

FOCAL Chronicle on Cuba November 2001

Domestic Affairs

November 1: A trial opened in the City of Matanzas for the six Cubans who built the ill-fated boat that Elián González and 13 other illegal immigrants boarded in 1999. The trial started shortly after the five defendants, charged with "illegal exit" went on a hunger strike for almost a week demanding to be freed or tried, said their relatives. (El Nuevo Herald, 2/11/01)

November 4: Hurricane Michelle tore across the island with winds of over 210 km/h. The provinces of Matanzas, Villa Clara, Cienfuegos and the Isle of Youth were the hardest hit. Four deaths have been reported. (Granma, 5-6/11/01)

November 17: The dissident organization Proyecto Demócrata Cubano (PDC) has made an "urgent appeal" to the international community for humanitarian aid for the victims of Hurricane Michelle. The group also criticized the "harsh economic situation" of the country and the government's refusal to declare a state of disaster. (El Nuevo Herald, 17/11/01)

November 17: At a meeting in Havana on the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), President Fidel Castro states that the FTAA "is not only a free trade agreement, but also a geo-strategic agreement for the hegemony of the United States." (Granma International, 20/11/01)

November 22: Osvaldo Payá Sardiñas, Coordinator of the Movimiento Cristiano Liberación condemned the obstacles introduced by the Cuban government preventing him from honouring an invitation by the Mexican Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). He also challenged the government to make its decision public. (El Nuevo Herald, 23/11/01)

November 23: Cuba frees dissident union activist José González Bridón. González Bridón, head of an opposition group called the Confederation of Democratic Workers in Cuba, was arrested last December and sentenced to two years in May for the crime of "spreading false information". (Reuters, 23/11/01)

November 23: Cuban authorities announced on national television the names of 30 people who shipwrecked in the Florida Straits attempting to reach US coasts illegally. (El Nuevo Herald, 24/11/01)

November 24: Dissident leader Osvaldo Payá Sardiñas, Coordinator of the Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, criticized the Cuban government for trying to obstruct a political change project that his organization and 116 other dissident groups are carrying out on the island. To that end the government has resorted to threats, pressures and offers of migration opportunities. (El Nuevo Herald, 25/11/01)

November 25: The International Association of Athletics Federations informs that jump world record holder Javier Sotomayor failed a dope test for the banned steroid nandrolone at a meeting in Tenerife, Spain, in July. (Reuters, 25/11/01)

November 30: It has been known that in early November a Panamanian businessman, Alejandro Abood, and several high-ranking officials from the Cuban Council of State were arrested on the island for spying for the United States. Documents from the Council of State and other information, as well as phone and computer connections in Castro's own residence could have

been spied on. Havana and Panama are tight-lipped about the incidence. (The Miami Herald, 30/11/01)

Economy

November 2: Fidel Castro appeared on Cuban television to provide an update on the country's situation after the September 11 terrorist attacks. He said the current world economic crisis was in place prior to that date and discussed its impact on Cuba. He also announced that the September events will have negative consequences for the tourism industry and predicted a growth of only 3% to 6%. He also announced that the exchange rate will be stabilized at 26 pesos for \$US dollar; and that Cuba will overcome the crisis. (Granma, 3/11/01)

November 8: A report on the extent of damages caused by Hurricane Michelle that hit the island last November 4 has been released: 45,000 homes; 780 industrial facilities; 145 agricultural and livestock facilities; 82 health care centres; 500 schools. (El Nuevo Herald, 8/11/01)

November 17: Business representatives from about 20 Ibero-American countries attended the II Forum Iberoeka 2001, in Havana. The Forum serves as an opportunity for exchanges on applied technologies in the areas of health, pharmaceutical industry and biotechnology. (El Nuevo Herald, 17/11/01)

November 19: For the first time ever, the Drilling and Oil Extraction Company (Empresa de Perforación y Extracción de Petróleo) operating in western Cuba produced one million tonnes of crude oil. (Trabajadores, 19/11/01)

November 20: The III National Inspection of Internal Administrative Control carried out by the National Association of Cuban Economists (ANEC) in conjunction with the ministries of Finance and Prices and Auditing and Control showed, in its preliminary results, that 16% of the entities inspected were "without control" or "lacking control", which indicates that 568 enterprises operating both in local and hard currency do not monitor their resources. In regards to prices, 4,611 irregularities were detected in the 11,017 entities inspected by Friday 16, including prices not officially approved or hidden to the customer, sale of non designated products, expired or poor quality merchandise, among others. Of 10,772 businesses evaluated with regard to pricing discipline, 44% received a mark of "Deficient" or "Average". (Juventud Rebelde, 11/20/01)

November 20: More than 600,000 timber-yielding trees were knocked down by Hurricane Michelle, while 85,903 m3 of non timber-yielding trees were used for firewood. (Juventud Rebelde, 20/11/01)

November 20: In the wake of Hurricane Michelle electric power services remained disabled in the municipalities of Los Arabos, Calimete and Ciénaga de Zapata. Services were partially restored in other regions: Pedro Betancourt, 12%; Martí, 19%, Perico, 24%; Colón, 33%; and Jovellanos 35%. Services had been fully restored only in Varadero. The Municipality of Matanzas continued its efforts to restore services in the localities of Corral Nuevo, Mena and Las Marías. (Granma, 20/11/01)

November 20: The Food Industry has resumed production of bread and milk after being suspended as a result of Hurricane Michelle. (Granma, 20/11/01) 20: Trade Fair ExpoCuba 2001 opened in Madrid with the participation of 27 Cuban companies. (Juventud Rebelde, 20/11/01)

November 21: The China-Cuba Joint Economic Cooperation Commission held its XIV session in Beijing. Cuban Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas, and China's Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Shi Guangsheng, led their respective delegations. (Juventud

Rebelde, 21/11/01) 21: Cuba's finance minister, Manuel Millares, says he hopes Cuban economy would grow at least 3 percent in 2001. (Reuters, 21/11/01)

November 22: The Minister of Tourism, Ibrahim Ferradaz, has acknowledged that the year's goal of 2 million tourists will not be met. The amazing annual growth rate of this sector -18%-- that pulls and stimulates the economy, will decrease. Cuba will have to resign itself to a figure of 1,8-1,9 million visitors, which would mean a growth rate of 3 to 4% in relation to last year. Nickel has fallen almost in half, \$4,715 a ton, down from \$8,640. Sales abroad of other products, such as steel, tobacco and cement, have decreased in the last quarter. Nevertheless, other exports such as fishing products have not been affected and there is no decrease expected for next year. (Radio Progreso, Miami, 22/11/01)

November 22: Edildo Campanioni Moreno, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) in Ciego de Avila province, warns that the province will produce less sugar in the upcoming harvest since more than 50,000 hectares were left unplanted due to a shortage of seeds and staff. He also said that cropping efficiency would drop as well due to the poor quality of the cane, inadequate attention and lack of weed control. (El Nuevo Herald, 22/11/01)

November 23: Bernard Thibault, president of Thibault Messier Savard (TMS), said in an interview that his company has already invested \$50 million in a first hotel resort managed by the Canadians in Cuba. The "El Senador" is situated on the Cayo Coco peninsula, in eastern Cuba. (The Ottawa Citizen, 24/11/01)

November 23: The sugar harvest has started ahead of schedule in several mills in the areas stricken by Hurricane Michelle. (Reuters, 23/11/01)

November 23: Sherritt International Corporation announces that due to the impact on the Corporation's earnings of the decline in the prices of oil, nickel and cobalt, as well as the uncertain outlook for these commodities, the Board of Directors has decided to discontinue payment of a quarterly dividend at this time and to retain earnings to fund the growth of its businesses. For the nine months ended September 30, 2001, Sherritt's net earnings were \$60.8 million compared with net earnings of \$96.1 million for the same period in 2000. During the current quarter, commodity prices have continued to erode. (Canadian News Wire, 23/11/01)

November 25: A proposal has been tabled at the Global Environment Facility Trust Fund for the rehabilitation of the plains south of Vueltaabajo (region of Cuba's westernmost province of Pinar del Rio). Soil degradation extends over 500,000 hectares (35% of the territory). Of the 520 species of flora in the white sands of the southwestern plains, 177 are endemic and 90 are endangered. (Juventud Rebelde, 25/11/01)

November 26: Guyana's foreign trade minister, Clement J. Roe, heads the talks of the joint inter-governmental commission Guyana-Cuba, in Havana. (Radio Habana Cuba, 24/11/01)

November 27: The IX Laos-Cuba Joint Intergovernmental Committee for economic and scientific cooperation continued its meetings. Noemí Benítez, Vice-Minister for Foreign Investments headed the Cuban delegation. (Juventud Rebelde, 27/11/01)

Exile Community

November 21: Peruvian President, Alejandro Toledo, received Carlos Alberto Montaner, President of [Unión Liberal Cubana](#), at the Government's headquarters. Montaner delivered a message to the President which was addressed to the XI Ibero-American Summit and signed by

over 100 Cuba-based opposition organizations, calling for solidarity with the democratic cause on the island. (El Nuevo Herald, 22/11/01)

November 26: The trial against former Cuban nurse, Eriberto Mederos, charged with torturing political prisoners in Cuba, has been postponed until next year so that the defence lawyer can travel to the island to find witnesses. Federal Judge Alan Gold set July 15, 2002 as a tentative date for the trial and left the door open for the defence to use the testimony of witnesses in Cuba via teleconference. (El Nuevo Herald, 27/ 11/01)

Foreign Relations

November 7: Japan and Cuba signed official documents in which Japan commits to providing humanitarian assistance to the island to help recover from the devastations caused by Hurricane Michelle. The aid amounts to \$176,312, including four ambulances and medical equipment. (AFP, 6/12/01)

November 9: An interagency mission including representatives and staff of six United Nations organizations present in Cuba (UNDP, UNICEF, World Food Programme, FAO, UNESCO, and WHO/PAHO) visited the areas hardest hit by Michelle in order to evaluate the possibility of lending assistance to the Government of Cuba in the midst of its extraordinary efforts to recover from the storm. (United Nations, 9/11/01)

November 13: Cuba and Canada sign a memorandum of understanding on a cooperation project between Canada and the Cuban Education Ministry (MINED), worth 2m Canadian dollars. The document was signed in Havana by Robert Anderson, vice-president of the Americas department of the Canadian Agency for International Development, and Ernesto Senti, acting minister for Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation (MINVEC). (Prensa Latina, 13/11/01)

November 14: After a meeting in New York, Javier Solana; Louis Michel, Belgium's Foreign Minister (whose country currently holds the Presidency of the UE); Chris Patten European Commissioner for Foreign Relations; and Felipe Pérez Roque Cuban Foreign Minister, have agreed to resume high-level political dialogue under no preset conditions at the end of this month. (AFP, 14/11/01)

November 19: Oaxaca, a southern Mexican state, has donated 30 tonnes of food to help the island recover from the damages caused by Hurricane Michelle. (Agencia de Información Nacional, 19/11/01)

November 19: It's been made known at the UN that a letter has been sent by the Government of Panama to the Secretary General, Kofi Annan, which states that Cuba has made "careless and offensive statements" regarding the lawsuit against the alleged terrorist Luis Posada Carriles and three other Cuban-Americans in Panama. "Speculating irresponsibly the Government of Cuba distorts the facts on the prudence and moderation in which the trial is being conducted", says the official statement delivered by Panama's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ramón Morales. (EFE, 20/11/01)

November 19: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov arrives in Havana to hold consultations on urgent matters. "Cuba is the only country which I was instructed to visit by the leadership after the Russian-U.S. summit." (TASS, 20/11/01)

November 20: North Korea and Cuba signed an agreement aimed at boosting economic and scientific ties. (EFE, 20/11/01)

November 20: In a press conference Uruguay's President Jorge Batlle insisted on the inclusion of Cuba into the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). (AFP, 21/11/01)

November 20: The image of Fidel Castro held by most Latin Americans is largely negative, according to a poll released by Sergio Bendixen, who organized the survey. The poll, which has a margin of error of one percent, consisted of 10,248 interviews conducted between April and August in Argentina, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Guatemala. The U.S. sample was made up of Hispanics in Miami, New York and Los Angeles. The overwhelming majority of respondents -- between 63 and 82 percent -- in seven of the eight countries said they had a negative opinion of Castro -- although his name recognition remained high. Only in Argentina did the positive impressions outweigh the negative; 53 percent of respondents said they had a positive image of the Cuban president. (The Miami Herald 21/11/01)

November 21: It has been announced that the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) will donate \$500,000 dollars in aid to Cuba for the victims of Hurricane Michelle. (Notimex, 21/11/01)

November 21: The Ibero American ministers of economy, gathered in Lima, pleaded for Cuba's access to international financial institutions and the removal of obstacles that prevent the island from obtaining financial credit due to the US-imposed economic embargo. (AFP, 21/11/01)

November 22: Jacques Diouf, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), announced that FAO would help Cuba recover from the damage to the island's agricultural sector caused by Hurricane Michelle. (Granma, 22/11/01)

November 23: Cuba's President, Fidel Castro, sends a letter to Alejandro Toledo, President of Peru, saying he would not be able to attend the XI Ibero American Summit in Lima after Hurricane Michelle. It is his first time away from a summit of Latin American nations and Spain. The Peruvian government says it would send a shipment of humanitarian aid to Cuba, which was ravaged by Hurricane Michelle. (Reuters, EFE, 23/11/01)

November 24: Cuban Minister of Government, Ricardo Cabrisas, begins a four-day official visit to Russia. According to Moscow's diplomatic sources, the aim of the visit is to analyze issues related to bilateral economic cooperation between both nations. The Cuban minister of government met with his Russian counterpart, Serguei Shoigu, as well as with other Russian representatives of important ministries including economic development, trade and health. (Radio Habana Cuba, 24/11/01)

November 24: Mexican Foreign Minister, Jorge Castañeda, said in Lima that "Mexico-Cuba relations are excellent and that there are continuous contacts and visits in both directions". He also announced that Mexico would assist Cuba in the wake of Hurricane Michelle. In regards to President's Fox visit to the island, Castañeda said that the most convenient time for both nations will be carefully chosen but "it will definitely be during the first quarter of 2002". (Notimex, 24/11/01)

November 26: Belgium's Foreign Minister, Louis Michel, will not attend the meeting that will reopen the political dialogue between the EU and Cuba. Instead, Jan De Bock, General Secretary of Belgium's Foreign Minister (whose country currently holds the Presidency of the EU) will lead a delegation to Havana. (El Nuevo Herald, 27/11/01)

November 27: Nauru and Cuba to formalise diplomatic ties. The move follows a meeting in New York between Nauru's president, Rene Harris, and Cuba's foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque. The two countries have been discussing a proposal for a Technical and Economic Cooperation Agreement since April. (Radio Australia News, 27/11/01)

November 27: The Government of Bahamas has repatriated a group of 35 Cubans who remained in custody for more than six months at a detention Centre in Nassau. The group had requested humanitarian visas for the United States. A commercial airliner took off early morning with the cargo of all 35 people including an 8-year-old child. (El Nuevo Herald, 28, 11/01)

November 29: Mexican Labour and Social Welfare Secretary Carlos María Abascal arrived in Havana to sign a technical cooperation agreement with Cuba that will strengthen the ties between Mexico and Cuba's Labour Ministries. (Prensa Latina, 29/11/01)

November 29: A planeload of relief supplies sent from South Florida is on its way to Cuba. It is waiting for final permission from the Cuban Government. Catholic Charities has assembled 61,000 pounds of supplies to help the Cuban people after Hurricane Michelle. Once in Cuba the supplies will be distributed by Caritas Cuba, an agency of the Catholic Church. (The Miami Herald, 29/11/01)

November 30: The State of Qatar has donated \$1 million dollars in cash to help the island recover in the wake Hurricane Michelle. (AFP, 30/11/01)

November 30: A European Union delegation arrived in Havana to reopen political consultations with the island. The talks, to be held without any prerequisites, will cover every topic, including bilateral relations, human rights, cooperation, trade issues and the US embargo, the outcomes of the past meeting the World Trade Organization (WTO) held in Qatar, the fight against terrorism and the European common position on Cuba. As a prerequisite for modifying its common position on Cuba, the 15-nation bloc is asking the Cuban government to sign the UN Convention and two other protocols on civil and political rights; to sign the UN Convention on social, economic and cultural rights; to free all political prisoners (about 260); and to put a moratorium or abolish altogether the death penalty. For its part, Cuba wants to ensure that the EU will not impose any precondition on the island's candidacy to the Cotonu agreement on the EU's economic cooperation with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and South Pacific known as the ACP group which would grant the island access to European funds. Presently, Cuba only receives humanitarian aid from the EU. (AFP, 30/11/01)

Security

November 24: For the first time since the arrest of Ana Belén Montes [see also Chronicle on Cuba, September, 2001) a Cuban high official refers to the issue. Vice President Carlos Lage, asked at a news conference in Lima, answers: "We have read this news too. It remains to be seen, to be known and to be confirmed if what has been said publicly corresponds to the truth." (...) "Our foreign policy is not one of espionage, it is not a policy of knowing North American policy interests, strategy, arms, development. All that is lies and fallacy". (Reuters, 24/11/01)

Terrorism

November 1: Cuban authorities have initiated a trial against three Guatemalans arrested in 1998, charged with attempting to sneak explosives onto the island as part of a campaign of violence to destabilize the government of Fidel Castro. Cuba affirms that the accused were part of a larger plot organized by Cuban exiles to undermine the island's government. (El Nuevo Herald, 2/11/01)

November 2: In a Cuban national television appearance, Fidel Castro, speaking on the US war against terrorism, said: "We insisted on the need to oppose terrorism and war. Never were we motivated by revenge or hatred against the United States. With sadness I reflected on what I thought to be a mistake but never was I rude nor uttered any insult against anyone. I have said many times to those involved in the battle of ideas that there is no need to hurt anybody's

feelings. We should instead focus on the facts, avoid hurtful verbal assaults, and be calm and objective in our judgment. That's what sustains our moral strength and nobody should doubt our solid and sincere position." (Granma, 4/11/01)

November 13: The Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs, Felipe Pérez Roque, condemned the war against Afghanistan and said "no one has the right to murder children, nor to send millions of refugees into poverty and death, worsening the humanitarian situation." He advocated for a UN-coordinated action instead of the US military attacks. "Our objective should be the absolute eradication of terrorism and its causes, not the hegemonic assertion of one superpower, making us all accomplices of its arrogance and arbitrariness." (Granma, 14/11/01)

November 16: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, leading the island's delegation to the 56th Session of the UN General Assembly, formally presents three international conventions against terrorism conventions at UN Headquarters in New York City. (Radio Habana Cuba, 16/11/01)

November 19: José Rodríguez Dueñas, director of the Centro Nacional de Seguridad Biológica states that there has been no misuse of biological agents for military purposes in Cuba, and that the country is in full compliance with international conventions. [see also Chronicle on Cuba, October 2001]. "Our philosophy is non-aggressive, and we are very strict when it comes to complying with international conventions, which accept the manipulation of microorganisms or biological agents for prophylactic and peaceful purposes." (International Press Service, 19/11/01)

November 20: Representatives of the Colombian government and of the National Liberation Army (ELN), met in Havana in an effort to advance the peace process. Since peace negotiations started in that country, Cuba has offered to host such meetings "without intervening in the process in any way". The Government of Bogotá confirmed the Havana meeting was "a formal work meeting aimed at reopening the peace talks". (World Data Service, 20/11/01)

November 24: Cuba signs a declaration against terrorism during the XI Ibero-American Summit in Lima. Vice President Carlos Lage states during the debate that took place: "We would remind you all of the debate that ensued when the proposal to condemn terrorism against Spain was presented as a resolution," said Lage. Cuba at that time disagreed with the resolution because it singled out only Spain for consideration. (Radio Habana Cuba, 24/11/01)

November 26: Pentagon officials begin designing military tribunals for suspected terrorists. They are considering the possibility of trials on ships at sea or on United States installations, like the naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. (The New York Times, 26/11/01)

November 27: Assistant State Secretary for the Western Hemisphere, Lino Gutiérrez, said: "The support of the Hemisphere (on the war against terrorism) has been broad-based and unwavering, with the usual exception of Cuba, whose Foreign Minister, in a speech to the United Nations last week, accused the U.S. and its allies of "targeting Afghan babies." (El Nuevo Herald, 28/11/01)

November 28: Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque says that Cuba has provided extensive assistance on terrorism to the US authorities. Saying he was "not authorized" to disclose details, Perez Roque said "categorically, yes," Cuba had provided "more information than you can imagine," including intelligence about possible future attacks. (The Washington Post, 28/11/01)

November 29: Cuba has endorsed the 12 international agreements against terrorism. According to the Cuban Foreign Ministry, the Cuban Ambassador to Canada delivered the last of such instruments at the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). (Prensa Latina, 3/12/01)

US-Cuba Relations

November 1: The twice-daily Continental Airlines flights, between Miami and Havana begin. This service will serve Cuban-Americans who visit family on the island each year as well as Americans with special permission to travel to Cuba. (BBC, 1/11/01)

November 7: The government of the United States has offered Cuba humanitarian assistance in the wake of Hurricane Michelle, in response to Cuba's gesture after the September 11 attacks [see also Chronicle on Cuba, September 2001]. (ANSA, 7/11/01)

November 7: The Senate Agriculture Committee votes to allow private American banks to finance sales of food to Cuba, potentially removing the main obstacle preventing such deals. The sales were restricted because no financing by the United States government or private American banks was permitted. This provision deals only with private banks. The vote came as the State Department announced the United States would offer food and other aid to Cuba to recover from Hurricane Michelle. (Sun Sentinel, 8/11/01)

November 8: The Cuban Government thanked the US Government in a diplomatic note for its willingness to assess aid necessities promptly, with a view to providing possible humanitarian aid to help the island recover from the damages caused by Hurricane Michelle. The note adds that the most useful thing for Cuba would be, "as an exceptional measure" to allow Cuban public companies to purchase "in an expeditious manner specific quantities of foodstuffs, medicine and raw materials to be used for restocking the reserves we are now using, so that we will be prepared for any new natural disaster that may emerge". (Información MINREX, 8/11/01)

November 15: US Administration and Congressional sources reveal that Cuba has opened talks with the United States on the purchase of millions of dollars of food and medicine. Cuban officials have presented a list of goods for examination by U.S. officials and have been in contact with 15 agricultural companies and 15 firms that produce pharmaceuticals or medical supplies. (The Washington Post, 16/11/01)

November 16: U.S. Congressman William Delahunt and expert Philip Peters, attending a regional drugs conference in Havana, advocate greater cooperation with Cuba in the international battle on drugs. Meanwhile, Ricardo Alarcón, president of the National Assembly of People's Power informs the press that he could see no reason for this not being the case, reaffirming that the island has always expressed its willingness to reach bilateral agreements on this issue. "The only reasons, the only objections, have come from the same minority group that opposes migration agreements and attempts to torpedo any collaboration between the two countries," highlighted Alarcón. He added that in his opinion "this is a senseless policy and against U.S. interests." (Granma International, 16/11/01)

November 16: Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque tells a news conference in New York, where he was taking part in the U.N. General Assembly: "I think normal relations between Cuba and the United States - for which Cuba is prepared and based on respect and non-interference in the each other's internal affairs - should not depend on hurricanes." (EFE, 16/11/01)

November 17: In a speech that began late day before, Fidel Castro speaks for the first time about US food sales to Cuba: "It's a good gesture", he said. He also removed a major obstacle to the sales, saying that U.S. ships or vessels from other countries can bring the goods to the island. Castro said he would abandon his insistence that the food be shipped on Cuban vessels. The United States had rejected that proposal. Castro said the American products could be picked up by boats from other countries, including the United States. (El Nuevo Herald, Cubanews, 17, 18/11/01)

November 21: Four agribusinesses become the first U.S. firms in 40 years to sign trade agreements with Cuba to supply about US\$20 million of food-including rice--to the island. Representatives of Archer Daniels Midland Company, Cargill, Riceland Foods, and ConAgra, were in Havana this week to sign the agreements with Cuban state company Alimport to provide wheat, corn, soy, and rice. (Planet Rice, 22/11/01)

November 25: Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage tells a news conference in Lima that Havana has no reason to believe the first offers of trade between the island and the United States in more than 40 years are signs of a policy shift. "It's an isolated fact. We have no reason to see it as a policy shift, rather as something that happened because of a hurricane that doesn't happen every month in Cuba," (Reuters, 25/11/01)

November 26: Lino Gutiérrez, U.S. State Department Assistant Secretary for Latin America says that sales of U.S. food to Cuba would not mark a new era in troubled relations. "Our concerns about Cuba are as strong as ever. We will follow the law. The sale of agricultural commodities is permitted (...) but the embargo remains in place and is in no way altered by these sales." "I take my cue from President (George W.) Bush, who has said repeatedly that we will do nothing to weaken the embargo." (Reuters, 26/11/01)

November 27: Cuba's foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, says at a press conference that the United States should remove restrictions on travel to Cuba, predicting that 2 million Americans visitors would "flood the country." "As a positive signal in the right direction," the Bush administration should lift travel restrictions. Cuba would then "get ready to receive (...) no less than 2 million Americans". (Cubanews, 27/11/01)

November 27: In a speech at a mass rally, in Havana, President Fidel Castro says U.S. immigration laws are to blame for fatal risks taken by Cuban emigrants, and added: "It was through the American TV networks and press agencies that we first learned that 30 Cubans, 13 of them children, had perished in a human traffic operation on a fast boat registered in the United States, coming from that country and funded by people living there." (...) "This time, our own authorities have already identified almost half of the 13 children mentioned in the press dispatches." (...) "The politicization of the migratory issue by the United States, particularly as it relates to Cuba, is at the source of this and many other similar tragedies" (Información MINREX, 27/11/01)

November 28: In a speech to the UN General Assembly, to introduce Cuba's proposed resolution on the embargo imposed on Cuba by the United States, Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, alluded to the US sale of foodstuff to Cuba: "For this once, Cuba will be able to pay US suppliers directly in cash. However, the shipment could not be carried on Cuban vessels: the very complex restrictions of the embargo legislation disallow it; not even the goodwill of both governments could surmount the obstacles. The shipment will be transported either by US vessels or ships from third countries." "Diplomatic contacts, unlike in the past, were conducted in a calm and respectful atmosphere and in a spirit of cooperation." As to the likelihood of re-establishing diplomatic relations with the United States, he said: "Does Cuba want to re-establish normal and mutually respectful relations with the United States? Yes. And Cuba is prepared for that." He also said that the Cuban government would be willing to compensate 6,000 US companies and citizens whose properties were confiscated after 1959, provided that the United States ends the economic embargo imposed on the island. (Información Minrex, 29/11/01)

November 28: The United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 56/9, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". The Resolution was passed by 167 votes in favour, 3 against, and 3 abstained. (Juventud Rebelde, 28/11/01)

November 28: The Cuban government signs a contract to purchase U.S. poultry from Florida-based Crowley Maritime Corp, with shipments beginning in December. Crowley, which earlier this year became the first U.S. shipping company to obtain a license from the U.S. Treasury Department to provide regularly scheduled common carrier service, signed a contract with Alimport, the Cuban state-run agency. (Xinhua, 29/11/01)

November 28: In an interview at Cuba's mission to the United Nations, Felipe Pérez Roque, Cuba's foreign minister says that the prospect of the first direct sale of U.S. foodstuffs to Cuba in 40 years is "an example of what the future could hold" for relations between the two countries. "We see it as a positive gesture," (The Washington Post, 28/11/01)

November 29: Wes Carrington, spokesperson for the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs of the US State Department declined a Cuban government's offer to compensate 6,000 firms and US citizens whose properties were nationalized after the 1959 revolution, provided that Washington compensates the island for the damages caused by the forty-year old embargo against the island. "The United States may persist on compensation (for its citizens), but we keep rejecting any relation between the Cuban government's obligations and any instrument of US policy, including the embargo." (AFP, 30/11/01)

November 30: Seven individuals have been accused, and two already arrested, in Florida for smuggling Cubans into the United States which could lead to the death penalty if found guilty. The accused may be responsible for the death of 30 people on board a boat that sank in the Florida Straits. (Notimex, 30/11/01)