

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.

US-CUBA RELATIONS

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES AND STATEMENTS

[See also, Terrorism/ United States Accusations]

The Bush administration brushed aside suggestions that Brazil's new leftist president is ready to form an alliance with leaders from Venezuela and Cuba. Responding to the suggestion of an axis unfriendly to the United States being formed, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said, "Let's get serious. These are three different leaders with different nations and different interests." "We have an excellent relationship with Brazil, and we look forward to building on that relationship," Boucher said. He also said both Venezuela and Brazil share the democratic values enshrined in hemispheric agreements. In contrast, he said, "Cuba remains a stark exception to those values." (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States is urging Cuba to work with a newly-appointed UN human rights envoy and grant her access to the communist-run island. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher called on Cuba to abide by UN guidelines that call for it to accept a special representative. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba sent condolences for the deaths of seven astronauts in the US space shuttle disaster. A Foreign Ministry statement said the Cuban flag would be flown at half-mast at the United Nations in New York out of respect for the American people. "The Cuban people joins in the pain and suffering of the American people over the death of several of its sons," the statement said. "In this moment of mourning we especially express the solidarity of the people and the government of Cuba for the families of the dead astronauts," it said. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban agents have left human waste in the Havana homes of American diplomats, disturbed their sleep and tempted married envoys with sexual liaisons in a harassment campaign, according to an internal State Department document. Originally classified, the cable was written by the US Interests Section in Havana in December and outlines the complaints. The cable, declassified this week, detailed these allegations: "US diplomats and their families "are denied rest or relaxation by house alarms triggered in the middle of the night (...) phones that ring at all hours and by cell phones that ring every half-hour for no apparent reason." "Cars belonging to US diplomats who talk regularly with Cuban dissidents are particular targets, their tires slashed, windows smashed and insides "pilfered." "Cubans search and bug the Americans' Havana residences, including tapping into their home computers, leaving open doors and windows behind and leaving (...) 'messages' (...) including unwelcome calling cards like urine and feces." In Washington, a senior State Department official who spoke on condition of anonymity said Cuban agents monitoring US diplomats in Cuba said spouses are not immune. The cable alleged, the Cuban government "has even run campaigns of 'sexual advances' against [Interests Section employees] when their spouses are out of the country." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro wrapped up his three-day visit to Vietnam, saying US hegemony and globalisation have plunged the world into its worst-ever crisis. In a rousing 65-minute speech made without notes to students and government officials at Hanoi Polytechnic University, the aging revolutionary warned the US "empire" would eventually be brought to its knees. "This world, one of freedom and globalisation, is now ruled by

the American administration," he told about 1,000 flag-waving students. "The world is falling into a big crisis, which I think will be difficult to overcome," he said, his voice trembling with emotion. "If you come to Latin America or anywhere else in the world you can see that the current situation is unbearable and unsustainable." With a dramatic swipe of his hand, Castro added: "This means that we need a solution to bring change nearer. It also means that the current (US) empire cannot last as long as the old Roman Empire." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

US President George Bush extended the provisions of Proclamation 6867 in relation with vessels traveling to Cuba without federal authorization. This regulation had been issued during the Clinton administration to avoid the smuggling of Cubans seeking refuge in the US. "In accordance with section 202(d) of the National Emergencies Act (50 USC 1622(d)), the President of the US is continuing the national emergency with respect to Cuba and the emergency authority relating to the regulation of the anchorage and movement of vessels set out in Proclamation 6867." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States, which had planned to sponsor a program to distribute textbooks and works of great literature to ordinary Cuban citizens, is protesting the recent decision by the Cuban government to forbid the US interests section in Havana from distributing books, said State Department spokesman Richard Boucher. "It is unfortunate that the Castro regime has made a 'firm decision' that books, many available in Cuba, could not be brought in by the US Interests Section, nor could they be purchased locally for distribution to the Cuban people through independent libraries." (...) "In the battle of ideas, the Cuban regime wants only one team on the field", Boucher said in his statement. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban regime of Fidel Castro continues to broadly violate the human rights of its citizens, according to a new report by the US State Department. Cuba's record on human rights remains "poor," the Department said in its 2002 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, released March 31. The report said Cuba is a totalitarian state controlled by Castro, who exercises complete control over all aspects of life through the Communist Party and its affiliated mass organizations. Cuba's people are not given the right to change their government peacefully, the report said. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro criticized the United States, warning that Cuba doesn't need its foreign office. The 76-year-old leader made the veiled threat about the status of the US Interests Section in Havana as an angry response to a public visit last month by section chief James Cason to a meeting with Havana dissidents. "Anyone can see that this is a shameless and defiant provocation," Castro said of Cason's meeting with the dissidents. "Perhaps the numerous US intelligence agents working at the Interests Section could explain to him that Cuba can easily do without this office - a breeding ground for counterrevolutionaries and a command post for the most offensive subversive actions against our country." Castro seemed to take special exception to Cason's declaration that "the Cuban government is afraid, afraid of freedom of conscience, afraid of freedom of expression, afraid of human rights." "Actually, Cuba is so afraid that it will calmly take all the time needed to decide on its course of action regarding this bizarre official," Castro said. (March, Foreign Affairs)

The State Department is restricting the freedom of travel of Cuban diplomats in the United States, responding to curbs imposed by Havana on US officials in Cuba. State Department sources said they believe the Cuban government made the first move as a means of cutting back on travel by the chief US diplomat in Havana, James Cason. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Adolfo A. Franco, Assistant Administrator for Latin America and the Caribbean of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), announced that USAID will continue to provide funding to the University of Miami for the second year of their Cuba Transition Project. CTP, is a pioneer academic program that conducts research regarding multiple issues affecting Cuba's transition to democracy. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

President Bush nominated a Miami attorney and lobbyist to head Radio and TV Martí, replacing Salvador Lew, whose tenure was dogged by internal strife and criticism. Bush will ask the board that oversees the Office of Cuba Broadcasting to approve Pedro Roig as director of the Voice of America program created to

be an alternative to Cuban-run media. "His years of experience will serve him well in his new position," a White House spokesman said. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

US State Department Spokesman Philip Reeker, made public a communiqué urging the international community to side with Washington in condemning the wave of repression unleashed by the Cuban government. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States has strongly denounced Cuba for opening treason and subversion trials against at least 78 political dissidents. State Department spokesman Philip Reeker said Cuba's crackdown on dissent is "the most despicable act of political repression in the Americas in a decade." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro said he was pleased the top American diplomat here tried to defuse a plane hijacking in recent days, but still accused US Interests Section chief James Cason of encouraging dissidents now on trial for state security crimes. "No one can deny that the chief of the Interests Section arrived with instructions to carry out provocations of all kinds against Cuba," Castro said on a government television show that began on April 4th and wrapped up early April 5th. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States has condemned the convictions of several leading Cuban dissidents and journalists who have received lengthy prison sentences in Havana for treason and subversion. At a briefing in Washington, State Department spokesman Philip Reeker condemned what he called "show trials" of members of Cuban civil society. Mr. Reeker said the government of Fidel Castro is persecuting journalists for acting like journalists, economists for acting like economists, and peaceful activists for seeking a solution to Cuba's growing political and economic crisis. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The recent crackdown by Cuban officials on dissidents has helped create the potential for a large-scale exodus of the island nation's residents, similar to ones in 1980 and 1994, the top US diplomat based in Havana said. James Cason, chief of the US Interests Section in Havana said the actions taken by Cuba against activists is stoking renewed fear among the island's residents. The Castro regime accused Cason of fomenting unrest on the island by conspiring with dissidents to undermine Cuba's socialist system. "They say that when I go out to speak with anybody, it becomes subversive," Cason said at the University of Miami. "The continued disintegration of Cuban society generates instability throughout the region and creates the threat of a mass migration to the United States," Cason said. "This undermines our security and the long-term potential for the Cuban nation." "Cuban airplane hijackings are a product of frustration," Cason said, adding that there could be more such incidents to come. "To the extent that the Cuban government says the US is lax on hijackers and does not improve its airport security, you are going to see a lot of these violent attempts to get out." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The House approved a resolution condemning the arrests of 79 Cuban dissidents and the harsh sentences handed down to dozens of them. The measure passed by a 414-0 vote, with just 10 abstentions. "The House of Representatives sent a clear message in support of the Cuban people's right to be free and in opposition to the brutal tyranny that oppresses Cuba," said Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Florida Republican and the measure's co-sponsor. He said that "today's vote honors the Cuban people as well as the American people." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque defended the swift trials and lengthy sentences-ranging from six to 28 years-given to the dissidents. During the trials in Cuba, the dissidents were accused of being financed and advised by America's top diplomat in Havana, Interests Section Chief James Cason. "Our country has had to struggle against the obsession of the US government to fabricate an opposition in Cuba. We've seen more than 40 years of economic embargo, aggression and armed invasion (...) with the Bush administration, there has been a leap in hostility against Cuba," Perez Roque said. Perez Roque submitted payment lists at trials he said came from the US government. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Accusing Cuba of engaging in "despicable repression," Secretary of State Colin Powell urged Fidel Castro to free the scores of dissidents imprisoned recently and sentenced to long terms. "Nearly 80 representatives of a growing and truly independent civil society have been arrested, convicted and sentenced to lengthy prison terms in summary, secret trials," Powell said in a statement. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

USAID does support a number of non-governmental organizations in the US that promote democracy and help dissidents and other individuals in Cuba trying to "create a space for democracy and free-expression in that society," Alfonso Aguilar, assistant administrator at the US Agency for International Development's Latin American and Caribbean Projects, said. "They indeed might have supplied or provided assistance for dissidents and their activities, but we have not provided that assistance directly," he added. "That's an absolutely outrageous statement on his (Cuban Foreign Minister Perez Roque's) part," "We did not, although we're perfectly authorized to do so by law. It's absolutely legal for the US to provide assistance to dissidents and their families in Cuba," Aguilar said. "We have not done so, principally to avoid the kind of outrageous allegations and the untruths that have been uttered by the Cuban government." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro remained defiant amid international criticism of Cuba's harsh measures to reign in dissent and halt hijackings, saying he would fight to the end to defend his nation against the United States. "We are now immersed in a battle against provocations that are trying to move us toward conflict and military aggression by the United States," Castro told a group of Venezuelans in a speech broadcast on state television. "We have been defending ourselves for 44 years and have always been willing to fight until the end," Castro added in the speech, which marked the coup attempt against his political ally Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez a year ago. Castro made no direct reference to the execution of three hijackers by firing squad, nor the sentences of up to 28 years handed down for 75 government opponents charged with collaborating with US diplomats to undermine the socialist system. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

An "Informative Note" broadcast by Cuban TV has accused the US government, aided and abetted by the UK and Spain, of "exerting colossal pressures on Latin American, African and other Third World countries" to vote against Cuba in the UN Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). The note added that the EU "which has traditionally been incapable of sustaining a position independent of American pressure regarding Cuba, has joined in a servile manner, as it usually does, the gross maneuver of the United States to impose once again an immoral condemnation on Cuba". (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Secretary of State Colin Powell, calling Cuba's rights situation horrible and getting worse, urged the UN Human Rights Commission to censure Cuba for suppressing dissent. Powell spoke in unusually harsh terms about Cuba when he was asked Tuesday at a news conference for an assessment of its rights record. "It has always had a horrible human rights record. And rather than improving as we go into the 21st century, it's getting worse," Powell said. He noted that scores of dissidents were arrested and given long prison terms recently "just for expressing a point of the view that is different from that of Fidel Castro". Powell said Cuba's behavior "should be an outrage to everyone. It should be an outrage to every leader in this hemisphere, every leader in this world." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States insisted it was pleased by the UN body's passage of a mildly worded resolution that omitted any mention of Havana's recent harsh clampdown on dissidents. The State Department, which has been pushing for the Geneva-based commission to specifically condemn the crackdown, said the resolution sent a "strong message" to Cuban dissidents and Fidel Castro's communist government. In a statement by the White House Deputy Press Secretary, the US Government expressed its satisfaction with the resolution approved in Geneva. "The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has once again voted to express its concern about the appalling human rights violations by the Cuban Government against its own people", the statement says. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

A wave of repression in Cuba has been so alarming that US officials have begun to wonder whether Cuba may unleash a new Mariel-style exodus -- a typical Cuban response in times of crisis. American officials are so worried that they have already quietly advised Cuba not to attempt any such action. But if a new exodus occurs, officials say they will activate a classified federal contingency plan designed to deal with migrant surges. Operation Distant Shore would trigger a dramatic escalation in the number of Coast Guard and other military vessels patrolling the Florida Straits -- a veritable floating wall designed to interdict as many migrants as possible at sea. "The United States remains committed to safe, legal and orderly migration from Cuba to the United States," National Security Council spokesman Sean McCormack said. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's Minister of Culture, Abel Prieto, said that US policies toward the island are "insidious and perverse." Speaking during a Concert for Peace, held in Pinar del Río, the minister of culture expressed confidence that the people of the world will close ranks to stop "the monster, its destructive war machine and the manipulation of information." Cuba's minister of culture said that the Concert for Peace in Pinar del Río is just a small part of the huge movement to protest the dangers of a "colonial and imperialist strategy" led by the United States. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

A high-ranking Cuban envoy accused the United States of trying to foment anti-government opposition on the communist-ruled island by trying to trigger an immigration crisis. "Clearly, they are violating the immigration agreements and they are trying to create the conditions for a crisis that would justify, according to their views, other actions against Cuba," Dagoberto Rodriguez, head of the Cuban Interests section, told reporters. He said the United States was trying to "generate instability in Cuba using the natural desire of many people to migrate." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Top US officials warned Fidel Castro that Washington would work with renewed "vigor" to bring an end to his communist stranglehold on the island. The United States would use "new creativity and vigor to hasten the inevitable democratic transition on the island," said Roger Noriega, President Bush's pick to be assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

US Secretary of State Colin L. Powell criticized Cuba as an "aberration in the Western Hemisphere" and said the administration is studying ways to respond to the Havana government's recent crackdown on its critics. "We're reviewing all of our policies and our approach toward Cuba in light of what I think is a deteriorating human rights situation," Mr. Powell told reporters after a meeting with the Jordanian foreign minister. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Attorney and historian Pedro Roig has been appointed to head the Broadcasting to Cuba Office's Radio and Television Marti, the US government-sponsored institution said. Roig has hosted two Radio Marti programs on economic issues over the past seven years, as well as "Uno contra Uno" on the television station. The attorney and historian is a past president of the Miami Inter-American Academy and has been an active member of the Cuban-American National Foundation. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

President Bush's pick for assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, Roger Noriega, called for greater international pressure on Cuba's communist government and help for the wounded dissident movement battling Fidel Castro. "We must redouble our bilateral and multilateral efforts to hasten the inevitable democratic transition on the island," Mr. Noriega told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during his confirmation hearing. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Secretary of State Colin Powell, just returned from talks in Damascus and Beirut, said in Sunday talk show interviews that, every nation in the Western hemisphere has rejected Cuba's communist ideology, and all are finding their own way "down a democratic path with market reforms. (...) They are having different levels of difficulty with respect to practicing democracy. Democracy isn't an easy system. But Cuba sits there isolated, getting poorer, getting broker, more irrelevant on the world stage, and sooner or later this regime will pass. It is an anachronism and history will catch up with it." (May, US-Cuba Relations)

US government efforts to promote political change in Cuba have shifted away from the subtle "people-to-people" contacts favored by the Clinton administration to a more confrontational approach, including direct support for dissidents, two US officials say. One senior US official called the new focus a "pressure cooker" approach. He and another official, who is also a former diplomat, said that recent developments in Cuba, including the crackdown on opponents of Fidel Castro's government, the execution of three ferry hijackers, and a Cuban government threat to close the US Interests Section, were Cuba's reply to a "significant shift" in US Cuba policy. The two officials spoke separately and on condition of anonymity. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The Bush administration denied a report that tougher measures have been implemented against Cuban diplomats in Washington. State Department officials admit that Cuba policy is under review and new measures are expected to be announced soon, but said that "none of the measures [cited by the AP] have, at this time, been implemented." (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The Bush administration is expelling 14 Cuban diplomats for engaging in "activities inconsistent with diplomatic status," a US official said, using diplomatic language that can refer to spying. "It is seven here (Washington) and seven in New York," a State Department official said. Those expelled were from the Cuban interest section in Washington and from the Cuban interest section in the United Nations, an American diplomat said earlier in Havana. The United States did not release the names of those expelled. The expulsion becomes effective in 10 days, the official said, noting Cuba had been notified. Cuban Interests Section officials told EFE they were aware of the order expelling the seven UN-mission diplomats but not that pertaining to their own staff. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The US government's expulsion of 14 Cuban diplomats is an "aggressive step" aimed at provoking a confrontation between the two countries, the Cuban Foreign Ministry said. The ministry also said in a published statement that it will take its time responding to "this new provocation." "The Foreign Ministry rejects this new aggressive step by the United States government against our country and our diplomatic representatives in Washington and New York," read a ministry statement published in the Communist Party daily Granma. "With these actions, the American government shows, once again, that it has openly launched a course of provocations and foreign meddling against Cuba." (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba demanded that the United States provide "so much as a single piece of evidence of illegal activity" on the part of the 14 Cuban diplomats expelled from the country. The head of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, Dagoberto Rodriguez, told a news conference that the expulsion was nothing more than a U.S. attempt to fuel tensions and seek "a pretext for an attack against Cuba." [\[Official Statement\]](#) (May, US-Cuba Relations)

US President Bush marked Cuban Independence Day by denouncing Fidel Castro and expressing hope his rule will soon end. "My hope is for the Cuban people to soon enjoy the same freedoms and rights as we do. Dictatorships have no place in the Americas. May God bless the Cuban people who are struggling for freedom," Bush said in a message played on US-backed Radio Marti, which is beamed into Cuba. At the White House, the US President met with Cuban dissidents and former political prisoners. At the emotional meeting, which lasted longer than expected, Bush reasserted his support for the democratization of Cuba, but ruled out an invasion of the island, according to Housing Secretary Mel Martinez, himself a Cuban-American. Isabel Roque, the sister of Marta Beatriz Roque, an independent economist imprisoned in March, echoed the housing secretary's sentiment. "We do not want the Marines to invade Cuba. We just don't want our hands to be tied," she said. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban doctors in South Africa said they have been "forced" to sign a petition by the Cuban government to support the principles of the revolution in the light of an "imminent invasion and attack from the United States on Cuba". According to a doctor in KwaZulu-Natal, the "urgent" document was faxed by the South African Cuban co-ordinator Dr Jaime Davis to the provincial co-ordinator with a request to sign and return it within 48 hours. Some Cuban doctors believe the petition is "needed as intellectual support" for the execution of three Cubans who hijacked a ferry last month in a failed attempt to reach the US. (May, Domestic Affairs)

The United States is concerned about the health of several political prisoners in Cuba, according to a statement issued by State Department Deputy Spokesman Philip Reeker. Reeker said that several of the 75 Cuban dissidents arrested and sentenced to long jail terms in March 2003 are ill and require immediate access to adequate health care. He called on the Cuban government to immediately release all 75 of the political prisoners or, at a minimum, provide them with the necessary health care, cease the inhumane treatment of these prisoners and allow humanitarian organizations to monitor their treatment. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, in Santiago de Chile for a meeting of foreign ministers from the western hemisphere, said he hopes the United States and the European Union can forge a common front to encourage Cuba to permit dissent. Powell told reporters while en route that he planned to address the Cuba issue "rather directly" when he speaks to a meeting of Organization of American States foreign ministers. The rest of the world is now starting to take note of Castro's increasingly poor human rights. "I will point out once again that Castro's Cuba remains an anachronism in our hemisphere and it is not getting better," Powell added. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Secretary of State Colin Powell challenged Organization of American State foreign ministers to join the United States in finding ways to "hasten the inevitable democratic transition in Cuba." Powell told his 34 colleagues from Latin America and the Caribbean that any such steps would be consistent with the OAS Inter-American Democratic Charter, approved in 2001. The charter, Powell said in a speech, "declares that the people of the Americas have a right to democracy. It does not say the peoples of the Americas except Cubans have a right to democracy." Powell criticized the March crackdown on Cuban dissidents, saying these activists were merely seeking to "act on their basic human rights." He also protested what he called the "harsh sentences" meted against them. The Cuban issue generally has been off-limits for the OAS. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States has cited 15 nations, including NATO allies Greece and Turkey, for failing to adequately fight sex trafficking, opening the way for possible sanctions. In addition to Greece and Turkey, the nations affected are: Belize, Bosnia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Liberia, Burma, North Korea, Sudan, Suriname and Uzbekistan, the State Department said in its third annual "Trafficking in Persons" report (June, US-Cuba Relations)

"Infamous, crude, and cynical," is the way Fidel Castro categorized the US State Department report placing Cuba on a list of countries trafficking in people. At the closing of the III International Culture and Development Congress in the capital, Castro reacted with indignation to the accusations in this document, which states that "minors in the Caribbean country are victims of tourist industry sexual exploitation." (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Ricardo Alarcón, President of the Cuban parliament stated that the country will overcome perils of a North American aggressions, with unity and patriotism. Alarcon explained that the improvement of Cuban society is of the foremost importance, mainly in its daily duties, avoiding indiscipline and denouncing the enemy's intention. The mission of the islands' intellectuals is to help the people to understand the great challenge the island has for long faced right from the moment it came up as a nation struggling against hegemony from the mightiest power on earth at present. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage released the report "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2002-2003", saying it covers "our work in some 92 countries -including Cuba-with especially problematic and persistent human rights violations." (June, US-Cuba Relations)

US President George W Bush reminded supporters that he supported a "free Cuba" without Fidel Castro in power, as he made his first reelection stop in Florida, a key state in the 2004 contest. For his Little Havana audience, the president sprinkled in a few phrases in Spanish and denounced Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. "Under the current leadership in Cuba, there will never be freedom," Mr. Bush said, drawing a standing ovation. "We believe freedom is the future of every country. We believe in a free Cuba." He criticized Castro again at a \$2,000-a-plate roast beef luncheon at a Miami airport hotel where the president banked \$1.8 million, according to Bush-Cheney campaign spokeswoman Nicolle Devenish. She said Mr. Bush would collect \$1.2 million more at an evening fund-raiser in Tampa. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

In Havana, this year's US-sponsored Fourth of July celebration was different: Gone were dozens of Cuban artists, musicians and writers. A government crackdown -- in which 75 dissidents, journalists, librarians and others were jailed -- scared many of their compatriots off. Others weren't invited because the Americans knew that the political climate has changed and that many Cubans wouldn't attend no matter

how many M&Ms and radios were passed out. Rubbing elbows with US diplomats -- always a hazardous proposition for Cubans -- is more perilous than ever. "It's like poison," said Felix Bonne, a Cuban dissident who attended the traditional festivities. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba marked US Independence Day this 4th of July with a cultural gala concert at one of Havana's main theaters. The function was attended by the Cuban minister of Culture, writer Abel Prieto, as well as by numerous other intellectuals and artists. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs has released a new fact sheet on political prisoners in Cuba. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro drew 10,000 people to a Paraguayan stadium for a speech blasting the United States. Castro attended the inauguration of Paraguayan President Nicanor Duarte and made his speech just before he was to return to Cuba. Castro, who turned 77, at times looked weary and seemed to struggle for words as he attacked US government policies and sought South American support for his communist state. Turning to the crowd, Castro likened the United States to the "Rome of antiquity" and outlined arguments defending his communist state. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

During an interview conducted by Enrique Gratas of TV Network Univisión, US Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said it is time for Fidel Castro to leave Cuba's leadership. "It's time for him to go. It's his 77th birthday and I was hoping, but I knew better, that perhaps he would announce his retirement." Powell added that it's not for the US to install democracy in Cuba: "It is for the Cuban people, as they have increasingly demonstrated to their leaders, who want a better life. There is now an opposition movement in Cuba. People are signing petitions saying give us a chance to honestly determine who should be leading this country". (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States said it will make it harder for Cuban diplomats in Washington to buy or sell cars, retaliating against them because Cuba imposes similar restrictions on US diplomats in Havana. The State Department said it would bar staff of the Cuban Interests Section at the Swiss Embassy in Washington and their families from buying cars. They would, however, be allowed to keep cars they already own, import cars from an overseas vendor and buy vehicles from other diplomats or embassies. In a notice published in the US Federal Register, the State Department said the Cuban diplomats may also rent cars from rental companies for up to 30 days, effectively depriving them of the lower rates that might come from long-term leases. "The primary effect of these terms and conditions (...) is to restrict the ability of the Cuban Interests Section and its personnel to purchase, lease, or sell any vehicle in the United States," the notice said. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

United States will work to obtain Cuba's condemnation by Latin American governments, a top US State Department official said. During a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on US policy toward Cuba, Assistant Secretary of State, Roger Noriega, said that Latin American support to Washington on Cuba's condemnation was his "deepest desire" and "personal mission". (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The US State Department has denied permission for the head of Cuba's Interests Section in Washington D.C. to attend a conference in Alabama on ties between Mobile and Havana. According to published reports, Rodriguez and other Cuban officials were informed that they would no longer be able to travel beyond the metropolitan areas of Washington, D.C., where the Cuban Interests Section is housed and New York, where Cuba's United Nations mission is based. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States is working with its neighbours to promote democracy in Cuba, said Roger Noriega to Congress. "Promoting democracy in Venezuela, Haiti and Cuba is a task we share with all our neighbours," he said to the International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro has praised California Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger's muscles, but wonders how much brain power the former Mr. Universe has. "To judge from the photographs, he has a lot of muscle, but they have not tested him to see how much muscle he has in the brain," the bearded revolutionary said during a five-hour speech closing a Latin American social sciences conference. "He may well have more force in the arms than in the brain," Castro, said. "At least he has the merit of having done a lot of exercise," added the Cuban leader. Anti-Castro exiles in Miami have called on California's future Republican governor not to trade with the communist-run island. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Casting itself as the terminator, the United States wished Cuba's Fidel Castro "hasta la vista, baby" before a vote in the UN General Assembly on the US embargo against Havana. "Cuba's best day is when the Cuban people have terminated Castro's evil Communist dictatorial regime and said to him, 'Hasta la vista, baby,'" US representative Sichan Siv told delegates before the vote. California's Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger uttered the oft-quoted line in the film "Terminator 2: Judgment Day." Angry at the insult to Castro, Havana's Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque shot back: "It is the people of Cuba who say 'Hasta la vista' to the blockade, 'Hasta la vista' to genocide." (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Vice-president, Carlos Lage, criticized the United States for attempting to introduce a declaration against Cuba at the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government. Lage, who arrived in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in Cuba in place of President Fidel Castro, said that is a "common and ordinary" practice by Washington. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's First Deputy Foreign Minister Fernando Ramirez said at the Russian University of Foreign Policy (MGIMO) that the policy of Cuba's political isolation had ended in fiasco. He said that Cuba was maintaining diplomatic and consular ties with 182 countries. The country is actively developing economic ties, 355 contracts involving foreign capital have been signed. "At the same time, the US administration is persecuting any attempts to establish cooperation with Cuba," the Cuban deputy foreign minister went on to say. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban purchases from the United States since the end of 2001 "have a political content" and do not pose a risk to commercial relations with other countries, said Cuban vice Foreign Minister Angel Dalmau. "Every purchase we make from the United States not only saves us money, but has a higher political value" in the efforts to "defeat the US embargo," added Dalmau. (El Nuevo Herald, 22/11/03) Noviembre 24: The Cuban government has released an Official Note refuting the statements made by vice minister of Foreign Affairs Angel Dalmau on US sales to Cuba. The note says that establishing mutually convenient, economic, scientific and cultural relations with the US has been the objective of Cuban policy, always based on respect for independence and sovereignty. In the communiqué Havana indicated that purchasing food in the US goes beyond the lifting of the over four-decade blockade imposed on the Caribbean island. Such trade operations began two years ago after Cuba suffered great losses caused by Hurricane Michele, under the condition that Havana pay in cash and the prohibition of using its merchant fleet for shipments. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States is demanding that Cuba immediately release a dissident who was arrested last year for trying to organize an event marking Human Rights Day. The State Department made the demand as it noted the anniversary of Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet's arrest on December 6, 2002. He and nine other opposition activists were arrested at the same time. (December, Us-Cuba Relations)

The United States unveiled its annual report on International Religious Freedom, indicating that the six most-grievous offenders were Myanmar, China, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam and Cuba. The six countries were categorized as totalitarian or authoritarian regimes, which see religions as "enemies of the state." (December, US-Cuba Relations)

ELECTORAL CANDIDATES' PERSPECTIVES

Democratic presidential hopeful Joe Lieberman criticized the Bush administration for returning for prosecution a dozen Cubans accused of hijacking a boat in an attempt to reach Florida. "When they were sent back to Cuba, that was a setback for America's best values," Lieberman said during a South Florida campaign swing. "For the US government to negotiate a jail sentence for these people with an oppressive regime, that we know do not have fair trials, is simply outrageous. No due process. No fair trials." (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Democratic presidential contender Howard Dean is proposing to move toward a goal of opening trade with Cuba, while leaving in place sanctions for human rights violations. Dean has run an aggressive grass-roots campaign for Iowa's leadoff precinct caucuses, and he is seeking to build on that effort by linking his rural ties in Vermont to Iowa's heavily agricultural base. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

On his first full day as a candidate for president, retired General Wesley K. Clark explained that he just wants to "listen to people" before saying where he stands on topics such as the trade embargo with Cuba, the economy and immigration policies. On the trade embargo with Cuba, Clark said he understood both positions and said "there are a lot of complexities there." But the former chief of the US Southern Command, who oversaw military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean, said he is inclined to favor engagement as a means to democratization. "If you look at the way we operated in Eastern Europe, we were effective in taking down communism because there was no embargo," he said. "The Iron Curtain was something they built, not something we imposed". (September, US-Cuba Relations)

During the second annual dinner and reception offered by Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP), before approximately 150 people gathered in Miami, Florida, Democratic candidate Dennis Kucinich, said "If elected president I would bring down the failed 'blockade' against Cuba". The crowd reacted with a standing and rousing ovation. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

At a forum for Democratic presidential candidates, retired Army General Wesley Clark said he would lift the trade embargo that was imposed against Fidel Castro's regime. In response to a question on Cuba, Clark said "When you isolate a country, you strengthen the dictator in it." (November, US-Cuba Relations)

In a wide-ranging luncheon address to the Capital Tiger Bay Club Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean said that he favors lifting the travel embargo on Cuba - but not right now. Reporters asked Dean after his speech about relations with Fidel Castro, who is hated by thousands of Cuban-American exiles in Miami-Dade County. "I was originally in favor of that," Dean said of easing relations with Havana. "The only problem is, it's an inopportune time. You can't appear to reward Castro for imprisoning dissidents, which is what he's just done." (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Democrat Presidential contender, Dennis Kucinich, defined the United States' policy against Cuba as "a failure" in reference to the decision by the US Congress to maintain restrictions on North Americans traveling to the island. The Congressional Representative for the State of Ohio said that the aggressive and hostile rhetoric used in relation to Cuba must stop, suggesting that recent political decisions taken in the US Congress were designed to placate anti-Cuban sectors in Miami. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

As his leading rivals for president hone positions on Cuba policy that appease South Florida's powerful exile bloc, retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark is gaining notice for a divergent approach: a willingness to discuss easing the decades-long trade embargo against the island and its dictator. Clark stops short of saying he would lift sanctions, but his nuanced responses to reporters, exile leaders and even a questioner at a nationally televised debate last month in Boston leave little doubt that a Clark administration could well do more than any other in 40 years to build ties with Fidel Castro's government. "In general embargoes normally, usually, they don't work, and they certainly haven't worked in the case of Cuba as far as ending the Castro regime," Clark told reporters during a visit to South Florida. "We don't want to give a gift to

Fidel Castro. But we do want to help the Cuban people achieve the same rights as everybody else in this hemisphere." (December, US-Cuba Relations)

EMBARGO, TRAVEL BAN, RADIO AND TV TRANSMISSIONS

Actions in Congress

Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, unhappy about lax enforcement of some parts of the US embargo on Cuba -- including provisions meant to restrict travel to this country by the island's government officials -- sent the White House a letter asking that more pressure be put on Fidel Castro. Among other things, Ros-Lehtinen, a reliable supporter of President Bush, also is unhappy about a proposed cut in funding for organizations that work with independent groups in Cuba to foster democratic change and the continuation of President Clinton's wet foot/dry foot policy, which usually allows Cuban migrants who reach shore to stay in the United States while typically sending back those interdicted at sea. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Senate Republicans, flexing their new political muscle on Capitol Hill, have quietly killed language in a sweeping spending bill that would have effectively ended the ban on American travel to Cuba. The full House and the Senate Appropriations Committee voted last year to stop funding enforcement of the 40-year-old ban, a move that would have permitted Americans to travel freely to the communist state. But the Senate never finished its 2003 spending bills, and when senators wrapped all the unfinished appropriations measures into an omnibus package the language lifting the travel ban had been removed, according to the offices of Senator Byron Dorgan, Democrat of North Dakota, and several other lawmakers who scanned the bill. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The Senate Government and Veteran's Affairs Committee unanimously approved a resolution in favor of lifting the US embargo on Cuba. It will now go to the full Senate for a vote. The resolution urges the President and Congress to lift the embargo on the Communist nation. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The White House has warned Congress that it may veto a massive \$390 billion spending bill if it includes language that weakens the embargo of the island. President Bush considers it "vitally important" to maintain the 4-decade-old embargo of Cuba, Office of Management and Budget chief Mitchell E. Daniels told four key legislators in a letter. Two senators -- Democrat Max Baucus of Montana and Republican Chuck Hagel of Nebraska -- circulated a proposal to lift the trade embargo entirely. "Trading with and traveling to Cuba does not represent an endorsement of the Castro regime," the senators said in a letter seeking support from colleagues. "To the contrary, it helps ensure that children in Cuba will be afforded more opportunity than their parents to have lives that are more full, free and just by opening Cuban society to democratic ideals." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The White House succeeded in stripping language to weaken the US embargo of Cuba from a massive spending bill making its final passage through Congress, a Miami legislator said. Republican Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart credited President Bush and his threat to veto the entire \$397 billion spending bill if legislators dismantled any part of the four-decade-old embargo. In a letter to four key legislators, White House Budget Director Mitchell Daniels warned that Bush considers the embargo of Cuba "vitally important" and might veto any bill that tinkered with efforts to lessen economic sanctions of the Fidel Castro regime. Opponents of the embargo on Capitol Hill, whose ranks are growing, have won majority votes for three consecutive years to lift a ban on most U.S. travel to Cuba -- but the Republican House leadership has just as consistently derailed the proposals. Senator Byron Dorgan, a North Dakota Democrat, had included a provision in the Senate version of the spending bill that would have relaxed restrictions prohibiting most US citizens from travel to Cuba. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Ten US senators from both sides of the aisle formed an informal group to fight the US trade embargo on Cuba, even as Fidel Castro ordered the arrest of dozens of dissidents at home. "The sanction policy of the United States has been ineffective since it was adopted in 1962," the legislators said in a letter to the Senate leadership. The group, which calls itself the Cuba Working Group, is similar to a group in the House, as

supporters and foes of the embargo geared up for a legislative battle over trade and travel sanctions against Castro's government. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

US Representative Bill Delahunt, Democrat of Massachusetts, criticized the trials and lengthy jail terms handed out to the dissidents, some of whom he had visited only a few weeks ago. But he said the restrictions on exchanges were a setback and ought to be reconsidered. "There is a parallel here between this administration and the Castro government," he said. "They are both going backward." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Members of Congress have renewed criticism of the Cuban government in the wake of a recent crackdown on dissidents in that country. Lawmakers on the House of Representatives International Relations committee gathered in an unusual hearing during a congressional recess to examine recent developments. Congressman Chris Smith, a New Jersey Republican, chaired the hearing, and set the tone when he condemned the recent arrests and imprisonment of dozens of dissidents in Cuba. The Cuban government's recent crackdown on dissidents is indicative of its failure, and the United States must continue to support Cuban citizens in their efforts toward democracy and a better life, says Lorne Craner, assistant secretary of state for democracy, human rights and labor. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

A bipartisan group of eight senators presented a bill that would open up Cuba to US tourism and allow American citizens to spend dollars freely there. "If we allow more and free travel to Cuba, if we increase trade and dialogue, we take away Castro's ability to blame the hardships of the Cuban people on the United States," Senator Michael B. Enzi, a Wyoming Republican, told his colleagues. Joining Enzi in co-sponsoring the bill were fellow Republicans Lincoln Chafee of Rhode Island and Larry Craig of Idaho, and Democrats Max Baucus of Montana, Byron Dorgan of North Dakota, Mark Dayton of Minnesota, Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico and Tim Johnson of South Dakota. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The Senate Appropriations Committee voted to make it easier for US businesses and farm groups to visit Cuba and sell food, other farm products and medicine there. Despite President Bush 's opposition to any warming of relations with Fidel Castro 's government, the Senate panel included language in a \$17 billion spending bill that would allow visitors to bypass a Treasury Department licensing restriction. Farm state lawmakers were unopposed in tacking the provision by Senator Byron Dorgan, Democrat-North Dakota, onto a bill funding the Agriculture Department and Food and Drug Administration next year. A Senate panel's action sets up a confrontation with the House, where the chairman of its appropriations committee, Representative Bill Young, Republican-Florida, opposes any further lessening of sanctions against Castro's government. John Scofield, a spokesman for the House Appropriations Committee, said the measure invites a presidential veto. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

East Valley Congressman Jeff Flake is renewing his efforts to get Cuban trade and travel bans lifted. The Republican is offering an amendment to a federal spending bill that would lift the ban on Americans traveling to Cuba. Flake argues the best way to bring democracy and market economics to Cuba and lift the authoritarian rule of Fidel Castro is to open the island up to US tourism and trade. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Senators were divided along partisan lines over the issue of trade with Cuba. Democrats argued for easing the US trade and travel embargos against communist dictator Fidel Castro's Cuba while Republicans, backed up by Bush administration officials, remained committed to the restrictions. In his opening statement at the hearing, Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley (Republican-Iowa) acknowledged the pressure from some of his colleagues to change current policy. "They point out that, despite four decades of sanctions against his government, Castro remains in power," Grassley said. "They also contend that US farmers and businesses are losing trade opportunities in Cuba to their counterparts in other countries." But Grassley also explained that other lawmakers "believe that now is not the proper time to change US trade policies," given that Castro's record on human rights has "become even more egregious during the past year" and that "lifting trade restrictions will in effect reward Castro for his actions." (September, US-Cuba Relations)

President Bush renewed a warning to Congress that he will veto any legislation that weakens economic sanctions against Cuba. The House is preparing to vote on an amendment to a spending bill for the Treasury and Transportation departments that would lift the ban on travel to Cuba. Another amendment would ease restrictions on remittances sent to Cubans. "It is essential to maintain sanctions and travel restrictions to deny economic resources to the brutal Castro regime," the White House budget office said in its written statement. "Lifting the sanctions now, or limiting our ability to enforce them, would provide a helping hand to a desperate and repressive regime at the expense of the Cuban people." The House has voted to lift the travel ban twice, and in recent years momentum has built in Congress to ease the embargo. But Republican leaders, especially in the House, have been able to remove most anti-embargo provisions from the final version of bills. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

House lawmakers voted to ease restrictions on traveling to the island and sending money to Cuban households. Representative Jeff Flake (Republican-Arizona) introduced an amendment to the Treasury Appropriations Bill for Year 2004 that would end funding for enforcing the travel ban to Cuba. The House also voted 222-196, for an amendment by Representative Bill Delahunt (Democrat-Massachusetts) to lift the cap on money remittances that may be sent by Americans with family members in Cuba. Also, Jim Davis (Democrat-Florida), a representative from Tampa, a city with deep historical ties with Cuba, added an amendment to roll back regulations imposed by the Administration preventing Americans from engaging in educational and cultural trips to Cuba - the amendment passed 246-173. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Senator Max Baucus testifying at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on US policy toward Cuba, stressed the idea that the embargo has been in place for more than four decades, "and it has not worked". He added that, "many dissidents were reportedly arrested because the Cuban government was concerned about their meetings with Americans". "If the Cuban government fears contact between the American and Cuban people, the answer is to send more Americans, not fewer", Baucus remarked. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Richard Lugar, Republican-Indiana, criticized US policy toward Cuba during a hearing, saying the 43-year-old trade embargo on the communist island nation "has not worked." Lugar, who has usually maintained a low profile on Cuban policy, also signaled for the first time that he could support ending the travel ban "at an appropriate time." (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's military would benefit greatly from an easing of US travel restrictions against the country because it controls 65 percent of Cuba's hotel rooms and would use the proceeds to suppress dissent, a State Department official said. Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega defended the restrictions in the face of criticism from members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who said the policy is not working. Noriega said the 70 percent of Cuba's tourist hotels are in isolated enclaves so that they are invisible to ordinary Cubans who, in any case, are not authorized to patronize the hotels. He cautioned against any easing of the restrictions. "We would advance none of our goals by making concessions to a decrepit dictatorship," he said. Noriega also remarked that President Bush "will veto any measure to change the current restrictions." (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The Senate joined the House of Representatives in striking at the four-decade-old policy of making travel to Cuba a criminal act, putting Congress on a collision course with Bush administration efforts to step up enforcement of travel restrictions. "The travel ban does nothing to hurt Fidel Castro," said Senator Byron Dorgan (Democrat- North Dakota). "It only harms Americans." He was co-sponsor of the measure, passed 59-36, that bars use of government money to enforce current travel restrictions. The votes in the two Republican-controlled chambers came despite a White House warning that President George W. Bush would be advised to veto the bill if it includes the Cuba provision. The Cuba vote did not reach the two-thirds margin needed to overturn a presidential veto. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Legislation that would relax the ban on travel to Cuba is headed for failure even though it passed both the House and Senate. Lawmakers said that Republican leaders probably would strip the provision from a transportation funding bill during House and Senate negotiations so President Bush would not have to veto an important appropriations bill. Senator Richard Shelby, Republican-Alabama, a key negotiator who will help craft the final bill, wants the travel ban enforced and said, "Everyone is very aware of the veto threat." While declining to admit defeat, Senator Max Baucus, Democrat-Montana, said "A veto would create too much of a firestorm. They (Republican leaders) will find some other way to finesse it." The widely expected result is that when the House and Senate conferees meet to iron out differences in the two transportation bills, the Cuba provision will be quietly dropped or changed to render it impossible to enact. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 13-5 in favor of legislation to end the Cuba travel ban first imposed by President Kennedy in 1963. The legislation, sponsored by a bipartisan group headed by Senator Mike Enzi, Republican - Wyoming, would bar the president from restricting travel to Cuba, except when the two countries are at war. Enzi also joined Senator Max Baucus, Democrat -Montana, and others in urging House and Senate leaders to retain language easing the travel ban that both chambers included in a \$90 billion bill to fund Transportation and Treasury department programs in the 2004 budget year. The White House has threatened a presidential veto if the spending bill includes the Cuba language, giving those negotiating a compromise the incentive to remove the provision before it goes back to the House and Senate for a final vote. But Enzi and Baucus, joined by Senators. Larry Craig, Republican - Idaho, and Christopher Dodd, Democrat - Connecticut, said removing the provision would be a direct act against the will of Congress and a majority of Americans. Congressional leaders will also have to decide how to deal with Cuba language included in a \$17 billion agriculture and food spending bill being debated by the Senate. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Lawmakers from the House and Senate rejected an attempt by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay to assist rum manufacturer Bacardi-Martini Inc. by attaching a measure to an annual defense authorization bill. The Texas Republican tried to slip the provision into the huge defense legislation without going through the usual process of public hearings. But after a series of news reports stirred controversy, Representative Duncan Hunter, a California Republican who leads the House Armed Services Committee, announced that the Bacardi amendment would not be allowed into the bill that is being finalized in a House-Senate conference. DeLay's measure, a revision to an obscure trademark law, is intended to award the Bermuda-based Bacardi the rights to a Cuban rum label "Havana Club." Pernod-Ricard, a French company, sells rum under that name in partnership with the Cuban government. The two rum makers have been involved in a long-standing legal fight over the label. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Senator Hillary Clinton defended her vote in favor of allowing Americans to visit Cuba, claiming that tourists could "rebuke" the Castro regime on vacations to the communist island. "This was an embargo on American travel to Cuba," she said at an afternoon news conference in response to a question from The New York Sun. "It made absolutely no sense to me (...) We certainly should allow a free flow of people to Cuba." She said American visitors to Cuba could "support dissidents" and "be there as a rebuke to the Castro regime." (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Congressional bargainers dropped efforts to end the government's ban on travel by most Americans to Cuba, awarding a victory to President Bush. Though the House and Senate had each approved provisions earlier this year ending the travel restrictions, negotiators from the two Republican-led chambers omitted that language from a compromise spending bill. There's no alternative other than dropping the provision" from the final bill, argued Senator Richard Shelby, Republican-Alabama, a chief author of the final bill. Senator Byron Dorgan, Democrat-North Dakota, an advocate of lifting the ban, tried persuading lawmakers to settle for a narrower provision allowing travel to the communist-run country by farm groups promoting sales of agricultural products. But it died when House bargainers refused by voice vote to accept it. American farmers can sell to Cuba if they are paid with cash. (November, Us-Cuba Relations)

Two US lawmakers are proposing a legislation that would penalize US companies signing agreements with Cuba to lobby against the trade embargo by placing a 100 percent tax on their profits from any Cuba deal.

The legislation is being sponsored by democrat representatives Peter Deutsch (Florida) and Robert Menéndez (New Jersey), who plan to take it on the floor during the next congressional period starting in January. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Government

Havana warned US officials that the punitive measures they are mulling, including ending direct charter flights between the United States and Cuba, would cause more problems for Washington than Havana. In a statement, the government of Fidel Castro said "the difficulties of prohibiting payments and flights to Cuba, which will affect an incalculable number of people in Cuba as well as in the United States, will fall on the government of that country (the United States)." "The punished will be many families (...) and, what is worse, many elderly people who depend on these remittances," said the statement, published on the front page of the Communist Party daily newspaper Granma. Cuba also warned the Bush administration that it would not be responsible if the US proposal to suspend family remittances and direct charter flights between the two countries sparks illegal mass migrations. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's communist regime again rails against the Bush administration, accusing it of "shamelessly violating" international regulations by using a high-tech aircraft to broadcast to the island. An editorial appearing on the front-page of this morning's Granma newspaper - entitled "Gracias, Führer" -- takes aim at greetings to the Cuban people by US President George W. Bush. Calling the greeting yet another gross provocation, the editorial notes that Washington simultaneously launched four new frequencies of the radio station Radio Martí -- as well as what is called "a special surprise" with the inauguration of a television signal that broadcast from 6 until 8 p.m. The editorial said that, unfortunately for Washington and Miami, the signal was poor and very few people were able to watch it. The newspaper went on to cite what it mockingly called "a very sweet and moving" May 20 message in Spanish by President George W. Bush on the occasion of the 101st anniversary of the proclamation of the Cuban Republic, an event that is not commemorated in Fidel Castro's Cuba. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro predicted that new US government attempts to use a satellite to broadcast TV Martí signals to the island would fail. "I read something about that, and I was laughing," Castro said, answering questions from reporters at a book presentation by visiting Paraguayan writer Augusto Roa Bastos. "Up to now, experience has shown that it has gone badly," Castro said of earlier efforts to thwart the Cuban government's jamming of TV Martí's signal. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's foreign minister said he thinks a majority of US citizens want better relations with his island, including free travel and commerce, but that the Bush administration is manipulated by hardline anti-Castro exiles. Many sectors of US public opinion "are in favor of easing restrictions, and many US senators and representatives "favor changes in the current policy toward Cuba," Felipe Perez Roque said on Venezuelan state television in the course of a working visit. Despite that sentiment, Washington "recently announced a revision of its Cuba policy that bows to pressure from extremist, hardline anti-Castro exiles in the Miami community and from far-right groups," the minister added. "Cuban hardliners do not represent the opinion of the majority of Cubans living in the United States, who do favor change and a normalization of US-Cuban relations," Perez Roque said. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba charged that the Bush administration was tightening a US embargo on the island despite growing domestic and international opposition, as it launched an annual drive to have the United Nations condemn the policy. "The economic, financial and commercial blockade the United States has maintained against Cuba for more than four decades has not only been scrupulously applied, but strengthened over the last two years," Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said at a Havana news conference. For the last 11 years the UN General Assembly has overwhelmingly called for the United States to lift the embargo, last year by a vote of 173-3 with four abstentions. Pérez said he expected similar results this year when the UN debates and votes on the embargo in November. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, delivered a speech against the US embargo on Cuba at the United Nations. The embargo has cost Cuba \$72 billion setting back its development, affecting

education, trade, industry, business transactions and its ability to receive international assistance, the minister said. Pérez Roque is in New York for the annual ministerial session of the UN General Assembly. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's foreign minister made an impassioned appeal for the lifting of the trade embargo against his country, saying the blockade has cost the Caribbean nation \$72 billion in the last 42 years. In a 75-minute speech at a Harlem church, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said the Cuban people do not hold any hatred against the American people. He stressed that Cuba was against terrorism and has been combating drug trafficking, but despite overtures the Americans have refused to lift the embargo. "The blockade is a major obstacle to our development. (It) prevents and curtails our development," Perez Roque told a sympathetic audience of more than 800 people, many of whom repeatedly interrupted with chants of "Viva Cuba." [[Cuba's Report to the UN Secretary General](#)] (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Branding Fidel Castro a tyrant, White House national security adviser Condoleezza Rice called for renewed international pressure against the Cuban leader. Speaking days after President Bush said he would begin tight enforcement of a ban on travel by US citizens to Cuba, Rice said Castro's crackdown on dissidents has brought him worldwide condemnation. "This needs to be an international effort," she told a meeting of the Inter American Press Association in Chicago. "It is unacceptable that Cuba remain in the state that it does in this hemisphere at a time when democracy and freedom and prosperity are within grasp (...) It should not be that the Cuban people are forgotten." (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's government accused the Bush administration of pandering to Cuban-American voters and blasted new initiatives aimed at spurring a post-Castro transition as little more than political schemes to secure a Florida election victory. "This is how the White House repays this [Cuban American] mafia for the fraud and scandalous tricks of the 2000 presidential elections," read a Foreign Ministry statement published in Cuba's government-run daily. "We would not be surprised if new aggressions are sown against our country as we approach November 2004." Fidel Castro's government retorted: "The transition dreamed of by Bush and his acolytes in the Miami mafia will never occur in Cuba. Our country is in transition, yes, but it is a transition toward more revolution, toward a more just society." (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque met with residents of the Los Sitios neighbourhood in Central Havana to talk about the enormous losses caused by the 40-year United States embargo of the island. Cuban official press said that in the last days over 170 meetings on the US embargo, like the one at Los Sitios, have taken place Havana. (October, Domestic Affairs)

Cuban officials said the US Senate vote on easing the ban on travel to Cuba confirmed that most Americans want to improve relations with Havana, but acknowledged the initiative may be blocked short of becoming law. "It's new proof that both [Congress] chambers are in favor of a political change, just like the majority of North American society," Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said. But Roque acknowledged that President Bush has threatened to veto the measure if it is approved by the full Congress. "I don't know what new trick President Bush will use to avoid [change]," Roque said. "I guess he could veto, ignoring the public opinion of his country to favor groups from the small and corrupt minority in Miami." National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón said that while the measure approved by the Senate likely will not survive, "either way, events like this (...) [are] indicative of the will of the majority of North American legislators in the case of Cuba." Alarcón added that Bush was being pressured "from the bottom" by the growing demands for an end to Washington's "hostile and war-like politics" toward Cuba. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

A number of Cuban ecumenical leaders met at a Baptist Church in the Havana suburb of Marianao with Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón and other high-ranking government and religious leaders. They spoke with Deputy Foreign Minister Fernando Remírez de Estenoz; Caridad Diego, head of the Office of Religious Affairs of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba; and Reinerio Arce, president of the Cuban Council of Churches. The Reverend Raúl Suárez, pastor of the Ebenezer Baptist

Church in Marianao, said that the US blockade does not make to political, social or economic sense - and is against Biblical, ethical and theological reason. (October, Domestic Affairs)

The Cuban authorities said that if Washington lifts its embargo on the island, it would become an important market for agricultural products from the United States, particularly rice. With the end of the embargo, Cuba would increase its rice imports from the United States to over 300,000 tons every year, Pedro Alvarez, director of Cuban state-run company Alimport said. Alvarez made the remarks at a press conference with US rice producers participating in the 21st International Fair of Havana. He revealed that over the last two years, business between both sides totaled 554 million US dollars and the amount is expected to increase to over 620 million dollars this year. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba accused the Republican leaders in the US Congress and other anti-Cuban sectors in that country of having used anti-democratic methods to eliminate an amendment that would soften restrictions on US citizens traveling to Cuba. A statement by the Cuban Foreign Ministry (MINREX) states that this action once again shows that US policy on Cuba is a total failure and must change because it does not represent the real and legitimate interests of the US people. (November, Us-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon denounced that the US blockades his country not only in trade and finance, but also in the field of information. Alarcon, speaking about World Summit about the Information Society (WSIS) beginning in Geneva, discussed the achievements of his country in information technology and communication, despite Washington's unilateral sanctions. Alarcon recalled the harassment, hostility, and constant pressure his country has suffered for over 40 years from the blockade imposed by the most powerful country in the world, and pointed out that the Island does not have the means to counteract the disinformation campaigns against it. (December, Us-Cuba Relations)

In a scathing attack on the US trade embargo against his country, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque has described the measure "as useless as it is harmful" to the US economy. Speaking to members of the Cuban Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, Perez Roque hailed last month's UN resolution supported by 179 countries which condemned the embargo imposed more than 40 years ago. "If we were speaking in baseball terms, we would say this was a perfect game and it will be very difficult to equal this in the future," Perez Roque said. Another sign that the sanctions were failing was the fact that American businessmen were now clamoring for them to end, the minister said, noting that Cuba was now buying some US food products authorized by Washington. "We don't believe that the embargo will end tomorrow, but it is clear that the American people, as well as some elements of the government, see it as useless as it is harmful to the US economy", Perez Roque told the legislators in his annual report on foreign affairs. (December, Us-Cuba Relations)

Exile Community

[See also, Exile Community/ US Policy Towards Cuba]

A bipartisan advisory group, which includes voices from prominent Miami Cuban Americans, issued a report calling for the Bush Administration, Congress and the Cuban government to begin a 'negotiated normalization' process and recommended several specific steps the US itself should initiate immediately, including allowing more travel and humanitarian sales. "Despite the diverse perspectives of our members, we agree that principled engagement should replace isolation as the core of US policy toward Cuba," former US Ambassador to Mexico James R. Jones, who chaired the Cuba Policy Advisory Group under the auspices of the Center for National Policy in Washington, said. "Our national interest and security require we begin a dialogue with Cuba." (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Leading Cuban-American organizations in southern Florida are endorsing proposed legislation in the US Congress, lifting restrictions on travel to Cuba by US citizens. The draft bill, "The Freedom to Travel Act, S. 950," was introduced in the Senate by the Cuba Working Group. According to Alfredo Durán, Secretary of the Cuban Committee for Democracy, lifting the travel ban "is welcomed by the majority of Cuban-Americans." He said that recent polls of Cuban-Americans show increasing support for ending all restrictions imposed on US citizens to travel to the island. Silvia Wilhelm of Puentes Cubanos said: "Now,

more than ever, we must build bridges of support with the Cuban people, and lifting the travel restrictions will be a major step forward to accomplish such a difficult but necessary task." For his part, Delvis Fernández, President of the Cuban-American Alliance Educational Fund, stated that "respectful engagement, commerce and freedom to travel will best serve the interests of both nations." (May, Exile Community)

Miami-based Cuban exile groups welcomed EU sanctions against Havana. Cuban Liberty Council director Ninaska Perez told EFE she was pleased with the "initiative that confirms the only possible attitude towards dictators such as Fidel Castro." Mariela Ferreti, spokeswoman for the Cuban American National Foundation, told EFE that the sanctions leveled further encourage the island's internal opposition. (June, Exile Community)US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban American National Foundation applauded President George W. Bush's veto threat to potential amendments to the Transportation/Treasury bill. "We are very pleased with the President's explicit veto threat on these amendments. It sends a very strong message to the Congress and even more importantly, to the people of Cuba, that the United States will not support the Castro regime by providing it with an unearned windfall of financial support," said Jorge Mas Santos, chairman of the Cuban American National Foundation. (September, Exile Community)

Many Cuban Americans viewed the relaxing of the travel regulations as a goodwill gesture from Cuba at a time when Washington and Havana have traded barbs, accusing each other's diplomats of everything from spying to destabilizing Castro's government. "It's a first step to normalizing relations with the Cuban-American community," said Alfredo Duran, secretary of the Cuban Committee for Democracy and a member of the CIA-trained Bay of Pigs Brigade 2506. The Cuban government is trying "to show they are becoming more soft, and one of the ways they can show that not only to the international community but also the Cuban-American community is by dropping the visa requirement," Duran said. Opposition leader Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo said he hoped the next step will be allowing Cubans to leave the island freely without government permission. Cuba is one of the few countries requiring an exit permit for its citizens. (September, Exile Community)

The Cuban American National Foundation applauded President Bush's remarks at a Rose Garden ceremony where he articulated a tougher-line policy towards Cuba's communist regime. "Today's announcement is a definite step in the right direction; it demonstrates that the President is moving Cuba's freedom to a top spot on his foreign policy agenda, that he is taking an interested and active role in developing a Cuba policy that will hasten democratic change on the island. We are very encouraged that he's made clear that the time for change in Cuba is now, and that there is no better ally of Cuban freedom than the United States of America," said Jorge Mas Santos, Chairman of the Cuban American National Foundation. (October, Exile Community)

The dominant sector of Miami's Cuban exile community, a much-courted bloc of votes in next year's elections, blasted moves by Congress to lift travel restrictions to the communist-ruled island and urged a presidential veto. The Cuban American National Foundation, or CANF, which opposes lifting any of the US-imposed sanctions on Fidel Castro's government, described the rationale for adopting the amendment as "immoral." "For as long as there is no freedom for the Cubans themselves in Cuba, including the freedom to travel within their own country, it is immoral to even raise the possibility of allowing US citizens to travel there freely," CANF human rights director Omar López Montenegro told the press. (October, Exile Community)

As anti-Castro groups wait for the presidential veto, others who favor easing the restrictions on travel to Cuba hailed the Senate vote. "We congratulate the Senate for voting like that with the support of a substantial majority. We believe it is one more step toward reconciliation, toward change in Cuba," Cuban Committee for Democracy chairman Ricardo González told the press. Lifting the restrictions will draw more tourists to Cuba, he said, and this will help the people on the island. "Those who maintain that the money will end up in Castro's pockets don't know what they are talking about," González said. (October, Exile Community)

A poll conducted for The Miami Herald and the St. Petersburg Times found that Florida voters, like those nationwide, overwhelmingly favor lifting the ban on travel to Cuba. The poll done by Democratic pollster Rob Schroth and Republican pollster Kellyanne Conway, shows that only Hispanics are opposed to easing restrictions -- by 55-43 percent. Overall, respondents said they support allowing US citizens to legally travel to Cuba by 64-26 percent. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

United Nations

Cuba's foreign minister made an impassioned appeal for the lifting of the trade embargo against his country, saying the blockade has cost the Caribbean nation \$72 billion in the last 42 years. In a 75-minute speech at a Harlem church, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said the Cuban people do not hold any hatred against the American people. He stressed that Cuba was against terrorism and has been combating drug trafficking, but despite overtures the Americans have refused to lift the embargo. "The blockade is a major obstacle to our development. (It) prevents and curtails our development," Perez Roque told a sympathetic audience of more than 800 people, many of whom repeatedly interrupted with chants of "Viva Cuba." (September, US-Cuba Relations)

For the 12th straight year, the UN General Assembly voted overwhelmingly to end Washington's four-decade old economic embargo against Cuba, which Havana has called tantamount to genocide. The annual roasting of the United States by friends and adversaries alike was approved by a record vote of 179 to 3 with two abstentions. Opposing the resolution were the United States, Israel and the Marshall Islands: Morocco and Micronesia abstained. Only seven countries did not participate in the voting: El Salvador, Nicaragua, Kuwait, Palau, Uzbekistan, Iraq, and Liberia. (November, Foreign Affairs)

United Nations Secretary General, Kofi Annan, asked the United States to lift the economic embargo which it has imposed on Cuba for more than four decades. "What has been pointed out is that sanctions should be eliminated and I personally agree with that", said Annan in Santiago de Chile, where he's on a visit as part of tour of Latin America. (November, Foreign Affairs)

Cuba denounced at the United Nations the use by the United States of unfair discriminatory and politically-encouraged actions which violate standards of diplomatic right. In her address at the plenary session of the UN General Assembly, Cuban representative Juana Helena Ramos said that the United States continues to repeatedly disregard its commitment to the UN Convention on Privileges and Immunity. Ramos referred to the arbitrary denial of a travel permit to the Head of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington Dagoberto Rodríguez who was to attend the 58th session of the UN General Assembly as part of the Cuban delegation. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

US Government

The new head of the US Interest Section in Havana, James Cason, helped set the tone for US policy toward Cuba at a time when the Bush administration and Congress are increasingly split on the fate of the four-decade-old economic sanctions and travel ban. "This is a 'Freddy the Freeloader' economy," he said of Cuba's poor credit rating, warning American business executives not to seek financing for food sales to Cuba, which are now legal on a cash-only basis. He argues an end to the travel ban will not lead to democratic reforms, but rather bolster Cuba's faltering economy with much-needed tourist dollars. "Europeans have been coming here for decades," Cason said. "So if tourists are supposed to have some impact on the political system I say where's the proof?" (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Travel companies outside the United States have been marketing trips to Cuba for Americans, saying they've found a legal loophole in the US law that curtails travel to Cuba by making it illegal to spend money there. But those companies are committing "a horrendous disservice to the American people," says Rob Nichols of the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). The OFAC is responsible for tracking the assets of terrorists and international narcotics traffickers, for investigating miscreants who market weapons of mass destruction and for pursuing Americans who vacation in Cuba. OFAC says it's simply not true that your trip to Cuba is legal if you pre-pay expenses to a third country. In

fact, since President George W. Bush took office, the agency has been cracking down on those who travel to Cuba without special permission. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Joan Slote, who went on a cycling holiday to Cuba, was fined nearly \$8,000 US for breaking the US embargo of the island. Her case is one of a growing number in which the US treasury department is actively pursuing Americans who have visited the island or who are suspected of encouraging others to do so. "The whole thing has been a nightmare," said Mrs Slote. The treasury has now indicated they may subtract the money from her social security. It is not only people who travel to Cuba who are being investigated. Tom Warner of the Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee was told by the treasury that he now faced thousands of dollars in fines because his website listed details of holidays in Cuba. They said he was seeking "to organise and promote" in breach of the embargo. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The Bush administration released new rules that will allow more Cuban Americans to visit relatives on the island, restrict the kinds of groups that can participate in exchanges and increase the flow of money to Cuba, including funds meant to reach government opponents. "Overall, these changes are expansive, these are not constrictive," said John Kavulich, president of US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council, a New York-based group that tracks the island's economy. Among the most dramatic changes in licensing rules: "Travel permits no longer will be granted to organizations that take individuals to Cuba to participate in 'educational' exchanges that are not related to academic course work. The change will require more scrutiny of license applications". (March, US-Cuba Relations)

The Bush administration is considering a series of steps to punish the Cuban government for its recent crackdown on dissidents, officials said. Among the more drastic are the possibility of cutting off cash payments to relatives in Cuba "a mainstay for millions of Cubans" or halting direct flights to the island, the officials said. President Bush is likely to make a public statement about the crackdown. At the same time, the president is expected to issue a stern warning to the Havana government that the United States will not tolerate another exodus of rafters, the officials said. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

On orders from the White House, the Pentagon deployed a special airplane this week to beam the signals of Radio and TV Martí to Cuba, using a technology that one administration official said "breached the wall" of Cuban jamming efforts. "The political green light is on" to make the controversial US-operated stations more effective at reaching Cubans, said the senior official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. An Air Force EC-130 plane conducted the transmissions between 6:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. on May 20, several officials said. It operated within US airspace, not passing into Cuban territory. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The organizer of an annual boat race to Cuba said that many of the items on the 20 competing sailboats were confiscated by federal agents when they returned to Key West. Michele Geslin, organizer for the Key West Sailing Club Conch Republic Cup, said customs officials confiscated crew members' cameras, trophies and paperwork. She said crew members also were told that they could be fined for having taken their boats to Cuba without an export license. Organizers said that has never happened before in the history of the race, which has been run for more than a decade. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

US officials have denied permission for travel to Cuba to organizers of last year's unprecedented US Food and Agribusiness Exhibition in Havana, as part of the Bush administration's reply to the dissident crackdown on the island. In a letter made public, the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, which issues the travel licenses, stated that two travel requests were denied "based on foreign policy guidance received from the Department of State." Exhibition organizers had applied for separate licenses to travel to Cuba to organize a second food and agricultural fair in Havana as well as a healthcare exhibition. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Financial conservatives are looking to discontinue a Cuban-American, PBS-style newscast beamed out of the United States, saying the Spanish-language program is broadcasting to nowhere. TV Marti, a multi-million dollar venture in Florida that takes aim at Fidel Castro, doesn't seem to be reaching the target audience it seeks - Cubans on the island nation. "I can tell you the taxpayers across the country aren't getting their money's worth," said Representative Jeff Flake, Republican-Arizona. Since its inception, US

taxpayers have spent at least \$100 million on TV Marti. It currently has 55 reporters, anchors and writers on the payroll, though it cranks out only about five hours per day of news and programming. On top of that, satellite (UHF) antennas are illegal in Cuba, and even though as many as 100,000 satellite dishes have been bought on the black market, critics say Cuban engineers have managed to use a \$100 piece of hardware to block TV Marti's signal. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Otto Reich, President Bush's chief adviser on Latin America, said that the administration will step up efforts to pressure the Fidel Castro regime, aid dissidents and hasten the political transformation of the island. The new measures will include boosting US radio and television broadcasts to Cuba and seeking international support for Cuban dissidents, Reich said in an interview between meetings in Miami with Cuban-American leaders. I know that President Bush is interested in doing more to accelerate the process of change in Cuba, and it's safe to say that in the next few weeks and months you will see some additional steps," Reich said. "It's been very difficult for this president to implement this policy for Cuba and the Western Hemisphere because up to this week he was denied the existence of his complete Latin American team. You are going to see an acceleration now that we finally have a team in place." Reich's main mission was to reassure community leaders that the Bush administration will toughen its policies rather than merely carry out those of former President Bill Clinton. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The State Department's top Latin America policy official said that President Bush will veto any bill allowing US tourists to visit Cuba because "beachgoers are not going to liberate" the communist-ruled island. Roger Noriega, the new assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs, spoke to a gathering at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. Noriega, in his speech, insisted that the United States "has not turned its back" on the challenges posed by widespread poverty, corruption and crime in many countries of Latin America. Prior to his confirmation as assistant secretary, Noriega was US ambassador to the Organization of American States. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

A senior State Department official says President Bush will veto any attempt to ease travel restrictions for Americans who want to visit Cuba. The official also says the United States will continue to support Cuban dissidents seeking democratic reform in Cuba. Roger Noriega, the US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemispheric Affairs, told Cuban exiles President Bush will not hesitate to veto any bill that crosses his desk, which would ease travel restrictions on US citizens who wish to visit Cuba. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Roger Noriega, US assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, ruled out any softening of restrictions on Cuba - despite growing pressure from US lawmakers to do so-- in a speech at a local university prior to the two-day Special Conference on Security. Noriega also called Fidel Castro's regime "a dictatorship of ruffians" and said the US would redouble efforts to cut off foreign cash flows. "Rather than make unilateral concessions that could give Castro another terrible day in power, we will concentrate our efforts on helping the Cuban people and denying the Cuban government the hard currency it needs to support its police state," according to a written version of Noriega's speech distributed by the US Embassy. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Joni Scott, US citizen, traveled to Cuba to distribute Bibles and help organize a prayer group, but the US government says she broke the law and must pay a \$10,000 fine. Scott, a teacher at a Christian school in Indianapolis, flew to Cuba through Canada with a church group in 1999. But she traveled without the permission of the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, which enforces a 40-year-old US embargo on Cuba. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

On his third trip to Cuba David Heslop was nabbed with a fine for US\$7,513.50 by US authorities. Heslop became one of hundreds of people that the US government is trying to punish for illegal travel to Cuba. Enforcement has been spotty, but now the Bush administration is cracking down. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and the Bureau of Public Affairs released a fact sheet on "the Cuban people's struggle for simple freedoms and human rights". The document states that "almost 44 years after Cuban dictator Fidel Castro assumed power, the Cuban people still dream of free elections, freedom of expression, and economic and political rights". (December, US-Cuba Relations)

- **Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba**

President Bush promised Cuban-Americans, a crucial constituency in his re-election bid, that he would tighten the pressure on the Cuban government to reform. Bush named his Cuban-born housing secretary, Mel Martinez, and Secretary of State Colin Powell to head a governmental commission "to plan for the happy day when (Fidel) Castro's regime is no more." Bush also said the United States would step up enforcement of existing restrictions against the communist government, such as a ban on tourism by Americans, and crack down on what he called the trafficking of women and children in Cuba. The United States also will launch a public outreach campaign to identify "the many routes to safe and legal entry" for Cubans who try to flee their homeland, he said. He announced plans to increase legal immigration from Cuba by issuing more visas for those who seek "safe and legal entry" and to "ensure that Cubans fleeing the dictatorship do not risk their lives at sea." President Bush didn't say how many new visas would be issued. [[Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba](#)] (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Secretary of State Colin Powell, interviewed on the Univision television network, offered his thoughts on new US initiatives to encourage a transition to democracy in Cuba. Asked about how soon the new Commission will start meeting, and what are the new ideas to hasten democracy in Cuba, Powell answered: We have presented proposals to the Cubans before. (...) "With the president's new initiatives we will be forming a commission, and I hope to have it formed in the very near future: my staff working with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Mel Martinez, and in a period of, I think, six months, will come forward with some recommendations for the president". Powell added "We will be, also, tightening up our travel restrictions to make them consistent with law and taking some action -- other actions that are consistent with our laws, all for the purpose of letting Castro know that his actions, especially his recent actions, are unacceptable". "This isn't the Cold War-he said-- this is the time to let people speak out and freely choose how to be governed. That will happen in Cuba. And the waves of freedom will eventually sweep across Cuba, just as they have in some of the other parts of the world". (October, US-Cuba Relations)

US authorities have stepped up inspections of charter flights to Cuba out of Miami, and plan to do the same at other airports, following a toughening of US policy toward the island, a top official said. A Treasury official told a House subcommittee on human rights and wellness that the tighter scrutiny led to the seizure of \$10,000 in unauthorized currency from one passenger. The maximum a passenger can take to Cuba is \$3,000. "Already, in response to the president's announcement, Customs and Border Protection inspectors have stepped up their efforts by examining nearly all of the charter flights departing from Miami," said Richard Newcomb, Treasury's director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

US charter companies that fly some 150,000 people to Cuba annually charged that US officials are harassing their clients even though they have permits to visit the communist island. "Customs and Treasury agents are going to every single flight that departs from Miami for Cuba, and they are questioning every single passenger about their licenses and how much money they are taking," said Tessie Aral, vice president of Miami-based ABC Charters, Inc. Other charter operators meeting with Cuban officials at a three-day travel industry conference in Cancun said their passengers faced similar scrutiny. Complaints focused on US Customs and Border Protection and Treasury Department officials at Miami's international airport, where all but two of 30 weekly flights to the Caribbean island nation depart. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

President Bush's October call for more rigorous enforcement of sanctions against Cuba has led to an increase in searches of people traveling to and from the island, Secretary of Housing and Urban

Development Mel Martinez said. Martinez cochairs President Bush's commission on a transition to democracy in Cuba with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. The group, which also includes representatives from the Treasury Department and other federal agencies, met for the first time. The one-hour meeting of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba included comments by national security adviser Condoleezza Rice. The president's commission is expected to issue its first report by May 1. May is significant for Cuban-Americans who celebrate the 20th of that month as the anniversary of the country's independence from Spain. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

After a meeting of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, Roger Noriega, assistant secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, indicated that the United States is serious about planning for a "peaceful" regime change in Cuba. "Our efforts to enforce restrictions on financial transactions that benefit the regime have been stepped up significantly since the president's speech." Noriega said before Bush's Oct. 10 speech that about 5 percent of passengers on one flight to Havana per month were scrutinized or searched. Now, he said, it is 100 percent of passengers on every flight. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro said he will outlast any Bush Administration plans to oust him and Cuba's one-party communist state will survive his death. "The group of idiots that met in the White House will die of bitterness and frustration," the 77-year-old Cuban leader said in an address to school children celebrating the 10th birthday of Elián González, the shipwrecked boy at the center of an international custody battle in 2000. "This little meeting does not worry us (...) they would be better off dedicating their time to drinking whiskey and smoking marijuana," Castro said, speaking to hundreds of school children. "They hope that 15 minutes after my death the revolution will collapse. They don't know that this country has thousands of leaders," he added. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Since October 10, the US government has increased scrutiny of passengers on the roughly 30 charter flights that depart the United States each day for Cuba, said OFAC's Juan Zarate. Fifty-five passengers have been told they could not travel because they did not have proper documents or Treasury approval. Zarate also said the Department of Homeland Security has begun training officers to look for US citizens traveling illegally to Cuba through third countries, including Canada and Mexico. In the 30 days after Bush's, speech, the Homeland Security Department searched 8,800 people on 144 aircraft leaving for Havana, Treasury Department spokeswoman Tara Bradshaw said. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control enforces many of the sanctions against Cuba. Bradshaw said 55 people were denied permission to fly to Cuba in that 30-day period. Bradshaw also said there were 188 seizures of cigars, alcohol and other goods from returning passengers during that period. Treasury officials also have for the first time begun judicial proceedings against travelers who have visited Cuba illegally. Bradshaw said that since September 11, 90 cases have been initiated and 27 of those have been referred to administrative law judges. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

A US commission is expected next year to suggest ways the United States can hasten the removal of Cuban President Fidel Castro without using force. The White House said in a statement the commission will issue recommendations by May 1 for quickly bringing a "peaceful, near-term end" to Mr. Castro's dictatorship in Communist-ruled Cuba. The statement said the commission will also suggest ways to create Democratic institutions and respect for human rights and the rule of law, as well as a free market economy. The statement said modernizing infrastructure and meeting basic needs such as health care and education will also be addressed. The recommendations will be made in a report to President Bush. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

The Department of Homeland Security released the results of the first 60 days of heightened enforcement of the US embargo against Cuba. Speaking at the 27th annual Caribbean Latin American Action Conference, Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security, Asa Hutchinson, announced that inspectors had conducted more than 45,000 baggage examinations on the nearly 54,000 passengers who traveled between the United States and Cuba over the past two months. Under Secretary Hutchinson announced that CBP officers had discovered almost 600 violations of the embargo, nearly half of which were for illegally transporting tobacco or alcohol products. In addition, 171 people were denied permission to travel to Cuba, when inspectors discovered that they did not have the proper OFAC licenses. Another 44

people arriving in the United States were discovered to have traveled to Cuba without the proper licenses. Those found in violation of the travel embargo are routinely subject to civil penalties. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

US Lawmakers, Organizations, Entrepreneurs and Individuals

Despite distaste for Fidel Castro, the US should foster better relations with Cuba so the island does not become a hotbed of crime or terrorism once Castro dies, the incoming chairman of the Senate intelligence panel said. Senator Pat Roberts, a Kansas Republican, made the remarks as he endorsed a bipartisan report urging the White House to ease the embargo of Cuba. "I have no illusions about Fidel Castro," Roberts said, adding that Cuba's 11 million people deserve to live in democracy and freedom. But Roberts said Washington should "be ahead of the curve" in preparing for changes and possible turmoil in Cuba once Castro, who is 76, is out of power. "We cannot afford the kind of chaos in a post-Castro Cuba that a terrorist organization or a drug cartel leadership -- let me repeat, a drug cartel leadership -- may bring. That would present additional problems for the US in the region," Roberts said. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Yucatan Express is proposing a humanitarian ferry service from Tampa to Cuba in which relatives of Cuban citizens would pay for their own passage but wouldn't be charged for cargo such as food and clothing. Matthew Hudson, chairman of Yucatan Express, said the company would not charge for shrink wrapping cargo and putting it on pallets. He said the port of Mantanzas on Cuba's northwest coast near Havana would probably be the ferry's destination. The company says it hopes to start the service Feb. 25. The United States allows humanitarian cargo such as food to be shipped to Cuba. Rob Nichols, a US Treasury Department spokesman, did not give a time frame for deciding on the proposal. The Treasury controls commerce between the two countries. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Most US agricultural exporters have split with the American Farm Bureau Federation over trade policy toward Cuba, while an academic study has said ending the ban on American travel would provide a big boost to US agriculture. The US Cuba Trade and Economic Council reported that its survey of executives from 307 U.S. companies that have exported products to Cuba showed 94 percent of them do not want to change the cash-only requirement. John Kavulich, president of the US Cuba Trade and Economic Council, said the US exporters no longer believe removing the ban would be a positive step, because the Cuban economy is so troubled that few companies would want to grant credit to the country and would be unlikely to get paid if they did. Kavulich said many executives had changed their minds about making it legal to grant credit to Cuba after traveling there for an agricultural exhibition in September. They learned from exporters from other countries that they had granted credit and not gotten paid. But a Farm Bureau lobbyist said of removing the financing ban: "We still want to do it. Anything we can do to chip away at the problems is useful." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The US trade embargo on Cuba is a relic from a bygone era and should be scrapped for the good of American business, US officials and executives said. "It's time to change a policy that isn't working," said Senator Maria Cantwell (Democrat-Washington), at the US-Cuba Business Conference in Cancún. "Farmers in my state say, 'Open up new markets, help us open up new markets. 'We're in tough economic times,'" Cantwell said. John Moore, the lieutenant governor of Kansas, said that "the current trade embargo is a relic of another era." He added: "One important lesson I think we've learned is that nobody has won. Not Cuba, and certainly not America." Tommy Irvin, Georgia's agriculture commissioner, once spoke in favor of exporting food to the Soviet Union. Now, more than a decade after that country's collapse, he wants Georgia farmers to trade more with Cuba. "We can sell goods in the world marketplace, but we can't do business freely in a country just to our south," said Irvin. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Visiting US Senator Kent Conrad said in Havana that Washington's economic embargo against Cuba was "counterproductive". The North Dakota Democrat told a press conference at the end of his nearly four-day visit that US restrictions on trade with Cuba and travel to the communist-ruled island were largely ineffectual. Abandoning limitations on travel to Cuba by US citizens and residents "is more likely to bring about political changes in this country than our current embargo policy," he said. Conrad also criticized Cuba's centralized economy and one-party rule. "I am leaving with a strong feeling that this is an economic

system that is not working as well as it should," the Democrat told an afternoon news conference. "It falls short." As for communist Cuba's political system, "it is a one-party state that does not enjoy the freedoms and the democracy that has contributed to the United States' success," Conrad said. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Senator Jim Davis (Democrat-Tampa) is scheduled to break new ground when he becomes the first member of Florida's congressional delegation to openly travel to Fidel Castro's Cuba. On the five-day trip, Davis hopes to meet with a broad spectrum of people, including government officials and human rights activists. He said he does not expect to meet Castro but did not rule out the possibility. "People feel very, very passionate" about Cuba, Davis said. "I need to go down myself and see it firsthand." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The largest single delegation of American lawmakers to ever visit communist Cuba arrived on the Caribbean island, Cuban officials said. The eight lawmakers are members of the Cuba Working Group, which is pushing for changes in American policy toward Cuba, including an end to travel restrictions for US citizens and an easing of four decades of trade sanctions. The group includes Republican US Representatives Jeff Flake of Arizona, Jo Ann Emerson of Missouri, Denny Rehberg of Montana and C.L. Otter of Idaho. Also in the delegation are Democratic US Representatives John Tanner of Tennessee, Nita Lowey of New York, Dennis Moore, of Kansas and William Delahunt of Massachusetts. The Lexington Institute organized the trip. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Kansas Representative Dennis Moore returned from a congressional trip to Cuba optimistic about opening US barriers to trade and travel with the island nation. Moore and other supporters of increased trade with Cuba want American producers to be allowed to sell more food to Cuba. They argue the current embargo hurts Americans more than anyone else. "An American could go to Baghdad right now and use an American Express credit card. You can't do that in Cuba," Moore said in an interview. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's crackdown on dissidents threatens to stymie attempts to ease travel and trade restrictions between the United States and its communist neighbor, US lawmakers, trade specialists and anti-Castro activists said. Kirby Jones, a Cuba trade consultant who sponsors meetings in Havana between US businessmen and Cuban officials, said that while he believes intensified tensions between the United States and Cuba is the product of economic restrictions, politicians may be wary to move forward immediately. "All I know from talking to people is this is not a good time to drop a bill on opening travel to Cuba." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Arkansas lawmakers still support normalizing relations between the United States and Cuba despite a crackdown by Cuban authorities that has led to the imprisonment of as many as 100 people. Arkansas' congressional delegation, which sees Cuba as a valuable market for rice and poultry, has been leading the call to ease sanctions. Five of the delegation's six members belong to the Cuba Working Group of their respective chambers. The two groups seek to end a trade embargo that has essentially limited U.S. exports to food and medical supplies and have endorsed legislation that would end a ban on travel to Cuba. "To me, the biggest issue is Castro's repressive government, and our policy toward him the last 40 years has not changed that," Rep. Vic Snyder said. "In the short term, he needs to hear very clearly that it's the desire of all Americans that this repression stop, but the evaluation of the current policy needs to go on," he said. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

A Republican congressman from Nevada, Senator John Ensign, said in a speech to the Cuban American National Foundation in Miami that the White House must maintain the embargo of Cuba. "I look at Cuba today and see a lot of European and Canadian businesses that have been operating there for years -- making a tidy profit at the expense of the Cuban people -- yet Cuba has not been transformed, and Castro has not changed one iota," Ensign said. The lawmaker said he would introduce a bill that would provide \$30 million to finance a transition government for Cuba, and another \$20 million for human rights activities through the Organization of American States and for dissidents, activists, relatives of prisoners and others seeking to build civil society. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Executives from US travel agencies have founded the Association of Travel Related Industry Professionals (ATRIP), which aims at defending the right to travel freely and announced that they will fight to end the ban on travel to Cuba. (June, Foreign Affairs)

Thirteen Mainers loaded up a big green bus full of supplies to send to Cuba as part of a humanitarian effort that disregards a US blockade. The members of "Let Cuba Live," a group from Brunswick, gathered in Portland's Monument Square to rally support for their cause. The group is sending supplies to Cuba in defiance of a blockade imposed by the US Treasury Department that prohibits humanitarian aid without a permit. "For a lot of us, Cuba's more than just a place on the map," said organizer Steve Burke. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

A truck loaded with relief supplies will leave Rochester's Downtown Presbyterian Church to join a convoy bound for Cuba. The group "Pastors for Peace" is organizing what they call a "non-violent" challenge to the US trade embargo against Cuba. Doctor Peter Mott of the Rochester Committee on Latin America says this is the 14th such caravan to challenge the embargo. Previous ones have made it across both the Mexican and Canadian borders, but with the USA Patriot Act now in effect, the activists aren't sure. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Volunteers from the Rochester Committee on Latin America in New York, have put together a shipment of medical supplies bound for Cuba, with the objective of breaking through the the US blockade against the island and finally reach the Cuban people. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Supporters of ending a 4-decade-old US ban on travel to Cuba said there were enough votes in Congress to lift the restrictions, but Cuban-American lawmakers predicted the effort would fail. Representative Jeff Flake, an Arizona Republican, said Fidel Castro's recent crackdown on dissidents was more proof the US embargo on Cuba had not forced democratic change on the island. "It's time to get tough with Cuba, and there's no better way to get tough than to have Americans export their freedom and values there," he said. "You can only have that if we don't have (...) our own government telling us we can't travel." The House of Representatives voted 262-167 last year in favor of lifting the travel ban. The effort died after the Senate failed to pass similar legislation. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The 14th Pastors for Peace Caravan is poised on the US border with Mexico, preparing to deliver 80 tons of material aid to Cuba. The caravan -- organized by the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) -- is a challenge to the US restrictions on travel to Cuba. Volunteers from across the United States, Mexico, Canada and Europe began arriving in McAllen, Texas and are undergoing an orientation before attempting to cross the border into Mexico. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

A growing number of US legislators, human rights groups and influential Cuban-Americans are calling for an end to the ban on travel to Cuba, with a new amendment set to be introduced in Congress by September. "Whenever it comes up, we're in a good position," said Jeff Flake, an Arizona republican and sponsor of the Export Freedom to Cuba Act of 2003 in the House, which would halt enforcement of the travel ban. "We're in the right position to win." Last year, the House of Representatives voted 262-167 in favour of lifting the four-decade-old travel ban to the socialist island, but the effort died after the Senate failed to pass similar legislation. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Former USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev will go to Miami to discuss his longstanding interest in Cuba and offer historic perspectives on US policy toward the island at the upcoming Florida National Summit on Cuba. Gorbachev will join a host of Cuban-American and elected leaders from the state of Florida, former American government officials, current members of Congress, heads of the two major international human rights organizations and international representatives to discuss how changing dynamics affect now and future US policy toward Cuba. The meeting will take place in October. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean says he is shifting his views on the trade embargo with Cuba. Speaking to reporters during a four-day national campaign swing, Dean said he supports rolling back the

embargo in order to encourage human-rights advancements -- but citing Fidel Castro's recent crackdowns on dissidents, says that in recent months he has become convinced that "we can't do it right now." (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Politicians who favor a change in US policy toward Cuba are getting new ammunition from the travel industry. Still struggling to recover from the effects of September 11 and the economy's downturn, the travel industry is mounting an aggressive lobbying campaign to get restrictions on travel to Cuba lifted when Congress returns in the fall. The industry argues that the island nation is a potential source of sorely needed revenues that would boost both the travel business and the US economy. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, a Democratic candidate for president who has campaigned heavily in Florida for cash and votes, appeared to shift his stance on the trade embargo with Cuba, telling a national television audience that he now supports keeping sanctions in place. Kerry's remarks, delivered on NBC's Meet the Press, seemed to contradict statements he made during a 2000 interview with The Boston Globe that a reevaluation of the embargo was "way overdue" and that the only reason Cuba has been treated differently than China and Russia is the "politics of Florida." Kerry called that "an honest statement," but when NBC's Tim Russert asked whether he endorsed lifting sanctions he replied: "Not unilaterally, not now, no." (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba-watchers do not see a breaching anytime soon of the 43-year-old US trade embargo against the Castro regime despite the House of Representatives' passage of a bill that would allow US tourists to visit the communist-ruled island. However, Philip Brenner, professor of International Relations at Washington's American University, maintain that the vote shows that Bush has lost steam with Congress. "This will be one more sign that President Bush has lost his ability to mobilize Congress," Brenner told the press. "With these votes, the House is taking for granted that the current US policy toward Cuba has failed and hurts US citizens more than Cubans, because it affects their basic rights, such as the right to travel," he said. Brenner said he is convinced Bush will not have to veto the measure, which must first be debated and voted upon by the Senate, which thwarted similar measures in years past. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Senator Norm Coleman, visiting Cuba, backed away from earlier calls to end sanctions on the communist country, saying that lifting the restrictions now would send the wrong message. Coleman cited the Cuban government's crackdown on the opposition in March, when 75 dissidents were rounded up and sentenced to prison terms of between six and 28 years. "I think about the folks in prison and what message that gives them," the Minnesota Republican said. American moves to eliminate the 40-year-old trade and travel sanctions have "been building for some time, but it's not there yet," Coleman told a small group of American reporters in Havana. "And the March actions create a problem." Coleman, however, said releasing some or all of the 75 dissidents "would be a good gesture," and would "increase the prospects" for American support to end the trade embargo and travel restrictions. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Caspar Weinberger, who served as secretary of defense under President Ronald Reagan from 1981 to 1987, said during a trip to Miami-Dade County that he expected Fidel Castro to remain in place for "quite a long time" and that economic sanctions against the island should not be relaxed. However, the 86-year-old chairman of Forbes Inc. said that he did not think that the dictator poses an imminent threat to US interests, because the economic weakness of the communist island had degraded its military capability. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Agricultural chiefs from four US farm states urged an end to the US embargo on Cuba after being feted by Fidel Castro in ceremonies marking two years of resumed bilateral trade. "Ending the embargo is simply the right thing to do," said Iowa Agriculture Commissioner Patty Judge, who joined counterparts from Iowa, North Dakota and Alabama and 250 US agribusiness, farm and shipping representatives at the ceremonies. At a news conference, the commissioners lauded their states' growing trade with the Communist-run island and called for normal relations. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

IRAQ WAR

Fidel Castro, said that it is "widely believed" in the world that the U.S. war plans against Iraq are aimed at "taking control of the third largest oil and gas reserves in the world." In a speech given at the closing of the "International Conference for World Balance", Castro pointed out that the war would be so dangerous for humanity that "no one can know or predict what will happen". "It is already generally accepted that the purpose of the war in Iraq is to take possession of the world's third largest reserve of oil and gas, something that greatly concerns almost all of the other developed countries, such as those of Europe, which import 80% of their energy, as opposed to the United States, which currently imports barely 20% to 25% of the energy it consumes", he added. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban Ambassador to the UN, Bruno Rodríguez, said Iraq has cooperated "unquestionably" with the UN arms inspectors, so a war is "unnecessary". The diplomat voiced Havana's opinions during a session organized by the UN for non-members countries of the Security Council to express their views on the crisis. (February, Foreign Affairs)

Fidel Castro called for a diplomatic solution to the crisis between the United States and Iraq during a state visit to Vietnam. At the end of a meeting between Castro and the Vietnamese leadership, the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry issued a joint statement in which both countries said they were against using force to disarm the Baghdad regime. "We support a diplomatic solution to the Iraqi issue based on respect for Iraqi independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity in line with the United Nations Charter and international law," the statement said. (February, Foreign Affairs) 23/2/03)

Fidel Castro says a US-led war against Iraq is unjustified because it is unlikely that Baghdad possesses weapons of mass destruction. Lashing out at his longtime ideological foe, Castro said the United States had failed to prove its case against Iraq and was acting unilaterally by ignoring the United Nations. "A war is about to break out (...) It is an unnecessary war, using pretexts that are neither credible nor proven," Castro said in a speech to a conference of Latin American economists. "The immense majority of world opinion unanimously rejects a new war," he said, adding that it was "hardly probable" that Iraq had biological, chemical or nuclear weapons. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

More than 5,000 people gathered in front of Havana hospital Hermanos Aimeijeiras to join in the International Day of Action against the war threatened by the US against Iraq. The Open Forum of the Revolution, a meeting usually held on Saturdays to support the Cuban government, this time became a congregation lead by Vice President and Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, Raúl Castro, to repudiate US policy. Reverend Raúl Suárez strongly objected to President Bush's references to God and democracy as an inspiration for his war plans. "This is how God is slandered and it is also an infamy against democracy", he said. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro lambasted the United States for trying to coerce the world into supporting what he called an "unnecessary" attack on Iraq. The US has "proclaimed the doctrine of a pre-emptive strike, something that no one had ever done in the political history of the world." Speaking at the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit in Kuala Lumpur, Castro criticized Bush's doctrine of preemptive strikes and plans for an "almost certain and "unnecessary" military action against Iraq. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro offered to help mediate in the twin crises of looming war with Iraq and North Korea's nuclear development program. Castro said that if asked he would do whatever he could to help lessen tensions. He made the remark during talks with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi who noted that Cuba maintains friendly relations with North Korea. In reply, Castro said, "The Cuban leadership has not made any direct contacts with (North Korea's current) leader (Kim Jong Il) since former leader Kim Il Sung died." However, he added, "It is important to solve the issues (of North Korea's nuclear development) in joint political efforts with China, Russia and South Korea. Cuba will also do what it can (for the solution)." As for Iraq, Castro referred to reports that Iraq had begun destroying its Al-Samoud missile system. "Although

it is a small step, the possibility is growing that Iraq will obey UN resolutions and avert a war (with the United States and Britain)." (March, Foreign Affairs)

Computer hackers, apparently from Brazil, entered Cuban Web sites and posted a message against President Bush and a possible US war against Iraq. "Our Web site was disrupted by this problem. They inserted their anti-war slogans and the Brazilian flag," said a Web page designer at Granma. "It was impossible to read the newspaper all morning," a staff member at Granma International told the press. (March, Foreign Affairs)

Fidel Castro has urged Baghdad to destroy "the last cubic centimetre of chemical or biological weapons" to remove any pretext Washington might have to attack it. At the close of the new Cuban parliamentary legislature, in which Castro's re-election as head of the government and the state came as no surprise, the Cuban leader praised Iraq's decision to destroy its Al-Samoud 2 missiles. "The American Government will no longer have the least legal or moral pretext to attack Iraq," Castro said. (March, Foreign Affairs)

Cuba criticized US President George W. Bush's warning to Saddam Hussein to leave Iraq within 48 hours or face military attack, saying that the United States was running roughshod over world opinion. "The arrogance of the empire has begun," Rogelio Polanco, editor of the Communist youth daily Juventud Rebelde, said on a regular nightly television panel that expresses the government's view of current events. Because the United States was moving ahead without United Nations support, the deadline signifies a "worldwide coup d'etat" by the American government, Polanco said. (March, Foreign Affairs)

A war on Iraq would question and weaken the system of international relations and multilateral institutions created since the end of World War II, Cuba's top diplomat warned. Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told Cuban television from Geneva the apparently looming war would have a significant impact on the work of the UN Human Rights Commission which holds its meetings there for six weeks each year. (March, Foreign Affairs)

Fidel Castro says the US-led war with Iraq was decided by "stepping over the Security Council" and makes the United Nations meaningless. "The United Nations has been totally ignored and, in fact, one can no longer say the United Nations exists," Castro said in a 15-minute television interview broadcast by the Dominican Republic National News Network. "This has been a strong blow against the institution (the United Nations), the initiative of those countries that for diverse reasons are against war, and against the immense majority of international public opinion," said Castro. Some government that support the war "have been subject to a great deal of pressure," he added. (March, Foreign Affairs)

Moscow considers Cuba its key partner in Latin America. This was disclosed by Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov when opening the talks with Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque. The North Korean crisis should be resolved through diplomacy, by providing security guarantees for the countries of the region and keeping the Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons, says a joint communique signed by Ivanov and Pérez Roque following the talks. They also called for an immediate halt in the US-led war on Iraq while warning against the detrimental consequences of the war in the region. In their joint statement, Ivanov and Perez Roque stressed the US and British military action in Iraq must be stopped as soon as possible. The two ministers also called for a fair settlement of the Mideast conflict on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and all other related resolutions adopted by the United Nations. They pointed out that the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and statehood within stable and safe borders and the Israelis' right to a terror-free life constituted the foundation for building a peaceful future in the Middle East. (March, Foreign Affairs)

The Cuban Parliament criticized the US aggression on Iraq, and called for unity among nations. "They want to impose a new world order based on barbarism, death, and violation of international law and countries' sovereignty by force," denounces the text drafted by the legislative Commission for Constitutional and Juridical Affairs. (March, Domestic Affairs)

Cuba asked both sides in the Iraq war to respect its diplomats, among the last to remain in Baghdad, after an armed attack on a convoy of Russian diplomats leaving for Syria. "Our staff will remain at their post. We hope their diplomatic condition will be respected by both sides in the war if there is fighting around the embassy," the Cuban government said in a statement released. The Vatican and Cuba have the only diplomatic missions that are still staffed in Baghdad, after the departure of the Russians, the statement said. (April, Foreign Affairs)

Cuba's foreign minister criticized the US-led war in Iraq and said the daily attacks on American forces there are carried out by an occupied people fighting for their "right to self-determination." (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro's government kept silent on the recent capture of Saddam Hussein and Cuban television only mentioned it briefly in its international news segment. Cuba remains in the list of countries the U.S. deems "sponsors of terrorism", but the case of Cuba is quite different from the Iraqi case. (December, Terrorism)

Fidel Castro said he repeatedly warned Saddam Hussein to leave Kuwait after the 1990 invasion but that the former Iraqi dictator's "mistakes" did not justify the US-led war. Castro, who was in Venezuela to meet with President Hugo Chavez, said he tried on numerous occasions to persuade Saddam to withdraw from Kuwait, warning the Iraqi leader that, not just Western countries, but also Arab nations, would turn against him. Castro called Saddam's invasion of Iran "absolutely unjust," during an interview with Venezuela's state-run television station, Venezolana de Television. The US-led invasion of Iraq was aimed at taking control of the country's oil, Castro told Venezuelan state television. "There is no moral argument, no possible justification to invade a country," said the veteran communist leader. (December, Cuba-US Relations)

The US-led invasion of Iraq was aimed at taking control of the country's oil, Fidel Castro told Venezuelan state television in an interview. "There is no moral argument, no possible justification to invade a country," said the veteran communist leader. "The United Nations did not agree on it; rather the most powerful nation agreed to invade (Iraq): the main objective, let us be totally honest, was to win an essential raw material which is called petroleum," said Castro. (December, Cuba-US Relations)

HELMS-BURTON LAW

A bold experiment by Glenfiddich to mature whisky in old Cuban rum barrels has given the spirit too much of an island flavour for US officials, who have banned the Scotch for violating American restrictions on trade with Cuba. Glenfiddich Havana Reserve 21-year-old single-malt Scotch whisky, with an evocative fusion of flavours and culture, is arriving in Canada, where it is marketed with the slogan: "Politics hang heavily over this product." "The US position is unfortunate, but it does leave more for the rest of us," noted James Doherty, the rare-whisky manager at Glenfiddich. (January, Foreign Affairs)

Princess Cruise PLC's official endorsement of Carnival Corp.'s \$5.22bn takeover bid will eventually mean the end of the company's winter trips to Cuba. The London firm will now have to "comply with US laws relating to doing business with Cuba," according to Carnival representative Tim Gallagher. The ship's Cuban voyages will end in March, which is the same time the Miami-based firm takes full control of the sea liner. (January, Foreign Affairs)

President Bush has suspended for another six months a provision in a 1996 law that would allow legal action against foreign firms using confiscated US properties in Cuba. Mr. Bush formally notified Congress of his decision to again suspend the Title III provision in the 1996 Helms-Burton act. The president said the waiver is necessary in the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro opened the country's largest hotel on land claimed by a Cuban-American family, saying the socialist island was owned not by individuals but by all the people. "Cuba is not the private property of

anyone," Castro said in a speech. The hotel site had been owned before 1959 by the Sanchez-Hill family, which now lives in the US. The family filed a claim under the US Helms-Burton law in 2000 against Spain's Sol Meliá company which it said planned to manage the hotel. Castro's presence, and the broadcast, showed the enormous importance the government places on this new project in particular and tourism in general. Hotels in Holguín draw visitors primarily from Canada, Germany, Britain, Italy, France and Switzerland. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

A US federal judge has granted a motion for a retrial for Canadian salesman James Sabzali, convicted last April for violating the US embargo against Cuba, because of prosecutorial misconduct. In a 31-page ruling, Justice Mary McLaughlin wrote she was "very concerned" by "inflammatory language (. . .) strewn throughout the (prosecutor's closing) argument." Declaring that "it is never proper to throw around such inflammatory language in a criminal trial," McLaughlin wrote that a prosecutor's "repeated" charges of defence lying served to "stir up the jury" and had "no place in the argument of an Assistant United States Attorney." The US Justice Department undertook a five-year investigation that resulted in a three-week trial. (June, Foreign Affairs)

President George W. Bush suspended for another six months Title III of the Helms-Burton Act that, if signed, would enable U.S. citizens to sue those who traffic in property confiscated from them by the Cuban government. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

US President George W. Bush could apply Chapter III of the Helms-Burton Act as a means of generating greater international pressure on the Cuban regime. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Roger Noriega, announced that the new commission created by Bush to step up support for the Cuban opposition could start operating at the end of October. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

MIGRATION

[See also, Domestic Affairs/ Migration/ General/ Hijackers]

Hijackers, Smugglers and Cubans Returned by the US Coast Guard

During 2002, the US Coast Guard intercepted 931 Cubans at sea, the highest number since 1999. Actions against human smugglers doubled compared to the previous year. "The Attorney's Office has been at its busiest time since stricter actions were taken against smugglers of Cubans", said Jacqueline Becerra, spokeswoman of the City of Miami's Attorney's Office. However, during the fiscal year 2002 –which closed on September 31– the Coast Guard Patrol reported the arrival of 1,335 Cubans. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

A group of 19 Cubans landed on the Florida coast. US authorities have arrested two individuals under suspicions of having smuggled them into the US. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Thirty Cuban migrants intercepted by the Coast Guard five miles from Sugarloaf Key -- and thrown into the sea when their smuggler's boat capsized -- were taken back to the Communist-ruled island, the Coast Guard said. Relatives and activists did not know the Cubans had been repatriated when they gathered in Little Havana to protest what they said was the use of excessive force to stop them. Coast Guard Petty Officer Danielle DeMarino said the migrants are lucky that rescuers were there when the boat capsized. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Prosecutors filed misdemeanor charges and offered probation to two Miami men accused of smuggling four relatives and two family friends into the United States by boat. Their 21-foot boat ran out of fuel and was towed to Key West by the Coast Guard in November. Once at dockside, five Cubans scampered from the boat to the dock to establish claims for legal residency. A 14-year-old boy who initially stayed aboard was later allowed ashore, too. The two counts each against Elizardo Ruiz Alvarez and Martin Mendez cover only the two friends who made the trip and do not claim smuggling for profit. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Coast Guard intercepted 79 Cubans who tried to get to the United States and returned them over the weekend, Cuba said. Seventy-five tried to make the journey aboard two smugglers' speedboats, the Communist Party newspaper Granma said. The other four were intercepted in a small boat, it said. Twenty-nine of the migrants had to be rescued when their boat capsized after they refused to stop for the Coast Guard, the newspaper said. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Four Cuban coast guardsmen defected, docking their patrol boat at a Key West resort, walking into town and surrendering to a police officer, authorities said. The men, dressed in their military uniforms, approached Officer Matt Dorgan and told him they wanted to surrender, Key West police spokeswoman Cynthia Edwards said. "They were happy to be here and were compliant with all of our requests," said Officer Tara Koenig, a Spanish-speaking officer Dorgan called for assistance. The men's patrol boat has been turned over to the US Coast Guard. A Coast Guard spokeswoman had no immediate comment and it could not be determined if the US military had been tracking the men before they arrived at Key West. No one answered the phone at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Coast Guard Service issued an appeal to Cuban "raftpeople" not to attempt against their own lives as a means to avoid being deported back to Cuba when intercepted on the ocean. The warning was issued after nine Cuban immigrants ingested pills upon detection by US authorities while attempting to reach the coast of Florida. Agreements between Havana and Washington stipulate that Cubans intercepted on the ocean must be repatriated. However, US legislation allows those who reach US soil to remain in the country and become residents after a year. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

US authorities say six Cubans who hijacked an airliner to Florida face air piracy charges. Federal officials say the knife-wielding hijackers surrendered peacefully after the DC-3 propeller plane landed safely at the airport on Florida's resort island of Key West. Earlier, the hijackers took control of the aircraft, which departed from Cuba's Isle of Youth, and diverted it from a scheduled landing in Havana. Thirty-five people were on board. None of the passengers or crew was injured. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro's government expressed satisfaction with the US decision to prosecute six men accused of hijacking a Cuban plane to the United States. The six men who diverted the DC-3 at knifepoint in an apparent bid to gain asylum were charged with conspiracy to seize an aircraft by force and violence, which is punishable by a minimum of 20 years in prison. "The decision to submit them to justice on piracy charges (...) constitutes, without doubt, a modest step forward," the Cuban government said in a statement. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

To Fidel Castro, the real culprits behind air hijackings not only of Cuban airliners but the world over are the US governments that in the last 44 years have fought the revolutionary process he leads. "They are the ones who first thought of that crime and it was done against Cuba," said Castro in a several hour TV show during which he talked with crew members and passengers of the DC-3 flight diverted to Key Largo at knife-point. Castro defined the hijacking of the plane as an act of terrorism. In the morning, the Cuban president welcomed the airliner's crew at Havana's José Martí international airport. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Coast Guard has repatriated 16 Cuban migrants after they were caught at sea trying to enter the United States illegally. The incident brings the total number of such repatriations to at least 230 this year. The 16 repatriations came after three boatloads of people were intercepted at the weekend as their crafts attempted to reach the south Florida coast, Coast Guard officials said. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Miami prosecutors are going to extraordinary lengths to keep a group of Cubans behind bars, mainly to send a message to island residents and their leader, Fidel Castro, that the United States will be tough on hijackers. The US attorney's office has tried twice, and failed, to block the release of the six defendants on bond before their trial. Now prosecutors say they may ask the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta to overturn a judge's bail order. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Two Cubans charged with assaulting US Coast Guard personnel who tried to intercept them as they tried to reach the Florida coast were released on \$70,000 bond. Javier Morales Molina, and Reinaldo Molina Morales, had been held at a Monroe County jailhouse after being charged in a Miami federal court, according to the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

An illegal Cuban migrant who was detained off the Florida Keys earlier this month has been sent to the US Navy station in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The migrant, identified in court documents as Ramon Aguilar Hernandez, was brought there by US Coast Guard officials, Petty Officer Carleen Drummond said. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services spokeswoman Ana Santiago declined to comment. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The Coast Guard returned 126 illegal Haitian and Cuban migrants to their homelands, officials said. Twenty-five Cuban migrants found in five separate cases since May 10 were repatriated to Bahía de Cabañas, Cuba. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Two Cuban migrants charged with brandishing weapons against the US Coast Guard, in a dash to reach land in the Florida Keys, pleaded not guilty in federal court. The case marked the first time that felony charges were filed against Cuban migrants who reached US soil after eluding federal authorities in the Florida Straits, the 90-mile stretch of water that separates Cuba and Florida. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

FBI agents did not inform two Cuban men of their constitutional rights until after they confessed to helping hijack an airliner to Key West in March, federal prosecutors acknowledged. After recognizing their initial mistake, agents awakened hijack suspects Neudis Infantes Hernandez and Yainer Olivares Samon and read them their Miranda rights against self-incrimination and having an attorney present during questioning. Both men waived their rights, confirmed that their confessions were accurate and voluntary, and then went back to sleep, said Assistant U.S. Attorney John Delionado. "We had what would be a clear violation of Miranda initially," Delionado said. "The agents had forgotten Miranda." (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Federal prosecutors in Miami have failed for a third time to overturn a judge's order that allows bond to be set for six Cubans accused of hijacking a passenger jet to Key West in March using knives and a hatchet. The recent ruling, by a three-judge panel of the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, has plenty of symbolic resonance but little practical application, because the suspects are going to remain in US immigration custody even if each posts a \$100,000 bond in the criminal case. US Attorney Marcos Jiménez has said his office has aggressively pursued the issue to send a message to Cuban citizens and Fidel Castro that the United States won't tolerate hijackings as a means of fleeing the island. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

In a rare show of cooperation between Havana and Washington, the Cuban pilot of a hijacked Cubana Airlines plane testified in a Florida court that the hijacker threatened to detonate hand grenades and kill everyone on board the aircraft. On the opening day of testimony at the trial in Key West, pilot Jorge Armando Rojas, 55, said Adelmis Wilson Gonzalez, 34, threatened to explode hand grenades on board the Antonov-24 with more than four dozen people on board last March. If convicted of one count of aircraft piracy, Wilson could be sentenced to life in prison. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

A Cuban who forced a Cubana Airlines passenger plane to fly over the Florida Straits to the United States in April was found guilty of air piracy by a Florida court and faces up to life in prison. Adelmis Wilson Gonzalez, 34, was accused of using fake hand grenades to hijack the twin-prop Antonov-24 plane, which began as a domestic flight from Cuba's Isle of Youth to Havana and ended up the next day in Key West on the southern tip of Florida. The 12-person jury in a Key West federal court took less than two hours to find Wilson Gonzalez guilty of one count of air piracy, a conviction that carries a sentence of 20 years to life in prison. Sentencing was set for September. The hijacking was one of three in March and April by Cubans trying to flee communist-run Cuba for the United States. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States repatriated 12 Cubans who allegedly tried to commandeer a boat from Cuba to Florida. But the decision was not well received in South Florida, where Cuban-Americans frown upon negotiations

with Castro's Cuba and typically support granting Cuban immigrants asylum in the United States. "This action makes the US complicit in the fate of the returned refugees," Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Republican-Miami, said in a statement. "This act of infamy in coordination with the Cuban tyranny is a condemnable monstrosity." Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Mario Diaz-Balart, the other two Cuban-American Republicans from Miami, also condemned the return. Joe Garcia, executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, blamed the return on the Bush administration and on Ros-Lehtinen and the Diaz-Balarts, whom he faulted for not having more influence with the White House. "This is a betrayal by this administration," Garcia said. "And what it demonstrates is the impotence of our Republican congressmen within this Republican administration. When you sell yourself cheap, you get treated cheaply." (July, Exile Community)

The US Coast Guard said it returned 22 Cuban migrants to their home country, after they were caught at sea in four different groups. All were brought on a Coast Guard cutter to Bahía de Cabañas, Cuba, officials said in a statement. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Three months after swift trials sent three hijackers before a firing squad, a group commandeered a mapping vessel from a Cuban port with more than two dozens people on board. In Miami, Petty Officer Danielle DeMarino said the Coast Guard was "monitoring the situation and standing by in case it escalates into anything." Ralph Fernandez, a Tampa attorney who has represented Cubans who have been accused of hijacking, said he was aware of cases in the past where Bahamian authorities have detained Cubans. He also said the United States might exercise "long-arm jurisdiction" and prosecute some of the Cubans on the boat for hijacking, even though the incident did not happen in U.S. territorial waters. A State Department official in Washington said it was too early to discuss any US role in the Cubans' fate. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

One day after US authorities stopped a Cuban government-owned boat as it meandered toward Florida, FBI agents and a federal prosecutor flew to the Coast Guard cutter where its 15 passengers are being held, after initial interviews suggested the vessel may have been hijacked after all. Criminal investigators were dispatched to the cutter after several of the Cuban passengers implied or told an interviewer that they were forced along on a ride through the Bahamas toward Miami after the vessel was taken from the Cuban port of Boca de Nuevitas, sources familiar with the investigation told the press. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban government called upon Washington to honour bilateral migratory accords, by which, it said, "the vessel and the hijackers must be returned to Cuba." Cuban authorities are waiting for the US reply to their request for extradition of hijackers that fled from the island to Miami on a state-owned GeoCuba surveying boat. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The boat that was allegedly hijacked from the port of Nuevitas in Cuba, has been returned to the island. The Cuban government has informed American diplomats that the individuals, now being held on a Coast Guard cutter off the Florida coast, would not be executed if returned to Cuba, a State Department official said. "The Cubans informed our mission that those principally responsible for armed robbery and kidnapping would have to face justice," the State Department official said. But, the official said the Cubans said they would receive sentences not exceeding 10 years in prison. "We're finding out through a number of avenues what would happen if they are repatriated." State Department and Coast Guard officials said the incident is still under investigation. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

US officials returned 15 Cuban migrants intercepted at sea on a boat owned by Fidel Castro 's government in a move that Havana praised as an important step in the fight against illegal migration. US officials agreed to the repatriation after Havana promised those who stole the boat would serve no longer than 10 years in prison, the Cuban government said in a statement. The statement also praised the decision by American officials earlier this year to prosecute a Cuban charged with hijacking a plane full of passengers to the United States. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Hoping to avert their repatriation if they should be intercepted at sea, an exile group in Miami has given US authorities the names of a score of Cuban dissidents who left the island in a small boat. Ninoska Perez Castellon, president of the Miami-based Council for the Freedom of Cuba, told the press that most of the dissidents belong to the "Feb. 24th Movement," whose president, Leonardo Miguel Bruzon, is currently imprisoned in the island. (July, Exile Community)

Several Cuban dissidents who left the island in a small boat were taken to the US naval base at Guantanamo, the Cuban American National Foundation reported. Immigrants intercepted at sea who have valid reasons to request political asylum are taken to Guantanamo and remain there until they are accepted by some other country. In contrast to those who actually step on US territory, who are allowed to stay, Cuban "rafters" stopped at sea are normally returned to Cuba. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Jeb Bush took the unusual step of criticizing his own brother's administration for the negotiations that led to the repatriation of 12 Cuban boat hijackers. "Despite the good intentions of the administration to negotiate the safety of these folks, that is an oppressive regime, and given the environment in Cuba, it's just not right" to have sent the Cubans back, Governor Bush said. "There's an expectation that I'm going to be in lock step with the administration, and that tends to happen," the governor added. "But from time to time I have to disagree, and this is one of them." (July, US-Cuba Relations)

A growing controversy about the fate of 19 Cuban migrants aboard a Coast Guard cutter has prompted a debate within the Bush administration about its policy of repatriating most Cubans intercepted at sea, according to several administration officials. A White House spokesman said the Bush administration was not changing its migration policy. "Our policy is one of a safe, orderly and legal migration," said Scott McClellan. "We expect that policy to be implemented and carried out in a consistent way." The debate is the first serious hint of a split within the administration about the controversial Cuban repatriation policy in effect since 1995, when former President Clinton and the Cuban government agreed to new migration accords. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Seven Cubans -- apparently dissidents and some relatives -- have won a rare chance to be resettled in a third country after the Coast Guard intercepted them at sea, but 12 other people on the same boat were taken back to Cuba. Cuban-American activists and legislators had lobbied the White House for all 19 of the Cubans to be given safe haven because of their ties to the 24th of February Movement, an island dissident organization named in honor of Brothers to the Rescue fliers shot down by Cuban MiGs on February 24, 1996. The group reportedly included at least 10 members of the group and at least two members of the Democratic 30th of November Party and the Confederation of Democratic Cuban Workers. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Five Cuban immigrants waited at sea without a country and three more sat in jail awaiting word on their destinies. The people, taken into custody as they made a dash for US soil through the Lake Worth Inlet, await word on whether prosecutors will charge the man who operated the boat and whether immigration officials will forcibly return those who never made landfall to Cuba. The three men who made it to Singer Island soil remain at the Palm Beach County Jail, while the three men, one woman and operator of the boat - all of whom never touched soil - are being held on a US Coast Guard cutter at sea. Under the so-called "wet-foot, dry-foot" immigration policy, Cubans caught at sea are kept at sea and generally sent home. Those who make it to land are generally allowed to remain in the US. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Coast Guard said that it repatriated 33 Cubans caught at sea as they sought to flee the country to the US, most of them aboard an overloaded go-fast boat. The Cubans were taken to Bahía de Cabañas, Cuba, aboard a US vessel, the US Coast Guard said. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The Coast Guard said it repatriated 34 Cuban migrants who were picked up at sea in two separate incidents. All the migrants were taken to Bahía de Cabañas, Cuba. The first group of three migrants was spotted on a raft about 60 miles south of Key West. The second group of 31 migrants was found on a boat 21 miles southwest of Elbow Cay, Bahamas. Three people suspected of smuggling in the second group were being

processed by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Coast Guard said. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

A US judge rejected a plea bargain offer from two Cubans who swam to the Florida coast after attacking Coast Guardsmen who tried to intercept them at sea, setting the date of their trial for next year. Judge Michael Moore considered that the sanctions contained in the plea bargain offer did not send a "sufficiently strong message" to immigrants who try to enter the United States by attacking federal officials. Javier Morales Molina, 27, and Reinaldo Molina Morales, 29, are charged with attacking US Coast Guard personnel who tried to intercept them just off the Florida coast in May. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Three Cuban-American members of Congress are urging the US government to amend the regulations that call for undocumented immigrants from Cuba who are intercepted at sea to be repatriated to the communist-ruled island. Representatives Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Mario Diaz-Balart, all Republicans from South Florida, made the request in a letter to the top officials for Latin American issues at the State Department and White House, Roger Noriega and Otto Reich, respectively. In a press release, the brothers Diaz-Balart and Ros-Lehtinen rejected the 1994 bilateral immigration agreement, noting that because of it, refugees intercepted at sea are sent back to the island "without even being heard to determine their eligibility for refugee status." (September, US-Cuba Relations)

A Cuban architect was sentenced to 20 years in prison for using two fake grenades to hijack a passenger plane from the communist island to Florida in April. Adermis Wilson Gonzalez, 34, was found guilty of air piracy in July. The case became politically sensitive after three Cubans were executed there for hijacking a Cuban ferry a day after Mr. Wilson commandeered the Cuban Airlines plane with 31 people aboard. Ten of the Cubans aboard - including Mr. Wilson's wife and son - chose to remain in the United States. His lawyer plans an appeal. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Coast Guard sent home 23 would-be Cuban migrants, along with a miniature white poodle that attempted to come to the United States. The 23, picked up at sea in four groups, were repatriated on a Coast Guard cutter. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Twenty Cuban migrants seeking asylum in the United States were repatriated to Cuba after they were intercepted in the Straits of Florida, the US Coast Guard said. The Coast Guard said the asylum seekers had been trying to reach Florida, on the US southeast coast, when they were plucked from the ocean in three separate groups. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

A US Marine patrol has saved 62 undocumented migrants from a potential disaster at sea near Puerto Rico, says the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). In a statement, the agency said the migrants -- four from Cuba, and 58 from the Dominican Republic -- were aboard a craft that had begun to sink and was about to capsize when it was intercepted by ICE agents. The rescue prevented what ICE said could have been one of the worst tragedies involving undocumented aliens in Puerto Rico. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

A total of 75 Cuban immigrants attempting to enter illegally into the United States, in two groups, were intercepted at sea by the US Coast Guard and sent back to Cuba, said the US Coast Guard. Five individuals suspected of organizing the trips were arrested for human smuggling. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban government recently locked up in an airport lounge three Miami lawyers who are defending clients in a hijacking case so they could not talk to witnesses or see the crime scene, according to federal court documents. The lawyers' court papers say they went through court and diplomatic channels and obtained visas to travel to Cuba for three days in late August. They planned to photograph the crime scene, an airport on the Isle of Youth, and to find witnesses who might help clear six men accused of the March 19 hijacking of a chartered DC-3 flight. Attorney Ana Jhones charged that the Cuban government "purposely and deliberately" thwarted the defense investigation. The defense now is asking for help from

its usual courtroom adversary, the US government, to bring Cuban defense witnesses to the federal courthouse in Key West for the trial. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Bringing defense witnesses from Cuba to testify at a hijacking trial in the United States could strain already touchy relations between the two countries, prosecutors argue. "A point of concern for both governments is that such witnesses, once in the US, may refuse to return to Cuba," Assistant US Attorneys Harry C. Wallace Jr. and John J. DeLionado told US Magistrate John O'Sullivan in court papers. Six Cubans are charged with conspiracy, air piracy and interfering with a flight crew, accused of using knives to commandeer a domestic Cuban flight with 31 passengers and forcing it to Key West on March 19. Their trial is to begin in December, in Key West. If convicted, they could spend the rest of their lives in prison. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

A US jury took one hour to convict a man described by federal prosecutors as "one of the best in the business of human trafficking" of 55 counts of smuggling Cuban migrants for up to \$10,000 a head. Remberto Moya, 39, of West Palm Beach, Florida, faces up to 15 years in prison and additional smuggling charges in a separate case, said Assistant US Attorney Lynn Kirkpatrick. "Prosecuting people engaged in human trafficking is one of the top priorities of the government of the United States," Kirkpatrick said at the end of the trial in Key West. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

A federal magistrate has ordered the US government to ask Cuba to let witnesses fly here to testify in an upcoming hijacking case -- for the defense. Cuban government officials and airline workers have come to the United States in the past to testify for prosecutors in skyjacking cases, but lawyers in this case could not recall defense witnesses doing so. Magistrate Judge John J. O'Sullivan's ruling came two months after three defense lawyers said they were thwarted from interviewing key witnesses on the island. They are defending three of six men accused of hijacking a flight on March 19 from Cuba's Isle of Youth to Key West using kitchen knives and a hatchet. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Defense attorneys representing six Cuban men charged in the March hijacking a Cuban Douglas DC-3 that landed at Key West International Airport will not be allowed to tell jurors about difficult economic and political conditions in Cuba. In a ruling handed down in Miami, US District Judge James Lawrence King said the current destitute conditions in the communist country are "irrelevant as to whether defendants are guilty of the crimes charged," and ordered that any evidence demonstrating such must be excluded from the jury. In addition, it was announced the Cuban government will allow government witnesses from that country to come to Key West to testify on behalf of the prosecution, but that no non-government witnesses -- private Cuban citizens -- will be allowed to testify for the defense. Defense attorneys were told they needed to go to Cuba to obtain depositions. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro has "taken a personal interest" in an upcoming federal hijacking trial and Cuba is manipulating which witnesses can go to the United States to testify, a defense attorney alleged in court papers. Lawyers involved in the case learned that Cuba would permit some prosecution witnesses to travel to Key West for the trial. But other witnesses who could help exonerate the accused hijackers will stay behind, according to defense attorney Ana Jhones, who filed the papers in federal court in Miami. Six Cubans are scheduled to go on trial Monday in Key West. They are accused of air piracy, conspiracy and interfering with a flight crew during the March 19 skyjacking of a Cuban DC-3 with 31 other people on board. If convicted, they could spend 20 years to life in a US prison. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

During a trial to six Cubans charged with hijacking a plane from the communist island to Key West, the defense isn't getting the witnesses it wants and prosecutors lost half of the confessions from the defendants. From their perspectives, each side is hobbled going into a politically charged trial on charges carrying potential sentences of 20 years to life in federal prison. Fidel Castro, who claims the United States is soft on hijackers, did a national television segment with smiling crew members and passengers after they returned from their interrupted journey. In contrast, defense attorneys say they were locked for hours in a Cuban airport lounge under armed guard on an August trip intended to generate favorable testimony. Cuba is providing the pilot and a steward as prosecution witnesses, and the United States has asked Cuba to deliver the co-pilot and flight mechanic as defense witnesses. The defense can be expected to challenge the

reliability of Cuban airline workers, whose salaries are paid by their government, in a case where Cuba would like to convict anybody the United States puts on trial for hijackings from the island nation to discourage other flights of fancy. The hijacked flight -- which was supposed to fly from the Isle of Youth to Havana -- carried a total of 37 people, including the six defendants and six crew members. Not counting the defendants, 14 opted to stay in the United States. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

A man found clinging to two inner tubes off the coast of Miami is believed to be the only survivor from a group of 11 Cuban migrants whose homemade boat capsized during an attempt to reach the United States illegally, the US Coast Guard said. A Coast Guard cutter crew rescued the man about nine miles off the Miami shore, but the incident was not made public until four days later. The man told rescuers he left Matanzas, Cuba, on November 27 with 10 other people aboard a 14-foot homemade vessel that was destroyed when it ran into bad weather. Weather reports for the days in question confirmed the seas were rough and the air unusually cool. Coast Guard crews conducted an intensive air and sea search and alerted boaters in the area, but had trouble pinpointing the vessel's likely route. The 24-year-old survivor was among 17 Cuban migrants repatriated to Cuba, the Coast Guard said. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

A Florida judge ruled there won't be a mistrial in the case of six Cubans accused of hijacking a passenger plane, saying the potential harm to their defense caused by a government witness's misstep has been outweighed by other testimony. US District Judge James Lawrence King said that alleged ringleader Alexis Norneilla Morales testified about the role three co-defendants played in the alleged March 19 hijacking, negating the potential harm caused by Border Patrol agent Kerry Heck's previous testimony. She had testified that Morales confessed to recruiting the three men, violating an agreement the men's attorneys had with prosecutors that part of his statement wouldn't be mentioned by the government. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

A jury found six Cuban men guilty of hijacking a passenger flight from their country to South Florida last March, in what federal prosecutors called an unequivocal rebuke of using violence to reach the United States. The six had been accused of using butcher knives and duct tape to commandeer a DC-3 as it flew from the Isle of Youth, off Cuba's southern coast, on its way to Havana on March 19. During the trial, prosecutors said that the leader of the group had pressed a knife to the pilot's throat after charging the cockpit, while other defendants tied up crew members in the rear of the plane. The incident and two others that followed led Fidel Castro to crack down on hijackers and to accuse the United States of encouraging illegal immigration by violent means. Harry C. Wallace, one of the government prosecutors, said that the verdict "sends a clear message that our goal here is sympathetic to people wanting to come to the United States, but that we will not tolerate the use of violence or the threat of violence in order to do it." Defense lawyers had depicted the incident as a "freedom flight" in which the flight crew was complicit. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban Foreign Ministry issued an official note approving a verdict of guilt issued by a United States court against six Cubans who hijacked a passenger plane from Cuba to the United States. The six Cubans were convicted of hijacking in Florida after their argument that the crew cooperated in the hijacking was rejected. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Migration Agreements

US State Department officials said steps to ease the Cuban migration rules would be positive. "We've registered our concerns with regards to the obstacles the Cuban government puts to discourage Cubans from leaving the island," said Charles Barclay, a spokesman. "We would welcome anything that would make it easier for Cuban citizens to do what citizens of other countries do as a matter of course when they are leaving the country without harassment from their government. But we'll wait and see what will come to pass." On a separate migration issue, Cuban officials said the idea of increasing the number of Cubans -- from 20,000 to 40,000 -- who could legally emigrate each year is not part of any proposal currently on the table. "If someday the United States wanted to increase that, it would be something for both governments to negotiate," Hernández-Acén said. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba says the United States must return four members of the Cuban Coast Guard who defected, along with their patrol boat. Fidel Castro's advisor on US relations Ricardo Alarcon said in Havana that failure to return the men would violate bilateral immigration agreements. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States returned a Cuban patrol boat used by four members of the Communist-run Caribbean island's coast guard to defect, the State Department said. The boat's return contrasted with the last such incident when a state-owned plane used by defectors was kept. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Media sources from South Florida informed that the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) ratified that Cuban nationals or citizens who have been admitted or paroled into the United States and who have been present in the country for at least one year, may obtain permanent residency under the Cuban Adjustment Act - in place since 1966. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States asked Cuba to remove barriers to orderly emigration in semiannual talks on the issue, the State Department said. The US government presented Cuba with a list of 636 people denied exit permits by Fidel Castro and demanded that they be allowed to emigrate to the United States. Kevin Whitaker, coordinator for Cuban affairs in the U.S. State Department, presented the list at talks at the US Mission to the United Nations aimed at promoting orderly migration between the two countries. The talks happen every six months. The accords were designed to provide for orderly emigration from the communist island to the United States. Cuba, for its part, said it would request a detailed analysis of several recent incidents involving migrants to the United States. The Foreign Ministry's statement did not specify which incidents, but they are likely to include the hijacking of two Cuban commercial airliners and a ferry. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States and Cuba have clashed over migration policy during the latest round of talks under a 1994 pact aimed at ensuring safe and legal migration. Cuban and US diplomats met at U.N. headquarters in New York, where Cuba accused the United States of cutting back on issuing visas. Rafael Dausa, a senior Cuban foreign ministry official, said the 1994 agreement calls for the United States to issue 20,000 entry visas a year to Cubans who want to emigrate. So far this year, he said only 1,200 visas have been issued. Mr. Dausa said the US aim is to encourage Cubans to migrate illegally through hijackings and dangerous human smuggling schemes. But US spokesman Richard Grenell said Cuba has failed to grant exit visas to 636 Cubans who already hold US entry visas. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Rumors have been circulating in Havana that the United States may be easing immigration restrictions for Cubans. But, American officials deny the allegation. "Those rumors are false," James Cason, America's top diplomat in Havana, said in an unusual nationally televised statement read by a Cuban announcer. "Cuban citizens who take to the seas in a misguided effort to reach the United States" will be sought and "prosecuted with the full force of the US legal system," he said. It was the second time Cason was allowed to express his views to Cubans. The first was in April, during negotiations over yet another hijacking. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Suggesting that the Bush administration is unlikely to make major changes in its Cuban refugee policy, new State Department chief of Latin American affairs Roger F. Noriega said that any dramatic policy shift could invite a massive stampede from the island and a humanitarian tragedy. Asked about the Bush refugee policy, which has come under attack from Cuban exiles who say Washington should stop repatriating would-be refugees following the execution in Cuba of three people who had hijacked a vessel to flee the island this spring, Noriega stressed that "we remain committed to safe, orderly and legal migration with Cuba." Noriega said he intends to "modernize" the US Radio and TV Marti broadcasts to Cuba through new ways of overcoming the Cuban government's jamming, and to find ways of sending videotapes and publications to the island. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The US Interest Section in Havana delivered a note reporting that it has issued travel documents to 20,000 Cuban citizens, "as required by the 1994 US-Cuba Migration Accord". The note said that "under the Accord the United States agreed to document for migration 20,000 Cubans per year in order to ensure the safe, legal and orderly migration from Cuba to the US". "We urge the Cuban government to grant exit

permits to all those Cubans who have received the US travel documents", it added. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba said that while Washington's granting of visas to 20,000 island residents represents a "positive element," the United States continues to violate provisions of the 1994 bilateral migration accords. The comments came in a statement from the Cuban Foreign Ministry, which noted an announcement by the US Interests Section in Havana that it had granted immigration visas to 20,000 Cuban citizens during the fiscal year 2002-2003, fulfilling one of the goals of the 1994 agreements. "Unfortunately," the communique continued, "other elements that violate the accords persist," a reference to the Cuban Adjustment Act and Washington's so-called "wet foot-dry foot" policy. Those elements "not only violate the commitments made in 1994 and 1995, but also constitute a great stimulus to illegal emigration and the associated phenomena, such as people trafficking and violence on the part of those trying to emigrate," the ministry said. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States accused Cuba of violating migration accords. Adam Ereli, State Department Deputy Spokesman, issued a press statement saying that at the last round of migration talks in June, the US delegation identified "over 600 individual cases of Cubans unfairly denied exit permits". (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro denied that his government makes it difficult for professionals with visas to emigrate to the United States. In remarks closing a conference of the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, Castro denied US allegations that Cuba is failing to comply with migration agreements. "They say that Cuba is making it hard for doctors, computer specialists and other professionals to emigrate, but as far as I know, we have never signed an agreement to protect brain-drain," Castro said, the official Prensa Latina news agency reported. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

A rumored radio broadcast that three missing Naples boaters could be in Cuban territory, perhaps in jail there, made its way to the US State department, prompting an inquiry of the Cuban government. State Department spokesman Curtis Cooper said that the agency contacted US Interests Section officials in Havana who are checking whether the Cuban government has any information about the missing trio. US Interests Section spokesman Ignacio Hernández said he was aware of the case, but, "we don't have any information right now." (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba exposed how the United States has manipulated a list of 636 persons allegedly prevented by Havana from emigrating to that country within the framework of the bilateral agreement signed in 1994, despite having their visas. The list "has been manipulated in a gross and lying way by the US authorities, accusing Cuba of violating the migratory agreement, the text affirms. The Cuban Foreign Ministry states that the list "is plagued by falsehoods and bears absolutely no relation to reality." The Cuban government acknowledged that 196 Cubans had been barred from leaving the socialist island on US visas, but it said a US list of 636 such cases was riddled with inaccuracies. Of the total 636 persons, there were errors in the case of 414; in other words 66.2% of the total names included on the list. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

The half-yearly round of talks on migration scheduled to take place in Havana between Cuba and the United States were cancelled. A new date has not been determined yet. The US State Department refused the proposed date of December 4 due to conflicts in the calendar, said a source from the US Interests Section in Havana. In turn, Washington proposed to hold the talks in January. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

NON-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA

Cuba allowed 905 US students to visit during the 2000-01 school year, a 64 percent increase over the year before. The number is expected to grow the next time figures are released as students increasingly turn to the only communist nation in the Western Hemisphere. "It's sort of forbidden fruit," said University of Nebraska senior Shane Pekny, part of a contingent of 12 communications majors who will visit Cuba this month. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Members of the Center for National Policy (CNP) Cuba Policy Advisory Group heads to Cuba. The bipartisan group, led by former Ambassador to Mexico, James R. Jones, consists of individuals with special knowledge of the politics and a personality at play in US-Cuba policy and includes representatives from the business and academic world. The group has representatives from different areas -geographical, occupational, and political and includes individuals with knowledge of substantive issues specific to the U.S.-Cuba relationship, such as drug policy, national security, and travel/tourism. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

A group from the University of Alabama will arrive in Cuba, looking for ways to open relations with the small island nation. The group is made up mostly of deans and professors, who will meet with their counterparts at the University of Havana. The payoff is hoped to be a series of academic exchanges between the two universities and shared ideas about academics and economics. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba is gaining growing attention from US students looking to study overseas. More than 905 US students were granted permission from the US government to study in Cuba during the 2000-01 academic year, a 64 percent increase over the previous year. This number is expected to continue to rise as the number of interested students increases. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro spent more than three hours with some 750 US university students and professors who are visiting the island as part of the "Semester at Sea" program. The group traveled to Havana aboard the Universe Explorer ship, under the University of Pittsburgh's "Semester at Sea" program. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Robert G. Rehme, who recently concluded his fifth term as President of the Academy of Motion Picture, Arts and Science of Hollywood, was pleased with his first trip to Cuba as part of a delegation from the Music and Arts Center of Los Angeles, which is made up of the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Ballet and the Opera of that city. During the visit to the International Cinema and Television School of San Antonio de los Baños, Rehme found similarities between the school's work and the American Film Institute, of which he is Board member. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Jeffrey Horowitz, a leading US architect and urban planner, is in Havana with a group of high-level colleagues to confer with their Cuban counterparts about the future of a city whose architecture and development have been essentially frozen in time since Fidel Castro took over in 1959. "This is an innocent, lost city that is going to be raped by the world," said Horowitz, noting that cash-flush developers from around the world are lining up to get into Cuba the moment the four-decade-old US economic embargo is lifted. "Everyone says, 'You've got to go now before it's ruined,' " said Horowitz, an architectural designer from California and founder of the Harvard Architecture Review. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

A small group of Olympia musicians in the US state of Washington, including violin maker Karl Applebaum, will travel to the Guanabacoa Music School in Cuba, on the outskirts of Havana. There, they'll teach jazz music workshops, repair instruments and begin a pen-pal exchange involving students from Olympia schools. "The level of music-making there is very high," he says of the school, which offers music instruction to 250 students ages 6 to 14, "but the conditions are terrible." Applebaum will spend some of the 12-day trip repairing violins and other instruments. "Nobody does that there," he says. "Everybody with

those skills left after the revolution." At the school, the principal doubles as a janitor. Teachers replace broken bass strings with stripped electrical wire, and children flush the toilet by dumping in a bucket of water. Instruction focuses primarily on classical music, and is subsidized by the Cuban government. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Organizers of educational study groups that travel to Cuba are expressing dismay over newly-tightened US restrictions that will soon make it even harder for Americans to travel to the island. Currently Americans seeking to travel legally to Cuba must do so under the aegis of an educational, humanitarian and religious organization possessing a special license from the Treasury Department. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Abel Prieto, Cuban Minister for Culture, highlighted the presence in Cuba of almost 60 North Americans as a sign of friendship and solidarity, when speaking at the closing of the International Forum on Ernest Hemingway. He said he was convinced that a fraternal relation between both countries is possible, and that culture may help, particularly through the figure of that writer, who lived the third part of his life in the island. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The Philadelphia Boys Choir performed at Havana's Amadeo Roldan Theater together with the children's section of the Cuban National Choir. The Philadelphia group, comprising 88 children and teens and 20 adults, first visited Cuba in 2000. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Members of the 34th Contingent of the Venceremos Brigade are on a visit to Cuba. The Venceremos Brigade is the oldest international solidarity brigade with the Cuban revolution. Formed in 1969 in the United States, thousands of American activists have gone to Cuba over the years to do volunteer work and tour the island. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

A new group of young people from the United States has arrived in Havana to begin studying medicine in Cuba. Sixteen youth from a number of different US states will study at the Latin American School of Medicine. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

After months of planning, football teams from Bonita Vista and La Jolla high schools finally set foot on the tarmac of Havana's Jose Martí Airport. Their arrival marked the beginning of a stay that will culminate in the first American football game played in Cuba since 1958. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

University Deans from Cuba and the United States have signed a cooperation agreement, which includes research development projects and exchanges of professors and students. The delegation from the US Association of Colleges and State Universities, which gathers 397 US institutions wound up a four-day visit to the island. (US-Cuba Relations)

Some 22 US experts, members of the International Coalition of Art Deco Societies, are expected to attend the third annual meeting organized by the Cuban National Council of Cultural Heritage, the Tribuna de La Habana weekly said. The meeting is expected to bolster bilateral information exchange and produce projects aimed at restoring Cuba's Art Deco structures. Experts from the University of Havana, Havana's Office of the City Historian and the Union of Architects and Engineers of Cuba are expected to be in attendance. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Phoenix resident Dana Pankey makes his fourth trip to Cuba, where he plans to work with Christian churches across the Communist-ruled island. It will be the first time he is allowed to preach openly, because Pankey is traveling using a religious visa issued by the Cuban government. Previously, he has traveled using a tourist visa. Pankey, 75, operates Missionary Action Projects, which sponsors Christian pastors in more than a dozen countries. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Around 600 US college students arrived in Havana aboard the cruise ship "Universe Explorer" to see Cuba firsthand. The members of the group, who hail from 239 US universities, are traveling around the world as part of "Semester at Sea," a program aimed at giving the students a closer look at the culture, traditions and

politics of several countries around the world, according to organizers. Hassan Pérez, head of Cuba's University Students Federation (FEU), welcomed the visitors, hailing the efforts at solidarity made by the organizers, who have docked in Havana with eight previous student groups. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro attended a meeting with some 570 US students visiting the island on the Semester at Sea program, sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh's Institute for Shipboard Education. The meeting was also attended by Cuban People's Assembly president Ricardo Alarcon and the ministers of Education, Luis Ignacio Gomez, and Higher Education, Fernando Vecino. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

RESTRICTIONS ON VISAS

Chucho Valdés, whose jazz piano concert at University of North Carolina was canceled last fall because of visa difficulties under new federal security guidelines, will perform on campus after all. The Cuban Grammy award-winning musician's concert originally scheduled for October will be held in February in the Hill Hall Auditorium. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States has denied visas to a group of Cuban wrestlers scheduled to participate in a tournament in Colorado Springs. The president of the Cuban Wrestling Federation, Gustavo Rollé, told the press in Havana that visas were not granted to the Cuban team despite efforts by the US Wrestling Federation to obtain them. The Cuban sports official said Cuba had planned to send a team of seven wrestlers that included most of the island's medal winners at the recently concluded World Wrestling Cup in Teheran. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Almost all of the 103 Cuban scholars who had registered to attend the Latin American Studies Association congress, including 40 invited to present papers, will be absent. With only three weeks to go before the gathering, only four or five of the Cubans have received an entry visa from the United States. This contrasts with previous congresses, when almost all Cuban scholars applying for a visa to attend the gathering received one. Four of the 103 Cuban scholars planning to attend the congress have had their visa applications rejected, apparently under a section of the Immigration and Nationality Act that allows the president to ban the entry into the United States of any foreigners whose presence "would be detrimental to the interests of the United States." (March, US-Cuba Relations)

The Havana Film Festival, which began this week in New York, has been marred by the absence of a number of Cuban filmmakers who were unable to attend because of difficulties in securing visas, festival coordinator Carole Rosenberg said. Rosenberg said at the opening gala that Cuban filmmaker Julio Garcia Espinosa, who is being honored at the event, will not attend the festival because he was unable to obtain a visa. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba has accused the United States of violating the migratory accords signed between both countries in 1994 and 1995. The head of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, Dagoberto Rodríguez, said that the Bush administration has reduced the number of visas for legal departures and allows air and sea hijackings to take place in order to provoke a crisis in Cuba and thus justify future actions against the island. Speaking at a news conference in the US capital the Cuban diplomat told reporters that Washington's stated doctrine of launching pre-emptive strikes against countries it may perceive as 'dangerous' to its so-called national security constitutes a very real threat against Cuba and other nations. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Answering Havana's complaints about a backlog in US immigrant visa requests, a senior US State Department official acknowledged the US mission is behind in processing but said it will fulfill its commitment of 20,000 such visas this fiscal year. Without providing any figures, the State Department official said US numbers for immigrant visas granted to Cubans during the current fiscal year that began October 1 differ "considerably" from those being cited by Cuban authorities. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban virtuoso Latin-jazz pianist Chucho Valdés will be playing at the Jazz Gallery, at 290 Hudson Street, in New York. Mr. Valdés, who lives in Havana, was scheduled to play a week at the Village Vanguard, along with two other engagements, but had to cancel because he did not have his visa. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Federal anti-terrorism efforts have forced a band of Cuban musicians to cancel an appearance in Hampton, Virginia, a spokesman for the group Sierra Maestra said. The nine-member band - which plays a style of traditional guitar-based music called "son" - was scheduled to perform at the American Theatre in Hampton as part of a tour celebrating the band's 25th anniversary. But the FBI, which now screens visa applications from countries identified as connected to terrorism, has held up approval, according to Sierra Maestra's American booking agency. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's archery team will miss the world championships and possibly the Olympics because the athletes weren't granted US visas in time, sports officials said. Nemesio Rodriguez, president of the Cuban archery federation, said two archers received visas and two others received no response. "We began the process within the time specified by the United States," Rodriguez said, adding that US consular officials interviewed the athletes about their requests May 19. He said the delay in visas was "a result of a hostile policy toward our country, in detriment to the purest values of Olympism." (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban nominees in the forthcoming Latin Grammys may miss next month's awards ceremony in Miami because of visa problems. "We have not received any visa applications from Cuban citizen Grammy nominees in connection with the Latin Grammy Awards ceremony," a US State Department spokeswoman said. "Visa applications received from award nominees to attend the Latin Grammy Awards are adjudicated in compliance with all relevant laws and regulations governing the issuance of non-immigrant visas," the spokeswoman said. The three acts involved are reported to be Ibrahim Ferrer, of Buena Vista Social Club fame, Afro-Cuban jazz star Chucho Valdés and the salsa band Los Van Van. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States said it might not be able to give visas to Cuban musicians in time for them to attend today's Latin Grammy Awards in Miami because they sent in their applications too late. Among musicians believed unlikely to make the event in Miami, the heartland of the anti-Castro US Cuban exile community, are Latin jazz king Chucho Valdés and Los Van Van, a group considered the Rolling Stones of salsa. Fidel Castro's government has said US authorities deliberately held up visas but the State Department said the applications came in late and took time to process because Cuba is on its list of state sponsors of terrorism. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban musicians, nominated for the Latin Grammy Awards, held a news conference in Havana to denounce the refusal of entry visas to attend the awards ceremony in Miami. Musician Zenaida Romeu said that the absence of Cuban nominees at the Latin Grammy ceremony, besides a deliberate mistake, will be an enormous deficiency. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Three Cuban sports officials said they failed to receive American visas to attend a regional volleyball meeting that opened in Atlanta the same day. Angel Iglesias, vice president of the Cuban Institute of Sports, told reporters that US visas never arrived for him, Omelio Castillo, president of the Cuban Volleyball Federation, and Jorge Enrique Luzon, member of the legal commission of the International Volleyball Federation. "Cuba denounces this arbitrary act excluding it from the meeting," Iglesias told a late afternoon news conference. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The charanga band Orquesta Aragon canceled its performance in the US because of problems obtaining visas from the American government, the band's representatives said. Attorney Bill Martinez, of San Francisco, California, who represents the Cuban-based band, said band member's visas were delayed - not denied. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban Book Institute lamented Washington's decision to deny visas to a Cuban cultural official and a poet to participate in a book fair in Puerto Rico to which they had both been invited. "Once again, this is an attempt to silence voices from the world of Cuban culture," stated an official note from the Institute. The

text went on to say that another group invited to the event is still awaiting a reply from the State Department stating whether or not their entry has been approved. The US authorities denied visas to both Máximo Salgado Perdigón, the Institute's president and poet Aymara Aymerich. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba denounced the US refusal to extend visas to Cuban officials Ciro Perez and Misael Lima, scheduled to speak at the 45th Central American and Caribbean Sports Organization (ODECABE) Assembly. A press release from the Cuban Olympic Committee (COC) says that "the new provocation is part of a hardening of US policy against the island". Perez, ODECABE second vice president, Lima, the COC executive director, and a Cuban delegate could not participate in the assembly or the Executive Committee meeting to be held in Saint Croix, US Virgin Islands. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

SALES AND POTENTIAL BUSINESS

Cuban importers began an inspection visit of North Carolina food producers as the communist country tries to expand trade ties for American agricultural goods. There are characteristics of the crops that we don't have in Cuba," said Máximo R. Martínez Rodríguez, director of vegetable and fruit quarantine for the Cuban government. "It is our intent to adjust the regulations to avoid diseases." Mike Blanton, a deputy state agriculture commissioner, said North Carolina hopes to increase the sale of agricultural products to Cuba. "We can be competitive," said Blanton. "It's a country close to us and offers the Cubans a savings in transportation costs." (January, US-Cuba Relations)

United States Senator Maria Cantwell (Democrat-Washington) will lead a delegation of food and agribusiness executives from the State of Washington and will speak at the US-Cuba Business Conference being held in Cancun and Havana in February. The US-Cuba Business Conference is the third major business event involving talks about trade with Cuba to take place in the last year. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's highest-ranking diplomat in Washington did some important networking in Tampa. Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera, head of Cuba's Interest Section in Washington, held a round of informal meetings with business people, including a number with ties to the port and local agricultural interests. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

The National Black Farmers Association is working on a deal to sell Cuba \$20 million in food ranging from chicken to wheat this spring. John Boyd, head of the group, said more than 10,000 black farmers would benefit from the agreement with Fidel Castro. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

Trade between the Tampa Bay area and Cuba was slated to resume after 40 years with a shipment of animal feed bound for the southern Cuban port of Cienfuegos. The shipment of 3,150 metric tons of dicalcium phosphate will take less than three days aboard the 330-foot vessel Frigga. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba will continue to purchase US agricultural products for cash at current levels of expenditures, but will not increase purchases unless there are "significant changes" in US law, Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera, the chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington told the press. Rodríguez Barrera said it is Cuba's "intention to keep buying" at current levels, "but for significant increases we will need to see significant changes" in US law such as "trade financing or lifting the travel ban." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's food import company pledged to buy \$10 million in agricultural products from Alabama in a move to revive historic trade ties with the southern state, members of a delegation said. Alabama Lt. Gov. Lucy Baxley said that Pedro Alvarez of Alimport asked the delegation over the weekend to work with Alabama producers in drawing up a list of farm products. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban trade minister Raúl de la Nuez said that Cuba contracted \$250 million in mostly agricultural imports with US companies in 2002 and that most of that has already been supplied and paid. "Of those \$250 million, \$189 million was already supplied and paid," de la Nuez told the press on the sidelines of the US -

Cuba Business Conference in Cancún, Mexico. Pedro Alvarez, the chairman of the Cuban government's purchasing organization, Alimport, said that total US exports to Cuba last year and so far this year are \$255 million, with \$210 million of that in completed transactions. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Ships bound for Cuba are steaming out of the Port of Galveston. Texas farmers recently formed the Texas-Cuba Trade Alliance to seek nearly \$60 million in potential business on the communist-controlled Caribbean island. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban importers and government officials say US business will miss the boat in Cuba if it fails to act soon and take advantage of business opportunities there. Meeting this week in the resort town of Cancún, Mexico, for the second US-Cuba Business Conference, speakers including Cuban Trade Minister Raúl de la Nuez said other countries are gaining a dominant share of the nation's business, particularly in the area of tourism. They pointed to Europe and Canada as being by far the biggest international investors in Cuba with 26 percent and 15 percent, respectively, of market share in terms of foreign investment and as the dominant global players in the Communist island's economy. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Senator Kent Conrad (Democrat-North Dakota), plans to travel to Cuba to discuss increased agricultural trade between North Dakota and the island nation. "We have North Dakota producers who are managing to sell goods, albeit indirectly, into Cuba," Conrad said. "But that's a less efficient way of doing it than if we could market more directly." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Texas is home to four of the nine US ports that have benefited thus far from trade with Cuba, according to Cuban trade officials. All the ports on the list are on the Gulf Coast, putting them within only 1,000 miles of the island nation. The ports of Beaumont, Freeport, Galveston and Houston have all shipped agriculture products to Cuba since July 2001, when the US government eased the trade embargo, according to the officials at the U.S.-Cuba Business Conference in Cancún, Mexico. Thus far, Galveston leads the pack in shipping agricultural goods to Cuba, sending about 150,000 tons of Archer Daniels Midland Co. wheat to the island nation last year alone. The Port of Galveston began shipping wheat to Cuba after Hurricane Michelle, when the country needed to replenish its losses. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro talked to democrat senators Mary Cantwell (Washington), and Ken Conrad (North Dakota), Lieutenant Governor of Kansas, John Moore, and more than 160 participants to the 2nd US-Cuba Trade Conference. The meeting was held in Cancun, Mexico, and it concluded with a visit to Varadero, Cuba. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

The first shipment of seafood from the US to Cuba since 1959, left from Los Angeles this week. The consulting group Global Strategies Trading of San Diego negotiated the seafood agreement in September at the first US food fair in Havana. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

John Parker, a cattle farmer from Florida, USA, made history in Havana when he signed in front of TV cameras a contract to sell 150 cows to Cuba as part of a US-Cuba trade agreement allowing for Cuban imports from the US. Cuban viewers watched Parker and Pedro Álvarez, president of Cuban state-owned Alimport, sign the approximately 200,000 USD contract. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

A delegation of business representatives from North Carolina, led by Meg Scott Phipps, Agriculture Commissioner for that state, is visiting Cuba. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Governor Tom Vilsack says he won't travel to Cuba after a recent crackdown on Cuban dissidents. Vilsack and other state officials had discussed finding ways to market Iowa products in Cuba. The governor says he changed his mind about traveling to Cuba after several dissidents who expressed opposition to Fidel Castro's regime were jailed and three men, not dissidents, were executed. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Two of the five members of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors are in Cuba. A third went last month, and a fourth visited the island in December. County insiders say some of the supervisors are

interested in potential trade opportunities between Cuba and Los Angeles County, which has the largest US port complex. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Maryland's agriculture secretary canceled a trade mission to Cuba because of concerns over Fidel Castro's recent crackdown on dissidents. The *Pride of Baltimore II*, a replica of a Baltimore clipper, was to bring the Maryland delegation to Havana. But the organization that runs the state-owned ship announced Tuesday that it also was dropping Cuba from its itinerary. "While we are committed to expanding the market for Maryland's agricultural products, Gov. (Robert) Ehrlich and I share the Bush administration's serious concerns about making this visit to Cuba at this time," said Agriculture Secretary Lewis R. Riley. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The Mississippi Coast Trade Council has received notice it's been approved to receive a travel license for Cuba. The license is from the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Controls, said Mike Olivier, executive director of the Harrison County Development Commission and current president of the trade council. He said the purpose of the council is to represent companies, particularly Mississippi companies, that are interested in selling products from a list approved by the federal government. (US-Cuba Relations)

The Mississippi State Port at Gulfport shipped Southern yellow pine to Cuba. Ships have left Gulfport since December 2001, with frozen chickens to Havana. The most recent shipment left, this time with lumber. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Two Cuban veterinary inspectors are on a tour of several U.S. livestock farms to make arrangements for the first cattle sales to Cuba in more than forty years. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

A US port and a Cuban state company signed an agreement to ship US agricultural and food products to the island. The president of the Cuban company Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, and the head of the administrative council of the port of Corpus Christi, Texas, Ruben Bonilla, agreed that this was a historic agreement, the first of its kind to be signed since the more than four-decade-long US economic embargo was imposed on the island. Alvarez said that the agreement allowed for the annual shipment of 2.1 million tons of bulk and frozen products from the United States to Cuba. He added that US firms had already sold Cuba \$480 million worth of goods, of which Havana had already paid some \$339 million for shipment to the island of some 1.4 million tons of goods from 11 US ports. Cuban imports from the United States include grain, vegetables, eggs, frozen chicken, animal feed, butter and pork. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

An American-flagged vessel docked in Havana harbor for the first time in nearly four decades to deliver a cargo of wood and paper to Cuba. The *Helen III*, of Maybank Shipping firm, South Carolina, delivered six tons of wood and 1,614 tons of paper, which were imported by Cuban food company Alimport. The 97-meter-long vessel acquired special authorization from the US government to enter Cuban waters. Alimport Director Pedro Alvarez and President of Maybank, Jack Maybank, received the vessel at the port. The shipment worth about 1.5 million US dollars was part of a contract to ship a total of 10,000 tons of cargo, said Alvarez. (US-Cuba Relations)

A shipment of livestock including 140 cattle, one of which was born during the trip, arrived in Cuba, the first significant batch of American animals to be sold in the island. The shipment was made under a 2000 exception to the long-standing US trade embargo on Cuba. American agricultural products can be sold to the island as long as transactions are done in cash or by financing from a third country. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

A Naples rancher, J.P. Wright & Co., announced that it had delivered 148 dairy cattle to the island in what the firm said was the largest successful US shipment of cows to Cuba since the communist revolution. The shipment, the latest of several summer deliveries, raised to nearly 450 the number of US cattle that have been sent to Cuba since Congress in 2000 exempted US food and agricultural products from the overall trade embargo, provided Cuba pays cash. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

A delegation of farmers and businesspeople from the US state of Alabama are in the Cuban capital to become acquainted with trade and commercial possibilities with the island. Speaking with reporters in Havana, Ron Sparks, Alabama's Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries and leader of the visiting delegation, said that they planned to negotiate the sales and delivery of agricultural commodities from Alabama producers to potential customers in Cuba. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba signed agreements with Alabama and its port of Mobile to start importing food later this year, adding to a growing list of US states trading with the communist-run island nation. Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries Commissioner Ron Sparks, heading a state delegation to Cuba, called it "the first step toward establishing a permanent trade relation" with Cuba. The president of the Cuban food import agency Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, said Cuba was set to buy \$10 million worth of chicken and dairy products. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

California businessmen and Cuban officials signed an agreement in Havana that will soon allow sales to the island of \$10 million in food products and medical equipment. The document was signed by Barry Sedlik, CEO of the World Trade Center Association Los Angeles/Long Beach, and Pedro Alvarez, director of Cuba's state-owned Alimport. In a press conference, Sedlik said he was focusing especially on gradually increasing mutual exchanges with Cuba. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

The World Trade Center Association Los Angeles-Long Beach along with a partner, Global Strategies Trading LLC, has concluded a week-long business trade mission to Havana. The mission resulted in an agreement with Alimport, the Cuban import company, to secure \$10 million in business over the coming year. The trade mission was comprised of California-based companies involved in food, medical, and health care. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Members of Montana's congressional delegation are leading a small group of agricultural leaders to Cuba for meetings to learn about the potential for future trade and business dealings in that country, officials said. Democratic Senator Max Baucus and Republican Representative Denny Rehberg will be with seven Montanans with agricultural ties on the "fact-finding mission," which includes a scheduled meeting with Fidel Castro, said Barrett Kaiser, a Baucus spokesman. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

For the first time in more than 40 years, representatives from the United States travel sector will meet in a public forum to discuss the potential for travel between the US and Cuba. The meeting - the US-Cuba Travel Conference - will be held in Cancún, Mexico, in October 2003 and is sponsored by the newly formed Association of Travel-Related Industry Officials (ATRIP). Along with ATRIP, a Cuban delegation of more than 20 officials and travel specialists from Havana will be at the conference led by Cuban Minister of Tourism, Ibrahim Ferradaz García. Support for this event is also being provided by Congressional leaders in both the Senate and House, Cuba Working Group. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

US Senator Max Baucus of Montana wraps up a four-day visit to Havana. Baucus, a democrat, is heading a delegation of agriculture and tourism executives from his home state and sealed a \$10 million agreement to sell food products to the island. The trade deal was signed with Pedro Alvarez, president of the state-run food importer, Alimport. Alvarez said that since the US Congress eased the trade embargo in December 2001 to allow Havana to buy food products for cash, "we have reached more than \$500 million in purchases." (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Port Manatee officials learned at a trade show in New Orleans that a second shipment of animal feed will be headed to Cuba from the port. The first shipment was made in January, marking the first time Port Manatee had done shipping business of a non-humanitarian nature with Cuba since the trade embargo imposed in the 1960s. The embargo actually predates the port, which opened in 1970. Arthur Savage, president of A.R. Savage & Son, the shipping agent representing the Cuban buyer Alimport, said the trade represents the fourth to Cuba for his company from Tampa Bay this year. Two were sent from Port Manatee and two from Tampa Bay. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

Members of a Texas trade mission to Cuba again pressed their case to sell rice from Texas producers. Ernest Bezdek, manager of trade development for the Port of Beaumont, said the chances are "very good" that Texas rice farmers could once again establish trade links to Cuba that were cut by embargo in the early 1960s. (September, US-Cuba Relations)

A request by US Senator Blanche Lincoln and nine other senators for a second American food exhibition in Cuba has been rejected by the federal government. The US State and Treasury departments cited Cuba's "recent repressive actions" in turning down the request. The State Department said in a letter to the senators made public this week that Cuba's government and US foreign partners "could interpret licensing of another such fair as conveying a sense of normalcy and business as usual." "Should the political situation improve, for example, by the regime releasing the unfairly imprisoned opposition members or otherwise indicating its interest in reform, we would be prepared to reconsider our views regarding these types of license requests." (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The sponsor of a US Food and Agribusiness Exhibition last year in Cuba charged the Bush administration is refusing to grant him a license for a second exhibition for political reasons. Peter Nathan, president of PNW Exhibicon of Connecticut, said he believes the Bush administration does not want the food and agribusiness exhibition to take place as planned in January because the show is likely to get a lot of international news coverage and would be bad for President Bush's chances of maintaining the support of Cuban Americans opposed to the government of President Fidel Castro. "This is definitely a political decision, having more to do with the re-election campaign than with Castro," Nathan said. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

John Parke Wright and several other Florida ranchers toured the Niña Bonita farm on Havana's outskirts to see how Jersey heifers and New York Holsteins imported this summer are adapting to Cuba's subtropical climate. "I have no desire to prop up any government or any military," Wright said. "The cows here only go toward milk for people. I'm not waiting for any change." Wright's 15,000-acre family ranch was expropriated after Fidel Castro's revolution, but these days the fifth-generation Naples cattle rancher wants to beef up future trade deals and forget about the past. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba expects that Cuban-born US business people start arriving in the island like those from other states, and that Florida becomes one of the states with most commercial ties in these lands. "We do not exclude US resident Cuban émigrés who have built an honest capital to trade with Cuba," Pedro Alvarez, director of the state firm Alimport, which is in charge of food purchases for the island, said to the press. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Booming sales of US foodstuffs to Cuba have fallen short of easing the decades-old trade embargo that Havana wants lifted, the country's ambassador to Spain said. Speaking several weeks before the communist nation presents its annual report about the effects of the US trade embargo to the United Nations, Ambassador Isabel Allende said her country was suffering under one-sided trading conditions imposed by the United States. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Over the past nine months, US firms have sold some \$238 million worth of farm products to the Cuban state import company, Alimport, accounting for around 25 percent of the island's annual food imports. Statistics from the company suggest that this boom in trade has even raised the United States above Spain, France and Italy in terms of such exports to Cuba. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The Indiana Farm Bureau signed a commitment to work for the repeal of trade and travel sanctions against Cuba in return for a Cuban pledge to buy \$15 million in agricultural products. Cuban officials said they have spent \$512 million on food imports from 35 US states in two years after a four-decade-old trade embargo against President Fidel Castro's government was relaxed by the US Congress. Indiana Democratic Senator Evan Bayh, heading a agricultural and business delegation to Havana, said trading with Cuba was the best way to promote "positive change" on the Caribbean island, the hemisphere's only communist state. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Tour operators from the United States and Cuba are meeting with Cuban officials in Cancun, Mexico to discuss the Caribbean island nation's travel industry potential, in defiance of Washington's plans to tighten the ban prohibiting US citizens from visiting Cuba. The Travel Conference meeting is being held by ATRIP (Association of Trip Industry Related Professionals), USA-Engage, Nacional Foreign Council, US-Cuba Trade Association, ABC Charters, Cuba Travel Services, Marazul Charters, and others. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

At a conference of Cuban and US tourism operators, both sides said limited hotel space could restrict any increase in American tourism, even if politics allows it. "Pent-up demand is going to be huge" after decades of restrictions on US visits, said Robert Whitley, president of the United States Tour Operators Association, which represents companies moving 10 million tourists a year. Most estimates say at least 1 million Americans - and perhaps many more - could try to visit Cuba in the first year after a travel opening. Miguel Figueras, adviser to Cuba's Tourism Ministry, said that figure could reach 2.5 million to 3 million in five years. Cuba's rapidly growing tourist industry accounts for 40 percent of the Cuban government's foreign trade income. It expects to serve 1.9 million tourists this year, most from Canada, Germany, Italy, Spain, France and Britain. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

"We are a large industry and sometimes we do not use the political power we have in terms of jobs, in terms of votes," said Brad Belt, executive director of the new Association of Travel Related Industry Professionals (TRIP). The group organized a conference in Cancun on Cuban travel. If they are successful, Fidel Castro's government could see a dramatic increase in the number of tourists - expected to be 1.9 million this year - who have become the island's largest source of hard currency. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

About 40 American tour operators visited Cuba, ignoring the US administration's toughening crackdown on travel to the country. The Americans flew to Havana for a firsthand look at tourist locales after a two-day Cuba travel conference in the Mexican Caribbean resort of Cancun. "We are now asking when - and not if" the US restrictions on travel to Cuba will be eliminated, said Matt Grayson, government affairs director for the National Tour Association. Conference organizer Kirby Jones of Washington said a loophole in the US travel restrictions allowed the operators to visit the island legally for the day because they were fully hosted and did not spend any money. The group was flying back to Cancun in the evening. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro told American tour operators that if US restrictions on travel are lifted, visitors will find Cuban tourism workers to be well educated. Tourism workers must have good knowledge of a broad range of subjects, Castro told the group during a surprise encounter at Havana's convention center. "If not, how will they speak with the tourists?" he said. Castro told the Americans that Cuba depended on tourism to pay for its free healthcare and education programs. "We are very appreciative of what you are doing," Castro told the group, referring to lobbying efforts in Washington to end US restrictions on travel to Cuba. Castro did not comment on the Bush administration's opposition to loosening travel restrictions for Americans who want to visit Cuba, and its campaign to crack down on illegal travel to the island. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The Montana Farmers Union and other state agricultural producers are eager to begin trade with Cuba under a deal struck last month between the state's congressional leaders and Cuba's largest importer of food. If the deal holds together, Hi-Country Beef Jerky sticks and other Montana-based agricultural products could soon be heading to the isolated socialist nation, which sits only 20 minutes by jet from US shores. Brooks Daily, vice president of the Montana Farmers Union, addressed a sparse audience at Carroll College where he shared the success of Montana's recent delegation to Cuba. The delegation looked to advance normalized trade and travel between the two nations. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

At the fair ground's most visible pavilion, after the central building reserved for Cuban companies, the US food companies had set up 26 stands. A banner above them read: "The New Flavor of Cuba." The banner was decorated with packs of Clorets, Dentine, Trident, Chiclets and other brand-name US products. "The presence of US companies is evidence of the growing movement in that country for trade and normal

relations," Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez said, as he opened Cuba's most important commercial event. Fair organizers said 153 US businessmen, representing more than 50 companies from 19 states, were attending. Cuba to date has purchased and contracted for about \$500 million in food products, including shipping costs, Pedro Alvarez, Chairman of state food-importer Alimport, said. "We plan to sign \$100 million in contracts at the fair, around half with the Americans," Alvarez told the press. "The US companies here demonstrate the contradictory nature, irrationality and absurdity of US policy (...) it is very important they are here," Vice President Carlos Lage, in charge of Cuba's economic development, told the reporters. "It is good business, a good market for us," said Joel Coleman, export sales director for Carolina Turkeys from North Carolina. "We have sold the Cubans 3.5 million pounds of turkey and hope to sign another contract. This business is important to our company," he said. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba bought \$20 million worth of food, paper and lumber from US companies, the first day of Havana's international trade fair where the communist nation promised to purchase \$50 million in US goods. "We have bought more than \$500 million worth of US products since December 2001," said a glowing Pedro Alvarez, chairman of Cuba's state food importer Alimport, as he signed one contract after another at the trade show. "We plan to sign more than \$100 million in contracts at the fair, around half with the Americans," Alvarez said. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Mississippi, long considered one of the most politically conservative states in the nation, is cultivating a small but burgeoning trade relationship with Cuba's communist-run government. Ships laden with an extensive and growing list of US food and agricultural products such as beef, chicken, rice and cheese now sail regularly from Gulfport and Pascagoula to Havana, the Cuban capital. "Mississippi has been very aggressive to put itself in a position to increase the amount of trade to Cuba," said Don Allee, executive director and chief executive officer of the Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport. More than 20,000 tons of cargo, or about 1 percent of the port's total shipments, went to Cuba last year. "When the embargo is lifted, whoever has a relationship with the Cubans has an advantage," Allee said. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba, the world's eighth largest sugar producer, is in talks to buy sugar from the United States for its domestic market, the president of the Cuban food import agency Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, said. Cuba's sugar output has declined dramatically in recent years, forcing the closure of half its unproductive mills last year. The communist-run government has had to import sugar from Brazil for local consumption because much of its production is under contract for export. "There is a US company interested in selling us sugar and we are interested in buying," Alvarez told the press. He hoped a deal could be struck during the trade fair in Havana. Talks are focusing on US export quota availability, a business source said. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States' ADM and Cuba's state-owned Alimport signed a \$17 million contract to sell crude and refined cooking oil, soybeans, soy flour and cornmeal to the island. "We're very proud to be suppliers of food and fodder to Cuba, and we're also proud of everything we have done for Cubans," said ADM vice president Robert Cook. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Sugar is among the new products Cuba hopes to buy from American farm producers as it varies the goods purchased under an exception in the US trade embargo, a leading import official said. "Cuba is ready to buy sugar from the United States," Pedro Alvarez, president of the Cuban food import firm Alimport told a news conference held to announce a new goodwill agreement with the Port of Manatee, Florida. "We are just waiting now on the American companies." (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban import company Alimport and Port Manatee officials signed an agreement to ship commodities from the Tampa Bay seaport. The agreement came during a trade mission by Port Manatee officials to Cuba, the port said in a statement. It is the latest in a series of moves to increase shipments of food from Florida ports to Cuba. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

A Californian biotech company is seeking US permission to license a promising Cuban cancer drug that is barred from the United States by trade sanctions, Cuban scientists said at a biotechnology conference in

Havana. CancerVax Corp, based in Carlsbad, California, wants to conduct joint research on cancer vaccines being developed in Havana, the director of Cuba's Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology, Luis Herrera, said. CancerVax, which made its debut on Nasdaq, said in its IPO prospectus filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission, that it had signed letters of intent with Cuba's Center for Molecular Biology (CIM) and Canada's YM Biosciences (YM.TO) relating to the license of an antibody that can slow or halt tumors by acting on the body's immune system. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Having visited Cuba recently, Kansas Agriculture Secretary Adrian Polansky said he would like to return to the island nation to pursue trade agreements covering grain and other products. Polansky said the United States should make trade with Cuba easier to foster democracy there and build relationships for when aging dictator Fidel Castro is no longer in power. And Barry Flinchbaugh, a Kansas State University agricultural economist who went with Polansky to Cuba, said five decades of effort to isolate the Castro regime had failed to dislodge it, meaning the United States should try another approach. "They're not accomplishing our purpose to any degree," Flinchbaugh said. "Find me an embargo that works. They don't work." (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba said American oil companies were welcome to join off-shore exploration of its Gulf of Mexico waters. Spain's Repsol-YPF SA plans to sink an exploratory well in March in waters one mile (1.6 km) deep off Cuba's northwestern coast in search of light oil deposits. A Canadian company has also signed risk contracts to explore for oil deposits there. "The government of Cuba wishes to say it has no objection whatsoever to the involvement of American oil companies in exploration and drilling in our exclusive economic zone on mutually beneficial terms," said a statement published by the ruling Communist Party newspaper, Granma. It noted that US food and agribusiness companies have traded with Cuba for two years, under an exception to trade sanctions imposed by Washington for four decades on Cuban President Fidel Castro's government. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

The door to American trade with Cuba was nudged open a bit more as more than 250 US agribusiness representatives traveled to Havana for sales talks, marking the second anniversary of the first US commercial food shipments to the communist island. Pedro Alvarez, head of Alimport, Cuba's food import company, told the press that he expected at least \$130 million in new sales contracts would be signed during four days of talks. "We've had a really strong response from companies" to the government's invitation to participate in the talks, said Alvarez. He expects 147 companies from 29 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico to attend. Alvarez said the companies include Riceland Foods Inc. of Stuttgart, Arkansas; Cargill Inc., of Minnetonka, Minnesota; Archer Daniels Midland of Decatur, Illinois; FC Stone of Des Moines, Iowa; and Kaehler's Homedale Farms in St. Charles, Minnesota. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

American food producers signed the first contracts in three days of negotiations expected to result in as much as \$130 million in new sales. Scores of farmers, port operators and supermarket representatives from around the United States watched as Pedro Alvarez, head of the Cuban import company Alimport, signed contracts to buy \$4.7 million worth of rice from Riceland Foods Inc. of Stuttgart, Arkansas. Later, Alvarez signed contracts for Cuba to buy \$700,000 in peas and lentils from PS International Ltd., of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and \$600,000 in chicken leg quarters from Gold Kist of Atlanta. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Cargill Inc. said it has reached agreement to sell an additional 110,000 tons of farm commodities to Cuba in the first half of 2004, starting the third year of resumed agricultural trade with Cuba. The Minnetonka-based food and agriculture company didn't give specific details on the sales, except to say they involve corn, soybeans, soybean meal and soybean oil. Industry observers said the deal will exceed \$20 million in value. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro chatted about nutrition and energy prices during a private meeting with US farm officials who are in Havana for three days of talks on bringing more agricultural goods to Cuba, those at the meeting said. Cuba wants to sign contracts to buy American farm products worth as much as \$130 million during the talks. The discussions -- and Castro's private meeting with about a dozen Americans -- underscore the

importance Cuba has put on trade with US companies two years since first exploiting an exception to the US trade embargo allowing direct sales of American farm products. By the end of Tuesday, \$55.5 million in contracts had been announced, including several in prices tied directly to the Chicago Board of Trade -- a first in two years of trade between communist Cuba and American agribusiness. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba, which this year became the US cattle industry's newest customer expressed sympathy for American ranchers dealing with their first case of mad cow disease and hopes that the situation is resolved soon. "Our sympathy goes out to U.S. ranchers and the meat industry and we hope the situation is cleared up quickly in their interest, ours and the world's," Pedro Alvarez, chairman of the state company that is Communist Cuba's only importer of US farm products, said in a telephone interview. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

In a letter, Cuba ratified its verbal offer to help in the investigations on the mad cow disease detected in the United States. "Our research institutions and development in the field of livestock health, as well as the people who work there, are willing to cooperate with their US counterparts," expressed Alimport director Pedro Alvarez in a letter sent to the US Meat Export Federation President and CEO Phillip M. Seng. In the letter, also addressed to the US National Cattlemen's Beef Association President Eric Davis, the executive of the Cuban food import company emphasized that Cuba will not cancel any of its commitments with US suppliers. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

THE CUBAN FIVE - THE WASP NET

Cuban Parliament president Ricardo Alarcón has revealed that information on terrorism that Havana delivered to the US's FBI in 1998 had been gathered by five Cubans wrongly accused and convicted of spying against the US government - and the five were arrested shortly after the information was made available. The documents contained information on terrorism carried out against Cuba by the Cuban American National Foundation and its leaders who provided funding while at the same time coordinating such acts. (January, US-Cuba Relations)

There are now a total of 108 committees in 51 countries around the world, organized to work for the immediate release of five Cubans that belonged to the Wasp Net. According to the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP), Spain, Mexico and the United States are the countries with the largest number of groups to "Free the Five". (January, US-Cuba Relations)

A group that advocates the forceful overthrow of Cuba's communist government claims that anti-Castro operatives in Cuba pulled off an assassination attempt on a Cuban spy. Rodolfo Frómeta, director of Comandos F-4, a Miami-based paramilitary organization, said members of the group in Cuba tried to assassinate Juan Pablo Roque early in December in Havana. Roque was wounded during a shootout, which killed one member of Comandos F-4 and a man accompanying Roque, Frómeta said. Roque is a target of the militants because they think he is responsible for the 1996 shutdown by Cuban MiGs of two Brothers to the Rescue Cessnas, in which four Cuban-Americans on board died. Roque, a Cuban spy who joined Brothers to the Rescue in an undercover operation, returned to Cuba the day before the shutdown. "I have never said that I order assassinations from here," said Frómeta, who said he is the highest-ranking member of the organization in the US. The FBI declined comment. (January, Exile Community)

Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón denounced the silence of the US press regarding the five Cuban political prisoners in this country. Alarcón affirmed, "the huge US media that calls itself 'liberal' remains silent in front of the injustice against the five Cubans. It makes no commentary and does not even refer to the event." (February, US-Cuba Relations)

South Florida District Judge Joan Lenard rejected a request by Antonio Guerrero's lawyer, Leonard Weinglass, to hold a new trial. Guerrero has been in prison in the US since September 1998, accused of espionage. (February, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba charged that the United States was holding five Cubans convicted of spying incommunicado to thwart an April 7 appeal of their sentences, and demanded they be allowed to see lawyers. Cuban lawmakers said the agents, who are being held in five different federal prisons, were all placed in solitary confinement on February 28, and had since been denied contact with lawyers, family and Cuban officials. "This measure was adopted by Washington with the deliberate purpose of obstructing a just appeals process," the statement by Cuba's National Assembly said. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

US Homeland Security agents arrested a motel clerk on charges he failed to formally advise federal authorities that he had been an intelligence officer in Cuba before coming to the United States. Lázaro Amaya La Puente, a night-shift clerk at the Le Jeune Motel on Southwest Eighth Street, was picked up by agents of the Department of Homeland Security's bureau of immigration and customs enforcement, one of three bureaus that replaced the Immigration and Naturalization Service on March 1. Amaya La Puente, 39, is the latest in a growing list of suspects with alleged Cuban intelligence connections arrested or convicted in South Florida and elsewhere in the country in recent years. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba's Foreign Ministry has filed a protest with the United States over the treatment of five Cubans serving lengthy prison sentences after being convicted of spying. Cuban officials made the announcement, saying the five nationals are being held in solitary confinement. Cuba also says they have not been allowed to communicate with their relatives and attorneys. Washington did not immediately react to the protest, which comes as defense lawyers prepare to appeal the men's cases next month. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

The US claimed "reasons of national security" were behind the decision to enforce restrictions on five Cuban spies incarcerated in several US prison facilities. Without elaborating any further, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher indicated that "some restrictions have been applied to these Cuban inmates on the instructions of the Justice Department." All five Cuban spies were convicted of attempting against the national security by a federal court in Miami, Florida. (March, US-Cuba Relations)

Washington has decided to put an end to the arbitrary solitary confinement of the 5 Cuban prisoners, Gerardo Hernández, René González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González. Though placed in the general penal population, they are subjected to several discriminatory restrictions against them related to the use of the telephone, correspondence, consular access, and family visits. (April, Foreign Affairs)

Gerardo Hernández' lawyer, Paul McKenna, has lodged an appeal with the Atlanta Circuit Court asking for a retrial for his client. Hernández is one of the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States. McKenna stated that he is very pleased at the filing of the report and confident of a favorable result in terms of the appeal. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

The United States has denied visas to the wives of Gerardo Hernández and René González -- two of the five Cuban prisoners in US jails. Adriana Pérez O'Connor and Olga Salanueva, the wives of Gerardo and René, respectively, had applied for visas to visit their husbands. The US rejection is the third time visas have been denied for the two women. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

The judicial process to which five Cubans accused of espionage are submitted in the United States is an attempt to hide the past, present, and planned future terrorist actions of that country against Cuba, Cuban Congressional president Ricardo Alarcón denounced. At the opening of an exhibit of the cartoons of Gerardo Hernández, who is one of the Cubans sentenced for spying in the US, Alarcón pointed out that lack of information about the case is the Achilles' heel for the liberation of the five men, imprisoned for allegedly endangering national security of the United States. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Five Cuban men convicted of spying in the United States have spawned a loyal following in the United States, led by activists who have long supported the Cuban revolution. "Quite a number of us across the country who work together in support of Cuba's right to exist formed the National Committee to Free the Five Cuban Political Prisoners," said Gloria La Riva of San Francisco, one of the founders. "The reason we picked a long name is because we want people to know that they're prisoners in the US and that they're

political prisoners." Those activists have had rallies, collected donations, pored over legal documents, participated in news conferences about each appeal in the case and maintained a Web site for the men, who they think were only trying to protect their country by infiltrating Cuban exile groups in Miami. They have advocated for the men with the same fervor as the Cuban government, something that irks Cuban exiles, who say the men were a threat to the United States. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Rodolfo Dávalos, distinguished Cuban lawyer, said that the correct way to proceed in the case of the five Cubans imprisoned in US since 1998 (the Five) would be to annul the entire legal process. "If reason and justice are really imposed in Atlanta, according to law, everything ruled should be thrown out starting from the first denial for a change of venue for the trial," said Dávalos, interviewed by the local press in Matanzas. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

More than 300 Mexican lawmakers, mostly deputies and senators, have expressed solidarity with five Cubans jailed in the United States under espionage charges, and claimed a new trial to be held. A document was handed over to Jorge Bolaños, Cuban ambassador in Mexico, and to Eusebio Leal, Cuban deputy. The Mexican lawmakers expressed their concern for the five Cubans' arbitrary arrest. (July, Foreign Affairs)

Members of the 11th Canadian Solidarity with Cuba Brigade have met with family members of the five Cuban prisoners being held in the United States. The members of the 11th Canadian Brigade are carrying out volunteer work in citrus plantations in the province of Pinar del Río, located to the west of the Cuban capital. During their stay, the brigadistas -- many of whom are Latinos who reside in Canada -- have been touring schools and hospitals as well as places of social and cultural interest. (August, Domestic Affairs)

An organization that favors relations between the US and Cuba said that 55 000 signatures were gathered in the US to obtain the release of five Cubans who are in several American jails. Alianza Martiana, a Miami group associated with Fidel Castro's government, says in a statement that the five Cubans were not spies, but were "gathering information on terrorist activities by Cuban American extreme rightist organizations". (September, Exile Community)

Aleida Guevara March and Irma González are on a two-week tour of Canada aimed at providing information about the international campaign for the release of the Cuban Five. Aleida is the daughter of Cuban-Argentinean revolutionary Che Guevara, and Irma is the daughter of one of the five Cuban prisoners being held in the United States (September, Foreign Affairs)

An online forum was held in recognition of the fifth anniversary of the arrest and imprisonment of five Cubans in the United States. Family members and attorneys for "the Five" participated in the forum and more than 100 questions and comments were exchanged during the two hour encounter. (US-Cuba Relations)

The daughter of revolutionary Che Guevara flew into Victoria to raise support for "The Cuban Five." Aleida Guevara March is one member of a cross-Canada tour organized by Goods for Cuba and the Canadian Network on Cuba. She was speaking at the University of Victoria. (October, Foreign Affairs)

Cuban Lawyer Rodolfo Dávalos considers that the impossibility of the US District Attorney's Office to deny the appeal of the five Cubans arrested in this country continues to put the judicial process in a form of legal limbo. At a TV Roundtable discussion, Dávalos admitted that the report given by the US Attorney's Office does not refute, at any time, the reason that led the Cubans to present the appeal of the severe sentences imposed by a Miami Court, in 2001. The 80 page document denies the 24 appeal reasons presented by the Defense (the total of five appeals) with political arguments, so it must be annulled for the well being of the US justice, Dávalos continued. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

The government of the United States has again denied visas to the wives and daughter of two of the five Cubans accused of conspiracy and imprisoned in that country, Havana's Chancellery informed. MINREX, the Foreign Relations Ministry of Cuba, reported that for almost five months, petitions to travel have been

refused for Olga Salanueva Arango and Ivette González Salanueva, wife and daughter of René González, and Adriana Pérez Oconor, Gerardo Hernández' wife. (November, US-Cuba Relations)

Over 5 000 women participated in a rally in Cárdenas to demand "justice and freedom" for the five Cubans sentenced in the United States for spying. Mothers, wives and daughters of René González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando González headed the demonstration. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

The US State Department refused a request from the National Council of the Churches of Christ to grant humanitarian visas to the wives of two of the five Cubans jailed in that country for spying against the US. (December, US-Cuba Relations)

TRANSMISSIONS TO IRAN

The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) condemned Cuba's jamming of US international broadcasts to Iran, calling the action a "deliberate and malicious" effort to block Iranian audiences from gaining access to truthful news and information. The BBG, the federal agency which oversees all US non-military international broadcasting, also urged providers such as Intelsat and Eutelsat to stop giving service to countries that have jammed satellite transmissions to Iran, where pro-democracy advocates have staged repeated demonstrations against the ruling Islamic government. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The US State Department has given the Cuban government a formal request to investigate allegations that transmitters thought to be in Cuba are jamming US satellite broadcasts to Iran, a spokesman said. The State Department called in officials of the Cuban interests section in Washington to put in the request, spokesman Richard Boucher told a briefing. "We would expect to hear back from them," he added. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón has flatly denied that Cuba is jamming US satellite transmissions to Iran. In statements to reporters in Ciego de Avila, Cuba's top legislator referred to Washington's accusation that Havana was "deliberately and maliciously" jamming US signals. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The Cuban Government has denied that it is intentionally jamming an American satellite TV broadcast to Iran. "Cuba has never undertaken nor will it ever undertake these types of interruptions in US television satellite transmissions," a Cuban Foreign Ministry statement said. Cuba described as a "new campaign of anti-Cuba lies" the US accusation that it is jamming satellite broadcasting from the US to Iran. "Cuba has never embarked, nor will it embark on this sort of interference with US satellite television signal broadcasting," the Foreign Ministry statement said. However, officials promised to bow to US requests that they investigate whether signals originating in Cuba could be unintentionally interfering with the broadcasts. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The Bush administration says it is still waiting for Cuba to formally respond to complaints about the jamming of US satellite television broadcasts to Iran. State Department spokesman Richard Reeker said in Washington that US officials have asked Cuba to investigate the matter. Mr. Reeker also says that while the jamming appeared to be emanating from Cuba, US officials at this point do not have enough information to know who is responsible. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba has told the United States that an Iranian diplomatic facility in or near Havana was the source of the jamming that disrupted US Farsi-language satellite broadcasts to Iran last month, the State Department said. In an unusual display of cooperation between the Cold War enemies, Havana appears to have actually acted on pledges to halt the interference which had prompted a formal protest from Washington, it said. "It has ceased," said Jo-Anne Prokopowicz, a department spokeswoman. After denying that it was responsible for the jamming but pledging to investigate the US complaints in mid-July, Cuba told the United States that it had found the source and had acted to stop it, she said. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba-based jamming of US satellite broadcasts to Iran was carried out by Iranians, not by the Cuban government, and it has stopped, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said. The US State Department in July said it had formally asked the Cuban government to investigate the jamming, which US officials said was disrupting both US government and private television broadcasts aimed at the opposition in Iran. (October, US-Cuba Relations)

US AND CUBAN STATEMENTS ON A US MILITARY AGGRESSION TOWARD CUBA

The US ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Hans Hertell, said the war in Iraq is an example for Cuba. "I think what is happening in Iraq is going to send a very positive signal, and it is a very good example for Cuba," he told local media. Hertell said the US-led war is the beginning of a campaign aimed at all countries around the world implementing a multiparty democratic system, including Cuba, the only one-party communist system in the Americas. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro disclosed publicly a brief message addressed to the U.S. Ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Hans Hertell, in response to some statements made on Cuba by the diplomat. The brief hand-written note made public on Cuban television and signed by Castro reads as follows: "Congratulations on your statements of today regarding your government's liberation crusade, including Cuba. Thank you very much." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro presided over a gathering of writers and artists in Havana. The meeting of the National Council of the Cuban Union of Writers and Artists (UNEAC) was called to create an international response to fascism, particularly in the area of culture. The National Council of UNEAC issued a statement at the conclusion of the two-day meeting, calling on artists and writers around the world to join in the struggle against cultural and informational manipulation. The statement notes that the world is living in very dangerous times, pointing specifically to the current US-led invasion of Iraq and Washington's threats to continue its "war of conquest". (April, Domestic Affairs)

Fidel Castro remained defiant amid international criticism of Cuba's harsh measures to reign in dissent and halt hijackings, saying he would fight to the end to defend his nation against the United States. "We are now immersed in a battle against provocations that are trying to move us toward conflict and military aggression by the United States," Castro told a group of Venezuelans in a speech broadcast on state television. "We have been defending ourselves for 44 years and have always been willing to fight until the end," Castro added in the speech, which marked the coup attempt against his political ally Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez a year ago. Castro made no direct reference to the execution of three hijackers by firing squad, nor the sentences of up to 28 years handed down for 75 government opponents charged with collaborating with US diplomats to undermine the socialist system. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld suggested that Cuba would not likely become a US military target after the war with Iraq, despite a wave of repression that culminated with the summary trials and execution of three men who tried to hijack a ferry boat to Florida. During an interview on NBC News' Meet the Press, Rumsfeld responded to a question about Cuba: "We care about the people of Cuba, who are repressed in a dictatorship," Rumsfeld replied. "People are imprisoned and killed and denied rights to speak their mind, and that's sad. It's unfortunate. "But the American people, for the most part, are people who want to go about their business, and we recognize we can't try to make everyone in the world be like we are." (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro gave his first full response to the extraordinary events in Cuba over the last five weeks. Castro said he was acting to prevent an attempt by US President George W Bush to provoke a war with Cuba. In a defiant three-and-a-half hour speech, everything was blamed on the United States. America, he said, was trying to destabilise Cuba, to provide an excuse for military intervention. The 75 dissidents that have recently been imprisoned he describes as "mercenaries in the pay of the enemy". Fidel Castro singled out America's top diplomat in Cuba as he blamed a supposed conspiracy between the US government and exiles in Miami for his recent dissident crackdown and the firing-squad executions of three hijackers.

Castro accused US Interests Section Chief James Cason of fomenting subversive activities by opponents of his government. "The arrest of various dozens of mercenaries who betrayed their homeland for privileges and money from the United States, and the death penalty for common criminals (...) were the result of conspiracy stirred up by the government of (the United States) and the terrorist mafia," he said. Castro typically uses such terms for Cuban exiles who actively oppose his rule. (April, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro accused the United States of wanting to attack Cuba, speaking at a May Day celebration. "In Miami and Washington they are now discussing where, how and when Cuba will be attacked," the Cuban president told a crowd of hundreds of thousands gathered for the celebration in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution. Castro said US officials "provoke and encourage" attacks like the recent hijackings of Cuban planes and boats. [[Cuba and the Nazi-Fascism](#)] (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuba doesn't expect to be attacked by the US but if an Iraq-style American invasion takes place, the Cuban people will "fight 100 years" and will never surrender, the communist republic's foreign minister said. "There is absolutely no reason for any U.S. attack against Cuba. We are a peaceful nation, which acts responsibly, despite the repeated provocations by the American government in order to deny the US any pretext for an attack against our country," Felipe Perez Roque told reporters in Bahrain, during a brief visit to the kingdom. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón says that Jeb Bush, the brother of US President George W. Bush, is urging the US to take military action against the island. Appearing on the ABC television network's talk show "This Week," the leader of Cuba's Parliament accused the governor of Florida of actively working for a 'regime change' in Cuba. "Well, you have, first of all, those in Miami that are calling for even a military action against Cuba, including the governor," Alarcon said. Later, he said: "I am convinced that not very far from President Bush and his entourage are people that are not just willing, but actively working toward that (...) The brother (Jeb Bush) was very open, calling publicly in Florida to do in the neighborhood, in the nation of Cuba, what you just did to Iraq." (May, US-Cuba Relations)

A spokeswoman for Governor Bush discounted charges aired by the president of the Cuban National Assembly that the Florida governor is conspiring to overthrow Cuban leader Fidel Castro. Bush's press secretary, Alia Faraj, said that the governor has been consistent on his views toward Cuba. "Governor Bush has been very clear in his position that he does not condone Castro's repressive regime," she said. "Americans should continue to show their support for the brave men and women who continue to seek change through continued support of an economic embargo and travel restrictions." (May, US-Cuba Relations)

US President Bush marked Cuban Independence Day by denouncing Fidel Castro and expressing hope his rule will soon end. Bush reasserted his support for the democratization of Cuba, but ruled out an invasion of the island, according to Housing Secretary Mel Martinez, himself a Cuban-American. Isabel Roque, the sister of Marta Beatriz Roque, an independent economist imprisoned in March, echoed the housing secretary's sentiment. "We do not want the Marines to invade Cuba. We just don't want our hands to be tied," she said. (May, US-Cuba Relations)

So far, at least 372,158 people have signed a declaration that criticizes the US war in Iraq and defends Cuba's crackdown on dissent as a necessary measure in the face of an imminent US attack on the island. Everyone from legendary ballerina Alicia Alonso to Grammy-winning musician Chucho Valdes to the Cuban Esperanto Society to the Cuban Association of Cocker Spaniels has joined a campaign that's been labeled in Havana as the Worldwide Anti-Fascist Front. As the numbers multiplied, Cuba published six special newspaper sections containing the names of thousands of architects, accountants, nutritionists, engineers, chemists, geologists, comedians, gym teachers, designers and others. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Kevin Whitaker, coordinator of the Cuban Affairs Office of the US State Department, reaffirmed his support to the Cuban people and reminded that both Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of

State Colin Powell have expressed on several occasions that the United States has no military objective in Cuba. "The United States respects Cuba's sovereignty", he added. Whitaker also pointed out that the US continues committed to the migratory accords which stipulate that only safe, legal and orderly migration from Cuba will be accepted. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

The danger of a US military attack against Cuba is real and should not be underestimated, according to an article that appears in the Cuban newspaper Trabajadores. Lázaro Barredo writes that Washington "is running out of choices in its stubborn, warmongering policy regarding Cuba." He points out that the United States is currently "in a state of arrogant euphoria," thinking it has the right to carry out a policy of unilateral, "pre-emptive" wars. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Secretary General of Cuba Independiente y Democrática, Huber Matos, said that the "ideal" scenario to restore democracy in Cuba and bring down Fidel Castro's regime would be a transition process and cautioned that the "greatest tragedy" would be the restoration of democracy through a U.S. military intervention. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

US aggression is ultimately to blame for Cuba's much-criticized crackdown on dissidents, the country's ambassador to Canada says. "We're threatened by the United States," Carlos Fernandez de Cossío told the press. "The day we have peace, Cuba will be very different than it is today." Cossío argued the crackdown is a matter of self-defence, given a US leadership that has become aggressive after terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and elsewhere. (June, US-Cuba Relations)

Fidel Castro "wants to end his four decades in power with a war against the United States," said oppositionist leader Huber Matos, who travelled to Argentina for the launching of his memoirs. In an interview published by the daily Clarín, Matos regretted "the ignorance of the Argentinean people and government officials" for the reception given to Castro during his visit to Buenos Aires. (June, Exile Community)

A new group of militant Cuban exiles has emerged in Miami, made up partly of veterans of the botched Bay of Pigs invasion who advocate a "multilateral military intervention" against the island's communist government. The National Cuban Congress, which claims 300 members, is the latest of dozens of anti-Castro groups in southern Florida, home to about 700,000 people of Cuban origin. The movement stands for "an international political, economic, diplomatic and touristic embargo" against the government of President Fidel Castro, and if that fails, "a multilateral intervention" similar to the US-led missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, said Antonio Calatayud, one of its leaders. (June, Exile Community)

During an interview in Spain, Otto Reich, President George Bush's top advisor on Cuban affairs, declared that the United States would not be taking military action against Cuba. "Military action, no. We do not believe it is required," said Reich. "The strategy is to weaken the government, with the use of diplomatic restrictions and information (...) increase contact with the population through the media," he added. (July, US-Cuba Relations)

The threat of a military attack by the US against Cuba still exists, but has dissipated in the short term as a result of complications associated with the US campaign in Iraq and pre-election turmoil for President George W. Bush, said in an interview the President of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcón. (August, US-Cuba Relations)

Cuban Defense Minister Raul Castro said that should the Communist state's arch-enemy the United States invade Cuba its forces would pay a far heavier price than the US troops occupying Iraq. "Our people will pay a terrible price, but we will exact from the aggressors a high cost, be they the Yankees alone or with their cousins the British or Spanish," Castro told reporters after attending a Veterans Day ceremony. The price they pay will be much higher (than in Iraq) and they are not going to dominate this country," Castro said. "For any invader who sticks a boot here, at the very least the boot with the foot inside will remain," he

said, adding there would be “a mine and an ambush awaiting foreign troops every square meter of the country.” (December, US-Cuba Relations)