off Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez Frias at Havana's International Airport, after a fruitful working visit which started on October 13. (*ACN, 16/10/07*)

October 16: A new cooperation accord in the field of education was signed by Cuba and China in Havana. China's Deputy Education Minister Zhao Qiping, who is currently visiting the island, said he is satisfied with the terms of the accord, which is an extension of a 2004 protocol for the period 2008-2011. The cooperation action includes the setting up of a center to teach Chinese language in Cuba. "The Confucio Institute, as it will be called, will allow others to learn our language and it will also encourage the exchange between our two peoples", said Zhao Qiping on conversations with the Cuban Education Minister, Luis Ignacio Gomez. Qiping praised the idea conceived by Fidel Castro of having Chinese people learn Spanish in Cuba. (*ACN, 16/10/07*)

October 16: Cuba continues to be the world's second largest prison for the press, with 24 journalists detained and subjected to very harsh prison conditions. Reporters Without Borders' 2007 Worldwide Press Freedom Index said. A year and a half after Raúl Castro took over as acting president in Cuba (165th), the predicted transition has in no way changed the human rights situation on the island. Of the 20 countries at the bottom of the index, seven are Asian (Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Laos, Vietnam, China, Burma, and North Korea), five are African (Ethiopia, Equatorial Guinea, Libya, Somalia and Eritrea), four are in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, Palestinian Territories and Iran), three are former Soviet republics (Belarus, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) and one is in the Americas (Cuba). [[Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2007](#)] (*AFP, 16/10/07*)

October 17: A Miami gathering of American news media leaders demanded the release of jailed journalists in Cuba and criticized the Venezuelan government for assaults and "acts of intimidation" against journalists there. The complaints were part of more than 20 resolutions issued by the Inter American Press Association at the end of its annual General Assembly. The group's members are news media owners and journalists from the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada. In the case of Cuba, the IAPA called the situation "alarming" and demanded the unconditional release of 27 jailed journalists, free access to the Internet and an end to the government's control over the media. It also noted that in the past six months there's been a crackdown on illegal satellite TV dishes. The resolution urged IAPA member media outlets and others "to

publish or air content to express solidarity with independent journalists who are behind bars or who suffer persecution or censorship as a result of their work as journalists" in Cuba. (*The Miami Herald*, 17/10/07)

October 17: The Kingston chapter of the Canada Cuba Friendship Association will soon be heading south for an eight-day whirlwind trip to the Cuban city of Cienfuegos, Kingston's sister city. Trip organizers have sent ahead three rowing shells and various rowing gear that had been donated by rowing clubs in Kingston and Toronto. John Johnson, who chairs the Kingston-Cienfuegos twinning committee, is also looking for used sporting equipment that trip participants can take with them when they depart in three and a half weeks. (*The Whig-Standard*, 17/10/07)

October 18: Secretary-General of the Ibero-American Secretariat, Enrique Iglesias, said in Madrid that King Juan Carlos could assist Cuba "in its transition project, provided the Cubans would ask him to." Iglesias emphasized the role of "facilitator of dialogue" Juan Carlos has played in other cases and said that "if at some point the Cubans requested the King's intervention," the King could "play a mediating role." (*Europa Press*, 18/10/07)

October 18: An Edmontonian held in a Cuban prison for the last five years has asked Public Safety Minister Stockwell Day to reconsider the rejection of his transfer to a Canadian institution. Perry King, 44, has been behind bars in Cuba for the last five years. He was convicted of corrupting the morals of a minor after a Cuban woman complained he'd had sex with her teenage daughter. King has always maintained his innocence. This summer, Day turned down King's request to be transferred to a Canadian prison. (*Edmonton Journal*, 18/10/07)

October 19: The Tenth Session of Cuba-Belize Joint Commission for Economic and Scientific Cooperation wrapped up in Havana after two days of work aimed at expanding bilateral cooperation in various spheres. The Belizean delegation at the forum was presided over by Foreign Minister Lisa Shoman who has been in Havana meeting a tight working agenda that included several meetings with local authorities. The Final Act of the Joint Commission took in the conclusions of this meeting that will contribute to the strengthening of friendship and solidarity bonds existing between Cuba and Belize. Cuba and Belize established official relations on July 14, 1995 with the signing of several cooperation and migratory agreements. Both countries have also agreed to fight drug trafficking, and to reciprocally promote and protect their investments. (*ACN*, 19/10/07)

October 20: The Cuban government refused to allow Brazilian lawmakers to meet with two boxers who apparently tried to defect during this summer's Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro but were detained and sent back to the island, a newspaper in Sao Paulo reported. The Web edition of the "Folha de Sao Paulo" newspaper said the head of the lower house of Congress' foreign relation's committee, Vieira da Cunha, told a columnist for the daily that Cuban authorities had denied the legislators permission to travel to the island. Cuba's ambassador to Brasilia, Pedro Nuñez Mosquera, "told me that if we formalize the petition, he is going to deny the visas for the lawmakers. He transmitted a decision of the Cuban government," Da Cunha said. The Brazilian lawmaker added that,

"according to the ambassador, Cuba considers this issue to be not only closed but an internal matter for the country. He clarified that Cuba will be pleased to receive the lawmakers for another purpose. But he made clear that, for this objective (to meet with the boxers) the visas would be denied." (*EFE*, 21/10/07)

October 21: Two representatives of the Iranian House of Latin America (HOLA), Amir Tafreshi and Salim Ghafouri, visited Cuba and later travelled to Nicaragua and Venezuela. One of HOLA's objectives is the promotion of cultural ties between Iran and the peoples of Latin-America. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 21/10/07)

October 22: Colombian foreign minister, Fernando Araujo, said relations with Cuba are developing in a climate of respect, fraternity and cooperation. During a ceremony in honor of Cuban National Hero Jose Marti at the Revolution Square Memorial, Araujo said this visit to Cuba is aimed at strengthening the bonds between the two nations. He emphasized that even though the two countries have different social models, both governments are engaged in joint projects for mutual cooperation. Araujo thanked Cuban Government "collaboration" and Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's "arrangements" regarding peace negotiations between Colombian authorities and rebel forces in that country. Araujo, who arrived the day before in Cuba, said that his government "has always found in the Cuban government great understanding of Colombian affairs and strong desire of collaborating in the solution of problems in which we have requested Cuba's collaboration." (*ACN, El Universal*, 23/10/07)

October 22: Colombian Foreign Minister Fernando Araujo Perdomo met with Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage and with the president of the Cuban parliament Ricardo Alarcon to discuss matters of the bilateral agenda. Lage and Araujo, who is on his first visit to Cuba, talked about the international situation and topics related to the upcoming Ibero-American Summit to take place in Chile in November, reported *Granma* newspaper. In his talks with Ricardo Alarcon, Araujo highlighted the increase of trade deals between the two countries over the last few years. Alarcon updated the visitor on Cuba's municipal elections held Sunday, October 21. (*ACN*, 23/10/07)

October 22: Cuban authorities deported two European visitors who took part in an activity organized by opponents of the island's communist government, sources at the Havana embassies of Slovakia and the Czech Republic told the press. They said that Slovak pro-democracy activist Petr Novotny and his translator, Czech citizen Pavel Res, were detained on October 21 and put aboard an Air France flight for Paris. The Slovak diplomatic, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said immigration authorities confirmed that the two men were deported but offered no explanation of the move. Neither embassy has received any formal notification of the deportations from the Cuban government. Cuban dissident Guillermo Fariñas told the press that Novotny, a member of the European Network of Election-Monitoring Organizations, and Res were arrested in the central city of Santa Clara after taking part in an opposition event. The detentions came after Novotny gave a lecture on the conditions necessary for clean, transparent elections, Fariñas said. (*EFE*, 22/10/07)

October 22: Cuban dissident Pedro Fuentes Cid praised the Czech Republic's long-term support for the Cuban opposition for being one of the loudest critics of Fidel Castro's regime, in his meeting with Czech Prime Minister Mirek Topolanek. He told journalists that Cuba may be freer earlier "than all of us may believe." Topolanek said states like France, Italy and Spain have been trying within the EU to apply a more moderate attitude to Castro's Cuba. The Czech Republic, however, belongs to the opposite camp. "We are trying to press on Cuba to release political prisoners," Topolanek said. Cid arrived in Prague within his European tour. In Brussels two days ago he took over the Ludovic Trarieux Human Rights Prize destined for Cuban lawyer and dissident Rene Gomez Manzano whom the Cuban regime did not allow to leave "the island of freedom." (CTK, 22/10/07)

October 22: The King of Lesotho, His Excellency Letsie III, started his first official visit to Cuba. The Head of State is accompanied by a delegation of ministers and other government officials. King Letsie III will hold talks with Cuba's First Vice President Raul Castro Ruz. Meeting other high ranking officials and touring sites of interest are also part of his agenda closing on October 26. To date, 70 students from Lesotho have graduated in Cuban universities and a group of 23 currently attend courses. Likewise, a group of nineteen Cubans provide services in the African nation. (ACN, 22/10/07)

October 22: Cuban education is passing through its deepest crisis, and the reforms proposed by Fidel Castro in recent years have only worsened the situation, according to a study by a group of Cuban and Slovak specialists unveiled in Miami. The study, "What is the future of education in Cuba?", gathers criticism, suggestions and proposals for a future educational reform and was carried out by the Slovak-based People in Peril, which since 2005 has been working with teachers and parents on the island. "Cuban education is destroyed, with grave problems like the deterioration of the schools, the predominance of ideology over teaching and the bad preparation of teachers," Eliska Slavikova said. She coordinated the study with Suzana Humajova, who visited the island in 2006 and met with teachers, Christian groups and others. The two women recognized the difficulties of analyzing the Cuban system in depth, because the statistics offered by the Education Ministry "do not come from reality, but from the formations in a [government] plan." (The Miami Herald, 23/10/07)

October 23: The sixth session of the Joint commission Cuba- Saint Vincent and The Grenadines opened at Havana's Ministry for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (MINVEC). Louis Straker, Foreign Minister and First Vice President of that sister nation presides over the meeting together with Marta Lomas, Minister of MINVEC. The 2007 meeting should outline the final steps for the construction and operation of a Medical Diagnosis Center and an airport in Saint Vincent and The Grenadines. (ACN, 23/10/07)

October 23: President Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua harshly criticized US President George W. Bush's plans to announce new anti-Cuba measures today to the accredited diplomatic corps in Washington. "Imagine that: here we are, summoning the diplomatic corps because of the tragedy we have here, and in Washington, the US president is

summoning the diplomatic corps to deliver bad news to the Cuban people,” Ortega commented. The Nicaraguan leader met with ambassadors to ask for international solidarity to help deal with the devastation caused by the storms that have affected the country in the last 52 days. “I thought that the US president would be calling on the diplomatic corps to talk about the fires in Los Angeles, (but) no, he’s going to talk about keeping up his fire against our Cuban brothers and sisters,” Ortega stated. (ACN, 23/10/07)

October 25: The President of Cuban People's Power National Assembly (Parliament) Ricardo Alarcon arrived in Quito to attend the Fifth Continental Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba. Cuban ambassador Benigno Perez and hundreds of Ecuadorians welcomed Alarcon and his delegation that joined delegations from 30 countries already in Quito to attend the event. The aim of the meeting is to foster actions against the US blockade of Cuba and to demand the release of five Cubans imprisoned in US jails. The Latin American integration and solidarity movements, misinformation on Cuba and the work of youth movements of solidarity with the island will also be analyzed in the two-day forum. Organized by the Ecuadorian Coordination of Solidarity with Cuba and supported by the Quito municipality and the government from the Pichincha province, the event will also have the presence of important figures of Latin American culture and politics. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/10/07)

October 24: Following a government session, Slovak Foreign Affairs Minister Ján Kubiš said that his ministry would ask Cuba to explain why it didn’t allow Peter Novotný, a Slovak citizen who was deported from Cuba, to contact his diplomatic mission. According to the minister, it's unnecessary to turn to the International Court of Justice in Hague yet. Novotný was in Cuba as an observer of local elections along with his Czech interpreter. They had been sent to Cuba by Slovak organisation Člověk v tísni (People in Peril). Novotný says they had been in Cuba since October 18, and on October 20 in the town of Santa Clara, where they met Cuban dissident and independent journalist Guillermo Farinas, with whom they discussed the principles of free and fair elections. On October 21, they were awoken by police and deported to Havana, where they were detained for the whole day before being deported to Europe. (*The Slovak Spectator*, 25/10/07)

October 24: Cuba was elected member of UNESCO’s Executive Council during its 34th General Conference underway in Paris until November 3rd. Cuba got 157 votes in favour of a possible 165. The Cuban ambassador before UNESCO, Hector Hernandez told the press that this election is due to the Cuban government's efforts in the development of education, science and culture. (ACN, 25/10/07)

October 24: Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro met with the King of Lesotho, Letsie III, at the Palace of the Revolution. At the conclusion of the welcoming ceremony, the two leaders held official talks in which they discussed the development of bilateral relations and cooperation, as well as exchanged their views on regional and international issues. Raul Castro was accompanied by Esteban Lazo Hernandez, vice president of the Council of State; Jose R. Balaguer Cabrera, minister of Public Health; Felipe Perez

Roque, Foreign minister; Julio Christian Jimenez, president of INDER; Marcos Rodriguez Costa, deputy Foreign minister and Esther Armenteros Cardenas, Cuba's ambassador to the Kingdom of Lesotho. The Lesotho delegation included: Sephiri Enoch Motanyane, vice president of the National Assembly; Mohlabi Kenneth Tsekoa, Foreign minister; Mathabiso Angelina Lepono, minister of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation; Mphu Keneiloe Ramatlapeng, minister of Health and Social Welfare; and Motseoa Senyane, Lesotho's ambassador to Cuba. (*Granma*, 25/10/07)

October 25: Bala Garba Jahumpa, newly appointed Gambia's Ambassador to the Republic of Venezuela, left Banjul for Cuba as a special envoy of President Yahya Jammeh. Speaking to the press soon before his departure, Bala Garba Jahumpa confirmed that he is leaving for Cuba as a special envoy of the Gambian leader, to take yet another 10 more medical students that President Jammeh has sponsored to study in Cuba. According to him, this batch of 10 medical students, will join students, who are already studying in Cuba in various academic fields. (*The Daily Observer*, 25/10/07)

October 25: Responding to US President George W. Bush's threats towards Cuba, Venezuelan authorities warned that "Cuba is not alone." The US president called on the international community to prepare for a "transition" in Cuba and vowed to maintain the embargo of the island. "He spoke like an imperialist and a colonialist," said Venezuelan parliamentarian Saul Ortega about Bush's statements. "In response we have to close ranks in defense of the principles of sovereignty and self-determination," he said. Vice-foreign minister Rodolfo Sanz assured that the United States was making a mistake with their statements towards Cuba and maintained that the "times have changed." "We aren't going to sit here with our arms crossed before some diabolic adventure," he said. Sanz assured that the Cuban people can count on support from nations like Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, among others, stating that "Cuba is not alone." (*Venezuelanalysis.com*, 26/10/07)

October 26: Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa sent fraternal greetings to the Cuban people and a message of solidarity that was read during the opening of the Fifth Encounter of Continental Friendship with Cuba. Ecuadorian government advisor Galo Moro spoke in the name of President Correa during the unity gathering and thanked Cubans for their courage and resistance. He noted that Correa could not make the meeting as he is participating in an itinerant cabinet meeting in the southeast Ecuadorian province of Zamora Chinchipe. Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon heads the Cuban delegation at this event that has gathered some 800 participants and is being held for the first time outside of Havana. (*Granma*, 27/10/07)

October 28: The 5th Continental Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba concluded in Quito with the approval of the Declaration of Quito, which will include actions to strengthen and support the Caribbean island. After two days of deliberations, representatives of Latin American groups of friendship with Cuba will define the working objectives of the continent for the forthcoming years. The creation of a network of solidarity movements and the need of breaking the silence of the US media about five Cuban prisoners in the United States, known as the Cuban Five, were proposals presented by the delegates.

Brazilian, Ecuadorian, Argentinean, Cuban, and Bolivian activists supported to build a network of groups of friendship with an eye towards using alternative means and new technology to put an end to misinformation about Cuba. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/10/07)

October 28: UN Special Secretary for the Right to Food Swiss citizen Jean Ziegler arrived in Cuba in an official visit until November 6. Cuban Foreign Vice minister Abelardo Moreno welcomed him at the Jose Marti airport, in the outskirts of Havana. Ziegler's visit is the result of Cuba's willingness to restart this cooperation method with the UN universal and non discriminatory mechanisms in the human rights sphere, according to government sources. The secretary has planned an extensive program, including meetings with local leaders, and visits to several provinces, in which programs devoted to assure food for more than 11.3 million Cuban people. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/10/07)

October 28: Haunted by their exiled parents' harrowing experience in the 1950s revolutionary Cuba, thousands of Venezuelans of Cuban descent are fleeing the country as President Hugo Chávez intensifies his drive to transform Venezuela into a socialist state. The two Cuban consulates in Venezuela -- in Caracas and Valencia -- have seen a sharp rise in recent months in the number of petitions from young applicants looking for ways to prove their Cuban origin. The sons and daughters of Cuban nationals have a unique advantage over the rest of Venezuelans: A direct shot at becoming US residents if they can prove their parents were born on the island. "We are witnessing in Venezuela the same situation that our parents experienced [in Cuba,] and that is why we are looking for new horizons," said Víctor López, a 35-year-old son of Cubans who went to the Cuban embassy in Caracas to request a birth certificate. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/10/07)

October 29: Cuban doctor Roberto Quiñones sent a letter to Chilean president, Michelle Bachelet, requesting that she intercede so that his mother, Hila Molina, and his grandmother, Hilda Morejón, could leave Cuba. The doctor requested the Chilean leader to mediate with Havana in favour of his 66-year-old mother, first neurologist to perform a brain tissue transplant successfully, and his 88-year-old grandmother, so that they can come and live with him in Argentina. Molina has been requesting this for 12 years without success. (*Encuentro en la Red*, 29/10/07)

October 29: Four Cuban sailors who jumped ship in New Brunswick plan to seek refugee status in Canada, says the man who plans to help them with their claims. The sailors left the Greek-owned cargo ship Dimitra G in Saint John, on October 23, and now are awaiting a decision by Immigration Canada, expected by November 6. The four men, who have still not spoken to their families in Cuba because they can't afford the telephone call, are staying with a local Spanish-speaking family. "They're doing fine right now," said Angel Negreira, who has helped some 20 Spanish-speaking sailors who have jumped ship in Saint John over the past 12 years. According to Mr. Negreira, the men said they faced poor working conditions on the ship. "The conditions are beyond any Canadian way of thinking," he said, adding that the pay is \$2.50 to \$3 a hour. "These people work a minimum of 84 hours a week. They have to work continuously." Gerard Bradbury, an inspector with the International Transport Workers' Federation, has been aboard the ship

once since the sailors defected. "My job is to go aboard and make sure these incidents don't happen [because of poor conditions]," Bradbury said. The four Cubans, escorted by Mr. Bradbury and Mr. Negreira, boarded the ship in search of their back pay - approximately \$12,000. After 20 minutes, they came back empty-handed. "They're confiscating their pay to give it back to their families in Cuba," Mr. Bradbury said after meeting with the vessel's captain. (*Canadian Press*, 29/10/07)

October 29: The Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) expressed its concern regarding persistent violence against members of the media in an attempt to silence them. In the case of Cuba, the Report by the Special Rapporteur said that "one journalist was arrested and sentenced on the same day" to four years in prison for "pre-criminal social danger," a provision in the country's Criminal Code under which a citizen can go to prison for the supposed threat that person represents to society, even if he or she has not committed a crime. The Office of the Special Rapporteur reiterated its concern over the systematic, ongoing lack of respect for freedom of thought and expression in Cuba. (*OAS Press Release*, 29/10/07)

October 29: The 2nd Business Forum of the Non-Aligned Countries Movement (NAM) will start in Havana. About 200 businesspeople, officials and figures from 40 countries are expected to attend the event, to seek feasible alternatives for the development of the bloc's nation members, sources from Cuba's Chamber of Commerce (CCC) confirmed. CCC president Raul Becerra told the press of the entity's preparation for the meeting, scheduled for November 2-3 in Havana's Conference Center. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/10/07)

October 29: Members of Grenada's diplomatic mission to Cuba paid homage to the Cubans who lost their lives during the American invasion of Grenada. The ceremony took place at Havana's Parque Central, where a floral wreath was placed by the Jose Marti monument in the park, in the presence of the diplomats and Cubans who survived the US attack on Grenada in 1983. Vyra Magdalena Moqueen, Grenada's ambassador in Havana, mentioned the importance of the Cuban collaboration to her country in the sectors of public health, agriculture and education. The ambassador thanked Cuban construction workers who helped in the building of the Point Saline International Airport. On October 25, 1983, seven thousand American soldiers invaded Grenada, More than 20 Cubans who were working on Grenada's airport were killed during the attack. (*ACN*, 30/10/07)

October 30: Australia has won itself a rebuke from Cuba, despite having supported a United Nations motion calling for the lifting of the US economic blockade of the island nation. Australia's ambassador to the UN, Robert Hill, said that the country's support for the move should not be seen as endorsing Cuba's internal policies. "Holding political prisoners and failing to comply with international human rights standards is not an internal matter - it should be of concern to all of us," Mr Hill said. In reply, a spokeswoman for Cuba said that "accomplices" of the anti-Cuban policies of the US President, George Bush, deserved little credit. "A government like Australia has no moral authority to criticise Cuba," the spokeswoman said. "Anyone can understand the level of

socio-economic development that Cuba would have attained had it not been subjected to this unrelenting and obsessive economic war," Cuba's Foreign Affairs Minister Felipe Perez Roque said. Mr Hill called on the Cuban Government to respect the rights of all its people and queried the claim that the blockade was the main obstacle confronting Cubans. "[Mr Perez Roque] will, with respect, have greater credibility in pursuing this argument when he can show that the rights of all Cuban people are properly respected and protected by his own government," Mr Hill said. (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 1/11/07)

October 30: The Archbishop of Havana, Cardinal Jaime Ortega, announced that Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, will visit Cuba in January of 2008. Cardinal Ortega said the visit would "revive the spirit of the presence of John Paul II in Cuba in 1998." It will also be recognition of all that the Pope's visit meant and a chance to live that moment again in order to continue in that same spirit that must continue to grow." He recalled that Pope John Paul II's visit to Cuba helped "open new possibilities" for the Church's mission in that country, and at the same time "contributed to improving Cuba's image in the world." Cardinal Ortega said relations between the Church and the State in Cuba "are good, but they could be better." (*CNA*, 30/10/07)

October 30: Cuban foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, said that Cuba would be willing to "renounce its sovereignty" to integrate "into a larger Latin-American and Caribbean bloc of nations." "We have said that one day when Latin-America is united, and we are able to appear before the world as a united and integrated group of nations, Cuba would even be ready to resign its sovereignty and the flag for which it has fought so much to integrate into a large bloc of Latin-American and Caribbean nations," said the official. Asked on the Venezuelan proposal to move towards a confederation with Cuba, Pérez Roque answered "President (Hugo) Chávez has outlined an idea; it is not a concrete plan to decide on." (*EER*, 31/10/07)

October 31: Turkey's Prime Minister and President of the ruling party for Justice and Development (AKP) Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz, member of the Secretariat of Cuba's Communist Party Central Committee. The Turkish Prime Minister held talks with Ramirez de Estenoz and the Cuban delegation he is heading at Ankara's parliament building, where they addressed issues relevant to bilateral relations between Turkey and Cuba. During his stay in Turkey, Ramirez de Estenoz, who is also the head of the Cuban Communist Party International Relations Department, met with the president of the Turkish parliament and with other Turkish high-ranking officials. (*ACN*, 31/10/07)

October 31: Iran Trade Minister Masood Mir-Kazemi arrived in Cuba to take part in the Second Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on business and commercial cooperation. Mir-Kazemi will attend the meeting in line with the objective to promote scientific and technical as well as economic and commercial cooperation between Iran and other NAM members. The three-day meeting, to start on November 1, will focus on research on the global economy. Besides Mir-Kazemi, foreign trade ministers of Cuba,

India and South Africa as well as representatives from Belarus and Latin American states will take part in the meeting. (*IRNA*, 31/10/07)



TERRORISM

October 4: United States defence secretary, Robert Gates, repeated in Santiago de Chile that his country is analyzing the possibility of shutting down the base in Guantánamo, Cuba. “I have said on several occasions that I would like the detention facilities in Guantánamo closed,” he said to the media. (*EFE*, 4/10/07)

October 12: The US military is reviewing its decision to classify hundreds of Guantanamo Bay inmates as "enemy combatants," a step that could lead to new hearings for men who have spent years behind bars in indefinite detention. Navy Captain Theodore Fessel Jr., the lead officer at Guantanamo for the Defense Department agency that oversees the panels, said authorities have begun seeking new or previously overlooked evidence that may warrant new hearings after the process came under fire. (*AP*, 12/10/07)

October 16: The guerrilla Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), called Venezuela’s president, Hugo Chávez, a “political hurricane” and Fidel Castro “warrior of love”. In a statement posted on a web page that often publishes FARC’s bulletins, the rebel group highlighted Chavez’s recent visit to Fidel Castro. Under the title “The sower of conscience,” the article describes that during the recent encounter of the two leaders in Havana, Chávez “listened to the ionized voice of Fidel, the man of planetary stature, the unwavering warrior of love, say repeatedly: Hugo, you are a sower of conscience.” (*El País*, 17/10/07)

October 22: Attackers threw sticks of dynamite at a house next to the Venezuelan consulate and at a residence for Cuban doctors in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz, but no one was wounded, officials said. Bolivia's leftist president, Evo Morales, has formed close ties with Venezuela's Hugo Chavez and Cuba 's Fidel Castro since taking office in January 2006. Opposition to Morales is strongest in eastern regions, and especially Santa Cruz. Cuba's ambassador to Bolivia said the attack was the second to target Cuban doctors working in the poor South American country in recent weeks. "A month and a half ago there was a similar attack with a tear gas grenade thrown against another house where Cuban doctors live (...) This is the second attack," Ambassador Rafael Dausa told local radio. (*Reuters*, 22/10/07)



US-CUBA RELATIONS

October 1: The US Interests Section in Havana said that its failure to issue Cubans the 20,000 visas mandated by bilateral accords was due to obstruction by the island's communist government, which is facing record levels of unauthorized emigration. Cuba is one of the few countries in the world that requires its citizens to apply for permission to leave. The Interests Section issued 15,000 visas in the fiscal year that ended on November 30, falling short of the quota for the first time since the migration accords were signed in the mid-1990s. US Consul General Sean Murphy attributed the shortfall to "obstacles" imposed by the Havana government, such as the refusal to authorize the hiring of staff necessary to cover vacancies in the consular office. The lack of personnel, he said, caused his office to have the longest waiting list of any US consular facility in the world, with an average delay of 750 days. This situation, he said, six months ago led the Interests Sections to suspend its special program for Cuban emigration, in which some 500,000 Cubans have taken part since its inception in 1998. The visa shortfall comes in a year that has seen an increase in illegal emigration of Cubans to the United States, both across the Florida Strait and from Mexico, an increasingly popular route for illegal people-trafficking rings. (*EFE, Reuters, AP, 2/10/07*)

October 2: A judge deciding whether a Cuban girl should remain with her foster parents in Florida or return to Cuba with her father warned both parties against pulling the girl into a political debate about living in Cuba. Attorneys for the girl's Miami foster parents requested an emergency hearing before Circuit Judge Jeri B. Cohen to relate the child's apparent anxiety about the possibility of returning to Cuba. A court-appointed therapist told the judge by phone that the girl appeared very fearful during a scheduled meeting when she was asked about Cuba, and repeatedly said she did not want to go there. The judge ordered another court-appointed therapist, scheduled to meet with the girl and her father later Tuesday, to begin broaching with the girl the idea of living with Izquierdo. But Cohen also instructed both Rafael Izquierdo, a Cuban farmer, and the foster parents, wealthy Cuban-American couple Joe and Maria Cubas, to refrain from discussing with the girl a potential return to Cuba. "You're making a 5-year-old make an ideological value judgment about Cuba. The issue is not, do you want to go Cuba? The issue is, do you want to be with your father? We need to change the issue here," Cohen said. (*The Miami Herald, 3/10/07*)

October 2: US investigators found cartridge casings on a chartered fishing boat whose four-crew-members have been missing since the vessel was found in September adrift near Cuba, federal prosecutors said. New details came to light in the case as a judge ordered the two men who had chartered the boat held without bail. An arraignment is scheduled for October 11, and the men were to remain at a federal detention center in Miami. One of the men, Kirby L. Archer, 35, has been charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution in connection with the robbery of a Wal-Mart store in Arkansas where he was a manager. The other man, Guillermo Zarabozo, 19, has been charged with lying to federal agents. Mr. Zarabozo was born in Cuba, and Mr. Archer, who speaks Spanish, served there as a military police investigator at the United States Naval base at

Guantánamo Bay. Cuba has no extradition agreement with the United States. (AP, 2/10/07)

October 3: Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said that he expects an overwhelming victory at the United Nations General Assembly on October 30th, when Cuba will present a resolution condemning the almost 50-year-old blockade imposed by the United States against the Cuban people. Addressing hundreds of students and professors at the Plaza Agramonte of the University of Havana, Perez Roque expressed his confidence on an overwhelming triumph that will show the world's support of the island's struggle against the blockade. "Cuba will not give up. We will continue bringing this issue to the United Nations because we are confident that the Empire will not be able to ignore the world's demand forever, as it happened with the Apartheid and the unjust imprisonment of Mandela," Perez Roque said. An audiovisual campaign against the blockade that will soon be broadcast by Cuban media and that was designed by talented designers, publicists, journalists and students, was also presented at the University of Havana. During the rally, Ernesto Fernandez, member of the National Bureau of the Cuban Young Communist League, read a declaration of the Cuban youth against the US blockade. (ACN, 4/10/07)

October 4: The mortal remains of American pacifist Jane Jackson were buried at the Santa Ifigenia cemetery, Santiago de Cuba, at the request of her family in honor to the love she felt for the Santiagueros. The American pacifist, who passed away last September 27 in Santiago de Cuba, received posthumous honors at the Cuban friendship Institute (ICAP), with the presence of local authorities and her brothers and sisters from the Episcopal Church. Also at the ceremony were members of the Cuban Association of People with Physical and Motor Disabilities and the people of the community where she lived during her stay in the city. The US and the Cuban flags waved together at the funeral by a photo of her hugging Fidel Castro. Floral wreaths from Cuban parliament president Ricardo Alarcon, and the secretary of the Cuban Communist Party on the province, were sent to the ceremony. (ACN, 5/10/07)

October 4: The United States government is prepared for a possible mass exodus of Cubans after the death of elderly leader Fidel Castro, Caleb McCarry, US Cuba Transition Coordinator, said. "We have contingency plans for a possible massive exodus," McCarry said in Washington. "We have the obligation to secure our borders." McCarry is one of the most controversial political figures in US- Cuban relations. The communist island interpreted the creation of his bureau by US President George W Bush as a clear statement of a purpose to annex Cuba in the near future. The US official admitted that "something changed" in Cuba since Fidel Castro, 81, temporarily gave up power to his brother Raul on July 31, 2006. "For the first time in decades there is uncertainty," McCarry noted. (DPA, 4/10/07)

October 4: Americans looking to recoup Cuban assets seized after Fidel Castro took power in 1959 likely won't get the billions they hope to seek after Castro dies, a federally financed study concluded. The study said they instead should settle for development rights and tax breaks that would let them profit from a new Cuba. It was commissioned

by the US Agency for International Development and conducted by scholars at Creighton University. They were asked to consider how Cuba, which has been under communist rule now for nearly a half-century, might settle long-pending claims after the 81-year-old Castro dies. Nearly 6,000 American claims for homes and businesses seized by the regime have been determined valid by the US Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. The study values them at about \$6 billion in current dollars, with interest. Many of the claimants are Cuban-Americans who were Cuban when their property was expropriated. [[Report on property claims](#)] (*AP*, 5/10/07)

October 5: Miami businessman Teo Babun's family lost a cement plant, mining properties and other interests in Cuba in 1960 and he now heads a consulting group seeking business opportunities in a new Cuba. He praised a study commissioned by the US Agency for International Development and conducted by scholars at Creighton University on claims of expropriated assets by Fidel Castro's government. The scholars were asked to consider how Cuba, which has been under communist rule now for nearly a half-century, might settle long-pending claims after the 81-year-old Castro dies. But, Babun said predicting Cuba's future is a bold move. "That's pretty darn gutsy for a bunch of lawyers to be predicting--that's the job of the US State Department," said Babun. Spokeswoman Linda Hartley of the US State Department would not comment on Cuba's future, saying it was complicated and the department would not comment on a hypothetical situation. A request for comment from the Cuban government's International Press Center in Havana was not immediately returned. (*Sun Sentinel*, 5/10/07)

October 5: Cuba has requested support from parliaments worldwide against the US economic, commercial and financial blockade against the island. The call was adopted by members of the Foreign Relations Permanent Committee of the National Assembly of the People's Power (Parliament) during a special session attended by the President of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcon. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/10/07)

October 6: The company about to auction off objects that belonged to iconic rebel Ernesto 'Che' Guevara has said that it has received threats from detractors of what they call 'a perversion and an insult to the memory of the revolutionary' who helped Fidel Castro take power in Cuba. Dallas-based Heritage Auction Galleries is sticking to its auction date of October 25 when objects such as a lock of the Argentine-born Guevara's hair, taken from him after his execution 40 years ago in Bolivia, will go on the block. "We hoped the auction would be of great interest to the general public, but never dreamed it would cause such an international uproar," the director of the US division of Heritage Auction Galleries, Tom Slater, told the press. The items up for bidding belong to Gustavo Villoldo, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative who had a direct role in the operation to capture Che and who advised the Bolivian army on the pursuit and detection of Cuban guerrillas. Also on the auction block besides Guevara's controversial lock of hair will be photographs, maps of the mission that captured Che in Bolivia, the text of an intercepted message that helped locate the guerrilla band, Guevara's fingerprints taken at the time, and personal letters of Villoldo communicating with the Bolivian president and the military. (*IANS*, 6/10/07)

October 6: Timothy Langford, a career CIA officer, has been appointed as the new Cuba and Venezuela mission manager for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence -- a position that coordinates information-gathering for areas considered top priorities. Langford, 48, spent 25 years dealing with Latin American issues at the CIA. He holds a masters degree in Latin American studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Ross Feinstein, a spokesman for the director's office, said Langford began his new position on October 1, but declined to elaborate on his previous assignments within the CIA. President Bush suggested the creation of the Cuba and Venezuela post after Fidel Castro became ill. (*The Miami Herald*, 6/10/07)

October 6: The fateful day of October 6, 1976 was recalled by all Cubans and in particular by relatives of victims of the mid air explosion of a commercial plane, linked to the US Central Intelligence Agency. Off the coasts of Barbados, terrorist hands supported by the US government took the lives of 73 innocent people, including the young fencing team's members. Latin America and the world were also shaken by that terrorist action 31 years ago, not only for its cruelty but also the innocence of those victims, who were returning to their country in a DC-8 Cubana de Aviacion plane that departed from Caracas to Trinidad-Tobago and later to Barbados. The pilot's skill was not enough to counter Luis Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch, Hernan Ricardo and Freddy Lugo's lethal plan, which fatally wounded 73 passengers, of them 57 Cubans, 11 Guyanese people and five Koreans. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/10/07)

October 7: Cuba is renewing its efforts to generate international pressure on the United States to end its long-standing embargo against the Communist island. Cuban officials said they would send their latest appeal worldwide in hopes the US blockade on business with Cuba would finally end after 45 years, Cuba's Granma newspaper reported. Havana claims the US embargo has cost the country about \$89 billion in trade revenue since it was first imposed in 1962. The latest appeal by Cuban lawmakers follows recent efforts by Osvaldo Martinez, head of Cuba's Economic Affairs Commission, to convince leaders at the UN General Assembly session to put additional pressure on Washington to end the embargo. (*UPI*, 7/10/07)

October 8: Daniel Imperato revisited a campaign promise, to open communications and improve relations with Cuba. As the leading Independent candidate for the US presidency, Imperato -- who has extensive world business and strategic experience -- repeated his 2005 prediction that if the United States didn't take action with Cuba, someone else will. Back in June of 2007, Imperato called for an immediate meeting with Fidel Castro, once it was announced that he had returned to good health. "Helping Cuba become an economic force in the region will go a long way toward freeing the Cuban people from bondage and unfair living conditions. Forty years of American administrations have been neglecting one of our important strategic security points -- the Caribbean sea lanes and the opportunity for trade with Cuba. The Caribbean and Cuba have become investment hubs for foreign nations around the globe, which could very well jeopardize our security," contended Imperato. "If we do not address the Cuban situation with Castro, Hugo Chavez will. The Chinese will. They have already loaned millions to Cuba and have offered to protect their oil and gas shipping lanes. We can't

lose this opportunity for freedom with one of our closest neighbors." (*PR Agency*, 8/10/07)

October 9: Cuba is convinced that the overwhelming majority of the international Community will condemn again the US blockade this year and demand to lift it. The ambassador of the Caribbean island in Spain, Alberto Velazco San Jose, addressed a press conference in which he discussed his country's report to the UN Secretary General on economic war and the new measures adopted by Washington. The diplomat told the journalists that the blockade has cost Cuba 89 billion dollars, and is an economic war rather than an embargo, so it is considered genocide, and he also criticized its extra territorial character. (*ACN*, 9/10/07)

October 9: A group of Iowans went on a trade mission to Cuba. Former Iowa Corn Growers Association president Bob Bowman said they spent five days meeting with government officials, the people in charge of Cuban livestock production, and touring farms. Bowman, a farmer in DeWitt, said there's great potential in Cuba to build markets for Iowa corn and distillers grains, however U.S. policies restrict trade to the Communist country. "It's a cash only business," Bowman says, "the cash has to be transferred into a US bank before the product can be shipped...which is kind of a disadvantage." Bowman said the Cuban officials he met with wish the United States would consider easing trade restrictions. "We were asked repeatedly to do what we could politically in this country to open up trade," Bowman said, "because they need two way trade to help their people out." (*Radio Iowa*, 9/10/07)

October 9: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice urged Congress to pass three Latin American free trade agreements, saying defeat of the deals would be a tremendous blow to America's standing in the region. Rice said such a defeat would be a serious setback for the leaders of Peru, Panama and Colombia and their efforts to strengthen democracy in their countries. "It would send a signal loud and clear across the region that the United States cannot be trusted to keep its promises," she said in a speech at the headquarters of the Organization of American States in Washington. Rice's speech was part of a concerted administration effort to jump-start its stalled trade agenda in the face of rising unhappiness as America's trade deficits have soared to record highs. Rice said increased economic ties with the United States would help support the spreading movement toward democracy and free markets in Latin America. "The exceptions to this rule may be noisy but they are heading in the opposite direction of the hemisphere," Rice said, not naming any particular country, although she later said that the United States was preparing for a transition to a democratic government in Cuba. [[Remarks at the OAS](#)] (*Las Vegas Sun*, 9/10/07)

October 10: General Cigar Co., the US unit of snuff maker Swedish Match AB, settled its trademark lawsuit against Southern Smoke LLC and other businesses accused of selling counterfeit Cohiba brand cigars. Under the accord, Southern Smoke will admit to the infringement, pay undisclosed damages and deliver about 10,000 cigars for destruction, according to a statement. General Cigar had sought more than \$1 million in damages under a federal anti-counterfeiting law. General Cigar, whose Stockholm-based

parent company is the world's second-largest maker of snuff and chewing tobacco, has been battling fake versions of the Dominican-made cigars since its ownership of the Cohiba trademark was confirmed by a US court in 2005, it said in the statement. "This case is another step in our ongoing efforts to stop the sale and marketing of cigars which infringe upon our federally protected trademark rights," Daniel Nunez, chief operating officer of General Cigar, said in the statement. "We are very pleased with the outcome of this case." Havana-based Cubatabaco had asked the justices to reverse a 2005 federal appeals court ruling that cleared General Cigar's use of the brand. Cubatabaco earlier won the case in district court when General Cigar was barred from selling Cohibas. (*Bloomberg*, 10/10/07)

October 10: Posing as men of the cloth, businessman Victor Vazquez and his wealthy friend David Margolis flew back and forth to Cuba by cleverly exploiting a religious loophole in the long-standing travel ban to the communist island nation. But on the afternoon of December 13, 2006, a team of US Treasury and Customs agents finally caught up with them upon their return to Miami International Airport. When asked about the Fort Lauderdale waterfront home that he used as a "church" to obtain his religious license, Margolis admitted, "You have me dead to rights." Vazquez, at first defensive, admitted he assisted Margolis in preparing his application and that "he knew the church did not exist," agents said. Vazquez, 40, of Delray Beach, and Margolis, 76, of Fort Lauderdale, would soon become the nation's first defendants to be charged with illegally obtaining religious travel licenses to get around the 44-year-old travel ban to Cuba. (*The Miami Herald*, 10/10/07)

October 10: President George W. Bush invited the wife of a Cuban political prisoner to the White House event to mark Hispanic Heritage Month. Bush called for the release of Jose Luis Garcia Paneque and all other political prisoners held in Cuba, after meeting the dissident reporter's family at the White House. "He did nothing more than advocate for freedom, and he is now in prison and not only is he in prison (...) he is ill," Bush said during a ceremony marking Latin American heritage. "One of the messages I have for the Cuban leaders is: free this man and free other political prisoners. He is not a threat to you. Let him be reunited with the woman who loves him dearly and his four children," Bush said. At his White House meeting, Bush spoke with Garcia Paneque's wife, Yamile Llanes Labrada, and her daughter Shirley. "May God bless your family and your husband," said Bush in Spanish, alluding to the situation of that Cuban family. The event ended with a performance by Cuban musician Israel "Cachao" Lopez. Lopez, 89, offered a short set that included a version of "Guantanamo," the rhythm of which moved Bush to follow its beat by moving both his head and feet and even by clapping his hands. [[Remarks by President George W. Bush](#)] (*AFP, EFE*, 10/10/07)

October 10: US authorities filed murder charges against two men found floating in a life raft near Cuba in the killings of four fishing boat crewmembers in a case of murder and piracy on the high seas. US agents never found the bodies of the victims and will rely on bullet casings, a handcuff key, a blood smear and conflicting stories from the suspects in hopes of winning a conviction in the high-profile mystery of the Miami charter boat Joe Cool. Kirby Logan Archer and Guillermo Alfonso Zarabozo were charged with first-

degree murder in international waters for the deaths of Joe Cool's captain, Jake Branam, his wife Kelley Branam, and crew members Scott Gamble and Samuel Kairy. The Coast Guard found the boat adrift on September 23 near Anguilla Cay in the Bahamas, about 35 miles from Cuba. The next day searchers found Archer and Zarabozo, with their luggage, in the life raft 12 miles north of the abandoned yacht. The two men told authorities three Cuban pirates commandeered the fishing boat and shot the four-crew members, but left Archer and Zarabozo on the vessel unharmed. Zarabozo said he was forced to throw the bodies overboard. (*Reuters*, 10/10/07)

October 11: The US government has angered Canada's airlines with a proposal to order them to hand over personal information about passengers who take flights that go south over US airspace en route to sunny destinations. Although the planes wouldn't take off from or land on American soil, the US Department of Homeland Security is proposing that Canadian carriers send passenger manifests up to 72 hours in advance of departures to popular winter escapes such as Mexico and the Caribbean. The Homeland Security's Transportation Security Agency proposal would cover flights operating between two international points that go over the airspace of the lower 48 US states, affecting mostly those run by Canadian carriers to winter getaways such as Mexico, Jamaica, Cuba and the Dominican Republic. (*The Globe and Mail*, 11/10/07)

October 11: The Coast Guard repatriated 41 Cuban migrants to Bahia de Cabanas, Cuba, who had been stopped at sea in five separate incidents. A helicopter from Air Station Miami located a loaded go-fast boat west of Marquesas, Florida. Nine Cuban migrants and two suspected smugglers were taken aboard, and the suspected smugglers were transferred to officials in Key West. The Coast Guard located and took aboard 10 Cuban migrants on Cosgrove Shoal Light. The Coast Guard located a disabled go-fast vessel with 16 Cuban migrants and two suspected smugglers 21 miles south of Marquesas. The go-fast boat and suspected smugglers were turned over to Customs and Border Protection agents in Key West. Two Coast Guard cutters chased two go-fast vessels, 90 miles northeast of Cozumel, Mexico, catching one 45 miles northeast of Cozumel. On board the first vessel, which had been reported stolen by the Collier County Sheriff's Office, were two suspected smugglers and one Cuban migrant. The second go-fast boat was stopped and all aboard taken into custody by the Mexican navy 20 miles northeast of Cozumel. Meanwhile, a civilian took aboard seven Cuban migrants from an old boat 15 miles east of Islamorada. (*Sun Sentinel*, 11/10/07)

October 11: In a heated debate at the UN General Assembly, Cuba criticized the US "hypocritical, unilateral certifications" in the fight against drug traffic, terrorism and people traffic. Addressing the UN Third Commission on Legal Affairs, Cuban diplomat Luis Alberto Amoros stressed that there cannot be double standards in the fight against international crime. "How can the US declare itself the champion of the world fight against terrorism and at the same time release the most notorious terrorist of the Western Hemisphere [Luis Posada Carriles]?" the Cuban representative wondered rhetorically. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/10/07)

October 11: Cuba handed over an American wanted for fraud and theft in Utah to US authorities, the third fugitive it has returned to the United States in one year, US officials said. John Bradley Egan was detained by Cuba at the end of June when his 30-foot (9-metre) yacht developed engine trouble off Havana's Marina Hemingway. Egan had no documents and the Cubans contacted the US diplomatic mission, which determined there was a warrant for his arrest in Utah for bank fraud and ID theft. "The US Coast Guard, our mission and the Cuban Foreign Ministry managed get him into US custody and he was taken back to the United States this morning," a US diplomat said. "We seem to have had good cooperation from the Cubans on these law enforcement and drug issues. It is not given much publicity," the diplomat said. (*Reuters*, 11/10/07)

October 12: Our human rights were violated all the time while we were in Guantanamo, a young Cuban man belonging to the 29 Cuban asylum-seekers in the Bicske Refugee Camp told the Hungarian press. "We were under constant surveillance in Guantanamo. They tapped our phone calls and read our letters. If the authorities did not like what we wrote, they simply disposed of our letters," the young Cuban asylum-seeker said after his arrival in Hungary. He spent 20 months on the US military base following his escape from Cuba and his failed attempt to reach the United States. The Cuban asylum-seekers residing temporarily in the Bicske camp had been intercepted by the US Coast Guard either in the Florida Strait between Cuba and the United States or at sea near the military base in Guantanamo. "I wish I could talk to a US newspaper about my experiences. There are many things I could tell them," he said, adding that asylum -seekers and terrorist suspects are strictly separated from each other in Guantanamo and can never see each other. (*Magyar Nemzet*, 12/10/07)

October 12: President George W. Bush urged the Democrat-led Congress to pass trade agreements with Colombia, Peru and Panama, saying exports mean better jobs in the US and increased security for young democracies in the Americas. "People who work for companies which export have a higher- paying job than someone who doesn't," Bush said in a speech in Miami sponsored by the University of Miami and the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce. "We've got to expand trade." The vision for the Western Hemisphere, Bush said, includes "a free and democratic Cuba." Bush drew a standing ovation from the audience with his Castro criticism. "As Cuba enters a period of transition, nations throughout the hemisphere and the world must insist on free speech, free assembly," Bush said. "They must insist that the prisoners in Cuba be free, and ultimately we must insist on free and competitive elections." [[President George W. Bush speech](#)] (*Reuters, Bloomberg*, 12/10/07)

October 15: The United States challenged ailing Fidel Castro to hold a dialogue with his people, following his much publicized live media appearance with his Venezuelan ally Hugo Chavez. Cubans heard Fidel Castro joking and chattering on a television show hosted by Chavez, his first live broadcast in Cuba since he was sidelined after major intestinal surgery 15 months ago. But the United States said Castro should have the same dialogue with his people. "I am delighted that Fidel Castro has an opportunity to have a chance to discuss things with his good friend President Chavez," said Tom Casey, a State Department spokesman. "It is too bad that in almost half a century of misrule in Cuba,

he's never had the same kind of conversation with his own people," Casey told reporters. (AFP, 15/10/07)

October 15: Since 2003, Cuba and the United States have cooperated closely to settle lawsuits and cases of inheritance involving more than \$50 million and hundreds of Cuban families on both sides of the Florida Straits. The increasing paperwork and the transfer of inheritance money to Cubans on the island are generating an inevitable interaction by lawyers and legal aides in Miami with their counterparts at Bufete Internacional de la Habana, the International Law Bureau of Havana, and other government agencies. Pragmatism has triumphed over political impediments. And the Cuban heirs on the island can now receive -- in periodic remittances made through Western Union -- their money, which until now had been frozen in the United States. "We're in the presence of a peculiarity in US-Cuba relations, because both parties are very interested in settling the litigation ahead," said Cuban-American lawyer Enrique Zamora, who travels to Cuba every six weeks, representing about 20 cases. "These are strictly familial -- not political -- affairs." In coordination with the 11th Judicial Circuit in Miami-Dade, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, established more than a decade ago a standard procedure to identify and process the cases of succession that involve Cuban heirs on the island. (*The Miami Herald*, 15/10/07)

October 16: A trial to determine the fate of a 5-year-old girl caught in an international custody dispute came to an abrupt halt when attorneys for both sides announced they were turning to the appellate court. The Third District Court of Appeal dispensed with one of the legal maneuvers within hours, dealing a blow to Cuban father Rafael Izquierdo, who seeks to return to his country with the girl. Izquierdo's legal team had requested the upper court halt the second phase of the trial, because the father had already been found by a judge to be a fit parent. The appellate court declined to hear the case without elaboration. But because another appeal, filed by the Department of Children & Families, is still pending before the appellate court, the trial remains on hold. (*The Miami Herald*, 17/10/07)

October 16: Foreign policy experts and Cuban American political activists argued that the United States can no longer afford to maintain its policy of isolation toward Cuba -- a policy that many see as an outdated vestige of the Cold War. "The Cold War is over," said Wayne Smith, the former chief of the US Interests Section in Havana, at a meeting of Cuban policy experts in Washington. "Soviet troops are out of Cuba. Cuban troops are out of Africa. We must press for change." Smith's current group, the Washington-based Center for International Policy, hosted the conference to challenge the wisdom of the US approach toward Cuba -- an approach which consists of a near-total embargo on trade, a complete severance of official diplomatic relations and strict travel restrictions. (*IPS*, 18/10/07)

October 17: Increasing US reprisals against Cuba and stepped up persecution of foreign firms doing business with the island were denounced at the UN. A communique by the Cuban mission to the UN also warns of the theft of new trademarks and millions of dollars in Cuban funds frozen in the US as part of the blockade. Titled "Application of

the Bush Plan for the Re-colonization of Cuba. The US Stepped Up Blockade," the document accuses Washington of taking more reprisals against those doing business with the island. (*ACN*, 17/10/07)

October 17: Cuba can become a more important market for Iowa's agricultural commodities, say representatives of the Iowa Corn Growers Association and the Iowa Corn Promotion Board who traveled to Cuba with Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey. They were in Cuba from October 1 to October 5. "For the last decade, Iowa Corn and the Iowa Department of Agriculture have led a sustained effort to increase food and feed sales to Cuba," says Craig Floss, chief executive officer for ICGA and ICPB. "In the last marketing year, 95% of Cuba 's corn imports came from the US. That is real progress, given the legal restrictions on US-Cuba trade." Cuba's corn purchases this year could be nearly 40 million bushels, but Floss is even more enthusiastic about Cuba 's development as a market for distillers dried grains, or DDGs from Iowa 's ethanol industry. "Distillers dried grains was unknown in Cuba before 2004. Our work to introduce its use is paying off. Last year, the Cubans bought about 100,000 metric tons, and this year that is expected to double." (*Farm Progress*, 17/10/07)

October 17: Seven illegal Cuban immigrants who arrived two days ago in Puerto Rico from the Dominican Republic were rescued by Puerto Rican authorities. According to the Aguadilla police, the group, comprised of six men and a woman, was rescued in the small island of Desecho, in La Mona Channel, between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. (*EFE*, 17/10/07)

October 17: US farmers like Ralph Kaehler have done millions of dollars in business with the Cubans, sticking it out through the ups and downs of Fidel Castro's turbulent relations with his Yanqui neighbors to the north. In November, Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Gene Hugoson will go to Havana to check on the state's declining business prospects, and, with the aging dictator ailing, to see firsthand what a post-Castro business environment might look like. "A lot of it is just showing interest," Hugoson said. "I believe there will be more openness down the road." Hugoson, who was part of Jesse Ventura's trade mission in 2002, is no stranger to Cuba. But it is likely to be a very different Cuba he sees. "The communications back from Havana have been quiet lately," said Kaehler, a St. Charles farmer and a pioneer in cattle sales to Cuba. Kaehler and other frequent business visitors to Cuba report just as much hunger for food buys, but more weariness about depending on US suppliers who face many bureaucratic obstacles at home. "It's not easy," said Tim Courneya, vice president of the Frazee, Minnesota based Northarvest Bean Growers Association, which has seen US sales of dried beans to Cuba level off to around 10 percent of the 80,000- to 100,000-ton market they once hoped it could be. Still, he says, there's hope for more. Havana's International Trade Fair on November 5-10 Hugoson plans to attend is sponsored by the Cuban government. Nearly 2,000 companies from around the world are expected to attend. For Minnesota sellers like Kaehler, that means more competition for Cuba's limited food coffers. "All those other countries are sucking the money out," he said. (*Star Tribune*, 17/10/07)

October 17: The US military has expanded plans for a tent encampment to shelter migrants in the event of a Caribbean boat crisis -- now planning on paper a safe haven for up to 45,000 people. Since Fidel Castro became ill last year and ceded power in Cuba to his brother Raúl, the Bush administration has been preparing for a theoretical humanitarian relief mission that would accommodate 10,000 people. It could be used for people fleeing a political crisis as well as a natural disaster. Under the expansion outlined, the military is planning on paper for a second phase that would shelter another 35,000 migrants. Army Lt. Col. Ed Bush, a Guantánamo spokesman, said no contracts had been put out to bid -- and the estimated figure for the next phase based on a recent site analysis was \$110 million. "The military is considering the possibility of establishing a Leeward North site to house additional [35,000] migrants," he said by e-mail. "The cost estimate of \$110 million, not \$40 million, was determined via a site survey conducted by the military." But, he said, the decision on whether to go forward, including to seek bids, would not be made until after Phase I is finished next summer. "Bottom line, there are plans for Leeward North; it remains to be seen if it will ever need to be executed," Lt. Col. Bush added. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/10/07)

October 18: US President George W. Bush punished two perennial adversaries — Myanmar and Cuba — for alleged "human trafficking," the forced labor and prostitution that the United States calls a modern-day form of slavery. The Bush administration determined that Myanmar, also known as Burma, is ineligible for US aid for failing to meet the minimum standards of fighting trafficking or make significant efforts to do so. On the same grounds, Cuba's officials and employees will not be eligible for educational and cultural exchange programs. [[Trafficking in persons report 2007](#)] (*AP*, 19/10/07)

October 18: Oscar-winning actor and activist Danny Glover will attend the Hollywood premiere of the Cuban documentary, "The Trial: The Untold Story of the Cuban Five". The English version of "The Trial" is narrated by Glover, and is available at The National Committee to Free the Cuban Five, in San Francisco, California. "The Trial", produced in 2007 and directed by filmmaker Rolando Almirante, is a co-production of Cuba's film institute ICAIC and Telesur of Venezuela. It features interviews with Cuban and US experts who testified in the trial of the Five. (*ACN*, 18/10/07)

October 18: The Fifth Forum of the Cuban Civil Society Against the Blockade and Annexation met in Havana with the participation of a record 202 organizations and some 400 delegates. During the event, representatives from non-governmental organizations from the most diverse sectors of cultural, scientific and religious life on the island unanimously approved a final declaration condemning the US economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. "We are going to try to distribute this as an official document in the upcoming United Nations General Assembly," Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister said. The Head of the Cuban International Relations Department Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz spoke at the closing of the forum, calling on participants to continue to work towards spreading the truth on the impact of the blockade on Cuban society. [[Declaración final](#)] (*Granma*, 19/10/07)

October 19: US President George W. Bush is to unveil "new initiatives" to help Cubans and push for democracy in the communist-run nation, the White House said. Bush is scheduled to speak on Cuba policy at the State Department on October 24 where he will announce "new initiatives to help the people of Cuba," White House spokesman Tony Fratto said. "The President intends to emphasize the importance of democracy for the Cuban people and the role the international community can play in Cuba's transition, by insisting on free speech, free assembly, free and competitive elections, and the release of all political prisoners," Fratto said. The White House and State Department did not elaborate on the "new initiatives." Tom Casey, a State Department spokesman, said, "The United States wants to be able to be in a position to assist the Cuban people as they move through that transition" from nearly a five-decade rule by Castro. When asked whether a longstanding US economic embargo on Cuba should be lifted during the transition, Casey said, "We believe that what should be lifted is the longstanding embargo on the rights of the Cuban people that's been imposed by Fidel Castro." (*AFP*, 19/10/07)

October 19: On September 17, US Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez launched the 2007–2008 Heritage Foundation series "Cuba at the Crossroads," which explores the choices Cuba faces after the end of Fidel Castro's 50-year reign. The next event in the series will focus on the threat that Cuba currently poses to US national security through its activities in Latin America, intelligence operations, and relations with US enemies. Over the next few months, leaders from Congress, the Executive Branch, academia, and the media will meet at the Heritage Foundation to lead focused discussions on the potential role of the United States in shaping post-Castro Cuba, the future of US–Cuba relations, and the role a newly democratic Cuba might play in the hemisphere. [[Cuba at the Crossroads: the Treat to US National Security](#)] (*Hawaii Reporter*, 19/10/07)

October 20: Fidel Castro slammed US elections as fraud-plagued contests for millionaires, as he urged countrymen to vote in the Americas' only one-party communist system. "Our elections are the antithesis of those held in United States (...) There, first you have to be very rich, or have an enormous amount of money behind you," said Castro, 81, who 15 months ago handed over the reins of power to his brother Raul Castro after major intestinal surgery. In the United States "to be elected president, you need hundreds of millions (of dollars), which come straight out of the coffers of the big monopolies. A candidate can win who actually got a minority of the popular vote," Castro marvelled in a jab at US President George W. Bush who, thanks to the unusual US electoral college system, won the presidency in 2000 though Al Gore won the popular vote. "There is fraud, trickery, ethnic discrimination and even violence," Castro said of the US electoral system, in his latest missive in Granma, the Cuban Communist Party newspaper. [[The elections](#)] (*AFP*, 20/10/07)

October 21: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque affirmed the new anti-Cuba sanctions announced by US President George W. Bush will once again come up against the people's determination to be free. Shortly after having cast his vote in the municipal elections, Perez Roque told the local press, President Bush will announce new actions to tighten the nearly 50-decade-old economic blockade against the island. But, he stressed,

"plans and evil machinations to make the Cuban people surrender by hunger and diseases will plunge." (*Prensa Latina*, 21/10/07)

October 21: An ailing Fidel Castro cast his ballot in private on Sunday in Cuba's municipal elections, which he said were a rejection of U.S. pressures for political change in the communist state. "The commander in chief expressed his confidence in the massive and enthusiastic turnout of our people in these elections that are an outright rejection of (U.S. President George W.) Bush's threats," government-run media reported. "Bush is obsessed with Cuba," Castro said in a statement read out on state television. He criticized the war in Iraq and the torture of detainees at the US naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. [[Declaración del Comandante en Jefe](#)] (*Reuters*, 21/10/07)

October 21: Fifty-six Cuban migrants interdicted at sea in four incidents were repatriated, according to the US Coast Guard. Three suspected smugglers from those incidents were turned over to US Customs and Border Enforcement in Key West. The vessels were stopped south of Big Pine Key and Key West. (*The Miami Herald*, 23/10/07)

October 22: The Bush administration warned that failure by Congress to adopt a free trade agreement with Colombia would bolster the anti-American campaign of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns said that refusal by lawmakers to pass the agreement "will embolden someone like Hugo Chavez to think that he can make hay out of that crisis, and it will be a crisis if the free trade agreement does not pass." President Chavez, a fierce critic of American economic policies in Latin America, has championed his "Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas," which counts Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua as signatories, as an alternative to US free trade pacts. Burns said Chavez would gain a "public relations benefit" if the agreement is not passed. (*AP*, 22/10/07)

October 23: In Cuba, children under 8 and adults over 65 are allotted one liter of milk per week. For the rest of the Cuban population, milk is scarce. Growing the dairy industry is a priority for Cuba where "food is very precious," says Bill Northey, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, after his first visit to Havana. He sees a growing market for Iowa corn, distillers' grains, and other agriculture products as Cuban dairy and livestock production increase. Northey traveled to Cuba in early October with representatives of the Iowa Corn Growers Association and the Iowa Corn Promotion Board. "For the last decade, Iowa Corn and the Iowa Department of Agriculture have led a sustained effort to increase food and feed sales to Cuba," said Craig Floss, Iowa Corn chief executive officer. "Last market year, 95 percent of Cuba's corn imports came from the U.S. That is real progress, given the legal restrictions on US-Cuba trade." (*Agri News*, 23/10/07)

October 23: Fidel Castro wrote US President George W. Bush is threatening the world with nuclear war and famine — an attack on Washington a day before the White House plans to announce new plans to draw Cuba away from communism. "The danger of a massive world famine is aggravated by Mr. Bush's recent initiative to transform foods into fuel," Castro wrote in Cuban news media, referring to US support for using corn and

other food crops to produce gasoline substitutes. The brief essay titled "Bush, Hunger and Death" also alleged that Bush "threatens humanity with World War III, this time using atomic weapons." [[Bush, Hunger and Death](#)] (AP, 23/10/07)

October 24: A national fathers' rights group has taken on the cause of a Cuban dad trying to gain custody of his daughter in South Florida, an effort that included sit-downs with key players in the case. Dr. Ned Holstein, president of the Boston-based nonprofit Fathers & Families, flew to Miami to meet with Rafael Izquierdo, the father of the 5-year-old girl at the center of the dispute. Holstein also met staff members at the Department of Children & Families and unsuccessfully sought to have the department drop its efforts to keep the girl in the United States. "I don't think there's bad faith here," said Holstein, who said members and supporters of his group have sent more than 2,000 letters to Governor Charlie Crist's office and the DCF in recent weeks. "But I think we're involved in a culture in which a father is considered irrelevant." (*The Miami Herald*, 25/10/07)

October 24: US President George W. Bush issued a stern warning that the United States will not accept a political transition in Cuba in which power merely shifts from one Castro brother to another rather than to the Cuban people. "The day is coming when the Cuban people will chart their own course," Bush said. Their new direction, he added, should be toward democracy. But Cuba specialists said the president's warning seemed oddly timed and his analysis outdated, part of a policy that is meant to isolate Cuba but that increasingly leaves the United States as the international odd man out. While administration officials said Bush's speech was aimed at the Cuban people, and would be heard by radio in the island, it appeared equally directed at the Cuban-Americans who form a powerful Republican voting bloc in Florida, and more broadly at US Conservatives, for whom fervent opposition to Fidel Castro has long been an article of faith. Bush's speech amounted to a call for Cubans to continue to resist. Addressing the military and police, he said they would have a place in a "new Cuba." [[US President discusses Cuba policy](#)] (*International Herald Tribune*, 24/10/07)

October 24: Cuba accused President Bush of threatening to take over the communist island by force in response to the U.S. leader's call for change in the country. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque called Bush's plans the "equivalent to the re-conquest of Cuba by force" and said they "give an idea of the level of frustration, of desperation and of personal hatred toward Cuba." He said most Cubans back the 1959 revolution led by Castro, making the idea of an internal uprising in the name of democracy a "fantasy" and "politically impossible." He added that thousands of Cubans would take up arms to defend their homeland in the face of a US invasion. Perez Roque's remarks echoed those of the ailing Castro himself, who wrote in newspaper columns this week that "Bush is obsessed with Cuba." [[Conferencia de prensa](#)] (*Reuters*, 25/10/07)

October 24: In an unprecedented event for Cuba's government-run media, Cuban television broadcast a long fragment of President Bush's speech about the island -- without interruptions. The news program Mesa Redonda opened at 6:30 p.m. with the last 15 minutes of Bush's speech at the State Department, taken from CNN en Español. The president's speech lasted more than 30 minutes. In the portion of the speech broadcast in

Cuba, Bush speaks to those who could be listening or watching him "with great risk" inside the island. The broadcast surprised the Cuban public, among them some members of the internal opposition parties. A group of 20 dissidents had viewed the broadcast from the US Interests Section in Havana. "Without a doubt this is an unexpected, novel and unusual event" said René Gomez Manzano, a dissident lawyer from Havana. "What we always see here is the refutation (...) but not a speech made by the same people who are refuted, in their own voice." (*The Miami Herald*, 25/10/07)

October 25: Cuban official media published a press conference delivered by Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, as the communist government's official statement responding the US President's October 24th speech. In an unprecedented event, Cuba's government-run media also published fragments of President Bush's speech about the island. [[Conferencia de prensa](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 25/10/07)

October 25: Bill Richardson, governor of the US state of New Mexico, responding to President George W. Bush's statements on Cuba earlier in the day, said that the US embargo of the island had failed. Richardson, who is in the race to become the Democratic Party presidential candidate, told the CNN network that if he were to become president, he would get rid of the measures adopted by Bush for strengthening the so-called embargo. He added that, with the purpose of creating a transition, he would remove the restrictions on travel to the island and would encourage trade in order to open up a dialogue with the Cuban government, because the punitive measures of more than 40 years have failed. Another Democratic contender, Democrat Chris Dodd, who supports easing travel restrictions, said Bush "continues to allow his fixation with the Castro brothers to stand in the way of a sensible policy with respect to Cuba. Nearly 50 years of a failed Cuba policy must end." (*Granma International*, 25/10/07)

October 25: A national rally against the latest speech by US President George W. Bush was held at Playa Giron, where, during the April, 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, "the US Empire received its most resounding military defeat in the Western Hemisphere", *Granma* newspaper said. Cuban Vicepresident José Ramón Fernández addressed a crowd of over 2,000 local residents. "Cuba will never surrender to the US", Fernández said. Cuban national and international television and radio stations broadcast the rally. (*ACN*, 25/10/07)

October 26: Alicia Alonso, the nearly blind matriarch of Cuban ballet, denounced US sanctions as an "inhuman and unjustifiable siege" that has hindered cultural ties between the United States and Cuba. Alonso, 85, called on American artists and intellectuals to speak out against the US embargo that has banned trade with Fidel Castro's communist government and restricted travel between the two countries since the early 1960s. "I ask you to raise your voices to reject so unfair a measure and demand the end to this inhuman and unjustifiable siege," she said in a statement read out for her at a news conference. (*Reuters*, 26/10/07)

October 27: As winds gusted on Tavernier Key, Joe Zumpano and an associate found themselves helping rescue about 22 Cuban migrants stranded during a storm on an islet

off Key Largo. The men rushed to a sportfishing boat. Zumpano, who's also a master captain US merchant marine, scanned the waters between mainland and Tavernier Key. They found the migrants by following the glimpse of a dim light on an islet, but shallow water prevented them from getting too close. Zumpano shouted: "Who are you?" The huddled crowd replied in Spanish: "Somos Cubanos" ("We are Cubans"). "Their desperation brought chills down my spine," said Zumpano. Some migrants were suffering from dehydration. Zumpano circled the islet for more than an hour waiting for the Coast Guard. He felt helpless, but gave them all one bit of good news: He told them he was a witness to their landing on US soil. Coast Guard Petty Officer Barry Bena said they transported the migrants to the mainland and turned them over to Border Patrol. "These people to me represent the kind of human suffering I have been very affected by," said Zumpano, whose mother is a Cuban immigrant who left her homeland in 1960 after Fidel Castro's officers arrested her father, a government treasurer. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/10/07)

October 28: Fidel Castro poked fun at President George W. Bush for proclaiming "Long Live Free Cuba," likening it to Spain's king saying the same during his colonial rule over the island. Bush said the transfer of power from the ailing Fidel Castro to his brother Raul as of July 2006 was unacceptable, proclaiming liberty was more important than stability and ending his comments in the speech to the US State Department with "Viva Cuba Libre." The slogan was first used by Cuban independence fighters, known as Mambises, in 1868, as they began their decades-long war against Spain's colonial rule. It was also the battle cry of Fidel Castro's guerrilla fighters in the late 1950s. Raul Castro often ends speeches with the slogan instead of Fidel Castro's "Motherland or Death." "I never imagined I would hear the words coming from the mouth of a U.S. president 139 years later," Castro said in an essay titled "Bush, Mambi?" carried by the official media. "It's as if a king in those times, or his governor, proclaimed 'Viva Cuba Libre,'" Castro said. [[Bush, Mambi?](#)] (*Reuters*, 28/10/07)

October 28: A recent visit to Cuba by members of Plantation United Methodist Church began with a blessing three days before takeoff. "To serve one another and serve the world, we make ready to leave this place so that all our members shall serve our Cuban sister church," the Reverend Timothy Smiley said during the official commission of the church's mission team to Iglesia Metodista in Consolación del Sur. The city, founded in 1690 in Pinar del Rio Province southwest of Havana, is home to many clandestine churches attended in private residences, said Smiley's wife, Candy Smiley, who, with member Jan Hamilton, helped establish the mission group and the ties with the Cuban church in 2002. Hamilton said the Plantation church, which also has a prayer partner program with sister church members, made visits to Cuba in 2004 and twice in 2005. Members Misty Jacobs, Christy Allen and Steve Rivera, all Plantation residents, left Florida on the most recent trip October 10-15 with seven suitcases packed with medical and personal hygiene supplies, school supplies, clothing, books and other hard-to-get items on the Communist-controlled island. Hamilton said the team visited on temporary religious visas. During their stay, Rivera said, the team experienced no resistance from Cuban government officials and the sister church members were gracious and welcoming. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/10/07)

October 29: A group of Cuban scientists, all from Ciudad de La Habana, Cuba, have developed a diagnostic composition comprising a protein. An abstract of the invention was released by the US Patent & Trademark Office. The inventors were issued US Patent No. 7,279,164 on October 9. The patent has been assigned to Centro de Ingenieria Genetica y Biotecnologia, Ciudad de La Habana. (*US Fed News*, 29/10/07)

October 30: Oscar Elías Biscet, a Cuban dissident who has spent much of the past decade in prison and is one of Fidel Castro's harshest and best-known critics, is to receive a Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by President Bush, the White House announced. Confined to a Cuban maximum security prison since 2003, Biscet was one of eight people awarded the presidential medal -- the highest US government award given to a civilian, along with the Congressional Gold Medal. Miami Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen had lobbied the White House to give the medal to Biscet. The award ceremony is scheduled for November 5. Bush mentioned Biscet in a speech, where he cited Cuba's human rights record to justify his continued tough stance against the Castro government. (*The Miami Herald*, 30/10/07)

October 30: The UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to urge the United States to lift its four-decade-old embargo against Cuba in a resolution adopted for the 16th consecutive year. The measure is non-binding and such moves in the past have had no impact on US policy. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque denounced the "arrogance and political blindness" of Washington in ignoring 15 similar resolutions passed since 1992. The resolution, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba," was passed with 184 votes in favor, four against and one abstention. Voting "no" with the United States were Israel, Palau and the Marshall Islands. Micronesia abstained. (*Reuters*, 30/10/07)

October 30: Addressing the UN General Assembly on the voting of the US embargo against Cuba, Ronald Godard, the US State Department's senior advisor for Latin American affairs, blamed the communist regime for the country's woes. "According to the Cuban Government's own trade statistics (...) we are one of Cuba's largest suppliers of food and one of Cuba's largest trading partners", Godard said. "In 2006 alone, we authorized the provision of over \$270 million of food and medicines by private citizens and organizations, making the American people the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people in the entire world", he added. "Cuba's problems derive not from any decision of the United States, but from the embargo on freedom that the Cuban regime has imposed on its own people," he said. "We call on the international community to join together in demanding that the Cuban government unconditionally release all political prisoners as the essential step in beginning a process that restores to the Cuban people their basic human rights," he told the assembly. (*AFP*, 30/10/07)

October 30: Cuba confirmed it has received an invitation to play in the 2009 World Baseball Classic, but wouldn't say whether it plans to participate. Jose Ramon Fernandez, a Cuban vice president and head of the island's Olympic Committee, told the press that

officials received an invitation from Major League Baseball to compete in the second installment of the international tournament. "We at the Cuban Olympic Committee have officially received the invitation for the second World Baseball Classic," Fernandez said. He would not say when the invitation arrived, nor respond to further questions. Major League Baseball officials have said for weeks that an invitation was sent to Cuba, but that they have yet to receive a response. MLB and its players' association jointly ran the first edition of the WBC last year. It appears the second WBC will be played in March 2009. In December 2005, the US Treasury Department denied the communist-run island a permit to participate after Fidel Castro had personally confirmed his country's team would accept American invitations to play. It took an appeal by Major League Baseball and a promise by Cuba that any winnings would go to Hurricane Katrina relief --thus ensuring no money went to Castro's government-- to reverse that decision. (AP, 30/10/07)

October 30: Cuba's foreign minister warned that his country is prepared to defend itself if the United States tries to bring regime change by force, saying a conflict would jeopardize US stability. "We are not threatening and we never bluff," Felipe Perez Roque said in an interview with the press. "We respect the United States, but we demand respect for ourselves, and we would defend our country from an attempt to have foreign aggression." He claimed that President Bush's recent major policy speech on Cuba indicated the US might be prepared to use force. Perez Roque singled out a comment from Bush's speech: "The operative word in our future dealings with Cuba is not stability. The operative word is freedom." "If that's the expression of the attempt to bring about a regime change by force in Cuba, that will clash with the resilience of the Cuban people, and the people are prepared," Perez Roque said. In Cuba, he said, more than 90 percent of the 11.5 million people support "the genuine revolution" that began in 1959 when Castro toppled dictator Fulgencio Batista. The only "freedom" that Cubans can imagine Bush pursuing, Perez Roque added, "would be similar to the one he has taken to Iraq," where war has continued for years. (AP, 31/10/07)

October 30: Cigar maker Habanos S.A., jointly owned by the Cuban government and Altadis, is pursuing a lawsuit in the United States over the "Guantanamera" brand name, the state-run press reported. The legal director of Habanos S.A., Adargelio Garrido, told the daily Juventud Rebelde that there is "a lawsuit that is beginning" regarding Guantanamera, a brand name launched in 2002. "A US firm based in Miami asked to register it and we had to start legal action against them," he said. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/10/07)

