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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: The first results of a study commissioned by the government on property in Cuba will be known within three years. The closing of the magazine "Vital" sparks a debate between the Catholic hierarchy and its parishioners. Representatives of the Cuban opposition publish the document "Unity for Freedom," which proclaims their unity in the pursuit of common goals. Two dissidents are sent to prison after summary trials; and seven others, including Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez), are set free.

Economy: New legislation on workplace discipline and work schedules goes into effect. Cuba's tourism industry is in a steep fall. Cuban authorities describe current sugar harvest as "tense and difficult". Germany favors the expansion of trade and economic relations with Cuba. Businesspeople from Cuba and Iran meet in Havana. The Ministry of Planning and the Economy dismisses rumors that the government might be considering a change of policy in terms of state property.

Exile Community: A new poll shows a divided Cuban American community on US sanctions toward Cuba. Cuban journalist and writer Raul Rivero wins the prestigious Ortega y Gasset Spanish journalism award.

Foreign Affairs: The Spanish Foreign Minister completes a controversial two-day visit to the island. Fidel Castro debates with the Brazilian government on the production of ethanol. A member of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo meets separately with both Fidel and Raul Castro in Havana. Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs arrives in Cuba on an official visit. Vice President Carlos Lage heads the Cuban delegation to the fifth Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas in Caracas. A seven-member parliamentary delegation from Iran arrives in Havana.

Security: Namibia's Minister of Defence meets with Raul Castro in Havana.

Terrorism: Cuba harbours the sixth round of peace talks between the Colombian government and the National Liberation Army.

US-Cuba Relations: Fidel Castro blasts US President George W. Bush's biofuel plan as "genocidal". The Cuban government issues an official statement against an order by a US federal judge setting anti Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles free on bail.

Domestic Affairs

April 1: The number of cancer cases in Cuba has risen due to smoking and excessive consumption of alcohol, and in some provinces on the communist island it now constitutes the main cause of death by disease, the local press reported. The official daily *Juventud Rebelde* reported that, according to data gathered by the National Statistics Office, malignant tumors caused 168.6 deaths per 100,000 people in 2005 and 171.5 per 100,000 last year, figures that are considered to be high. "We have traffic accidents in first place (and) cancer in Cuba is in third place as a cause of death," Marta Osorio, the head of the Clinical and Chemical Therapy Research Department at the National Oncology and Radiobiology Institute, told the daily. Osorio said that "alcoholism and smoking are two big social health problems in Cuba," along with other risk factors such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension. (*EFE*, 1/4/07)

April 2: The Cuban Pen Club founding committee was established in Havana by a group of dissidents comprised of Víctor Manuel Domínguez, Manuel Cuesta Morúa, Jorge Olivera and Luis García Vega. The committee should select prospective members from across the island and invite them to join the organization, which would be patterned after the International Pen Club. (*Cubanet*, 2/4/07)

April 3: According to details from a study by Mercer HR Consulting released in London, Havana and Port-au-Prince rank this year among the Latin-American cities with the lowest quality of life. Havana moved down two positions as compared to 2006 and now ranks 189th in a list of 215 cities — not only capitals — in several continents. (*EFE*, 3/4/07)

April 4: One of the most-visible faces of Cuba's caretaker government urged the island's young people to ignore capitalism's "siren song," while acknowledging that the country's current communist system was not as "ideal" as had been desired. Marking the 45th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Youth League, Vice President and Cabinet Secretary Carlos Lage said the revolution that Fidel Castro led by toppling dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959 will have to live on in a generation that may be unsure of what it is rebelling against. "We always knew the biggest challenge of socialism is to instill in young people a communist conscience and rejection of capitalism, without having lived in it, without having seen the moral damage it produces," Lage said. Part the League's job now, he said, is to help make young people "immune to the siren song of capitalism." "Cuban young people do not see the capitalist model as a solution to any of the country's difficulties. They accept their responsibility of fighting every day in response to the call to make our revolutionary process irreversible", asserted Julio Martínez, the leader of the Communist Youth League. Raul Castro presided the Cuban youth celebration at a packed house in Havana's Karl Marx Theater. [[Discurso de Carlos Lage](#)] (*AP, Granma*, 4/4/07)

April 4: Three new computer science regional faculties were opened in Artemisa (Havana province), Ciego de Avila (central Cuba) and Manzanillo in the eastern Granma province as part of a government strategy to universalize higher education and elevate the country's informatics skills. The new regional faculties are branches of Cuba's Computer Sciences University (UCI), located in the capital, and together form a network designed to prepare top level professionals. (*Granma*, 5/4/07)

April 5: More than 20,000 stray dogs can be found on the streets of Cuban cities, their lives threatened by traffic and by violence -- human and canine. In Cuba most canines have a stable home, but because of their owners' lack of responsibility they spend most of the day out on the streets, says Nora García, president of the non-governmental Cuban Association for the Protection of Animals and Plants (Aniplant). "Truly stray dogs, there aren't that many. The circumstances don't offer real possibilities of survival and reproduction. Hunger and thirst mean a rapid decline in health. They get by on a bone here, some dirty water there. The unrelenting sun shows little mercy, and in their

constant wandering they deteriorate quickly," García told the press. The lack of public education campaigns and of control measures makes a solution an elusive goal, despite the efforts of organisations, cultural personalities, veterinary clinics allied with Aniplant and government institutions. Environmental education in this country "can't be more concerned about a forest or a river than about a dog without an owner: they deserve the same attention, humanely and ecologically, and the same awareness about their importance and place in the framework of life on Earth," says Cuban author Leonardo Padura. Padura has denounced the impunity of animal mistreatment and has presented the image of the stray dog as "a cry of alarm that, apparently, very few are hearing." (*Tierramerica*, 5/4/07)

April 6: The Cuban Catholic Church has asked the international community for "understanding" and "dialogue" in moments of "change" in the communist island. "Right now the important thing is a high level of understanding in order to take the right steps", said the assistant Bishop of Havana, Juan de Dios Hernandez, during the Via Crucis procession in central Havana. For the Catholic Cuban Church, he added, "every situation of change (in the island) would need a big understanding of the international community and a dialogue that allows us to go ahead in a civilized way".

According to Bishop Hernandez, during these past months of interim government the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Cuban State has been "the same". "We are going the same way, there are no substantial changes", said Hernandez. For Hernandez, "after difficult times, the Cuban state is slowly starting to understand which is the role of the Church in society". As for the future, he said that the religious institution would like "as far as it is possible", to go through the "path of normalization". "And I think that is also the State's aspiration", he added. (*DPA, El Nuevo Herald*, 8/4/07)

April 6: Holy Week in Cuba was marked with processions, a Way of the Cross through the streets of Old Havana and official permission to broadcast radio messages to the faithful. Hundreds of people wound through the streets from the Havana cathedral to the Church of Cristo del Buen Viaje (Christ of the Good Journey). A group carried statues of Jesus and Mary and a huge wooden cross through the streets on their shoulders, while followers sang and prayed. Two announcers with megaphones described each station, while residents watched the procession from the balconies or doorways of their houses.

Catholic processions were prohibited in Cuba from 1961, shortly after Fidel Castro came to power, until Pope John Paul II's historic visit to the island in January 1998. (*CNS, AP*, 8/4/07)

April 6: Cuban economists and other professionals held their first meeting this week in search of answers to inefficiency, theft, poor service and quality in the state-run socialist economy, the official media said. "Finding new methods to improve economic efficiency and stop corruption are the main objectives of the large group of professionals, who for the first time began a project analyzing property in the country," the Communist Youth newspaper *Juventud Rebelde* said. A number of economists said they had been commissioned by the ruling Communist party to prepare reports on what ails various sectors of the economy and propose solutions. "Socialist property in Cuba faces external and internal threats. To fight them successfully science needs to find the causes," economist Ernesto Molina, from Cuba's top school for international relations, was quoted as stating at this week's meeting. Plans to form the Commission on Socialist Property Relations were first announced in October by *Juventud Rebelde* following a scathing three-part expose by the daily on graft and poor service in shops and bars. While Cubans are hoping for quick solutions, *Juventud Rebelde* indicated patience was in order. "The first results of this broad and complex study on property in Cuba will be known within three years," the newspaper said. (*Reuters*, 6/4/07)

April 7: Scientists from the westernmost Cuban province of Pinar del Rio are working to demonstrate orchid effects in human rejuvenation, an attractive feature in the Soroa garden, specialized in this plant. According to Doctor Alejandrina Pena, in charge of this study, the orchideological universe of the island, with some 330 species registered, is a vastness to explore, even when we are extracting from them about 30 essences for diverse medical treatments. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/4/07)

April 7: "Investing in health to forge a safer future" is the main theme to mark the World Health Day this year, devoted to international sanitary security. During a press conference, the Pan American Health Organization representative in Cuba, Dr. Lea Guido, explained the difficulties of living safely in a globalized world, where diseases spread from one continent to another in a very short time. Cuba's Health Deputy Minister Gonzalo Estevez explained that the island devotes 18 percent of its Gross Domestic Product to public health, besides investments in new equipment and ongoing remodeling of health facilities. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/4/07)

April 8: A Cuban woman weighing more than 227 kilograms (500 pounds) says that she has not gotten up from her armchair since last September and has been trying without success for years to exchange her fourth-floor apartment for one on the first floor, the official *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper reported. Caridad Agueda Martin Ortega is considered to be one of the most obese women in Cuba and she also suffers from a number of other maladies and conditions, including diabetes, hypertension, an umbilical hernia and high cholesterol, all of which make it impossible for her to go up and down the stairs. Ortega said that when she began to gain weight she asked the housing authorities to swap her three-room apartment for one on the first floor "to help me get to the doctor appointments more easily." But "years have passed and they never made any proposal to solve my problem. If I'm turning to you (the press), it's because I can't take any more," she said. (*EFE*, 8/4/07)

April 9: Cubans will stage a massive march next May Day as an expression of support of their Socialist System and against Washington's intentions to topple the Cuban Revolution, political and union leaders said. Demonstrators in Havana and in other parts of the country will reaffirm their dignity and their love for their political system, Pedro Saez, First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party in Havana, said during a preparatory meeting of May Day activities. General Secretary of the Cuban Workers Federation (CTC) Salvador Valdés also attended the meeting. May Day activities will include a national voluntary session on April 29 and rallies at work centers and schools. Also on the agenda is a traditional Solidarity-with-Cuba Encounter on May 2nd at Havana's Convention Hall with the attendance of representatives of unions and social organizations from dozens of countries. (*ACN*, 9/4/07)

April 10: The Roman Catholic magazine *Vitral*, one of the few publications in Cuba not controlled by the government, said it was closing down due to "lack of resources". The fortnightly magazine published by the Catholic Diocese of the western city of Pinar del Rio has provided a rare space for critical debate within communist-run Cuba since 1994. "It's a problem of resources. We do not have material. This year only two editions have appeared. The current one is the last," said the staff member, who asked not to be named. The magazine's editor, Roman Catholic layman Dagoberto Valdes, could not be reached immediately for comment. Valdes complained he was not allowed to buy a printer despite having the money, one diplomat reported. An editorial in *Vitral*'s last edition called for a political opening in Cuba, while criticizing the government's "anachronistic and ethically unacceptable" economic policies. Cuba has been at a crossroads since Cuban leader Fidel Castro handed over power to his brother eight months ago following emergency surgery, it said. Castro, 80, has not appeared in public since. "This could be the moment for those high in the government to steadily, gradually and peacefully open up the opportunity for participation by all Cubans," the editorial said. National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón said last year that *Vitral* criticized the government "with great harshness," compared to the moderate attitude of the Catholic Church hierarchy, but added that the government had never halted its publication. (*Reuters, The Miami Herald*, 10/4/07)

April 10: Cuba will adopt legal resources for the protection of animals through the Cuban Scientific Veterinary Council (CCVC) and the Association for the Protection of Animals and Plants. The document was presented to the Ministry of Agriculture aimed at creating a legal regulation, said Maria Gloria Vidal, a council's specialist. According to Vidal legal protection of animals is necessary since there are many persons that attack them, arrange dog fights, throw things in the Zoo or have pets without appropriate conditions. To break this law will entail a sanction. (*Prensa Latina*, 10/4/07)

April 11: The sixth International Congress of Veterinary Sciences, in session in Havana, focuses on the development reached in Cuba in prevention of disasters, epidemics and other threats that can affect animal health. Experts from a dozen nations are attending the important meeting, where the latest news about animal reproduction, epizootology, microbiology diagnosis, bioenergetics, clinical pathologies, parasitology and laboratory animals is presented. At the opening of the event, Minister of Environment, Science and Technology Fernando Gonzalez said Cuba is free of more than 50 percent of the animal illnesses of obligatory declaration. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/4/07)

April 11: Authorities from Cuba's National Defense Council are working on preparations for the Meteoro 2007 exercise in May to assess safety levels in case of natural disasters. According to Lt. Col. Domingo Carretero, an expert from that institution, the drill is scheduled for May 19-20 and will be aimed at assessing the level of safety and measures to be taken to reduce casualties and damage. Agencies attached to the National Defense Council, state institutions and economic and social organizations will participate in the exercise, which is carried out every year before the hurricane season begins in the Atlantic Ocean. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/4/07)

April 11: Working on an old computer with a burned-out monitor, Cuban rapper Aldo Rodriguez painstakingly lays the tracks for his next song. Sitting shirtless on the edge of his bed, tattoos up and down both arms, the 23-year-old says he's not afraid to speak his mind in the communist country run by Fidel Castro for decades. His lyrics are punchy and edgy, tackling issues that the state would prefer not to be aired. "I've pointed out the things that seem wrong to me, and the people like it," he says. "They like to hear it because they identify with what they hear in the songs. "It's not anything bad. It's just the truth, and the people aren't used to hearing it." His group -- Los Aldeanos, or "The Villagers" -- is one of Cuba's best-known underground hip-hop acts. It's earned credibility with lyrics that condemn racism, police harassment, prostitution and inequality -- criticisms often heard in Cuba's streets, but controlled by the state in the media. Last year, the nation's Rap Festival was canceled amid uncertainty surrounding Castro's health. The Cuban Rap Agency began co-sponsoring the event in 2002 to the angst of many. Rodolfo Rensoli organized the rap festival before the state stepped in. He says government limitations have made groups and their fans more rebellious. He says it would be a major mistake to try to set limits on the rappers: "Censor them or cut them out, intimidate them or limit the expression of these kids -- that would be horrible." (*CNN*, 11/4/07)

April 11: The Founding Committee of the Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs of Cuba (CGCRDHC) was formed in Havana. Juan Carlos González Leiva, who was elected Chair, said that it represents one more step toward the establishment of the Council of Human Rights Rapporteurs of Cuba, an institution that brings together approximately 30 organizations working to uphold human rights inside the island. (*Cubanet*, 25/4/07)

April 11: A broad renewal taking place in the ranks of the Cuban Episcopal Conference in the last few years is nothing "exceptionally suspicious," rather a "coincidence in time" of several factors, affirmed Msgr. Carlos Manuel of Céspedes, one of the oldest-serving Catholic Church vicars in this country. "There has been nothing exceptionally suspicious in the deaths of some bishops, the resignation of others and the ensuing appointments," said the prelate. [[Designaciones Episcopales](#)] (*AFP*, 11/4/07)

April 12: A new coalition of moderate Cuban opposition groups called for the creation of a human rights commission in the National Assembly, after an agreement between Havana and Spain to open a dialogue on human rights and other issues. The recently founded Dialogue for Rights Coalition will work to eliminate the death penalty, distribute copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and win the release of political prisoners. Manuel Cuesta Morua, the main representative of the Progressive Arc, said the group plans a signature drive to back its request that the parliament form a human rights commission. The Democratic Solidarity Party, which claims 1,000 Cuban members, is also a member of the coalition. The group is at odds with many of Cuba's better known opponents, who were irritated that Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos did not meet with them during his visit to the island earlier this month. Moratinos and his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque, agreed to explore regular bilateral talks that could include a discussion of human rights. (*AP*, 12/4/07)

April 12: Havana newsstands sold copies of the Socialist Constitution of 1976, while young people acting on government instructions also handed them out free of charge. A few years ago, General Raúl Castro spoke about the need to respect the Constitution. (*Cubamet*, 12/4/07)

April 13: Fidel Castro is steadily recovering from his undisclosed illness and is getting stronger every day, the Cuban foreign minister said. "President Fidel Castro is recovering very well," Felipe Roque told reporters after an hour-long meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart, Pham Gia Khiem. Roque said Castro was back to his pre-surgery weight, did regular rehabilitation exercises and had resumed some of his leadership duties. "He receives reports about the country's situation and is directly involved in managing some important issues," Roque said. (*AP*, 13/4/07)

April 13: Peasants from the area of Joturo, in the municipalities of Songo-La Maya and Second Front, are practically in a state of civil disobedience, demanding electrical service for a population of approximately 300 families. The peasants have refused to work at the state farms and co-operatives in protest for lack of electric power. After a several years' wait for the service, the power plant installed by the authorities burned down twice, so they are now demanding a connection to the national grid which has a main line about half a mile away. (*APLO*, 14/4/07)

April 13: Some 357,910 children, ranging from one month to two years, 11 months and 29 days of age, will be administered a first dose of a vaccine during the initial stage of the polio campaign, running until April 19th, said doctor Miguel Angel Galindo, head of the National Immunization Program of the Public Health Ministry. A second dose will be administered during a second phase of the anti-polio action, which will run from May 25th through 31st. Meanwhile the vaccine will be reactivated on 141,646 nine-year old children. The Cuban campaign takes place in the context of the 45th anniversary of the declaration of Cuba as the first country in the Americas free of poliomyelitis, a disease causing disability or death. (*ACN*, 13/4/07)

April 15: Representatives of the Cuban opposition published a document in which they proclaim their unity in the pursuit of common goals. "Unity for Freedom," as the declaration is called, defends respect for human rights, democracy, social justice, freedom and the sovereignty of the Cuban people; it also demands the immediate and unconditional release of political prisoners and respect for pluralism. Among those signing the document were Vladimiro Roca of Todos Unidos (All United), Oswaldo Paya of the Christian Liberation Movement, Martha Beatriz Roque and Rene Gomez Manzano of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, and Elizardo Sanchez of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation. Joining in on a personal level were Laura Pollan, Berta Soler and Miriam Leiva of the Ladies in White, a group of relatives of the 75 dissidents jailed in the spring of 2003, and Hector Palacios and Oscar Espinosa, two members of the "Group of 75" who were paroled on medical grounds. "We do not accept that acknowledgement and respect for the rights of Cubans in law and in practice can be conditioned by any international situation nor by Cuba's relations with other countries, nor by pacts and understandings with other governments," it reads. "This is one of the most positive results of the visit of (Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel) Moratinos," Roca said with reference to the Spaniard's two-day sojourn in Cuba early this month. [[Unidad por la Libertad](#)] (*EER*, 16/4/07)

April 16: Cuba will continue to defend its right to build "the most just, humane and supportive society that has ever existed", ratified thousands at a demonstration in the corner of 23 and 12 street, in Havana, where 46 years earlier Fidel Castro proclaimed the socialist nature of the Cuban Revolution. Sitting in the front row of the ceremony recalling the historic date were combatants who defended the island during the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, when mercenaries trained and financed by the US government were defeated in less than 72 hours. Among those attending the ceremony recalling the proclamation of socialism in Cuba were Pedro Saez, first secretary of the Communist Party for the City of Havana; Lina Pedraza, of the Central Committee Secretariat; and leaders of several defense, community and youth organizations and institutions. (*Granma*, 17/4/07)

April 17: Independent reporter Oscar Sanchez Madan was sentenced at a summary trial to four years in prison for "pre-criminal dangerousness," an outlawed Cuban human rights group said. Sanchez Madan, 44, wrote stories for the dissident news service Cubanet from Union de Reyes in the western province of Matanzas, the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation said in a statement. Signed by commission head Elizardo Sanchez, the communique cited the reporter's family as saying that he was arrested last Friday, convicted shortly thereafter and sent to Combinado del Sur prison on the outskirts of Matanzas city. According to the rights commission, the imprisonment of Sanchez Madan brings to 25 the number of jailed, out of a total of roughly 270 political prisoners in Cuba. Cubanet Director Hugo A. Landa said Sánchez had been arrested several times in the past year, and was once detained and beaten. "It has been a process of harassment for some time," Landa said. "Oscar was very verbal. He said what he thought and wrote it. He writes the kind of articles that most bothers the Cuban government -- the ones that are about real facts and events." (*EFE, The Miami Herald, 17,19/4/07*)

April 17: A Cuban bishop denied reports that the Roman Catholic Church's celebrated Vitral Magazine has closed, but hinted at a clash with the magazine's founding editor. "It was never said that Vitral Magazine would 'close' or 'end,'" Bishop Jorge E. Serpa of the western diocese of Pinar del Rio wrote in a letter to subscribers, priests, parishioners and the news media. International media outlets had reported that Vitral -- a powerful alternative voice in a country where news media is controlled by the communist government -- had shut down or would do so soon. In his letter, the bishop called the reports "distortions of some news media provoked by unfortunate information given to them." But Serpa alluded to an apparent conflict between church leaders and the editorial board over what the monthly magazine should be and who should have final say. "I have asked that Vitral magazine keep to the truth based on the gospel and the church's social doctrine," Serpa wrote, "without falling into aggressive and argumentative expressions." Under Serpa's predecessor, editor Dagoberto Valdes reportedly had wide leeway in running the magazine he founded more than a dozen years ago, as well as a church-sponsored center that offers classes and materials on civic participation. Valdes was not at Vitral's office and could not be immediately located for comment. [[Comunicado por S. E. Monseñor Serpa](#)](*AP, 17/4/07*)

April 17: Peaceful political opponent Osmany Osorio Herrera was arrested in Cienfuegos province for carrying a bracelet with the word CHANGE. Osorio Herrera, who is a member of Movimiento Democracia (Democracy Movement), was approached by a State security officer who told him to remove it because the word CHANGE was against the principles of the Revolution. He refused and was detained for several hours. (*Cubanet, 19/4/07*)

April 18: Intellectuals and artists will hold a Congress that will dictate the guidelines for cultural policy "within the revolution" for the next few years. The Congress of the Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba (UNEAC) is being scheduled four years late, just like the delayed congress of the ruling Communist Party of Cuba (PCC), which had been expected to take place in 2002. According to Granma newspaper, "commitment", "continuity" and "renewal" will be key themes of the Congress. For this event, a Preparatory Committee featuring an "unprecedentedly balanced number of young and veteran members" was formed. The committee will be led by Sergio Corrieri, a former actor and stage director. According to Juventud Rebelde newspaper, the Preparatory Committee was created under the premise of "reasserting the identification of the intellectual and artistic avant-garde with (official cultural) policy," which precludes any possibility for voicing dissent. (*AFP, 18/4/07*)

April 20: The Concerted Effort for Dialogue and Reconciliation, formed by the Democratic Solidarity Party and Progressive Arc, announced that is adding its voice to the declaration Unity for Freedom, and that it is willing to work toward that goal. The call for unity was signed by Oswaldo Payá, Martha Beatriz Roque, Elizardo Sánchez, Vladimiro Roca and members of Ladies in White. (*MartiNoticias, 20/4/07*)

April 21: Fidel Castro has held talks with a top delegate from China in what is thought to be his first official act since his illness last year. Mr Castro - who has handed over power temporarily to his brother, Raul - has appeared to play a greater role in Cuba over the last few weeks. The Communist Party newspaper Granma carried a photograph of Mr

Castro, standing and shaking hands with the Chinese delegation. The latest pictures published by Cuban official media also show him talking and apparently taking notes during the meeting. The speculation now is whether Mr Castro might soon be fit enough to appear in public. The forthcoming International Labour Day on 1 May is one possible date. For most of the last 47 years of his rule, Mr Castro has marked the occasion with a lengthy speech in Havana's revolution square. While few expect Mr Castro to address the crowd this year, some sort of appearance is not being ruled out. (*BBC*, 21/4/07)

April 22: Cubans take pride in an average life expectancy roughly similar to that of the United States. They ascribe it to free medical care, mild climate, and a low-stress Caribbean lifestyle, which they believe make up for the hardships and shortages they suffer. "Sometimes you have all you want to eat and sometimes you don't," said Raquel Naring, a 70-year-old retired gas station attendant. "But there aren't elderly people sleeping on the street like other places." Cuba's average life expectancy is 77.08 years — second in Latin America after Puerto Rico and more than 11 years above the world average, according to the 2007 CIA World Fact Book. (*AP*, 22/4/07)

April 22: Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antúnez), one of Cuba's longest-serving political prisoners, stepped free after serving his full prison term of 17 years and 34 days. Antúnez, now 42, was 25 when he was jailed for spreading "enemy propaganda" after he grabbed the microphone on a stage during a musical recital in Placetas and began shouting slogans against Fidel Castro. He also was convicted of sabotage after authorities accused him of setting fire to sugar cane fields, a charge of violence that he denied but which meant he was not considered a prisoner of conscience by international rights groups. Other dissidents have called Antúnez Cuba's Nelson Mandela because he was the longest-serving jailed black opponent of Cuba's communist government. He was among the prisoners Pope John Paul II had asked the government to release. But he was not among the 14 people the Cuban government said it had freed in conjunction with the January 1998 papal visit. Antúnez continued to rebel in prison, where he founded a political prisoner group named after Pedro Luis Boitel, a jailed dissident who died in a hunger strike in 1972. He wrote a book on prison conditions in Cuba called "Boitel Lives." [[Boitel Vive](#)] (*EER, Reuters, AP*, 23/4/07)

April 22: The International Festival of Low-Budget Cinema again lighted up the big screen in the eastern Cuban province of Holguin. This year's contest enjoyed both the greatest number of works and participants since the festival of film started five years ago. The festival received more than a hundred works, of which there are 30 documentaries, 12 original scripts, 36 fiction films, six movies and 17 experimental works. The works show real life situations in countries such as Guatemala, Nicaragua, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Brazil, Chile, France, Iran, India, Cameroon and in Spain, which is bringing the largest number of works from Europe. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 22/4/07)

April 23: A Cuban human rights group reported a new case of a dissident attorney sentenced after a secret trial to 12 years in prison for painting graffiti and distributing pamphlets with an anti-government message. Rolando Jimenez Posada was charged with disrespect for authority and revealing state secrets. He was tried in Havana without a defense attorney or family members present, said Elizardo Sanchez, spokesman for the independent Cuban Commission for Human Rights and Reconciliation. Sanchez said Jimenez Posada was transported to Havana for the proceeding from Isla de la Juventud, where he has been jailed since his arrest in early 2003. It was unclear whether the time already spent in jail would count toward the 12-year sentence. According to Sanchez, Jimenez Posada's relatives say authorities denied the defendant's request to represent himself in court and he was not allowed to attend his own trial when he protested. "The biggest worry for the commission is that in two weeks, we have seen two similar secret trials behind closed doors, without relatives or defense attorneys present," Sanchez said. The rights commission had criticized what it said was the secret trial of independent journalist Oscar Sanchez Madan. The Cuban government has not commented on either case. (*AP*, 23/4/07)

April 23: Recently released from prison, dissident Jorge Luis Garcia Perez (Antunez) said he will continue his struggle against Fidel Castro's regime. "I am more committed to the struggle, I am more committed to the cause for which I

was sent to prison. My body, soul and heart will always be at the service of Cuba and my people." "Nothing or nobody will make us waver." Antúnez said in a statement released by the Cuban Democratic Directorate, an anti-Castro exile organization". The path has been hard, but already the air of freedom is barely visible on the horizon," he added. "He's very brave," said Janisset Rivero, executive director of the Democratic Directorate. "I spoke to him yesterday. The first thing he said was: 'There are a lot of people suffering in prison, and we have to get them out.'" There are 280 political prisoners currently being held in Cuba, according to Cuban human rights groups. (*The Miami Herald*, 24/4/07)

April 24: Cuban authorities set free six dissidents who were arrested two years ago during anti-government demonstrations, opposition groups said. Rights activists said the men had served their sentences and the releases did not point to a let-up in repression of dissent since Fidel Castro was sidelined by surgery last July. Emilio Leiva, Manuel Perez and Lazaro Alonso were released from jails in Havana and sent home, their families told the Cuban Commission for Human Rights, its spokesman Elizardo Sanchez said. Another group called the National Coordinate of Political Prisoners reported that Elio Enrique Chavez, Jose Diaz Silva and Dulian Ramirez were also set free. The six dissidents were arrested during demonstrations on July 13, 2005, including a protest near the port of Havana on the 11th anniversary of the sinking of a tugboat packed with people trying to flee Cuba. "They have served their time and we are happy they are going home. But this is no gesture of political reconciliation by the government," Sanchez said. "It would be if they freed political prisoners serving long terms." (*Reuters*, 24/4/07)

April 24: Cuban authorities are investigating the deaths of five manatees on the coast of the central province of Villa Clara and the possible use of their meat for human consumption, the state-run media reported. Five manatees were found dead over the past 15 months in Nazabal Bay, some 300 kilometers (186 miles) east of Havana. Experts attribute the death of the mammals, which can weigh up to 500 kilos (1,100 pounds) and measure three meters (10 feet) long, to people hunting them for their meat. Two of the last manatees found dead were "dismembered, a sign that the flesh was used as food," the official daily *Juventud Rebelde* reported. (*EFE*, 24/4/07)

April 25: According to declarations made in Havana by Luigi Bonazzi, Apostolic Nuncio in Cuba, the Catholic Church on the island seeks to have relations with the State based on the "principles of autonomy and of healthy and respectful collaboration." The representative of the Vatican offered a reception to commemorate the second anniversary of the coronation of Benedicto XVI. Bonazzi concluded his speech by saying that "we pray for President Fidel's recovery." Bonazzi invited Ricardo Alarcón, president of the People's National Assembly, and the Head of the Office for Religious Affairs, Caridad Diego, for a talk with a group of bishops at the Nunciature. (*La Jornada*, 26/4/07)

Abril 26: Dagoberto Valdés Hernández, who founded "Vital" magazine 14 years ago, resigned as director of the publication. Valdés and part of the "Vital" editing team decided to quit on account of Bishop Jorge Serpa's "handling" of a crisis brought on by disagreement over the future of the publication and the "editorial policy it will adopt henceforth." (*EER*, 26/4/07)

April 26: A meeting of the Constitutional and Judicial Affairs Committee of the People's National Assembly reviewed the performance of the People's Courts and the Office of the National General Prosecutor. In particular, the Commission studied in depth the reasons behind the exodus of judges and prosecutors seeking other employment within and outside the judicial sector. (*Granma*, 26/4/07)

April 26: Peaceful opposition activist Ángel Luís Gallardo Mena was detained by the police at Havana's inter-provincial bus terminal for carrying literature considered subversive. Gallardo was approached by a police officer who branded him an enemy of the state for transporting a dozen documents censored by the government. The activist was led to a police station in the Old Havana municipality. (*Cubanet*, 26/4/07)

April 27: Some 500 Cuban athletes are participating in the ALBA Games in Venezuela as part of their preparations for the Pan-American event in Rio de Janeiro. The ALBA Games have the objective of Latin American and Caribbean

integration, stated Christian Jiménez, president of the Cuban Sports Institute. He added that at this event, the Cubans are looking for a “competitive model with their sights set on the Pan-Americans so that they will arrive prepared and disposed to fight for victory”. (*Granma International*, 27/4/07)

April 28: A top Cuban official would not confirm or deny that Fidel Castro might attend annual May Day events in Cuba, in what would be the convalescing communist leader's first public appearance in nine months. "We all would like for his swift recovery to be even faster and for him to be with us," Economy Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez told international journalists. "That recovery is coming along well, but it is going to take the time that necessary medical steps take, and we are going to have to respect whatever is necessary to do in that case." Rodriguez added that "everyone knows Fidel is there taking part in the country's key decisions (...) but if it is possible, he'll be there, and if it is not, he won't." (*AFP, BBC*, 29/4/07)

April 28: Cuban Vice President Otto Rivero said Fidel Castro is "permanently" taking part in the political activities of the country and is participating in top-level decision-making. "Fidel has not disappeared. We have him here permanently. He's participating (and) has participated in the decisions it's been his responsibility to take part in," Rivero told reporters. The VP did not say if Castro, who has been slowly recovering from an undisclosed but quite serious illness ever since last July, will reappear in public at the huge May Day parade scheduled to be held in Havana. The vice president said that the most recent images of Castro released by the island's media during a meeting with a high-level Chinese delegation were a "very important and encouraging" sign. "Our people felt very happy to see a recovered Fidel. In the pictures (...) the change and the transformation (for the better) that have occurred (in him) were visible," Rivero said, emphasizing the "consistent and very dignified" attitude and the "spirit of high responsibility" displayed by the Cuban people during Castro's convalescence. Rivero heads the department that is managing the so-called "Battle of Ideas," the strategy launched by Castro in 2000 to demand that Washington return rescued rafter child Elian Gonzalez to Cuba. (*EFE*, 29/4/07)

April 29: More than a million Cubans, around ten percent of the population, turned out for a day of volunteer work in salute to International Worker's Day to be celebrated on May 1. Salvador Valdes Mesa, general secretary of the Cuban Labor Federation (CTC), reported that the nationwide volunteer effort took place in agriculture, social infrastructure projects prioritized by the Revolution, the energy-savings program and in the fight against mosquito breeding grounds. (*Granma*, 30/4/07)

April 30: Close to one of the busiest crossroads in the Cuban capital, but peaceful nonetheless, the non-governmental Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Centre (CMLK) has been active in Cuban society for two decades, working for a more participative social system. According to its own definition, the Centre is "a Christian-inspired organisation engaged in inter-faith dialogue, which works prophetically and in solidarity with the Cuban people and its churches, on training and education to promote informed, organised and critical popular participation to bring about social justice." "Out of commitment to the Cuban Revolution's socialist project, and out of religious conviction, we take our stance looking towards the South, because the South is where the Good News is happening, the South is where the poor are," said Reverend Raúl Suárez, head of CMLK, at the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of its foundation. Suárez is also a parliamentary deputy, and says he is a "firm believer in the revolution." He has been criticised by Cuban spokesmen for the Roman Catholic Church for what they described as his "complete submission to the Castro regime." (*IPS*, 30/4/07)

April 30: Fidel Castro made some reflections on the topic of bio-fuels and the struggle against hunger and poverty around the world. The communique, published in Cuban official media on May 1, also makes a call to Cuban workers and “to all the poor of the world”, on the occasion of May Day, to protest for the release on bail from a US prison of Luis Posada Carriles, whom Castro calls “a terrorist monster”. Castro issued the latest in a new series of communiqués, calling for a revolution in energy production. He reiterated his opposition to US plans to use food crops to produce ethanol for cars, predicting that American fuel needs would be provided with the labor of the world's impoverished

sugar cane workers. "Tomorrow the first of May is a good day to carry these reflections to the workers and all of the poor people of the world," Castro wrote in the communique. [[Reflections by the Commander in Chief](#)] (ACN, AP, 1/5/07)

Economy

April 1: New legislation on workplace discipline and work schedules has gone into effect officially in Cuba. Resolutions 187 and 188, regulating work schedules and penalties, had been under analysis and preparation since their approval during the Congress of the National Workers' Union in September. To avoid workplace absenteeism, the authorities have since been trying to deal with pressing issues such as a crisis in public transportation, a deficit in day-care centers and demanding work schedules in public institutions. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Alfredo Morales, acknowledged that some of these problems "will take some time" to be resolved. (EFECOM, 1/4/07)

April 1: Cuba's tourism industry, the island's main economic engine for the past 15 years, is in a steep fall amid a mix of factors that range from rising air ticket prices to changes in tour ownerships and crumbling tourist facilities. The first alarm rang late last year, when Ministry of Tourism (MinTur) figures showed 2.2 million people had visited the island in 2006, down from 2.3 million in 2005. The decline has accelerated so far this year. January and February indicators show a combined drop of 7 percent compared to the same months in 2006, according to the most recent MinTur figures, with February visitation falling 13 percent. Spanish tourists, historically the island's third-largest group, dropped by 45 percent over both months. Even Canada, with 604,000 tourists per year, dropped by 3% during the first two months of 2007. Manuel Marrero Cruz, former president of the Gaviota Group, run by the Cuban armed forces, and a trusted aide to Cuban interim leader and Defense Minister Raúl Castro, was appointed Minister of Tourism in early 2004 after the removal of Ibrahim Ferradaz amid reports of a corruption scandal. "What's happening in tourism is a reflection of a behavior that has spread nationwide," said dissident economist Oscar Espinosa Chepe on the phone from Havana. "People are disgusted with the economic situation at home, workers don't take pride in their work and inertia corrupts the entire organization." (The Miami Herald, 1/4/07)

April 1: According to the official daily Granma, 39 per cent of the land reallocated 3 years ago away from sugar cane crops to agro-food production still remains idle. "Of the land that the Ministry of the Sugar Industry has allotted to agro-food production, 488,267 ha are currently in use while 318,769 ha remain empty," said Granma. (AFP, 1/4/07)

April 2: Syrian Minister of Economy and Trade Amer Hosni Lutfi discussed with Cuba's Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Marta Lomas Morales economic cooperation between the two countries. Dr. Lutfi underlined the importance of the Syrian –Cuban joint committee for economic, scientific and technical cooperation which will "put the required legal and legislative framework to facilitate trade exchange between the two countries". The Minister of Economy pointed out to the importance of exchanging exhibitions and visits between the two sides, referring to the possibility of making use of the route connecting Iran, Syria and Venezuela to facilitate trade exchange between Syria and Cuba. For her part, Lomas Morales stressed her country's desire to develop relations with Syria in the interests of both countries, pointing out to the necessity of opening an airline corridor between Syria and Cuba. (SANA, 2/4/07)

April 3: In communist-run Cuba there is a tiny pedestrian street where capitalism is flourishing. Beneath hanging paper dragons and tasseled red lanterns, a dozen Chinese restaurants are doing a bustling trade serving up spicy pork noodles, fried rice and crispy duck, washed down with a Cuban beer or a mojito. Havana's Barrio Chino, or Chinatown, was granted special licenses a decade ago to run private restaurants, a move aimed at revitalizing a once-vibrant area that was hit by the 1959 revolution and almost snuffed out completely when Cuban leader Fidel Castro took over small businesses in 1968. Redeveloped largely as a tourist draw, some see the lively strip as a glimpse of the street-level

entrepreneurial culture that Cuba might one day embrace without necessarily changing its socialist colors, much like China has done. "When I arrived, this street was empty. Now the flavor is completely Chinese. I could be in my own country," said Tao Jin Rong, 66, who came to Cuba from Shanghai in 1995, the year Castro first visited China. "The government leaves us alone. I see it as a test. Cuba could do this in other places, or it could shut us down, it all depends," he said, sipping Jasmine tea at his restaurant, Tien Tan, in the barrio's main strip, Calle Cuchillo. "I can earn much more with tips here than in a government job," said waiter Carlos White, 22, who studied gastronomy at college and dreams of having his own restaurant. "This is how I want Cuba to be. Because now, life is very hard. Everybody here dreams of Cuba changing." (*Reuters*, 3/4/07)

April 11: Cuban authorities described the soon-to-be-concluded sugar harvest as "tense and difficult" and estimated the potential sugarcane yield nationwide to be 62 percent on average, the official daily Granma reported. "When the harvesters are preparing to normalize the supply of cane to the mills, the rains return and further complicate the situation, to the point where the potential sugarcane yield, the national average, is just 62 percent," Granma said of the harvest, set to conclude in the coming weeks. The paper said that "more than 44 percent of the unmillable cane is the direct or indirect result of the rains and their consequences," stressing the excessive precipitation during this year's growing season, including March rainfall that was 25 percent above normal levels. Top sugar reporter Juan Varela Perez did not mention the organizational and other problems responsible for the remainder. For instance, Holguin province reported one of the nation's largest mills, the Urban Noris, had opened months late due to delays in an upgrade. This season, Cuba hoped to launch a new era for sugar, once its most important industry, after a 15-year decline in the harvest from 8 million raw tonnes produced in 1990 to 1.2 million tonnes in 2006, one of the lowest on record. (*EFE, Reuters*, 11/4/07)

April 13: The Cuban Government wants to attract Portuguese investors to the island country, especially in the sectors of tourism, oil and minerals prospecting, and energy, the news site of Portuguese business daily *Diario Economico* reported. According to Cuba's Foreign Investment & Economic Cooperation Deputy Minister, Ricardo Guerrero Blanco, the government wants to open doors for foreign investments and to facilitate anyone planning to participate in Cuban companies. He spoke to journalists in Monte Gordo, in Portugal's southern tourism region of Algarve, during a business meeting organized by the municipality of Vila Real de Santo Antonio. Guerrero Blanco reportedly noted that Cuba passed through an economic crisis, caused by the prolonged drought, natural disasters, such as hurricanes, and reduction of the sugar price, which led to the closure of about half the companies in the sector. Among the countries which have companies with mixed capital in Cuba, Spain occupies first place with 73 units. It is followed by Canada with 40, Italy with 30, France with 13, China with 12 and Venezuela with 10. These mixed capital enterprises cover some 20 economic sectors, especially in the area of minerals, tourism and civil construction. (*DiarioEconomico*, 13/4/07)

April 12: Cuban exports increased by 35 % during 2006, the largest increment in the last 20 years, reported the Minister of Foreign Trade, Raúl de la Nuez. Although no exact figures were quoted, high international nickel prices and sales of non traditional products like pharmaceuticals and biotech goods were credited for the increase. (*EFECOM*, 12/4/07)

April 16: The ambassador of the Belarus Republic in Cuba, Igar I. Paluyan, said his country is working to strengthen the economic and commercial links with the island after 15 years of diplomatic relations. In an interview with Granma newspaper Paluyan explained that the European nation has sent the first 100 buses to the Caribbean State. The buses are of proven quality and circulate all around Germany and other countries of the European Union, he noted. The diplomat emphasized that Belarus is interested in buying sugar, medicine and other products from Cuba. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/4/07)

April 16: The minister of Economy, Labor and Tourism of the German federal state of Mecklenburg West Pomerania, Jurgen Seidel, favored the expansion of trade and economic relations with Cuba. Seidel arrived in Cuba accompanied

by 27 businesspeople representing the areas of trade, energy, water resources, construction, ports, hotel industry, raw materials, recycling and tourism, among others. The German mission met with Cuban officials, specialists of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce and local company executives, at the Hotel Nacional. Seidel said the energy issue could be very important for both parties. Cuban Deputy Minister of Trade, Pedro Luis Padron, said the European Union was Cuba's third most important trading partner at the end of 2006. Germany is the seventh most important destination of Cuban exports and second in her imports from Europe. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/4/07)

April 17: Cuba is to supply more than 10,000 tons of nickel to China this year, said visiting Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Felipe Ramon Perez Roque. In his speech at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, Perez said Cuba is a reliable nickel supplier for China. By the end of 2006, Cuba had altogether provided nearly 30,000 tons nickel for China. Cuba's nickel reserve currently stands at 14.6m tons, which is the second largest in the world. Perez said China has become Cuba's second largest trading partner, adding bilateral trade volume hit a record high of 2bn US dollars in 2006. (*Xinhua*, 17/4/07)

April 18: Cuba will plant 150 million trees this year, part of the world campaign "Plant for the Planet," Cuban National Forest director Elias Linares announced. This international call to save the forests of the planet has been launched by the UN Environment Program, and its objective is to plant a billion trees in the world in 2007. Linares is a participant in the fourth Forest Congress that is in session in Havana with the participation of 16 countries from Europe, Africa and Latin America. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/4/07)

April 19: Businesspeople from Cuba and Iran met in Havana to exchange knowledge and experiences, with the aim of fostering trade and mutual business. Cuba's Chamber of Commerce president Raul Becerra, Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Pedro Luis Padron, Iranian Exports Deputy Trade and Promotion Minister Mehdi Ghanzafari and Rafael Rivero, official of the Center for Exports Promotion are expected to speak at the occasion. The event also includes a display on foreign investment in Cuba, and a questions and answers session. (*Prensa Latina*, 19/4/07)

April 19: A wildfire that started almost three weeks ago continued to destroy a swath of western Cuba and firefighters said they needed more powerful equipment to control the blaze. The fire, first reported 20 days ago outside the town of Cienaga de Zapata, has devastated 1,040 hectares (2,568 acres), 600 hectares of grassland and 440 hectares of woods, according to the official daily Juventud Rebelde, which did not indicate whether it was affecting a natural area in that part of the island that was declared a UN biosphere reserve in 2001. The director of the Integral Forest Company of Cienaga de Zapata, Eduardo Garcia, told the newspaper that his organization has the means to combat the fire, but needs more powerful engines to propel the water. "After being brought under control on April 14th, the fire was revived by strong winds on the 15th and through yesterday afternoon continued to spread in areas where a lot of combustible material like tree branches have accumulated," the head of the National Forest Rangers Corps, Manuel Lamas, said. Lamas said that physical evidence shows that the fire originated along a path that leads to a lake frequented by fishermen and poachers. (*EFE*, 19/4/07)

April 22: A forum to consider trade and investment opportunities between Iran and Cuba was held in Havana. According to a report by Iran's embassy in Havana, deputies commerce ministers from both countries and around 100 people interested in trade and investment attended the forum. Mullahs' Deputy Commerce Minister and President of Iran's Trade Development Organization (ITDO) Mehdi Ghazanfari and Cuban Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Pedro Louis Pardon expounded on commercial situation and trade regulations of their respective countries and both expressed their countries' readiness to render services to all who are interested in trade between the two countries. Working groups held private negotiations concerning trade agreements in the fields of road construction, pharmaceuticals, nickel and aluminum industries. (*Persian Daily*, 22/4/07)

April 22: A modernized oil refinery is set to go on line in December, official media reported, in a shift due to turn imports-dependent Cuba into an oil exporter. Overhauled with capital from a joint Venezuelan-Cuban company, the

Cienfuegos refinery in south-central Cuba will meet the Caribbean country's own demands, and earmark 9,000 barrels of gasoline a day for export, Venezuela's communications and information ministry said in a release circulated in Havana. Vice President Carlos Lage confirmed the facility was set to start operations in December, the Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported. Lage said the refinery would process 65,000 barrels per day of petroleum by late this year or early 2008, the paper said. (AFP, 22/4/07)

April 23: Cuba forecasts \$140 mln (103 mln euro) worth of steel exports for 2007, up from \$130 mln (96 mln euro) in 2006. In 2006 Cuban steel industry registered a third consecutive year of growth in exports and a second consecutive year of exports above \$100 mln (74 mln euro). In 2006 Cuban steel industry doubled its output, especially the production of steel, of aluminium and galvanised frames for homes, of agricultural equipment and machinery in general, of cooling systems and boilers, and of bicycles. Cuban steel industry exports its products principally to Mexico, Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, Honduras, Russia, Belarus, Spain and China. (Latin America News Digest, 23/4/07)

April 27: According to official media, dozens of Cuban sugar mills will remain open in May and perhaps in June in an attempt to make up for a shortfall of approximately 500,000 tons of unrefined sugar. Cuba would have to import sugar to meet its domestic demand of 700,000 tons and fulfill contracted orders, said local operators and analysts. (Reuters, 27/4/07)

April 28 Cuba's Minister of Economics and Planning Jose Luis Rodriguez said that Cuba hopes to return to a single currency, a departure from the current two-currency system that makes many consumer goods unattainable for most Cubans. Communist Cuba's dual economy emerged more than 15 years ago after the country lost most of its preferential trade and aid with the collapse of the Soviet Union. "We have been advancing toward monetary unification," Rodriguez told reporters during a briefing on the Cuban economy. "That's the path." He did not provide specifics. Today, the regular Cuban peso is what Cubans use for virtually all government services — including utilities, transportation, and a monthly food ration — and it is the only currency accepted at popular farmers markets. But the convertible Cuban peso, which is tied to foreign currencies, is the only money accepted for electronics, packaged food, and other consumer goods at most government-run stores. Cuban government workers, who earn on average about US\$15 a month, cannot afford most of the items available in convertible Cuban pesos at the foreign-currency stores, which are high priced even by American or European standards. (International Herald Tribune, 29/4/07)

April 28: The Ministry of Planning and the Economy, José Luis Rodríguez, affirmed that state property still prevails in Cuba and dismissed rumors that the government might be considering a change of policy. The official, who is also a vice-president of the Council of Ministers, told the foreign press that a committee recently created at the Institute of Philosophy to study the property system in the island lacks official status. The issue "has been publicized more intensely lately," said Rodríguez. Although their views "are held in very high regard, at present, the academic team does not constitute a government research group looking into the issue of property in Cuba." (La Jornada, 29/4/07)

April 28: Cuba's Minister of Economics and Planning Jose Luis Rodriguez said the island has avoided a collapse since Fidel Castro's handover of power to his brother Raul Castro, and achieved economic progress -- forecasting 10-percent growth this year -- without emulating the Chinese or Vietnamese economic models. "The Chinese model is very different for a number of reasons. China has great potential on many fronts that Cuba does not have," Rodriguez said mentioning differences in population and rural development. "We do not have to copy any model, we can exchange experiences, and we do not have to do the same thing," he said also referring to the Vietnamese model. (AFP, 29/4/07)

April 29: The president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, said that Fidel Castro wrote him a letter nearly 10 pages long, praising "China's socialist market-economy." "I received a letter from Fidel that I read several times last night because it is a letter that's already philosophical. Fidel is thinking very deep thoughts," Chávez told journalists prior to a meeting of Heads of State of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) in Barquisimeto, Venezuela. Chávez

indicated that, in the missive, Castro reflected on the experiences of Ernesto Che Guevara and Chinese leader Mao Zedong when the debates on socialism began in the sixties. In the letter, Castro "tells me about Mao Zedong and his original project and ends up by saying how China, with its strategy of socialist market-economy, has managed to turn today into a superpower and will eventually become the biggest superpower of the 21st century," Chavez elaborated. "Ultimately, after philosophizing very much and speaking to me of history, Che, Mao, the Cuban and Chinese experiences, what Fidel means to convey to me is a major truth for which he is worthy of admiration: the socialism of the 21st century has to adapt to the circumstances of the 21st century," said Chávez without further details. (*AFP*, 29/4/07)

April 30: According to a resolution of the Ministry of Finance and Prices, published in the Official Gazette, starting May 1, Cuba authorized non commercial imports of video appliances, prohibited since July, 2002. "It is now convenient to lift the prohibition," says the brief document signed by Minister Georgina Barreiro. (*AFP*, 30/4/07)

April 30: The "camello," Cuba's most unwieldy form of urban transport, is disappearing from the center of Havana, to the relief of residents and the benefit of the environment. Huge and heavy, camellos are 18-wheeler trucks with flatbeds converted into bus-like carriages. They earned their name, which means camel, because of their hump-backed silhouettes. At rush hour, they can pack in up to 300 people. Now, a few months after the government publicly acknowledged that urban transport in the capital was on the verge of collapse, the camellos are gradually disappearing from the city center, and being replaced by imported articulated buses, also known as accordion buses or "bendy buses." "They're much more comfortable than the camellos, and they come by more frequently, every 10 or 15 minutes. The only problem is that they're hotter inside," said a 43-year-old Havana resident. Among the new strategies is the plan to use the camellos only for mass transit from peripheral neighborhoods to Havana. Once within the city, smaller vehicles will be used, which "cause less damage to paved roads and are more comfortable to handle in traffic," Cuban Transport Minister José Luis Sierra announced. Sources at the Provincial Transport Directorate of the City of Havana, in charge of urban buses, told the national press that work is in hand to ensure transport for 660,000 passengers a day in the first half of this year, and to create conditions for modernizing the entire national transport system. This will surpass the 400,000 passengers a day that were transported during 2006, but is still a long way from the nearly 4 million trips a day prior to the economic crisis. (*IPS*, 30/5/07)

Exile Community

April 2: A new poll shows that growing numbers of Cuban Americans in Miami-Dade oppose US restrictions on travel to the island and favor more contacts with Havana. According to the results, 56 percent of those polled support the US trade and travel embargo, down from 66 percent in March 2004. Some 65 percent favor establishing a national dialogue among Cuban exiles, dissidents and representatives of the Cuban government, a 10 point increase over the 2004 results, while 57 percent favored re-establishing diplomatic relations with Cuba. The results also show a community divided in opinions on Havana depending on the year of arrival, skeptical that a quick change will happen on the island, and attitudes that seem contradictory: A narrow majority favors a US invasion of Cuba, but a bigger majority supports a restoration of diplomatic ties between Havana and Washington. The latest poll was conducted by Florida International University, with funding from the Cuba Study Group, a moderate Cuban-American group based in Washington, and FIU's own Cuban Research Institute. The Brookings Institution, a Washington nonpartisan think tank, was part of the organizing team. The FIU poll is unique because it is the eighth such poll in 16 years, and organizers have tried to ask questions consistent over time to get a clearer picture of how attitudes are evolving. [[2007 FIU Cuba Poll](#)] (*The Miami Herald, Sun Sentinel*, 2/4/07)

April 3: Cuban exile artists including singers Willy Chirino, Lissette Alvarez and Jon Secada announced a TV and radio campaign to show solidarity with Cubans on the communist island and call for them to not cooperate with the regime. The "Yo no coopero con la dictadura" messages that will be showcased in South Florida Spanish-language media are meant to encourage people living in Cuba not to participate in government-run events, organizers said. Several television and radio signals in South Florida sporadically reach cities in Cuba. The no-cooperation message, which gained force after Fidel Castro had emergency surgery July 31, also seeks to raise the issue of Cuba's failed human rights record, said Sylvia Iriondo, president of M.A.R. por Cuba, or Mothers Against Repression. (*The Miami Herald*, 4/4/07)

April 16: Several organizations of the Cuban exile in Miami saluted the declaration of unity of Cuba's domestic dissident organizations and called it an "example of political maturity" and a "coordinating effort" to achieve a "democratic change". The Cuban American National Foundation, the Cuban Democratic Directorate and Primer Partido Nacionalista Democrático de Cuba (First Nationalist Democratic Party of Cuba) shared the view that it is a "gesture of political maturity" that brings new hope to "a people exhausted by almost half a century of oppression." [[CANF Commends Declaration of Unity](#)] (*EFE*, 16/4/07)

April 23: The Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF) offered the bishop of Pinar del Río, Jorge Enrique Serpa Pérez, to donate "the funds and necessary material resources" so that the Catholic magazine "Vital" may continue to be published. CANF said that, in continuation of their "track record of support for the intellectual and cultural independence of the Cuban people," they wished to offer "moral and economic" assistance to *Vital*, to make sure that it would continue to be published. (*EER*, 23/4/07)

April 25: Cuban dissident writer Raul Rivero has won a prestigious Spanish journalism award for his reporting on his native country, where he spent two years in jail on charges of trying to undermine Fidel Castro's government. Rivero, who is 62 and moved to Madrid in 2005 after being released from prison, won one of several Ortega y Gasset Prizes. The awards, now in their 24th year, are given by Spain's top-selling newspaper, El País. The jury voted unanimously to give Rivero the prize for journalism in recognition of his "tenacious and committed battle for journalistic freedom" in Cuba. It praised Rivero, who is also a poet, for a life's work that is "very original and of extraordinary literary value." (*El País*, AP, 25,27/4/07)

April 26: Spanish Audiencia Nacional (Spain's highest criminal court) judge Santiago Pedraz did not allow a criminal suit filed in February by the Cuban opposition organization Committee of Assistance to Dissidents Brigada-2506(CAD-2506) against Fidel Castro for the death of nine prisoners of war after the botched Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. The legal team representing Miami-based CAD-2506 filed an appeal. (*Europa Press*, 27/4/07)

Foreign Affairs

April 1: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque received his Spanish counterpart, Miguel Angel Moratinos, at Havana's international airport. Moratinos, arrived in Cuba for a two day official visit, the main aim of which is to normalise bilateral relations. He is being accompanied by the secretaries of state for International Cooperation, Leire Pajín, and for Iberoamerica, Trinidad Jiménez. It is the first official visit by a Spanish Foreign Affairs minister since 1998, and the first by any European Foreign Affairs minister since 2003, when the EU imposed sanctions, that have since been lifted, against Cuba in protest at the execution of three kidnapers and summary sentences passed on 75 dissidents. (*Think Spain, Herald Sun*, 2/4/07)

April 2: Spain's Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos on a visit to Cuba advocated a "new era" of "better understanding" between Spain, Cuba and the European Union. "It is absolutely unthinkable for the Spanish government not to sustain, defend and develop an intense and constructive policy with the Cuban authorities" based on dialogue, Moratinos said after a meeting with his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque. "Each moment and each occasion confirms my reflection and intuition that this visit was necessary," Moratinos said, adding that Spain and Cuba had gone many years "without this possibility of having a frank dialogue of mutual respect and of moving forward in our bilateral relations." It is not clear whether Moratinos will also meet with dissidents, who have expressed interest in meeting with him to show him the "Cuban reality" and present their demands for the liberation of political prisoners and the "respect of the human rights" on the island. (*EFE, DPA, Herald Sun, Reuters, 2/4/07*)

April 2: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said Cuba was discussing human rights with the Spanish delegation headed by foreign minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, but would only do so with the EU if full diplomatic relations were restored and if the EU tore up its 1996 "Common Position," which seeks democracy in Cuba. He said the EU should treat Cuba with the same respect that Cuba showed it. He said he was confident of an improvement. "Spain (...) is, today, within the European Union, a privileged negotiator," Perez Roque said. "We recognize this government's authority to talk to us on a basis of perfect equality, including on the most complex issues." Pérez Roque affirmed that the foreign minister's visit is a clear sign of rectification, of a change in direction, of needed openings, clear evidence of the Spanish government's genuine interest in dialogue with the Cuban government based on mutual respect and equality. He also noted that "we have closed one stage", that "we have healed the deep wounds" left open as a result of the actions of the former Spanish government; that Spain is once again becoming a privileged interlocutor and that bilateral relations can only advance on the basis of strict reciprocal respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. He added that while similar points of view are not shared on all issues, he was confident in their capacity to discuss them with respect. (*EFE, DPA, Granma International, Reuters, 2/4/07*)

April 2: Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung stated in Hanoi that his country supports Cuba and its will to broaden bilateral links, after welcoming the island's Minister for Informatics and Communication Ramiro Valdes. On a fraternal exchange at the Presidential Palace, Dung stressed that "Vietnam has been, is and will be a brother country and faithful friend of Cuba," as well as make efforts to strengthen and broaden bilateral ties. The Cuban minister termed fruitful and promising the meeting held with the minister of Posts and Telecommunications of Vietnam, to raise collaboration in this sphere to a new level. (*Prensa Latina, 2/4/07*)

April 2: In a letter released in Havana, the Ladies in White, wives of Cuban political prisoners, thanked Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt for his denunciation before the UN Human Rights Council of the situation in Cuba. (*AFP, 2/4/07*)

April 4: Cuba's government issued the second article in a week about ethanol production signed by Fidel Castro, with the ailing leader reiterating his charge that the use of food crops to produce biofuels for automobiles could leave the world's poor hungry. "Where are the poor countries of the Third World going to get the minimum resources to survive?" asked the article entitled "Reflections of the Commander in Chief." "I'm not exaggerating or using unmeasured words. I am sticking to the facts." As for Brazil's continued support of ethanol production, Castro wrote: "It is not my intention to harm Brazil, nor get mixed up in affairs related to the internal politics of that great country." But, Castro wrote, key questions remained unanswered about plans for biofuel production following weekend talks between Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and US President George W. Bush on that and other trade matters. "From where and who are going to supply the more than 500 million tons of corn and other cereals that United States, Europe and the rich countries are going to need to produce the quantity of gallons of ethanol that the big companies of the United States and other countries demand in return for their many investments?" he asked. The issue has created a genteel tension in Cuban relations with the government of Silva, a former labor union organizer who has a long history of friendly ties with Cuba's communist leaders. [[Reflexiones de Fidel Castro](#)] (*AP, 4/4/07*)

April 4: Brazil does not wish to ideologize the ethanol issue, brought into question by Cuba and Venezuela, and attributes criticism by Cuban leader Fidel Castro to a matter of "incomprehension," said Marco Aurelio García, senior international adviser for Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva. "We do not want to turn the ethanol issue into an ideological problem," declared García. In reference to Castro's position, García said that "there is certain incomprehension, in that the position that the (Cuban) president (Fidel) Castro has maintained is that the production of biofuels would create problems for food production (...) that is not the reality." "The issue of world hunger is not a problem of lack of food but of revenue." (AFP, 4/4/07)

April 4: Spain's foreign minister left Cuba with agreements making Madrid Cuba's preferred interlocutor for contacts with the European Union, but Havana made it clear that the question of the 300 or so political prisoners in the island's jails is off the agenda. Miguel Angel Moratinos ended his first official visit to Cuba with important agreements to renew Spanish development aid - suspended after the 2003 crisis - and to create a formal mechanism for dialogue on human rights, the first of its kind signed by the Cuban government with an EU country. The minister was received the day before by acting President Raul Castro, in whom he said he found "comprehension ... (and) the will to work together" and to whom he delivered a handwritten note from Spain's King Juan Carlos inquiring after the health of Fidel Castro, who has been recovering for the past eight months from an illness and surgery, the nature of which have remained "state secrets." Moratinos and his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque, emphasized that this visit had opened a new phase in bilateral relations. However, despite the agreements and the many declarations of good intentions and "frank and sincere" dialogue on "all matters," Perez Roque made clear that the subject of political prisoners, the most delicate issue in the tense relations between Havana and the EU, remains off limits. "The prisoners in Cuba do not constitute part of this agenda. We, in addition, consider that is an issue that has to be dealt with by our legal system, by the established mechanisms in our country and, of course, in accord with what is set forth in Cuban laws," said Perez Roque in the presence of Moratinos. [[Comunicado Conjunto](#)](EFE, 4/4/07)

April 4: Cuba's leading dissidents, miffed by a rapprochement between Spain and Cuba's communist government, boycotted meetings with a Spanish official. Pro-democracy activists said they felt "insulted" that Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos ended a two-day visit to Havana without meeting with them. "Moratinos's visit was an insult to the Cuban people. He came and gave tyranny a slap on the back," said Vladimiro Roca, one of half a dozen dissidents who turned down invitations by the Spanish embassy to meet with Director General for Ibero-America Javier Sandomingo. "Moratinos visited at a time when repression, intolerance and violation of civil rights is on the rise, especially against the democratic, peaceful opposition," said Oswaldo Paya, Cuba's best-known dissident. Marta Beatriz Roque, leader of the illegal Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society, said, "I do not believe at all in the deal [on human rights], or in the good will of the Spanish government." "I do not know how Spain can talk about human rights in Cuba if the political prisoners are not on the agenda," Roque said. "Moratinos has forgotten what he went through under Franco's dictatorship." Social-democrat dissident Manuel Cuesta Morua, and Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, from Cambio Cubano, accepted the invitation by the Spanish embassy. (AFP, Reuters, 4/4/07)

April 4: Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg criticised Spain's decision to patch up diplomatic ties with Cuba's communist regime. "The Czech Republic has a different long term opinion to that of Spain when it comes to dealing with the Cuban regime," said Schwarzenberg. "There is not a change in Czech policy towards Cuba. The question of human rights constitutes one of the foreign policy priorities for the Czech Republic," Schwarzenberg said in a statement. In May 2005 Schwarzenberg was one of several European lawmakers who were expelled from Cuba as they arrived to attend a congress of Cuban political dissidents. (AFP, 4/4/07)

April 4: Spain's decision to renew ties with Cuba is unlikely to be followed soon by the European Union and it could fuel divisions over the best way to promote democracy on the island, diplomats said. The decision came during a visit to Cuba by Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, whose government has spearheaded efforts to revive relations hurt by Havana's jailing of 75 dissidents four years ago. For many EU diplomats, it simply confirmed something that they had known for a long time: Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero would prefer to go it

alone on Cuba rather than struggle to rally 27 European countries behind him. Most states agree that with the health problems of veteran leader Fidel Castro and the arrival of his brother Raul, Cuba "is in a transitional phase, but certainly not yet post-Castro," another diplomat said. The German EU presidency in February drafted a new policy paper on Cuba, sparking a discussion among EU diplomats at a 29 March meeting in Brussels. Strategic parts of the text are to remain secret but the document is also designed to give rise to a public EU political declaration on Cuba in June. "The new document says little that hasn't been said by the EU before. The wording is very carefully balanced so as not to offend the sensibilities of the [EU] delegations, in terms of what we are trying to achieve," an EU official said. Spain, supported by Greece and Cyprus, wants Berlin to shelve the new EU paper despite its softly-softly approach. Madrid says any EU policy shift in mid-2007 could damage prospects of a "new era" in Cuba-EU relations, with the opening created by the fragile health of 80-year old Fidel Castro and upcoming elections of March 2008. (*AFP, EUObserver, 4/4/07*)

April 5: The international relations secretary of Spain's governing Socialist Party spoke out in defense of Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos' just-completed visit to Cuba. Elena Valenciano took issue with the criticism leveled by Cuban dissidents of Moratinos' decision to send a subordinate to meet with them at the Spanish Embassy in Havana rather than receive them himself. In comments to the press, she asked rhetorically what Spain's main opposition conservatives are doing for the Cuban people. Valenciano was responding to Popular Party foreign affairs spokesman Jorge Moragas, who said that the dissidents deserved "more dignified treatment" from Moratinos. (*EFE, 5/4/07*)

April 5: The OAS Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed concern in its report, released March 29, about the "precarious" detention conditions of 79 leaders of the Cuban dissident movement sentenced to prison in April 2003, as well as the situation for other political prisoners. Several people detained have been physically mistreated by prison authorities and subjected to long periods of isolation, causing serious deterioration in their physical and mental health, said the commission's report. [[2006 IACHR Annual Report: Cuba](#)] (*US Fed News, 5/4/07*)

April 6: Freedom House sent a letter to the Foreign Minister of Spain, Miguel Angel Moratinos, expressing disappointment that the official met with Cuban authorities during a recent visit to the island but not with members of the country's dissident movement. "Spain has long served as a model of a peaceful democratic transition and has played an important role in encouraging democratic reform around the world," wrote Jennifer Windsor, Executive Director of Freedom House, in the letter. "The decision not to personally meet with those individuals on the front-lines of the peaceful struggle from democratic freedoms sent an unfortunate -- if unintended -- message that issues of human rights are not a top priority in Spanish foreign policy." [[Letter to the Foreign Minister of Spain](#)] (*FH Press Release, 6/4/07*)

April 7: Cuba and the Dominican Republic have agreed to cooperate on environmental protection in both countries and to join forces to work on the issue across the Caribbean region, according to a memorandum signed in the Cuban capital. The document was signed by Dominican environment minister Max Puig and the Cuban science, technology and environment minister Fernando González. "We are very happy, we congratulate ourselves for having signed this agreement which allows us to work, continue working, not only as we've done until now, but increasing our links", said Puig. (*Dominican Today, 7/4/07*)

April 7: With the last group of 238 patients being sent out to Cuba and Venezuela to undergo corrective surgery for different eye diseases, Nicaragua will bring to a close operation "Miracle," launched in March, 2006. An ophthalmology center in Nicaragua staffed by a Cuban medical brigade will take over the surgical interventions, using 600,000 USD worth of surgical equipment donated by Cuba. (*AP, 7/4/07*)

April 9: Emphasizing that the simple existence of nuclear weapons poses a danger to world peace and security, Cuba urged universal nuclear disarmament. Cuban Ambassador to the United Nations Rodrigo Malmierca told the UN Commission on Disarmament that this danger is the reason Cuba "is reaffirming the historic stance of the Non Aligned

Movement that nuclear disarmament is the highest priority in the disarmament field." Nuclear nations have the legal obligation not only to hold negotiations, but also to complete them to achieve a comprehensive nuclear disarmament under a strict, effective international verification system, he said. The Cuban diplomat said further that the island rejects plans to ignore or minimize the relevance of nuclear disarmament "in order to impose a selective non-proliferation approach instead." (*Prensa Latina*, 9/4/07)

April 10: As the rotating chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Cuba once again underlined its solidarity with Iranians in defending the nation's nuclear right and access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque in a meeting with the outgoing Iranian Ambassador to Havana Ahmad Edrisian said that his country will continue to stand by Iran in the face of pressures exerted on and threats facing it. "Meanwhile, as a friendly country and head of NAM, Cuba will defend Iran's nuclear rights," he added. The Cuban minister lauded Iran's initiatives in thwarting the pressures and threats of the colonial and bullying powers. Turning to the recent crisis created by the British marines who violated the country's territorial waters, he said that Iran managed to end the crisis through its favorable measures and consciousness. Roque also declared that his Iranian counterpart, Manouchehr Mottaki, will visit Havana in the near future and said that the trip will provide a suitable opportunity for exchange of views between the two sides in various grounds of mutual, regional and international concern. (*IRNA*, 10/4/07)

April 10: Norwegian Foreign Affairs Ministry's Secretary of State Raymond Johansen was received by Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Eumelio Caballero, as part of his official visit to the island. Both diplomats held official talks, highlighting their interest in increasing bilateral relations in several sectors, and Johansen will meet with local sector officials. The secretary's agenda includes meeting with Rogelio Sierra, Foreign Affairs Ministry director of Latin America and the Caribbean, and Deputy of Basic Industry Minister Tomas Benitez. (*Prensa Latina*, 10/4/07)

April 10: Some 1,500 delegates gathered in Caracas for the 14th Congress of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) sent Fidel Castro a message of best wishes, Granma daily reported. During her opening speech, WIDF President Marcia Campos said that Castro and the Cuban people are no longer alone in the struggle against imperialism, and today have the support of governments committed to democracy and women. Campos highlighted the role of Cuban women's leader Vilma Espin, whom she called a symbol for the WIDF because she represents hope, struggle and commitment to women around the world. (*ACN*, 10/4/07)

April 10: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez presented degree certificates to 1,013 integral general doctors, the first group of its kind, during the graduation ceremony at the Teresa Carreño theater. Also present was Carlos Lage, vice president of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba. The Venezuelan president specifically acknowledged Cuban President Fidel Castro whom he called "the doctor, friend, brother, comrade" who has most encouraged this initiative to create this immense battalion of Bolivarian doctors. For his part, Lage specified that the graduates had undergone an intensive training program with the help of 1,420 highly qualified Cuban specialists. During the event, Chávez affirmed that Venezuela and Cuba had ratified the project to graduate 200,000 Latin American doctors in the current decade, as part of a bilateral agreement entitled the Sandino Commitment. (*Granma International*, 11/4/07)

April 10: Uruguayan President Tabaré Vázquez said that he has a "radically" different opinion than Fidel Castro regarding the production of ethanol as an alternative fuel. "I beg to differ radically with Fidel Castro (...) It is necessary to rationalize land use to harmonize one thing with the other, as an alternative to fossil fuels and also to produce food," maintained Vázquez. "It seems to me that this is not a black-and-white issue, that there are gray areas, and the Uruguayan government is going to work along that line." (*EER*, 12/4/07)

April 11: Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Felipe Perez Roque arrived in New Delhi on a two-day visit to take forward the bilateral ties between the two countries. On his first-ever visit to India, Roque will meet Minister of State for External Affairs Anand Sharma in addition to making a courtesy call on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Rodrigues Costa and senior officials will be accompanying him.

The bilateral cooperation, covering a number of areas, including agriculture, science and technology, sports, health and energy, was reviewed and expanded in the sixth Indo-Cuban Joint Commission meeting held in Havana in February, 2006. Perez Roque's visit to India will be followed by a stay in Vietnam and later in China. (*Daily India, ACN, 11/4/07*)

April 12: Four Cuban doctors are facing a huge dilemma, and are currently in hiding in Namibia from the Cuban Government after they were prevented from immigrating to America. The doctors have lost their jobs, do not have any passports, and despite the fact that they are in possession of emergency travel documents to travel to America, they are prevented from leaving Namibia by immigration control at the airport. The way in which Cuban doctors and medical personnel are being treated stands in direct conflict with the provisions of the Namibian Constitution. Furthermore, it infringes upon international human rights norms as contained in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights and the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. This is the conclusion reached by the Legal Assistance Centre after the Cuban doctors approached it for assistance. This could lead to legal steps being taken against the Namibian Government in which the court will be tasked to test the legality of the bilateral relations between Namibia and Cuba with regard to the deployment of Cuban medical personnel in Namibia, and the provisions of the Namibian Constitution. (*The Republikein, 12/4/07*)

April 12: Venezuelan intelligence agents raided the home of a close friend of Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles, who is jailed in the United States but wanted in Venezuela for a 1976 airliner bombing, the man's wife said. Military intelligence agents searched attorney Joaquin Chaffardet's home for five hours, saying they were looking for weapons and documents, his wife, Maria Teresa Rosas, said. She accused them of planting a C-4 explosive along with other potentially compromising documents, saying "that wasn't in my house." Military officials did not immediately return calls seeking comment. Chaffardet was out of the country at the time of the raid, Rosas said, declining to say where he was and citing security reasons. Hugo Chavez' government has called Chaffardet an accomplice of Posada, saying it was grossly improper that his court testimony helped convince a US judge that Posada faced a threat of torture if handed over to Venezuela. Chaffardet, a Venezuelan, was once a police colleague of Posada, who held a prominent role in Venezuela's secret police in the 1970s. (*Sun Sentinel, 13/4/07*)

April 13: Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung met with visiting Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and ratified his country's willingness to further strengthen relations with the island. "The Government, party and people of Vietnam will never stop cultivating these brotherly friendship links, so that they can become even better in the future," the Vietnamese premier said. Dung highlighted results of a meeting between Perez Roque and his Vietnamese peer Pham Gia Khiem, with whom he reviewed the state of bilateral relations and discussed steps to further strengthen them. They also discussed regional and international issues of mutual interest. Perez Roque arrived in Hanoi as part of an Asian tour which started in India and will take him to China on April 15. (*AP, Prensa Latina, 13/4/07*)

April 13: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said his close friend and ally Fidel Castro has "almost totally recovered" from his illness. Speaking at a televised news conference, Chavez said the 80-year-old Cuban leader's marked improvement is clear. "Almost totally recovered is the very reliable information that I keep receiving," Chavez said. "The information that keeps emerging, his notes, his voice on the telephone, show a marked improvement (in his health)," he said. "He has taken back a good part of government functions, but, of course, not formally." (*BBC, AP, 13/4/07*)

April 13: Venezuelan Ambassador to Havana, former Foreign Affairs Minister Alí Rodríguez, said that the Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), previously scheduled to take place in Havana, would now be held in Caracas. The change of venue opens questions about an eventual public reappearance of Fidel Castro during the ALBA summit, as was announced by Bolivian president Evo Morales. Morales had said that the meeting of the ALBA presidents would take place on April 28 in Havana, "an opportunity for the return of brother Fidel Castro to the presidency". The announcement of the new venue had been briefly made by President Hugo Chavez on April 12, and

was confirmed by Ambassador Rodríguez. The presidents of Venezuela, Bolivia, and Nicaragua, and a representative from Cuba, will attend the summit in Caracas on April 27-29. (*La Jornada*, 14/4/07)

April 14: Cuban refugees escaped from the Fairbanks Detention Centre in Cayman Islands and took their protests to the streets of George Town. After forcing a gate at the facility, the 29-strong group marched into town shouting, "No Cuba, No Castro!" and displaying placards. Whereas previous protests have been conducted in relative secrecy, this demonstration was witnessed by hundreds of visiting cruise ship passengers. As the protesters made their way back, they stopped and spoke to some of the tourists, striving to ensure their complaints reached an international audience. After a few hours, the group, by now accompanied by a substantial police escort, returned to the centre. However, the protest continued outside the gates. The Cubans explained to the press that they faced persecution if the Cayman Islands Government sent them back to Cuba. Although not giving specific details, many referred to a fear that Fidel Castro would "break" them if they were repatriated. Explaining their heightened concerns, several said the situation in Cuba had become much worse since Raul Castro had been given power. The questions revealed that the Cubans want to go on to Honduras. They were adamant that, even though seven had already been detained in the Cayman Islands and repatriated, being sent back to Cuba was not an option. In 1999, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the governments of Cuba and Cayman Islands to address the increasing illegal migration from Cuba. (*Cayman Net News*, 17/4/07)

April 15: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said that Fidel Castro was recuperating from his illness and cited a letter from the Cuban leader as evidence of his recovery. "I received a letter today from an extraordinary human being. His name is Fidel Castro. How are you Fidel? [in English] I am going to show for those who say Fidel has Parkinson's disease, that he's trembling, that he can't walk, that he's dying. Look at Fidel's signature," said Chavez, holding up the letter signed by Castro during the inauguration of a medical school with Bolivian President Evo Morales. In the letter, Castro said that "100 Cuban students would be studying medicine in Venezuela's Latin American School of Medicine". (*AP*, 15/4/07)

April 16: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque began a wide program of contacts in Beijing. The Cuban minister responded to an invitation of his Chinese counterpart Li Zhaoxing with whom he will hold official talks and sign a protocol of bilateral collaboration. Perez Roque's official visit to China began in the southern province of Guangdong, where he inaugurated a new Cuban general consulate. Guangdong is linked to the Caribbean island due to the Chinese migration since the 19th century. The collaboration plan between Cuba and China will establish political consultations of their respective Foreign ministries, dealing with the international situation and issues of reciprocal interest as well as collaboration in the United Nations. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/4/07)

April 16: The president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva affirmed that it is possible to produce both biofuels and food, contradicting criticism by the leaders of Cuba and Venezuela. "I do not know yet what science or technical data there is behind the criticism," said the head of State in reply to questions regarding Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez's opposition. (*Reuters*, 17/4/07)

April 17: China and Cuba pledged to strengthen their friendship on their rapidly growing cooperation in various fields. The commitment was made during an-hour-long meeting between Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing and his Cuban counterpart Felipe Roque in Beijing. The two sides agreed to enhance communication and have more dialogue to push forward the mutually beneficial cooperation, with Li and Roque signing an accord. Roque called on Chinese Vice-President Zeng Qinghong later in the day. He said it was in his country's strategic interest to further develop cooperative ties with China. The Chinese Foreign Affairs spokesman, Liu Jianchao, said that the agreement signed between the two chancelleries includes, "consultation on regional and international affairs, the formation of diplomats, and further mutual visits to increase political understanding between the two countries". (*China Daily*, *EFE*, 17/4/07)

April 17: Cuba's Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque, met with Chinese State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan on the last day of his official visit to China. Tang reiterated his country's desire to strengthen bilateral exchange, economic relations and coordination in international organizations between the two nations. Perez Roque said he was pleased with the results of his visit to China and assured that ties had been strengthened. (*Granma*, 18/4/07)

April 18: The International Conference on the theme "Democracy in Cuba: Seeking Common Initiatives", which will take place in Berlin on the 25th and 26th of April, 2007, will be attended by several leading personalities of international politics. The following individuals have confirmed their participation: Václav Havel, Lech Walesa, the former President of Uruguay Luis Alberto Lacalle, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg, Members of Parliament Markus Meckel, Arnold Vaatz and Jorge Moragas, the Vice-President of the European Parliament Edward McMillan-Scott as well as several others. Representatives of the leaders of the Democratic Opposition Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas and Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello will also attend the conference. The individual panel discussions will address the following themes: What developments await the situation in Cuba? Who will play the main role in a possible transformation? What can international actors do? How can the EU, Latin America and the USA find a common approach towards Cuba? What can the countries of the EU do and what are the results of their policies? The conference is organized by the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and will be attended by representatives of European governments and the Cuban opposition as well as non-government organizations working in Cuba. (*ICDC Press Release*, 18/4/07)

April 18: A Cuban dissident journalist was arrested, tried and sentenced to four years in prison -- all in one day and with no defense attorney -- on charges of being a "pre-criminal social danger," a press freedom group said. Oscar Sánchez Madan, a 44-year-old resident of Unión de Reyes in central Matanzas province who writes for the Coral Gables-based Cubanet network, was summarily processed on April 13, Reporters Without Borders said. The Paris-based press freedom organization said he is the third reporter jailed for "dangerousness" since interim President Raúl Castro took over power July 31 from his ailing brother Fidel. "When the transition of power first took place in Cuba, I think people in civil society thought there would be more freedoms," said the group's Americas director, Benoit Hervieu. "I think this is strategic repression to show the world we are still the masters, and are afraid of nobody." (*The Miami Herald*, 19/4/07)

April 18: Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos said that he will continue to ask the Cuban government to free the nearly 300 political prisoners now being held in the jails of the communist-ruled island. Moratinos, in a joint press conference with visiting Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov, said that he already made this request during his recent visit to Cuba and will do so again when a bilateral commission set up to deal with matters including human rights meets in May. The minister made the remarks when asked whether the government will ask for the release of Cuban independent labor leader Pedro Pablo Alvarez Ramos, as recommended in a non-binding resolution approved by the foreign affairs committee of the Spanish Parliament. Moratinos said Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's government will call for the release of this dissident and other members of the opposition because "it's the best way to create trust and conditions that allow the Cuban authorities and the Cuban people to continue to make strides toward deepening democracy." (*EFE*, 18/4/07)

April 18: Belarus and Cuba are increasing mutually beneficial cooperation, a deputy foreign minister of Belarus, Viktor Gaisenok, said at the House of Friendship during a reception organized to mark the 15th anniversary of the establishment of Belarusian-Cuban diplomatic relations. Mr Gaisenok said the relations were growing stronger step by step in all spheres: political, economic, cultural and education. The Ambassador of Cuba to Belarus Omar Senon Medina Quintero said the Belarusian and Cuban peoples were united by years-long friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation. There are many promising cooperation avenues today like tourism and medicine, he said. (*NLCRB*, 19/4/07)

April 19: Thongloun Sisoulith, deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Laos, arrived in Cuba by invitation of Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. Sisoulith heads the Laotian delegation to the 12th Intergovernmental Commission for Economic and Scientific-Technical Collaboration. Marta Lomas Morales, minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration, will lead the Cuban delegation during the meeting. The two foreign ministries see the meeting as an opportunity to further increase the dialogue between the two socialist states, both members of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) currently chaired by Cuba. The Intergovernmental Commission is expected to produce a new agreement to expand collaboration between Laos and Cuba. (*Granma*, 19/4/07)

April 19: A member of China's Communist Party's inner circle arrived in Havana on a mission to improve cooperation and friendship with Cuba, the official press reported. Wu Guanzheng, a member of the Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party of China, is the highest-ranking Chinese government official to visit Cuba since the December 2005 visit of another politburo member, Lou Gan, and Chinese President Hu Jintao in November 2004. Wu's trip is meant to "increase friendship, consensus and cooperation," the official daily said. Wu was greeted at the airport by Fernando Ramirez de Estenez, in charge of foreign relations of Cuba's Communist Party secretariat. (*AFP*, 19/4/07)

April 20: The Communist Party daily *Granma* reported that Wu Guanzheng, a member of the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo, met separately with both Fidel Castro and his younger brother Raul. A short message about the encounter was first read on state television and carried on official news services. After meeting for an hour with Fidel Castro and delivering a letter from Chinese President Hu Jintao, Wu met with Raul Castro to discuss economic and other issues, *Granma* said. Trade between the two communist countries has burgeoned in recent years, growing to \$1.8 billion last year, double that of 2005, according to Chinese officials in Cuba. Chinese exports of buses, locomotives and farm equipment and supplies to Cuba helped account for the sharp increase. (*AP*, 21/4/07)

April 20: All 118 member countries of the Non Aligned Movement reaffirmed their strong condemnation of terrorism in the wake of the release of Luis Posada Carriles. In a statement published by Cuban media, the NAM recalls that Posada Carriles is responsible for numerous terrorist acts against Cuba and other countries, including the blowing up of a Cuban plane in October 1976, killing all 73 people on board. [[Statement by the 118 members of the NAM](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 21/4/07)

April 20: The Venezuelan government is considering lodging a complaint against the United States before the United Nations and the OAS for that nation's release on bail of anti-Castro dissident Luis Posada Carriles, accused of terrorism by both Caracas and Havana, an attorney involved in the case said. "Venezuela considers asking the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the United Nations Security Council to open an investigation into the conduct of the United States government and its authorities (...) in the release of terrorist Posada Carriles," Jose Pertierra, Venezuela's legal representative in the case of extradition, said. According to the attorney, the release on bail of Posada Carriles, 79, "does not fulfill the obligations" that the United States assumed "under resolution 1,373" of the United Nations, the state-operated Bolivarian News Agency (ABN) reported. (*EFE*, 21/4/07)

April 21: President of Bolivia, Evo Morales, presented the book "100 Hours with Fidel" by French journalist Ignacio Ramonet, which he described as "a significant work because of the ideas and humanist sense of the Cuban president." The presentation ceremony was attended by ministers, deputies, senators, delegates of the Constituent Assembly, officials from the Armed Forces and National Police, as well as municipality authorities, diplomats and leaders of social organizations. "Fidel is the Commander of the Latin American liberating forces," Morales said in his emotional speech, in which he appreciated the results of Cuban medical cooperation in Bolivia. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/4/07)

April 21: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and his Laotian counterpart, Deputy Foreign Minister Thongloun Sisoulith met to discuss, among matters, issues related to the Non Aligned Movement. In welcoming Sisoulith, Perez Roque thanked Laos' support to Cuba's struggle against the US over a five decade blockade and attacks. "We are socialist, developing countries in NAM, in an unjust, unequal world that overrides our right to peace",

he said. During his stay, Sisoulith and his delegation met with Marta Lomas, minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, and is scheduled to meet with Vice President Carlos Lage. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/4/07)

April 22: Manouchehr Mottaki, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, arrived in Cuba on an official visit, fulfilling an invitation by his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque. This trip shows the fraternal ties between the two nations, and the firm political will of strengthening them, an official source stated. (*Prensa Latina*, 23/4/07)

April 23: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque reiterated Cuba's support for the right of Iran to develop a nuclear program for peaceful purposes, during a meeting with his Iranian counterpart. The meeting was on the agenda for Manouchehr Mottaki's state visit to Cuba aimed at strengthening bilateral ties. "We are grateful for the position of the Non-Aligned Countries on this subject, particularly the position of its president, to support Iran's right to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes," the Iranian minister told the press at the Cuban Foreign Ministry. "Nuclear development in Iran is following a natural course under the NPT (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) supervised by the (International Atomic Energy) Agency," Tehran's top diplomat said. For his part, Perez Roque said that his country firmly opposes "the pressuring and blackmail being practiced against the Republic of Iran." Cuba, he said, "opposes the discrimination and double standard" in the area of nuclear development. Perez Roque described their bilateral relations as excellent and underscored the agreement of the two countries on many points of the international agenda. (*EFE*, 23/4/07)

April 23: Manouchehr Mottaki, Iran's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said his country is "ready for broader cooperation with Latin American states". In the first round of talks with his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque in Havana, Mottaki said that, "today, Cuba is not alone in Latin America and the new generation of Latin American states are Havana's friends with a justice-oriented angle." He said Iran is ready to share experience with Cuba and Venezuela in agriculture, industry and science with a view to effectively contribute into progress, development and public welfare of the countries, which have been suffering from poverty, illiteracy and many other problems as a result of being under domination." Perez Roque for his part voiced his country's readiness for any sort of bilateral and multilateral cooperation with Iran to ensure the development of Latin American states. "We have always been beside Iran and are supporting the Islamic Republic of Iran in all domains," he announced. (*Tehran Times*, 24/4/07)

April 23: Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki claimed in Havana that Washington supported terrorism in various parts of the world, criticizing the release of a former CIA operative convicted in the deadly 1976 downing of a Cuban airliner. The Iranian diplomat, who was on a two-day visit to Cuba, decried what he called Washington's "support for terrorism in various parts of the world." His remarks followed the release on bail of former CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles, who is wanted in Cuba and Venezuela for a 1976 bombing that killed all 73 people aboard a Cuban passenger jet, the report added. "We condemn the release of Luis Posada Carriles," said Mottaki. "He is a terrorist protected by the United States," the minister said. (*IranMania*, 24/4/07)

April 23: Cuba's acting president Raul Castro said in Havana that support for Iran's stance on its peaceful nuclear activities was among his country's fixed policies. Castro made the remark in a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki before the latter wound up his week-long visit to Latin American states. Cuba will stand shoulder to shoulder with Iran in the face of any threat, Castro stressed. Iran is a big state with a great civilization, the acting president added. (*IRNA*, 24/4/07)

April 23: Authorities and high-ranking officials from Malawi, Haiti and Egypt started in Havana activities aimed at strengthening bilateral relations with Cuba. Malawi's Foreign Minister Joyce Hilda Banda is expected to meet with Ricardo Alarcon, President of the Cuban Parliament and with the Minister of Education, Luis Ignacio Gomez. Also, Haiti's Minister of Foreign Relations and Cults, Jean Renald Clerisme, will hold talks with Cuban officials and sign a ministerial agreement. Cuba and Haiti have long-standing relations of brotherhood and cooperation, mainly in health and education. For his part, Deputy Foreign Minister of Egypt, Hatem Aziz Seif El Nasr, is expected to sign a visa

exemption with authorities of the island. A cooperation protocol between the Raul Roa Garcia Higher Institute of Foreign Relations and the Egyptian Foreign Ministry's Diplomatic Studies Institute is also expected to be signed. The Egyptian high ranking official met with Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque on an agenda including issues linked to the Non Aligned Movement, currently presided over by Cuba. Egypt will assume the NAM presidency in 2009. (*Prensa Latina*, 24/4/07)

April 23: St. Vincent's Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves was recovering from surgery in Cuba after an operation for an undisclosed ailment. Gonsalves said in a phone interview that the surgery was successful and he expects to recuperate in the hospital for another week. "Everything is OK. I'm feeling fine," the St. Vincent prime minister told the press. He said it was not related to an April 9 car crash in his small Caribbean nation. His driver, Zaccheus Parris, was also in Cuba and was examined by Cuban leader Fidel Castro's personal orthopedic surgeon for neck and shoulder injuries sustained in the crash, the prime minister said. (*AP*, 23/4/07)

April 23: The May Day International Brigade of Solidarity with Cuba, formed by over 220 activists from 32 countries, began a new campaign of friendship with the island. The brigade plans to meet with relatives of the five Cubans unfairly imprisoned in the US. During their 15-day stay on the island, the group members also intend to celebrate May Day along with Cubans, a source from the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) told the press. (*Prensa Latina*, 23/4/07)

April 24: Two Cuban doctors, Juan Castro Rodriguez and Margarita Perez Perez, (aliases), told a Namibian newspaper of the horrific treatment that they received in this African country. Three months ago the Legal Assistance Centre, which is assisting them in their efforts to leave the country, appealed to the Ministry of Home Affairs to provide them and another doctor, Juana Rodriguez Alvarez (an alias), the necessary documents to leave the country. They have not received any reply yet. On their arrival in Namibia, their passports were confiscated by the Cuban Embassy, and they were sent to Oshakati to work there. According to Rodriguez and Perez, their living conditions were horrific, and in October last year they had had enough. They left Oshakati and went to Windhoek where they applied for special travel documents. These are documents issued by the US Embassy to people from countries renowned for human rights abuses, enabling them to travel to America. The documents were issued on January 27, but Namibian authorities refused them leave to depart Namibia. They have since been living like refugees, moving from one place to another, so that Namibian authorities cannot arrest and deport them, as they do not possess work permits to be in Namibia. Dr. Perez told *Republikein* that in terms of the disciplinary code of the Cuban authorities, they cannot travel in Namibia without the permission of the Cuban Embassy, so they are prohibited from making friends with Namibians, and they cannot visit Namibian homes. These conditions also pertain to any contact with Angolan or Portuguese citizens. (*Republikein*, 24/4/07)

April 24: More than 860 unionists from 61 nations have already confirmed participation along the Cuban people in upcoming May Day celebrations. Confirmed participants represent 167 trade unions from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the United States and Canada. The General Secretary of the World Federation of Trade Unions George Mavrikos, as well as renown Latin American union leaders have also confirmed their participation at the Havana celebrations. (*ACN*, 24/4/07)

April 25: Former Czech president Vaclav Havel called for greater international solidarity for the benefit of freedom and human rights in Cuba, at the start of a two-day meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) in Berlin. Havel addressed his appeal mainly to the European Union. "Everything that serves human rights and freedoms must be paid attention," Havel said. He stressed the importance of international support, referring to his personal experience from opposition to the former regime in Czechoslovakia. "Europe should catch up with the United States in its effort at human rights," Havel said in an allusion to the EU's effort to compete with the USA mainly in the economy. He clearly pointed to the EU's years-long disunity on the totalitarian regime in Cuba. "The policy the EU pursues seems to me to be rather cautious," Havel told journalists. He said this concerns human rights in other countries

as well. The ICDC brings together politicians and intellectuals. It was created on Havel's initiative four years ago. Its members include former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, former Spanish PM Jose Maria Aznar and Nobel Literature Prize winner Mario Vargas Llosa from Peru. (CTK, 25/4/07)

April 25: The Cuban dissident organization Christian Liberation Movement (MCL) asked the European Union (EU) to endorse the manifest "Unity for Freedom" written by several domestic opposition groups. In a message sent to the conference of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, held in Berlin, Oswaldo Paya, as representative of the MCL, said that, "in the last few months, many in the world speak and speculate about Cuba, based only on what happens in the higher circles and making prophecies and plans for succession and continuity (...) Some find in the opposition's alleged divisions and the mirage of our people's passivity their excuse to work out their plans over the Cuban people's heads squashed by a society without rights." (EER, 26/4/07)

April 25: General Secretary of the Russian Federation Communist Party Guennadi Ziuganov bestowed a commemorative medal marking the 90th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution on Fidel Castro. Ziuganov presented the medal to Vice President Carlos Lage to give to the leader of the Cuban revolution. "Fidel is a symbol of the anti-imperialist struggle in the region," said the Russian communist leader. Ziuganov arrived in Havana to fulfill a working agenda that includes meetings with members of the Communist Party of Cuba, and representatives from the Cuban Government and Parliament. (ACN, 25/4/07)

April 26: "My trip to Cuba had the effect of giving the domestic opposition a visibility it has never enjoyed before. During the trip, it took up entire sections of the media in Spain and much of the world." These were the proud words with which Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos responded in the Spanish Congress to the question asked of him by the PP [opposition Popular Party] about his recent visit to the Caribbean island, when he decided not to meet opponents of Fidel Castro. Despite the scant interest he showed in finding out their demands first-hand, the foreign minister stressed that the dissident movement is "a fundamental, inalienable part" of the Spanish government's relationship with Cuban society, in harmony with the stance of the European Union. What is more, he argued, the mechanism of bilateral political dialogue agreed with Cuba, which will be set in motion at the end of May, will not exclude "any subject a priori", including that of political prisoners. Even so, the Havana government, through its foreign minister, Felipe Perez Roque, made it clear at the end of Moratinos's visit that the situation of people jailed for political reasons would not be on the agenda because it was a matter of a domestic nature. (EFE, La Razon, 26/4/07)

April 26: Foreign Minister of Haiti Jean Renald Clerisme, during an official visit in Havana, called Cuba's collaboration with his country an example to follow. In statements to the local press, the minister said Cuban assistance should serve as a pattern for South-South relations, and mentioned for instance that all the agreements are unconditional, and praised the quality of the experts and the services provided. The Haitian official held talks with Cuban Deputy Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Orlando Requeijos. The Creole version of the Cuban teaching method Yo si puedo "Yes, I can" will be used in Haiti as soon as the editing is completed. There are Cuban medical brigades in 116 out of the 133 districts of the country, and a sugar cane factory has been successfully built and installed. (ACN, 26/4/07)

April 26: The Commissions on Labour Affairs, Welfare, Legal Affairs, Energy and Mining of the Latin American Parliament (Parlatino) held a two-day meeting in Havana to review topics of vital significance for the region. Debates centred on international migration and the impact of that phenomenon in Latin America; labour rights and the protection and defence of the rights of people with disabilities and minimum wages. The delegates discussed the legal instruments for the development of renewable and alternative sources of energy in Latin America, and on the polemic panorama of bio-fuels in the region – the current situation, competitiveness and policy. Parlatino member countries are the Dutch Antilles, Argentina, Aruba, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the Dominican Republic, Surinam, Uruguay and Venezuela. (ACN, 26/4/07)

April 26: Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg called on the European Union to step up pressure on the Cuban communist regime, at a meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC). He joined other speakers who have pointed to the EU's disunity in pushing for human rights observance and freedom in Cuba.

Schwarzenberg said he is convinced that the final statement on the EU-USA summit in Washington on April 30 will mention human rights in Cuba. Some EU countries, such as Italy and Spain, have been opposed to it. (*CTK, 26/4/07*)

April 26: With Germany presiding over the European Union (EU) this semester, the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba asked German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin for the support of her government in the promotion of the dialogue with Fidel Castro's regime and its opposition, demanding respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in the Caribbean island. At the end of a two-day conference on "Democracy in Cuba," representatives from 22 countries and 17 non-governmental organizations expressed their unanimous "interest in a peaceful transition and democratic progress" in the Caribbean island. (*AFP, 26/4/07*)

April 26: A new group of Cuban doctors under the Zimbabwe-Cuba health program has arrived in Zimbabwe to help boost the health sector in this southern African country, ZBC News reported. The program was launched in 2000 to supplement the number of doctors in Zimbabwe's hospitals. The latest group of Cuban doctors comprises 64 young men and women trained in the areas of pediatrics, gynecology, neurology, radiography, forensics, dentistry and general medicine. The head of the Cuban medical brigade in Zimbabwe Elision Fernandes said the 64 new doctors bring to 136 the total number of Cuban doctors currently deployed in Zimbabwe. (*Xinhua, 26/4/07*)

April 27: Bolivian President Evo Morales said he was "sure" Fidel Castro, who has been recovering from intestinal surgery, will resume power during May Day celebrations in Havana on May 1, a Bolivian television station reported. "I'm sure, my Cuban brothers, that on May 1 comrade Fidel will return to governing Cuba and Latin America," Morales said, according to the private Unitel network. "I'm convinced that comrade Fidel will return to continue governing and leading the Cuban people." It was the second time in two months that Morales, a leftist ally of Castro's, has said the communist leader was likely to return to power. Morales made the comments during an event attended by dozens of Cuban doctors in the northern Bolivian department of Pando. (*Reuters, 28/4/07*)

April 28: Vice President Carlos Lage is heading the Cuban delegation to the fifth Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), to be held in the Venezuelan city of Barquisimeto. The meeting will be also attended by Presidents Hugo Chavez (Venezuela), Evo Morales (Bolivia), and Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua), countries that along with Cuba form part of ALBA. Haitian President Rene Preval and delegations from other Caribbean and Latin American countries will participate as guests. The Cuban mission is also made up of Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration Minister Marta Lomas, and Deputy Foreign Ministers Alejandro Gonzalez and Abelardo Moreno. (*Prensa Latina, 28/4/07*)

April 29: Fidel Castro is back "in charge" after undergoing intestinal surgery in July, his friend and protege Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said. "He is in charge, he is in charge, he is doing a lot of thinking," Chavez said in a speech at a summit of the ALBA group, which promotes co-operation between Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua. The Venezuelan president said Castro was well enough to be not only closely monitoring the ALBA summit but was also running affairs behind the scenes. "He is in charge, the great helmsman of ALBA is Fidel," he said. Chavez said earlier this month that Castro, 80, had informally resumed "a good part" of his governing duties. Bolivian President Evo Morales has said he is sure Castro will attend a May Day parade in Havana, but Chavez said he did not know whether his mentor would be there. "I think Evo and Fidel have a plan so secret that even I do not know," he said, triggering a wave of laughter. (*Reuters, 30/4/07*)

April 29: The European Union is "willing to support change" in Cuba, a Spanish newspaper quoted German Foreign Minister and current EU president Frank-Walter Steinmeier as saying. Steinmeier told Catalan daily "El Periodico" the issue of future EU relations with Cuba would be raised at the next Council of the European Union meeting. Spain,

which has spearheaded efforts to revive EU-Cuba relations hurt by Havana's jailing of 75 dissidents in 2003, decided to renew its ties with the island earlier this month. "This step forward (...) is not an affront to the EU in general and the German presidency in particular," Steinmeier said, adding that Spain would write up a report on the subject for its European partners. "I am convinced that we (the EU members) will adopt agreements where it will be clear that the EU as an organisation is willing to support change" on the island, Steinmeier said. "It is possible that the young generations of Cuban politicians, who have had access to power, will move the country towards opening. There are some signs in this direction," he added. (*AFP*, 29/4/07)

April 29: The 5th Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) wrapped up with the signing of a number of cooperation agreements which aim to boost economic and social development in the region. The first of the ALBA Projects consists of the implementation of teaching programs including literacy campaigns, higher education and professional training in several Latin American countries. An agreement in the field of culture established the creation of an ALBA Cultural Fund. The third project is ALBA-Fair Trade. It institutes the formation of companies for industrial supplies, import and export, as well as the development of a network of stores and warehouses for the commercialization of products. Another accord is called ALBA-Finance. It introduces the establishment of an economic fund for cooperative investments. (*ACN*, 29/4/07)

April 29: During the 5th Summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez proposed in the area of energy, an accord which will take the existing agreements among the ALBA members and Haiti to a higher level. According to the Venezuelan leader, Venezuela will meet the demand for oil in the area, covering 50% of the price. Customers will also have credit facilities and half of their payment will go into the ALBA fund. Likewise, Chavez proposed the signing of an accord for the exploration, extraction and refining of oil in the region, along with the construction of a gas pipeline throughout the Caribbean islands including Cuba and Jamaica. This agreement also seeks to boost the use of eco-friendly energy sources. During the meeting, a group was structured to guarantee the fulfillment of the accords and the execution of the projects. The team is chaired by a Council of Presidents, along with a Council of Ministers and Social Movements and a permanent secretariat. The group is also made up of several commissions responsible for political, economic, social, energy and environmental affairs. (*ACN*, 29/4/07)

April 30: The Mexican Chamber of Senators expressed its rejection of the bail release in the United States of anti-Castro firebrand Luis Posada Carriles. Venezuela is demanding Carriles's extradition because he masterminded the 1976 mid-air bombing of a Cuban aircraft in Venezuelan airspace that killed all 73 passengers onboard. The Chamber of Senators, where the Acción Nacional Party has simple majority, said that the Mexican president should "ask the US government to abide by its own commitments as signatory of the United Nations agreements on terrorism." (*AFP*, 30/4/07)

April 30: Cuba, as president of the Non-Aligned Movement, insisted on the need to comply with the treaties on nuclear disarmament and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Cuba also underlined that multilateralism, according to the UN Charter, is the only sustainable method to deal with multiple approaches to international disarmament and security. Speaking at the opening session of the preparatory committee for the conference to review the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010, Cuban Ambassador Norma Goicochea recalled the NAM's commitment to the agreement. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/4/07)

April 30: Over 30 officials from Guatemala have confirmed attendance at the third Cuba-Guatemala Foreign Ministries Meeting, on May 3-4, in Havana. The Guatemalan mission will be led by Foreign Minister Gert Rosenthal, and is also formed by the ministers, deputy ministers and directors of the health, economy, agriculture, education, culture and sports, government, and energy ministries. The forum will focus on subjects of bilateral and multilateral interest and analyze the state of already signed cooperation deals, such as those in public health, sports, culture, energy, and

agriculture. Hundreds of Guatemalan students are currently studying at Havana's Latin American School of Medicine, and over 300 Cuban doctors are offering free medical care in Guatemala. (*ACN*, 30/4/07)

April 30: A seven-member parliamentary delegation left Tehran for Havana for an official visit. Iranian Head of Iran-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship Group and an MP from central city of Shahreza Avaz Heidarpur is heading the delegation. The Iranian delegation is scheduled to hold talks with senior political and parliamentary officials. The two sides are to explore avenues for bolstering of bilateral relations particularly between the Iranian and Cuban parliaments as well as international developments. (*IRNA*, 30/4/07)

Security

April 26: Namibia's Minister of Defense, Major General (retired) Charles D.N.P. Namoloh, laid a wreath on the monument of General Antonio Maceo, south of Havana, in a gesture of friendship with Cuba. Namoloh arrived in Havana on April 25 and was welcomed in an official ceremony by the Senior Vice Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces General Staff, Army General Alvaro Lopez Miera. Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces Minister Raul Castro received Major General Namoloh. The leaders met at the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. Military cooperation between the two countries goes back to the mid 1960s and seventies, when assistance provided by the Cuban armed forces in the region— called “decisive” by many— resulted in South Africa's withdrawal from Namibia and the granting of its full political independence. (*Prensa Latina, Juventud Rebelde*, 26/4/07)

Terrorism

April 9: A long-running hunger strike at Guantanamo Bay gained several participants in recent weeks amid complaints over conditions at a new unit of the prison, but a spokesman at the US military base said that the protest appeared to be losing steam. All were being force-fed through tubes inserted into their noses, said Navy Commander Robert Durand, a Guantanamo spokesman. The strike, which began in 2005, has had as many as a dozen participants in recent months. Durand suggested the prisoners were trying to gain the attention of dozens of reporters covering the trial at the US Naval base in southeast Cuba, where about 385 men are imprisoned on suspicion of links to al-Qaida or the Taliban. (*AP*, 9/4/07)

April 17: The Colombian government and the National Liberation Army (ELN), an anti-government group, began their sixth round of peace talks in Havana. Both sides told reporters in the Cuban capital about the substantial difficulties in the talks, which began in December 2005. ELN chief negotiator Pablo Beltran and the government's peace envoy Luis Carlos Restrepo are expected to hold talks for at least six days on this occasion. Beltran confirmed for the first time previous reports that Colombian Nobel Prize-winning novelist Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Cuba's acting president Raul Castro met with ELN leaders and Restrepo in mid-March in efforts to push the ELN-government peace negotiations forward. (*People's Daily*, 18/4/07)

April 24: The US military filed charges including murder against a Canadian Guantanamo detainee who was a teenager when he was captured in Afghanistan and sent to the remote prison in 2002. Omar Khadr, now 20, allegedly threw a grenade that killed a US Special Forces soldier while fighting with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and allegedly planted mines targeted at American convoys. He was charged with murder, providing support to terrorism, attempted murder, conspiracy and spying under rules for military trials adopted last year. Khadr, the son of a Canadian Islamic extremist who was close to Osama bin Laden and his Egyptian deputy Ayman Al-Zawahari, is to be arraigned on the charges within 30 days, the military said. (*AP*, 24/4/07)

April 30: US Senator Dianne Feinstein (Democrat-California) introduced legislation to close the Department of Defense detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, within one year of the bill's enactment. It is the first measure introduced in the Senate to close the Guantanamo Bay facility. Senator Feinstein, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is deeply concerned that open-ended detentions and documented reports of detainee abuse at Guantanamo Bay have tarnished America's reputation and complicated US efforts to fight global terrorism. (*DF Office Press Release*, 30/4/07)

April 30: The Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism of the US Department of State issues its Country Reports on Terrorism for 2006. Cuba's situation remains analyzed under Chapter 3, "States Sponsors of Terrorism". [[2006 Country Reports on Terrorism](#)] (*US Department of State Press Release*, 30/4/07)

US-Cuba Relations

April 2: The US International Trade Commission (ITC or Commission) has launched an investigation to report on the effects of US trade and travel restrictions with Cuba on US exports of agricultural, fish, and forest products to that country. US exports to Cuba of these products amounted to \$337 million in 2006. The investigation, US Agricultural Sales to Cuba: Certain Economic Effects of US Restrictions, was requested by the US Senate Committee on Finance in a letter received on March 16, 2007. (*US Fed News*, 2/4/07)

April 4: Fidel Castro blasted US President George W. Bush's biofuel plan as "genocidal" in an editorial, saying it would worsen global hunger. The column, signed the day before and published as "Reflections of the Commander in Chief" in the ruling Communist Party newspaper Granma, was the second in a week by Castro attacking Bush's proposals to increase the use of foodstuffs like corn for fuel to run cars. Unable to give speeches, the formerly verbose Castro has taken up the pen to attack his ideological nemesis, the US government, focusing on the Bush administration's plan to increase fuel production from renewable crops instead of oil. Ethanol production topped the agenda at Bush's meeting with Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva at Camp David. The United States and Brazil are the world's top producers of the biofuel. "The worst could be yet to come: a new war to ensure gas and oil supplies, which could place the entire human race into a total holocaust," Castro said. [[Reflexiones de Fidel Castro](#)](*Reuters, AFP*, 4/4/07)

April 4: A US judge denied a request to set bail for veteran anti-Castro activist Luis Posada Carriles, who faces charges of immigration fraud. Posada, a Cuban-born Venezuelan citizen accused of terrorism by both Havana and Caracas, will remain in a New Mexico jail pending his trial in El Paso, Texas, set to begin May 11. Judge Kathleen Cardone said that the court considered the risk that Posada would attempt to escape the jurisdiction of the court to avoid being sent back to jail. She also believed that there was no guarantee he would comply with house arrest, as the defense requested, given that he escaped from a Venezuelan prison in the 1980s while awaiting a second trial for his alleged participation in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that left 73 people dead. "What is most urgent now is to make sure that (Posada Carriles) receives medical attention because of his delicate heart condition," Felipe Millan, one of the anti-Castro activist's attorneys, told the press. (*EFE*, 4/4/07)

April 5: The United States condemned human rights repression in Cuba. The State Department said in a new human rights report that Cuba had at least 283 political prisoners and detainees at the end of 2006. The report said thousands more citizens in Cuba served sentences in 2006 for "dangerousness," in the absence of any criminal activity. In addition, the report said beatings and abuse of detainees and prisoners, including human rights activists, were carried out with impunity, and that harsh and life-threatening prison conditions included denial of medical care. The Cuban government uses the concept of "dangerousness" in an attempt to justify detaining its citizens, saying these people supposedly have a "special inclination" to commit crimes. [[2006 Human Rights Record: Cuba](#)] (*US Fed News*, 5/4/07)

April 5: The US State Department said that Raul Castro's presence in Cuba shows that there is a transformation under a totalitarian regime, rather than a transition, taking place in the island. Barry Lowenkron, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labour said that in Cuba, where NGOs cannot operate, the US has supported broadcasting. "It is to find all means possible in order to do the one critical thing that we need to do no matter how hard the case is, and that is to send a clear message that those individuals are not alone". Lowenkron made his comments during a presentation of the "2006 Annual Report on Human Rights", that documents the many ways the United States worked worldwide last year to foster respect for human rights and promote democratic government. Lowenkron admitted that "in some places is more difficult than in others". "In the case of Cuba, for example, the funding goes into broadcasting. It goes into providing books and literature and material. It goes into helping develop sinews in relationship among the activists within Cuba", he said. "In the context of what's happening in Cuba now, we have an interagency, senior interagency team, that laid out last summer publicly what this Administration is prepared to do in the context of offering, offering assistance to the Cuban people. But offering assistance, we made it clear, not in the context of a transition but in the context of a transformation", Lowenkron added. (*US Fed News*, 5/4/07)

April 5: A group of 20 Cuban immigrants arrived in Key West, Florida. The Sheriff Office of Monroe County reported that the immigrants said they had reached the coast in a vessel made of buckets and screws, but the vessel was not found. The group, comprised of men, women, and children was found at Key West airport. (*EFE*, 5/4/07)

April 6: A federal judge ordered Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles set free on bail pending trial on charges he lied in a bid to become a US citizen, and the government immediately asked that he remain jailed. Judge Kathleen Cardone said in a written order 79-year-old Posada Carriles, despite "a controversial past" as an opponent of Cuban leader Fidel Castro, was not a flight risk because he is "old, infirm and has strong ties to the community." He was not immediately released because prosecutors asked that he be detained while they consider an appeal to a higher court. His attorney, Felipe Millan, told the press he hoped to get Posada Carriles out of jail by the end of next week. Posada, 79, was arrested in Miami. He is wanted in Cuba and Venezuela on charges that he was in Caracas when he plotted the deadly 1976 bombing of a Cuban jetliner. (*Sun Sentinel*, *Reuters*, 7/4/07)

April 7: Cuba slammed what it said was the US' double standard on terrorism after a US federal judge ordered the release of an anti-Castro activist convicted in the deadly downing of a Cuban jet. "The court ruling is yet another confirmation of the George W. Bush administration's double standard on its alleged war on terror," the Cuban Communist Party newspaper Granma said. The ruling by a federal judge in Texas, does not necessarily mean former CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles, 79, will leave jail immediately, since he could be arrested by US immigration officials who have a deportation order for him. He was ordered freed pending a hearing on immigration fraud charges. "The international community is demanding justice. And Venezuela is pressing on in its bid to have him extradited," the Cuban statement in Granma added. (*AFP*, 8/4/07)

April 9: Border patrol authorities reported 40 Cubans landed on beaches in the Florida Keys around dawn. A group of 30 appeared near Marathon in what "appeared to be a 'go-fast' smuggling event," said Miami assistant chief Victor Colon. Go-fast boats are large speedboats generally belonging to US-based smugglers who charge thousands of dollars per person to bring immigrants to the United States. An hour later, border patrol agents responded to a landing of 10 Cubans in north Key Largo. The group (five men and five women) said they'd been at sea for three days and showed signs of exposure to the sun, authorities said. (*Sun Sentinel*, 10/4/07)

April 9: Idaho is turning to Cuba in search of new markets for its products. With Cuba's communist dictator Fidel Castro ailing, Idaho Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter is among those optimistic that political change will help turn the island's 11 million residents into big consumers. In March, Nebraska Governor Dave Heineman was the latest US official to visit Cuba, which bought \$340 million (euro254.2 million) in US farm products in 2006. Otter and his 35-member entourage are scheduled to travel to Cuba on April 10 for a four-day trade mission. "He's going down there to sell groceries," said Jon Hanian, Otter's spokesman. "It's an opportunity to make some sales." In a speech last March,

Otter told reporters he had a "respectful" relationship with Castro. The United States has a trade embargo with Cuba that exempts food, and does not allow residents to visit the island nation. (AP, 9/4/07)

April 9: Stung by defeat, the US government launched a counteroffensive to prevent the court-ordered release of Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles to Miami before his trial on fraud charges in federal court in Texas. Justice Department lawyers urged US District Judge Kathleen Cardone to reconsider her decision to grant Posada a \$350,000 bond and to hold a hearing on the collateral pledged by supporters to secure his bail. Lawyers in Justice's counter-terrorism division pressed the judge to delay her bond decision until that hearing, which could focus on a \$1.5 million Coral Way office building owned by a Posada supporter, Judith Garcia Prado. In a court filing, she pledged the property on 1378 SW 22nd St. for his bond, which is set far lower than the building's value. "The court's order thus waters down the bond conditions, and presents no real disincentive to flee," wrote Justice Department attorneys John W. Van Lonkhuyzen and Paul Ahern in a 10-page filing. (*The Miami Herald*, 10/4/07)

April 9: A lawyer representing the Venezuelan government accused the United States of shielding a Cuban militant from standing trial for allegedly planning the deadly 1976 bombing of a Cuban jetliner. A federal judge in Texas had ordered Luis Posada Carriles freed on bail pending trial on charges he lied in an attempt to become a US citizen. Prosecutors asked the judge to reconsider. "If the White House doesn't want them to free Posada, the US government can easily prevent his release," lawyer Jose Pertierra claimed in a phone interview from his Washington office. "Either extradite him to Venezuela or try him in the United States for the 73 counts of first-degree murder," Pertierra said. (AP, 10/4/07)

April 10: Imprisoned independent journalist Normando Hernandez Gonzalez won the 2007 PEN/ Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award, the writers' group announced in New York. The annual prize honors writers who have been persecuted or jailed for engaging in or defending freedom of expression. The award will be presented at PEN's annual New York gala on April 30. Hernandez Gonzalez, 38, was among 75 independent journalists, rights activists and other critics of the Cuban government arrested in a March 2003 crackdown on the island's opposition. Sixteen people in the group have since been released on medical parole, leaving 59 -- including Hernandez Gonzalez -- behind bars. (AP, 10/4/07)

April 11: Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles took one step closer to moving to Miami on a \$350,000 bond as he awaits trial on fraud charges in a Texas federal court. Posada's release from a jail in New Mexico near the Texas border could be imminent, thanks to a new ruling by US District Judge Kathleen Cardone. She rejected the US government's request to freeze her decision on Posada's bond until April 13, when Justice Department lawyers planned to decide on an appeal. In a separate bid, prosecutors have sought to increase Posada's bond, saying the former CIA operative could flee the country to evade his May 11 trial if his bond is not set higher. Cardone has not ruled on that request. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/4/07)

April 11: Fidel Castro denounced a US court ruling allowing a jailed Cuban militant who was once a US operative to post bond, accusing the American government of planning to free a "monster." The charges came in a letter distributed by Foreign Ministry officials after US District Judge Kathleen Cardone refused to reverse her decision allowing Luis Posada Carriles to be released. "The answer is brutal," Castro wrote, referring to Cardone's initial ruling in El Paso, Texas. "The government of the United States and its most representative institutions have decided the liberation of the monster beforehand," said the statement, which bore Castro's signature. The letter was the third in recent days signed by the ailing Cuban leader, who has not been seen in public for more than eight months. [[A Brutal Reply](#)] (AP, 11/4/07)

April 11: The Police may be giving their Cuban fans a free show this Christmas. The super rock group, which recently reunited for a sell-out world tour, has received an invitation from the Cuban government to perform in Havana in December. The Havana show would be the last one in North America, ending the Police's massive tour that begins on May 28 in Vancouver. The invite stems from a recent visit to Havana over the 2006 Christmas holiday by Sting and

Trudie Styler where they met with many local musicians and poets. "They were overwhelmed by the Cuban culture and the arts and the musicality," a source said. "The people were very generous to them with their time." (*Fox News*, 11/4/07)

April 11: Sports agent Gustavo Dominguez told a federal jury that the \$225,000 he gave to a convicted drug trafficker was not payment for smuggling five Cuban baseball players into the United States -- it was to protect his family. "I was scared," Dominguez testified, as his wife of 28 years and two grown children watched from the back of the courtroom. Dominguez, co-founder of California-based Total Sports International, is on trial on charges of financing an August 2004 smuggling operation by go-fast boat to the Keys, and of transporting and harboring the players in California for monetary gain. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/4/07)

April 11: Tearful relatives of Cubans killed in a 1976 airline bombing blamed on anti-communist militant Luis Posada Carilles denounced a US court ruling allowing him to be released from jail on bond. "I'm outraged," said Iliana Alfonso, whose father was among those killed on the Cubana de Aviacion flight that exploded off Barbados. "In the United States, they are talking about good terrorism and bad terrorism. To me, all terrorism is bad." Alfonso read aloud a protest by relatives of victims of the airline bombing. "It is not ethical to unleash wars against terrorism, provoking the deaths of thousands of citizens in distant parts of the world while sheltering in its own territory terrorists who are self-confessed and still active," it said. Posada, a Cuban-born former CIA operative and naturalized citizen of Venezuela, is wanted in Cuba and Venezuela for masterminding the jetliner bombing, which killed 73 people — charges Posada denies. (*AP*, 11/4/07)

April 12: An appeals court blocked the release of anti-Castro Cuban militant Luis Posada Carilles, who was set to be freed on bond. The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans issued an order blocking his release after the aging militant had already been transferred from the Otero County, New Mexico jail to the federal courthouse in El Paso to sign paperwork freeing him on \$250,000 bond. Prosecutors filed the emergency motion. US District Judge Kathleen Cardone had earlier denied the US Justice Department's motion to keep him jailed. Posada, 79, was escorted from the federal courthouse in El Paso back to New Mexico, wearing a red prison uniform and shackled at the waist and feet. (*Sun Sentinel*, 12/4/07)

April 13: A group of 21 Cuban immigrants touched US land close to the Rickenbacker viaduct, Miami. The US Coast Guard said the group was comprised of 10 men, nine women and one adolescent. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 17/4/07)

April 13: A fisherman in Cuba who is fighting for custody of his 4-year-old daughter living in Coral Gables will be allowed to go to the United States in the summer for as long as 45 days to make his case to a Miami judge. The US State Department's decision to allow the man, a fisherman and office-worker from Guayos, to enter the United States is an about-face from an earlier decision to deny him entry, sources told the press. Permitting the father to argue on his own behalf could dramatically strengthen his hand in the international custody dispute -- especially if he can extend his stay. The man, who is not being identified to protect the little girl's privacy, has been fighting the Department of Children & Families to gain custody of his daughter since she was taken away from her mother, who arrived in the United States in March 2005. The mom, who also is not being named, was hospitalized with severe emotional problems. The little girl and her 12-year-old brother, who has a different father, are living with a Cuban-American family in Coral Gables. (*The Miami Herald*, 13/4/07)

April 13: Almost 50 years after the US government stripped William Morgan of his American citizenship for his role as a leader in the Cuban rebel forces, the famous "Comandante" has been reclaimed by his country. The US State Department now says it can no longer uphold its previous finding that the Ohio-born Morgan -- executed in 1961 by one of Fidel Castro's firing squads for counterrevolutionary acts in Cuba -- lost the right to call himself an American. "We cannot sustain the finding of loss of nationality in this case," the State Department said in a letter to the attorney for Morgan's widow. "Mr. Morgan shall be deemed never to have relinquished his US nationality." That leaves

Morgan -- adventurer, martial arts expert, rumored CIA operative and hero to many in Miami's Cuban community for his unwavering anticommunist stance -- officially American once again. It also settles one question in the mysterious life and death of a man historians called a "rock star" revolutionary who helped lead Cuba's fight for freedom yet died without a country. (*The Miami Herald*, 13/4/07)

April 13: An Austrian bank recently bought by a US-headed consortium has told a Cuban-born customer to take her business elsewhere, her husband said, suggesting that Washington's ban on commerce with Havana was behind the decision. Peter Pointner said his wife was born in Cuba but is an Austrian citizen. He said his wife, Maria Cajigal-Ramirez, was told by letter by officials of the BAWAG-P.S.K. bank that all her accounts at her hometown branch would be closed. When she asked why, personnel at their local branch, in the Upper Austrian town of Frankenmarkt, told her that the bank did not want business ties with "people originating from Cuba," said Pointner, speaking by phone from Tuzla, Bosnia, where he is stationed with European Union forces as a lieutenant. Pointner said he is considering taking legal action against the bank because of "antihuman, discriminatory and racist acts." (*AP*, 13/4/07)

April 13: The United States is eyeing Spanish policy toward Cuba with concern after Foreign Minister Miguel Ángel Moratinos visited Havana, in a move that Washington fears could have undermined European and American efforts to goad the communist state toward democracy. In an interview, Thomas Shannon, the US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere Affairs, said that US diplomats are still attempting to get a clear answer from Spanish officials as to the purpose of Moratinos' visit, in which he signed an agreement to discuss human rights with the Cuban government but did not meet with political dissidents. "We're trying to talk to the Spanish government to find out the purpose of the visit, what was achieved and what wasn't achieved," Shannon said. Shannon added that US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice would try to take advantage of her next meeting with Moratinos to receive that information. Shannon suggested that the visit could represent a setback in creating a common US-EU approach toward the island, and he underscored US surprise at Moratinos' refusal to meet with Cuban dissidents. "Such meetings have a political and symbolic value," he noted. "It is our opinion that one of the necessary elements for a dialogue is the end of harassment; it is necessary that the Cuban government stops using State Security to repress political expressions; it is necessary that the Cuban government finds political ways to promote dialogue instead of making a crime out of it," he said. In terms of what the Cuban government could do to facilitate dialogue, Shannon said, "the release of political prisoners would be a humanitarian, political and symbolic gesture with repercussions inside and outside of Cuba, including the US", Shannon said. "It could be seen as a proof that the regime is willing to initiate a dialogue, and confident that it can handle that situation". (*El País*, 14/4/07)

April 15: Filmmaker Michael Moore's production company took ailing Ground Zero responders to Cuba in a stunt aimed at showing that the US health-care system is inferior to Fidel Castro's socialized medicine, according to several sources with knowledge of the trip. The trip was to be filmed as part of the controversial director's latest documentary, "Sicko," an attack on American drug companies and HMOs that Moore hopes to debut at the Cannes Film Festival next month. (*AP*, 15/4/07)

April 16: Barclays Bank has told the London branches of two Cuban organisations to take their accounts elsewhere in what is seen as the latest example of pressure exerted by the United States on British companies to enforce its embargo of the island. MPs are to discuss the controversial embargo at a special meeting in the House of Commons next month. The long-standing accounts held by Havana International Bank and Cuba-NACAM, a state-owned travel organisation, are understood to be healthy. But they have been told to take their accounts elsewhere. A spokesman for the Cuban embassy in London said: "We are aware of the intensification of US pressure in various countries in order to make them comply with the regulations of the blockade imposed on Cuba. These pressures include the banking and financial system". (*The Guardian*, 16/4/07)

April 16: A spring break trip to Cuba taken by students and a teacher from a New York City public high school has raised concerns about whether the group violated US travel restrictions to the Communist country. "We are

investigating," Mayor Michael Bloomberg told reporters. A city Department of Education spokesman said this month's trip to Cuba was not officially sanctioned by the Beacon School, although the school's Web site featured a call for applications and a list of selected students, as well as details of previous sponsored trips to the island. "We were told that it violated State Department travel restrictions," department spokesman David Cantor said. Molly Millerwise, spokeswoman for the US Treasury Department, declined to comment on the case. (*The New York Times*, 17/4/07)

April 17: Spain's foreign minister said in Luxembourg that Madrid maintained a "good dialogue" on Latin America with the US government and that he kept Washington fully informed about his recent visit to Cuba. Miguel Angel Moratinos commented at a press conference when asked about public requests from US officials for an explanation of why the minister did not meet with dissidents during his stay in Havana. Moratinos said the Spanish government had contacts with the United States "before, during and after my visit to Cuba." Spain's secretary of state for Ibero-America, Trinidad Jimenez, was in touch with US officials to brief them on the objectives and results of the trip, the foreign minister said. "Therefore," Moratinos said, "we don't have to give answers to anyone. We maintain a dialogue. We have many points of agreement with the United States, including on the subject of Cuba, but there are others on which our approach does not appear to fit the way of thinking of the United States." The Spanish government continues "working diligently for good bilateral relations with Cuban authorities, with all of Cuban society and, at the same time, within the EU (European Union), maintaining a dialogue of friendship and relations with the US," the foreign minister said. In the wake of the controversy, Jimenez plans to travel in late May to Washington to discuss Moratinos's Cuba visit with the US assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs, Thomas Shannon. (*EFE*, 17/4/07)

April 18: A former executive at a US-funded anti-Castro TV station who pleaded guilty to accepting more than \$100,000 in kickbacks was sentenced to two years and three months in prison, prosecutors said. A federal judge also ordered Jose M. Miranda to pay \$8,000 in fines. Miranda was fired from the station after he pleaded guilty in February. The US government seeks to beam Radio and TV Marti into Cuba to provide an alternative to the government-run media. Miranda was the director of programming for TV Marti between 1999 and 2004 and earned \$103,000 from the Office of Cuba Broadcasting, which oversees the station. (*AP*, 18/4/07)

April 18: When Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter set out for Cuba, he billed it as an opportunity to sell Idaho groceries and products to the Caribbean island's more than 11 million customers. For the most part, the Cuban cash registers were silent. Aside from one meat export contract, the governor and his delegation returned with more hopes than sales receipts, mindful that plenty of work remains before Idaho potatoes, beef and medical products find their niche on Cuban store shelves. "We did a lot of field preparation down there; I have high hopes that the work we've done and will continue doing in the weeks and months ahead (...) will result in a fruitful harvest for Idaho producers and businesses," Otter said in a statement. "The relationship we're building in Cuba could pay dividends for years to come," he said. Initially, Otter and his 35-member entourage returned from the four-day visit empty handed. But on April 16, Otter announced that Independent Meat Co. agreed to ship 54 metric tons of boneless pork legs to Cuba in June. The deal is valued at \$100,000 and the Twin Falls company is expected to bid on additional contracts for delivery later this summer and in 2008. Agreements to ship spuds or seed potatoes hinge on a future, unscheduled visit to the state from Cuban trade officials and scientists, Otter spokesman Jon Hanian said. During talks, Hanian said Cuban officials insisted on an inspection of Idaho potato fields before issuing an import permit and the opportunity for Cuban researchers to collaborate in the fight against potato cyst nematodes, a microscopic root-eating worm. (*AP*, 18/4/07)

April 18: Congressional opponents of the communist regime in Cuba are condemning a New York City schoolteacher who took a group of teenage students to the island nation in an apparent violation of federal travel restrictions. "It's totally inappropriate to teach schoolchildren to circumvent federal law," a congresswoman who represents a district in South Florida with a large Cuban-American population, Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Democrat, said. "It's more than inappropriate. It's irresponsible." City officials are investigating how a history teacher at the Beacon School on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, Nathan Turner, was able to take a group of students on a nine-day trip to Havana in early April. Both the Department of Education and the school principal have said they did not approve the

trip. Federal law limits educational trips to Cuba to college and graduate students who are traveling for a minimum of 10 weeks. Violators can receive up to a \$65,000 fine. (*The New York Sun*, 19/4/07)

April 18: An anti-Castro Cuban militant was set to be freed after his attorneys posted \$250,000 bail, but he still faced the prospect of being held by immigration authorities. Luis Posada Carriles wants to return to Miami, where his wife lives, to await his May 11 trial on immigration fraud charges. The former CIA operative, who admitted to entering the country illegally from Mexico two years ago, has been ordered deported; immigration officials could detain him after he is released from jail in Otero County, New Mexico. Posada, 79, was indicted on charges of lying to immigration authorities while trying to become a naturalized US citizen. An appeals court in New Orleans on April 17 rejected the federal government's bid to keep Posada jailed until his trial. (*The Washington Post*, 18/4/07)

April 19: The Committee to Protect Journalists denounced the arrest and sentencing of an independent Cuban journalist who wrote critical articles about dissident groups and the hardships of island life. Oscar Sanchez Madan, 44, was arrested April 13 and tried and sentenced to four years in prison that same day for the vaguely worded charge of "social dangerousness." Joel Simon, executive director of the New York-based press advocacy group said in a statement that, "it is outrageous that Cuba has once again thrown a journalist in jail after a summary trial or a trumped up charge." [[Cuban Journalist Sentenced to Prison](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 19/4/07)

April 19: After a two-year battle with immigration authorities, Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles, looking frail and unsteady on his feet, arrived in Miami after being released on \$350,000 bond by a federal court in El Paso, Texas. Wearing a rumpled light-colored jacket and trousers, Posada was rushed up a walkway to a narrow staircase as newspeople tried to take his picture, and pose questions. Asked how he felt, Posada responded: ``*Estoy muy contento*'' - - ``I'm very happy." Asked if he had a message to the community, he replied: "*Estoy muy agradecido*" -- ``I'm very grateful" -- as his attorney urged him not to speak. Posada's release unleashed a firestorm in Venezuela and Cuba, where leaders accuse Posada of masterminding the bombing of a civilian jetliner that killed 73 people in 1976, among other alleged terrorist acts. Posada has denied any involvement in the bombing, was cleared by a Venezuelan military court and was awaiting the outcome of a civilian court's ruling when he escaped in 1985. (*The Miami Herald*, 20/4/07)

April 19: Nicaragua will request the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles, President Daniel Ortega announced, while he condemned the terrorist's release by US authorities. We are giving instructions for Nicaragua to, besides condemning his release, offer its territory so that Posada Carriles can be tried in our country, taking into account that he also committed terrorist acts here, Ortega said. (*Prensa Latina*, 19/4/07)

April 19: Hundreds of Cubans chanted "Justice! Justice!" outside the American mission in Havana as protests across the island were organized by the Cuban government after an anti-Castro exile wanted in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner was released from federal prison in New Mexico. Luis Posada Carriles posted bail totaling \$350,000 to get out of a federal prison in New Mexico. He flew to Miami, where he was placed under house arrest at his wife's home pending his May 11 trial on immigration fraud charges. Yellow school buses brought about 600 youngsters to a plaza outside the US mission in Havana, where they waved plastic Cuban flags and demanded justice. A 22-year-old university student held a sign showing a cartoon of Posada's head, with bloodstained fangs, on a canine body. "The Dog is Loose," it read. A Communist youth leader recalled that President Bush has said anyone who harbors or supports terrorists is as guilty as the terrorists themselves. Rallies were hastily organized across Cuba, including two large demonstrations in the eastern cities of Bayamo and Granma. (*AP, The Miami Herald*, 20/4/07)

April 20: Cuba says it holds the US government responsible for the release of a Cuban exile blamed for the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner. In a statement on the state-run newspaper, *Granma*, the Cuban government condemned the release of Luis Posada Carriles, who was freed on bond from a US jail. Havana accused the United States of having double standards in the fight against terrorism. [[Statement by the Government of Cuba](#)] (*VOA*, 20/4/07)

April 21: Cuban spy Ana Montes, who passed US military and intelligence secrets back to Havana for 16 years from her senior post in the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), was "our worst nightmare," says the man who caught her. But she wasn't alone. "Fidel Castro has the American government thoroughly penetrated" with spies, says Scott W. Carmichael, the DIA mole hunter who first identified Montes as a Cuban agent and nagged the FBI into launching the investigation that finally brought her down in 2001. "It was so easy for the Cubans to recruit Ana Montes and place her where they wanted to, in the heart of US intelligence," Carmichael says. "I have to believe that if they're that good, they've been able to do it more than once." Carmichael is in Miami to read from his new account of the Montes case, "*True Believer*", at Books & Books. He spent 2 ½ years wrangling with the DIA and other US intelligence agencies to get the book into print, he says, because he's trying to sound an alarm about Castro's spies -- an alarm the government isn't taking very seriously. (*The Miami Herald*, 21/4/07)

April 24: Fidel Castro's health is improving and he is increasingly involved in Cuba's foreign affairs, but he is unlikely to ever retake full command again, a senior US intelligence official said. The comments come after the Chinese Xinhua news agency reported that the 80-year-old Castro was in "a hospital" when he met with a top Beijing delegation. The US intelligence official said the Cuban photos themselves suggested that while Castro may indeed be recuperating, he's not out of the woods. "An 80-year-old man who's gone [from public view] nine months and still wears a track suit when he meets with foreign dignitaries suggests this is an extremely serious illness still," the official said while briefing two journalists who cover Cuban issues. The intelligence community believes that Castro may suffer from multiple ailments, including Parkinson's disease, diverticulitis and Crohn's disease, an inflammation of the digestive tract, the official said. "What seems obvious is that over the past couple of months, Castro's health seems to be on the upswing," said the official. "He seems to be following, particularly foreign affairs, very carefully." But he added: "It still seems unlikely, at least to me, that he'll regain the full range of control he had before the end of July." (*The Miami Herald*, 24/4/07)

April 24: The United States has praised a statement from representatives of the Cuban opposition movement calling for peaceful democratic change in Cuba. The statement said that the task of achieving democratic change in Cuban society is up to "Cubans and only Cubans." The Bush administration's Cuba transition coordinator, Caleb McCarry, told the press on April 20 that the statement is an "important message to the Cuban people and the outside world from Cuba's peaceful democratic opposition." The United States, said McCarry, "supports the right of the Cuban people to define a democratic future for their country." Michael Parmly, chief of mission at the US Interests Section in Havana, added that US policy "has been to give the Cuban people the lead in deciding their country's future." Parmly told the press that the statement from the opposition Cuban group, dubbed "United for Freedom," represents the "views of many Cubans who have been advocating for human rights and democratic change for a long time." In its statement, released April 16 in Spanish, members of most of Cuba's leading opposition groups said they were united in their call for Cuba to change peacefully from communist rule to democracy, freedom, social justice and human rights for all the Cuban people. (*USINFO*, 24/4/07)

April 25: Cuba protested the decision by an Austrian bank recently bought by a US consortium to stop serving Cuban customers. "For us, this action is unacceptable," Norma Goicochea Estenez, Cuba's ambassador to Austria, told reporters at the Cuban Embassy. BAWAG P.S.K., linked to the collapsed US commodities broker Refco, was bought in December by a consortium headed by New York-based private equity company Cerberus Capital Management. Since US law prohibits not only American businesses but also their subsidiaries abroad from conducting any commerce with Cuban nationals, the bank said it had terminated its relationship with its Cuban customers. Goicochea Estenez said the embassy had been in touch with several Austrian ministries and the speaker of parliament and had been told that the matter would be looked into. (*The Miami Herald*, 25/4/07)

April 25: A Delaware poultry business signed an agreement with Cuba to ship its products there. Mountaire Farms will begin shipping containers of chicken to the country in May. The company's president, John Wise, said he worked with Delaware Agriculture Secretary Michael Scuse. He said it was a challenge that required negotiating and building

relationships with Cuban officials. Scuse said a March trip to Cuba was very helpful to find other avenues for exporting Delaware goods to the country. 38 other states export goods to Cuba. (AP, 25/4/07)

April 25: A British member of Parliament has criticised Barclays Plc over its plans to close the bank accounts held by two Cuban organisations after pressure from the US. Barclays, Britain's third-biggest bank, has asked for the withdrawal of accounts held by Havana International Bank and Cubanacam, a state-owned travel organisation. The US bars trading with Cuba and it has recently put pressure on companies in the UK to sever ties with companies based there too. "British law states that no person will be discriminated against on grounds of race or nationality," Ian Gibson, a lawmaker for the ruling Labour Party, said in an e-mailed statement in London. "This decision clearly contradicts this and could place the bank in contravention of British discrimination laws." (Bloomberg, 26/4/07)

April 25: The Provincial Court of Madrid, Spain, has rejected the Bacardi claims over ownership of the Havana Club rum, the spokesperson of the distribution firm of the Cuban spirit with headquarters in Havana said. A report by the distributor, Havana Club International S.A., said that the court rejected the demand by Bacardi over ownership of the brand in Spain. The court considered unfounded the arguments presented for the claim, as the Havana Club brand was never used by the previous owner and neither was it renewed when the time to do so expired. (Prensa Latina, 25/4/07)

April 25: Bolivian President Evo Morales added his signature to the petition, already signed by 800 personalities from 80 countries, urging Washington to try Luis Posada Carriles for his terrorist crimes. The document was also signed by Bolivian lawmaker Gustavo Torrico, leader of the Movimiento al Socialismo Party (MAS) in the Bolivian Parliament. (ACN, 25/4/07)

April 25: Venezuela and Cuba asked a UN counterterrorism committee to investigate the release from a US jail of a Cuban militant who is wanted in Venezuela on charges of plotting a 1976 airliner bombing that killed 73 people. The two countries made the request in a letter to Panamanian Ambassador Alberto Arias, the committee's chairman, saying it was urgent the case be considered as soon as possible following the release on bail of 79-year-old former CIA agent Luis Posada Carriles. "This international terrorist's release constitutes a clear violation of the Security Council resolutions on counter-terrorism," Venezuela and Cuba said in the letter. Venezuela's acting ambassador Aura Mahuampi Rodriguez de Ortiz and Cuban Ambassador Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz also said Posada's release on bail, while awaiting trial on charges of lying to US immigration authorities, demonstrates the US government's "complicity and full responsibility." (AP, 25/4/07)

April 25: Venezuela's ambassador to the Organization of American States accused Washington of protecting alleged terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, drawing a sharp reply from the lead US diplomat at the session. Nelson Pineda, Venezuela's envoy to the OAS, said Posada is believed to have "planned or carried out" terrorist acts in 20 of the hemisphere's 35 nations, including Cuba, Venezuela and the United States. He charged that the US State Department has ignored Venezuela's extradition request. (The Miami Herald, 26/4/07)

April 26: Major League Baseball officials are quietly preparing to re-establish a relationship with Cuba if the United States lifts its trade embargo. "There may not be any significant changes with our relationship with Cuba in the near term, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't think about these things," Joe Garagiola Jr., the senior vice president for baseball operations, said in a telephone interview. "We are thinking about them, and that is probably the extent of what we can say at this point." Garagiola, a former general manager of the Arizona Diamondbacks, is coordinating baseball's discussions on Cuba. (The New York Times, 26/4/07)

April 26: A man who fled to Cuba after being convicted of mail fraud in the United States has been expelled from the island after 42 years. His expulsion from Cuba is highly unusual. Both the US and Cuba accuse each other of harbouring fugitives from each other's justice systems. Joseph Adjmi, now 70, has returned to the US after spending more than half his life on the run from US justice. In 1964 Mr Adjmi was convicted in Florida of mail fraud, and

sentenced to 10 years in prison. But he failed to turn up to his final court appearance and fled to Cuba. In early 2006 a message was sent to American officials at the US Interests Section in Havana that he was in a Cuban prison and would be expelled from the country when he had served his term. Mr Adjimi was put on a regular charter flight to Miami. He was taken into custody on arrival by agents of the US diplomatic security services. Several other fugitives from US justice remain in Cuba. They include hijackers and convicted murderers. *(BBC, 26/4/07)*

April 26: A Florida medical supply company opened two days of meetings with Cuban authorities, showing off an anesthesia machine and other equipment in hopes of whetting the island's appetite for American medical goods. "Cuba appreciates the high quality of American medical supplies," said Pedro Alvarez, chairman of the Cuban food import company Alimport. "But the (US) embargo affects the ability to export these supplies to Cuba." Alvarez said at the small exhibition by Mercury Medical of Clearwater, Florida, that companies have lost billions of dollars in sales over the years. The equipment will be donated to the Cuban Health Ministry for distribution to hospitals and clinics after the gathering, said event organizer Pamela Ann Martin, of Molimar Export Consultants Inc. of Ambler, Pennsylvania. *(AP, 26/4/07)*

April 26: Austria is charging BAWAG, being taken over by US investor Cerberus Capital, with violating European Union rules after the bank cancelled the accounts of around 100 Cubans, foreign minister Ursula Plassnik said. BAWAG, Austria's fifth-largest bank, told around 100 Cuban clients that it had to cancel their accounts because US sanctions against Cuba meant Cerberus could not buy BAWAG if it kept them as clients. Plassnik told Austria's parliament that BAWAG had violated EU rules against implementing the US Cuban sanctions on European soil, and that she had therefore launched proceedings against BAWAG. *(Reuters, 27/4/07)*

April 26: Bob Woodruff of ABC News is headed to Havana for his first overseas reporting trip since being severely injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq last year. He'll be accompanied by cameraman Doug Vogt and sound technician Magnus Macedo, the team with him on the fateful Iraq trip. His coverage of May Day commemorations in Cuba will begin on "World News". *(AP, 26/4/07)*

April 26: Shareholders arriving at the bank's extraordinary AGM were greeted by noisy protesters and a giant George Bush puppet waving a Barclays banner. Under pressure from Washington, the bank has agreed to force London-based Cuban organisation Havana International Bank and state-owned travel organisation Cubanacan to take their accounts elsewhere. The protesters, who included MPs Diane Abbott and Colin Burgon, along with representatives from trade unions Amicus, GMB and ASLEF, said that banning Cuban businesses not only undermines British sovereignty but flouts our anti-discrimination laws. *(Morning Star Online, 26/4/07)*

April 26: New Mexico Governor and Democrat White House hopeful Bill Richardson showed his support for an examination of the US embargo on Cuba and a softening of travel restrictions to the island for Cubans living on American soil. "We should be planning for a post-(Fidel) Castro Cuba, and that means re-evaluating the embargo. It also means that we should find avenues that ensure that Cuba becomes a democratic country," he said. *(AFP, 26/4/07)*

April 27: Cuba has lifted a ban on imports of US long-grain rice that it put in place last year because of fears about genetic contamination. Raul Sanchez, director of the US division of the island's food import company Alimport, said the ban was lifted earlier this month and that in recent weeks Cuba has imported 30,000 tons of long-grain US rice and expects to import 10,000 more soon. A US announcement in August that American long-grain rice samples had tested positive for trace amounts of a genetically modified strain not approved for consumption prompted Japan to suspend its US rice imports. Cuba imposed a ban of its own after conducting independent testing, Sanchez said. Sanchez, who spoke during a meeting with US medical company representatives, did not provide details about the exact date and why Cuba had lifted the ban, suggesting only that US long-grain rice no longer appeared to be a problem. *(AP, 27/4/07)*

April 28: US President George W. Bush took fresh aim at Cuba's communist government, calling it a "cruel dictatorship" and predicting that democratic change was near. Bush, who has tightened economic sanctions on Havana and boosted aid to dissidents with a goal of hastening the end of Castro's grip on power, said in a commencement speech at Miami Dade College that many Cubans were dreaming of a better life. "Unfortunately, those dreams are stifled by a cruel dictatorship that denies all freedom in the name of a dark and discredited ideology," Bush said, noting that many people at the graduation had roots in Cuba, which is just 90 miles (140 km) from Florida. "Some of you still have loved ones who live in Cuba and wait for the day when the light of liberty will shine upon them again," Bush said. "That day is nearing." (*AP*, 28/4/07)

Foreign Affairs

May 3: Guatemalan Foreign Minister Gert Rosenthal Koenigsberger arrived in Havana on an official visit to the island at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque. Besides a meeting between the two foreign ministries, Rosenthal will attend the Third Bilateral Cuba-Guatemala Meeting, official daily Granma reported. The Guatemalan delegation includes Minister of Education Maria del Carmen Acena Villacorta, and the vice ministers of the Office of Planning and Programming of the Presidency, and of the Ministry of Interior. Also traveling with the foreign minister are the president of the Permanent Human Rights Commission, and executives of other ministries and institutions. (*ACN*, 3/5/07)

May 3: Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Midori Matsushima was received in Havana by Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Felipe Perez Roque. The Cuban minister described the ties between Cuba and Japan as respectful and cordial. Perez Roque also noted that this is the first time a high-level Japanese official has held bilateral talks with Cuba, but noted that on two other occasions Japanese deputy foreign ministers have come to Cuba -during the prolonged hostage crisis at the Japanese embassy in Lima (1996-1997) and heading the Japanese delegation to the Non-Aligned Nations Summit, last September. The Cuban Foreign Minister also pointed out that that Cuba-Japan economic ties have strengthened during the past several years, Granma newspaper reported. "Bilateral trade is on the order of \$300 million US a year, and will be growing as the Cuban economy recovers," said Perez Roque. He added that Japan is an important supplier of high technology equipment, mainly for the Cuban public healthcare sector, but also used in the solidarity aid provided by Cuba to other nations, like Pakistan and Indonesia after earthquakes, and following flooding in Bolivia. "There is an area of wide reaching possibilities, in particular in biotechnology, where the first joint ventures are starting to take shape," said Perez Roque. Matsushima announced that she will be discussing topics including the reform of the United Nations Security Council and Tokyo's candidacy for the 2016 Olympic Games. (*ACN*, 3/5/07)

May 3: Malawian Foreign Minister Joyce Hilda Banda, concluded her visit to Havana for the Cuba-Malawi Third Joint intergovernmental Commission. She highlighted the importance of boosting South-South Cooperation and voiced her support for unity among the Third World to face development challenges. Banda stressed the importance of relations within the Non-Aligned Movement --currently chaired by Cuba-- and indicated that ties with developed countries are necessary, but said they should always be developed within the framework of equity and cooperation, Granma newspaper reported. (*ACN*, 3/5/07)

May 3: Reaffirming a critical position already adopted in 2006, OAS Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza said the United States should extradite Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela. Insulza insisted on his stance that Posada Carriles should be extradited. "He committed a very serious terrorist act", Insulza said. "We are fighting against terrorism in the Americas and there shouldn't be any excuse not to take any terrorist to justice", he added. (*AFP*, 3/5/07)

May 4: The Sixth Hemispheric Conference to Fight Free Trade Agreements and for the integration of the peoples is taking place in Havana, on May 3-5, with the participation of 733 delegates from 33 countries and more than 400 guests. The opening day of the Conference focused on the current situation of "free" trade and the battle against it

undertaken by different forces in the Western Hemisphere. Vice President Carlos Lage Davila and other Cuban leaders attended the opening session, reports Granma newspaper. Conference participants hope to reach consensus on ways to face problems such as energy, infrastructure, militarization, access to drinking water and respect for the rights of indigenous peoples. Likewise, one panel will discuss integration and another agro-energy. (ACN, 4/5/07)

May 4: Cuba proposed regional campaigns and actions for the recovery of lands and against the use of food to produce fuel, in a countermove to the new US fuel production policy. Maria del Carmen Barroso, of ANAP's International Relations Department (National Association of Small Farmers), stressed joining forces to stage that battle. The Cuban representative made her remarks to a panel on agriculture, food sovereignty and indigenous people at the Sixth Hemispheric Meeting of the fight against FTAs (free trade agreements) and for the integration of the peoples. Barroso said that while Cuban farmers are not victimized by eviction or manipulation of transnationals, they declare their solidarity with the current situation of the rural Latin American population. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/5/07)

May 4: Cuban border patrol forces intercepted a vessel in the country's eastern zone during a drug trafficking operation, Granma newspaper reported. The event occurred on April 30 in the eastern Guantanamo locality of Boca de Jauco, when a Bahamas speed boat was detected from which 590.33 kg of marijuana were confiscated. The allegedly Bahamas crew of the vessel shot and crashed into the border patrol forces unit 45, whose occupants replied to the aggression, the daily states. About 30 pieces of baggage and 13 plastic tanks with marijuana were confiscated on board, noted the report, highlighting the exceptional use of force for self-defense by border patrols. Cuba informed the Bahamas government of the action through diplomatic channels and expressed its willingness to provide all collected information as well as hold exchanges to continue fighting drug trafficking. The two drug traffickers involved in these actions will be put at the service of Cuban courts, noted the article. (*Prensa Latina, EFE*, 4/5/07)

May 4: The deputy director of the UN's World Food Program, Jean Jacques Graise, noted his satisfaction with the will, seriousness and competence of the island's authorities during a working visit to Havana. The UN official made his remarks at a commemorative postal stamp cancellation ceremony marking the tenth anniversary of a WFP-sponsored youth art competition that deals with themes related to food and nutrition. "Our agency," he said, "in concert with the government of Cuba, is undertaking a group of collaboration projects principally in five eastern provinces so as to contribute to the food security of the most vulnerable groups in that region. Basically, we will attempt to shore up school snack programs and other assistance efforts offered through health centers." "I am very happy with the results so far and with others that link the work of the WFP and Cuban government authorities and institutions," said Graise. (*Juventud Rebelde* 4/5/07)

May 5: The foreign ministers of Guatemala and Cuba, Gert Rosenthal Koenigsberger and Felipe Perez Roque, respectively, broadened the relations between both countries by signing an agreement, at the end of the 3rd Binational Meeting in Havana. At the end of the official discussions, both ministers signed an agreement for the creation of three eye centers, two of which are already in operation. Rosenthal noted that they could work together in many fields. Greeting the visiting delegation, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque described it as one of the most representative that he had received, which he said explained the success of the recently concluded 3rd Binational Meeting. (*Granma*, 5/5/07)

May 7: The Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the UN and Azerbaijan's Ambassador to Cuba, Agshin Mehtiyev, said that his recent visit to Cuba "was a success". "I held numerous meetings and talks in different ministries, offices and agencies of the Republic of Cuba, where we discussed firm proposals on further development and the improvement of bilateral relations between our countries in political, economic, cultural and other fields", Mehtiyev said. "We had warm friendly relations, which we must fully restore", he added. "Cuba is the country which has an authoritarian influence in its region. Cuba is the country, which will lead the World's Non-Alignment Movement in the next three years. That means that we are seriously interested in restoring and developing bilateral political talks between our countries. Azerbaijan is also of a great interest to Cuba due to our country's location in the

region, Azerbaijan's increasing role at the international arena and in the Muslim World, in particular." (*Trend News Agency*, 7/5/07)

May 7: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez sent his warmest regards to his Cuban counterpart Fidel Castro, at the end of the ALBA Games' baseball finals played in Caracas between Cuba and Venezuela. Chavez threw the first ball and watched the whole game, which ended up with a 3-1 victory for the island. He also met the Cuban sports commentators and talked with them and over the microphone about the second ALBA Games. "Cuba has won today, but ALBA and its member countries have also won," said the Venezuelan President who acknowledged Fidel Castro's leadership of this regional integration project. During his talk with the press, Chavez also recalled the famous baseball match he took part in against a Cuban team led by Fidel. (*ACN*, 7/5/07)

May 8: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque received the North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Jyong Jun in Havana. The Korean official brought with him a message of greetings from President Kim Jong II to Commander in Chief Fidel Castro in which he expressed his joy over the Cuban leader's recovery. During the talks, the existing solidarity between the two countries was evident as they shared efforts to build socialism under threats from the United States. In that context, Cuba rejected the aggressive attitude of the US against North Korea and recognized the Asian countries right to their defense, while supporting the just cause of Korean reunification. Perez Roque also supported the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the situation on the Korean peninsula and expressed satisfaction over the agreements reached on February 13 in Beijing, in the framework of the six-party negotiations (North Korea, United States, South Korea, Japan, Russia and China), and with the fact that a commitment acceptable to all parties was agreed upon aimed at reaching nuclear disarmament in Korea. (*Granma*, 9/5/07)

May 9: Austrian Foreign Minister Ursula Plassnik received praise from an unexpected quarter, the Cuban Communist Party newspaper *Granma*. It said her position had been "honourable" in opposing a ban by the Austrian BAWAG bank on business relations with Cubans. Plassnik made it clear at the time that she opposed the ban, and commented sharply that "Austria is not the 51st state of the United States". She stressed that in Austria, Austria law was in force, and not that of the US. *Granma* commented that Austria had "ignored" the "illegal and humiliating" US economic embargo against Cuba. "The government stood up, and defended its sovereignty against the threat of measures by President George W. Bush." (*APA*, 9/5/07)

May 9: The "Ladies in White," a group of women relatives of 75 Cuban dissidents imprisoned in 2003, asked that the European Union (EU) continue to push for the release of all "political prisoners" in the island. "The demands from the international community (...) must not wane, because the Government of Cuba has not taken any steps to curb the repression against the people," indicates the organization in a communiqué released in Havana. (*EFE*, 9/5/07)

May 9: Gambian President Yahya A.J.J. Jammeh arrived in Cuba on an official visit. President Jammeh's delegation includes Bala Garba Jahumpa, Secretary of State for Foreign Relations; Tamir Demba Mbowe, Secretary of State for Health and Social Welfare, and Ousman Jammeh, General Secretary of the Office of the President and Chief of Civil Service. The visit is expected to strengthen the friendship and collaboration that has characterized relations between Cuba and Gambia, both members of the Non-Aligned Movement, currently chaired by Cuba. The Gambian leader and his delegation will remain in Cuba until May 11. President Jammeh will hold official talks with First Vice President Raul Castro as well as with other Cuban leaders. (*Granma*, 9/5/07)

May 10: Bolivia and Cuba are due to foster bilateral relations during the two-day visit of the island's Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque to the Andean nation. Perez Roque's agenda includes meetings with his Bolivian counterpart David Choquehuanca and other State officials, the opening of one of the 23 hospitals the island donated to this country in 2007, and the attendance to a solidarity act with Cuba. A source from the Cuban embassy told the press that both nations will evaluate the real scope of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas and the Peoples Trade Agreement, the results of the island's Free Eye Surgery Program, and the literacy campaign. On the international level, the two

nations will analyze issues related to the UNESCO joint labor and other integration projects in blocks like the Southern Common Market and the South American Community of Nations. UN documents like the Resolution against the blockade on Cuba, the status of Puerto Rico, NAM cooperation and relations with United States will be also analyzed by both delegations, the sources said. (*Prensa Latina*, 10/5/07)

May 10: In a meeting in Havana between Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage and Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Shunmugan Jayakumar, the two officials expressed their interest in broadening relations between these countries. Jayakumar thanked his hosts for the welcoming and program prepared for his delegation, which includes officials from the Singaporean Foreign Ministry, the National Health Science Authority and the National Environmental Agency. The Singapore deputy prime minister noted that he was the foreign minister when in 1997 diplomatic relations were established with Cuba. He also recalled the visit of Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque to Singapore and the recent visit of a group of biotechnology experts from his country to Havana. (*ACN*, 11/5/07)

May 11: Bolivian President Evo Morales expressed his respect and admiration for the Cuban doctors working at a new hospital officially inaugurated in the Patankamaya municipality of La Paz. "I admire you, because our people were never properly attended to," said Morales in his speech that opened the ceremony. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque was also present. The health center is the 22nd facility built in Bolivia with equipment and medical personnel from Cuba. (*Granma*, 12/5/07)

May 11: The President of Gambia, Doctor Yahya A. J. J. Jammeh concluded an official visit to Cuba, after having been officially received at the Palace of the Revolution by Cuba's First Vice President Raul Castro. During the welcoming ceremony, Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) paid homage to the Gambian President, who is accompanied by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Bala Garba Jahumpa, Secretary of State for Information and Communications Nemeah McDool-Gayet, Secretary of State for Health and Social Welfare Tamir Demba Mbowe, and Secretary General of the Office of the Presidency Ousman Jammeh. During official talks held after the ceremony, Raul Castro and Yahya A. J. Jammeh addressed the development of bilateral links between both countries, which, established diplomatic relations on May 19, 1979. The Gambian President paid homage to Cuban soldiers who were killed in action while fighting for the freedom of African peoples, at a pantheon in Havana's Colon Cemetery. (*ACN*, 11/5/07)

May 13: Pope Benedict XVI lamented the deep divide between rich and poor in Latin America but told priests to steer clear of politics as they work to reverse Roman Catholicism's waning influence in the region. Wrapping up five-day visit to Brazil, the 80-year-old pontiff denounced Marxism in an hour-long speech opening a 19-day conference of Latin American bishops in the shrine city of Aparecida. According a previous statement by Claudio Hummes, one of the Pope's closest advisors, Ratzinger said he is worried about "the alliance between Chávez and Fidel Castro". (*El País*, 14/5/07)

May 14: Dissident Cuban lawyer René Gómez Manzano expressed his gratitude for the human rights award "Ludovic-Trarieux," bestowed upon him in France, and called it "an incentive" to keep on fighting "for the establishment of the rule of law" on the island. Gómez Manzano, 63, is a member of the leadership of the illegal Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 14/5/07)

May 14: The Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza favored the opening of dialogue with Cuba. Interviewed in Rome, Italy, Insulza said "what I'm sponsoring is dialogue between Cuba and OAS, which is currently non existent, but is a bit absurd since 33 countries of the organization but one, have normal relations with Havana". Insulza said he expected "things to improve in coming years", and recalled that Cuba was suspended from OAS in 1962, but to return must subscribe and abide by the Inter-American Democratic Charter, "since the OAS works on the basis of a consensus system". The Inter-American Democratic Charter "subscribed by a strange coincidence on September 11 2001 in Peru, is a document which defines democracy in a very ample sense and among

other things means “free elections, honoring commitments, separation of government branches and respect for human rights”. “Transition in Cuba will necessarily happen at some time”, insisted Insulza who added that the Cuban regime has lasted “almost half a century” and has thrived on a very important factor: “the charismatic figure of Fidel Castro”. (*OAS News*, 14/5/07)

May 15: Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations, Rodrigo Malmierca, reaffirmed the country's position against the use of food crops as biofuels when more than two billion people across the world are starving. The diplomat told high-level officials at a meeting of the UN Sustainable Development Commission that Cuba is committed to achieving the world goal to guarantee environmental sustainability, while explaining that the new energy strategy would create a devastating crisis in countries where more than 50 percent of the population depends on agriculture. He mentioned variations in market supply and prices as well as a negative environmental impact, as some of the consequences that could result from turning food into biofuels, *Granma* newspaper reported. (*ACN*, 15/5/07)

May 15: Fidel Castro wrote that he supports Brazil's move to break the patent on a key AIDS drug in an article attributed to him published in official daily *Granma*. Brazil had announced it would ignore US pharmaceutical giant Merck's patent on the drug Efavirenz, after failing to reach an agreement with the company after three years of talks. "We fully support the decree of nationalization of the patent of a pharmaceutical transnational for the manufacturing and marketing in Brazil of medicine against AIDS," Castro wrote. [[Lessons We Learned](#)] (*AFP*, 15/5/07)

May 15: Cuba has offered to assist Fiji in the fields of medicine and sport. The offer was made by Cuba's ambassador to the United Nations to Fiji's minister for public enterprise, Poseci Bune, during a meeting in New York. Mr Bune said Cuba has also offered assistance and partnerships to Fiji in the areas of agriculture and sugar. Mr Bune said he will put Cuba's offer to assist before the interim cabinet and hopefully there will be a follow-up mission to discuss these issues with Cuba before the end of the year. He says this could coincide with a special trade and development mission to Venezuela which has offered to do a feasibility study to build an oil refinery in Fiji. Currently Cuba provides doctors and other professionals to countries in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as to the Solomon Islands and Nauru in the Pacific. (*The Voice of New Zealand*, 15/5/07)

May 15: Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Marcos Rodriguez said in Tehran that peaceful use of nuclear energy is Iran's inalienable right. Rodriguez, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), was speaking to the Iranian press after a two-hour meeting with Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Saeed Jalili. Rodriguez stressed the importance of implementing agreements already signed between Iran and Cuba. The Cuban official pointed to economic, trade and medical cooperation between the two countries and said that Havana has recently established a center at Karaj, Tehran Province, to produce advanced medicines. He said that the Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Commission would hold a session in Havana in June. (*IRNA*, 16/5/07)

May 17: In an extensive document, the second in less than a week published in the official daily *Granma*, Fidel Castro harshly criticized negotiations between United States and Latin American countries for the establishment of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Castro recalled that those attending the 6th Havana's Hemispheric Meeting condemned not only bilateral but also multilateral FTA deals with Washington. The revolutionary leader termed statements by three participants of that forum "solid points of view of a bitter reality which has enriched my ideas." [[La opinion unánime](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 17/5/07)

May 17: The Cuban ambassador to Bolivia, Rafael Daussá, urged metal workers to put an end to their hunger strike in demand of their reinstatement by the government to another plant after the Executive closed the company where they worked. "Progress must be made within a dialogue framework, through serious negotiation, and not (by maintaining) this coercive measure. And the only one laughing at all this, the only one enjoying all of this, is the opposition," Daussá told the workers in video footage broadcast by the media outlet "Cadena A". Daussá frequently attends public meetings

together with Bolivian president Evo Morales and recently was filmed while attending a meeting of the Bolivian Cabinet of Ministers with Morales. (*AP, EER, 17/5/07*)

May 17: Costa Rica accused Cuba of meddling in its internal affairs after Cuban leader Fidel Castro criticized free trade agreements between Latin American nations and the United States. The Central American nation charged that Cuba was attempting to "mar" a referendum on its free trade deal with the United States scheduled for September 23. "The government of the Republic of Costa Rica expresses its concern and unease over a foreign government's interference in the internal affairs of Costa Rica," President Oscar Arias' office said in a statement. "The declarations of the president of Cuba (...) fomenting an external interventionism and insinuating the possibility of 'fraud' in the referendum (...) represent a serious affront on the residents of a sovereign, democratic, free and independent Costa Rica," the statement said. The statement was issued a day after the convalescing Castro denounced in Granma, the Cuban official newspaper, the "bitter reality" left by free trade agreements between Latin American nations and Washington. (*AFP, 18/5/07*)

May 18: The secretary-general of the organization of Ibero-American nations said in Madrid that he is in favor of beginning talks with Cuba and added that a good way to start would be removing the economic embargo Washington imposed on the island in 1962. "I believe it really is time to begin talks and find the way to do so, beginning with something very important, the end of the embargo," Enrique Iglesias told the press in Madrid. The veteran Uruguayan diplomat, who served for nearly two decades as president of the Inter-American Development Bank, agreed to head the permanent secretariat established to promote implementation of initiatives agreed on at the annual Ibero-American Summits involving Spain, Portugal and the nations of Latin America. Iglesias said he was in favor of closer relations with Havana when questioned about statements made by Organization of American States chief Jose Miguel Insulza, who also defended talks with Cuba, a nation that is a member of the regional forum but has been suspended from it since 1962. "What Insulza said makes a lot of sense," he added. (*EFE, 18/5/07*)

May 19: Senate Chairman Mohammadmian Soomro stressed the need for enhancing trade ties and cooperation in the fields of education, health and agriculture between Pakistan and Cuba. He was talking to Cuban deputy foreign minister Bruno Rodrigues Parilla, who was visiting Pakistan. The chairman said the two countries were playing positive and significant role as members of the NAM and UN. These ties should be extended to other sectors such as science and technology, commerce and trade in which the two countries could work together for mutual benefit. The Cuban deputy foreign minister said that his country wanted to further strengthen bilateral ties with Pakistan. He also called for stepping up co-operation between the two parliaments to share technical expertise. (*Business Recorder, 20/5/07*)

May 20: Arguing that it's the right time to step up their engagement with Cuba, rather than try to pressure or isolate it, most nations have either been quiet on Havana or increased contacts with Cuba's emerging new leadership, observers say. A handful of countries, including Costa Rica and the Czech Republic, publicly declared that it was time for Cuba to change. Most ignored US requests for condemnation of Havana as Cuba stepped up its international diplomacy. Companies from China, India, Spain and Norway have lined up to explore Cuba's oil deposits off its northwestern shores. Recently, even close US allies seem eager to court Cuba in what has become a parade of dignitaries heading out to Havana. Canada is sending Len Edwards, its deputy minister of foreign affairs, to Cuba, and Japan and Singapore dispatched senior officials to Havana earlier this month. Mexico's new conservative President Felipe Calderón has made friendly overtures to Cuba and reportedly plans to send a senior political ally, Gabriel Jiménez Remus, as ambassador to Havana. (*The Miami Herald, 20/5/07*)

May 21: Despite public disagreements over relations with Cuba and the shape of a new EU treaty, the Czech and Spanish foreign ministers papered over their differences at a meeting in Prague. "Our views are a lot closer than might appear at first view," Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg said during a joint news conference with his Spanish counterpart, Miguel Angel Moratinos. "We have sometimes different approaches, but we have the same end

goals. We are going to continue our good coordination so that we can succeed in our common objectives," said Moratinos. Moratinos said he briefed Schwarzenberg on his April visit to Cuba, when Madrid and Havana signed an agreement creating a mechanism for political consultation, including on the sensitive issue of human rights. (AFP, 21/5/07)

May 21: Fidel Castro slammed Britain for building the Astute class of nuclear-powered attack submarines he said is destined to sink whatever is left of Britain's international prestige. (Britain's World War II Prime Minister Winston) "Churchill said, 'Sink the Bismark.' Today (British Prime Minister Tony) Blair says: 'Sink whatever's left of Britain's prestige,'" the ailing 80-year old leader said in an editorial published on May 22 by Cuba's official daily Granma. Furthering his criticism of Britain's staunch support of the US occupation of Iraq and Washington's "imperialistic system," Castro said the "marvelous submarine would bring about either (the end of Britain) or the holocaust of the human race." "What a wonderful feat," Castro said, adding that Britons, however, "surely cannot feel any pride" in the new weapon. Britain announced a 295-million-euro (395-million-dollar) contract to build the 7,800-tonne HMS Audacious, fourth in the Astute class of nuclear-powered attack submarines, the largest and most powerful ever built in Britain for the Royal Navy. [[The English Submarine](#)] (AFP, AP, 22/5/07)

May 21: Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa Cantellano assured that Mexico is working hard behind the scenes to establish closer ties with Cuba and Venezuela. Espinosa Cantellano said that it is in Mexico's best interest to establish respectful and constructive relations in the region. (Notimex, 21/5/07)

May 22: President Evo Morales called capitalism the "worst enemy of humanity" at a conference of Latin American leftist intellectuals. "The transnational corporations always provoke conflicts to accumulate capital, and the accumulation of capital in a few hands is no solution for humanity," Morales said at forum in Cochabamba. The president spoke at a two-day conference on the role of media in political efforts to create a new Latin American socialism, sponsored by Bolivia, Venezuela, Cuba, and Ecuador. Cuba's Minister of Culture Abel Prieto and Ambassador to La Paz, Rafael Daussa attended the event. (AP, *Prensa Latina*, 23/5/07)

May 22: Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Eumelio Caballero Rodriguez said that Cuba supported Croatia's efforts to become a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, adding that it would be in his country's interests. Caballero Rodriguez made the statement at a press conference in Zagreb on his first visit to Croatia, during which he had had a series of meetings in the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration. He met the President of the Republic, the Minister of Culture and the Mayor of Zagreb. "Cuba supports Croatia's aspirations to become a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, because that is also in our interest," the Cuban deputy foreign minister said, adding that during his talks in Zagreb he thanked Croatia for its support in countering attempts by the United States to block Cuba's candidacy in international forums. "The peoples of the former Yugoslavia had strong and varied relations with Cuba, and now it is necessary to adjust them to the new reality and develop bilateral relations with each country individually," Caballero Rodriguez said. After Croatia, the Cuban official travels to Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria. (HINA, 22/5/07)

May 23: Reporters Without Borders reiterated its call for the release of Armando Betancourt, 45, as he completed a year in detention without trial. A contributor to the Nueva Prensa Cubana website and founder of the underground magazine "El Camagüeyano", Betancourt was arrested by Cuba's National Revolutionary Police (PNR) on 23 May 2006 in the central city of Camagüey. "Betancourt's only offense was to work as a journalist," the press freedom organisation said. "There are no serious grounds for holding him and even the judges have acknowledged inconsistencies in the testimony about the circumstances of his arrest. Given the element of doubt and absence of any charge, Betancourt should be freed." (RWB Press Release, 23/5/07)

May 23: Amnesty International denounced that freedom of expression, association and movement continue to be "severely restricted" in Cuba. In the section dedicated to Cuba, AI's 2007 Annual Report on human rights says that, "at

the end of the year, 69 prisoners of conscience continued to be held for their non-violent political views or activities". "Scores of people continued to be held without charge on suspicion of counter-revolutionary activities or on unclear charges. Their legal status remained unclear at the end of the year", the Report said. [[2007 Cuba](#)] (*EER*, 23/5/07)

May 23: Venezuela is pushing the Organization of American States to condemn the United States for Washington's alleged reluctance to punish or extradite anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles. The Venezuelan draft resolution drew a strong rebuke from the United States, which argued the 34-member OAS had no business getting involved in a bilateral problem with Caracas. "It is worrisome that US authorities pretend to protect this well-known terrorist Posada Carriles," said Venezuela's envoy before the OAS, Jorge Valero. Countries were divided over the Venezuelan proposal. Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador backed the Venezuelan draft proposal, which said the US delay in jailing or extraditing Posada could "debilitate" international efforts against terrorism. Canada and Panama supported the US stance. Robert Manzanera, the acting US ambassador to the OAS, said "a show of hands" could help settle the issue, but diplomats instead decided to set up an informal group to try and reach an agreement on an issue that threatens to spill over into the upcoming General Assembly of the OAS, where foreign ministers are to discuss renewable energy issues. (*McClatchy Newspapers*, 24/5/07)

May 23: According to the Costa Rican government, there seems to be a "clear" Cuban interest in interfering with the referendum scheduled for September that will decide whether Costa Rica will enter into a Free Trade Agreement with the United States, and asked Havana and Caracas to refrain from meddling. The government of Costa Rica does not want this type of interference because "it is an issue for the Costa Ricans to decide," declared Presidency Minister Rodrigo Arias. (*AFP*, 23/5/07)

May 23: The Uruguayan navy training vessel *Capitan Miranda* arrived in Havana's harbor, becoming the first naval ship from the South American nation to make a port call in the Cuban capital since the triumph of Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959. Captain Julio Ambrosini told reporters that one of his ship's missions, as "Uruguay's floating ambassador," is to "make a small contribution to the excellent relations" between his country and Cuba. The vessel, which arrived at the island after stops in Brazil and Venezuela, will remain in Cuba until setting sail for the Bahamas on May 28, part of a seven-month voyage that will also take it to the United States, Portugal, Spain and Italy. (*EFE*, 23/5/07)

May 24: Cuba presented the case of Luis Posada Carriles at the 11th High Level Meeting of the Mechanism for Cooperation on Drugs between the European Union and Latin American and the Caribbean, for its linkage to organized crime in this part of the world and its countless terrorist crimes. Julio Alfonso Fonseca, member of the Cuban delegation to the meeting, held May 22-23 in Port Spain, Trinidad Tobago, presented the case of Posada and denounced the impunity under which he has carried out his crimes. Fonseca Alfonso stressed the need for the international community to know that Posada's release is a blow to the struggle against terrorism and organized crime. (*ACN*, 24/5/07)

May 24: Two volleyball players, Raidel Poey and Yasser Portuondo, defected from the Cuban team while in Bulgaria. "They stayed there, we do not know their whereabouts, (...) we have not had any communication with them," said the technical director of the Cuban team, Orlando Samuels. (*EFE*, 24/5/07)

May 24: Journalists, business people and diplomats attended a reopening ceremony of a *Prensa Latina* office in France, 15 years after its closure. During the gathering, Cuba's Ambassador to France, Rogelio Sanchez Levis, said that with this return of the agency to Paris "our countries from the South have the opportunity to develop an efficient, fruitful information effort." (*Prensa Latina*, 24/5/07)

May 24: Lenin Moreno Garcés, Vice President of Ecuador, arrived in Havana for an official visit. Moreno will meet with top-level Cuban government leaders and carry out visits to places of historic, social and cultural interest. Moreno

took office as Ecuador's vice president on January 15, 2007, accompanying the newly elected president, Rafael Correa. (*Granma*, 25/5/07)

May 24: Cuban Vice President Esteban Lazo Hernandez met Nong Duc Manh, General Secretary of the Vietnamese Communist Party, at Havana's international airport, where the Vietnamese leader made a stopover en route to Chile. Manh heads a delegation that includes government and Communist Party leaders as well as business executives beginning a four-nation trip that will take them to Chile, Brazil, Venezuela and end in Cuba. Fernando Ramirez de Estenez, who heads the International Relations Department of the Communist Party, and Ricardo Cabrisas, minister of Government, also welcomed the Vietnamese delegation at the airport. (*Granma*, 25/5/07)

May 25: Around 60 physicians from Cuba specialised in public health are to arrive in Angola in July this year. According to a source from the Cuban embassy in Luanda, a total of 20 doctors will work in the Programme of Community Health and the rest in health centres and hospitals of Luanda city, especially in the districts of Kilamba Kiaxi, Sambizanga and Cazenga. The Cuban technicians come to Angola in the ambit of the cooperation accord signed this year between the ministries of health of Angola and Cuba. (*Angop*, 25/5/07)

May 25: Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque headed the Cuban delegation to the 45th Summit of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), which began meeting on the island of Grenada. Cuba, a special guest to the Summit, is located in the western Caribbean but has widespread diplomatic and cooperation relations throughout the region. Perez Roque addressed the prime ministers and referred to the historic ties of collaboration existing between Cuba and the OECS countries. Cuban assistance in the region extends to the areas of health, education; energy savings; the construction of housing, roads and airports; agriculture; fishing; and sports. Cuba's Yo Si Puedo (Yes I Can) literacy program is being widely used as well. The Operation Miracle (Vision Now) eye surgery program has also benefited more than 10,000 patients from the Eastern Caribbean nations. (*Granma*, 25/5/07)

May 25: Canadian First Deputy Foreign Minister Leonard J. Edwards and his Cuban counterpart Bruno Rodriguez agreed that for many decades, their countries have maintained good and broad relations in several fields. During a meeting at the Foreign Ministry headquarters, the Cuban diplomat noted that Cuban-Canadian ties are an example of exchange between two countries with different systems but similar interests. Rodriguez described bilateral relations as respectful and constructive ties between the two peoples. He expressed gratitude for Canada's support at the UN General Assembly for the resolution condemning Washington's economic blockade of Cuba. For his part, the Canadian diplomat noted the permanence of bilateral relations despite some differences, and the two countries' capacity to talk sincerely in all spheres. Edwards said this visit was a great opportunity to exchange opinions with Cuban leaders and review the state of bilateral trade relations. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/5/07)

May 25: Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage said that Cuba and Ecuador will strengthen their friendship. In brief statements to reporters during a meeting at the Council of State with his Ecuadorian counterpart, Lenin Moreno, Lage expressed satisfaction with his visit to Cuba and noted that in the short period since the incumbent Ecuadorian government took power, it has gained Cuba's admiration and respect. For his part, Moreno conveyed warm salutations to the Cuban people and lauded what he called Latin American brotherhood. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/5/07)

May 25: Chinese Minister of Civil Affairs Li Xueju met in Havana with Cuban Vice President of the Council of State Carlos Lage to discuss strategies for caring for senior citizens. Li Xueju learned about Cuba's social programs for that sector of the population and about government initiatives to deal with the aging of Cuban society, and pointed out the similarity of Chinese programs for the elderly. Speaking about labor issues, the minister praised the low rate of unemployment in Cuba—below two percent—and advocated increasing cooperation between the two countries in the labor sector. (*Periódico 26, Granma*, 26/5/07)

May 26: The Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) could decide on May 28 if Luis Posada Carriles should be extradited to Venezuela, sources of that entity indicated. The panel created by the OAS' Permanent Council, after the division that sparked among member states around the Posada case, worked all week analyzing the demand presented by the Venezuelan authorities for the extradition of the terrorist. Venezuelan ambassador to the OAS, Jorge Valero, asked the Council for support to the petition made by his country to the US judicial authorities in order that Posada Carriles be extradited to Venezuela. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/5/07)

May 26: Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro received the vice president of the Republic of Ecuador, Lenin Moreno Garces, who began an official visit to Cuba on May 24, local media reported. During the meeting, held in the cordial and friendly atmosphere that characterizes Cuban-Ecuadorian relations, the two top officials reviewed the state of bilateral ties. Raul Castro and Moreno also analyzed other issues of interest, including the current situation in Latin America and the rest of the world. Also present at the meeting were Carlos Lage, secretary of the Executive Committee of the Council of Ministers, and Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. The Ecuadorian delegation also included Presidential Advisor Eduardo Calderon and Ambassador to Cuba Universi Zambrano. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/5/07)

May 28: Ambassadors and diplomats from 17 African nations accredited in Cuba visited the Slave's Route Museum, as part of celebrations for the Day of Africa. Led by Pascal Oguemby, senior African ambassador in Cuba, the diplomats toured the facility at colonial Fort San Severino, in Matanzas, 62 miles east of Havana. This year the Day of Africa was dedicated to the 50th anniversary of the independence of Ghana. Ghanaian Ambassador to Havana Cecilia Gyan Amoah highlighted to the press the friendship that the Cuban government shows to Africa. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/5/07)

May 28: Ecuadorian Vice President Lenin Moreno Garces concluded his five-day visit to Cuba, which strengthened official relations and cooperation between the two countries. Diplomatic relations between Cuba and Ecuador were established on April 24, 1903. They were interrupted in April 1962 and reestablished in August 1979. (*CAN*, 28/5/07)

May 28: During a special meeting, the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted a Declaration on "Strengthening Cooperation in the Fight against Terrorism and the Impunity of its Perpetrators", in response to a proposal initially presented by the government of Venezuela. Venezuelan Ambassador Jorge Valero had presented a resolution demanding the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles from the US to the South American nation. Valero, who is also the President of the Permanent Council, expressed appreciation for the good offices of OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza and the Permanent Representative of the Dominican Republic, Roberto Alvarez, for bringing about a complete consensus in the formulation and approval of the Declaration. In the resolution the name of Posada Carriles is not mentioned and there is no reference to Posada's extradition to Venezuela. (*OAS News, AFP*, 29/5/07)

May 29: The governments of Cuba and Spain began in Havana their first round of talks on human rights with an agenda from which "no issue is excluded," according to officials close to the closed-door meeting. Leading the respective delegations are the director-general of the Spanish foreign ministry, Rafael Dezcallar, and Cuba's deputy foreign minister for multilateral issues, Abelardo Moreno. Neither the Cuban government nor the island's state-run media have reported so far on the encounter. Neither has the Spanish delegation made any comments to reporters about the start of the talks, which will wrap up on May 30. This round of talks, the first between Havana and a member nation of the European Union, are taking place within the framework of the formal dialogue mechanism agreed to during last month's visit to Cuba by Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. (*EFE*, 29/5/07)

May 29: Members of the internal dissident movement expressed skepticism about the results of the meeting between representatives of the Spanish and Cuban government on issues concerning human rights. The Cuban government calls the country's dissidents "mercenaries" financed by the United States and does not recognize the existence of "political prisoners" on the island. "I hope it is successful, above all so that the prisoners of conscience are freed, but I'm very cautious because I don't see any willingness on the part of the Cuban government to take steps in favor of respecting

human rights," said Oscar Espinosa, an independent economist sentenced in the spring of 2003 in the trials of 75 dissidents and since released from prison for health reasons. Elizardo Sanchez, who heads the outlawed Commission for Human Rights, voiced his "total skepticism" about the results of the meeting. "I have no doubt of the good faith with which the Spanish government is acting in this initiative, but I am absolutely certain of the bad faith with which the Cuban government always responds to initiatives of this kind," he said. Sanchez's commission says Cuba's communist government is holding more than 280 political prisoners. (EFE, 29/5/07)

May 30: Spain's Socialist Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero said that he will discuss differences with Washington over Cuba when he meets with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "Nations and governments do not have to have similar positions on all foreign policy issues," Zapatero told reporters following talks in Madrid with his Dutch counterpart Jan Peter Balkenende. "It is understandable and reasonable because there are different historical ties, because there are very different approaches over what can and should be the future," he added. "What is positive is that we are going to talk and when we do the positions are going to be much more understandable and much closer," Zapatero said. (AFP, 31/5/07)

May 30: Spain said it held "frank and cordial" discussions about human rights, the death penalty and treatment of prisoners in Cuba, despite US complaints it has been too friendly with the communist island. In a joint statement, Spanish and Cuban authorities did not report any major agreements in the two days of closed-door meetings, and leading Cuban government critics were barred from attending. Both sides said the meetings remained friendly, despite delving into human rights topics that usually make Cuban officials bristle. The Spanish delegation was allowed to visit three prisons close to Havana. The Cuban-Spanish statement said the talks touched on "individual and collective rights for everyone," the death penalty, prison systems and "respect for human rights in the fight against international terrorism." It described the meeting as "cordial, frank and constructive" and said the two sides agreed to continue talks later this year at a meeting of the UN General Assembly in New York. [Official communique] (AP, EFE,31,1/5,6/07)

May 30: The World Committee of Poets in Defence of Humanity met in Havana as part of the 12th International Poetry Festival. The group advocates for "revitalizing the basic essence of poetry, a breathing apparatus for imagination without which humans are not valid beings," said Committee President Juan Banuelos. The Mexican poet also spoke about poetry in Africa and the Caribbean, the two regions to which this year's festival is dedicated. Present at the meeting were poet and Proyecto Sur Coordinator Alex Pausides, Jose Marti Studies Institute Director Armando Hart and Mozambique poet Marcelino dos Santos. (Granma, 31/5/07)

May 30: In June, Cuba will host a meeting of experts from 39 countries on how to best promote cultural diversity over cultural globalization, Cuba's Deputy Minister of Culture Rafael Bernal said. "We'll discuss the best way of putting into action the (2005) Convention" for the protection and promotion of cultural diversity of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization that 60 countries have ratified, he said. For Cuba, among the first to sign the UNESCO convention, cultural diversity "is extremely important in the world we're now living in, where national cultures are under an increasingly vicious attack." The Fifth International Congress on Culture and Development will gather some 600 academics, researchers and cultural promoters in Havana on June 11-14. (AFP, 31/5/07)

May 31: Cuba has reaffirmed its strong commitment to building economic, social and cultural ties with the nations of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). This affirmation has come from Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Felipe Perez and his delegation during the OECS Heads of Government Meeting in Grenada. "The Minister reaffirmed Cuba's strong commitment to building economic, social and cultural ties with the OECS and pledged his country's continued support for the region through the maintenance and expansion of a number of cooperation projects," the communique issued at the end of the meeting stated. The Cuban Minister announced that his Caribbean nation will continue the Miracle Eye project, which allows Cuban doctors to perform eye surgeries, but patients will now have the operations conducted in their home island, reducing the need to travel to Havana. "One in every 58 OECS nationals were tested during the first phase of the project, and 9,799 received operations," said the communique. Cuba

also announced support for the fight against HIV/AIDS with the award of 25 post graduate scholarships to OECS nationals involved in work related to the fight against HIV/AIDS. (*Caribbean Net News*, 31/5/07)

May 30: The Caribbean Community (CARICOM) condemned all forms, manifestations, methods and practices of terrorism, wherever they are committed and whosoever perpetrates them. In a statement released at the end of the 2nd Cuba-CARICOM Ministerial Meeting in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, foreign ministers from the region recalled the terrorist attack on a Cubana de Aviación aircraft in 1976, which led to the death of 73 civilians from various nations. One of the masterminds of the sabotage, Luis Posada Carriles, was freed a few weeks ago in the United States. The ministers reiterated their call on the US government to consider Venezuela's application for Posada Carriles' extradition and to ensure, in line with its international obligations, that he is tried for the crimes with which he has been charged. Representatives of Cuba, Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Dominica, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Christopher and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Belize, St. Lucia and Surinam endorsed the document. (*Granma International*, 31/5/07)

May 30: The Intergovernmental Cuba-Sudan Commission on Economic and Scientific collaboration began sessions for the third time on May 30-June 1, in Havana. Sudanese Foreign Collaboration Minister Al-Tigani Salih Fedail, who leads the delegation attending the meeting, said exchanges on areas such as sports, education, agriculture, and biotechnology may be increased. Cuba's Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration, Martha Lomas, stressed that the exchange accord—in force since March 23, 2002—has allowed solid and smooth cooperation between the two nations. The first Intergovernmental Cuba-Sudan Commission was held in Havana on November 2004, while the second meeting occurred in Khartoum. (*ACN*, 31/5/07)

May 30: Cuba and Sri Lanka signed a cooperation agreement in Havana to expand cultural relations between the two nations. The accord, which was penned by Cuba's Culture Minister Abel Prieto and his counterpart from Sri Lanka Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, stipulates the expansion of artistic exchange to the fields of music, theatre, dance and other cultural manifestations, as well as the teaching of arts. The document also includes the implementation of movie festivals between the two countries, cooperation in the field of conservation, and restoration of pieces of cultural value, and the exchange of experts and documents between both countries' national libraries. During the signing ceremony, Abel Prieto expressed his satisfaction for the agreement, which will be a useful working tool to expand cultural relations between Cuba and Sri Lanka, he stressed. (*ACN*, 31/5/07)

May 30: Angola's minister of Culture, Boaventura Cardoso, considered as solid the cultural relations between Angola and Cuba. During an interview with the Angolan press, the minister made these comments prior to Angola's participation at the 5th International Congress on Culture and Development, taking place in Havana. The official also said that he will seize the occasion to reiterate the invitation made in 2005 to his Cuban counterpart, to visit Angola in 2008. (*Angop*, 31/07)

May 31: The OAS Secretary General, Jose Miguel Insulza, said that sooner or later Cuba would return to the fold, joining the democratic governments of the Americas, but without pressing for that process. On the eve of the OAS General Assembly in Panama, Insulza said that Cuba's legitimate return to the hemispheric organization will be via consultation with the Cuban population and its voters. The former Chilean minister said that Cuba is not a topic in the GA agenda. (*MartíNoticias*, 31/5/07)

Security

May 9: On the 62nd anniversary of the victory over fascism, the Cuban Armed Forces paid tribute in Havana to Soviet soldiers who died during missions in Cuba. The ambassadors of Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia and Khazakhstan, as well

as military representatives of other countries, placed flowers on the graves and attended the military parade. (AFP, 9/5/07)

May 10: China's defense minister called for "eternal friendship" with Cuba at the start of a visit to bolster strategic ties with a communist ally 90 miles (145 km) from the United States. "We wish eternal friendship between our countries," Cao said in Havana, the first stop on a trip that includes Argentina, Chile and Greece. Cao is the second top Chinese official to visit Havana in less than a month. Wu Guanzheng, a member of the Standing Committee of China's Communist Party Politburo, met on April 20 with convalescing Fidel Castro, who has not appeared in public since handing over power to his brother Raul nine months ago. (*Global Insight, Reuters*, 11/5/07)

May 11: Army General Raul Castro Ruz, Second Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee and Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR), met with Colonel General Cao Gangchuan, Vice President of the Central Military Committee and Defence Minister of the People's Popular Republic of China. Official talks were held at the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces in a friendly and fraternal atmosphere, characteristic of the close relations shared between both countries' communist parties, governments, peoples and armed forces. Also attending the meeting was Army General Alvaro Lopez Miera, FAR Vice Minister and Chief of the FAR General Staff and other high officials. The Chinese Ambassador to Cuba, Zhao Rongxian, and members of the high level delegation accompanying Cao Gangchuan also attended the meeting. (*Granma*, 12/5/07)

May 21: A delegation of 93 students from the Venezuelan Air Force Academy, headed by its Director, Brigade General Mauro Hernán Araujo, began a one-week instructional visit to Cuba. This is the second visit by the Venezuelan military to Cuba in the last three months. Approximately 250 officers and cadets from the Venezuelan Joint Academy for Advanced Studies on War visited the island in mid February "to exchange experiences." (*EER*, 22/5/07)

Terrorism

May 8: Representative Jane Harman (Democrat-Venice), chair of the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing & Terrorism Risk Assessment, and Representative Neil Abercrombie (Democrat-Honolulu) introduced legislation requiring the US President to close the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The bill would close Guantánamo no later than one year after enactment and give various options for the treatment of detainees held there. (*Hindustan Times*, 8/5/07)

US-Cuba Relations

May 1: Marchers gathered in Havana's Revolution Square on May Day protested the recent US court decision to free on bond anti-communist militant Luis Posada Carriles, pending his trial on US immigration charges. Havana accuses the Cuban-born Posada of orchestrating a 1976 airliner bombing that killed 73 people -- a charge he denies. Demonstrators held signs and banners declaring "Prison for the Executioner" in reference to Posada, accusing the Bush administration of a double standard on terrorism. (*AP*, 1/5/07)

May 1: One US government official did not seem overly impressed by Fidel Castro's possible reappearance at Havana's May Day rally. "We don't spend much time thinking about whether Fidel Castro will return to power or not," Kirsten Madison, Assistant Undersecretary of State for the Western Hemisphere, told the Spanish news agency Efe. "If

Fidel Castro returns to power tomorrow, I expect to see more of the same: repression against the people, the suppression of economic rights." (*The Miami Herald*, 1/5/07)

May 1: US trade officials heard pleas from business groups for looser trade rules with Cuba, which the groups said could be a major market for US farm goods. The US International Trade Commission, which provides independent analysis of trade issues, will release a report in late June on the impact that trade and travel restrictions have on US agricultural exports to Cuba. "The United States can better engage the market opportunity that Cuba represents," said Gary Martin, president of the North American Export Grain Association, a trade group. US sales could "expand significantly," Martin said, once current limitations are removed. NAEGA is one US commodity group that would like to see more seamless trade with Cuba. It hopes that stirrings in Congress will bring policy changes and boost farm exports that are now worth about \$300 million a year. (*Reuters*, 1/5/07)

May 2: The FBI office in Miami has been quietly gathering evidence on a 1997 bombing that killed an Italian man at a Havana hotel, with agents traveling to the Cuban capital recently to see if they can link Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles to the attack. The extraordinary effort at cooperation between the two countries underscores their shared goal to pin the plot on Posada, the focus of a federal grand jury probe in Newark, N.J. Posada, a former CIA operative trained in explosives, is under house arrest at his wife's West Kendall apartment as he awaits trial on immigration fraud charges unrelated to the bombing. "Anything that comes from Cuba is fruit of the poisonous tree," said Posada's attorney, Arturo Hernandez. "We deny these charges, and we will vigorously defend Mr. Posada against them if they ever come to fruition. This is part of the Castro regime's full-court press against my client." Human rights and exile groups ask how Cuba's justice system can be trusted when it routinely jails dissidents and journalists with scant evidence. The Cuban Interests Section in Washington did not return phone calls seeking comment. (*The Miami Herald*, 2/5/07)

May 2: A fugitive who was expelled from Cuba pleaded not guilty to jumping bond in the United States more than 40 years ago - but he was not given a chance for a repeat performance. US Magistrate Judge William Turnoff denied Joseph Adjmi's request for bond as the 70-year-old awaits trial. Adjmi was convicted of mail fraud and sentenced in 1963 to 10 years in prison, but disappeared before serving his sentence. Last year, Cuban officials alerted the US counterparts that Adjmi was in their custody for fraud-related crimes he'd allegedly committed on the island. They intended to expel him upon his release and asked the United States to take him. (*AP*, 2/5/07)

May 2: For the second time in two days a group of 14 Cubans, including a one-year-old, came ashore in the vicinity of the Rickenbacker Causeway in Miami. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 3/5/07)

May 3: Telecom giant AT&T Inc. unveiled a new calling plan for landline calls from South Florida to Cuba. The plan costs \$7.99 a month, or about 75 cents per minute for direct dialed calls to Cuba. That's down from plans that now cost about 85 cents per minute for direct dial calls to Cuba, a spokeswoman said. AT&T said the majority of calls made to Cuba originate in South Florida. The area is home to more than 700,000 Cubans, according to 2000 Census numbers. Telecom rates to the communist-run island, among the most expensive in the world, depend largely on fees set by Cuban authorities, analysts said. (*Sun Sentinel*, 3/5/07)

May 3: The National Security Archives at George Washington University has released documents that prove the responsibility of Luis Posada Carriles with the 1976 sabotage of a Cuban airliner in which 73 persons died. Among the documents available on the Archives website, are statements from Freddy Lugo and Hernan Ricardo, who placed the explosives on the plane. Lugo and Ricardo incriminate each other for having blown up the aircraft with C-4 explosives and identify Luis Posada Carriles and Orlando Bosch as the leaders of the terrorist action. Peter Kornbluh, in charge of the documents related to Cuba at the Archives said the documents give a true historical framework from which to indict Posada. [[Documents linked to Cuban Exile Luis Posada](#)] (*Granma*, 4/5/07)

May 4: Austrian bank BAWAG P.S.K. offered to reinstate accounts held by Cuban nationals which it had cancelled last month due to the imminent takeover by a US investor subject to US sanctions against Cuba. The cancellations, which came after private equity fund Cerberus Capital [CBS.UL] agreed to buy the bank last year, caused a public uproar in Austria and triggered the foreign minister to charge the bank with violating European Union rules. "The board of BAWAG P.S.K. with immediate effect revokes the decision to terminate business relationships with Cuban nationals," BAWAG said in a statement. (*Reuters*, 4/5/07)

May 4: South Florida's three Cuban-American members of Congress condemned the Justice Department for sending Miami FBI agents to Cuba to collect evidence against Luis Posada Carriles in a hotel bombing that killed an Italian in Havana a decade ago. 'By asking a state sponsor of terrorism for `evidence' regarding terrorism, the Bush administration Justice Department demonstrates a shockingly profound ignorance of the nature of terrorism, of its origins and its state sponsors," US Representatives Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and brothers Lincoln and Mario Díaz-Balart said in a statement. It marked the first official public expression of anger over a heightening grand jury investigation in Newark, New Jersey. The former CIA-trained explosives expert was detained by immigration agents two years ago in Miami-Dade. Posada, 79, is under house arrest at his wife's home in West Kendall while he awaits a May 11 trial in Texas on immigration fraud charges unrelated to the bombing. (*The Miami Herald*, 4/5/07)

May 4: Luis Posada Carriles's defense team will not be allowed to use the anti-Castro militant's immigration records as evidence for his defense. Judge Kathleen Cardone denied the defense motion to be allowed to review the full extent of the documentation contained in the records. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 5/5/07)

May 4: The Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Kirsten Madison, and the coordinator of the US State Department's Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, Caleb McCarry, met with officials of the European Union Council, the European Commission and diplomats from the twenty-seven to discuss the political situation in the island and the attending parties' respective strategies to facilitate the establishment of democracy. (*EFE*, 4/5/07)

May 4: A Cuban army officer killed during a failed airplane hijacking was buried with military honors, decorated posthumously with one of the communist regime's top medals as officials blamed Washington for his death. A government statement said the American policy of letting most Cubans stay if they reach US soil encourages violent attempts to leave this island, such as the incident that led to the fatal shooting of Lt. Colonel Victor Ibo Acuna Velazquez by two army deserters. The headline in the Communist Party newspaper called the hijacking attempt an "act of terror promoted by the United States." [[Acto de terror promovido por Estados Unidos](#)] (*AP*, 4/5/07)

May 7: The Czech Foreign Ministry has denied claims by the Cuban authorities that the Czech Republic is to become a safe refuge for Cuban terrorist Luis Posada Carriles, who is accused by Cuba and Venezuela of terrorism. "Unfortunately, this is a case of a deliberate campaign aimed at discrediting us," Czech Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zuzana Opletalova told the press. (*Mlada Fronta Dnes*. 7/5/07)

May 7: The United States, which has been planning for possible waves of fleeing Cubans when Fidel Castro dies, has hired a Florida company to build a temporary complex to hold migrants at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, the military said. Islands Mechanical Contractors Inc. of Jacksonville, Florida, has won a \$16.5 million contract to build a "migrant operations complex" at the base, a US enclave in eastern Cuba, the US Defense Department said. The fenced complex would include showers and laundry facilities and is to be finished by May 2008, according to a Defense Department publication that announces contracts. The announcement did not specify the capacity of the complex and a Defense Department spokesman said additional details were not immediately available. Bob Turnage, the president of Islands Mechanical, declined to discuss the project. The contract announcement did not specify that the complex would be for Cuban migrants, but Navy officials told the press in January that they were preparing for a potential Cuban exodus because of Castro's health problems and would hold migrants at Guantanamo. (*AP*, 8/5/07)

May 7: Fidel Castro said two Cuban soldiers who killed an army officer during a failed attempt to hijack an airplane to escape from the island were encouraged by the prospect of impunity in the United States. In an editorial e-mailed to journalists, Castro, 80, described the attempted hijacking of a few days ago as "a consequence of freeing the monster of terror." He was referring to an American judge's recent decision to free Luis Posada Carriles, an anti-communist militant wanted in Cuba and Venezuela in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people. "The impunity and the material benefits that have been rewarded for nearly half a century for all violent action against Cuba stimulate such acts," said the editorial, the fifth attributed to Castro since he disappeared from public view more than nine months ago. "It only takes the stunning liberation of a known terrorist and death again is visited upon our homes," the statement said. [[The Tragedy Threatening Our Species](#)] (AP, 8/5/07)

May 8: A federal judge dropped charges against former CIA operative and anti-Castro Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles, blasting what she called government "fraud, deceit and trickery" in an interview with Posada that led to the charges. US district judge Kathleen Cardone ordered Posada's electronic bracelet cut off in the courtroom and cleared the way for him to return to Miami a free man. Cardone said the interpretation of the April 2006 interview "is so inaccurate as to render it unreliable as evidence of the defendant's actual statement." Posada's attorney, Arturo Hernandez, told the press the ruling was "an incredible legal victory." The Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security said they were reviewing Cardone's decision. Cuba and Venezuela want Posada to face charges. Posada, 79, was charged with seven counts of immigration fraud. He was arrested in Miami in May 2005 after entering the country illegally. (CNN, *Chicago Tribune*, 8/5/07)

May 8: The Cuban government reacted angrily to news of Luis Posada Carriles' release, calling him a "known terrorist" in a statement released by Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera, chief of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington. In the statement, the Cuban government blames the White House for having "made all the efforts necessary to protect the bin Laden of the hemisphere, [out of] fear that he could have talked and recount the whole history about the US government links with his terrorists' activities." The Cuban government accuses Posada of being involved in the 1976 downing of a Cuban passenger plane, which killed 73 people. Posada has denied any role in the airliner attack. He's also accused of being involved in a string of hotel bombings in Havana and making attempts on the life of Fidel Castro. (CNN, 8/5/07)

May 9: US Immigration and Customs Enforcement issued a statement noting that Luis Posada Carriles must check in with immigration officials upon his return to Miami -- but not saying whether it plans to appeal the ruling. "At this time, we're reviewing the judge's decision and we're evaluating our options," said Justice Department spokesman Dean Boyd. He declined to explain why the government had not filed terrorism charges against Posada. "I'm not going to get into our internal deliberations," he said. Leticia Zamarripa, a spokeswoman for the US Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, said her agency was notified of the dismissal of Posada's criminal indictment and "we are evaluating the matter and will take appropriate action." An immigration judge ruled in 2005 that Posada be deported, but not to Cuba, where he was born, or Venezuela because of fears he could be tortured. Several other countries have refused to take him. (*The San Francisco Chronicle*, AP, 10/5/07)

May 9: Venezuela and Cuba accused Washington of shielding a terrorist after a judge threw out immigration fraud charges against a man wanted in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro said his government planned to seek international support for the extradition of 79-year-old former CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles. "What will happen to Posada Carriles is in the hands of the US government," Maduro said, calling Washington "that terrorist-protecting government." He spoke at a news conference alongside Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, who said the fact that Posada is now free shows the "hypocrisy" of US President George W. Bush's administration. Maduro reiterated demands that Posada either be tried in the United States for the 1976 jetliner bombing off Barbados or be turned over to Venezuela for trial. Cuba's Perez Roque said the Bush administration has refused to classify Posada as a terrorist and hand him over to Venezuela because Posada would "make good on his threat to tell everything that he knows and all that he did for the U.S. government when he was a CIA man." In a

briefing with the press, the spokesman for the US State Department Sean Mc Cormack said that the Posada case was “fundamentally” a Department of Justice issue. “They are the ones who are taking a look at the judgment of this”, he said regarding the immigration charges. “They’re taking a look at the ruling, deciding what their options are. And the Department of Homeland Security ultimately has jurisdiction about, you know, what foreigners are in the United States and whether or not they are allowed to remain. As a matter of foreign policy, yes, we do consult with the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security on the matter. But we are not the ultimate arbiters of either (a) what court case may be brought against Mr. Posada Carriles or (b) whether or not he remains in the United States.” (*The Miami Herald, US State Department Daily Briefing, 9/5/07*)

May 10: Academy Award-winning filmmaker Michael Moore is under investigation by the US Treasury Department for taking ailing September 11 rescue workers to Cuba for a segment in his upcoming health-care documentary “Sicko”, the press has learned. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control notified Moore in a letter dated May 2 that it was conducting a civil investigation for possible violations of the US trade embargo restricting travel to Cuba. "This office has no record that a specific license was issued authorizing you to engage in travel-related transactions involving Cuba," Dale Thompson, OFAC chief of general investigations and field operations, wrote in the letter to Moore. In February, Moore took about 10 ailing workers from the Ground Zero rescue effort in Manhattan for treatment in Cuba, said a person working with the filmmaker on the release of “Sicko”. The person requested anonymity because Moore's attorneys had not yet determined how to respond. (*AP, 10/5/07*)

May 10: The US government has launched a probe into whether maverick director Michael Moore, whose 2004 documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11" criticizes the Bush administration, broke laws when he went to Cuba for a new movie about US health care. US citizens face "civil and/or criminal penalties" for unauthorized travel to the communist country, the US Treasury Department warned in a letter to the Oscar-winning director that was posted on Moore's web site. Dated May 2, the letter highlights federal concern that Moore went to Cuba in March without approval, and asks for details about travel dates, people on the trip and reasons Moore might qualify for a journalist's license to go to Cuba. A spokesman for Moore declined comment on what the filmmaker was doing in Cuba, but said news reports about his taking victims of the September 11 attacks on New York's World Trade Centers there for health care were inaccurate. (*Reuters, 10/5/07*)

May 10: US Attorney General Alberto Gonzales expressed his disagreement with El Paso Federal Judge Kathleen Cardone's recent decision to dismiss the charges for migratory offenses against anti-Castro firebrand Luis Posada Carriles. "We are aware of the Judge's ruling. Obviously, we do not concur," said the Secretary of Justice during a Congress hearing. (*AFP, 10/5/07*)

May 11: The future of a proposed \$1 billion tunnel to the Port of Miami may be in limbo because the preferred contractor has close business ties to the Castro government. An affiliate of the French construction giant Bouygues Travaux Publics -- heading a team that was the low bidder for the tunnel project -- has built 11 high-end resorts in joint ventures with the Cuban military since 1999, according to a French government report and the company's own website. Fidel Castro also mentioned the Bouygues affiliate in a 2003 speech during the opening of Playa Pesquero, a five-star hotel that the firm built in the northeastern province of Holguín, according to the official government newspaper Granma. Lawyers for Bouygues strongly denied any wrongdoing, but the revelation of the Cuba connection could unravel a complicated financing package that is critically dependent on state, county and city tax dollars. The tunnel would link the port with the MacArthur Causeway and route thousands of trucks a day away from crowded downtown streets. "I think once the public becomes fully aware of this, especially at the county commission level, then Bouygues is going to have a very hard time winning this contract," said Miami attorney Nicolas Gutierrez, who has raised the issue about Bouygues' possible violations of the Helms-Burton Act with officials in Miami, Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. (*The Miami Herald, 11/5/07*)

May 11: A grand jury is meeting in Newark to decide whether to indict Posada on charges of financing a terrorist operation. FBI agents visited Havana last year in connection with the probe, following up on a 1998 trip to the island, according to two U.S. law enforcement officials who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly about the investigation. "We've provided American authorities with a lot of information," said Cuban Lt. Col. Roberto Hernandez Cabellero. Visiting FBI agents deposed him during the 1998 trip, and while he said he had no information on more recent visits, he said US prosecutors should have what they need. The federal probe in New Jersey has the most potential to put Posada behind bars in the United States. (AP, 10/5/07)

May 11: Cuba accused the US government of violating international anti-terrorism treaties by allowing Luis Posada Carriles, a man Havana accuses of violent acts against the country, to walk free of all charges after an immigration indictment against him was dropped. "The US government has not only violated its own laws and supposed commitment to its self-proclaimed 'War Against Terrorism,' but also to its own international obligations," said a government declaration published in the Communist Party newspaper Granma, signed on May 9. The declaration detailed several international treaties it said the United States had violated, but did not say whether it would take any diplomatic action. [[Declaración del Gobierno de Cuba](#)] (AP, 11/5/07)

May 11: In Havana, 300 Cuban artists, armed with music and poetry, gathered at the Jose Marti Anti-imperialist Tribune to protest the release of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. "The way the Posada case has been handled confirms the complicity and commitment of the Bush administration and family with this individual," said Ana Victoria Casadesus Pazos, member of the UJC National Committee, which along with the Cuban Institute of Music organized the event. Thousands of young people, including UJC First Secretary Julio Martinez Ramirez, gathered in the square in front of the US Interests Section in Havana to unite their voices with singers, artists, musicians and actors in protest of this terrible injustice. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 11/5/07)

May 11: Filmmaker Michael Moore has asked the Bush administration to call off an investigation of his trip to Cuba to get treatment for ailing 9/11 rescue workers for a segment in his upcoming health-care exposé "Sicko". Moore, who made the hit documentary "Fahrenheit 9/11" assailing President George W. Bush's handling of 9/11, said in a letter to US Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson that the White House may have opened the investigation for political reasons. "I understand why the Bush administration is coming after me – I have tried to help the very people they refuse to help, but until George W. Bush outlaws helping your fellow man, I have broken no laws and I have nothing to hide," Moore said in the letter, which he posted on a liberal website. (AP, 12/5/07)

May 11: Demonstrators gathered outside the Justice Department to demand the prosecution of anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles for allegedly blowing up a Cuban airliner and eluding responsibility for three decades. Photographs of some of the 73 victims who died in the 1976 explosion lined a sidewalk. Protesters carried signs saying "Prosecute Posada for Terrorism" or "Extradite Posada to Venezuela." And speakers in English and Spanish decried Posada's release from custody this week after a judge in El Paso, Texas dismissed immigration charges against him. It was part of what demonstrators called a national and international day of protest. Similar rallies were planned in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, El Paso, Boston and Philadelphia as well as other American cities and some in Canada and Mexico. (*Sun Sentinel*, 12/5/07)

May 11: A former Florida college counselor will undergo cancer surgery before serving a prison term in connection with her husband's role as a Cuban agent. A federal judge delayed the start of Elsa Alvarez's three-year stretch until the end of the month so she could have a growth removed. Alvarez, 57, pleaded guilty to charges she failed to tell investigators that her husband, Carlos, was acting as an unregistered agent of the Castro regime and feeding Havana information about the Florida exile community. The couple was recently declared indigent by the court, but continues to appeal their case despite reaching plea agreements with the US government. (UPI, 12/5/07)

May 11: An estimate of 1,798,000 tourists from the US will visit Cuba annually within two years of the end of travel restrictions. The American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) testified to the US International Trade Commission on April 24 that by conservative estimates 1,798,000 Americans will visit Cuba annually within two years of the end of travel restrictions. Paul Ruden, ASTA's senior vice president for Legal and Industry Affairs, predicted there would be 835,000 recreational visits by air, 480,000 cruise visitors and 482,000 family visitors. He noted that another study had estimated 2.8 million total visits annually. ASTA was invited to testify as the representative of the travel industry because at the request of Congress the USITC is preparing a report on the economic impact in the US of its unilateral embargo of Cuba. (*TravelVideoTV.Com*, 11/5/07)

May 12: Charlie Hill, an accused murderer and admitted hijacker, has lived 36 years as a fugitive of American justice. With the Cuban government providing him an offshore safe haven, he has managed to live a life beyond the reach of the FBI. But the years are catching up with him. Some of his fellow fugitives have died recently, forcing Mr. Hill, a 57-year-old grandfather whose hair, once a black afro, is now closely cropped and grey, to confront his own mortality. Inextricably linked with his fate is that of his patron, Fidel Castro, who is 80 and in failing health. For obvious reasons, Mr. Hill and other fugitives who have long been protected by Mr. Castro are hoping for the longtime leader's recuperation and for a continuation of the Communist government that has long butted heads with Washington. "I don't think there will be much change if Fidel dies," Mr. Hill said. "There might be, but I think it's 60-40 that not much will happen. If it does, well, what can I do?" (*The New York Times*, 12/5/07)

May 14: The US Coast Guard told US Senator Bill Nelson it is ready to tackle matters dealing with Homeland Security, hurricane preparedness or a possible mass exodus from Cuba, but not for a confluence of crisis' that potentially could occur in South Florida this summer. Nelson (Democrat-Florida), met with Coast Guard Rear Admiral David Kunkel in Miami to discuss the joint plan between the Coast Guard, Florida National Guard and other US military personnel to protect the nation's borders and respond to natural disasters. (*AP*, 14/5/07)

May 14: Cuba staged a mock trial for an anti-Castro militant it says the United States has avoided prosecuting for acts of terrorism. Luis Posada Carriles, a former CIA operative who is accused of bombing a Cuban airliner and tourist targets in Cuba, walked free in the United States when a US judge dismissed immigration charges against him. Red flags covered the walls of the once elegant Vedado Tennis Club where Cuba's Communist Youth organization set up an "anti-terrorist tribunal" that will hear witnesses for two days and condemn the Cuban exile for acts of violence against Cuba. Hundreds of college and high school students, many looking bored and squirming in their seats, filled the social club ringed by dilapidated tennis courts in Havana's Vedado district. Witnesses included Cuban government investigators and students who studied the case in Cuba and in Venezuela. "The US authorities have enough proof to prosecute Posada Carriles as a terrorist with what we have given them," Interior Ministry investigator Lt. Col Roberto Hernandez said. Hernandez said indicting Posada Carriles for acts of violence would put an end to the impunity exiled groups have enjoyed for decades in launching attacks, such as strafing Cuban hotels with machine guns from passing speed boats. "Putting Posada Carriles on trial would restore the US government's authority and put a bunch of terrorists in Miami out of business," he said at the trial. (*Reuters, AP*, 14/5/07)

May 15: Cuban law students concluded a two-day mock trial by convicting anti-communist militant Luis Posada Carriles and the United States of decades of terrorism against the government of Fidel Castro. Delivered at a courtroom set up outside the US mission in Havana, the verdict was a foregone conclusion. No sentence was issued. The Communist Party's youth wing organized the event, hoping to pressure the United States to bring more serious charges against the 79-year-old, who has spent a lifetime trying to undermine Castro. "This tribunal declares the accused, Luis Faustino Clemente Posada Carriles, and the government of the United States of America, guilty of all of the terrorist acts expressed herein," said the tribunal's black-robed president, Iala Rodriguez. To the side of the bench was an empty seat, presumably for Posada. (*The Washington Post*, 16/5/07)

May 15: The Cuban father of a four-year-old girl at the center of an international custody dispute has quietly entered the United States in his fight to gain custody of the little girl. Sharply dressed in khaki slacks and a tan button-down shirt, the girl's father sat quietly with attorneys at Miami's crowded juvenile courthouse before entering a three-hour hearing before Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Jeri B. Cohen. After the hearing -- the first attended by the Cuban national -- the father slipped out a back exit along with nearly a dozen attorneys and caseworkers. Portions of the courthouse were in virtual lockdown for the hearing. Cohen has closed all proceedings and forbidden all participants to discuss the case. Cohen has never said publicly why she closed the case, but sources with knowledge of the proceedings say the judge wants to avoid the kind of turmoil that surrounded the custody battle over Elián González, whose mother drowned at sea while bringing him to the United States. Elián was forcibly removed by federal agents from his relatives' Little Havana home in April 2000 and sent to his father in Cuba. (*The Miami Herald*, 16/5/07)

May 15: Relatives of five Cuban spies serving long US prison sentences said they were forming an international support group to press for their loved ones' release. US federal prosecutors failed to prove the men obtained any US secrets but were successful in arguing for sentences ranging from 10 years to life for Gerardo Hernandez, Rene Gonzalez, Ramon Labanino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando Gonzalez. The men said they were gathering information that might prevent violent attacks on the island. All five were convicted of being unregistered foreign agents, and three also were found guilty of espionage conspiracy for failed efforts to obtain military secrets. Hernandez also was convicted of murder conspiracy in the deaths of four Miami-based pilots whose small planes were shot down on February 24, 1996, by a Cuban MiG in international waters off Cuba's northern coast. (*The Miami Herald*, 16/5/07)

May 17: Preparing for a day when US companies may trade freely with Cuba, a market research firm is planning to offer detailed data on island consumers to US businesses. Puerto Rico's Gaither International unveiled a deal for Horwath Consulting of the Dominican Republic to conduct consumer surveys in Cuba four times a year, starting June. Gaither will offer the research to US firms. "With this study, many US companies will be able for the first time to attain a basic understanding of the average Cuban family," Gaither executive Beatriz Castro said. Horwath will study a unique Caribbean neighbor that in the 1950s relied on the United States for most imports and served as a key test market for American products. (*Sun Sentinel*, 17/5/07)

May 17: Cuba asked the UN secretary general to circulate a protest against the release of international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles in the United States, as an official document of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Cuban Ambassador Rodrigo Malmierca said in a letter to UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon that a US court dropped all charges against Posada and released him on May 8. Once again, Cuba holds the US government responsible for that decision, which is proof of Washington's double standard in its self-proclaimed "war against terrorism", the letter says. Malmierca added that by not considering this individual a terrorist, the US government is violating international covenants and treaties, in addition to breaking its own laws. (*Prensa Latina*, 17/5/07)

May 17: Treasury Department officials have dropped the threat of a \$34,000 fine against the Alliance of Baptists, according to a letter the group's attorney received May 17. The department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, threatened the fine for alleged violations of the federal government's economic embargo against Cuba. The department alleged that five Alliance churches that sent mission teams to Cuba under the organization's travel license had engaged in forbidden economic activities. The letter said OFAC officials withdrew their recommendation to impose the fine. According to Stan Hastey, the Alliance's minister of ecumenical relations and mission partnerships, Treasury officials found that none of the five churches engaged in forbidden activity under the terms of the license. However, the letter also contained a warning on future travel. (*ABP*, 17/5/07)

May 18: Thousands of US companies -- hoping for compensation from the Cuban government for property seized after the 1959 revolution -- may as well forget the Cuban money once held at JP Morgan Chase bank in New York. Cuban funds, as much as \$268 million at one point, sat in US bank accounts since 1963, when the Kennedy administration froze all Cuban assets in the United States. But now almost all of that money is gone, paid out to a handful of citizens

who sued the Cuban government in Miami courts in wrongful-death cases. Awards from the frozen accounts have gone to the families of Brothers to the Rescue pilots shot down by Cuban MiGs, to the spurned wife of a Cuban spy and to relatives of Americans executed shortly after the revolution. This means there is virtually no money at banks such as JP Morgan Chase for the long list of other parties who seek compensation from Cuba, including nearly 6,000 American companies and individuals who have certified claims for seized property and Cuban-Americans who also seek payments for former homes, farms and businesses. If and when Cuba and the United States get closer to normalizing relations, the issue could be a major stumbling block. Havana has denounced the payouts as theft, and at least one U.S. corporation has fought the payouts in court. During the 1960s, the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission certified 5,911 claims of American citizens and companies worth \$1.85 billion. Now those claims are valued at more than \$7 billion after 47 years at 6 percent interest. (*The Miami Herald*, 18/5/07)

May 18: Some Fortune 100 companies are paying the University of Miami \$100,000 for help developing business plans for Cuba. A Cuba expert at a Miami law firm says his phone rings daily with potential clients interested in the island nation. There have been many false starts about doing business in Cuba, but these days, "everyone is poised, positioned and ready," said Jerry Haar, an international business professor at Florida International University. "There are a lot of US companies that are salivating to do business in Cuba." The revitalized interest comes as Fidel Castro's health wavers, his brother is perceived as more open to change and Congress considers further easing the trade embargo. Jorge Piñon, director of the University of Miami's Cuba Business Roundtable program, a year-old consulting and research service, said he is already helping more than 20 Fortune 100 clients plan to access a post-embargo Cuba. Piñon would not name the clients - trade with Cuba is a touchy subject, especially in Miami - but said they represent some of the biggest names in the cruise, construction and logistics industries. (*South Florida Business Journal*, 18/5/07)

May 19: Some 300 former students at the prestigious Ruston Academy in Havana, the children of Cuba's pre-Castro elite and those of American diplomats and businessmen, gathered for an emotional reunion. The final batch of students whose bilingual education at the prep school ended abruptly nearly 50 years ago with Fidel Castro's arrival, are scattered across the country. The prep school was an oasis for American kids who lived in Cuba before Castro's revolution. They were there because their parents were diplomats, industrialists or representatives for US companies. A book was just published about the school and the report on the status of the Ruston-Baker Educational Institution, a foundation collecting seed money to one day reopen the beloved school in a Cuba without communism. That had long been the dream of the school's late headmaster, James D. Baker, and now his son and former students want to help make it a reality. "Running Ruston was the highlight of my father's life -- the pinnacle of his teaching career. He always hoped to go back," said Chris Baker, 66, one of Baker's two sons who traveled from Maryland to attend the reunion at the Grand Bay Hotel. Now, with Cuba in political limbo, Ruston devotees want to be prepared -- just in case, he said. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/5/07)

May 20: US President George W. Bush offered greetings on the 105th anniversary of Cuba's independence -- a date not recognized by the Cuban government. "I send greetings to all those celebrating the 105th anniversary of Cuba's Independence," Bush said in a statement marking the day in 1902 when the United States yielded most control over the Caribbean island, which it had won in the 1898 Spanish-American War. "The longing for justice, freedom and human rights is a desire that can be delayed but never denied. The United States remains committed to extending the full blessings of liberty around the world, and on this important milestone, we stand united with freedom-loving people of all nations in the conviction that Cuba's future must be one of dignity, liberty, and opportunity". "This day is also an opportunity to recognize the generations of Cuban-Americans who have made contributions to our society. Your hard work and high ideals reflect the best of America and enrich our nation." Cuba's communist government does not celebrate May 20 as its National Day, instead choosing January 1, 1959, when Castro and his forces stormed Havana, toppling US-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista and initiating their revolution. (*AFP*, 20/5/07)

May 21: Abdiel Ramos tried to leave Cuba for the United States six times in the past six months. The 24-year-old from Havana finally succeeded. He was among the 26 Cuban migrants who walked up to the tollbooth at the western end of the Rickenbacker Causeway around 1:30 a.m. "That trip was terrible," Ramos said. "But I feel really good right now." The group of 10 men, 10 women and six children was the latest in a wave of Cuban migrants -- 663 this year -- who have come ashore in South Florida. The total for 2006 was 1,426. This was also the third time in three weeks that Cuban migrants landed near the Rickenbacker Causeway. After being released later by the US Border Patrol, Ramos said conditions in Cuba made him keep trying. "Everyone knows things are bad since Fidel [Castro] got sick," he said. "There is no food and people are being carted off to prison." (*The Miami Herald*, 22/5/07)

May 22: In an interview with the press, Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton said she doesn't want to see immediate changes in the US embargo against Cuba and travel restrictions to the communist country, but she added that there may be need for change in the next presidency if Fidel Castro is no longer in power. She said she wants commitments to human rights and more openness in return for changes in US policy. (*AP*, 22/5/07)

May 22: Despite the US Trading With the Enemy Act, which governs Washington's 45-year-old embargo, sales on Fidel Castro's island are lining the pockets of corporate America. Nikes, Colgate and Marlboros, Gillette Series shaving cream and Jordache jeans -- all are easy to find. Cubans who wear contact lenses can buy Bausch & Lomb. Parents can surprise the kids with a Mickey Mouse fire truck. Dozens of American brands are on sale in Cuba -- and not in some black-market back alley. They're in the lobbies of gleaming government-run hotels and in crowded supermarkets and pharmacies that answer to the communist government. The companies say they have no direct knowledge of sales in Cuba, and that the amounts involved are small and would be impractical to stop. But it's hard to deny that a portion of the transactions wind up back in the United States. Christopher Padilla, US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Export Administration, said from Washington that Cuba even sends delegations on "buying missions," hunting for specific American products in third countries for resale back home. Cuban press authorities did not make relevant officials available to discuss the practice. (*AP*, 22/5/07)

May 22: Another Alabama trade mission is scheduled to arrive in Cuba with several legislators planning to accompany officials from the state Department of Agriculture and Industries. Department spokeswoman Christy Rhodes Kirk said the state-funded delegation will assist Alabama companies in negotiations for the sale of a variety of products, including poultry, lumber, utility poles, cotton, peanuts, fish and snack foods. Agriculture Commissioner Ron Sparks has led some trade missions in the past, but Kirk said this one will be led by the department's director of international trade, John Key. (*AP*, 22/5/07)

May 22: North Dakota wants to ship potatoes to Cuba, and was looking for ways to get the highly perishable vegetable to the island without spoiling. Representatives from two potato producing companies, as well as state experts on plant diseases and varieties of potatoes were meeting with top representatives from Alimport, Cuba's food import company. "If we can begin sales of North Dakota potatoes and do it in a way that gets them down here in good shape, that would be a very successful trade mission because we've been talking about it for five years and so far it hasn't happened," said Roger Johnson, the state's agriculture commissioner. Johnson, making his sixth trip to Cuba, said North Dakota has sold about \$30 million worth of products to the communist country since 2001, mostly peas, as well as garbanzo and lentil beans. He is heading an 18-member delegation that includes producers of those products, as well as the potato experts and wheat and dry bean suppliers. (*AP*, 22/5/07)

May 22: Cuba and Venezuela clashed with the United States in the U.N. Security Council over the release this month by a US judge of an anti-Castro militant wanted for bomb attacks against Cuba. Cuban charge d'affaires Ileana Nunez Mordoche accused Washington of a bid to conceal details of Luis Posada Carriles' CIA past by permitting his May 8 release after the judge in El Paso, Texas, dismissed immigration fraud charges against him. Nunez Mordoche accused the United States of double standards on terrorism. "It is impossible to eliminate terrorism if some terrorist acts are condemned while others are silenced, tolerated or justified," she said. She urged the Security Council to "take all the

necessary steps" but did not elaborate. U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad replied that the decision to free Posada Carriles had been made by an independent judiciary. "The United States is currently reviewing that decision and its options for challenging it," he said. He said the immigration judge who originally considered Posada Carriles's case had barred his deportation to Cuba or Venezuela. But he said Washington would be prepared to send him to another country with terrorism-related charges against him. (*Reuters*, 22/5/07)

May 22: Communist Cuba expects to sign contracts for as much as \$150 million in American agricultural goods next week at the largest gathering of US farm producers in Cuba since Fidel Castro fell ill last summer. Pedro Alvarez, chairman of the island's food import company Alimport, said that talks beginning on May 28 should produce enough deals to ensure Cuba buys as much US goods in 2007 as it did last year. About 100 American farm groups and companies from 22 U.S. states are participating. In 2006, Cuba spent \$570 million for US food and agricultural products, including shipping and banking costs, Alvarez said in an interview with the press. So far this year, his government has spent \$225 million to purchase and import American goods. "We are hoping that by the end of the coming week, we will have between \$100 million and \$150 million in new contracts," Alvarez said, adding he expects as many as 250 Americans at the talks that will wind up with contract signings on May 30. (*The Miami Herald*, 23/5/07)

May 23: The Texas subsidiary of a Scottish oil company that had business in Cuba has paid a fine of \$164,006 for violating the US embargo on the island, the US Treasury department has announced. A Treasury announcement said PSL Energy Services (PSLES), an international firm that provides technology and services for the oil industry, paid the fine after acknowledging that it had violated US restrictions on commerce with the island between April and September of 2004. Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) said PSLES voluntarily revealed that it had violated the US embargo "by engaging in the unlicensed exportation and re-exportation of oil field servicing equipment and related skilled services to Cuba." Treasury spokeswoman Molly Millerwise, who handles OFAC issues, declined to comment further on the case. (*The Miami Herald*, 23/5/07)

May 24: A federal judge said he needs more facts before deciding whether US courts have jurisdiction over a lawsuit from three Cuban men, who say Havana's communist government forced them into virtual slavery to pay off a debt to a Curacao shipbuilding company. Among the key issues, said Senior US District Judge James Lawrence King, is whether the arrangement was intended to circumvent the US economic embargo by allowing Cuba to profit from work done in Curacao on American cruise and merchant vessels. "That is one of the primary problems I'm having," King told attorneys at a hearing. "I believe that I'd be more comfortable if the record were developed more fully." The three Cuban men, who all now live in Florida -- Alberto Justo Rodriguez, Fernando Alonso Hernandez and Luis Alberto Casanova -- claim they were among hundreds of men forced by Cuba to work at Curacao Drydock and threatened with prison or worse if they refused. They say they worked 112-hour weeks at hard labor, were watched by armed Cuban guards and were forced to watch videotapes of long speeches by Fidel Castro. The arrangement -- a conspiracy, according to lawyers for the men -- was Cuba's way of paying off a debt for a drydock installation the company had built some years earlier near Havana. The Cuban Interests Section, which represents the Castro government in Washington, did not return a telephone call seeking comment. (*AP*, 24/5/07)

May 25: Fidel Castro lashed out at President Bush, hours after the American leader approved legislation paying for military operations in Iraq without setting a timetable for troop withdrawal. In his latest comments as he convalesces from intestinal surgery, the 80-year-old Cuban leader accused Bush of waging a war that was causing conditions in the region to deteriorate. "Just yesterday, Bush bragged about having won the battle over his adversaries in Congress," he wrote in a four-page statement released to the media. "He has \$100 billion, all the money he needs to duplicate, however he wishes, the sending of American troops to Iraq and continue the slaughter." In signing the measure, Bush said it would provide a roadmap to help the Iraqis secure their country and strengthen their young democracy. [[Bush Expects Everything to Be Solved with a Bang](#)] (*AP*, 26/5/07)

May 27: A non-official meeting on the prevention of hurricanes was carried out in Monterrey, the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon, with the participation of experts from Cuba and the United States. The informal forum, which ran until May 25, was promoted by Wayne S. Smith, former chief of Washington's Interest Section in Cuba, and host Victor Lopez Villafane, director of the Monterrey Technological Institute. The Cuban delegation was led by Dagoberto Rodriguez, chief of Cuba's Interest Section in Washington, along with meteorologist Jose Rubiera and two physicians of the Henry Reeve Medical Brigade, who worked in Indonesia and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the United States representation was made up of experts from the states of Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as other members of non-governmental entities of the neighbour country. (*Prensa Latina, 27/5/07*)

May 27: Once-secret CIA and FBI documents make a compelling case that Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles knew of a plot to bomb a Cuban airliner more than three decades ago -- but not the one that Cuba and Venezuela blame Posada for orchestrating. One document shows the former CIA operative referring to a plan to bomb a Cuban plane leaving Panama in June 1976. But that was unrelated to the Cubana plane that was attacked off Barbados about three months later -- killing 73 people. None of the declassified documents says Posada ordered the bombing of any Cuban plane. A confidential source, however, "all but admitted" to the FBI that Posada and fellow exile militant Orlando Bosch "had engineered the bombing of the airline" in October 1976. In another document, Posada was overheard saying: "We are going to hit a Cuban airplane." Posada's lawyer said his client had no involvement in the jetliner bombing. He declined to let Posada be interviewed. (*The Miami Herald, 27/5/07*)

May 28: Cigar Aficionado, the glossy magazine for lovers of expensive cigars, criticized the US Treasury Department for continuing to spend federal funds chasing people for buying Cuban cigars. "Stop wasting our time and money chasing cigar smokers," the magazine said in an editorial in its June issue, which is dedicated to Cuba as it approaches the post-Castro era. The premium cigars hand-rolled in Cuba are considered the world's finest, but they are banned in the United States under a trade embargo adopted in 1962 to undermine Cuban leader Fidel Castro's communist government. New York-based Cigar Aficionado said American agribusiness companies sell millions of dollars a year in food to Cuba, while momentum is growing to allow US oil companies to get involved in oil exploration in Cuba's Gulf of Mexico waters. "Yet if you buy a Cuban cigar, you may end up in jail," it said. "Something is wrong with our government priorities here." (*Reuters, 28/5/07*)

May 28: Five US lawmakers, including a Georgia congressman, made an unannounced visit to Cuba, appearing at an agricultural trade fair during which the communist island hopes to sign contracts for as much as \$150 million in American goods. Representative Rosa DeLauro (Democrat-Connecticut), is heading the delegation, which plans to meet with at least one top Cuban official before returning to the United States, said Sarah Stephens, director of the Washington-based Center for Democracy in the Americas, which opposes the US embargo toward Cuba and helped organize the trip. Also in Cuba were Democratic Representatives Marion Berry of Arkansas and Bob Etheridge of North Carolina, as well as Representative Rodney Alexander (Republican-Louisiana), and Representative Jack Kingston, a Republican from Georgia. All were making their first trips to the island, except Berry who visited Cuba in 2000. DeLauro, Berry and Etheridge have all supported legislation to ease US trade restrictions toward Cuba in the past, while Kingston has supported the embargo. The lawmakers said agriculture trade opportunities were a key reason to make the trip. "We are a diverse group geographically and in our politics toward Cuba," DeLauro said. "But we view this as an opportunity to learn, to create dialogue about issues of mutual concern." (*The Miami Herald, 28/5/07*)

May 28: With a catfish fry for Cuban officials and pleas to US President George W. Bush to ease sanctions, dozens of American businessmen began negotiating new sales of agricultural products to communist Cuba. "I challenge Mr. Bush to tear down this embargo," said Mississippi cotton farmer John Newcomb, borrowing Ronald Reagan's famous 1987 line to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev at the Berlin Wall. Executives of 114 companies from 25 states, backed by five members of the US Congress, are looking to increase sales of rice, wheat, corn, soy products, peas, lentils, chicken, pork, supermarket goods, newsprint, wooden poles and lumber. The opening session of the largest gathering in Cuba of US food suppliers since convalescing Fidel Castro fell ill last summer, was attended by the five congressional

members. "We in Mississippi are absolutely committed to ending the political barriers that separate our countries," said William Hawks, a Mississippi farm executive and former undersecretary in the U.S. agricultural department. "It is time that we move forward." "The trade embargo has not only hurt the Cuban people but it has hurt the American farmer," said John Newcomb, an Arkansas farm executive. "I want to challenge Mr. Bush to tear down this embargo now: Open trade and travel between our two countries." Still, Pedro Alvarez, chairman of the island's food import company Alimport, said the three-day meetings should generate enough deals to ensure that Cuba buys as much US goods in 2007 as it did last year. He said more than 200 agribusiness executives, food exporters and farm groups from 28 US states were attending the talks. (*Reuters, Sun Sentinel, 29/5/07*)

May 28: Fidel Castro said in a statement published on May 29 in Granma newspaper that President Bush is waiting for him to die but that the American leader cannot kill his ideas. The latest in a series of essays by the 80-year-old Castro was published on the front page of the Communist Party daily. The Cuban leader said that Bush, asked recently about his Cuba policy, replied: "I'm a hard-line president and I'm only waiting for Castro to die." "I'm not the first, nor will I be the last, who Bush has ordered to be deprived of life," said Castro, who offered no details of the alleged conversation. American law now prohibits the US government from ordering the assassination of foreign leaders, but declassified US documents show that the CIA made numerous attempts to kill Castro in the early years after the 1959 Cuban revolution. "Ideas are not killed," Castro wrote. [[Ideas Cannot Be Killed](#)] (*AP, 29/5/07*)

May 29: US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice criticized Spain for its dealings with Cuba and said she would press Spanish officials on the issue in Madrid. After several years of tense relations with Spain, Rice is set to make her first visit as the top US diplomat to Madrid. She will meet King Juan Carlos, Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero and Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos. "On Cuba, I am not sure that we see eye to eye," Rice told reporters traveling with her to Germany where she is meeting Group of Eight ministers. Rice said a country like Spain that had overcome its own "authoritarian past" -- a reference to Spanish dictator Francisco Franco -- knew of the need for democracy in a nation such as Cuba. "I don't see how that course (of democracy) is advanced by simply dealing with the current regime, a regime that seems to be setting itself up for a non-democratic succession when the transition takes place in Cuba and doing that at the expense of contacts with the very nascent and fragile democratic opposition that is beginning to arise in Cuba," she said. "The Cubans deserve better and I think we will talk about that," Rice said. (*Reuters, 29/5/07*)

May 29: Convalescing Fidel Castro lambasted President Bush for opposing the European Union's goal for an agreement on carbon emissions at the Group of Eight summit. In the latest in what are becoming almost daily opinion pieces called "Reflections of the Commander in Chief," Castro said Bush would be wise to listen to his ally, outgoing British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who has made global warming a primary focus of his last weeks in office. The ailing 80-year-old Cuban leader also criticized both Britain and the United States for heavy military expenditures. "Perhaps someone with one of the new computer programs by Bill Gates could figure out how much the war expenditures have deprived humanity of education, health and culture," the essay read. "George should say what he really thinks at the G-8 meeting, including the subject of the dangers threatening peace and food for human beings," Castro added. "Someone should ask him. And he should not try to escape from the counsel of his friend Blair." [[The G-8 Meeting](#)](*AP, Granma, 30/5/07*)

May 29: The US Congress should take a hard look at US policy toward Cuba and debate whether Washington's 45-year-old embargo is working, visiting US lawmakers said. Headed by Representative Rosa DeLauro (Democrat-Connecticut), the five-member bipartisan delegation is spending five days in Cuba to discuss farm trade and catch a glimpse of life on the communist-run island. The group attended a US-Cuba trade fair, speaking with US business leaders and Cuban trade officials before meeting with Cuban parliament speaker Ricardo Alarcon and representatives from the island's Roman Catholic Church. "It's bipartisan but it's also with different histories with regard to lifting the embargo and travel restrictions," DeLauro, who favors easing US sanctions, said of the group. "So it's the conversations, it's the dialogue, it's the understanding from both perspectives what the future could be. And I think that

helps us to move forward on legislation in the Congress." (AP, 29/5/07)

May 30: A little-noticed passage in two State Department reports says Havana has stated that it will no longer provide safe haven to US fugitives who enter Cuba -- a promise the Castro government has met twice since September. The promise and deportations amount to a rare sign of cooperation by Havana. A brief passage in the State Department's voluminous 2005 and 2006 Country Reports on Terrorism -- the 2006 report was released April 30 -- that went largely unnoticed until now said Cuba ``has stated that it will no longer provide safe haven to new US fugitives who may enter Cuba." State Department spokesmen declined comment on who made the promise, when or whether it involved any US counter-promise. Some 70 US fugitives are believed to be living in Cuba, including Joanne Chesimard, convicted in the 1973 murder of a New Jersey state trooper. Cuba has refused to return them, generally arguing that the US charges against them are "political." The refusals were among the reasons the State Department used for including Cuba in its list of nations that support international terrorism. [[2006 Country Report on Terrorism: Cuba](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 29/5/07)

May 30: Former Congressman Bill Hendon's compelling new book about American POWs in Southeast Asia stirs up memories of an earlier controversy -- charges that American prisoners in Vietnam were tortured by Cuban agents. In "An Enormous Crime -- The Definitive Account of American POWs Abandoned in Southeast Asia," Hendon and co-author Elizabeth Stewart disclose that Fidel Castro was a key adviser to the North Vietnamese government during the Vietnam War. They report that Castro gave Hanoi a strategy for capturing GIs and then trading them for postwar reconstruction aid from the US, just as Cuba had done with the Bay of Pigs prisoners. But another Cuba-Vietnam connection came to light in late 1999 with the revelations about the torture of POWs. US Air Force Colonel Edward Hubbard, a former POW, said he had received brutal treatment at the hands of a Cuban advisor the prisoners nicknamed "Fidel." Hubbard claimed that "Fidel" was actually Fernando Vecino Alegret, Cuba's Education Minister. After reports of the Cuban torture program first surfaced, Fidel Castro dismissed the claims on state television, saying Alegret had never even set foot in Vietnam. (*NewsMax*, 30/5/07)

May 30: Cuba's food import company signed a deal to buy about USD 118m in American food products ranging from pork and corn to soybeans. "The sales this week went beyond all of our expectations," said Jim Sumner of the US Poultry and Egg Export Council, one of more than 200 Americans from 25 states who visited Havana for talks with the Cuban officials. "When the embargo is lifted, which we hope will be very soon, these deals will be much greater." "The active and massive participation of the American business community makes us very happy," said Alvarez, chairman of the Cuban food import company Alimport, who organized the latest round of negotiations with US farm producers. US providers include the firm Bunge, of Florida, which will supply 30,000 metric tons of soybean flour and Pilgrims Pride, of Georgia, which will sell Cuba 4,200 tons of chicken meat. The island will also purchase 25,000 tons of corn from the Connecticut Corporation, whose president Louis Dreyfus called for an expansion of the bilateral trade exchange in the benefit of both nations. It is expected that Cuba's expenditure on food from US in 2007 would match the \$570 million it spent on American food and agricultural products the previous year. Cuban Commerce Minister Raul de la Nuez said most of the food would be sold at heavily subsidized prices, on the government's food ration and at public schools and workplace dining rooms. "This will help feed our people," De la Nuez said. (AP, ACN, 31/5/07)

May 30: Relations between Cuba and the United States "are at their worst moment" and never before has the island confronted such an aggressive administration in Washington, the speaker of the Cuban parliament said. Ricardo Alarcon told Colombia's RCN television that US President George W. Bush's administration had dedicated itself clearly and explicitly "to destroying Cuba and taking control of it." Bush has established a government commission to aid the transition to a "free Cuba" and has tightened the 44-year-old economic embargo against Fidel Castro's regime, but Washington denies any bellicose intentions toward the communist-ruled island. "But besides that, (it is) resorting to the worst methods," added Alarcon, going on to mention the recent "unusual" release from custody of anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles. Alarcon said that Posada escaped from a Venezuelan prison in 1985 and subsequently turned up on an air base in El Salvador, from where he helped funnel arms to US-backed Contra rebels fighting against

the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. "This man appears in the United States, and Venezuela (...) renewed its request to have Posada Carriles turned over," the Cuban legislative chief said, adding that Washington not only refused to hand him over to Caracas, but also refused to bring him to trial, despite the existence of international agreements regarding people accused of terrorist acts. (*EFE*, 30/5/07)

May 30: Matt Lauer and NBC's "Today" show will broadcast live from Cuba to report on the political and economic climate there. Although Lauer is a frequent round-the-world traveler for "Today," it took 18 months to arrange the visit to a country only 90 miles from the United States, said Jim Bell, the show's executive producer. Bell used his ability to speak Spanish in the negotiations. "It's always timely to go to Cuba," Bell said. "There's always news there. Being there is news in itself." Besides examining Cuba's political future, "Today" plans stories on the impact of the US embargo on both countries. (*AP*, 30/5/07)

May 31: The United States hopes that Spain will use its influence over Cuba to help bring democracy to the communist Caribbean island, a senior US official said in a newspaper interview. "Spain has enormous influence over Cuba. I hope she will use this influence to bring democracy," Dan Fried, Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, told the Spanish daily *El Pais*. The interview was published a day ahead of an official visit to Spain by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who has been critical of Madrid's policy of constructive engagement with Cuba. "Many in Spain look at Castro and Cuba through the prism of ideological categories which date back to the 1960s," said Fried. "I don't see Castro particularly like a man of the left because I don't think that the biggest tradition of the left is dictatorship. I think he is simply a dictator," he added. (*AFP*, 31/5/07)