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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Nearly 300 individuals are charged with prescription and over-the-counter drug black-marketeering offences. Cuban lawyers from several institutions are updating the Family Code enacted in 1975.

Economy: Blackouts amount to five or six hours per day in Havana and the western province of Matanzas. The Canadian conglomerate Sherritt International reports \$16.9 million in revenues for its oil and natural gas operations in Cuba. Cuban authorities in Havana shut down hundreds of private entrepreneurs. Cuba increases the salaries of its teachers, doctors and nurses.

Foreign Affairs: Foreign ministers of the European Union decide not to re-impose diplomatic sanctions on Cuba. Fidel Castro makes a surprise visit to Venezuela to attend a Caribbean oil summit.

Security: Fidel Castro receives a delegation from the Institute for National Defence Higher Education of Venezuela.

Terrorism: International watchdogs condemn continued human rights abuse against detainees at Guantanamo Naval Base.

US-Cuba Relations: Fidel Castro accuses the United States of protecting Luis Posada Carriles. The US House of Representatives rejects the easing of sanctions on Cuba.



Domestic Affairs

June 1: International Children's Day was widely celebrated in Cuba, including a main function at Havana's National Oncology and Radiobiology Institute, where children with cancer are treated. A large array of activities were scheduled at outdoor facilities, while Cuban television channels opened their programming with shows dedicated to children. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 1/6/05)

June 1: Barometers in Havana rose to a record high of 36.5 degrees centigrade that suffocated Cuba's capital, but the city got a relief from a downpour that flooded some areas in the downtown. The much needed rain was welcomed by Havana residents who have been feeling the effects of a long drought that has hit the island in the past months. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/6/05)

June 2: Cuban authorities will be applying severe penalties against anyone attempting to disrupt the public transit service in Havana. The Cuban Ministry of the Interior (MININT) has issued 14 edicts that establish legal proceedings for criminal offences ranging from holding on to moving buses while riding a bicycle or a skateboard, to theft and fighting among transit users. Most alarming to the Cuban government are the incidents of rocks being thrown at buses in the downtown Havana area or the San Miguel del Padrón neighbourhood under cover of darkness provided by the long power outages affecting the city and deficiencies in the street lighting system. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 2/6/05)

June 2: Pastor Vega, a Cuban filmmaker widely known for such films as "Retrato de Teresa" (Portrait of Teresa), has died. He was 65. His death was announced by Cuba's International Press Centre. Other films made by Mr. Vega during his 40-year career included "Vidas Paralelas" (Parallel Lives) and "Las Profecías de Amanda" (Prophecies of Amanda). Mr. Vega was married to Cuban actress Daisy Granada, with whom he also worked as a theatre director. (*Globe and Mail, EFE*, 2,10/6/05)

June 3: Independent journalist Fabio Prieto Llorente, locked inside a special cell in the Prison Kilo 8 in the province of Camaguey, is forced to live with common prisoners, denounced a relative of the political prisoner. Clara Lourdes Prieto Llorente, sister of the jailed reporter, pointed out to the press that the independent journalist suffers from pulmonary emphysema and pains in his back. Fabio Prieto Llorente is a member of the group of the 75 opponents and independent journalists sanctioned to long prison sentences during the wave of repression unleashed by the Castro regime in the Spring of 2003. (*Lux Info Press*, 3/6/05)

June 3: Opponent Juan Ramón Rivero Despaigne was arrested and will be tried in Havana for the alleged crime of "social dangerousness". At the time of his arrest, Despaigne was only carrying a backpack with copies of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Despaigne is the president in function of the Republican Alternative Movement, and member of the Assembly to Promote the Civil Society in Cuba. He participated in the congress of the Assembly celebrated in Havana on May 20th. (*Lux Info Press*, 3/6/05)

June 4: Cuban actor and playwright Alberto Pedro passed away in Havana, the National Council for the Theatrical Arts told the press. Alberto Pedro wrote some of the plays that helped define the Cuban theatre of the 80s and 90s including, among others, "Manteca", "Delirio Habanero" and "Weekend en Bahía". (*EFE*, 4/6/05)

June 6: The 4th International Congress on Culture and Development kicked off in Havana with the participation of some 500 national and foreign delegates. The delegates to the event will analyze cultural policies, diversity and heritage. The forum will be divided into six working groups, in which participants will analyze folklore, popular culture, neoliberal policies, diversity, gender, race and minorities, as well as the role of heritage and culture regarding tourism. Foreign figures attending the meeting include US actor Danny Glover and political scientist James Cockcroft, Italian novelist Valerio Massimo Manfredi, Venezuelan narrator Luis Brito and Brazilian actress Leticia Spiller, among others. Among the Cubans are Roberto Fernandez Retamar, Lisandro Otero, Marta Arjona, Miguel Barnet, Julio Garcia Espinosa, Reynaldo González, Eduardo Heras, Eusebio Leal, Rogelio Martinez Fure, Eliades Acosta and Desiderio Navarro. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/6/05)

June 6: The eastern city of Holguín is recognized for its positive results in preserving the ecosystem. The reduction of contaminants, the recovery of its soils and the increased wooded areas are among the achievements of the province which led the Cuban authorities to select it to commemorate World Environment Day. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/6/05)

June 6: A brutal attack was perpetrated by officers of the National Police (PNR) on beach goers who were ready to board a public bus at The Peñas Altas Public Bus Stop, beach of Guanabo, east of Havana. Police officers jumped out of 11 patrol cars and 3 police trucks with batons and began beating swimmers who were prepared to board Bus 462. The incident broke out when police officers could not control a brawl between swimmers who were trying to get on the bus. The lack of public transportation to the beaches in the Eastern part of the capital during the summer originates brawls amongst citizens wanting to get into the buses. (*Lux Info Press*, 6/6/05)

June 7: According to the official daily *Granma*, nearly 300 people have been charged with prescription and over-the-counter drug black-marketeering offences so far this year. The report added that, in the last five months, Cuban police have launched 309 raids against the illegal trafficking of pharmaceuticals, averaging two per day and resulting in criminal charges against 468 individuals. (*La Jornada, Granma*, 7/6/05)

June 7: Seven people died and 12 others were injured when a truck rolled over on a highway in eastern Cuba, according to media reports. The accident occurred when the truck, which belonged to a state-owned food company, veered out of its lane and flipped over near the town of Fallas, in Ciego de Avila province. Two victims were reported in a serious condition and admitted to the "Roberto Rodriguez" hospital in Moron. Preliminary reports blamed the accident on a mechanical fault, said a source from the National Police, adding that the investigation continues. The death toll from the accident was not higher because of the fast response of rescue workers and the efforts of doctors and nurses at the hospital in Moron. (*Prensa Latina, EFE*, 8/6/05)

June 7: A growing number of Cubans who don't belong to dissident groups are rejecting Fidel Castro's government, says the first member of the so-called Group of 75 to arrive in the United States. "There is a strong underground social dissidence that has many ways of confronting the regime -- people who look for independent spaces (...) and whose rejection is shown in indifference to the political discourse," dissident Manuel Vazquez Portal told the press after arriving in Miami. Vazquez Portal was sentenced to 18 years in March 2003 but was among 14 prisoners released on medical parole last year (he suffers from emphysema). Vazquez Portal said there is plenty of reason to worry about Cuba. "There is a large percentage of indifference in all sectors of society," he said. "I leave behind a country that is devastated economically and spiritually, where the slow and continuous exodus of professionals and intellectuals has caused a brain drain on the island." Vazquez Portal said the arrest of the 75 opposition leaders in 2003 can be considered "a punch, but not a knockout" for Cuba's dissident movement. "Political dissidence and independent journalism have begun to absorb the punch and are coming out stronger, as the Women of White movement and the [May] meeting of the Assembly to Promote a Civil Society shows," he said. (*The Miami Herald*, 10/6/05)

June 8: The health condition of imprisoned dissident Hector Palacios has deteriorated significantly. According to reports from his wife, in recent weeks he has suffered from six episodes of cerebral ischemia, an insufficient supply of blood to the brain that could potentially lead to a stroke. At age 63, Hector Palacios is serving a 25 year sentence. Mr. Palacios' health problems have only been aggravated by harsh prison conditions. In March 2003, Mr. Palacios became one of 75 human rights advocates, independent journalists and librarians who were arrested, tried, and sentenced to up to 28 years in prison. (*NotiCuba Internacional*, 8/6/05)

June 9: After four days of intense debates and reflections, the 4th Congress on Culture and Development wound up in Havana with the conviction that "capitalism is responsible for the planet's destruction." The final agenda included Networks and Resistance, Role of Cinema, Television and Other Media in Culture, History and Memory for a Diverse Cultural Future, and others. The closing panel tackled Contemporary Anti-capitalist Thinking, with the participation of Argentinean Atilio Boron, Belgian Francois Houtart, American James Cockcroft and Brazilian Maria Clavatta Franco. During debates at the Conference, the word "destruction" was associated to the International Monetary Fund, neoliberalism, discrimination, marginalization and other expressions linked to the US system. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/6/05)

June 12: The unceasing struggle for the unity of the revolutionary forces, and the unifying political action of Fidel Castro as leader of the 26th of July Movement in the country were determining factors of the 1959 triumph, as ratified by the participants in the scientific workshop on the movement, closed by Castro. After two working sessions at the International Conference Center, the event ended with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the constitution of the 26th of July Movement, attended by original members of its leadership, combatants from the Moncada assault, the Granma landing, the struggle in the Sierra Maestra, the underground movement and internationalist missions. (*Granma International*, 12/6/05)

June 14: Diverging philosophies on a post-Castro future, meddling from the Cuban government, along with clashing egos among opposition leaders competing for international attention, threaten the dissident movement in Cuba and unfortunately help Fidel Castro. "The opposition has a very wide spectrum," Vladimiro Roca Antuñez said. "But we all have the same goal. Oswaldo Payá and María Beatriz Roque are against the government but in between both of them there is a very bad relationship." Payá's movement calls for negotiation with the regime and national reconciliation. Roque's Assembly is geared to defying the government and promising to seek justice in a post-Castro Cuba. "Our mission is to move forward," Payá said. "Our target is not to kill people, not to create chaos, just to ask for the rights which we are all guaranteed. If we continue to ask for these rights, to keep pressure on the government, then the regime will not have the moral force to keep it in power. We respect the right to do the assembly, but we don't trust the people who organized it." "We are not against national reconciliation," René Gómez Manzano said. "But it is the regime that exerts totalitarian control of the state and it is the regime which puts people in jail for speaking their minds and therefore it is for the regime to come forward and ask for dialogue with the people, and not for the dissidents to do so." (*The Miami Herald*, 14/6/05)

June 14: The 4th Congress of the Cuban National Association of Physically Handicapped (ACLIFIM) concluded in Havana after the election of a new National Executive Committee. More than the fifth part of the 64,000 members of this Non-governmental organization is actively working, according to reports during the opening of the meeting. ACLIFIM Vice President Mabel Ballesteros told the press that 14,584 jobs have been created for handicapped people as part of Cuban state policy. Some 5,000 jobs were opened in the last five years mainly in handcraft workshops and similar centers. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/6/05)

June 14: Juan Antonio Picasso, a Cuban mulatto descendant of Pablo Picasso's grandfather, opened an exhibition of 15 watercolors at a Havana gallery. "I'm proud to belong to the family of a great painter, the greatest of the 20th century," the budding artist said. "At times the name is a burden, though," the 30-year-old bank clerk added. His great-great-grandfather was Francisco Picasso Guardeno, who vanished in 1864 from Malaga, Spain, leaving behind his wife and four children, including Maria, the great artist's mother. Like many Spaniards at the time, Francisco Picasso headed for Cuba, fell in love with the daughter of freed slaves, settled down and started another family. His descendants had no clue they were related to Pablo Picasso until Cuban historian Barbara Mejides found the link in 1998, finding members of the black branch of the family who bore an amazing resemblance to the artist. A documentary film "The Black Picassos" further established the connection. (*The New York Times*, 14/6/05)

June 15: Although only 18 are exclusive to Cuba, 177 species of butterflies can be found on the island. A group of those endemic to Cuba can be found in the province of Camagüey, which includes the Hazel Phoebis (*Phoebis avellaneda*) butterfly, named in honor to the Cuban writer Gertrudis Gomez de Avellaneda. The "Major General Agramonte" Provincial Museum has one of the widest collections of these insects, consisting of more than 1,500 exotic national specimens. (*AIN*, 15/6/05)

June 16: Osvaldo Alfonso's fight for democracy in Cuba has cost him his freedom, his country and, in the final indignity, his marriage. One of 75 Cuban pro-democracy advocates, poets, librarians and independent journalists to be arrested on March 18, 2003, the gangly intellectual buckled under pressure. During his summary trial, he was the only one to "confess." In a statement later cited by Cuban officials in a nationally televised news conference, he said the

dissidents had "responded in one way or another to the interests of the US" -- words he immediately regretted. Now Mr. Alfonso, 40, is out of jail and is persona non grata in Cuba, in the Liberal Democratic opposition party and in his marriage. His wife, Claudia Marquez, divorced him and went into exile in Florida, taking their eight-year-old son, Cristian, with her. The United States rejected Mr. Alfonso's asylum bid. "Everyone considers me an enemy," Mr. Alfonso said, his eyes bloodshot. "We are an example of a family totally destroyed by the system." Mr. Alfonso blamed the psychological torture he endured for making a jailhouse confession. "I was deprived of sleep and the lights were kept on in my cell for 24 hours. They threatened to imprison my wife and said our son would end up in an orphanage," he said. He was released last November, along with 13 others, after he attempted suicide twice and will leave this summer for Sweden, where he has been accepted as a refugee. (*Globe & Mail*, 16/6/05)

June 17: The 1st Sports Games of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) opened at the Havana Sports Center Coliseum. Cuban Sports Institute President said the ALBA Games would be the expression of Latin American and Caribbean integration, friendship and unity among people through sports without economic and commercial interest. Some of the main countries participating are Venezuela, Mexico, El Salvador, Colombia, Panama and Cuba. (*Prensa Latina*, 17/6/05)

June 17: Activists and members of Democratic Party 30 of November "Frank País" stood in protest outside the Combinado del Este prison, in Havana, demanding that Rafael Ibarra Roque be released. Ibarra Roque, president of this illegal opposition party, has already been in jail for 11 of a 29 year-sentence. "We stood outside the prison from 8 in the morning to 12 in the afternoon, demanding the unconditional release without exile for our president", said Anaika Paneca Román, of the Democratic Party 30 of November. She further said that, "agents of the Cuban State Security threatened and forced the oppositionists to turn off a cellular telephone, where several news agencies abroad called covering the protest". (*Puente Informativo*, 17/6/05)

June 19: Nearly 60 Ladies in White, all relatives of the 75 dissidents imprisoned two years ago in Cuba, braved inclement weather and carried out a protest walk to demand the release of their loved ones. During the walk that also marked Father's Day, the Ladies were accompanied by a dozen children, whose fathers are among the jailed oppositionists. (*EFE*, 19/6/05)

June 23: Cuba's success in the fight against drug consumption and international drug trafficking were praised during the 3rd Conference on Drug Control in the Caribbean held in Havana. "Drug use has been reduced in Cuba and we are continuing to work to bring down its effects," said Roberto Diaz Sotolongo, Minister of Justice, at the opening of the conference. Last year only, Cuban courts sentenced over 3,400 individuals for drug trafficking, most of them with sentences of over six-years in prison. Sotolongo, said. Almost 1,472 lawsuits tried in Cuban courts decided the confiscation of assets belonging to over 300 Cubans involved in these activities. (*AIN, AFP*, 23/6/05)

June 26: In an effort to revert a growing trend in vehicular theft, Cuban police issued an appeal to the general population to be more vigilant. According to the daily *Juventud Rebelde*, over 300 vehicles were reported stolen between January and April, averaging more than two cases per day, 30% of which have been solved, resulting in 176 vehicles being returned to their owners. The newspaper appealed to vehicle owners to refrain from buying in the black market, where the stolen property ends up after being stripped for spare parts. (*La Jornada*, 27/6/05)

June 27: Cuba is presenting in Havana a national campaign on city management, sponsored by the UN Human Settlements Program (HABITAT). With the title "For a Better City and Safer Environment," the aim of the event is to improve people's living standard, their houses, city participation and local development. Cienfuegos, Holguin, Bayamo and Santiago de Cuba are the Cuban cities chosen for the international initiative. A HABITAT promotional gathering coincides with the beginning of the 5th World Meeting on Sustainable Cities Programs and Local Agenda 21, under the auspices of the UN Environment Program and Cuban Institute for Physical Planning. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/6/05)

June 27: Cubans continue risking their lives at sea to reach the United States-and they are taking more perilous routes to do so. Many of them set off from Santa Cruz del Sur, where its picturesque bay has become a popular launch point for Cubans trying to avoid the stepped-up US and Cuban patrols in the Florida Straits. Honduras' lenient immigration policy has made it the temporary destination of choice among many Cuban migrants, who then make their way north to the US. Like most Cuban rafters, those fleeing Santa Cruz del Sur are primarily men in their 20s or 30s who leave behind mothers, wives and children relieved at the word of a successful voyage but shattered by grief if no word arrives at all. In the squat homes that line the city's dirt streets, desperate women push frayed photographs of loved ones lost at sea into the hands of strangers in the hope they can bring news of survival. Cuban officials blame the stream of rafters on the 4-decade-old US economic embargo, which they say has crippled the island's economy. They also criticize America's "wet-foot, dry-foot" policy, under which Cubans who make it to US soil can stay but those picked up at sea are sent back. But some Santa Cruz del Sur residents said Cuba's socialist system crushes economic opportunity and leads to a level of desperation that would send some on what can only be described as a suicidal voyage. (*Chicago Tribune*, 26/6/05)

June 27: Cuban lawyers from several institutions are updating the Family Code, enacted in 1975, official sources reported. Luis Palenzuela, vice president of the Cuban Society for Civil and Family Law, said the current Code will still continue in force, but with new amendments. Among the new aims are to give more possibilities to under 18-year-old people to demand their rights and benefit people with disabilities. The Cuban official also said that together with the code, new legal proceedings and family courts should be created. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/6/05)

June 27: Cuba would need to build 50,000 houses a year for a decade to overcome a massive housing deficit across the island, according to a government report. More than half a million homes are needed in Cuba, but just 15,350 houses were built last year, according to the National Housing Institute report released this week at a sustainable development conference in the capital. The housing crisis has become one of the government's most serious challenges, Parliament Speaker Ricardo Alarcon said at the event's opening. But Cuba is launching a comprehensive plan this year to repair and construct homes, particularly in the capital, Havana Mayor Juan Contino announced, without providing more details. (*AP*, 27/6/05)

June 28: Five years ago, little Elián González, the boy who survived a shipwreck and became the center of a legal dispute between his father in Cuba and relatives in the United States, returned to Havana. The happy ending of this drama, the return of the child to his father in Cuba, was headlined in the local press, recalling the mobilization of the people of Cuba and world support on his behalf. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/6/05)

June 29: Cuba will adopt measures for the upcoming summer holidays (July and August) to curb the rate of traffic accidents en route to recreational areas. Lt. Col. Francisco Bruzon, head of the National Traffic Division, listed a group of measures, ranging from reinforcing traffic police with access to recreation centers and annulment of more than 1,000 driving licenses nationwide. Reports indicate a slight increase of accidents in the first four months of the year with more than 1,300, one hundred more than in 2004. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/6/05)

June 30: University rectors and student leaders from seven countries are attending the 75th session of the Central American Higher Education Council (CSUCA) underway in Havana. The Confederation's management chief, Anibal Martinez, said the Havana meeting would allow a closer look at the Cuban Higher Education Ministry in order to strengthen cooperation and draw up guidelines for regional universities. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 30/6/05)

June 30: After several days of intense analysis, the 14th International Scientific Congress CNIC 2005 finished in Havana, after bringing together over 800 professionals from 40 countries worldwide. Agendas included master conferences and symposiums on infectious diseases, environment, neurosciences and nano-technologies, as well as the exhibition of new products of the medical-pharmaceutical industry, dedicated this time to the 40th anniversary of the foundation of National Center for Scientific Research (CNIC). (*Prensa Latina*, 30/6/05)

Economy

June 2: The blackouts that have affected Havana and other parts of Cuba were caused by breakdowns in power plants and damage to transmission lines, the state electric utility said. For several days, blackouts lasting up to six hours have plagued Havana and some areas in Matanzas and other provinces during both daylight hours and at night. The damage was caused by the severe weather that has affected different parts of the island, the utility said. The current blackouts are similar to those experienced at the end of last year, when there were outages lasting an average of 10 hours a day after a major breakdown at the Antonio Guiteras plant. (*EFE*, 2/6/05)

June 2: Cuban-Canadian joint venture ENER GAS will increase electric power generation with natural gas this year, starting with important investments in the west of Cuba, it was announced. Specialists estimate that ENER GAS will exceed 300 MW/h by the end of November 2005, and has the fringe benefit of preventing 100 tons of sulphur being released into the atmosphere daily. ENER GAS is a joint venture comprised of Cuban Unión Eléctrica and Cuba Petróleo, and Canadian Sherritt, and has national recognition by the Cuban Science, Technology and Environment Ministry. It commenced operations at the end of 1998, and was the first initiative to produce cheaper electric power, and foster the aspiration to generate all electric power in the country from national crude oil, now at 90 percent. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/6/05)

June 2: The Canadian conglomerate Sherritt International reported \$16.9 million in revenues for its oil and natural gas operations in Cuba during the first quarter of 2005. The report, posted on the website of the Cuban Ministry of the Basic Industry, states that this figure represents a 21.3% increase in company revenues. Sherritt is planning to step up production by early 2006, when drill sites currently being assessed in Santa Cruz, north of Havana, become fully operational. (*EFECOM*, 2/6/05)

June 3: Spanish oil-prospecting company Repsol YPF resumed subsurface sounding in Cuban waters, following a failed attempt last year. With a new joint-venture deal that entitles it to 40% of all revenues and puts it at the helm of the drilling rig, the company is planning to pick up where it left off. Other shareholders in the joint-venture will be Chinese state-owned CNOOC, with a 30% stake, and Norwegian Norsk Hydro, with the remaining 30%. (*Notimex*, 3/6/05)

June 7: It has been more than a decade since Cuba opened its door to foreign businesses. Now many investors -- mainly European -- who took the plunge are being asked to leave. Only half the homes rented to expatriates by the state's real-estate monopoly are now occupied, and at the Havana International School enrollment is down about a third from two years ago and falling. On average, one joint venture and two smaller cooperative production ventures have closed each week since 2002, when there were 700 in the country. "I would not be surprised if in the end there are only around 50 joint ventures in the country and just a handful of cooperative production agreements," said an employee at the Cuban Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Ministry. Cuba is now interested in partnering only with well-known companies in strategic sectors of the economy, said Marta Lomas, foreign investment and economic cooperation minister. European investors whose joint ventures are liquidating complain of endless haggling with state companies and ministry officials over how and when their share of investments will be paid, and the often millions of dollars they are owed for financing operating costs. (*Financial Times*, 7/6/05)

June 7: Cuba has begun a top-level review of its once-powerful sugar industry after a 2002 restructuring failed to halt its decline and improve efficiency, industry sources and foreign traders said. The Communist-run Caribbean country shut down 71 of 156 mills and relegated 60 percent of sugar cane plantation lands to other uses in the 2002 restructuring. Twenty-three of the remaining mills remained closed this season, and cane output was less than 30 tonnes per hectare due mainly to drought conditions. Local experts said many of the mills would remain closed next year as output would still fall well short of 2 million tonnes, compared with 2.52 million tonnes in 2003. They said general

neglect of the state-run industry was the underlying reason for its precipitous decline. The industry once employed 400,000 workers and two million of the country's 11 million residents depended on it, most living in the countryside. Some 200,000 workers have been laid-off in recent years, with the government paying their salaries while they are retrained mainly for agriculture-related jobs. (*Reuters*, 7/6/05)

June 7: Cuba is experiencing a shortage of electricity, with blackouts this summer expected to average six hours daily, despite Fidel Castro's pledge to improve the nation's power supply. Recent severe weather caused breakdowns in power plants and damage to transmission lines that affected Havana and other parts of Cuba for several days, state-owned Electric Union of Cuba, or UE, said this month. UE also warned that blackouts could last on average six hours daily. "I do not truly believe that we are going to recover -- even with the capital maintenance that we are carrying out," said Yadira Garcia, Cuban minister of basic industry, late last month. "These plants date back to the 1980s and 1970s. We are still having problems financing the maintenance". "The technology for these plants, some of which are Soviet and Czech, is really no longer manufactured by the factories that produced certain parts," the minister said. The blackouts are similar to those experienced at the end of 2004, when outages lasted an average of 10 hours daily. Cuban Basic Industry Minister Marcos Portal was dismissed after those outages. (*UPI*, 7/6/05)

June 9: Arlene, the first cyclone of the 2005 season, brushed the western tip of Cuba on its way northwards bringing more benefits than harm to the drought-stricken Caribbean country. No human casualties have been reported. The tropical storm, with winds up to 75 kilometers/hour, brought much needed rain to the island, which Cubans have seen as a blessing for their dried lands. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/6/05)

June 10: Despite its sugar industry currently being in dire straits, Cuba shipped 400 tons of sugar out to North Korea by way of contribution to a United Nations World Food Program (WFP) relief effort in that country. The sugar will be used to improve the diet of 6 million people in that nation, said Rosa Inés Antolin, WFP representative on the island. (*AP*, 10/6/05)

June 13: The latest economic report from the Spanish Commercial Office in Havana stresses that the current situation of the Cuban economy "has a noticeable impact on the numerous Spanish firms with stakes on the island" and "many of them have seen a drop in their sales or are having difficulties getting paid." About a dozen Spanish companies received an official communication informing that their operating licenses would not be renewed. (*Marca*, 13/6/05)

June 14: The Cuban government will spend at least \$412 million on products made in Venezuela under a trade agreement signed between the two nations, according to terms of the deal published in the Venezuelan press. Cuba will purchase foodstuffs including canned sardines, gelatin and condensed milk, as well as work clothes and boots "for an initial sum of \$412 million," according to the Official Gazette, a government publication listing the details of recently approved diplomatic deals and legislation. The Venezuelan goods exported to the communist-led island will be "exonerated of all taxes" and "given preferential treatment within the policy of economic and social development" in Cuba, the Gazette reported. (*Dow Jones International*, 14/6/05)

June 15: According to a source with the Housing Department, in the municipality of Old Havana 19 homes were left partially destroyed in the wake of torrential rain accompanying tropical storm "Arlene." There were no fatalities reported. (*Cubanet*, 15/6/05)

June 16: Canada is Cuba's third-largest trading partner, with about \$900 million in two-way exchange in 2004, behind only Venezuela and Spain. Canadian firms manage to do business with Cuba in the shadow of restrictive US policy. Carpets, computer hardware and newsprint are some of the household items crammed into large containers and loaded onto one of four cargo ships that leave the port of Halifax on a non-stop Atlantic voyage to Havana each month. "Cuba needs a lot of products," said Bill Shatner, a sales representative for the Cuban-based shipping company Melfi Container Lines. "It's not an easy market to deal with, but it's been busy." (*Embassy Magazine Canada*, 16/6/05)

June 17: French hotel group Accor SA has taken over management of Cuba's Riviera and Capri hotels, two notorious haunts of the Mafia in pre-revolutionary Havana, according to the company's representative. "We are very excited. Our imaginations are already hard at work. We can do many things with these two classic establishments and their nightclubs," Accor executive Eric Pyre said. Ginger Rogers was flown to Havana as a star attraction when Mafia boss Meyer Lansky opened the Riviera and its domed casino on Havana's waterfront in 1957. The Capri, which will get a \$15 million overhaul, was run for the mob by American actor George Raft until Fidel Castro swept into power in a 1959 revolution that sent the gangsters running. Accor's move is the latest indication of renewed investor confidence in the Communist-run country's leisure sector after last year's replacement of the tourism minister and other top officials created uncertainty. (*CNN*, 17/6/05)

June 17: The World Food Programme (WFP) has launched an emergency food aid operation for 773,000 people affected by the ongoing drought in Cuba, WFP representative Rosa Inés Antolín told the press. The operation, which will involve a total of 3.7 million dollars in assistance for three months, could go into effect in July, Antolín noted. The WFP will also be counting on support from donors, including the European Union (EU), Canada and Japan, to provide aid over subsequent months, she added. The food aid operation will be carried out in coordination with the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation (MINVEC) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (*IPS*, 19/6/05)

June 19: Communist authorities in Havana have shut down hundreds of private entrepreneurs in a drive to reorganize the tiny private sector and ensure the businesses obey the law, the capital's official weekly said. "The process has included personal interviews, the checking of the skills of the self-employed and the study of where raw materials come from (...) up to now the licenses of 2,000 have been revoked," the weekly *Tribuna de La Habana* said. The process will conclude at the end of the month and take place every two years, Odalys Gonzalez, a regional labor ministry director, told the newspaper. The government has repeatedly complained about growing inequality associated with self-employment. A private worker can earn more in a day than the US\$12 (euro10) than the average state worker makes in a month. Officials also say private workers often compete with the government or steal state goods. (*Reuters*, *AP*, 19/6/05)

June 19: The 13th Expo Caribe International Trade Fair kicked off in the Heredia Convention Center of Santiago de Cuba. Over 70 national exhibitors will be showing their products and services, representing the ministries of Agriculture, Light and Basic Industry, Culture, Health, Higher Education, Fishing, Tourism, Iron and Steel, Transportation and Hydraulic Resources, among others. Various foreign firms will also be present, from Italy, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Spain among others. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 20/6/05)

June 20: Cuba's Foreign Trade Minister Raúl de la Nuez has announced that, despite US hostility, climactic adversity and the high prices of fuel, Cuban trade has surpassed the seven billion dollar level of 1991. Speaking at the opening of the XIII International Fair of the Caribbean in Santiago de Cuba, the minister explained that notwithstanding cut-backs necessitated by the crisis, imports grew 20 percent in 2004, while exports increased 38 percent, both in relation to the previous period, *Granma* daily reported. (*Prensa Latina*, 20/6/05)

June 21: Persistent electricity shortages, which last year cost a government minister his job and forced enterprises to curtail working hours or close altogether, augur an even-hotter-than-usual summer for this Caribbean island nation. Power outages increased in May due to breakdowns in supply lines and several power plants, though not to the level of last year, when blackouts lasted an average of 10 hours a day. Though the official press regularly publishes lists of scheduled outages - some as long as seven hours - in different urban areas, reality fails to conform to the notices, and blackouts often take the population by surprise. The blackouts not only strike private homes, but also businesses, shops and some health centers, which are in the dark for hours. The Cuban Electric Union says service should improve in the latter half of the year, as plants are repaired and 17,000 kilometers (10,500 miles) of cable and 43,000 lampposts are

replaced or restored. Even if the power supply were stabilized, it could not meet the island's growing demand, especially in the summer, when electricity consumption goes up 15-20 percent, experts say. (*EFE*, 21/6/05)

June 20: The MERCOSUR member countries agreed to begin negotiations to sign a free trade accord with Cuba within the framework of the Latin American Integration Association (ALADI). The initiative was mentioned in a joint declaration signed by the presidents of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. (*Reuters*, 20/6/05)

June 21: Habanos SA, the world's leading company in the commercialization of premium cigars, recently has opened its first franchised store, La Casa del Habano, in Shanghai. The latest Shanghai store is its fourth outlet in China. The new store will sell about 20 Cuban cigar brands and more than 30 kinds of cigar products, according to the related report. Habanos SA had set up its first cigar store La Casa del Habano in Chinese mainland in Guangzhou in September 2003. (*Business Daily News*, 21/6/05)

June 22: Over the last decade, hurricanes have cost Cuba an estimated 4.5 billion dollars in losses, according to figures from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The damage caused by the passage of Hurricane Michelle in November 2001 alone was calculated at close to one billion dollars. Razed crops, uprooted trees, houses left in ruins, flooded streets and cuts in basic services like electrical power and water, sometimes lasting days, form part of the bleak aftermath once the storm has passed and it is time to appraise the damages. The poor physical condition of many homes makes it necessary to evacuate thousands of families who could otherwise be killed by crumbling buildings. (*IPS*, 22/6/05)

June 23: Venezuela, with 22 production and trade companies, is the widest represented country in the 13 th Caribbean International Fair (ExpoCaribe) running in Santiago de Cuba. Marcial García, president of the Corporación Industrial de Venezuela, said that such a wide Venezuelan exhibition in ExpoCaribe implies an effort of his country to increase trade with Cuba, which reached 1,500 million dollars in 2004. (*AFP*, 23/6/05)

June 23: Cuba increased the salaries of its teachers, doctors and nurses, highlighting the importance the nation's communist government puts on its health and education sectors. Workers in these fields will receive an average of 40 to 50 additional Cuban pesos a month, or the equivalent of about US\$2. The increase was to take effect July 1. "It's very modest, and can be improved upon," Fidel Castro said in a live televised address to announce the news. The average Cuban worker earns 300 pesos a month, or the equivalent of about US\$12. Many of those to receive the new salaries also benefited from an earlier increase to the island's minimum wage, under which the salaries of nearly 1.7 million low-wage workers were doubled May 1. The positive economic news has come on the heels of new optimism based on oil prospects off Cuba's northern coast and strengthened economic ties with China and Venezuela. (*Prensa Latina, AP*, 23/6/05)

June 26: Mexican carrier Magnicharters started offering direct flights from Monterey to the main tourist destinations in Cuba, airline management said. "Magnicharters launched the first direct flights to Cuba with Cayo and Varadero the principal destinations," the airline's marketing chief, Rafael Carpio Blanco, told the press. (*EFE*, 26/6/05)

June 26: Repairs are taking longer than expected at Cuba's Felton thermoelectric plant - the country's largest - and the resulting widespread blackouts are inconveniencing residents in Havana and at other locations on the Communist-ruled island. The oil-powered plant, located in the eastern province of Holguin, is undergoing major repairs to one of its power generation units with the aim of achieving greater efficiency in the consumption of petroleum, the official AIN news agency reported. Initially, authorities had planned for the repairs to the steam generation mechanism to take about 60 days, but once the operation was under way other problems were found in the electric generator, forcing more complicated repairs to be undertaken and the time required for the task to be extended. Engineer Eric Kinzan, one of the Felton chiefs, said that the repairs will finally be done about mid-July, and the plant will be operating at full capacity and can then be reintegrated into the National Electricity Generation System. For several weeks, the blackouts

have been gradually getting longer and now amount to five or six hours per day - or night - in the capital and the central province of Matanzas. (*EFE*, 26/6/05)

June 27: An illegal operation for the production and sale of pharmaceuticals, working out of a government-owned laboratory and involving a network made up of some 40 individuals, including executives, technicians and a chief of security, was uncovered in Cuba. The weekly "Trabajadores" reported that 43 people received punishment ranging from facing criminal charges to workplace disciplinary action. (*Notimex*, 27/6/05)

June 27: Virgin Atlantic launched an inaugural flight to Havana for its regular, twice-a-week service from London's Gatwick Airport beginning in July. British billionaire and Virgin Express Holdings PLC chief Richard Branson stuck Cuban and UK flags out of a small hole in the airplane as it rolled up on the Havana runway. "I think there are billions of people who'd like to come to Cuba," he told reporters at the airport. "I think (our venture) will be enormously successful. We'll make it so." (*CNN*, 27/6/05)

June 27: Cuba is carrying out hydraulic works of over 160 million dollars as an emergency solution against the persistent drought affecting the country for a year and a half, Trabajadores weekly informed. The president of the National Water Resources Institute (INRH), Jorge Luis Aspiolea, said these are highly expensive investments with priority for the most affected zones, adding the Cuban government is seeking other responses to cope with this problem. Rains in the past three weeks have brought some relief to the drought-stricken island, but still not enough to cover all the needs. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/6/05)

June 27: Cuba's largest citrus orchard reported final tonnage would be 425,000 tonnes of grapefruit and oranges, 75,000 tonnes less than expected due to dry weather, official radio said. "Despite irrigation difficulties, Matanzas citrus workers have collected 400,000 tonnes (...) with 25,000 tonnes of oranges still to be harvested before the season ends," official Radio Reloj said. Matanza's state-run Jaguey Grande orchard, just east of Havana, accounts for around 50 percent of Cuba's citrus crop and 70 to 80 percent of all citrus-related exports. A prolonged drought in central and eastern Cuba began spreading west this year, before June rainfall eased the situation in the area. The orchard produced 435,000 tonnes during the 2003/2004 season and planned to produce 500,000 tonnes this season. Citrus products are the country's second agricultural export after tobacco, earning around \$100 million. Fresh fruit and concentrate go mainly to Europe (*Reuters*, 27/6/05)

June 28: Cuba has begun preparing sugar workers for mill closings in the wake of this year's record-low crop and the prospect that next year's will be more or less the same. Estimated output of 1.3 million tons of raw sugar was the lowest since 1908 and has forced the country to import sugar to meet contracts and cover its 700,000-ton domestic consumption commitment. Juan Varela Perez, Cuba's top sugar reporter who often speaks for the Sugar Ministry, confirmed to Reuters that a top-level review of the industry was underway and that some mills would close down. "Another group of mills will cease operations so that in the coming harvest the most efficient and economically justifiable operate," Varela said. "The mills that are closed will be transformed into agricultural companies or ranches and the land freed from cane production will be planted with other crops or used as pasture." The government hasn't commented directly on the harvest and future plans, but Fidel Castro called the industry the country's ruin earlier this year. (*Reuters*, 28/6/05)

June 29: Fidel Castro, Venezuelan leader Hugo Chávez and top officials from 14 other Caribbean countries met for talks on a Venezuelan plan to sell fuel more cheaply to the region as world oil prices remained at near record highs. Most of the delegations were expected to sign an accord to set up a cooperative program for Venezuela to distribute fuel across the region on preferential terms. Castro called the plan an important step toward greater solidarity, "the only method of survival for our countries" as oil prices continue to rise. The initiative, called Petrocaribe, would extend and improve

special financing arrangements under past oil deals and use an expanded fleet of Venezuelan tankers to deliver fuel directly to bypass costly intermediaries, Chávez said. (*AP*, 29/6/05)

June 30: The Che Guevara nickel refinery in Moa, Holguín province, has begun mining a new field, replacing a previous one, Yagrumaje, that had been depleted after 20 years in use. Industry sources say this will guarantee the necessary raw material to obtain nickel plus cobalt at the Che Guevara refinery, which has a capacity of 30,000 tons a year. To exploit this field, the enterprise has introduced new equipment and will comply with strict environmental norms for the conservation of the site. This follows an agreement between the Cuban government and Canada's Sherritt International to expand their joint venture, which includes the Pedro Sotto Alba nickel processing plant in Moa and the refinery in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. The 50-50 venture, valued at \$450 million, foresees expansion of the Pedro Sotto Alba plant to 16,000 tons a year, an increase of almost half its original capacity. (*Cuba News*, June 2005)

Exile Community

June 1: Cuban dissident exiles living in Europe attended a seminar on the current Cuban situation, organized in Brussels by European Parliament (EP) political groups. In the event, called "La Isla de la Libertad" (The Island of Freedom), participated among others Cuban author Raúl Rivero, the representative of the Ladies in White, Blanca Reyes, as well as Julio Hernández, who attended on behalf of Oswaldo Payá, leader of the Varela Project. (*Notimex*, 1/6/05)

June 2: A young Cuban journalist who had repeatedly demanded the release of all Cuban prisoners of conscience and denounced Fidel Castro's regime in scathing articles published by US newspapers in 2003, has arrived in Miami. Claudia Márquez Linares, 27, and her son Cristian, 8, were admitted into the United States under political refugee status. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 12/6/05)

June 2: With a review of this year's EU-Cuba thaw coming up, Cuban dissidents spoke out at a hearing of the European Parliament about what they think the bloc's relations with the 46-year-old Communist regime in Havana should be. "We're in favor of reimposing the sanctions (suspended in February), because there has been only a partial liberation of 14 of the 75 dissidents who were in jail, while dozens more have ended up in prison," said Carlos Albert Montaner, Madrid-based president of the centrist Cuban Liberal Union. As for the correct approach to take toward Fidel Castro, Javier de Cespedes, leader of the center-right Cuban Democratic Directorate, said that "Europe must not fall into the worst of its political traditions: appeasement." Poet, novelist and screenwriter Zoe Valdes, insisted that her homeland's "future depends solely and exclusively on support for the democratic opposition." All three spoke at a hearing of the European Parliament in Brussels organized by the centrist and conservative coalitions within the European Union's legislative body. Also present was Blanca Reyes, wife of journalist and former political prisoner Raul Rivero. The most prominent member of Cuba's internal opposition, Oswaldo Paya, recipient of the European Parliament's 2003 Sakharov Award for human rights, was represented by colleague Julio Hernandez. (*EFE*, 2/6/05)

June 6: At the OAS General Assembly, a score of political leaders of the Cuban exile community asked the US government to continue to promote policies aimed at isolating Fidel Castro's government and encouraged the rest of the Americas to assist in bringing democracy to Cuba. In a meeting behind closed doors with US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice, representatives of anti-Castro organizations and Cuban-American legislators also denounced attempts by some Latin American nations and members of the US business community to establish closer ties with Cuba. (*AP*, 6/6/05)

June 9: Cuban poet and journalist Raúl Rivero met in Strasbourg with the European Council Secretary General, Terry Davis, and with the president of the European Court of Human Rights, Luzius Wildhaber, to whom he spoke about the situation of Cuban political prisoners, particularly incarcerated independent journalists. (*Encuentro en la Red*, 9/6/05)

June 11: Producers of Havana Night Club, the Las Vegas show featuring a cast of Cuban defectors, have yanked a CD of the show's music because it riled a West Kendall woman who said a video on it promotes tourism to Cuba. The CD, titled "Energy & Passion", also provided a link to a website that led to information on hotel bargains in Cuba and how to circumvent US travel restrictions to the island. The episode evoked memories of past South Florida disputes involving performers whose independence from the Cuban government was questioned in the exile community. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/6/05)

June 13: Cuban exiles are split along generational lines in their opinions about Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles, a recent poll shows. Older Cuban exiles tend to feel strongly that Posada is a patriot who should be given asylum in the United States. Younger exiles are much more likely to think Posada is a terrorist and have a negative opinion of him. The poll, conducted by Coral Gables-based Bendixen & Associates, gives an idea of where sentiments on Posada lie in the politically sensitive Cuban-American community. Sergio Bendixen said he funded the poll. "Cuban exiles feel that when Posada was committing all of these acts of violence, that was the strategy then and he was following orders from the CIA," Bendixen said. "And they don't think it's fair to punish him now because the strategy has changed." According to the poll, 65 percent of Cuban exiles have a positive opinion of Posada. Exiles over 50 are much more likely to feel that way. Less than half of exiles under 50, or about 47 percent, have a positive opinion of Posada; 75 percent of exiles 50 or older view him in a positive light. Altogether, 61 percent of exiles feel that he is a patriot instead of a terrorist. Bendixen questioned 300 Cuban exiles living in Miami-Dade and Broward from May 12-23. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus five percentage points. (*The Miami Herald*, 13/6/05)

June 20: The man who tried three times to reach the US in vintage vehicles converted into boats finally arrived in Florida with his family. Rafael Diaz Rey, his wife, Nivia Valdez, and sons Pablo Alonso and David looked tired but relieved after their flight from the US base at Guantanamo Bay. They were taken there after being picked up 14 miles south of Key West on June 7 in a bright blue, 1948 Mercury taxi that Diaz converted into a boat. The US normally returns Cubans picked up at sea to Cuba, but Diaz caught a break because he and one of his sons already had won the right to emigrate in a Cuban government lottery. His wife, a doctor, and a second son had been denied Cuban exit visas. (*New York Daily News*, 20/6/05)

June 27: Cuban author Reinaldo Bragado Bretana, a pioneer of the human rights movement in Cuba passed away in Miami. He was 52. Bragado was a political prisoner on the island in 1977. As a member of the Cuban Committee for Human Rights (CCDH), he was in charge of the arts department and promoted independent artistic expression. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 28/6/05)

Foreign Affairs

June 1: Some Czech deputies considered reviving the Czech-Cuban parliamentary dialogue and visiting Cuba, but their plan has been "frozen" by the expulsion of Czech Senator Karel Schwarzenberg from Cuba and Cuba's refusal to grant visas to a few MEPs in May. "The situation has complicated possible progress in the [dialogue] project," lower house foreign committee chairman Vladimir Lastuvka told the press. He said the plan had not exceeded its initial stage, and it had not been discussed with the Cuban side either. The idea was hatched at a meeting of deputies with Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda. However, Cuba's approach towards the foreign legislators in May has complicated everything, Lastuvka said. (*CTK*, 1/6/05)

June 1: Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage received in Havana the Under Secretary General of the United Nations for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordination of the Emergency System, Jan Egeland, who made a three-day visit to this island. The high UN official recalled that the hurricane season started for the North Atlantic-Gulf of Mexico-Caribbean. The number and magnitude of these events grow by the year, so it is urgent that more efficient preparatory work is

done in the whole zone, he indicated. In this sense, he endorsed that the Cuban system of measures to protect the population and its training to reduce losses is among the best in the world. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/6/06)

June 1: An exhibition of photographs presenting the life of mothers and wives of Cuban dissidents imprisoned by Fidel Castro's regime opened in the Prague House in Brussels, organised by the Czech Republic's People in Need association. The photographs document the courage and suffering of the women persecuted by secret police, authorities and sometimes even by fellow citizens. Cuban poet Raúl Rivero attended the exhibition opening ceremony with his wife Blanca Reyes, who, along with other women, has struggled for the dissident prisoners' release. Both Rivero and his wife are currently living in Spain, after Rivero's release from prison by Cuban authorities. (*CTK*, 1/6/05)

June 1: A small group of pro-Cuban protesters demonstrated outside the US embassy in Mexico City to demand the US government send Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela to face charges in an airplane bombing that killed 73 people. The protesters, about a dozen members of the Mexican Movement in Solidarity with Cuba, donned masks representing US President George W. Bush, Mexican President Vicente Fox and Osama bin Laden; they then doused their hands with fake blood and held out false dollars they said represented US protection and funding for terrorists. (*AP*, 1/6/05)

June 1: Cuban Ambassador to the Philippines Jorge Rey Jimenez backtracked on previous statements requesting the assistance of the Philippine government in extraditing a Cuban renegade from the United States. Jimenez told a news conference he was only trying to "solicit public opinion" over claims that the US had been blocking all efforts to extradite Luis Posada Carriles, a former operative of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) wanted for the 1976 fatal bombing of a Cuban airliner. Jimenez stressed the initiative did not come from Havana but from a group that wanted Posada to face trial for the 1976 bombing. He said one of the four Philippines-Cuba friendship associations had actually called the press conference held at the Cuban embassy in Makati City. "The press conference was called by one of the four Philippines-Cuba associations and not by the Cuban Embassy," Jimenez clarified. (*The Philippine Star*, 1/6/05)

June 1: Pope Benedict XVI expressed hope that a recent meeting in Havana "would give a new impulse to the tireless missionary efforts of the Church in Cuba." The Pope relayed that expectation in a message to the participants in the 1st Missionary Meeting of Cuba, held in Havana in May. The text was read by the apostolic nuncio in Cuba, Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi, in the course of the first meeting of the event. The conference attracted 141 delegate representatives from the 11 Cuban dioceses, including 110 lay missionaries, in addition to 23 seminarians, according to Father Raúl Rodríguez Dago, national director of the Pontifical Missionary Societies in the country. Resolutions reached by the participants included the decision to endorse the commitment taken by the National Meeting of the Catholic Church in Cuba in 1986. That commitment included making the mission central to pastoral work. Among those attending the Missionary Meeting was Cardinal Jaime Ortega Alamino of Havana. (*Zenit*, 1/6/05)

June 2: Havana has held out an assurance to Islamabad that it would open its embassy in Islamabad by the end of 2006, at the latest, but pointed out that the Cuban ambassador accredited to Pakistan, based in China, has been waiting since July 2004 to present his credentials. In a meeting with Pakistan's Special Envoy Nasim Zehra, the Cuban foreign minister said that he was pleased to convey his government's decision to open an embassy in Pakistan, which was earlier delayed due to financial constraints. The special envoy held out an assurance that Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad is already working on ensuring that the Cuban envoy can present his credentials within the next couple of months. (*The News International Pakistan*, 2/6/05)

June 2: Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda does not expect the EU foreign ministers to revise their January decision to soften the EU stand on Cuba and resume the previous diplomatic sanctions, he said, but added that there exist many other ways to exert pressure on Fidel Castro's regime. "We must not let ourselves be impressed by cosmetic changes, no crucial progress had been made [on the part of Cuba]," Svoboda told the press after a Brussels meeting of politicians from the European People's Party (EPP) which focused on the EU policy towards Cuba. At the seminar

meeting, EPP politicians agreed that the EU has to pursue an uncompromising policy toward Cuba until the local regime starts democratization and releases its dissidents, sentenced to many years in prison. (CTK, 2/6/05)

June 4: Fidel Castro called upon the OAS to “support almost unanimously” a request for the extradition to Venezuela of anti-Castro firebrand Luis Posada Carriles, currently detained by US authorities. Castro spoke at the closing ceremony of a three-day conference that brought together hundreds of social activists and political leaders, mostly from Latin America, to review, starting with the case of Posada Carriles, a long list of violent and repressive events spanning the last four decades. (*La Jornada*, 4/6/05)

June 4: The OAS Secretary General, José Miguel Insulza, weighed in on the debate regarding the situation of Cuba within the Inter-American system. Insulza declared that the OAS position on Cuba, ostracized from the organization for the last 41 years, “is well known” and has been “cemented” by the approval of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2001. “With that Charter, to be in the OAS you have to meet the requirements of the Charter,” he said. “Therefore, if the issue of Cuba is brought up again within the OAS – at Cuba’s request or the OAS’s – and the return of Cuba is laid once more on the table – which we have always been willing to consider --, it has to be within the framework of the Inter-American Democratic Charter (...) That’s the focal point,” he said. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 4/6/05)

June 4: More than two dozen foreign dignitaries joined a call in South Florida for the Organization of American States to make Cuba's transition to democracy one of its top priorities. The University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies took advantage of the OAS' annual General Assembly, being held in Fort Lauderdale, to organize a seminar on how the 34-hemispheric bloc can play a constructive role in Cuba's future. "It is high time [the OAS] addresses the issue of Cuba and Cubans," said Martin Palous, the Czech Republic's ambassador to Washington. "If anything can come out of this general assembly (...) it is [that] Cuba is part of the American discussion. It would be a tremendous boost for Cuban freedom fighters." A dozen Latin American and European leaders signed a three-page declaration on Cuba passed around at the seminar and urging the OAS to "consider how it can play a constructive role in helping a future Cuban democratic transition government rejoin the hemispheric family of democracies and rebuild its political, legal, economic system." [[Consensus for Democracy in Cuba](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 5/6/05)

June 4: East Timor Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Minister Jose Ramos Horta began an official visit to Cuban to strengthen the relations between both countries. Ramos Horta will hold official talks with his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque and other Cuban officials. The agenda of the 1996 Peace Nobel Prize Winner will include a meeting with the Cuban Communist Party’s Central Committee International Relations Department chief, Fernando Remirez, and the Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration Minister, Marta Lomas. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/6/05)

June 5: The Cuban-Mexican Civic Association, a non-governmental organization, accused the Mexican government of treating Cuban illegal immigrants like “5th class citizens.” According to the organization, at least 16 Cuban *balseiros* (illegal migrants who brave the ocean on homemade rafts) were deported back to Cuba, while another 50 were transferred from Veracruz to Mexico City for the same purpose. (*EFE*, 5/6/05)

June 6: Brazil called on the OAS to engage in "constructive cooperation" with Cuba, which was suspended from the regional organization in 1962. "Constructive cooperation, even when there are differences in perceptions, sometimes profound differences, is the best path for ensuring that the goals of the (OAS) charter are fully achieved," Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim said. During his address at the first session of the 35th Organization of American States General Assembly, the foreign minister referred to the "empty seat" at the regional gathering, a clear allusion to Cuba. "We also believe that it's an anomaly and also regret that it's that way. In 1994, Brazil, with the support of other countries, advocated opening a dialogue about this situation," Amorim said in his address to the gathering, which is being presided over by US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. (*EFE*, 6/6/05)

June 6: Cuban volleyball player Javier González requested political asylum in Italy, where the Cuban national team was competing in the Men's World League. Gonzalez is the 10 th volleyball player to defect in the last 3 years. (*EFE*, 6/6/05)

June 6: The President of Cape Verde, Pedro Verona Rodrigues Pires, began a working visit in Cuba and is expected to meet with Fidel Castro. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/6/05)

June 6: King Mswati III of Swaziland began an official three-day visit to Cuba to strengthen bilateral ties. Africa's last absolute monarch arrived in Havana at the invitation of Fidel Castro. The southern African king will visit the Institute of Tropical Medicine and the International Sports School, both of which are in Havana. This is Mswati's second visit to the island, after an April 2000 summit of the Group of 77. Cuba and Swaziland established diplomatic relations on September 22, 1996. (*AFP, Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/6/05)

June 9: Angolan deputy minister of health, Natália do Espírito Santo, in Havana, defended the need for strengthened cooperation with Cuba, especially in the technical and scientific fields. "Now in times of peace we are in a position to further strengthen this co-operation. We will finalise all work that we started in 2004 which might lead to the signing of a project of cooperation between both Health Ministries", said Natália do Espírito Santo. (*AllAfrica.com*, 9/6/05)

June 9: EU governments should rethink their policy towards Cuba and stop helping European companies support the island's Communist regime by skimping on labour rights, a leading Cuban opposition figure said. "We recognise that the EU has good intentions but words alone will not do it. Sanctions did not work but lifting them didn't work either," said Eduardo Perez Bengochea, travelling in Europe as the representative of three Cuban dissident groups. "We think that the European Union should consider a complete 'no' policy towards Cuba -- proactive and socially responsible, not reacting to Castro's moods, wishes and actions," he said. Perez said he represented economist Martha Beatriz Roque, 60, who has spent four of the last eight years in jail for criticising Castro, and her Assembly to Promote Civil Society. (*Reuters*, 9/6/05)

June 9: Canadian Cuba solidarity activists are to hold a press conference to inform the Canadian people about the implications for their country of the arrest of international terrorist Luis Posada Carriles. They will demand that the Canadian government intervene so that the US extradites Posada to Venezuela. "It all began with Fidel's speeches on the Carriles case," recalled Philippe Leroux, of the Coordinating Committee in the province of Quebec, which brings together the different Cuba solidarity groups. "In Canada, we have been dealing with Bush's new anti-terrorist measures, which signify the loss of civil rights and freedoms," Leroux emphasized. "Moreover, the Montreal Convention against terrorism was signed in that city in 1997, so it is normal for us to be particularly concerned about that issue." (*Granma International*, 9/6/05)

June 9: Carlos Nieto Palma, director of Una Ventana a la Libertad [Window to Freedom], expressed his opposition to the presence of Cuban professionals in Venezuelan jails. "They have nothing to contribute to us in the penitentiary area," he explained and referred to those who graduate with advanced technology degrees in prison administration. Nieto Palma said statements by the head of the Prison Mission, Sara Infante, were irresponsible, after she said that her work is to make a diagnosis in the area and then to tackle the situation. "This doctor, who will evidently guide the fate of our prisons, does not have the least idea of what she is saying. In Venezuela, we have plenty of diagnoses, we do not need any more, much less from people who are not familiar with our prison system," he said. The lawyer wondered if Infante will try to treat the inmates who are addicts the way they do in Cuba. "The Cubanization of our prisons, more than a step backwards with regard to prison practices, is an affront to the graduates of the University Institute of Penitentiary Studies and to the personnel who work in those prisons, in addition to demonstrating the inability of the Interior and Justice Ministry through its director of custody and rehabilitation to resolve the problem internally," he explained. (*El Nacional, BBC Monitoring*, 14/6/05)

June 10: The European Union will not revive diplomatic sanctions against Cuba despite the expulsion of several EU lawmakers and journalists who tried to attend an opposition conference last month, diplomats said. The Czech Republic, a former communist state and new EU member, led efforts to re-impose the sanctions, arguing that the EU should respond to the communist government's refusal to admit European Parliament members. But Spain convinced a big majority of member states that the move would be counter-productive, noting that political dialogue with Havana had only just resumed and it was a step forward that the authorities had permitted the dissident meeting at all. "They (the 25 EU countries) have agreed at ambassador level to maintain the suspension of the sanctions. I expect the ministers to do the same", one EU diplomat said. (*Reuters*, 10/6/05)

June 12: Organization of American States (OAS) Secretary-General Jose Miguel Insulza said that the US trade embargo against Cuba, in effect for more than 40 years, "has not worked" and "it would be good" to look at other options for effecting change in the island. "The most discreet reply would be to say that when a thing has not worked for more than four decades, it might be good to try something else," Insulza told the *La Tercera* newspaper. The former Chilean interior minister said it was not clear what the OAS could do with regard to Cuba, because there was "a structural problem" in light of the fact that the island was suspended from the organization in 1962. "We can talk about mechanisms, instruments, but it is not very clear which ones the OAS could use with regard to Cuba," Insulza said, noting that the regional organization only deals with the Cuban issue in the human rights commission. "When Fidel Castro recently said some less than loving things about me, a lot of time had gone by since he had spoken about the OAS," Insulza said, noting that, after his election as secretary-general, the Cuban leader referred to him as "silly" for saying that the organization should serve as a guardian for democracy in the Americas. (*EFE*, 13/6/05)

June 13: As was expected, foreign ministers of the European Union decided not to reimpose on Cuba the diplomatic sanctions suspended earlier this year, despite noting on the record a lack of "satisfactory progress" toward respect for human rights on the Communist-ruled island. The ministers approved a document reiterating the 25-nation bloc's intention to continue dialogue with Havana, said Jean Asselborn, foreign minister of Luxembourg, which currently exercises the EU's rotating presidency. Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, whose Socialist government pushed for late January's suspension of the diplomatic sanctions, argued during debate in favor of giving the rapprochement more time to work. The ministers said the policy would again be reviewed in June 2006. (*EFE*, 13/6/05)

June 13: "The Cuban regime behaves as a totalitarian one and it is not possible to be silent on this," Czech Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda told the press before the EU's discussion on a draft resolution on Cuba. The EU will take a very critical stand on human rights violations in Cuba, but it will not resume diplomatic sanctions which were suspended in January, it ensues from the draft resolution. The resolution was originally expected to be approved without a debate, but the Czech Republic raised an objection to the text, and therefore the debate was held. (*CTK*, 13/6/05)

June 14: In a press Conference, Deputy Chairman of the Cuban Friendship Association Enrique Ramón Hernández underscored the strong ties between Syria and Cuba in the political, cultural and scientific domains, pointing out that his visit to Syria "aims at cementing friendship relations between the two countries." Hernández reviewed the economic changes in the world during this stage, asserting the need for "boosting Arab-Cuban cooperation" to face challenges imposed by the economic great blocs that aim at dominating other nations' capacities. (*SANA*, 14/6/05)

June 14: Mexican Foreign Minister Luis Ernesto Derbez said that the Vicente Fox administration is waiting for Havana's consent to send its new ambassador to the island, a post that has remained vacant since last February. "Trade ties with Cuba are still maintained. Yes, we do not have an ambassador there at present, but we are awaiting word from Havana to send in our new representative," Derbez told Mexican senators. (*AFP*, 14/6/05)

June 14: Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage arrived in Qatar to attend the high level meeting of the Second South Summit, where representatives of 132 member countries of G-77 are participating. Lage was received in the Qatari

capital by Minister of State Chej Hamad Ben Abdallah Al Thani and Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque, already in Doha. The Cuban official will participate in the meeting of presidents, heads of government and state representatives of the Third World, to be held in Doha, where they will approve the Final Declaration of the Summit and the Plan of Action of the Group of 77 for the next five years. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/6/05)

June 15: In a message addressed to the 2nd South Summit in Doha, Qatar, Fidel Castro called for a more equitable and sustainable world order to deal with the economic model neoliberalism has imposed on it. Fidel Castro pointed out that the neoliberal system implacably takes the life of millions of people in the poorest nations of the Earth. "Our countries are included for exploitation but excluded from development," he denounced in his message to the Doha Summit, which is calling for larger South-South trade exchange and integration. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/6/05)

June 17: While portraying himself as a 'friend' of the Cuban government, Portuguese author José Saramago defended the right of Cuban dissidents to voice their views. During a press conference following a lecture at the University of Havana, Cuba, where he arrived at the government's request, Saramago said, "I do not agree with what has happened in Cuba. But I am in Cuba right now and the Cuban government has not asked me to leave." The writer tried to elaborate on his position and indicated that "dissent is a right" and, as such, no one should be stripped of it. However, he quickly went on to claim to being a "friend" of Cuba and the local authorities. (*AP*, 17/6/05)

June 19: Cuban advisors have retrained 3,017 teachers from 35 Colombian public schools and the government of President Álvaro Uribe wants the program, implemented by agreement with the government of Castro, to be extended to another 211 educational centers, whose student population is primarily Afro-Colombian. These are government-run schools located in the cities of Tumaco and Buenaventura, on the Pacific coast, as well as in Quibdo, in the Chocó jungle region, and on the Caribbean island of San Andrés. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 19/6/05)

June 19: Angola's Culture Ministry is negotiating a contract so that Cuban teachers work in the country at artistic schools, Minister Boaventura Cardoso announced. The Minister made the announcement at his arrival from Madrid where he represented the Angolan government at the Foro de Concertación of various Culture Ministries, a meeting preceded by the fourth International Congress on Culture and Development, which took place in Havana. (*Angop Press*, 19/6/05)

June 19: Fidel Castro has called for concrete steps towards genuine integration among the peoples of Latin American with a view to solving serious health problems that plague the region. At the closing ceremony of the Fifth International Ophthalmology Congress, the Cuban statesman said he is convinced that great accomplishments in terms of health are in store through solidarity, cooperation, and mass training of highly qualified personnel. Approximately 180 million people throughout the world are blind and the sad fact is that 80 per cent of blindness cases are curable and preventable, Castro said. He pointed out that in Latin America alone the rate of blindness is 8,000 per million inhabitants. (*Media Monitor*, 19/6/05)

June 20: Seven Cubans and two Dominicans who attempted to reach Puerto Rico illegally by boat are missing, the Dominican Navy reported. A Navy spokesperson said that relatives of the illegal migrants had reported them missing, and added that they had passed themselves off as tourists before setting out for Puerto Rico. (*AP*, 20/6/05)

June 21: Cuban Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas is attending the first day of the 81st session of the Africa, Caribbean, Pacific (ACP) Group's Council of Ministers. After arriving in Brussels, Cabrisas held talks with ACP General Secretary John Kaputin. Meeting participants will discuss, among other topics, measures of the Cotonou Agreement, as well as analyze basic topics like sugar, banana and cotton. (*Prensa Latina*, 21/6/05)

June 21: Mexico is against the trade embargo with Cuba, Mexican President Vicente Fox said at Moscow State Institute of Foreign Relations (MGIMO). "We are strongly against the trade embargo with Cuba," he said. "It is not a

solution to the issue." The Mexican president pointed out that Mexico has "great relations with Cuba." He called the relations "very productive" and said they included trade and economic cooperation. (*Novosti*, 21/6/05)

June 21: Retired army officers who oppose the government of President Hugo Chávez appealed to Venezuelans to take to the streets of Caracas and other Venezuelan cities to protest a possible Fidel Castro visit to that country. The Institutional Military Front called upon the population to demonstrate against the Cuban President's visit. (*OCB*, 21/6/05)

June 21: Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia highlighted the need for strengthening the existing traditional ties between Bangladesh and Cuba to a new level for the benefit of the two peoples. She was speaking to new Cuban envoy to Bangladesh Juan Carretero Ibáñez when he made his first call on her at the Prime Minister's office here. Mr. Carretero, based in New Delhi, said in addition to the existing political ties, Bangladesh and Cuba have the scope of cooperation in the fields of trade and economy for the benefit and welfare of the two peoples. (*BSS*, 21/6/05)

June 26: Venezuelan president Hugo Chavez said he expects Fidel Castro will not attend an oil summit with Caribbean leaders in Venezuela and will instead send his vice president, Carlos Lage. The talks in the northeastern city of Puerto La Cruz are to center on Chavez's proposal to create a regional company, called Petrocaribe, to offset high oil prices by distributing Venezuelan crude and refined oil products to the Caribbean at lower prices. (*EFE*, 26/6/05)

June 27: Onelia Ross, a Cuban-Canadian, who looked forward to sipping *mojitos* and swimming in the warm turquoise waters of the Caribbean during a trip back to Cuba, instead, spent five days sitting in a Havana prison cell. "They held me for five days while they investigated the case and they didn't let me call a lawyer," Ms. Ross said from her Ottawa home. They accused her of trying to enter the country illegally. "I said no, that there must be a mistake," recalled Ms. Ross. As she argued with the official, the situation devolved into a shouting match at the small airport in Holguin. She also said she was manhandled by her jailors and suffered bruising and scrapes. Reynald Doiron, a spokesman for the Department of Foreign Affairs, confirmed that Ms. Ross was held in prison for five days. "We sent a diplomatic note to Cuban authorities requesting they check into the allegation of Ms. Ross being beaten or roughed up and no reply has been received so far," he said. Ms. Ross's dual citizenship "may be a complicating factor" in receiving a timely response, he said. "However the treatment of a Canadian citizen as reported by her is of concern to Foreign Affairs and deserves a full explanation. We hope they will provide one." Ms. Ross, a 47-year-old accountant, has never been involved in politics or been critical of Cuba, and left the country 28 years ago when she met and married a Canadian diplomat who was posted in Havana. After five days in prison she was released and put on a plane to Ottawa. Cuban authorities kept the \$500 (U.S.) in cash that Ms. Ross was carrying, saying it covered the cost of feeding her for five days, and flying her from Holguin to Havana. (*The Globe & Mail*, 27/6/05)

June 28: An orthopaedic surgeon from Cuba has claimed that the Health Professions Council of South Africa had refused to renew his yearly registration certificate because of pressure by Cuban authorities. According to the professional, Cuban authorities hope to make an example of him so that other Cuban doctors would "toe the line". Pietermaritzburg-based Mario Menchero - who is married to an attorney who has represented numerous Cuban doctors in legal battles with the South African health authorities - has said in the Pietermaritzburg High Court that he has been labelled a "traitor" and was being victimised as a result of his marriage. Menchero alleges in court papers that the fact that he was not registered led him to being placed on leave without pay. He was based at Grey's Hospital in Pietermaritzburg. (*IOL*, 28/6/05)

June 28: Fidel Castro made a surprise visit to Venezuela for what he described on arrival as an "historic encounter" with his top ally, President Hugo Chávez, and Caribbean leaders in his fourth trip to Venezuela since 1999 and his first outside of Cuba since late 2003. Castro said his visit to Venezuela for a Caribbean oil summit marked the first overseas trip he could remember in which foes have not mounted a plot to assassinate him. Castro told Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and other Caribbean leaders that his last-minute decision to attend the meeting in Venezuela might have

thrown off those plotting against him. "This may be the only visit I've made in which there was no plan to attack me, simply because I wasn't going to make the trip," said Castro, citing assassination plots thwarted during past trips abroad. "During 40 years, every time I have left the country they have organized plans to attack me, without exception," he said. Castro said he initially didn't plan to attend but decided to come at the last minute after hearing Chavez talk about the meeting on television. (*The Miami Herald, Taiwan News, 29/6/05*)

Terrorism

June 1: Testimonies of state sponsored terrorism imposed on Latin America by successive US administrations were the subject of discussion on Cuban TV and radio program "The Round Table." Guest panelists from the region recounted how the US government supported Operation Condor, a conspiracy undertaken by Latin American military dictatorships to eliminate all opposition to their rule during the 1970's and 80's. (*Radio Habana Cuba, 1/6/05*)

June 2: Fidel Castro presided over the International Meeting against Terrorism, for Truth and Justice, at the International Conference Center in the Cuban capital with the participation of more than 300 Cuban and foreign delegates. Left-wing politicians and intellectuals attending the conference accused the US government of harboring a Cuban exile blamed for the bombing of an airliner in 1976. They said the Bush administration had a double standard in its post-9/11 war on terror because it refused to extradite former CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela to stand trial for the downing of a Cuban plane that killed 73 people. The meeting at Havana's convention center, was called to press for Posada's extradition by the United States, where he was arrested last month for illegal entry while seeking asylum. "Not extraditing him to Venezuela would be an act of great hypocrisy by the US government and President George W. Bush, and evidence that he does not care about other people's pain," said Michael Avery, associate professor at the Suffolk Law School in Boston and a conference participant. Piero Gleijeses, professor of American Foreign Policy at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, said the US bears responsibility for the killing of 200,000 people in Guatemala and the work of death squads in El Salvador, but history is being rewritten today to show the United States as a champion of democracy in the region. Conference delegates included some of the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, mothers of leftists who disappeared in Argentina's "dirty war" in the 1970's, Andean peasant leaders and members of Communist Parties of Portugal and Brazil. (*Radio Habana Cuba, Reuters, 2/6/05*)

June 5: International leftist leaders, academics and activists joined the Cuban government's campaign to demand the extradition of anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles to Venezuela, where he is wanted in connection with the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner. During a four-day Havana conference that drew 500 participants from the United States, Latin America and Europe, speakers slammed the Bush administration for rejecting Venezuela's arrest request for Posada and said Washington is trying to protect the former CIA operative. (*Sun Sentinel, 5/6/05*)

June 8: US Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld said that the Bush administration was not considering shutting down the detention center at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and he defended the treatment of its prisoners by their American military guards and interrogators as humane. During a visit to Norway before a meeting with NATO defense ministers in Brussels, Mr. Rumsfeld responded to criticisms that the detention center should be closed after reports that the Koran had been mishandled and prisoners mistreated. "I know of no one in the US Government, in the executive branch, that is considering closing Guantánamo," he said at a news conference. (*The New York Times, 9/6/05*)

June 8: US President George W. Bush left open the possibility that the US prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, could be shut down following mounting criticism from former President Jimmy Carter and others. "We're exploring all alternatives as to how best to do the main objective, which is to protect America," Bush said when asked in an interview with Fox News Channel's Neil Cavuto in Washington if he would close the detention centre. Amnesty International also recently called for Guantanamo's closure, saying the facility was the "the gulag of our time" – a

characterisation Bush dismissed again. "It's just absurd to equate Gitmo and Guantanamo with a Soviet gulag," he said. "Just not even close." Bush said the Guantanamo Bay detainees were being treated in accordance with international standards and that any allegations of mistreatment were fully investigated. He also defended the policy of holding enemy combatants. (*The Scotsman*, 8/6/05)

June 10: Senator Mel Martinez of Florida said that the Bush administration should consider closing the detention center at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Mr. Martinez is the first high-profile Republican to make the suggestion. "It's become an icon for bad stories, and at some point you wonder the cost-benefit ratio," Mr. Martinez said at the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors/Florida Press Association convention. "How much do you get out of having that facility there? Is it serving all the purposes you thought it would serve when initially you began it, or can this be done some other way a little better?" (*The New York Times*, 11/6/05)

June 13: US Vice President Dick Cheney said he doesn't believe revelations about the treatment of prisoners at the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay have become an image problem for the United States and that the facility should not be shut down. "Those who most urgently advocate that we shut down Guantanamo probably don't agree with our policy anyway," the vice president said after presenting the Gerald R. Ford Foundation journalism awards at the National Press Club. Given all the facts, he said, "Our policy is the correct one." (*CNN*, 13/6/05)

June 14: The detention center at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, will be needed for years to come, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld suggested. Mr. Rumsfeld said at a news conference at the Pentagon that there was no alternative site to hold and question the suspected terrorists there. "I don't know any place where we have infrastructure that's appropriate for that sizable group of people," he said. "The United States government, let alone the US military, does not want to be in the position of holding suspected terrorists any longer than is absolutely necessary. But as long as there remains a need to keep terrorists from striking again, a facility will continue to be needed." (*The New York Times*, 15/6/05)

June 16: US Senators considered imposing new limits on the treatment of so-called enemy combatants as the Bush administration defended the military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. In an often-confrontational hearing, members of the Senate Judiciary Committee grilled administration officials on the status of about 520 prisoners, mostly from the war in Afghanistan, being held at the military prison on a US-occupied sliver of Cuba. Lawmakers clashed sharply, with Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat-Vermont, calling the offshore prison compound "an international embarrassment," while Senator Jeff Sessions, Republican-Alabama, said some of the detainees should be executed. (*Los Angeles Times*, 16/6/05)

June 17: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) hit back at a US Republican report which questioned its impartiality, dismissing the accusations as false and unsubstantiated. ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger vowed the Swiss-based agency would stick to its principles of neutrality and expressed confidence the United States would remain its top donor. A policy adviser for the US Senate Republican majority said this week the ICRC had lost its impartiality and was advocating positions at odds with US interests. (*The New York Times*, 17/6/05)

June 18: Amnesty International and human rights activists of different nationalities condemned continued human rights abuse against detainees at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, calling for greater transparency from the United States on inmates' conditions and for the closure of the detention center. The demands came during a conference organized by the human rights and freedom organization (HOOD) and Amnesty International, and attended by lawyers from Washington, Britain, Europe and Middle East countries. (*The Daily Chew*, 19/6/05)

June 20: Former President Bill Clinton has said the United States should either "close down or clean up" the Guantánamo Bay prison for foreign terrorism suspects. In an interview with the Financial Times, Clinton said American or British troops would be at much greater risk if they had a reputation for abusing people. "Well, it either

needs to be closed down or cleaned up," Clinton said when asked whether the camp on Cuba should close. "If we get a reputation for abusing people, it puts our own soldiers much more at risk," Clinton said. (*The New York Times*, 20/6/05)

June 23: UN human rights experts said they have reliable accounts of detainees being tortured at the US base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The experts also said Washington had not responded to their latest request to check on the conditions of terror suspects at the facility in eastern Cuba. The experts, who report to UN bodies on different human rights issues, said their request for a visit was "based on information, from reliable sources, of serious allegations of torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of detainees, arbitrary detention, violations of their right to health and their due process rights." US officials so far have allowed only the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit Guantanamo detainees. (*The New York Times*, 23/6/05)

June 25: During a tour of the US prison for suspected terrorists in Guantanamo, House Republicans and Democrats, including one who has advocated closing the facility, said the United States has made progress in improving conditions and protecting detainees' rights. The US lawmakers witnessed interrogations, toured cellblocks and ate the same lunch given to detainees on the first congressional visit to the prison for suspected terrorists since criticism of it intensified in the spring. "The Guantanamo we saw today is not the Guantanamo we heard about a few years ago," said Representative Ellen Tauscher, Democrat-California. (*AP*, 26/6/05)

Security

June 3: The class of Venezuelan armed forces officers aspiring to command posts or places on the joint chiefs of staff have selected Fidel Castro as their "godfather," army commander General Raul Baduel confirmed. "Because it is my duty as commander of the army, I presented (Castro's selection) to the appropriate authorities; that is, to the defense minister, General Jorge Garcia, and to the president of the republic, Hugo Chavez," so that they may decide upon the matter," he added. (*EFE*, 4/6/05)

June 4: Cuban and Chinese top military officers met in Havana to boost cooperation and friendship between the armies of both nations. Cuban General Alvaro López and the Chinese Popular Liberation Army's General Political Department deputy chief, Liu Yongzhi, led the meeting. Liu and his delegation toured an army unit in western Cuba where Major General José Carrillo received them. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/6/05)

June 12: Led by its Dean, Brigadier General Rafael Eduardo Arreaza Castillo, a delegation from the Institute for National Defence Higher Education of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela arrived in Havana. The delegation will visit the Ministry of the Armed Forces headquarters, as well as the head offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Defence College. (*Granma*, 13/6/05)

June 15: Fidel Castro received a delegation from the Institute for National Defence Higher Education of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, led by its Dean, Brigadier General Rafael Eduardo Arreaza Castillo. (*Granma*, 16/6/05)

June 30: Cuban Brigade General Harry Villegas (Pombo) arrived in Uruguay, at the head of a delegation to participate in the regional seminar on parliamentary control on security. The Cuban delegation is comprised of Silvia Lozano Ferrer, assistant of the Cuban Parliament's International Relations Commission, and Lazaro Barredo, deputy and journalist. Villegas told the press the meeting would be of great interest to exchange experiences, and let foreign participants know the Cuban position on security. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/6/05)

US-Cuba Relations

June 1: The US Coast Guard said it repatriated 40 Cuban migrants to Bahía de Cabañas, Cuba, and 162 Haitian migrants to Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The 40 Cuban migrants were intercepted by the Coast Guard aboard five different rustic vessels found in the Florida Straits between May 22 and the 24th. (*Sun Sentinel*, 1/6/05)

June 2: Novelist Ernest Hemingway's hideaway near Havana, where he wrote "The Old Man and the Sea" and spent more than 20 years of his life, is so tied to American culture - and so damaged by time and the elements - that a US preservation group has listed the house among its endangered historic places. The house, called Finca Vigía, or Lookout Farm, is the first historic site outside the United States to be part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's annual call for help. "This is a very important part of America's cultural heritage even though it is outside our boundaries," said Richard Moe, president of the group. "It is part of our shared heritage with the Cubans." (*Sun Sentinel*, 2/6/05)

June 2: Fidel Castro accused the United States of protecting his old archenemy, Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles, implying that the former CIA operative might have secrets American officials may not want revealed. "This empire is letting itself be blackmailed by its accomplices," Castro said of Posada and other Cuban exiles who were active in efforts to topple the island's communist government during the Cold War. Although he wasn't on the agenda, Castro spoke several times during the first day of an antiterrorism meeting that drew about 400 participants from abroad, mostly from Latin America. (*The Miami Herald*, 3/6/05)

June 3: Citing both the positive actions and failures of governments around the world to take the necessary steps to end modern-day slavery, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice presented to the public the fifth annual Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP) at the US Department of State. The report records the efforts of 150 nations between March 2004 and March 2005 to deal with the issue, explained Ambassador John Miller, the senior adviser on trafficking in persons in the State Department. "Burma, North Korea, Sudan and Cuba remain on Tier III, largely because they still fail to address forced labor in their countries", Miller said. Tier 3, the least favorable rating, lists countries whose governments fail to meet minimal international standards and are not making significant efforts to do so. [[Trafficking in Persons Report. Countries A through G](#)] (*Washington File*, 3/6/05)

June 3: Fidel Castro said that the US government's current anti-terrorist crusade is a continuation of Operation Condor, a plan carried out in order to crush progressive forces in Latin America in the 70s. Referring to a speech by Argentinian writer Miguel Bonasso before the International Meeting against Terrorism, for Truth and Justice, Castro indicated that these plans include attempts to assassinate Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and destroy the Bolivarian Revolution. Condor is against Venezuela now, one of the current US administration's main concerns, something that cannot be underestimated if one wants to wipe out all abhorrent tragedies and events witnessed by this continent, he said. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/6/05)

June 4: Luis Posada Carriles said he will fight to remain in the United States, and he wants to live a quiet life, supporting himself by selling his paintings, a newspaper reported. In an interview with *The Miami Herald*, Posada did not say if he would give up violence in his campaign against Cuba's Fidel Castro. "In the United States, I want to lead a normal life," Posada said. "I will paint and work for my fatherland. That's what I'm going to do." Posada, 77, is in US custody in El Paso, Texas, facing deportation on charges of entering the United States illegally earlier this year. (*Sun Sentinel*, 5/6/05)

June 4: More than two dozen foreign dignitaries joined a call in South Florida for the Organization of American States to make Cuba's transition to democracy one of its top priorities. The University of Miami's Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies took advantage of the OAS' annual General Assembly, being held in Fort Lauderdale, to organize a seminar on how the 34-hemispheric bloc can play a constructive role in Cuba's future. A dozen Latin American and European leaders signed a three-page declaration on Cuba passed around at the seminar and urging the OAS to "consider how it can play a constructive role in helping a future Cuban democratic transition government rejoin

the hemispheric family of democracies and rebuild its political, legal and economic system." In addition, the resolution urged the OAS' Inter-American Human Rights Commission to remain vigilant on Cuba's human rights situation and help its people. Participants included former presidents Luis Alberto Lacalle of Uruguay, Luis Alberto Monge of Costa Rica, Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic and Eduardo Frei of Chile. (*The Miami Herald*, 5/6/05)

June 4: A two-and-a-half hour speech by Fidel Castro was the final salvo fired in an international conference that accused the United States of hypocrisy in the fight against terrorism. "The empire has to be forced to hand over its henchmen, to comply with treaties, with UN and bilateral accords and those with the nations of the Caribbean, that it hand over the criminals," Castro declared, referring to Luis Posada Carriles, a CIA-trained Cuban exile wanted in connection with the 1976 bombing of a Cubana commercial jet that killed all 73 on board. This case has the United States in a bind, Castro said at the conference closing, but "we have to demand that they talk, that they explain, that they say how he entered [the country] and then we'll know a whole lot of things." (*Prensa Latina*, CBS, 5/6/05)

June 5: The OAS member states cannot rest "until freedom and prosperity and security enrich the lives of all of our people," US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said as she opened the annual session of the OAS General Assembly. "Thirty-four nations have earned their rightful place in this great democratic organization. But there remains one open seat at the table -- a seat that will one day be filled by the representatives of a free and democratic Cuba". Rice added that, "In Florida, we can glimpse the future potential of a free Cuba. As recently as 1999, the 2 million Cubans in the United States earned a combined income of \$14 billion. Now compare that with Castro's Cuba, a country of 11 million citizens and a GDP only slightly larger than \$1 billion. The lesson is clear: When governments champion equality of opportunity, all people can prosper in freedom". [[Remarks by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice](#)] (*OAS Press Release*, 5/6/05)

June 6: US president George W. Bush singled out Cuba as the only non democratic nation in the Western Hemisphere during a speech to the Organization of American States, but said "the tide of freedom" would one day reach the communist island. The president, who was addressing the 34-member body at its annual summit, noted that 30 years ago, fewer than half of the OAS members had democratically elected governments. "Today, all 34 countries participating in this General Assembly have democratic, constitutional governments. Only one country in this hemisphere sits outside this society of democratic nations -- and one day the tide of freedom will reach Cuba's shores as well," Mr. Bush said. [[Remarks by President George W. Bush](#)] (*The Washington Times*, 6/7/05)

June 6: Civil society leaders from Latin America met with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and, among other matters, expressed concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in Cuba. The director of Human Rights Watch (HRW) for the region, José Miguel Vivanco, said that Rice lent ear to concerns over human rights in Cuba, "where the repressive machinery has remained unchanged for many years." The meeting with Rice was also attended by representatives from the US-based Cuban Democratic Directorate; Súmate (Join Us), from Venezuela; the Haiti Chamber of Commerce; the Inter-American Democracy Network, from Argentina; the Latin American Development Corporation, from Ecuador; and the Canadian Foundation for the Americas (FOCAL). (*AP*, 7/6/05)

June 6: The President of the National Council of Cultural Heritage (CNPC), Marta Arjona, highlighted that the Ministry of Culture is financing the restoration of the House-Museum Ernest Hemingway in San Miguel del Padrón, Havana. In statements to press, the also member of the International Council of Museums and Sites stressed the advisory work done by a group of architects who, without doing any structural modifications, currently work on the roof and other parts of the building. Arjona added that from last February the residence of Finca Vigía estate (about 8 miles southeast of downtown Havana) is being restored with a budget of 270 thousand dollars. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/6/05)

June 6: US President George W. Bush met with exiled Cuban doctor Alberto Hernández, a personal friend of anti-Castro firebrand Luis Posada Carriles. Nothing transpired from the brief discussion, whose images were broadcast by US Hispanic TV station Canal 51. (*Notimex*, 6/6/05)

June 7: Some lively dialogue about US policy on Cuba is expected as farm exports from the Southeast take the spotlight at a conference in Alabama's port city, chosen because of its cultural and shipping links to Havana. The fourth National Summit on Cuba which will be held in Mobile is sponsored by the World Policy Institute based at the New School University in New York. "We are creating a forum for an intelligent and balanced discussion of US-Cuba relations," says summit spokeswoman Lissa Weinmann, a researcher at the institute. She said the agenda for the meeting is "wide-ranging, but the focus is on trade." Some Cuban officials, who cannot attend, are expected to participate by phone or possible video hookup and answer questions from the audience. (AP, 7/6/05)

June 7: Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen said she was "very upset" with a group of architects seeking authorization to travel to Cuba to restore "Outlook Farm," Ernest Hemingway's home in Havana. In a press release, Lehtinen, a Florida Representative, pointed that the architects "are concerned about the condition of the Hemingway property, while Castro's brutal government keeps hundreds of political prisoners in jail and the whole island under a totalitarian and despotic regime." (EFE, 7/6/05)

June 7: A proposal by the US to monitor democracy in Latin America through the Organization of American States is a bid to weaken the authority of governments in the region, Cuba's vice president said. Tuesday. Carlos Lage, secretary of Cuba's Council of Ministers, or parliament, said the US proposal before the OAS was meant to "disregard the authority of governments and democratic institutions in our region." Lage, a sharp critic of US foreign policy, responded after meeting with Venezuelan Vice President Jose Vicente Rangel in Caracas. "Freedom and democracy arrived in Cuba on January 1, 1959, with the triumph of the revolution and they arrived to stay," said Lage. (AP, 7/6/05)

June 7: Bernardo Heredia fled communist Cuba a decade ago, and this year loaned his lookalike younger brother his US residency documents to help him do the same. But what started in March as an act of familial love became a full-blown sacrifice when Cuban authorities got wise to the ploy and refused to let the elder Heredia leave the island, effectively switching the lives of two brothers. Now, Heredia is living with his younger sibling's wife and child, plotting an ocean escape similar to the one he went through in 1994. It began when Heredia, 42, found out his younger brother, Fidel, planned to leave Cuba by sea. In Havana on a family visit, Bernardo Heredia persuaded his brother to use his US residency card and Cuban passport to leave on a plane for Mexico. Fidel Heredia then used his own documents to cross the Mexico border into the US as a regular Cuban migrant before working his way to his brother's home in Las Vegas. With his own documents mailed back to him and no record of an arrival in Las Vegas, Bernardo Heredia imagined there'd be no problem flying back to the United States. But Cuban immigration officials stopped him at the Havana airport after realizing his passport had been used a few days prior. Heredia spent 30 days in a detention center. When he was released, he said, he was told he wouldn't be leaving Cuba anytime soon. The US government can't do much because the elder Heredia never obtained American citizenship. (AP, 7/6/05)

June 7: A naval professor was sentenced to a year of probation for lying about a visit to Cuba to see his mistress. Alberto Coll, the Cuban-born chairman of the Strategic Research Department at the US Naval War College in Newport, pleaded guilty in March to lying about the purpose of the visit in 2004. Coll told federal authorities he was visiting an ailing aunt. US District Judge Ronald Lagueux also fined Coll \$5,000, calling the crime an aberration and an "error in judgment." (AP, 7/6/05)

June 8: A group of 13 Cubans set sail for the United States in a vintage blue taxicab converted into an unwieldy vessel, Miami television station NBC 6 reported. But the makeshift boat, with a prow jutting out of the front and a taxi sign on the roof, was intercepted by the US Coast Guard about 20 miles off Key West on the southern tip of Florida. The television station showed images of Coast Guard launches circling the vessel and the occupants rolling up the windows, presumably to try to avoid being caught. The Coast Guard declined to comment. "Under US government policy, we cannot discuss migrant interdiction operations until disposition is complete," said Petty Officer Sandra Bartlett. That process often takes days, she said. (The New York Times, Reuters, 7/6/05)

June 8: A federal grand jury indicted two men accused of smuggling 31 Cubans to an island off Key West last month. Meanwhile, officials continue to investigate whether the smuggling case may be connected to an incident in which a man drowned off the coast of Cuba. The Florida-based smuggling suspects -- Elio Díaz Hernández and Edel Domínguez Carvajal -- were charged with one count each of conspiracy, 31 counts of smuggling illegal aliens into the United States for profit, and 31 counts of bringing aliens to an "undesignated port of entry." If convicted, the men -- who pleaded not guilty -- would each face a minimum sentence of five years in prison. (*The Miami Herald*, 9/6/05)

June 9: Four of the 14 Cubans intercepted at sea aboard a vintage taxi converted into a boat will be allowed to stay in the United States because they have valid immigration documents, but the others will be sent back to Cuba, US officials said. Rafael Diaz Rey, the mechanic who built the blue, 1948 Mercury taxi-boat, and his wife and their two children appear to have legitimate documents that would permit them to stay in this country, according to the US attorney's office in Miami. An attorney for Democracy Movement, a Cuban exile group in Miami, said Diaz and his family last year won the documents in an annual lottery in Cuba for legal travel to the United States. But the government of Fidel Castro refused to let the family leave, said attorney Wilfredo Allen. "They had to act before the documents expired," Allen said. After interviewing the remaining 10 migrants, Homeland Security Department officials concluded they have no reasonable fear of being persecuted or tortured if they are repatriated to Cuba, according to documents filed in federal court. (*AP, CNN*, 9/6/05)

June 9: Arizona Republican Representative Jeff Flake's efforts succeeded when the Foreign Relations Committee of the Lower Chamber of Congress passed an amendment to the State Department's proposed authorization bill to include Cuba among the countries that would benefit from US government-sponsored study abroad program funding. The amendment proposes to assign \$5 million USD to Cuban or US citizens seeking to study in the US or Cuba within the grant framework provided by Fellowships from the Fulbright Program, EducationUSA, Gilman (study abroad programs), Humphrey Fellowships, the International Visitor Leadership Program, as well as the professional, cultural and youth programs managed by the Office of Citizen Exchanges. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 9/6/05)

June 9: Four days before anti-Castro militant Luis Posada Carriles is scheduled to appear before an immigration court in Texas, the private National Security Archive posted a declassified CIA document from 1976 that quotes Posada as saying, "We are going to hit a Cuban airplane." The source of that information is not known, although it is described as "a former Venezuelan government official" who is "usually a reliable reporter." The new documents also suggest that Posada was spying on Cuban exiles for the CIA. One 1976 memo from the CIA to the FBI said, "Posada also was used as a source of information on Cuban exile activities." Posada is asking the US government to grant him political asylum, arguing that Cuban government agents want to kill him. (*The Miami Herald*, 10/6/05)

June 10: Roberto Martin conned a cast of Cuban exiles, lawyers and bankers in an only-in-Miami scam to bring into the United States billions of dollars supposedly stolen from Fidel Castro's government. But the con game masterminded by Martin, who arrived in South Florida from Cuba on a raft in 1994, came to an end in a federal courtroom in Miami. Martin, posing as a CIA operative, sweet-talked people into believing that he was a former Cuban intelligence officer who skimmed money from Castro's government and moved upward of \$20 billion to Swiss bank accounts. Working with a colleague who impersonated a real Secret Service agent, Martin convinced an entourage of exiles and others that he had official US government support for his plan to move Castro's money -- and that he could make them rich with their up-front financial assistance. Martin, who pleaded guilty to mail fraud and other charges last fall, fleeced upward of \$1 million from investors, lawyers and others who assisted him, according to Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Clark. (*The Miami Herald*, 10/6/05)

June 10: Participants in the National Summit on Cuba were told that lifting the embargo on Cuba would be a financial boon to the United States, and particularly the South. The fourth annual summit drew about 300 people to the Mobile Convention Center to hear from political and academic leaders who generally advocated lifting of the embargo. A handful of officials from Cuba participated with live feeds from Havana. Semoon Chang, director of the Center for

Business and Economic Research at the University of South Alabama, and Tim Lynch, director of the Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis at Florida State University, both provided numbers showing the financial benefit of trade with Cuba. (*The Sun Herald*, 11/6/05)

June 11: The Venezuelan government said it has provided the US with key information on the role of a former CIA agent in the downing of a Cuban airliner. Venezuela is seeking the extradition of Cuban-born Luis Posada Carriles, who is currently in jail in the US. The new documents purportedly prove his role in masterminding the 1976 bombing in which 73 people died. (*BBC*, 11/6/05)

June 11: Fidel Castro characterized Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles as a symbol of past US-backed terrorism in the region, reiterating his earlier insistence that American officials turn his old nemesis over to Venezuela for prosecution in a deadly airliner bombing three decades ago. "If they were intelligent, the first thing they would do is send that man to Venezuela," Castro said at the presentation of a new collection of interviews and stories by Argentine journalist and politician Miguel Bonasso. "They are searching where to send him," Castro said of US officials, who he has accused of trying to protect Posada, and of seeking another country that will take him. (*AP*, 11/6/05)

June 13: Supporters of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez presented thousands of signatures demanding the United States extradite a Cuban exile wanted in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban jet. Jesus Marrero, a former leftist guerrilla who helped organize a signature drive to demand the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles last month, said at least 40,000 Venezuelans signed the petition. (*CNN*, 13/6/05)

June 13: A US immigration court ruled that anti-Castro militant and accused terrorist Luis Posada Carriles must remain in custody while it studies his case and determines whether or not to deport him. In a hearing held in El Paso, where Posada was transported after his arrest in Miami, immigration Judge William Lee Abbott postponed his bail hearing until June 24. He also set July 29 as the date for Posada's trial for immigration violations. At the hearing, Posada's attorney, Eduardo Soto, requested political asylum for his client as well as the transfer of his trial to Miami, which has a very large Cuban exile population. However, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) prosecutors opposed that move, and the judge made no ruling upon the matter. (*EFE*, 13/6/05)

June 13: A three-person delegation from Cuba arrived in Vermont looking to buy Holstein and Jersey heifers -- young dairy cows about to start their milking careers. The three -- a cattle expert, a veterinarian and an official with Cuba's import agency -- toured farms in southeastern Vermont's Windham County, a hot and muggy day that appeared to make them feel at home. Tatiana Taboada Gonzalez of Cuba's Alimport agency said the country currently has about 1.5 million dairy cows, not enough to provide milk and dairy products for the country of 11.3 million people. "The first goal is to be self-sufficient," she said. The group hopes to buy 100 heifers in Vermont, a similar number in Maine, and others in Pennsylvania, Minnesota and Florida. (*AP*, 14/6/05)

June 13: Two Cuban brothers were sentenced to six years in prison for assaulting a US Coast Guard crew that tried to prevent them from illegally reaching the Florida Keys by boat. US District Judge K. Michael Moore sentenced Jorge Cartaya-Acosta, 35, and Jose Cartaya-Acosta, 39, at a hearing in which their lawyers argued they were mentally impaired. The crew of the Coast Guard cutter Valiant approached the boat driven by Jose Cartaya-Acosta off the coast of Key West on February 8. When the brothers refused orders to stop and tried to outrun the cutter, the Coast Guard gave chase in a small inflatable boat. The brothers rammed the Coast Guard boat, breaking its stern light. Jorge Cartaya-Acosta brandished a metal tire iron, threatened to beat the officers and tried to puncture the inflatable boat, court documents said. Under US policy, Cuban migrants who reach land are usually allowed to stay and those intercepted at sea are repatriated to Cuba. The brothers were convicted in March of assaulting the Coast Guard officers, and faced up to 20 years in prison. (*Reuters*, 14/6/05)

June 13: A group of ten Cuban immigrants who attempted to reach US soil on a raft made out of an old vehicle once used as a taxi cab has been repatriated. According to the US Coast Guard, four of them were taken to Guantánamo Bay US Naval Base and will be allowed to return to US territory within a few days as they already had their immigrant visas. (*AFP*, 13/6/05)

June 14: In seeking to pass a resolution to normalize US relations with Cuba, Salt Lake City Mayor Rocky Anderson faced indignation - not from Cuban exiles, but from New Jersey mayors. During the US Conference of Mayors annual meeting last week in Chicago, four mayors from the Garden State attacked the resolution while it was being discussed in the conference's international affairs committee, the Trentonian reports. The reason: A woman who killed a New Jersey trooper in 1973 escaped from prison and fled to Cuba, where she has been protected from extradition, according to the newspaper. The mayors' committee eventually tabled Anderson's proposal, which says the US economic embargo harms children and the elderly and that the policy has further isolated Cuba. It "urges the normalization of diplomatic and economic relations." Anderson said the committee formed a five-member task force to work on a new Cuba resolution for next year. (*The Salt Lake Tribune*, 15/6/05)

June 15: Venezuela has made a formal request to the US to extradite a militant Cuban exile wanted over the downing of an airliner which killed 73 people. Caracas says Luis Posada Carriles is a "terrorist" and is urging the US not to protect the ex-CIA informant. "It is up to the state department to decide if it will protect a terrorist or not," said Venezuelan Vice Foreign Minister Delcy Rodriguez. The Venezuelan note asks that the extradition request take precedence over the immigration charges against Posada. The request was based on a 1922 bilateral extradition treaty and other international accords, said the Venezuelan ambassador in Washington, Bernardo Alvarez. (*BBC, Sun Sentinel*, 16/6/05)

June 15: A \$61.3 billion appropriations measure, which also funds the State and Commerce departments, figured in a second battle over Commerce Department rules restricting gift packages mailed from the US to Cuba. In a 216-210 roll call, lawmakers reversed the trend of taking a more open approach to Cuba, instead voting to uphold the rules after strong pressure from Majority Leader Tom DeLay. Mr. DeLay held his Republican defections to just 35, 11 fewer than last year when he lost on the same issue. "To deny the Cuban people toothpaste and toilet paper will not bring down Fidel Castro," chided Representative William Delahunt (Democrat, Massachusetts). Mr. DeLay said lawmakers risked undercutting the plight of dissidents in Cuba. (*The Wall Street Journal*, 16/6/05)

June 15: With the first sale completed in a contract signed in March committing Cuba to spend \$15 million for Louisiana products, an official with the state Office of Economic Development said that the office is planning another trade mission to the island nation in hopes of finding more opportunities for Louisiana businesses. Speaking to a lunch meeting of the World Trade Club of Greater New Orleans, Felipe Martinez, project manager for the state Department of Economic Development, said Cuba is a "natural trading partner" for the state and a number of opportunities remain for Louisiana businesses there. (*Times Picayune*, 16/6/05)

June 15: According to US Customs and Border Protection spokeswoman Judy Turner, more than 40 Cubans who reached the United States via México and requested asylum are now undergoing medical exams. The immigrants claimed political asylum when they were detained at the Brownville area checkpoint on the border between Texas and México. (*AP*, 20/6/05)

June 20: The New York state Assembly is calling for eased restrictions on Americans' travel to Cuba, advocating a policy some observers of Cuba say enriches Fidel Castro's communist regime and exploits ordinary Cubans. The Assembly passed a nonbinding resolution calling on the Bush administration to encourage "streamlining licensing procedures for qualified United States persons traveling to Cuba" for "people-to-people" visits. Such visits, members of the Assembly argue, establish meaningful ties between ordinary Americans and Cubans, sowing the seeds for cross-cultural exchanges that will promote democracy on the island. (*The New York Sun*, 20/6/05)

June 20: The attempt by two brothers to go to the United States from Cuba fell short and left one brother trapped in Cuba. But, now both brothers are on American soil. Bernardo Heredia has been stuck in Cuba for the last three months hoping to get back to his home and family in Las Vegas. His brother, Fidel Heredia used Bernardo's documents to leave Cuba. Once Fidel got to the United States, he mailed Bernardo's documents back to him so he too could leave but not before Cuban officials caught on. Cuban authorities forced Bernardo to stay in the communist country he fled for a better life. Bernardo says the intense pressure from the media is what he believes forced the Cuban government to release him and allow him to return to the United States. (*Las Vegas Sun*, 20/6/05)

June 20: Immigration proceedings for a Cuban exile accused of planning the deadly bombing of an airliner in 1976 will remain in El Paso, a judge ruled. Lawyers for Luis Posada Carriles asked that the case be moved to Florida, where Posada was staying before his arrest and where his lawyer lives. Posada is charged with entering the country illegally in a case that has sparked an international battle. US Immigration Judge William L. Abbott issued a written ruling to lawyers in the case, said Greg Gagne, a spokesman for the Executive Office for Immigration Review in Washington. Posada's attorney said he wanted the trial moved because holding it in El Paso would cause Posada hardships. He also said his client wants to be closer to family in Miami. Prosecutors said holding Posada in South Florida would be a security risk. (*The Miami Herald*, 20/6/05)

June 21: A congressional panel voted to undo a new Bush administration regulation that critics say threatens to squelch US food sales to Cuba. The House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, by voice vote, approved an amendment that would roll back a Treasury Department rule issued in February that requires communist Cuba to pay for food imports from the United States before they leave port. (*Reuters*, 21/6/05)

June 22: Hours before a neighborhood youth group was to play a team from the US mission in Havana, Cuban security agents confiscated the baseballs, bats and mitts. The agents charged into the home of activist Marcos de Miranda to grab the sports gear, family members said, in the latest and among the most bizarre in a long history of harassment targeting this family of dissidents opposed to communist President Fidel Castro. "It was to be a sports and cultural event - nothing at all political," de Miranda, 28, said in his family's crumbling apartment. "We're denied even the right to play our national sport." De Miranda's 59-year-old father, Roberto, was among 75 government opponents rounded up two years ago, though he was released for health reasons last year. His 54-year-old mother, Soledad Rivas, is a member of the increasingly audacious "Ladies in White" who have protested for the release of imprisoned dissidents. (*Boston Herald*, 22/6/05)

June 22: The United States told Cuba it would continue to "play ball", despite complaining that communist authorities blocked a friendly baseball game between US officials and youths in Havana. "It says a lot about the paranoia and insularity of the regime that it can't tolerate young kids playing baseball with Americans," said State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli. The department said that staff of the US Interests Section in Havana planned a recent baseball game against a group of young people, some of whom were human rights activists. But the Cuban government confiscated baseball equipment from the youths and prevented the US envoys from lending their kit to their opponents, and blocked access to the field where the game was supposed to take place, Ereli said. Asked what the United States planned to do about the aborted game, Ereli said: "We play ball." "We will continue to try to engage. We will continue to try to bring more democracy and openness and freedom to a country that knows very little of any of this." (*AFP*, 22/6/05)

June 22: A group of Americans from a US trade association pushing for normalized commercial relations with communist Cuba arrived in Havana to discuss future business possibilities and the current state of trade with their Cuban counterparts. The visit by delegates from the Washington-based US-Cuba Trade Association comes as members of Congress consider amending a new Treasury Department rule that forces Cuba to make full payment for American farm goods before the cargo leaves US ports. "The purpose of the trip really is for the members to get an update on what's happening from the Cuban point of view," primarily with the island's economy and the effects of the latest US

measures, Kirby Jones, the association president, told the press. Hopefully companies will sign some contracts as well, he said. (AP, 22/6/05)

June 23: A yearlong delay in the purchase of an airplane to broadcast TV and Radio Martí's signals to Cuba has stoked concern on Capitol Hill that the C-130 currently being used may be reassigned to Iraq. The possible loss of the airborne broadcasts -- touted by President Bush as a key strategy to break through Havana's jamming and hasten the island's transition to democracy -- has prompted foes of Fidel Castro to send pleas to the White House and Pentagon. In letters to Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and President Bush, Miami Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen cited "grave concerns about reports that the C-130 Commando Solo airborne platform transmission currently dedicated to Cuba-related activities may be reassigned." (*The Miami Herald*, 23/6/05)

June 23: Cuba will spend less than two-thirds of the money it had planned to invest in American farm goods this year because of increased US restrictions, Cuba's top import official said. The communist-run island had planned to purchase up to \$800 million in goods this year from the United States, according to Pedro Alvarez, chairman of Cuba's food import company Alimport. But a rule that forces Cuba to make full payment for goods before the cargo leaves US ports has complicated commerce and forced the island to turn to other markets, Alvarez said. As a result, Cuba is now aiming just to match the amount it spent last year on US products -- about \$475 million. "Not only have the recent measures made American exports more expensive, they've also introduced a lot of uncertainty," Alvarez told a news conference during a visit to the island by members of a US trade association pushing for normalized trade with Cuba. (*The Miami Herald*, 24/6/05)

June 23: US food producers who sell to Cuba complained that a payment rule introduced by the Bush administration has cut their exports to the Communist-run island by 25 percent. "What is disturbing for producers is that we are losing solid exports to Cuba every week," US Rice Producers Association President Dwight Roberts said on a visit to Cuba. US food businesses sold almost \$400 million to Cuba last year, mainly in bulk shipments of corn, wheat and soy, under an exception to a trade embargo enforced for four decades against Fidel Castro's government. But sales fell to \$131 million in the first four months of this year compared to \$173 million in the same period of 2004, according to US Department of Agriculture figures. (*Reuters*, 23/6/05)

June 23: The US military aircraft broadcasting TV and Radio Martí's signals to Cuba will not be diverted to Iraq, at least until a replacement plane is bought and equipped, a senior State Department official said. "The president has made the decision that we would do what we could to break through the information blockade imposed by the Castro regime," the official said after the press reported concerns raised by Miami Republican Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen that the Pentagon's C-130 Commando Solo plane could be sent to the Middle East. "As far as we know (...) until the permanent platform is available, the C-130 is flying," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of sensitivity surrounding the issue. The official added that negotiations are under way with legislators to win approval for President Bush's \$10 million budget request for the purchase of the plane. "The president is fully committed to securing a permanent platform for Radio and TV Martí," Representative Lincoln Díaz-Balart, Republican-Miami, said. "And I am not aware of anyone in the administration challenging the president on issues where he has clearly made his intent known, such as this one." (*The Miami Herald*, 23/6/05)

June 23: The head of Cuba's state-run food importing company said the country would import 750,000 to 800,000 tonnes of rice this year, 300,000 tonnes more than in 2004. "We are providing more subsidized rice to our people and the rice crop was severely impacted by drought," Pedro Alvarez, president of Alimport, told a news conference, explaining why imports were up by around 75 percent. Cuba usually produces 150,000 to 200,000 tonnes of rice and imports 400,000 to 500,000 tonnes, mainly from Vietnam and China. Alvarez said Cuba bought 100,000 tonnes of rice from the United States last year, but would purchase less in 2005 due to new regulations regarding food for cash trade exempted from the trade embargo. (*Reuters*, 23/6/05)

June 23: Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff announced that a second shipment of cattle has been sold to Cuba as a result of his trade mission trip last year, and as part of Cuba's commitment to invest \$10 million in agricultural commodities within Pennsylvania. "Building relationships with domestic and international markets is consistent with Governor Edward G. Rendell's commitment to economic development, and is a win-win situation for Pennsylvania agriculture and for Cuba's dairy industry," said Wolff. "The sale not only is a significant economic boost to Pennsylvania's farm economy, but also helps to grow the Cuban dairy industry with high quality genetics." Some 300 Holstein and Jersey animals from Pennsylvania will be shipped in two groups in early and mid-July; 100 in the first and 200 in the second. (*US Fed News*, 23/6/05)

June 24: Several dozens of American philosophers and social scientists participating in the 18th Conference of Cuban and US Philosophers and Social Scientists demanded the extradition of terrorist Luis Posada Carriles from the United States to Venezuela. Participants in the Conference that concluded at the University of Havana also demanded a revision of the pardon granted to also terrorist Orlando Bosch by former US president George Bush Sr. In addition, they demanded the lifting of the US economic blockade against the island, the release of the five Cuban prisoners incarcerated in the United States and the elimination of travel bans that prevent American citizens from visiting the island. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 25/6/05)

June 26: US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, a fierce opponent of communist Cuba under Fidel Castro, could gain even more clout over the volatile issue if she gains the chairmanship of the House International Relations Committee in the next Congress. Ros-Lehtinen, who has represented a Miami district since 1989, would become one of the most powerful Cuban-Americans on Capitol Hill if she can defeat Republican colleagues with greater seniority to win the post being vacated by veteran US Representative Henry Hyde, Republican-Illinois, who is retiring and would be forced to relinquish the chairmanship anyway under House term limits rules. (*AP*, 26/6/05)

June 26: The eighth New York International Ballet Competition concluded with an awards ceremony and gala performance at Alice Tully Hall that brought together 48 dancers between the ages of 17 and 24 from 19 countries. Daniel Sarabia, from Cuba, won the men's silver medal. (*The New York Times*, 28/6/05)

June 30: Reversing years of congressional votes that showed supporters of easing US sanctions on Cuba gaining strength, the US House of Representatives rejected three such proposals and gave a categorical win to supporters of a tough line on Havana. An amendment seeking to overturn limits on Cuban-Americans' family travel to Cuba was defeated 211-208 -- the first time such an initiative was beaten back in a congressional vote. A similar amendment, also submitted by Florida Democrat Jim Davis, was approved last year on a 225-174 vote. A proposal to ease restrictions on US student travel to Cuba, presented by Representative Barbara Lee, Democrat-California, was defeated 233-187. Last year it was so heavily backed that it passed by a simple voice vote. (*The Miami Herald*, 1/7/05)