

FOCAL SUMMARY OF NEWS ITEMS REPORTED ON CUBA January-December 2004

This resource is a compilation of news items on Cuba listed in FOCAL's monthly Chronicle on Cuba throughout 2004

TERRORISM

CAMP "DELTA"

April 16: Cuba has asked the UN's top human rights body to investigate the United States' detention of al-Qaeda and Taliban suspects at its naval base in Guantanamo Bay, ending Havana's policy of avoiding direct confrontation on the issue. The Cuban delegation urged the Commission, the highest UN authority on human rights, to investigate the conditions in which the non-US citizens of around 40 different nationalities are being held. Most of the men, who the United States describes as Al Qaeda and Taliban suspects, have been held at Guantanamo Bay in southeastern Cuba since January 2002. (*The Australian, IPS, 16/4/04*)

April 19: Fidel Castro lashed out at the United States for building a "concentration camp" at Guantanamo Bay for prisoners suspected of ties to terrorist organizations. Castro said European nations that voted against Cuba last week at the U.N. Human Rights Commission are now faced with an "embarrassing" decision on whether to monitor the situation at the US naval enclave in eastern Cuba, where hundreds of prisoners have been held without charges since 2002. Without naming the United States, Castro said the US naval base had been "converted into a concentration camp where absolutely no rights are respected." The 77-year-old Castro, wearing a military uniform, spoke during a television talk show marking the anniversary of the botched 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion by CIA-trained Cuban exiles seeking to end his fledgling socialist revolution. (*Reuters, 19/4/04*)

April 22: Cuba avoided a showdown with the United States by withdrawing from the top UN human rights body a hard-hitting resolution which called for an investigation of treatment of terrorism suspects at the US naval base at Guantanamo. Citing US "threats and blackmail," Cuban Ambassador Jorge Mora Godoy told the commission he would not ask for a vote on the motion, which claimed widespread rights abuses against the suspects held at Guantanamo. Western diplomats said Havana likely feared the UN Human Rights Commission would fail to condemn the United States over its detention of more than 600 individuals from 44 countries at the base. Mora Godoy accused the United States of bullying other governments on the 53-nation commission to ensure the failure of the Cuban resolution. (*AP, 22/4/04*)

April 22: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque conducted a press conference in Havana to inform the national and international news media of Havana's decision to not insist on a vote of its draft resolution concerning arbitrary detentions at US Naval Base at Guantánamo. With Cuba's decision, said the island's foreign minister, Havana will be able to bring up the issue of the arbitrary detentions at any time and at any international forum, such as the UN General Assembly. (*Radio Habana Cuba, 22/4/04*)

April 22: Cuba dropped a call to the UN's top human rights body to probe allegations of US abuse of Guantanamo detainees and accused European and some Latin American states of cowardice for not backing it. The resolution expressed "deep concern" that the United States might be depriving detainees at the US naval base on the southeast tip of Cuba of their rights

under international law. Cuba's ambassador to the UN in Geneva told the 53-state Commission on Human Rights Cuba was withdrawing the resolution because the United States "and its allies" were preparing to present a counter motion to prevent any action on Cuba's call. He said the Europeans and Latin Americans, many of which have been critical of the United States over Guantanamo.

September 6: The opening round of detainee military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay resembled something between a Mel Brooks farce and the kangaroo courts of former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. The proceedings didn't look anything like justice, military or otherwise. Meanwhile, two US citizens still sit in military brigs, isolated from their lawyers and months if not years away from the hearings the high court says they deserve. The US criminal justice system, including its military stepchild, is supposed to stand for due process, impartiality and openness. No photographic, video or audio recordings of the hearings will be released. (*The Toronto Star*, 6/9/04)

October 17: Many detainees at Guantanamo Bay were regularly subjected to harsh and coercive treatment, several people who worked in the prison said in recent interviews, despite long-standing assertions by military officials that such treatment had not been used except in some isolated cases. Military guards, intelligence agents and others described a range of procedures that included treatment they said was highly abusive. They said it took place over a long period of time, as well as rewards for prisoners who cooperated with interrogators. (*The New York Times*, 17/10/04)

December 16: Britain's highest court ruled against the detention of foreign terrorism suspects without trial, in a major judgment on how far human rights can be restricted in the "war on terror." The Law Lords were deciding the cases of nine Muslim men whose detention under draconian post-Sept. 11 legislation -- some for three years -- is a cause celebre for rights activists. (*Reuters*, 18/12/04)

December 17: Within the heavily guarded perimeters of the Defense Department's much-discussed Guantanamo Bay prison in Cuba, the CIA has maintained a detention facility for valuable Al Qaeda captives that has never been mentioned in public, according to military officials and several current and former intelligence officers. The buildings used by the CIA are shrouded by high fences covered with thick green mesh plastic and ringed with floodlights, officials said. They sit within the larger Camp Echo complex, which was erected to house the Defense Department's high-value detainees and those awaiting military trials on terrorism charges. (*The Boston Globe*, 17/12/04)

December 26: At least ten current and former detainees at the US military prison in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, have alleged that they were abused in custody. The American Civil Liberties Union has released more FBI reports obtained under the Freedom of Information Act on FBI agents' accounts of abuse of prisoners taken from Afghanistan and Iraq. "On a couple of occasions, I entered interview rooms to find a detainee chained hand and foot in a fetal position to the floor, with no chair, food or water. Most times they had urinated or defecated on themselves and had been left there for 18, 24 hours or more," an unidentified FBI agent has written. Brent Mickum, a Washington attorney for one of the detainees, said: "Now there is no question these guys have been tortured. Every allegation that I have heard has now come to pass and been confirmed by the government's own papers." A Pentagon spokesman said that the military had an ongoing probe of torture claims and was taking credible allegations seriously. (*World News*, 26/12/04)

POSADA CARRILES CASE

[See also, Foreign Affairs/ Latin America]

January 21: The Panama trial of four Cuban exiles accused of a plot to assassinate Fidel Castro has been postponed indefinitely, a defense attorney said. Luis Posada Carriles, considered Cuba's most wanted terrorist, was arrested in Panama City in late 2000 along with three Miami-Dade County men -- Gaspar Jiménez, Guillermo Novo and Pedro C. Remón -- accused of

plotting to kill Castro with a bomb while he attended a presidential summit in Panama. The Cuban government released a statement expressing "worry and indignation" over the "maneuvers" by defense attorney Rogelio Cruz to delay the trial. Cruz acknowledged that the latest delay was caused by a change in judges that defense attorneys requested. Judge Enrique Paniza was replaced by Judge José Ho Justiniani after Cruz raised questions about Paniza's impartiality. He postponed the trial after saying he had not had time to rule on important evidence. But Cruz said he did not want the delay. (*The Miami Herald*, 21/1/04)

January 21: The lawyer for four Cuban exiles accused by Cuba of plotting to kill Fidel Castro said he would ask a judge to release his clients temporarily after the court again suspended the trial. "We have been left once again without knowing a date for the start of the trial," said lawyer Rogelio Cruz. "The fairest thing would be for the Cubans to be released conditionally" until the trial begins. (*AP*, 21/1/04)

January 27: A Panamanian court has rejected an appeal to free four Cubans who are in jail on charges they plotted to assassinate Fidel Castro in 2000, the suspects' lawyer has said. Attorney Rogelio Cruz told the press that he had filed a habeas corpus motion but that it was denied by judges on the Second Superior Court. Local television reports said the judges ruled that the preventative detention of the four suspects was legal and therefore rejected the appeal. (*EFE*, 27/1/04)

January 29: The four terrorists accused of plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro are to remain in prison in Panama after a court declared their detention legal, government sources stated. A spokesman for the Supreme Court of Justice announced that the Second Higher Court considers legal the detention of Luis Posada Carriles and three other persons implicated in conspiring to assassinate Castro during the 10th Ibero-American Summit in Panama City. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 29/1/04)

February 13: The postponed trial of four individuals accused of plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro during the 2000 Ibero-American Summit in Panama is now set for March. "The court has more than enough proof," said plaintiff attorney Julio Berríos in declarations to the press. He added, "In the hands of Panamanian Justice are 43 volumes containing thousands of pages of evidence and testimony. Prosecuting the case represents a matter of honor for the Panamanian Justice System." (*Prensa Latina*, 13/2/04)

February 24: Rogelio Cruz, defense lawyer for Luis Posada Carriles has "deliberately" provoked a hostile environment in order to gain Judge Enrique Paniza's withdrawal from the upcoming trial. The proposal is that the trial judge should "not be familiar" with the DA's report or the "evidence presented and the object of evidence to be presented," the Panamanian district attorney Arquímedes Sáez Castillo, who is directing the proceedings, informed *Granma International*. (*Granma International*, 24/2/04)

March 11: Relatives of the victims of several terrorist attacks accused seven Cuban dissidents arrested in Panama on charges of plotting to kill Fidel Castro of also murdering their loved ones, and they demanded "that justice be done." Cuban citizens Luis Posada Carriles, Pedro Remón, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo Sampoll, Pedro Remén Rodríguez and César Matamoros, and Panamanian national Jose Manuel Hurtado, were arrested in November 2000 in Panama and charged with planning to assassinate Fidel Castro during a Latin American summit. During a news conference, Felix Víctor Negrin, Lissette Diaz, Domingo Garcia, Juan Carlos Cremata and Justino Di Celmo accused the seven anti-Castro activists of killing their relatives in separate terrorist attacks against the communist regime. "We have faith and trust in the Panamanian justice system," said Negrin, whose exiled brother Eulalio Jose Negrin was killed during a terrorist attack in Union City, New Jersey, in 1979. Cremata, for his part, recalled that his father, Carlos A. Cremata, was among the 73 people who died in the explosion of a Cuban plane over Barbados in 1976, which he said, was "an absolutely terrorist act." (*EFE*, 11/3/04)

March 15: Five anti-communist Cuban exiles and a Panamanian expressed pleas of not guilty in a Panama City court at the beginning of their long-delayed trial on charges of plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro in late 2000. Luis Posada Carriles - the most prominent defendant - was the first to plead not guilty before Judge Jose Hoo Justiniani. The trial proceeded with the reading of the indictment, which cited "serious signs" that link Posada Carriles and the five others to the alleged attempt on the Cuban leader's life. (*EFE*, 15/3/04)

March 16: Prosecutors said four Cuban exiles accused of possessing explosives in an alleged plot to kill Fidel Castro planned to kill Cuba's leader in cold-blood. "There shouldn't be clemency for these people," said federal attorney Arquimedes Saez. After being delayed three times, the trial got under way with the reading of statements from the accused, all of whom declared their innocence. Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jimenez Escobedo, Guillermo Novo, and Pedro Remon have been charged with conspiracy, possessing explosives and endangering the public's safety. An explosives conviction carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison, while the lesser charges carry sentences of one to three and two to five years behind bars, respectively. Also charged in the case are two Panamanians, Cesar Matamoros and Posada Carriles' driver, Jose Hurtado. (*AP*, 16/3/04)

April 20: A Panamanian judge convicted four Cuban exiles in a plot to kill Cuban President Fidel Castro and sentenced the oldest -- 76-year-old Luis Posada Carrilles -- to the maximum sentence of eight years. Caught in Panama City with a fake passport and 33 pounds of explosives, Posada and the three others were found guilty of endangering public safety after 3 ½ years in jail. Codefendants Pedro Remón and Guillermo Novo, both of Miami, were sentenced to seven years, Remón told *The Herald* by telephone from prison. Posada and Gaspar Jiménez, also of Miami, received an extra year each for using false passports to enter Panama in November 2000, just before Castro was to visit the Ibero-American summit. The defendants will all get credit for time served. (*The Miami Herald*, 21/4/04)

April 21: Cuba called the sentences handed down in Panama to six anti-communist militants accused of plotting to kill Fidel Castro with explosives in November 2000 too short. "The sentences imposed do not correspond to the seriousness of the crimes they planned to commit in Panama," the Cuban Foreign Ministry said in a statement published by official government newspapers in Havana. (*EFE*, 21/4/04)

April 21: The Cuban government and exiles in Miami clashed over the prison terms of six to eight years handed down by a Panamanian judge to four exiles convicted on charges linked to an alleged plot to assassinate Fidel Castro. Cubans in Miami called for Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso to pardon the men, jailed since their arrest in 2000, while others accused her of cozying up to Castro. Miriam Novo, 52, wife of defendant Guillermo Novo, told the press that she was only half surprised by the verdict. "I expected absolution. There was never any proof," she said. But, she added, part of her expected it. "We have always had faith in the justice system of democracies, but in the case of Panama you can see that the Cuban regime has used intimidation, blackmail and bribery," she added. "Castro's arm is long." "This sentence has been bought and paid for by the government of Cuba," said Hector Fabian, member of a committee supporting the Panama four. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/4/04)

April 22: Two days after a Panamanian judge convicted four Cuban exiles in a plot to kill Fidel Castro, hundreds of supporters rallied and raised funds for what has become a cause célèbre in part of the exile community. More than 400 people packed the Renaissance Ballroom in West Miami for the \$100-a-plate dinner. Among them: Francisco "Pepe" Hernández, president of the Cuban American National Foundation, sharing a table with Miami Commissioner Angel González. Nearby sat members of Brigade 2506, veterans of the Bay of Pigs invasion. Also making the rounds was former Miami Commissioner Humberto Hernández, who was removed from office

and convicted of voter and mortgage fraud. He accompanied his father, Humberto Sr., a Bay of Pigs veteran. Prominent developer Mario Ferro donated reprints of works by Cuban artist Cundo Bermúdez for an auction. The four Cubans convicted -- including three from Miami -- have relied on local donations to support their legal fight, said Santiago Alvarez, a local developer and longtime supporter. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/4/04)

April 23: Panama's Foreign Affairs Minister Harmodio Arias said that the anti-Castro Cuban, Luis Posada Carriles, must serve out his entire eight-year prison sentence for planning to assassinate Fidel Castro. "Mr. Posada Carriles was condemned to eight years in prison and will have to serve out his time for the crime of which he was found guilty," said Arias in a brief statement carried by Panamanian local television's Channel 11. (*EFE*, 23/4/04)

July 6: A Panamanian court has upheld rulings against Luis Posada Carriles and other three Cubans on charges of illegal possession of explosives, association to commit delinquent acts and crimes against public safety. The Second Higher Court of Justice denied a petition for a writ of *habeas corpus* filed by Posada Carriles's attorney. (*AFP*, 6/7/04)

July 15: Appeals by defense attorneys for convicted terrorist Luis Posada Carriles to have him and several accomplices released from prison into house arrest could be the first stage of a possible escape plan, the Cuban Foreign Affairs Ministry warned. The Cuban Foreign Ministry warned against providing any conditions that could favor a jailbreak, especially considering that Posada Carriles and Jiménez Escobedo had previously escaped from prisons in Venezuela and Mexico. (*AFP*, 15/7/04)

July 15: Panamanian authorities responded to the Cuban warning on a potential jailbreak by Posada Carriles with assurances that security would remain tight around the convicted terrorist. The Panamanian Foreign Affairs Ministry issued an official statement calling the Cuban warning as "unfounded". (*AP*, 15/7/04)

August: 14: Cuba warned the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Panama about its responsibility if that government allows terrorists imprisoned in that country since November, 2000 to escape or exarcerate them. The warning is contained in a statement by the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Relations issued on the present situation of the process followed in Panama against terrorists Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jiménez Escobedo, Pedro Remon and Guillermo Novo Sampoll. [For more on this, see Exile Community and Foreign Affairs] (*Prensa Latina*, 15/8/04)

August 16: The Government of Panama does not plan to grant amnesty to a group of Cubans accused of plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro in November 2000, said Panama's Foreign Minister. "They will serve their sentences (of 7 and 8 years in prison) in Panama", said emphatically Foreign Minister Harmodio Arias. Last March, Cubans Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jimenez, Pedro Remon and Guillermo Novo were sentenced by a Panamanian court for actions threatening national security and illicit association. [For more on this, see Exile Community and Foreign Affairs] (*AFP*, 17/8/04)

August 26: Panama's president has pardoned four Cuban-exile extremists convicted of plotting to kill Fidel Castro, whose government has said diplomatic relations would be severed if the "terrorists" were so favored. Announcing the pardons just days before she was to leave office, President Mireya Moscoso said she wanted to prevent a future government from extraditing the four when they finish their terms. She pardoned Luis Posada Carriles, Gaspar Jimenez, Guillermo Novo and Pedro Remon. "We know that if they stay, they would face the possibility of being extradited to Venezuela or Cuba where I am sure they would have been killed," she told a news conference. Posada, a 76-year-old former CIA operative, faces criminal charges in Venezuela as well as Cuba. (*EFE, AP*, 26/8/04)

August 26: Three Miami Cuban exiles jailed after Fidel Castro claimed they were plotting to assassinate him came home amid cheers and tears at Opa-locka Airport, having been pardoned by Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso. A fourth, alleged mastermind Luis Posada Carriles -- a man Castro once called "the worst terrorist in the hemisphere" -- immediately went into hiding. (*The Miami Herald*, 27/8/04)

August 24: In Miami, Santiago Alvarez, a developer and friend of several of the men convicted in Panama for plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro, said he was "elated" with Mireya Moscoso's decision to consider a pardon. Alvarez also denied any knowledge of Miami exile efforts to lobby the Panamanian president before heightened tensions between the two countries. If there has been pressure on the part of the Cuban community, it has not been from me or from any of the families of the jailed men, he said. Cuban exiles did write letters to Moscoso urging clemency for the four and met with Panama's vice consul in Miami last year -- before the four were convicted -- to appeal on their behalf, Alvarez said. Alvarez, who spearheaded the campaign to raise funds for the men's defense along with fellow Miami exile Ignacio Castro, said about \$400,000 had been raised. [For more on this, see Foreign Affairs and Terrorism] (*The Miami Herald*, 24/8/04)

August 26: FBI agents questioned three Cuban exiles shortly after they arrived at Opa-locka Airport following their pardon by Panama's president in an alleged plot to kill Fidel Castro. The information could be used for an investigation into whether the three -- all naturalized US citizens -- violated federal law. The US Neutrality Act bars Americans from trying to overthrow foreign governments not at war with this country. FBI agents interrogated the three to find out more about the Castro claim that they planned to kill him during a 2000 visit to Panama, according to law enforcement sources. Immigration officials also questioned them. Meanwhile, the mystery of the whereabouts of a fourth exile and alleged plot mastermind, Luis Posada Carriles, continued with reports that he was in El Salvador or Honduras. (*The Miami Herald*, 28/8/04)

August 26: Bush administration officials denied any role in the pardon of four Cuban exiles by the outgoing Panamanian government. In Panama, Moscoso — who has been close to the Bush administration — also denied that she had been influenced by the United States. "No foreign government has pressured me to take the decision," she told reporters. Reflecting the political sensitivities of the case, US officials declined to condemn the actions of the four men — who authorities said had planned to use 33 pounds of explosives to kill Castro — even though Bush has said the war on global terrorism is his top priority. "These are bad guys. The absence of a statement says a lot," said Julia E. Sweig, a Cuba expert at the Council on Foreign Relations. "It is the most preposterous violation of what this administration stands for." Sweig said direct White House involvement in the pardons was perhaps unnecessary. (*The Washington Post*, 27/8/04)

August 26: About 50 relatives and supporters -- including Miami Commissioner Angel González and the Cuban Liberty Council's Alberto Hernández -- waited several hours as at Opa-locka Airport for the three men released from prison by Panamanian president Mireya Moscoso. The news did not make everyone happy, however. Some question the hero's welcome for men who have been linked to anti-Castro violence. "It just brings up some dreadful memories for my mother," said Al Milian, whose father, radio commentator Emilio Milian, lost his legs in a car bombing in which Jiménez was indicted, although the indictment was later dropped. Milian declined to comment further, saying his father had forgiven his attackers and had asked his sons -- on his deathbed -- to do the same. [For more on this, see Foreign Affairs and Terrorism] (*The Miami Herald*, 27/8/04)

August 28: Fugitive Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles, accused by Havana of multiple terror attacks, sneaked into Honduras using an altered US passport after he was freed from a Panama prison, Honduran officials said. A Honduran immigration worker at the airport in the northern city of San Pedro Sula confirmed that a known photograph of Posada matched a man who landed there, the officials said. "Based on that identification, we believe Posada did enter Honduras, and

we have many teams out looking for him," said a top government official who asked for anonymity because of the sensitivity of his job. [For more on this, see Exile Community and Foreign Affairs] (*The Miami Herald*, 28/8/04)

August 30: Honduran president Ricardo Maduro said that if self-confessed anti-Castro terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is found in Honduras, he "will be treated like a criminal." Maduro told reporters that Posada Carriles - along with three other Castro opponents, who later traveled to Miami - arrived in the northern Honduran city of San Pedro Sula "with forged passports and under false identities." "Any person who enters the country without authorization of the government will be held responsible in every sense, even those who traveled on to the United States," namely Guillermo Novo, Pedro Remon and Gaspar Jimenez, who Maduro warned, "will also be prosecuted." "He obviously isn't a common criminal," Maduro said of Posada Carriles, given that he entered Honduras in a private plane, "has money and has the support of some powerful people who helped him obtain forged US passports. That's why we know we're dealing with important international influences." "We're not going to rest for a moment, especially in the case of an internationally well-known illegal immigrant. Once more, I want to make it very clear: he'll be treated like a criminal," said Maduro. (*EFE*, 30/8/04)

September 2: Cuba has formally requested the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles from Honduras. The request was made by Havana's ambassador to Tegucigalpa, Alberto González Polanco, in a letter addressed to acting Honduran Foreign Minister Aníbal Quiñónez. The Honduran Foreign Ministry has confirmed that Tegucigalpa would extradite Posada Carriles if he is found to be in Honduras. (*EFE, Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/9/04)

September 2: In Tegucigalpa, Honduran Security Minister Oscar Alvarez said that Luis Posada Carriles had presumably left Honduras for the Bahamas. Meanwhile, in San José, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Roberto Tovar declared in a press release that "the Government had no knowledge" of the Cuban anti-Castro fugitive entering the country. Tovar made this declaration following a tip from Cuban authorities that Posada Carriles might "enter Costa Rican territory." The Costa Rican minister said that "if (Posada Carriles's) presence (in Costa Rica) were confirmed, he would not be granted asylum or refuge." (*EFE, Europa Press*, 2/9/04)

September 5: Cuban Parliamentary President Ricardo Alarcón declared that any country locating self-confessed terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is under obligation to detain him in accordance with international law. Alarcón, in an interview with the Prensa Latina news agency, affirmed that both international law and UN Security Council resolutions originally proposed by the United States oblige states to apprehend groups or individuals linked to terrorism found within their territory. The leader of the Cuban Parliament criticised statements from some Central American political leaders declaring that Posada Carriles would be deported if found, reiterating that states were duty bound to arrest the self confessed killer and then discuss requests for extradition. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/9/04)

October 14: Cuba has asked the UN counter-terrorism committee to evaluate Panama's pardon of four Cuban exiles that the communist government accuses of trying to assassinate Fidel Castro. In a letter to the UN Security Council, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said his government hopes that "such an effort might bring an end to impunity for these terrorists." Perez Roque said Cuba's first report to the committee in 2002 listed instigators of terrorist acts against Cuba, including the four men pardoned by Moscoso. He said the government wants to know what steps the counter-terrorism committee "has considered taking in response to the voluminous information that Cuba has provided to it." Cuba also requests the committee to evaluate the pardons. (*AP*, 14/10/04)

October 14: The Supreme Court of Panama will soon rule on the constitutionality of pardons granted by former president Mireya Moscoso during her final days in office. A petition, supported by the country's new attorney general, José Antonio Sossa, requests a legal opinion from the high court on 183 pardons -- including four Cuban-born terrorists who were also released in

August, just one week before Moscoso left the presidency. The legal brief allows ten days for the presentation of arguments, after which the Supreme Court will issue a ruling on the petition. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 14/10/04)

December 2: Panamanian authorities said they would investigate whether government officials abused their power while carrying out former President Mireya Moscoso's pardons of four Cubans who had been accused of trying to assassinate Fidel Castro. Special prosecutor Arquimedes Saenz said authorities planned to solicit testimonies from former Interior and Justice Secretary Arnulfo Escalona as well as Carlos Bares, the ex-director of the national police force, as part of the investigation. (*AP*, 2/12/04)

TERRORIST ATTACK IN MADRID

March 11: Cuban oppositionist Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas sent a letter to the president of the Spanish Government, José María Aznar, expressing his solidarity with the Spanish people and condemning the genocide committed by terrorists in Madrid. In the letter, Payá says to feel the same anguish and indignation that Spanish families feel, with whom he shares the same pain. The promoter of the Varela Project added that the crime is against life itself, against every Spanish citizen, is a crime against all those who love the Spanish people, a crime against humanity. (*Puente Informativo*, 11/3/04)

March 11: Fidel Castro has expressed consternation and sadness at the terrorist bombing attack in the railroad system of Madrid that has so far claimed the lives of some 190 people and has resulted in over 1,200 wounded. In a letter of condolence to Spanish King Don Juan Carlos I, Castro wrote, "I can assure you that Cuba, which for 45 years has been a victim of acts of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, understands and shares the pain brought by this revolting and unjustifiable aggression against the Spanish people." (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 11/3/04)

March 11: Cuban vice president José Ramón Fernández personally called Manuel Fraga, president of the Galicia Xunta, to express his condolence for the victims of the terrorist attack in Madrid. Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, also communicated his condolence to Mr. Fraga. Apparently, no Cuban government official got in contact with Spanish president José María Aznar. (*Europa Press*, 11/3/04)

March 11: After the terrorist attack in the railroad system of Madrid, Cuban ambassador to Spain, Isabel Allende, personally expressed her condolence to the Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister. (*Europa Press*, 11/3/04)

March 13: Fidel Castro said that "no act of terrorism is justified, no matter who does it," referring to last week's terrorist attacks in Madrid that killed 200 people. "No act of terrorism is justified, no matter who does it, but for reasons of a strictly political nature, it is in the interests of some and not others because everyone knows that more than 90 percent of the Spanish people opposed that war in Iraq," he said. The only way to fight terrorism, according to Castro, is "to seek sincere cooperation" because war "is not going to put an end to it, it is going to make it worse and worse, it is going to sow ever more hatred, more dissatisfaction, more tragedy." (*EFE*, 14/3/04)

UNITED STATES (ACCUSATIONS)

[See also, US-Cuba Relations/ Diplomatic activities and statements]

March 30: Repeating and strengthening previous allegations about Cuba's alleged weapons of mass destruction program, a Bush administration official told Congress in written testimony that the island "remains a terrorist and [biological weapons] threat to the United States." "I believe the

case for the existence of a developmental Cuba [biological weapons research and development] effort is strong," said John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security. Bolton made the allegations as part of a 25-page written statement on the development and spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Bolton also said Cuba has been successful at hiding details of its weapons program thanks to data passed to Havana by convicted spy Ana Belen Montes, the former senior Cuba analyst for the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency. Montes is serving 25 years in federal prison after pleading guilty in 2002 of spying for Cuba. (*Sun Sentinel*, 31/3/04)

March 31: Cuba rejected a renewed accusation by a senior US official that it is developing biological weapons and said the charges were an attempt to seek a pretext to invade the communist-run island. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque called a news conference to deny the latest charge by John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control and international security in the Bush administration, who made a similar accusation in 2002. (*Reuters*, 31/3/04)

April 29: The United States has praised efforts by countries across Latin America to fight terrorism in 2003, but again designated Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism. The US State Department, in its annual report on terrorism, said Cuba continued to provide support to US-designated foreign terrorist groups. The report said that Cuba also acted as host to several terrorists, including members of the Basque separatist group ETA. The United States also named Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism in 2002. (*VOA News*, 29/4/04)

May 11: Speaker of the Cuban National Peoples Power Assembly (Congress), Ricardo Alarcon, affirmed that the administration of George W. Bush is responsible for some of the worst acts of terrorism committed on this continent and in the world. Alarcon made the accusation at the midnight closure of a public audience gathered to learn details of the case of the five Cubans condemned in the United States to tough sentences ranging from 15 years to double life imprisonment. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/5/04)

May 18: Secretary of State Colin Powell has determined and certified to the US Congress that five countries -- Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea and Syria -- have not been cooperating fully with United States antiterrorism efforts, the Department of State said. (*USInfo*, 18/5/04)

September 17: The Bush administration has conducted a new assessment of Cuba's biological weapons capacity and concluded that it is no longer clear that Cuba has an active, offensive bio-weapons program, according to administration officials. The latest assessment contradicts a 1999 National Intelligence Estimate and past statements by top administration officials, some of whom have warned that Cuba may be sharing its weapons capacity with "rogue states" or with terrorists. The new assessment says the intelligence community "continues to believe that Cuba has the technical capability to pursue some aspects of an offensive biological weapons program," according to an intelligence official. He added, "There is still much about Cuba that is cause for concern, including the production and export of dual-use items and cooperating with countries on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism." The term "dual use" refers to items that could be used for both civilian and military programs. (*The New York Times*, 17/9/04)

October 22: Biotechnology experts who recently visited various facilities in Cuba said that while the communist nation has sophisticated technology there is no evidence to support claims it is working on bioweapons. "We can't give Cuba a clean bill of health, but we have no evidence to support these allegations," said Jonathan Tucker, a senior researcher at the Washington-based Center for Nonproliferation Studies, an independent group working to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction. "They have the capability, but so do we," he told a conference focused on whether Cuba should be kept on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism. Cuba's capability to produce bioweapons has long been a source of speculation. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/10/04)

December 17: "The Bogota Three" -- IRA suspects James Monaghan, 58, Niall Connolly, 38, and Martin McCauley, 41 -- are hiding out in communist Cuba under the protection of Fidel Castro. Republican sources said that the three had fled to the Caribbean island after their release in June. Cuba has a long-standing extradition treaty with Colombia but it's unlikely the communist state will co-operate with the right-wing junta and force the men to leave. Colombian officials admitted they have no idea where the Irishmen are. (*The Mirror*, 18/12/04)