



# FOCAL

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## Research Forum on Cuba

# Chronicle on Cuba November 2007

### HIGHLIGHTS

**Domestic Affairs:** Police detain Cubans wearing bracelets with the word “Change”. The Cuban government announces that in some cases aircraft can be privately owned. Newly elected municipal assemblies choose candidates for provincial and national assemblies who will be presented on December 2 and elected on January 20. Several opposition organizations present initiatives for change and debate in the island.

**Economy:** Iran's trade minister expresses his country's interest in increasing investment flows and bolstering cooperation with Cuba. Tropical storm Noel causes severe damages in agriculture, housing, and roads in the eastern provinces. The Havana International Trade Fair takes place in the Cuban capital with an attendance of over 1,200 businesspeople from 54 countries. For the first time in years, Cuba's foreign trade balance shows improvement in 2007. Cuba and Bolivia give a boost to their economic and commercial relations with a Complementary Economic Agreement signed in La Paz.

**Exile Community:** A group of exile organizations based in Madrid founds the Spanish Federation of Cuban Associations (FECU). Cuban exiles in Brazil create the Cuban-Brazilian Committee for Democratic Cuba.

**Foreign Affairs:** The President of the National Assembly clarifies statements made by the Cuban Foreign Minister on the potential union between Cuba and Venezuela. The Cuban government says it would welcome the visit of a UN representative for human rights in the future. The United Nations envoy on the right to food praised Cuba's efforts for feeding its people. Fidel Castro takes side with Hugo Chavez in the rift between Venezuela and Spain at Santiago's Ibero-American Summit. A high-ranking Cuban official visits Ottawa.

**Security:** Cuba launches the Moncada-2007 military exercises.

**US-Cuba Relations:** A senior US counterintelligence officer confirms intelligence sharing between Iran and Cuba. US President George W. Bush bestows the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Cuban dissident Dr. Oscar Elías Biscet. Executives representing 16 Florida firms participate in Havana's International Trade Fair.

## LO MÁS RELEVANTE

**Asuntos domésticos:** La policía detiene a cubanos portando brazaletes con la palabra "Cambio". El gobierno cubano anuncia que en algunos casos los aviones pueden ser de propiedad privada. Las recién elegidas asambleas municipales escogen candidatos para las asambleas provinciales y nacional, quienes serán presentados el 2 de diciembre y elegidos el 20 de enero. Varias organizaciones opositores presentan iniciativas para implementar el debate y cambios en la isla.

**Economía:** El ministro de comercio e Irán expresa el interés de su país en incrementar el flujo de inversiones e impulsar la cooperación con Cuba. La tormenta tropical Noel causa daños severos en la agricultura, vivienda y viales en las provincias orientales. La Feria Internacional de La Habana tiene lugar en la capital del país con la asistencia de 1,200 empresarios de 54 países. Por primera vez en años, el balance comercial de Cuba muestra una mejoría en 2007. Cuba y Bolivia le dan un impulso a sus relaciones económicas y comerciales con la firma en La Paz de un Acuerdo Económico Complementario.

**Comunidad de exiliados:** Un grupo de organizaciones de exiliados radicadas en Madrid fundan la Federación Española de Asociaciones Cubanas (FECU). Exiliados cubanos en Brasil crean el Comité Cubano-Brasileño para la Democracia en Cuba.

**Asuntos exteriores:** El Presidente de la Asamblea Nacional aclara las declaraciones del ministro de Relaciones Exteriores acerca de una potencial unión de Cuba y Venezuela. El gobierno de Cuba dice que en un futuro recibiría la visita de un representante de la ONU para los derechos humanos. El enviado de Naciones Unidas sobre el derecho a la alimentación elogió los esfuerzos de Cuba por alimentar a su población. El vicepresidente Fidel Castro toma partido a favor de Hugo Chávez en la disputa entre Venezuela y España durante la Cumbre Iberoamericana de Santiago. Una alta funcionaria cubana visita Ottawa.

**Seguridad:** Cuba lanza los ejercicios militares Moncada 2007.

**Relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos:** Un oficial de alto rango de la contrainteligencia de EEUU confirma el intercambio de inteligencia entre Irán y Cuba. El presidente de Estados Unidos George W. Bush le otorga la Medalla de la Libertad al disidente cubano doctor Oscar Elías Biscet. Ejecutivos de 16 firmas de Florida participan en la Feria Internacional de La Habana.



## DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

**November 1:** Newly elected municipal assemblies will convene across Cuba by November 16 as the island's election process advances without word on the future of Fidel Castro. In an order published on the front page of the state newspaper Granma, Cuba's top executive body decreed that the 15,236 municipal assembly members elected on October 21 and in two subsequent runoff votes will meet for the first time. The order was signed by Castro's brother and acting president, Raul. Assembly members later will start choosing candidates for parliamentary elections due next spring. It is unclear whether Fidel Castro, 81, will be healthy enough to run for parliament, where he must hold a seat to remain head of government. Even if he retains his seat, legislators could decide to replace him with his brother as head of the Council of State. (*Sun Sentinel, Prensa Latina*, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Cuban police rounded up a group of young people wearing white rubber wristbands stenciled with the word "cambio," or "change," and held them for hours before releasing them without filing charges, a human rights activist said. The detentions, which took place on October 29, went little-noticed on the island. Critics of Cuba's communist government said at least 70 youths had been arrested. Elizardo Sanchez, head of the Havana-based Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, said an unknown number of young people were wearing the bracelets when they were detained and taken to a police station in central Havana. He said no formal charges were filed and that most of the group was released after a short time, but that a few may have been held until early next day. The youths, however, had to relinquish their bracelets, Sanchez said. (*AP*, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Political prisoner Lázaro González Carballo was set free after serving out his entire 15-year prison sentence. González Carballo, a member of the Democratic Party 30 de Noviembre "Frank País" was convicted of criminal "acts against the security of the State." (*Cubanet*, 9/11/07)

**November 3:** A conference called Alternative Pedagogics - 2007 was held by Cuban oppositionist teachers. The forum, the second of its kind organized in the island, held a meeting at the residence of Roberto de Miranda, president of the Cuban Association of Independent Pedagogues and one of 75 dissidents imprisoned in 2003. "Our objective is to debate the ills affecting Cuba's chaotic Public Education system," like the issue of "the political indoctrination that pervades it," declared De Miranda, released from prison for health reasons in June, 2004 to serve the remainder of his term under house arrest. (*AFP*, 5/11/07)

**November 3:** Fidel Castro is following very closely the situation in eastern Cuba due to the floods left by Tropical Storm Noel, Vice President Carlos Lage stated. From the start, Lage said, Castro recalled what happened in 1963 with hurricane Flora, when severe downpours provoked flooding in the eastern provinces. At the end of a visit to Santiago de Cuba to evaluate the damages left by the tropical storm, Lage pointed out that Fidel

Castro has been kept informed of what is happening and the measures taken to counteract the negative impact of the storm. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/11/07)

**November 4:** Havana police arrested “Ladies in White” member Bertha Soler in full public view for wearing a bracelet with the word "Change." She was released soon after. (*Martí Noticias*, 5/11/07)

**November 4:** Cuban scientists have said they are readying for clinical trial a new AIDS vaccine that has shown encouraging results on animals. Eduardo Martinez, director of the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Centre in Havana, told reporters that the safety of the therapeutic vaccine has already been tested on animals and has shown no adverse indications. It is expected to improve the treatment of AIDS patients whether used alone or in combination with retroviral drugs, most of which are produced in Cuba, he said. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/11/07)

**November 4:** More than a year after Fidel Castro fell ill and ceded power to brother Raul, dissident groups on the island lack the strength and organization to force political change, dissidents on the island said. The opposition is not only infiltrated by state security but also hampered by conflicting views on how to bring about economic and political change and a widespread belief they're paid agents of the United States. "The entire weight of the opposition together, including the pro-democracy and human rights movements, is not enough to confront the regime politically," said veteran rights activist Elizardo Sanchez of the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation. Manuel Cuesta, leader of a social-democratic group that favors dialogue with the current government, and other dissidents said the opposition has not fully recovered from a three-day government crackdown in March 2003, when 75 dissidents were rounded up and jailed. Sixteen of the original 75 have since been released for medical reasons. Disarray among Cuba's opposition was underscored after the July 31, 2006, announcement that Fidel Castro was transferring power to younger brother Raul. Cuesta said dissidents learned a hard lesson: they were woefully unprepared to reach a Cuban public that knew little about them. "We were caught with our pants down," he said. "Many opposition leaders call for free and democratic elections right now. But if Raul Castro decided to hold an election in, say, six months, the opposition wouldn't capture a municipal seat." (*Sun Sentinel*, 4/11/07)

**November 5:** Healthcare workers admitted to a service quality decline in this sector, acknowledging popular and media criticisms that, among other factors, point the finger at issues like staff shortages, cronyism and trading in influences, as well as requesting payment for medical attention, which in Cuba must be given completely free of charge. According to the weekly paper *Trabajadores*, the board of the healthcare workers' national union convened a meeting to discuss “existing shortcomings in the sector that affect the quality of service.” In the last two months, there have been constant demands in Havana to address the deterioration of healthcare services, in particular the shortage of staff and lack of hygiene in medical facilities. (*La Jornada*, 6/11/07)

**November 5:** The Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB) opened its doors to Havana 2007 Biotechnology Congress November 5-9. Experts from 25 countries will exchange views on the latest bio products and leading techniques. Cuba, a leader in the generation of biotechnology products, will share several experiences including the first patented produce obtained out of transgenic plants (plants created in a laboratory using recombinant DNA technology), and vaccines such as the "Pentavalent" against five major childhood killer diseases. (*ACN*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** The oppositionist Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Conciliation (CCDHRN) denounced that the government continues to arrest youths wearing rubber bracelets inscribed with the word "change." "They are arrested and taken to the precinct, where the wristband is removed. They are then released without charges," said Elizardo Sánchez Santacruz, leader of the CCDHRN. Sánchez Santacruz said that, although he does not have exact figures, there have been in excess of fifty arrests. (*EER*, 6/11/07)

**November 5:** Fidel Castro is faring well in his long recovery from surgery, takes "very few drugs" and works so hard he has to be held back, his older brother Ramon Castro told reporters. "He goes to extremes, he works a lot. He can't do it all (but) does a lot. You have to hold him back a little, take care of him," the 83-year-old said of his convalescing brother at the opening of Havana 's International Fair. Ramon Castro, an advisor to the Agriculture and Sugar ministries, said his brother was following the treatment prescribed by his doctors and now needs to take "very few" drugs because he feels better. Pressed to comment on Fidel's plans for the future, Ramon was coy. "I don't touch that issue. I can't get into that because I just can't. I stick to my job," he said. (*AFP*, 5/11/07)

**November 8:** Fidel Castro "is working hard, every day more," the communist-run island's vice president said. Castro, 81, "is already assuming tasks," Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage told Chilean state television. "He is working, working hard, every day more," Lage said of Castro. "I'd say he's reading, studying, analyzing, offering ideas, thoughts, giving us ideas for us to continue the battle for the ideals of justice and solidarity to which he has dedicated his entire life." Asked whether Castro would soon appear in public and resume full presidential power, Lage replied, "he's already assuming tasks, perhaps the most important task a chief of state can have, which is seeding consciousness." (*AP*, 8/11/07)

**November 8:** Cuban scientists have become the latest developers of a possible vaccine for the potentially fatal dengue fever, according to the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*. The leading Cuban research centre CIGB is spearheading two development projects, alongside the 53 other research and drug production institutions that collectively make up the island's so-called "Pharmaceutical Pole". A source from CIGB also revealed that the government is working on a potential vaccine for human papillomavirus (HPV), the cause of many cervical cancers. (*Global Insight*, 8/11/07)

**November 9:** For two days, the residence of blind lawyer Juan Carlos González Leiva, president of the Cuban Human Rights Foundation remained surrounded by Cuban State

Security agents and police officers. About a dozen human rights activists were detained during the operation. (*Cubanet*, 14/11/07)

**November 9:** A program of cultural and recreational activities is being carried out for people who were evacuated from their homes in the Cuban eastern provinces due to the huge floods caused by Noel tropical storm. The initiative goes back to 2005, when several Cuban coastal communities were hit by Hurricane Dennis and brigades of cultural workers used the arts as a way to deal with the difficult times, *Granma* newspaper reported. While material and human resources are readied for the recovery of the communities still flooded, a mobile video unit of the provincial cinema center, musical groups, professional artists and art students are taking diverse cultural programs to the affected areas. (*ACN*, 9/11/07)

**November 9:** Ricardo Alarcon, president of the National Assembly of the People's Power (Cuba's Parliament), said that the Revolution will win the battle against corruption. "This is a battle we must win. It is a struggle that continues," Alarcon said in brief remarks to journalists present at the closing session of the First Cuba-Bolivia Inter-Legislative Meeting. Combatants do not usually claim victory in the clamor of battle, he added. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/07)

**November 9:** The Assistant Attorney General of the Republic Carlos Raul Concepcion said that Cuba has declared an all-out war on corruption as it struggles to perfect its society. Speaking at the Fourth International Meeting on Corruption, the attorney explained that the scourge has been detected mainly in the business sector and the intermediate level of state management. The Meeting on Corruption brought together some 400 legal experts from 21 countries. During the last day of the forum, experts exchanged experiences on the challenges faced by contemporary society in the fight against corruption. The President of the Cuban Parliament's Commission on Foreign Affairs Osvaldo Martinez stressed the relation between corruption and neoliberal policies. The meeting was sponsored by the Cuban General Prosecutor's Office, the Institute for Legal Development and Research, and the National Association of Cuban Economists and Accountants. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/07)

**November 10:** The Cuban government-run newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* defended the right of transsexuals to full social integration and announced the upcoming publication in the island of an educational piece that appeals for Cubans to learn to respect the dignity of these individuals. The article, entitled "Transsexualism: caught between being and pretending," condemns "ignorance on the issue of sexual diversity and the blanket silence on the topic imposed on the world by a predominantly heterosexual culture." (*El Nuevo Herald*, 12/11/07)

**November 12:** Kyoto's University of Foreign Studies granted Cuban scientist Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart the title of emeritus professor during his recent visit to Japan. Dr. Castro Diaz-Balart is the advisor to the Council of State for nuclear policy. He traveled to Japan at the invitation of the academic institution to attend the international symposium: "Latin America: Possibilities and Challenges." In a press conference at the Cuban

embassy in Japan, Dr. Castro Diaz-Balart gave details of Cuba's energy policy, which aims at diversifying energy sources, while improving efficiency and encouraging energy saving. (ACN, 12/11/07)

**November 13:** The Havana Auction, to be held for the sixth time in Havana, on November 28, will include this year the work of a group of classic and novel Cuban painters. The projects Havana Gallery and Havana Auction were created in 2002 to protect the island's cultural heritage and to promote the work of the new Cuban artists in the world. The auction, which draws the attention of a large number of collectors from the United States and Europe, takes in the work of renowned Cuban painters such as Leopoldo Romañach, Juan Gil Garcia, Rafael Soriano, Victor Manuel, Servando Cabrera Moreno and Mariano. According to the vice president of the event, Luis Miret, the 58 paintings, sketches, sculptures and photos will be auctioned at Cuba's emblematic National Hotel in Havana. There will also be a virtual gallery, which will be on-line throughout the year. Miret said that several telephones will be set up during the auction day to receive any outside bids. (ACN, 13/11/07)

**November 14:** Cuba is organizing the country's 169 municipalities to create the Peoples' Power Municipal Assemblies by November 16. The Cuban electoral law stipulates that those elected delegates in the first stage of general polls will meet in sessions directed by the president of Municipal Electoral Commission in each territory. Delegates in those meetings elect the president and vice president of the municipal assembly through secret vote, as of proposals presented by the candidature commissions. Over 55,000 Cubans form the lists of candidates, of them more than 37,000 elected in neighborhoods, as well as the current provincial delegates and deputies, and thousands of people proposed by different sectors of the Cuban society. Amarilys Perez, member of the National Commission for the List of Candidates, said that the initial number was much higher, but the figure has been reduced, because by checking the lists, it was proven that organizations and territories have coincided in the proposal of some delegates. Six grass-roots organizations of the country, including the students, propose candidates for delegates to the Provincial Assemblies and deputies to the National Assembly through plenary sessions at all levels. Provincial elections and for deputies, yet to be defined, are the second stage of general elections in Cuba. (ACN, 14/11/07)

**November 14:** Cuba keeps and improves its struggle against domestic violence, said Sonia Beretervide, president of the National Group for Prevention of Domestic Violence against Women, in Havana. In a press conference, the official highlighted the Cuban work in assisting women who are victims of violent incidents, and avoiding such events. Also member of the Cuban Women Federation Secretary's Office, she said Cuba will celebrate the International Day against Violence towards Women on November 25. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/11/07)

**November 14:** After one year behind bars, political prisoner Lorenzo García Rodríguez was liberated in the eastern province of Holguin. Garcia Lorenzo, who was incarcerated on November 22, 2007, fulfilled the total of his sentence. (*Cubanet*, 27/11/07)

**November 15:** For the first time since the onset of the 1990s economic crisis, the people of Cienfuegos received 227 grams of beef. Although rationed, the distribution of the meat in October became a joyous occasion in Cienfuegos, a port city 256 km Southeast of Havana. Beef sells at 4.60 USD/kg on the Cuban black market. In the supermarkets that sell in convertible pesos (Cuba's own foreign currency), imported prime cuts can sell for as much as 12.00 USD/kg, or the equivalent of three weeks' salary for an average Cuban. Up to the beginning of the 1990s economic crisis, every Cuban had been receiving ½ lbs beef per month through a rationing card system. (*Reuters*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** The banned Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, or CCDHRN, denounced in Havana the arrest of dissident Carlos Jesus Menendez Cervera by plainclothes members of the secret police. The CCDHRN said that Menendez, 64, was arrested in Havana when "he was preparing to enter the home of Hector Palacios and Gisela Delgado," both currently living in Spain for health reasons. "The CCDHRN believes that this arrest constitutes an arbitrary detention and urges the authorities to immediately release Menendez," said the organization in a communiqué. The head of the CCDHRN, Elizardo Sanchez, told the press that "so far, his whereabouts are unknown and we don't know the charges" against Menendez, who - he added - "was arrested on other occasions, the latest in December of last year." "Although this happens frequently, in his case I have no doubt that it is a decision made by a top official in the central government," Sanchez said. Menendez "is a well-known person. He was a military pilot, an officer in the armed forces. No police official would dare to arrest him" unless at the instruction of higher authority, he said. Carlos Menéndez is the son of late Jesús Menéndez, a Cuban communist union leader who became famous in the 40s for his struggle at the head of sugar cane workers. The arrested dissident is a member of the CCDHRN, the executive secretary of the opposition Social Democratic Party and interim director of the Independent Libraries Project, which Delgado heads. (*EFE*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** Interim leader Raul Castro has unveiled arguably the most significant economic reform since taking the helm in communist Cuba, announcing that in some cases aircraft can be privately owned. It is major news in a country that depends heavily on tourism to generate hard currency, though the announcement raised many questions without immediately delivering many answers. "Aircraft (...) are state-owned, socialist property of all the people. But their ownership can be transferred, in part or whole, in exceptional cases, to individuals or legal entities," said the decree. The announcement did not immediately make clear whether those potentially benefiting from the change would be Cuban individuals and entities, foreign individuals and groups, or both. The measure stipulates that such an exceptional transfer of ownership will be carried out "in the interest of the country's economic development, following approval by the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers," led by Vice President Carlos Lage. [[Decreto Ley 255/2007](#)] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 16/11/07)

**November 15:** Several members of the Popular Movement for Human Rights "Miguel Valdés Tamayo" carried out a walk through downtown Havana. While walking, they distributed rubber wristbands inscribed with the word "Change" and flyers with the

**November 16:** Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon highlighted the strengthening of democracy in Cuba with the setting up of 169 municipal assemblies of the People's Power nationwide. Alarcon attended the inauguration of the Municipal Assembly of the People's Power in Plaza de la Revolucion Municipality, at the University of Havana. Present at the ceremony were Carlos Lage, vice president of the Cuban State Council, Ruben Rodriguez, vice president of the National Election Commission, and Jorge Victor Ramiro, president of the Municipal Election Commission. After noting the importance of the process, Alarcon pointed out that the efforts to improve, polish and boost proficiency and representation within the People's Power system maintains it as a true expression of the will and interests of the people. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/11/07)

**November 16:** The Cuban people will pay tribute to Division General Sergio del Valle Jimenez, who died in Havana, *Granma* newspaper reported. In July 1957, Del Valle was a physician and soldier of the Rebel Army, an armed force of the 26th of July Movement led by Fidel Castro. He concluded the Cuban liberation war with captain degree and after the January 1, 1959 revolutionary triumph, he was promoted to the position of Commander, the daily states. He was founder of the Cuban Communist Party, deputy to the Peoples' Power National Assembly and member of the Council of State. Del Valle was also Interior Minister (1968-1979) and Health Public Minister (1979-1986). His burial will be carried out at the Revolutionary Armed Forces pantheon in Havana's Colon cemetery. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/11/07)

**November 17:** The Castro brothers paid homage to fallen revolutionary comrade Sergio del Valle Jimenez, with Fidel recalling his help during the Bay of Pigs invasion and Raul attending his military funeral. "We have lived exceptional times," Fidel Castro wrote in an essay carried in state media. "Your lessons and your example will endure." Raul, Cuba's defense minister and interim leader since his brother stepped aside because of illness in mid-2006, attended General Del Valle's interment at Havana's Colon Cemetery. Del Valle Jimenez died of undisclosed causes. Del Valle joined Castro's revolution against dictator Fulgencio Batista through a Havana underground movement in the mid 1950s, and entered the rebel army as a physician and soldier fighting against Batista's troops in eastern Cuba in 1957. He was also interior minister in the late 1960s and health minister from 1979 to 1986. [[En honor a Sergio del Valle](#)] (*AP*, 17/11/07)

**November 18:** Nearly four months after Brazil deported Guillermo Rigondeaux, Cuba's top boxer and two-time Olympic bantamweight champion, following a defection attempt at the Pan American Games together with fellow boxer Erislandy Lara, his boxing future is uncertain. "I don't know what's happening," he said. "I want to fight and win again." At a time when leaders are encouraging Cubans to openly discuss the shortcomings of the socialist system, Rigondeaux and his wife, Farah Colina, 32, said government officials have refused to listen to the hardships of one of the island's top athletes. "We've been trying to talk to them for more than a year but no one listens," Colina said. "We've had no access. This is a two-time Olympic gold medallist. Imagine ordinary people just trying to

be heard." Fidel Castro, who has not been seen in public since emergency intestinal surgery forced him to cede power to younger brother Raul in July 2006, seemed unforgiving in essays he wrote on the supposed defections. On August 8, he wrote that Rigondeaux and Lara "had reached the point of no return" with the national boxing team. (*Sun Sentinel*, 18/11/07)

**November 18:** "Ladies in White" member Soledad de la Riva Verdecia and independent journalist Tania Maceda Guerra were intercepted by a secret police agent as they were driving to the Church of St. Rita, which prevented them from attending mass and the usual walks down 5ta Ave in Havana. The agent remained with them for two hours, refusing them access to another vehicle. (*Cubanet*, 18/11/07)

**November 18:** The United States drilled 14 hits, including one home run, to upset Cuba 6-3 in the baseball World Cup, dashing Cuba's dream of clinching a 10th successive title at the tournament. The US team, mostly from US minor league squads, pounded seven Cuban pitchers, with Jayson Nix smacking a solo homer off Cuba's second relief pitcher, Yuniesky Maya Mendiluz, in the fourth innings. Cuba has had a stranglehold on the tournament since its inception, winning 25 of the 28 World Cups they have competed in, including the last nine. (*Canadian Press, AP*, 18/11/07)

**November 19:** The Cuban authorities, under the leadership of Cuba's Minister of Defence and acting president Raul Castro, have issued a new strict code of conduct for public employees with the purpose of reducing corruption and increasing efficiency in the Caribbean island. The code defines clear working rules for civil servants and establishes sanctions in case there is a breach of conduct. The punishments range from a simple memo to dismissal, according to Agence France Presse. The code of conduct, which was signed by Castro in July 2007, came into effect on 1 September and was only recently published in the local media. (*Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 19/11/07)

**November 19:** A municipal court in Havana has sentenced a young man to two years in prison for breaking the window of a city bus with a rock, the Cuban Communist Party daily Granma reported. The newspaper said the punishment was meted out for a September 1 incident that "caused serious damage" to property, and the court also slapped the man with a fine of 2,090 pesos (about US\$90). Cuban authorities have been taking measures to prevent vandalism against new buses, which must frequently be taken out of service due to stonings and other acts, Granma said. Pedro Castiñeiras, director of the state-owned Metrobus agency that provides transportation in Greater Havana, told the newspaper that measures had been taken to address the problem, such as "bolstering enforcement and discipline at stops with the presence of officials and inspectors." (*EFE*, 19/11/07)

**November 20:** The Cuban government has dubbed the program Operation Miracle, and for the hundreds of thousands of people from Venezuela, Central America and the Caribbean who have benefited from it since it was started in July 2004, it is aptly named. Yet the program is no simple humanitarian effort, and it has not come without a cost. The campaign against vision loss serves as a poignant advertisement for the benefits of Cuban

socialism, as well as an ingenious way to export one of the few things the Cuban state-run economy produces in abundance — doctors. Dr. Sergio M. Vidal Casali, 84, has worked at the Ramón Pando Ferrer Cuban Institute of Ophthalmology for more than 50 years, specializing in diseases of the retina. He said the heavy flow of foreign patients through the hospital, combined with the exodus of several physicians to other countries, had hurt his department. “I don’t like it, really,” he said. “It’s wonderful for the people, but not for us. It disturbs our work.” (*The New York Times*, 20/11/07)

**November 20:** Cuba announced it has set January 20 for national elections that are part of the process of determining whether ailing Fidel Castro continues as president. The ruling, signed by interim leader Raul Castro and read on state television, set the date for elections to provincial and national assemblies -- voting that is held every five years. There was no explicit mention of Fidel Castro, but the 81-year-old leader of the Cuban Revolution must be re-elected to the national parliament before he could repeat as president of the Council of State to remain in full power. Raul, 76, is the council's first vice president. The parliament, known in Cuba as the National Assembly, elects a new council every five years, several weeks after deputies are elected. It was not announced when the new National Assembly would meet for the first time to renew the top council members. [[Convocan a elecciones](#)] (*AP*, 20/11/07)

**November 21** In the latest issue of “Espacio Laical,” a publication from the Archdiocesan Council of Lay Persons of Havana, an editorial entitled "Let's institutionalize the debate" hails the debate process taking place across the island at the behest of Raul Castro and asks to put emphasis on the possibility of extending it. [[Editorial](#)] (*EER*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** The opposition group Arco Progresista unveiled the initiative Foro Progresista de La Habana (Progressive Forum of Havana), which calls upon "left-leaning citizens across the world" to "assume that freedoms, social justice, democratization and human rights form an indissoluble whole without which ‘poverty’ of freedom will never be overcome." The idea seeks to “animate a space” for the exchange of proposals and the update of information. [[Foro Progresista de La Habana](#)] (*EER*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** The Network of popular educators of Cuba, with the support of the non-government organization Martin Luther King Memorial Center (CMMLK), has made practical contributions to the debate on the people’s participation in the changes that the Cuban society will have to undergo if socialism is to be maintained as the prevailing socio-economic system. The areas it focuses on are community work, local government, agro-ecology and healthcare. (*IPS*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** Newly elected municipal assemblies will choose candidates for provincial and national assemblies on December 2 in a process that could reveal whether Fidel Castro will remain head of Cuba's government, state television reported. An anchor on the evening news read a resolution signed by Castro's younger brother Raul, who is serving as Cuba's provisional leader, issuing the call for the December 2 meetings. The 81-year-old Fidel Castro must be nominated as a candidate for deputy to the National

Assembly, or parliament, and be re-elected in January 20 national elections to remain in the running for the Council of State presidency he has held since 1976. Previously Cuba's prime minister, Castro has been the nation's unchallenged leader since 1959. Born and raised in eastern Cuba, Castro has been a parliament deputy representing the eastern city of Santiago for many years, even though he has lived in Havana since the 1959 revolution. [[Resolución](#)] (AP, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** A group of dissident women handed in a petition signed by 10,738 people demanding an end to Cuba's dual currency system which they said caused poverty and inequality. Seven women took the petition to the National Assembly, which is obliged by Cuba's constitution to consider any legislative proposals requested by more than 10,000 citizens. In Cuba's socialist society, people get paid in Cuban pesos but need a harder currency called the convertible peso --worth 24 times more-- to buy most consumer goods. "We demand for all the nation that the Cuban peso be an acceptable means of payment in every establishment without exception," the petition said. The signatures were gathered by members of the Latin American Federation of Rural Women (FLAMUR), a group that receives support from Cuban exile organizations in Miami. "We expect a positive reply from the government because this is a demand that all Cubans are making," said Maria Antonia Hidalgo, from the eastern province of Holguin. (Reuters, 21/11/07)

**November 22:** The Cuban-Spanish co-production "La Edad de la Peseta" (An Awkward Age) by Cuban filmmaker Pavel Giroud, will be one of the nine Latin American movies competing next year for the Goya Awards, of the Spanish Film Academy, in the category of best foreign movie of Spanish language. The news was announced at the Iberoamerican Film Festival of Huelva in the southern region of Spain, where Giroud's film is competing. (ACN, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** The Tenth International Workshop on Political Science began in Havana aiming at discussing research to design a new science from the political realities of the South. The meeting coincides with the 25th anniversary of the creation of the Cuban Society of Philosophical Research, an organization that groups sociologists, philosophers, environmentalists, experts on bioethics, doctors and other scientists. "This non governmental organization has the thinking of Karl Marx, Frederic Engels, Vladimir I. Lenin and Fidel Castro at its core," said Thalia Fung, president of the Society and emeritus professor at the University of Havana, where the event is taking place. For three days, academics from 15 countries are discussing several topics related to philosophy and will analyze processes and global political cultures. (ACN, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Approximately 110 millimetres of scorpion toxin, highly effective in the treatment of cancer, have been obtained every month since August in the eastern Cuban province of Las Tunas. At present, technicians at an area scorpion farm are able to milk venom from some 800 scorpions using electrodes. This technique is applied in other Cuban cities, such as Guantanamo, and there are scorpion farms run by the Pharmaceutical and Biological Laboratories (LABIOFAM) in each of the island's provinces. The anti-cancer properties of the medicine obtained from the venom have been successfully tested in Cuba after several years of research. (CAN, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Luis Miranda, president of Casa de las Americas in New York, deceased in that US city, received the tribute of the people of Cuba, for his constant support to the Cuban Revolution. "It is impossible to say good-bye to him, it would be betraying him: we do not say good-bye to him, we will always stay at his side," said Cuban National Assembly (Parliament) president Ricardo Alarcon, during Miranda's burial at the Cemetery of Colon in Havana. Born in Cuba in 1928, Miranda went to the US from where he was an active collaborator of Cuban revolutionary movement 26 de Julio. After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, on January 1, 1959, he kept his support to the Cuban government. Fidel Castro sent a flower offering to accompany his body. (ACN, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** The development of workshops to strengthen human values in the health sector characterizes the activities during the period commemorating Health Workers' Day in Cuba. Until December 3 in the country's polyclinics and hospitals, issues like service quality, sensitivity and humanism, internationalism, industriousness, dedication and honesty will be debated. (*Prensa Latina*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Internationally renowned dissident Oswaldo Paya announced a new group with more than 300 members to promote reconciliation and push for laws that allow Cubans more individual liberties. Paya said the Citizen Committee for Reconciliation and Dialogue seeks to get average Cubans involved in efforts to change laws to "guarantee the exercise of fundamental rights of all Cubans, whether they live inside or outside" the communist-run island. It builds on Paya's Varela Project, which amassed more than 25,000 signatures asking for a referendum to change Cuba's electoral law and to guarantee freedoms of speech, assembly and private business ownership. While some members of the new committee are established dissidents, most are ordinary citizens, Paya told a small group of reporters. "The majority of Cubans want change," said Paya, 55, a devout Roman Catholic who founded the opposition Christian Liberation Movement a decade ago to emphasize peaceful change. "Never before have the Cuban people been so conscious that change is near and that Cuba has to change." In a "Declaration of Liberty for Cubans" accompanying the announcement, Paya said, "The Cuban people, and especially the new generations, want to live in peace, in an environment free of fakery, fear, hate, rancor, without revenge or vengeance." [[Una nueva luz se levanta y Declaración de Libertad de los Cubanos](#)] (AP, 22/11/07)

**November 24:** Representatives of Cuban civil society and members of the Commissions of Candidacies will meet with the municipal delegates, previous to the postulation of the candidates to deputies and provincial delegates of the People's Power. Parliamentary sources indicated that in the next days the teams in the 169 municipalities of the country will offer information on the selection of pre candidates, as well as what is established according to Law in relation to the nominations to cover the positions. According to Granma paper, those contacts are independent of the consultations on the elaborated proposals, since more than half of current representatives of the neighborhoods are new and they must be prepared. (*Prensa Latina*, 24/11/07)

**November 24:** An evangelical pastor and several other human rights workers have been detained in Cuba shortly after security forces broke up a meeting commemorating political prisoners in Havana. "Cuban government repressive forces brutally beat members of families who live in a poor neighbourhood in Havana and destroyed the furniture and personal belongings of a human rights defender. The activists arrested are threatened with being prosecuted," said Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leiva, a blind Christian lawyer who leads the Cuban Foundation of Human Rights and the Human Rights Rapporteur Council in Cuba. He said the problems began on November 22, when over 30 officials of "the Cuban political police and Cuban State Security violently invaded," the San Miguel del Padron area of Havana. They were seen "ransacking the home of 30 year-old activist, Juan Bermudez Toranzo, where a vigil on behalf of (...) all Cuban political prisoners was taking place." Police, he said, "brutally beat all families and neighbors present, including women and children." He added that Bermúdez Toranzo "was dragged along with his two year-old son from his bedroom to the street outside where he was thrown into a patrol car with other activists of the Cuban Foundation of Human Rights." Pastor Yordis Ferrer, who leads a Pentecostal congregation, and four activists were taken away to a local police station where they remain "under investigation," Gonzalez Leiva said. He said Ferrer was detained, when he "came to the aid of Juan Bermudez Toranzo's wife as repressive forces were beating her up." (*BosNewsLife*, 24/11/07)

**November 24:** The Cuban Catholic Church is collecting among its congregation donations for the victims of the heavy floods of last October and November, especially in the province of Granma, reported the Episcopate of Bayamo-Manzanillo. "The most necessary aid articles are food, clothes, shoes, sheets and towels, as well as toiletry, bath and laundry soap and detergent," alerted the Episcopate. (*AFP*, 26/11/07)

**November 25:** In Cuba, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is being observed by many organizations and a recently released documentary titled *La Deseada Justicia* (The Desired Justice) brings the issue home. Several Cuban civic groups and public institutions are stepping up their efforts to address the problem. The film, by Cuban director Lizette Vila, artfully intertwines the testimonies of seven Cuban survivors of domestic violence and is being shown at special functions prior to its screening at the Havana New Latin American Cinema Festival set for December 4-14. Coordinated by the Oscar Arnulfo Romero Group for Reflection and Solidarity of Havana, the documentary was made to help break the silence and stimulate discussion on a thorny issue that in many countries still gets confused as being a private matter rather than a societal or public health concern. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/11/07)

**November 25:** The daily *Juventud Rebelde* criticized the uncaring attitude and ineffectiveness of officials at different levels of parliamentary government in Cuba and called for the replacement of the "overwhelming unanimity" attitude with open debate. At "the National Assembly or other bodies of government, there seems to prevail an overwhelming unanimity, with rare instances of debate allowing for the confrontation of different positions, which do not necessarily have to refer to conflicts of principles or strategic goals," said the newspaper. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 26/11/07)

**November 26:** Cuban scientists exhibited the ADN tests performed on the remains of Argentine guerrilla warrior Ernesto “Che” Guevara ten years ago when they were taken to Cuba. "We did not use the ADN tests to identify Che, we used them (...) as a corroborative proof" that the primary methods used in his identification in Bolivia "were methods of certainty," said Cuban forensic specialist Jorge González. The expert intervened in a scientific workshop celebrated in Santa Clara, presided over by Commander of the Revolution Ramiro Valdés. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** During a visit to San Cristobal, Pinar del Rio province, Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon highlighted the rigorous work taking place in the newly elected municipal assemblies to nominate candidates for the January 20 National and Provincial Assembly elections. The National Election Commission (CEN) reported in Granma daily that the 1,291 members of provincial assemblies and 614 members of the National Assembly will emerge from the pool of over 55,000 newly-elected delegates nationwide. CEN Vice President Ruben Perez Rodriguez said that the automated information system and material supplies will be tested in all territories and immediate tasks would be carried out to guarantee the good work at polling stations. Perez noted that on December 3, the photos and biographies of the candidates would be published, so that voters can know them better. He added that in December, the CEN would update the electoral rolls that will be used on January 20, 2008. Cuba's general elections were announced on July 9. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** Cuba will launch a campaign on the World AIDS Day, December 1, to highlight the work of volunteers and social activists in the prevention of the scourge. Gloria Pausada, a specialist working with the AIDS prevention and control programme, said the volunteer movement on the island country, grew through participation of patients themselves, who spent part of their time visiting workplaces, schools and other institutions to increase public awareness about AIDS. Students, workers and housewives joined them later and the country currently boasts thousands of promoters and advisers in HIV prevention. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** A group of Cuban students and young professionals said it has collected 5,000 signatures petitioning the government to allow universities that would operate independently of the state while encouraging freedom of speech. Supporters of the University Students Without Borders Project want Cuba's communist government to tolerate autonomous colleges and also reopen Havana's Catholic University of Santo Tomas de Villanueva, which authorities shut in 1961, two years after Fidel Castro's revolution toppled dictator Fulgencio Batista. "We are promoting a culture of free thinking despite the repression and fear hanging over us," said Nestor Rodriguez, who helped organize the petition drive with his brother Rolando. The small group began seeking signatures in August 2006 and hopes to collect the 10,000 necessary to formally present its cause to Cuban lawmakers. (*The New York Times*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** The Ninth International Symposium on Literary Translation opened in Havana with the participation of university professors from Spain, Canada, Greece, Jamaica, Argentina, Mexico, Uruguay and Cuba. Lourdes Arencibia, president of the

Literary Translation Office of the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (UNEAC) said the event will include book presentations and a roundtable discussion on the poetry of Yannis Ritzos, Granma newspaper reported. (ACN, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** Patriotic marches all over Cuba and dozens of Cuban flags hoisted above the Anti-Imperialist Tribune were gestures paying tribute to the eight Medical school students unjustly executed by the Spanish crown on November 27, 1871. Cuban medical school students gathered to recall the crime committed 136 years ago, as well as to protest the judgment by a US court nine years ago against five Cubans imprisoned in the US. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** Cuba has a total of about 288 children of HIV-positive mothers, and 30 of them have the human immune deficiency virus (HIV), Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported. Until September 25, about 268 women gave birth with that condition and 288 infants were born, the daily stated in an article, highlighting the country's efforts to avoid infection during pregnancy, delivery and breastfeeding period. Of 30 children with AIDS, two are a-symptomatic, 10 have died from this disease, and 18 are under anti-retroviral treatment. About 197 are diagnosed as uninfected healthy patients, and 59 are being tested, the daily said. Since the first AIDS case was detected in 1985, the island has implemented an HIV-AIDS prevention program, with special mother-child attention, aimed at decreasing infection of the child during pregnancy. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** The Ladies in White, a group of women relatives of the 75 political prisoners who were sentenced during the crackdown on dissidents of 2003, denounced to the press that seven of the 59 dissidents remaining in jail have been hospitalized. Ricardo González, Nelson Aguiar, Pedro Alvarez, Lester Gonzalez, Omar Pernet, Normando Hernandez, and Jose Gabriel Ramon are the names of the prisoners who have been sent to hospitals in different provinces by jail authorities, according to a communiqué given to the press. (*EFE*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** Experts from 11 countries attended a Seminar on Public Information about the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy. Specialists from the Cuban Center of Information Management and Energy Development told the press that most of the delegates come from Asia and Europe, including Spain, France, Switzerland and Japan, while Latin America is represented by experts from Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Mexico, all of them members of the World Council of Nuclear Workers (WCNW). Reporters and journalists who have specialized on scientific themes also participated as guests in this event that was held at Panorama Hotel, in Havana, and where delegates discussed topics such as the introduction in Cuba of nuclear techniques, mainly in the field of medical services. (ACN, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** The First International Symposium on Latin American and Caribbean Masonry will take place in Havana from December 5-8. In a meeting with reporters, Esther Lobaina Oliva, Deputy Director of the Havana-based Don Fernando Ortiz Center of Studies, recalled that masonry had a great influence on the independence, culture and formation of states in Latin America and the Caribbean. The opening day of the event

will coincide with the 148th anniversary of the creation of the Great Logia of Cuba. (ACN, 29/11/07)

**November 29:** Cuba's half-century-old revolution is immersed in a process of transformation and needs change and criticism, a member of the Communist Party Central Committee said. Eliades Acosta, the head of the party's culture department, made his comments to Cubarte, a web site of the Ministry of Culture. Cuba, Acosta said, is going through "a moment of revolutionary transformation" and the country "is rethinking its structures, the party itself is rethinking its relationship with society to seek a more direct, more efficient dialogue and greater participation of the people in decisions." With that in mind, he said, the July 26 call made by Cuba 's provisional president, General Raul Castro, recognizing the need for structural adjustments and calling on Cubans to debate was fundamentally important. Acosta said that Raul Castro's call has translated into debates all over the country in which some five million Cubans have participated. "There are many material, salary and legal problems which are like red lights (i.e. danger signs) and tell us of the need for changes," the party official acknowledged, convinced that the aspirations of the Cuban public "are possible and necessary." "They are aspirations for material well-being, so that you can support yourself and your family with the honest fruit of your labor," and for "personal and social development" within the framework of revolutionary principles, Acosta said. "We aspire to have a society that speaks aloud about its problems, without fear (...) A society where there is much and varied information, (...) where we can be in communication with the world in a natural way and we know how to defend the essence of our identity and the conquests of the revolution itself," he said. (EFE, 29/11/07)

**November 29:** The Tenth International "JoJazz Festival" opened in Havana with the participation of talented young jazz players from Cuba and abroad. Award-winning musicians from previous festivals played at the opening ceremony, at the Mella Theater, The International JoJazz Festival, which has been held since 1997 in Havana, includes jazz interpreters and composers between 16 and 30 years old. (ACN, 29/11/07)

**November 29:** Some 2 to 5,2 per cent of sexually active Cuban males have acknowledged they have had sexual intercourse with other men, and over 80 percent of HIV positive individuals are homosexuals and bisexuals, according to official statistics. The information was made public during the exhibit of the first video-clip on sexual diversity filmed in the island. The video was made in support of a new campaign of the HSH project (Men who have sexual relations with other men) and the National Center for the Prevention of Sexual Transmitted Diseases and HIV-AIDS. (EFE, 29/11/07)

**November 30:** Four young promoters of the project University Students Without Borders (Universitarios sin Fronteras) were detained by local police, the Cuban Democratic Directorate denounced. The detention took place while the young activists were protesting the detention of dissident Juan Bermúdez Toranzo, in front of a police station in Havana's municipality of Diez de Octubre. Rolando Rodríguez Lobaina, director of the Centre for Alternative Studies (Centro de Estudios Alternativos); Gerardo Sánchez Ortega, national coordinator of the Young Cubans Movement toward Democracy in Cuba

(Movimiento Cubano de Jóvenes por la Democracia en Cuba), MCJD; Juan Carlos Hernández Hernández, member of the MCJD, and Eliécer Consuegra Rivas, president of the Democratic Eastern Alliance (Alianza Democrática Oriental,) had offered a conference on November 27 to present 5,000 signatures supporting the project University Students Without Borders. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 1/12/07)

**November 30:** The project of candidatures for delegates to provincial assemblies and the National Parliament is ready. According to a note read during a primetime television newscast, the Municipal Assemblies will be in charge of nominating the candidates in each territory next December 2nd. Grass-root organizations such as the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR), the Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC), the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) and the Federation of University Students (FEU) nominated 50% of the candidates while municipal delegates nominated the other 50%. Yanira Ruper Herrera, member of the National Commission of Candidature, noted that there was also an ample process of consultation in work places and in the neighborhoods to know the people's opinion about the nominees. (*ACN*, 30/11/07)



## ECONOMY

**November 1:** The Havana 2007 Urban Manifesto was presented at the 2nd International Convention on Territorial Distribution and Urbanization underway in Havana. The document aims to set an alternative program of sustainable urban development, which includes improvements for pedestrians, cyclists and the public transportation network. It also takes in measures against the negative effects of dense traffic areas in the cities through the reduction of main streets and the use of beltways instead of traffic lights. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, *ACN*, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Iran's trade minister expressed in Havana his country's interest in increasing investment flows and bolstering cooperation with Cuba. In his second trip in less than four months to the communist-ruled island, Sayed Masoud Mir Kazemi met with Cuban Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez. Both ministers said the potential for bilateral trade is "very good" and pledged to consolidate and increase exchanges in the areas of agriculture, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, energy and transport, Kazemi said. In mid-June, the two countries signed several memorandums of understanding and a document for the use of a 200 million euro (\$289 million) loan from Tehran. The loan allows Cuba to finance imports from Iran in the transport sector, mainly in railroad material and vehicles; hydraulic machinery; and materials for the energy sector. "We're prepared to expand cooperation," De la Nuez said referring to the opportunities for the production of Cuban vaccines and the development of medicines at a medical-pharmaceutical complex built in Iran with Cuban technology. (*EFE*, 1/11/07)

**November 2:** Tropical storm Noel left thousands of hectares of sugar cane under water in eastern and central Cuba and seriously damaged infrastructure, official media said, as rain

continued in the area. The Communist party newspaper Granma reported "significant damage" in eastern Guantanamo province, "extensive areas of cane flooded" in neighboring Holguin province, and "ravaged" plantations in Las Tunas province. Extensive areas of cane were also flooded in eastern Santiago de Cuba and Granma provinces, as well as the central provinces of Camaguey and Ciego de Avila. Thousands of miles of secondary roads and rails used by the industry were washed out, while damage to major roads and rails left much of the area without adequate supplies of fuel and food, state-run media reported, without further detail. Unlike in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, no deaths were reported. (*Reuters*, 2/11/07)

**November 3:** The Eastern provinces of Cuba continued under the effects of torrential rains associated to Noel tropical storm, a hurricane already causing significant economic and social damages. According to data of Civil Defense of the National General Administration (EMDC), more than 30,000 people of east Cuba have been evacuated to safe places where they are guaranteed the necessary means and food services until weather conditions improve. Dams in Guantanamo, Santiago de Cuba, Granma and Tunas, were overflowing and tens of communities were without communication because of floods and the destruction of highways, roads, and bridges, Radio Rebelde reported. According to the same source, half a million people in Santiago of Cuba face a critical drinking water situation, due to breakages of pipes and power interruptions. Damages to the economy of Santiago de Cuba are considered at three million pesos, mainly related to the thousands of coffee beans still without being collected in the mountains, Radio Rebelde emphasized. (*Prensa Latina*, 3/11/07)

**November 4:** Abraham Maciques, president of the Organizing Committee of Havana's International Trade Fair 2007 (FIHAV 07), said Canada, China, Italy, Panama and Spain will be the foreign countries with the biggest representation at this 25th edition of FIHAV, the greatest commercial fair in Cuba and one of the most important in the region. Maciques said there will be 15 pavilions and important delegations coming from Brazil, Belgium, Argentina, France, Mexico, France, Venezuela and the US. Turkey and Iran will be among a group of nations with an important participation. More than 1,200 entrepreneurs from 52 nations of the world will take part at FIHAV. The Fair was preceded by the 2nd Non Aligned Movement Business Forum, November 1 to 3, at Havana's Convention Center. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/11/07)

**November 5:** The Havana International Trade Fair started in the Cuban capital with an attendance of over 1,200 businesspeople from 54 countries, higher than the previous edition. Cuban Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez highlighted the increase of the total exchange of the island's goods from January to September, compared with the same period last year. The exchange grew 12% during the first nine months of 2007, compared with same period last year, due to a growth of exports of 44%, while "imports grew 3%", the Minister said. On the eve of the opening of FIHAV, De la Nuez highlighted that Cuba's trade with the Americas occupies the first place, at 46%, followed by Europe and Asia (26%) and Africa and Oceania (3%). "Exchange with Asia has grown, not only with China, our main trade partner in that region, but also with Vietnam and Japan", he added. (*Prensa Latina, AFP*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** Panamanian Vice President Samuel Lewis and his Cuban counterpart, Carlos Lage, officially opened the 25th Havana International Fair (FIHAV) at Cuba's largest exhibition site: ExpoCuba. Lewis cut the ribbon to open nearly 10 square miles of exposition grounds, where there are displays of equipment, machinery, new technologies, raw materials and services, belonging to 36 chambers of commerce and 1,425 companies – 997 of them foreign. Lewis signed two accords with Cuban authorities on air transportation and maritime cooperation. His agenda in Cuba also includes meeting with his counterpart Felipe Perez Roque and presiding over the celebration of the Panama Day in his country's pavilion at the 25th Havana International Trade Fair. (*ACN, Prensa Latina, 5/11/07*)

**November 5:** Iran and Cuba have agreed to launch a joint shipping line venture aimed at increasing trade between Iran and Latin America, according to reports. And Iran and Venezuela are considering finalizing a similar agreement, Iran's Finance Minister Massoud Mir-Kazemi said. He made the comments after returning home from the second Business Forum of the Non-Aligned Countries Movement held in Havana, Cuba from November 1 to 3. Iran and Cuba signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the joint shipping line. In addition, contracts on transport and the specific industries for which Cuba needs Iranian investment have been signed as well, Mir-Kazemi said. Of the contract between Cuba and Iran Mir-Kazemi was quoted by Iran's Press TV as saying, "Both countries have important business ties. Cuba needs train wagons and other Iranian products, and we are interested in Havana's well-developed biology projects." He said both that deal and the pending one between Tehran and Caracas could enhance trade between Iran and other Latin American countries as well. (*AHN, 5/11/07*)

**November 5:** No deaths have been reported so far by the local civil defense authorities in Granma, in spite of the floods caused by the heavy rains that continue to affect the eastern region of Cuba. According to reports, the number of people evacuated exceeds 40,000, half of them from the municipality of Rio Cauto. Civil defense authorities and army forces continue to lead evacuation actions as rains in the mountains have not ceased, and water continues to drain down from the highest areas. Numerous floods have been reported in the municipalities of Yara and Campechuela, said Lazaro Exposito, President of the Provincial Civil Defense Council. The people from Rio Cauto, are being taken to Bayamo, the capital city of Granma, since the Cauto River, the largest in Cuba, is overflowed, as well as the Salado and Naranjo rivers. Exposito said around 300 families in Bayamo are hosting evacuees. Economic losses caused by the rain in the month of October and particularly those associated with hurricane Noel are estimated to be valued at millions of Cuban pesos especially in the housing, roadways and agricultural sectors in Granma. (*ACN, 5/11/07*)

**November 5:** A meeting of the directors of telecommunications of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) began in Havana to define legal bases with a view of creating of a mixed company in that sector. First Vice Minister of Computer Science and Telecommunications Ramon Luis Linares, from Cuba, said this initiative - Gran Nacional ALBA Telecomunicaciones - is a necessity for the development of integration

in Latin America. The company, expected to be constituted by January, will have to guarantee sovereignty and the security in this important sector. For three days, representatives of Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Cuba will examine several subjects related to rural telephony, as well as research and development of communications. In addition, the subjects to be tackled cover formation of training workshops, telecommunication network infrastructures and the creation and development of products. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/11/07)

**November 5:** The Spanish ambassador to Cuba, Carlos Alonso Zaldivar, called for reinforcing the commercial bonds established between his country and the island. The statement was made at the inauguration ceremony of the Spanish pavilion at the 25th Havana International Fair (FIHAV 2007), which is being attended by over 80 companies from Spain. Alonso Zaldivar noted that Spanish exports to Cuba amounted to 630 million euros in 2006, and pointed out that they should exceed 700 million euros in 2007. The president of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, Raul Becerra, said the three Spanish pavilions cover an area of 1,241 square meters in EXPOCUBA, the island's largest exhibition site. Becerra also praised the excellent relations between Cuba and Spain. Cuba ranks fifth in Spain's exports to Latin America, particularly in food, machinery and spare parts. (*ACN*, 6/11/07)

**November 6:** About 20 companies from Russia are taking part in the 25th Havana International Fair that opened in the Cuban capital. The Russian firms display automotive, aviation and railway technology, as well as instruments, machine tools, and other manufactures. Minister of the Cuban government Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz has said in an Itar-Tass interview, "We regard it as a very positive fact that Russia participates in this international fair again. He said, "This is a clear illustration of the revival of trade and economic contacts between the two countries", the revival that has been observed in recent years. "Trade has always been a reflection of the relations of friendship and cooperation, the relations that have never been interrupted between our two countries," Cabrisas pointed out. He emphasized that the Cuban authorities "take an optimistic view of further development of bilateral relations" with the Russian Federation. (*ITAR TASS*, 6/11/07)

**November 6:** Cuban state importer Alimport signed contracts for a value of \$140 million for the purchase of wheat, peas and powdered milk from Canada at the 25th Havana International Trade Fair. Cuba signed a contract with the Canadian Wheat Board to buy 150,000 tonnes of wheat, a sign that Canada's food sales are recovering at the expense of US exporters. The president of the Cuban food import agency Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, said the wheat purchase for delivery next year was worth about \$70 million. Cuba also bought 100,000 tonnes of peas and 3,000 tonnes of powdered milk from Canadian companies at the annual Havana trade fair, deals worth another \$75 million, he said. Cuban food purchases from Canada will increase 40 percent this year due to difficulties in buying from the United States, which is requiring payment before shipment on food sales under an exception to the US trade embargo against Cuba, he said. "We are signing with the Canadians before the Americans," Alvarez said. "We compete with the Americans all around the world, so we are very happy about this signing," said Greg

Arason, president and CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board. Canada exported 89,000 tonnes of wheat to Cuba in the 2006/07 marketing year, which ended July 31, according to Canadian Grain Commission statistics. The previous year, Canada shipped 177,000 tonnes of wheat to Cuba -- its biggest exports to the country in the previous decade. The 10-year average is 77,500 tonnes. (*Reuters, EFE, 6/11/07*)

**November 6:** Cuba's foreign trade balance will show improvement in 2007 for the first time in years, with exports up 44 percent through September and imports 3 percent higher, the island nation's trade minister said. Foreign trade totaled \$12.18 billion in 2006, with exports of \$2.76 billion and imports of \$9.42 billion, the government reported. The trade deficit was offset by more than \$6 billion in revenues from services. "We have a commercial balance of goods which is better than previous years," Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez told the press during a brief interview at Cuba 's international trade fair in Havana. De la Nuez said he expected the year-end figures to be similar to those through September, meaning exports would increase by more than \$1 billion and imports by less than \$300 million. "Nickel is the most important reason our exports are up, followed by pharmaceuticals and medical equipment and tobacco," de la Nuez said. Cuban nickel and cobalt exports garnered around \$1.3 billion in 2006 on output of 74,000 tonnes of unrefined product. (*Reuters, 7/11/07*)

**November 7:** Authorities have evacuated more than 80,000 people as rains in eastern Cuba in the aftermath of the tropical storm Noel damaged thousands of homes, wiped out crops and practically snapped the entire regional communications network. Granma province, where 40,000 people have been moved to safety, is one of the hardest hit in Cuba's wettest October in a century. Three nickel plants were shut down in eastern Cuba due to flooding, state-run radio reported, while two others continued operations using reserves as weeks of torrential rain made mining impossible. "The Rene Ramos Latour nickel plant in Mayari municipality stopped operations due to flood waters reaching the main plant where ovens reduce the mineral," state-run Radio Progreso said. "The joint venture Pedro Soto Alba plant and Che Guevara plants in Moa continue production (...) as they have various days of reserves and are not threatened by flood waters," the report said. Two of the country's three plants are owned by state-run Cubaniquel, and the Pedro Soto Alba plant is a joint venture with Canada-based Sherritt International. "We are always prepared for rain in the area at this time of year and operations continue," Sherritt spokesman Michael Minnes said earlier this week in a phone interview from Toronto, Canada. However, local residents said flooded roads, overflowing rivers and rain in the remote mountainous area meant it would be difficult to process and move nickel laterite at a normal pace. (*EFE, Reuters, 7/11/07*)

**November 7:** Brazil state oil company Petrobras is taking another look at deep-sea exploration in Cuban waters in the Gulf of Mexico, Brazilian officials said. "Petrobras is interested in oil prospecting in Cuba," Brazilian Development, Industry and Trade Minister Miguel Jorge said at the annual Havana trade fair. Diplomatic sources said a high-level Petrobras delegation had visited Cuba in September and a team of technical experts were in Havana for talks with Cuba 's state oil company, CUPET. Jorge said he

did not know whether any agreements would be signed during a visit Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva plans to make at the end of the month. (*Reuters*, 7/11/07)

**November 8:** A man drowned crossing a river in eastern Cuba where heavy rains and flooding in the wake of Tropical Storm Noel caused \$500 million in damages to crops, roads and houses, the Cuban government said. It was the first death reported by Cuba as a result of the torrential rains dumped on its eastern provinces last week by Noel, the deadliest storm of 2007, which killed at least 142 people on other Caribbean islands. Yusmani Tames died trying to cross a swollen river in Granma province, where floods after Cuba 's biggest river, the Cauto, burst its banks, the government said in a statement published by the Communist Party newspaper Granma. It said 22,000 houses had been damaged or destroyed, and thousands of kilometers of roads flooded. Cuba lost 10 percent of its coffee crop due to Noel, which drenched eastern provinces already saturated by two weeks of persistent rainfall. Officials said 50,000 hectares (123,550 acres) of sugar cane fields were flooded or damaged by the storm in the eastern half of Cuba, which accounts for half of Cuban sugar output. The floods could delay the start of the sugar harvest, they said. (*Reuters*, 8/11/07)

**November 9:** South Africa and Cuba are to establish a task team to improve the trade relations between the two countries. "We have identified this [trade] as a challenge and we have agreed that we are going to establish a task team of officials from both countries to really pay more attention to this area to see how we can turn this around and improve the trade and economic co-operation between our two countries", Foreign Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma said at the 5th SA-Cuba Joint Bi-national Commission which she co-chaired with Cuba's Foreign Minister Martha Lomas Morales. Minister Dlamini Zuma said the reason for trade being a challenge is that Cuba is a long distance away from South Africa and is not a traditional trading partner; however both countries are willing to build partnerships. "This is why we have established a special task team to look at the obstacles and how we can get around them," Minister Dlamini Zuma said. (*BuaNews*, 11/11/07)

**November 9:** Special teams from the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources (INRH) began mounting a new water pipeline for Santiago de Cuba as part of the works underway in that city to improve the service, that due to the rains was seriously affected. Engineer José Angel Pita Hernández, the INRH representative in the province, said that after this past October, Santiago's rainiest season in the last 80 years, the water distribution system suffered many breakdowns, and major damage was reported in the main lines piping water into Santiago. In the Holguín municipality of Urbano Noris, the simultaneous "explosion" of about 13 ruptures along the same road, which runs between the provincial capital and the municipality of Moa, caused a section of roadway more than 100 meters long to collapse, cutting off transit between the eastern and western parts of the province. Non-stop work was underway to build a detour road. Heavy rain in the Báguano region caused the Rejondones stream to rise, causing the collapse of another bridge and forcing a the traffic detour through Urbano Noris. (*Granma*, 9/11/07)

**November 10:** The accelerated ripening of coffee beans due to heavy rains left a red blanket in the mountainous zones of Granma province, where the road repairs continue to reopen access to these areas. Residents of the surrounding communities are taking time off from their usual activities to pick beans before they fall and help bring in the harvest. The first task after the deluge was to restore the road access to coffee fields. More than 1,600 are taking part in road repairs, using picks and shovels to push back the soil that came down the hillsides during the rains. So far, nearly 30 kilometers of roads have been restored. Some 46 percent of roads in the area are damaged. According to William Chavez, in charge of coffee production and forestry for the Ministry of Agriculture in Granma province, 40 of the area's 51 pulping plants as well as the drying process are back operating. The harvest will receive reinforcements with students from several neighbouring municipalities, Chavez said. (*Granma*, 10/11/07)

**November 12:** Participants in the Third Meeting of Telecommunication Executives from the member countries of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) laid the foundations to set up a joint venture in that field. The five-day meeting held in Havana made major achievements in the preparation of documents, said Ramon Luis Linares, Cuba's first deputy minister of Informatics and Communications. We have created conditions for the documents to be signed officially in December, in Caracas, Venezuela, the Cuban official added. At the closing session of the meeting, Cuban Informatics and Communication Minister Ramiro Valdes noted that the project boosts unity between Venezuela and Cuba, as well as Bolivia and Nicaragua, all of which are signatories of the ALBA accord. (*Prensa Latina*, 12/11/07)

**November 12:** Major General Ramón Pardo Guerra, chief of the Civil Defense National General Staff, reaffirmed the progress made in the recovery period following Tropical Storm Noel, assessed the people's response as positive and met with leadership bodies from several provinces as part of his tour of affected areas in eastern Cuba. After arriving in this city, Pardo Guerra recognized the disciplined and swift actions taken by the local Defense Councils, as well as those in Granma and Las Tunas provinces, in response to the rainiest season reported in the country in decades. In Las Tunas, he visited the highway in the Manatí municipality, and in Granma, he met with authorities and citizens affected by the storm in Yara, Manzanillo, Bayamo and Río Cauto, where some of the worst flooding in history was reported. In each of those sites, he stated, "we were able to see the capacity of work that was activated before, during and after the heavy rains, and we confirmed that the measures implemented were appropriate and consistent, responding to contingency plans approved by the Civil Defense." (*Granma International*, 12/11/07)

**November 12:** Cuba purchased more than \$300 million worth of food from Canadian, Chinese, Venezuelan and US companies, among others, during the 25th Havana Trade Fair, officials said. Some 1,425 firms from 53 countries took part in the fair, which ended on November 10. The head of Cuban state-owned food importer Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, told the press that the island's purchases of food products would total between \$1.6 billion and \$1.7 billion this year, representing an increase of nearly \$600 million over the past four years. Alimport's purchases at the Havana Trade Fair reached some

\$301 million, of which contracts with US firms totalled about \$106 million, "a figure much smaller than in the previous year," Alvarez said. The contracts with Canada totalled some \$140 million and covered the purchase of wheat, peas and powdered milk, while the island agreed to purchase 200,000 tons of rice from Vietnam for more than \$90 million, the Cuban official said. Cuba agreed to purchase feed from firms in Mexico and the Dominican Republic, as well as supermarket products from Spanish suppliers, Alvarez said. "We are negotiating the fundamentals for food for the first third of the year, from January to April, and, on an exception basis, some transactions up to May or June (of 2008)," the head of Cuba 's state-owned food import firm said. (*EFE*, 11/11/07)

**November 12:** Cuba said that unrefined nickel plus cobalt production was returning to normal after weeks of torrential rains in eastern Holguin province had shut down open pit mines and slowed output. "Nickel production in the province has begun to stabilize," Sunday evening's government newscast said, in a report on recovery efforts in eastern Cuba where flooding from Tropical Storm Noel caused \$500 million in damage. Cuba's three plants are located in the mountains of Holguin province, which since early October has been battered by the worst rainfall in decades, and was swamped by Tropical Storm Noel 10 days ago. The Rene Ramos Latour nickel processing plant, which was closed when flood-waters reached its drying ovens more than a week ago, reopened on November 11, Holguin's local television channel reported. The two other plants in the area operated with skeleton staffs over the last two weeks, with little if any material moving in or out of the plants. At the weekend transportation remained difficult, with the military, construction crews, and residents working to reopen washed out roads and bridges. (*Reuters*, 12/11/07)

**November 14:** Representatives from 30 countries are taking part in an international panel on urban agriculture and municipalities, convened by the Government of Havana Province and the Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forest Technicians. The panel is part of the 15th meeting of the City Council Cooperation and Solidarity with Havana, which began with a tour of urban agriculture areas in the Cuban capital. The event, attended by about 400 authorities from local governments, including mayors, aldermen, governors, agronomists, urban planners, international agencies of collaboration and non governmental organizations from various continents, will discuss sustainable agricultural development in harmony with the environment and society. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/11/07)

**November 14:** Cuba and the Bolivarian Revolution took another step forward to unity with the start-up of the Bi-national Project of National Development in the Cuban municipality of Venezuela, located in the central province of Ciego de Avila, as part of agreements of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). The program, about which its general aims were made public in a mass gathering in the city, is aimed at providing the area with resources to reactivate its economy, which has deteriorated over the last few years due to the impact of the US blockade and the collapse of the socialist bloc. The initiative for the development of a local core in the municipality of Venezuela, with funds from ALBA, plans 318 investment actions with 114 goals related to production and services, which will also helped to reanimate other branches. The project should be fulfilled in the next three years and its general lines are aimed at increasing and

improving the irrigation systems in farming areas, improving conditions for livestock breeding and constructing, repairing and maintaining all roads devoted to agricultural production. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 14/11/07)

**November 15:** Cuban Minister of Economic Collaboration and Investment Marta Lomas concluded her working visit to Windhoek where she presided over the 9th Meeting of Namibia-Cuba Mixed Commission. Namibia and Cuba have strong bonds of political friendship, but the two governments have expressed concern over lack of effort to improve the low level of trade and investment between the two countries. The Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Marta Lomas Morales said the two countries have made significant strides in consolidating bilateral relations. They have done this through the signing of various agreements in areas such as education, but one area that still calls for attention remains trade. Morales said the two countries should seriously discuss and identify products that can become part of trade between the nations. She said Cuba could, for example, export pharmaceutical products including vaccines for children. Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources Abraham Iyambo suggested Namibia could export horse mackerel, beef and marble to Cuba. Namibia could in turn import sugar, HIV/Aids drugs, aspirins, and Cuban branded drinks such as Havana Club. (*Prensa Latina, All Africa.Com*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** The State Duma lower house of the Russian parliament is expected to ratify an agreement between the governments of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Cuba, House Deputy Speaker Oleg Morozov told journalists in Moscow. Morozov specified that the agreement in question concerns a settlement of Cuba's debts to Russia under earlier granted credits. According to the document, those debts amounting to \$166 million are to be repaid within the next ten years. The Agreement was signed in Havana on September 28, 2006. (*Itar-Tass*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** Specialists from Hanoi's Energy Institute have started a course on the building and management of biogas plants, in the Cuban eastern province of Las Tunas. The course includes theoretical and practical lessons, which will allow a number of Cuban managers and technicians to benefit from the Vietnamese experience in the field of environmental sources of energy. The Vietnamese specialists have chosen to give the course in Las Tunas, as in previous years, due to the abundance of organic material in that territory where the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment is promoting the production of biogas. (*ACN*, 15/11/07)

**November 16:** A company of Azerbaijan and Cuba signed protocols on intentions to sell Azerbaijani wine, brandy and other strong drinks in Cuba, the Economic Development Ministry reported. Also, the companies signed protocols on import of Cuban rum and cigars to Azerbaijan. Presentation of wines, brandies and other strong drinks made in Azerbaijan was made during meetings with such well-known Cuban companies as Kuba Nikel, LabioFam, FarmaCuba, and Maprinter. (*Trend News Agency*, 16/11/07)

**November 17:** Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage extolled in Cienfuegos that the island cut its fossil fuel consumption in the last three years. Precisely when the country s

economy is growing, diesel consumption fell by seven percent and gasoline by 13 percent, informed Lage after a tour of Cienfuegos energy facilities. Lage, also executive secretary of the Council of Ministers, attended the inauguration of a power plant with a generating capacity of 20 megawatts in the locality of Cruces and learned about the modernization project of the thermoelectric power plant of this city. Later, he checked the state of works at the oil refinery Camilo Cienfuegos, investment by a Cuba-Venezuela joint venture which will begin processing 65 thousand barrels per day in the first stage by the end of next December. Lage said the energy revolution -government strategy in this sector- more than a task is a concept developed by Fidel Castro of a permanent nature. Energy revolution is forever, as there is always a need to achieve less fuel consumption, he reiterated. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/11/07)

**November 19:** Over 500 experts from 24 countries are attending to the 14th Congress on Asphalt Techniques at Havana's convention center. The president of the Organizing Committee, Mercedes Mustelier Vidal, noted that most of the participants at the event are from abroad. The Congress, sponsored by the National Union of Cuban Architects and Engineers, is being attended by delegates from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador, Spain, Mexico, Nicaragua, Venezuela and the United States. Mustelier noted the meeting will be very helpful particularly for the Cuban experts who plan to undertake a project for the improvement of the island's national transportation network. (*ACN*, 19/11/07)

**November 19:** Cuba will repair more than 2,900 kilometers of highways on urban and rural areas, during a five-year period, announced the Cuban Minister of Transport, Jorge Luis Sierra. Sierra explained that these efforts were "over and above" those already underway to repair the damages left behind in the Cuban East by the rains accompanying tropical thunderstorm Noel. (*EFE*, 20/11/07)

**November 19:** The Cuban government has implemented an investment program to produce pastas with the instalment of four factories with Italian technology, two of them currently in production, an official from the sector said. Abel Gonzalez, investment executive at the "Union Confitera," managerial group from the Food Industry Ministry, told reporters that the four plants distributed throughout the country will produce 60,000 tons of long pastas per year. One is located in the central-south Cienfuegos province, the second in Santiago de Cuba, the country's second city, a third in San Jose de las Lajas, 15.5 miles southeast of Havana, and a fourth in the east Camaguey province. (*Prensa Latina*, 19/11/07)

**November 19:** Fourteen sugar mills decommissioned by the Cuban sugar industry will be installed in Venezuela to produce ethanol. The South American country will dedicate 300 thousand hectares of sugar-cane to produce the biofuel with a view to mix up to 10 % of it with fossil fuels. This mix will be destined to the domestic market. (*Cubanet*, 19/11/07)

**November 19:** The government of Cuba declared December 31 and January 2 as statutory holidays, bringing the number of Cuban stat holidays in a year from seven to

nine, according to an official statement published in the newspaper Granma. (*Cubanet*, 19/11/07)

**November 19:** The President of Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, will open the oil refinery Cienfuegos in Cuba in the next few days in the presence of Fidel Castro, Chavez announced. Chavez told the news during the closing ceremony of a summit of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which took place in Riyadh over the November 17-18 weekend. The next summit of the regional energy initiative Petrocaribe will take place in Havana with the participation of 14 Caribbean countries, Chavez also announced, without quoting when exactly the summit will be. (*Latin America News Digest*, 20/11/07)

**November 20:** Waste, inefficiency and, in some cases, corruption are driving up Cuba's bill for fuel, the state-run media said. The communist-ruled island could save more than 200,000 liters (53,000 gallons) a day of diesel fuel just through the more efficient operation of trucks and tractors in the farming sector, Juventud Rebelde newspaper said. The daily cited a report submitted to the Agriculture and Sugar ministries that pointed out how much fuel is wasted by the common practice of leaving vehicles running all the time due to the lack of spare parts to repair faulty batteries. Drafted by some of the young straight-arrow Communist Party cadres carrying out the anti-corruption crusade launched two years ago by Fidel Castro, the report also documents falsifications of the records of vehicle use and even tampering with odometers. (*EFE*, 21/11/07)

**November 20:** More than 2,000 people were evacuated from their homes as floods washed away buildings, crops and electricity pylons in eastern Cuba, two weeks after the same region was hit by the country's worst floods in 40 years, local media reported. Driving rains swelled rivers in Guantanamo and Holguin provinces overnight, with the Toa river cresting one meter (three-feet) above flood stage, sending families scrambling to higher ground. "I live and grew up on the banks of the Toa River and never in my long life -- I'm 84 -- have I seen something so awful," an unidentified local woman said on television. A local mayor reported 2,000 people evacuated and extensive damage wrought by the floods, but said that luckily "there was no loss of life." (*AFP*, 20/11/07)

**November 21:** Cuba announced it has increased to 64 the municipalities adopting the fuel saving system of direct delivery of milk by dairy farmers to consumers. At the National Rebellion Day celebration July 26, First State Council Vice President General Raul Castro announced that six municipalities were then using this system. Orlando Lugo Fonte, president of Cuba's Association of Small Farmers (ANAP), said that today 35 municipalities are already self-sufficient. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** Cuba and Bolivia gave a boost to their economic and commercial relations with a Complementary Economic Agreement that both sides signed in La Paz, the Bolivian capital. Cuban Foreign Trade Vice Minister Pedro Luis Padron told the press that the duty-free policy for the buying and selling of products from both countries - one of the benefits - is in accordance with the agreements of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) and the Trade Treaty of the Peoples (TCP), signed by both

governments. Padron said that food and items of clothing are some of the products with more perspectives for bilateral trade, which in 2006 rose to the tune of \$50 million. (ACN, 21/11/07)

**November 23:** Caribbean presidents will gather in Cuba in December for a meeting of Petrocaribe, which supplies Venezuelan oil to the region at preferential prices, Venezuela's ambassador to Cuba said. Ali Rodriguez said the summit will coincide with the reopening of a 65,000-barrel-a-day refinery that is being overhauled by Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA and that Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez plans to inaugurate in mid-December. "The Petrocaribe meeting and the inauguration of the refinery will be done at the same time," Rodriguez said at a news conference in Havana. The exact dates of the meeting have yet to be worked out, he said. (Reuters, 23/11/07)

**November 23:** The Cuban tourism industry hopes to end the year, the fourth in a row, with the figure of more than 2 million visitors, once again confirming the island as one of the top destinations in the Caribbean. The information was provided in Holguin, by María Elena López, deputy minister of the Ministry of Tourism, who emphasized that the number of visitors from the main issuing countries, such as Canada, was expected to rise by 6%. The issue was addressed by López during the 18th Congress of the French Association of Business, Tourism and Travel (AFAT-Voyages) at its closing event at the Hotel Playa Pesquero. (Granma International, 23/11/07)

**November 25:** An official Cuban newspaper questioned government claims of 2 per cent unemployment in the latest challenge to government rhetoric begun under acting president Raul Castro more than a year ago. The article in the Union of Young Communists' "Juventud Rebelde" newspaper questioned government claims that almost all young people are working or in school. The Union of Young Communists is the youth wing of the ruling Communist party. "The figures never reflect reality," said the article, which concluded that those involved in ensuring youth are working or studying should "tear themselves away from illusory figures" and take another look. Among numerous examples provided by the two-page article was a report that around 16,000 youth in eastern Santiago were unemployed in 2006, when a survey by social workers put the figure at 29,000. (Reuters, 26/11/07)

**November 26:** Cuba and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) signed a technical cooperation project, to develop the industrial chain of Spirulina Algae for human consumption. The plan includes improving production and commercialization processes, controlling quality systems and staff training, modernizing labs to control quality, and obtaining other products with high added value. (Prensa Latina, 26/11/07)

**November 26:** Cuba and the Democratic Republic of Korea reaffirmed in Havana their interest in maximizing bilateral cooperation and exchange in the sectors of biotechnology, culture, education, agriculture, health and energy. Cuba's intentions of increasing the existing bilateral socioeconomic relations with North Korea were expressed by the island's Minister of Government, Ricardo Cabrisas, during the inauguration of the 26th Bilateral Commission of Economic, Scientific and Technical

Consultation in Havana. For his part, Trade Minister Rim Kyong Man, who heads the visiting delegation, expressed the interest of his people in promoting common economic ties and in taking them to the same level of the excellent political relations that exist between the two countries. (ACN, 27/11/07)

**November 26:** Cuba's economy should grow by 10 percent in 2007, the third straight year of double-digit expansion, despite slips in the tourism sector, according to Economy Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez. Speaking at a meeting of economists, Rodriguez said gross domestic product on the communist-run island would rise by 10 percent this year, reiterating a prediction he made in February. The event was closed to international media, but Rodriguez's comments were reported by the official National Information Agency. The report provided few details about what is fuelling growth, citing only general increases in industrial and agricultural production. Cuba includes state spending on social and health care programs when calculating its growth rates, a methodology that makes its figures difficult to compare with those of other countries. (AP, 26/11/07)

**November 27:** Cuban Economy and Production Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez defended an adequate structural change in the economy, emphasizing production, service and transportation. Rodriguez spoke in western Pinar del Rio at the celebrations for National Economists' Day, and declared food production and energy efficiency are the priorities of his ministry; noting that 70 percent of this year's investments are to consolidate food production infrastructure. However, he added, at the threshold of 2008 it is necessary to face up to the changes demanded by the economy and encourage substitution of imports with a better balance of trade and services. This will allow improvement, where possible, in distribution of income and strengthening of the national currency, he said. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/11/07)

**November 28:** Mexico's new ambassador to Cuba said that his country will re-negotiate US\$500 million (euro337 million) in debt that the communist-run island owes Mexico to improve strained relations between the nations. Ambassador Gabriel Jimenez said both sides will meet several times next month and hope to reach a debt settlement plan by the end of the year, marking the first public acknowledgment of talks on the issue. Jimenez, a friend of Mexican President Felipe Calderon, said he has reassured his government that Havana has every intention of paying off its debt in time. "Cuba wants to meet its obligations," he told reporters. Debt discussions are likely to lead to bilateral talks on other thorny issues, including illegal immigration and human rights, as both sides are "now getting serious" about reconciliation, Jimenez said. (AP, 28/11/07)

**November 29:** The 26th Session of the Economic, Scientific and Technical Consultation Commission between Cuba and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea concluded in Havana with the signing of a bilateral cooperation protocol for the next years. Cuban Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas and Korean Trade Minister Rim Kyong Man, who advocated for deepening collaboration between both countries, led the talks. Also included were possible actions in trade, oil, health, biotechnology, agriculture, iron-steel and metallurgy industries, sugar, science and technique, education, culture and sports. (ACN, 29/11/07)

**November 30:** Nearly a year after imposing resolutions to improve workplace discipline in Cuba, the authorities admitted that there still remain shortcomings in the sector. The Minister of Labor and Social Welfare, Alfredo Morales, complained about the systematic tardiness and repeated absences of the employees, among others. According to Morales, a monitoring study conducted between April and September revealed that irregularities persist, including workplace absenteeism by managers. (*EFE*, 29/11/07)

**November 30:** During a general assembly in Bilbao, Spain, the Association of Basque Businessmen in Cuba declared their willingness to strengthen ties with the Caribbean island. Cuban Ambassador to Spain Alberto Velazco, guest of the association, gave a general overview of present day Cuba, emphasizing its economic situation. Bilbao will host the Cuba-Basque Mixed Commission in 2008. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/11/07)

**November 30:** During a recent visit to Cuba, Paulino Rivero, president of the Canary Islands, emphasized the progress of some 100 projects his country has undertaken in Cuba, 11 of which are currently developing in the areas of public health, education and social work. In a meeting with the Cuban and accredited international press, Rivero said that links between the two peoples are excellent and that his government authorities are devoted to improvement in the quality of life of the population. He explained that during his visit, letters of understanding were signed with respect to future tourism development projects, an area in which the Canary Islands can contribute its knowledge and experience. The president of this Spanish autonomous territory highlighted Cuban climatic, environmental and social conditions that lend themselves to the leisure industry and, in his opinion, investment possibilities, a topic in which national authorities showed great interest and openness. (*Granma International*, 30/11/07)



## EXILE COMMUNITY

**November 5:** Three Hungarians were stabbed during a bar scuffle with six Cuban refugees at a town 40 km west of Budapest, the head of Hungary's immigration office said. A Hungarian immigration official told a state news agency that their refugee status would not be affected by the accident. (*Xinhua*, 6/11/07)

**November 7:** Exile groups are opening a hot line to help Cubans on the island report political persecution as well as acts of defiance and civil disobedience against the communist government. The initiative, proposed by the Cuban Democratic Directorate, or Directorio Democrático Cubano, and various other groups of exiles who arrived in the 1960s, seeks to document any detentions or repercussions against any Cuban who refuses to cooperate with the regime. The international line, 877-303-YONO (a play on "Not I" in Spanish) will be available 24 hours a day and will be manned by former political prisoners in Miami. "This is a new phase within the "Yo no coopero con la dictadura" (I will not cooperate with the dictatorship) campaign just as civil society protests are

increasing," said Angel de Fana, an ex-political prisoner and director of the group Plantados. "These are political actions in a society where politics governs every aspect of the population." (*The Miami Herald*, 7/11/07)

**November 8:** In a ceremony broadcast live on the Univision Network, Cuban trumpet virtuoso Arturo Sandoval was awarded a Latin Grammy in the category of Best Latin Jazz Album by the Latin Recording Academy for "Rumba Palace", released on May 22, 2007. Sandoval was the only Cuban awarded of over 15 that were nominated. (*Jazz Police*, 9/11/07)

**November 8:** Fulgencio Ruben Batista, the oldest son of one of Cuba's most controversial yet influential presidents, died at his Coral Gables home of complications from leukemia and lymphoma. He was 73. His father, whose name he carried, was Cuba's last leader before he was dramatically overthrown by Fidel Castro's revolution during New Year's Eve celebrations in 1958. Batista had been democratically elected in 1940, but in 1952 suspended the constitution, cancelled elections and turned to strongman rule. As the son of a president during a violent and traumatic era, Batista had a front-row seat to events that changed the course of the island's history. "He had a uniquely valuable knowledge of Cuban history," said his daughter Tere Batista of Miami, who was writing a book with her father of his memories. She said her father never became bitter about exile. "He summed up having to live out the bulk of his life in Miami like this: 'When I left Cuba, I lost a whole way of life and a future in politics. In exchange, I gained the possibility of a free and more peaceful existence,'" she said. (*The Miami Herald*, 8/11/07)

**November 12:** The Cuban exiled community in Miami paid homage to political Cuban prisoner Oscar Elias Biscet, recently awarded the Presidential Medal by George W. Bush. Cuban-American congress representatives hosted the ceremony, which was attended by prominent former political prisoners. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 13/11/07)

**November 14:** A documentary made in Cuba on the legacy of Monsignor Enrique Pérez Serantes (1883-1968), considered one of the historical pillars of Catholicism in the island, will be shown in several parishes of Miami. The film "Esta noche es mi Pascua" ("This night is my Easter") (2006), directed by Carlos Alberto Zaporta, covers the life of Pérez Serantes and offers testimonies of those who knew him closely as archbishop of Santiago de Cuba. The work is a part of a series of cinematographic projects by the Cuban Catholic Church scheduled for next year. Among them, there are documentaries devoted to Monsignor Eduardo Boza Masvidal, former parish priest of the Church of the Charity who died exiled in Venezuela in 2003, and to the tenth anniversary of the visit of the Pope Juan Pablo II to the island. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 14/11/07)

**November 17:** About 200 people gathered in Coral Gables to celebrate the 47th anniversary of the Operation Pedro Pan Group and salute the late Elly Vilano-Chovel, who served as the group's chairwoman. The organization announced it would honor Vilano-Chovel's memory with a new scholarship. "This is an emotional night for us," said Gerardo Simms, 57, Vilano-Chovel's friend. Simms and Vilano-Chovel were among

about 14,000 unaccompanied children sent to the United States from Cuba in the wake of the revolution, from December 1960 to October 1962. About half of them were taken in by relatives or friends; the Catholic Welfare Bureau cared for the others until they could be reunited with family. Vilano-Chovel lived in a Florida City camp with other Cuban children. She grew up to make significant contributions to the Child Welfare Catholic Home for Children in Perrine and at Boystown of Florida in Kendall. She died in August. (*The Miami Herald*, 18/11/067)

**November 19:** The Spanish Federation of Cuban Associations (FECU) was constituted in Madrid, in a ceremony during which those in charge of the new organization pledged their efforts to obtain freedom for all imprisoned dissidents and democracy at Cuba. The Secretary General of FECU, Ernesto Gutiérrez Tamargo, told the media that the platform was established with the intention of bringing together not only exiled anti-Castro organizations based in Spain, but also cultural and humanitarian entities as well as immigrants without political leanings. (*EER*, 20/11/07)

**November 23:** No one else has captured such loyalty among Cubans in exile than Jorge Mas Canosa. He was their voice and ambassador to the White House and around the world. Not bad for a man who arrived in Miami with his family in 1960 and whose first job in the United States was milk-man. By the time of his death of cancer at age 58 on November 23, 1997, he was a self-made millionaire who left behind a billion-dollar conglomerate called MasTec. Mas Canosa's greatest success was the 1981 creation of the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), which became a powerful lobby group. More significantly, it established the framework for Cubans to organize and unite, giving them an influence that few ethnic groups have exercised in the United States. In Miami, exiles still remember Mas Canosa for confronting, in a 1996 television debate, the leader of Cuba's National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcón. Francisco "Pepe" Hernández, current president of the pared-down foundation, said if his "friend from the heart" were alive today -- a time when Cuba's future is at a crossroad -- it would be an era of "great frustration," alluding to Washington's current approach to Cuba, which calls for little intervention. But he adds: "That would not have prevented him from continuing to fight to change the situation in Cuba." (*The Miami Herald*, 23/11/07)

**November 27:** Cuban exiles created in Brazil the Cuban-Brazilian Committee for Democratic Cuba, which will aim "to strive peacefully in support of the Cuban transition efforts," according to Jorge Hernández Fonseca, a member of the new organization's leadership. The Committee will be comprised of "Cuban exiles residing in Brazil, Brazilian democratic citizens and other foreigners (...) all interested in making the Cuban reality known (...) and in joining efforts for a peaceful transition towards democracy in Cuba". (*EER*, 27/11/07)

**November 28:** Spain's top official for relations with Latin America met in Miami with representatives of Miami's powerful Cuban exile community to dispel "certain erroneous perceptions" about Madrid's policy toward the communist-ruled island. Trinidad Jimenez said she told the exiles about the efforts of the Spanish government to serve as a bridge between the Castro regime, the internal Cuban dissident movement and exile groups. "I

explained in detail how the Spanish government is working in its relations with Cuba to clarify certain erroneous perceptions that do not conform to reality," she told the press after the meetings. One of the misperceptions, Jimenez said, is that Madrid does not maintain a fluid relationship with Cuba's internal opposition. Marcelino Miyares, president of Cuba's Christian Democratic Party, and spokesman for Consenso Cubano – an umbrella organization comprised of the Cuban American National Foundation, Brothers to the Rescue, Democracy Movement, and the Cuban Committee for Human Rights, among other exile groups— said the meeting with Jiménez was “open, positive, and friendly”. Miyares said that he told Jiménez that the Cuban case shouldn't be a topic used for political domestic confrontation in Spain. He requested from the Spanish government to keep on working to obtain the release of all political prisoners. (*EFE, EER, 28/11/07*)

**November 30:** Cuban Americans welcomed this week's Solomonic resolution to what has been a protracted and acrimonious custody fight over a 5-year-old girl, a marked departure from the high passions that dominated the Elián González saga seven years ago. Few callers to Miami Radio stations mentioned the international custody case involving Cuban birth father Rafael Izquierdo and foster parents Joe and Maria Cubas, who sought to raise the girl. "It's almost like two different worlds," said Jose Cancela, a Cuban-American businessmen and expert on Hispanic media and marketing. "There was a lot of fatigue in the community after Elián," Cancela said. Ninoska Pérez Castellón, spokeswoman for the Cuban Liberty Council and host of a show on Radio Mambí, championed the cause of Elián's Miami relatives. But she rarely brought up the case of the 5-year-old girl. Pérez Castellón was heartened because the deal ensures the girl can visit with her brother at the Cubas household every other weekend. "The sad part would have been if there had been no agreement," she said. "People were calm because they knew this kid had her day in court," she said. "It's totally different than Elián." (*The Miami Herald, 30/11/07*)



## **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**November 1:** Iran's Minister of Commerce Masood Mir-Kazemi arrived in Cuba to attend the 2nd Non-Aligned Forum on Business and Commercial Cooperation, which opened its sessions in Havana. According to the Iranian agency IRNA, Mir-Kazemi attendance to the NAM forum is in tune with Iran's objective to promote scientific, technical and commercial cooperation with other NAM member nations. During his visit to Havana, the Iranian foreign minister is scheduled to meet with Cuban top government officials, according to diplomatic sources in the Cuban capital. (*ACN, 1/11/07*)

**November 1:** The president of the National Assembly of the Cuban People's Power, Ricardo Alarcón, said that Cuba has always aspired to be a part of a "large Latin American motherland," but pointed out that that moment is not "so close." Alarcón made the comment in reply to questions regarding declarations made by Cuban Foreign

Minister Felipe Pérez Roque in which he remarked that the island would be willing "to give up its sovereignty and flag" to join a large bloc of Latin-American and Caribbean nations. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** A UN expert said that Cuba demonstrates its creativity by finding ways to feed its population despite shortages prompted by the nearly 50-year-old US trade embargo. Jean Ziegler, who has been the United Nations' independent rapporteur on "the right to food" since 2000, said the communist-run island was at the forefront of establishing food "as a constitutional right that is implemented every day under a total blockade." The Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council appoints outside experts who are assigned countries or subjects and given wide latitude in their reports. Ziegler's visit marked the third time a UN special rapporteur has been invited to the island since 1998. (*AP*, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Cuba is willing to open its doors to a UN special envoy on human rights in the future, said the island's foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, during a meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. "Your visit to Cuba in this moment is an expression of our commitment to universal non-discriminatory and non-selective human rights mechanisms," said the chancellor upon receiving Jean Ziegler, an academician of left leanings and UN official, in Havana. (*Reuters*, 1/11/07)

**November 2:** A coalition of 27 non-governmental organizations is urging senior officials and member states of the UN to oppose a set of proposed changes to the Human Rights Council that would end that body's scrutiny of abuses in Cuba and Belarus, obstruct resolutions that name specific countries for violations, and institute an Islamic-sponsored initiative to permanently censure Israel under a fixed agenda item. In a letter sent to Mr. Ban, the President of the General Assembly, High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour, and all 192 UN ambassadors, the NGO coalition—including the Geneva-based UN Watch, Freedom House, Directorio Democrático Cuba, and 24 other groups from Switzerland, Italy, Pakistan, Australia and Nigeria—urged the General Assembly to excise the regressive elements of the proposal that on Monday will be presented in person by Human Rights Council president Romulus De Costea. [[Letter to the UN Secretary General](#)] (*UN Watch Press Release*, 2/11/07)

**November 4:** St. Lucia Sports Minister Lenard Spider Montoute termed successful his two-day visit to Cuba, in which he revised relations between the two countries in this field. Shortly before leaving to his country, Montoute told the press that the accords signed with the Cuban Institute of Sports, Physical Culture and Recreation (INDER) "will help us grow in several spheres." Among the accords training experts in universities in the island and receiving coaches from that country. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/11/07)

**November 5:** Serbia's parliament overwhelmingly approved a resolution calling for an end to the nearly 50-year-old US embargo on Cuba. The resolution was widely seen as a sign of mounting anti-US sentiment, stemming from Washington's support for the independence of Serbia's separatist Kosovo province. It was also timed to coincide with Agriculture Minister Slobodan Milosavljevic's visit to Cuba. In a statement issued in

Belgrade, he said that Havana fully supports Serbia's "territorial integrity" and its bid to keep Kosovo within its boundaries. With 205 votes in favor of the declaration, the 250-member assembly expressed "full solidarity" with the Cuban people, as well as support for the Caribbean island's efforts to end the blockade. (*AP*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma will co-chair together with the Cuban Minister for Cooperation, Martha Lomas Morales, the 5th session of the South Africa - Cuba Joint Bilateral Commission. The two-day session is scheduled to take place at the Arabella Sheraton Hotel in Cape Town starting November 8. In regards with the summit, Minister Dlamini-Zuma said, "I will co-chair the 5th session of the South Africa - Cuba Joint Bilateral Commission within the context of South Africa's priority to consolidate and strengthen the bilateral political and economic relations between South Africa and Cuba." (*All Africa.Com*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** The Ladies in White, a movement that brings together women relatives of 75 opposition activists imprisoned in 2003, called upon the leaders who will attend the 17<sup>th</sup> Ibero-American Summit to "adopt more emphatic positions" with regard to the situation of the political prisoners in the island. "The highest-ranking authorities in the Cuban government have shared with your Excellencies 16 Ibero-American Conferences and have signed the corresponding documents." "If the Cuban dignitaries want to demonstrate that they are making progress (...) they must release all peaceful prisoners of conscience and political prisoners," they indicate. (*EER*, 6/11/07)

**November 5:** The Chilean chancellor, Alejandro Foxley, said that the situation of democracy in Cuba "is not a topic" on the agenda of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government to be held in Santiago. Foxley added that the delegation of Cuba to the meeting "is welcome and has all the necessary guarantees to participate" in the meeting. (*EFE*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** Guatemalan President-elect Alvaro Colom affirmed his willingness to maintain and amplify full relations with Cuba. "There is strong synergy between both states since relations were restored," said Colom after underlining the importance of bilateral cooperation, particularly in health and sports. Social-Democrat Colom praised the work of Cuban doctors in Guatemala, which he called "praiseworthy and deep solidarity with the people of Guatemala." The new statesman said he has been congratulated by the presidents of Nicaragua and Panama and Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/11/07)

**November 6:** The United Nations envoy on the right to food praised Cuba for feeding its people adequately but said he saw the need for agricultural reforms to reduce the country's dependence on food imports. UN Special Rapporteur Jean Ziegler said communist-run Cuba had the best record among developing countries in ensuring no one went hungry, despite US trade sanctions and the economic crisis endured since the collapse of the Soviet Union. "We cannot say that the right to food is totally respected in Cuba, but we have not seen a single malnourished person," he said at a news conference at the end of a 10-day visit. Ziegler said Cuba was engrossed in a national debate opened

by acting President Raul Castro on how to improve agricultural output to cut imports in the face of rising world food prices. He said a reform plan could be adopted in months that would most likely increase the scope of private cooperatives at the expense of state farms to raise productivity. "We heard the people want free markets for more products other than vegetables," he said. Ziegler visited two prisons near Havana but gave no details of what he saw. He said his brief was to report on how the inmates were fed and watered. Ziegler said his visit was a sign that Cuba was willing to cooperate on human rights with the new UN body and would pave the way for visits by other rapporteurs. (*Reuters*, 7/11/07)

**November 6:** The World Medical Association congratulated Dr. Oscar Biscet on his award from President Bush of the Presidential Medal of Freedom in recognition of his advocacy efforts for human rights and democracy in Cuba. Dr. Otmar Kloiber, secretary general of the WMA, said Dr. Biscet is a physician and a noted advocate for human rights and democratic freedoms in Cuba, his native country. Despite appeals from the United Nations, foreign governments, and international human rights organizations, Cuba has refused to release him. Amnesty International and other organizations consider Dr. Biscet, who also heads the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, a prisoner of conscience. "He represents the highest ideals of medical ethics and human rights among physicians and we congratulate him on his award," Kloiber said. Dr. Biscet is serving a twenty-five year prison sentence in Cuba for allegedly committing crimes against the sovereignty and integrity of the Cuban territory. He was sentenced in 2003, in a crackdown on human rights activists across the island. (*Medical News*, 6/11/07)

**November 7:** Mexico accepted Cuba's offer to send a brigade of 50 Cuban doctors to attend to the victims of the floods in the southeast of the country, confirmed the Mexican ambassador in Havana, Gabriel Jiménez Remus. The diplomat said that the government of Cuba offered the aid and his country "accepted it unconditionally." (*EFE*, 7/11/07)

**November 7:** Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage travelled to Chile, heading his country's delegation to the 17th Ibero-American Summit, which will run from November 8-11 in Santiago. Social cohesion, as the major issue of the Ibero-American Summit, is linked to social problems facing Latin American nations, said Cuban deputy foreign minister Abelardo Moreno in Santiago de Chile. Moreno, who is also Cuba's coordinator for the meeting, said there are prevailing necessities to meet in the nations of the region, particularly in the fields of health care, education, employment and social security, among others. The Cuban deputy foreign minister said that following the preparation of the agenda by a meeting of experts, the foreign ministers from all participating countries will hold discussions on November 8 at the Ibero-American City, a locality in the outskirts of the capital Santiago de Chile, where the heads of state and government will also carry out their dialogue on November 9-10. (*ACN*, 7/11/07)

**November 7:** Some 40,000 Cuban health specialists serving in Venezuela have saved more than an estimated 57,000 lives in Venezuela since the beginning of the "Barrio Adentro Mission" on April 16, 2003. The deputy director of the Cuban medical brigade in Venezuela, Dr. Pablo Feal Cañizares, noted that over 70 percent of the population

living in remote regions of that South American country have benefited from the program. Feal Cañizares said that the improvement of health indicators is reflected in the decrease of infant and maternal mortality rates. He pointed out that between 1995 and 2005, nearly 1,000 children died every year due to curable infections, diseases and HIV/AIDS. (ACN, 7/11/07)

**November 7:** In a communiqué to the press, Reporters Without Borders said that basic freedoms, especially free expression, will be discussed at the 18th Ibero-American summit, a three-day meeting of heads of state and government from Latin America, Spain and Portugal taking place in the Chilean capital of Santiago, with the official theme of “Social cohesion and public policies for fairer societies.” Consolidated in some countries, weakened in others, press freedom exists to some degree everywhere in the region “except one country, Cuba”, “where the human rights situation has not evolved since Raúl Castro took over as acting president from his elder brother, Fidel, on 26 July 2006”, RWB said. “With 24 dissident journalists detained - three of them arrested under the new president - Cuba is the world’s second biggest prison for the press, after China,” it added. “Among the 20 journalists held since the March 2003 crackdown, serving sentences ranging from 14 to 27 years, the state of health of Normando Hernández González, the head of the Colegio de Periodistas Independientes de Camagüey independent news agency, is particularly alarming.” (AFP, 8/11/07)

**November 8:** While discussing with the media the recent visit of Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadineyad, Bolivian President Evo Morales said that he had received messages from different sources, like Cuba and Venezuela. “I cannot deny these messages: that Iran is looking for an approach, that it wants to establish relations.” “We sat in meetings last year, and there were conversations with Iran in Cuba. If the empire attempts to interfere, Latin America can become a second Vietnam for the United States,” warned Morales. (Notimex, 8/11/07)

**November 8:** Experts from seven countries are participating at the Fourth International Meeting on Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) underway in Havana. Representatives from Cuba, Canada, Mexico, Panama, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic and Uruguay are attending the event which aims at exchanging experiences to counteract the negative effect of the standardized western cultural patterns spread worldwide through internet. According to the agenda, Cuban vice-Minister of Information and Communication, Boris Moreno, opened the forum with a lecture on the equitable and sustainable development of the Information Society. (ACN, 8/11/07)

**November 9:** Chilean President Michelle Bachelet and Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage met in Santiago de Chile to analyze the strengthening of bilateral relations. The gathering, termed cordial, especially dealt with Cuban collaboration in health, education and biotechnology. According to reports, in the meeting, also attended by Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Ambassador Giraldo Mazola, the Chilean president expressed her interest and wish to visit Cuba. (Prensa Latina, 9/11/07)

**November 9:** Speaking at the opening of the 17th Ibero-American Summit, Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage said social cohesion will never be achieved by the supposed goodness of the market, but through a system of fairness and equality. A fair and democratic international political and economic order is essential to reach social cohesion and we must be willing to face up to national selfish and violent oligarchies and the current US administration's criminal policy, he told the 22 presidents. Lage insisted "they would do anything to prevent us from achieving social justice, or even more social unity, because it would affect their historic privileges." He also held that neither will there be social cohesion if "the nations that are developed with our resources and by the sweat and blood of our peoples behave selfishly and irresponsibly, or try to seduce us with demagogic aid." The same would happen "if the central banks are under the orders of the International Monetary Fund and a questioned consensus reached in Washington, and they ignore the needs of their peoples." Neither will it be reached, nor will it not make sense to seek social cohesion, if we are not able to save the existence of our species, he said. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/07)

**November 9:** Cuban and Bolivian legislators agreed that their first inter-parliamentary meeting is strengthening friendship and fraternity between the two countries. Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS) senator and president of the Bolivian delegation, Santos Javier Tito, informed that the meeting is consolidating and joining the two nations, while stimulating bilateral socio-economic development. The Bolivian senator appreciated Cuba's help in education, noting that the last literacy campaign was done with the Cuban method, Yes I can. Cuban parliament president, Ricardo Alarcon, pointed out that Cuba and Bolivia had not held bilateral meetings before, but "we are sure they will continue through time". (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/07)

**November 9:** Organizations and personalities from the US, Canada and Cuba are due to attend the solidarity conference "Breaking the Silence," taking place in Toronto. The aim is to analyze strategies to achieve the release of five Cubans imprisoned in United States since 1998. Among the guests are important US jurist Leonard Weinglass, attorney of Antonio Guerrero; Elizabeth Palmeiro, wife of Ramon Labanino; and Cuban Peoples' Power National Assembly official Silvia Garcia. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/07)

**November 9:** Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon and Bolivian Senator Santos Javier Tito Veliz signed a joint resolution at the closing session of the first Cuba- Bolivia Intergovernmental Commission. The document denounces the US economic, financial and commercial blockade of Cuba, highlighting its extraterritorial nature and the fact that the UN General Assembly has condemned it sixteen consecutive times. The joint declaration will further facilitate the application of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), and the Trade Treaty subscribed between Bolivia, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Cuba. (*ACN*, 9/11/07)

**November 10:** Spain's King Juan Carlos told Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to "shut up" during closing speeches by leaders from the Latin world and brought the Ibero-American summit to an acrimonious end. "Why don't you shut up?" the king shouted at Chavez, pointing a finger at the president when he tried to interrupt a speech by Spanish

Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. Zapatero was in the middle of a speech at the summit of mostly leftist leaders from Latin America, Portugal, Spain and Andorra, and was criticizing Chavez for calling former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar a fascist. After the disagreement, Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega took the floor to criticize Spanish enterprises, which prompted the King of Spain to temporarily leave the room. Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage followed Ortega to support Chavez highlighting the right of the Venezuelan President to defend himself against Aznar, who in "several occasions" (...) "attacked Venezuela's dignity". "It shouldn't be misunderstood Venezuela's right to defend itself with an attack to the King, the Spanish government, or its people", Lage said at the Summit. (*El País, Reuters, 10/11/07*)

**November 10:** Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez spoke on a mobile phone with a caller he identified as Fidel Castro at the Summit for Friendship and Integration of Latin American People that took place in a stadium in Santiago de Chile. He was handed the phone by Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage while speaking about the overthrow of Chilean President Salvador Allende, according to a Venezuelan government statement. Castro and Chavez conversed, with Chavez repeating Castro's words for the audience, according to the statement. Castro wasn't heard by the public because no one could get the speakerphone to work, according to the statement. (*Bloomberg, 10/11/07*)

**November 10:** The 17th Summit of Ibero-American Heads of State or Government concluded in Santiago de Chile with the approval of the Final Declaration and a plan of action aimed at developing a comprehensive social protection system for immigrants in any regional country. The participating Ibero-American leaders also subscribed 10 special communiques, demonstrating their common position regarding several issues, among them terrorism and the US blockade against Cuba. They ratified the extradition request as an essential tool in the fight against terrorism and condemned the fact that well-known international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles --the mastermind of the 1976 terrorist sabotage against a Cuban civilian plane that claimed 73 lives-- has not been tried for terrorism. (*Prensa Latina, 10/11/07*)

**November 11:** Fidel Castro openly criticized Latin America's socialist-leaning presidents for the first time. Castro also praised Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his other revolutionary regional allies in a commentary carried by official Cuban media on the Ibero-American summit in Santiago, Chile. Nearly all of the 19 leaders who attended the summit were leftists, but there was debate over the region's future and the closing speeches were marked by sharp exchanges between Chavez and Spanish leaders. "I listened with great sorrow to the speeches pronounced from traditional left positions at the Ibero-American summit," Castro wrote. He was apparently referring to the presidents of Brazil, Chile, Uruguay and others who advocate social democracy with capitalism. "I felt proud of the pronouncements of various leaders, revolutionary and courageous," he said of the heads of state from Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua, who believe government and economic structures must be radically altered and there must be a new relationship developed with the United States. [[The Value of Ideas](#)] (*Reuters, 11/11/07*)

**November 11:** The Cuban television broadcast the polemic final session of the Ibero-American Summit held in Santiago, during which a heated verbal exchange took place between the representatives of Venezuela and Spain. It also broadcast the speeches delivered by the presidents and representatives of Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Bolivia, Colombia, Spain, as well as Carlos Lage, Vice-President of Cuba. (*AFP*, 12/11/07)

**November 11:** According to Ramiro Abreu, attending Mauricio Funes' proclamation as presidential candidate for the the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in representation of Fidel Castro, the FMLN is well in tune with what other leftist presidents, like Hugo Chávez, are doing in other parts of the continent. Abreu, head of the Cuban Communist Party's Bureau for Central America, applauded and underlined Mauricio Funes's "anti-imperialist" pronouncement against the United States during his proclamation as presidential candidate for the FMLN at Cuscatlán Stadium, in San Salvador. (*El Mundo*, 14/11/07)

**November 11:** The 15th Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students (CLAE) gathered for their first day in Quito, Ecuador. The encounter of delegations from thirteen countries of the region include the United States and representatives from Asia and Africa. Education is one of the crucial topics on the discussion calendar. Analysis began around this theme among participants, who considered it "a necessity for the definitive liberation of our people." Sebastian Cevallos, the president of the Federation of University Students from Ecuador (FEUE), welcomed the delegations greeting them in the Agora House of Ecuadorian Culture to enjoy the "Light from America" inaugural gala. In the ceremony, the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students (OCLAE) received a commemorative stamp for the 85th anniversary of the Cuban Federation of University Students (FEU). "OCLAE is a unique organization. Since its foundation, it has understood that the struggle should be against imperialism," said Carlos Lage Codorniú before recognizing Luis Arza, president of the continental student organization. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 11/11/07)

**November 12:** Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon, received the president of the France-Libertés NGO, Danielle Mitterrand, who is in Cuba to participate in the 15th Solidarity Encounter of City Halls with Havana. During the meeting, both officials discussed the current problems linked to fresh water availability around the world and stressed the necessity to implement a program of actions to deal with that scourge which affects millions of people. According to United Nations sources, some 1.1 billion people have no access to an adequate fresh water supply. Numerous specialists consider that the fulfilment of the Millennium Goals on the reduction of that figure by 2015 will be very difficult to attain. Alarcon and Mitterrand also agreed that the poor quality of water has lead to the increase of health problems in several regions of the planet. (*ACN*, 12/11/07)

**November 12:** Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto described the cultural agreement signed by Cuba and Ecuador at the Third International Book Fair underway in Venezuela as an important tool of work. For his part, Ecuadorian Culture Minister Antonio Preciado noted the importance of the document for his country which will benefit from the island's

large experience in the field of cultural management. The Cuban delegation to the major cultural event is also made up of the vice President of the Cuban Book Institute, Alpidio Alonso, poet Renaldo Garcia Blanco, writer Raul Flores, and a number of editors and specialists. (ACN, 12/11/07)

**November 12:** During an interview with the media, the Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, said he believed that relations between Cuba and Mexico "are in a franc process of restoration." According to the Cuban official, the agenda has covered several topics with a will to make progress, like Cuba's debt in excess of 400 million USD to state-owned National Foreign Trade Bank (Bancomext) of Mexico. (EER, 12/11/07)

**November 12:** Cuba opposed any attempt to grant greater powers to the UN Security Council, stating that any reform of that UN body should be aimed at making it more democratic, representative, responsible and effective. "We need to assure that the Council agenda reflects the needs and interests of both developed and underdeveloped countries in an objective, rational, non-selective and non-arbitrary way," Cuban Ambassador to the UN Rodrigo Malmierca said. Malmierca put forth Cuba's stance on the first day of UN General Assembly debates on issues relating to the UN Security Council including a proposed increase of the current number of members and the question of balanced representation. (*Periódico 26*, 13/11/07)

**November 12:** Cuba's most prominent dissident accused last week's Ibero-American Summit of ignoring the plight of people on this communist-ruled island and of losing the chance to "vindicate itself" before history. "Once again, and at such a moment, they left Cuba, its people, its citizens to their own devices and wallowed in an imitation of democratic harmony that is now so full of falsehood that the fake harmony has become a dissonant noise," Oswaldo Paya said in a statement released in Havana. "The summit held in Chile lost it chance, maybe the last one it will have, to vindicate itself before history, before the Cuban people and before their own citizens," he said with regard to the gathering of the leaders of Spain, Portugal and Latin America that ended in Santiago. Paya said that when it's time "for the next summit, the people of Cuba will be free, without having received any support from the summits and in spite of the summits." [[La última Cumbre que abandona al pueblo cubano](#)] (EFE, 12/11/07)

**November 13:** Fidel Castro, siding with ally Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, said that the Spanish king's rebuke of Chavez, during the Ibero American Summit in Santiago de Chile, exposed his imperialist attitudes. Spanish King Juan Carlos told Chavez to "shut up" when the Venezuelan leader interrupted a speech by Spain's socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. The incident, at the end of a summit of leaders from Latin America, Spain, Portugal and Andorra has been seen by Castro and Chavez as proof developed countries look down on the region. "When the king of Spain in an abrupt way asked Chavez: 'Why don't you shut up?', in that instant, the hearts of all Latin America quivered," Castro, who has been sidelined by a serious illness, wrote in a commentary carried by state-run media. "Saturday, November 10, 2007, will go down in history (...) as the day of truth (...) an ideological Waterloo," Castro said. [[The Summit Debate](#)] (Reuters, 13/11/07)

**November 13:** About 400 delegates from over 30 countries of all continents attend the 15th Meeting for the Cooperation and Solidarity of City Halls with Havana. According to national press, the event, taking place at the Havana's Conference Center until November 15, runs parallel with the Workshop for the Collaboration among Cities, and the Seminar on Food-Producing Cities. Among attendees are Danielle Mitterrand, president of the France-Libertes Non-Governmental Organization (NGO). (*Prensa Latina*, 13/11/07)

**November 13:** Wang Zhaoguo, member of the Political Bureau of China's Communist Party arrived in Havana at the invitation of Cuba's Communist Party Central Committee. The top Chinese Communist Party official and his delegation were welcomed at Havana's Jose Marti International airport by Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz, member of the Secretariat of Cuba's Communist Party, and by Zho Rongxian, Chinese ambassador to Havana. During their stay in Cuba, until November 15, the Chinese visitors will hold talks with Cuban government and party officials. (*ACN*, 13/11/07)

**November 13:** Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will visit Cuba on November 22-33 and hopes to see ailing Fidel Castro during the trip, the Brazilian foreign ministry announced. "I don't know what the state of his health is, but if it is good, yes we will meet," Lula said during the Ibero American Summit in Santiago de Chile. On the official visit Lula is tentatively planning to meet with Fidel Castro's brother Raul, who has acted as interim president ever since Fidel underwent surgery in July 2006, according to government officials. The visit comes after an invitation from Cuba, according to the foreign ministry. (*AFP*, 13/11/07)

**November 13:** China and Cuba have seen increasing high-level visits and deepened exchanges of experience in years, a visiting Communist Party of China (CPC) official said. The visits and exchanges of experience on governance have brought benefits to the construction of the countries and parties of both sides, said Wang Zhaoguo, member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. Wang, also vice-chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), China 's top legislature, kicked off his three-day Cuba tour on November 12. Since the 1990s, the two countries have secured stable development of bilateral ties, as they have strengthened their cooperation in areas such as politics, economy, science and technology and culture, and supported each other in international affairs, Wang said. Wang made the remarks while meeting with Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and vice-president of the Council of State of Cuba. Wang also briefed Machado and other Cuban officials on the just-concluded 17th National Congress of the CPC. (*Xinhua*, 13/11/07)

**November 14:** The United Nations has expressed regret that undercover Cuban officials attended a UN news conference on human rights, where they sought information on a French journalist asking critical questions about Fidel Castro's regime. Elena Ponomareva, spokeswoman for the global body's European headquarters, said she was unable to prevent two Cuban diplomats from entering the October 11 news event with Jean Ziegler, a UN rights expert who was preparing for a mission to the communist-run

island. The UN strictly prohibits government officials from attending news conferences unless they are explicitly invited and included among those presenting. The Cuban officials were present for a testy exchange between the French journalist and Ziegler, who said Havana should be praised for cooperating with the global body and agreeing to allow him to report on the country's respect for the "right to food". The Cuban officials asked journalists in the room to identify the name and agency of the journalist who debated Ziegler. When the news conference ended and Ponomareva confronted the officials, they said they were diplomats at a UN mission, but declined to say which country they represented. "I can only regret this incident," she wrote in a letter to the UN correspondents' association in Geneva. (*The New York Times*, 14/11/07)

**November 14:** Moderate Cuban dissidents rejected what they referred to as Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez's "recurring meddling" in Cuban domestic affairs, and claimed that the island's sovereignty is in "serious jeopardy." "We address you with deep concern for what we perceive as recurring meddling by your government in the domestic affairs of Cuba," indicated the Cuban opposition activists in a letter to Chávez delivered to the media. The document is signed by the illegal opposition groups Arco Progresista, Concertación pro Diálogo, Alianza por una Nueva Nación and Grupo Mediático Consenso. (*AFP*, 14/11/07)

**November 14:** Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro met with visiting Wang Zhaoguo, member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party, and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, Zhaoguo gave Raul Castro details about the results of the recently held 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party and praised the existing ties of brotherhood between the Cuban and Chinese governments, communist parties and peoples. He also gave the Cuban First Vice President a message and greetings from the General Secretary of China's Communist Party, Hu Jintao, to Fidel Castro and wished him a speedy recovery. For his part, Raul Castro thanked the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party for sending this high-level delegation to Cuba to inform about the results of the Congress, which he described as a success that showed the leading role of the Communist Party within the Chinese society. (*ACN*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has postponed his trip to Cuba for one month. According to a communiqué from the Brazilian presidency, the decision to delay the visit to Cuba was based on the need to review a series of unspecified pending issues, which must be ready before Lula arrives in Cuba to sign several co-operation agreements. The need to address these issues was brought up privately by Cuba's Vice-President Carlos Lage during the Ibero-American conference that took place in Chile. (*Global Insight Daily Analysis*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** The Third Committee of the UN General Assembly passed a symbolic resolution calling for a worldwide moratorium on capital punishment. Ninety-nine countries voted in favour of the resolution, 52 voted against and there were 33 abstentions. The United States, Singapore and China joined many developing countries, notably from the Islamic world, in voting against the resolution, while abstainers included Bhutan, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo and Cuba. (*IPS*, 16/11/07)

**November 16:** A gigantic march of Latin American youths proceeded through the streets of Quito from the Central University to San Francisco Square in both a celebration of International Student Day and as an appeal for the integration of the continent. With it, and with their call to peoples to forge unity, the youth concluded their week of discussions and exchanges at the 15th Latin American and Caribbean Congress of Students (OCLAE). Cuba's university student organization, FEU, was reelected to head the leadership of OCLAE, while the National Union of Students of Nicaragua and UNE of Brazil were ratified as members of the Executive Secretariat. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 17/11/07)

**November 16:** Fidel Castro said Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's remarks at the recent Ibero-American summit in Chile were "cowardly." Castro, 81, came to the defense of his biggest ally, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, who was told to "shut up" at the summit by Spanish King Juan Carlos I after the Venezuelan leader called former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar Lopez a fascist. Zapatero asked Chavez to avoid insults and to respect the other countries at the summit. The exchange was "an unambiguous display of the genocidal ways and methods of the empire, its accomplices and the anesthetized victims of the Third World," Castro wrote in a "reflection," entitled "The Ideological Waterloo," which was sent by e-mail to the press. Castro's response underscores mounting tensions between Zapatero and the leaders of Latin America's socialist movement. [[The Ideological Waterloo](#)] (*Bloomberg*, 16/11/07)

**November 16:** Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque met in Havana with Akira Miwa, Director-General of Latin America and Caribbean Affairs Bureau attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. Perez Roque and Akira Miwa discussed the development of bilateral relations and other topics of mutual interest during a meeting that took place at the Cuban Foreign Ministry. Deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Rodriguez was also present. Akira Miwa arrived in Havana heading the Japanese delegation to the Ninth Inter Foreign Ministries Session of Bilateral Political Dialogue. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/11/07)

**November 16:** Canada and a handful of other countries were rebuffed in their attempt to stave off "flawed" and "politicized" rule changes for the United Nations Human Rights Council. The 165-7 vote saw only the United States, Australia, Israel and three Pacific island states join Canada in opposition to the new rules, while three countries abstained. Under the new rules, there would no longer be special human rights investigators for Cuba and Belarus. It would also be more difficult to provoke council criticism of any country except one -- Israel -- which Islamic and Arab states selected as being in need of special focus. The United States has so far declined to stand for election to the council, while Canada is in the second year of a three-year term. Canadian officials focused on how the council chair used "procedural manoeuvring" last June to sideline Canadian delegates as they sought to call a vote at that time on the package. "We categorically reject the manner in which the (...) package was pushed through at the council," said Henri-Paul Normandin, who is Canada's deputy representative at the UN. "Canada was

denied its sovereign right to call a vote (...) (and) in using the ends to justify the means, the human rights council set a very dubious precedent." (*National Post*, 16/11/07)

**November 17:** Cuba termed a victory and a devastating blow to the US anti-Cuban plans the ratification by the UN General Assembly to eliminate the mandate of the UN special representative for human rights to the island. "The decision is a devastating coup to the Bush administration's imperial plans against Cuba," stated a declaration by the island's Foreign Affairs Ministry. The document entitled "Human Rights: Historic Victory after 20 Years of Battle," stressed that the multi-national forum has echoed the recommendation by the Human Rights Council in Geneva to eliminate the figure of the rapporteur for the island. Year after year and for two decades, the US government has approved that mandate "through blackmails, threats and coercion," stated the declaration. [[Declaración del Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 17/11/07)

**November 17:** The Japanese Peace Cruiser that arrived in Cuba's eastern province of Santiago de Cuba on November 15, as part of its traditional world tour to promote solidarity and the cessation of wars, sailed towards Venezuela. This is the second time that the "Peace Boat" has docked in the eastern province and as usual, with more than 1,000 passengers on board. The Peace Boat's first voyage was organized by a group of Japanese university students as a creative response to government censorship regarding Japan's past military aggression in the Asia-Pacific region. They chartered a ship to visit neighboring countries with the aim of learning first-hand about the war from those who experienced it and initiating a people-to-people exchange. (*Prensa Latina*, 17/11/07)

**November 19:** Fidel Castro revealed details of the conversation with his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez during the 2002 coup d'etat and the Ibero-American Summit held in Chile. "I remember exactly what I told him that night when I asked him not to sacrifice himself: that Allende could not rely on a single soldier to fight back and that he, on the other hand, could rely on thousands," Castro said in a Reflection published in official media. [[The Conversation with Chavez](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 19/11/07)

**November 20:** Fidel Castro supports Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's plan for the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries to offer low-interest loans to poor nations overwhelmed by soaring energy bills. The 81-year-old Cuban leader commented on the speech made by the Venezuelan at the OPEC summit in Saudi Arabia. "Chavez said it with total clarity in Riyadh: developing countries' bill for petroleum and gas reaches \$1 trillion. I propose that OPEC (...) assume the role that the International Monetary Fund was created for and has never fulfilled," Castro said in Communist Party daily Granma. [[Oil Costs and Development](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 20/11/07)

**November 21:** A high-ranking Cuban official visited Ottawa, promoting Cuba as an essential partner in Canada's push to engage Latin America and the Caribbean. "Cuba's presence and Cuba's good relations with the rest of our region cannot be avoided and have to be present as part of anybody else's priority towards Latin American and the Caribbean," said Josefina Vidal. Ms. Vidal, the director of North America division of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was in Ottawa for a series of meetings. She told the

press her country has the knowledge and experience to be of assistance. "We have an experience co-operating with many Latin American countries that we can share with the Canadians in that process of the elaboration of their own strategy towards the region," she said. "We have had many years of co-operation with many Latin American countries to solve social problems that have accumulated for so many years in those countries." During her time in Ottawa, Ms. Vidal met with political and trade officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, officials from the Canadian International Development Agency, elected members of the Canada-Cuba Inter-parliamentary Group, and various institutions involved in trade and investment. (*Embassy*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** Cuba's work as present leader of the Non-Aligned Countries Movement focuses on revitalizing the group, according to its ten principles of foundation. Since September 2006, when the 14th NAM Summit was held in Havana, the island has been working to boost and develop the decisions signed in the meeting's final document, Granma daily noted, highlighting the significant scope and importance gained by NAM Coordination Bureau decisions. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/11/07)

**November 22:** The commissioner of the National Institute of Migration (UNM), Cecilia Romero Castillo, said that the Mexican government is currently looking into the "overall environment" for a migratory agreement with Havana. According to Romero, the issue of Cubans migrating to Mexico — most of them intending to proceed on to the United States — is rather complex, with many edges, and it is therefore necessary to find an in-depth solution. (*EER*, 22/11/07)

**November 21:** Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez stopped in Cuba to meet with Fidel Castro and his brother Raul on a return home from an international tour, official media reported. The Prensa Latina news agency said in a brief dispatch that Chavez told the brothers about his trip to Iran, the OPEC meeting in Saudi Arabia, France and Portugal. The Venezuelan president was headed home later. Chavez is scheduled to return to Cuba in December to help inaugurate an oil refinery that the two governments renovated in a partnership. (*AP*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** The Sixth International Conference on Latin American Studies opened in Havana with the words of Cuban economist Osvaldo Martinez who said, "The capitalist system will not collapse due to economic crisis; it must be toppled with political activism." Martinez, a Cuban legislator and head of the World Economy Research Center, said that the current global crisis experienced by capitalism "comes at an especially promising time" in Latin America as it's the only place in the world where there are anti-capitalist ruptures and new forms of integration such as the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). (*ACN*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Iran will resist pressure from the US and its allies to cease its uranium enrichment work, the country's top nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili said. "Iran is not supposed to give up its nuclear rights under pressure," the state-run Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Jalili, secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, as

saying at a seminar in Tehran on Iran's atomic program. The seminar was attended by scholars from Australia, Cuba, Russia, New Zealand, Germany and Egypt. (*Bloomberg*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Evelyn Gervan, president of the Canada-Cuba Friendship Association in the city of Kingston, Ontario, heads a delegation from the organization visiting Cuba's south-central city of Cienfuegos, a sister city with Kingston as of three years ago. "Our group is very broad based, with diverse interests that run from culture to politics, to environmental activism," noted Evelyn Gervan. The group has visited several social projects, including a Grandparents' Club in the Reina neighborhood and the 50 Aniversario Park, inaugurated as part of the program marking a half century since the popular uprising against the Batista dictatorship on September 5, 1957. The Canadians toured a care home for the elderly where they learned of the services provided to the residents. They also showed interest in collaboration in the treatment and recycling of solid wastes. (*Granma*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Two Cuban men taking part in a Canada World Youth exchange program left their Ontario hosts to apparently seek asylum. The two young men were part of a group of eight Cubans staying in homes in the Meaford, Ontario, area for nearly three months. The two men left the home where they were being billeted on November 19 and left behind a note stating they plan to seek asylum. The two would-be defectors do not have identification because Canada Youth is holding onto their passports and they may be in Toronto. (*The Canadian Press*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** Liberal opposition groups in Cuba called the statements made by some regime officials regarding an alleged political merger between Cuba and Venezuela as "unconstitutional". The groups warned that the current Constitution confers that decision upon "the people of Cuba." (*EER*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** New projects for international cooperation led by UNICEF will be carried out in Cuba in 2008, based on the 7-year experiences and practices of local reference centers about children's rights. The announcement was made during a national workshop for the promotion of children and teenagers' rights underway in Camaguey, with the participation of UNICEF's technical staff and provincial coordinators. (*ACN*, 22/11/07)

**November 23:** Paulino Rivero, president of the autonomous government of the Canary Islands, advocated for strengthening relations with Cuba, before meeting with Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque in Havana. In statements to the press, President Rivero pointed out that the Canary Islands has never interrupted its relations with Cuba, and there are more than 100 cooperation projects fostered by the Canary Islands with Cuba, and 11 in development. Rivero said that many of these initiatives are to develop education, social and health programs. The president was declared an Illustrious Guest in the province of Havana for his contributions between Cuban and Canary citizens. (*Prensa Latina*, 23/11/07)

**November 24:** Beatriz Paredes, president of the National Executive Committee of the Mexican Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), was received by Raul Castro. Paredes carried out a three-day visit to Cuba, Granma newspaper reported. Paredes and 10 leaders from that Mexican opposition party visited the island on November 21-24 invited by the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee, the daily stated. The visitors' agenda included the launching of a book, and meeting with Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage, Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, and Culture Minister Abel Prieto. (*EER, ACN, 26/11/07*)

**November 25:** Cuban composer, guitarist and orchestra conductor Leo Brouwer is currently in Chile to receive a tribute from the people and authorities of the South American nation. For two weeks, the author of emblematic scores of Latin American vanguard music of the twentieth century, will teach classes, conduct a concert of pieces by him, and receive the Pablo Neruda Artistic and Cultural Order from President Michelle Bachelet. "I'm very excited, as this is my first visit to Chile," said Brouwer, 68, shortly after arriving to Pudahuel Airport. (*Cuba Headline News, 25/11/07*)

**November 26:** Cuba is participating in the 21st International Book Fair of Guadalajara. Representing the island in this fair, considered the biggest meeting in the world of Spanish-language literature, are Eduardo Heras Leon, Marta Rojas, Aida Bahr, Alberto Garrandes and Ricardo Alberto Perez, all winners of awards in several events. A special moment for the Cuban delegation will be the launching of the book 'Desde la soledad y la esperanza' (From Loneliness and Hope), dedicated to the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States and written by 18 authors from the Caribbean island. (*ACN, 26/11/07*)

**November 26:** An international meeting of solidarity with Cuba will take place in Mexico City on December 10-11 to condemn the constant aggressions of the US government against the island and its intentions to further increase its sanctions against the Cuban people. The call for the meeting was issued by the Mexican Movement in Solidarity with Cuba, the Mexican Trade Union Front and a group of other trade union organizations. The event will be attended by representatives from the Cuban Workers' Confederation (CTC) and the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP). (*Prensa Latina, 26/11/07*)

**November 26:** Despite the disputes between the EU and Cuba regarding the human rights situation in the Caribbean state, Economics Minister Michael Glos, of the Christian Social Union, wants to send his state secretary Bernd Pfaffenbach to Havana in February 2008. Pfaffenbach, in his additional job as the "Sherpa" of the chancellor at world economic summits, would be the first high-ranking German government representative in Cuba since the curbing of diplomatic relations in 2003. At that time, the EU had restricted contacts in protest against massive human rights violations by the socialist regime; German development aid was frozen. There is already a protest against the delicate visit. Christian Democratic Union parliamentarian Arnold Vaatz demanded in a two-page letter to the CSU minister to cancel the trip. The Pfaffenbach mission is to secure German economic interests in Cuba. (*Der Spiegel, 26/11/07*)

**November 26:** The governments of Spain and Cuba postponed the second technical meeting of the mechanism of dialogue on human rights established last April, due to irreconcilable agendas, reported diplomatic sources. The Madrid meeting has been postponed to a date still to be determined. (*Europa Press*, 26/11/07)

**November 26:** The movement in solidarity with Cuba is growing among trade unions and other institutions in England and there are currently around 4,000 people carrying out actions of friendship and support of the island in this British territory. These were the words of Reverend Geoffrey Bottoms, member of the Campaign in Solidarity with Cuba in the United Kingdom. Bottoms said that some of the most recent activities carried out by the British Campaign in Solidarity with Cuba include a meeting with members of the British Parliament, trade union leaders, lawyers and international organizations, who received details about the case of the five Cuban political prisoners. (*ACN*, 26/11/07)

**November 26:** The first UN rapporteur invited to visit Cuba in almost 20 years has hit back at accusations of anti- Americanism. Jean Ziegler said he refused to meet a number of NGOs during his 10-day visit from October 28 to November 6 because it would have jeopardized a new spirit of “openness” signalled by Cuba. The New York-based human rights organization, UN Watch, accused him of abusing his mandate and attempting to further “his extreme anti-American political agenda.” The special rapporteur on the Right to Food said he had been invited by a number of European Union ambassadors to meet the NGO's secretly within their embassies. “To meet discreetly would have been an absurdity,” Ziegler said. His programme had already been arranged and approved by the Cuban Government and he wanted to respect his mandate on the right to food. “It would have been irresponsible for my part to, in whatever way even if humanly understandable, put in danger this openness,” he added. The Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Roque, said at a press conference, that Ziegler was “the first rapporteur, others will follow next year,” Ziegler said. (*DPA*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** Cuba has attentively followed the political debate in Venezuela prior to a referendum for a Constitutional reform in the South American country. A group of panelists at the official Cuban TV program “Round Table” affirmed that there is a media campaign that pursues the “satanization” of Chavez, presenting him as a dictator. “The modus operandi is old; that is what the empire always does; it satanizes”. “Behind the media campaign is the US”, Juventud Rebelde columnist Marina Menendez, wrote. Instead of a dictatorship, the reform pursues “more power to the people”, she added. For her part, Nidia Diaz, in official daily Granma, said that, “the reforms will consolidate popular participation, the people’s right to control their own resources, and their right to choose and to be chosen uninterrupted”. The Cuban press, radio and TV, under state control, have been reporting daily about “the opposition plans” to destabilize Venezuela. (*AFP*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** The outgoing Swapo Party President Sam Nujoma called for the immediate and unconditional release of the five Cuban prisoners incarcerated in the United States. Nujoma further condemned the continued economic blockade and "sabotage" against Cuba by that country. He was speaking at the official opening of the

Swapo Party Congress where he expressed Swapo Party's gratitude to its sister parties. The Communist Party of Cuba, Zimbabwean African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), Communist Party of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa, Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), Social Democratic Party of Sweden, and the People's Party for Reconstruction and Development of the Democratic Republic of Congo were amongst the sister parties attending the congress. (*All Africa*, 27/11/07)

**November 28:** The Spanish Secretary of State for Ibero America, Trinidad Jiménez, visited Miami to establish contacts with Cuban exile organizations, Spanish daily "ABC" reported. Jiménez traveled to Florida together with the Director General for Ibero America, Javier Sandomingo. The daily "El Periódico de Aragón", quoting sources from Jimenez' department, said the purpose of the visit is to obtain "the most complete vision" about current political circumstances in the island. (*EER*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** Mexican Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa, will travel to Cuba during the first quarter of 2008, to prepare the visit of the Mexican President to the island, Mexican Ambassador to Havana, Gabriel Jimenez said. "It is in the agenda of both chancelleries" a mutual visit of Espinosa and the Cuban Minister Felipe Perez Roque "in the first quarter of next year", Jimenez told the press in Havana. (*AFP*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** Cuba called for an end to sanctions imposed on it by the European Union (EU) to pave the way for improving bilateral relations. Deputy Foreign Minister Eumelio Caballero told a gathering in Havana that his government appreciated the willingness expressed by the EU Council of Ministers to hold a comprehensive and open dialogue with Cuba, but denounced the political sanctions imposed by the bloc and called the so-called 'common position' adopted in 1996 'interference'. The 27-member EU has put Cuba under political sanctions in 2003 to protest Havana's repression of dissidents and the execution of three men who attempted to hijack a passenger ferry for a voyage to the US. (*EFE*, 29/11/07)

**November 28:** By the end of 2007, the Cuban government would have donated to Bolivia all the medical equipment for 43 second-level hospitals, the Cuban embassy in La Paz announced. According to the diplomatic mission, 2,220 Cuban health specialists are working in the South American country; of them, 1,553 are medical doctors, and the rest are nurses, lab technicians, auxiliaries, and paramedic personnel. (*EER*, 28/11/07)

**November 29:** Lots of people have heard about the "Lost Boys of Sudan" who ended up in the United States after years on the run in their war-torn country or stuck in refugee camps in surrounding countries. Not many know about the lost boys who ended up in Cuba. For the first time, two of them have returned home with UNHCR help after more than two decades in the Caribbean island nation. Following weeks of preparations, Michael Bol Deng, 36, and Archangelo Kuech Gur, 37, reached Juba on November 15 after a two-day journey from Havana via Paris and Nairobi. Met on their arrival by staff of the UN refugee agency and government officials, the two men said they hoped to track

down relatives and build a new life in a country whose culture and language they have almost forgotten. (*UNHCR*, 29/11/07)

**November 29:** Dominican Foreign Affairs minister, Carlos Morales Troncoso, called the next visit of President Leonel Fernandez to Cuba as “very important”. The official visit of the Dominican President to the island has a “very wide” agenda, the minister said. President Fernandez, who visited Cuba last year for the Non Aligned Summit, will return to the island on December 18- 21. The President of the Dominican Republic will participate in the PetroCaribe Summit, a project headed by Venezuela, by which the Caribbean nation receives 50,000 daily barrels of oil. (*EFE*, 29/11/07)

**November 29:** Ibrahim Mohamed Alzeben, ambassador of the State of Palestine in Havana, praised the existing relations between Cuba and Palestine and described them as historic during a ceremony held at the venue of the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP) in the Cuban capital to commemorate the International Day in Solidarity with this Arab nation. "The Palestinian people are in a new battlefield defending their right to a dignified life," said the diplomat in reference to the ongoing process of negotiations with Israel, which occupies the Palestinian territory with the support of the United States. "The creation of the Palestinian State, the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their territories and the designation of Jerusalem as its capital, are essential aspects to attain peace between the sides," stressed Mohamed Alzeben. (*ACN*, 30/11/07)

**November 30:** Havana Historian Eusebio Leal received with great excitement an Ibero-American award for restoring Old Havana. Leal was honored at the Lam Cultural House, where a documentary by Mexican Alejandra Ochoa was screened along with a photo exhibition by Silvia Martinez of Spain. The historian told the press of the importance that the jury of the Queen Sofia Award of Spain voted unanimously for that recognition, very important on a Ibero-American and international scale. This award is annually given for the restoration of historical centres. Leal highlighted that the most important thing was that the jury recognized the social nature of the work. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/11/07)

**November 30:** Fidel Castro said he has warned Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to watch out for US-backed assassination attempts, telling his close friend and socialist ally to avoid open-top vehicles that could be targeted by snipers. "The empire has created conditions conducive to violence and internecine conflicts" in Venezuela, Castro wrote in an essay published in Cuba's two leading official newspapers. In an article entitled "A People Under Fire", Castro said that such circumstances are without precedent in the history of mankind. "On Chavez's recent visit last November 21, I seriously discussed with him the risks of assassination as he is constantly out in the open in convertible vehicles," wrote Castro, who himself survived dozens of CIA-backed attempts on his life since leading the Cuban revolution in 1959. Castro noted his own experience as a combatant trained in the use of automatic weapons with telescopic sights. His comments came a day after more than 100,000 people flooded Venezuela's streets to oppose 69 proposed constitutional changes to the nation's 1999 constitution that would, among other things, create forms of communal property, eliminate presidential term limits, and increase presidential authority. [[A People Under Fire](#)] (*AFP, Prensa Latina*, 30/11/07)



## SECURITY

**November 19:** Cuba's military launched five days of exercises to prepare against a possible US attack. The Moncada-2007 maneuvers, involving the armies of Cuba's west and central regions and units of the Territorial Militia Troops, reserves and local residents, are "an exercise of leaders and command and control units," according to the official newspaper Granma. The maneuvers will involve aircraft as well as troops, and demonstrate the modernization of combat techniques, it said. "Moncada-2007 will serve to measure the readiness of command and control units and, as well, show the level of skill achieved by the different types of personnel over a year of defense preparation," Granma said. (AFP, 19/11/07)

**November 19:** A delegation of the Cuban Interior Ministry arrived in Luanda for a week-long official visit to Angola, aimed at re-launching cooperation with the Angolan counterpart. Leading the Cuba's five-member delegation is the official in charge of the Department of Operations, Investigation and Criminality of Cuban Interior Ministry, Adalberto Garcia. Speaking to the press at Luanda's "4 de Fevereiro" International Airport, Adalberto Garcia said that the visit to Angola serves to strengthen cooperation and interchange existing between the Interior Ministries of Cuba and Angola. He also underlined that the cooperation focuses on staff training and other activities of combat to drug trafficking, organised crime, among others. The Cuban delegation will also visit the provinces of Kwanza Sul and Benguela, (centre) as part of its visiting programme. (Angop, 19/11/07)

**November 23:** Cuba completed five days of military exercises in preparation for what it says is a possible attack by the United States. The manoeuvres included military personnel from the west and central regions of the country. Military aircraft and tanks were also part of the training exercises, known as Moncada 2007. (VOA News, 23/11/07)



## TERRORISM

**November 3:** The US government is considering closing a war-on-terror detention center at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and granting its detainees substantially greater rights, The New York Times reported. Citing unnamed officials involved in the discussions, the newspaper said the plan also called for possibly moving most of the detainees to the United States. One proposal that is being discussed would overhaul the procedure for determining whether detainees are properly held by granting them legal representation at detention hearings and by giving federal judges, not military officers, the power to decide whether suspects should be held, the report said. (AFP, 4/11/07)

**November 8:** The Pentagon's twice-derailed effort to try a former child soldier who allegedly killed a Delta Force commando in Afghanistan resumed in US Guantanamo Base, Cuba. Few expect the proceedings to go smoothly. Anticipation has been building for the trial of Omar Khadr, a Canadian who was 15 when he was captured in Afghanistan in 2002. Lawyers for the prosecution and defense, journalists and members of human rights groups that will monitor the proceedings arrived in Guantanamo on military planes. Even before Khadr, who is now 21, can enter a plea on charges of murder, conspiracy and others in a small hilltop courthouse, the judge must resolve the thorny issue of whether he can legally stand trial at the base. "We haven't even begun to identify all of the issues or kinks or flaws in this commission process, let alone address them," said Army Col. Steve David, the chief defense counsel for the military commissions. (*Sun Sentinel*, 8/11/07)

**November 8:** Lawyers for a Canadian terror suspect accused the US government of blocking their access to evidence and attempting to rush his trial to validate embattled war-crime tribunals at Guantanamo Bay. Omar Khadr's lead attorney, Navy Lt. Cmdr. William Kuebler, said he has not been permitted to interview several witnesses in his defense of the former child soldier accused of killing a US Special Forces soldier in Afghanistan. (*AP*, 9/11/07)



## US-CUBA RELATIONS

**November 1:** Scott Carmichael, a senior counterintelligence officer with the US Defense Intelligence Agency, recently confirmed continued intelligence sharing between Iran and Cuba. Additionally, Israeli sources report that during last year's meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement in Havana, Iranian and Cuban intelligence officers discussed increased collaboration in targeting the United States. Close ties between Tehran and Havana have reportedly existed since Iran's revolutionary leadership came to power in 1979. Given both nations' sponsorship of terrorism, their continued collaboration imperils U.S. national security. In the past, Havana provided training and material to selected terrorist groups, some of which are Iranian allies. Today, Cuba remains a safe haven for some international terrorist groups and it allows safe transit to others. Furthermore, Iran's Interests Section and its Mission to the United Nations appear inadequately staffed for significant intelligence collection. This shortfall likely makes Tehran even more dependent on Havana's continued intelligence trafficking. (*The Miami Herald*, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Colombian Nobel Literature Laureate Gabriel García Márquez joined the international appeal for the release of five Cubans imprisoned in US jails for nine years now. With García Márquez joining the action, plus the recent subscription of the call by the President of East Timor Jose Manuel Ramos Horta, the appeal is now backed by six Nobel laureates. The document, which was released last October 12 on the Website of the Network in Defense of Humankind, demands the release of Gerardo Hernández, Ramón

Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González, known worldwide as the Cuban Five. (ACN, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Millions of Canadians whose MasterCard charge cards were issued by credit unions are now being forced to abide by U.S. economic sanctions that prevent use of the cards in countries including Cuba and Iran. CU Electronic Transaction Services (CUETS), which issues MasterCards to credit unions and caisses populaires, was in October acquired by the Canadian subsidiary of the Bank of America. As a result, CUET MasterCards will not work in Cuba, North Korea, Burma, Iran and Sudan. MasterCards issued by other Canadian financial institutions are not affected and will continue to be accepted around the globe. (CBC, 1/11/07)

**November 1:** Republican Senator Mel Martinez and his Cuban-American counterpart, New Jersey Senator Bob Menendez, a Democrat, put aside partisan differences to blast a common foe: Fidel Castro. From the Senate floor, the two displayed small white plastic bracelets with the word "cambio" ("change") etched on them. "Standing with those that are oppressed is our highest moment and our best calling," Martinez said. "It is unthinkable that a regime would be so weak to be so threatened by something as simple as these wristbands we are wearing." Menendez said 70 young people wearing similar bracelets were "detained, arrested and harassed" for wearing the bracelets in Cuba. "What was their crime? Acting violent? No, they were walking down a street in Havana (...) they had on these bracelets," Menendez said. (*The Miami Herald*, 5/11/07)

**November 2:** A 17-member delegation of Nebraska agriculture representatives are headed to Cuba again. Governor Dave Heineman will lead the group leaving for a visit to coincide with the annual Havana International Trade Fair, which the delegation will visit on November 5. Heineman also will lead meetings with Pedro Alvarez, head of Cuba's food import company Alimport, and others. Since 2005, Cuba has bought \$60 million in Nebraska commodities, including dry edible beans, corn, wheat, turkey, pork, beef, soybeans and other soy products. This will be the Governor's fourth visit to Cuba. (AP, 2/11/07)

**November 5:** Calling him "a great man with a mighty heart," President Bush bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on one of Cuba's most prominent dissidents, Oscar Elías Biscet. The 46-year-old Biscet, who according to his family is in poor health because of tough prison conditions, is serving a 25-year jail sentence since December of 2002. The medal was accepted by Biscet's stepson, Yan Valdés Morejón, who lives in Miami. Biscet, one of Fidel Castro's most ardent opponents, has been arrested dozens of times as he organized a string of public protests against the communist system between 1997 and 1999. Over the past eight years, he was out of jail on only one 36-day stint, in 2002. "His example is a rebuke to the tyrants and secret police of a regime whose day is passing," Bush said. (*The Miami Herald*, 6/11/07)

**November 5:** Cuba is challenging Washington's 45-year-old economic embargo against the communist-ruled island on the grounds that the measure violates the rules set down by the World Trade Organization. In a proposal presented by Cuba to the rest of the

member countries, Havana notes that the WTO works for "the elimination of discriminatory treatment in international trade relations." The text recalls that the ministerial declaration of the Doha Round - the negotiations for which began six years ago - specifies that "all members are in agreement with reducing or eliminating trade barriers," including non-tariff barriers. The Cuban proposal goes on to "urge all the members to lift any discriminatory unilateral trade measure." (*EFE*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** Cuba pledged to sign nearly US\$450 million (€310 million) in contracts with firms from the United States and dozens of other countries as it opened its top annual trade event. Less than two weeks after US President George W. Bush asked lawmakers in the United States to renew its economic embargo against the Communist-run nation, Cuban officials touted the 25th annual International Fair of Havana as proof that the decades-old policy has failed. "For Cuba, this is a demonstration that the genocidal, economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for nearly 50 years has failed to achieve its objective of isolating us from other countries," Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez said at the opening ceremony. Cuba will close deals for Canadian wheat and Vietnamese rice at the Havana Trade Fair, while US food sales dwindle. American vendors and Cuban officials blamed the tightening of U.S. financial sanctions against Communist Cuba. "Vietnam gives them credit, we don't," said Marvin Lehrer, the USA Rice Federation's director for Latin America, as he handed out hot samples of chicken-flavored long-grain rice. Sales of US rice to Cuba dropped to 80,000 tones last year from 175,000 tonnes in 2005 and prospects are not good for this year, Lehrer said. (*Reuters*, 5/11/07)

**November 5:** Prosecutors have appealed a federal judge's decision to dismiss an immigration fraud case against anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles. Prosecutors filed the 73-page appeal with the 5th US Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans. The case against the former CIA operative and US Army soldier was dismissed in May after US District Judge Kathleen Cardone in El Paso concluded that federal authorities used trickery, fraud and deceit in trying to pursue a criminal case against Posada. He was accused of lying on an application and during an interview to become a naturalized citizen. Lawyers for the government argued in their appeal that Posada didn't meet his burden to prove that the government engaged in trickery or deceit. They also contended that Cardone "erred by imposing the extreme sanction of dismissal and by dismissing counts that had no relation to the naturalization interview." Finally, prosecutors argued that government "deception or outrageous conduct" doesn't excuse Posada's alleged lies. Posada, 79, is wanted in Venezuela, where he is a naturalized citizen, on charges that he plotted the deadly 1976 bombing of a Cuban jetliner from Caracas. (*AP*, 6/11/07)

**November 7:** In a move that underscores Cuba's belief that relations with the United States could become more critical in the coming years, Havana is dispatching one of its most seasoned diplomats to head its mission in Washington. Jorge Bolaños was ambassador to five countries in Europe and Latin America and was once Cuba's No. 2 diplomat. He comes from Mexico, where he was seen as a healing voice in the often rocky relationship between the two countries. The gray-haired Bolaños, 71, is expected to take over soon after the November 27 send-off party for the younger and straight-talking

Dagoberto Rodríguez. The United States and Cuba do not have formal diplomatic relations but run quasi-embassies in each other's capitals known as Interest Sections. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/11/07)

**November 7:** The deplorable decision in June by the UN Human Rights Council to drop its long-standing investigation of human rights abuses in Cuba is yielding predictable and tragic results, US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Republican-Florida) warned. A United Nations envoy visiting Cuba, Jean Ziegler, offered praise for the regime's food policies, and said that he saw no evidence of malnourishment among the Cuban people and declined to make any comment following a visit to a Cuban prison. According to media reports, Ziegler's visit to Cuba is the first by a UN rights official in nearly a decade. He was invited by the regime following a June decision by the Council to end scrutiny of human rights abuses in Cuba. "How can a UN envoy for food credibly commend the practices of a regime that uses food as a tool of intimidation, coercion and repression?" Ros-Lehtinen asked. "His statement is either a case of wilful self-deception or worse, and it follows the party line of UN officials who have served as fronts for repression on that imprisoned island." (*Congressional Documents and Publications*, 7/11/07)

**November 10:** Cuba's most significant trade event concluded in Havana, although the number of US companies in attendance this year dropped. But executives representing 16 Florida firms were there again this year, about as many as attended when American food executives began participating in the fair in 2001. Cuban trade was an investment in the future, they said, even as the Bush administration tightens financial sanctions and sales dwindle. "The biggest companies in America are here: Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland and Perdue," said John Park Wright IV, a livestock baron from Naples whose family has traded cattle with Cuba since the 1850s. "All that Cuba needs is here." Florida executives peddling everything from lumber to fresh vegetables to shipping services said the state stood to gain the most if trade restrictions were eventually eased. Arthur Savage, president of a Tampa-based shipping company that has been delivering food to Cuba for five years, said he and other Florida shipping companies doing business with Cuba already have plans to re-establish ferry service to Havana. "We have vessels that can perform that service today," he said. "That's no secret. Everybody in the shipping business is looking at re-establishing those ferries. They just can't because of the Helms Burton Act," which strengthened the US embargo and prevents the United States from normalizing economic relations as long as the Castro brothers are in power. Wright, who is related to Savage and shared a booth with him at the trade fair, declined to comment further. "We don't want to tip our hand," he said. (*Sun Sentinel*, 10/11/07)

**November 13:** Congressman Bill Delahunt announced that the Foreign Affairs panel that he chairs, the Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, will hold a hearing on November 15, on the case of Luis Posada Carriles, an alleged Cuban exile terrorist currently living in Miami, Florida. "It's important to examine the treatment he has received," said Delahunt, "because it goes to the heart of American credibility among the family of nations." The hearing, entitled "'Diplomatic Assurances' and Torture: A Case Study into Why Some are Accepted and Others

Rejected," will seek clues from Posada's background as to why he - unlike other accused terrorists, many of whom have been kidnapped and sent to be tortured in other countries by the Bush Administration - has so far been able to escape an accounting for his alleged crimes. These include one of the most notorious terrorist attacks in the Western Hemisphere, the midair bombing of a civilian airliner in 1976 that resulted in the deaths of 73 civilians. Witnesses will include Peter Kornbluh of the National Security Archives; Anne Louise Bardach, an author who has tracked Posada's activities for over a decade; Roseanne Nenninger, the sister of one of Guyana's victims in the 1976 bombing; and Arturo Hernandez, Posada's attorney. (*US Fed News*, 13/11/07)

**November 14:** Cuba denounced the impunity enjoyed in the United States by several confessed terrorists who, lacking scruples, have committed numerous bloody acts against the island. The issue was addressed by Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations Rodrigo Malmierca, during a Security Council debate, where he referred to freedom granted to Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch, responsible for the blowing up of a Cuban plane in mid flight in 1976, that killed all 73 people on board. The Cuban diplomat also referred to freedom enjoyed in the US by terrorist Crispin Remon, who is responsible for the assassination of Cuban diplomat Felix Garcia and, two decades later, tried to assassinate Fidel Castro in Panama. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/11/07)

**November 14:** Delegates to the World Radio Communication Conference 2007 declared illegal the US government's use of airplanes to beam the signals of Washington-funded Television Marti into Cuba over the objections of the island's communist government, Cuban diplomats said in Geneva. The conference, which is organized by the UN International Telecommunications Union, approved a series of conclusions ratifying some of Havana's complaints about the actions of the US Office of Cuba Broadcasting, the Cuban mission in Geneva said in a statement. "A radio broadcasting station that functions on board an aircraft and transmits only to the territory of another administration without its agreement cannot be considered in conformity with the radio communications regulations," said the conclusions provided by the Cuban Embassy. (*EFE*, 14/11/07)

**November 15:** Thirty-five Cubans -- including a 2-year-old girl and a 5-year-old boy -- jumped from a boat into the surf off Palm Beach and swam. All but one made it safely to the beach. A 33-foot boat and the man aboard suspected of smuggling the immigrants to the United States, were being held by US immigration agents. The disposition of the 34 was not confirmed. Customarily, Cuban migrants who reach land are processed and released within hours. At about 2:30 a.m., four men knocked on the door at 110 Mockingbird Trail and told the owner that their boat sank. The owner called Palm Beach police. Police arrived to find pre-schoolers, teenagers and adults into their 50s or 60s. The group told police one of the group was missing. "We found him in the surf," said Police Captain Rick Howe. The drowned 39-year-old man had names and phone numbers of local contacts on slips of paper in his pockets, Howe said. "Everybody else was just staying put. They weren't running; they made it to shore. They're Cuban. They don't have to run," Howe said, referring to the US wet-foot, dry-foot policy that permits Cubans who make it to land to stay. In all, there were 17 men, 12 women, three teenagers -- two girls

and a boy -- and the two children. "They seem to be very healthy. They claimed to have been on the ocean since November 9", Howe said. (*The Palm Beach Post*, 16/11/07)

**November 15:** Cuba and the US had a confrontation at the debates of a UN Commission in charge of finances, when the Caribbean island accused Washington of obstructing its payments to the organization. Cuban acting ambassador Ileana Nunez reiterated the difficulties of her country to pay the corresponding payments to this organism due to the reinforcing of US economic, commercial and financial blockade against her nation. She denounced that once again the Washington administration "shows its complete disregard toward the UN, without minding to affect this organization, as well as continues with their political criminal policy of blockade against Cuba". (*Prensa Latina*, 15/11/07)

**November 15:** Members of Congress panned the Bush administration's handling of the case of anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles, wanted by Cuba and Venezuela in the 1976 bombing of a Havana airliner that killed 73 passengers and crew. The hearing brought together Posada's attorney, Arturo Hernández, as well as journalists and investigators who have looked into the activities of Posada, now free and living in Miami. The hearing was convened by Representative William Delahunt (Democrat-Massachusetts), chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight, and one of the sharpest critics of the Bush administration's policy on Cuba and Venezuela. Delahunt told the congressional subcommittee that national security laws are being unfairly applied to favor Posada Carriles. Delahunt, a Democrat whose district has received subsidized heating oil from Venezuela, said he asked the US Department of Justice why it failed to designate Posada Carriles a "terrorist" despite FBI and CIA documents linking him to the deadly airline bombing. He said he received no response. "We must insist on answers about the disparity of treatment provided him" compared with other terrorism suspects, Delahunt said in a prepared statement. "We must demonstrate that we apply our laws fully and equally without regard to political ideology if we want to ensure international cooperation on terrorism." (*AP, The Miami Herald*, 16/11/07)

**November 16:** Victor Rabinowitz, a leftist lawyer whose causes and clients over nearly three-quarters of a century ranged from labor unions to Black Panthers to Cuba to Dashiell Hammett to Dr. Benjamin Spock to his own daughter, died at his home in Manhattan. He was 96. His son Peter announced the death. For much of his career, Mr. Rabinowitz teamed up with the lawyer Leonard B. Boudin, who died in 1989. The two lawyers won the new revolutionary government of Cuba as a client over a poolside chess game with Che Guevara at Havana's Hotel Riviera in 1960, their law partner, Michael Krinsky, said in an interview. Guevara won, then gave them Cuba's business. It quickly provided considerable work. The United States banned Cuban sugar imports, and Cuba retaliated by nationalizing American corporate holdings. This led Mr. Rabinowitz to defend Cuba's position in the case of Banco Nacional de Cuba v. Sabbatino before the United States Supreme Court in 1963. (*The New York Times*, 21/11/07)

**November 20:** More than 200 prominent individuals from the arts and show business in the United States have signed a letter addressed to President George W. Bush expressing

their support for cultural relations between the United States and Cuba. "President George W. Bush (...) We are writing you as representatives of the cultural sphere in the United States. We write you as American citizens," the letter begins. "We believe the time has come to move towards cooperation and constructive relations with Cuba," including cultural exchange, says the letter. The letter to Bush bears the signatures of more than 200 actors, musicians, filmmakers, producers and other prestigious individuals such as Harry Belafonte, Ry Cooder, Peter Coyote, Danny Glover, Sean Penn, Bonnie Raitt, Gloria Steinem and Alice Walker. [[Letter to US President](#)] (*Granma International*, 20/11/07)

**November 21:** Utah's Hispano-Latino Rotary Club is leading a humanitarian mission to Cuba. Some 40 Rotarians from various Utah clubs plan to deliver 2,500 pounds of school supplies, five wheelchairs, clothing and shoes to Cuban kids. The eight-day trip is the Hispano-Latino club's first to Cuba, said the group's president, Cesar Diaz. Getting permission from both the Cuban and US governments was an "incredible ordeal," he said. "Rotarians are not political. We are not religious. We just want to go and serve and do whatever we can to help," said Diaz, whose club routinely organizes international service trips. Each traveling Rotarian has to pack 50 pounds of supplies to take to Cuba. (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, 21/11/07)

**November 21:** The number of interdictions in the Florida Straits may soon match or exceed those in 2005, when the US Coast Guard made the greatest number of interceptions since the rafter crisis 13 years ago. The number of Cuban migrants stopped by the Coast Guard was 2,938, just 14 shy of the 2005 mark. While no mass exodus is afoot, the increased number of interdictions is part of a gradually increasing number of Cubans leaving the island and heading for the United States -- by boat, plane, car and on foot through the US-Mexican border. At least 3,437 more Cubans left the Communist island and reached the United States between October 2006 and September 2007 than during the previous 12-month period, leading some Cuban affairs analysts to wonder whether a migration crisis is coming. [[Coming to America: The New Cuban Migration Crisis](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 24/11/07)

**November 22:** In a significant shift in Cuba migration policy, the US government announced it was creating a new program that would reduce the long delays many Cubans experience in securing visas to enter the United States. Under the new Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, Cubans granted permission to travel by US authorities will no longer have to wait in Cuba to receive permanent residency. They will now be given a travel document that would "parole" them into the United States, so they can wait in the US for their green card to be delivered to them. Even with the new program, however, there is no guarantee that Cubans with approved parole will enter the country any faster. That's because they still must get an exit permit from the Cuban government. It's unclear whether or not Havana will even recognize the new US program. Cuban Interests Section officials in Washington did not return a call asking for comment. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/11/07)

**November 22:** The Cuban government published a book that gathers "important information" about the activities of former CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles, accused by Havana of multiple terrorist acts against the communist-ruled island. "Posada Carriles: Four Decades of Terror" compiles declassified Central Intelligence Agency documents, interviews and transcripts of phone calls made by the anti-Castro militant. The book brings together "texts published in Cuba and abroad that detail various moments of the criminal activity of the dangerous international assassin," the state news agency Prensa Latina reported, citing the book's author, Canadian journalist Jean Guy Allard. (*EFE*, 22/11/07)

**November 26:** The US Coast Guard repatriated 37 Cubans to Bahia de Cabanas, Cuba. The migrants were interdicted trying to reach US land in two separate groups that included two suspected smugglers who were detained on November 19. (*The Miami Herald*, 27/11/07)

**November 27:** After state lawyers objected to a Miami-Dade judge's attempt to hold a hearing on the welfare of a 5-year-old girl at the center of an international custody battle, the judge blasted the state Department of Children & Families for setting what she called "a dangerous, dangerous precedent." Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Jeri B. Cohen had scheduled a judicial review hearing to gauge the welfare of the girl, who is splitting time between her birth father, a Cuban national, and a Coral Gables foster family that is seeking to raise her. Such hearings -- which are intended to ensure that children in state custody are well cared for and are receiving all the services necessary to promote good health, stability and education -- are required under both state and federal law, which ties the completion of the hearings to federal funding. But attorneys for DCF; for the foster parents, Joe and Maria Cubas; and for the girl's birth father, Rafael Izquierdo, objected to Cohen's holding the hearing. They argued that Cohen has no jurisdiction over the case because a state appeals court late last month stayed trial court proceedings. (*The Miami Herald*, 27/11/07)

**November 28:** US First Lady Laura Bush met via video conference with Cuban independent librarians Noelia Pedraza Jimenez, Roberto de Miranda, Iraida Rivas, and Nereida Rodriguez and her daughter Yurisel. Mrs. Bush spoke of her admiration for the work of the independent librarians in Cuba who provide a source of uncensored information to their countrymen at great personal risk, and expressed solidarity with them and their cause. (*White House Press Release*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** A letter by Cuba's Legendary Prima Ballerina Alicia Alonso ignited the support from the entertainment industry. US Cuba Cultural Exchange (USCCE), a national network of artists and presenters took the initiative from a letter by Alicia Alonso to create a campaign to end the ban the US has imposed infringing on the rights of artists in both countries to collaborate and create. USCCE has obtained an unprecedented number of signatures from noted artists, intellectuals, presenters and industry executives from Alice Walker to Tom Waits calling for an end to this ban between the two countries. Alicia Alonso who is also UNESCO's Goodwill Ambassador stated in her letter "Let us work together so that Cuban artists and writers can take their

talent to the United States, and that you are not prevented to come to our island to share your knowledge and values; so that a song, a book, a scientific study or a choreographic work are not considered, in an irrational way, as a crime.” (*Reuters*, 28/11/07)

**November 28:** A settlement was reached in the court battle between a Cuban farmer and a wealthy Florida couple over the man's 5-year-old daughter, and a person familiar with the deal said it gives the farmer sole custody. Rafael Izquierdo and his daughter would remain in the US for several years and the girl would regularly visit her US foster parents, according to the person, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of confidentiality rules. The person said Izquierdo eventually could return to Cuba with his daughter. The girl and her half-brother, whom the foster parents have adopted, emigrated legally to the US from Cuba with their mother, Elena Perez, in 2005. They went into foster care after Perez, who has a history of psychological troubles, attempted suicide. The state Department of Children and Families has sided with the foster family and fought to keep the girl in the United States. A department spokeswoman, Flora Beal, confirmed that a settlement has been reached but declined to comment on the details. (*The Miami Herald*, 29/11/07)

**November 29:** US intelligence agencies have said Cuban-Venezuelan intelligence ties remain close and are growing, with large numbers of Cuban intelligence personnel working in Venezuela. In some cases, Venezuelan ambassadors sent abroad were actually Cuban intelligence operatives. (*World Tribune*, 29/11/07)

