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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: The Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, a coalition of dissident organizations in Cuba, holds an unprecedented two-day meeting in Río Verde, Havana. A public meeting of Fidel Castro's critics in Cuba deepens split between dissidents.

Economy: Cuba signs an agreement with Canadian company Sherrit International, aimed at expanding their joint venture in the nickel industry. Trade and cooperation agreements between Cuba and Venezuela increase. Cuban top officials stress that the national economy is gradually recovering. Fidel Castro unveils a national plan for the promotion of practices reducing electricity consumption. Cuba ends the worst sugar harvest in a century.

Exile Community: Cuban exile community in Miami is divided over the Luis Posada Carriles case.

Foreign Affairs: Fidel Castro criticizes the Mexican secretary of Foreign Affairs, the Chilean government, the Organization of American States and its new secretary-general. Raúl Castro concludes a trip to Asia with a private visit to Galicia, Spain. The European Union criticizes Cuba's decision to deport EU lawmakers and journalists from the island. Cuba asks Mexico for a report on the passage through Mexico of Luis Posada Carriles.

Security: North Korea and Cuba hold senior-level military talks in Pyongyang.

US-Cuba Relations: Fidel Castro pushes a strong campaign against the US government over the case of Luis Posada Carriles. The US president George Bush and a House of Representatives resolution extend their support to participants of the meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba.



Domestic Affairs

May 1: Over one million Cubans assembled at Havana's Revolution Square to reaffirm their rejection of terrorism. The throngs of participants were there to celebrate the International Workers Day in a massive demonstration presided over by Fidel Castro. Representatives of trade unions from around the world, and those who participated in the recently

concluded Fourth Hemispheric Conference Against the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement, joined the mega gathering. (*AIN*, 1/5/05)

May 1: In observance of International Worker's Day, the Group for Social and Corporate Responsibility in Cuba (GSCRC) called on the Cuban regime and foreign investors in Cuba to respect worker's rights as outlined in the International Labor Organization's (ILO) conventions recently ratified by Cuba. "The Cuban regime has a responsibility under international law to respect the 89 conventions of the International Labor Organization it has ratified and to respect Cuban worker's basic rights as outlined in the UN's international charter on human rights," said GSCRC Director Joel Brito. "Foreign investors profit millions of dollars each year on backs of Cuban workers," said Brito. "On this anniversary of international labor day we are simply asking foreign investors to afford Cuban laborers the same basic rights their employees enjoy at home." (*USIS Press Release*, 1/5/05)

May 2: The government of Fidel Castro is harassing the Cuban opposition in advance of a pro-democracy gathering scheduled for May 20th in Havana. One of Cuba's best-known opposition leaders, Martha Beatriz Roque, said the Castro government is trying to intimidate prospective attendees and discredit organizers of the conference: "For us, it is critical to receive international support because the Castro regime has focused its repressive apparatus on the leaders of the assembly at this point, so international support is critical." (*VOA*, 2/5/05)

May 4: Dissident leaders Felix Bonne, René Gómez Manzano and Martha Beatriz Roque, who are organizing a national meeting of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Havana, said that they have decided to press ahead with the meeting. However, some people on their distributed list of participants said they hadn't been consulted and some 50 of the names are listed as representing two or more groups at once. The meeting meant to unify dissidents itself has led to some disputes. "The Assembly does not represent the opposition," said independent librarian Estrella Garcia, who said Roque had been "harassing" her to attend. Gay rights activist Yacel Benitez alleged that the meeting "is to collect money for her (Roque) and not to topple Castro's regime." He said it was likely to provoke a crackdown on dissidents. (*AP*, 4/5/05)

May 6: One of the 75 Cuban dissidents jailed in the spring of 2003 is on hunger strike in protest against the mistreatment to which he is subjected in prison, the most prominent opposition figure on the Communist-ruled island, Oswaldo Paya, said. Paya told the press that Jose Daniel Ferrer Garcia went on hunger strike nine days ago to protest the abuse he and other political prisoners are forced to endure at Camaguey's Kilo 8 prison, where Ferrer is serving a 25-year sentence. When he was arrested, Ferrer, 32, was helping organize and promote the Varela Project, a democratic initiative spearheaded by Paya. (*EFE*, 6/5/05)

May 6: According to opposition leader Vladimiro Roca, president of the Social Democratic Party of Cuba, the member organizations of the Cuban opposition coalition "All United" held a meeting in Pinar del Río. Issues discussed included the restructuring of All United as well as the organization's future initiatives. All members were called upon to reject all manifestations of sectarianism. Cándido José Hidalgo Gato, national coordinator for the Social Democratic Party of Cuba and Director of the independent library "Manuel Moreno Fraguinals," was designated as the coalition's liaison for Pinar del Río. (*Cubamet*, 9/5/05)

May 8: With arm bands inscribed with the word "Amnesty," a group of wives and mothers of Cuban political prisoners known as the "Ladies in White" carried out a peaceful demonstration on Mother's Day, demanding that their loved ones be released. "We are asking that Cuban political prisoners be amnestied," Dolia Leal told the press. Her husband, Nelson Aguiar Ramírez, is one of the incarcerated oppositionists. Upon exiting the Santa Rita parish after attending mass, a group of 55 women, dressed in white and carrying gladiola, walked an 800m stretch along 5 th Avenue, in Miramar, Havana. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 9/5/05)

May 8: Jose Miller, president of the Cuban Jewish community council, known as the 'Patronato' told the press how in the 60's Jews were mainly considered part of the rich middle classes whose land and goods were expropriated and nationalised by the communist government. The Patronato has its headquarters in the Beth Shalom synagogue, the biggest of the three in Havana. With the revolution, "came a style of life and thought that did not favour religious practices at all," said Miller, a retired surgeon now in his 80s. By the end of the 1980s, the Jews who remained believed they had no future, according to Miller who called it a time of "agony." But since the middle of the 1990s, there has been a new spirit of openness toward religion and the faithful have returned to churches and synagogues. In Cuba, he assured, "there is a social police that is not far from biblical." (AFP, 9/5/05)

May 9: The 11th International Conference on Computer Science 2005 began at the Havana International Conference Center for the promotion and marketing of information technologies. Twelve simultaneous conferences will take place, such as the 11th International Conference on Computer Science applied to Education, the 5th Conference of Computer Science applied to Health Care and the 2nd Conference on Digital Journalism. Other events include the 11th International Computer Science, Communications and Industrial Automation Fair. The events will have the participation of experts from 20 countries. (Prensa Latina, 9/5/05)

May 9: Cuban police have rounded up and jailed in recent months some 400 young people who have not committed crimes but are considered by authorities to be likely to do so, a non-governmental human rights organization said in Havana. The youths were accused of "pre-crime dangerousness" and have been sentenced to prison terms of between one and four years, according to the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation. The group, headed by Elizardo Sanchez and considered illegal by the government, said the Communist regime's "Operation Containment," which began in January, is "a real and unacceptable social cleansing operation." The dissident group said the majority of the arrests were made in Havana. "Our Commission considers that all the people jailed are legally innocent since they have not committed a specific crime or been given due process, and, for that reason, we call for their immediate release," the rights group said, adding that the average age of those arrested was 18. [[Redada policial contra cientos de jóvenes cubanos](#)] (EFE, La Jornada, AFP, 9/5/05)

May 10: The most sought-after Cuban contemporary actor Jorge Perugorria will present in Havana the documentary "Iré Habana", Cuban Film Institute sources confirmed. This is the second time he has co-directed a documentary, after his first try with compatriot filmmaker Arturo Soto, a film on the Madrid-based music project Habana Abierta, very popular in Cuba. "Iré Habana," in Yoruba, stands for "blessing to Havana." "It is a song to the health of the city, whose inspiring beauty we feel is threatened," the actor told a local radio station. Made by filmmaker Angel Alderete, the film -in DVD format- presents the music by a namesake album by Cuban pianist and composer Jose Maria Vitier, a fusion of Latin jazz with genres ranging from traditional trova to Cuban country music. (Prensa Latina, 10/5/05)

May 10: The first Games of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) are to take place in Cuba on June 17-30, with contests in 30 disciplines. The announcement was made in Havana by President of the Cuban Sports, Physical Education and Recreation Institute (INDER) Humberto Rodriguez, who termed the competition as the expression of a true Latin American and Caribbean sports integration. The official said the event will take place in eight Cuban provinces and that Venezuela will send a 600-strong delegation, including top-of-the-line athletes who in those dates will not have international activity. Rodriguez also said that among the other countries of the region, only Panama confirmed its participation in eight disciplines. (Xinhua, 10/5/05)

May 12: A leading Cuban dissident who is preparing an unprecedented opposition meeting in an orchard outside Havana said Cuba's communist authorities were taking steps to stop some of the 360 delegates from attending. Martha Beatriz Roque, an economist who has spent four of the last eight years in jail for criticizing Fidel Castro's policies, said the government had arrested three of her followers and was trying to obstruct the May 20 event. "The government could allow the event to take place, but undermine it by stopping people from getting here," she said in an interview. Roque said 14 delegates from Cuba's Isle of Youth have been told not to leave for the mainland, while others have been

called in by police for interviews she termed "harassment." "This is the first time we have gotten this far," Roque said. (*Reuters*, 12/5/05)

May 12: In the municipality of Cienfuegos, several groups of high school students were forced to miss school due to a shortage of teachers. Low salaries, lack of resources and the prevailing teaching methodology are being cited among the reasons driving educators away from their chosen profession. (*Cubanet*, 12/5/05)

May 16: Fidel Castro once again spoke to the nation criticizing growing US support for Cuba's internal opposition. In a cryptic reference to a meeting by the opposition to be held on May 20 th, Castro said that the "mercenaries" would receive "energetic and appropriate responses from the revolution." He said that "the mercenaries" have been receiving salaries by the "empire", in reference to the announcement made by the US Agency for International Development of a six million dollar donation to the Group in Support of Democracy (Grupo de Apoyo a la Democracia). Castro also referred to the meeting as "a provocation" by "unpatriotic and political annexed (to the US)". (*EFE, AP*, 16/5/05)

May 16: An outlawed Cuban political party said it won't attend a major dissident assembly because the event is partly backed by Miami-based exile groups that support violence. Cuba's Popular Republican Party is the latest group to say it will not participate in the general meeting of the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society in Cuba planned for May 20 th. "We consider that the assembly is affiliated with terrorist groups," Reynaldo Gantes, the party's secretary general, told international journalists. The group was among more than 300 groups on a list of participants earlier distributed by key event leader Martha Beatriz Roque, a well-known dissident leader and former political prisoner. Among organizations backing the meeting is Alpha 66, a commando type group that has favored the violent overthrow of Fidel Castro's government. "Without separating ourselves from our traditional strategy of combat, we understand the importance of recognizing and supporting all efforts of our brothers on the island," Alpha 66 wrote in a letter posted on the assembly's official Web site. (*AP*, 16/5/05)

May 17: Cuba will gradually switch to the open-source Linux operating system for its state computers, eliminating its exclusive use of Microsoft Windows, the government daily Juventud Rebelde reported. Roberto del Puerto, director of the state office of information technology, told the daily that Cuba already has about 1,500 computers using the Linux system, a free operating system whose technical data is open for public viewing. Del Puerto said his office was working on a legal framework that would allow the replacement of the Windows system. Windows is used on about 90 percent of the world's personal computers. (*AFP*, 17/5/05)

May 18: The Cuban experience in curing leukemia to 70 percent of child patients will be presented during the 5th National Congress on Hematology, Immunology and Transfusion Medicine taking place in Havana. Dr. Jose Manuel Ballester, president of the Cuban Hematology Society, said the congress will take place at the same time as the 7th Latin American Hematology Symposium, with the attendance of 600 delegates from more than 25 countries. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/5/05)

May 18: The Democratic Party 30 of November "Frank País" ratified its withdrawal from the national meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba, on May 20th. The Party's National Executive made this decision after consulting with all their delegates and activists, who ratified the withdrawal from the Assembly by a majority of votes. The Party publicly declared that a so-called delegation in Sancti Spiritus openly supporting the Assembly, does not exist. (*Puente Informativo*, 18/5/05)

May 19: Rifts and rivalries within the Cuban opposition movement threaten to discredit the meeting organized by the Assembly to Promote Civil Society. One of the most prominent dissidents, Oswaldo Payá, who drew international attention after launching a petition drive for government reforms, issued a statement calling the assembly a fraud and accusing its organizers of working with Cuba's state security. "We are not going to attend the May 20 assembly because it is a big fraud against the opposition, facilitated by the imprisonment of the majority of the opposition leaders. The

individuals who run the assembly have sabotaged every civic project, especially the Varela Project and the National Dialogue, with lies, provocations and other maneuvers”, Payá said in the statement. “While over 50 of our companions are still in prison, these three individuals [opposition leaders Martha Beatriz Roque, René Gómez Manzano y Félix Bonne Carcasés] are organizing this maneuver of May 20, helping Fidel Castro's regime that wants to destroy the civic movement of the Varela Project and give this negative image of an opposition, allied to the extremists; while on the other hand our activists are being repressed all over Cuba”, the statement adds. [[Una aclaración necesaria](#)] (*The Sun Sentinel, Puente Informativo, 20/5/05*)

May 20: With shouts of “Freedom” and singing Cuba’s national anthem some 200 dissidents opened an unprecedented meeting in Havana. “Freedom, Freedom” and “Down with Fidel Castro” were shouted by the attendants to a meeting held by the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba (APCSC), a coalition of dissident organizations. The oppositionists gathered in a fruit orchard on the outskirts of Havana as they called for democratic change in Cuba and the release of political prisoners. It was the first general meeting of APCSC, a US-backed umbrella organization that joins dozens of small dissident groups across Cuba. A handful of American and European diplomats attended the meeting. Former political prisoner, Martha Beatriz Roque, who organized the meeting, said it was the first such gathering since Castro seized power in a 1959 revolution. She said police had harassed delegates to keep them from traveling to Havana. “We are convinced that when in the future people speak of the peaceful struggle for democratic change, they will speak of before and after this Cuban Democratic Congress. Therein lies its significance,” Roque said. An attempt by Castro opponents to meet in 1996 was called off after police arrested most of its leaders. (*AP, Reuters, EFE, 20/5/05*)

May 21: An unprecedented meeting of dissidents seeking political change in Communist Cuba wrapped up with the election of a panel to direct the group and a call for massive peaceful protests. The first Cuban Democratic Congress, staged in Havana by the Assembly to Promote Civil Society (APSC), ended with a call for the immediate release of all political prisoners in the island and a demand for “democratization.” Some 150 representatives of different dissident groups opposed to Fidel Castro's 46-year-old Communist regime gathered in the backyard of a dissident's house in the Rio Verde neighborhood, in southwest Havana. The dissidents elected a 36-member executive secretariat headed by former political prisoners Martha Beatriz Roque, Felix Bonne and Rene Gomez Manzano, the APSC's main promoters and congress organizers. Roque read a declaration approved by delegates amid shouts of “Liberty!” and “Democracy!” calling for “freedom for political prisoners, denouncing one-party rule and demanding democratic pluralism, respect for human rights, among other issues. [[Resolución Aprobada por la Asamblea para Promover la Sociedad Civil en Cuba](#)] (*EFE, AP, Reuters, 21/5/05*)

May 23: Several Cuban dissidents who did not participate in the May 20 th opposition meeting said they were nonetheless pleased the island's communist government allowed the event to take place. Manuel Cuesta Morúa, a government opponent who did not attend the meeting because of ideological differences with organizers, sent a statement congratulating them for putting on a successful event “without mishap.” Eloy Gutiérrez-Menoyo, a moderate dissident who was not invited to the meeting, also applauded the event but said it was unfortunate that many international observers were not allowed to attend. “The point of conflict was the expulsions,” said Gutiérrez-Menoyo, a former exile now living in Cuba. (*The Miami Herald, 24/5/05*)

May 23: Bárbara Rojo Arias told international reporters that her husband, independent journalist and prisoner of conscience Omar Moisés Ruiz Hernández, was put in solitary confinement for refusing to salute a prison guard while walking in the yard of the Canaleta prison in Ciego de Ávila. (*Cubanet, 25/5/05*)

May 24: The 10th International Poetry Festival opened in Havana, dedicated to the 100th birth anniversary of late Hungarian writer Attila Jozsef (1905-1937). As part of the homage to Jozsef, his book “Pure Heart,” translated into Spanish by late Cuban poet Fayad Jamis (1930-1988), was launched. Attendees at the event will have the opportunity

of meeting with several Cuban and foreign poets, and attending a seminar on Puerto Rican contemporary literature and a colloquium on Portuguese poetry. (*Prensa Latina*, 24/5/05)

May 24: The Republican Alternative Movement, a human rights organization inside Cuba, denounced degrading treatment perpetrated against political prisoner Orlando Zapata Tamayo, in the Prison Taco Taco, in the western province of Pinar del Río. Two officers from the prison dragged Zapata Tamayo along seven meters because the prisoner refused to be searched. (*Puente Informativo*, 24/5/05)

May 26: The first public meeting of Fidel Castro's critics in Cuba has deepened splits between hardline and moderate dissidents over how close they should align themselves with his archenemy, the United States. Some opposition leaders believe Castro allowed the May 20-21 meeting by a US-backed dissident group to paint a divided opposition as Washington agents and sideline moderates like Oswaldo Paya, Cuba's leading dissident. Paya said the meeting was a set-up to counter his Christian Democrat movement and accused its organizer, economist Martha Beatriz Roque, of being in cahoots with the secret police, the latest in tit-for-tat accusations between the two sides. Dissidents who were not invited to the meeting feared Roque's links to the United States could unleash a new wave of repression against Cuba's weak opposition movement, still reeling from a March 2003 crackdown that landed 75 in jail. Oscar Espinosa Chepe a former diplomat turned dissident said showing Bush's video message only helped paint all of Castro's opponents as American agents. "This is a great service to the the government's efforts to slander us," he said. "Her (meeting organizer Roque's) unbridled relationship with the United States is counterproductive and can only contribute to the government's siege mentality," said Manuel Cuesta Morua, head of Arco Progresista, a Social Democratic group. (*Reuters*, 26/5/05)

May 26: According to the wife of independent journalist and political prisoner Héctor Maseda Gutiérrez, who has been confined for months in a maximum security prison in Villa Clara, her husband's living conditions have deteriorated. Laura Pollán informed that Maseda was transferred to a poorly-ventilated, mosquito-infested cell with no light. To make matters worse, his new living quarters get flooded when the rest of the prisoners shower and his new cellmate is a dangerous offender. (*Cubanet*, 26/5/05)

May 30: More than 100 leaders of African-Cuban religions highlighted the force of spiritual freedom in Cuba during a national meeting with leaders of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC). Babalao Enrique Gómez Armenteros, from Guanabacoa municipality in the island's capital, rejected the anti-Cuban campaigns against alleged violations of religious freedom, and gave as an example the home temple that he directs, which has always received the support of the local authorities. Babalao Antonio Castañeda, president of the Yoruba Cultural Association of Cuba (ACYC), explained the work of this institution that was created in 1991. The chairs of the meeting included Esteban Lazo, member of the Political Bureau of the PCC and vice president of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, and Caridad Diego Bello, head of the Religious Affairs Department at the Central Committee of the PCC. Also participating in the events were members of the Councils of High Priests of Ifá, Oriatés, and Iyalochas, and representatives from the Abakuás, Ararás, and Vudú, among others. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 30/5/05)

May 30: After years of decay and crippling poverty, a massive programme of restoration is under way in Havana, aimed at boosting tourist revenues and improving conditions for residents. The Historian of the City of Havana, Eusebio Leal Spengler, now employs a staggering 7,000 people involved in repairing and reviving old buildings great and small, running parador-style hotels, speciality shops and restaurants and museums in old palaces and harbour forts. Much of old Havana is in an accelerated state of decay, with building collapses recently occurring every three days. Havana's formidable conservation programme embraces not just the old city, a World Heritage Site since 1982, but extends to chic, newly restored Art Deco offices and hotels and even high-rise concrete apartment blocks. Restoration projects now embrace Deco buildings including the 1930 Bacardi building, abandoned when the famous rum baron decamped to Puerto Rico after the revolution. More modern buildings that have been restored include the Hotel

Riviera, built in the 1950s by the mafioso Meyer Lansky. Current projects include the 1914 Grand Theatre, with its marble staircase by the Belgian architect Paul Belau. (*The Times*, 30/5/05)

May 31: With support from Miami, a group of Cuban doctors are developing a small but growing independent network that for the first time provides primary health care in some areas of the island as an alternative to similar government-regulated services. The network is comprised of several dozen doctors, nurses and collaborators who provide basic home-based health care for sick people without resources in Havana, Pinar del Río, Santiago de Cuba, Cienfuegos and Ciego de Ávila. The network is maintained with financial support, medicines and equipment donated by Miami-based organizations. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 31/5/05)

May 31: Cuba commemorated World No Tobacco Day by pushing its campaign to stop youths on the communist island from starting the habit. Some two million of Cuba's 11 million citizens are smokers. In February, the authorities put in place a resolution prohibiting the sale of cigarettes to persons under 16 years of age and the sale of tobacco products in stores and restaurants located 100 meters (yards) or less from schools. The Education Ministry is carrying out a program against tobacco use that is being taught at all grade levels and which an article in the official newspaper Juventud Rebelde claimed had resulted in a drop in smoking among young people. A 2001 study of 1,998 students between 13 and 15 years of age in 164 schools in Havana revealed that some 29.9 percent of them smoked. Between 33 and 38 percent of Cubans above age 16 smoke. One in every 10 smokers began the habit before their 12th birthday, according to official statistics. Tobacco use leads to 30 percent of the island's deaths from cancer, the country's second biggest killer, the government estimates. (*EFE*, 31/5/05)

May 31: One of the members of Ladies in White, a group of women comprised of wives and mothers of political prisoners in Cuba, made public a letter sent to the Cuban government requesting the liberation of her husband due to poor health conditions. In a letter sent to Fidel Castro, Gisela Delgado said that her husband, Héctor Palacios, 63, is in "critical health condition". Delgado made an appeal to international organizations, watchdogs, and the Red Cross to support her request. The Cuban government sentenced Palacios to 25 years in prison, together with 74 other activists, during the repressive wave against dissidents of March 2003. (*Reuters*, 31/5/05)

Economy

May 1: A special ceremony was organized in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan Province, to mark the delivery of 400 buses for export to Cuba. It is considered the biggest bus export deal for a Chinese auto maker. The export deal, worth 240 million yuan (about 28.92 million US dollars), included 200 complete buses and the other 200 CKD (completely knocked down) bus parts, said Tang Yuxiang, President of Yutong Group, the exported bus maker that is based in Zhengzhou, the provincial capital. Yutong Group will also build an after-sale service in Cuba later, according to Tang. (*Xinhua*, 1/5/05)

May 1: Prawn and shrimp breeders will be able to breathe easy soon with a biotech product that could make their fry resistant to diseases such as the dreaded white-spot virus. And no one is more thrilled than prawn farm owner Hashnoel Murshim Hashim, the first in Malaysia to try Acuabio 1, a growth stimulator agent developed by a Cuban biotechnology research centre. Initial results during test trials have shown that the product increased productivity by 100 per cent. (*New Straits.Com*, 1/5/05)

May 2: Even a rigidly state-controlled economy such as that of Cuba is not immune to the global phenomenon of music-industry piracy, with local artists seeing their big hits circulating widely in illegitimate copies. Energized by digital technology, the illegal copying and sale of recorded music has really taken off in Cuba, according to a study by now-state-run Egrem, the island's oldest and largest music label. The firm's marketing director, Reinaldo Hernandez,

told the press that retail sales of legitimate CDs in Cuba have fallen for three years running and he put Egrem's losses from piracy in 2004 alone at \$40,000. (*EFE*, 2/5/05)

May 2: A co-operation protocol in the fields of infrastructures, sporting equipment and training of trainers, coaches, referees and umpires was signed in Luanda between the Angolan Youth and Sports Ministry and Cuba's National Institute for Sports, Physical Education and Recreation. According to a communiqué, the agreement was inked by Angola's deputy Minister of Sports, Albino da Conceição Jose, and Cuba's first vice chairman for Sports, Julio Cristiano Molina. (*AllAfrica.Com*, 2/5/05)

May 3: Fidel Castro recently sent a team of economists on a secret mission to explore the state of poverty in Cuba, as part of his campaign to put a brake on growing poverty and social stratification in what was once one of the world's most egalitarian societies. According to a well-placed source, their verdict was 300 pesos - five times the minimum 55 pesos pension and three times the 100 pesos (\$4.80 USD) monthly minimum wage. Shortly after receiving their report, Mr Castro announced increases to the minimum monthly pension - to 150 pesos - and the minimum wage - to 225 pesos - to take effect this month. "The two measures will benefit 3,602,344 people receiving the lowest income, for which the revolution will dedicate 2,255,683,370 more pesos to the annual budget," said the official trade union weekly, *Trabajadores*. Some Cuban economists are not as enthusiastic. "There is no similar increase in domestic production to justify increasing demand. It is inflationary," a Cuban economist said. (*Reuters*, 3/5/05)

May 3: Colombia has sold 35,000 tonnes of white sugar to Cuba this year, a practice that may become more common as production on the Caribbean island falls, Colombia's sugar producers association said. "It is not clear at this time if we are going to send more sugar to Cuba or not," Ricardo Villaveces, president of Asocana, Colombia's sugar cane producer association, told the press. "But their production is going down, so it may become more common for Cuba to buy sugar from abroad," he said. This year's sales to Cuba were made by CIAMSA, a trading company owned by Colombian sugar producers. (*Reuters*, 3/5/05)

May 4: Venezuela and Cuba have agreed to start a joint shipyard in Venezuela, the Venezuelan government said. The shipyard was among a series of agreements signed between the countries during a visit to Havana by President Hugo Chavez, the Infrastructure Ministry said in a statement. The shipyard is to be built in the western Venezuelan state of Zulia. It is to be for repairing naval ships and the construction of small navy ships, Venezuela's Infrastructure Minister Ramon Carrizalez Rengifo said in the statement. Venezuela announced that the 53,000 barrels of oil it began selling to Cuba on preferential terms in 2000 had now risen to up to 90,000 barrels daily. Cuba agreed to increase the number of its doctors in Venezuela to 30,000 by year's end. It will also help train 40,000 new Venezuelan doctors. (*AP*, 4/5/05)

May 4: The Cuban Ministry of Commerce informed that Cuba will purchase from Venezuela \$28.5 million USD worth of food products, including canned sardines, crackers, pudding, marmalade and chocolate drinks, as well as work apparel. (*AP*, 5/5/05)

March 4: Cuba has signed an agreement with Canadian company Sherrit International, aimed at expanding their joint venture in the nickel industry, official sources reported. According to a press release published in *Granma* daily, the agreement was signed in the Cuban capital in the presence of Fidel Castro and Ian Delaney, the president of the Canadian firm. The agreement is aimed at implementing a program to extend production by the Pedro Soto Alba firm, located in Moa, (in the eastern part of Cuba) and at a nickel refinery located in the North American country. The project requires financing of around \$450 million, which Sherrit International and Cuba will equally fund. The press release announced that Pedro Soto Alba's production would increase to 16,000 tons of cobalt nickel as a result of this initiative. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 4/5/05)

May 4: Canadian mining and energy company Sherritt International posted first quarter operating profits from its oil and gas business in Cuba of Cdn\$21.1mn (US\$16.9mn), up 21.3% from Cdn\$17.4mn in the first quarter of 2004

(1Q04), the company said in its 2005 first quarter earnings statement. Revenues rose to Cdn\$49.7mn from Cdn\$47.6mn in 1Q04 due to higher realized prices, partly offset by lower production volumes. The average price in Cuba rose to US\$28.40/b in the quarter from US\$24.21 in 1Q04. Sherritt's net oil sales in Cuba fell to 17,523b/d from 19,964b/d in 1Q04 and first quarter gross operated Cuban oil production fell 9.13% to 39,219b/d from 43,157b/d in 1Q04. This figure excludes production from Santa Cruz on block 7 because the field has not yet been declared commercial. Following on from promising initial results from the Santa Cruz exploration well in December, 2004 [that tested at a rate of 1,300b/d], Sherritt has begun drilling two appraisal wells in this field," the statement said. "If initial results are borne out, commercialization of the field is anticipated around the end of the year." Four drilling rigs were active during the quarter, drilling a total of seven development wells and one exploratory well. Sherritt sells all heavy oil produced in Cuba to Cuban government agencies, generally at selling prices based on 79-83% of the Gulf Coast fuel oil no. 6 reference price. The impact of higher fuel oil prices was partially reduced by the strength of the Canadian dollar. (*BNAmericas*, 4/5/05)

May 5: Fidel Castro made an appeal to have rationality prevail in whatever economic steps are taken on the island. In a national radio and television address, Castro said that "the Revolution has demonstrated it knows how to act speedily", but this time not only it knows how to do things speedily, but it knows how to do it with much higher quality, he noted. Castro made emphasis on the carefulness with which work will be done in the distribution of products, raw materials, consumer goods and other commodities purchased in Venezuela and worth 412 million dollars. He insisted on the need that the hard currency stores keep their prices, so that the current rising trend of the Cuban peso purchasing power is kept, a goal that will not be achieved in a matter of days, he cautioned. (*AIN*, 5/5/05)

May 6: The US government has been trying to keep cruise ships out of Cuba for years. Now Cuba's government is telling the ships to stay away as well. Fidel Castro said last week that Cuba had discovered that the cruise ships weren't the sort of tourism it wanted. "Floating hotels come, floating restaurants, floating theaters, floating diversions visit countries to leave their trash, their empty cans and papers for a few miserable cents," Castro said. "We have told [fellow Caribbean states] that Cuba will not accept cruise ships," Castro said. He did not say whether the measure had taken effect. Cruise ships have been visiting Havana periodically until late last month. (*Orlando Sentinel*, 8/5/05)

May 9: The 6th International symposium over the use of hydrogen as fuel was inaugurated at the National Hotel in Havana. Experts from different countries will debate the contribution of this fuel to the development of a Cuban sustainable electro-energetic system. The production of hydrogen in the country is low because it is mainly used as refrigerant in thermoelectric plants. It is very valuable to be able to broaden and update the knowledge about new technologies, according to Antonio Valdés of the organizing committee. Cuba will host for the first time in Latin America a meeting of this type, including experts from 25 countries mainly from developing nations. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/5/05)

May 9: The northeastern Brazilian state of Ceara will focus on bilateral trade with Cuba, it was reported. Ten Cuban entrepreneurs will take part in a workshop with the participation of 30 Ceara-based companies. Trade relations between Cuba and the state of Ceara were limited and the workshop is intended to change this situation. According to Brazilian Development, Industry and Trade Ministry, the exports of Ceara to Cuba totalled \$558,810 in 2004. Between January and March 2005, the Ceara state exports to Cuba stood at the modest \$24,770, accounting for the modest 0.01 pct of the total Ceara state exports in the period. Representatives of Cuban drug, cement, sugar and ethanol and agricultural industries, as well as software, hotel, fish and footwear producers will participate in the workshop. According to the Development, Industry and Trade Ministry, in the first quarter of 2005, the Ceara exports to Cuba were limited to footwear, while in 2004, exports to Cuba were more diversified, including household appliances, juices, and other leather products. There is no statistical data about Cuban exports to Ceara for 2004 and 2005. (*Latin American News Digest*, 10/5/05)

May 9: Cuba and Russia have good potential to develop bilateral ties in various areas, Fidel Castro said in Havana, when meeting a delegation of the Russian State Duma headed by the first deputy chairperson, Lyubov Sliska. "In the course of a 90-minute conversation we discussed many interesting topics and shared opinions on the prospects for future cooperation," Sliska told the press. Castro spoke in favour of continuing "a close dialogue with Russia, for developing bilateral economic ties and raising their effectiveness", she said. During the meeting, Castro named several concrete projects that could be implemented within the framework of Cuban-Russian cooperation. (*ITAR-TASS*, 9/5/05)

May 10: Cuba's 25th International Tourism Fair kicked off in Havana with the participation of travel authorities and businessmen from 37 countries seeking to diversify their product and improve their quality. Cuban Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero gave the welcoming address to more than 1,200 participants, among them the heads of France's and Venezuela's tourism authorities, Leon Bertrand and Wilmar Castro, respectively. Marrero said that in 2004, for the first time in history, Cuba received more than two million tourists, adding that Havana expects to welcome 2.3 million visitors this year.

He said that tourist arrivals increased 8 percent during the first quarter compared with the same period in 2004. Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Spain, France, Italy, Argentina and Mexico all have sent big delegations to the fair, organizers said. (*EFE*, 10/5/05)

May 10: The Cuban authorities expressed interest in attracting more Chinese tourists to visit the Caribbean island, as the 25th International Tourism Fair of Cuba opened in Havana. Cuban Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero stressed that the number of Asian vacationers, especially from China and Japan, is on the increase. China and Cuba signed a memorandum of understanding in 2003, allowing Chinese travel groups to visit the Caribbean country. (*Xinhua*, 10/5/05)

May 11: Cuban Economy and Planning Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez stressed that the national economy is gradually recovering. The minister said Cuba's relationship with other countries is bringing about favorable perspectives, like the latest agreements with China and Vietnam. Rodriguez also highlighted the new step toward western hemispheric integration in an agreement with Venezuela through the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, in contrast to the US-sponsored Free Trade Area of the Americas. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/5/05)

May 11: The Cuba-Belize Joint Commission concluded in Havana with the signing of a final declaration including bilateral cooperation in different sectors. Cuban Foreign Investment Minister Marta Lomas and Belize Development Minister Assad Shoman presided over the meetings. Cuba and Belize analyzed cooperation in health care, education, culture and transport and agreed to set up a program for the next two years. At least 105 Cuban collaborators, most health personnel, are currently working in Belize, while 197 young people from that country are studying in Havana, including 123 studying medicine, according to the Cuban minister. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/5/05)

May 11: The Brazilian northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte targets to strengthen trade relations with Cuba with the aim to boost exports to that country. According to the government of Rio Grande do Norte, the state's exports to Cuba might reach \$11.9 mln per year. Cuban ambassador Pedro Nuñez Mosquera, formerly Cuban Foreign Affairs Vice Minister, took part in the 92nd edition of Foreign Trade Meeting (Encomex) which started in Mossoro, Rio Grande do Norte. The delegation of the Cuban ambassador is comprised by representatives of four sugar and ethanol producing companies, and firms from the drug and fertilisers segments. Rio Grande do Norte presently exports to Cuba products for hotels, footwear, furniture, ready-to-wear clothes and fish. The total Brazilian exports to Cuba jumped by 90 pct year-on-year to \$193 mln in 2004. (*Latin American News Digest*, 11/5/05)

May 12: The Cuban and Venezuelan governments will organize a construction company to reduce the deficit of housing in both nations and in Latin America. The initiative is part of the integration agreements to boost the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). The US\$100 mn corporate capital will be sourced from the ALBA International Fund, with the contribution of the member countries. Under the agreement, Cuba will provide machinery

and equipment, while Venezuela will provide capital, as published by El Universal newspaper. (*Latin American News Digest*, 11/5/05)

May 12: Sol Meliá Cuba Sales and Marketing Director Gabriel Díaz informed that the Spanish hotel chain hosted 227,796 visitors out of 721,818 tourists that traveled to Cuba in the first quarter of 2005, which translates into 31.58% of all tourist arrivals on record between January and March. The main tourist markets that contributed to these results include Canada, Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France, Russia and Argentina. (*Europa Press*, 12/5/05)

May 12: Venezuelan business persons are expected to sign an agreement with Cuba that surpasses 8m US dollars. Light Industry & Trade Ministry said the contracts the Cubans will sign are for chocolate drinks, fruit juices, condensed milk, plastic bags and iron-tubed furniture, among other products. The 8m dollars will be added to 28m dollars agreed to in bilateral trade talks that took place in Havana. The Cubans will pay 1.9m dollars for the chocolates drinks deal and 1.4 for fruit justices, while 5m dollars will go for kitchen utensils, plastics and artisan products pending a positive green light from Cuban trade officials regarding which Venezuelan products to grants contracts to. (*BBC*, 12/5/05)

May 12: The state-run Bolivarian News Agency informed that Venezuelans vacationing in Cuba would soon be allowed to pay in Bolívares without any impact on the rate of exchange as pertaining to the US dollar. According to the President of the Banco Industrial de Venezuela (BIV), Luis Quiaro, a project to that effect is currently at an advanced stage and will shortly be submitted for the approval of Finance Minister Nelson Merentes and other Venezuelan finance authorities. (*Encuentro en la Red*, 12/5/05)

May 14: It was reported that Cuba's ranks of retirement- age citizens will only grow. The average Cuban is expected to live 76 years, one of the highest life expectancy rates in Latin America. Low birth rates also mean Cuba's population, much like the United States, is becoming older every year. The Cuban government imposes a mandatory retirement age for most of its citizens - 60 for men, 55 for women - to make room for younger workers in the tight job market. Some workers, however, are retiring even earlier, knowing they can make more money on the streets than in a typical government job. A middle-age newspaper vendor who wakes up early every morning to sell Cuba's official newspapers on the streets said he used to work for the government at a newsstand until he realized he could make more money on his own. One 62-year-old Havana man has a friend who sells him 100 plastic bags for 50 pesos, or about \$2. The man steals them from a Havana factory where he works. The retiree can sell each bag for 1 peso on the street, doubling his investment. "You have to go into business to survive," he said. His pension amounts to less than \$10 a month. (*AP*, 16/5/05)

May 15: Cuba welcomed its one-millionth visitor of 2005, staying on track to hit the target of 2.3 million tourists set for this year, Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero said. Tourism authorities are trying to expand the tourism market by providing more diverse offerings and improving service, officials said. During the January-April period, tourist arrivals rose 8 percent, compared to the same period last year, according to the Tourism Ministry. Nearly 2.05 million tourists visited Cuba last year, the highest number ever, generating about \$2 billion in gross revenues. Canada remains the top source of visitors to the island, followed by Italy, Britain, Spain, Germany and France. The number of visitors from Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Argentina and Chile is growing rapidly, tourism officials said. (*EFE*, 15/5/05)

May 20: The problems with the electrical service that have been affecting Cuba in recent days are due to damages in thermoelectric units in the country, according to an Electric Union note. "Serious damage has been affecting the electrical service, with stoppages of generating plants when important maintenance works were being carried out," according to the brief report that did not refer to the power stations damaged. The text asserts the situation will improve in the next days. (*Prensa Latina*, 20/5/05)

May 25: Officials from Cuba and Mozambique ratified in Havana their decision to broaden cooperation after signing a protocol during the 15th Session of the Joint Commission for the Economic and Scientific Technical

Collaboration. Cuban Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation, Marta Lomas, and her Mozambique counterpart, Alcinda A. de Abreu reiterated their interest in extending the ties to new areas like fishing, radio, television and tourism. (*AIN*, 26/5/05)

May 26: Cuban economic growth is expected to accelerate in 2005 to 5%, fuelled by new international accords and the development of oil and mineral resources, a United Nations study says. "The 2005 economic outlook is moderately optimistic based on a new economic policy, agreements with Venezuela and China, the discovery of new oil deposits and increased nickel production," the UN Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) said, in a 48-page study on the island for 2004-2005. The study said the Cuban economy grew 3% in 2004, a figure below the 5% figure announced by Cuba, which uses a different methodology to calculate gross domestic product figures. The source said that UN economists used mainly preliminary data provided by the Cuban government to recently draw up the study, which was undated. (*National Post*, 26/5/05)

May 27: Fidel Castro praised the qualities of the pressure cooker, a basic tool for saving electricity in the country, and said authorities were making "exceptional efforts" to avoid repeated blackouts that have been affecting the Cuban population in recent days. After highlighting the issue of the state of Cuban electricity distribution system and the need to reduce consumption, in his 29th TV appearance, the 78-year-old leader addressed it again, unveiling a national plan for the promotion of practices reducing electricity consumption including the use of pressure cookers. At the end of a 2.5-hour speech in which he criticized Cubans for wasting electricity, Castro had some aides bring to the podium where he was staying two trolleys carrying some ten pressure cookers, two electric fans, one electric kettle and other household appliances. Answering a question posed by Castro, officials of Cuba's state-owned electricity monopoly said 17,000 kilometres of electric cables and 44,000 substations needed to be upgraded. (*ANSA, AP*, 27/5/05)

May 28: A London-based journal, the *Travel Trade Gazette* (UK & Ireland), has announced that the forthcoming inauguration of an air line between Gatwick airport, outside the British capital, and Havana should increase the flow of tourists from the United Kingdom to Cuba. According to the journal, officials linked to British tourism in London have stated that the new route with Virgin Atlantic will operate from mid July onward. It was also revealed that the head of Cuban tourist concerns in London, Mario Dorta, has stressed that the twice-weekly flight will bring about an increase of about ten per cent in the number of British holidaymakers traveling to Cuba. (*World Data Service*, 28/5/05)

May 30: Vietnam's prime minister praised Cuban achievements in the scientific, technological and environmental fields and encouraged both countries to draw up concrete collaboration programs in those areas. Prime Minister Phan Van Khai commented to Fernando Gonzalez Bermudez, interim minister of Cuba's Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), on the strength of Cuba's scientific sector and emphasized the need to develop new strategies to strengthen cooperation. Fernando Gonzales recently concluded an official visit to Vietnam accompanied by other members of his ministry. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 30/5/05)

May 30: Mozambique is to begin using an anti-cholera vaccine developed at the Finlay Institute, according to Alcinda Antonio de Abreu, minister of foreign business and cooperation for that country, who spoke with Granma International just before ending a three-day visit to Cuba. The minister explained that in the future, immunization campaigns using other products from that Cuban scientific center could be undertaken against malaria, tuberculosis and other endemic diseases. (*Granma International*, 30/5/05)

May 30: Cuba has ended the worst sugar harvest in a century with output down more than 40 percent from the previous harvest at around 1.3 million tonnes, sources close to the industry said over the weekend. "Only one of 13 sugar-producing provinces, Villa Clara, met its plan," a local expert said, adding one or two mills could still be open somewhere in the country, but for all intents and purposes the season was over. Drought slowed planting last year and destroyed some freshly seeded plantations. The always hermetic sugar ministry has not commented since January on the harvest. Local experts said general neglect of the state-run industry was the underlying reason for its precipitous

decline from a peak of 8 million tonnes when the Soviet Union guaranteed a market at subsidized prices. (*Reuters*, 30/5/05)

May 30: Cuban medical brigades that arrived in Honduras to help out in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch are to leave the country following a decision made by the local government. In statements to the press, Honduran Health Minister Merlin Fernandez said that the departure of the Cuban doctors was a decision taken by a tripartite commission, made up by the Medical Association, the government and the School of Medicine. The minister said that the presence of some 120 Cuban doctors who provide free services in the 18 departments that comprise Honduras represent expenses of 14m lempiras (900,000 dollars) for the government every year. "Obviously, we will not abandon the communities; we will seek mechanisms to generate more resources so that Honduran doctors can replace them," said the minister. Alberto Gonzalez Polanco, Cuban ambassador in Tegucigalpa, said that the Honduran Foreign Affairs Ministry still had not informed him of the decision. (*Notimex*, 30/5/05)

May 30: Cuban businessmen have increased cooperation with Russian businessmen in different spheres due to mutually advantageous basis, Alejandro Musteller, Chairman of the Cuban part of the Business Council Russia-Cuba said. He addressed a meeting of businessmen of the two countries, which was attended by representatives of the Cuban government. "The bilateral Business Council was created just at the moment when relations between Cuba and Russia are strengthening on the whole," Musteller stressed. According to Musteller, serious progress has been achieved in the work of the Russian-Cuban Inter-Governmental Commission in the field of economic cooperation. (*ITAR TASS*, 31/5/05)

May 31: Spanish-Argentine oil and energy company Repsol YPF said that it will spend more than 21.1 billion euros (\$26.1 billion) as part of a five-year global investment plan, with particular emphasis on exploration and production. The company said some 11.4 billion euros (\$14.1 billion) will go specifically to exploration and production under its 2005-2009 strategic plan. Chairman Antoni Brufau said exploration and development projects will spearhead the company's growth in the next five years beyond its traditional markets of Argentina, Brazil and Bolivia. Brufau also said Repsol will continue exploring for oil in Cuba. (*AP*, 31/5/05)

May 31: Cuban Minister of State Ricardo Cabrisas expressed in Havana his country's readiness to cooperate with Iran in the World Trade Organization. In a meeting with Iran's Ambassador to Cuba Ahmad Edrissian, the Cuban minister said Cuba is ready to hold consultations with Iran now that Iran's call to join the WTO has been accepted. Cuba received the WTO membership on April 20, 1995. Cabrisas, who is Cuban head of Iran-Cuba Joint Economic Commission, expressed satisfaction with the growing trend of economic relations between the two countries, particularly bilateral cooperation in the fields of industry, water, electricity and sugar cane. (*IRNA*, 31/5/05)

May 31: Western companies welcomed in Cuba as heroes a decade ago for bucking the US embargo are packing up and leaving as the Communist government rolls back market reforms and squeezes out intermediaries. Embittered by the change in attitude, small and medium-sized foreign businesses complained this week that they no longer feel welcome and are worried they would not recover money owed to them by Cuban partners. The Spanish dairy firm Penasanta SA announced this month that its \$8.5 million milk venture had failed due to the economic climate in Cuba, a view expressed by many other businessmen. "They always tried to get the most money, machinery and knowledge they could out of us while giving little in return. They owe us millions, but we are leaving mainly because of their attitude, the way they treated us," a major European company that is pulling out after 10 years said. Western embassies report increasing complaints from their nationals whose businesses were liquidated without any guarantee they would be compensated. "Cuban partners say they will pay back investments and money owed for operating costs from future profits, but it is doubtful the companies will even exist in the future," said the commercial attache at a European embassy. Companies have the option of going to arbitration, but many feel they would be wasting time and money because the government would ignore the rulings anyway. Cuba reported that the number of joint ventures had

dwindled to 313 at the end of 2004, down from 412 in 2002. Another 67 will be closed this year, according to a MINVEC source. (*Reuters*, 31/5/05)

Exile Community

May 6: Attorney Rafael Diaz-Balart, a bitter enemy of Fidel Castro's regime and father of two Cuban-American congressmen, died of leukemia in the city of Miami. "His death is one more reason to continue to fight for Cuba's freedom, which was my father's ideal all his life, as it was of so many Cubans who died yearning for a democratic Cuba," said the man's son, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, a Republican who represents a Florida district in the US Congress. Youngest son Mario Diaz-Balart, also a Republican congressman, said his father was "a guide, leader, inspiration, a man who to the last kept teaching us to live, with his love, commitment to one's word and to honor." Rafael Diaz-Balart was a senator and undersecretary of the interior in Cuba prior to the 1959 revolution. One of his sisters, Mirta Diaz-Balart, was Castro's first wife and mother of his eldest child, Fidel Felix Castro, born in September 1949. Castro and Mirta divorced in 1955. (*EFE, AP*, 6/5/05)

May 10: More than 40 Cuban-American organizations are celebrating New Jersey's first Cuban Heritage Month in May with a series of events to raise funds and provide moral support for the Cuban dissidents, who are planning the May 20-21 Assembly to Promote a Civil Society in Cuba. In New Jersey, Silvio Acosta, spokesman for the group, said that whether the meeting occurs or not, it is already a success, especially because human rights activists from all over the world are keeping a close eye on Cuba. "If they put them all in jail, before the eyes of the world, they will be arresting people simply for trying to attend a public meeting," Acosta said. "And if they let them hold the meeting, they will be denounced for their atrocities. It's a win-win situation." (*The Record*, 11/5/05)

May 10: Cuban journalist and author Raúl Rivero, released from prison last November, opened the 2nd International Poetry Festival "Ciudad de Granada." In this edition, the festival honours Rivero, whose presence in the opening ceremony realizes the objective of the "Granada Declaration"-- a document written last year by writers, musicians, professors and journalists, seeking Rivero's release. (*Europa Press*, 10/5/05)

May 12: The Social Security Administration has relaxed its policies to benefit elderly Cuban and Haitian immigrants, The Miami Herald reported. The change would mean hundreds and maybe thousands of elderly and disabled Cubans and Haitians will soon get monthly checks from the Supplemental Security Income program. Each immigrant could receive up to \$579 a month and couples as much as \$869. Some Cuban immigrants were being denied benefits because they had overstayed their visa before becoming legal residents. Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart, (Republican-Florida), and Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, (Republican-Florida), both asked for a review of the situation in March. (*UPI*, 12/5/05)

May 12: The Cuban American National Foundation won US permission to travel to Cuba for a dissident meeting on May 20, a foundation official said. Alfredo Mesa, the foundation's executive director, said he received official word from the US Treasury Department but he declined to detail what plans, if any, members have for travel to the island. "We will make the final determination on the eve of May 20th," Mesa said. (*Sun Sentinel*, 13/5/05)

May 12: The US government announced a contribution of \$6 million USD to the efforts of the Support Group to Democracy (GAD), a Miami-based organization with a broad network providing humanitarian assistance to activists, political prisoners and their relatives on the island. The donation was channelled through the US Agency for International Development (USAID), whose Cuba Program has a budget of \$15 million USD. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 13/5/05)

May 17: An influential exile group will help publicize a \$1 million reward now on the head of a convicted black militant who escaped from prison and is living in Cuba. At an afternoon news conference, the Cuban American National Foundation will renew a call for the capture and return to the United States of Joanne Chesimard, now making her home in Havana. Chesimard, 57, a Black Liberation Army member, was given safe haven in Cuba after she escaped from a maximum-security prison in 1979. Chesimard, known as Assata Shakur, returned to the spotlight when the US government added her to its terrorism watch list and the bounty for her arrest was increased from \$150,000 to \$1 million. (*The Miami Herald*, 17/5/05)

May 17: Following the International Tourism Fair held in Havana, the Group for Corporate Social Responsibility in Cuba, comprised of organizations, independent trade unions and NGOs, has released a document denouncing the "unethical" treatment that foreign investors, shielded by current Cuban labour legislation, afford their Cuban employees. The Group, created in Madrid last April and made up of members of diverse organizations, seeks to raise awareness regarding the working conditions of Cuban workers. (*Europa Press*, 17/5/05)

May 18: Cuban journalist and author Raúl Rivero remembered his friends still imprisoned in Cuba when he was bestowed the "Award in Acknowledgment to Tolerance" by the Autonomous Community of Madrid. "For me, being tolerant means being willing to respectfully listen to views different than my own while being allowed to voice the latter with passion and conviction, so that a middle ground can be found that may lead to satisfactory solutions to any issues at hand," said Rivero, adding that, in that vein, "Cuba needs a large dose of tolerance." (*AFP*, 18/5/05)

May 18: In Miami's Little Havana, exile leaders said they anticipated few protests of Luis Posada Carriles' arrest -- though many exiles view him as a patriot for the cause of Cuban freedom and hope he is granted asylum. "We don't want to play into Castro's hands and have him start criticizing us," said Enrique Carrazana, 72, a Bay of Pigs veteran sitting at a barber shop. Indeed, Castro has daily branded Posada a terrorist and ridiculed President Bush as a hypocrite for waging a war on terrorism while harboring Posada. Ninoska Pérez Castellón, an influential radio personality and founding member of the hard-line Cuban Liberty Council, said the community was reassured by the Bush administration's statement that Posada would not be deported to Cuba or Venezuela. Some saw a partisan political factor in the exiles' restraint. Chin Martinez, a community activist and the father of Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez, said exiles, who favor the Republican Party, should be defending Posada more vocally. "If a Democratic president was in power, there would be demonstrations," said Martinez, 80, who is a registered Democrat. "This is about partisanship." (*The Miami Herald*, 19/5/05)

May 23: At age 87, an architect and professor of art history, Manuel de la Torre, was still fighting to recover the art collection he left behind when he fled Cuba more than four decades ago as an anti-Castro protester after the communist revolution. Two months after his death, members of de la Torre's family picketed the Upper East Side headquarters of Sotheby's, repeating claims that the international auction house had attempted to sell one of their prized paintings that had been seized by pro-Castro militants. The picketing was sparked by the breakdown of settlement talks between the family and Sotheby's. Absent a settlement, the tangled and lengthy court battle over the ownership of "La Hamaca," a painting by a Cuban artist who was de la Torre's friend, Mariano Rodriguez, is likely to continue into the summer. (*The New York Sun*, 24/5/05)

May 24: Despite accusations that Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles has carried out deadly attacks in his four-decade battle against Fidel Castro's government, most Cuban exiles in South Florida think he is a patriot who deserves political asylum in the United States, according to a poll released. The poll of 300 Cuban-born people in Miami-Dade and Broward counties was conducted May 13-22 by Bendixen & Associates, which asked respondents about their views on Posada. More than 60 percent said they had a positive view of the aging exile and former CIA operative who has been accused of a number of violent acts, but they also said they preferred that a future transition to democracy in Cuba be peaceful rather than violent. The poll's margin of error was 6 percent. (*Sun Sentinel*, 24/5/05)

May 24: A Cuban exile organization asked for the US government's help in securing an indictment of Cuban Defense Minister Raul Castro for the 1996 downing of two of the group's planes by fighter jets over the Straits of Florida. Jose Basulto, president of Brothers to the Rescue, pleaded for support from other Cuban-American groups to join him in his call for charges against Castro -- Fidel Castro's brother and his designated successor. "We also respectfully ask President George W. Bush to convert, into action, his recent words and his expressed desire for a democratic Cuba by removing the political obstacles to the indictment," Basulto said. Even if Raul Castro were indicted, it is unlikely that he would ever face US justice. Still, an indictment would make it more difficult for Raul Castro to succeed his brother, Basulto said. The Cuban government has always maintained that the Brothers to the Rescue planes were in Cuban airspace when they were shot down. A UN inquiry concluded they were outside Cuban territory. (*AP*, 24/5/05)

May 30: A new demonstration was held in Miami urging the Bush administration to deny political asylum to terrorist Luis Posada Carriles and instead extradite him to Venezuela where he is wanted on several criminal charges. The protest took place in front of a Florida Immigration Office in Miami and is the second in a month sponsored by members of the Jose Marti Association, says a report in Granma daily newspaper. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 30/5/05)

Foreign Affairs

May 1: Nestor Kirchner and his wife Cristina will visit Cuba during the last week in May and will meet Fidel Castro. For this occasion, the president has decided to take a large delegation with him to Cuba: no fewer than 80 people. (*BBC*, 1/5/05)

May 2: Nigerian Minister of Health and Sanitation, Abattor Thomas presented some 20 Cuban doctors from different specialties to President Kabbah at state lodge. Presidential Spokesman, Kanji Daramy who made this disclosure to the press said the doctors are part of the South-South Co-operation framework of Nigeria, Libya and Cuba. (*AllAfrica.Com*, 2/5/05)

May 2: Raul Castro Ruz, first vice-president of the Council of State and the Council of Ministers of Cuba, and other members of the high-ranking Cuban party and state delegation left Ho Chi Minh City, concluding their official friendship visit to Vietnam. While in Ho Chi Minh City, Raul Castro Ruz and his entourage were received by Nguyen Minh Triet, Politburo member of the Communist Party of the Vietnam Central Committee and Secretary of the municipal Party Committee, Le Kha Phieu, former general secretary of the Party Central Committee, and former State President Le Duc Anh. (*BBC*, 2/5/05)

May 2: A total of 66 illegal Cuban immigrants held by the authorities in the Mexican state of Veracruz have gone on a 3-day hunger strike in an effort to avert their repatriation. On makeshift signs made out of pieces of cardboard boxes that they showed from the windows of the National Immigration Institute (INM), the Cubans wrote "Do not deport us back to Cuba!! We would rather die here!!" (*EFE*, 2/5/05)

May 2: Chilean Interior Minister Jose Miguel Insulza, 61, who was elected as the OAS secretary general, with the votes of 31 of the 34 members of the OAS, has called the outcome indicative of a "genuine consensus." "The OAS," he said, "has a key role to play in the establishment of rules that lead a globalized world toward more just and mature forms of integration, projecting a regional perspective rich in diversity." Regarding Communist Cuba, suspended from the OAS in 1962 and the only country in the hemisphere not represented in the forum, the socialist Insulza said he does not seek to promote a rapprochement with Havana absent a consensus within the body in favor of such a move. (*EFE*, 2/5/05)

May 4: Fidel Castro criticized the Organization of American States and its new Chilean secretary-general, accusing him of using "insolent, interventionist" language to suggest change is needed in communist Cuba. Castro used a three-hour appearance on Cuban state television to lambaste the United States and several other governments around the region that he said were servile toward the United States. But Castro appeared to be infuriated by Insulza's suggestions that "all of us want to promote important progress in terms of democracy" in Cuba. "The little gentleman lost control," Castro said, and referred to the OAS as "that corrupt, putrefied, stinking institution." (*AP*, 5/5/05)

May 5: OAS Secretary General-elect José Miguel Insulza said that it would "be best not to respond" to criticism from Fidel Castro, adding that his job is based on the promotion of dialogue. "My job is rooted in dialogue, only not that kind of dialogue," said Insulza, Chilean Minister of the Interior. (*AFP*, 5/5/05)

May 5: Chilean President Ricardo Lagos said that Cuba is part of the OAS and that the fact that there exists a "vacant seat" that should be occupied by a representative of the island in the regional forum remains an issue that ought to be addressed by the 34 member states. (*AFP*, 5/5/05)

May 5: The Spanish government has not scheduled any official meetings with Cuban Vice-President Raúl Castro or the island's Foreign Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, during their current visit to Galicia. "It is a private trip and there have not been any requests for official meetings on the part of the Cuban delegation," said government sources. Raúl Castro is visiting his father's birthplace. (*Europa Press*, 5/5/05)

May 5: According to Fidel Castro, Cuba will extend to other Latin American countries the benefits of one of the health care programs it currently maintains with Venezuela. During a televised address, Castro said that, in a joint effort by Cuba and Venezuela, some 100,000 disadvantaged people throughout the continent will receive free eye care on the island. The idea is to expand the "Mission: Miracle" initiative, an eye care plan originally established by agreement with Venezuela to benefit citizens of that country and that last year alone restored the eyesight of 20,000 clinically blind individuals. (*AP*, 5/5/05)

May 6: The Colombian government remains in the dark with regards to the fate of Luis Hernando Gómez Bustamante, a.k.a., Rasguño (Scratch), detained by the Cuban authorities and regarded by the United States as one of the most powerful drug kingpins in the world. The Colombian Foreign Ministry still awaits a response from the Cuban government to a formal extradition request submitted six months ago and claims to ignore the current legal situation of the drug lord on the island. Javier Camacho, an official with the Cuban embassy in Bogotá, explained that any information on the matter can only be released by the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs and refused to make any comments for the press. (*El País*, 6/5/05)

May 6: Raul Castro Ruz, first Vice President of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba, arrived in Havana Friday night, after concluding a 22-day tour including China, Laos, Vietnam, Switzerland, Portugal and Spain. The top official, who is Minister of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, was welcomed at Havana Jose Marti International Airport by Fidel Castro and other members of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee Political Board. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/5/05)

May 6: Cuban officials and visiting Russian parliamentarians highlighted in Havana the prospects of even better relations between both nations and called for materializing joint projects. "We defend our links to work on issues of common interest," said First Vice President of the Duma (Russian Parliament) Liubov Sliska during a meeting with Cuban Minister of Government Ricardo Cabrisas. Havana-Moscow links are at one of their best moments as the level of coordination between them is excellent, said the Cuban top official. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/5/05)

May 6: Fidel Castro has offered free medical treatment to an Ecuadorian child who requires an expensive operation in the United States to recover his sight. According to Prensa Latina News Agency, Venezuela and Cuba have proposed

extending health care assistance to 100,000 Latin Americans a year to treat eye- related diseases. Ecuadorian child, Hugo Mansalvas, could now benefit from the program. After reviewing the information on the case, Fidel Castro instructed that the child be offered free, immediate medical care in Cuba. He remarked that the spirit of solidarity contained in the ALBA (Alternativa Bolivariana para las Américas) integration project promoted by the Venezuelan and Cuban governments could benefit thousands of Latin Americans as well as US citizens. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 7/5/05)

May 7: Cuba granted 100 scholarships to study at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) to poor students from Uruguay. A group of 45 will fly to the island to join another 300 already studying in Havana. Montevideo's local radio broadcast made the announcement when Cuba increased to 100 its original offer of 45. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/5/05)

May 8: The president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez announced that his country and Cuba are to initiate a plan to offer operations on the island free of charge to poor people with visual problems in Latin America and the Caribbean. "This is Mission Miracle. We want to get it underway soon to help our brothers and sisters with visual problems in a situation of poverty in any Latin America or Caribbean country; that is what Venezuela and Cuba are doing," he affirmed on his weekly Sunday radio and TV program "Aló presidente." The Venezuelan leader explained that if the mechanism is accepted by interested countries and communities in the region, it could "bring people with visual problems to Caracas for evaluation" and then send them on to Cuba for operations. (*Granma International*, 8/5/05)

May 9: Pope Benedict XVI has named a new bishop for central Cuba's Matanzas diocese in his first decision concerning the Roman Catholic church on this communist-run island, the Bishops Conference of Cuba said. The Reverend Manuel Hilario de Céspedes y García Menocal, great-great grandson of Cuban independence leader Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, will fill the post left vacant by Bishop Mariano Vivanco's death, the bishops said in a statement. De Céspedes, a priest, has been vicar general in the western province of Pinar del Rio. Born in Cuba on March 11, 1944, De Céspedes emigrated to Puerto Rico in the 1960s, where he studied electrical engineering. But in 1966, he entered a seminary in Venezuela to study for the priesthood. Ordained in 1972, De Céspedes developed his ministry in Venezuela for 12 years before returning to Cuba. (*AP*, 9/5/05)

May 9: Four Cubans that were allegedly trying to reach the US were detained at the Nicaraguan border with Honduras, said Nicaragua's top Immigration official, Avil Ramírez. The Cubans were arrested at the border checkpoint in Las Manos when they attempted to use Costa Rican passports. The official said that the passports presented by the Cubans had been issued in Costa Rica and that the detainees had claimed to have obtained the documents in Asunción, Paraguay. (*AFP*, 10/5/05)

May 10: The revitalisation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will continue when Cuba assumes its stewardship from Malaysia next year, Cuban ambassador to Malaysia Pedro Monzon Barata said. He said that over the past two years, under Malaysia's leadership, the 114-member movement had progressed from being considered as weak and insignificant to becoming a loud and courageous organisation in voicing out its opinions. "It is clear for us to continue revitalising the movement and strengthening the group although it doesn't mean under the same slogan (as Malaysia's), but we will proceed with the strategies proposed by Malaysia," he told reporters at the Cuban embassy in Kuala Lumpur. (*Bernama*, 10/5/05)

May 10: French Minister of Tourism, Leon Bertrand, is attending Cuba's 25th International Tourism Fair in Havana. At the Fair's opening ceremony, Bertrand said that tourism "is a factor of peace and understanding among peoples." He is the second European Union minister to visit Cuba since January, when the bloc normalized its relations with Havana after a crisis broke out in 2003 over the communist regime's imprisonment of 75 peaceful dissidents and the execution of three ferry hijackers. (*EFE*, 10/5/05)

May 10: Four members of the Cuban musical ensemble Vocalité, on tour in Mexico, were deported back to Cuba following a failed attempt to reach the US border and request political asylum in that country. However, one of the group's vocalists and his wife did manage to cross from Tijuana into US territory and currently remain in an immigration detention centre, awaiting legal proceedings. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 11/5/05)

May 10: Fidel Castro criticized Chile for not pressuring the United States to turn over an anti-castro Cuban. Castro said Chilean President Ricardo Lagos should take advantage of his close ties with the United States to petition the Bush administration to turn over Luis Posada Carriles, who has been implicated in an assassination attempt on the Cuban leader, and the assassination in Washington of former Chilean minister under Salvador Allende's government, Orlando Letelier. He also criticized the secretary-general of the Organization for American State, Jose Miguel Insulza, for not taking the initiative to demand Carriles' extradition from the United States. (*UPI*, 12/5/05)

May 11: "Our democratic process has sought to protect human rights not only in Chile but throughout the world, as well." With those words, Chilean Minister Francisco Vidal responded to Fidel Castro's challenge to both Chilean President Lagos and OAS Secretary General-elect José Miguel Insulza to comment on the involvement of anti-Castro firebrand Luis Posada Carriles in the assassination of Orlando Letelier in Washington in 1976. "We believe that such challenges to the government of Chile, its President and Minister Insulza are bad form," said Vidal. (*El Mercurio*, 11/5/05)

May 11: Fidel Castro said that he "did not mean to offend" his Chilean counterpart Ricardo Lagos, following a war of words spurred by the election of Chilean minister José Miguel Insulza as OAS Secretary General. "I will admit to being forced to resort to rather unorthodox methods, but it was (Insulza and Lagos) who fired the first salvo when they committed the infamy of talking about "democratizing Cuba," said Castro. "It was them who broke protocol because, all of a sudden, after all their gossiping in Washington, they vowed to democratize the Republic of Cuba," said Castro in reference to Insulza's declarations. Castro added that Insulza "then came up with some more idiocy" when he spoke about Cuba's admission into the OAS, "as if we were lining up at the OAS door, waiting to get in! Where does he get off thinking that?," he quipped. (*Reuters, EFE*, 11/5/05)

May 11: Iran and Cuba studied ways for expansion of political, economic and cultural cooperation. Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Euro-American Affairs Morteza Sarmadi and Cuba's Vice President Eumelio Caballero reviewed ways of promoting bilateral ties and some international issues as well, Iran's embassy in the Cuban capital Havana reported. (*IRNA*, 11/5/05)

May 12: Chilean President Ricardo Lagos said that Luis Posada Carriles, currently hidden in the US, should be punished, following repeated challenges by Fidel Castro. "Every terrorist should be punished, as he constitutes a denial through the terrorist activity of human beings," asserted Ricardo Lagos. In a news conference, the Chilean president said there could not be double standards on the issue of terrorism. "On the personage you are asking me about (Posada Carriles), he is being charged with terrorism, there cannot be the slightest doubt he must be tried as such," he told reporters. (*Prensa Latina*, 12/5/05)

May 12: China's top national advisor Jia Qinglin arrived in Havana for a four-day official visit to Cuba at the invitation of Ricardo Alarcon de Quesada, president of the National Assembly of People's Power of Cuba. Jia, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), was greeted by Alarcon and Chinese Ambassador to Cuba Li Lianfu at the airport. (*Xinhua*, 12/5/05)

May 13: A senior Chinese official met with Fidel Castro during a visit aimed at cementing political and economic ties between the two communist nations, state media reported. Jia Qinglin also met with Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and parliament speaker Ricardo Alarcon. Cuban Defense Minister Raul Castro, the president's younger brother and designated successor, and Perez Roque visited China and other Asian nations last month. Jia is head of the

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, an advisory body to China's ceremonial parliament, and a member of Communist Party's ruling nine-man Politburo Standing Committee. (AP, 14/5/05)

May 14: The jailed "military chief" of the now-defunct Medellin drug cartel said the criminal outfit had dealings with Cuba during the 1980s and that its "direct contact" in the Havana regime was Raul Castro, brother of the island's leader. John Jairo Velasquez, better known as "Popeye," made the claims in a telephone interview with Television Española from Combita prison in central Colombia. "Popeye" was reputedly the chief enforcer for the late Pablo Escobar, the ruthless cartel boss killed by police in 1993. In the interview, Velasquez said his knowledge about the link with Raul Castro came from a conversation he witnessed between Escobar and Cuban army Capt. Jorge Martinez Valdes, adjutant to Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa. Both officers were among four people executed by firing squad in 1989 for drug trafficking. (EFE, 14/5/05)

May 15: Former colleagues and investigators describe drug trafficker, John Jairo Velasquez, alias Popeye, as a clown. Popeye has recently attacked Raul Castro - brother of Fidel Castro and head of the Cuban military - to drug trafficking. In high-powered revelations to Colombian and Spanish media from his jail cell just north of Bogota, Velasquez fingered Castro and the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua for facilitating drug shipments to the United States in the 1980s. Velasquez was also a close confidant of Colombian drug kingpin Pablo Escobar. Just how close will help determine the veracity of Velasquez's explosive claim on Television Espanola that Raul Castro was "the direct contact" of Cuban officer Captain Jorge Martinez Valdez, who Velasquez said traveled frequently to Colombia to meet with Escobar and discuss using the island as a transshipment point for drugs and a safe haven for the traffickers. Fidel Castro's government executed Martinez Valdés, along with three other Cuban officers in 1989, after a long military trial - some of which included dramatic public confessions on television. (Knight Ridder Newspapers, 15/5/05)

May 15: Cuban "balseros" detained in Veracruz have requested their fellow countrymen from Miami to assist them in realizing their goal to reach the US and therefore forestall their deportation back to Cuba. The leader of a group of 69 individuals, an English teacher by the name of Elíxander Valladares Quintana, said that none of them intends to remain in México. The illegal immigrants' spokesperson, who has remained in custody for nearly two months, also begged the Mexican government to expedite any legal proceedings pertaining to their immigration status and allow them to continue on to the US so they can be reunited with their relatives. (EFE, 15/5/05)

May 16: The Christian Democratic Organization of America (ODCA) has launched a "campaign of solidarity" with Cuban political prisoners aiming at securing their release. According to the organization's executive secretary Francisco Javier Lara, representatives of 32 parties affiliated with ODCA will participate in the effort. He added that the initiative was developed in behalf of 65 Cuban dissidents incarcerated in March 2003, as well as another 9 detainees, classified as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International. (EFE, 17/5/05)

May 17: Two Polish members of the European Parliament who planned to attend a dissident meeting in Cuba were denied entry by the island's Communist authorities and sent back to Europe, a Polish diplomat said. Boguslaw Sonik and Jacek Protasiewicz arrived in Cuba and were denied entry by immigration officials at the airport of Varadero, Cuba's top beach resort. "The legislators were traveling on private passports and had tourist visas," the Polish consul in Havana, Piotr Turzanski, said. "They were not arrested and told to re-board" the same plane they arrived on, he said. Sonik and Protasiewicz were invited to attend a meeting that opponents of Fidel Castro plan to hold in Havana on May 20 to push for a transition to democracy in Cuba. Sonik said they were ejected despite their status as diplomats. "Despite the fact that we showed our diplomatic passports, they ejected us out of Cuba where we went to as tourists to take part in a meeting of Havana citizens," he told the press in Warsaw. (EUObserver, Reuters, 18/5/05)

May 18: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and St. Lucia's Petrus Compton held official talks at the Havana Foreign Affairs Ministry, aimed at further expanding bilateral relations. The Cuban foreign minister said Compton's visit coincides with the joint commission meeting between both countries, and noted the CARICOM Summit, to be

held in Barbados late 2005, will be a new opportunity to continue working "for development and peace." During his stay in Havana, Compton will also meet with the President of Cuban National Peoples' Power Assembly (Congress), Ricardo Alarcon and Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/5/05)

May 18: The Cuba-Grenada Joint Commission's 8th Session achieved reactivation and strengthening of cooperation in health, education, culture, construction and civil defense. Among agreements stand out the Cuban commitment to contribute to the creation of a civil defense system in Grenada for the early detection of natural phenomena, training and recovery of people. Grenadian Einstein Louison, Minister of National Security and Development of Trade and Private Sector, asserted Havana's experience in the field may help his country, which was devastated by the passage of Hurricane Ivan in September 2004. (*Prensa Latina*, 19/5/05)

May 19: Former Spanish president José María Aznar and the leader of the Liberal Front Party of Brazil, Jorge Bornhausen are hosting in Rio de Janeiro a meeting of the Executive Council of the International Center Democrat (IDC) association. Prior to this event, a seminar entitled "A Democratic Future for Cuba" was also conducted in Brazil, featuring discussions on the lack of freedoms on the island. Cuban opposition leaders and activists participated in the seminar. (*AmericaEconomica.Com*, 19/5/05)

May 19: The European Union criticised Cuba's decision to stop two EU lawmakers from entering the Caribbean island state to take part in a meeting of opposition figures. Polish EU deputies Jacek Protasiewicz and Boguslav Sonik were turned back by Cuban authorities when they tried to enter the communist state to meet with dissidents. "It's a pity that these kinds of incidents take place with parliamentarians, that they see how they cannot enter the country," said Amadeu Altafaj, spokesman for European development and aid commissioner Louis Michel. "These kind of incidents do certainly not go in the direction that the European Union has set (...) which is based on political dialogue," Altafaj said. (*AFP*, 19/5/05)

May 19: Cuban exiles' groups in Spain expressed their concern at the fact that the Spanish government has decided, for the time being, not to send any representatives to the first Congress for Democracy in Cuba, which is due to begin tomorrow on the outskirts of Havana. No MPs or prominent members of the main Spanish political parties have confirmed their attendance, either. The congress is organized by the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, an organization led by Marta Beatriz Roque, Rene Gomez Manzano and Felix Bonne Carcasses, three Cuban former political prisoners. (*La Razón*, 19/5/05)

May 19: Half a dozen Polish journalists were detained in Cuba, following the expulsion of two Polish deputies from the European Parliament. All of those detained by authorities had been planning to meet Cuban dissidents taking part in the meeting organized by the dissident organization the Assembly for the Promotion of Civil Society. Maciej Staszinski from Gazeta Wyborca was detained together with two Polish Euro Parliamentarians and was sent back to Poland. The Polish group was among dozens of foreign politicians and journalists invited as observers to the meeting. (*Polskie Radio*, 19/5/05)

May 19: Cuba expelled a Czech senator and a German legislator, hours before they were due to attend a meeting sponsored by opponents of Fidel Castro. Czech senator Karel Schwarzenberg was among dozens of European legislators invited to the first general meeting of the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba, an umbrella organisation of small dissident groups led by economist Martha Beatriz Roque. "The police fetched me at the hotel, brought me to the airport and put me on a plane," the senator said by cellphone before boarding a flight to Europe. "This is the behaviour of totalitarian states." A German diplomat said Arnold Vaatz, deputy head of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group in the Bundestag, had also been taken to the airport and put on a flight for Europe on Thursday night. Schwarzenberg, former Czech President Vaclav Havel's chief of staff for two years, was also on a tourist visa, but insisted he had not broken any law. "It is very astonishing to be pushed out of a country without doing anything

against the law," he said. "I was invited (to the dissidents meeting) and I would have gone. It is not against the law, even Cuban law." (*IOL, AP, 19/5/05*)

May 20: The Czech Foreign Ministry Friday summoned Cuba's representative in Prague to protest the deportation of a Czech lawmaker from Cuba. Deputy Foreign Minister Petr Kolar summoned the Cuban charge d'affaires in Prague, Aymee Hernandez Quesada, to "strongly protest the action of Cuban authorities," the ministry said in a statement. (*AP, 20/5/05*)

May 20: The German Foreign Ministry summoned Cuba's ambassador to explain why a politician was expelled from the communist island country earlier in the day, a ministry spokesman said. The ministry would like to talk with the ambassador to clear up any misunderstandings and get information on the incident, the spokesman said. (*AP, 21/5/05*)

May 20: The European Union described as "unacceptable" the expulsion from Cuba of two members of the bloc's parliament, saying such actions by the Communist regime jeopardize a recent thawing of relations between Havana and Brussels. The position of the European Commission, the administrative branch of the EU, was provided at a press conference by Amadeu Altafaj, spokesman on matters of development and aid. He quoted Louis Michel, the bloc's commissioner for development and aid, as saying: "European Parliament members have the right to travel, move around and take part in meetings with the political opposition to the Cuban regime as they see fit." Michel always has been in favor of political dialogue with the Cuban government instead of sanctions. But if episodes like these expulsions continue, "even Cuba's best friends are going to have problems" in maintaining the status quo, said Altafaj. (*EFE, Globe and Mail, 20,21/5/05*)

May 20: Two Spanish former senators and a sitting member of the Iberian nation's lower house were expelled by Cuba, officials from their respective political parties told the press. Two members of the conservative Popular Party, former Senators Isabel San Baldomero and Rosa Lopez Garnica, were booted off the island, according to the PP, while lawmaker Jordi Xucla, of the moderate Catalan nationalist party CiU, was expelled too. The communications secretary of the main opposition PP, Gabriel Elorriaga, said at a press conference in Madrid that Cuban authorities prevented the former lawmakers from making telephone calls. (*ABC, 21/5/05*)

May 20: The Spanish government said in a press release that the expulsions of three Spanish lawmakers from Cuba were "unacceptable," adding that they had occurred "without the Spanish diplomatic and consular authorities being informed by the Cuban authorities." The statement, made by the Foreign Ministry, also said that it is the Spanish government's "wish to continue working on democratization and in defense of rights and liberties in Cuba." Cuban Ambassador to Madrid Alberto Velazco was summoned by Spain's Foreign Affairs Minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos, with regards of the expulsions. But, Velazco excused himself and sent the embassy's Second Secretary to listen to the Spanish government's complaints. (*ABC, EFE, 20,21/5/05*)

May 20: Italian Foreign Affairs Minister Gianfranco Fini has called for Cuba's ambassador in Rome, Maria de Los Angeles Florez Prida, with regards to Havana's arrest of Francesco Battistini, a journalist working for Italy's largest newspaper "Corriere della sera". The Italian embassy in Cuba has been tasked with overseeing the Italian journalist's handling by Cuban authorities and with pursuing his immediate release. (*AGI, 20/5/05*)

May 20: Liberal Party MP Birgitta Ohlsson, who sits on the board of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, has been refused a visa to enter Cuba. Ohlsson was to take part in a major meeting which is being planned by the Cuban opposition. Ohlsson wants Sweden to use international aid to force Fidel Castro to introduce increased democracy. "I think it is our moral duty and obligation," Birgitta Ohlsson said. (*BBC, 20/5/05*)

May 21: Mexican authorities rescued 16 Cuban "rafters" off the Caribbean coast of the state of Quintana Roo, state Public Safety Secretary Pedro Flota said. The Cubans were discovered on a flimsy boat off the port of Majahual, used

by luxury ships, and turned over to the local office of the National Migration Institute, or INM. The passengers - 12 men, two women and two children - were treated by physicians and the rescue team after they displayed signs of dehydration and malnutrition, though they were otherwise in good health, Flota said. The Cubans said they left a town in Pinar del Rio province, Cuba, on April 30, and sailed in the direction of Miami, Florida, but ocean currents pushed them very close to the Belize border. According to the INM, this year 120 undocumented immigrants have been intercepted off Quintana Roo alone. *(EFE, 21/5/05)*

May 21: The International Federation of Journalists protested to Fidel Castro over the arrest and expulsion of journalists from Poland and Italy and called on the country to end its long-running campaign against independent journalists which has seen dozens of reporters and jailed. The foreign journalists were trying to cover a meeting of dissidents when they were arrested and detained. The Polish journalists arrested and finally expelled from Havana were Seweryn Blumsztajn of the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Jerzy Jurecki of the regional daily *Tygodnik Podhalanski*, and Wojciech Rogasin of *Newsweek* and who had come to cover a congress of dissidents taking place in Havana. Also held was their interpreter Maciej Sarna. The IFJ supported also the protests of its affiliate in Italy the *Federazione della Stampa Italiana (FNSI)* over the arrest and expulsion of Francesco Battistini, the correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera*. *(IFJ Press Release, 22/5/05)*

May 21: Lawmakers from Spain, Italy and Germany urged their governments take to a tougher line with Cuba after the communist government expelled a number of Europeans ahead of an opposition rally in Havana. Spanish officials demanded that Cuba explain why two Spanish politicians were told to leave the country and a third threatened with expulsion before the rare opposition demonstration, the Foreign Ministry said. *(AP, 21/5/05)*

May 22: Venezuelan and Cuban youths held a rally in Caracas to promote the 16th World Festival of Youths and Students, scheduled for August in Caracas. Under the theme "For Peace and Solidarity, We Fight Imperialism and War," the meeting was chaired by leaders from the Venezuelan National Institute of Youth and the Cuban Young Communist League (UJC). There were also over 1,000 youth and students, including the island's candidates for delegates to the Festival. *(Prensa Latina, 23/5/05)*

May 22: Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos called the conference of dissidents in Cuba, opposed to the Communist regime of Fidel Castro, a positive step despite it being overshadowed by the expulsion of European lawmakers and journalists. Moratinos said the expulsions endangered relations between Cuba and the European Union. "But we have to recognize the positive side," which was an uncensored meeting taking place in Havana, "where dissidents could debate, discuss and organize," Moratinos said. *(AFP, 22/5/05)*

May 23: Cuba and Burkina Faso strengthened bilateral cooperation during the 9th Intergovernmental Joint Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technological Collaboration that began in Havana. Cuban Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration Minister Marta Lomas and Burkina Faso Delegate Minister for Regional Cooperation Jean de Dieu Somda presided over the bilateral meetings. *(Prensa Latina, 23/5/05)*

May 23: Spain defended the EU's recent rapprochement with Cuba, saying that despite setbacks such as last week's expulsion from the island of several European legislators, things are better now than before the thaw. Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos called for "objectivity" in evaluating what he said were the "advances" brought about by the EU's policy shift - headed by Spain - toward Cuba. Key elements of the new policy include the freeing of dissidents, as well as allowing the opposition to hold a congress this past weekend in Havana. "This is about looking at where we were with the earlier measures, which were the blockade and the lack of dialogue with Cuba, and where we are today," Moratinos said at a press conference at the end of the EU's Foreign Relations Council meeting in Brussels. *(EFE, 23/5/05)*

May 23: Cuba has asked Mexico for a report on the passage through Mexico of a Cuban exile sought by Venezuela for trial in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban passenger jet, authorities announced. Luis Posada Carriles, a militant opponent of Fidel Castro, has acknowledged entering the United States secretly through Mexico in mid-March. Mexico's Interior Department is handling Cuba's request and Mexico will eventually report back, said Ruben Aguilar, a spokesman for Mexican President Vicente Fox. (*Basque News*, 24/5/05)

May 24: President Kirchner denied that the decision to suspend his visit to Cuba was a "sign" intended for the United States. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Rafael Bielsa explained that the visit to Cuba "has not been cancelled but simply delayed" because of "issues related to the president's schedule". Kirchner spoke of his eventual visit to Cuba during a lengthy interview on Radio 10. Kirchner said that he is not going to Cuba because "in every visit the conditions must be right in order to produce a positive institutional effect for both countries." He also said that his decision to suspend the visit had nothing to do with the Argentine position in the votes in the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva. When asked if he wants elections to be held in Cuba, Kirchner merely answered: "I am a man of democracy and I believe that democracy should exist all over the world." (*BBC*, 24/5/05)

May 24: Several press advocacy groups have condemned the Cuban government's detention and expulsion of foreign journalists who traveled to Cuba to cover a May 20 gathering of Cuban opposition activists and international observers. In a statement, the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) condemned the expulsion from Cuba of five journalists from Poland and Italy who had gone to Cuba's capital city of Havana to cover the dissidents' meeting, formally called the "Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba. The Paris-based organization Reporters Without Borders said the expulsions demonstrated that "once again the Cuban authorities are trying to stifle all dissent by violating press freedom in the most crude and brutal fashion," adding: "This time they have targeted foreign journalists, although they had permission to come to Cuba. We firmly condemn these repressive methods." The Miami-based Inter-American Press Association said it "emphatically opposes and considers the expulsion of five European journalists from Cuba, who were covering the meeting of the political opposition, as another example of the lack of tolerance" for press freedom by the regime of Fidel Castro. (*Washington File*, 24/5/05)

May 24: A new TV station backed by Venezuela, Argentina, Cuba and Uruguay began transmitting by satellite as part of the test phase for a project organizers say will bring Latin America an alternative to large commercial media outlets. The first images shown on Telesur included promotional clips of people from various Latin countries dancing, smiling and holding political protests. The station has its headquarters in Caracas, in a building adjacent to Venezuelan state television. (*AP*, 24/5/05)

May 26: Germany's foreign minister said that Cuba needs to make progress on human rights and democracy as European countries consider their relations with the communist island after the expulsion of politicians and journalists. Spain, Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland and Italy have all demanded that Cuba explain why it expelled a number of their citizens before an opposition rally in Havana. "I am not satisfied at all. We view the situation in Cuba very critically in terms of human rights and democratic freedom," Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said after meeting his Spanish counterpart, Miguel Angel Moratinos, whose government has led recent European moves to increase dialogue with Cuba. (*AP*, 26/5/05)

May 26: The 3rd Venezuela-Cuba Parliamentary Meeting, which honed ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) and the struggle against terrorism in two working days, was closed in Caracas with a final declaration. Cuba's Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón and Venezuela's Nicolas Maduro analyzed the bilateral exchanges as fruitful. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/5/05)

May 26: Cuba did not warn Mexico in time of the presence of Luis Posada Carriles, a Venezuelan citizen accused of terrorism by Cuba and Venezuela, Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Alberto Derbez said. The Mexican government did not know where and with whom Posada was in March when he entered the United States via Mexico, Derbez told

Radio W in Luxembourg, where he attended a meeting with European Union representatives. He added that Havana "let him (Posada) pass, although it knew where he was." The foreign minister said that if Mexico had learned of his presence, Posada would have been arrested and extradited to Venezuela, which indicted him for having detonated a bomb in a Cuban airliner, killing 73 people in 1976. (*People's Daily Online*, 27/5/05)

May 27: European Union (EU) ambassadors to Cuba met with independent journalists and intellectuals, not all of whom oppose the government of Fidel Castro, during an event that could be described as "academic," said one of the participants. Dagoberto Valdés, a layman who runs Catholic magazine Vitral made a presentation on the subject of information on the island. Among the oppositionists that attended the event was Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who was recently released from prison after receiving a 20-year jail sentence in 2003; his wife, journalist Miriam Leiva; Manuel Vázquez Portal, a poet also released from prison last year; Juan Carlos González Leyva, a lawyer; journalist Guillermo Fariñas; and Roberto de Miranda, a pedagogue. The non-dissident participants included artists, poets and writers. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 28/5/05)

May 28: Cuba will offer support to the Caribbean island of Grenada for its civil defense measures, particularly in the installation of an early warning system for natural disasters, it was revealed in Havana. The agreement was drawn up by authorities representing both countries on the occasion of the 7th Bilateral Joint Commission, held in Havana earlier this month. A Cuban official source explained that the accord on civil defense is one the co-operation programmes agreed with Grenada for the 2005-2006 period. The sectors included in the accords are public health, education, agriculture, sports and culture. (*World Data Service*, 28/5/05)

May 30: The Chamber Choir of Matanzas City, 100 kilometers east of Havana, will perform in the World Festival of this genre in Canada in June. Conducted by Jose Antonio Mendez Valencia, the choir will present a repertoire including themes by composers from Sweden, Germany, Greece, France and Norway, and more. The Cuban artists also expect to exchange with choirs from Spain, the United States, Canada and Mexico. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/5/05)

May 31: Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez announced that an initial group of 300 graduates have received scholarships and will travel to Cuba soon to study "integral community medicine." Chavez presided at the graduation of some 20,700 people emerging from the so-called "Ribas Mission," a program designed by the Caracas government to incorporate the poor into secondary education and to train Venezuelans "for the social battle." "Brother Fidel offered 10,000 spots for the Ribas Mission in integral community medicine," Chavez said, without specifying if the scholarships were bestowed by his government or Cuba's. The scholarship recipients will be trained in Cuba to foster "the social, political and economic revolution" being pushed forward by Venezuela's "Bolivarian" government, Chavez said. (*EFE*, 31/5/05)

Terrorism

May 30: Cuba has announced plans to stage an international meeting against terrorism in June. The official news agency Prensa Latina said the meeting would be attended by hundreds of intellectuals, artists, union and social leaders, congressmen and political leaders. The two-day event will be held under the theme "Against terrorism, for truth and justice". Cuban authorities have been critical of the position adopted by the United States with regards to the request by Havana and Venezuela for Luis Posada Carriles to be extradited on charges related to the 1976 bombing of the Cubana airline, which claimed the lives of 73 people. (*CMC*, 30/5/05)

Security

May 3: Cuba has disclosed that its military engineers took part in the widening of the famous Ho Chi Minh Trail in the midst of Vietnam's war with the United States. An interview with retired Cuban colonel Roberto León in the official paper Rebel Youth opens up an episode touted as one of the greatest secrets of the 1965-1975 war. León says he led a team of 23 Cuban military engineers and about 50 Vietnamese nationals in work on the trail over seven months. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 3/5/05)

May 4: The head of the Brazilian intelligence agency dismissed rumors about some of his agents being trained in Cuba. Mauro Marcelo de Lima, Director of the Intelligence Agency of Brazil (ABIN) said that a recent trip to Cuba was in line with a strategy to strengthen ties with sister agencies in the region and not an effort to outsource the training of his agents. He pointed that the Brazilian intelligence services have not had ties to their Cuban counterparts for 50 years. (*AP*, 4/5/05)

May 4: North Korea and Cuba held senior-level military talks in Pyongyang and exchanged views on boosting friendly relations and issues of mutual concern, the North Korean Central News Agency said. The KCNA said the discussions proceeded in "a friendly atmosphere," but it did not provide further information except for the names of the chief delegates of the talks. North Korea was represented by General Ri Myong-su, while the Cuban delegation was led by Lt. General Leonardo Andollo Valdés, vice-chief of its general staff and director of the operations department. (*Yonhap*, 4/5/05)

May 6: Fidel Castro once again addressed the nation in a special appearance at Havana's International Convention Center during which he spoke of the very special relationship enjoyed by Havana and Caracas and warned that any US attack on Venezuela would ignite the entire continent. The United States campaign against Chávez, noted Fidel Castro, includes making every effort to prevent Venezuela from buying even light arms with which to defend itself. Venezuela, he added, has every right to protect itself against a possible aggressor -especially given the history of the United States in Latin America and the number of nations it has invaded and its policy of pre-emptive attack. An attack on Venezuela would ignite the entire continent, warned Fidel Castro. The intention of the White House is clear, he added - to provoke a war that would lead to Venezuela's rich oil fields. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/5/05)

May 11: Cuba carried out military exercises in the western region, as part of troops' regular training, according to a press release from the Revolutionary Armed Forces. The communiqué says that for that reason, troops will be deployed in the region and explosions will be heard in some areas in the provinces of Havana and the City of Havana. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/5/05)

May 10: Vice-Marshal of the Korean People's Army Kim Yong-chun, member of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) National Defense Commission and chief of the KPA General Staff, met and had a friendly talk with the delegation of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba headed by Lt-Gen Leonardo Andollo Valdés, vice-chief of the General Staff and director of the Operations Department of the Revolutionary Armed Forces. (*KCNA*, 11/5/05)

May 13: Cuba's Armed Revolutionary Forces Minister, Army General Raul Castro, rated as successful the military drills in the western region, which he attended along with other top-ranking chiefs, Granma daily reported. The two-day maneuvers allowed practicing new ideas in the military theater of operations, the daily noted. "I feel very happy for having corroborated our real capabilities and how much we have advanced. I am convinced the enemy can be defeated," Granma quoted Raul Castro as saying. (*Prensa Latina*, 13/5/05)

US-Cuba Relations

May 1: Fidel Castro ripped the US government in his May Day address for harboring Cuban-exile radical and admitted bomber Luis Posada Carriles, who the Cuban leader said was "a time bomb" for Washington. Castro continued to push his campaign of recent weeks against Posada in an address to some 1.3 million people in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution for the May Day celebration. The US administration "is involved in one of the most embarrassing and delicate episodes of its terrorist adventures, aggression and lies against Cuba," Castro said. The Cuban leader accused President George W. Bush of being "a cheat and a fraud." (*AP, EFE, 1/5/05*)

May 2: Fugitive cop killer Joanne Chesimard is now on the same terrorist watch lists that include Osama bin Laden. Chesimard was convicted of the 1973 murder of Trooper Werner Foerster, but she escaped to Cuba and was granted political asylum after three gunmen busted her out of what was then the Clinton Correctional Institution for Women in Hunterdon County in 1979. Garden State officials have failed to convince Cuba to hand over Chesimard, 57, who goes by the name Assata Shakur. In an indication of how badly New Jersey authorities still want to recapture the Black Liberation Army member who executed a state trooper as he lay on the ground 32 years ago, the bounty on Chesimard's head was increased from \$150,000 to \$1 million. (*Sun Sentinel, 2/5/05*)

May 2: While processing 18 Cubans who reached shore near Bahia Honda State Park, the US Border Patrol was also trying to figure out how they got there. "We're trying to determine if they were smuggled or if they were rafters," said Kerry Heck, a supervisory patrol agent. "But we suspect they were smuggled." The group included eight men, three women, five boys and two girls, ranging in age from two months to 62. Officials believe they're all in good health. (*The Miami Herald, 2/5/05*)

May 3: The current US administration is leading the country towards the days of Adolph Hitler's Germany, world thinkers affirmed in Havana. Delegates to the "In Defense of Humanity" meeting, held at Havana's Convention Center on the occasion of May Day festivities, agreed that this phenomenon began to be particularly noticeable after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. They gave as examples the preventive wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US deep-seated contempt for the UN and international law, election frauds, and double standards in anti-terrorism, among others. (*Prensa Latina, 3/5/05*)

May 3: Venezuela's Supreme Court ruled the government should seek extradition from the United States of an anti-communist Cuban exile wanted by Havana on terrorism charges. Luis Posada Carriles, who has Venezuelan citizenship and escaped from prison in Caracas in 1985, has been accused by Cuba of several attacks, including the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed dozens of people. His attorney said last month Posada had applied for asylum in the United States, although US officials said he was not in their custody and they were reviewing his case. (*CNN, 3/5/05*)

May 3: A top State Department official denied Cuban allegations that the United States is providing a haven for a man Cuba accuses of perpetrating a terrorist bombing against a Cuban airliner in 1976. "I don't even know that he is in the United States," said Roger Noriega, the top State Department official for Western Hemisphere affairs. Noriega said Cuban claims about Posada "may be a completely manufactured issue." The United States, he said, "has no interest in giving quarter to someone who has committed criminal acts." Unlike Cuba, Noriega added, "we are a country that respects the rule of law." (*CNN, 3/5/05*)

May 3: Cuba's food importer company Alimport and the US state of Vermont have agreed to promote the sale of agricultural products, mainly cattle, milk powder and mayonnaise on the island. Vermont's independent Senator James Jeffords and Alimport's President Pedro Alvarez signed a memorandum of understanding, an evidence of growing ties with the agro-business community of the United States. Jeffords described his trip to Cuba as very informative and productive and he committed himself to do all he could "to lift the trade embargo and promote closer relations between our two peoples and our two governments", said the Vermont lawmaker. (*Prensa Latina, 3/5/05*)

May 4: Bowing to criticism that it could get sucked into the battle between Washington and Havana, Chicago's Loyola University has suspended a US government-funded program to provide English language courses to adults in a poor Havana neighborhood, a university spokeswoman said. Since 1999, students at the Jesuit school have paid their own expenses to teach English for two weeks during the summer at a Catholic community center in Cuba. But last fall Loyola signed a \$425,000 grant with the US government to continue the courses under a program managed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) that seeks to spur political change on the communist island. In Cuba, even a modest and benign educational program like Loyola's garners scrutiny because it is being financed by the US at a time when relations between the two nations are at their lowest point in years. Maeve Kiley, a Loyola spokeswoman, said the university informed faculty and students early last month that its Cuba program was suspended "at the request of our Cuban partners." (*Chicago Tribune*, 5/5/05)

May 5: Wayne Smith, former Chief of the US Interests Section in Havana between in 1979 and 1982, issued a statement taking issue with the remarks of Roger Noriega, assistant secretary of state, on the question of whether accused terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is in the United States. "On May 2, Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega stated that he did not 'even know if he (Luis Posada Carriles) is in the United States.' Cuba claims that Posada Carriles is here, said Noriega, 'may be a completely manufactured issue'". "Well, not quite, Mr. Noriega. On April 13, Posada Carriles' lawyer did state categorically that his client was in the US and requested political asylum for him so that he can remain here. Mr. Noriega offers no explanation as to why his attorney would lie about Posada Carriles being here in the US", Smith said in his statement. (*US Newswire*, 5/5/05)

May 5: Venezuela formally requested the extradition of a radical Cuban exile who is reportedly hiding in Florida and is wanted in Venezuela in an airline bombing that killed 73 people. Bombing suspect Luis Posada Carriles' April 13 petition for US asylum has roiled Washington's strained relations with Venezuela and sparked anger in Cuba, the target of the attacks blamed on him. The asylum request said Posada, 77, managed to slip into the United States. (*Los Angeles Times*, 6/5/05)

May 6: A federal judge ruled against awarding damages to 13 people who were tear-gassed by immigration agents during the raid to seize 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez in April 2000. US District Judge K. Michael Moore issued a 19-page decision saying that the demonstrators and bystanders failed to show enough credible evidence that federal officers' use of force during the raid was "unreasonable under the circumstances." The 13 people had sued the government for \$3.25 million, claiming they had lingering injuries after they were sprayed at close range while on their own property or behind barricades. (*The New York Times*, 6/5/05)

May 6: The US group Audioslave broke decades-long barriers with a thundering concert before thousands of Cuban fans -- who knocked over barriers to get closer to the first US rock band to play an outdoor concert in Cuba. Chris Cornell's scream -- "I won't do what you tell me!" -- boomed off the high-rise apartment buildings on south side of the stage as feedback shrieks from Tom Morello's guitar drifted into the night breeze over the Caribbean to the north. It was a distinct difference from the orderly, clean-cut crowds who march in massive anti-US protests along the Malecon waterfront at the same venue: the Jose Marti Anti-Imperialist Tribunal before the US Interests Section, or diplomatic mission. (*The New York Times*, 8/5/05)

May 6: The Senate committee considering John Bolton's nomination for US ambassador to the United Nations heard from two former State Department officials with opposing views on how he would perform in the post. The committee is reviewing accusations that Bolton, currently the top US diplomat for arms control, bullied subordinates and tried to force intelligence analysis of Cuba, Syria, North Korea and Iran to conform to his hard-line views. (*Reuters*, 6/5/05)

May 7: The father and brother of an Italian tourist killed by a bomb in a Havana hotel in 1997 say they are outraged that Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles, implicated in the attack, is seeking asylum in the United States. Livio Di Celmo, whose brother Fabio died in the hotel blast, says he's willing to travel to Miami to testify against Posada in any

asylum or extradition proceeding. Posada has never been charged with the bombing. He has alternately admitted to the attack and then denied it. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/5/05)

May 8: Hundreds of British holiday makers have had their travel plans wrecked after Ebookers cancelled all its bookings to Cuba. The travel agency group also owns Travelbag, Flightbookers and Bridge the World, all of which have cancelled every holiday or flight booking they hold to Cuba. The group was bought by Cendant, a large American corporation, in February, and has decided it must now comply with the US trade embargo prohibiting trade with or travel to Cuba. "It seems utterly ridiculous", said one traveller who was called by Ebookers and told it would no longer be taking him on his honeymoon to Cuba. "The Iberia plane we were booked on is still flying to Cuba, but we're now having to re-book with another company. Ebookers didn't give any explanation - they just said it was something to do with their new owners." (*The Observer*, 8/5/05)

May 9: In the latest twist to the presence in South Florida of controversial Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles, a former Miami police detective said Posada is lying when he denies involvement in the bombing of a Cuban passenger jet in 1976. Diosdado C. Diaz, who left the force in 1999, told the press that one of his top informants -- exile Ricardo "Monkey" Morales -- stated to him in 1982 that he supplied the explosives and that Posada prepped them to bring down the plane. But on another occasion, Morales denied Posada was involved. He said another militant prepared the explosives -- Gustavo Castillo, a suspect in the 1976 car-bomb attack on Miami exile radio commentator Emilio Milián. Castillo said he had nothing to do with the plane bombing. (*The Miami Herald*, 9/5/05)

May 9: As world leaders celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany in Moscow's Red Square, Communist Cuba held its own parade and accused the United States of using "fascist" policies to dominate the world. The president of Cuba's National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon, denounced the world's only superpower for employing military force unilaterally in an apparent reference to the US invasion of Iraq. "They practice a fascist military doctrine and proclaim their right to attack anyone when they please, using their powerful military machine, without any justification," he said in a speech marking the 60th anniversary of the defeat of Germany's Third Reich. "The Fourth Reich will be defeated. The 21st century will see the final defeat of fascism," Alarcon said. The ceremony at a monument to Soviet soldiers outside Havana was attended by Lyubov K. Sliska, first deputy speaker of the Russian Duma, and Cuban Defense Minister Raul Castro. (*CNN*, 9/5/05)

May 9: The United States has no idea of the whereabouts of anti-Castro Cuban Luis Posada Carriles and has received no request for his extradition from Venezuela. "In terms of where he presently is, I think it's fair to say we don't know," US State Department spokesman Tom Casey told reporters. "Certainly the United States has no interest in allowing anyone with a criminal background to enter the United States," he said. Although Venezuela's Foreign Minister Ali Rodriguez said that he would ask the United States to extradite Posada Carriles "within hours," the US spokesman said that the State Department had received no such request. (*AFP*, 9/5/05)

May 9: A Cuban exile long regarded as a violent opponent of Fidel Castro has applied for asylum in the United States, a government official said. Luis Posada Carriles, a suspect in the bombing of a Cuban passenger plane in 1976, reportedly slipped into South Florida several weeks ago but the Bush administration says it cannot confirm his whereabouts. To be eligible for political asylum, Posada must prove that he has a well-founded fear of persecution in his native country, said a Department of Homeland Security official. The official, asking not to be identified, said consideration of asylum requests includes national security and law enforcement criteria. A person who seeks asylum need not be in the presence of a US government official when applying. (*AP*, 9/5/05)

May 10: Luis Posada Carriles attended at least two planning meetings for the bombing of a Cuban jetliner in 1976 that killed 73 people, according to once-secret documents provided to the press by the private National Security Archive in Washington. "There is no way the Bush administration can ignore the historical record as it evaluates his petition for safe harbor," said Peter Kornbluh, a senior analyst and Cuba specialist at the archive. One FBI document dated

November 3, 1976, quotes a confidential informant saying Luis Posada Carriles was among a group that discussed "the bombing of a Cubana Airlines airplane" before an attack at a hotel bar in Caracas, Venezuela. Posada, a former senior officer of the Venezuelan intelligence service, denies involvement in the bombing, which killed 73 people, including 24 members of Cuba's national fencing team, according to his lawyer, Eduardo Soto. Soto did not immediately return a call for comment. Other documents that will be published confirm that Posada worked for the CIA through the late 1960s and was an informant for the agency until the mid-1970s, Kornbluh said. (*The New York Times*, *The Miami Herald*, 10/5/05)

May 10: Cubans will stage a giant march passing by the United States Interests Section headquarters in Havana to demand the US administration to arrest the terrorist of Cuban origin Luis Posada Carriles. The march was announced by Fidel Castro in a televised address to the nation, dedicated to denounce the presence in US territory of Posada Carriles. "Let's see if this gentleman [George Bush] does what is most convenient for him and does what he must", Fidel Castro said that the march would serve to "demand punishment for the murderers". Fidel Castro has held about 20 televised appearances over the past two months, many of them to accuse US President George Bush and his administration of coddling terrorists and of claiming not to know where Posada -- a former CIA employee -- is hiding in the United States. He referred to Bush as "the little Hitler" and suggested he wanted to dominate the world. Castro dedicated more than an hour to reading for Cubans a New York Times story about the Posada case and again listed numerous terrorist actions that that Cuban officials attribute to Posada or his associates. He even suggested that Posada and his friend Orlando Bosch might have ties to the 1963 assassination of former US President John F. Kennedy. (*Prensa Latina*, *AP*, 10/5/05)

May 10: Fidel Castro has rejected calls to hand over a fugitive who US officials put on a terrorism list this month, saying she is an innocent victim of racial persecution. "They wanted to portray her as a terrorist, something that was an injustice, a brutality, an infamous lie," Castro said in a television address. While Castro did not identify the woman by name, he was apparently alluding to Assata Shakur, the former Joanne Chesimard, who was put on a US government terrorism watch list on May 2. On the same day, New Jersey officials announced a \$1 million reward for her capture. Castro's remarks were his first comment on the new US actions. A member of the Black Liberation Army, Shakur, 57, was convicted in 1973 of killing New Jersey State Trooper Werner Foerster as he lay on the ground. She escaped from prison in 1979 and fled to Cuba. Castro referred to her as a victim of "the fierce repression against the Black movement in the United States" and said she had been "a true political prisoner." (*CNN*, *AP*, 10/5/05)

May 10: The Cuban government was in a High Court battle with an American company over the rights to music heard on the award-winning album Buena Vista Social Club and the film of the same name. A company run by the communist state's interior ministry had tried to register itself as the copyright owner of the songs in the UK. The US company, Peer International Corporation, which has claimed ownership of the songs since the 1930s, took its battle to the British courts, saying it had always paid the writers and their heirs a fair price. But Editora Musical de Cuba (EMC) said the poor Cubans got virtually nothing. The contracts should not be recognised in law as they were "unconscionable bargains". In papers submitted by Peter Prescott, QC, EMC said it would show that "these contracts were so cunningly contrived as to allow the publishers to get away with paying the composers practically nothing". The composers got "nothing or, at most, a few pesos and maybe a drink of rum". (*The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, 11/5/05)

May 10: A US House of Representatives resolution urged the international community to "actively oppose" any attempts by Cuba to punish participants in the "historic meeting" organized by the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, an illegal opposition organization in the island. "The House of Representatives extends its support and solidarity to the organizers and participants of the historic meeting of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba (...) urges the international community to support the Assembly's mission to bring democracy to Cuba ; (...) urges the Administration and international community to actively oppose any attempts by the Castro regime to repress or punish the organizers and participants of the Assembly; and (...) shares the pro-democracy ideals of the Assembly to Promote the Civil

Society in Cuba and believes that this Assembly and others will hasten the day of freedom and democracy for the people of Cuba”, the resolution says. (*Reuters, US Congress Press Release, 10, 12/5/05*)

May 11: Fidel Castro stepped up his denunciations of the US government for failure to arrest a suspected airplane bomber and said other alleged terrorists also should face trial. In a televised appearance that lasted nearly four hours, Castro read summaries of newly released US intelligence documents linking Luis Posada Carriles and other anti-Castro militants to terrorist attacks beyond the 1976 bombing of a jetliner that killed 73 people. Castro repeated his demands that the United States locate, arrest and extradite former CIA agent Posada for trial in Venezuela, where he is wanted for trial in the airplane attack. But Castro also increasingly turned the focus to other militants, several of them linked to Posada. Chief among those is Orlando Bosch, a man termed a terrorist in some US intelligence documents, which also link him to the 1976 bombing. He was pardoned by the first President George Bush. Both Posada and Bosch deny involvement in the bombing, but Bosch has several times said that the jetliner was a legitimate target in the war against Castro. Castro said he would accept an international trial for the men to avoid defense claims they would risk death if returned for trial in Venezuela -- though Castro noted that country has no death penalty. He long ago renounced Cuba's right to try Posada. But he said that Bosch, too, should be tried. "That pardon cannot be accepted," Castro said. "Bosch should be judged." (*AP, 11/5/05*)

May 12: Fidel Castro said that the US people will never forgive their rulers for their lies and deceit about Cuban-born terrorists who operate in that country. In a new call for Washington to take actions against Posada Carriles, Orlando Bosch and other terrorists, Castro accused the White House of covering up the truth. "Who is going to believe that the government does not know how and why Posada Carriles entered US territory, or where he is at present?" he wondered. "I think that US public will never forgive the government for how much it has lied," said Fidel Castro. (*Prensa Latina, 13/5/05*)

May 12: In conversations with the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Department of Treasury, K.B. Forbes, the Executive Director of the Consejo de Latinos Unidos, a national non-profit advocacy group that educates and assists Hispanics, called on the office to investigate Sacerdocio Lucumi Shango Eyeife (a Miami for-profit corporation) with ties to the Yoruba Cultural Association (Asociacion Cultural Yoruba de Cuba) -- an organization based in Havana, Cuba that appears to collect hard- currency and useful intelligence for Fidel Castro's government while fraudulently masquerading itself as a "cultural" group and recruits members in the US. Forbes said, "All travel privileges to Cuba under the auspices of Sacerdocio Lucumi Shango Eyeife and known Yoruba Cultural Association members in the United States should be thoroughly investigated." (*PRNewswire, 12/5/05*)

May 13: Venezuela asked the United States to extradite a Cuban exile and former CIA collaborator for his suspected involvement in the downing of a Cuban airliner in a case that tests the U.S. commitment to combat all forms of terrorism. Luis Posada Carriles, who has Venezuelan citizenship, has applied for asylum in the United States, according to his lawyer, but US officials say they do not know the fugitive's whereabouts. The Venezuelan Embassy in Washington delivered a letter requesting the Bush administration hunt down the 77-year-old, and deport him to face trial for a 1976 airliner bombing that killed 73 people. He was arrested in Venezuela more than 20 years ago but escaped from prison without being convicted. The top Venezuelan and Cuban diplomats in Washington reaffirmed the countries wanted to see Posada face justice in Venezuela -- not in Cuba. (*Reuters, 13/5/05*)

May 13: In a conference telephone call facilitated by the US Interests Section in Havana, more than 50 Cuban civil society activists debated a report on national reconciliation written in 2003 by a team of academics led by Dr. Marifeli Pérez Estable. In the discussion with Dr. Pérez Estable participated Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Elsa Morejón, Félix Bonne Carcasés and other members of the opposition. [[Cuban National Reconciliation](#)] (*Cubamet, 13/5/05*)

May 13: Relatives of victims of the 1976 Cubana jet bombing that killed 73 people urged the United States to arrest and extradite fugitive terror suspect Luis Posada Carriles, who has asked for US asylum though he is wanted in

Venezuela and Cuba. "This was not a faceless crime. Our whole lives were disrupted. We never really had closure," Trevor Persaud of Guyana told reporters, remembering the death of his brother Raymond, who was killed in the bombing as he headed to medical school in Cuba. "He was on the way to accomplish his lifelong dream," Persaud said, adding of Posada Carriles that "this guy deserves to be extradited and tried for his crimes in Venezuela." "My mother is still grieving over what happened," almost 30 years on, another brother, Kenrick Persaud, added. (AFP, 13/5/05)

May 15: Cuban migrant smugglers, who for years have brought people from the island to remote spots in the Keys, have adopted a new strategy to get around the heavily patrolled waters off the Keys: Launch their smuggling missions from Collier County in Southwest Florida. The cat-and-mouse shift has everyone, including the Coast Guard and Collier County sheriff's deputies, trying to keep up. "Criminals look to take advantage of vulnerabilities," said Lt. Tony Russell, spokesman for the Coast Guard in Miami. "We are working hard to minimize those. The Florida Straits covers from Cay Sal in the east, to the Marquesas in the west. That's 25,000 square miles of ocean." The increase in smuggling from Collier has been accompanied by another tactic: dropping off the Cuban migrants in the remote Dry Tortugas and Marquesas Islands well off Key West, rather than the Keys mainland. (*The Miami Herald*, 15/5/05)

May 16: Fidel Castro once again spoke to the nation, hammering on the Luis Posada Carriles case and criticizing growing US support for Cuba's internal opposition. Sometimes angry, sometimes laughing in ridicule, Castro in his nighttime talk dismissed US government claims that Posada cannot be found and might not be in the United States at all -- even as the fugitive's attorney and friends have confirmed his presence. And he demanded that President Bush -- whom he called "the little fuhrer" -- live up to his promise to fight terrorism wherever it occurs. Night after night, Fidel Castro has been on television demanding the United States arrest Posada. Speaking for up to four hours at a time, Castro thunders with indignation and laughs at the absurd as he reads the news before a live audience of Communist officials -- occasionally pausing to flip through a scattering of papers in front of him hunting for a quotation. The result is remarkably like a televised version of an Internet blog -- references to outside news sources tightly wrapped in personal commentary. (AP, 16/5/05)

May 17: A Cuban militant in hiding while seeking asylum in the United States denied any involvement in an attack on a Cuban airliner in 1976 but was less forthcoming about a series of bombings targeting Cuban tourist sites in 1997, a newspaper reported. Luis Posada Carriles, who is being sought by Cuba and Venezuela, gave his first interview to *The Miami Herald* in a surreptitious meeting at a luxury downtown condominium after arriving in Miami in March following an illegal trip through Central America. "They accused me of being the intellectual author of fabricating a weapon of war and of treason to the homeland. No one saw me make a bomb," Posada said in a two-hour interview last Wednesday. "Sincerely, I didn't know anything about it." "I feel that I've committed many errors, more than most people," he said. "But I've always believed in rebellion, in the armed struggle. I believe more and more every day that we will triumph against Castro. Victory will be ours." (AP, 17/5/05)

May 17: Hundreds of thousands of Cubans answered Fidel Castro's call to file past the American mission in a "March against Terrorism," demanding that the United States arrest a Cuban militant in the deadly bombing of an airliner. Dressed in his traditional olive green military uniform and cap, the 78-year-old Castro showed up in the crowd outside the US Interests Section minutes before the march was to start. "Down with terrorism!" Castro shouted in brief comments before he stepped off to lead the march. "Down with Nazi doctrines and methods! Down with the lies!" Protesters were calling for the arrest of Castro's longtime foe, Luis Posada Carriles, an elderly Cuban exile who recently traveled to the United States where he is seeking political asylum. Venezuela is seeking the extradition of Posada in the 1976 airliner bombing that killed 73 people. (CNN, EFE, 17/5/05)

May 17: US authorities arrested a Cuban exile who slipped into the country in March and is wanted by Venezuela over the bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people nearly 30 years ago. Luis Posada Carriles, 77, a former CIA collaborator and anti-communist activist who has sought political asylum in the United States, was arrested in Miami just hours after he emerged from hiding to give a series of media interviews. "Today, US Immigration and Customs

Enforcement took Mr. Luis Posada Carriles into custody, pending review of his immigration status," the Department of Homeland Security said in a statement, adding that it had 48 hours to decide on Posada's status. The Homeland Security department statement threw into question whether the United States would approve Venezuela's extradition request. "Under certain circumstances, there are additional legal restrictions on removal due to international treaty obligations," it said. "As a matter of immigration law and policy, ICE does not generally remove people to Cuba, nor does ICE generally remove people to countries believed to be acting on Cuba's behalf". (*The New York Times, The Globe and Mail*, 18/5/05)

May 17: A key associate of Fidel Castro welcomed the news that the US picked up Luis Posada Carriles, but questioned why it took two months to arrest an escaped militant sought for two decades in a deadly airliner bombing. Parliament speaker Ricardo Alarcon spoke with the press as Castro led hundreds of thousands of Cubans past the US mission to demand Posada's arrest and extradition from the US. "Do you want us to applaud the fact that he has been arrested after his presence (in the US) was burning for two months?" Alarcon said in an interview. "Now Mr. Bush has to prove he is sincere about terrorism." Alarcon said. "What the United States has to do now is clear: if there is a request for his extradition it has to attend to it according to its own laws." (*The New York Times*, 18/5/05)

May 17: In a letter made public by the Venezuelan embassy in Washington, twenty Democrat Representatives asked US President George W. Bush to extradite to Venezuela anti-Castro firebrand Luis Posada Carriles, who has been accused of planning and executing acts of international terrorism. "Not only must the United States reject the asylum application of Luis Posada Carriles, a known international terrorist, but Posada should also be returned to Venezuela for a proper adjudication of the case against him," wrote the legislators in the letter to Bush. (*AFP*, 23/5/05)

May 18: Fidel Castro called the detention of his old nemesis Luis Posada Carriles two months after his arrival in the United States a "farce," a face-saving move the US government was finally forced to make after Posada's presence became an embarrassment. Speaking on a nightly current events show on state TV, Castro said it was impossible for President Bush's administration to be unaware for so long that Posada, sought in Venezuela for retrial in a deadly plane bombing, was in Miami. "What has occurred is a big farce, a big lie, an attempt to escape from a difficult situation," Castro said of the detention of Posada, a Cuban born militant who has spent much of his life trying to topple Castro and his communist government. The Cuban leader also expressed doubt that his old foe would be returned to Venezuela, which is seeking Posada's extradition, to be retried in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner off the coast of Barbados, killing all 73 people aboard. "The goal of the United States government is to protect him, to keep protecting him and prevent (him) from going to court," said Castro, who for several weeks had repeatedly decried Posada's presence in Miami and what he said was the US government's failure to hold him. (*AP, Reuters*, 19/5/05)

May 18: If the United States extradites a Cuban exile wanted in a 1976 airliner bombing, he would not be turned over to Cuba but would remain in Venezuela to face justice, Venezuela's vice president said. "There is no possibility that Venezuela would turn him over to another country if Posada Carriles' extradition to Venezuela is approved," Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel said. "I think it's an excuse, a subterfuge, that they are using precisely in order to not approve the extradition. Bringing up that he could be sent to Cuba (...) in this way they elude the commitment and the obligation they have to approve the extradition." (*The Houston Chronicle*, 18/5/05)

May 19: US immigration officials charged Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles with entering the United States illegally, which could lead to his deportation to another country. Venezuela wants Posada in connection with the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner. US Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials also said that Posada would be held without bond pending a hearing before an immigration judge scheduled for June 13. The precise location of that hearing was not specified. "At such a bond hearing, ICE would present its arguments for holding him without bond," said an agency statement. (*CNN*, 19/5/05)

May 19: Homeland Security Department officials said that they had charged Luis Posada Carriles, the violent anti-Castro militant, with illegally entering the United States. United States officials have not said whether or not they want to deport Mr. Posada. They have indicated that they would not willingly send him to Venezuela, Cuba's closest ally in the Western Hemisphere. "This is a case that the Department of Homeland Security now will handle," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said. "The issues here concern understanding the record of Mr. Posada and then making judgments about what that means about his request" for asylum. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement division of the Department of Homeland Security said Mr. Posada had been charged with illegally entering the country, was being held without bond and would see an immigration judge on June 13. (*The New York Times*, 20/5/05)

May 19: A former leftist guerrilla in Venezuela claimed that Luis Posada Carriles ordered that he be tortured and also ordered the murder of another guerrilla when Posada was a senior intelligence officer for a Venezuelan police agency in the 1970s. Posada, a militant Cuban exile in US custody accused of illegally entering the country, said in an interview with *The Herald* that he had not ordered anyone's torture while he headed a special operations unit at the agency known as DISIP. Posada also denied ordering the other guerrilla's murder. The allegations from Jesus Marrero, the former Venezuelan guerrilla, are difficult to verify, but they could open a new front in the U.S. government's case against Posada in immigration court. (*The Miami Herald*, 20/5/05)

May 19: The US government has too many nuclear weapons but it lacks ideas, and what is worse, it lacks brains, Fidel Castro stressed when denouncing Washington's complicity with terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. Castro spoke on a special program broadcast live on national radio and television from Havana's Karl Marx Theater. He accused the administration of US President George W. Bush of hiding many secrets of his commitments to Cuba born terrorists. Referring to the conditions in which US authorities arrested Posada Carriles, Fidel Castro asked: "Would they have taken Bin Laden in a golf cart, without handcuffs, to a center where he even has access to recreation?." He described the alleged global crusade the United State has unleashed against terrorism as a lie. In denouncing that the group that today holds the US presidency has resorted to lies, the Cuban leader accused Bush of using terrorism to gain and retain power. He impugned how timely the broadcast of a Bin Laden's video was, four days before the November elections, in which the sinister figure bragged about the attacks of September 11, 2001. He added that four years earlier, anti-Cuba counterrevolutionary groups had helped him to win the White House with the fraud in Florida, insisting the same thing happened last November. (*Prensa Latina*, 20/5/05)

May 20: Cuba and the United States shared extensive information in hotel bombings and other terrorist attempts in the late 1990s, Fidel Castro said, adding that the past collaboration has been forgotten in the current case involving militant Luis Posada Carriles. Speaking to several thousand government supporters gathered for his evening address, Castro read extensively from declassified Cuban documents that indicated frequent exchanges of information between the countries after the bombings of Cuban tourist installations in 1997. Castro said that in May 1998, his friend Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez personally delivered a message to then US President Bill Clinton's advisers alerting them to plans by violent exile groups to plant bombs on flights between Cuba and the United States. (*The New York Times*, 21/5/05)

May 20: US President George Bush praised a dissident meeting held in Havana and for their courage in coming out of the "shadow of repression". Attendants to a meeting organized by the Assembly to Promote Civil Society in Cuba were able to listen to Bush's message in a video played from a laptop computer. Bush said his administration, which last year stepped up restrictions on travel and cash remittances to Cuba, will keep working to hasten political change on the island. "We will not rest. We will keep the pressure on until the Cuban people enjoy the same freedom in Havana that they have in America," he said. (*AP*, 20/5/05)

May 20: New information links detained Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles to a 1976 meeting where a former US prosecutor says a group of exiles discussed acts of terrorism. In June 1976, Luis Posada Carriles took part in a meeting in the Dominican Republic where Cuban exile militants discussed anti-Castro terrorism, including plans to

bomb a Cuban airliner and target a leftist Chilean dissident, a former US prosecutor told the press. E. Lawrence Barcella Jr., who was the lead prosecutor in the federal investigation of the assassination of former Chilean Foreign Minister Orlando Letelier, told the press that his probe had placed Posada at the meeting in Bonao in the Dominican Republic. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/5/05)

May 21: Federal agents grilled Cuban exile militant Luis Posada Carriles for more than two hours in El Paso, Texas, where he is being held, one of his lawyers said. Attorney Renee Soto said officials asked Posada about involvement in terrorist attacks, his illegal entry into the United States and other issues. Posada declined to answer many questions, she said. Soto, a cousin of Posada's lead immigration lawyer Eduardo Soto and an associate in his firm, said Posada was more forthcoming about how he entered the country. A hearing was tentatively scheduled for May 24 th to decide whether to transfer Posada closer to South Florida, and whether to release him on bail. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/5/05)

May 22: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said he will consider breaking diplomatic ties with the US if it fails to hand over a Cuban-born terror suspect. Venezuela said Luis Posada Carriles must stand trial over the 1976 bombing of Cuba's plane that killed 73 people. Mr Chavez said Washington would be guilty of protecting international terrorism if it refused extradition. (*BBC*, 23/5/05)

May 24: A former top Defense Department official born in Cuba has pleaded guilty to lying about his visit to the island last year, having told US officials that he was visiting a sick aunt when he really went to see a woman his lawyer described as a "girlfriend." Alberto R. Coll, a longtime specialist on US-Cuba relations, had his security clearance temporarily suspended at the Naval War College in Newport, RI, where he serves as chairman of the strategic research department. "His security clearance is not revoked but his access to classified information has been suspended for the time being," Susan Haeg, a spokeswoman at the college told the press. "This is a matter between him and the district attorney. We're not going to make any decisions until this matter takes its course." Coll is charged with making "false statements to representatives of the US Department of State and the US Department of Defense concerning the purpose of a proposed visit to the nation of Cuba," according to court documents. (*The Miami Herald*, 24/5/05)

May 25: An unusual alliance of farm-state Republicans, liberal Democrats and free-trade advocates is fighting a Bush administration policy aimed at stifling the growth of farm exports to Cuba. Ready to square off against the group is a vocal bloc of lawmakers who vehemently oppose Fidel Castro and any moves to open trade with his regime. The issue has reignited the acrimonious debate between supporters of the four- decade-old US trade embargo, who believe it will weaken Castro's government, and opponents who see it as a failed policy and an obstacle to democratic change. (*Newhouse News Service*, 25/5/05)

May 25: A British judge who has been asked to rule in a US-Cuba copyright dispute over music from the Buena Vista Social Club album and film said he would travel to Havana to hear evidence from elderly Cuban musicians. Judge John Lindsay is hearing a case at London's High Court involving rival claims from US and Cuban publishing companies over rights to the traditional "son" recordings. The hearing was postponed after video links to witnesses in Cuba broke down. Lawyers for the Cuban side wanted the hearing moved to Cuba, saying it was too expensive and difficult to bring frail, elderly musicians to London. Lawyers for US-based Peer International Corp. said the case should remain in Britain. (*AP*, 25/5/05)

May 25: Cubans living in the United States still send an estimated \$460 million a year to relatives on the island despite restrictions tightened by the Bush Administration last summer, according to a poll released by a Coral Gables firm. The results of the Bendixen survey, presented during a forum at the think tank Inter-American Dialogue, indicate that 69 percent of respondents continue to send the same amount of money as before President Bush tightened restrictions on remittances to Cuba. Bendixen's survey was conducted in February and results were based on telephone interviews with 1,000 Cuban adult immigrants throughout the United States. But a separate survey by an Inter-American Dialogue researcher, based on interviews with some 200 people who live on the island, showed that while 58 percent of

recipients said they continue to receive the same amount of money from relatives abroad, 29 percent reported that they are getting less funds. The island respondents were nearly evenly split in their views on what prompted changes in cash flow: 13 percent blamed new measures imposed by the Cuban government while 11 percent pointed to tightened US restrictions. (*The Miami Herald*, 26/5/05)

May 25: The United States would be obliged under international law to try Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles on terrorism charges if it fails to extradite him to Venezuela to face trial for a bomb attack 30 years ago, a senior Cuban official said. Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcon repeated Havana's support for Venezuela's demand that Washington hand over Posada, a militant foe of Fidel Castro, to be tried for the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people. Alarcon said without extradition Washington would be forced to put Posada, 77, on trial because it is a signatory to the Montreal Convention on international airline liability. "Extradite him to Venezuela, or if they don't want to extradite him, then no excuses, they will have to try him themselves, but as if the victims were Americans and the aircraft American," Alarcon told reporters in Caracas. "Judge him and punish him with the same severity they impose on people with Arab names or who are Muslims. Imagine we are talking about Luis bin Posada or Osama Posada Carriles," he said, referring to Osama bin Laden. (*The New York Times*, 26/5/05)

May 26: Tropical fruit trees and manicured gardens greet visitors driving through Ernest Hemingway's sprawling estate on the outskirts of Havana, but the wooden home where the famed American novelist lived more than 20 years is falling apart. Scaffolding covers the molding house, where much of the furniture has been removed due to moisture damage and to make room for restoration work. Americans in Havana for an international forum on the late writer were surprised at the sight. "It's not like what you see in the photographs," University of Pennsylvania professor Paul Hendrickson said as he peered through the windows of Hemingway's study. "This is really in a more fragile state than I had guessed." Erosion, tropical humidity and botched repairs are threatening the house where Hemingway spent some of his happiest years and wrote the prize-winning classic "The Old Man and the Sea." (*AP*, 26/5/05)

May 26: Federal authorities are investigating a migrant-smuggling run in which a Cuban man reportedly died just off Cuba. The man is believed to have drowned after smugglers left him in the water and fled to Florida when a Cuban patrol vessel approached their boat before the man could climb aboard. "We did receive a report from Cuban authorities regarding a migrant-smuggling event that they reported did involve a death of a migrant," Lt. Tony Russell, a Coast Guard spokesman, said. "The details of that report are similar to the landing that took place in the Marquesas." Two Miami-area men -- Elio Diaz-Hernandez, the boat's captain, and Edel Domingo-Carvajal, a crewman -- were taken into custody after grounding a speedboat on an island in the Marquesas island chain off Key West. (*The New Herald*, 27/5/05)

May 27: The Bush administration has rejected Venezuela's request to keep under arrest with an eye to extradition a notorious anti-Castro militant wanted by Caracas on terrorism charges, Venezuelan diplomats said. Rejection of the request does not mean Luis Posada Carriles, who is wanted by Caracas for retrial for his alleged role in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people, will not remain under arrest. It relates only to the grounds on which he is being held. "The State Department has denied Venezuela's request for his arrest with an eye to extradition, but it left the door open to pursuing extradition at a later date," a Venezuelan diplomatic source told the press. (EFE, 27/5/05)

May 28: Tens of thousands of Venezuelans backing President Hugo Chavez marched through Caracas demanding that the United States extradite a Cuban militant wanted for his alleged role in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner. Waving Venezuelan flags, and dancing to songs celebrating Chavez's rule broadcast over loudspeakers mounted on flatbed trucks, the president's supporters accused US President George W. Bush of harboring terror suspect Luis Posada Carriles and of a double standard in dealing with terrorists. (*CNN*, 28/5/05)

May 30: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez condemned as "negative" the United States' rejection of an initial attempt by his government to extradite a Cuban exile accused of bombing an airliner. Chavez repeated a warning made just

over a week ago that he would review relations with the United States, Venezuela's biggest oil buyer, if Washington did not agree to the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles. "They've given a sign, a negative one," Chavez said. "It's a worrying sign," he said during a cabinet meeting broadcast live on state television. Chavez accused Bush, whom he mockingly referred to as "Mr Danger," of "sheltering a terrorist." (*Reuters, The New York Times*, 30/5/05)

May 30: The United States does not object to the Philippines assisting Cuba in its effort to extradite a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) agent, US embassy chargé d'affaires Joseph Mussomeli said. Speaking to reporters on the occasion of Memorial Day at the Manila American Cemetery at Fort Bonifacio, Makati, Mussomeli said the matter is a "bilateral issue" between the Philippines and Cuba. "I know there was a request and it's up to the Philippine government how they want to handle that," he said.

Cuban Ambassador Jorge Rey Jimenez said the Philippines is in a position to help out with the repatriation of Posada since it heads the Anti-Terrorism Committee of the United Nations Security Council and chairs the anti-terrorism task force of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). (*The Philippine Star*, 31/5/05)

May 31: The US Coast Guard was in the process of transferring to shore ten Cuban migrants who landed on an island off the Keys after setting off from Cuba on a rustic boat. The migrants, who arrived on Boca Grande, were among six dozen who have ridden calm seas to the Florida Keys in recent days. (*The Miami Herald*, 31/5/05)

May 31: The US Interest Section in Havana accused the Cuban government of encouraging illegal migration from the island to the US. In a statement to the press, the USIS says that the Cuban government hasn't allowed the Special Program for Cuban Migration, commonly known as "el bombo" or "el sorteo", since 1998. "One of the consequences of the Cuban authorities' failure to meet their obligations under the Migration Accords by permitting a new registration period for the Special Program for Cuban Migration is that Cubans who are now adults in the ages of 18 to 24 are cut off from the benefits of "safe, legal and orderly" migration that the Cuban authorities pledged to support in the 1994-95 Migration Accords", the statement says. "The United States Government renews its call to the Cuban authorities to cooperate in scheduling a new registration period, in conformity to Cuban obligations under the Migration Accords", it adds. (*Press Release, USIS*, 31/5/05)