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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Over 40,000 people are evacuated from flood-prone areas prior to the passing of Hurricane Ivan. Dissidents and relatives of political prisoners organize various vigils and fasts demanding the release of all political prisoners in Cuba.

Economy: Hurricane Ivan causes serious environmental damages and affects tobacco drying houses, citrus and other crops. Cuban and Venezuelan authorities approve 116 collaboration projects in 15 different areas. Cuba says it will close more than 100 factories as part of measures to cope with a severe energy crisis.

Foreign Affairs: Former national leaders gather in Prague with writers and human rights advocates at the first meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, an initiative of Vaclav Havel. Cuban and Mexican legislators meet in Havana at the 7th Inter-Parliamentary meeting. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov meets with Fidel Castro.

Terrorism: Cuba formally requests the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles from Honduras. The Bush administration concludes that it is no longer clear that Cuba has an active, offensive bio-weapons program.

US-Cuba Relations: The US House votes to reverse limitations on travels by Cuban-Americans to visit their families in Cuba. Cuba presents the document on the US embargo that will be presented before the UN General Assembly.



Domestic Affairs

September 1: The Coordinator of the Democratic Party November 30 "Frank País", Ada Kaly Márquez, reported from Cuba that seven members of this dissident organization were "forced" to abandon the island, risking their lives, due to the constant persecution they were facing. The Cuban State Security initiated an all search operation in Havana, looking for the seven members of this illegal opposition party. Márquez made an appeal to the Cuban exile community, and to Brothers to the Rescue, in support of these dissidents. (*Puente Informativo*, 1/9/04)

September 1: Eighty-five-year-old Cuban pianist Bebo Valdés and Spanish singer Diego El Cigala received their first Latin Grammy for best traditional tropical album for their "Lagrimas negras". Valdés, who has lived out of Cuba since the early 60's, said he would not use his win as a means to comment on his homeland's politics. "The music is art. My politics are private," the 85-year-old said backstage. "It's been 24 years since I go to my country." He had totaled four nominations. Cuban pianist Chucho Valdés, Bebo's son, won his 5th Grammy Award with "New Conceptions", best Latin jazz album. In an emotional presentation, Cuban salsa singer Celia Cruz received a posthumous Grammy for best salsa album for "Regalo del alma," and for best tropical song for "Ríe y llora." (*EFE, The Washington Post, Prensa Latina, 2/9/04*)

September 2: Cuban transvestites say police have come to their homes lately to warn them to dress "in a corresponding manner." Gillian, 19, says she is afraid to go outdoors dressed as a woman. This summer, she says, she was detained twice by police who threatened her with prison for the crime of *peligrosidad* -- dangerousness. Her "dangerousness," apparently, is her dress and makeup. But help is on the way. Mariela Castro Espin, an internationally renowned sexologist who happens to be the niece of President Fidel Castro, wants Cuba's National Revolutionary Police to undergo gender-sensitivity training. "The police take measures -- that's what they are there for -- but they interpret things with their own way of thinking," she said in an interview. "They have learned over their lifetimes that transvestites or homosexuals are intrinsically bad." (*AP, 2/9/04*)

September 2: Fidel Castro welcomed the Cuban athletes who competed at the Athens 2004 Olympics, at Havana's Jose Marti International Airport. Talking to the delegation, Fidel Castro praised highly various Cuban performances in the Olympic, including that of baseball, which won its third title, and the boxing squad with "its incredible straight winning streak." "This the first time a boxing tournament has been fairly refereed, although not 100 percent, and there were no big scandals," he noted. (*Prensa Latina, 2/9/04*)

September 2: Dozens have joined a fast supporting the hunger strike that dissident Berta Antúnez has maintained since August 23. Antúnez told the press that Cuban authorities have given her no other option than the hunger strike. She is demanding that her brother, political prisoner, Jorge Luis Pérez, "Antúnez" be transferred to a prison in his home province. (*Radio Martí, 2/9/04*)

September 3: Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, dissident leader of the Asamblea para Promover la Sociedad Civil (APSC) in Cuba, suggested that her organization will not join the National Dialogue proposed by the organizers of the Varela Project. Although Roque Cabello said that she is unaware of the document calling for a National Dialogue, she pointed out that the APSC "can not join any organization" because it is "a coalition of different organizations in itself", and because in the APSC's political platform "it is stated not to combine its purposes with those of a political party". (*Cubanet, 3/9/04*)

September 3: After a mass at the Catholic temple in Santiago de las Vegas, Havana, 44 peaceful dissidents, members of the Opposition Movement for the New Republic, presided by José Díaz Silva and the Cuban Pro Human Rights Party (affiliated to the Andrei Sajarov Foundation led by René Montes de Oca Martija), they all marched through the streets of Santiago de las Vegas in a peaceful demonstration until they arrived at the José Martí Park. Once in the park, they sang the National Anthem and Montes de Oca called for national reconciliation, peace and love amongst all Cubans, asking also for the immediate and unconditional release of all political prisoners. The State Security watched the peaceful demonstration. (*Puente Informativo, 3/9/04*)

September 4: A group of dissident organizations and individuals who had been supporting Bertha Antúnez in her hunger strike have stopped fasting. Antúnez, the sister of political prisoner, Jorge Luis García Pérez "Antúnez", also stopped a hunger strike she had begun last month waiting for Cuban authorities to respond to the petitions she had made of transferring her brother to a prison in their home province. Officials from the Ariza prison in Camagüey, are planning to transfer Bertha's brother to a prison in Villaclara, the province where the Antúnez live. (*Cubanet, 9/9/04*)

September 6: "Only education can save the world," Fidel Castro told attendees at Karl Marx Theater and the television audience during the official opening of the academic year. Calling Cuban education "a heroic feat," Castro cited statistics from international organizations on the success of the universal and free Cuban educational system, and thus welcomed the 2.8 million students to their new year of study. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/9/04)

September 6: According to a declaration issued in Havana, the dissident coalition Mesa de Reflexión de la Oposición Moderada (MROM), created in 1998 by several organizations in the island, has been dissolved. The communiqué, signed by Fernando Sánchez López, president of the Partido Solidaridad Democrática (PSD), and Manuel Cuesta Morúa, secretary general of the Corriente Socialista Democrática Cubana (CSDC), states that both organizations decided to dissolve the MROM due to "differences on the vision and politics these organizations have towards US-Cuba relations". (*Encuentro en la Red*, 7/9/06)

September 6: Two-time Olympic boxing champion Mario Kindelán of Cuba announced his retirement. Kindelán, 32, who won the gold medal in the 60-kilogram category in Sydney 2000 and Athens 2004, assured to the local press "time for retirement has come. Boxing is my life, but I must retire." (*Xinhua*, 7/9/04)

September 7: Wives and family of the 75 Cuban dissidents incarcerated in the spring of 2003, also known as the "ladies in white," held a candlelight vigil to pray to the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, Cuba's patron saint, for the release of their relatives. At the Centro Habana home of Raúl Rivero, some twenty women in white attire lit candles and prayed to the Saint on her designated feast day. (*AFP*, 8/9/04)

September 7: Independent journalist and prisoner of conscience Víctor Rolando Arroyo Carmona, sentenced to 26 years in prison, has been on a hunger strike since September 1, according to his mother, Martha Carmona. Ms. Carmona, 76, fears for the health of her son, whom she has not been able to see since his arrest on March 18, 2003. (*Cubanet*, 7/9/04)

September 7: Fidel Castro underscored the quality of the educational system in Cuba, a country with the highest teacher-student ratio in the world, with a teacher for every 36.8 people. The Cuban leader focused on the advantages of the Cuban educational system, which is free to all at all levels, as well as the universal use of audio-visual and computing programs in teaching in a TV discussion. He said capitalist countries cannot do what Cuba does because their system has not been designed to give education to everyone, "what feelings can a savage and selfish society have, when it is poisoned by all possible means?" he asked rhetorically. It has taken a great effort to start the current academic year just three weeks after the passing of Hurricane Charley through western Cuba, the leader said. (*Prensa Latina*, 8/9/04)

September 8: The signature campaign in support of the Varela Project is an uphill battle. Oswaldo Payá, leader of the unofficial opposition Christian Liberation Movement, is author of the first major non-governmental petition circulated since Fidel Castro ousted Batista in 1959. "We're in a competition with State Security." According to Paya, when his supporters revisit those who have already signed the petition, they discover that government agents have already been there. "They threaten them. They ask them to retract," he says. "They speak ill of me." Moreover, according to Paya, State Security agents are now showing up "wearing the American flag on their chest" and impersonating Varela Project supporters. Payá, engaged in collecting still more signatures on his petition, issued a challenge to the Cuban Government: "Why don't you acknowledge to the Cuban people that it is their constitutional right to sign the Varela Project and ask for a referendum. " The answer says Payá "is that millions of Cubans would sign, more than in Venezuela", a reference to the recent petition drive for a referendum to oust President Hugo Chavez. American observers say the Cuban Government is very concerned about the tens of thousands of Cubans who have signed the Varela Project, noting that something between a third and a half of the 75 convicted in the May 2003 arrests and trials of dissidents had links with the Varela Project. To further thwart his campaign, Payá charges that State Security "infiltrated false signatures" on the petition, making it necessary to recheck all 25,000 names. (*CBS*, 8/9/04)

September 8: Cuban religious devotees celebrated with processions and church activities the island's patron saint's day. One of more than 50 carried out in her honor in several dioceses throughout the island, a procession of thousands led by Cardinal Jaime Ortega in Havana paid tribute to the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. (*Martí Noticias. Com*, 9/9/04)

September 8: The illegal Christian Liberation Movement (MCL), led by Osvaldo Payá, maintained that it is "fighting for the freedom that will soon bring about a nonviolent political transition" in Cuba. This peaceful transition "will not represent a conflict among Cubans but a new beginning as brethren," says a document sent by the group to foreign media outlets on the occasion of the 16 th anniversary of the organization's inception. (*EFE*, 8/9/04)

September 8: Cuban political prisoner Nelson Aguiar Ramírez remains on a hunger strike, demanding a transfer to another prison, his wife Dolia Leal told the press. According to Leal, her husband began his hunger strike when he was released from solitary confinement into a cellblock reserved for dangerous inmates. Aguiar is serving out a 13-year prison sentence. (*Martí Noticias.Com*, 9/9/04)

September 9: The wife of political prisoner Oscar Elías Biscet made an urgent appeal to the international community in support of her husband. In an open letter, Elsa Morejón, Biscet's wife, blamed prison authorities for the "acts of cruelty and abuses" her husband has suffered while in jail. "I feel the urgency to denounce these acts of abuse against him", she said. "Nothing justifies to have a human being living in a catacomb, sleeping on a cement floor with a thin mattress that is handed to him at night and retired at dawn, with no access to fresh air, nor to his belongings", Morejón added. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 10/9/04)

September 9: Fidel Castro said discipline is very important to face the battering of hurricane Ivan, whose strong winds and intense rain are expected to hit Cuba within the next 48 hours. Castro said that Cuba is better prepared than other countries to handle a hurricane, but the Cuban people in all provinces should stay informed about its trajectory and follow all instructions from Civil Defense. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/9/04)

September 9: According to a WHO report, Cuba has the highest suicide rate in Latin America. "In Latin America, Cuban suicide statistics stand out as the highest, followed by Brazil's and Colombia's," said Jesús Ramón Gómez, a psychologist and director of the *Fundación Amor a la Vida* (Love for Life Foundation), a Colombian non-governmental organization devoted to suicide prevention. However, United Nation's affiliate organization WHO maintains that, compared to the rest of the world, Latin American suicide rates are among the lowest on record. [[Cuba: Suicide rates.pdf](#)] (*BBC*, 9/9/04)

September 10: Concerned about tougher prison conditions and dissident poet Raúl Rivero's precarious health, his wife appealed to international public opinion to push for his release, and blamed Fidel Castro for the risks the prisoner is facing. [[Carta de Blanca Reyes a la opinion pública mundial](#)] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 11/9/04)

September 11: Fidel Castro stressed the need to employ all preventive measures in the face of deadly hurricane Ivan, which was on its way towards Cuba. He placed emphasis on saving human lives and then protecting material resources, as the strongest storm of the last 50 years approached the western part of the island. Speaking in a special edition of the nationally televised "Round Table" program, the Cuban leader exhorted Cubans to put into practice the solidarity that characterizes the nation by inviting neighbors in vulnerable dwellings to seek shelter in more stable buildings. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 11/9/04)

September 11: Cuba girded for Hurricane Ivan by evacuating 40,000 people from flood-prone areas and directing some of them to a network of tunnels dug long ago to resist a US attack. Long lines formed at markets and gas stations, Havana residents hoarded supplies, and workers trimmed tree branches and cleared street drains as the hurricane that Cuban weather forecasters were calling "Ivan the Terrible" approached. Many stores had already run out of many

goods, particularly candles and batteries, and buses were packed with people who were running to make last-minute purchases. One woman said the government had ordered neighborhood grocery stores to sell all their produce and issue current and future rations of the subsidized food items, so that none of it spoils. But lines were reported to be even longer at stores that sell goods for US dollars, where there is typically a greater supply and variety of food items and other goods. (*The Miami Herald*, 11/9/04)

September 12: Fidel Castro was again on Cuban national TV urging citizens to prepare for the onslaught of hurricane Ivan, the deadliest storm to threaten the island since the 1959 revolution that brought him to power. "We can't let our guard down," the 77-year-old dictator said as Ivan veered toward Cuba after ripping its way through the Caribbean. "There are still many hours in which this monster can do many unpredictable things," Castro said. (*The Globe and Mail*, 13/9/04)

September 13: A group of independent journalists and collaborators of the independent Lux-Info-Press, are publishing a Digital News Bulletin from Cuba. According to the information, under the direction of journalist Gilberto Figueredo Álvarez, they are generating a news report edited for the digital international press, with reports from their investigative unit, and other news provided by their permanent collaborators. "We hope to improve the design, the editing and volume of the information of future editions, by including reports from all over the island as we increase the number of collaborators and investigative units in all of the provinces"- affirmed in Havana, Figueredo Álvarez. "We want to thank and give special recognition to the US Interest Section in Havana and their Internet Unit, for providing us with the possibility to freely access the Internet and at the same time for teaching us the use of this new technology", he added. (*Puente Info Cuba*, 13/9/04)

September 13: Oswaldo J. Payá Sardiñas sent another SOS to the international community denouncing the Cuban regime's desperate attempts to stop the work of the Christian Liberation Movement (MLC) and the Varela Project. Now, they showed no mercy to Adrián Curly Cedeño, member of the MCL, who was sent by a Tribunal to the Psychiatric Hospital San Luis de Sagua as a patient. This abusive and Stalinist style of punishment is a recurrent pattern with the members of the Christian Liberation Movement (MLC) and other activists in favor of the Varela Project. (*Puente Informativo*, 13/9/04)

September 13: As part of the National Vigil Campaign "Liberty Without Exile for All Political Prisoners", members of the Union Liberty Foundation Movement demanded in Havana the unconditional release of all the political prisoners that are presently serving unjust sentences in prisons in the island. "We are demanding from the Cuban government the unconditional release of all political prisoners confined in more than 200 prisons throughout the island. Guarded by the Cuban flag during the vigil, upon singing the national anthem, the dissidents held hands in a chain of prayers at plain view of dozens of citizens passing by who stopped and watched the event. (*Puente Informativo*, 13/9/04)

September 14: Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), considered the first leading cause of death in infants between one and twelve months of age in western countries, is not so frequent in Cuba. However this syndrome, whose direct cause remains unknown, has become a nightmare tormenting many parents. In essence, it is defined as the sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy nursing infant. "It's very traumatic for the parents," Virginia Díaz, a specialist in neonatology told WFS. "The infant is healthy and death always occurs during sleep" According to Dr. Díaz, in Cuba national statistic data on this syndrome are not collected, but lack of data doesn't mean that SIDS doesn't occur. The incidence of this syndrome is not considerable, she explains. (*WFS*, 14/9/04)

September 14: Nowadays less Cuban young women have an abortion to interrupt an unwanted pregnancy, according to official records, but the abortion rate continues to be high and its practice worries health specialists and authorities. According to official reports, the abortion rate of adolescents shows a major decrease (30, 8 percent) between 1990 and 2001. However, "the great problem is that it's mostly used by the young population as a natural fertility control, and it even precedes contraception," Dr. Aldo Izquierdo Rodríguez, assistant gynecology professor says. In a country where

abortion is free, legal and performed by a specialized medical staff in medical institutions, it is use with extreme frequency and not considered a last option to prevent an unwanted pregnancy, specialists point out. (*WFS*, 14/9/04)

September 14: In Havana, members of the Investigative Reporting Unit trained in the island by correspondents of Lux-Info-Press, affirmed that they support The Working Document for the Transition Program, presented to the Cuban people, by the Christian Liberation Movement, in December, 2003. "For the first time, the population has the opportunity to prepare for their own transition before the falling of the regime"- pointed out Rolando S. Calvet, reporter of Lux-Info-Press. Calvet added that, "all Cubans are invited to participate without exclusions, from political prisoners who are serving unjust sentences today in Cuba, exiles, to common citizens". [[Documento de Trabajo para el Programa de Transición pdf](#)] (*Puente Informativo*, 14/9/04)

September 16: Cuba began a three-day National Crime Watch Training for neighborhood organizations to reinforce control of drug trafficking and other crimes in the community. The training, organized by the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, is within the scope of the normal activities performed by this organization in each neighborhood. The preparation is in conjunction with local police forces and includes reinforcement of the control of crime and encouraging CDR vigilance. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/9/04)

September 17: Cuban singer and songwriter Silvio Rodríguez dedicated one of his shows in Madrid to the five Cuban prisoners in the United States. Rodríguez participated at the Spanish Communist Party festival, in Casa Campo. As it happened in his recitals in Barcelona, Salamanca, San Sebastian and Vigo, the show was sold-out long before and the arena was crowded. (*Prensa Latina*, 17/9/04)

September 18: Over 20 "Ladies in White," as a group of wives and relatives of the 75 dissidents incarcerated in Cuba in 2003 is referred to, held a fast in Havana to mark the 18th month of their loved ones' imprisonment. Coinciding with the "Oppositionist's Day," the event took place at the home of Laura Pollán, wife of Héctor Maseda, independent journalist and leader of the Cuban Liberal Democratic Party, who is currently serving out a 20-year prison sentence. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 19/9/04)

September 21: Just one week after hurricane "Ivan" hit the province of Pinar del Río, local students were back in school. According to government newspaper *Granma*, the only exceptions were 17 boarding schools that remain without power. In order to allow schools to resume classes, the authorities have turned various facilities into makeshift classrooms temporarily substituting for those damaged in 251 schools affected by the hurricane's strong winds and heavy rains. (*Europa Press*, 21/9/04)

September 22: Over 1,000 senior citizens from the Cuban province of Matanzas will participate in an initiative of the World Alzheimer's Association to investigate factors that may increase the risk of contracting the disease. According to a story in the daily *Juventud Rebelde*, the study that includes 36 nations will be carried out in several municipalities of Havana where neurological and genetic tests will be performed in addition to interviews. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 22/9/04)

September 24: A disabled Cuban athlete is to be stripped of his gold medal at the Paralympic Games in Athens after failing a drug test. Sergio Arturo Perez tested positive for the banned steroid prednisolone after winning in the men's judo category. He will not face any other sanction because prednisolone is not considered performance-enhancing for judo. (*BBC*, 24/9/04)

September 24: Cuban authorities say that the power system of almost all of Cuba's western towns has been recovered after the passage of hurricane Ivan that cut off the service in most of the municipalities of this region. Over 95 percent of the inhabitants in this area, battered by the meteor, already have electricity, declared engineer Rolando Blanco, director of this enterprise. (*Prensa Latina*, 24/9/04)

September 24: The "Ladies in White" prayed to the *Virgen de las Mercedes* (Our Lady of Mercy) for the release of their incarcerated husbands. The overnight vigil was held at the home of Gisela Delgado, wife of Héctor Palacio, who has so far served 18 months of the 25-year prison sentence he received in 2003. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 25/9/04)

September 27: Luis Enrique Ferrer García, a political prisoner who was sentenced to 28 years in jail, initiated a hunger strike. According to Oswaldo Payá, leader of the Movimiento Cristiano Liberación (MCL), Ferrer García stated that he will "continue the strike until the end", after having received a "sadistic treatment" and having been beaten by prison authorities at the Prisión Juvenil of Santa Clara. Ferrer García, 30, who is the youngest of the 75 dissidents sent to prison last year, is determined to go on with the hunger strike, Payá said in Havana. The prisoner was the coordinator of the MCL at the time he was sent to jail in April 2003. (*AFP*, 28/9/04)

September 29: Cuban dissident René Montes de Oca Martija, was sentenced to 8 months in jail. Montes de Oca, secretary general of the dissident Partido Pro Derechos Humanos de Cuba, affiliated to the Andrei Sajarov Foundation, was charged with minor contempt of authorities, a minor crime that usually doesn't result in a prison sentence. (*Puente Informativo*, 29/9/04)

September 29: A well-known member of the Cuban dissidence, who was arrested and condemned in 2001 for threatening the Mexican Ambassador in Havana, was revealed as agent of the Cuban intelligence according to sources from the Cuban internal opposition. The alleged activist, Elizardo San Pedro Marín, founder of different oppositionist groups, was presented to his neighbors as a "collaborator" with the Cuban State Security (Ministry of Interior) by Cuban authorities. Back in 2001, San Pedro Marín threatened former Mexican Ambassador, Ricardo Pascoe, on behalf of the Miami based anti Castro organization Alpha 66. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 29/9/04)

Economy

September 1: Cuba is stepping up efforts to make use of sugarcane derivatives for animal and human medications at a time when the island's sugar industry is undergoing restructuring due to the low sugar prices on the international market. Local experts are unanimous in touting "alternative" uses for sugarcane, to make sweets and alcohol, animal feed, resins, preservatives, plastics and manufactured products like paper or furniture. Of the surprising variety of sugarcane derivatives, the product that achieved perhaps the greatest international popularity in the late 20th century was policosanol, or PPG, discovered and developed in Cuban laboratories. PPG is applauded as a regulator of the metabolism for fats, including cholesterol, and as a food supplement for people in situations of great physical exertion. This "natural" medication does not have harmful side effects and is thought to enhance sexual function. The product has customers in Europe and Australia, among other points of the globe, and is sought by many of the tourists visiting this socialist-run island. (*Tierramérica*, 1/9/04)

September 1: Cuba has planted some 1700 hectares with citrus fruit annually since the 2001-2002 harvest and that figure is expected to significantly increase over the next five years. During a recent tour of eastern Ciego de Avila province, the president of the Citrus Fruit Entrepreneurial Group, Percy Ruíz Medina, said that the country needs larger orange and grapefruit plantations for domestic consumption as well as to increase exports of fruit juice. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 1/9/04)

September 2: The bay in the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba, one of the island's most polluted, is showing slight improvements following the first few years of a water-treatment and nature-restoration program. Specialists at the Cuban Science, Technology and Environment Ministry have been able to identify 264 organic and non-organic pollution sources, the Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported. Before the project, the bay's "dissolved oxygen level was

nil and prevented (the existence of) any life form," the ministry's environmental management specialist, Nadia Justiz, said. The bay's waters were black and smelly with waste from nearby housing developments, factory pollution and runoff from ships. "Currently, pollutants have gone down by 34 percent," Justiz said. The behavior of birds that traditionally inhabited the area - ducks, curlews, pelicans and gulls - shows "the clean-up has progressed," but not enough, according to ornithologist Luis Omar Melián. (*EFE*, 2/9/04)

September 2: The construction of a new small-capacity water reservoir in drought-stricken Holguín, east of Cuba, has entered its final phase. Water reservoir "Naranjo", with a capacity for 11,000 650 cubic meters of water and the first built since 2001, should begin its service in 2005 and start collecting water in the next rainfall period. (*Prensa Latina*, 2/9/04)

September 2: Cuban authorities called on the island's 11 million inhabitants to save electricity in the face of prolonged blackouts that have added discomfort to a hot summer. The outages began after Cuba's largest power plant, located near the city of Matanzas, broke down in May during maintenance work, depriving the country of 330 megawatts, almost one fifth of its power needs. Hurricane Charley made matters worse in western Cuba by downing high voltage power lines and electrical poles in and around Havana during its furious passage. Electricity demand regulator Victor Puentes said the Antonio Guiteras generator near Matanzas, 60 miles east of Havana, will be repaired in 10 days, improving power supplies. But maintenance work on other generators will mean power cuts will continue through the end of the year, Puentes said in an interview with the ruling Communist party newspaper *Granma*. "We must continue saving electricity at work places and homes to contribute to the stability of this vital service," he said. (*EFE*, 2/9/04)

September 6: Cuba hopes to cover almost 30 percent of its surface area with trees by 2015 with the help of a massive reforestation campaign announced by the National Forestry Office. The spokesperson for the office, José Garea, told local reporters that the campaign has a multi-million dollar budget and is inspired by the need to protect the environment and promote sustainable development. The reforestation will begin almost immediately and more than a million hectares of land have been earmarked for tree planting over the next ten years. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/9/04)

September 7: Cuba and Argentina have signed a trade agreement worth US \$200 million per year. According to Argentinean Ambassador to Havana, Raúl Taleb, the agreement is expected to be in force for three years and is renewable on a yearly basis, unless either signatory party otherwise denounces it. In a press conference, Taleb explained that the pact seeks to improve a bilateral trade balance that heavily favors his country. (*AP*, 7/9/04)

September 9: The Cuban government is attempting to strengthen and expand trade with China. Havana's strategy is not only aimed at boosting cooperation and trade flows, which in 2003 totalled 357 million dollars, but at attracting greater investment from China as well. Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Investment and Cooperation will present 41 proposals for joint ventures at the 8th China International Fair for Investment and Trade (CIFIT), one of the biggest such events in Asia, which runs in the southeastern port city of Xiamen. (*IPS*, 9/9/04)

September 13: In passing over the island, hurricane Ivan tore off roofs, downed trees and telephone poles and brought waves 5 meters (16 feet) in height along the coast. Civil Defense officials said that practically everyone had been evacuated from the communities with the greatest risk from the storm. A total of some 180,000 people were evacuated from Pinar del Rio province, some 35 percent of the western province's population. Many coastal towns were abandoned as about 1.3 million evacuated their homes across the island, mostly seeking refuge in friends and relatives' homes. Others went to government shelters. High winds tore roofs off buildings, ripped trees up by their roots, damaged citrus and banana plantations, important roads were submerged in water, tobacco fields drenched and power lines downed. Cuba's tobacco crop was safe, according to top grower Alejandro Robaina. Planting season doesn't begin until next month and remnants of January's harvest are protected in curing houses. A tobacco curing house had part of its zinc roof pulled away. (*EFE, Sun Sentinel, Granma, AP*, 14/9/04)

September 15: According to experts, aging and slow population growth rates in Cuba could hinder the island's social and economic development. With over 14 % of its citizens aged 60 and older by the end of 2002, Cuba is ranked among the nations with the highest rates of population aging on the planet. The 2001 Demographic Yearbook for Cuba reports a birth rate of 1.6 children per woman and a life expectancy rate of approximately 77 years. By 2010, the projected figure for people 60 and older is expected to reach 18 %. (*EPS*, 15/9/04)

September 15: The 22nd Joint Intergovernmental Commission between Vietnam and Cuba opened sessions in Hanoi, with an aim to promote bilateral trade and investment. The conference includes representatives of the Vietnamese and Cuban Chambers of Commerce as well as other officials from Hanoi and Havana. The purpose is to increase trade between both nations, said Frank Abel Portela, general secretary of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce. The new committee will support businesses in their search for new markets and clients, he added. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/9/04)

September 15: The President of the Panamanian Chamber of Commerce, Raúl del Valle, declared that the diplomatic breakup between Cuba and Panama had "immediate repercussions at the Colon Free Zone (CFZ)." Remaining optimistic, he added: "Talks have already taken place between both governments and bilateral relations have not ceased altogether. I am confident that things will go back to normal soon." According to CFZ sources, Cuban buyers are having difficulties purchasing products in Panama as the absence of a Panamanian embassy in Havana makes it impossible for them to acquire travel visas. With the Cuban outstanding debt to the Central American nation exceeding US \$200 million, Panama is only accepting cash payments in its transactions with Cuba. (*La Prensa*, 15/9/04)

September 16: Hurricane Ivan caused almost no damage to Cuba's sugar industry as it roared by the western tip of the island, and the storm provided much-needed moisture to the drought-stricken crop, media reports and sources said. Damage was confined to western Pinar del Rio province which produced 75,000 tonnes of the most recent sugar harvest's 2.52 million tonnes of raw sugar. "Just a few of our 85 mills sustained minor damage and some cane is under water," a local sugar expert said. Brigades were hard at work draining flooded plantations before water could suffocate the plants, top Cuban sugar reporter Juan Varela Perez said in his daily radio spot. Ivan provided little relief to the drought stricken eastern part of the country as it passed south of the island, but precipitation increased as the Category 5 storm neared, benefiting the rest of Cuba which has also suffered a lack of rain this year. "Sugar workers and farmers in the western provinces, as well as some central provinces, have benefited from Ivan's rainfall, because they can now increase planting," Varela said. (*Reuters*, 16/9/04)

September 17: Results and perspectives of the commercial exchange between Cuba and Ukraine are among the topics to be analyzed at the 8th Session of the Inter Governmental Commission, to begin in Havana. The course of the Program for Attention to the children affected in Chernobyl 14 years ago, and technical and economic projects in many sectors will be examined, as a note by the Cuban Ministry for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration pointed out. The projects are related to agriculture, industry, transport, iron and steel and other sectors. (*Prensa Latina*, 17/9/04)

September 18: Guanahacabibes Peninsula, located 200 kilometres west of Havana, is the westernmost point in Cuba, and was therefore the closest to the eye of Hurricane Ivan. It was declared a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) Biosphere Reserve in 1987. "There is very little vegetation left, and the trees still standing look like they were set on fire," commented Omar Ledesma, head of the meteorological station in Cabo de San Antonio. Ledesma is one of a team of 14 men who managed to reach Cabo San Antonio, after clearing a path through 50 kilometres of wreckage with axes and machetes. It took them 12 hours". Along the way we saw dead fish and iguanas, but we saw others that were still alive," said Ledesma. He estimated that the hurricane affected 95 percent of the forests, as well as most of the beaches. Further to the east, throughout the rest of the province of Pinar del Rio, official sources have reported the destruction of 225 tobacco drying houses, the loss of almost 14,000 tons of citrus fruits, damage to 2,200 bee hives, and the death of 2,400 chickens. (*IPS*, 18/9/04)

September 20: Cuban authorities say that more than 70 percent of Pinar del Rio province, the most affected by Hurricane Ivan, have already had electric power restored. Local electricians and workers from seven other provinces have returned electric service to all main municipal cities, circuits in La Palma and Bahia Honda are 95 percent activated, with those in the provincial capital about to start, electricity company director Rolando Blanco informed. Cape San Antonio, hardest hit by the 162 mph winds with gusts of 217 miles per hour, and Sandino, Guane and Mantua, also severely affected, will have electricity restored this week. (*Prensa Latina*, 20/9/04)

September 22: The Cuba-Venezuela Joint Cooperation Commission got underway in Havana with the aim of further strengthening bilateral friendship and cooperation relations. The gathering takes place in the context of the current Comprehensive Cooperation Accord reached between Caracas and Havana four years ago. Cuba's Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Marta Lomas and Venezuela's Energy and Mining Minister Rafael Ramírez are presiding over the joint commission. Participants at the meeting are evaluating the course of several joint projects underway in 17 social and economic fields. They will also look at the current bilateral cooperation program and draw up a plan for 2005. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 22/9/04)

September 22: Cuba and Ukraine inaugurated in Havana the Seventh Session of the Inter-Governmental Commission for Economic, Trade, Scientific and Technological Cooperation. The Cuban delegation, headed by Public Health Minister Jose Balaguer, and the Ukrainian delegation, led by Andry Pidaev, were expected to evaluate the current situation and prospects of bilateral cooperation, in particular commercial exchanges. (*Xinhua*, 22/9/04)

September 23: FIT 2004, the 8th International Transportation Fair, considered the most important opportunity for commercial exchange on the island, is gathering 72 exhibitors from 19 countries. FIT 2004 is organized by the Cuban ministries of Foreign Trade and Transportation, Cuba's Chamber of Commerce, Expo-Cuba, and the Havana Convention Center. More than 200 national and foreign specialists, three more participants than last year, are participating, organizing committee chair Angel Garate noted. Germany, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Holland, Mexico, Spain, and Panama are represented by the companies Mercedes Benz, Damex, Tokmakjian Group, Tri-Star Caribbean Inc, ZTE Corporation (China), Russia Automotriz, Corporación Cancun. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 23/9/04)

September 25: Cuba appealed for the restructuring of the \$400 mln (326 mln euro) debt the country has with Mexico's state-run National Bank for Foreign Trade (Bancomext), at a meeting of Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez, and Mexican Foreign Minister, Luis Ernesto Derbez, in New York. The exact offer made by Cuba for the debt restructuring was not disclosed. The acceptance of the offer by Mexico will include reinforcement of economic relations between Mexico and Cuba. The two ministers discussed the possibility of resuming the annual binational meetings between the two countries, which have not taken place since 1998. (*Latin American News Digest*, 25/9/04)

September 26: Current trade and other Russo-Cuban economic ties fall far below potential opportunities. In addition, sizeable reserves have remained unused, Alexander Yakovenko, official spokesman of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out in an interview. Cuba remains among Russia's crucial Latin American commercial partners. A trend to reduce the bilateral trade deficit has been lately reversed. As Russia's Customs Committee statistics have it, the deficit approached 133 million US dollars during this year's first five months --9 per cent above the same period in 2003. The Russo-Cuban intergovernmental commission for trade, economic, research and technological cooperation is to meet for its 6th session before the year's end, added Mr. Yakovenko. (*Novosti*, 26/9/04)

September 27: Faced with growing difficulties in the local power grid, Cuban officials headed by Fidel Castro are appearing on TV these days to explain the whys and hows behind the island's current chain of blackouts. Cuban television broadcast its regular Round Table, in which Fidel Castro suggested having a second program to thoroughly analyze a situation that has resulted in more frequent and prolonged power outages since May. Castro noted that this time and unlike previous occasions, blackouts had not been prompted by oil shortages. Experts appearing in the

program offered explicit details regarding the damages that have affected power sources such as the Antonio Guiteras thermoelectric plant, in western Matanzas province, some 98 kilometers east of Havana. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/9/04)

September 27: Cuban and Venezuelan authorities approved 116 collaboration projects in 15 different areas, ranging from joint development of vaccines to sports training. Granma reported that, after 4 days of private sessions, the 5th Joint Commission held its closing ceremony, with the attendance of Fidel Castro. Foreign Investment Minister Marta Lomas was quoted as saying that 120 Venezuelans and their Cuban counterparts had taken part in 20 working groups. (*AP*, 27/9/04)

September 27: The XI Session of the Intergovernmental Mixed Commission for Economic and Scientific-Technique Collaboration between Cuba and Congo was opened in Havana with the aim to strengthen bilateral exchange. The ceremony was at the protocol headquarter of the Ministry of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (MINVEC) and was presided over by the minister, Marta Lomas. The Congolese delegation was led by Justin Ballay Megot, minister in charge of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and French-speaking countries. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/9/04)

September 28: During a second episode of a TV daily Round Table (Mesa Redonda) dedicated to Cuba's electric grid, Fidel Castro announced that new emerging measures would be taken to save energy, including the possibility of closing Antillana de Acero, one of the biggest factories in Havana. Castro also announced that a third episode of the TV program will be dedicated to the electricity crisis in Cuba. Although many individuals have not been able to watch the TV transmissions due to recurring blackouts. (*Radio y Diario Monitor*, 28/9/04)

September 28: Investigators examining problems at Cuba's largest thermoelectric power plant have ruled out sabotage as the source of the breakdown. The Antonio Guiteras plant, in the western province of Matanzas, sustained damage to a rotor due to a sudden temperature drop apparently caused by oversights on the part of three computer operators in charge of monitoring temperature levels. During a broadcast on state-owned television dedicated to Cuba's electricity problems, Interior Ministry representative Lt. Colonel Nestor Borrero said authorities opened an investigation of the breakdown. Experts concluded that the workers implicated in the problem, who were not identified, had merely committed an "operational error," Borrero said. Fidel Castro, meanwhile, said "we've got to be half-wits to forget that there's an enemy that never ceases in his efforts to sabotage anything that can be sabotaged." The power plant experienced the breakdown when it was preparing to shut down for scheduled maintenance in May. Cubans have endured repeated and lengthy blackouts in recent months due, in large part, to problems at Guiteras, considered the "heart" of the island's electric grid. (*EFE*, 28/9/04)

September 29: Cuba said it would close more than 100 factories as part of measures to cope with an energy crisis that has caused daily blackouts of up to 12 hours, wreaking havoc on personal lives and the economy. "Steel, cement, paper, juice and other plants totaling 118 in all will be shut at least for October," Vice President Carlos Lage said in a television broadcast. Lage said Havana's Antillana de Acero steel works, with a government reported capacity of 600,000 tonnes, would be closed. "The steel works has been working very little anyway," Lage said in a television broadcast. "The citrus processing plants can be shut down in October because the bulk of the harvest begins in November," Vice President Carlos Lage said. It was not clear how many of the four citrus plants in the country were scheduled to operate in October. Lage explained that in order to diminish effects on the population, production in factories would take place outside the hours of most consumption, although this would increase the country's costs. To reduce use of lighting in workplaces, the commercial sector will only work until 7:00 pm, except for food service. Cuba will not establish daylight saving time in October this year to prevent an increase in power consumption, so the school and work schedule will also be reduced by a half hour for four months beginning October 25. "We all are to blame (...) we have a weak system," Fidel Castro said, promising to invest in new capacity. He said supply problems could persist for five months or more. (*Reuters, Prensa Latina*, 29/9/04)

September 29: Homes and agriculture in western Cuba suffered the worst effects from Hurricane Ivan earlier this month, authorities said in Havana, in the first detailed assessment of damage. In a report released by the official press, authorities in Pinar del Rio province say Ivan damaged 19,828 homes, of which 807 were destroyed and 2,108 had their roofs blown off. The head of the provincial government of Pinar del Rio, Vidal Perez, said 311 schools were damaged, as well as 46 sporting facilities, 38 cultural centers, and 93 clinics, according to the official publication Granma. Agriculture was the hardest-hit economic sector. Some 6,500 hectares (16,049 acres) of tubers and roots were lost, along with 4,140 hectares (10,222 acres) of vegetables, 3,966 hectares (9,793 acres) of plantains, 295 hectares (728 acres) of fruit trees and 170 hectares (420 acres) of rice. Ivan, the second hurricane to hit Cuba this year, damaged the area's electrical and telephone infrastructure. The fishing industry, vital to the province's economy, also was adversely affected, as five processing plants were damaged and two days of fishing were lost due to bad weather. (*EFE*, 29/9/04)

September 29: Fidel Castro met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Havana. The Cuban leader expressed his interest in the implementation of some joint projects with Russian companies. According to Fidel Castro, joint projects can cover such spheres as car transport, production of medical equipment, development of mineral resources and modernization of the energy sector. Talking to the press, Castro and Lavrov expressed satisfaction with the Russian-Cuban political dialogue. (*Novosti*, 29/9/04)

September 30: Cuba's nickel and cobalt production were so far unscathed by the energy crisis gripping the Caribbean island, industry sources said. Cuban officials had said the energy grid was functioning at just 50 percent of demand due to plant breakdowns and other problems, causing daily blackouts of six to 12 hours, and the crisis would continue in the coming months. "The nickel and mining plants are operating normally as they do not rely on the national energy system," said a foreign investor who visited Cuba's nickel mining region in eastern Holguin province last week. "The blackouts have affected office work, so some delays might develop," he added. (*Reuters*, 30/9/04)

September 30: After months of frequent, lengthy and unexpected power outages, Cubans will now at least be able to plan their lives around the weekly blackout schedule to be published in local newspapers. This measure, adopted in response to public demand, is just one part of a much broader government programme to ensure power supplies during the country's worst energy crisis in a decade. These unannounced power cuts had begun to last between six and 12 hours, and in some areas there were more than one in the same day. Some specialists noted that while the situation has been difficult in Havana, it has been even worse in other parts of the country. The schedule for the city of Havana will include six-hour blackouts during both daytime and evening hours, but none are planned for the early morning hours, according to a document from the provincial power company. However, since the outages are due to electrical power generation problems rather than fuel shortages, unplanned interruptions in service could still happen at any time. (*IPS*, 30/9/04)

September 30: Two hotels are closing in Havana, after the Cuban government announced a programme to ensure power supplies during the country's worst energy crisis in a decade. Hotel Riviera and Neptuno are closing temporarily as part of the severe energy plan adopted by Cuban authorities. The surprising decision is the first one in the tourism sector, after the government announced the austerity plan. (*La Jornada*, 30/9/04)

Exile Community

September 2: Joe Garcia, the public face of one of the most influential Cuban-American groups in the country, is stepping down as executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation to lead South Florida recruitment efforts for a Democratic organization. The New Democrat Network is an independent group that raises money in support of moderate Democrats. In 2002 it launched a Hispanic outreach effort to boost the party's standing among the fastest-growing group of voters. Garcia, who starts immediately, will serve as a senior advisor to the group's president,

and will be responsible for developing a strategy to lure more Cuban American and other Hispanics to the Democratic ticket. "We should advocate for a better long-term Cuba policy with anyone who will listen," Garcia said. "The Democrats are listening." Foundation chairman Jorge Mas Santos hailed the move, suggesting it would benefit Cubans to ensure they're represented by the Democratic party. "We don't want the extreme left of the Democratic Party to guide the Cuba policy or thinking on Cuba," Mas Santos said. "It is important to keep all the bases covered because we don't know who is going to win in November and we can't be so irresponsible as to put Cuba's fate in the hands of one person or one party." (*The Miami Herald*, 2/9/04)

September 6: In a letter addressed to the Pope and all Cuban bishops, the "Cuba Democracia Ya!" International Platform requested that those who suffer "political exclusion" be mentioned in the Catholic hierarchs' public statements on September 8, Cuba's Patron Saint's Day. (*Encuentro en la Red*, 6/9/04)

September 19: A summit of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba attended by representatives from a number of Cuban exile organizations came to an end after 3 days of sessions. The Cuban Democratic Directorate (DDC) sent several delegates while the Washington-based Center for a Free Cuba, whose Executive Director is Frank Calzón, was also represented. Carlos Alberto Montaner, from the Liberal Union, took part in a panel discussing proposals made by the Committee. Angel Garrido, international representative of the Lawton Foundation, led by political prisoner Oscar Elías Biscet, submitted before the Summit an open letter from his organization, demanding the release of Elías Biscet and all other prisoners of conscience. [For more on this, see also Foreign Affairs] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 19/9/04)

September 21: Speaking at a Democratic Party rally in Little Havana, a prominent Miami exile figure denounced President Bush as leading "probably the worst administration we've ever had on Cuban policy." The remark by Joe Garcia, former executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, signals what could be an unprecedented battle for Hispanic voters in the upcoming presidential race. "Part of it is our fault," Garcia said. "Because he's been saying exactly what we want to hear -- words like freedom, democracy, liberty. But he hasn't done anything to bring this about in Cuba." Garcia left CANF to accept a post with the New Democrat Network, a recruitment arm of the Democratic National Party that is launching a \$6 million media campaign targeting Hispanics. (*The Miami Herald*, 22/9/04)

September 28: A nationwide Democratic Party advocacy group announced the launch of several television ads aimed at Cuban-Americans, considered a pivotal voting bloc in Florida. The ads, part of a \$1 million effort, begin airing in Miami this week on the Telemundo and Univision Spanish-language networks and aim to speak to Cuban-Americans about jobs, health insurance and prescription drugs -- key issues identified by the New Democrat Network. A separate Internet ad critical of President Bush's policies will also be launched this week. (*Sun Sentinel*, 28/9/04)

Foreign Affairs

September 1: A group of 27 Cuban believers, including some evangelic leaders and Catholic laymen, traveled to Caracas, to attend the second meeting with Venezuelan counterparts. Raul Suarez, director of Havana-based Martin Luther King Center, told the press that the meeting's purpose is to reflect on biblical and theological unity, reconciliation, peace and justice. The gathering will also be an opportunity for exchanging views on the church's mistakes and reflect on revolutionary movements' flaws in their relation with religion. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/04)

September 1: Martín Torrijos, the son of a former dictator, took office as Panama's president, promising better relations with Cuba. He criticized Moscoso for last week's pardon of four Cuban exiles who had been accused by the

Cuban government of trying to kill Fidel Castro at a summit in Panama in 2000. "For me, there are not two classes of terrorism, one that is condemned and another that is pardoned (...) It has to be fought no matter what its origins," Torrijos said. Torrijos said he would seek to improve relations with both Cuba and Venezuela, which were angered by Moscoso's pardon of the Cuban exiles. Castro's government broke off relations, and Venezuela recalled its ambassador. (AP, 1/9/04)

September 2: Half a hundred Cuban doctors, members of the Special Program of Health in Honduras, attended an emergency operation against dengue in Rivera Hernandez shantytown, in San Pedro Sula department. The anti-dengue operation was developed to face the appearance of new cases in this sector, noted the chief of the metropolitan area, Diogenes Chavez. The coordinator of the Cuban doctors, Redelio Rendon, explained that in the last 32 weeks over seven thousand cases of dengue were reported, 120 of hemorrhage dengue with high incidence in this capital and in San Pedro Sula, according to official statistics. (*Prensa Latina*, 3/9/04)

September 2: According to Panamanian First Vice-President and Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis Navarro, Panama's new government initiated diplomatic contacts to mend relations with Cuba and Venezuela. (*EFE*, 2/9/04)

September 3: Radio Prague, the international service of the Czech Republic's state-owned radio, will expand its Cuba-focused programming next year, with an eye to human rights and peaceful democratic transition on the island. For four months, Radio Prague has been broadcasting a weekly 10-minute program on short-wave radio called "From Totalitarianism to Democracy," which directly addresses the communist-ruled island. "This initiative, an alternative to Miami programs, explains how the transition in Eastern Europe went, as told by its protagonists," Carlos Gonzalez, a representative of the nongovernmental People in Need foundation, told the press. The show "will help Cubans apply the experiences to their own situation," Gonzalez said. (*EFE*, 3/9/04)

September 4: Cuba's civic movement received the support of six former Costa Rican presidents and some 300 congressional members from 12 Latin American countries, including Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Venezuela. The group released a letter stating that, "Cuba is governed at present by the only dictatorship remaining in Latin America. There, the values of freedom are disregarded in the most visible manner". "In collective and general terms, our region still has not expressed itself in a clearly defined manner regarding this opening to the budding Cuban civic movement. In view of the hope for a peaceful change that emerges from the depths of Cuban reality, Latin American regional organisms and the embassies of our countries in Havana have a moral obligation to respond in a positive manner", the letter adds. (*The Miami Herald*, 4/9/04)

September 6: Guinea Bissau minister of Foreign Business, International Cooperation and Communities, Soares Sambu, arrived in Havana on an official visit to Cuba. Sambu will hold official talks with Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Felipe Perez Roque, and later sign an inter-ministerial agreement. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/9/04)

September 6: Recent denunciations of political prisoner abuse in Cuba could delay consideration by the European Union (EU) of a downgrading of diplomatic sanctions imposed against Havana in June 2003, European diplomatic sources told the media. According to a Dutch report to the EU, the Dutch EU Presidency summoned Cuba's second ambassador to The Hague to communicate concerns over the use of "torture and abuse" against imprisoned oppositionists in Cuban jails. (*Europa Press*, 6/9/04)

September 6: EU Council experts on Latin American issues will debate a study on the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, a recent Bush Administration initiative concerning the future of the island. Taking into account recommendations by the EU-25 ambassadors in Havana, the Dutch EU Presidency's considers that the U.S. initiative only has bilateral political relevance between Cuba and the United States. (*Europa Press*, 6/9/04)

September 7: Nauru's Health Minister said the arrival of 11 Cuban doctors has made a major contribution to the country's ability to handle serious health problems. The Cuban Government sent the doctors to Nauru two months ago, following a request made to Fidel Castro. Nauru's Health Minister Kieren Keke, a medical doctor who used to spend half his day at the hospital and the other half in his ministerial office, says the arrival of the Cuban doctors has taken a lot of pressure off the local medical fraternity. (*ABC*, 7/9/04)

September 8: Seven Cuban rafters missing at sea for a week are safe and sound in the Bahamas, Miami activists have confirmed. "We are glad to confirm that the seven missing young men are in Nassau," said Angel de Fana, head of the organization "Plantados." (*El Nuevo Herald*, 9/9/04)

September 9: The Parliamentary Group of Spain's People's Party has submitted draft legislation to its Congress aimed at having the Chamber of Representatives' Plenary Session express support for the Varela Project. The Popular Party initiative takes place prior to the second phase of the Varela Project, known as "National Dialogue," soon to be launched in Cuba and abroad. (*Europa Press*, 9/9/04)

September 9: The Canadian Network on Cuba is currently holding its convention to evaluate the solidarity work carried out over the past two years and to draw up new action plans. Representatives of 11 Friendship-with-Cuba Associations in English speaking Canada, two communist parties, and the Worker to Worker and the Postal Workers labor unions are attending the event underway in Toronto, Canada. In a press release, the Cuban Friendship Institute (ICAP), said convention activities began as over 50 participants waged a demonstration to protest the recent pardoning of four anti-Cuba terrorists by former Panamanian President Mireya Mosocoso, including Luis Posada Carriles. ICAP vice-president Enrique Roman heads a delegation from Cuba to the Canadian event. Also attending are Antonio Pubillones, Cuban political attaché in Ottawa and Laureano Cardoso, the Caribbean nation's General Consul in Toronto. (*AIN*, 9/9/04)

September 9: Some 50 deputies from 10 member nations of the Latin American Parliament, PARLATINO, are meeting in Havana to analyze health, energy and mining in the region. The meeting will be divided into two working committees. Access to health services in the continent including the impact on demographics and the main causes of ill health in adults and children are the main topics to be discussed in the health committee. The Energy and Mines Committee is discussing the experiences of public corporations and alternative energy sources. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 9/9/04)

September 10: Seven Cubans reached the Caribbean island of Guanaja, off the coast of Honduras, in a small wooden boat, a Honduran immigration official reported. The Cubans, all males, said they were from Camaguey, Cuba, from where they had sailed the previous week, he added. The men also said they wanted to go to Tegucigalpa, perhaps to travel to the United States from there, officials speculated. (*EFE*, 11/9/04)

September 13: With regards to Cuba, Spanish Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Ibero-America, Bernardino León, expressed before the Senate's Ibero-American Affairs Commission the need to "re-establish a normal dialogue, while continuing to push for improvements in the human rights situation." León also stressed that policies that instigate confrontation and obstruct dialogue can only benefit Castro's regime. (*Europa Press*, 13/9/04)

September 14: A group of eight Cuban refugees arrived by boat in the isles of Cisne, Atlantic Honduras. The group is under the custody of Honduran authorities, it was officially reported. (*AP*, 15/9/04)

September 15: Great Britain offered the Cuban government emergency aid to alleviate damage caused by hurricane Ivan, which killed at least 71 people in the Caribbean and is currently headed for U.S. shores. Last week, Fidel Castro declared that Cuba would not accept humanitarian assistance from countries that have enforced sanctions against its government. (*AFP*, 15/9/04)

September 15: The head of the UN body that focuses on disaster reduction said Cuba is a model for other countries in the management of hurricane risks, according to UN News Center. Salvano Briceño, director of the International Secretariat for Disaster Reduction, said Cubans are taught in schools, universities and workplaces how to prepare for hurricanes and how to cope with them if they hit the country. Some 1.3 million Cuban people were evacuated from their homes in anticipation of the arrival of Hurricane Ivan. Television and radio stations are used to transmit information to the public and all institutions are mobilized 48 hours in advance of the expected arrival of a serious storm. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/9/04)

September 15: At the European Parliament (EP) Chamber, a group of 40 representatives from 10 countries have formed the Group for Solidarity and Friendship with Cuba, which seeks non-discriminatory treatment of Cuba by the European Union, like the rest of the developing world receives. EP socialist representative Miguel Angel Martínez was unanimously chosen as president of the Group. (*Europa Press*, 15/9/04)

September 15: A report called "Manifiesto for the freedom of the prisoners of conscience in Cuba" presented by former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar in Madrid said that Cuba lacks an alibi "with which it can excuse or explain" its political and civil rights abuses. Also on hand for the report's presentation, which will be delivered to the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba at that body's first summit in Prague, were prominent Cuban exile Carlos Alberto Montaner and the president of the Spanish Association Cuba in Transition, Rafael Rubio. In the event, organized by the Fundación para el Análisis y los Estudios Sociales, headed by Aznar, the former president of the Spanish government demanded the Cuban government grant "immediate and unconditional" freedom for all prisoners of conscience. [[Manifiesto.pdf](#)] (*EFE*, 15/9/04)

September 16: Cuban official newspaper Granma chastised former Spanish President José María Aznar, who once again demanded the "immediate and unconditional" release of all political prisoners in the island. Under the headline "A now weaker Hurricane Aznar hits Cuba one more time," the daily claims that the ex-President is following to the letter the instructions of his "bosom buddy" George W. Bush. (*Europa Press*, 16/9/04)

September 16: During a Parliament session, Dutch Foreign Minister, Bernard Bot, said that Dutch diplomats in Cuba do not have access to the intellectuals imprisoned in Cuban jails. Bot said that, "our Embassy in Havana cannot have access to Cuban dissidents, in spite of the efforts they make to meet them". The Dutch minister emphasized the importance of the European Union pressures on the Cuban government in order to obtain the liberation of "the 68 intellectuals imprisoned in Cuba for the crime of having opposed current political regime". (*EFE*, 16/9/04)

September 16: Mothers, wives and daughters of 75 imprisoned Cuban dissidents have sent a letter of thanks to the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) which will shortly meet in Prague. The statement of Cuban women recalls that the dissidents are kept under extremely severe conditions which have a negative impact on their health. They suffer from various diseases which are not treated properly in prison. Cuban women in their letter appreciated solidarity and the committee's interest to help liberate those who are guilty only of the love for their country. Most of the women are relatives of the political opponents who were imprisoned by the Cuban regime last year. Among the signatories is the wife of Cuban poet and journalist Raul Rivero, 57, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison and whose health condition is allegedly very poor. One of his books has recently been published in the Czech Republic. (*CTK*, 16/9/04)

September 17: Former Czech President, Vaclav Havel, will be joined by politicians, intellectuals, and non-governmental organizations, during the first meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba. The meeting will discuss strategies for a peaceful transition on the island. Also in attendance will be Chile's Patricio Aylwin, his nation's first democratic president after the end of the Pinochet regime in 1990, former Canadian prime minister, Kim Campbell, and Luis Alberto Monge and Luis Alberto Lacalle, former heads of state in Costa Rica and

Uruguay, respectively. Former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar is also slated to take part in the gathering that is taking place under the auspices of the Czech Foreign Ministry and Senate. (*EFE*, 16/9/04)

September 17: Former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar called for the release of dozens of inmates in Cuba, charging they're political prisoners held "simply because they have a different opinion from the official line." He spoke at a meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, which is examining ways to support resistance to Fidel Castro's regime. Participants highlighted the case of Raul Rivero, a dissident journalist and author who was arrested in March 2003 along with 74 others in a crackdown on the opposition. (*AP*, 18/9/04)

September 17: Ricardo Alarcón, the president of the Cuban parliament, said that Cuban-Mexican relations were on the mend. Alarcón was speaking at a reception, held by the Mexican embassy in Havana, to celebrate Mexico's Independence Day. He was the most senior Cuban to attend, though the minister of culture, Abel Prieto, was also there along with a swarm of junior officials. Alarcón admitted that relations between the two countries were still not perfect but said that their improvement was inevitable. He said both countries could work out their differences and pointed out that next week there will be a meeting of the Mexican-Cuban inter-parliamentary union. He also praised the Mexican ambassador to Cuba, Roberta Lajous, saying that everyone in Cuba liked and respected her. (*Latin News Daily*, 17/9/04)

September 18: Former Czech President Vaclav Havel has opened an international conference in Prague on promoting democracy in Cuba. He told delegates that Cuba's situation would change soon and that opponents to Fidel Castro's 45-year rule should prepare for the end of "dictatorship". Mr Havel said a free, post-Castro Cuba should take inspiration from the experience of eastern Europe. "Some will be surprised to have so much freedom after all these years of communism and to have so much weight on their shoulders," he told delegates. Former Czech president Vaclav Havel described Cuba as "a giant prison", as he called for international mobilisation to persuade the country to commit to a peaceful transition to democracy. "Cuba is a giant prison. We have to put up alarm bells around the walls," he said. "With every signature, every conference we make another step towards freedom in Cuba." The Prague meeting is being organised by the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, founded by Mr Havel a year ago. (*BBC, AFP*, 19/9/04)

September 18: A fleet of environmentally-friendly buses will soon be on the streets of Havana thanks to a donation from the German State of Hessen and the Transport Association of Rhine Meno, the Granma daily newspaper reported. Parliamentary Member Dieter Posch presented the 13 buses, with capacity for between 110 and 180 passengers to the Cuban Minister of Transport, Carlos Manuel Pazos, at the central Bus Terminal in the Cuban capital. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 19/9/04)

September 18: Swedish MEP Cecilia Malmstroem said at a meeting of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) in Prague, that pressure on the United States to lift the economic embargo should be one of the pillars of EU policy towards Cuba. Malmstroem said that most of the European Parliament believes that the embargo has not been effective, has not brought anything positive and is used only as an alibi for the dictatorship in Cuba. Former Uruguayan President Luis Alberto Lacalle said he agrees with this opinion, adding that if George Bush wins re-election as president of the United States, he should re-evaluate this ineffective policy. Malmstroem said that coordination of activities between countries in Latin America, the United States and Europe is key, which a UN resolution from last year's conference on human rights shows. (*CTK*, 18/9/04)

September 19: The three-day conference of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) concluded with a discussion between European and Latin American NGOs. The groups agreed to ask the European Commission to work out a plan on how to deal with Cuba after a regime change. "Eastern European countries can contribute their experiences so that chaos is avoided," Milan Nic from the Pontis group said. Former Czech President Vaclav Havel also stressed the need to prepare for communism's fall in Cuba. NGOs also debated on how they can help Cuba. "Spain

and the Netherlands are the largest investors in Cuba. Every investment, into a hotel for example, violates international conventions in several ways, labour codes, for example," Nic said. He added that the fact that the Cuban government charges several times what it pays out to workers means that investments are moral support for the regime. (CTK, 19/9/04)

September 19: The declaration adopted by the Summit of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, known as the "Prague Memorandum," seeks "to set out common objectives for a general plan of support for democracy in Cuba that can be implemented in a coordinated manner at different levels and from different parts of the world. The task of general coordination and support for this plan will correspond to the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba." [[The Prague Memorandum](#)] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 19/9/04)

September 19: If a small but growing group of Argentine legislators has its way, the remains of Che Guevara will come back home one day -- back, that is, to a home that many people do not know he had. "Some people may be in favor of his ideas, and some may be against, but all agree that Che was a figure of noble causes," said Ines Perez Suarez, a congresswoman from Buenos Aires who wants the government to ask the Castro regime to repatriate Guevara's remains. "Che is admired all over the world, and the Argentine people deserve to have him back." That Castro would agree to such a request is unlikely if not unthinkable. One of Guevara's Cuban sons said he considered it so outlandish, "at first I thought it was a joke." (*Chicago Tribune*, 19/9/04)

September 18: The 23rd Economic and Scientific-Technical Commission between Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea opened at the Sojedong Residential Complex in Pyongyang. Cuban Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas and DPRK Trade Minister Ri Kyong Man are chairing sessions on the development of bilateral economic and commercial relations over the last two years, and exchange views on relations in 2005 in a wide variety of areas. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/9/04)

September 18: A group of Cubans who tried to make it to Florida aboard a boat made from a 1959 Buick have started a hunger strike to protest the limbo they've fallen into since being sent to Guantanamo Bay where they are waiting on their asylum claims. The Cubans - 13 of the some 38 - began the hunger strike after being held at the US outpost in eastern Cuba for months, according to William Sanchez, a Miami attorney for Luis Grass Rodriguez, one of the Cubans who made the trip in the makeshift boat in February. "What they're asking for is to be granted political asylum in the United States or for the United States to expedite political asylum, or for the minimum a third country, but to not keep them in Guantanamo any longer because that violates international law on political asylum and because the stay there is unbearable," said Sanchez. The migrants are being held on the Leeward side of the base away from the terror suspects. (*AP*, 18/9/04)

September 20: Slovakia hosted a conference for the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba, indicating a seismic shift in Slovak foreign policy towards Cuba. Meanwhile, Slovak non-governmental organisations (NGO) have been actively supporting Cuba's political dissidents, and several Slovak representatives have criticised the Castro regime for human rights violations, especially after the Cuban government detained a number of people accused of conspiring with the US. Slovakia's increasing involvement was highlighted when Bratislava hosted a conference supporting the democratic movement in Cuba. The conference came after a meeting held in Prague by the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba. "We are observing increasing interest in some groups, for example, the NGOs, the media, and citizens who have visited Cuba as tourists," programme manager of the Pontis Foundation Milan Nič told the press. (*Slovak Spectator*, 27/9/04)

September 20: A senior Cuban government delegation is headed to Southeast Asia for a three-nation tour. The group, led by senior government official Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, will travel to China, Laos and Vietnam for talks. Also joining the delegation are Salvador Valdés Mesa, member of the Central Committee and first secretary of the Party in

Camagüey, and Oscar Martínez Cordovés, vice chief of the International Relations Department of the CC. Details of the meetings have not been released. (VOA, *Granma*, 20/9/04)

September 20: Former Argentina captain Diego Maradona arrived in Cuba in another effort to kick his 20-year cocaine addiction and regain his health. A grinning but seriously overweight Maradona gave the thumbs up to European tourists as he slowly made his way through the airport but he frowned at reporters and refused to talk to them before being whisked away into the night. The 43-year-old, one of the most gifted players in the history of soccer, was accompanied on the flight from Argentina by his personal doctor Alfredo Cahe and his two sisters, among others. Maradona, who led Argentina to victory at the 1986 World Cup, will be treated at the Cuban Interior Ministry's Centre for Mental Health (CENSAM). (Reuters, 20/9/04)

September 20: Dissident Oswaldo Payá Sardiñas praised the outcome of the Prague Summit for democracy in Cuba and said that criticism of the event from domestic opposition figures was uncalled for. "I can't understand why anybody would have anything against a summit that aimed at promoting civil society in Cuba," indicated the leader of the Varela Project. From Havana, Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, leader of Cuban Change, said that the Czechs had made a mistake in inviting people who did not have the best interests of the Cuban nation in mind and acted to promote "unscrupulous destabilization plans against Cuba." [[Message from Oswaldo Payá to the Prague Summit](#)] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 20/9/04)

September 21: Former Argentina captain Diego Maradona was having medical examinations in Cuba and received a message of support from Fidel Castro for his latest efforts to kick cocaine, Argentina's ambassador said. The soccer great was met by Cuban Health Minister, Jose Ramon Balaguer, and Secretary of the Council of State, Jose Miyar Barrueco, upon his arrival in Havana's international airport. The Cuban officials brought a message from Castro welcoming Maradona and offering his support, Argentina's ambassador, Raul Taleb. (Reuters, 21/9/04)

September 22: Cuban and Mexican legislators began working to improve bilateral relations at the 7th Inter-Parliamentary Meeting, in an encounter favored by Havana's authorities, said Ricardo Alarcon, president of the Cuban Parliament. The meeting officially opened at the Nacional Hotel with the participation of 10 Mexican Senators and six Congress people, representing six political parties, and eight Cuban Assembly representatives. At the opening ceremony, Cuban Congress President Ricardo Alarcon urged participants to insist on better friendship and fraternal relations based on honest dialogue among real friends to improve bilateral ties. All Mexican political parties are represented in the delegation led by PAN Senator Marco Antonio Adame (Partido Accion Nacional). Among others in the delegation are PRD Jorge Martinez (Partido de la Revolucion Democratica), who is coordinator, and PT (Partido del Trabajo) Pedro Vazquez, president of the recently-constituted Mexico-Cuba Friendship Group. (*Prensa Latina*, 22/9/04)

September 22: The head of Cuba's medical brigade in Haiti, Juan Carlos Chávez, has announced that Cuban doctors are working to return health facilities to normal and assist Haitians affected by tropical storm Jeanne. In an interview with Cuban journalists, Dr. Chávez said Cuban medical personnel were evacuated from the path of the storm, but are now ready with medicine and provisions to help counteract infections and possible epidemics in Haiti. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 23/9/04)

September 22: Delegates from ten countries are debating the development of fragile ecosystems at an international workshop in the eastern Cuban province of Santiago. Among participants at the three-day event are specialists from Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Venezuela, El Salvador and Guatemala, who will share experiences and research with their Cuban counterparts. The workshop is sponsored by the Cuban Science, Technology and Environment Ministry, the Canadian International Development Agency, the non-governmental organization Alternative, the United Nations Development Program and the Latin American Council of Social Sciences. (*Prensa Latina*, 22/9/04)

September 24: Chinese President Hu Jintao said in Beijing that China has set an unswerving policy on consolidating ties with Cuba, and the policy will not alter regardless of changes in the international situation. Hu made the remarks at a meeting with Jose Ramon Machado Ventura, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba's Central Committee and vice president of the Council of State of Cuba. With concerted efforts, China believes the bilateral friendship between China and Cuba would be better developed, said Hu, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China. (*Xinhua*, 24/9/04)

September 24: Mexican and Cuban legislators meeting in Havana criticized the US embargo against Cuba while avoiding thorny issues that might affect bilateral relations. The final statement from the conference, the first since the crisis that had the two countries on the verge of breaking off diplomatic relations in May, does not mention issues like Cuba's debt to Mexico or the latter's criticism of the human rights situation on the island. The document said the 42-year-old U.S. economic embargo against Cuba "violates the principles of international law and norms governing relations between countries." The statement also expressed the legislators' "satisfaction" with the "normalization of bilateral relations within an atmosphere of respect and cordiality." Havana and Mexico City exchanged ambassadors over the summer after nearly severing diplomatic ties in May. In addition, it highlighted the need to expand trade and opportunities for investment to promote bilateral exchanges and proposed a treaty that would do away with double taxation. The statement did not mention Cuba's debt to Mexico, some 480 million, although both delegations agreed to refer the issue to the appropriate government agencies. (*El Universal*, 24/9/04)

September 24: In a press conference, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos confirmed that, during a meeting with his Cuban counterpart Felipe Pérez Roque, the release of political prisoners in Cuba, particularly that of Raúl Rivero, had been discussed. Asked whether they had talked about the incarcerated poet, Moratinos answered with a terse "yes," and made no further comment. (*Europa Press*, 24/9/04)

September 24: President Hugo Chavez proposed joining forces with communist Cuba to bring free health and education programs to poor Caribbean nations ravaged by recent hurricanes and tropical storms. "I've proposed to Cuban President Fidel Castro that Venezuela and Cuba pool resources to offer the governments of these people, if they consider it appropriate, these programs for literacy (...) and medical attention," he said. (*Reuters*, 25/9/04)

September 25: Forced by a freedom-of-information request, Mexico's government has released a report giving a sketchy outline of its reasons for a near-break in relations with Cuba earlier this year, a newspaper reported. The newspaper *El Universal*, which obtained the document, said that roughly a fourth of the material had been blacked out by censors on national security grounds, leaving several questions unanswered. It was produced by the government intelligence agency, which operates under the interior minister. The document said that growing activism by Cuban officials in Mexican affairs led to the May 2 expulsion of Cuba's ambassador and the withdrawal of Mexico's ambassador to the island. The ambassadors later returned to their posts. (*AP*, 25/9/04)

September 26: Latin Americans must unite to avoid being devoured by large centers of power, Fidel Castro warned during the closing of the 5th Cuba-Venezuela Meeting at Havana's Convention Center. With the money flying from developing countries to developed ones, social programs similar to those the Bolivarian Revolution is developing could be implemented in all the region, the daily *Juventud Rebelde* quoted Castro as saying. "Resulting from injustices and need to survive, Latin America is facing more crises, but rebelliousness and consciousness are higher than ever before, in a context where the example of Venezuela is outstanding," Fidel Castro stated. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/9/04)

September 27: Barbados Prime Minister Billie Miller expressed in New York the rejection of his country and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) of every attempt of "change of regime" imposed from abroad on Cuba. Cuba's isolation in the hemisphere is also a problem that concerns Barbados, that is why we embrace (Cuba) as a sister nation and we are committed to keep a constructive policy towards its government and people, Miller stated at the UN. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/9/04)

September 27: Cuba will send a brigade of electricians and linesmen to Grenada to help re-establish electricity on that island, seriously damaged by Hurricane Ivan several weeks ago. According to the daily Granma, the brigade -- made up of workers from seven Cuban provinces -- will travel to Grenada in the next few days. Angel Morfi, general secretary of the National Chemical, Mining and Energy Workers Union, said that the electricians just finished repairing damage done by hurricane-force winds in western Pinar del Río. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/9/04)

September 27: Panama acknowledged that it will not be easy to restore relations with Cuba, which were broken in August after the Central American nation's outgoing president ordered that four imprisoned anti-Castro Cuban exiles be pardoned. Panamanian Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis Navarro said during a press conference that the process of restoring relations with Cuba was "not easy," but that the island had "smiled upon the steps Panama has taken" in that direction. He added that during the 59th United Nations General Assembly in New York, he had spoken with his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque, about the matter, saying that "now the ball is in (the Cuban government's) court." (*EFE*, 27/9/04)

September 28: In response to a voter letter campaign, 79 percent of the British Parliament voted to oppose any US military action and hostile policy against Cuba. Concerned that Bush is increasing aggression against the island, the British Solidarity Campaign organized "Hands Off Cuba", in which a large number of British voters overwhelmingly rejected all belligerent actions by Washington, Granma daily reported. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/9/04)

September 28: Zambia's Foreign Affairs Minister Kalombo T. Mwansa concluded an official visit to Cuba, where he held top-level talks and visited socio-economic centers in the island's western zone. Mwansa arrived in Havana at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque, with whom he held official talks at the Cuban Foreign Affairs Ministry. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/9/04)

September 28: The visit of Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sergei Lavrov, to Cuba is devoted to development of trade and economic relations between the two countries, according to an interview he gave to the Russian journalists in Havana. "The purpose of the visit is, along with an exchange of views on international problems, to discuss ways, so to speak, to 'push' towards acceleration of the development of trade and economic relations," Russia's Foreign Minister said. "Following the well-known changes which have taken place in our relations, including the termination, for objective reasons, of the implementation of the 'oil for sugar' traditional scheme, it is necessary for us to seek new forms of cooperation, including establishment of joint ventures and joint production units, development of the natural resources, and other projects linked with industrial investment," Mr. Lavrov went on to say. (*Novosti*, 28/9/04)

September 28: The 12th International Conference on European Studies opened in Havana with the presentation of sixty papers on a wide variety of themes. The conference is hosted by the Cuban Center of European Studies, an organisation set up in 1974, that won consultative status in the Economic and Social Commission of the United Nations in 1996. The conference was opened by Dennys Guzmán, director of the Center, and by Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban National Assembly. More than 250 experts are participating in the conference that includes debates and workshops on themes as diverse as the European Union's foreign policy towards Cuba and the economic evolution of Eastern European countries. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 28/9/04)

September 29: "Cuba is not unfriendly towards the United States," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a news conference he gave with his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Perez Roque. "I have never felt Havana's unfriendliness towards the United States whenever I talked to Cuban officials. Russia believes Cuba is eager to be energetically engaged in tackling problems facing the world," said Mr. Lavrov. Mr. Lavrov said Russia believed the policy of imposing embargoes and economic sanctions was inefficient, although it was not ruled out by the United Nations Charter. (*Novosti*, 29/9/04)

September 29: Russia and Cuba agreed on a collective reaction to crises and conflicts under the UN aegis on the basis of international law. A statement issued by the Russian and Cuban Foreign Ministers, Sergei Lavrov and Felipe Perez Roque, confirmed "the readiness of both sides to an overwhelming boost of cooperation in the international scene in the interests of forming a more just, equal and democratic world order, based on strict observance of the norms and principles of international law and the UN Charter". (*Novosti*, 29/9/04)

September 29: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met with Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders as the countries worked on re-creating more modest versions of political and economic alliances that unraveled after the Soviet Union's collapse. Lavrov said in Havana that his lengthy meeting with Castro started the day before. "I slept five hours," Lavrov said before meeting with Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage. Lavrov characterized the encounter as "very useful and interesting" without offering any details. The meeting with Castro underscored the importance of Russia's past relationship to Cuba, a strategic Soviet ally in America's backyard during the Cold War. (*AP*, 29/9/04)

September 29: President of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelleh, begins a visit to Cuba to improve cooperation and bilateral relations, according to official sources in Havana. Guelleh is the first president of this African nation to visit the island, and it demonstrates the wish of both countries to strengthen bilateral relations and collaboration. (*Prensa Latina*, 29/9/04)

September 29: The planes owned by state-run oil giant Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. (PDVSA) have made unusually frequent flights to Cuba. Cuban ministers, diplomats, relatives, and officials are frequent beneficiaries of the so-called "colitas". On several occasions the Cuban Vice President, Carlos Aurelio Lage Dávila, has arrived in Venezuela aboard a Falcon 50 airplane owned by Flight registers for PDVSA airplanes show that the aircrafts have frequently flown to the Caribbean island, carrying ministers, diplomats, political leaders, and relatives of top Venezuelan officials. (*El Universal*, 29/9/04)

September 29: Spanish Foreign Affairs Minister, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, admitted that Madrid is looking for consensus among the twenty-five EU ministers in order to ease some of the diplomatic sanctions imposed by the EU Council on Cuba. Moratinos added that limitation of diplomatic contacts with Havana is "irrational" and doesn't lead anywhere". (*Europa Press*, 29/9/04)

Terrorism

September 1: There was a Cuban citizen among those who suffered in the terrorist attack near Moscow's Rozhskaya metro station, medical sources told the press. In total, 46 people suffered in the terrorist attack, including 4 children, 25 men and 17 women. (*Interfax*, 1/9/04)

September 2: Cuba has formally requested the extradition of Luis Posada Carriles from Honduras. The request was made by Havana's ambassador to Tegucigalpa, Alberto González Polanco, in a letter addressed to acting Honduran Foreign Minister Aníbal Quiñónez. The Honduran Foreign Ministry has confirmed that Tegucigalpa would extradite Posada Carriles if he is found to be in Honduras. (*EFE, Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/9/04)

September 2: In Tegucigalpa, Honduran Security Minister Oscar Alvarez said that Luis Posada Carriles had presumably left Honduras for the Bahamas. Meanwhile, in San José, Costa Rican Foreign Minister Roberto Tovar declared in a press release that "the Government had no knowledge" of the Cuban anti-Castro fugitive entering the country. Tovar made this declaration following a tip from Cuban authorities that Posada Carriles might "enter Costa Rican territory." The Costa Rican minister said that "if (Posada Carriles's) presence (in Costa Rica) were confirmed, he would not be granted asylum or refuge." (*EFE, Europa Press*, 2/9/04)

September 5: Cuban Parliamentary President Ricardo Alarcón declared that any country locating self-confessed terrorist Luis Posada Carriles is under obligation to detain him in accordance with international law. Alarcón, in an interview with the Prensa Latina news agency, affirmed that both international law and UN Security Council resolutions originally proposed by the United States oblige states to apprehend groups or individuals linked to terrorism found within their territory. The leader of the Cuban Parliament criticised statements from some Central American political leaders declaring that Posada Carriles would be deported if found, reiterating that states were duty bound to arrest the self confessed killer and then discuss requests for extradition. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 6/9/04)

September 6: The opening round of detainee military tribunals at Guantanamo Bay resembled something between a Mel Brooks farce and the kangaroo courts of former Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. The proceedings didn't look anything like justice, military or otherwise. Meanwhile, two US citizens still sit in military brigs, isolated from their lawyers and months if not years away from the hearings the high court says they deserve. The US criminal justice system, including its military stepchild, is supposed to stand for due process, impartiality and openness. No photographic, video or audio recordings of the hearings will be released. (*The Toronto Star*, 6/9/04)

September 9: Fidel Castro sent a letter of condolence to the Russian people and condemned the bloody terrorist siege in the southern Russian town of Beslan that left almost 350 people dead, the Cuban Foreign Ministry informed. The official Ministry press release said that the Cuban leader sent the letter of condolence to Russian President Vladimir Putin on September 4th to express his and Cuba's sympathy with the families of the dead and condemn what he called "repulsive" acts of violence the world over. [[Nota Informativa](#)] (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 10/9/04)

September 17: The Bush administration has conducted a new assessment of Cuba's biological weapons capacity and concluded that it is no longer clear that Cuba has an active, offensive bio-weapons program, according to administration officials. The latest assessment contradicts a 1999 National Intelligence Estimate and past statements by top administration officials, some of whom have warned that Cuba may be sharing its weapons capacity with "rogue states" or with terrorists. The new assessment says the intelligence community "continues to believe that Cuba has the technical capability to pursue some aspects of an offensive biological weapons program," according to an intelligence official. He added, "There is still much about Cuba that is cause for concern, including the production and export of dual-use items and cooperating with countries on the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism." The term "dual use" refers to items that could be used for both civilian and military programs. (*The New York Times*, 17/9/04)

September 28: The top diplomats for Russia and Cuba condemned all forms of terrorism and renewed Russia's call to expand the war against the global scourge. Foreign Ministers Sergey Lavrov of Russia and Felipe Perez Roque of Cuba said in a statement after private talks that they "condemn terrorism in all forms and manifestations, wherever, and against whomever, such acts are committed and independent of their motives." (*AP*, 28/9/04)

Security

September 1: General Leopoldo Cintra Frías, hero of the Republic of Cuba and general of the Army Corps, is in the Chinese capital at the invitation of the Chinese armed forces for an official visit. Cintra Frías, a member of the Cuban Communist Party Political Board and chief of the Army for the island's western region, is leading a delegation of several high officials of the Cuban Armed Forces. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/04)

September 1: Vietnam's Public Security Minister, Le Hong Anh, arrived in Havana at the official invitation of the Cuban Ministry of Interior. The Vietnamese minister will hold official talks with his Cuban counterpart, Brigadier General Santiago Borges. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 1/9/04)

September 3: Chinese Defense Minister and Central Military Commission vice president, Colonel General Cao Gangchuan, received Cuban General Leopoldo Cintra Frias in Beijing. The meeting between the generals was described as friendly. (*Prensa Latina*, 3/9/04)

US-Cuba Relations

September 1: Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture Steve Kerr is planning a trip to Cuba, to work on a deal to export the state's agricultural commodities and dairy cattle to the island, according to The Boston Globe. Kerr is following up on an April trade mission to Havana by Lt. Governor Brian Dubie, who returned home with plans to eventually sell apples, dried milk and cows from Vermont, the newspaper reports. The agriculture secretary said he hoped to return after his four-day trip with contracts in hand for the sale of five container loads of apples valued at approximately \$100,000 and for 3,000 metric tons of powdered milk valued at \$6 million. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/04)

September 1: The US has imposed a fine on Iberia, the Spanish airline, for breaking its embargo on Cuba. According to the US Treasury, Iberia - in which the Spanish government has a 5.35 per cent stake - was guilty of the "transportation and importations of Cuban goods to the United States". The fine, which was imposed in June but only is emerging now, threatens further to undermine relations between Washington and Madrid. (*The Financial Times*, 1/9/04)

September 2: Spanish airline Iberia said it had agreed to pay \$8,000 to settle US government accusations that it broke the US embargo on Cuba. The events at issue in the case date back to 2000 when, according to the airline, Iberia carried tobacco originating in Spain's Canary Islands from Spain to Panama via its Miami hub. "It was Canaries tobacco, but they (the United States) insisted it was Cuban tobacco, although they were unable to prove it and finally we opted for a less costly settlement," an Iberia spokesman said. The settlement with the US Treasury was reached in June but has only now been made public. (*Reuters*, 2/9/04)

September 2: In the shadow of the best-known and most controversial result of the Cuban balsero crisis in 1994 - the wet-foot/dry-foot policy - more than 230,000 Cubans have legally immigrated to the United States in the past decade. That quiet inflow of Cubans represents nearly seven times the 35,000 would-be migrants who wound up at the US Navy base in Guantanamo Bay - another of the searing images from those days when Cubans by the tens of thousands took to inner tubes, homemade rafts and other flimsy vessels in desperate bids to cross the Florida Straits. (*The Miami Herald*, 2/9/04)

September 2: A hospital translator faces a federal immigration hearing after federal agents arrested him on allegations that he failed to disclose he once worked for Cuba's intelligence service. Juan Manuel Reyes-Alonso, 36, who lives in Chatham County, was held without bond in the Forsyth County jail while awaiting a meeting with an immigration judge in Atlanta. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents led him away in handcuffs outside UNC Hospitals, where Reyes-Alonso works in the pediatrics department. Reyes-Alonso, who was born in Cuba, failed to disclose that he was in "intelligence office training in June 1994 under the command of the Cuban Directorate of Intelligence," said Sue Brown, a spokeswoman for the immigration and customs enforcement office. (*AP*, 3/9/04)

September 3: The US has imposed fines on several European companies in the last few months, including Alitalia, the Italian airline, for breaking its Cuban embargo laws, raising fears of a new trade confrontation between Washington and Brussels. The fines follow the penalty imposed on Iberia, the Spanish airline, after it was accused of shipping Cuban goods through the US. The sanctions may force the European Commission, which has strongly criticised the extra-territorial application of the Cuban embargo laws, to protest to Washington. Brussels said it was studying the fine

imposed on Iberia. "We are opposed to any extra-territorial measure (from the US government) that affects any European interest," said a spokeswoman for Pascal Lamy, the trade commissioner. (*The Financial Times*, 3/9/04)

September 4: Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon stated that Cuba did not expect the US to change its policy toward Havana, irrespective of the candidate who wins the November elections in the North American country. Alarcon said that the relaxation of travel prohibitions on Cuban immigrants was the only predictable change if Democrat candidate John Kerry won and kept his promise. According to the Parliament president, Kerry speaks about keeping the blockade and pressures, the same position but probably with a less aggressive rhetoric than President George W Bush: essentially the same policy. When Democrats opposed the travel bans on Cuban-Americans, they made clear they supported the document containing the Bush policy, Alarcon stressed. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/9/04)

September 5: Cuban National Assembly President, Ricardo Alarcón, has expressed that there is a real threat of a US invasion of the island. Alarcon rejected that US authorities denied such a possibility after a denouncement made in a Cuban congressional statement in July. "I wouldn't say US authorities have denied that. There has been a brief statement by US Interest Section chief in Havana, James Carson, but he is a fourth-class bureaucrat," the official stressed. He also recalled what President Bush said when he created a commission to draft a plan for a so-called Cuban transition -meaning the process that will start the day Cuban President Fidel Castro is gone- "we are not just talking, but working, acting to get that, and we have to do it in a quick, aggressive manner," Bush said then. No US government has ever been more explicit in developing and revealing its designs for intervention, Alarcon concluded. (*Prensa Latina*, 6/9/04)

September 6: According to relatives in Havana and sources with the Miami Coastguard Service, seven Cuban balseros who left the island illegally are currently missing at sea while a freighter on its way to the Bahamas picked up another 24. [For more on this, see also Foreign Affairs] (*El Nuevo Herald*, 7/9/04)

September 7: Antonio Guerrero, one of the five Cuban political prisoners in the United States, denounced in a public letter that prison authorities have forbidden him to collect stamps. The letter explains that after his stay in a punishment cell, he had accumulated more than 200 letters, kept for a month by the prison's Security Department. Nevertheless, the official who gave him the letters objected to two coming from Slovenia with no name and address, and containing stamps from that country. As the Cuban prisoner is not authorized to receive them, they threw them out. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/9/04)

September 8: A US Senate subcommittee has authorized business trips to Cuba by U.S. citizens selling domestic agricultural products. The agricultural affairs subcommittee gave its unanimous approval to a joint proposal submitted by Republican Larry Craig and Democrat Byron Dorgan, who represents the agricultural states of Idaho and North Dakota, respectively. (*AFP*, 9/9/04)

September 8: A license for Southern Illinois University researchers to travel to Cuba has been renewed by the federal government. The license had expired in June and government officials did not renew the document. But university officials and local congressmen successfully convinced the US Department of the Treasury to restore the SIU's license for one year. (*AP*, 9/9/04)

September 8: An international working group comprised of analysts, former government officials and diplomats is "most troubled" to see that the recommendations to the U.S. president by a special commission on Cuba are more concerned with putting an end to Fidel Castro's rule than with a "peaceful transition," the long-avowed policy of the U.S. government toward the island. In an open letter addressed to Secretary of State Colin Powell, the working group of the Inter-American Dialogue -- a Washington-based think tank -- maintains that the recommendations to President George W. Bush "poorly serve U.S. interests in Cuba and the wider region." [[An open letter to Secretary of State Colin Powell.pdf](#)] (*IPS*, 9/9/04)

September 9: Fidel Castro said he will not accept any humanitarian aid for victims of Hurricane Ivan from any country that has imposed economic sanctions on the island, insisting the only acceptable humanitarian aid is the lifting of the US embargo. "We will not accept assistance from those that have imposed economic sanctions on our country; they can spare themselves the hypocrisy of offering aid to Cuba," Castro said. "We won't accept any humanitarian assistance other than the lifting of the US economic embargo," said the leader, who spoke close to four hours on state-run television. (*EFE*, 10/9/04)

September 8: The chief US diplomat in Havana built a model of a Cuban prison cell in his backyard to draw attention to the island's human rights record, drawing critical comments by foreign diplomats. James Cason, head of the US Interests Section in Havana, presented the structure, a model of what he said is a typical solitary holding cell in a Cuban prison, during a small diplomatic reception at his home. Cason said the structure was based on a description that imprisoned dissident Oscar Biscet gave his wife. A little over six feet high and three feet wide, the holding cell of wood and metal features a drain on the floor for a toilet, a plastic bowl of food, a sheet for a bed and a fake rat. (*AP*, 8/9/04)

September 9: The president of the Cuban parliament, Ricardo Alarcón, criticized the decision by James Cason to build in his backyard a model of a Cuban prison cell. "I'm not surprised by any unsightly display that man makes," Alarcon said. "He lacks seriousness." "What he should do is mount an exposition of the holding areas of the base at Guantanamo," Alarcon said, referring to the prison in easternmost Cuba where the U.S military is holding hundreds of prisoners accused of links to Afghanistan's fallen Taliban regime or the al-Qaida terror network. (*El Tiempo*, *AP*, 9/9/04)

September 9: Vermont Agriculture Secretary Steve Kerr is bringing home from Cuba seven million dollars worth of business for the state. Kerr met with Fidel Castro before Kerr signed the agricultural deals. Kerr says he and Castro talked about everything from the importance of education to Parkinson's disease and eye surgery. He described his meeting with Castro as "remarkable." Kerr signed agreements to send dairy cattle, apples and powdered milk to Cuba. The American food sales to Cuba are an exception to US trade sanctions against the island. (*AP*, 9/9/04)

September 13: With Hurricane Ivan just hours away from passing over or near the western tip of Cuba, Fidel Castro repeated his stand that he wouldn't accept any assistance from the US. Castro said Cuba wouldn't accept a penny from the US or any country that has imposed economic sanctions against his country. "Not only from the US, but from other countries whose names I don't want to mention", Castro said. Castro said the US could save itself the hypocrisy of trying to help Cuba in this situation. (*CNN*, *La Jornada*, 14/9/04)

September 13: A key lawmaker renewed his criticism that the Bush administration was dedicating too many resources to squeezing the communist government in Cuba rather than tracking down terrorists. Senator Max Baucus (Democrat-Montana), ranking member of the Senate Finance Committee and a critic of the Cuba embargo, said that the Office of Foreign Assets Control devoted "more personnel resources to prevent US citizens from vacationing in Cuba than it does to root out the international sources of terrorist financing in Iraq, Afghanistan or Iran." OFAC deploys 21 employees to enforce the Cuba travel ban. That compares to 16 employees who track the financial support networks of Iraqi insurgents and another 16 who pursue the al Qaeda terrorism network, Baucus' office said in a statement. (*The Miami Herald*, 14/9/04)

September 14: The head of the federal agency charged with enforcing US economic sanctions against other countries, including Cuba, is leaving his post after 17 years, the Treasury Department announced. Richard Newcomb, director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, or OFAC, leaves his position in the Treasury Department as OFAC's workload was expected to increase sharply after President Bush decided earlier this summer to tighten US restrictions on travel to Cuba. OFAC, in charge of enforcing all of the United States' economic sanctions against other countries, also plays a role in pursuing those who finance terrorists. (*The Miami Herald*, 14/9/04)

September 15: Opponents of US restrictions on travel to Cuba suffered a defeat when an amendment that would have denied funding for enforcement was withdrawn from a House of Representatives bill, the first such setback in five years. Representative Jeff Flake (Republican-Arizona), the sponsor of the initiative, blamed election-year politics for his decision to withdraw the amendment. "Unfortunately, the timing of this legislation this year does not lend itself to a reasoned and thoughtful debate about our policy toward Cuba," he said. A similar amendment passed the House and Senate last year, but was later dropped in a conference committee under a veto threat from the White House. (*The Miami Herald*, 15/9/04)

September 15: In separate trials, a US judge gave 1-year prison sentences to four individuals charged with conspiracy to smuggle 62 illegal aliens from Cuba into the US territory. The Miami-based Office of the US Attorney for the Southern District of Florida informed that the accused would also serve one year's probation. (*EFE*, 16/9/04)

September 15: The Department of State released the sixth Annual Report on International Religious Freedom, which examines the "status of religious freedom around the world." In the case of Cuba, the reports signals that, the "Ministry of Interior continues to control and monitor religious activities and to use surveillance, infiltration and harassment against religious groups, clergy and laypersons." [[International Religious Freedom Report: Cuba](#)] (*Washington Files*, 15/9/04)

September 15: The number of people visiting Cuba from the United States has dropped 25 percent since new US travel restrictions took effect this summer, Cuba's tourism minister said. That trend isn't expected to change before the US presidential elections on November 2, Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero said. "These measures have really pressed down the flow of American tourists (...) and Cubans residing in the United States," Marrero told a news conference. "We are hoping for recovery after November." (*AP*, 15/9/04)

September 16: The B'nai B'rith Cuban Jewish Relief Project is collecting clothing, medicine and supplies for the beleaguered population of Cuba, which has been battered by two hurricanes in the past five weeks and may be in the path of a third by this weekend. Based in Pittsburgh, the relief project is licensed by the U.S. government to assist Cubans through humanitarian missions and donations. (*Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, 16/9/04)

September 18: The world premiere of Oliver Stone's follow-up documentary on Fidel Castro met timid applause from a half-full house at the San Sebastian International Film Festival. Stone's documentary, titled "Looking for Fidel," presents a more balanced portrait of the Communist leader and life on the Caribbean island than Stone's 2002 film "Comandante." "It's a very spontaneous movie," Stone said at a news conference after the screening. "It's not a left-wing documentary, and I hope Americans will see it that way." "It was made for educational reasons, not for money, but I've had enormous difficulties to market it," he added. (*Las Vegas Sun*, 19/9/04)

September 18: IFCO's Pastors for Peace, an organization based in New York, announced the creation of a relief fund for countries affected by recent hurricanes Charley, Frances and Ivan in the Caribbean. The second week of September, Hurricane Ivan hit hard across the Caribbean, destroying 90% of the housing on the island of Grenada and rendering 3/4 of the people of Grenada homeless; flooding Grand Cayman; killing more than 60 people and causing untold damage in Jamaica and other island nations, explains IFCO's Pastors for Peace in a press release. In Cuba, no lives were lost, it says, but major damage has been suffered in Pinar del Rio and the Isle of Youth, and torrential and sustained rains have damaged crops in Havana Province and homes in the oldest neighborhoods of Centro Habana and Old Havana. The note says that when Pastors for Peace brought their 15th Friendship to Havana in late August, Cuba was recovering from the summer's first big storm. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/9/04)

September 21: In a rebuke against President Bush, the House voted to reverse a new administration policy that limits travel by Cuban-Americans to visit their families in Cuba. With Florida members sharply divided, the US House voted 225 to 174 to remove new travel restrictions. Proponents from Florida and other states said the new rules separate families

and cut off a lifeline of support during an especially traumatic time in the aftermath of hurricane damage. The 225-174 vote is not expected to survive the legislative process; the Senate version of the bill is still in committee and even if both chambers keep the amendment on the final transportation appropriations bill, Republican leaders said they believe Bush would veto it. But the vote was viewed as a slap at Bush as he battles to keep his historic domination of the Cuban-American vote in Florida. (*Boston News, Sun Sentinel*, 22/9/04)

September 22: A Cuban-American man convicted of smuggling Cubans into the United States has been sentenced to nearly 13 years in prison for a mission that claimed the life of a 48-year-old woman after a life prison term was erased on appeal. Under a plea bargain, Jorge "Bombino" Aleman admitted organizing five smuggling trips that ferried more than 100 Cubans to Florida from October 1999 to June 2001. (*AP*, 22/9/04)

September 22: Award winning US filmmaker Oliver Stone has reaffirmed his admiration for the Cuban Revolution and Fidel Castro. Speaking with reporters in Spain at the San Sebastian Film Festival, the internationally-renowned movie director said that during recent visits to the island he has witnessed the Cuban people's reaction to their president on the streets and affirmed that their support and admiration are not feigned. "If it were, they'd all deserve Oscars for their performance." (*Prensa Latina*, 22/9/04)

September 23: Cuba sought fresh support from the American people and the United Nations to end the four-decade US embargo on the island, and dismissed the Bush administration's campaign to topple Fidel Castro as a failure. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said if Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry defeats President Bush in November and lifts some restrictive measures against Cuba, "that would be positive." But only a complete end to the social and economic embargo will satisfy the Cuban government, he told The Associated Press in an interview. Perez Roque made a sharp distinction between Washington's hard line toward the Cuban leader and the support for easing the sanctions among the American public and in the US Congress. (*AP*, 23/9/04)

September 23: Former New York mayor, Rudy Giuliani, accused the democrat candidate, John Kerry, of avoiding a visit to Miami. According to Giuliani, Kerry didn't want to give explanations to the Cuban exiles about his position towards the island. "Sincerely, I think he doesn't come to Miami because he has been very inconsistent regarding Cuba." "He has been consistently inconsistent," Giuliani told the press. Besides, "Kerry knows that this community will ask him explanations for his positions during last visit", Giuliani said in the last scale of a tour with candidate to the Senate, Mel Martínez. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 23/9/04)

September 24: A man from Ecuador was sentenced by a US jury to 100 years in prison for recording his sex acts with at least 120 children in Cuba and Ecuador and distributing the videotapes and CDs to customers in the United States. The Cuban government, co-operating with US investigators, tracked down nine victims using still images lifted from tapes and disks; Ecuador identified three victims. Cuba prosecuted three women and a man who helped recruit girls and boys for the illicit productions. (*The National Post*, 25/9/04)

September 24: Cuba said US President George W. Bush had "handcuffed" the United Nations, and that the war in Iraq had cost the world body its credibility and respect. Following the US-led invasion of Iraq, the United Nations had ceased to exist as a "useful and diverse forum," and was now living through the worst period in its 60-year history, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told the UN General Assembly. He also argued that the unilateral actions of the United States precluded any valid reform of the United Nations -- an issue that has been a hot topic of debate at the General Assembly. [[Statement by Felipe Pérez Roque at the UN General Assembly](#)] (*AFP*, 24/9/04)

September 24: The Cuban government has little hope for a change in US policy towards the island after the upcoming presidential elections in the United States. But in other sectors of Cuban society, there are some who believe that even a second term under George W. Bush would be different. "I support John Kerry, the Democratic candidate for president in the November elections, because I believe that anyone would be better than Bush," Cuban dissident Eloy Gutiérrez

Menoyo, a former rebel commander who is now asking to be allowed to continue his activism legally in Cuba, said in an interview with IPS. Nevertheless, a change in Washington's stance could come under either Bush or Kerry, he added. "There is a majority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives that is in favour of a new U.S policy towards Cuba, a policy that isn't controlled by an elite minority of the Cuban exile community," he explained. (*IPS*, 24/9/04)

September 26: Bacardi has been indicted by a Texas grand jury on charges of making an illegal \$20,000 (£13,600) payment to a Republican political group whose founder lobbied against rival Cuban rum brand Havana Club. The charge against the rum giant is the latest twist in the decade-long "rum war" between the exiled anti-Castro rum dynasty and communist Cuba. At stake is control of the US trademark for Bacardi's arch rival, Cuban-distilled Havana Club, currently owned by Cubaexport - a joint venture of Cuba and French drinks giant Pernod Ricard. The drink is the fastest-growing rum brand in the world but, because of a legal dispute going back to Fidel Castro's revolution in 1959, both sides claim to own it in the US. Bacardi lost the last round of the trademark dispute, but is appealing. (*Reuters*, 26/9/04)

September 27: A group of organizations representing publishers and authors sued the federal government, saying it is blocking the works of authors in countries such as Cuba, Iran and Sudan from reaching the United States. In the lawsuit in US District Court in Manhattan, the groups asked a federal judge to remove government restrictions that allegedly block the free exchange of information and ideas. Otherwise, it said, "Americans who want information from Cuba, Iran and Sudan are limited to reading what has already been written in those countries." The lawsuit noted that authors in those countries already work under government restrictions and blamed the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control for, in effect, extending "the force of foreign censorship to the United States." (*AP*, 27/9/04)

September 28: In a rare intervention in the American legislative process, the Cuban government is lobbying against legislation pending before Congress, saying lawmakers must act to repeal controversial trademark legislation and expressing its opposition to the so-called Bacardi bill, according to a document provided to the press. In a letter to Senate Judiciary Committee members, Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera, chief of the Cuban Interest Section in Washington, D.C., said Cuba opposes the bill. Rodríguez Barrera said his country's courts have protected the thousands of US trademarks currently registered in Cuba, adding that Cuba has waited with considerable patience on effective US action to cure Section 211's violations" of the Inter-American Convention and the TRIPS agreement. Many US companies fear that Fidel Castro would initiate legal retaliation against their trademarks. National Foreign Trade Council (NFTC) President Bill Reinsch said he believes Cuba is waiting to see what Congress does" but would retaliate if Section 211 were not appealed outright. (*The Hill*, 28/9/04)

September 29: Cuban scholars charged that the US government denied visas to more than 60 Cubans seeking to attend a conference on Latin America in the United States. Milagro Martinez, a political scientist who was to attend the Latin American Studies Association congress in Las Vegas next month, said the American mission in Havana announced this week that she and more than 60 other Cuban academics were denied US visas. The reason for the denial was not immediately clear. Officials at the US Interests Section in Havana declined to comment and referred calls to the US State Department in Washington, which did not immediately issue a statement on the matter. (*AP*, 29/9/04)

September 30: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque presented the document that will be offered before the United Nations General Assembly in October. In communist Cuba, milk rations for children stop at age 7, blackouts stop the fans in sweltering homes, and it's anyone's guess whether there'll be cooking gas this month. Such banes of daily life are the product of the US trade embargo and could be removed within a year of sanctions being lifted, Cuba's foreign minister said as he launched the island's annual international campaign against the embargo. Cuba has lost an average of \$1.8 billion a year in trade since the first sanctions were imposed in 1960, a year after the Cuban revolution thrust Fidel Castro into power, Felipe Perez Roque said in a news conference. [[Report by Cuba on Resolution 58/7 of the UN General Assembly](#)] (*Radio Habana Cuba, Sun Sentinel*, 30/9/04)

