

**Chronicle on Cuba**  
**SUMMARY OF NEWS ITEMS REPORTED ON CUBA**  
**January-December, 2003**

*This web resource highlights the most significant news items on Cuba listed in FOCAL's monthly Chronicle on Cuba throughout 2003, and groups these according to a wide range of key topics. Web links to important documents and statements are also included.*

**TERRORISM**

**CAMP "DELTA"**

In a strongly worded letter, Secretary of State Colin Powell has urged Pentagon officials to move faster in determining which prisoners held at Guantanamo Bay can be released, defense officials said. Powell's April 14 letter to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld questioned the continued detention of about 660 prisoners from 42 countries who were captured during the war against al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. A Pentagon official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the "strongly worded" letter made it clear that the secretary of state wanted the Defense Department to quickly determine which prisoners could be released. (May, Terrorism)

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said that prisoners at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba must be questioned by several agencies before they can be released and he blamed this "very slow" process for their continued detention. The defense secretary responded that he, too, would like to see the process move more quickly. But, Rumsfeld said, the prisoners' cases are being reviewed by agencies including the FBI, the Justice Department, the State Department, the Pentagon, the CIA and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. (May, Terrorism)

Plans for an execution chamber at the Guantánamo Bay naval station in Cuba are being studied by the US military as it prepares to bring suspected al-Qaida and Taliban terrorists to trial later this year. The execution chamber could be part of a permanent prison at the US Navy base where the military is holding about 680 detainees captured during the war in Afghanistan, according to plans being developed by the commander of the prison camp. (June, Terrorism)

President George W. Bush has designated six captives in what he has called the war on terrorism as eligible to be tried before US military commissions, the Defence Department says. The six were believed to be among the more than 600 prisoners being held at a US military prison in Cuba. (July, Terrorism)

A British detainee held by the Americans at Guantánamo Bay US naval base has tried to kill himself. Feroz Abbasi, 23, tried to hang himself with a towel - one of the few possessions he is allowed in the harsh Cuban detention centre. He was spotted by a guard, and marines raced to his cell to rescue him. Abbasi, from Croydon, Surrey, who was arrested in Afghanistan, is said to be increasingly withdrawn. Officials are becoming increasingly concerned about the mental state of those held in total isolation. The 680 detainees are referred to by America as "illegal combatants". (July, Terrorism)

A prisoner tried to kill himself again in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where US authorities are preparing for military tribunals to try terror suspects, officials said. The attempt was the 29th since the detention mission began 1 1/2 years ago, said spokesman Lt.-Col. Barry Johnson. Most attempts occurred this year, a sign that the indefinite detentions are beginning to take their toll on the prisoners, who have not been formally charged or allowed to see lawyers. (July, Terrorism)

The Canadian government is being accused of doing too little on behalf of Canadians imprisoned as suspected terrorists by the United States at the US navy base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Two Canadian brothers - Omar and Abdul Rahman Khadr - are among the 680 foreign citizens from 40 countries being held without charge at the base in the Caribbean and possibly subject to trial by a military tribunal. "The Canadian government's silence has been deafening, particularly when there are Canadians being held there," New Democratic Party MP Svend Robinson (Burnaby-Douglas) said. (July, Terrorism)

President Bush announced that he had halted military legal proceedings against two Britons and an Australian being held as suspected terrorists, allowing time to negotiate additional legal protections with their governments. Separately, the Pentagon announced today that it had transferred 27 detainees from Guantanamo Bay for release in their home countries because the U.S. government had determined they were no longer a threat. The announcement also said approximately 10 new enemy combatants had arrived at the naval base, bringing the total number of detainees to approximately 660. (July, Terrorism)

A US congressional delegation has visited the prison for terror suspects at Guantanamo Bay amid complaints of abuse by inmates. The six representatives toured the US Navy base in Cuba, viewing interrogation rooms and discussing techniques for questioning. (July, Terrorism)

The mother of a British terrorist suspect held by the US at Camp Delta in Cuba was speaking in public for the first time about her son's plight. Zumrati Juma hopes to send a strong message to Attorney General Lord Goldsmith as he prepares for his second trip to Washington to discuss the future of the nine Britons held at the military base in Guantanamo Bay. Her son, Feroz Abbasi, 23, from London, along with Moazzam Begg, 35, from Birmingham, is on an initial list of six detainees who could face US military tribunals. (July, Terrorism)

An Arabic television network has aired an audio tape it says was made by a top Al Qaeda official, who warns the US it will pay a high price if it harms any of the detainees at Guantanamo Bay. Al Qaeda official Ayman Al Zawahri is considered to be Osama bin Laden's right-hand man. "America has announced it will start putting on trial in front of military tribunals the Muslim detainees at Guantanamo and might sentence them to death," the voice on the tape said. "I swear in the name of God that the crusader America will pay a dear price for any harm it inflicts on any of the Muslim detainees." (August, Terrorism)

The heads of 10 leading law bodies around the world call on the US to give a "fair and lawful trial" to prisoners detained at Guantanamo Bay and be a "beacon of justice in an unjust world". In a letter to the press, law society chairmen and presidents, including those from Britain, France, Sweden, Australia and Canada, express misgivings about the US plan to put foreign prisoners held at Camp Delta in Cuba before partially secret military tribunals without juries. Human rights groups have voiced concern about the treatment and fate of the 650 or so prisoners. (August, Terrorism)

The commander of the Guantánamo Bay detention camp has told the press the US military is hoping to release children it is holding there. A journalist in Guantánamo Bay, says the US's interviews with the three children - aged between 13 and 15 - reveal they may have been coerced into fighting in Afghanistan. General Geoffrey Miller who leads operations at the camp is seeking to have the children released in recognition of their age and co-operation, the journalist says. (August, Terrorism)

In another sign that the US detention mission at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, is set for the long haul, the military announced it is building a fifth camp to hold more detainees and expand interrogation facilities. Camp V will make room for 100 more detainees, increasing the capacity at the remote naval base in eastern Cuba to 1,100, Lieutenant-Colonel Pamela Hart said in a telephone interview. (August, Terrorism)

Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld says most suspected terrorists at a US prison camp in Cuba will probably be detained for the course of the global war on terrorism rather than face trial. Rumsfeld said Wednesday he expects some trials but prefers that most continue to be held at the Guantanamo Bay facility.

"Our interest is in not trying them and letting them out," he said. "Our interest is in - during this global war on terror - keeping them off the streets, and so that's what's taking place." (September, Terrorism)

Pentagon officials said they worry that terrorists are trying to infiltrate the US military and may have done so at the prison camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Three workers at the prison, including two members of the military, have been arrested on suspicion of espionage at the high-security base. It is unclear whether the men were connected to or part of any terrorist plot, the commander in charge of homeland security said. "I'm hoping we're going to find these are unusual, these are few and far between, that this isn't some large cell," said General Ralph Eberhart, head of US Northern Command. (October, Terrorism)

Christophe Girod, the chief representative in Washington of the International Committee of the Red Cross, said the imprisonment by the US of more than 600 people at Guantanamo Bay, in Cuba, is unacceptable because the detainees are being held indefinitely without proper legal aid, the New York Times reported. Girod spoke at the US naval base as Red Cross representatives were completing an inspection, the newspaper said. He said it's intolerable that the camp is used as "an investigation center, not a detention center," for the 660 prisoners, mostly Afghans, the paper said. (October, Terrorism)

The US Supreme Court agreed to hear two appeals over whether hundreds of terrorist suspects in secret custody are being held unlawfully. The case involves the overseas detention of some 660 men from about 40 countries, said to be al Qaeda or Taliban fighters. Some have been held for as long as two years at the US Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, without access to lawyers or family. (November, Terrorism)

Omar Khadr, a Canadian teenager held at Guantanamo Bay, is blind in one eye and can't use one of his shoulders, his grandmother said. Canadian officials, who have visited the 17-year-old at the US military base where he is held in Cuba, have never publicly mentioned such injuries. Representatives from Canada's Foreign Affairs Department said they would try to confirm the extent of Mr. Khadr's injuries. The US military says Mr. Khadr tossed a grenade that killed a 28-year-old Army medic during a 4½-hour gun battle in a remote Afghan village in July, 2002. He was 15 at the time. Mr. Khadr was shot twice in the chest by U.S. soldiers as they raided the building in which he was hiding with other suspected al-Qaeda members. He was the only one of the group captured alive. Mr. Khadr is now being held without charge. (November, Terrorism)

The US has returned 20 people held at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba to their countries of origin - only to bring in 20 new prisoners from an undisclosed location. This means the US naval base still holds some 660 people suspected of terrorism, many seized two years ago in Afghanistan and Pakistan. So far 84 have been released in their countries, and four have been transferred to Saudi prisons. (November, Terrorism)

A Canadian citizen has been quietly released from Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and those close to him say he wants to return to Toronto to talk about his two years as a detained terrorist suspect. Abdul Rahman Khadr, who turns 21 next month, has been released back to Afghanistan, where he was arrested as an alleged al-Qaeda fighter two years ago. But supporters of Mr. Khadr say Canada is refusing to let him come home. Canadian officials had tried but failed to visit Abdul Rahman Khadr while he was locked up as one of nearly 700 uncharged enemy combatants in Cuba. He is now a free man somewhere in the Middle East. This much was confirmed by Canada's Foreign Affairs Department. "Canadian government officials were made aware a few weeks ago that Mr. Khadr would be released," said spokesman Reynald Doiron. "Privacy concerns limit our ability to provide information on his current whereabouts." (November, Terrorism)

More than 100 prisoners will be released from US custody at the detainment camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and more will follow, military officials said. The first of two new transfers is scheduled for the end of December, and the other in January. The official did not say where the prisoners would be sent and a military spokeswoman declined to provide details about future transfers from the US base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (November, Terrorism)

Ending a long odyssey that took him from a Cuban prison camp to Afghanistan and the Balkans, former Guantanamo Bay detainee Abdul Rahman Khadr returned to Canada, flying into Toronto's Pearson Airport from London. Mr. Khadr looked to be in good physical health, but said he had been treated poorly at the US detention facility in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. (November, Terrorism)

A federal appeals court has concluded that terrorist suspects held in secret US custody on foreign soil deserve access to lawyers and the American legal system. The US Supreme Court has already agreed to decide whether US courts have jurisdiction over the "detention of foreign nationals captured abroad (...) and incarcerated at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, Cuba." But the latest ruling by the San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals adds more legal ammunition to criticism over the constitutionality of the White House's war on terror, stemming from September 11, 2001, attacks. The Supreme Court will have the final word on the detention policy when it hears two similar cases and issues a ruling by June. (December, Terrorism)

Cuba has charged the United States with running a concentration camp at the Guantanamo base on the eastern tip of the island, in the government's first attack on use of the facility to hold terror suspects. "In the territory illegally occupied by the Guantanamo naval base, hundreds of foreign prisoners are subjected to indescribable abuses," said a statement passed by parliament and broadcast by the state-run media. Communist-run Cuba's National Assembly said prisoners were isolated and denied the right to communicate with their families or to prepare an adequate defense. (December, Terrorism)

## **CUBAN GOVERNMENT POSITION**

Fidel Castro attended the launching of a book entitled "Scarred Memories" about terrorist attacks against Cuba. The activity was held at the Havana's International Book Fair. (January, Terrorism)

The president of Cuba's parliament says that the sale in Florida of a small plane taken from the island by a defector was just the latest example of the United States aiding and abetting terrorism. "The sale (...) is another demonstration of the US authorities' engagement with anti-Cuban terrorism," Ricardo Alarcon said at a Havana news conference. (January, Terrorism)

The Cuban government has released a list of people it calls terrorists, most of them living in Miami. The list, containing 64 names, was released by the Cuban Government and printed in the state controlled newspapers. On it are the names of persons the Cuban Government regards as terrorists -- people who have participated in actions against the island in attempts to topple the Castro government. (January, Terrorism)

Cuba denounced at the United Nations that the illicit traffic of small and light weapons, tolerated by the US Government, favored the implementation of many terrorists actions suffered by the Cuban people. Cuban Ambassador to the UN Bruno Rodriguez, made reference to the use for those purposes of weapons that were registered in the United States of America, during a biannual meeting devoted to the action program for the control of such types of armament. (July, Terrorism)

Fidel Castro, together with the presidents of eight Latin American countries, signed a declaration in Asunción, Paraguay, pledging to boost their effort to fight terrorism and drug trafficking in the region. The Declaration of Asuncion also urged regional solidarity with the government of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, whose country is plagued by a 40-year-long internal war, news from Asuncion said. (August, Terrorism)

## **ETA MEMBERS IN CUBA**

Spain has not yet received a formal reply from the Cuban government regarding its request that the island stops harboring members of the terrorist group ETA, according to statements at a press conference by Spain's Foreign Minister, Ana Palacio. (January, Terrorism)

The European Council of Ministers requested the extradition of an ETA member living on the island by the Cuban government. José Angel Urtiaga Martínez was involved in the kidnapping of Diego Prado and Colón de Carvajal in 1983. (August, Foreign Affairs)

## **POSADA CARRILES' CASE**

A Panamanian court turned down a request to release four Cuban anti-Castro exiles under arrest in Panama for planning to assassinate Fidel Castro. The Court of Appeal ordered to keep Luis Posada Carrilles, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Crispin Remon and Gaspar Jimenez Escobedo remanded in custody for their participation in the alleged plot against Castro. (April, Foreign Affairs)

Four men, arrested in Panama for allegedly plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro, requested the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) to expedite the proceedings against them or terminate their preventive detention. (May, Terrorism)

The Panamanian media is promoting the release of Luis Posada Carriles and three other Cuban-Americans, charged with attempting to blow up the auditorium of Panama City University during a political meeting in November 2000 -- a plot designed to kill Fidel Castro. According to Granma newspaper, in recent days Panamanian television has transmitted an extensive report on the "injustice" being committed in the case of Luis Posada Carriles. The television report calls Carriles "the persecuted politician of the Castro regime," an old man suffering from various illnesses who "will have to wait for the conclusion of the legal procedure delayed by the prosecutors." (May, Terrorism)

An El Salvadoran court has initiated procedures with Panamanian authorities for the extradition of Cuban American Luis Posada Carriles, detained in that country since November 2000 for allegedly plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro. (May, Terrorism)

New maneuvers to free terrorist Luis Posada Carriles and three accomplices are being undertaken in Panama. The four are scheduled to go on trial on charges of planning to assassinate Fidel Castro in November 2000. According to press reports, the Cuban-American National Foundation, based in Miami, is pulling out all the stops to free Luis Posada Carriles, Guillermo Novo Sampol, Pedro Remón Rodríguez and Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo. The four terrorists are being held at El Renacer Prison, located near the Panama Canal, awaiting their hearing that is slated to begin on September 3rd. They were arrested by Panamanian authorities nearly three years ago after it was discovered that they planned to blow up an auditorium with C-4 explosives at the University of Panama, where the Cuban leader was scheduled to speak. (August, Foreign Affairs)

Four Cuban exiles accused of trying to assassinate Fidel Castro appeared in a Panamanian court for the first day of a three-day preliminary hearing. Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez, Guillermo Novo and Pedro Remón were arrested after Castro denounced a plot to kill him during an Ibero-American summit that was held in Panama's capital in November 2000. Local courts ruled there wasn't enough evidence to try the four Cuban exiles for attempted murder, but Panamanian authorities said the men had gathered explosives in the country. The proceedings began amid a small but spirited protest that saw students, workers and Indian leaders march around the courthouse carrying pro-Castro signs and shouting slogans condemning the defendants. Later, a group of the Cuban exiles' friends and family members arrived, forcing police to separate the two groups of demonstrators. (September, Terrorism)

Four Cuban exiles accused of trying to blow up Fidel Castro will stand trial on charges of conspiracy, possessing explosives and endangering the public's safety, a Panamanian judge ruled. Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez, Guillermo Novo and Pedro Remón were arrested after Castro denounced a plot to kill him during an Ibero-American summit held in Panama's capital in November 2000. Local courts had ruled there wasn't enough evidence to arrest the Cubans for attempted murder, but Panamanian authorities said the men had gathered explosives in the country. "There is sufficient merit and evidence" to go to trial, Judge Enrique Paniza said, setting a trial date for November. (September, Terrorism)

The lawyer for Luis Posada Carriles and his accomplices has forced the withdrawal from his clients' trial of Judge Enrique Paniza Morales. Five weeks before the court case, the Panamanian press reported that Paniza, the fifth penal judge, had declared himself unable to follow through with the trial after Rogelio Cruz, lawyer for the four accused by Cuba to be international terrorists, lodged a complaint of "partiality" against him in the Second Higher Court of Justice. The trial is scheduled for January. The sixth penal judge Rubén Royo received Cruz' complaint and subsequently accepted Paniza's withdrawal. (December, Terrorism)

## **UNITED STATES ACCUSATIONS**

[See also US-Cuba Relations/ Diplomatic Activities and Statements]

US Congressman James McGovern demanded that Cuba be removed from a list of states that according to Washington "harbour or sponsor terrorists". The US congressman read an open letter he sent to US Secretary of State Collin Powell, urging him to "remove Cuba from the list of states that allegedly sponsor or harbour terrorists", arguing that Cuba poses no threat to the United States. McGovern, a Democrat from Massachusetts, said that Cuba's inclusion in the US "blacklist" has only to do with Washington's own political interests, and affects scientific exchange between the two nations. The US lawmaker arrived in Havana Sunday accompanied by former US presidential candidate George McGovern, to participate in an Inter-American Conference on Pharmacology and Nutrition. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

The Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism of the US Department of State released its "2002 Patterns of Global Terrorism". In its section, Overview of State-Sponsored Terrorism, the document says that "despite significant pressure from the US Government, the seven designated state sponsors of terrorism—Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria, and Sudan—did not take all the necessary actions to disassociate themselves fully from their ties to terrorism in 2002". (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban officials said "an irrational thirst for revenge" --and not the facts-- led the US government to once again brand Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism. "Cuba condemns all acts, methods and practices of terrorism," the socialist government said in a lengthy statement published in the Communist Party daily Granma --its first response to the US accusations. The government said the Bush administration is trying to engender "the right conditions for a possible military attack against Cuba," a charge the United States denies. [\[Official Statement\]](#) (May, Terrorism)

The US has included Cuba in a list of six countries that "do not cooperate fully" with Washington in its antiterrorist crusade. The list is part of an official notice published in the Federal Register, concerning countries to which US weapons exports are prohibited on account of their involvement in international terrorism, as provided by the Arms Export Control Act. (May, Terrorism)

It is reported that in a hearing with the Senate Intelligence Committee on prewar reports, senior intelligence expert, identified by several officials as Christian Westermann, made it clear that he had felt pressure from John Bolton, the under secretary of state for arms control and international security. He said that pressures originally dated to a clash the two had over Mr. Bolton's public assertions last year that Cuba had a biological weapons program. Mr. Westermann argued those assertions were not supported by sufficient intelligence. Mr. Bolton declined to comment on the matter. Mr. Westermann also declined to comment. (June, Terrorism)

The United States issued a new accusation that Cuba had a "limited" biological arms program. At a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Cuba, Christopher Dodd, a Democrat from Connecticut, asked why Washington continued to enforce a four-decade sanctions regime against Havana. "If it (Cuba) is no longer a threat, why would we maintain those restrictions?", Dodd asked to Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, Roger Noriega. "We continue (...) to believe that Cuba has at least a limited, developmental, offensive biological weapons research and development effort and is providing dual-use biotechnology to other rogue states," said Noriega, the top US diplomat for Latin America. (October, Terrorism)

The Cuban Foreign Ministry issued a statement, strongly denouncing recent statements by Roger Noriega, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemispheric Affairs. Published on the front page of Granma newspaper, the statement by Cuba's Foreign Ministry notes that Roger Noreiga echoed the "ridiculous" accusation previously made by his colleagues that Cuba is working on bio-terrorist projects -- despite the fact that such claims have been roundly rejected as completely false. The Cuban Foreign Ministry called on Washington to present the slightest piece of evidence to support its false claims that the island is developing biological weapons. (October, Terrorism)

Rogelio Pfirter, General Director of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), visited the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology. Pfirter praised the cooperation received from Cuban authorities during the on-site inspection of two Cuban facilities that utilize organic chemical substances in the manufacturing of various products. "Both verifications were positive and confirmed the information given by (Cuban) authorities in a report on last year's industrial operations," said Pfirter. (November, Foreign Affairs)

Undersecretary of State John R. Bolton said the United States intends to prevent delivery of sensitive nuclear and ballistic missile technology to Iran "from whatever source." Like Iran, Bolton said that North Korea, Syria, Libya and Cuba are "rogue states" pursuing weapons of mass destruction. He said the United States would seek diplomatic solutions whenever possible, but that America and its allies "are also willing to deploy more robust techniques such as the interdiction and seizure of illicit goods." "The lesson that emerges from Iraq is that the United States is determined to go after those countries that intend to develop weapons of mass destruction programs," he added. (December, Terrorism)