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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Cuba's National Assembly supports the Government's austere economic measures. Several oppositionists were detained on the eve of the 15th anniversary of the "Maleconazo". The number of political prisoners in Cuba rose in the first half of the year. The Ministry of Education decided to close secondary schools in rural areas. Two videos show a fit and alert Fidel Castro.

Economy: The government cuts its budget for the second time this year. Portions for many rationed foodstuffs are cut while food deliveries to factories, offices and schools are trimmed.

Exile Community: A poll finds that almost half of Cuban-Americans opposes the controversial concert of Colombian singer Juanes in Havana. Cuban exiles launch an international campaign to demand the release of a man sentenced in Cuba for publicly criticizing the lack of food on the island

Foreign Affairs: President Raul Castro attends the swearing in ceremony of Ecuador's President. Cuba appoints new ambassadors, including in Venezuela. Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa meets with Fidel and Raul Castro in Havana. Diplomats from European Union countries anger Cuba when they went to the home of a jailed dissident. Fidel Castro holds a public phone conversation with the Nicaraguan President.

Security: A Russian warship stays for three days in Havana's harbor.

US-Cuba Relations: President Raul Castro warns the United States and the European Union that the country's political system is non-negotiable. Fidel Castro harshly criticizes the installation of US military bases in Colombia. A delegation of three US Catholic bishops visits Cuba. New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson says he will report to President Obama about his trip to Cuba. Fidel Castro accuses the United States of seeking to "eliminate" Venezuela's government.

Lo más relevante

Asuntos domésticos: La Asamblea Nacional apoya las medidas de austeridad económica del Gobierno. Varios opositores fueron detenidos en la víspera del 15to aniversario del “Maleconazo”. El número de prisioneros políticos aumentó en Cuba durante la primera mitad del año. El Ministerio de Educación decidió cerrar las escuelas secundarias en el campo. Dos videos muestran a un Fidel Castro sano y alerta

Economía: El gobierno recorta el presupuesto por segunda vez en el año. El gobierno recorta las raciones de muchos productos alimentarios y disminuye los envíos de comida a fábricas, escuelas y centros de trabajo.

Comunidad de exiliados: Una encuesta revela que casi la mitad de los cubano-americanos se opone al controversial concierto del colombiano Juanes en La Habana. Exiliados cubanos lanzan una campaña internacional para demandar la liberación de un hombre condenado en Cuba por criticar públicamente la falta de comida en la isla.

Asuntos exteriores: Raúl Castro asiste a la ceremonia de asunción del presidente de Ecuador. Cuba designa nuevos embajadores, incluida Venezuela. El presidente de Ecuador Rafael Correa se reúne en La Habana con Fidel y Raúl Castro. Diplomáticos de la Unión Europea provocaron las iras de Cuba cuando visitaron la casa de un disidente encarcelado. Fidel Castro sostiene una conversación telefónica pública con el presidente nicaragüense.

Seguridad: Un buque de la armada rusa atraca durante tres días en el puerto de La Habana.

Relaciones Cuba-Estados Unidos: El Presidente Raúl Castro les advierte a Estados Unidos y a la Unión Europea que el sistema político de la isla no es negociable. Fidel Castro critica severamente la instalación de bases militares de Estados Unidos en Colombia. Una delegación de tres obispos católicos visita Cuba. El gobernador de Nuevo México Bill Richardson dice que informará al presidente Obama sobre su viaje a Cuba. Fidel Castro acusa a Estados Unidos de procurar la “eliminación” del gobierno de Venezuela.



Domestic Affairs

August 1: Homero Acosta Alvarez was confirmed as Secretary of the Council of State during the session of the National Assembly, the *Prensa Latina* news agency reported. Acosta was assigned to that post on an interim basis five months ago, when Dr. José Miyar Barrueco, Fidel Castro's physician and confidant, was appointed Minister of

Science, Technology and the Environment. "The post of Secretary of the Council of State is not in itself a post with powers of decision in the context of the State and does not have any leading role in the direction of the State," read the official announcement, issued on March 2. According to *Prensa Latina*, Acosta, 45, is a law graduate from the University of Havana and holds a Master's degree in public law from the University of Valencia, Spain. He was First Deputy Chief of Staff to Raúl Castro (*The Miami Herald*, 1/8/09).

August 1: The Cuban Parliament passed a law setting up the General Comptroller of the Republic. Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon described the new legislation as strategic to the safeguard of the Revolution. Nobody has the right to get hold of what does not belong to him, said Alarcon as he referred to the principles supporting the legislation in terms of fighting and denouncing any act of corruption. Homero Acosta Alvarez, who was elected as secretary of the Cuban Council of State, presented the draft legislation as he underscored that the bill was submitted to consultations and assemblies throughout the country during a whole year. He said the approved legislation will contribute to the enforcement of current laws in terms of internal control. Meanwhile, the president of the Juridical and Constitutional Commission Jose Luis Toledo said that the new law sets up top-level mechanisms that allow the Parliament and the Council of State to carry out strict control of state and government bodies. The General Comptroller will have branch offices in every province with different working divisions that will be in charge of the activity in municipalities. The Cuban Parliament unanimously elected Gladys Bejerano as General Comptroller of the Republic of Cuba at the proposal of Cuban President Raul Castro. Ricardo Alarcon announced that the first deputy comptroller and the vice-comptrollers would be elected in an upcoming occasion by the Parliament, or by the Council of State, as it is established by the law (*ACN*, 1/8/09).

Agosto 1: El Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC) realizará en breve plazo una conferencia nacional para renovar sus mandos, tras 12 años de vigencia desde el quinto y último congreso celebrado, anunció Raúl Castro, segundo secretario de la organización. En correspondencia con los estatutos, una reunión plenaria del PCC, realizada el 29 de julio, acordó convocar una conferencia nacional fundamentalmente para elegir los nuevos organismos de dirección, es decir el Comité Central, el Buró Político y el Secretariado, dijo Castro en un discurso de clausura de una sesión parlamentaria. Indicó que la conferencia, prevista por los estatutos para realizarse si fuera necesario entre congresos, es un evento que con anterioridad no habíamos organizado y que podemos realizar en un plazo relativamente breve, y así lo haremos. El pleno del PCC acordó posponer la celebración del sexto congreso hasta que se logre un consenso en la organización y la sociedad del modelo a seguir en los próximos años, sobre todo cuando ya no esté la generación histórica que encabezan Fidel y Raúl Castro ([Discurso de Raúl Castro en la clausura de las sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional](#); *AFP*, 1/8/09).

Agosto 1: Raúl Castro anunció una mayor "racionalidad económica" en los emblemáticos sectores de la salud y la educación, como parte de las medidas de ajuste que adopta su gobierno para enfrentar la crisis económica internacional. En ese sentido, explicó que "se estudian vías para reducir la cifra de alumnos internos y seminternos" en zonas rurales del país, donde "ya no se requiere su participación en tareas agrícolas", así como

garantizar el traslado de esos centros de enseñanza a la ciudad. "Es una decisión en aras de un mayor ahorro en los cuantiosos gastos en la educación sin afectar la calidad", añadió el gobernante, al subrayar que "con similar sentido de racionalidad, se adoptarán otras decisiones en la educación" y "la salud pública" ([Discurso de Raúl Castro en la clausura de las sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional](#); AFP, 1/8/09).

Agosto 1: El dirigente opositor Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas criticó a la Asamblea Nacional por refrendar ajustes económicos en lugar de cambios, en una declaración escrita entregada a la prensa, coincidiendo con la sesión ordinaria del legislativo. "Tampoco la Asamblea Nacional del Poder Popular (ANPP) anuncia lo que el pueblo quiere: cambios. Por el contrario, lo que anuncia el General Raúl Castro, presidente del Consejo de Estado, son medidas difíciles y nada gratas", dice el premio Sajarov-2002. Una reunión plenaria del Partido Comunista de Cuba, realizada el 29 de julio, pospuso nuevamente la realización de su VI Congreso, alegando que esa organización política y la sociedad deben lograr un consenso antes de realizar la reunión, que trazaría los lineamientos políticos y económicos para el próximo lustro. "El anuncio de que no habrá por el momento Congreso del Partido Comunista deja a la mayoría de los cubanos en el mismo escepticismo que si hubiesen anunciado un próximo Congreso", dijo Payá en su declaración. El dirigente opositor sostuvo que ningún congreso anterior del Partido Comunista trajo nada bueno para el pueblo, ni la libertad, ni el progreso" (AFP, 1/8/09).

Agosto 1: El cáncer será la primera causa de muerte entre los cubanos en 2009 si continúa la tendencia de 2008, cuando más de 21,000 fallecieron por ese motivo, de acuerdo con cifras oficiales. Un análisis publicado en la prensa local reveló que 21,200 cubanos murieron el año pasado a causa de la enfermedad, y advirtió que la estadística, muy alta para un país que tiene alrededor de 11 millones de habitantes, llevará al cáncer a ser la primera causa de muertes en 2009. "En siete provincias cubanas ya sucede así", advirtió el artículo, publicado por el diario oficial *Juventud Rebelde*. Por el momento, la primera causa de muertes en Cuba son las enfermedades cardiovasculares, con una incidencia de 131,9 defunciones por cada 100,000 habitantes, mientras que el cáncer ocasiona 129,5 (ANSA, 1/8/09).

Agosto 1: El presidente Raúl Castro informó que en Cuba se han confirmado 242 casos de gripe porcina, ninguno de los cuales ha resultado letal. En un discurso ante el Parlamento Cubano, Castro precisó que de los 242 casos de influenza A H1N1, "135 son importados por personas que llegaron enfermas a la isla, 50 son introducidos, (es decir cubanos infectados por enfermos procedentes del extranjero) y 57 son autóctonos". El mandatario de la isla agregó que "232 recibieron el alta médica y 10 restantes presentan una evolución favorable; no hemos tenido que lamentar complicaciones ni el fallecimiento de ningún caso" (AP, 2/8/09).

Agosto 3: La mayoría de los cubanos acogió con escepticismo y resignación los nuevos recortes de gastos sociales anunciados por el presidente del país, Raúl Castro. "No tenemos otra opción que aguantar lo que viene y tratar de seguir sobreviviendo, como a lo largo de estos años", dijo Eduardo, un conductor de 35 años.

"Demasiadas restricciones para un pueblo con necesidades acumuladas desde hace muchos años", comentó Eduardo. "Se dieron cuenta tarde de que parte de los alimentos que consume este país pueden ser producidos por este país. Si dejaran que la gente gestionara pequeños negocios (...) el golpe sería ahora menor", afirmó. La maestra jubilada Esther Cañedo cree que las medidas "son necesarias para que la gente se dé cuenta que no se debe derrochar", y que "es una manera de formar a los más jóvenes en el orden y la disciplina". "Habrá que adaptarse a lo que venga, porque no creo que esta situación será más fuerte que el período especial -la depresión que sufrió Cuba al desplomarse la Unión Soviética-, cuando la escasez de alimentos llegó a afectar la salud de los cubanos y pasamos por aquellos apogones terribles", dijo Cañedo. Teresa Sánchez, ama de casa de 44 años, teme que sean multados quienes gasten más energía. "En el caso que decidan multar a los sobreconsumidores de electricidad, yo invito a que vengan a mi casa, en un antiguo garaje, para ver si se puede soportar este calor (...) La corriente que gasto es por necesidad y no por derroche", explicó (*EFE*, 3/8/09).

Agosto 3: Los disidentes advierten que el nivel de vida se reducirá de forma muy peligrosa ante los nuevos recortes de gastos sociales anunciados por el presidente del país, Raúl Castro. "No deseo ningún exabrupto social, pero están tensando demasiado al pueblo", declaró Leiva y añadió: "La gente se va a sentir muy presionada y es un momento muy peligroso, porque el gobierno pide sacrificio y lo que propone es represión. El disidente Manuel Cuesta, del Arco Progresista, comentó que el aplazamiento del Congreso del Partido Comunista "tiene que ver mucho con la imposibilidad de realizar un debate a fondo dentro del partido de cara a lo que muchos vamos considerando la quiebra técnica del país". "No parece el gobierno estar en condiciones de debatir las necesidades estratégicas al mismo tiempo que hace un reajuste (...) Les obligaría a incorporar las opiniones, demandas y propuestas que existen en la sociedad", añadió. El economista Oscar Espinosa, uno de los 75 opositores apresados en el 2003, también indicó que los recortes "van a afectar el nivel de vida de la población", que seguirá descendiendo "hasta que se den cuenta de que se requieren urgentemente cambios estructurales y de concepto". "Mi temor es que si se siguen demorando, se puede llegar a una situación económica y política incontrolable", advirtió. Según Espinosa, "las reducciones al consumo y a la electricidad afectarán el crecimiento (...). No se puede producir sin electricidad. Es imposible que el PIB pueda crecer 1.7 por ciento este año". Teresa Sánchez, ama de casa de 44 años, teme que sean multados quienes gasten más energía. Por su parte, el disidente Oswaldo Payá, del Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, señaló que el aplazamiento del Congreso se debe a que, "quizás teman que los militantes del partido actúen más como buenos cubanos fieles a nuestro pueblo y a nuestra patria que como instrumentos para mantener un orden sin derechos y sin justicia" (*EFE*, 3/8/09).

August 3: Havana prolonged by 30 days authorization for Cuban dissident Hilda Molina to remain in Argentina, her son said. The internationally renowned neurosurgeon arrived in Argentina in mid-June after winning a 15-year battle with the Cuban government for permission to leave the communist-ruled island. The 30-day extension to the three-month limit set by Cuban authorities was granted on August 1st, Roberto Quinones told a local radio station. The authorization came despite strongly-worded criticism of Molina by Havana since her arrival in Argentina. Molina, 66, came to Buenos Aires to visit her

ailing 90-year-old mother, Hilda Morejon, who has been living in Argentina since leaving Cuba in May 2008 and suffers from heart problems. She has said she does not intend to stay in Argentina and intends to return to Cuba once the state of her mother's health permits (AFP, 4/8/09).

August 5: Cuba's Communist Party newspaper *Granma* published a front-page story marking the 15th anniversary of street protests that Fidel Castro himself had to quell, an unusual public reference to one of the few serious internal threats to his nearly half-century of rule. The article portrayed the event as a victory for Castro's revolution - challenging the version of anti-Castro activists who celebrate it as a "day of resistance" to the communist government. In the summer of 1994, food and fuel were scarce and islanders were sweating through hours-long blackouts that stilled fans, air conditioners and water pumps, making sleep fitful and bathing difficult. Some desperate Cubans invaded foreign embassies to demand asylum. Others hijacked Havana harbor ferries and tried to take them to the United States. On August 5 - reportedly after police tried to block a ferry hijacking - hundreds of Cubans spilled onto Havana's seaside Malecon boulevard, picked up rocks and debris from crumbling buildings and hurled them at police. Chants of "Liberty!" rose from the crowd. Castro arrived in an army jeep to quiet the disturbance, and his appearance prompted some demonstrators to drop their stones and applaud. *Granma* published a photo of Castro in his trademark olive-green fatigues listening to demonstrators, and it cast the protest as the government prevailing over "those who, spurred by the United States, disrupted public order in Havana's Malecon sector in a violent manner" (AP, 6/8/09).

Agosto 5: Unos 20 opositores fueron detenidos en el aniversario 15 de la revuelta social contra el gobierno conocida como el "Maleconazo". Varias organizaciones disidentes habían programado actividades para recordar el hecho, ocurrido el 5 de agosto de 1994. Según la Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CCDHRN), entre 15 y 20 personas fueron arrestadas en medio de una fuerte represión por parte de las fuerzas de Seguridad del Estado. Elizardo Sánchez, líder de la CCDHRN, dijo que desde hace varios días la policía política está "muy activa" y "hay mucha vigilancia, sobre todo en el Malecón" de La Habana. "Hemos visto que en los últimos días han aumentado los arrestos y la represión política preventiva", indicó (*Europa Press*, 5/8/09).

Agosto 5: Personas de bajos ingresos, en su mayoría ancianos, deambulan por las principales calles de Nueva Gerona, Isla de la Juventud, en busca de materiales reciclables que vender para conseguir el sustento diario, ya que reciben muy poca, o ninguna, ayuda gubernamental. Latas de aluminio, botellas de ron, cartones y papeles son los objetos más apreciados por los ancianos, que los llevan de inmediato a la empresa recolectora de materias primas. Las botellas de ron vacías y limpias se venden a un peso la unidad, y un kilo de latas de aluminio, se vende en ocho; un kilogramo de papeles, cartones y revistas se vende a sesenta centavos. Con este nuevo método de intercambio, y según palabras de una anciana recicladora, el canje es desigual, ya que deben trabajar más para ganar mucho menos. "Con lo que pagan por un kilogramo de latas escachadas

no podemos comprar ni una libra de carne de cerdo que vale 20 pesos”, dijo la señora (*Cubanet*, 5/8/09).

August 5: Four Cuban labor activists who were featured in a documentary that debuted in Miami were summoned by the Cuban National Police and threatened, stateside supporters said. *Under the Cuban Skies* is a 29-minute movie filmed in Cuba about the lack of labor rights and low salaries in Cuba, which aired at the Association for the Study of the Cuban Economy conference in downtown Miami. Four days later in Havana, activists Maria Elena Mir Marrero, Justo J. Sanchez, Hanoi Oliva and Daniel Sabatier, who were featured in the film, were summoned and threatened, said Cuba Study Group executive director Tomas Bilbao. The Cuba Study Group hosted the premier. In the film, which was produced by retired InterAmerican Development Bank economist George Plinio Montalvan, the four discussed racial and political discrimination at the workplace, low salaries and the lack of right to organize. "They reported to police and were interrogated, fingerprinted had DNA samples and photos taken and were degraded," Bilbao said. "They were told that if they continue these activities, they would be subject to detention or more physical harm" (*The Miami Herald*, 5/8/09).

Agosto 6: El primer vicepresidente de Cuba, José Ramón Machado, pidió a los cubanos apretarse el cinturón y trabajar y producir más, como solución para que la isla salga de la crisis económica, informaron hoy medios oficiales. "Debemos comprender mejor y tener conciencia plena de lo que significa apretarse el cinturón en estos tiempos. La fórmula de oro para salir adelante en medio de la crisis mundial es trabajar y producir más (...) Fue en esencia el espíritu del mensaje", dice el diario *Granma*, portavoz del gobernante Partido Comunista. Agrega el periódico que "el término de apretarse el cinturón", según dijo Machado, "no puede ser más expresivo y también más fácil de descifrar por el sentido común", aunque "hay a quienes les cuesta trabajo entenderlo". "Machado insistió en el principio de que es imprescindible hacer producir la tierra", añade el diario oficial (*EFE*, 6/8/09).

Agosto 6: Los presos políticos José Daniel Ferrer García y Alfredo Domínguez Batista, miembros del grupo de 75 disidentes condenados en la primavera de 2003, se encuentran en huelga de hambre desde hace una semana en la Prisión Provincial de Las Tunas, para protestar por los maltratos de los carceleros. "Exigimos adecuadas condiciones de vida; exigimos adecuada atención para nuestros hermanos enfermos; exigimos agua potable, adecuada alimentación; exigimos un aceptable régimen de visitas, basta ya de torturas psicológicas con esa situación; exigimos que se trate humanamente a los reclusos en el sistema penitenciario cubano, donde miles de presos languidecen en condiciones de perpetuo hacinamiento, en condiciones de pésima alimentación", dijo Ferrer García, según una grabación difundida por el opositor Consejo de Relatores de Derechos Humanos. "Cada vez nuestras condiciones de vida son peores. A Alfredo le niegan incluso el derecho a recibir los rayos del sol", denunció. José Daniel Ferrer García y Alfredo Domínguez Batista, reconocidos como reos de conciencia por Amnistía Internacional, cumplen 25 y 14 años de prisión, respectivamente (*Martí Noticias*, 6/8/09).

Agosto 6: Una tormenta local severa azotó al municipio de Caibarién, en la provincia central de Villa Clara, informó el Noticiero Nacional de la Televisión. El fenómeno de corta duración causó estragos en barrios residenciales y dependencias económicas de esa localidad, señaló la fuente. Según informaciones preliminares, emitidas por el órgano local de la Defensa Civil, hasta las 9:30, hora local no se reportaron víctimas fatales, aunque el niño Yasniel Jiménez recibió lesiones leves. También se habían cuantificado 36 afectaciones en viviendas, consistentes en un derrumbe total, cinco totales de techos, y 30 parciales. Los daños a una panadería, un punto de venta de la agricultura, el almacén municipal de materiales de construcción y varias líneas de transmisión de electricidad, aparecen entre las afectaciones registradas, refirió la fuente (*Prensa Latina*, 6/8/09).

Agosto 7: San Antonio de los Baños, con una población de 45,000 habitantes no tiene transporte público. Mercedes González, de 66 años, vecina del reparto Aguacate, se encontraba de compras en un mercado agropecuario del municipio, y se le hizo casi imposible trasladarse a su casa, porque el único medio de transporte local es el bicitaxi (bicicletas adaptadas para transporte de pasajeros). “Y no tengo recursos para pagarlo”, dijo. “Además -expresó la señora-, desde hace 20 años aquí no hay autobuses locales, a pesar de la extensión del pueblo. Tampoco se disponen de taxis u otros medios en el territorio, sólo hay bicitaxis”. En caso de una emergencia, aparecía siempre un chofer particular. Pero ahora ya no se ve este tipo de transporte (*Cubanet*, 7/8/09).

Agosto 7: Seis cubanos murieron y doce resultaron heridos como consecuencia de una carrera de dos viejos camiones rusos de carga que llevaban pasajeros en el extremo oriental de la isla, informaron medios oficiales. Según la agencia oficial *AIN*, el teniente de policía Yordanis Rodríguez explicó que los choferes iban con exceso de velocidad, hicieron adelantamientos indebidos y violaron la norma que "prohíbe establecer competencias" en la vía, “excepto en los casos autorizados por el Ministerio del Interior”. El accidente ocurrió en el municipio de Maisí, provincia de Guantánamo, al salirse de la carretera un camión Kamaz cuyo chofer, "de manera irresponsable, sostenía una competencia de velocidad" con el de otro vehículo de la misma marca, ambos de una misma empresa estatal (*EFE*, 7/8/09).

August 7: Cuba, in the grip of a serious economic crisis, is running short of toilet paper and may not get sufficient supplies until the end of the year, officials with state-run companies said. Officials said they were lowering the prices of 24 basic goods to help Cubans get through the difficulties provoked in part by the global financial crisis and three destructive hurricanes that struck the island last year. Cuba's financial reserves have been depleted by increased spending for imports and reduced export income, which has forced the communist-led government to take extraordinary measures to keep the economy afloat. "The corporation has taken all the steps so that at the end of the year there will be an important importation of toilet paper," an official with state conglomerate Cimex said on state-run *Radio Rebelde*. The shipment will enable the state-run company "to supply this demand that today is presenting problems," he said. Cuba both imports toilet paper and produces its own, but does not currently have enough raw materials to make it, he said (*Reuters*, 7/8/09).

Agosto 7: El traslado de un cadáver de un extremo a otro de La Habana para su incineración, el mal estado de funerarias y crematorios, la madeja de trámites burocráticos y la indolencia de algunos empleados, hacen de la muerte una “odisea”, fustigó el diario oficial *Granma*. Bajo el título "El daño de la insensibilidad y el burocratismo", el órgano del Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC, único), reseñó el descontento de la población de La Habana con los servicios funerarios, sobre todo para la incineración (*AFP*, 8/8/09).

Agosto 7: El grupo disidente Comité Cubano por la Integración Racial (CIR) inauguró en La Habana una muestra itinerante de fotografías de 66 personalidades negras de la política, la cultura y el deporte de la isla, con la intención de rescatar y difundir su trayectoria. El director del Salón de Negras y Negros Ilustres de Cuba, Leonardo Calvo, dijo que la exposición pretende ser una "galería física y virtual" con la imagen de "los cubanos negros y mestizos que han hecho aportes trascendentales a la nación". Reúne fotografías de personalidades como el líder independentista Juan Gualberto Gómez, el sindicalista Jesús Menéndez, el bailarín Carlos Acosta, la cantante Celia Cruz, el pelotero Orlando *El Duque* Hernández, el músico Bebo Valdés y el poeta Nicolás Guillén. El coordinador del CIR, Juan Antonio Madrazo, indicó que esta exposición es una de las iniciativas del grupo para impulsar un debate público sobre la "problemática racial" en Cuba (*EFE*, 9/8/09).

August 8: Cubans accustomed to hours-long speeches, thousand-word essays and lengthy interviews can now get El Comandante at a glance, thanks to a new *Dictionary of Thoughts of Fidel Castro*. "Unemployment" and "History" are among the myriad words for which the 339-page paperback provides definitions — based on snippets of speeches, columns and statements dispensed by Castro during the 49 years he governed the communist-run island. Taking a leaf from China's Chairman Mao, the *Dictionary* will be "a valuable tool for the ideological debate in the contemporary world and the work of constructing socialism in our country," the Communist Party newspaper *Granma* said. The work was compiled by Salomon Susi Sarfati, an oratory analyst at the Cuban Communist Party's high ideological school, and was announced in *Granma* a week before it was presented to the public. During the launch in Havana, the book was presented as a “gift” to Castro on his 83rd birthday on August 13 (*Reuters*, 5/8/09; *AP*, 8/8/09).

Agosto 9: Un grupo de opositores se reunió en la provincia Camagüey y fundó el Partido por Cuba Independiente y Democrática, según dio a conocer Josiel Hernández, director de relaciones públicas de esta nueva organización opositora. Hernández dijo que los opositores se reunieron en el antiguo cuartel Agramonte, donde fue arrestado el 17 de octubre de 1959 el comandante Huber Matos por orden de Fidel Castro, y allí se eligió el ejecutivo del nuevo partido. La organización quedó constituida con Marcelo Maury como presidente, quien destacó que “el principal trabajo que realizará el partido será la práctica de la desobediencia civil en las calles de esta ciudad para darse a conocer ante el pueblo, y que todos conozcan la labor de la oposición pacífica” (*Cubanet*, 13/8/09).

Agosto 10: El opositor Ernesto Medero Arozarena ha sido enviado a prisión por el gobierno, según dio a conocer el periodista independiente Carlos Serpa Maceira, que cita

al ex preso político Jorge Luis García Pérez (Antúnez). "Estamos denunciando ante la opinión pública nacional e internacional que el opositor Ernesto Medro Arozarena se encuentra en la prisión de mayor rigor Agüica, del municipio Colón, en la provincia de Matanzas, en espera de un juicio amañado bajo los supuestos cargos de resistencia y desacato", dijo Antúnez. Miembro de la organización Presidio Político Pedro Luis Boitel, Medero Arozarena se disponía a viajar a la ciudad de Santa Clara el pasado 3 de agosto para participar en las actividades por el Día de la Resistencia, cuando fue detenido por agentes de la policía en la terminal de ómnibus de Colón. Según testigos, Medero Arozarena fue golpeado por las autoridades tras ser detenido (*Cubaencuentro*, 10/8/09).

August 10: Fourteen people are dead and at least 33 hospitalized after two trucks loaded with passengers collided in the central Cuban province of Ciego de Avila. The government news agency *AIN* said the crash occurred on the Central Highway outside Baragua, 250 miles (400 kilometers) east of Havana. Provincial deputy health director Enrique Cossio says 13 people were killed instantly and one died in the hospital. At least 33 people were injured. The news agency did not give details about how the trucks crashed and local authorities would not comment. Public transportation is so scarce in most parts of Cuba that private trucks fill their beds with hitchhikers who have no other way to get around. According to official media, in the last three days at least 25 persons have died and over 45 have been injured in traffic accidents in the island (*AP, EFE*, 10/8/09).

August 10: Upscale grocery stores that were scheduled to close two days for inventory remained shuttered, sparking rumors of food shortages because of the country's dire economic situation. More than a dozen stores in Cuba's capital that had been run by the now-defunct firm Cubalse closed to tally merchandise before they were transferred to the new managing company, TRD Caribe. The change is part of a government effort to streamline bureaucracy. When they didn't reopen as scheduled, customers started to get concerned. Cuba has seen its revenue from nickel and other exports plummet, leaving it short on cash to pay bills overseas. The shuttered stores cater to foreigners and accept only convertible pesos, a currency worth 24 times the regular peso, which most Cubans are paid in. However, some islanders get convertible pesos through remittances from relatives in the United States, or from jobs in tourism or with foreign firms, and frequent the upscale stores seeking toilet paper, ground beef, cooking oil and other products unavailable in local groceries. Customers knocked on the door of one closed store to demand an explanation. "It's a lack of respect for the consumer," said Alina Marquez, a 66-year-old retiree who came because, "I ran out of laundry detergent and was also looking for a little chicken to eat." The closings have raised fears of less merchandise and higher prices (*AP*, 10/8/09).

August 10: The number of political prisoners in Cuba rose by three to 208 in the first half of the year as the island continued to have the worst human rights in the Western Hemisphere, a rights group charged. The Cuban Commission of Human Rights said the increase, although small, "reflects the situation of paralysis and indifference of the Cuban government toward the urgent need to end political imprisonment on the island." "During this summer 2009, the situation of civil, political and economic rights, and of certain

cultural rights of the first order, continues being the worst of the whole Western Hemisphere," said the illegal, but tolerated group in its semi-annual report. Those who were hoping for rights improvements under President Raul Castro "suffered a big disappointment," said the report, signed by commission spokesman and former political prisoner Elizardo Sanchez. The rise in political prisoners this year represented a "negative upturn" in what has been a tendency over the past two decades to reduce the numbers, the commission said. It said the past six years the government has adopted "low profile political repression" that includes brief detentions of human rights activists and other forms of harassment (*Reuters*, 10/8/09).

Agosto 11: "Cuba vive, desde hace varios meses, una cierta esperanza de cambios en orden a lograr una sociedad civil más abierta y un engranaje económico más eficaz", afirma Monseñor Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, Vicario General de la Arquidiócesis de La Habana, Párroco de San Agustín, en el residencial reparto de Almendares, en el Municipio habanero de Playa. En el último número de la revista *Palabra Nueva*, órgano oficial de la Arquidiócesis de la capital cubana, expresó: "Estimo que se trata de revisar y cambiar todo lo que sea necesario para que la Nave Cuba emprenda una nueva andadura, un nuevo proyecto de convivencia y promoción humana integral". Céspedes, bisnieto del primer presidente de Cuba en armas frente a la metrópoli española, señala que "la Constitución socialista vigente, la de 1976, reformada con posterioridad, carece de poder convocatorio suficiente, en el orden nacional, y de 'prestigio' jurídico en el internacional ([Una vez más, algunas reflexiones sobre nuestra República](#); *Monitor*, 11/8/09).

Agosto 11: Estrella López, pastora de la Iglesia Evangélica Pentecostal Libre, del barrio habanero de Santos Suárez, se negó a interceder con las autoridades para que cese el acoso de que es víctima el doctor Darsi Ferrer por parte del agente Mina, testigo y acusador en el caso del médico, encarcelado en la prisión Valle Grande. La madre y la esposa de Darsi se entrevistaron con Estrella en su casa para rogarle que usara su influencia en defensa del detenido, ya que el agente es miembro de su congregación. La pastora respondió que no haría tal gestión, porque Mina no entendería sus razones, y perjudicaría a su iglesia, que podía ser acusada de complicidad con los opositores. "Mi iglesia es apolítica, pertenece al Consejo Nacional de Iglesias (entidad de tendencia progubernamental), y no participamos de estos asuntos," enfatizó la pastora (*Cubanet*, 11/8/09).

August 11: The Cuban government is implementing a price reduction of up to 20 percent on 24 basic goods sold at foreign-currency stores, including food products like ground meat, chicken and canned milk, as well as soap and toothpaste. Trade officials began implementing "centralized discounts" from five to 27 cents per CCP (Convertible Cuban Peso) on most items. The markdown could be as high as 2.85 CCP on some products and brands. One CCP equals \$1.24 in the official currency exchange, representing a savings of between six and 33 cents per dollar, which in some exceptional cases could go as high as \$3.50. Besides hamburgers, sausages and hot dogs, the goods to be marked down are yogurt, detergents and disposable diapers for babies and adults. The Ministry of Finance made the decision official on July 20. "So far I've seen very few discounts at the stores," economist and independent journalist Oscar Espinosa Chepe said from Havana. "Though

many products have been missing from the shelves for too long now, there has been a visible shortage in the last few days and people are skeptical." While the measure has been official since last week, its implementation has been gradual in state markets in Havana and in other cities (*The Miami Herald*, 11/8/09).

Agosto 11: Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas, coordinador del opositor Movimiento Cristiano Liberación, denunció las torturas y condiciones carcelarias en las que se encuentran miembros de su organización. Payá pidió a los gobiernos del mundo y a instituciones como Amnistía Internacional, detener las torturas físicas y psicológicas que se practican en las cárceles cubanas contra los prisioneros políticos y de conciencia. Payá advirtió que "mientras pasan los minutos", los prisioneros, entre los que se encuentran varios miembros del MCL, "sufren horriblemente en sus cuerpos y en sus mentes las condiciones infrahumanas a las que les somete el Gobierno de Cuba". El líder disidente se refirió a los casos de Alfredo Domínguez Batista y José Daniel Ferrer, encerrados en la Prisión Provincial de las Tunas ([Trato despiadado a prisioneros](#); *ACI*, 13/8/09).

August 12: Cubans have more than enough reasons to celebrate International Youth Day, said Osnay Miguel Colina, member of the National Bureau of the Young Communist League (UJC). The youth leader said that in this world, marked by poverty, exclusion, inequities and so many other injustices, if one country can really celebrate the date, established in 1999 by the UN's General Assembly, that country is Cuba. Colina said that, as part of activities to mark the date across the country, youths have been involved in reforestation projects, recreational-sports festivals, book fairs, concerts, art exhibits and workshops. In the main venue of celebrations in Havana, the 'March 13 Park' and its surroundings, there are wushu performances, dog shows and boys and girls scouts' exhibits, sales of books, youth publications and Cuban music CDs. The program also includes activities for children like children shows, screening of cartoon films, a playing ground, and areas for those fond of astronomy, meteorology and other related sciences (*ACN*, 12/8/09).

August 12: Cuba has unveiled what it says is a recent photograph of ex-President Fidel Castro, showing him looking healthier than in other pictures since he underwent emergency surgery three years ago. The photograph is the centerpiece of an exhibit that opened dedicated to the former leader's 83rd birthday. Curator Arturo Suarez said the large image of Castro was taken by his son, Alex Castro, who he said is a professional photographer. The close-up portrait was taken "very recently," Suarez said. He didn't give the date or other details. "Life gave me the opportunity to take this photo and, I must say, I have some advantage because I can do it up close," Alex Castro told reporters. "83 Motives" features 80 photos and three paintings of Fidel. He was expected to celebrate his birthday in private. No official celebrations were scheduled, but Cuban workers and other groups planned small celebrations (*AP*, 13/8/09).

Agosto 12: Juan Carlos González Marcos, más conocido como Pánfilo, que se hizo famoso por su frase "lo que nos hace falta es jama", fue condenado a dos años de cárcel, tras ser juzgado bajo el cargo de "peligrosidad predelictiva" por un tribunal de la isla. "Pánfilo fue condenado (...) a dos años de privación de libertad, en un juicio

evidentemente muy presionado por la policía política, que tenía cercado el Tribunal Municipal de Plaza", informó desde La Habana el periodista independiente Julio Aleaga Pesant. Según el reportero, "había no menos de 50 miembros de la policía política y paramilitares" durante el juicio, que fue realizado a puertas cerradas. Pánfilo se hizo popular entre la comunidad cubana por aparecer borracho en un vídeo donde interrumpe innumerables veces la entrevista a un reguetonero para reclamar comida, "Hace falta comida, que hay tremenda hambre", exclama en una de esas apariciones (*Martí Noticias*, 13/8/09).

August 13: Fidel Castro turned 83, his birthday defying all predictions of his death. Those predictions escalated in frequency and frenzy following his collapse and intestinal surgery at the end of July 2006. At exactly midnight, Cuban television interrupted all programming to put on a three-minute photo and video montage of Castro's life, accompanied by patriotic music. Four books about Castro's thinking and work were presented in Havana's Jose Marti International Press Institute to celebrate his birthday. (*CBS, ACN*, 14/8/09).

August 13: The General Secretary of the Cuban Workers Confederation (CTC), Salvador Valdes, corroborated the progress made in the construction of houses in Havana, where housing projects expand. The head of the municipal Housing Investment Unit, Alejandro Diaz de Leon, explained that 191 houses will be built at the Planta de Gas (Gas Plant) settlement, located near Capiro Hill, 95 of which will be given to the best workers. Diaz de Leon stressed that 73 houses have already been built, while the rest are in different stages of their construction, and added that they're also working on the urbanization and the placing of the electric mains and sewage. Over 200 houses were finished at the Brisas del Oeste neighborhood, where the largest number of houses is been built, 60 of which will be given to people whose houses collapsed during the last hurricane season (*ACN*, 14/8/09).

Agosto 15: Cuban health authorities warned of a dramatic rise in AIDS cases among the young on the island, where there over 1,300 new HIV infections in 2008 and another 1,400 are estimated for this year. Cubans aged 19 to 24 are at the greatest risk of infection, said Jorge Perez, deputy director of the Tropical Medicine Institute in Havana, warning of the dangers of unprotected sex. "This is something that tends to happen more to young people because of the dynamism of youth, not thinking about the future and only about the present... Having a no-fear attitude and doing things that are risky," he told local television in this communist country of 11 million people. "We must tell you beware, because there is danger in trust." Of the total of 11,469 cases of HIV infections recorded in Cuba since 1986, 4,602 people developed aids and 1,864 died, according to official figures (*AFP*, 15/8/09).

Agosto 15: La ola de críticas contra el colombiano Juanes por el concierto que realizará en septiembre en La Habana raya en la "demencia", según un comentario publicado en el sitio de Internet oficial *Cubadebate*. "Estos cubanos llenos de animadversión ahora están enfilando su ira contra Juanes y todo aquel que quiera compartir el escenario con él en La Habana. Con el uso de groserías e infamias y a veces hasta francas tontadas muchos de

estos ya están atacando a cualquiera que participe o defienda este empeño", subrayó. El comentario, escrito por Margarita Alarcón, colaboradora de *Cubadebate* e hija de Ricardo Alarcón, presidente de la Asamblea Nacional, añadió que Juanes y los cubanos que impulsan el concierto consideraron que "podía ser la manera perfecta de contribuir a la construcción de puentes de mejor entendimiento". "Ahora resulta que muchos lo acusan de 'andar buscando promoción personal' a niveles que rayan en la demencia (...) él solo pretende venir y cantar. Tan sencillo como eso", dijo Alarcón, filóloga y experta en política internacional, en particular sobre Cuba y Estados Unidos (*AFP*, 15/8/09).

August 15: Amid the controversy surrounding Colombian pop star Juanes' plans to give a "Peace Without Borders" concert in Cuba next month, young people on the streets of Havana told the press it's unfair that anti-Castro exiles in Miami are trying to sabotage the event for political reasons. Opponents of the Castro regime in Miami are calling for boycotts of Juanes concerts and CDs, saying he would be tacitly supporting a regime that locks up peaceful dissenters and calling on him to sing for freedom not peace. But young Juanes fans in Cuba say they would be the only victims if the concert were not held and are already making arrangements to attend the show on September 20 at the emblematic Plaza de la Revolucion, a huge square used by the Cuban government for political rallies. "For me, going to that concert would be crazy. It would be so much fun for kids. I don't think it's fair for them to take that away from us, for them to stop him from meeting us and singing for us," Oleydi, a 17-year-old student, told the press. She said that in her downtown Havana neighborhood "people are really excited" and "people are making plans" to attend the event with friends and family. "It would be great if all the (invited artists) would come, but if it's just Juanes we'd still have a great time," Oleydi said (*EFE*, 15/8/09).

August 16: Cuba won the only ticket available to the Final Round of the 2010 International Volleyball Federation (FIVB) Men's World Championship at the NORCECA-H third round tournament played at Ciudad Deportiva Coliseum in Havana with a convincing straight-set (25-21, 25-19, 26-24) win over Canada in the final game of the tournament (*ACN*, 17/8/09).

Agosto 16: La Iglesia Católica considera "un paso positivo" la decisión de Raúl Castro de trasladar a las ciudades las escuelas en el campo, dijo el arzobispo de Santiago de Cuba, Dionisio García. "Lo vemos como una medida buena, compartir con la familia completa, y creo que eso es positivo, lo vemos como una paso positivo", dijo García. Desde hace años, todos los centros preuniversitarios de Cuba, alrededor de 150 (del 10 a los 12 grados), estaban en el campo, excepto algunos centros destinados a jóvenes con problemas de salud. Durante años, la Iglesia pidió la medida que tomó el 1 de agosto el gobierno. "Es una petición que (...) lleva muchos años. Creo que la edad en que los jóvenes se van normalmente al campo, 14-15 años, es precisamente la edad de la adolescencia, en la que el joven necesita tener más cerca a los padres. La familia es la primera comunidad educativa", opinó monseñor García (*EFE*, 16/8/09).

Agosto 17: Dos miembros de la Fundación Cubana LGTB (lesbianas, gays, transexuales y bisexuales) permanecen en paradero desconocido desde el 14 de agosto, cuando fueron

arrestados por agentes de la Policía y la Seguridad del Estado en un operativo para impedir la organización de una actividad, informó el presidente de ese grupo independiente, Aliomar Janjaque. Los detenidos son Mario José Delgado, de 27 años, vicepresidente de la Fundación, y Berkis Delín, de 21. Janjaque aseguró que varios activistas han recorrido las estaciones de policía de La Habana sin resultado. Los familiares de los arrestados tampoco han sido informados del lugar en que se encuentran. El caso de Delín, advirtió, se agrava por el hecho de que es una paciente de sida, que necesita medicación específica. Según Janjaque, los miembros de la Fundación fueron detenidos en casa de Delgado, cuando se encontraban reunidos para la preparación del evento Mr. Gay, una "actividad cultural" que planean realizar el próximo 29 de agosto en el Malecón de La Habana (*Cubaencuentro*, 17/8/09).

August 17: Cuba says is reducing international calling rates for residents with land lines to \$1 a minute. Cuba's telecommunications monopoly, Etecsa, says the discount applies to all international calls through December 15. Details of the promotion appeared on its Web site and were confirmed by a company representative who did not provide his name. Residential calls from Cuba had cost \$2.45 a minute to the United States and Canada, \$3.45 to Central America and \$5.85 to Europe. Most Cubans don't have Internet access and cannot afford cell phones or computers. Despite the cuts, international dialing remains a costly proposition for most Cubans whose average state wages are \$20 a month. News of the offer hadn't been published by state media. Etecsa said details about the plan will appear on residents' telephone bills. Residents wanting to call abroad must first request activation of international calling service, the company said. No reason was given for the discount (*AP*, 17/8/09).

Agosto 18: La estudiante de periodismo en Cuba, Yudelmis Fonseca Rondón, dijo que la han citado en Seguridad del Estado ya que integra un grupo de apoyo a las Damas de Blanco. "Soy dama de apoyo, y el viernes 14 de agosto fui citada por la seguridad del estado y allí fui amenazada. Me querían deportar para mi provincia, Holguín", relató Fonseca. "Me dijeron que no podía participar ni apoyar mas a las Damas de Blanco, porque iba a ser reprimida, iba a ser citada y me iban a seguir hostigando" (*Marti Noticias*, 18/8/09).

Agosto 18: Unas 100 familias de la ciudad de Baracoa, en el extremo oriental de Cuba, se instalaron en sus nuevos hogares, destruidos en 2008 por un mar de leva el marzo y el huracán Ike en noviembre, informó la prensa local. En esa localidad fueron afectados 6,157 inmuebles, de los cuales más de 4,000 ya han sido reparados (*IPS*, 18/8/09).

Agosto 18: Los obispos católicos cubanos convocaron una colecta, una práctica inusual en los últimos 50 años, para remodelar el Santuario Nacional del Cobre con vistas a los 400 años de la aparición de la imagen de la Virgen de la Caridad, patrona de Cuba. El presidente de la Conferencia Episcopal, Dionisio García, arzobispo de Santiago de Cuba, llamó en una carta leída en los templos a "contribuir a la reparación, restauración y ampliación del Santuario de Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre y de sus dependencias de acogida a los peregrinos". En el texto, difundido en el sitio de Internet de la Conferencia Episcopal, monseñor García explicó que el templo se construyó en

1927 a partir de otra colecta nacional, convocada también por el Arzobispado de Santiago de Cuba, donde se ubica el Santuario ([Colecta para el Santuario del Cobre](#); *AFP*, 18/8/09).

August 18: Tropical rainstorm Ana might regain strength over the warm water of the eastern Gulf of Mexico, but has little chance of becoming a cyclone over the next day or so as it crosses Haiti and Cuba, several weather forecasters predicted. The US National Hurricane Center forecast the remnants of Ana, currently producing thunderstorms over Haiti, Cuba and the Bahamas, had a low chance - less than 30 percent - of becoming a tropical cyclone again over the next 48 hours (*Reuters*, 18/8/09).

August 18: Prominent Cuban dissidents offered support for the plans of Colombian pop star Juanes to give a "Peace Without Borders" concert in Havana, distancing themselves from the disapproval expressed by much of the exile community in Miami. "No one has the right to deprive Cubans inside the country from what people enjoy naturally outside the country. The totalitarianism on the island is more than enough," Miriam Leiva, founder of Ladies in White, a group comprising relatives of political prisoners, said. Nor does Leiva agree that the concert should be rejected because it will be held in the Plaza de la Revolucion. "(Pope) John Paul II said his last Mass in Cuba there, Fidel Castro included, on January 25, 1998, and his message is still remembered". Also supporting the concert was blogger Yoani Sanchez: "I think Juanes should come here and sing. If the subject is peace he must know that this island is not submerged in war, but it doesn't have peace either." "He will lift up his voice before a people that has been divided, classified by political color and forced to confront those who think differently. A nation that for years has heard no talk of harmony and that knows the punishment awaiting those who dare to criticize," Sanchez wrote on her blog *Generacon Y*. "We need his voice, but only if he sings without forgetting any Cubans, without dismissing any differences. We'd like him to accompany his songs with the cadence of Willy Chirino, the trumpet of Arturo Sandoval, the rhythm of Albita Rodriguez and the sensual sax of Paquito D'Rivera, but none of them will be allowed to be there," she said (*EFE*, 18/8/09).

Agosto 19: Con portón abierto a la calle animada, en el corazón de la oriental Santiago de Cuba, un baratillo de libros antiguos y fotos de colección de la Revolución se anuncia como el "rincón de la memoria" de la isla comunista. Hace quince años, en plena crisis económica post-soviética que provocó enormes penurias a muchos cubanos, Eddy Tamayo decidió cambiar su profesión de ingeniero aeronáutico por el oficio de un librero "que no vende libros pero los intercambia por otros". La librería "La escalera" nació en la planta baja de una estrecha pieza de techo alto que muere en una escalera, de donde tomó su nombre. Sus peldaños llevan a una puerta clausurada y "están abiertos a todos aquellos, cantantes y músicos, que buscan un lugar donde tocar", asegura el vendedor de 62 años. En este país criticado en el exterior por faltas en materia de derechos humanos, Tamayo quiere que su librería "sea un lugar de la memoria y de la libre expresión", citando al presidente Raúl Castro quien pidió a los cubanos "expresarse libremente". En su "cueva" se hallan apretujadas novelas en inglés dejadas por los turistas, ensayos sobre comunismo, algunos en ruso, una guitarra, discos en acetato de marchas revolucionarias,

revistas viejas, pero también retratos del guerrillero argentino Ernesto "Che" Guevara, el cantante Charles Aznavour o una imagen del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (*EFE*, 19/8/09).

August 19: The Cuban secret police is looking for a few good men and women to join its ranks. The Organization for Secret Operative Work (OTOS) of the National Revolutionary Police has issued a public invitation to men and women, 18 to 40, with a high-school education or higher, to join OTOS, Cuba's National Information Agency reported. To qualify for plainclothes-person, "it is imperative that [the candidate] feel motivated by that activity, enjoys investigation and risk-taking, and be able to confront cases of criminal demonstrations, so as to help correct twisted behavior," the invitation reads. "The operative agent tracks events that, at first sight, have no perpetrators, and contributes the necessary evidence to take [the perpetrators] to court according to the law." The agent "also dismantles groups or gangs involved in criminal activities and hampers their contacts abroad" (*The Miami Herald*, 20/8/09).

Agosto 19: Los habitantes de la ciudadela Los Pinos, aldeaña al reparto Abel Santamaría, en la periferia de Santiago de Cuba, se preparan para participar en la Marcha por la Libertad, convocada por ciudadanos organizados en torno a la organización conocida como MANO. La marcha tiene el propósito de exigir al gobierno respeto a los derechos civiles. Santiago de Cuba es la provincia que más deportados recibe desde La Habana, y el fin de las deportaciones es una de las demandas. La mencionada ciudadela fue víctima hace unos meses del ataque de la policía, ocasión en que fueron destruidas las treinta viviendas más cercanas a la carretera. El cese de los desalojos y los ataques a estos asentamientos es otra de las demandas de los que participarán en la marcha (*Cubanet*, 19/8/09).

Agosto 19: Un grupo de vecinos se enfrentó a los policías que intentaban arrestar a una señora en las afueras de un agro mercado en el barrio Santos Suárez, municipio 10 de Octubre, en Ciudad de La Habana. Pedro Moisés Calderín, testigo de los hechos, comentó que todo comenzó cuando dos agentes empujaron y golpearon en la cabeza a una mujer de sesenta años, mientras la obligaban a montar en el carro patrulla. A los gritos de auxilio de la señora, operada de un tumor en la cabeza, varias mujeres acudieron en su ayuda y golpearon a los dos policías. "De inmediato llegaron al lugar tres carros patrulleros, pero la gente no se detuvo". Se necesitaron más patrulleros y la presencia de un alto oficial del Ministerio del Interior para calmar a los vecinos. La señora fue liberada y los policías se retiraron en medio de la repulsa popular (*Cubanet*, 19/8/09).

August 19: The president of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER), Christian Jimenez, presented the Cuban national flag to the team that will represent the Caribbean nation in the upcoming World Boxing Championships in Milan, Italy. Jimenez handed the flag to Olympic bronze medallist Rosniel Iglesias (64 kg) who was escorted by Osmay Acosta (91 kg) and Erislandi Savon (+91 kg). The team will conclude their preparation for the competition with a training camp that begins on August 21, in Paris, France (*ACN*, 20/8/09).

Agosto 19: El rockero punk cubano, Gorki Águila, opositor al gobierno, aseguró que no recibió invitación alguna para el concierto de Juanes el 20 de septiembre en la Plaza de la Revolución, al comentar la afirmación del colombiano acerca de que intenta su participación. "Ni mi grupo (Porno para Ricardo) ni yo hemos recibido ninguna invitación por parte de los organizadores de dicho concierto", dijo el músico de 40 años en un correo electrónico desde México, donde según señaló visita a su madre y su hermana. "Mi intención es regresar a la isla, si esto no lo puedo cumplir responsabilizo al Estado cubano, puesto que no es la primera vez que actúan de esa manera con opositores al régimen", agregó. En La Habana, el padre de Gorki, Luis Águila, y el guitarrista del grupo Ciro Díaz también dijeron desconocer una gestión de Juanes para que la banda participe en el concierto (AFP, 20/8/09).

August 20: Juan Almeida García, son of revolutionary *comandante* Juan Almeida Bosque, was detained by Havana police as he strolled through Revolution Square with a sign that said he wanted an exit permit to leave the country. He was released a couple of hours later with a promise that his request will be answered. Almeida was arrested May 6 after attempting to flee in a boat and given supervised parole. Since 2006, he has asked the authorities repeatedly for an exit permit that would enable him to seek medical treatment abroad for a rheumatoid disease he has had for years. His wife and daughter live in the United States. "They promised I would get an answer," Almeida told the press after his release. "I am willing to continue my demonstrations on the Square in front of every building, beginning with the Ministry of the Interior", he said (*The Miami Herald*, 21/8/09).

August 20: Cuban Olympic champion and world record holder (110 hurdles), Dayron Robles, left his semi-final race due to an injury at the 12th Athletics World Championship underway in Berlin, Germany. Robles was in problems since the very beginning of the race when knocked down the three first hurdles and had to stop, visibly affected by his recurring injury in the left thigh (ACN, 20/8/09).

August 20: Women's boxing is "inappropriate" and Cuban women will therefore not be able to compete in the London 2012 Olympic Games, the head of the Caribbean nation's sports federation, Jose Barrientos, said. "We have no intention of participating for the moment in any international competition as we consider this discipline is "inappropriate" for women, Barrientos said in remarks carried by the *Prensa Latina* news agency. Barrientos added there exists no development programme for women's boxing in Cuba, a country which has produced a raft of champions in the male variant. Cuban head boxing trainer Pedro Roque told Cuban radio he recognised that the discipline was under development for women elsewhere but that Cuban women "are made for beauty and not to take blows around the head" (AFP, 20/8/09).

Agosto 21: Agentes de la policía política detuvieron en Banes, provincia Holguín, al opositor pacífico Arnaldo Expósito. Según el testimonio de Arnaldo, la detención tuvo lugar cuando se disponía a viajar fuera de la ciudad, y un policía lo obligó a subir al auto patrullero, donde se encontraban otros agentes. Expósito permaneció arrestado en el cuartel de la policía política hasta horas de la tarde, y declaró que durante el

interrogatorio fue víctima de ataques verbales por parte del mencionado agente, quien en otra ocasión participó en una golpiza que le propinaron. Arnaldo Expósito es presidente del Comité Democrático Cubano Carlos Manuel de Céspedes (*Cubanet*, 21/8/09).

August 21: The national headquarters of the Cuban Writers and Artists' Union will be officially declared a National Landmark, the day before the organization marks the 48th Anniversary of its foundation. In order to grant the condition, the National Commission of Landmarks took into account the architectural and aesthetic value of the building and its age and, specifically, its history throughout nearly five decades as a venue of meetings and for the analysis of significant aspects of Cuban culture. Important Cuban intellectuals and artists, including UNEAC's founders like prima ballerina *assoluta* Alicia Alonso and writers Roberto Fernandez Retamar and Pablo Armando Fernández will participate in the ceremony. Before becoming UNEAC's headquarters, the big house, located in the Vedado municipality of Havana, used to be the residence of Juan Gelats Botet, owner of the Gelats Bank (*ACN*, 21/8/09).

Agosto 22: Cuba is condemning threats made against Colombian pop singer Juanes, who plans to stage a "Peace Without Borders" concert in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution. Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto blamed anti-Castro exiles in the United States for the threats and said the September 20 show will go on as planned. His comments were reported by Cuba's state news agency, *Prensa Latina*. Prieto said those issuing the threats "should be ashamed of what they're doing." Some Cuban-Americans in the United States contend that the concert endorses the Communist-led government of Raul and Fidel Castro. Juanes told police in Florida that someone sent him a message on Twitter that said, among other things, "I hate what you are saying but you will die for defending your right to say it" (*AP*, 23/8/09).

August 22: The Cuban Women's Federation (FMC) will celebrate its anniversary, August 23, with a ceremony in honor of young women who have volunteered for Military Service. The Museum of the Revolution will be the venue of the event scheduled for the day before the 49th anniversary of the organization. Other cultural activities will be held to mark the date including the presentation of the book "Haydée, del Moncada a Casa" (Haydee, from Moncada to Home), written by Celia Hart Santamaria, daughter of Haydee Santamaria. A poetry reading will be performed by important Cuban writers at the ALBA house in Vedado, City of Havana. Retired women teachers who returned to the classrooms were also recognized on the occasion of the FMC's 49th anniversary as well as those who are members of the National Revolutionary Police, or work in agricultural activities, among other outstanding women (*ACN*, 22/8/09).

August 22: Researchers from the History Museum and the Archaeology Department of Curator's Office of Trinidad, Sancti Spiritus province, confirmed the finding of the first slave cemetery in the ancient Guinia de Soto sugar mill. Head specialist of Trinidad's History Museum Hector Manuel Viera Cartaya, said that, after with the falling down of a tree and the erosion of the soil, five perfectly-preserved corpses buried in a very organized way, were brought up to the surface. The remains have high cheekbones, perfect dentures, wide noses and resistant bones. These, according to experts, are

characteristics found in the Africans that were brought to Cuba as slaves. Viera Cartaya explained that burial dates back to late in the 18th century or early in the 1800's, the period of the highest development of the sugar mills, when there were some 200 slaves in the area, according to texts on the topic (ACN, 22/8/09).

August 23: Cuba placed twelfth in the medal standings of the 12th IAAF World Championships in Athletics that concluded in Berlin, the German capital, with the participation of athletes from nearly 200 countries. In the final day of competitions, Guillermo Martinez surprisingly gave the Caribbean nation a silver medal in the men's Javelin with an 86.41-meter throw. In all, Cuba accumulated six medals: one title, four silver and a bronze (ACN, 23/8/09).

August 23: The appearance of a fit and alert Fidel Castro on television after a long absence has surprised Cubans and raised questions about why the former Cuban president is suddenly back in the spotlight. Many saw the TV broadcast of a video of the legendary Comandante, the first such broadcast in more than a year, as a move to reassure Cubans that the 83-year-old Castro is alive and well. Other observers said it was also a deliberate attempt to bolster the position of his younger brother and current president, Raul Castro, at a time when the Cuban leadership faces major economic challenges and popular discontent. Fidel Castro, who has mostly been out of public view for the past three years, was shown smiling and chatting with Venezuelan students in a video of their three-hour meeting the day before. While he was clearly not the robust Fidel of old, he looked to be in good health and mentally sound as he spoke about the dangers of global warming and the personal qualities needed to be a good revolutionary. Cuban political dissident Oscar Chepe said he believed the larger point of the video was to show support for brother Raul Castro during a time of tough economic crisis in Cuba. "Raul Castro wants to use his brother as a symbol," Chepe said. "They'll continue using the figure of Fidel as the old symbol of the revolution to keep people calm" (Reuters, 24/8/09).

August 24: Ramiro Valdes Menendez, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and member of the Politburo of the Cuban Communist Party, presented the Cuban national flag to the team that will represent the Caribbean nation in the upcoming World Baseball Cup scheduled to take place next month in several European countries. Valdes Menendez handed the flag to outfielder Alfredo Despaigne, who was escorted by veteran right-hander Norge Luis Vera and third baseman Yulieski Gourriel (ACN, 25/8/09).

Agosto 26: Convergencia Liberal Cubana (CLC) emitió una declaración en la que sintetiza la crisis económica, administrativa y social por la que atraviesa la nación. Bajo el título "La situación nacional", el documento hace un llamado a los factores democráticos de la sociedad civil a aunar esfuerzos en pos de consolidar las transformaciones que inevitablemente se avecinan. CLC afirma que los debates que tuvieron lugar en el año 2007, en los que alrededor de 3 millones de ciudadanos abordaron la problemática actual, parecen estar engavetados. El documento explica que "todo continúa fraguándose en las más altas esferas del gobierno, mientras que la sociedad civil, principal protagonista, sigue ajena a las soluciones de los problemas que le aquejan". Además de rechazar duramente los artículos 3, 55, 57, 58, y 75 (incisos a, g, q,

t, u) de la Constitución, la declaración señala: “Las organizaciones miembros de CLC están firmemente decididas a convertirse en sujetos conductores, junto al resto de las fuerzas democráticas en el país, de las transformaciones que demanda el pueblo”. Firmaron el documento Reinaldo Hernández (Partido Liberal de Cuba), Fernando Sánchez (Partido Solidaridad Democrática), Ángel R. González (Partido Liberal Ortodoxo), Pedro Fontanal (Movimiento Liberal Cubano) y Lázaro Prieto (Comisión Atención a Presos Políticos) (*Cubamet*, 26/8/09).

August 26: Cuba's communist government is being challenged to move toward a more participative and inclusive socialist system, one that offers real economic well-being and responds to the social and political demands that have built up and been expressed in different ways in recent years. Although it has been postponed until further notice, the Sixth Congress of the governing Cuban Communist Party (PCC), the only recognised party, must meet this challenge in the context of an international crisis which has aggravated the economic difficulties facing this Caribbean island nation and has had a major impact on the living standards of its 11.2 million people. In the view of some analysts, the crisis makes it even more urgent to hold the PCC Congress, which normally meets every five years to evaluate and lay down guidelines for solving the country's most pressing problems. While he recognised that the Cuban economy requires a new approach, Presbyterian pastor Raimundo García told *IPS* that the "profound changes" needed in this country require, among other things, "that the PCC take on what should be its primary role, and stop being a second tier of government within the state." The Cuban pastor said this implied that the political organisation should "become a centre for research and debate, in which, focusing on a common purpose, different opinions can be expressed by people representing the different spheres of society, including civil society. "Unanimity is non-existent, as our president has often said, and in any case it would be bad for dialogue and decision-making," said García, who is head of the Christian Centre for Reflection and Dialogue (CCRD) in Cárdenas, 150 kilometres from Havana (*IPS*, 26/8/09).

Agosto 26: La televisión cubana difundió un video de 24 minutos que muestra a Fidel Castro aparentemente en buen estado, en animada conversación con diez jóvenes venezolanos que lo visitaron en su residencia. “No pasa un día en la vida de uno que no aprenda cosas nuevas sobre lo horrible del sistema [capitalista]”, afirmó el líder comunista, de 83 años, a los abogados venezolanos recién graduados, con quienes conversó por tres horas ([Video](#); *AFP*, 27/8/09).

August 27: A local severe storm damaged more than 100 houses, three schools and five power circuits in Camaguey city, in the province of the same name. *Granma* newspaper reported that the natural phenomena crossed the southeast area of the city with sustained winds of 80 kms/h and higher gusts in a short period of time. The hardest hit districts were La Belen, El Jardín and Las Delicias. Also the Casino Campestre, the largest urban natural park of the island, suffered some damage; several trees were brought down and part of its recreational infrastructure was affected too (*ACN*, 28/8/09).

Agosto 28: El hermano de Juan Carlos González Marcos, 'Pánfilo', que fuera arrestado y sentenciado a dos años de cárcel por el régimen cubano el pasado 12 de agosto, dijo a la prensa que el detenido "se encuentra bien" y está "en la prisión 1580". Pánfilo se hizo famoso a través de un vídeo de Youtube en el que gritaba a la cámara que tenía hambre: "¡Queremos jama!". "No puedo revelar mi nombre porque aquí la seguridad del estado me mete preso", afirmó su hermano. "La última vez que lo vi fue el viernes pasado. Estaba bien. De eso no puedo hablar nada. Tienen todos los teléfonos 'pinchados'". Al preguntarle si 'Pánfilo' ha recibido amenazas al interior de la prisión mantiene que "eso es mentira". Sin embargo, Elizardo Sánchez, presidente de la Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CCDHRN), afirma todo lo contrario. "Tenemos informes que está recibiendo presiones dentro de la cárcel. Ha recibido amenazas que pueden aumentarle la condena, amenazas contra su familia para que no acepte ayuda de ningún grupo", asegura. Según Sánchez, el juicio de apelación se debe estar dando en las próximas semanas. La CCDHRN ha tratado de ayudar legalmente a Juan Carlos González Marcos pero "la familia nos dijo que la policía secreta les ha dicho que se alejen de cualquier grupo que huelga a disidencia", afirmó (*El Mundo*, 28/8/09).

Agosto 28: El opositor Partido Arco Progresista (PARP) denunció la detención temporal de uno de sus representantes en Santiago de Cuba, Juan Carmelo Bermúdez Rosabal. El disidente fue arrestado en su casa, dijo la organización socialdemócrata en un comunicado, citando a Yasnay Losada Castañeda, esposa de Bermúdez y también miembro del PARP. De acuerdo con la versión de Losada, autoridades policiales se presentaron en el domicilio del matrimonio y, sin explicar los motivos, condujeron a Bermúdez hacia las oficinas de la Seguridad del Estado de la provincia. El disidente fue liberado horas después sin cargos, confirmó Manuel Cuesta Morúa, portavoz del PARP, quien calificó la detención de "arbitraria". El arresto coincidió con una visita de Raúl Castro a la región oriental (*Cubaencuentro*, 29/8/09).

Agosto 30: El diario oficial *Juventud Rebelde* criticó "la enfermiza obsesión" de funcionarios y responsables que bajo el pretexto de "cuidar la imagen del país" censuran información, rechazan la crítica e impiden el análisis público de los problemas del país. "La enfermiza obsesión por cuidar 'la imagen' del país, del ministerio, la empresa o el territorio" es "más recurrente que la preocupación por los propios desaguizados de la realidad", señaló el diario, órgano de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunista, sin mencionar casos concretos. Esa frecuente tendencia "en ocasiones es paranoia" por conservar puestos y cargos "cuando de lo que se trata es de mejorar la realidad", agregó. "El socialismo europeo desapareció porque extravió el visor de lo que realmente sucedía, y la brújula para rectificar la ruta. Esa lección no puede olvidarse", dijo. En los últimos meses los medios de prensa de la Isla —todos bajo control del gobierno— han publicado algunas críticas sobre los problemas que aquejan al país, pero los blancos son siempre abstractos o funcionarios intermedios, nunca ministros o altos cargos del gobierno ([Espejos](#); *AFP*, 30/8/09).

Agosto 31: El diario oficial de Cuba, *Granma*, fustigó a una "estirpe creciente de chapuceros" en las actividad económica que se escuda en la escasez de recursos, la crisis internacional o el embargo de Estados Unidos, y dañan la imagen del socialismo.

"Arrastramos algunos vicios y ciertas distorsiones ajenas al ideal socialista. La chapucería, por ejemplo, no fue decretada ni por Marx ni por Lenin como una condición del sistema antagónico al capitalismo", subrayó una columna de prensa. *Granma*, órgano del gobernante Partido Comunista de Cuba (PCC), reseñó casos como el de un edificio que exhibe un pésimo estado, pese a que sus constructores recibieron un premio a "la excelencia empresarial". "Si nos salimos del tema construcciones, y andamos la ciudad con miradas críticas, descubriremos una estirpe creciente de chapuceros que están detrás de los malos servicios. O los que han hecho de la chapucería un sentido de la vida", añadió. *Granma* criticó que "siguen retoñando" quienes "confunden el socialismo con la mala factura", y dan argumentos para "distorsionar" la imagen de la revolución a "los politólogos del capitalismo" que afirman que el socialismo es el "lobo" y un "mamarracho" ([Chapucerías](#); *AFP*, 31/8/09).

Economy

August 1: President Raul Castro gave Cuba's National Assembly more bad economic news, saying the government had cut its budget for the second time this year to confront the country's worst financial crisis since the 1990s. He did not say how much had been cut, but said the Cuban economy, battered by the global financial crisis and three hurricanes last year, grew just 0.8 percent in the first half of 2009. He said growth of 1.7 percent was expected for the full year. The combined economic shocks cut income from exports and forced the government to spend more on imports of food and other items, which has depleted the country's cash. As a result, Castro said, "We've been forced to renegotiate debts, payments and other commitments with foreign entities." The plan for next year, he said, calls for Cuba to have a "balance of payments, without deficit" and to put priority on producing products and services that bring hard currency. Castro's biggest reform since taking office has been the decentralization of decision-making in agriculture and putting more land in the hands of private farmers to increase food output. He also has pushed for Cubans to be paid based on their production, with the aim of creating incentives for them to work harder. Castro has also launched a fight against widespread corruption that he says is choking the Cuban economy. Before his speech, the National Assembly approved creation of the comptroller general's office, with powers to audit and control all government and economic activities. ([Discurso de Raúl Castro en la clausura de las sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional](#); *Reuters*, 2/8/09).

Agosto 1: Las medidas de ajuste económico, que refrenda la Asamblea Nacional (AN), no afectarán al turismo —el número de viajeros ingresados a la isla crece 2,9% anual—, pese al impacto de la crisis internacional, afirmó el ministro del ramo, Manuel Marrero. "En los ajustes que se han hecho en la economía, el turismo no está inserto", pues "hemos reducido los gastos y planificado incrementar los ingresos. Ninguno de los ajustes está destinado a afectar la calidad y los servicios turísticos", dijo Marrero a la prensa, en la primera sesión anual de la AN. "El turismo tiene aprobado un plan de inversiones que se continúa ejecutando", con "la prioridad de recuperar y elevar el confort de las instalaciones y de iniciar" la construcción de otras, añadió. Marrero destacó que el arribo de visitantes "está creciendo a (un ritmo de) 2,9%", pero "la situación económica internacional tiene un impacto en los ingresos" (*AFP*, 1/8/09).

August 3: Supermarkets and clothing stores in Havana have been closed for inventory, in preparation for their turnover to an Army-managed enterprise, creating much discomfiture among the capital's residents. Establishments like the mall Galerías Paseo were run by the state organization Cubalse but now -- as part of an economic restructure imposed May 26 by Raúl Castro -- they will be managed by the chain TRD Caribe. That chain is part of the tourism conglomerate Gaviota, managed by the Cuban Army. The Spanish newspaper *El Norte de Castilla* reported that Havana residents are unhappy with the shutdown. "An elderly woman told me that 'according to a shopkeeper, her store didn't open because the man who has to give the order is traveling in Canada. Imagine that!'" the newspaper's Havana correspondent wrote. "Very few can afford to pay 150 euros at one blow to buy their biweekly or weekly supplies," the reporter wrote. "People complain because they are annoyed. In two blocks, two stores are closed, one of which supplies local wholesalers. Five blocks farther down, the Market of 70, one of Havana's biggest, has been closed for five days." Shutdown or no, "one of the priorities for housewives is to put food on the table each day, a pressing drama during the summer vacations," the article said (*AFP, The Miami Herald, 3/8/09*).

August 4: Venezuela, which offers Caribbean nations low-interest cash to buy its oil under the Petrocaribe alliance, may reduce its commitment to the program, according to a statement on the Jamaica Information Service Web site. South America's biggest oil producer wants to receive at least 80 percent of the value of oil it sends to Petrocaribe members, Jamaica said. Venezuela now finances as much as 60 percent of the value of shipments with 20-year loans at 1 or 2 percent interest. "The impending changes in the agreement will present grave difficulties," Guyana President Bharrat Jagdeo said in the statement. Petrocaribe includes Central American countries Guatemala, Belize, Honduras and Nicaragua as well as Caribbean nations Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia. Venezuela's eastern neighbours, Guyana and Suriname, are also members (*Bloomberg, 4/8/09*).

August 5: Daily deliveries of 150,000 liters of milk confirm a five-year steady recovery of the stockbreeding sector in central Villa Clara province as milk production in this region now approaches its best historical levels that date from 1985. Roberto Pérez García, deputy delegate of the Ministry of Agriculture in this province, told the press that a proper handling of cattle, the increase in the number of births and the raise in the purchasing price of milk from producers, are the key factors for this success. At the end of the first half of this year, Villa Clara ranchers reported 300,000 liters of milk more than planned, which allows foreseeing that the year's collection will be around 45 million liters, the highest amount in the last two decades (*ACN, 5/8/09*).

Agosto 6: Los ministros de Medio Ambiente de Haití, Cuba y la República Dominicana firmarán en Barahona, en el suroeste dominicano, el Plan de Acción del Corredor Biológico del Caribe, iniciativa ideada para impulsar proyectos medioambientales, sociales, económicos y culturales en la región. El citado plan establece los perfiles de estos proyectos, que se desarrollarán en un espacio geográfico lineal que conecta paisajes,

ecosistemas, hábitats y culturas de los tres países, a lo largo de unos 1,600 kilómetros, informó el Ministerio de Medio Ambiente de Santo Domingo. El corredor confiere una categoría especial a 61 áreas protegidas, lo que facilita las inversiones orientadas al desarrollo humano, en particular las que promuevan la reducción de la pobreza, mejora de la calidad de vida, de la educación, y recuperación de zonas de alto impacto humano (*EFE*, 6/8/09).

August 8: The Camilo Cienfuegos PDV-Cupet Joint Venture Refinery has processed 35 million barrels of oil since its opening in 2008. Pedro Villaroel Guerra, general manager of the facility in central Cienfuegos province, said that 13.5 million barrels have been processed this year, while in 2008 the number was 21.5 millions, *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper reported. The executive said that the refining goal for this year is being met according to their plan. At the moment, the most important goals they have is the building of four new large tanks, which will increase the refinery's storage capacity to 80,000 cubic meters (*ACN*, 8/8/09).

Agosto 8: Cuba mejoró su tasa de natalidad, pero aún es insuficiente para lograr el reemplazo poblacional, indicaron cifras oficiales. "En el 2008 los nacimientos en Cuba aumentaron por segundo año consecutivo: 122.569 nacidos vivos; 10.097 por encima del 2007, y 11.246 más que en el 2006", comentó el periódico oficial *Granma*, órgano de difusión del Partido Comunista. Precisamente el 2006 había sido el año con menor natalidad de los últimos 50 años. Según el rotativo, la edad promedio de las mujeres para tener el primer hijo se mantiene en valores jóvenes, sobre los 23 años; pero aún así no se garantizó en 2008 el reemplazo poblacional --la sustitución personas viejas o muertas por nuevos nacimientos--, pues las mujeres sólo tuvieron 1,59 descendientes contra los 4,06 que solían dar a luz en 1960. Para lograrlo, cada mujer debía tener 2,1 bebés. *Granma* basó sus datos en los proporcionados por la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas (ONE) (*EFE*, 9/8/09).

August 8: In Cuba, portions for many rationed foodstuffs have been cut -- red beans and chickpeas from 30 to 20 ounces a month, salt by half to about four ounces per month -- while food deliveries to factory, office and school cafeterias have been trimmed, according to official announcements. Harsh police crackdowns on the food black market -- apparently an attempt to ensure that more items reach the legal outlets -- have driven up prices yet left many of the legitimate sales points with shelves oddly bare, Havana residents say. Even foreign businesses are suffering, with the government tightly controlling withdrawals from their accounts. Raul Castro replaced his entire economic Cabinet in March, and just last week the legislature created a comptroller's office to attack official corruption. Yet many analysts in and out of Cuba argue that those belt-tightening moves are far from what's needed to address the crisis. "Mercurochrome and Band-Aids for deep wounds with heavy bleeding," Miami activist Juan Antonio Blanco wrote in his blog, *Cambio de Epoca* (Epochal Change). Even the official *Granma* newspaper called the situation "grave." "The country is again facing a situation as adverse" as the early 1990s, the UN's Economic Commission for Latin America wrote earlier this year. Cuba's economy shrank by 35 percent after the Soviet Union collapsed and cut off its \$4 billion-\$6 billion annual subsidies to Havana. Despite early speculation

that the reputedly pragmatic Castro would move Cuba toward a Chinese-like ``market socialism system," his reforms have remained relatively moderate (*The Miami Herald*, 9/8/09).

August 10: The Cuba Railroads company (Ferrocarriles de Cuba) will receive 550 carriages produced by the Iranian company Wagon Pars for the transportation of containers, oil and cement, among other cargos. Gholam Reza Razzazi, general director of Wagon Pars, explained that the transaction is valued at \$ 60 million, the website of *Radio Havana Cuba* reported (*ACN*, 10/8/09).

August 10: Cuba's Pharmaceutical Entrepreneurial Group Quimefa saved the country 1.4 million dollars during the first semester of 2009, and increased the supply of medicines to the Cuban people. In statements published by *Granma* newspaper, Ramon Arango, director of Qimefa's Quality and Development Department, said the enterprise production program for the period from 2007 to 2012 includes 73 products, of which 31 substitute imports. These include antibiotics; eye, cardiovascular and skin medicaments; as well as anti-inflammatory, anti-asthmatics and anti-parasites. Arango highlighted the efforts to replace medicines that are bought in other countries with similar ones obtained in the island (*ACN*, 10/8/09).

August 10: President Raul Castro is promoting oxen, the beasts of burden, as a way for the economically strapped communist country to ramp up food production while conserving energy. He recently suggested expanding a pilot program that gives private farmers fallow government land to cultivate -- but without the use of gas-guzzling machinery. "For this program we should forget about tractors and fuel, even if we had enough. The idea is to work basically with oxen," Castro told parliament on August 1. "An increasing number of growers have been doing exactly this with excellent results." The agricultural ministry in late June proposed increasing the use of oxen to save fuel, as Cubans have seen a summer of factories closing and air conditioners at government offices and businesses shutting off to save oil. The ministry said it had more than 265,000 oxen "capable of matching, and in some cases overtaking, machines in labor load and planting" (*AP*, 10/8/09)

August 12: Representatives of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) member countries are meeting in Nicaragua to discuss details of the Unique Regional Compensation System (SUCRE). The SUCRE will function as a kind of virtual currency for commercial exchange between nations of the group, Prensa Latina news agency reported. In the meeting's agenda are included topics like the exports' surplus of the nine ALBA countries (Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, and San Vicente and the Grenadines). Likewise, participants will analyze the surplus' potentials and the import requirements of each member country, which will be included in a data base. The creation of a regional common currency was approved in an ALBA meeting held last April in Venezuela, where the general regulations for the implementation of a Central Chamber for Compensation, a Regional Monetary Committee and a Reserves and Commercial Convergence Fund were

set up (ACN, 12/8/09).

Agosto 12: Las mujeres representan el 46 por ciento de la fuerza laboral en el sector estatal civil, informó Yolanda Ferrer, secretaria general de la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas (FMC). La dirigente reconoció además que "sobre ellas sigue recayendo la jornada interminable que impone el hogar". Según el Panorama Económico y Social de Cuba en 2008, publicado por la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas, el 49,9 por ciento de los habitantes de la isla son mujeres (IPS, 12/8/09).

Agosto 12: Cuba redujo este mes su consumo de electricidad en 20 mil megavatios por hora, al cumplir el estricto plan de ahorro que aplica desde el 1 de junio, pero el gobierno detectó miles de fraudes "energéticos" en los sectores estatal y residencial. Especialistas de la Unión Nacional Eléctrica (UNE) dijeron que la disminución registrada en los primeros nueve días de agosto representa casi el cinco por ciento del gasto de ese tipo de energía a nivel nacional. Ricardo González, director de Uso Racional de la Energía de la UNE, explicó a la televisión estatal que a excepción de la provincia occidental de Matanzas, con cerca de un 4.0 por ciento de incumplimiento, todas las demás se ajustan a las regulaciones implantadas (Notimex, 12/8/09).

August 13: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's move to close golf courses is similar to what his mentor Fidel Castro did shortly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Castro ordered military barracks to be built on most of the golf courses that once catered to high-rollers. But golf was still played in Cuba. In a 1962 publicity stunt, Castro played a round with Che Guevara, who had been a caddy in his Argentine hometown before he became a guerrilla icon. According to Castro, *The New York Times* reports, it was meant to make fun of then-US president Dwight Eisenhower. But Castro lost the round of golf to Guevara, and was so angry that he fired the journalist who wrote about his defeat. Golf courses are now making a comeback in Cuba under Raul Castro's government because the country needs revenue from tourists (*Toronto Star*, 13/8/09).

August 13: Cuban thermoelectric plants will be using for the first time reinforced-polyester and fiberglass pipes in their water cooling systems. On its digital edition, Ciego de Avila's local TV network reported that the Indalecio Montejo enterprise of the province has produced more than one hundred of those parts to replace molten iron and gummed steel pipes through which water pulled out from the sea circulates, which are very vulnerable to the marine environment once they lose their lining. General director of the enterprise Orelvis Meneses said the required accessories have successfully passed the trial phase in the '10 de Octubre' power plant located in the coastal municipality of Nuevitas, Camaguey, while others are ready to be installed in the thermoelectric plants of Renté, in Santiago de Cuba; Mariel, in Havana, and in the one in Cienfuegos (ACN, 13/8/09).

Agosto 14: Ecuador y Cuba suscribieron acuerdos para ampliar preferencias arancelarias y mejorar las condiciones de su intercambio comercial. La cancillería ecuatoriana informó en un comunicado que durante una cita en Quito, el viceministro de Comercio Exterior e Integración de Ecuador, Julio Oleas, y su par cubano, Orlando Hernández

Guillén, mejoraron el Acuerdo de Complementación Económica bilateral ya existente y que amplió sus ventajas. El documento firmado por los funcionarios contempla la ampliación de preferencias arancelarias recíprocas, la reducción de obstáculos técnicos al comercio, medidas sanitarias y fitosanitarias, entre otros puntos. También reafirma la necesidad de fomentar la "ampliación y diversificación del comercio bilateral" y la promoción de actividades productivas complementarias que contribuyan "al desarrollo de las economías" de ambos países (*AP*, 14/8/09).

Agosto 15: Cuba eliminó al 100% las importaciones de gases clorofluorocarbonados (CFC) que agotan el ozono a fines de 2008, y actualmente adopta medidas para "reconvertir" y "sustituir" sus sistemas de refrigeración, informó el semanario oficial *Opciones*. La reducción de las importaciones fue un "gran reto" para la isla, cuyo consumo de CFC ascendía a más de 1,000 toneladas anuales cuando firmó en 1987 el Protocolo de Montreal, mediante el que 191 países acordaron eliminar en un 95% el uso de esos gases, comúnmente utilizados para refrigeración. Tras un proceso de "reducción paulatina" Cuba logró cerrar el 2007 con menos de un 90% de importaciones de CFC, y en 2008 solo se comercializaron unas 74 toneladas (*EFE*, 15/8/09).

August 17: Cuba's new technological advances in the production of vaccines and other medicines were presented to Ethiopian authorities and specialists with the Health and Nutrition Institute of this North African nation. During a meeting with Ethiopian experts, the Cuban ambassador in Addis Ababa, Clara Pulido, spoke of the work of Cuban scientific institutions such as the Finlay Institute and also about the Program to Eradicate Malaria in Africa by the Havana-based LABIOFAM institution. During the meeting, both sides ratified their interest in increasing cooperation in the production of medicines in Ethiopia (*ACN*, 17/8/09).

Agosto 19: La Aduana de Cuba exigirá que los 50 habanos que se permite a los viajeros sacar de la Isla sin factura de compra, estén contenidos en cajas originales, cerradas y selladas, según una resolución. La nueva disposición, fechada el 10 de julio y que estableció 90 días para su puesta en vigor, sustituye a otra de 2007 que permitía llevar al exterior hasta 50 puros, en cajas, sueltos o en mazo, sin factura ni otros requisitos. Ahora deberán estar "contenidos en envases originales, cerrados, sellados y con el holograma oficial establecido, exigencias sin las cuales no se autoriza la exportación", subrayó el texto. Según el documento, se podrá exportar sin fines comerciales hasta 20 unidades de puros sueltos (las cajas son generalmente de 25) sin papeles ni otros requisitos; y se mantienen los requisitos de denominación de origen para cantidades superiores a 50 habanos (*AFP*, 20/8/09).

August 20: Cuba increased its output of diesel and fuel oil in the first half of the year, but gasoline production fell dramatically, according to refining statistics released by the government. Fuel oil rose 10.5 percent to 1.4 million tonnes, while diesel jumped 25.3 percent to 646,000 tonnes, the National Statistics Office reported on its website. Gasoline dropped 36.1 percent to 232,000 tonnes, the statistics office said. Kerosene, liquid gas and lubricant oils also declined significantly, while there was no information provided for

jet fuel and other products. There was no official explanation for the mixed performance (*Reuters*, 20/8/09).

Agosto 24: Unos 9,000 empleados del turismo cubano fueron reubicados en otras labores debido a la temporada baja de la industria y la crisis económica internacional, informó el semanario *Trabajadores*. Aunque "no es nada exclusivo este año", pues se trata de una medida tradicional en estos meses para cerrar capacidades hoteleras y disminuir gastos en la etapa baja de visitantes, "ahora se agudiza por los efectos de la crisis económica internacional", subrayó la publicación. Los 9,000 empleados, declarados "interrumpidos", representan el 10,4% de los 85.800 trabajadores del turismo y son reubicados en otros puestos de trabajo, la mayoría dentro del propio sector, o en tareas "socialmente útiles en actividades priorizadas", dijo Pedro Tejada, dirigente sindical (*AFP*, 25/8/09).

August 25: Some 200,000 tourists arrived in Cuba in July, a 6 percent increase as compared to the same period of 2008, according to an announcement made by the Cuban National Office for Statistics (ONE). This growing trend is reflected on the report, which shows a steady increase over the last three years, that is, from July 2006 to July 2009. There was a 3.1% growth in the number of tourists coming to Cuba from January to July this year, when the figure of visitors to the island totalled some 1.5 million. This represents another 47,000, as compared to the first seven months of 2008, thus becoming the period with the largest number of arrivals to the country (*ACN*, 25/8/09).

August 25: Agriculture, one of the sectors of Cuban economy hit the hardest by the passage of three hurricanes in 2008, is now showing signs of recovery, as reported by the National Office for Statistics. There has been a 7 percent increase in production as compared to last year, now amounting to 1,050 million tons. This represents an increase of 68,000 tons, mainly due to the sowing of vegetables and root vegetables of a faster growth. Among plants with the most outstanding results we find tomato, with a 38.5 percent increase -the best in recent years; garlic, 8.2 percent; and pumpkin, 3.9 percent. Other products registering significant growth are sweet potatoes, 37.1 percent; and potatoes, 49.0. Meanwhile, crops needing more time for harvest showed a decrease, like banana, which registered a 51.8 percent reduction (145,000 tons). Other crops have not recovered yet, including corn, orange and grapefruit, which have a significant weight in Cuban exports (*ACN*, 25/8/09).

Agosto 26: Los procesos erosivos en curso en las playas cubanas provocan un retroceso de entre uno y 1,20 metros de la línea de costa por año, según un estudio en 140 zonas de ese tipo en la isla, realizado por el Instituto de Oceanología del Ministerio de Ciencia, Tecnología y Medio Ambiente. Ese deterioro se debe a la extracción ilegal de arena para fines constructivos, los daños a los ecosistemas productores de arena y el cruce de viales por áreas costeras (*IPS*, 26/8/09).

August 26: Cuban plans to produce around 70,000 tonnes of unrefined nickel and cobalt this year are behind schedule, official media in Holguin province reported, apparently due to hurricane damage sustained in 2008. Local *Television Cristal* said on its website that one of the country's three nickel plants, all located in the eastern province, was forecast to

produce 6,000 tonnes below its capacity and that in another it was "possible" it would reach full production. The information came out in reports about a visit to Moa, Holguin by state officials to inspect two of the plants. "Jorge Cuevas Ramos, First Secretary of the Holguin Communist Party, congratulated workers for their efforts to make up lost production," *Television Cristal* reported on its web page as he toured repair work. "These improvements along with other investments are key to leaving behind lagging output in 2009 and resuming next year the productive levels of this industry of transcendental importance for the Cuban economy," Cuevas stated. Cuba produced 70,400 tonnes of unrefined nickel and cobalt in 2008, after averaging between 74,000 and 75,000 tonnes during much of the decade. Nickel emerged as Cuba's biggest export earner in 2000 with almost all output destined for Canada, Europe and China (*Reuters*, 27/8/09).

August 27: President Raul Castro inaugurated the first stage of the East-West water transfer project in eastern Holguin province, which will benefit several eastern Cuban territories. The first stage of the project includes the reservoirs known as Biran, Nipe, Gibara, Colorado and Naranjo, canals and pipes that connect these reservoirs; which are part of a strategic plan to draw water from where it is abundant to sites where it is scarce, according to a report by Cuban TV. The first stage of the work will guarantee drinking water reserve for Holguin city in the event of drought and although the urban area has been guaranteed all the necessary water, its distribution still needs improvement. During the visit to Holguin Raul was accompanied by Revolution Commander Ramiro Valdes, Construction Minister Fidel Figueroa, Rene Mesa and other officials. They also visited a site where the largest work in the East-West water transfer project – a reservoir named Mayari-- is being built (*ACN*, 28/8/09).

August 29: President Raul Castro corroborated the advancement in eastern Santiago de Cuba province of an investment project aimed at rehabilitating the water supply system in order to improve the vital service for the population. Addressing the water shortage that became a distressing problem for the Santiago people, Raul said that the city will be the first urban area in the country to fully meet its drinking water needs by the first half of 2010, according to joint plans agreed to by the Construction Ministry, the National Institute of Water Resources and the provincial government, except for three communities that will have that problem completely solved by 2011. At present the aqueduct has been rehabilitated and works are targeting pipes that guarantee stable water supply; also underway is the rehabilitation of water distribution networks in the city. During his visit to Santiago, Raul also learned about ongoing reconstruction works in apartment buildings, particularly improvement of roofing conditions, electricity meters at homes as well as the setting up of phone services and other services (*ACN*, 29/8/09).

Agosto 30: Con un intercambio que supera los 2,200 millones de dólares, China se consolida como el segundo socio comercial de Cuba detrás de Venezuela, indicó el director general del Centro de Comercio Exterior de China, Wang Junten. En ese intercambio, todavía es pequeño el número de productos que la isla exporta a China, afirmó el funcionario chino. Por su parte, Miriam Martínez, directora de Ferias y Exposiciones de la Cámara de Comercio de Cuba (CCC), destacó que el comercio de La Habana con Pekín equivale al 12% del intercambio total de la isla. Martínez se refirió a la

próxima participación de Cuba en la Feria de Importación y Exportación del gigante asiático. La bolsa comercial, también conocida como la Feria de Cantón, se celebra desde 1957, y sesionará del 15 octubre al 4 de noviembre venideros en la ciudad de Guangzhou. Según la funcionaria cubana, ese evento será una plataforma idónea para el "lanzamiento" de productos de la Isla en el mercado chino, así como para ampliar y diversificar las exportaciones (*Notimex*, 30/8/09).

August 31: According to Cuban news agency *Prensa Latina*, Cuba discovered oil on its largest oil well in its history, in the western province of Matanzas. Excavations near the resort of Varadero stopped at five thousand 904 meters. This work surpasses the record of the Canadian company Sherritt, which maintained the supremacy, with five thousand 628 meters in a well located in the same territory. Cubapetroleo reported that specialists now are working to bring the oil to tests, and probably will begin the extraction of oil in a promising area of heavy oil productivity. This is the first time that specialists from the island had operated a high-tech drilling machine, owned by Cubapetroleo (*IPR*, 31/8/09).

Exile Community

Agosto 5: Al cumplirse 15 años de la mayor jornada de disturbios populares en Cuba desde la llegada de Fidel Castro al poder, organizaciones del exilio cubano recordarán los acontecimientos del "Maleconazo" con vigiliyas y llamamientos a la resistencia cívica dentro de la isla. En Miami, la coalición Asamblea para la Resistencia ha convocado a actos conmemorativos en tres céntricas zonas. Las actividades de recordación se extenderán a otras ciudades de Estados Unidos, y países de Europa y América Latina con presencia de exiliados cubanos. "Lo que queremos es destacar el aniversario de un día de rebelión popular que marcó un hito en la lucha de los cubanos por su libertad", declaró Janisset Rivero, integrante del Directorio Democrático Cubano (DDC). "Hemos lanzado una convocatoria general al exilio en diferentes partes del mundo". La activista indicó que "la fecha ha cobrado un significado patriótico tanto para la oposición interna como para la comunidad exiliada", que la identifican como el Día de la Resistencia Cubana. El 5 de agosto de 1994, miles de personas congregadas a lo largo de cuatro kilómetros del Malecón habanero protagonizaron un espontáneo estallido de violencia, y recorrieron las calles aledañas lanzando piedras, botellas y otros artefactos contra establecimientos estatales e instalaciones turísticas (*El Nuevo Herald*, 5/8/09).

Agosto 6: El exilio cubano repudió el concierto que ofrecerá el cantante colombiano Juanes en La Habana el 20 de septiembre por considerar que se convertirá en "cómplice" del régimen cubano al no denunciar las "violaciones que se cometen" en Cuba. Varias organizaciones anticastristas calificaron de "inmoral" que el artista desdeñe la situación de los cubanos y algunas amenazaron con boicotear a Juanes cuando visite Miami mediante protestas y la destrucción de sus discos. Ninoska Pérez, directiva del Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba (CLC), dijo que los cubanos en la isla necesitan democracia y solidaridad y no un concierto en el que se ignorará la "opresión" a la que están sometidos desde hace 50 años. Juanes, que según dijeron algunos activistas cubanos con el concierto se cambió la camisa negra por una roja, en alusión a una canción del ganador de doce

Grammy Latinos, planea cantar junto a otros doce artistas internacionales el Día Mundial de la Paz (*EFE*, 6/8/09).

August 7: US Senator Mel Martinez of Florida said he will give up his seat, letting fellow Republican Governor Charlie Crist appoint a replacement. "After nearly 12 years of public service in Florida and Washington, it's time I return to Florida and my family," Martinez, 62, said at a news conference in Orlando. "I had talked to the governor about this potential." Martinez, a first-term senator and former US housing secretary, announced in December he wouldn't seek re-election next year. A month earlier, a Quinnipiac University poll showed only 36 percent of respondents said he deserved another term. "I have no specific plans for my future other than the fact that it's going to be in private life," Martinez told reporters. Martinez, who was born in Cuba, is a member of the committees on Armed Services; Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; and Science and Transportation. He opposed President Barack Obama's \$787 billion economic stimulus plan and the nomination of Timothy Geithner as Treasury secretary. He voted for the Troubled Asset Relief Program to buy distressed securities from financial companies, according to his Web site (*Bloomberg*, 7/8/09).

Agosto 7: El periodista cubano José Pardo Llada murió en Cali, Colombia, a los 86 años de edad, tras permanecer hospitalizado varios días, informaron medios de prensa colombianos. Pardo Llada, nacionalizado colombiano, fue una figura prominente de la radio en la Cuba republicana. Había sido ingresado en estado grave después de sufrir una hemorragia estomacal que derivó en complicaciones cardíacas. El legendario periodista nació en Sagua la Grande, antigua provincia de Las Villas, y cobró notoriedad a comienzos de los años cuarenta por sus críticas al gobierno de Ramón Grau (1944-1948), y a la corrupción republicana. Fue colaborador cercano del líder político Eduardo Chibás (1907-1951), y logró un abrumador respaldo popular como candidato del Partido Ortodoxo para llegar a la Cámara de Representantes en las elecciones de 1950. Tras el golpe militar de Fulgencio Batista, en 1952, su espacio radial fue suspendido en decenas de ocasiones y Pardo Llada fue arrestado varias veces. A finales de 1958 marchó a la Sierra Maestra para unirse a la insurgencia de Fidel Castro. En 1961 abandonó la isla rumbo a México, por desacuerdos con el régimen instaurado, y luego viajó a Colombia, donde alternó la carrera periodística con la política. En Cali fundó Partido Movimiento Cívico y fue representante a la Cámara por el Departamento del Valle. También fungió como embajador de Colombia en Holanda y República Dominicana. Tras 43 años de exilio, regresó a Cuba por primera vez en 2004 para someterse a un tratamiento oftalmológico (*Cubaencuentro*, 7/8/09).

August 10: Colombian rocker Juanes -- discussing with fans and critics on microblogging website Twitter -- defended his plans to play in Havana. Juanes, who lives in Miami, had been criticized by Cubans in exile in the US and was accused of being complicit with the Castro regime on Cuba, but Juanes, "taking advantage of the fact that I can't sleep," argued that the Cuban people should not be forgotten about. The singer openly responded to questions of others active on the website, acknowledged the pain of Cubans in the US and other countries, but stressed his concert was for the young people of Cuba, who he wants to "lend a hand." "Forget politics now! Think of the people,"

Juanes wrote. "There is a future for Cuba, but we have to give them a hand, help them, open our minds to them, so that they do the same to us," the singer added (*Colombia Reports*, 11/8/09).

Agosto 12: Un grupo de exiliados cubanos ha montado un grupo en Facebook, la red social más popular, para proponer su particular alternativa a la dictadura castrista: que Cuba se "reincorpore a España" convirtiéndose en la décimo octava comunidad autónoma. "Cuba antes o después tendrá que tomar decisiones sobre su futuro, se ofrecerán entonces distintas posibilidades al pueblo cubano. Nosotros proponemos la reincorporación de Cuba a España como Comunidad Autónoma, con todos los derechos y todas las garantías que la Constitución Española de 1978 otorga". Esta reincorporación que llevaría pareja la "incorporación automática a la Unión Europea" por ser ya España miembro de pleno derecho". Queda así resumido el 'leiv motif' y razón de ser del grupo 'Movimiento por la Reincorporación de Cuba a España como Comunidad Autónoma' que ya cuenta en Facebook con cerca de 600 fans. Sus promotores, cubanos en el exilio, cuentan con el apoyo de historiadores, políticos y periodistas españoles ([Video](#); *El Confidencial Digital*, 12/8/09).

August 12: President Obama bestowed the Presidential Medal of Freedom on 16 luminaries in theater, sports, science, the humanities and politics, including Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the tennis great Billie Jean King, the actor Sidney Poitier, the physicist Stephen Hawking, and Cuban Dr. Pedro Jose Greer Jr., who founded a medical clinic to treat Miami's poor. The White House said "Dr. Greer's tremendous contributions to the South Florida community and our Nation as a whole stand as a shining example of the difference one person can make in the lives of many" (*The New York Times*, 13/8/09; *The White House*, 12/8/09).

August 14: Colombian rocker Juanes is feeling heat from Cuban exiles, who argue his planned "Peace Without Borders" concert in Havana is an endorsement of Cuba's communist system. Event promoters insist the September 20 concert will have no ideological overtones, even if it is being staged in Havana's Revolution Plaza — with its famed, building-size homage to fallen revolutionary Ernest "Che" Guevara. "Nobody is coming to sing to the Cuban system. Juanes isn't a Communist, he isn't a socialist," folk singer Amaury Perez told the press. "I can assure you, because I've been involved in all of the preparations, that no political condition has been imposed." The Grammy-winning Juanes is known for his social activism. Members of one Cuban-exile group in Miami used hammers to destroy copies of Juanes' CDs in protest over the planned concert. The Vigilia Mambisa organization placed the CDs on a sidewalk on Calle Ocho in Miami's Little Havana, the heart of the Cuban-exile community, and shattered them to pieces. Protesters also held up posters that read "Juanes, Guerrillas Without Borders," "Juanes, Olga Tañon and Miguel Bose, Traitors" and "Juanes, Friend of the Murderous Castros." (*AP, EFE*, 14/8/09).

August 19: News that Colombian superstar Juanes will hold an outdoor concert in Havana next month has ignited a backlash from Cuban-Americans. Many artists, including exiled Cubans, have also come to Juanes' defense, highlighting the

longstanding divide about whether to engage in dialogue with Cuba or not. But Cuban-Americans like singer Willy Chirino and actress María Conchita Alonso have issued harsh statements criticizing the September 20 "Paz Sin Fronteras" ("Peace Without Borders") concert. "A concert for peace? In Cuba? Please, that would only occur to a naive, ignorant or cynical person," Alonso said in a statement. Protesters seem particularly angry at Juanes' chosen location — Revolution Plaza — and his plan to perform with well-known Cuba-based singers like Silvio Rodríguez and Amaury Pérez, who they charge are supporters of the Castros' government. Others who have voiced their support include the recently exiled trio 3 de la Habana. Tellingly enough, Cuban-American powerhouse couple Emilio and Gloria Estefan, normally vocal on Cuba matters, have not issued any public comments. Singer Albita Rodríguez also declined to comment through her publicist (*New York News*, 19/8/09).

Agosto 19: Una treintena de activistas políticos y de derechos humanos del exilio cubano en Miami respaldó el polémico concierto que el cantante colombiano Juanes prevé ofrecer en Cuba el próximo 20 de septiembre. "Fundamentamos el apoyo en nuestras propias experiencias a lo largo de estos 50 años de tiranía, y en reconocer el escenario real de un pueblo incomunicado del resto del mundo, que siempre ha reaccionado con alegría y agradecimiento profundo a sus visitantes libres", dijeron en un comunicado. El grupo indica que impedir al intérprete de "A Dios le pido" y a otros artistas expresarse y dar a conocer su música es adherirse a la misma posición de "censura" que ha implementado el régimen castrista en 50 años y que viola la Carta Universal de los derechos humanos. En su opinión, la intención de Juanes puede ser perfecta porque aparte de regalar su música al "pueblo esclavo de Cuba también -y aunque no sea su propósito- puede abrir una brecha de reclamación cívica de libertad al pueblo cubano". "Y apoyando el concierto de Juanes estamos colaborando a ello", afirmaron los representantes de las organizaciones Cuba Study Group, el Comité Cubano Pro Derechos Humanos, Consenso Cubano y el Partido Demócrata Cristiano, entre otras (*El Nuevo Herald*, 21/8/09).

Agosto 25: El grupo Generación Cambio Cubano (GCC) de Miami respaldó el polémico concierto que el cantante colombiano Juanes prevé ofrecer en Cuba, el 20 de septiembre, y se declaró en contra de manipular un evento cultural como "arma política". "GCC que profesa un cambio de conciencia mediante la reconciliación de generaciones cubanas, trascendiendo diferencias ideológicas y enfatizando la unidad social por el bienestar del pueblo, se declara públicamente a favor del concierto Paz sin Fronteras", indicó la organización. Hugo Cancio, fundador de GCC, exhortó a los cubanos a anteponer el bienestar de "nuestro pueblo por encima del dolor personal. No podemos combatir el odio con el odio, la hostilidad con la hostilidad, y la incomprensión con incomprensión" (*El Nuevo Herald*, 25/8/09).

August 27: A newly released poll of Cuban Americans on Colombian singer Juanes' controversial Peace Without Borders concert in Havana finds that almost half oppose the September 20 event, though the numbers vary dramatically according to age and country of birth. The survey was commissioned by the Cuba Study Group, a Washington, D.C.-based organization of Cuban-American businessmen which supports cultural exchanges,

including the Juanes show, as a means of advancing democratic change in Cuba. It polled 400 Cuban Americans around the US -- about 80 percent of those questioned live in Florida -- and was conducted by Bendixen & Associates. It has a margin of error of 5 percent. Nearly half, or 47 percent of those surveyed, oppose the concert, while 27 percent support it and 26 percent said they didn't know or had no opinion about the show. Most of those who opposed to the concert gave political reasons. Forty percent said the concert ignored ``Cuban reality" such as human rights violations and lack of freedom, and 25 percent said it ``helps Castro." Of those supporting the concert, 60 percent said the show would bring Cubans needed happiness and music. Predictably, those opposed to the concert tended to be older and had arrived earlier in the United States, while supporters tended to be younger and either recent arrivals or born in this country. Over 60 percent of those 50 and older opposed the concert, while 35 percent of those 18 to 34 supported it. Forty-five percent of those who arrived in the U.S. after 2000 were in favor of the concert, while 64 percent of those who came before 1970 opposed it (*The Miami Herald*, 27/8/09).

August 27: Gloria Estefan has said that if she were to give a concert in Havana, it would lead to violence because she would not keep quiet about what she thinks of the Castro regime, and she emphasised that her dream continues to be to perform "in a free Cuba". "My presence in Cuba would cause violence, because I've got a very big mouth and I'm not going to keep quiet in the face of injustice," the singer told Puerto Rican daily *El Nuevo Dia* in an interview. The Cuban-born star was asked about the concert that Colombian singer Juanes is planning to give in Havana on September 20. Estefan said that it would be painful for her to sing someplace and then leave knowing that the people there continue to "undergo tragedies and hardships". The singer said that neither she nor her husband, Emilio Estefan, would agree to accompany Juanes to Cuba and be placed in the "persona non grata" category by the Havana regime. She said that her dream is to sing in "a free Cuba" and pointed out that the people who will come to Juanes's concert will be specially selected by the communist island's government. "The people who are going to attend that concert have been selected by the government because they - the Castros - aren't going to allow anything to get out of their control," she said (*IANS*, 28/8/09).

August 27: Cuban exiles in the United States have launched an international campaign to demand the release of a man sentenced in Cuba to two years in prison for publicly criticizing the lack of food on the island. The campaign, called the "Jama y libertad" - meaning "Food and Freedom" - will have a Web site where people expressing support for the effort can list their names along with comments about the freedom of expression on the communist island. Poet and photographer Jorge Salcedo, the promoter of the effort, said that it is a campaign of solidarity with 48-year-old Juan Carlos Gonzalez, better known as "Panfilo," who was sentenced to two years behind bars for "pre-criminal dangerousness." Charges were brought after an obviously drunk Panfilo interrupted a live television interview on rap music and, in front of the TV cameras, shouted "We want food! What we need here is food! There's no food, and we're terribly hungry." The video was posted on Internet on the YouTube Web site and has received thousands of hits from interested viewers. The campaign, Salcedo said, is also to demand the "right to freedom

of expression in the face of an act of collective intimidation that his imprisonment implies" (*EFE*, 28/8/09).

Foreign Affairs

August 1: Police in Cuba have detained six Canadians, including four men from Montreal and two women from Toronto, after a wild resort vacation ended in allegations of rape. The two women in their early 20s have accused the four men of assaulting them while they were vacationing in the popular resort town of Varadero. The men, identified by a defence lawyer as Hervé Kalongo Kalongo, Guems Jean, Michel-Ange Pierrecin and Steven Michel, have been in jail since their arrests on July 19. All in their mid-20s, the men accuse the two women of inventing the story to cover up wild vacation behaviour. Three of the men hired Montreal lawyer John Pepper, who has collected sworn statements from three fellow travellers saying the women were willing participants in a wild week of partying and casual sexual encounters. Cuban police trying to sort out the mess detained the young women just before they were to head home to Toronto. "Often our clients tell us lies, but in this case I'm convinced these boys are telling the truth," said Mr. Pepper (*Globe and Mail*, 1/8/09).

August 5: The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) has taken another step towards cooperation with the setting up of an Economic Council that opens the doors to a common financial zone. The first meeting of this body, underway in Caracas, aims at complying with agreements made in the 6th ALBA Summit to strengthen the institutional nature of the organization made up of nine countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, *Granma* newspaper reported. The meeting was summoned to evaluate the situation of member countries amidst the global financial crisis, define the role of the ministerial council for economic complementation and distribute tasks among member countries. The Caracas meeting will be followed by another one in Quito, Ecuador, for the official inauguration of the Politics Commission. Later, on August 21, ALBA's Social Council will meet in La Paz, Bolivia, as agreed in the 6th Summit (*ACN*, 5/8/09).

Agosto 5: El embajador cubano en La Paz, Rafael Dausá, y la compañía Cubana de Aviación estarían involucrados en el traslado ilegal de una niña boliviana a Cuba en 2006, según el padre de la menor, el español Manuel Rodríguez. La niña, Manuela Rodríguez, tenía cuatro años cuando fue llevada ilegalmente a Cuba por su madre, Ivette Velaz, y su abuela, Guadalupe Saba Velaz, bajo el amparo de la embajada cubana en La Paz, denunció Rodríguez tras lograr documentos de la oficina de Migración de La Habana que involucrarían al embajador Dausá, informó el diario español *El País*. Rodríguez, quien recibió la custodia legal de su hija tras el divorcio, aseguró que el diplomático viajó a la isla con las dos mujeres y la menor, en un vuelo de cooperación internacional entre Santa Cruz y La Habana. Dausá ha negado cualquier relación con el caso (*Cubaencuentro*, 5/8/09).

Agosto 5: Expertos del gobierno de La Habana se desplazarán a la ciudad colombiana de Cartagena para la aplicación de programas de educación y salud cubanos. Según el diario

colombiano *El Tiempo*, esto fue acordado durante una visita a la isla de la alcaldesa de Cartagena, Judith Pinedo Flórez, y de varios miembros de su gabinete, que firmaron con las autoridades cubanas convenios de cooperación bilateral en educación, salud, deporte, cultura y defensa de zonas costeras, entre otros (*Cubaencuentro*, 5/8/09).

Agosto 5: El Principado de Asturias ha propuesto para la Medalla de Oro de Asturias 2009 al jurista gijonés, Aurelio Menéndez Menéndez, y al vicepresidente de Cuba, de origen asturiano, José Ramón Fernández Álvarez, conocido como “El Gallego”. La decisión se aprobará definitivamente en el mes de septiembre. Fernández Álvarez, nació en Santiago de Cuba el 4 de noviembre de 1923. Es de origen asturiano -su padre era de Morcín y su madre ovetense- pero se le apoda como “El Gallego” por su peculiar ritmo al hablar y por ser el apodo con el que tradicionalmente se conoce a los cubanos con raíces en España. Desde pequeño, se inclinó por la disciplina militar hasta que en 1947 se graduó en la Escuela de Cadetes de Cuba y en la Escuela de Artillería. Actualmente, es vicepresidente de Cuba, diputado de la Asamblea Nacional Poder Popular, Vicepresidente del Consejo de Ministros y de su Comité Ejecutivo y Presidente del Comité Olímpico Cubano. Fernández ostenta los títulos de hijo adoptivo de Oviedo y de Morcín, en referencia a los orígenes de sus padres y el Premio Jovellanos, entre otros (*Europa Press*, 5/8/09).

August 6: Colombian rocker Juanes wants to hold his second Peace Without Borders concert in Havana's storied Revolution Plaza in September with a host of regional stars. He says he has met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in hopes that American musicians can join the extravaganza. In what could be the latest sign the art world is well into a thaw of nearly a half century of icy US-Cuba relations, Juanes' manager, Fernan Martinez, said the concert will be on September 20. The Cuban government gave permission to use the sprawling concrete plaza. The first Peace Without Borders concert in March drew 100,000 fans to the border between Venezuela and Colombia (*AP*, 6/8/09).

August 6: Cuba's former President Fidel Castro said that plans to let the US armed forces use Colombian bases may force Venezuela to boost its military capacity. “Venezuela doesn't arm itself against its brother community Colombia,” Castro wrote in a “reflection” posted today on *Cubadebate*. “It arms itself against the empire, which attempted to overthrow it and now expects to install its sophisticated weapons near the Venezuelan border” ([Seven Daggers at the Heart of the Americas](#); *AFP*, 6/8/09).

August 8: President Raul Castro presided over the swearing-in ceremony of 38 new Cuban ambassadors in Havana. “Being an ambassador of the revolutionary Cuba is a big commitment with the homeland, with Fidel (Castro) and Raul (Castro), with the Communist Party and with socialism, and it entails representing a people that have carried out so many heroic deeds,” said Deputy Foreign Minister Ana Teresita Gonzalez addressing the diplomats. Alejandro Gonzalez, the new Cuban ambassador to Spain, spoke on behalf of the diplomats. “It is an honour for us to be sworn-in as ambassadors of Cuba and to represent the brave Cuban people and the socialist Revolution,” he said. Also present were Ricardo Alarcon, President of the Cuban National Assembly; Foreign

Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla; the head of the Foreign Relations Department at the Central Committee of Cuba's Communist Party, Jorge Marti Martínez; and the Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Rodrigo Malmierca (ACN, 8/8/09).

August 9: Cuban President Raul Castro arrived in Quito, Ecuador, heading his country's delegation to the swearing in ceremony of President-elect Rafael Correa Delgado. The Cuban delegation includes Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla and Havana's Historian Eusebio Leal Spengler (ACN, 9/8/09).

August 9: Cuban President Raul Castro met with his Bolivian counterpart, Evo Morales, in Quito, Ecuador. Present in the meeting were the Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla, and Bolivia's Defense Minister Dr. Walter San Miguel (ACN, 9/8/09).

August 10: Cuban President Raul Castro met with his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez in Ecuador after they participated in the swearing-in ceremony of Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa. According to *Granma* newspaper, during the meeting in Quito, both leaders spoke of topics related to the close relations between the two nations and about the current international situation (ACN, 11/8/09).

Agosto 10: El Consulado español en La Habana ha recibido desde el 29 de diciembre de 2008 hasta el pasado 15 de julio, 24,435 expedientes de cubanos que han solicitado la nacionalidad por la llamada Ley de Nietos, informó el diario español *El País*. Según el rotativo, alrededor de 8,000 casos ya han sido aprobados, y desde el pasado marzo, el consulado tiene previstos 325 turnos diarios para los solicitantes, que se elevarán a 425 a partir de octubre. Las citas concertadas por cubanos para entregar la documentación se elevan a más de 165,000, aunque desde un principio se calculó que unos 250,000 cubanos podrían optar a la nacionalidad española o recuperarla, contando con la prórroga de un año de la ley (*Cubaencuentro*, 10/8/09).

Agosto 10: Una organización opositora cubana consideró apaciguadora la postura de la Unión Europea (UE) respecto de esta isla, especialmente la de España, al tiempo que reclamó una "posición más enérgica" de la comunidad internacional en defensa de los derechos humanos en su país. "No nos oponemos al diálogo, pero nos parece pobre en relación con un tema que requiere mayor atención", dijo Elizardo Sánchez, tras difundir un informe sobre el panorama humanitario que emite cada seis meses la opositora Comisión Cubana de Derechos Humanos y Reconciliación Nacional (CCDHRN). En el seno de la UE, "debido a la pertinaz influencia del gobierno de España, sigue prevaleciendo una política de virtual apaciguamiento" hacia la situación de Cuba, consideró Sánchez en una declaración que acompaña el documento de la CCDHRN. En opinión del activista disidente, la comunidad de naciones y fuerzas democráticas internacionales deberían mostrar "una posición más enérgica, que se manifieste en una clara reclamación al gobierno de Cuba para que respete normas universalmente consagradas en materia de derechos civiles, políticos, económicos y culturales". Sin embargo, Sánchez aclaró que no está en contra del diálogo político que tanto la UE como España mantienen con La Habana. "Pero nos parece pobre en relación con estos temas

humanitarios que requieren mayor atención", dijo el opositor, que encabeza la CCHRN desde su creación en los años 80 (*IPS*, 10/8/09).

August 10: President Raul Castro passed on greetings from Fidel Castro to the Ecuadorian people and congratulated President Rafael Correa – who was sworn-in for a second term in office until 2013 - and all Ecuadorians for their victory. Raul, his Venezuelan counterpart Hugo Chavez and the constitutional president of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, were welcomed with a standing ovation by some 30,000 people that gathered at the Olympic Stadium in Quito, *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper reported. After being invited to take the floor by Correa, Raul recalled that Ecuador, and Quito in particular, has the honor of being the place where the Latin American independence movement began. Castro joined Chávez and Correa in comparing Spain with the US as forms of “imperialism” in Latin America. In a reference to the bicentenary of Ecuador’s independence, Castro said that “the previous master (Spain) was substituted by one even more powerful (United States)” (*ACN, Europa Press*, 11/8/09).

Agosto 10: La secretaria española de Política Internacional y Cooperación, Elena Valenciano, dijo que Raúl Castro tiene que hacer "algún gesto aperturista" para que el presidente socialista José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero viaje a la isla, informó el diario *El Periódico*. Valenciano comentó que viajará a la Isla el próximo mes de septiembre para renovar los contactos tras la destitución del vicepresidente Carlos Lage y el canciller Felipe Pérez Roque. Según la funcionaria, es "útil y necesario" conocer a los "nuevos encargados de las relaciones internacionales" del régimen. Valenciano opina que por ahora no se ha visto nada nuevo más allá de la "retórica revolucionaria con algunas invitaciones a dialogar con Estados Unidos" (*Cubaencuentro*, 11/8/09).

August 11: Cuban President Raul Castro arrived in Havana after concluding his official visit to Ecuador, where he attended the swearing-in ceremony of his Ecuadorian counterpart, Rafael Correa. Present at Havana’s José Martí International Airport to welcome the Cuban head of state was First Vice-President Jose Ramón Machado Ventura. Castro headed the Cuban delegation to Correa’s swearing-in ceremony and among other activities he participated in the mass meeting held at Quito’s Atahualpa Stadium (*ACN*, 11/8/09).

August 11: Cuban academicians attended the Hiroshima and Peace summer course, following an invitation by this Japanese city’s university, where they held exchanges with colleagues and students of international relations from several countries. Cuban professors Ileana Capote Padrón and Raúl Roa Kourí, from the Higher Institute of International Relations, and Yanet Rojas from the University of Havana, dealt with a variety of issues affecting or threatening world peace and with others contributing to achieve it, like integration, disarmament and peace. Debates on these topics from the Cuban perspective and that of other countries from the South were also held (*ACN*, 12/8/09).

August 11: Mexican dancer and crótalo (ancient castanet) performer Sonia Amelio will participate in a cultural gala slated for August 19 in honor of late Cuban leader Vilma

Espin, the founder of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). Amelio, one of the most outstanding personalities of contemporary Mexican culture, will visit Cuba once again as of August 16. She is an exceptional dancer who masters the singular art of the *crótalos*, *Granma* newspaper reported. According to the program promoted by the Cuban Music Institute and the Mexican Embassy in Havana, Amelio will give a master class at the Plaza de la Revolución Culture Center (ACN, 11/8/09).

Agosto 12: Rogelio Polanco has been appointed Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Over the last five years, Polanco has fulfilled important missions linked to the Bolivarian Revolution. At the moment of his designation, he was holding the position of director of the *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper. A graduate in Political International Relations, he represented Cuba at the International Students Union (UIE), he was the head of the Department of International Relations of the Young Communists' League. At present, he's a member of the National Assembly of the People's Power, *Granma* newspaper reported. Germán Sánchez Otero, who for 15 years carried out an outstanding work while in charge of the Cuban diplomatic mission in that South American nation, will be assigned other tasks. (ACN, 12/8/09).

August 12: Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez, presented Fidele Diarra, Malian Ambassador to Cuba, with the Friendship Medal, as an acknowledgement of his permanent solidarity with the Caribbean nation. Ivan Mora, head of the Cuban Foreign Ministry's Department for sub-Saharan Africa, highlighted that Diarra, after graduating from the University of Havana, contributed to the creation of the Malian Association for Friendship with Latin America and the Caribbean, in which solidarity with the Cuban people was permanent. Mora also said that during his over 8 years of work as ambassador, Diarra worked arduously in the strengthening and spreading of political relations and of cooperation at all levels between the two countries (ACN, 12/8/09).

Agosto 13: El vicepresidente cubano José Ramón Fernández, también presidente del Comité Olímpico de la isla, rechazó la decisión del Comité Olímpico Internacional (COI) de escoger al golf y al rugby entre siete como únicos deportes con opciones de entrar en los Juegos Olímpicos. Los cubanos apoyaban el béisbol, pero rechazan el golf y el rugby dijo Fernández a la agencia oficial *Prensa Latina*. "El deporte que esté al alcance de las masas es el que debe estar en los escenarios competitivos", mientras que "el golf es un deporte de elite, de las clases más altas", dijo (*Martí Noticias*, 13/8/09).

Agosto 14: Bajo el título "Blogueando a Cuba", autores de blogs cubanos residentes en el extranjero, compartirán las experiencias vividas como comunicadores cibernéticos, desde el espectro cubano y del fenómeno de la blogosfera dentro de Cuba. El evento se llevará a cabo hasta el domingo 16 de agosto, en Mallorca, España. La Blogosfera Cubana: su impacto social, cultural, político y mediático, es el tema central. Los organizadores esperan que se fomente el desarrollo de otros blogs sobre el tema cubano y permita un mayor reconocimiento de los ya lanzados". Los participantes en el evento pedirán nuevamente al gobierno cubano que deje de restringir el acceso a Internet en la isla (*Martí Noticias*, 14/8/09).

August 14: President Hugo Chavez said he found his close ally and mentor Fidel Castro in good health during a visit to Cuba to celebrate the Cuban leader's 83rd birthday. Chavez said they shared a cake. He said he also gave Castro Venezuelan products including chocolate and sardines, and two charcoal drawings: one of Venezuelan independence hero Francisco de Miranda, and a second of Cuban hero Jose Marti. He said Castro "is in absolute use of his mental faculties." "You know what the imperialists say," Chavez said. "Some say that Fidel is crazy (...) They create rumors." Chavez said the two leaders talked for some five hours before he returned to Venezuela. "Fidel is fine, he's in his prime," he said (AP, 14/8/09).

August 14: La guerrilla colombiana marxista de las FARC felicitó a Fidel Castro por su cumpleaños 83, en una declaración divulgada en Internet y en la que reiteran que continuarán combatiendo hasta la victoria o la muerte. ``En este aniversario de su fecunda existencia sembrando perseverante lucha, audacia, convencimiento en la causa de la emancipación de los oprimidos, reciba nuestras felicitaciones", señala el mensaje dirigido al ``camarada" y suscrito por la ``comisión internacional" del grupo guerrillero. Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC), dijeron además que ``rinden homenaje a una historia de lucha ineludible con el compromiso de mantener el combate por la justicia social, con la absoluta determinación de entregarlo todo hasta la victoria o hasta la muerte". ``Celebramos la bondad y la entrega del valeroso hijo de Mayarí y de su pueblo, que tanta esperanza han dado con su ejemplo a quienes bregan por el decoro de la América Nuestra", agregó el mensaje divulgado por la agencia *Anncol* que difunde la información de las FARC (AP, 15/8/09).

August 16: The ruling Socialist Party of Spain (PSOE) is planning to send a delegation to Cuba to "take the pulse of the situation" and establish contact with "some of the new interlocutors" in the Cuban government and Communist Party, a spokeswoman for the PSOE told the *Europa Press* agency. Elena Valenciano, the party's secretary for international policy, said the PSOE has had "an open invitation from the Cuban government for a long time." The PSOE's deputy secretary general, José Blanco, visited the island in November 2008 and met with then-Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque and then-International Relations chief Fernando Remírez de Estenoz, but those men were ousted on March 2 of this year and replaced by Bruno Rodríguez and Jorge Martí, respectively. Valenciano did not speculate whether PSOE leader and Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero will visit the island this year. "That's part of the Prime Minister's agenda and I don't get involved in that," she said (*The Miami Herald*, 17/8/09).

August 16: Spanish singers Ana Belen and Victor Manuel say they are ready, if invited, to perform with Colombian crooner Juanes at the controversial September 20 concert he is set to give in Havana, and they lamented the intransigence displayed by members of the Cuban exile community in Miami in the matter. "We have sung with Juanes and we would be thrilled to do it in Cuba," Victor Manuel said in an interview published by the Colombian daily *El Tiempo*. Ana Belen, for her part, responded to the question of whether she would be willing to sing with Juanes in Havana by saying: "Yes, absolutely. Of course." "Some anti-Castroites from Miami are impossible. My opinion is that they

should hold the concert. Juanes should go to sing there or wherever they call him. Why should Cubans who live in Cuba not have the right to enjoy Juanes?" said Ana Belen, who performed in Bogota with Victor Manuel. The Juanes concert in Havana has taken on political connotations because of the strong opposition to it by groups of Cuban exiles and well-known artists who oppose the Castro regime (*EFE*, 16/8/09).

August 17: Four members of Cuba's team have gone missing in the Canary Islands and may claim political asylum, said the president of the islands' basketball federation. Five players originally went AWOL and only one of them turned up for the flight back to Havana, federation head Jose Armas told the Spanish media. "We know what sportsmen and women tend to do when they leave Cuba and travel to compete in another country, request political asylum," Armas said. Spain's basketball federation (FEB) was unavailable for comment and the interior ministry said it would be unable to confirm the players' absence unless they claimed asylum (*Reuters*, 17/8/09).

August 17: Between songs and dances interpreted by young artists, anecdotes and bouquets of flowers, like the one sent to her by Cuban prima ballerina *assoluta* Alicia Alonso, Mexican actress Sonia Amelio celebrated her birthday in Havana. Under the direction of maestro Hugo Oslé, the students of the Mariana de Gonitch National Singing Academy and the Mariachi group offered Amelio a gala performance at the headquarters of this institution. In her statements to the press, Amelio, now on her 7th visit to Cuba, reiterated her love and respect toward Revolution leader Fidel Castro, whom she met several years ago at the Mexican embassy in Havana –a meeting she recalls as one of the unforgettable moments of her life (*ACN*, 18/8/09).

Agosto 19: El cantante español Miguel Bosé defendió el concierto que organiza junto al colombiano Juanes en la Plaza de la Revolución de La Habana y afirmó que las presiones de grupos del exilio cubano han hecho que artistas como Maná, Enrique Iglesias y Ricky Martin se retiren del cartel. "Nuestra intención era dar un concierto por la paz en la plaza de la Revolución de La Habana, un lugar reservado para las grandes ocasiones. Simplemente eso", dijo Bosé en un artículo publicado en el diario español *El País*. "La Habana nos pareció un buen lugar para reclamar la paz como una necesidad de bienestar y entendimiento social, de ausencia total de conflictos. No sólo como algo opuesto a la guerra (...) Lo que sucede es que la guerra es rentable en todos los sentidos, también mediáticamente. Y la paz no lo es tanto", lamentó el cantante, que junto a Juanes y otros artistas forma parte de la Plataforma Paz sin Fronteras. "En Florida la presión es enorme", añadió y dijo comprender que músicos como Enrique Iglesias, Maná o Ricky Martin, decidieran retirarse del evento (*Cubaencuentro*, 19/8/09).

Agosto 19: El cantante colombiano Juanes, criticado por el exilio cubano por organizar el concierto 'Paz sin fronteras' en La Habana para el 20 de septiembre, admitió al diario español *El País* que intenta que participe en él el roquero punk Gorki Águila, que estuvo detenido cinco días en Cuba. Cuando se le preguntó si Gorki Águila participará en el concierto, Juanes respondió "estamos intentándolo", en una extensa entrevista publicada por el diario español. Gorki Águila -líder del grupo cubano de punk-rock Porno para

Ricardo y conocido por sus críticas al régimen castrista- estuvo detenido en Cuba en agosto de 2008 durante cinco días (*AFP*, 19/8/09).

August 19: The National Archives of Cuba and Venezuela will be soon interconnected through a digital system that will allow access to information in both offices. Director of Venezuela's General Archives of the Nation (AGN) Carmen Alida Soto told *Granma* newspaper while in Havana that the two offices are working together in the preservation of documentary heritage as part of an initiative of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA). She announced among future projects the elaboration of catalogues of relevant documents about revolutions and revolutionary movements in Latin America, and the organization of bilateral meetings. Soto explained that her current visit to Cuba is intended to settle new projects with the Cuban National Archives within the framework of ALBA's Cultural Grand National program (*ACN*, 19/8/09).

August 19: Four Cuban basketball players who failed to turn up for their squad's flight home from the Canary Islands have begun the process of seeking asylum in Spain, the local government said. Georvis Elias Sayus, Grismay Paumier, Taylor Garcia and Geofry Silvestre will now have to wait 30 days for a response from the Spanish authorities, according to a spokesman for the islands' government. The Cuban basketball squad had traveled to the Canary Islands for a series of friendly fixtures (*Reuters*, 19/8/09).

Agosto 20: El mandatario ecuatoriano, Rafael Correa, se tomará una semana de vacaciones y junto a su familia viajará a Cuba, por lo que dejará el cargo en manos de su vicepresidente, Lenin Moreno. Correa viajará junto a su esposa, Anne Malherbe, y sus tres hijos en un vuelo de la compañía ecuatoriana TAME, informó la secretaria de Comunicación de la Presidencia (*EFE*, 20/8/09).

August 20: United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon highlighted the importance that his organization gives to relations with Cuba. In a meeting with Abelardo Moreno, who is concluding his term as Cuban permanent representative before the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon also praised the development of these bilateral relations during the period in which Cuba held the pro-tempore chairmanship of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) from 2006 to 2009 (*ACN*, 20/8/09).

Agosto 20: El presidente Rafael Correa anunció que viajará a Cuba para someterse a exámenes médicos por invitación del gobierno de la isla, y dijo que irá acompañado de su esposa y sus tres hijos. Se informó que viajaba en la misma fecha prevista, pero sin precisar la hora de la salida de un avión comercial contratado. El mandatario ecuatoriano señaló que "no se trata de un viaje de turismo, ni de vacaciones, sino de una visita por invitación del gobierno cubano, para efectuarse una revisión médica", según una nota de prensa de la Presidencia que indicó que hizo el anuncio a sus ministros durante una reunión de gabinete en el palacio de gobierno (*AP*, 21/8/09).

August 21: A Cuban delegation headed by Higher Education Minister Miguel Diaz-Canel Bermudez arrived in Bolivia to participate in the first meeting of the Social

Council of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) that takes place in La Paz, the Bolivian capital. Topics on the agenda include literacy and post-literacy campaigns and health care for historically vulnerable sectors, *Granma* newspaper reported (ACN, 21/8/09).

Agosto 21: El Ministerio portugués de Sanidad anunció la contratación de 44 médicos cubanos, por un periodo de tres años, que ejercerán en centros de salud de las regiones del Alentejo, Algarve, Lisboa y Val do Tejo. En un comunicado, el Ministerio especificó que la Administración Central de Salud lusa y los Servicios Médicos Cubanos han concretado un protocolo que permitirá a estos médicos ejercer en Portugal durante tres años (EFE, 21/8/09).

Agosto 21: El cantautor guatemalteco Ricardo Arjona afirmó que realizará un concierto en la capital cubana el 25 de enero de 2010. En declaraciones al diario español *El Mundo*, Arjona criticó el embargo de Estados Unidos contra la isla y calificó de "barbaridad" que se bloquee "la posibilidad de compartir la música con los cubanos". El anuncio llega en medio de la polémica por el concierto por la paz del colombiano Juanes, que debe de efectuarse el próximo 20 de septiembre en la Plaza de la Revolución (IPS, 21/8/09).

August 21: Syria reaffirmed its interest in increasing sports cooperation with Cuba and to benefit from the island's experience in this sector, particularly in disciplines such as boxing, volleyball and basketball. This interest was expressed in Damascus, by General Farouk Bouzo, President of the temporary Committee of the General Sports Federation of Syria, during a meeting with Pedro Estevez Piñero, First Secretary of the Cuban embassy in that country (ACN, 21/8/09).

August 21: Bolivian President Evo Morales met with Cuban Higher Education Minister Miguel Diaz-Canel, who heads Cuba's delegation to the first meeting of the Social Council of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas (ALBA) that takes place in La Paz, the Bolivian capital. During the meeting, also attended by the Cuban ambassador in La Paz, Rafael Dausa, Morales and Diaz-Canel highlighted the excellent state of bilateral cooperation in the education and health sectors (ACN, 21/8/09).

Agosto 21: El presidente de Ecuador, Rafael Correa, está en Cuba "de vacaciones, para descansar unos cuatro días", informó el embajador de ese país en La Habana, Universi Zambrano. "El presidente llegó anoche a La Habana en un vuelo comercial de la aerolínea Tame, como cualquier pasajero común y corriente", dijo el embajador ecuatoriano. "No vino en el avión presidencial porque viene de vacaciones, a descansar. Vino acompañado de su esposa (Anne Malherbe) y de inmediato partió al destino que tenía previsto para descansar durante su visita privada de unos cuatro días", agregó el diplomático. Zambrano negó que el presidente haya viajado a Cuba para realizarse un chequeo médico, como informó un comunicado de la Presidencia en Quito (EFE, 21/8/09).

August 21: Members of the second Fidel Castro Ruz graduated class who recently finished their law studies in the University of Carabobo, Venezuela, traveled to Havana at

the request of Castro. The ten young students were invited to visit the island to learn more about the Cuban people, which they consider an example of resistance and courage, as they told the Cuban press in Caracas. While in Cuba, they will visit Havana, Santa Clara, Santiago de Cuba and Varadero (ACN, 21/8/09).

Agosto 21: Fidel Castro met Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa in an undisclosed location where the Cuban leader recuperates from intestinal surgery. A front-page photograph of Castro meeting Correa was published in the official *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper. A brief official note said Castro and Correa spoke for a number of hours about recent developments in their respective countries, Latin America and the world (*Europa Press*, 23/8/09).

August 23. A footage, broadcast on Cuba's official TV, showed Fidel Castro meeting students from Venezuela at an undisclosed location a day earlier. In the television broadcast he appeared telling the students that he was worried about the future of the planet, under threat from global warming. "Even the Pentagon has become involved," Castro said. "It has included the climate among things that threaten the security of the United States." The students presented Castro with a T-shirt and sang: "We love you, Fidel. We love you." Castro, wearing a blue track suit, told the students that Cuba stood by the Venezuelan government of President Hugo Chavez (*Al Jazeera*, 24/8/09).

August 23: Six track and field athletes from the world championships were arrested after a scuffle at a Berlin disco. The six were being investigated on possible charges of disturbing the peace and causing bodily harm after the incident at the Havana Disco, police said. The athletes were not identified by name under German privacy laws. Police spokesman Frank Millert said the men all spent the night in jail, but were being released. The incident occurred just before 4 a.m. Sunday as the athletes, who were part of a group of 20 people, tried to get into the overflowing nightclub, police said. Words were exchanged with doormen after the group was told to stay in a waiting area, police said. The confrontation escalated when the doormen then tried to force the group to leave. Bottles were thrown at the club employees, injuring a 30-year-old and a 36-year-old in the head, and a 27-year-old in the face, police said. Once police were called, they arrested the three athletes from the Bahamas and the American. The two Cubans were arrested slightly later after more bottles were thrown, police said (*AP*, 24/8/09).

August 24: A top Manchester cop and his young daughter were held in a 'diabolical' Cuban hospital for four days - because airport officials thought she had swine flu. Department Chief Inspector Pete Marsh, 47, spent £4,000 treating his wife and two children to a dream holiday. But it became a nightmare when a thermal camera showed daughter Bethany, 12, had a high temperature. She was rushed to a ramshackle hospital - with Pete insisting he went along too. They were put in a room with bars on the windows and no running water - and forbidden to leave. They only got out when Pete, of the Wythenshawe major incident team, told staff they would have to arrest him to make them stay. Now they are back at their hotel with the rest of the family - but claim the holiday has been ruined. "The conditions were absolutely diabolical," Pete, from Stockport, said from Cuba (*Manchester Evening News*, 24/8/09).

August 25: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez bestowed the Orden Libertador (Liberator Order) in its first class, on the outgoing Cuban ambassador to Caracas, German Sanchez Otero. During the ceremony, held at the Ayacucho Hall of the Miraflores Palace in the Venezuelan capital, Chavez also awarded Aldo Muñoz, outgoing coordinator of the Cuban Medical Mission in the South American nation, with the aforementioned order, in its second class, *Granma* newspaper reported. The Venezuelan leader highlighted the diplomatic work carried out by Sanchez Otero over the past 15 years. He also referred to the creation of the ‘Barrio Adentro’ social program and the contribution made by thousands of Cuban doctors, nurses and health technicians. The awarding ceremony was broadcast live by Venezolana de Television (ACN, 26/8/09).

August 25: Cuban President Raul Castro and Ecuador’s head of State Rafael Correa met in Havana on a wide array of issues, as part of a private visit by the Ecuadorian president. According to Cuban TV, the two leaders followed up on a first encounter they held in Brazil last December 2008, when they attended international meetings that took place in the South American nation. The dialogue was previously resumed last July, when Raul Castro attended the presidential inauguration of Rafael Correa. The two presidents expressed their satisfaction with the increasing and positive bilateral relations between both countries. They also addressed the international situation, and issues of high concern for Latin America and the Caribbean region (ACN, 26/8/09).

Agosto 25: Entre el 9 y el 21 de mayo de este año, 25 ecuatorianos de entre 20 y 33 años, viajaron a La Habana, Cuba, para participar en el Taller de Formación Intensiva de Promotores y Técnicos Sociales, con pasajes y viáticos cubiertos por el gobierno de Ecuador. Cuba cubrió la alimentación y la estadía de los ecuatorianos. Los participantes al taller de Cuba eran colaboradores de la Secretaría de Pueblos, con formación académica heterogénea, que varía entre estudios en Bellas Artes y en Hotelería y Turismo. El taller se realizó en la Escuela de Promotores Sociales de Cuba, puntal en la formación de los Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (CDR). El modelo al parecer será replicado en Ecuador. Esto se deriva del anuncio de Correa en el Estadio Atahualpa, mientras vitoreaba al mandatario de esa isla, Raúl Castro (*Revista Vistazo*, 25/8/09).

August 26: The ten Venezuelan lawyers who recently graduated from the University of Carabobo, members of the second “Fidel Castro” graduation, finished their visit to Cuba. Before returning to Caracas, the young lawyers visited Santiago de Cuba, where they paid tribute to Cuban National Hero Jose Marti and toured historical places linked to Fidel Castro, *Granma* newspaper reported (ACN, 26/8/09).

August 26: Cuban President Raul Castro met with visiting Martin Torrijos, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Democratic Party of Panama (PRD) who arrived in Havana for a working visit. Torrijos’s previous visit to the island was last January, when he arrived in the Cuban capital for an official visit as president of his country, *Granma* newspaper reported. Also present in the meeting were Jorge Marti Martinez, head of the Foreign Relations Department at the Central Committee of Cuba’s Communist Party, and Luis “Lucho” Gomez, a leader of the PRD (ACN, 26/8/09).

August 27: Diplomats from European Union countries angered Cuba when they went to the home of a jailed dissident to express their concern about the case and what they view as government efforts to quell dissent. Their visit signaled that despite improved relations with Cuba, the EU still has reservations about the communist government's treatment of opponents. Cuba's government reacted swiftly, summoning ambassadors or charges d'affaires from the five countries whose diplomats made the visit -- Sweden, Poland, Hungary, Germany and Britain -- to say they had threatened recently renewed EU-Cuba dialogue. "The message was of criticism about the visit, meddling in Cuban internal affairs and putting at risk the political dialogue. It was a pretty strong move," said a European diplomat. The five diplomats had met with Yusnaimy Jorge Soca, the wife of Cuban physician Darsi Ferrer who has been imprisoned since July 21 on charges he bought two bags of cement on the black market and verbally assaulted a neighbor. No trial date has been set for Ferrer, 39, who has organized walks along Havana's seaside boulevard, the Malecon, and in front of local UNESCO offices to support human rights. Angry mobs attacked his small group at the UNESCO walks in 2006 and 2007. His wife, pointing to concrete ceiling beams with gaping holes in the living room of their cramped home, told reporters a friend had given them cement to make repairs. "My husband is not in prison for two bags of cement," she said. "He's in prison for dreaming" (*Reuters*, 27/8/09).

Agosto 27: Fidel Castro habló por primera vez en vivo desde octubre del 2007, en una conversación telefónica con el presidente de Nicaragua, Daniel Ortega, a quien llamó para expresar su satisfacción por la graduación de 44 médicos nicaragüenses que estudiaron en Cuba. "Me alegra chico (..) me alegra saber que están 44 (nicaragüenses) graduándose de la ELAM (Escuela Latinoamericana de Ciencias Médicas)", se le escuchó decir claramente a Fidel, en una breve conversación que sostuvo con Ortega, durante el acto de graduación en Managua. La comunicación había sido anunciada segundos antes por el presidente nicaragüense, quien interrumpió tres veces su discurso para atender una llamada telefónica en público que aparentemente no podía concretarse, hasta que explicó que Castro quería saludarlo en vivo. Entonces activó el altavoz del teléfono y lo puso cerca del micrófono para oír a Fidel, quien con un tono apacible y claro le manifestó que estaba contento por la graduación de los jóvenes nicaragüenses. "Me parece muy buena noticia saber que ustedes cuentan con una gran fuerza médica" y que "están a la altura de las necesidades que tiene Nicaragua", manifestó el ex gobernante (*AFP*, 28/8/09).

August 28: The Peace Boat ship left the Japanese city of Yokohama under the banner of "Creating a culture of peace" and will make a visit to Cuba during its global journey. The boat houses some 500 Japanese including 10 survivors of nuclear attacks against Hiroshima and Nagasaki. At a press conference organized with the Hibakusha (the nuclear bomb survivors), an advisor at the Cuban Embassy in Tokyo, Andres Gonzalez Ballester, said that the seafarers will receive a warm welcome upon their arrival to Cuba (*ACN*, 28/8/09).

Agosto 29: El presidente ecuatoriano, Rafael Correa, pidió a Estados Unidos que "levante ese criminal bloqueo" que ha mantenido por décadas sobre Cuba y no dudó de

que, si ello ocurriera, la economía de la isla podría convertirse en una de las más prósperas de la región. "Levanten ese criminal bloqueo", pidió Correa durante su enlace de radio y televisión sabatino, en el que informó, entre otras cosas, del viaje que efectuó con su familia en días pasados a Cuba, por invitación de autoridades cubanas y para un chequeo médico. Según el mandatario ecuatoriano, si se retira el bloqueo, se verá como Cuba, "con los recursos humanos, con su cohesión social que tiene, se dispara como uno de los países más prósperos de América Latina". Correa admitió que en Cuba existen serias deficiencias en varios campos como la vivienda, pero dijo que esa situación, según él, se debe al embargo comercial y financiero que Washington aplica a la isla desde 1962. Además, comentó que en Cuba se reunió con Fidel Castro, con el que conversó por más de cinco horas, según precisó, y con su hermano, el actual mandatario del país, Raúl (EFE, 29/8/09).

Agosto 30: El presidente de Venezuela, Hugo Chávez, dijo que no es de extrañar que Fidel Castro asista como invitado a una cumbre de la Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de nuestra América (ALBA). "No les extrañe que aparezca Fidel invitado especial en una cumbre del ALBA, nadie se extrañe que aparezca Fidel un día de estos por allí", señaló en rueda de prensa con medios internacionales. Chávez indicó que pronto habrá una cumbre del ALBA en Bolivia, aún sin fecha, y en ese momento acotó: "un día de estos invitamos a Fidel" al evento, que tiene un carácter trimestral (ANSA, 30/8/09).

August 31: The president of the Permanent Committee of the Chinese National Assembly, Wu Bangguo, left Beijing for a tour that will have Cuba as its first stop. Bangguo will arrive in Havana for an official visit at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart Ricardo Alarcon. Wu will also visit the Bahamas, where he will meet with the president of the Senate of this archipelago, Lynn Holowesko. The Chinese legislator will conclude his tour on September 12th in the United States, invited by Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives (ACN, 31/8/09).

August 31: A new group of Cuban youngsters arrived in Chinese universities to take language courses as part of collaboration programs between the two nations. Sources from the Cuban embassy in Beijing told *Prensa Latina* news agency that 19 out of the 32 students are on scholarships granted by the Ministry of Higher Education. The rest of the group will stay in China for two years. Among them are representatives from the ministries of Agriculture; Transportation; Science, Technology and the Environment; and the Basic Industry, among others (ACN, 31/8/09).

August 31: Cuba is not expected to seek to rejoin the Organization of American States anytime soon despite the OAS vote to lift a decades-old suspension, the multinational group's chief said. OAS Secretary General Jose Miguel Insulza told reporters it's likely that "some years" and "a lot of changes in Cuba" will happen before the Cuban government asks to return to the 34-nation organization. "We hope they will do so, but we don't think that they will do so in the near future," Insulza said in Barbados, where he was holding his first official meeting with the country's new foreign minister (AP, 31/8/09).

Security

Agosto 3: El buque de la armada rusa Altai, atracó a las nueve horas en el muelle de la marina de guerra en la bahía de La Habana, según afirmaron testigos presenciales. El remolcador de altura, con su tripulación formada en proa, enfiló el canal de la bahía hasta el punto de atraque. La llegada de este buque de apoyo de la armada rusa, se produce una semana después de la visita de Igor Sechin, vicepresidente del gobierno ruso, quien entregó un crédito de 150 millones de dólares al gobierno cubano (*Cubanet*, 3/8/09).

August 4: A pair of nuclear-powered Russian attack submarines has been patrolling off the eastern seaboard of the United States in recent days, a rare mission that has raised concerns inside the Pentagon and intelligence agencies about a more assertive stance by the Russian military. According to Defense Department officials, one of the Russian submarines remained in international waters, about 200 miles off the coast of the United States. The location of the second remained unclear. One senior official said the second submarine traveled south in recent days toward Cuba, while another senior official with access to reports on the surveillance mission said it had sailed away in a northerly direction (*The New York Times*, 4/8/09).

Agosto 6: Concluyó la estancia de un barco de la Armada rusa que atracó durante tres días en el puerto de La Habana para una "visita de trabajo" y avituallamiento, informaron fuentes de la embajada rusa en Cuba. El remolcador de guerra "Altai" llegó a la isla el 3 de agosto en "una visita de trabajo y para descansar y comprar comida", indicaron las fuentes, que no quisieron precisar ni el recorrido ni los "planes" del barco. Durante su estancia en la Habana, la tripulación del "Altai" colocó ofrendas florales ante el monumento del prócer independentista cubano José Martí y ante el mausoleo del Soldado Internacionalista Soviético (*EFE*, 6/8/09).

US-Cuba Relations

August 1: Cuban President Raul Castro warned the United States and the European Union that the country's socialist political system was non-negotiable, adding he would not "restore capitalism" in Cuba. In a speech to the Cuban National Assembly, Castro acknowledged the United States under President Barack Obama was less "aggressive" toward Cuba, but he expressed irritation with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton for saying repeatedly that Washington expected Havana to make changes in exchange for better relations. "I have to say, with all due respect to Mrs. Clinton (...) they didn't elect me president to restore capitalism in Cuba, nor to hand over the revolution," said Castro, who succeeded his brother Fidel Castro as president last year. "I was elected to defend, maintain and continue perfecting socialism, not destroy it," he added, prompting a long standing ovation from assembly members, most of whom are members of the Communist Party. "We are ready to talk about everything, but (...) not to negotiate our political and social system," he said ([Discurso de Raúl Castro en la clausura de las sesiones de la Asamblea Nacional](#); *AFP, Reuters*, 1/8/09).

August 3: The US State Department had little to say about Raúl Castro's speech to the National Assembly. "I think we are willing to have a broader dialogue with Cuba. Clearly, Cuba has to take certain actions before we think that would be viable", spokesman Philip J. Crowley said during his daily press briefing. "We have had some limited dialogue with Cuba in recent weeks on more technical subjects, obviously, restarting the migration talks. We have been willing to discuss other issues such as mail service. I think we're taking this in a step-by-step", he said (*The Miami Herald*, 4/8/09).

August 3: It's been about four months since President Obama announced looser restrictions on travel and sending money to Cuba. But they haven't gone into effect yet, the Treasury Department confirmed to the press. Some in the "Cuba lobby"--Cuban-Americans in Congress like Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen and Senator Bob Menendez--suggest the administration may be mulling their objections (Menendez questions lifting remittance restrictions; he favors travel). Others cite red tape in an administration dealing with 1,001 issues. But a State Department official, who isn't authorized to speak for the record about internal policy discussions, suggests one reason for the delay is a flurry of new talks between the countries that could lead to an even wider opening to Cuba, including a lifting of restrictions on diplomatic movements. "There are discussions going on, and some new things have been put on the table," says the State official (*Newsweek*, 3/8/09).

August 3: Groups of travelers who defied the federal government's ban on most travel to Cuba returned to the United States with some fanfare but no holdups, passing without incident through checkpoints at the northern and southern borders. Opponents of the ban have been making such protest trips for 40 years but said recent overtures from the Obama administration have lifted hopes that US relations with Cuba will improve. About 140 members of the Venceremos Brigade walked from Canada into the United States at Buffalo wearing orange T-shirts and chanting for an end to US sanctions. Meanwhile, about 130 members of the "US/Cuba Friendship Caravan" re-entered the United States at the Hidalgo International Bridge from Reynosa, Mexico. "It went pretty smoothly," said Bonnie Massey, returning from her 11th Cuba trip, after being cleared by US Customs and Border Protection officers in Buffalo. The Bronx woman, traveling with her 7-month-old son, said she and others in the group were allowed to pass even after declining to answer written questions they thought might be incriminating, like how much money they had spent. Customs and Border Protection spokesman Kevin Corsaro said no one in the group was detained (*AP*, 4/8/09).

August 5: The United States is pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into subversion in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America despite a pledge to start a new era in regional relations, Cuba's Communist Party newspaper *Granma* charged. "There is a US offensive against progressive Latin America that is being stepped up at this time against the members" of the Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas (ALBA), the newspaper said. In Cuba, "US investments meant to facilitate annexing Cuba not only have not decreased but actually have increased and worsened, due to new technologies and media," the report alleged in harsh but not unusual language for the island's state media. Citing a American-Venezuelan researcher, the report said US President Barack Obama "continues to seek to

destabilize the Cuban revolution" using USAID, the agency for international development. *Granma* said that despite promises from Obama, the United States has not stopped spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year in taxpayer funds on "this dirty war against Latin America" (*AFP*, 5/8/09).

August 5: The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Treasury Department released its monthly report of civil penalties imposed for violations of the economic sanctions programs administered by the agency. OFAC announced a \$10,341.00 fine imposed against, and paid by, MGE UPS based on allegations that the California-based company "sold electrical regulators ultimately destined for Cuba." The allegation that the goods were "ultimately destined for Cuba" indicates that MGE didn't ship the goods to Cuba but shipped the goods outside the country - likely to Schneider Electric, its parent company in France - and that the goods were then sent from outside the US to Cuba (*ACN*, 5/8/09).

August 6. In the face of anticipated budget cuts in federal funding of the Office of Cuba Broadcast (OCB) in Miami, Radio and TV Martí will eliminate 35 jobs, or 21.8 percent of their workforce. "We have done everything possible to minimize the impact of these cuts on our staff," said OCB spokeswoman Letitia King. Twenty-two employees will be laid off -- mainly television anchors and technicians, news editors and radio anchors, King said. The rest involve vacant positions and employees who have volunteered for buyout packages. The workforce cuts take place at a time when the stations, designed to break Fidel Castro's information blackout, get ready for a September retooling of their program format, which has been criticized for its scant reception in Cuba (*El Nuevo Herald*, 6/8/09).

August 6: Erika Crenshaw returned to Los Angeles this week from a 10-day trip to Cuba with a message for authorities charged with enforcing a ban on travel to the communist-ruled island: Come and get me. One of 270 US citizens who openly made the illegal journey over the last two weeks, the 30-year-old financial advisor would like the government to fine or charge her, forcing a courtroom showdown on whether the ban is constitutional. Groups such as the Venceremos Brigade, with which Crenshaw travels, have been defying the ban almost as long as it has been in force. This year, they ramped up the challenge with record numbers and blazing orange T-shirts to pressure the Obama administration to make good on pledges to improve ties with Cuba. "I have a duty, a responsibility, to disobey unjust laws," said Crenshaw, who returned from her fifth Cuba visit. "I would welcome a fine (...) It would give us a chance to go to court and have our voices heard" (*Los Angeles Times*, 6/8/09).

August 6: Two nuclear-powered Russian attack submarines have been patrolling off the eastern seaboard of the United States in the first mission of its kind so close to shore in nearly a decade, US officials said. The Pentagon said it was not alarmed by the maneuvers, carried out by what officials described as Soviet-designed Akula-class submarines in international waters as little as 200 miles off the coast. Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said Obama saw that rivalry as "long passed" and that Washington was keeping an eye on the two vessels. "So we don't look at this action and

automatically see threatening motives," Morrell said. "We view this, we are mindful of it, we watch it, but we do not assign motives that we don't believe are there." He said the Russian vessels were free to operate in international waters. "It doesn't cause any alarm within this building (the Pentagon)... It doesn't pose any threat," Morrell added. One of the Russian submarines remained in international waters a couple hundred miles (km) off the coast of the United States, officials said. The second sub made a port call in Cuba in recent days, the *New York Times* reported, citing Defense Department officials who spoke on condition of anonymity. "It is the first time in roughly a decade that we've seen this kind of behavior," Morrell said (*Reuters*, 6/8/09).

Agosto 7: El presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, mantiene la misma política sobre la isla de sus once antecesores con la aplicación a la isla de un bloqueo financiero y comercial, según publican medios informativos oficiales de Cuba. "El cambio preconizado por Barack Obama poco tiene que ver con la relación de Estados Unidos y Cuba, mucho menos con el bloqueo genocida que 11 administraciones han sostenido", afirma un artículo publicado en el diario *Granma*, portavoz del gobernante Partido Comunista, y divulgado por otros medios estatales. La nota añade que "el bloqueo continúa su engranaje asfixiante, los cinco (cubanos condenados por espionaje en EEUU) siguen presos injustamente, la ley de ajuste (para cubanos que llegan a ese país) permanece como aliento criminal a la emigración ilegal, Obama condecora a mercenarios por sus servicios, Hillary (Clinton) proclama condiciones para un diálogo". "¿Dónde está el cambio cuando se habla de Cuba?", pregunta uno de los principales presentadores de la televisión estatal de la isla, Randy Alonso, quien firma el artículo (*EFE*, 7/8/09).

Agosto 9: A pesar del embargo económico que aplica Estados Unidos a Cuba desde 1962, la isla importó de ese país productos por más de 4,00 millones de dólares en los últimos ocho años, principalmente alimentos, informaron fuentes oficiales. "Desde que se iniciaron las operaciones en diciembre de 2001 hasta la fecha, Cuba ha pagado a su contraparte estadounidense más de 4,400 millones", informó la edición digital del semanario *Opciones*, que cita al presidente de la empresa estatal Alimport, comercializadora de alimentos, Pedro Álvarez. Según *Opciones*, "las compras de productos agroalimentarios de Cuba a Estados Unidos, luego de mantener un ritmo ascendente hasta 2005, cuando alcanzaron la mayor cifra en volumen, sufrieron en los últimos tres años un decrecimiento". Álvarez atribuye la disminución a que se mantiene el embargo, a la crisis financiera internacional y a la falta de créditos. El gobierno de Cuba está a punto de pasar de la falta de la liquidez a la insolvencia, según fuentes diplomáticas (*EFE*, 9/8/09).

Agosto 10: Fidel Castro alertó que Estados Unidos "podría promover" una "guerra sucia" en Sudamérica desde las bases militares que instalará en Colombia y aseguró que los argumentos utilizados por ambos países para justificar el convenio son "un insulto a la inteligencia". "La lucha contra las drogas es un pretexto para establecer bases militares en todo el hemisferio", sostiene Castro en su último artículo titulado "Las bases yanquis y la soberanía latinoamericana" publicado en los diarios oficiales cubanos. Para Castro el "verdadero objetivo" de las autoridades norteamericanas es poder ejercer "el control de los recursos económicos, el dominio de los mercados y la lucha contra los cambios

sociales" en el hemisferio sur. "La historia no perdonará a los que cometen esa deslealtad contra sus pueblos, ni tampoco a los que utilizan como pretexto el ejercicio de la soberanía para cohonestar la presencia de tropas yanquis", señala el texto. Castro alertó de que los soldados norteamericanos "podrían promover una guerra sucia como hicieron en Nicaragua, incluso emplear soldados de otras nacionalidades entrenados por ellos y podrían atacar algún país" de la región ([Las bases yanquis y la soberanía latinoamericana](#); *Europa Press*, 10/8/09).

August 10: Referring to Honduras during an improvised speech in Quito, where he attended the second inauguration of President Rafael Correa, Raúl Castro said that "in this continent, nobody gives a coup d'état without authorization from the United States of North America." "Those putschists don't even breathe without permission from Washington," he said. Castro also criticized a US plan to use military bases in Colombia to combat drug trafficking bound for the United States. "That's not casual," he said. The US military presence in Colombia "is not to fight against drugs or against guerrillas." President Obama "is well-meaning and full of good intentions," Castro said, but -- alluding to former President Bush -- "he's half the old and half the new, although nobody knows which half." Because of that ambivalence, "we see a president condemning a coup with one side [of the mouth] and supporting it with the other." When the United States "is unable to hold back the tide" of socialism in the continent, "the coups d'état will return," Castro said. "That is why the case of Honduras acquires great importance and the situation in Colombia is a perfect complement." Castro wondered against what Latin American government the US "is going to aim its guns and what tactics it will use -- coup d'état, assassination" and urged the region's presidents to remain "alert." Correa's inauguration speech "will go into history but at the same time will summon the devils and gorillas in Washington," the Cuban leader said. "That means that Cuba and other friendly countries will support the people of Ecuador with everything within our reach" (*The Miami Herald*, 11/8/09).

August 11: Tampa Councilwoman Mary Mulhern believes that the time is right for opening to Cuba and says so in an article in *The Tampa Tribune*. Back from a visit to the island with several Tampa businessmen and Tampa Port Authority Commissioner Carl Lindell, Mulhern says that expanded trade and travel would benefit "regions closest to Cuba. That means Florida, and especially Tampa's port, airport and businesses." "Louisiana and Texas now account for 81 percent of U.S. exports to Cuba while Florida accounts for just 6 percent," she writes. "Mobile, Alabama, a sister city to Havana since 1993, is actively courting Cuba's port business. To deny ourselves the huge economic and job potential that free travel and trade mean for Tampa Bay is indefensible, especially during this severe economic downturn." Because travel restrictions are a hindrance, Mulhern urges "US Representative Kathy Castor and Senators Bill Nelson and Mel Martinez to listen to their constituents, send a clear signal to the president, and sign on to the Senate and House bills ending travel restrictions" (*The Miami Herald*, 11/8/09).

Agosto 11: El gobierno cubano invitó a empresas de Estados Unidos a comercializar en su país un medicamento único producido en la isla para las úlceras de pie diabético, un mal que ocasiona 80,000 amputaciones anuales en ese país. "Estamos haciendo un

llamado a empresas e inversionistas de Estados Unidos que quieran contribuir a controlar ese problema en su sociedad", dijo en conferencia de prensa Ernesto López, director del programa del medicamento. Se trata del Hebertrop-P, un preparado que desde 2006 el Centro de Ingeniería Genética y Biotecnología (CIGB) ensaya y que ya benefició a más de 4,000 diabéticos de varios países, pues logra curar esas úlceras y reponer los tejidos bajo tratamiento en hospital. López informó que en las dos últimas semanas enviaron comunicaciones a 18 compañías estadounidenses, de las cuales siete respondieron, cuatro alegaron que el fármaco no estaba en su línea y tres estudiarán la propuesta (*AFP*, 11/8/09).

August 13: During the last few weeks there have been thousands of cyber attacks on computers and computer networks in the US government and private entities. The United States, because of its dependence on computers, is very vulnerable to such attacks. A cyber attack on the United States could crush our country and the world economy, which depends on the United States as the world's leading economy. The US government has not publicly identified where the cyber attacks are coming from, but Cuba has such potential. A partially declassified CIA document released several years ago notes that Cuba started in 1991 to study how to interfere with computer networks. This project had a modest budget of \$50,000. The Soviet Union maintained in Cuba the Lourdes electronic espionage base, to which Cuba did not have direct access. That base was dismantled in 2002, but there are others. In 1994, Cuba and Russia agreed to build a similar base in Bejucal, south of Havana. It became operational in December 1997 at a cost of \$750 million. The Bejucal base shows the importance Cuba puts on cybernetics -- having gone from a \$50,000 budget to \$750 million in only six years. The Bejucal base has the capacity to listen to US. telecommunications, interfere with computer networks, read/change electronic files and, more important, change output commands of computers used to control infrastructure facilities (*The Miami Herald*, 13/8/09).

Agosto 13: En un nuevo capítulo de la controversia legal en el caso del militante anticastrista Luis Posada Carriles, el gobierno estadounidense tendrá que presentar sus argumentos para evitar el acceso público a las evidencias fundamentales de la acusación. La jueza federal Kathleen Cardone puso de plazo hasta el 14 de agosto para que los fiscales del Departamento de Justicia entreguen al tribunal de El Paso, Texas, los materiales considerados "sensibles" en el encausamiento de Posada, así como una explicación precisa sobre las razones que tiene el gobierno para impedir su divulgación durante el proceso judicial. Cardone revisará las evidencias en privado y programará una audiencia posterior para ventilar el tema con las partes contendientes (*El Nuevo Herald*, 13/8/09).

August 13: A delegation of three US Catholic bishops will visit Cuba on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), August 17-21. Cardinal Sean O'Malley, OFM Cap., of Boston, Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, Fla., and Auxiliary Bishop Oscar Cantu of San Antonio will join Father Andrew Small, OMI, director for the Church in Latin America at the USCCB, on the journey to meet with Cuban Church leaders and visit parishes. "Our main focus will be to follow up on the extraordinary grant awarded to the Church in Cuba after last year's hurricanes," said Father Small. "We will

be visiting those impacted areas and seeing what kind of clean up has taken place since last year and how else we might help the Church in Cuba," said Father Small. USCCB welcomed the move by the Obama Administration in April to relax restrictions on Cuban-American travel and the regulation in remittances to Cuba. The US bishops also urge passage of the "Freedom to Travel to Cuba Act" (H.R. 874 and S. 428), which would remove travel restrictions to Cuba for all Americans (*Targeted News Service*, 13/8/09).

Agosto 13: Fidel Castro celebró su cumpleaños 83 con la publicación de una "Reflexión" sobre la presente crisis económica mundial, en la que cuestionó las medidas del presidente de Estados Unidos, Barack Obama, para tratar de librar la problemática, porque la inmensa mayoría de los países en desarrollo es la que paga los platos rotos, dijo. "El Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte –agregó– es el más claro ejemplo de lo que puede ocurrir con un país en desarrollo en las fauces del lobo: ni soluciones para los inmigrantes ni permiso para viajar sin visa a Canadá pudo obtener México en la última cumbre" regional, celebrada en Guadalajara, Jalisco. Castro se refirió marginalmente a la reunión de Obama con los jefes de gobierno Felipe Calderón, de México, y Stephen Harper, de Canadá, en un artículo titulado "Una causa justa que defender y la esperanza de seguir adelante", donde dice que a pesar de que en las últimas semanas Obama se empeñó en demostrar que la crisis va cediendo como fruto de sus esfuerzos para enfrentar el grave problema que Estados Unidos y el mundo heredaron de George W. Bush, es posible que sus acciones provoquen austeridad y sacrificios al resto de los pueblos ([Una causa justa que defender y la esperanza de seguir adelante](#); *La Jornada*, 14/8/09).

August 13: Three times during the last eight years, John Tredway applied for a license to take American students to debate their counterparts in Cuba. Three times, he was denied. Then the other day he got word that a new request to take students from New College in Sarasota had been approved by the Treasury Department. "It really came out of the blue," said Tredway, 60, director of USA Youth Debates, which sends groups of students all over the world. "We had been reading in the press about Obama's new Cuba policy for Cuban-Americans visiting Cuba, but nothing indicated that the policy had changed with regard to other Americans." After eight years of cultural freeze, it seems the ice is thawing between the United States and Cuba. In the coming months, a major Hispanic musician from Miami and a New York orchestra are planning to perform in Cuba, an apparent reversal of the Bush administration policy of isolating the island regime. A sudden surge of Cuban performers are coming to the US as well. "The president (Obama) has himself stated that people-to-people contact is good for both countries," said Timothy Ashby, a Cuba specialist with the Miami law firm Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal. Other licenses are pending. The Sarasota Yacht Club applied for a license to organize a regatta to Cuba in May 2010, one of a number of boating events in Cuba next year that Florida sailors are hoping to attend if restrictions are eased (*St Petersburg Times*, 13/8/09).

August 17: US Catholic bishops think US President Barack Obama needs to move more quickly to patch up long-bitter relations with Cuba and they hope to speed things up with

a visit to the communist island. A delegation led by Boston's Cardinal Sean O'Malley arrived in Cuba, where they will meet with church leaders. They will also look over reconstruction work to repair damage caused by three hurricanes last year, said Father Andrew Small, director of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops' Collection for the Church in Latin America. But the main purpose of their five-day trip is to send a message to the White House that it must move more quickly to improve US-Cuba relations. "Isolation doesn't help change. There has to be greater contact. And the Obama administration has been, unfortunately, encouraging but painfully slow," Small said. "We need some radical changes, particularly from the US perspective," he told the press in the courtyard of a Havana church (*Reuters*, 17/8/09).

Agosto 17: El polémico concierto de Juanes en La Habana, puede convertirse en un fuerte mensaje de paz entre Cuba y Estados Unidos, deseo de la mayoría de las personas a ambos lados del Estrecho de la Florida, asegura Silvio Rodríguez. El trovador cubano señaló que en realidad son pocos los que han levantado revuelo en torno al espectáculo anunciado por el rockero colombiano para septiembre próximo en la Plaza de la Revolución. "Las voces que condenan a este concierto no son las de la inmensa mayoría de trabajadores emigrantes cubanos. Mucho menos la de los 11 millones que vivimos en Cuba. Las voces incómodas y agresivas son de la pequeña pero muy poderosa ultraderecha cubana" en Miami, comentó Rodríguez. "No creo que una canción o un concierto puedan cambiar la compleja realidad de la noche a la mañana", agregó. "Pero sin duda un evento como éste puede ser un fuerte mensaje de voluntad de paz, en este caso entre los Estados Unidos y Cuba, países separados por discrepancias de medio siglo" (*AP*, 17/8/09).

August 18: More than one in 10 deaths in immigration detention in the last six years have been overlooked and were omitted from an official list of detainee fatalities issued to Congress in March, the *New York Times* reported – and curiously, nearly all the previously unreported deaths were of Cuban nationals. The paper reported that the Obama administration added 10 previously unreported deaths to the official roster and disclosed an 11th. The new roster includes the names of several Cubans who died in custody from 2004 to 2006. The causes of death range from suicide, to “failure to eat/drink” and natural causes (*The Miami Herald*, 18/8/09).

August 18: The United States and Cuba must "listen to their better angels" and end 50 years of hostilities that have caused suffering for people in both countries, US Catholic bishops visiting Cuba said. They said the United States should move more boldly to patch up US-Cuban relations or the opportunity for change that US President Barack Obama has endorsed may be lost. "There's about 50 years of lack of confidence on both sides," said Bishop Thomas Wenski of Orlando, Florida. "That's a lot of history to overcome, but for the good of people who are separated, and suffering because of that separation, we would hope that both sides listen to their better angels," he said at a press conference in Havana. Wenski was part of a delegation from the US Conference of Catholic Bishops visiting Cuba to meet with Cuban and church officials and to inspect reconstruction work on church facilities damaged by three hurricanes last year. Cardinal Sean O'Malley of

Boston said the group met with officials at the US Interests Section in Havana and would meet with Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon (*Reuters*, 18/8/09).

August 19: Fidel Castro criticized the United States for being willing to spend billions on its high-tech military but finding it difficult to approve healthcare reform that would protect its poor people. He wrote in a commentary published on a state-run Internet site that huge military budgets are approved easily by the US Congress but US President Barack Obama is struggling to convince federal lawmakers to pass a bill that would "deliver health services to 50 million Americans that don't have them." "What hope can that society offer the world?" he asked. Castro pointed out that a free health clinic in Los Angeles recently attracted 8,000 patients, some coming from hundreds of miles away because they said they could not afford to go to a doctor or dentist ([The Empire and the Robots](#); *Reuters*, 19/8/09).

August 19: A Maine court has found the Republic of Cuba guilty of the wrongful death of an American veteran believed to have been shot down while on a covert mission over the island decades ago. In finding in favor of Stockton Springs resident Sherry Sullivan, Waldo County Superior Court Justice Jeffrey Hjelm granted her damages of \$21 million plus interest. Sullivan is the daughter of Geoffrey Sullivan, whose plane is believed to have disappeared over Cuba in October 1963. "I'm just overwhelmed," Sullivan said. "It was never about money; it was to find out what happened to my father. The answer to finding my father is not what I got." Sullivan filed her suit against Cuba in May 2007. Also named were former President Fidel Castro, President Raul Castro and the Cuban army. Those names were dismissed without prejudice by Hjelm because it could not be determined whether they were ever served the documents. The Swiss Embassy in Havana served a copy of the suit to the Cuba Ministry of Foreign Affairs on September 22, 2008. Cuba never responded to the suit leading Justice Hjelm to issue his default judgment on August 10 (*Bangor Daily News*, 20/8/09).

Agosto 20: El cantante colombiano Juanes denunció ante la policía de Miami que recibió mensajes amenazantes en su página de Twitter por el concierto que prevé ofrecer en Cuba el próximo 20 de septiembre, informó la cadena de televisión *Telemundo*. A raíz de esos mensajes, el interprete de "A Dios le pido" estaría considerando cancelar el Concierto por la Paz, en la Plaza de la Revolución, en La Habana, según un informe policial con fecha del 15 de agosto citado por ese medio de comunicación. La estrella del pop latino acudió al Departamento de la Policía de Key Biscayne, en el condado de Miami-Dade, y denunció que le escribieron mensajes anónimos que señalaban: "Prefiero morir en la batalla que en prisión. Paz sin libertad", y una frase atribuida al filósofo Voltaire que dice, "Odio lo que dices, pero morirás por defender tu derecho a decirlo". "Juanes tomó esos mensajes como una amenaza y dice que teme por su seguridad y la de su familia", afirmó *Telemundo* (*El Nuevo Herald*, 20/8/09, *The Miami Herald*, 21/8/09).

Agosto 21: El gobierno de Estados Unidos rehúsa entregar cierta información confidencial a los abogados del anticastrista Luis Posada Carriles, bajo el argumento de que no hay bases legales que le obliguen a suministrar ese material, según un documento judicial. La información está relacionada con el proceso judicial que se le sigue a Posada

Carriles en un tribunal de El Paso (Texas), por presuntamente mentir a las autoridades estadounidenses en su trámite de asilo político y ciudadanía. Los fiscales federales, que han solicitado una orden judicial para proteger la información, respondieron a una solicitud de la defensa del ex agente de la CIA, en el documento, presentado en el tribunal el pasado miércoles 19 de agosto. "El acusado señala que las reglas de procedimientos civiles federales requieren que el gobierno le entregue documentos que intenta mantener fuera de su alcance bajo la orden de protección solicitada", indicaron los fiscales. El gobierno estadounidense expone que los argumentos de la defensa carecen de fundamento, ya que los procedimientos civiles no aplican en casos criminales (*EFE*, 21/8/09).

August 21: The first tropical storms of the season have begun raging across the Atlantic, bringing with them all manner of panic and potential destruction — and, behind the scenes, a little boost in United States-Cuba relations. The weather is one of the few topics on which the United States and Cuban governments regularly engage. “We’ve had a close working relationship in regard to tropical cyclones that goes back to the ’70s and ’80s,” said Max Mayfield, who retired in 2007 after seven years as director of the National Hurricane Center in Miami. “Any storm that goes toward Florida goes over Cuba, so we need their observations. And they need our data from the aircraft.” Wayne Smith, a former American diplomat in Havana who is now a fellow at the Washington-based Center for International Policy, has brought an array of American officials to Cuba in recent years to look at how Cuban disaster preparedness programs manage to keep the number of hurricane deaths on the island so low. Among those who made the trip last month were Russel Honoré, a retired lieutenant general who was the commander of the military’s Hurricane Katrina task force; Robert Turner, regional director of the Southeast Louisiana Flood Protection Authority East; and Stewart Simonson, assistant secretary for emergency preparedness in the Department of Health and Human Services during the George W. Bush administration (*The New York Times*, 21/8/09).

August 21: Returning from a short trip to Havana, former Miami pastor and Orlando Bishop Thomas Wenski said he was “very impressed” with church-funded hurricane recovery efforts in Cuba following three hurricanes that battered the Caribbean nation last summer. Wenski was part of a delegation of US Roman Catholic Church leaders hoping to take advantage of the new Obama administration to further push for the lifting of Washington’s 47-year-old economic embargo against Cuba, and show support for the Catholic Church on the island. “There has to be a stepping away from the rhetoric and engagement has to take place in some small areas that don’t represent a surrender on either side,” said Wenski, a well-known and respected church leader. The trip included visits to the US Interests Section, which serves as an informal U.S. government mission; a meeting with Ricardo Alarcón, head of Cuba’s parliament; a tour of hurricane-damaged churches and talks with Cuban church officials. The delegation met privately with Alarcón, who tried to get the group’s support for the release of five Cuban agents jailed in the United States. Cuban President Raúl Castro has offered to free political prisoners in exchange for the release of the convicted agents. Wenski said no decision has been made by the delegation on what position -- if any -- it will take on the matter of a prisoner swap (*The Miami Herald*, 21/8/09).

August 24: A Cuban Communist Party (PCC) delegation attending the 15th Sao Paulo Forum being held in Mexico urged participants to counter US maneuvers against achievement made by the Latin American left wing movement. Jorge Marti, head of the International Affairs Department of the PCC Central Committee, spoke at the plenary session of the meeting, where the document "Left Wing Alternatives against the Capitalist Crisis" was debated. He noted that actions must be taken timely in the light of recent developments, including the creation of the Fourth US Fleet, the installation of seven US military bases in Colombia and the coup d'etat in Honduras. Marti said leftwing revolutionary parties and movements in the Sao Paulo Forum are meeting now to analyze the new swipes the US is taking like a wounded beast. He pointed out that in 14 Latin American and Caribbean countries, parties and political forces from the Forum are in office or are part of governing coalitions (*Inside Costa Rica*, 24/8/09).

August 25: President Barack Obama is trying to make positive changes in the United States, but is being fought at every turn by right-wingers who hate him because he is black, former Cuban leader Fidel Castro said. In an unusually conciliatory column in the state-run media, Castro said Obama had inherited many problems from his predecessor, George W. Bush, and was trying to resolve them. But the "powerful extreme right won't be happy with anything that diminishes their prerogatives in the slightest way." Obama does not want to change the US political and economic system, but "in spite of that, the extreme right hates him for being African-American and fights what the president does to improve the deteriorated image of that country," Castro wrote. "I don't have the slightest doubt that the racist right will do everything possible to wear him down, blocking his program to get him out of the game one way or another, at the least political cost," he said ([I Wish I Were Wrong](#); *Reuters*, 25/8/09).

August 24: New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson, who has a history of diplomatic troubleshooting, may try to push US-Cuba relations forward on what one expert called an "intriguing" visit to Cuba. A spokeswoman in Santa Fe, New Mexico, said Richardson was to arrive in Havana and return home on August 28 on a trip officially billed as a trade mission for New Mexico farm products. A statement said the governor would be accompanied by several New Mexican officials whose primary aim is increasing the state's agricultural sales to the communist-led island. Richardson, who was US ambassador to the United Nations and energy secretary under President Bill Clinton, served as a special envoy on diplomatic missions to countries such as North Korea, Myanmar and Cuba. In 1996, he met with then-Cuban leader Fidel Castro and negotiated the release of three political prisoners. The New Mexico press release did not say with whom the delegation would meet (*Reuters*, 25/8/09).

Agosto 24: Antes de viajar sorpresivamente a La Habana, el gobernador de Nuevo México y ex candidato presidencial demócrata, Bill Richardson, se reunió con exiliados cubanos en Miami, según supo *El Nuevo Herald* de fuentes familiarizadas con la reunión. "El gobernador se reunió con un importante recaudador de fondos republicano y miembros del exilio tradicional cubano", dijo una de las fuentes. La cita se extendió por un par de horas en los alrededores del Aeropuerto Internacional de Miami, después que

Richardson arribara desde Nuevo México. Ninguna de las fuentes quiso abundar sobre los temas que se trataron (*El Nuevo Herald*, 26/8/09).

August 24: Allegiant Travel Company's Allegiant Air subsidiary will stop flying charters to Cuba, the carrier announced. "While our Cuba flying has been and continues to be profitable, these programs are exposing the airline and its people to operational complexity inconsistent with our operating philosophy," said Maurice J. Gallagher, Jr., Allegiant Travel Company CEO. "Keeping things simple is a key attribute of our business model and since we are not short of profitable opportunities consistent with operational simplicity, we decided the sensible thing was to remain true to our proven operating philosophy and return our people and aircraft to such efforts." The charters, which Allegiant started earlier this summer, were flown as part of a US government program open to eligible travelers (*Aviation News*, 24/8/09).

Agosto 24: Australia & New Zealand Bank Group (ANZ), un poderoso conglomerado financiero en el Pacífico Sur y Asia, pagó una multa de \$5,750,000 por realizar transacciones en beneficio de Cuba y Sudán a través de cuentas de bancos estadounidenses, informó el Departamento del Tesoro. Según un informe de la Oficina de Control de Bienes Extranjeros (OFAC), las violaciones ocurrieron "en operaciones de comercio internacional y cambios de moneda extranjera realizadas entre el 2004 y el 2006, e involucraron a ANZ en el procesamiento de las transacciones utilizando cuentas correspondientes de filiales bancarias de Estados Unidos". La sanción representa el mayor monto gravado en relación con el embargo a Cuba desde junio del 2004, cuando la Unión de Bancos Suizos recibió una multa de \$100 millones por permitir que el gobierno cubano usara un programa internacional de la Reserva Federal de Estados Unidos para la sustitución de billetes de dólares en mal estado (*El Nuevo Herald*, 26/8/09).

August 25: New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson met with Cuban political and economic authorities during a visit to Havana to promote trade between his state and the communist-ruled island. Richardson told reporters that he dined with the leader of the National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon, and that his conversations continued with the president of the Chamber of Commerce, Pedro Alvarez, and were "very positive." "I ate dinner last night with my friend Ricardo Alarcon," said the governor, a former Democratic presidential hopeful thought to be close to President Barack Obama. He said his talks with the president of the Chamber of Commerce were "very positive," adding that New Mexico "is interested in selling (Cuba) wheat, beans, potatoes and apples." He added that the delegation accompanying him is comprised of nine people, including several businessmen who are interested in selling agricultural products to Cuba. This is the third business mission organized by the state of New Mexico to Cuba. Richardson is the first US governor to visit Havana this year and his trip sparked speculation about possible political activities between the two countries (*EFE*, 26/8/09).

August 26: Ricardo Alarcon, President of Cuba's National Assembly, sent a message asking for support of the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States, that was read out in a meeting marking the 40th anniversary of the Young Lords, a revolutionary group organized in New York to demand social progress. The *CubaDebate* website reported

that the ceremony was held in the First Hispanic Methodist church in the so-called city of skyscrapers, with the participation of former members of the movement and of the members of the US Congress Nydia Velazquez and José Serrano, and state deputy Jose Rivera. "I'm asking you to support a demand for the release of Oscar Lopez Rivera, Carlos Alberto Torres and Avelino González Claudio, the Puerto Rican patriots," wrote Alarcon and added, "they deserve to be free as much as Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and Rene Gonzalez, the five Cuban revolutionaries that have been unfairly punished in the US" (ACN, 26/8/09).

August 26: New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson said he plans to report to Barack Obama's administration his assessment of Cuba-US relations following a five-day trade mission to the island even though he is not an official envoy of Washington. Richardson is meeting with a host of Cuban government officials, including a scheduled encounter with Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez. He met with Ricardo Alarcon, president of Cuba's parliament. So far, everyone has brought up the US embargo and other aspects of US policy, Richardson said, without elaborating. "I'm not an envoy of the (Obama) administration. I'm carrying no message. I'm here as a governor seeking agricultural trade," he said. "Obviously I do plan to submit my impressions to the administration after I conclude," he added. "I will do that as a citizen and as a governor. They're my impressions alone" (AP, 26/8/09).

August 26: New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson said he had "very fruitful and positive" meetings with Cuban officials on tourism, agriculture and trade, adding that he was seeking to "increase the economic ties" between his state and Cuba. The governor said in brief comments to reporters in Havana that economic, cultural, educational and other types of contacts between the United States and the communist-ruled island should be expanded. "I am in favor of more humanitarian trips to Cuba, more tourism, more remittances and personal contacts between American citizens and Cubans," the governor said. Richardson met with Deputy Tourism Minister Maria Elena Lopez and other tourism officials. The governor also toured Old Havana and visited the Ernest Hemingway Museum at Finca Vigia, the writer's home in Cuba, to which he donated an antique telephone. Richardson was accompanied to the island by his agriculture secretary, Miley Gonzalez, cultural affairs secretary, Stuart Ashman, and finance secretary, Katherine Miller (*Latin American Herald*, 28/8/09).

August 27: New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson kept up a busy schedule in Havana by meeting with Cuba's Deputy Foreign Minister Dagoberto Rodríguez Barrera. The Cuban government's choice of Rodríguez as Richardson's interlocutor is interesting. An experienced diplomat, Rodríguez headed the Cuban Interests Section in Washington before being elevated to second-in-command at the Foreign Ministry, or MINREX, as it's known in Havana. He represented Cuba at the immigration talks with the US held in New York City in mid-July (*The Miami Herald*, 27/8/09).

August 27: The number of Cubans attempting to cross the Florida Straits has fallen by more than half, putting 2009 on track to be perhaps the lowest for migration from the communist island in almost a decade. Experts say it's hard to pinpoint what has caused

such a drastic drop but attribute it to combination of factors, with the US economic downturn topping the list. They also point to stepped up US law enforcement against smugglers, eased US restrictions on Cuban-Americans who want to travel to the island and send money to family there and a clampdown by the Cuban government. From October 1 through July 31, the US Coast Guard intercepted an average of 72 Cubans a month, compared to 183 a month in the previous fiscal year. The last time the numbers were that low was in 2002, the year after the September 11 attacks. The US Customs and Border Patrol said there was also a huge drop since last year in the number of Cubans who reached the US by sea, falling from nearly 4,000 annually to about 1,000. And the number entering through Mexico has plunged, falling to about 5,000 between October and July, compared to almost 9,000 during the same period a year earlier, Border Patrol said (*AP*, 27/8/09).

August 27: Fidel Castro accused the United States of seeking to "eliminate" Venezuela's leftist government and amass power in South America through its military deals with Colombia. His attack came on the eve of a summit of South American presidents that could be overshadowed by a growing row over a deal between Washington and Bogota to give the American military access to seven Colombian bases. Washington's "only purpose with these bases is the ability to put US troops in South America in a matter of hours", Castro said in an article published on the official government website *Cubadebate*. The United States insists the facilities, spread across the territory of its main regional ally, are aimed at fighting drug gangs and left-wing rebels in Colombia. Castro said America's real objective was to "eliminate the revolutionary process" begun by Venezuela's firebrand leader Hugo Chavez, a key Cuban ally, and to "gain control of the oil and other natural resources in Venezuela". "The delivery of land to establish seven US military bases in Colombia directly threatens the sovereignty and integrity of the peoples of South and Central America and the great Latin American fatherland our forefathers dreamed of," he wrote ([It is the Time of Mobilization, of Marching Together](#); *Reuters*, 28/8/09).

Agosto 27: El diario oficial *Granma* consideró decisivo el apoyo del fallecido senador demócrata estadounidense Edward Kennedy para la victoria del presidente Barack Obama y elogió su batalla a favor de la reforma de salud en su país. "Edward Kennedy ha arrastrado hasta su último aliento el reto de su familia: sanear la sucia política de Estados Unidos", señaló este jueves en el comentario "El reto de los Kennedy" sobre su muerte ocurrida el 25 de agosto a los 77 años de edad de un tumor cerebral. En ausencia de una reacción de funcionarios gubernamentales, el órgano del Partido Comunista publicó un comentario sobre la vida de los asesinados hermanos John y Robert y sobre el último representante de ese influyente clan familiar (*Notimex*, 27/8/09).

August 28: New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson offered to set up talks between the Cuban government and Cuban Americans with the aim of ending five decades of mutual animosity and helping restore US-Cuba relations. At the conclusion of a five-day visit to the communist-led island, he said he had not seen a better atmosphere for improving relations between the two countries, but that things would have to proceed gradually to overcome years of bad blood. Richardson, a Hispanic Democrat who has a history of

being a diplomatic trouble-shooter, said he came to Cuba on a trade mission for New Mexico, not at the behest of the White House. Richardson, speaking in both English and Spanish, said he has proposed informal Cuban-Cuban American talks as a way of improving relations between two groups who have been bitter enemies since Fidel Castro took power in a 1959 revolution and many Cubans fled to Miami. "If there's going to be a solution to the normalization of relations between Cuba and the United States, Cuban Americans must play a role," said Richardson (*Reuters*, 28/8/09).

Agosto 28: El gobierno de Raúl Castro impidió la salida del país de una treintena de universitarios cubanos que habían recibido becas para participar este verano en dos programas en instituciones académicas de Estados Unidos. "Lamentamos la decisión del gobierno cubano de no permitir la participación de sus ciudadanos en estos proyectos, pero continuaremos brindando oportunidades para que los cubanos participen en este tipo de programas educativos, los cuales ofrecemos a estudiantes de todo el mundo", dijo Sara Mangiaracina, portavoz del Buró de Asuntos Hemisféricos del Departamento de Estado. La convocatoria para ambos programas -- auspiciados por el Buró de Asuntos Educativos y Culturales (BECA, por su nombre en inglés) del Departamento de Estado -- fue lanzada a mediados del pasado año a través de la Sección de Intereses de Estados Unidos (USINT) en La Habana y en pocas semanas recibió una avalancha de solicitudes. Es la primera vez que estudiantes cubanos son invitados a participar en este tipo de programas internacionales del gobierno estadounidense (*El Nuevo Herald*, 28/8/09).

Agosto 29: For the first time since Fidel Castro took power in Cuba over a half-century ago, a drug developed by the Communist regime is going through clinical trials in the United States. The drug nimotuzumab is designed to target cancer cells including those in rare and deadly types like glioma. A researcher at the University of Florida, where one trial is already in progress, calls the drug "exciting, interesting." But, even if trials prove successful, nimotuzumab could not be sold in the United States because 20 percent of the company holding the license is owned by the Cuban government. "We're in the business of developing drugs," said David G.P. Allan, chief of YM Biosciences, based in Canada. "We could care less about the political side." YM Biosciences owns 80 percent of CIMYM, the company that has the rights to develop nimotuzumab in North America, Europe, Japan and other places. The other 20 percent is owned by the Center of Molecular Immunology, the biotech lab in Havana that developed the drug (*Europa Press*, 29/8/09; *The Miami Herald*, 31/8/09).

August 31: Three of the five Cubans incarcerated in the US were taken to the Miami detention center to wait for a re-sentencing hearing scheduled for October 13th. Last year, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals of Atlanta ruled that the sentences given to Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero and Fernando Gonzalez "were imposed incorrectly" and sent them back to Judge Joan Lenard who, in the presence of a jury, will have to give them new sentences. Ramon Labañino and Antonio Guerrero are serving life terms while Fernando Gonzalez was sentenced to 19 years. The two other Cubans, Gerardo Hernandez and Rene Gonzalez, who are serving two-life terms and fifteen years, respectively, were not benefited with the re-sentencing ordered by the Atlanta appeals court (*ACN*, 31/8/09).

August 31: The President of Cuba's National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon, denounced the reasons behind the US Government's decision to impose excessive sentences on the five Cubans who remain imprisoned in the United States. In an article posted on the *CubaDebate* website, under the title "Inhabilitando a Los Cinco" (Disqualifying the Five), Alarcon comments on the sentences imposed on Gerardo Hernandez (two life terms plus 15 years), Ramon Labañino (one life term plus 18 years), Antonio Guerrero (one life term plus 10 years), Fernando Gonzalez (19 years), and Rene Gonzalez (15 years). Alarcon points out that the sentences are out-of-proportion compared to those imposed recently by the US government against other individuals who were charged with committing espionage (*ACN*, 31/8/09).

August 31: Talks aimed at resuming direct postal service between the United States and Cuba, which has been suspended for decades, are set to be held in mid-September in another sign of thawing US-Cuba relations, Western diplomats said. Officials from the US State Department and US Postal Service were expected to attend the discussions in Havana, the diplomats, who asked not to be named, said. No further details were immediately available and there was no immediate confirmation from the Cuban government. At present, mail between the two countries must go through a third country (*Reuters*, 31/8/09).

Agosto 31: Diez cubanos llegaron al islote Monito, en territorio puertorriqueño, y se encuentran en buen estado de salud, informaron las autoridades. Los cubanos dijeron haber sido dejados en el islote por una embarcación procedente de República Dominicana, indicó la Policía en un comunicado. El islote Monito está ubicado entre el oeste de Puerto Rico y el este de República Dominicana, en el Canal de la Mona (*AP*, 31/8/09).

August 31: Cuba accused the Obama administration of following in the footsteps of the Bush administration and violating US law by denying a visa to the wife of a convicted intelligence agent for the communist nation. In a letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Cuba's UN Ambassador Abelardo Moreno Fernandez demanded that the US government grant Adriana Perez "a humanitarian visa immediately so that she may visit her husband," Gerardo Hernandez. The ambassador said that on July 15, after a wait of 95 days, the US Interests Section in Havana denied Perez a visa for the 10th time, using "the crude argument" that she "constitutes a threat to the stability and national security of the United States." "This is shameful confirmation that the current Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is using the same argument as her predecessor Condoleezza Rice to deny Ms. Adriana Perez her visa," Moreno Fernandez said. "This decision of the United States authorities violates the country's own law and demonstrates a systematic violation of its international obligations," he said (*AP*, 31/8/09).