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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Candidates for delegates to municipal governments are nominated throughout the island. An essay by Fidel Castro is perceived as a sign of contradiction within the elite. The soldiers who attempted to hijack an airliner in May are spared from death sentence by a military tribunal. A national debate on economic reform takes place at workplaces and neighbourhoods. A group of Cuban dissidents stage an unusual sit-in in front of the Justice Ministry in Havana and denounce the arrests of more than a dozen who were intending to participate.

Economy: Cuba's housing construction program experiences serious delays. China delivers 200 buses for public transportation to Cuba. Venezuela gives Cuba a \$100 million loan to upgrade the island nation's railroad system. First deputy Economy and Planning Minister says that Cuba's 2007 Gross Domestic Product will grow by ten percent if compared to previous years. Cuba and Spain sign a broad agreement that re-establishes cooperation.

Foreign Affairs: Two Angolan delegations, one headed by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, visit Cuba. Delegations from Myanmar, Zimbabwe, Uganda, Mali, Guinea Bissau, and the President of the African Union visit the island. Mexican President Felipe Calderón receives the new Cuban ambassador. The Second Ministerial Meeting of the Council of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) takes place in Havana. The Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs develops a busy agenda on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

US-Cuba Relations: A custody case of a 4-year-old Cuban girl continues at the Miami-Dade County Courthouse. More Cubans arrive illegally in the US. Fidel Castro suggests that the September 11 attacks were the result of a conspiracy by the US government. Cuba releases its annual report on the embargo. In a speech to the UN General Assembly, the US President calls for free elections in Cuba. Cuba's foreign minister walks out of the UN General Assembly in protest of US President's speech.



Domestic Affairs

September 1: Nomination of candidates for delegates to municipal governments in over 100 assemblies started in Cuba, as the first stage of the general elections to be held in October. These meetings in each neighbourhood are the first of 50,600 assemblies scheduled for proposing those elected by the population, as established by the Electoral Law. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/07)

September 1: The book "Dialogue of Civilizations" by Fidel Castro was presented in Cuba as a source of the historical thought of mankind and protection of environment. Published by the Cuban State Council, the book includes the speech at the UN Conference on Environment and Development by Fidel Castro in Rio de Janeiro on June 12, 1992. Other pages are also dedicated to the words of Fidel Castro at the World Conference of Civilizations on March 30, 2005 in Havana. Presenters of the book insisted in the importance of Fidel Castro's revolutionary thought in the two speeches, with great creativity and universal thought, and a call to understand that science, politics and human values are not separated in the world. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/07)

September 1: Culture Minister Abel Prieto said that Fidel Castro is recovering and is working, to refute rumors of a presumed deterioration in the leader of the revolution's health. "I have no reason to think Fidel is in danger for his life. As we know he is recovering and is working," Prieto said at a press conference after the presentation of a book of speeches by Castro on the environment. "Fidel is obviously very intellectually active and, although I have no direct news about how he feels, I think it's undeniable that he is a person at the height of his intellectual powers and is producing some highly valuable material," he said. (*EFE*, 1/9/07)

September 2: Cuba finished in the eleventh spot of the general medal standings of the 11th World Championships of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) that concluded in Osaka, Japan, with the participation of athletes from 203 countries. The island's delegation accumulated a title, silver, and a bronze medal. (*ACN*, 3/9/07)

September 3: More than three million Cubans are enrolled in the new school year 2007-2008. The main national ceremony, marking the beginning of the new school year was held at the Mella theatre in Havana. Cuban Education Minister Luis Ignacio Gómez expressed his confidence that the new school year, dedicated to Argentinean-Cuban legendary guerrilla fighter Ernesto Che Guevara, will be far better than any previous one. He explained that despite economic hardships and Washington's intensified economic blockade against the island, the new school year begins with all the necessary material and human resources guaranteed. According to a press report, "Reflections by the Commander en Chief" on the history of US-Cuba relations will be part of the topics that children in elementary grades will be studying in the current academic year. (*Radio Habana Cuba, EER*, 3,4/9/07)

September 4: Fidel Castro's long absence from public view has fuelled wild rumours among his exiled opponents in Miami that he is dead, even one that Russian embalmers were at work preserving his body. In Cuba, confident Communist Party officials who have been relaxing at the beach are back in town with suntans to show and not an inkling of concern over Castro's health or the country's future without him. "Don't believe a word. It's all a fabrication by the Miami crowd," said an aide to a senior Cuban official. Foreign observers in Havana believe Castro is alive, but say he appears to be chronically ill. A European diplomat said he thought Castro had suffered a relapse in recent months and undergone additional surgery, which would explain why he has not been seen since a pre-taped television interview aired on June 5. "These operations are to save his life, not to cure him," said the diplomat, who asked not to be named. (*Reuters*, 4/9/07)

September 4: Fidel Castro lashed out at people he called "super-revolutionaries," apparently referring to foreign Marxists who have recently suggested Cuba needs some political and economic reforms and criticized its increasing reliance on tourism revenue. He accused them of being swayed by "neo-liberal" free-market ideology and suggested that communist Cuba buy into "pure poison." On August 28, Marxist US professor James Petras published the article "Cuba: revolución permanente y contradicciones contemporáneas", in the online journal *Rebelión*, suggesting the need of initiating changes in the Cuban economy. Some members of the moderate opposition considered that Castro's essay is a sign of contradictions within the leadership. Dissident Manuel Cuesta Morúa and Oscar Espinosa Chepe referred to "internal debate" within the Cuban government. [[The Super-Revolutionaries](#)] (*La Jornada, Global Insight, EFE*, 4/9/07)

September 5: In Banes, Holguín province, peaceful opposition activists carried out a peaceful march in support of the campaign "With the same coin." Also present were members of the Women's Movement "Lucia Iñiguez," the Latin American Federation of Rural Women and the Cuban Human Rights Foundation. Some of the participants were sporting T-shirts bearing the logo "CHANGE." (*Cubanet*, 5/9/07)

September 5: One of the most prestigious dancers of the Cuban National Ballet, Fernando Jhones, passed away in Mexico where he worked as director of the Ballet of the University of Queretaro. Jhones, who was a loyal member of the Cuban National Ballet, visited Havana just a few months ago to participate in the International Conference of the Ballet Teaching Academy held every year in Havana. The Cuban dancer was internationally acclaimed for his high technical and stylistic level. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 5/9/07)

September 5: With Fidel Castro's poor health making change in Cuba seem closer than ever, a leading dissident called for fractious opposition groups to patch up their differences and get ready before the ailing leader is gone. Sociologist Hector Palacios urged Cuba's liberals to unite around the platform Liberal Unity of the Republic of Cuba (Unidad Liberal de la República de Cuba). The Liberal Unity aims for a gradual and peaceful transition from communist rule to multi-party democracy. Its first demand is the release of 250 political prisoners and the abolition of repressive laws used to put Castro's critics behind bars. "Opposition numbers have multiplied, despite the difficult conditions in Cuba," the dissident said at a crowded news conference in his small Havana apartment. "We do not have to wait for Fidel Castro to die to grow. We are growing every day," said Palacios, who was paroled in December after serving almost four years of a 25-year prison sentence for his opposition activities. It was the third call to unity in recent months by pro-democracy groups, who are still recovering from a crackdown that landed 75 of their more active members in prison in 2003. Cuba's best-known dissident, Oswaldo Paya, head of the Christian Liberation Movement, called on the National Assembly to allow open elections and guarantee freedom of expression. Cuban dissidents sense the time has come to organize, said Social Democrat Manuel Cuesta Morua, who has made two pleas for unity since April. Palacios said it's unclear who is running Cuba 13 months after Fidel Castro fell ill and provisionally ceded authority to his younger brother Raul. "We don't know who the president is," former political prisoner Hector Palacios told the press. "We don't want successors. This isn't a throne or Louis XV," Palacios said, referring to the French monarchy. (*Reuters*, *AP*, *La Jornada*, 5/9/07)

September 5: Fidel Castro and the first Vice President Raul Castro congratulated the people of Cienfuegos on the 50th anniversary of the popular uprising against the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship (1952-1958). During the ceremony at the south center city located 190 miles south east of Havana, Vice President of the State Council Jose Ramon Machado Ventura conveyed greetings from Fidel and Raul Castro, who expressed their confidence in the people. (*Prensa Latina*, 5/9/07)

September 8: Thousands of faithful devoted to Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre defied the rain and accompanied her image in the traditional public procession that closed the Havana festival of Cuba's patron saint. People of all ages, sheltered under umbrellas - or letting the rain soak them - walked the regular route of several blocks through the parish where the saint's image is kept, while they awaited the departure of the procession announced by Cardinal Jaime Ortega. Before the procession, the Havana cardinal and archbishop had agreed to conduct it despite the heavy rains. Dozens of local residents and the curious watched from the balconies and doorways of their houses located along the procession's route, a tradition reinstated by Catholics on this communist island after the historic 1998 visit of Pope John Paul II. This year, the Cuban government authorized 90 processions, a number without precedent since processions were reinstated after the visit of Pope John Paul II to the island. Also, 10 radio statements by bishops in different provinces were allowed. (*EFE*, *El Nuevo Herald*, 9/9/07)

September 9: A month after returning home following an apparent failed defection attempt in Brazil, Guillermo Rigondeaux - considered Cuba's best boxer at present - is not allowed to fight, jobless, ignored by his country's authorities and "worried" about his future. "I'm not doing anything," Rigondeaux said in an interview with the press in

which he acknowledged that he is "worried, nervous" over the lack of a decision by Cuban sporting officials about his career as a boxer. Rigondeaux, 26, and Cuba's other boxing standout, 22-year-old Erislandy Lara, deserted the Cuban delegation taking part in the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro on July 22, having been courted by a "talent-hunter" who made them an offer to compete outside their homeland. "A month has gone by; I think a decision should have been made by now," said the two-time world champion in the bantamweight category. Since he returned to Cuba on August 5, neither of Rigondeaux's trainers has stopped by his home on the outskirts of Havana, forcing the boxing star to pass the time "talking with a couple of buddies." "What can I do? I'm waiting in the best possible frame of mind," the Cuban fighter said, adding that while he has done a little running and shadow-boxing on his own over the past month he needs formal training to recover his previous form. (*EFE*, 9/9/07)

September 10: "The efforts of social workers in Cuba is showing results and raising expectations as to what can be accomplished," said Carlos Lage, secretary of the Executive Committee of the Cuban Council of Ministers. Lage spoke at the closing of a two-day meeting of 200 representatives of the more than 42,000 social workers across the country. The social workers, with an average age of 21, take on a number of tasks considered priorities by the government. "Thanks to these young people, we know our society much better," said Lage. Seven years after the program began on September 10, 2000, the participants at the meeting held in the Havana seaside town of Cojimar sent a letter of congratulations to Fidel Castro who developed the project that led to their training. (*Granma*, 11/9/07)

September 11: Socialism cannot be "divorced" from well-being, the son of Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage said, acknowledging the need for changes that translate the "virtues of the revolution" into food on the table. "The people in Cuba have to see that socialism is also material, you can't deny human beings their material needs," Carlos Lage Codorniu, president of the University Student Federation, said in an interview with the press. "There's a need for people to feel that the virtues of the revolution are present in the food on the table," added the 26-year-old economist. Socialist theory, Lage Codorniu said, "never refused to attend to material needs." He said that the island's government must undertake the necessary changes for Cuban society to overcome its contradictions and become a more fair and just society without abandoning the principles of the 1959 revolution led by Fidel Castro. No infallible formulas exist on how to do that because "the book on the Cuban model is not written and nobody has the perfect formula," which, he said, means that a lot of importance must be given to discussion and analysis. "The logic of the revolution is that it doesn't obey dogmas" and it would be "an error to stick to formulas of the past. We have to make changes and apply new formulas," he said. (*EFE*, 11/9/07)

September 11: Ivan Dominguez of Cuba broke out of a tight group of riders and won the first stage of the inaugural Tour of Missouri in the US. In near-perfect weather conditions, the cast of international riders made the 136.8 (85-mile) circuit beginning and ending in Kansas City's Country Club Plaza district without incident. Thousands of spectators lined the highways and streets as the riders made their way through the loop. The race is nearly 965 kilometers (600 miles) in six stages across the state and will end on September 16 in St. Louis. (*AP*, 11/9/07)

September 12: The Cuban official press denounced the theft of postal packages at Cuban Postal Service facilities. Despite an overhaul of postal operations and increased controls, theft continues to affect the service, which has failed to provide adequate compensation to the victims. According to the newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, "the loss and theft of postal packages continue to smear the public image of the Cuban Postal Service, in spite of the efforts of the majority of its workforce." (*AFP*, 12/9/07)

September 12: Two senior Cuban officials said that Fidel Castro, absent from public view for more than a year, is recovering from an intestinal problem that required several operations. Cuban Culture Minister Abel Prieto said Castro was not at death's door and dismissed rumors in Miami of his demise as "wishful thinking" by exiled opponents. Prieto said he had no inside information on Castro's medical condition, but deduced from the 81-year-old leader's regular essays and columns that he is not dying. "Nobody who was agonizing could be doing these analyses and reflections about day-to-day reality," he told reporters. "He is aware of everything that happens, he is reading the wires, he is

analyzing and evaluating." The speaker of Cuba's National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon, told CNN that Castro's recovery was "going well" although he had not been in touch with him personally for more than a week. "He suffered an intestinal accident, from which he is recovering after several operations," Alarcon said. While Cuban officials say Castro is on the mend, they have stopped insisting that he will return to office. (*Reuters*, 12/9/07)

September 12: Fidel Castro will have to persuade Cubans - even his brother Raul - if he decides not to serve another term as president because of health issues, a Cabinet member said. Elections are expected to vote next spring for Cuba's National Assembly, or parliament, which in turn will chose a new Council of State, the country's supreme governing body. Castro has held the council presidency since 1976, although he has been the nation's unchallenged leader since 1959. Castro "would have to convince the people not to be re-elected," Culture Minister Abel Prieto said. Cubans are convinced "Fidel has to stay on top, and even Raul would totally agree with that." "I'm convinced that the immense majority of our people, the sweeping majority, are going to want Fidel to continue as president of the Council of State," Prieto said. "I don't know what he would say about the state of his health, and I think it depends a lot on that." (*AP*, 12/9/07)

September 13: Blind and visually impaired people have access to computer services in Cuba thanks to a project called Social Network, which is already available in several provinces across the island. In a number of provincial branches of the Cuban National Association for the Blind, there are computers which have been installed with a software that transforms visual and graphic information into sound. (*CAN*, 13/9/07)

September 14: Pedro Larena, independent librarian and Cuban Human Rights Foundation activist, was the target of an act of repudiation organized by the president of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution of his neighbourhood. Larena has launched a campaign in the international press denouncing the alleged murder of his cousin Manuel Acosta Larena while in police custody in Aguada de Pasajeros last June. (*Cubanet*, 14/9/07)

September 14: The fourth Festival of Origins, dedicated to the Chinese presence in Cuba, began in Matanzas with a varied program of talks, book launchings, lectures and exhibitions. During the opening ceremony, an exhibit of painting and ritual masks of Asia was opened. During the inaugural gala, at the Sauto Theater, artists from Havana's Chinatown were scheduled to perform. The Festival is taking place at Saint Severino Castle, a Spanish fort dating from the 18th century and the only remaining property from the foundation of the city in 1793, 314 years ago. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/9/07)

September 14: Jailed Cuban journalist Normando Hernandez Gonzalez was transferred across the island nation from Kilo 7, a prison in Camaguey, to Carlos J. Finlay military hospital in Havana. The move of the critically ill writer came after several months of growing international protests on his behalf. Hernandez Gonzalez is one of 59 writers still imprisoned following a 2003 crackdown on dissidents. At the time, 75 writers were arrested, tried and convicted of "endangering the state's independence or territorial integrity." The youngest of those originally arrested, Hernandez Gonzalez, now 39, suffers from tuberculosis and several other life-threatening diseases. All of them were contracted in jail. Hernandez Gonzalez's sudden transfer came a day after Costa Rican legislator Jose Manuel Echandi Meza filed a petition with the UN High Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, Switzerland. The petition is the latest attempt by Costa Rican legislators to have Hernandez Gonzalez treated, released and turned over to them. Previous attempts, which included offering him an exit visa, were rebuffed. (*Bloomberg*, 19/9/07)

September 14: Cuban authorities have seized some 60 kilograms of drugs at Havana's international airport, the local press reported. A young Peruvian woman was caught on August 9 carrying a cylinder with 734 grams of cocaine in her vagina. As part of operations carried out by specialized forces at the Ministry of the Interior and the General Customs Service of the Republic, some 49 individuals representing 23 nationalities have been detained, Granma newspaper reported. In another case, the authorities prevented the entry of 108 grams of hashish concealed within a bag of

toiletries in luggage that arrived from Spain. The passenger was subsequently detained inside the airport in Havana carrying 53.7 grams of hashish inside a tub of face cream. The man, whose identity was not revealed either, faces a sentence of 15 years' imprisonment. (*Granma Internacional*, 14/9/07)

September 15: The Cuban family in today's Latin American context is one of the main topics of debate at the Second Congress of the Latin American Union of Psychology Entities (ULAPSI) underway in Havana. The meeting is chaired by the President of the Cuban Society of Psychology, Dr. Patricia Ares, and attended by over 700 delegates from eleven countries. During the meeting, Cuba presented its achievements in the fields of education, community psychology, sports, arts and healthcare. (*Radio Cadena Agramonte*, 15/9/07)

September 17: Cuban scientists have found a series of fossils they believe to be between 18 and 20 million years old in the central Cuban province of Sancti Spiritus, the island's Caving Society said. The fossils are the remains of dugongs and giant crocodiles that lived in the area in the Miocene period, the fourth era of the Tertiary age, which began 23 million years ago and ended 5 million years ago, it said. The fossils were found in a cave close to the banks of the Cayajana River, 350 km east of Havana. (*Xinhua*, 18/9/07)

September 17: Cuba will aim to be in the top 10 at the 2008 Olympics in the Chinese capital Beijing, Christian Jimenez, president of the Cuban Sports Agency said. "This is the commitment that the athletes, coaches, officials and technical staff have made: to give our people the joy of remaining in the 10 ten nations within the Olympic movement. We are not accustomed to failing the people," Jimenez said. "We are looking for a big performance, like the one in the Rio de Janeiro Games," he added. (*Xinhua*, 18/9/07)

September 18: The electoral rolls for October elections were published throughout the island, as a prior step to the renovation of the Peoples' Power municipal assemblies. Any Cuban with the right to vote can correct any mistakes, changes or omissions in these registers. On October 21, the Peoples' Power municipal assemblies must be renewed, and a runoff election is expected October 28, for candidates who fail to get over 50 percent of the votes. The date for the polls to choose provincial delegates and deputies for the National Assembly of People's Power for a five-year term is yet to be defined. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/9/07)

September 19: Two Cuban soldiers who attempted to hijack an airliner in May were sentenced by a military tribunal to life in prison, while three others received 15-30 year sentences, a Cuban rights group said. Sergeants Leandro Cerezo Sirut, 20, and Yoan Torres Martinez, 21, were given life in jail in the attempted hijacking that left two people dead at Havana's Jose Marti airport's international terminal on May 3, according to a document from the dissident Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation led by Elizardo Sanchez. The two were part of a group of armed conscripts whose desertion from the army and evasion from arrest had captured the attention of the island in late April. They had fled their military base hoping to escape to the United States on a hijacked airplane, but the authorities foiled their escapade during which the soldiers shot dead a sentry and an army officer. (*AFP*, 19/9/07)

September 19: Elizardo Sanchez of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation said a secret military tribunal's decision not to apply the death penalty was "something positive." "We hope the government will take other positive steps," Sanchez said, such as commuting the sentences of 50 other inmates believed to be on Cuba's Death Row. The de facto moratorium has placed Cuba in a more flexible position with regard to the controversial issue, expected to be on the agenda of the United Nations General Assembly's 62nd session. The London-based global rights watchdog Amnesty International reported that the European Union Council of Ministers decided in June to present a resolution seeking an international moratorium on the death penalty, a step towards the abolition of capital punishment worldwide. "The de facto moratorium is good news," Sánchez said. (*Sun Sentinel*, *IPS*, 19/9/07)

September 20: Senior Cuban officials said that Fidel Castro continues to recover from his health crisis, but they gave no indication he would return to office. Vice President Carlos Lage told reporters that the essays Castro has signed

every few days since late March are evidence that his health is strong. "Fidel continues to recuperate. It's a productive recuperation as we can see in the press," said Lage, apparently referring to the publication in state newspapers of Castro's "Reflections of the Commander in Chief." "Fidel is recovering," Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told reporters in Havana. "It has been a fertile period of work, reading, studying and writing, while keeping in touch with and being involved in the country's main decisions, on which he is consulted." (*Reuters, AP, 21/9/07*)

September 20: At workplaces and in neighborhoods across Cuba, people are complaining about the state of their country in a national debate on economic reform opened by acting President Raul Castro. After years of economic crisis, Cubans are being asked to propose fixes in group discussions after Castro acknowledged in a keynote speech on July 26 that wages are too low and agriculture needs structural reforms to feed the country. "People were expressing themselves like never before about all the problems in their lives," a Communist Party member said after attending a meeting. "Raul is raising everyone's expectations, so he better have some solutions." Common complaints range from low wages, which average about \$15 a month, and poor services to restrictions on killing your own cow, buying cars and booking rooms in hotels reserved for tourists. Another complaint in discussion groups has been Cuba's dual currency system, under which state salaries are paid in pesos and consumer goods are sold in hard currency, the so-called convertible peso. But it is not yet clear how far Raul plans to take reforms, and Fidel Castro pushed similar initiatives in the past. (*Reuters, 20/9/07*)

September 21: Fidel Castro appeared in his first television interview in more than three months, ending speculation that the ailing revolutionary had died or suffered a major relapse. Castro, 81, spoke slowly about world affairs, the Cold War and political history, but appeared little changed from the last time he was shown in a Cuban state television interview on June 5. Dressed in what has become a customary red, blue and white athletic jacket, sitting in an armchair and showing his age through the gray in his beard and bags under his eyes, Castro answered questions about an essay he published and attacked the United States, his longtime ideological foe. "Yesterday the euro was at \$1.41. Oil I think about \$84 a barrel," Castro said at one point, indicating that he was up to date on current affairs and signaling that the interview was very recent. He also showed a copy of a book by former US Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, which was published recently. In a conversation that was at times difficult to follow, Castro often trailed off mid-sentence and needed prodding by Alonso to remind him of words or bring him back on track. Alonso fawned over Castro, telling him how his voice sounded strong and that Miami exiles were going to "fall on their backs" when they see the latest video. Asked what message he had for the Cuban people, Castro said, simply, "a strong embrace." (*Reuters, The Miami Herald, 21/9/07*)

September 22: At a government-run Internet cafe inside a Havana post office, the 1,942 Cubans signed up to use the computers were left with a question this summer: Why had the government abruptly cut their Internet access, leaving them only with e-mail on a state account? At this and three other public centers in Havana no longer on the Web, managers and clientele could only speculate why: Did demand exceed the woeful infrastructure? Or was it the latest example of information control in the communist nation, as Internet rumors abound about Fidel Castro's illness and prognosis? Did the communications minister make good on a February pronouncement that the Internet "can and must be controlled"? Ordinary Cubans have trouble affording and securing authorization for computers and home dial-up service (high-speed access doesn't exist in Cuban homes). Less than 2 percent can go online. That makes the Internet cafe, whose overall numbers throughout Cuba couldn't be ascertained, the all-important public means to access the Internet. Foreign visitors can access the Web in hotels, where Internet cafe prices of \$12 an hour and strict guest policies keep out average Cubans. One report estimated that only 220,000 of the country's roughly 11 million people are online. (*Chicago Tribune, 22/9/07*)

September 23: Speaking about sectorial meetings to be held this month, Raúl Castro asked Cubans to voice their views "courageously" on any topic but "without expecting the problems to be resolved as if by magic." Castro requested that at these meetings people speak "sincerely and objectively," but warned that such discussion has boundaries because it

must be conducted, "as we say in the armed forces: in the right place, at the right time and in an appropriate fashion."
(*La Jornada*, 23/9/07)

September 24: Cuba shows rates of work-induced stress similar to those in the United States and Europe, and in some professional sectors the malady affects up to 80 percent of employees, according to experts on the communist-ruled island. *Trabajadores* (Workers), a newspaper published by Cuba's only legal union federation, reported that research shows an incidence of work-related stress to be "between 30 and 40 percent, depending on the sector; at the same time, studies carried out with professional groups have come up with results that double those percentages. Although the weekly did not establish causes specific to the island, it did mention types of work-induced stress such as "welfare stress," which affects countries with a growing services sector with workers dedicated to health care, education, commerce and tourism, as is the case with Cuba. (*EFE*, 24/9/07)

September 24: "The Ladies in White," a group of women with family ties to 75 political activists imprisoned in the spring of 2003, marched to the Church of Mercy in Havana, demanding the release of their relatives. Laura Pollán, spokesperson for "The Ladies in White," explained that, as they usually do on September 24, they went to the church to pray to the Virgin of Mercy that they be granted "their greatest wish: the release of our prisoners." (*EFE*, 24/9/07)

September 24: The assemblies for the nomination of municipal candidates in Cuba have been accomplished up to 96.8% , with a participation of over 85% of electors. According to *Trabajadores* newspaper, only 1,580 municipal assemblies remained to be held to complete the 50,750 on the program. (*ACN*, 24/9/07)

September 24: Some 50 peaceful dissidents carried out a demonstration in Santa Clara to denounce the beatings endured by political prisoner Carlos Luis Díaz Fernández. Forty two opposition activists initiated the protest outside the Juvenile Prison of Villa Clara while Carlos's relatives were at the facility, visiting. The relatives also went to the CMHW radio station and demanded that they report on the abuse Carlos endured but they were turned down. It was then that the group of opposition activists sat down on the street and began to shout out "Stop the torture of prisoners!", "Long live human rights!", "Down with the dictatorship!". Around 80 members of the "quick response brigades" surrounded the protesters who were subsequently led to the provincial courthouse by the authorities to be arraigned. They were later returned to their homes without charges. (*Cubamet, RM*, 24,26/9/07)

September 25: A top Catholic prelate in Cuba said religious practice is slowly spreading in the communist nation despite rigid restrictions. Archbishop Dionisio Guillermo Garcia Ibanez, named earlier this year to lead Catholics in Santiago, Cuba's second-largest city, said the church has been able to expand its reach, though it will be years before it achieves goals of even more openness. "The faith of our community has manifested, it has been reborn," he said in a recent interview during a visit here. "The Catholic faith in our community has resurrected." Garcia would not pin the loosened restrictions on Fidel Castro's decision to temporarily hand over the government last year to his brother Raul. He said he has witnessed piecemeal improvements since his ordination in 1985. "Hope is relative," the 62-year-old archbishop said after a Mass at Ermita de la Caridad, the spiritual heart of Cuban exiles here. "We always need to work toward what we think is necessary, is fair." Garcia was cautious in his statements and steered away from any criticism of the Cuban government, for which his predecessor, retired Archbishop Pedro Meurice Estiu, became known. (*Herald Tribune*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Cubans remember the 1990s as a time of dire crisis and hunger, but researchers have found that the resulting population-wide weight loss helped reduce deaths from conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. A team from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Loyola University and Cienfuegos, Cuba, studied the crisis triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the Cuban economy shrunk by 40 percent in four years. Fuel shortages meant Cubans had to give up traditional ways of transportation and use Chinese-made bicycles to get around, while their calorie intake plummeted. The result was a decline in obesity, and also in the number of deaths attributed to diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke, according to the study "Impact of Energy Intake, Physical Activity, and Population-

wide Weight Loss on Cardiovascular Disease and Diabetes Mortality in Cuba, 1980–2005”, published in the American Journal of Epidemiology. (*Reuters*, 25/9/07)

September 26: The president of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcon, said that everyone on the island is represented by each of the thousands of people democratically nominated across the nation as candidates to become members of the municipal assemblies. Speaking during the Round Table daily radio and television program, the top legislator analyzed and gave details of the electoral process that is underway on the island. For her part, the president of the National Electoral Commission, Maria Esther Reud, said that more than seven million electors participated in the nomination of candidates for delegates to municipal assemblies and noted that the number of candidates elected was 37,328. The vote to choose the municipal deputies will take place on October 21st. (*ACN*, 27/9/07)

September 27: The history of the Committees for the Defense Revolution (CDR) is treasured at a museum opened in Old Havana, a day prior to the anniversary of the 47th anniversary of the organization. Images combine with texts to narrate the chronology of the organization, including its precedent and founding. Twenty four panels tell the story of the CDRs participation in Cuban society. The design of the first floor reproduces a Cuban neighborhood in which the social duties of CDR members are present. A neighboring hall depicts recent history and the battle for the return of Elian González, for the release of the Cuban Five, incarcerated in the United States, and Cuba's internationalist missions. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 28/9/07)

September 27: A group of Cuban dissidents staged an unusual sit-in in front of the Justice Ministry in Havana and denounced the arrests of more than a dozen other government opponents who were intending to participate in a peaceful march to demand improvements in jail conditions for political prisoners. Cuban dissident Marta Beatriz Roque - who headed the sit-in - said that at least 13 opponents of the communist regime who were intending to take part in a peaceful march organized in Havana to demand better conditions for political prisoners were arrested. Roque said that among those arrested was Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, known as "Antunez," who was released from prison in April after serving a 17-year sentence for political crimes. The arrested people, the leader of the outlawed Assembly to Promote Civil Society said, planned to participate in a peaceful march to deliver a letter to the Justice Ministry demanding improvements in the situation behind bars of Cuban political prisoners. Elizardo Sanchez, who heads the Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, told the press that his organization so far had confirmed four arrests and was investigating the whereabouts of about 20 other dissidents. Despite the arrests, Roque, accompanied by six supporters from her organization, delivered the letter, addressed to Justice Minister Maria Esther Reus, at the ministry headquarters, after which Roque announced that she would remain before the doors of the ministry until she received an official response to her group's demands. During the first few hours of the sit-in, Roque and her companions remained seated on the sidewalk in silence amid a heavy deployment of security forces, who made no move against the dissidents. Small, peaceful opposition protests have provoked standoffs with government supporters in the past, but all was calm outside the ministry. All the dissidents were put in buses and sent back home. (*Reuters*, *EFE*, 27/9/07)

September 27: The letter that was delivered to the Cuban Ministry of Justice by a group of dissidents headed by Martha Beatriz Roque, was accompanied by more than 200 signatures. It denounces the fact that numerous political prisoners suffer from "beatings, torture, lack of medical attention, nonfulfillment of the benefits established in the regulations, poor nutrition, harassment from common prisoners and (being incarcerated) far from their homes." "We demand that the political prisoners be treated with dignity, because they are human beings, and - in addition - innocent," the letter continues. "Those who (...) think differently from the government and now find themselves in prison must be released," insists the letter. "We need to make these demands because the prisoners can't take any more. I have an endless list of prisoners (who have been) beaten (and are) threatened with health problems that are not being attended to. We have to do this," said Roque in remarks to the press. The Cuban Commission on Human Rights and National Reconciliation, considered illegal by the island's communist government, estimates that there are some 270 political prisoners in Cuba. (*Reuters*, *EFE*, 27/9/07)

September 28: Dozens of Cubans detained on their way to a Havana protest in defense of political prisoners were back home, saying they are more determined than ever to keep up the pressure on behalf of their loved ones behind bars. Authorities detained from two dozen people to about 40 on highways, homes and street corners in several provinces before dawn on September 27 who were headed to a protest in front of the Ministry of Justice in Havana, activists on the island said. Only nine persons made it to the 1:30 p.m. protest. Up to 40 would-be demonstrators picked up en route were detained and later released, some after more than 15 hours, the activists said. The group of detainees included prominent dissident Jorge Luis Garcia Perez, who was recently released from prison after serving a 17-year sentence. "For us this protest was very important," Laura Pollán, a member of the Ladies in White dissident group, said. Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque "was at the United Nations this week saying human rights are respected in Cuba and that there's freedom of expression. So we wanted to show that there is no freedom of expression and that you can't even protest the detention of your husband." Pollán's husband, Héctor Maseda, is an opposition journalist serving a 20-year prison sentence. He was one of 75 dissidents caught up in a 2003 sweep. About 60 are still being held. (*The Miami Herald*, 29/9/07)

September 28: There were reports that some 300 students from the University of Oriente, in Santiago de Cuba, mutinied against the university authorities' decision to "segregate men from women" at the residence facilities known as Quintero boarding houses. It started with a handful of students with that group eventually growing to "approximately 300" protesting against the University rector, Dr. Zaida Valdés Estrada. State Security forces have taken control of the facilities and it is not known how many students will be expelled or brought up on charges for assault on the rector. (*EER*, 28/9/07)

September 30: Renowned Cuban actor Enrique Almirante, 77, passed away in Havana after several decades working in television, cinema and radio. Almirante was part of the cast of the most important TV shows since the creation of the Cuban television industry more than 50 years ago. In a recent interview with Juventud Rebelde newspaper, he said television was a milestone in his artistic life. Almirante performed in several Cuban films, and also acted in productions for the big screen in Peru, Mexico, Venezuela and Colombia. For his outstanding work, the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television awarded him with several prizes including the title of 'Artist of Merit'. (*ACN*, 1/10/07)

September 30: On a January morning nearly 10 years ago, Archbishop Pedro Meurice introduced a papal mass in Santiago de Cuba, the island's second-largest city, by boldly accusing the state of corrupting the moral traditions of Cuba. The frankness of his message, delivered with Defense Minister Raúl Castro sitting before him, drew applause from many of the 100,000 in the audience. The late Pope John Paul II nodded his approval. Now 75 and retired in Santiago de Cuba, his native city, Meurice said hopes for improved church-state relations have been dashed. In the intervening years, he said, the state has quietly stripped the church of gains that came with the historic 1998 visit. "In the end, we have not accomplished what we're entitled to; the Catholic Church has not been granted the right to evangelize and spread without fear of losing its religious freedom," Meurice said in a recent interview. "What has happened with Vitral and the civic center (...) demonstrates that significant restrictions are now being applied," Valdes said. "I'm being prudent in using the word 'restrictions.' I think these services are being eliminated." "The church has serious difficulties with the repair and maintenance of its temples," Meurice said. The government has denied the church access to the Internet and strictly limited access to state-controlled media. In early September, for the first time since the revolution, Santiago's new archbishop was allowed to deliver a brief radio message on the feast of Our Lady of Charity, Meurice said. (*Sun Sentinel*, 30/9/07)

Economy

September 3: The Third Meeting of the Cuba-Argentina Intergovernmental Joint Commission kicked off in Buenos Aires, the Argentinean capital. According to Prensa Latina, the Cuban Vice Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation (MINVEC), Orlando Requeijo, said that this meeting intends to maintain the development of bilateral agreements. The Argentinean delegation is headed by Roberto Ojea Quintana, Deputy Secretary of

Coordination and International Cooperation at the Argentinean Foreign Ministry, and also includes Julia Levi, general director of International Cooperation also at the Foreign Ministry of the South American country. (ACN, 3/9/07)

September 4: Representatives from Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela gathered in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, to discuss the creation of the Bank of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) before the end of this year. Nicaragua's Finance Minister, Alberto Guevara, said the goal is to establish a new financial structure which will not be necessarily influenced by the mechanisms that currently rule financial relations. The Nicaraguan official pointed out that the agreements reached in Managua will be later assessed at the ALBA Council of Ministers during an upcoming meeting to take place in Havana, with the presence of the presidents of Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Bolivia. (ACN, 4/9/07)

September 4: Cuba has launched a hotel chain that will eventually include 50 establishments in different tourist areas of the country and represent an alternative to lodging options catering to beach-bound tourists. The Hotel Encanto Palacio Azul, a converted 1920s mansion that Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero inaugurated in the central city of Cienfuegos, is the first of the Hoteles E establishments to open its doors. The project is an initiative to restore vintage buildings in Cuba's main historical squares and convert them into hotels. Marrero said the Hoteles E plan "sprung out of an unsatisfied demand for tours (of the island) and cultural-historical tourism," the official Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported. (EFE, 5/9/07)

September 5: Cuba and Argentina reaffirmed their commitment to bilateral cooperation as the third meeting of the Cuba-Argentina Joint Commission in Buenos Aires concluded. Signing the closing statement, officials from both countries said the meeting had been a success. Cuba's ambassador to Argentina Aramís Fuente expressed his satisfaction with the encounter, which renewed both countries' resolve to continue cooperating. Julia Levi, head of cooperation at Argentina's foreign ministry said the exchange had gone well because both countries came with similar objectives. (Radio Habana Cuba, 5/9/07)

September 6: Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister, Patrick Manning, left Port of Spain for Havana to officially open the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Facilitation Office (TTFO). In the making since the beginning of last year, the Trade Facilitation Office is expected to take Trinidad and Tobago one-step closer in the regional integration process, promoting trade between the two countries. Speaking at the announcement of the establishment of the TTFO last year, Minister of Trade and Industry Ken Valley said: "The TTFO will be authorised under Cuban law to promote and facilitate trade between Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba. It will be designed to function as a conduit between Trinidad and Tobago manufacturers and those state companies authorised to import and sell to consumers; and also advise our manufacturers of products which can be exported to Cuba." (Trinidad and Tobago Express, 6/9/07)

September 6: Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Patrick Manning and Cuban Vice President Carlos Lage inaugurated the Trinidad and Tobago Trade Facilitation Office at the Miramar Trade Center in Havana. Officials from both nations and members of the diplomatic corps in the Cuban capital attended the opening of the institution. During the inauguration, Cuban Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez said that, in spite of the US almost 50-year-old blockade against Cuba, the island has been able to achieve a stable economic growth. He added that in 2006 Trinidad and Tobago became Cuba's main commercial partner in the Caribbean with the bilateral trade standing at over \$65 million, which was 41% of the Cuban trade with Caribbean nations. (ACN, 7/9/07)

September 7: The Russian government passed a decree to introduce to the State Duma a bill on the ratification of an agreement between the governments of Russia and the Republic of Cuba to settle the latter's loan debt to Russia. The decree was signed by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov, the government's press office reported. The accord was signed in Havana on September 28, 2006. (RBC, 7/9/07)

September 7: The Expocuba 2007 Award to the best Cuban territories and enterprises was won by the Agriculture Pavilion, shared with the Cuban province of Camaguey and the Isle of Youth. Cuban Ministers Council's Executive Committee Secretary Carlos Lage Davila delivered the awards and suggested the event should correspond to the 50th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and the 20 years of Expocuba. Other pavilions such as Science, Technology and Environment (CITMA), the Provincial Patrimony Center of Cienfuegos, and the pavilions of Las Tunas, Granma and the Fishing Industry were also awarded. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/9/07)

September 7: For the seventh year, Habanos SA authorities announced the presentation of their 2007 Limited Editions, cigars made of two-year old tobacco leaves, a novelty awaited by tobacco aficionados. The Ediciones Limitadas 2007 is especially aimed for tobacco collectors and demanding smokers, and includes Trinidad Ingenios, Romeo y Julieta Escudos and Hoyo de Monterrey Regalos. Since 2000, Habanos SA has presented 24 special cigars from its most world-renowned brands, such as Cohiba, Montecristo, Partagas and Romeo y Julieta. (*Prensa Latina*, 7/9/07)

September 10: In a rare instance of corporate self-criticism in the island, an executive with the CIMEX retail chain said that Cubans are complaining about the poor quality and the price of retail products, including clothing. Most customers "are not pleased with the quality and the price of our products," admitted CIMEX executive Angel Hernández in a news segment shown on state-run Cuban television. Meanwhile, in a Sunday edition article, the newspaper Juventud Rebelde emphasized that the main problem with Cuban public services lies in their "unreliability." (*AP*, 10/9/07)

September 10: Cuba's participation in the International Trade Fair in the Turkish city of Esmirna was very positive, Cuban officials said. Cuba consolidated exports of some products already on the Turkish market, such as cigar, rum, nickel, and sugar. Eduardo Cueto, from Cuba's Chamber of Commerce, also said that medicine and tourism are beginning to have a considerable weight in bilateral economic exchanges. (*Prensa Latina*, 10/9/07)

September 11: Cuban youths of the Social Workers Program changed incandescent light bulbs in 14 countries to contribute to power saving in those countries. Over 2,700 members of that movement created in Cuba since seven years ago, had accomplished this and other activities abroad directed to reduce the use of combustible, referred the daily "Trabajadores" in its digital publication. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/9/07)

September 11: The emblematic Pasacaballo Hotel, located in the south central Cuban province of Cienfuegos, reopened its doors to national and international tourism after providing lodging and services to patients of the Operation Miracle program. In less than a month, workers from several of the different institutions in Cienfuegos refurbished the facility located at the entrance of Jagua Bay (also known as Cienfuegos Bay) that was inaugurated by Fidel Castro on July 18, 1976. Renovations were carried out on the hotel's salt water pool and adjoining food services, 190 rooms, restaurant, and lobby. As part of the Operation Miracle, the Pasacaballo Hotel took in some 9,000 patients from 12 countries. Operation Miracle falls under the ALBA (Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas) framework, an alternative to the FTAA. (*Granma*, 11/9/07)

September 12: Mexican Undersecretary for Latin America and the Caribbean Gerónimo Gutiérrez said that his government wishes to bring up again before Havana the issue of Cuba's outstanding debt with the state-owned Mexican Foreign Trade Bank (Bancomext). In 2002, Havana stopped payments on nearly US\$ 400 million worth of debt with the institution, which closed down its office in the island. (*EFE*, 12/9/07)

September 12: An expert of the UN Development Program (UNDP) reiterated that Cuba has the full support of that organization in the reduction of substances that can deplete the ozone layer. Roberto Galvez, UNDP Resident Representative on the island said during a meeting held at the venue of the Cuban Minister of Sciences, Technology and the Environment in Havana that, until December 2006, the country reduced to 77% the consumption of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), elements that deplete the ozone layer. This figure represents 85% of the goal for this year,

said the specialist during the main activity to celebrate the anniversary of the Montreal Protocol, signed on September 16, 1987, which was also declared by the United Nations as the International Day for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. (ACN, 12/9/07)

September 13: The Eighth Session of the Cuba-Mali Intergovernmental Committee concluded in Havana with the signing of a protocol calling for an extension of cooperation to a number of sectors, including agriculture and energy. The document was signed by ministers of Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration, Marta Lomas (Cuba), and Foreign Affairs and International Collaboration, Moctar Ouane (Mali). As a result of the session, Cuba will maintain its 118-member health in Mali, as well as another 11 specialists who are developing in the African nation the only Vision Now project of the island in that region. The agreement also includes cultural and sport exchanges and the training of youngsters from Mali as doctors in Cuba, as well as cooperation in tourism and science and technology. (*Prensa Latina*, 13/9/07)

September 14: The director of employment at the Cuban Ministry of Work and Social Security, Maria Victoria Coombs, has announced that the unemployment rate in the Caribbean island remains below 2% since 2003. Coombs said that nearly 1.5 million new jobs have been created in Cuba since 1995, when the nation was in a deep crisis because of the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsidies were suspended. According to Coombs, the main challenge for Cuba is that salaries are not enough for workers and there is a need to provide additional subsidies. It is quite possible that unemployment in Cuba may be close to the 1.7% reported by the authorities. However, official figures have to be taken into account with special consideration as Cuban measurement systems are different from those adopted by most countries across the world. (*Global Insight*, 14/9/07)

September 14: At an average 83 percent of capacity, Cuba's reservoirs have not been so full in mid-September since 1993. Specialists from the National Hydraulic Resources Institute said the rainfall in the January-August period, 1,003 millimeters, represents 114 percent of the historical average. Ten of the country's fourteen provinces and the special municipality of Isla de la Juventud recorded rainfall exceeding the annual average while five (Havana, Havana City, Matanzas, Granma and Santiago de Cuba) reported between 89 and 98 percent. (*Periódico 26*, 14/9/07)

September 14: Officials from China and Cuba highlight important advances in their trade and cooperation relations, after reviewing the course of links between the two nations. Delegations from both countries held a meeting in Havana on September 12-14 to analyze a group of accords inked during the 19th Cuban-Chinese Inter-Government Session, held in Havana in March. Raul Torres, director of the Asian Department at the Cuban Ministry for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration (MINVEC), and Xu Yingzhen, deputy director of America and Oceania Department at the Chinese Trade Ministry, led the talks. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/9/07)

September 15: Justice and fairness are key rules for Cuba's International Trade Arbitration Court that will operate over the next 24 months with 21 judges and seven mediators. The CCAC, a branch of Cuba's Chamber of Commerce, replaces the Foreign Trade Arbitration Court that, for over 40 years, determined the relations between Cuban companies and their world counterparts. Judge Ydael Leon said one of the distinctive features of this court, consisting of lawyers, economists and trade and exchange experts, is to use mediation to settle controversies. CCAC includes a president, attorney Rodolfo Davalos, and two vice presidents, Armando Castanedo and Narciso Cobo Roura. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/9/07)

September 17: Cuban sugar milling will begin a month early this year in an effort to harvest cane left standing from the previous season and get a jump on the new crop, officials said. Unseasonal rainfall and heat combined with industrial and organizational problems made the 2006-2007 harvest one of the worst on record. Output was estimated at around 1.1 million tonnes of raw sugar, based on provincial reports, compared with the 1.5 million to 1.6 million tonnes that had been planned. Officials hope this year's dry season, which corresponds with the harvest, will begin on schedule in November and continue through April without major weather issues. Officials in eastern Holguin and Las Tunas

provinces, where output was around 200,000 tonnes in 2007 compared with the 385,000 tonnes planned, said milling would begin in late November. "Holguin will have a big influence in the coming harvest so we want to start milling in November (...) the cane is very tall and has a good yield," Violeta Mesa, the province's top sugar official, said in a radio interview. (*Reuters*, 17/9/07)

September 18: According to Cuban Foreign Trade Ministry sources, by the end of 2007, the Cuban government expects a 60 % increase in bilateral trade with Russia as compared to 2006. Cuban official statistics suggest bilateral trade between the two countries in the neighbourhood of \$US300 million last year. Cuba and Russia seek to strengthen commercial ties in sectors like transportation, biotechnology, communications and tourism. (*EFE*, 19/9/07)

September 18: A delegation from UNACA - confederation of peasants, farmers and cattle-raisers associations- led by its chief, Paulo Uime, will participate on September 20-25, in Havana, Cuba, in an international forum on Agro-ecology. The secretary-general of UNACA, Jose Muambeno Luis, disclosed that at the event will be debated "the importance of Agro-ecology for Agriculture", "The Agro-ecology benefits for the environment" and "Advantages of tillage without constant use of fertilizers". At the meeting, participants will also exchange experiences on the use of new technologies of tillage in the domain of agro-ecology. Experts from various countries of Europe, Africa and America will participate in the meeting. (*Angop*, 18/9/07)

September 19: Cuba has gradually pulled out of its economic crunch with financial help from Venezuela and China, and high prices for its top export commodity, nickel. This has allowed the state to assign resources to upgrade farming infrastructure. Many Cuban farmers, however, believe that more incentive is needed to turn Cuban agriculture around. Some experts argue that the state should hand land over to the farmers and farming cooperatives if it wants to raise productivity. Most of the land in Cuba is owned by the state, making it perhaps the largest unproductive landowner in Latin America. "Here there is land and enough men to produce all the food the country needs," said farmer Arsenio Perez in a telephone interview from eastern Santiago de Cuba province. "The only thing you need now is to bring them together in the best way and you'll see how the land provides all that's missing," he said. (*The New York Times*, 19/9/07)

September 20: The 10th Cuba-Zimbabwe Intergovernmental Commission closed sessions with the key decision to keep a 134-strong medical brigade in the African country. The sessions were led by Marta Lomas, Cuban minister for Foreign Investments and Economic Cooperation, and Simbarashe S. Mumbengegwi, Zimbabwe minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The accords will cover staff training, identify new areas of cooperation, exchange information on the literacy program "Yes I Can (Yo Si puedo), " and send experts to Bindura University and Harare Technology Institute. Zimbabwe asked for an increase in scholarships and signed a draft memorandum of understanding on tourism, while Cuba offered biotechnology and veterinarian and biotechnical products to fight malaria. Cuba also proposed a new project for technical aid as part of future cooperation in science and technology, labor, social security, agriculture and renewable energy. (*Prensa Latina*, 20/9/07)

September 21: Although Cuba proclaimed its intention to change its computer operating systems for free software in 2005, the shift seems to depend more on the efforts of a small community of enthusiasts than on the state agencies that are officially in charge.

The overwhelming majority of this Caribbean island nation's computers run on illegal copies of the Windows operating system, produced by United States software giant Microsoft, and use pirated versions of programmes for which no license fees are paid, which are also in effect free to users. "There's still a great deal of resistance to the change," acknowledged Yudiavián Almeida, a professor in the mathematics and computer science department at the University of Havana. In his view, Cubans are impervious to the argument that free software costs nothing, because the US embargo of the island means it is obliged to ignore licence fees anyway. "We need to talk about freedom, about knowing exactly what you're using, and having the opportunity to adapt the software to your needs," Almeida, who coordinates the Free Software and Linux User Group at the university, told the press. (*IPS*, 21/9/07)

September 24: Increasing the number of tourists traveling to Cuba from Eastern Europe was the aim of the conference given by experts of the Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) at the embassy of the Caribbean island in Sophia, Bulgaria. The conference and a video displaying Cuba's main tourist destinations was attended by Bulgarian Deputy Minister for Economy and Energy, Valentin Ivanov, President of the Bulgarian Association of Travel Agencies, Donka Sokolova, and representatives of over forty tour operators, travel agencies and airlines. The MINTUR delegation, headed by Cuba's representative of Tourism in Moscow and Eastern Europe, Carlos Oscar Hernandez, completed a two-day program aimed at promoting Cuba as a tourist destination and fostering the exchange with Bulgarian authorities of the field. (*ACN*, 24/9/07)

September 24: Cuba's housing construction program is experiencing serious delays, especially in the eastern part of the island, where some 40 percent of the planned building projects still have not commenced, the state-run press reported. The weekly *Trabajadores* said that, with less than four months remaining in the year, about 27 percent of the scheduled construction "is not even in the final phase." The provinces experiencing delays in construction - which is slated to total 72,000 homes for 2007 - are Villa Clara, Camaguey, Las Tunas, Holguin, Guantanamo, Granma and Santiago de Cuba. Among the causes for the delays, *Trabajadores* cited the "insufficiency of land in the (provincial) capitals" for designated construction and delays in the distribution of materials. Another problem dragging on the completion of the plan, according to press reports in recent months, is the excess of bureaucracy, about which the official daily *Juventud Rebelde* in June said that "it's worse than Ulysses' odyssey." (*EFE*, 24/9/07)

September 25: The Minister of Economic Development of Azerbaijan is going to visit Cuba. The Minister's office reported to the press that the visit is planned for late October, early November. "At present both countries are preparing to create an Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation," the Ministry noted. (*ABC.AZ Daily News*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Chinese auto maker Yutong Group Co. Ltd. has delivered 200 buses for public transportation to Cuba, a company spokesman said. According to a Sino-Cuban export agreement, from 2007 to 2009 Cuba will import 5,348 buses or coaches from Yutong, which is a factory based in Zhengzhou, capital of central China's Henan Province. The buses value 300 million yuan (37.5 million US dollars). (*Xinhua*, 25/9/07)

September 25: For 6 miles, the Luyano River wends past a panorama of Havana -- residences, businesses, industry -- before it spills into Havana Bay, one of the busiest but most polluted ports on the Caribbean. After a decade of studies, the watershed's dirtiest river is receiving its first wastewater treatment plant, funded with \$4 million from international partners and \$20 million from Cuba's government, according to the international financing body Global Environment Facility. The waterway is a case study in how Havana's growth has overwhelmed its century-old public water works, forcing the Luyano and other rivers to become dumping grounds, experts and officials say. Since the late 1990s, Cuba has been cleaning up the bay through closures, relocations and renovations of 15 industries, officials say. Between 2000 and 2005, oxygen was up, and contaminants such as phosphorous, nitrogen and suspended solids were largely down, sometimes by more than half, GEF figures show. Still, tons of untreated sewage and contaminants flow annually through the Luyano, starkly evident earlier this month when rain rinsed the city's drains. Two-thirds of a mile away, crews are laying the foundations to a plant that will treat wastewater from 62,000 inhabitants, but they are behind schedule and experiencing millions of dollars in overruns, according to Cuban and United Nations Development Program officials. (*Chicago Tribune*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Most of Cuba's provinces will eventually benefit from the installation of 100 wind measurement stations in 32 regions, Basic Industry Ministry technical director Juan M. Presa explained at a Havana meeting on renewable energy. Presa gave detailed information to Cuban and German experts on the contribution of this alternative energy to counteract climate changes. He announced that, in this phase, the national aeolian map is being re-elaborated, experiences in Parque Demostrativo in central Turiguano are being studied and 1.65 Mw air generators are being installed in the Isle of Youth. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Venezuela's farming sector boasted the first five socialist joint ventures of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), jointly created with Cuba to secure food sovereignty in both nations. These entities will be raising rice, legumes, wood, poultry and dairy products, according to a note from Venezuela's Ministry of Agriculture and Land. (*Prensa Latina*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Venezuela will give Cuba a \$100 million loan to upgrade the island nation's railroad system. Venezuela's state development bank, the Banco de Desarrollo Economico y Social, and the Banco Exterior de Cuba, have signed an agreement securing financing for the project, Cuban government daily Granma reported. Cuba will buy more train cars and improve infrastructure to increase train speeds to 100 kilometers (62 miles) per hour from the current 40 kilometers per hour, Cuban Transportation Minister Jorge Luis Sierra said. (*Bloomberg*, 25/9/07)

September 26: Russia rolled out the first new passenger jet since the collapse of the Soviet Union, marking a milestone in President Vladimir Putin's drive to revive an aircraft industry that was once one of the world's most prolific. OAO Aeroflot, eastern Europe's largest airline, is the SuperJet's initial customer, with the first delivery due in November next year. The Moscow-based carrier may create a joint venture in Cuba to employ the plane on flights from Havana to destinations in the Caribbean and central America, Valery Okulov, its chief executive officer, said at today's rollout. (*Bloomberg*, 26/9/07)

September 27: Vietnam's Construction Minister Nguyen Hong Quan was adamant that Cuba's national food security would be secured after touring several rice co-operatives in eastern Cuba between September 24-25. The Guillermon Moncada co-operative in Holguin province is now the proud owner of an average yearly yield of 6 tonnes of rice thanks to techniques and experience provided by Vietnamese experts. The co-operative has benefited from a project, called Family-Sized Rice Farming, that was deployed in 2002 with Vietnam's assistance. Vietnam has also sent experts to help Cuban families organise themselves into rice-farming co-operatives using Vietnamese farming techniques, from rice seedlings to the drying of rice. (*Nhan Dhan*, 27/9/07)

September 27: Cuba and Spain agreed to set the island's commercial debt to Spain at roughly US\$1,400 million, an issue that was getting in the way of investment and trade development, said Spanish businessmen. This agreement could release lines of commercial credit frozen since 2001 and strengthen Spain's position as a major foreign investor in Cuba and the island's third-biggest trade partner, right after Venezuela and China. (*Reuters*, 27/9/07)

September 27: Spanish corporate executives indicated that increased exports and Raúl Castro's apparent willingness to allow more of a certain type of foreign investment encourage expectations regarding future business dealings with the island. Juan Arenas, president of the Spanish side of the Spanish-Cuban Business Cooperation Committee, predicted sales in excess of €700 million by the end of the year, as compared to €529 million in 2006. "There has been (...) some talk of an opening but no actual change yet so what the economic world is expecting (to see) is what reforms are going to be introduced," declared the president of the Higher Council of Chambers of Commerce, Javier Gómez Navarro. (*EFE*, 28/9/07)

September 28: Cuba's first deputy Economy and Planning Minister Alfonso Casanova said in Havana that Cuba's 2007 Gross Domestic Product will grow by ten percent if compared to previous years. Casanova addressed participants at the 15th Session of the Cuba-Spain Business Cooperation Committee gathered at the Havana-based Hotel Nacional for the definition of their 2007-2008 working agenda. The economic growth of the country will be determined by structural changes in areas related to the GDP, as well as increasing exports of products and services, energy saving, and geographical re-orientation of foreign trade, the official explained. (*ACN*, 28/9/07)

September 29: Cuba and Spain took a big step toward mending relations by signing a broad agreement that re-establishes cooperation halted in 2003 after Havana jailed 75 dissidents. Spanish International Cooperation Minister Leire Pajin said the deal includes support for small business, the environment, food security and joint efforts in other

countries such as Haiti. Pajin said after the signing ceremony in Havana that it was not yet possible to set an amount of aid for the first year of the agreement in 2008 because some projects were still in the planning stages. Spain is Cuba's third-biggest trading partner at around \$1 billion per year and a major investor in the island nation. "We are going to resume cooperation. The challenge is to demonstrate to other European countries that we can work together based on respect and equality," Cuban Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Marta Lomas told the media the day before. (*Reuters*, 29/9/07)

September 30: In what may be seen as an attempt to open up its economy, Cuba is preparing to invite more foreign investment in a 'new climate' in the country and to prevent errors committed in the past, Foreign Investment Minister Marta Lomas said.

"There's a new climate for investment, the consolidation of the economy is a fact. We've had years with sustained growth of the economy and that allows there to be a new climate for doing new things," Spanish news agency EFE quoted Lomas as saying. Tourism is one area the government is looking forward to with increased foreign investment, Lomas said, although "we're studying main sectors of the economy" to identify priorities. The minister said the recently concluded Hispanic-Cuban Business Committee meeting ended on an upbeat note and that the leaders agreed to more talks next year to identify possible investment projects. At the end of 2006, according to official estimates, Cuba had 236 foreign and mixed firms operating on the island the business volume of which exceeded \$3 billion annually. (*IANS*, 1/10/07)

September 30: Cuba needs to produce higher-quality goods more efficiently, cut graft and reduce reliance on gasoline, a major economic leader said in remarks published in the official media. Vice President Carlos Lage delivered a frank assessment of his country's economic future during a closed-door speech on September 29 that was later reported in the official newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, saying the communist government has become accustomed to producing shoddy merchandise and undertaking unsustainable economic initiatives. "We live in the conditions of a country facing economic war," Lage told the leadership of Cuba's central workers union, though he added that Cuba is "a country that is strong and has the conditions and possibilities to move forward." Lage said Cuba needs to slash the amount of oil it uses and must improve production of goods that meet basic needs for its population instead of poor-quality consumer goods. "The need to produce quality and, moreover, to do it saving energy, has to be incorporated in the economic culture of every worker," he said. Lage said Cuba needs labor leaders and administrators who can solve problems — including rampant employee theft of state materials — instead of just parroting empty statistics. "We should not do anything we know we aren't capable of sustaining," Lage said, possibly a veiled allusion to the sort of periodic economic crusades that Castro summoned during his 47 years in power. (*AP, Sun Sentinel*, 1/10/07)

Exile Community

September 3: The Miami exile who led the mission to capture Ernesto Ché Guevara in the jungles of Bolivia is auctioning a treasure trove of memorabilia from the iconic figure's last days. "It's time for me to put the past behind and pass these on to someone else," said Gustavo Villoldo, 71, a now-retired grandfather, who led the joint CIA-Bolivian army mission to stop Ché's aspirations to duplicate a Cuban-style revolution. Villoldo has joined forces with Heritage Auctions of Dallas, the world's largest collectibles auctioneer, to stage a first of its kind, international sale of his Ché scrapbook on October 25 and 26. They hope to attract bids in excess of six figures. (*The Miami Herald*, 3/9/07)

September 4: Since three years ago, Cuban opposition organizations from the island and the exile community have convened to form the Military Junta for the Freedom of Cuba to plan a common military strategy, which might soon be put to the test given the critical situation on the island. Héctor Fabián, Junta spokesman in the exile, confirmed that

extraordinary meetings have been held. The Junta has reiterated that they are not preparing to fight against the entire Cuban army but rather those who have committed crimes. (*Diario de las Américas*, 4/9/07)

September 9: Democratic candidates are already trying to breach the Republicans' stronghold in the Cuban-American community, hoping that a strong enough showing among Cuban voters will help them win Florida's electoral votes in 2008. "Florida is the largest of the states that is up for grabs," said Dario Moreno, director of the Metropolitan Center and associate professor of political science at Florida International University. Among Democrats, Senator Hillary Clinton of New York has made the most positive impression, Moreno said. While Illinois Senator Barack Obama made headlines recently when he called for lifting the Bush administration's 2004 decision to limit Cuban-Americans' ability to travel to Cuba and send remittances there, Clinton has said she supports the policy. By disagreeing with Obama on Cuba policy and his willingness to meet with "rogue regimes" such as Cuba, North Korea and Syria, Clinton has "kind of made herself a real alternative for Cuban-Americans who are thinking of voting Democrat for other reasons," Moreno said. "The Republicans can't win Florida without Cuban-Americans," said Joe Garcia, chairman of the Democratic Party of Miami-Dade County. "If a Democrat can get 32 or 33 percent of the vote, it makes it almost impossible for a Republican to win statewide. That number is going to be reached. I think it's going to be surpassed." (*Sun Sentinel*, 9/9/07)

September 15: Legendary trombonist Generoso Jimenez, who redefined the role of the trombone in Cuban music and Latin jazz, died in Miami of renal failure. He was 90. The prolific Jimenez worked nearly to the day of his death. He is a featured guest on Gloria Estefan's new album, "90 Millas". The trombonist lived Cuba's golden age of music. He was a member of the original lineup of Orquesta Aragon and later joined Chico O'Farrill's band. His greatest success came as trombonist for the great singer Benny More. More reworked the lyrics of his famous song "Que Bueno Baila Usted" and turned them into "Generoso, que bueno toca usted" (Generoso, how well you play), immortalizing Jimenez's name among legions of Cuban music fans. (*Reuters*, 17/9/07)

September 21: A Cuban-American think tank has asked the US government, the European Union and private companies to create a special fund of \$300 million to aid small businesses in the eventual post-Castro Cuba. The Cuba Study Group hopes to continue an initiative launched in 1989, when President George Bush signed the bill, Support for Democracy in Eastern Europe, which helped to create a viable private sector in Hungary and Poland and provided funding to small businesses in those countries. "We know that the current restrictions in law both in the United States and Cuba make the implementation of this project impossible right now," Tomas Bilbao told the CubaNews agency. Bilbao said that his organization would "work with US officials to encourage the creation of this fund. What is clear, however, is that this project cannot be implemented until significant reforms take place in Cuba." (*Catholic News Agency*, 21/9/07)

September 26: Xiomara Laugart doesn't look much like the musical icon Celia Cruz. But when the 46-year-old Cuban singer belts out old-school Cruz classics like Bemba colorá, Cao cao maní picao and Quimbara, audience members can dream they're watching the genuine article. The hugely affectionate celebration of the life and songs of Cruz, who died four years ago, made its official premiere at the New World Stages, two blocks west of Broadway. "It was difficult at first to come up with an angle, because Celia was normal," the writer, Carmen Rivera, said, "no drugs, no fighting, no berrinches [arguments]. She did suffer from the lifelong pain of not being able to return to Cuba or bury her mother, but she also had this beautiful gift of positivity. She always had messages in her songs hidden in between all the great singing and rhythms that were very positive and very profound: Practica el amor [practice love]." (*The Miami Herald*, 26/9/07)

Foreign Affairs

September 1: Cuba sent a solidarity greeting to the 3rd Brazilian Labour Party Congress, its second day of sessions in this city. During the opening session, representatives of the Cuban Communist Party's and the Uruguayan Broad Front addressed the public. Fernando Ramirez de Estenez, PCC Foreign Affairs Department head, greeted the participants in the congress, and highlighted the historic relations of friendship between the Brazilian and the Cuba people. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/9/07)

September 2: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez spoke for several hours in his TV Sunday program "Alo Presidente", in Caracas, on subjects ranging from Mayan theology to US "imperialism" to advice he received in a recent letter from Fidel Castro. Chavez read Castro's letter, which this time was typed and not handwritten by the Cuban leader, during the inauguration of a corn factory which was constructed through an agreement with Iran. The Venezuelan leader thanked Fidel for his letter and stressed that "this letter motivates, drives and strengthens". During the live program, broadcasted from the Venezuelan state of Yaracuy, Chavez highlighted the good mood of Castro. "Dear Hugo: I understand the fervour of your battle of ideas, especially your rejection against hypocrisy and the lies of the sustained consumerism model imposed by imperialism", Castro wrote. He continued, "I am dedicating myself to that now in my veteran years: fight in order for humanity not to be deprived to the right of existence". Fidel Castro told President Chavez: "Do not be frightened over the one grey hair that you discovered: my problem is that I do not have one single black hair in my white head. When that time comes you will discover that you will lack more than ever the time to meditate". (*AP, ABC, Radio Habana Cuba*, 3/9/07)

September 3: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque arrived at Tehran to preside with his Iranian counterpart over the Ministerial Meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (MNOAL) on Human Rights and Cultural Diversity. During his speech, Roque said that defending cultural diversity is tantamount to defending the right to preserve the future of humankind. "Defending cultural diversity is tantamount to defending our right to preserve the future of humankind. In this, as in other battles to vindicate the aspirations of the peoples of the South, the Non-Aligned Movement will be able to count on Cuba," said Roque in an address to the NAM Meeting. (*ACN, IRNA*, 3/9/07)

September 3: More than 9,000 unemployed youths will be trained as auxiliary social workers by 2010, the South African department of social development said. Minister Zola Skweyiya said the implementation of the training programme was part of an agreement of co-operation with Cuba's minister of labour and social security Alfredo Morales Cartaya. Cuba has developed a two-pronged work training programme comprising a formal university level programme and a rapid 12-month social work training programme. (*IOL.Com*, 4/9/07)

September 3: Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcon arrived in Montreal, Canada to participate as a special guest at the 27th Latin American Studies Association Congress, which will take place on September 5-8. The association is the largest organization in the world that groups experts from different countries on Latin American and Caribbean issues. This year's conference will be addressing the topic "After the Washington Consensus: collaborating on the research for a new Latin America." The Cuban delegation is comprised of 135 academics and intellectuals. Alarcon has been invited by the current president of LASA to deliver a lecture to the plenary. (*Prensa Latina, El Nuevo Herald*, 5/9/07)

September 4: The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) of developing nations voiced support for a plan to set up a human rights and cultural diversity centre based in Iran, which often faces Western criticism over its own rights record. The NAM, a forum of more than 100 nations led since September last year by Communist-run Cuba, issued a declaration on this and other issues after a two-day meeting in the Iranian capital attended by ministers and other senior officials. "The Americans, in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, by establishing secret prisons and secret detention centers in Europe, did not consider any dignity for human rights," Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki told a news conference. "Neither America nor its allies have the spiritual right to put themselves in a position to judge about human rights in other countries," Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque told the joint news conference. Iranian Deputy Foreign

Minister Mehdi Mostafavi told the ISNA news agency the centre would be an independent research body. (*The New York Times*, 4/9/07)

September 4: Members of the 47th contingent of the 'Jose Marti' European Brigade in Solidarity with Cuba representing 17 countries ratified their support of the Cuban Revolution during a ceremony held in Havana to pay tribute to Cuban National Hero Jose Marti. Zeta Katamperi, a member of the executive council of the Cuba-Greece Solidarity and Friendship Association, spoke to the press and highlighted the international significance of socialism on the Caribbean island as a guide for other peoples. Katamperi explained that their presence in Cuba also aims at expressing their rejection of the blockade imposed on the island by the US. (*CAN*, 4/9/07)

September 4: A top Angolan delegation, led by the Public Works minister, Higinio Carneiro, including ambassador Mário Cabral, paid an official visit to Cuba on August 23-27. The visit aimed at boosting bilateral cooperation between Angola and Cuba, and to encourage Cuban investments in Angola. The delegation was received by Cuba's Vice-President of State Council and of the Cabinet, Raúl Castro Ruz. The Angolan entourage also met with the head of Africa's department of the Central Committee of the Cuban Party, Rodolfo Puente Ferro. (*Angop*, 4/9/07)

September 4: Cuba was elected member of the Committee on Science and Technology of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought. The COP 8 Conference at Congress Palace in Madrid gathers 2,000 guests from 191 countries and non governmental organizations September 3-14. The election of engineer Maria Nery Urquiza Rodriguez as CST 8 Committee vice chairman and researcher recognizes Cuba's work and relevant contribution to fight desertification and drought. (*Prensa Latina*, 4/9/07)

September 4: Mexico's relations with Venezuela and Cuba are regaining pace and the three countries plan to exchange ambassadors soon. Mexico's foreign minister said. "All three governments value the importance of relaunching and formalizing diplomatic relations, something which could happen very soon," Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa Cantellano said. "We will soon receive Cuba's and Venezuela's ambassadors." "Mexico's ambassadors will soon travel to these nations, where we will open a new stage of relations with them," she said. (*Xinhua*, 4/9/07)

September 6: Vice President of the Cuban Council of State Esteban Lazo Hernandez met in Havana with Ugandan Vice President Dr. Gilber Balibaseka Bukenya to discuss topics of mutual interest and ways to continue strengthening bilateral relations. Accompanied by Minister of State for Information Technology Alintuma Nsambu, Bukenya delivered a greeting to the Cuban people and Commander in Chief Fidel Castro on behalf of Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and expressed his satisfaction over his first visit to Cuba. (*Granma*, 7/9/07)

September 6: The number of Brazilian grant holders studying in Cuba will reach the 1000 mark before the end of the year, nearly double the current figure of 600. The announcement by the Brazilian ambassador to Cuba, Bernardo Pericás, comes in the wake of an official visit to Brazil by Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque. (*Diario de las Américas*, 8/9/07)

September 7: A Cuban medical brigade is assisting victims of Hurricane Felix in the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua. The island's medical brigade, made up of 57 doctors, arrived in the Autonomous Region of the North Atlantic of Nicaragua in August to attend residents of that remote area. (*ACN*, 7/9/07)

September 8: Zimbabwe Vice President Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru started an official visit to Cuba, fulfilling an invitation by the island's government. The African vice president is accompanied by Health Minister David Pagwese Parirenyatwa, as well as other top government officials. Her agenda until September 12 will include meeting with Council of State Vice President Esteban Lazo and other Cuban leaders. Her visit is an expression of the excellent relations existing between the two governments and peoples and will also be an occasion to discuss the regional and international situation. (*Prensa Latina*, 8/9/07)

September 9: Lina Moreno de Uribe, the Colombian Republic's first lady, arrived in Havana for a working visit, invited by Cuban authorities. A note published in Havana's *Juventud Rebelde* daily said the distinguished visitor will hold meetings with government and Cuban Women Federation leaders, and tour socially and culturally interesting places. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/9/07)

September 9: The work in solidarity with Cuba was the main topic of a conference given by the President of the Cuban Parliament, Ricardo Alarcon, who participated as a special guest in the 27th Congress of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) that concluded on Saturday in the Canadian city of Montreal with the participation of nearly 8,000 academics from several countries. During the event, LASA President Charlie Hale spoke of the steps taken by the organization so that the Cuban representatives could participate in the event, where academics, intellectuals and other specialists from the island have presented their works. A special recognition was given to Cuban intellectual Roberto Fernandez Retamar for the work of his life, which was received by renowned writer Miguel Barnet. Delegates were also informed about the organization of the 28th LASA Congress that is scheduled for Brazil, from June 11-13 in 2009. (*ACN*, 10/9/07)

September 10: According to the Spanish Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, Leire Pajín, the reestablishment of Spanish collaboration with Cuba will not be conditioned to the regime's progress on the issue of human rights because the aim is "to express the Spanish people's solidarity directly to the Cuban people." (*Europa Press*, 10/9/07)

September 10: The Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali, Moctar Ouane, began an official visit to Cuba at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque. According to *Granma* news daily, the Malian Foreign Minister heads a delegation from his country that will participate in the eighth session of the Cuba-Mali Intergovernmental Commission that takes place on September 11-12 in Havana. (*ACN*, 10/9/07)

September 10: Bilateral relations between Cuba and Zimbabwe are excellent, said Esteban Lazo, Vice-president of the Cuban Council of State during the welcoming ceremony given in Havana to Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru, Vice-president of the African country. Lazo stressed the strong historic and blood bonds uniting Cuba to Africa and he assured that Joyce's visit to the island will further strengthen bilateral relations. Cuba's cooperation with Zimbabwe dates back to the times in which that country struggled for independence, said Lazo who highlighted the common views defended by both countries at international forums. (*CAN*, 10/9/07)

September 11: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Mali Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Minister Moctar Ouane signed an accord for visa exemptions for diplomatic, official and service passports. At the eighth Intergovernmental Commission, Perez Roque thanked Bamako for his nation's support to fight off US hostility and recognized their agreement at the Human Rights Council in Geneva in defense of national interests. Both ministers held talks on bilateral affairs and the world and arranged for a future visit to Cuba by President Amadou Toumani Toure. (*Prensa Latina*, 11/9/07)

September 11: Nonaligned nations rejected "interference" in attempts to close the file on Iran's past nuclear activities — an allusion to US concerns about the International Atomic Energy Agency's newest Tehran probe. But Europe sided with Washington. Norma Miguelina Goicochea Estenez of Cuba also expressed support for the work of the agency and its head, Mohamed ElBaradei, in her separate capacity as head of the agency's nonaligned board members. Her statements outside the agency's 35-nation board meeting reflected the main dispute at the gathering: whether a pact committing Iran to cooperate with an agency probe of past nuclear activities will blunt attempts to pressure Tehran to scrap uranium enrichment — technology that could be used to make a bomb. A statement by the European Union to the closed meeting made available to media appeared to reflect that concern. A nonaligned statement delivered by the Cuban ambassador cited the pact under which Iran is cooperating with the IAEA as saying Iran will be treated "in a routine manner" if it holds to the agreement and fully answers all questions posed by the agency. In comments to

reporters, Goicochea Estenoz called for "noninterference in the work of the agency," adding that nonaligned countries offered "full support for the professionalism of" ElBaradei. In her statement to delegates, she said the nonalignment movement "strongly rejects any undue pressure or interference" put upon the agency. She was even more direct in her role as Cuba's chief delegate, criticizing countries "that always want to interfere" with ElBaradei and his staff and telling reporters there was a "real feeling among many member states" that the West was exerting undue pressure on the IAEA chief. (*AP*, 11/9/07)

September 11: The Ladies in White asked the first lady of Colombia, Lina Moreno de Uribe, currently on an official visit to Cuba, to show interest about the situation of political prisoners, who are living in cruel conditions without appropriate medical care. The wives, mothers, daughters and sisters of the prisoners of conscience imprisoned during the so-called Black Spring of 2003 do not consider it political interference to show concern for the lack of freedom and democracy endured by the Cuban people. (*Marti Noticias*, 11/9/07)

September 12: About 30 people outside the US embassy in Prague demanded the release of five Cubans sentenced in the USA for spying. The protesters were from the Communist Youth Association (KSM) and the Society of Czech-Cuban Friendship. They said the Cubans had been sentenced to high punishment for having defended their homeland. There were chants "Shame on Bush" and "Cuba si, Yankee no" and speeches lasting half an hour. (*CTK*, 12/9/07)

September 12: Cuba and the United Nations have agreed to concentrate their cooperation on five areas in the next few years, in order to avoid spreading resources too thinly, and to increase synergy between projects. UN aid to the island will amount to more than 100 million dollars during that period. "The plan is to focus aid on a small number of fronts based on national policy, to increase the probability of making an impact," Susan McDade, resident coordinator of UN agencies in Cuba, told the press. McDade and Cuban Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Marta Lomas signed the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), an agreement currently being signed in many countries. The UN drew up the UNDAF after working with Cuban officials, who established their own development priorities. The consultation process resulted in the document, a "programmatic instrument" so broad in scope that it deserves to be taken up promptly, actively and seriously, Lomas said. (*IPS*, 12/9/07)

September 12: Cuba's Council of State designated Manuel Francisco Aguilera de la Paz as ambassador to Mexico, according to an official note published by the local press. At the time of his designation, Aguilera de la Paz was serving as deputy minister of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the release noted. Cuban-Mexican diplomatic ties have been maintained uninterrupted since they were established on May 20, 1902, when the first Cuban president took office. (*Prensa Latina*, 12/9/07)

September 12: Peru granted refuge to two Cuban doctors who entered the country from Bolivia and is evaluating another two cases, reported Peruvian Foreign Minister José García Belaunde. "It is not a matter of asylum, they have requested refuge," clarified the chancellor. The Cubans, whose identities were not released, are currently in the care of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said the chancellor. (*EER*, 12/9/07)

September 12: The Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) Government will be continuing the country's diplomatic relations with Cuba, Prime Minister Bruce Golding assured Cuban officials. Golding, who acknowledged that there were difficulties in the relationship between Jamaica and Cuba during the 1980s, said that was a different time and the world has changed drastically since then. He said both countries could maintain and deepen their relations on the basis of mutual respect and recognition. Golding said that his administration would explore new areas of co-operation with Cuba, and that Jamaica would also continue to oppose the economic blockade against Cuba. The prime minister's assurance was given during a meeting at Jamaica House with Esteban Lazo Hernandez, vice-president of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba and its delegation. Jamaica House said the meeting was Golding's first official duty as prime minister, after being sworn in that same day. (*The Jamaica Observer*, 12/9/07)

September 13: During a briefing to the Pakistani government, Minister for Foreign Affairs Khurshid Kasuri informed that the Cuban embassy had been opened in Islamabad and Pakistan was finalising arrangements to open its mission in Havana. (*Dawn*, 13/9/07)

September 13: The Costa Rican member of Congress José Manuel Echandi submitted before the UN a demand against Havana for "violating the right to health and freedom" of Cuban independent journalist Norman Hernández, one of 75 dissidents that the Cuban government imprisoned in the spring of 2003. Echandi, a legislator representing opposition party Partido Unión Nacional, said that Hernández, who suffers from stomach problems and tuberculosis, is being tortured by the authorities who deny him the medications he needs. Last May, the legislator obtained a humanitarian visa, granted by San Jose, so that the incarcerated journalist could travel to Costa Rica. "The Cuban did not acknowledge receipt" of the request, said Echandi. (*EFE*, 13/9/07)

September 13: Oswaldo Payá, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement, criticized the declarations by the Spanish Deputy Minister for International Cooperation, Leire Pajín, who said that Madrid will not condition the reestablishment of cooperation with Cuba to progress on the issue of human rights because the aim is to "reach out" to the Cubans and "to express the solidarity of the Spanish people directly." [[Nota de Prensa del MCL](#)] (*EER*, 13/9/07)

September 13: The president of Mexico, Felipe Calderón, received the new ambassadors of Cuba and Venezuela, Manuel Francisco Aguilera and Roy Chaderton, respectively, thus formalizing a normalization of diplomatic relations with the two leftist Governments, following a lengthy period of diplomatic tension. (*Reuters*, 14/9/07)

September 13: In Ottawa, Canadian groups of solidarity with Cuba released the film "Luis Posada Carriles: Terrorism Made in USA." Several NGOs said the release is part of the world drive to denounce US policies and to free the five Cubans imprisoned in the United States. (*Prensa Latina*, 13/9/07)

September 12: "I have learned a lot about the resistance, commitment and unity of the Cuban people," said Zimbabwe's Vice President Joyce Teurai Ropa Mujuru at the end of a five-day official visit to the island. Speaking to reporters Mujuru said that during her meeting with Cuban VP Esteban Iazo, they exchanged opinions about the realities in her country and in Cuba and about the situation in Africa and Latin America in general. During the last day of her visit, the VP visited the pharmaceutical laboratories of LABIOFAM and met with Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque. (*ACN*, 13/9/07)

September 13: Canadians will soon be answering questions at their door, queries posed by officials from the US Department of Homeland Security as they gauge Canadian attitudes toward Cuba, according to a prominent Latin American scholar. "That's for sure," said Raul Rodriguez, who delivered a public lecture at Thompson Rivers University. Rodriguez said Canada's relationship with Cuba is being "redefined" under the Stephen Harper Conservative government. He said Canada is endangering its reputation in Cuba for tolerance and anti-imperialism by increasingly aligning its Cuban foreign policy with that of the United States. "It's showing more coincidence with the US," he said. "That's something we're following very closely in Cuba." (*Kamloops*, 16/9/07)

September 14: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said that Cuba has a policy priority towards Africa, and sees the role of the African Union in the destiny of Africa with optimism. "We defend the right of the peoples of Africa to peace, justice and development," said Felipe Perez Roque during a meeting with the African Union Commission president Alpha Oumar Konare. Perez Roque demanded a greater presence of the African countries at the United Nations Security Council with "no less than two places for permanent members, and the same rights and attributions as the rest of the members." He added that the visit of the AU Directing Board to Cuba is an expression of the excellent links of Cuba with the AU and the rest of the 53 African countries. (*Prensa Latina*, 14/9/07)

September 14: The Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos, affirmed that the human rights dialogue between Spain and Cuba and the reestablishment of Spanish cooperation to promote the island's development "walk hand-in-hand." Those were his words when asked about recent declarations by the Spanish Deputy Minister of International Cooperation, Leire Pajin. "We are not shy when speaking about human rights just as we are not shy about recovering something lost and it was inconceivable that Spain would not have cooperation efforts with Cuba," said Moratinos. (*Europa Press*, 14/9/07)

September 14: Singapore and Cuba signed an agreement to collaborate on the control and prevention of dengue, local media reported. The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the CEO of Singapore's National Environment Agency (NEA) Lee Yuen Hee, and Director-General of Cuba's Institute "Pedro Kouri", Gustavo Kouri. The agreement will allow both countries to leverage on each other's expertise and experience in dengue control. (*Xinhua*, 14/9/07)

September 15: Cuban Ambassador to Peru Luis Delfin Perez visited the northern Andean city of Cajamarca, where he met with the region's governor, Jesus Coronel. The Cuban diplomat and the governor exchanged viewpoints on the Caribbean island's cooperation in Peru and its prospects. Perez is visiting Cajamarca as a guest to the Eighth Peruvian Meeting on Solidarity with Cuba, which will close on September 16. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/9/07)

September 15: President Hugo Chavez expects to visit Cuba in December to set up an oil refinery to be run bilaterally, according to Venezuela's ambassador to Cuba. Ambassador Ali Rodriguez also said that Chavez maintains "very good communication" with convalescing Fidel Castro. The refinery is to operate in Cienfuegos, in central Cuba, and will refine 65,000 barrels of oil per day, rising eventually to 109,000 bpd. (*AFP*, 16/9/07)

September 15: Pakistani boxers will embark on a three-month training tour of Cuba to prepare for Beijing Olympics qualifiers. Besides training in Cuba, the Pakistani pugilists will also compete in boxing competitions in that country. Immediately on return from Cuba they will take part in the Olympic Qualifying tournaments which will commence in late December this year. "The training of boxers in Cuba will be beneficial as Cuba is one of the leading countries in the world of boxing" said the spokesman of Pakistan Sports Board, Muhammad Azam Dar. (*Pakistan Times*, 15/9/07)

September 17: Cuban Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque, and the President of the African Union, Alpha Oumar Konaré, signed a memorandum of understanding in Havana aiming to strengthen the bilateral relationship. The document establishes the legal mechanisms to diversify and systematize cooperation in fields of mutual interest in the spheres of politics, economy and culture. According to Konaré the inking of the Memorandum is an act of faith and commitment to continue working together in an environment of humanism, solidarity and justice for Africa's integration. (*ACN*, 17/9/07)

September 17: The Foreign Minister of Myanmar, U Nyan Win, began an official visit to Cuba at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart Felipe Perez Roque. This is U Nyan's second visit to the island as he also participated in the 14th Summit of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries held in Havana in September 2006 as the head of the Asian country's delegation. During his three-day stay in Cuba, the visitor will participate in the 2nd Session of the Cuba-Myanmar Intergovernmental Commission and will hold official talks with Perez Roque. (*ACN*, 17/9/07)

September 18: Zimbabwe minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Simbarashe Simb Mumbengegwi, is in Cuba to preside the Joint Intergovernmental Commission with the island. The top ranking African leader expressed satisfaction over Cuban cooperation in several spheres, especially noting public health and his interest in increasing ties in other fields. "What is most important for us is to learn of new Cuban projects and continue bonding our relations, which are excellent," Simb Mumbengegwi said to the press. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/9/07)

September 18: The European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid, Louis Michel, expressed disappointment because the Cuban government does not show any willingness to meet European Union expectations on issues such as the release of political prisoners. Michel made the declaration during a European Parliament conference on the policies of the international body towards the island. The Cuban ambassador to the EU, Elio Rodríguez, also attended the conference. (*RM*, 18/9/07)

September 18: Reporters Without Borders said it supports Costa Rica's request for imprisoned journalist Normando Hernández González to be allowed to leave Cuba for humanitarian reasons. His health has deteriorated steadily since his arrest in the "Black Spring" crackdown of March 2003. Costa Rica's consul in Havana, José Maria Penabad, formally submitted the request to Cuban foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque on September 16. "Humanitarian concerns are clearly paramount as regards all prisoners of conscience, especially the 20 journalists held since March 2003 in very harsh conditions," the press freedom organisation said. "We hail the Costa Rican government's efforts to have Hernández moved to Costa Rica so that he can receive appropriate treatment for his condition, which is now alarming." "We strongly hope the Cuban foreign ministry will accede to this request from Costa Rica, which has already issued a visa for Hernández. We also hope other governments will support this initiative and will take similar initiatives on behalf of other imprisoned journalists," Reporters Without Borders added. (*RWB Press Release*, 18/9/07)

September 19: Suriname and Cuba have signed an agreement which a Suriname government official said will strengthen cultural cooperation between the two countries. Minister of Education and Human Development Edwin Wolf, who signed the agreement with his Cuban counterpart Abel Prieto Jimenez, said the pact would facilitate exchange programmes for artists and technical personnel. "This will especially improve the mutual cultural development," the minister said in a release. (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 19/9/07)

September 19: The Angolan Head of State, José Eduardo dos Santos, left Luanda for Cuba, for an official three-day visit to that Caribbean country. During his stay in Cuba, the Angolan Statesman will meet with Cuban authorities, with whom he will discuss the existing relations of friendship and co-operation between the two countries. Experts of Angola and Cuba have been negotiating accords in the domain of public works and higher education, as well as a complementary protocol to the one signed in 1976, which outlines the general understandings between both countries and creates a joint bilateral commission. The director of the bilateral commission of the Angolan Foreign Affairs Ministry, Florencio de Almeida, highlighted that in the ambit of the visit to Cuba of President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, protocols will be signed in the domain of sports, hotels and tourism, and possibly in the field of energy and waters. The 1976 accords set up co-operation in all domains of social and economic life. (*Angop*, 19/9/07)

September 20: The top slugger of Cuba's last baseball season, Alexei Ramirez, said he has defected to the Dominican Republic to fulfill his dream of playing in the US Major Leagues. The 25-year-old right-handed hitter, who plays outfield and second base and helped Cuba win the gold medal in the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro in July, adds to a list of athletes who have defected from Communist-run Cuba in recent years. "The dream of every baseball player is to get to the Major Leagues, and I want to be part of the world's best league too," Ramirez told the press in a hotel room in the capital of the Dominican Republic. Sports officials in Havana said Ramirez was due to return to Cuba, but failed to take his flight from Santo Domingo, where he had been visiting the family of his Dominican wife Mildred. "I want to be a slugger. I have played outfield and second base, but I also like short stop," he said. "I don't consider myself a deserter. I took this step to be with my family," he said. Ramirez said he has applied for residency in the Dominican Republic, which would allow him to become a free agent in the US baseball leagues. (*Reuters*, 20/9/07)

September 20: Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos thanked Cuba for sending troops during his country's civil war as he visited the communist island to sign cooperation agreements. Cuba sent to Angola 300,000 soldiers between 1975 and 1991 plus 50,000 civilian advisers on the economy, health, education and sports. Dos Santos, who rarely leaves his country, was invited to Cuba by interim president Raul Castro. "First, I want to salute the Cuban people and thank Cuba because it has always been by Angola's side (...) in the fight for independence and sovereignty," he said at

Havana's airport, where he was greeted by Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura. "Secondly, there were changes in the world and Cuba and Angola alike are adapting, and we will see how we can better collaborate (...) to improve the lives of our respective peoples," said Dos Santos, who has been president since 1979. (*EFE*, 20/9/07)

September 20: The Spanish Deputy Minister for Latin America, Trinidad Jiménez, said that, following Fidel Castro's transfer of power to his brother Raúl, the Cuban regime should be allowed "some time" before "major change" takes place. (*Europa Press*, 20/9/07)

September 20: Uruguayan Congress Representative Gustavo Espinosa will submit a formal protest before the government of Cuba for being the target of telephonic interference while he tried to speak from Montevideo with political dissidents in the island. Espinosa said that he is "nearly certain" that the intervention of the telephone communication was the work of the "Cuban secret police." Espinosa, a member of the human rights commission of the House of Representatives, had tried to reach members of several Cuban opposition groups by cellular phone. (*El País*, 20/9/07)

September 20: Thousands of unemployed South African youths and an embattled social services sector will benefit from a bilateral cooperation agreement signed between the department of social development and the government of Cuba. Under the agreement just more than 9 000 auxiliary social workers will be trained in 2008 in a move to provide relief to overworked social workers. The details of the package, including where the training will take place, still have to be negotiated following the signing ceremony in Havana by Minister of Social Services Zola Skweyiya and Cuban Minister of Labour and Social Security Alfredo Morales Cartaya. (*Mail & Guardian Online*, 20/9/07)

September 20: The Second Ministerial Meeting of the Council of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) opened in Havana, attended by top-level delegations from Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Cuba. The aim is to review the course of agreements signed in Caracas in June, the state of the implementation of the Cooperation Accords, and the ALBA institutionalization process, inked in the Summit of Heads of State held in Barquisimeto, "Granma" newspaper reported. During the opening, Cuba Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque confirmed that the integration proposed by ALBA is the only road toward development in Latin America, based on cooperation and solidarity, and far removed from neoliberalism. "We are convinced that the ALBA will not become a reality through mercantile and egotistic criteria, but through the widest and most profound practice of coordination and complementarity," he said. He added that within this model, trade and investment are not ends in themselves but instruments to achieve fair development, at the same time proposing the active participation of the state as regulator and coordinator. (*Prensa Latina, Granma International*, 20,21/9/07)

September 20: A resolution passed by the congress of the Centrist Democrat International (CDI) asked for "the release of all political prisoners" in Cuba. The CDI document also condemned "the communist regime's attempts to secure an absolutist succession." (*EFE*, 20/9/07)

September 21: Venezuelan Minister of People's Power for Foreign Affairs, Nicolás Maduro, said that a special meeting of Finances Ministers of the countries members of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of our America (ALBA) is expected to be held on October 10th to discuss about the Alba Bank. Minister Maduro made this statement at his arrival in the Hotel Palco in Havana, where the II Meeting of Ministers Council of the ALBA is taking place. During the meeting four main issues about the "grannational" projects ("grannacional", term used by Hugo Chavez as opposed to "transnational") are expected to be discussed: Alba Bank, institutionalization of Alba and the timetable for next meetings, as well as the date and place of the VI Alba Summit. The first discussion point on the agenda of the Alba countries' delegations, Cuba, Venezuela, Nicaragua and Bolivia, is to update the Grannational projects that were approved in April in the city of Barquisimeto, Venezuela, during the V Alba Summit. The second point of discussion is to analyze the development of the negotiations for the creation of the Alba Bank. The third point of discussion is to

analyze the institutionalization process of the Alba combined with the creation of a permanent structure proposed for the Political Commission of the organization, and the restructuring of its commissions. (*Mathaba News*, 21/9/07)

September 21: The Ministerial Meeting of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA), agreed in Havana to boost six new regional projects, and the creation of the Permanent Secretariat's office of that mechanism. A Permanent Coordinator of the regional cooperation bloc, which has now been established with headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela, will have its first meeting in November, while the first stage in the creation of its bank is expected to conclude in December. These were some of the outcomes of the second meeting of the Council of Secretaries of ALBA, which concluded in Havana. Other accomplishments at the gathering included the completion of the first phase of organizational work to create the Council of ALBA Social Movements, expected to be formally established in December; the identification of 18 priority continental projects—which will add to the 39 already adopted and functioning— and an agreement to hold the Sixth ALBA Summit in Managua, Nicaragua, on December 20. As Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque detailed, the Coordinator will serve as a secretariat, which will ensure continuity and compliance with agreements, and will support the Summit and ALBA ministerial appointments. By the conclusion of the meeting, characterized as "flexible and efficient," it was agreed that the Coordinator could count on the participation of a permanent coordinator from each country, with the rotation of overall coordination to occur every two years between the four current ALBA members: Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua. (*Prensa Latina, Juventud Rebelde*, 21,22/9/07)

September 21: Fidel Castro nearly died and underwent several blood transfusions in which almost all his blood was exchanged, but he is now doing well, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said. It was not clear if Chavez was talking about a recent relapse in the health of Castro, 81, or if he was recounting complications that he suffered after undergoing emergency surgery more than a year ago due to an intestinal problem. "Fidel is well, clearly he has not finished his recovery. He has a little problem there but he can live like this another 100 years," Chavez told reporters during a visit to Brazil's Amazon city of Manaus. "What problem does he have? Well, one operation, two operations, three operations, 81-years-old, he almost died. They transfused nearly all Fidel's blood; he is still alive because he's Fidel. They gave him I don't know how many transfusions," said Chavez, a close friend and ally of the veteran communist. (*Reuters*, 21/9/07)

September 21: Honduras President, Manuel Zelaya, confirmed that he will be visiting Cuba next October 9. In a conversation with the press, Zelaya said that during his visit to the island Honduras will sign a Maritime Demarcation Treaty with Cuba. (*Notimex*, 21/9/07)

September 21: Anti-Castro Luis Posada Carriles is not welcome in El Salvador, said President Elías Antonio "Tony" Saca. "On the issue of terrorism, we have to be consistent (...) I will not open the doors to my country for Posada Carriles," said the president. (*El Nuevo Herald*, 21/9/07)

September 22: The President of Angola, José Eduardo dos Santos said in Havana that he is pleased with the visit he paid to Cuba, in which ten accords of cooperation and memorandums of understanding were signed aimed at reinforcing economic and trade ties between the two countries. The Angolan Statesman was speaking to the press during the visit he paid to the Havana Colonial historic-cultural site and to the House of Africa, in which about 3,000 artefacts of African countries are being exhibited, from which 100 are from Angola. He affirmed that the meeting with the Vice President of the Council of State of the Cuban government, Raul Castro Ruz, held on September 21, was fraternal and open for cooperation, admitting that there are still issues to be discussed. The memorandums were signed at the Revolution Palace, and attended by the Angolan President, José Eduardo dos Santos, and the Vice President of the Council of State and of Cuban government, Raul Castro Ruz. Foreign Affairs ministers of Angola and Cuba signed the "Complementary cooperation protocol to the convention of collaboration, which updates the juridical marks, signed on 29 July 1976. They also signed the cooperation accords on public works, energy, higher education and training of staffs

and the memorandums of understanding on health, literacy, hotels and tourism and in the fields of sports and physical education. (*ANGOP, Granma, 23/9/07*)

September 23: Cuba published a photo of a standing, smiling Fidel Castro looking heavier but still gaunt as he met with Angola's president, the first head of state to see the ailing 81-year-old since June. In the picture, which appeared on the front page of Communist Party youth newspaper *Juventud Rebelde*, Castro appears to have gained weight and wears a warm half-smile as he shakes hands with Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, who was in Cuba on an official visit. "The friendly meeting lasted one hour and 45 minutes (...) (during which) both leaders recalled the very close links between our peoples and exchanged (remarks) about the current situation in our two countries and the opportunities that are opening up to deepen bilateral relations in different economic and social spheres," the newspaper said. The Cuban leader and the Angolan president "analyzed the complex problems that humanity has to confront today and which fundamentally affect the people of the poorest nations," *Juventud Rebelde* said. "I could see him recuperating," Dos Santos told Cuba's state news agency, *Prensa Latina*. "He's strong, with good enthusiasm." (*Herald Tribune, EFE, 23/9/07*)

September 23: Cuba's acting president, General Raul Castro, bid farewell to Angolan President Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, calling the latter's four-day official trip to the Communist island a "magnificent" visit. "I came to say goodbye (to Dos Santos) as a sign of the satisfaction we have over his visit," Fidel Castro's younger brother told the local press after seeing the Angolan leader off at the Juan Gualberto Gomez international airport in the tourist resort city of Varadero, some 150 kilometers (91 miles) east of Havana. State-run Cuban television emphasized that during the African leader's visit the two nations had "strengthened (their) relations of brotherhood and cooperation." Cuba and Angola have maintained over the past 30 years a relationship marked by the military cooperation the Caribbean island provided to the African country during its civil war. More than 300,000 Cuban soldiers served in Angola starting in 1975, when then-President Agostinho Neto asked Havana for military support. After the two nations signed an accord in 1988, the Cuban soldiers withdrew from Angola in 1991. (*EFE, 23/9/07*)

September 24: Cuba's minister of culture, Abel Prieto, called on Spanish activists to shake the world's conscience about the economic war led by the United States against Cuba for nearly 50 years. Cuba's Culture Minister attended the 10th Annual Meeting of the Cultural Policies Network that took place in Seville, Spain. He also participated in the 30th Party of Spain's Communist Party, where he met with scholars, and was interviewed by several press agencies. Speaking at a meeting with more than five hundred Spaniards, Prieto said he was sure that Cuba's draft resolution against the US economic blockade of the island will have the support of most members of the United Nation's General Assembly. The document will be presented before the international body on October 30. (*ACN, 24/9/07*)

September 24: The European Union held informal exploratory talks with Cuba on resuming closer ties after years of tension over human rights issues, an EU diplomat said. The foreign ministers of EU presidency holder Portugal and Slovenia, next in the EU chair, plus European Development Commissioner Louis Michel met Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. "It was an informal meeting authorized by the (EU) council to test the waters. No document was signed. The important thing was that the meeting happened at all," the diplomat said. The EU diplomat said the ministers agreed to meet again early next year under Slovenian presidency ahead of a planned EU-Latin America summit. They tried to identify issues for that meeting, including from the EU side human rights, governance reform and prisoners as well as trade facilitation, economic assistance and initiatives to help protect the Caribbean region from hurricanes and natural disasters, he said. (*The New York Times, 24/9/07*)

September 24: A second meeting within the framework of the human rights dialogue between Spain and Cuba will be held in Madrid the first week of November, as agreed in New York by the Foreign Affairs Ministers of both countries, Miguel Ángel Moratinos and Felipe Pérez Roque. Moratinos showcased this agreement as one of the most important results of his working dinner with Pérez Roque. (*EFE, 25/9/07*)

September 24: The government of Mexico undertakes "very important efforts" to prevent the traffic of undocumented Cuban individuals across its territory and into the United States, indicated Interior Secretary Francisco Ramírez. The official pointed out that his Department has implemented "coordinating mechanisms with the northern Mexican states" bordering the US, to prevent human trafficking, particularly of minors. (*Notimex*, 25/9/07)

September 25: The former Bolivian Defence Minister Carlos Sánchez Berzaín denounced in Miami a campaign orchestrated by Cuba and Venezuela to "destabilize" the democracies in Latin America and institute a totalitarian regime model under Venezuelan control. "We are witnessing a region-wide political effort," with "Cuba providing the know-how and Hugo Chávez the money," to cause a "destabilization" of democracy in Latin America, said Sánchez Berzaín. (*EFE*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Unhappy with what he considers Hollywood's monopoly on the silver screen, President Hugo Chavez is bankrolling Venezuelan movies through a state-run film studio. Now rolling are biopics about national heroes and villains, including Luis Posada Carriles, the former CIA operative who allegedly masterminded a jetliner bombing and tried to kill Fidel Castro. Scenes are being shot in and around Caracas for the movie about Posada, considered by Chavez to be a Latin American version of Osama bin Laden. Scheduled for international release in 2008, it's one of a growing number of films the socialist government is financing in a fusion of politics and art. (*AP*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega returned to his old leftist form, attacking US "imperialistic" designs in the harshest comments by any of the half dozen left-of-center Latin American presidents attending the UN General Assembly. In a speech, Ortega attacked President Bush for demanding elections in Cuba. He also mentioned the aggressions suffered by the Cuban people and the "unjust" incarceration in the United States of five Cubans, also noting that the US government represents "the worst tyranny in the history of humankind". Ortega's comments were the toughest of all the leftist Latin American leaders at the UN, including Rafael Correa of Ecuador, Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, Bolivia's Evo Morales, Argentina's Néstor Kirchner and Michelle Bachelet of Chile. (*The Miami Herald*, *ACN*, 26/9/07)

September 25: Angolan President José Eduardo dos Santos said in New York that "it is imperative" to put an end to the economic, financial and trade embargo on Cuba. According to the Angolan Head of State- who was delivering a speech at the 62nd General Assembly of the United Nations- this embargo violates the principles of international law and the articles number 1 and 2 of the UN Charter. "Angola awaits that the UN make a pronouncement on this issue, in line with the main point of the Charter, according to which every action must be the result of debate and collective decision, therefore, excluding unilateralism", reminded the Angolan statesman. (*Angop*, 26/9/07)

September 26: The Non-Aligned Countries Movement (NAM) reiterated its support of Palestinian people and their leaders, and promoted an extensive, fair and lasting peace process in that convulsive region of the world. A declaration from the Non Aligned Ministerial Committee on Palestine in its UN headquarters supports the Palestinians' rights to self-determination. The committee, which was addressed by Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, recalled the Declaration on Palestine adopted in Havana in September 2006. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/9/07)

September 26: The Foreign Minister of Cuba, which chairs the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), called for improvements in the work of the United Nations to make it more transparent and democratic. Addressing the General Assembly's annual high-level debate, Felipe Pérez Roque called for a "radical" change in the working methods of the Security Council to make it more accessible to all Member States. "We need a United Nations with a reformed Security Council, acting in conformity with the mandate granted to it by the Organization's Charter, without infringing upon the functions and prerogatives of other organs of the system." The General Assembly, he said, should be able to exercise its influence as the UN's most representative and democratic body. "We uphold the idea of having a United Nations where multilateralism and the solutions agreed upon in full compliance with the Charter are the only way to address and

resolve the current problems," the Foreign Minister said. [[Statement by Felipe Perez Roque](#)] (*UN News Centre*, 26/9/07)

September 26: The Cubans did not like Jose Luis Zapatero's comparison between the dictatorship Spain experienced under General Francisco Franco and the one Cuba is experiencing under Fidel Castro, when at the UN General Assembly the chief of the Spanish government urged the island's inhabitants to learn how to "wait". Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque spoke to Spain's Foreign Minister, Miguel Angel Moratinos in New York - where they are both taking part in the United Nations General Assembly - and expressed to him his unhappiness with Zapatero's words. (*ABC*, 27/9/07)

September 26: After meeting with her Cuban counterpart, Mexican Foreign Secretary Patricia Espinosa announced a high-level meeting in the medium term as part of the efforts to normalize bilateral relations. Espinosa said that the meeting will take place as soon as "the agenda moves forward at the technical level. "I expect that it will take place in 2008," affirmed the Foreign Secretary. (*EER*, 27/9/07)

September 27: The Colombian department of Boyaca will be declared free of illiteracy when 51 thousand inhabitants receive their certificates from the Cuban literacy workshop called Yes, I can. The project was carried out after an agreement signed in November 2006 between the Boyaca government and Havana's Latin American and Caribbean Educational Institute (IPLAC). A group of 11 Cuban specialists has worked with 5,512 volunteer teachers and 610 regional coordinators in the 123 municipalities of the department. (*Prensa Latina*, 27/9/07)

September 27: Surgeons from several Caribbean nations gathered in Havana to attend the First Congress of the Surgery Section of the Caribbean Medical Association (CMA) taking place at the Hotel Nacional. Professor Dr. Eugenio Selman Housein, AMECA's president, said this is the first time a section within the association has held a congress. The congress includes lectures on several related topics, debates and round table. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 27/9/07)

September 27: US foe Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad courted leftist Latin American leaders, visiting Bolivia and Venezuela to strengthen ties in a region where anti-American sentiment is on the rise. Ahmadinejad said the two host nations, as well as others in the area that are led by leftists, such as Cuba, Nicaragua and Ecuador, were united with Iran in a worldwide revolutionary movement. "When we stand together, without doubt we multiply our powers," he said in a speech in Caracas with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at his side. (*Reuters*, 27/9/07)

September 28: Brazil granted refugee status to two Cuban athletes who fled their country's delegation at the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro in July, a government official said. The status was conceded to handball player Rafael Dacosta and cyclist Michel Fernandez Garcia, said Luiz Paulo Barreto, secretary general of the Justice Ministry. The decision was approved by the eight members of the National Committee of Refugees, linked to the ministry, Barreto said. The ministry said the two will receive Brazilian identity papers and will have access to government services including health and education. They can legally get jobs, hold bank accounts and receive government legal protection. Barreto said the two cannot leave Brazil without the government's permission. They can apply for Brazilian citizenship after six years. (*AP*, 29/9/07)

September 28: Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque concluded an intense working session at the UN. Pérez Roque took part in the UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Climate Change, convened by the UN secretary general, where he spoke on behalf of Cuba. He likewise spoke on behalf of the presidency of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in the general debate of the 62nd session of the UN General Assembly, which had wide repercussions both within that world organization and in the international media. The Cuban minister is presiding over a meeting of the Foreign Ministers Coordination Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in which Cuba will report on the first year of its presidency of the NAM. In parallel, the Cuban foreign minister has prepared speeches on behalf of the NAM for the

Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 plus China, and for the meeting to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the application of the Chemical Weapons Convention, a ban agreed in New York. The Cuban delegation also participated in the ministerial meeting of the Troika of the movement and the Troika of the European Union, and in the NAM Presidency meeting attended by the other members of the NAM Troika – Malaysia and Egypt – with the foreign minister of the Russian Federation, organized for the first time. The Cuban foreign minister is to meet with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Pérez Roque also met with high-ranking leaders of the Pacific Islands in the context of their membership of the Alliance of Small Island States, and took part in a preparatory meeting for the upcoming Ibero-American Summit with the foreign ministers of Latin America, Spain and Portugal. The minister had 17 other bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of China, Russia, India, Iran, Algeria, Spain and Mexico, among others. (*Granma Internacional*, 28/9/07)

September 29: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque spoke on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at a meeting of the Group of 77 plus China, held in New York. During his address, the Cuban leader pointed out that in today's world of globalized economic crisis, where the voracious appetite of transnational corporations and the domination sought by imperial powers are ever increasing, and in which the very survival of humanity is threatened, the countries of the South continue to be victims of poverty and exclusion. He said that 854 million people suffer hunger in the world, 820 million of which live in underdeveloped nations, and noted that the inequality between countries and within countries continues to grow. "The right to development for the 130 nations of the G-77 seems ever further away," said the Cuban foreign minister. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 29/9/07)

September 29: Cuban First Vice President Raúl Castro received Vietnamese Minister of Construction Nguyen Hong Quan who is heading his country's delegation at the 25th Session of the Cuba-Vietnam Inter-governmental Commission in Havana. The Vietnamese delegation included Vietnamese Ambassador to Cuba, Vu Chi Cong, Inter-governmental Commission Secretary Nguyen Van Hoa and Deputy Chief of the Minister of Construction's Office Le Van Toi. The Cuban delegation included Vice-president of the Council of State Carlos Lage Dávila and Government Minister Ricardo Cabrisas Ruiz who is also the co-chair of the Intergovernmental Commission for Cuba. (*Juventud Rebelde*, 29/9/07)

September 29: In his last Reflection, Fidel Castro reproduced an article published in the Spanish daily El Pais about a conversation dated February 2003 between former Spanish prime minister Jose Maria Aznar, and US President George W. Bush. Castro doesn't make any comment about the content of El Pais' article or about the conversation between the two heads of state held in Crawford Ranch, Texas, four weeks before the Iraq invasion. [[One More Argument for the UN](#)] (*EFE*, 29/9/07)

September 30: Fidel Castro accused former Spanish prime minister Jose Maria Aznar of urging Washington to bomb Serbian radio and television stations during NATO's participation in the war in Kosovo. In a column published by official newspapers, Castro quoted extensive excerpts from what he implied was a transcript of a 1999 conversation between Aznar and US president Bill Clinton. Aznar was quoted as telling Clinton, "If we're at war, let's make it an all-out war (...) I don't understand why we have not yet bombed Serbian radio and television." Castro did not say how he obtained the transcript. The version he published contained only Aznar's comments, none by the person he was speaking to. But he said he had "other materials, both public and confidential," which he would use in future essays. [[Aznar's Silence](#)] (*Canadian Press*, 30/9/07)

September 30: Reporters Without Borders condemned a wave of arrests of dissidents and journalists as a peaceful protest in support of political prisoners was being prepared in front of the justice ministry in Havana. Six journalists among the 30 or so people arrested were released after 24 hours, which was welcomed by the worldwide press freedom organisation. They were freelance Idania Yanes Contreras, Roberto de Jesus Guerra Perez, correspondent for the websites Payolibre and Nueva Prensa Cubana and also Radio Marti, Alvaro Yero Felipe and Belinda Salas Tapanes, de la Agencia Libre Asociada (ALAS), and Yoel Espinosa Medrano and Felix Reyes Gutierrez, of the independent news

agency Cubanacan Press, founded by Guillermo Farinas Hernandez, winner of the 2006 Reporters Without Borders Cyber-Freedoms Prize. "Some of the arrested dissidents were immediately released, but this crackdown is a reminder of the 'black spring' of March 2003," Reporters Without Borders said. (*RWB Press Release*, 30/9/07)

September 30: Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said that his country owes a lot more to Cuba "for its medical assistance than what Cuba could owe Venezuela for its oil supply to the island." During his radio and television program 'Alo Presidente', Chavez noted that the 30,000 Cuban doctors and nurses that have been working in the South American country for more than five years have saved more lives than in the history of public health in Venezuela. "That is invaluable. It is a lot more than what we contribute with our modest oil supplies," he stressed. "Those foolish people who are accusing us of selling petroleum at bargain prices to Cuba should ask themselves: in objective prices, what is worth more? The oil barrels we sell to Cuba or this?", Chavez said. (*ACN*, 1/10/07)

September 30: Guinea Bissau President Joao Bernardo Vieira began an official visit to Cuba to enhance bilateral ties, an official release said. Vieira, who will stay in Cuba until October 4, will meet with Vice President Raul Castro and other Cuban officials. The head of state is accompanied by Maria da Conceicao Nobre Cabral, minister for Foreign Trade, International Cooperation and Community, along with other officials. Vieira visited Cuba on September 2006 for the 16th Summit of the Non Aligned Movement held in Havana. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/9/07)

Terrorism

September 24: A US military appeals court reinstated terrorism charges against a Canadian prisoner held at the Guantanamo Bay prison camp for more than five years. The US Court of Military Commission Review ruled that a military judge was wrong in dismissing the charges against Omar Khadr because of questions over the detainee's "enemy combatant" status. Khadr, 21, is accused of killing one US soldier with a grenade and wounding another during a firefight at a suspected al Qaeda compound in Afghanistan in 2002. (*The New York Times*, 25/9/07)

September 25: Six Syrians and a Cuban were detained in Panama after the crew on their flight from Cuba alerted authorities to suspicious behavior. An aviation official denied police reports that the Syrians tried to open the cockpit door. "This is not a hijacking," said Victor de la Hoz, spokesman for the Panamanian Civil Aviation Authority. (*AP*, 25/9/07)

September 27: Fourteen 'high value' detainees held at the US base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba have been formally offered the right to request attorneys, the Pentagon announced. Up to now the detainees -- which include Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the alleged mastermind of the September 11 terror strikes -- have met with Red Cross representatives but have not had access to lawyers. US officials sought special rules for these detainees because they said conversations with attorneys could reveal secret details of the CIA's detention program and its interrogation tactics. (*AFP*, 28/9/07)

September 27: Panamanian authorities said they had freed two Syrian passengers and found no terrorist links to four others still in custody after they allegedly tried to enter an airplane cockpit during a flight from Cuba. The two male youths, who authorities said were 16 or 17 years old, were released after officials found no grounds to charge them with any crime, prosecutor Ruben Arango told the press. Authorities did not identify the four other Syrians and one Cuban still held, or say what charges they were considering. The six Syrians told authorities they were en route to Haiti to attend a friend's wedding, while the Cuban was traveling from Havana to Argentina, authorities said. (*AP*, 27/9/07)

September 28: Panama freed four Syrians and a Cuban after finding no evidence they tried to open the cockpit door of a Copa Airlines flight from Cuba, officials said. The five men were released after being detained for two days. "There

was no proof that they committed any crime," prosecutor Luis Martinez said. Panama earlier had released two other Syrians, both teenagers. The seven people, all traveling in the plane's first-class section, were taken into custody on September 25 in Panama City after the pilot reported that several of them tried to open the locked cockpit door. The men said they mistook the cockpit door for the bathroom. Flight attendants also reported a missing knife after they served breakfast in first-class, further raising suspicions. The knife later was found in the plane. (AP, 28/9/07)

US-Cuba Relations

September 3: Former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney severely criticized the declaration of Senator Barack Obama that he will grant Cuban-Americans "unrestricted rights to visit family and send remittances to the island" once he becomes president. According to Romney, the statement of Obama which was published in the Miami Herald proves that Obama "does not have the strength to confront America's enemies or defend our values." (*Trans World News*, 4/9/07)

September 4: A group of 25 people who say they're Cuban refugees have been handed over to the Border Patrol after someone dropped them off at an Oakland Park restaurant, Florida authorities said. The migrants had been smuggled into the United States earlier in the day and were taken to the restaurant. The group -- 10 adult men, nine adult women, two girls and three boys -- were released after they were processed at the US Border Patrol in Pembroke Pines. They were issued a notice to appear in front of an immigration judge and released on their own recognizance, said Victor Colon, an assistant chief Border Patrol agent. They were then taken to a medical facility in Miami. (*Sun Sentinel, The Miami Herald*, 4,5/9/07)

September 6: Liberalized trade with Cuba could double or triple the volume of agricultural exports leaving the Port of Corpus Christi, Texas. "The Trade Sanctions and Reform Act allows (US interests) to sell agricultural products, medicine and lumber to Cuba," says Michael Perez, director of port operations and business development for the Port of Corpus Christi. Perez, during a recent National Cotton Council Producer Information Exchange (P.I.E.) tour, said Cuba currently buys some citrus, beans, and other agricultural products from the United States. They also purchase utility poles. "We're not shipping any rice out of here yet," he said to cotton farmers from California and Arizona and representatives from sponsors NCC and Bayer CropSciences. A sticking point that limits trade, even under the reform, is a stipulation that demands cash up front for any goods sold to Cuba. "The cash sales requirement hurts trade," Perez said. "We always have a trade deficit through this facility. That's why liberalized trade with Cuba is so important. We bring in a lot of crude oil through this port that's used domestically." (*Farm Press*, 6/9/07)

September 6: Cuba's Culture Minister Abel Prieto announced that the US blockade obstructs the participation of renowned American jazz players in the Varadero Jam Session International Jazz Festival that began in the central province of Matanzas. "I'm sure that many of them would have liked to participate in this event but the arbitrary laws of the Bush Administration obstruct these cultural ties," he said. Prieto recalled that before George W. Bush took office many Cuban and US artists were able to exchange their experiences and art in different events, but all this has been cancelled, he noted. The Cuban official participated, along with Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero and the President of the festival Maestro 'Chucho' Valdes, in the opening of the Jam Session event. (*ACN*, 7/9/07)

September 6: The Senate agreed to restore President Bush's requested \$47 million funding for Cuban opposition groups in a foreign operations spending bill. Until now, the Senate had not made any pronouncements on Cuba policy. With the House and Senate in agreement on the levels of dissident aid for Cuba, the increase in funding is almost certain to become law. Earlier this year, senators in charge of appropriations cut the aid to \$15 million, only a modest improvement from the \$10 million a year Cuba democracy programs got in the past. The Senate approved an

amendment to increase the funding by unanimous consent. It was presented by Florida Republican Senator Mel Martinez and co-sponsored by Republican Senator John Ensign of Nevada and Democratic Senators Bob Menendez of New Jersey and Bill Nelson of Florida. The increase is the latest setback for opponents of US policy toward Cuba. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/9/07)

September 6: Twenty-three Cubans -- women, men and children -- were dropped off at Biscayne National Park, at Boca Chita Key. Coast Guard and Biscayne National Park officials transported the group to Black Point Marina, where they were turned over to US Customs and Border Patrol officials. Biscayne National Park officials said this is the second group that has arrived in the last seven days. On August 31, 22 Cubans arrived at Elliot Key. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/9/07)

September 7: The face-off between a former federal prosecutor and the Cuban pig farmer seeking custody of his 4-year-old daughter continued at the Miami-Dade County Courthouse, where -- for the second day -- tensions remained high as the two dueled over the truthfulness of the father's testimony. Once again, farmer Rafael Izquierdo became flustered and, at times, angry as Department of Children & Families Chief of Staff Jason Dimitris, a former state and federal prosecutor, grilled him over key details. At issue are efforts made by Izquierdo to obtain a US visa to fight for custody. (*The Miami Herald*, 7/9/07)

September 7: At the cactus-dotted fenceline where US and Cuban military officers meet face to face on the edge of the Guantanamo Bay naval base, Fidel Castro's name does not come up in official conversations. The base commander, Capt. Mark Leary, said he discusses mundane things like brush fires and construction work at monthly meetings with his Cuban military counterpart. "We haven't done anything differently really since his (Castro's) illness," Leary told the press at the only US military base on communist turf. "Nothing has changed at the fence line meeting even, and really, I wouldn't expect it to. It really is kind of a military-to-military relation and really only a local kind of thing." Firefighters from both sides joined up for their annual drill in June to practice for cross-border brush fires and other emergencies. Leary notified the Cubans that there would be an influx of construction workers for runway repaving and other work on the U.S. side. A year-old agreement to allow emergency medical flights to cross Cuban airspace was recently and uneventfully put to the test when a man at the base was flown to Miami for treatment unavailable on the base, Leary said. Residents on both sides of the fence can listen to each other's radio stations. A U.S. caller to an afternoon radio talk show on the navy base recently suggested that the Cuban soccer team be invited over for a match. Leary called that "a nice thought" but said there were no plans to carry it out. "That's really making policy. We don't do that," he said. (*Reuters*, 7/9/07)

September 7: For nearly a decade, Republican presidential candidates have counted on Florida's Cuban-American community to win the state and, with it, the presidency. This year's hopefuls are again making the rounds in Little Havana and on Miami's Spanish-language radio. But this once fail-safe plan has become more risky as Florida's increasingly diverse Hispanic community no longer guarantees a monolithic vote. Of the state's estimated 3 million Hispanics, Cubans represent a third. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans, more traditionally Democratic voters, make up another third, and Central and South Americans round out the group. Meanwhile, Democrats are courting the community with renewed vigor, while also using Florida as a platform to reach out to Hispanics nationwide. The eight Democratic candidates will participate in a live forum on September 9, at the University of Miami sponsored by the Spanish-language Univision Network. The televised forum, with the candidates' answers translated simultaneously from English to Spanish, is aimed at the nation's more than 34 million Hispanics, underscoring the candidates' recognition of this demographic shift. On the Republican side, only John McCain agreed to attend Univision's now-canceled Republican forum. His rivals cited scheduling conflicts, though Univision executives say they are in talks with the candidates to reschedule the event. (*AP*, 7/9/07)

September 8: An essay signed by Fidel Castro criticized President Bush for asking Asia-Pacific leaders to cooperate in a new framework on climate change that could compete with other international efforts. Castro wrote that the US and

Australia, the host of this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, never signed the Kyoto Protocol on energy security and climate change and their new proposal could undermine efforts to create a successor to the UN-backed agreement. He went on to blast the US and Australia for continuing their "adventure in Iraq," while other countries are pulling out troops. "It is known that in Iraq about 1 million people have died and 2 million have been forced to emigrate from their country occupied by troops from the United States and their allies, among them Australia," Castro added. [[W and APEC](#)] (AP, 7/9/07)

September 8: Democrat Christopher Dodd pledged that as president he would end a decades-old trade embargo with Cuba and lift travel restrictions to the communist island. The Connecticut senator also said he would open an embassy in Havana and shut down the 17-year-old TV Marti, a US government-run station that broadcasts to Cuba. "Other than the war in Iraq, no other American policy is more broadly unpopular internationally," Dodd said of American policy toward Cuba. Dodd called the policy an "abject failure." As president, he said he would seek a repeal of the 1996 Helms-Burton Act, which strengthened the US embargo against Cuba. He also said taxpayers should not spend millions of dollars annually on TV Marti, which virtually no one in Cuba sees, and that he would reform its companion, Radio Marti. The senator, who trails better known rivals in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, said he would work to establish US mail service to Cuba. He added he would make staying in touch with family on the island easier for Cuban-Americans, by allowing US companies to lower prices for phone calls there. He said he has faith in the Cuban community, and in their willingness to take a look at his policy, though Cuban-Americans generally oppose any lifting of the trade embargo. (AP, 8/9/07)

September 8: More Cubans, frustrated by long waiting lists for visas, are arriving illegally in the US aboard boats, buses and planes. Nationally, 16,100 undocumented Cubans have arrived in the fiscal year that ends September 30 -- 1,749 more than last year. The US Coast Guard has caught 2,435 Cubans in the Florida Straits this year -- exceeding interdictions for all of 2006. Border Patrol and Customs and Border Protection also disclosed figures showing an overall increase in Cuban migrant arrivals on South Florida shores and at border entry points nationally and international airports -- exceeding arrivals during a similar period last year. Recently arrived Cubans interviewed at the Catholic Charities Legal Services offices in Miami and Miami Springs said the leadership change in Cuba was a factor -- but not the only reason. "With or without Fidel, things in Cuba are deteriorating," said Cabrera, 34. (*The Miami Herald*, 8/9/07)

September 9: Seven Democratic Presidential pre-candidates for the US elections of 2008 took part in a television debate aimed at the Hispanic community, in which they agreed that Washington must prepare to take part in the democratic transition in Cuba. New York Sen. Hillary Clinton promised to work closely with the area countries in a transition that "is already under way in Cuba." Bill Richardson indicated that his administration would lift the embargo on Cuba and support movements like those taking place in Brazil, Chile and Argentina. (AFP, 10/9/07)

September 10: The island recalled the ninth anniversary of the arrest of Five Cubans in the US by denouncing the new irregularities committed in the legal process against them. Gerardo Hernandez, Ramón Labanino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando Gonzalez and René Gonzalez were arrested in September 12, 1998 and condemned to severe sentences for the crime of miscarrying terrorist plans against their country, organized in Miami. Lawyer Rodolfo Avalos assured in an article published in the official media that nine years have already passed since the unfair and illegal arrest of those men, so it is necessary to continue fighting for their liberation. (*Prensa Latina*, 10/9/07)

September 11: Fidel Castro joined the band of September 11 conspiracy theorists by accusing the US of spreading disinformation about the attacks that took place six years ago. In a 4,256-word article read by a Cuban television presenter, the country's leader asserted that the Pentagon was hit by a rocket, not a plane, because no traces were found of its passengers. "Only a projectile could have created the geometrically round orifice created by the alleged airplane," he said. "We were deceived as well as the rest of the planet's inhabitants," he said. In fact, the remains of the bodies of the crew and passengers of American Airlines flight 77 were found at the Pentagon crash site, and positively identified

by DNA. As for the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, Mr Castro wrote that the way the passenger jets crashed into the twin towers on September 11 and the data from the plane's black boxes "do not correspond with the criteria of mathematicians, seismologists, and information and demolition specialists". In his article, Mr Castro said the truth behind the attacks with hijacked planes that killed nearly 3,000 people would probably never be known. [[The Empire and Its Lies](#)] (*The Guardian*, 11/9/07)

September 12: Fidel Castro claims Cuba's government saved the life of President Reagan by giving American officials information about an assassination plot in 1984. Castro had mentioned the episode in a 1989 speech to Cuba's Council of State, without providing details. Castro's new essay seemed aimed at showing Cuba has cooperated with the United States in the past. Castro, who has not appeared in public for more than a year, wrote that a Cuban security official stationed at the United Nations told the then US mission security chief about an extreme right-wing group that was planning to kill Reagan during a trip to North Carolina. [[The Empire and Its Lies](#)] (*The New York Times*, 12, 14/9/07)

September 12: The Cuban government distributed a letter in which American author Alice Walker expressed her support to the children of five Cuban intelligence agents imprisoned in the United States. Walker, who won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel "*The Color Purple*", has in the past joined American writers, artists and intellectuals in demanding the release of the so-called Cuban 5, who were convicted in 2001 of being unregistered foreign agents operating in the United States. The letter was released at a news conference held in Havana to unveil a new Cuban book celebrating the five. It was signed "Alice," with "Walker" in parentheses. (*AP*, 13/9/07)

September 12: The President of the Cuban Parliament Ricardo Alarcon said in Havana that the US State Department has once again denied the entry visas to Adriana Perez and Olga Salanueva to visit their husbands Gerardo Hernandez and Rene Gonzalez in prison. Alarcon made the announcement during an activity commemorating the 9th anniversary of the FBI detention of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Fernando Gonzalez, Rene Gonzalez and Antonio Guerrero held at Havana's Mella Theater. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 12/9/07)

September 12: A Miami judge threw out a significant piece of the case against a Cuban farmer who wants to take his daughter back to Cuba, ruling at the end of the state's presentation that child-welfare lawyers failed to offer sufficient evidence the dad knew his daughter was at risk of being harmed by her mentally ill mother. Though much of the Department of Children & Families' case against the Cuban father, Rafael Izquierdo, remains, Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Jeri B. Cohen signaled state lawyers would face an uphill battle when his side begins to present its case on September 14. The judge said recent Florida appeals court rulings make it very difficult to prove a parent abandoned his or her child. "It is very difficult to show abandonment in Florida," Cohen said. "I was very surprised to find out how hard it is when I read the case law. Believe me, if it were up to me, it would be easier." For the first time, the judge acknowledged the politics that overshadow the case. "The United States is reluctant to repatriate a child to a communist country," Cohen said, adding that she believes state workers might have acted differently had her father lived anywhere but Cuba. "We don't need to mince words here." (*The Miami Herald*, 13/9/07)

September 13: The president of Cuba's legislature, trying to explain recent comments by Fidel Castro that a "projectile" and not a plane slammed into the Pentagon on September 11, said that a more thorough investigation of the terror attacks would clear up any misconceptions. Speaking to Wolf Blitzer on CNN's *The Situation Room*, National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón said Castro's comments were based on assertions that others have made, including individuals in the United States. "President Castro was referring to various allegations by scientists, even by journalists, that suggest (...) contradictions between the data that has been published or known about the incidents. "The fact is that a full investigation of that event, as far as I know, didn't take place," Alarcón said from Havana. Asked by Blitzer about the DNA and other evidence from the airplane, Alarcón said "the best answer to that would be a full investigation and a presentation of every detail on every individual that may have had responsibility on what happened." Blitzer told Alarcón that the 81-year-old Castro's comments raise questions about his state of mind. (*The Miami Herald*, 14/9/07)

September 14: A push to rid New York State's pension fund of companies invested in nations identified as backers of terrorism could be derailed by America's longtime pariah state: Cuba. While some are pressing to make New York a leader in the divestment movement - which is attempting to wield America's economic muscle against its enemies - legislation that's been introduced in Albany has a built-in snag. In addition to listing Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Sudan, the legislation also includes Cuba, which is subject to a decades old trade embargo with America. That embargo was relaxed in 2000 and many American businesses are waiting for the day that it is removed entirely and they can begin expanding to the island. The bill passed the Republican controlled Senate despite the dissent of several New York City Democrats, but it is being considered dead on arrival in the Democratic-controlled Assembly. (*The New York Sun*, 11/14/07)

September 14: Attorneys for a Cuban farmer who wants to take custody of his 5-year-old daughter were so confident state lawyers have failed to prove their client is an unfit father that they rested their case without presenting a single witness or piece of evidence. The unusual move by the attorneys for Rafael Izquierdo came after the judge said that the state Department of Children & Families will have a hard time convincing her the father abandoned his daughter. When the trial resumes on September 18, Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Jeri B. Cohen will hear closing arguments. She said she expects to render a decision by September 21. (*The Miami Herald*, 15/9/07)

September 14: US Republican Presidential candidate Fred Thompson said that Fidel Castro presides over a nation that sponsors terrorism and therefore it is necessary to maintain the existing embargo against the Caribbean island. According to the former Senator and actor, who discussed the Cuban topic during a visit to the restaurant "Versailles," where Cuban exiles meet, Fidel Castro is a dictator and a leader of State-sponsored terrorism and must be treated accordingly. (*EFE*, 14/9/07)

September 17: A multimillion-dollar human smuggling enterprise is bringing thousands of Cubans to the US on high-powered speedboats at a price of up to \$10,000 a head, and the flourishing business has increased the number of Cubans illegally entering the US by double-digit percentages in each of the last three years. More than 16,000 Cubans have arrived illegally this fiscal year, which ends September 30. Most arrived on remote beaches in the Florida Keys or in Mexico, where they could enter the US Southwest through official border crossings. Coupled with the 20,000 visas issued to Cubans each year for legal immigration, the numbers arriving now rival the 35,000 who crossed the Straits of Florida in 1994 to escape the poverty that gripped communist-ruled Cuba after the Soviet Union disintegrated. "We don't know at 3 a.m. when we see a 'go-fast' boat running without lights if that's migrants seeking a better life or terrorists coming here to blow up a nuclear power plant," said Zachary Mann, senior special agent and spokesman for Customs and Border Protection. The smugglers' success using so-called go-fast boats has convinced South Florida Cuban exiles who put up the money for their relatives' passage that they are paying for a service rather than committing a crime, authorities say. (*Los Angeles Times*, 17/9/07)

September 17: A Nebraska delegation will be making another trade trip this fall to Cuba. Governor Dave Heineman said he's going to lead the agriculture-based group to the island nation in November. This would be Heineman's fourth trade trip to Cuba. Since 2005, Cuba has bought 60 million dollars in Nebraska commodities, including dry edible beans, corn, wheat, turkey, pork, beef, soybeans and other soy products. (*Chrom.Com*, 17/9/07)

September 18: Cuban Cardinal Jaime Ortega y Alamino is one of five personalities to be honoured by the American Bible Society in New York, on the Day of the Spanish-American Bible, reported LaBibliaWeb.com. (*EER*, 18/9/07)

September 18: Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez said that the United States was ready to work with Cubans seeking real economic and political reform, but that he saw little sign to date of change as ailing leader Fidel Castro passes from the scene. The Cuban-born Mr. Gutierrez strongly defended the 45-year US trade embargo with Cuba, saying the transfer of power from Mr. Castro to his brother Raul amounted to a "preservation of dictatorship." It is "more than a bit naive" to think the shift from the 81-year-old Fidel to the 75-year-old Raul would bring meaningful

reforms, Mr. Gutierrez added. "Unless the regime changes, our policy will not change," the Havana-born Mr. Gutierrez said in the first of a series of programs on the future of post-Castro Cuba at the Heritage Foundation. But he said the US government is anxious to do business with Cuba once the Castro regime is replaced. He said the United States was already the largest source of food and humanitarian aid to the Cuban people, despite the hostility to the regime. "The question is not, when will the United States change its [embargo] policy? The real question is, when will Cuba change its policies? (...) We are prepared to work with Cuba if there is real reform," he said. (*The Washington Times*, 18/9/07)

September 18: Though Cuba's economy is small, it still offers interesting prospects for commerce, trade experts said. Without a nod to the highly charged political issues that usually swirl around Cuba, the SeaCargo Americas Conference dissected the Cuban economy and its trade and economic potential in a roundtable. "It is limited," said John Price, president of the business consulting group InfoAmericas. "But Cuba is interesting as a trading partner." According to Price, because the Cuban economy doesn't have a lot of productive sectors, it has to import about \$10 billion a year in goods. Oil products account for about a third of those imports. Despite the US trade embargo, the United States is still one of the largest exporters to Cuba, though its exports -- largely food and agricultural products -- reach only about \$350 million a year and have fallen slightly as Cuba has turned to other countries for food imports. Like the rest of the region, Cuba faces major challenges in how to stretch its limited resources. Price pointed out that nickel prices are falling and that the tourism sector has the worst record in the Caribbean in attracting return visitors. Capital for future investments will need to come from outside Cuba, and the future depends on Cuba's ability to attract those investments, Price said. US companies are not allowed to invest in Cuba and U.S. service firms also do no business there. (*The Miami Herald*, 19/9/07)

September 18: Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque released a 56-page report on the embargo, calling it devastating and an attempt to "beat our people into submission with hunger and disease." Stricter enforcement of 40-year-old US sanctions has made it harder for Cuba to do its banking and has seen Cubans evicted from US-owned hotels around the world, Roque said. Even Cuban musicians have been banned from playing for guests at Hilton, Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels as far as Asia, the Foreign Minister complained. Tougher US actions include stripping Cuba of rights in the United States to its best known trademarks, Cohiba cigars and Havana Club rum, he said. "Enforcement of the blockade has reached levels of madness and has been particularly ferocious and cruel in the last year," he said at the presentation of an annual report to the United Nations on the impact of US sanctions. The most serious development has been the growing refusal of international banks to conduct Cuban business in dollars, for fear of running afoul of US regulators, he said. "No bank dares accept a Cuban transaction," Perez Roque said. "Our country wants to pay but can't. The Swiss banks are afraid of receiving transfers," Perez Roque said. "World rejection of the embargo is practically unanimous," said Perez Roque, who will represent Cuba at the UN General Assembly. The vote on Cuba is on October 30. [[Report Cuba vs Blockade](#)] (*ABC, Reuters*, 18/9/07)

September 18: Cuba's Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said that Cuba is ready to open a dialogue with the United States, if the US is respectful of Cuba's sovereignty and rights; otherwise, it will continue resisting the blockade for a thousand years. Cuba has not been brought to its knees nor will it be made to do so in the future, stressed Cuba's top diplomat, while presenting to journalists accredited to Havana a report on the need to put an end to the blockade that affects the island's social and economic life. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/9/07)

September 19: Fidel Castro denounced that the United States government is using unimaginable economic means to defend a right that violates the sovereignty of all the other countries. In an essay entitled "Deliberate Lies, Strange Deaths and Aggression to the World Economy," the leader of the Cuban Revolution states that it keeps on buying raw materials, energy, advanced technology industries, the most productive lands and the most modern buildings on the face of our planet with paper money. [[Deliberate Lies, Strange Deaths and Aggression to the World Economy](#)] (*Prensa Latina*, 19/9/07)

September 19: The judge in the contentious child custody battle that spans the Florida Straits interrupted closing arguments in the case to lament that nearly everyone in the courtroom -- including herself -- shares blame in a "tragic situation." Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Jeri B. Cohen said that responsibility for what has become a long, tense legal battle lies with several parties, including the father of the 5-year-old girl at the center of the dispute, who failed to act decisively when his child entered foster care in December 2005. Cohen also blamed herself, for listening to a state child-welfare lawyer who insisted that father Rafael Izquierdo come to the United States from Cuba to fight for his daughter, instead of letting him plead his case on the telephone -- as the judge said she allows in cases virtually every week. But Cohen reserved her harshest criticism for the Florida Department of Children & Families, saying the agency could offer no explanation for waiting months before notifying the father, a farmer from Cabaiguán in Central Cuba, that the state wanted to strip him forever of custody of his child. "You blame, you blame and you blame," Cohen said, looking at DCF attorney Rebecca Kapusta. "But the Department of Children & Families [has] a lot of responsibility for the tragic situation we have here. You [have] a lot of the responsibility because you let politics get in the way." (*The Miami Herald*, 20/9/07)

September 19: Fernando Gonzalez, one of the five Cubans imprisoned in the US, was taken from Waseca Prison in Minnesota to Terre Haute, Indiana, the Free the Five International Committee reported. Gonzalez was sentenced to 19 years in jail. Along with Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Rene Gonzalez and Antonio Guerrero, Fernando was arrested September 12, 1998. (*Prensa Latina*, 19/9/07)

September 20: The top US diplomat for Latin America urged nations to push Cuba to hold an internal dialogue that would pave the way for democracy on the island. "There is a quiet consensus in the Americas and in Europe that Cuba's future must be democratic," Thomas Shannon, assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere, told participants at the The Miami Herald Americas Conference in Coral Gables. "All successful political and economic transitions, from South Africa to Eastern Europe, have required dialogue between the existing regimes and the citizens of their countries," he said. "Cuba will be no different." Shannon's comments were a rare public admission of the difficulties the United States faces in its diplomatic efforts. "Currently, the regime believes it can buy time and space through increased repression within Cuba and aggressive diplomacy outside of Cuba," Shannon said to a crowded room. "This is not a long-term strategy, and it does not address the forces of change that ripple beneath Cuba's surface." Shannon said there "still exist differences" about how to promote democracy in Cuba, given Latin America's "historic commitment to the principles of non-interventionism and national sovereignty." "But have no doubt," he noted, "helping the Cuban people achieve their democratic destiny and reintegrate their country into the Americas will be one of the biggest diplomatic challenges we face." [[The Americas: Dynamic Change in the 21st Century](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 21/9/07)

September 20: US Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez spoke briefly about Cuba calling it the "human rights travesty of the hemisphere." Gutierrez was speaking at the Americas Conference sponsored by The Miami Herald. "I am often asked when the US will change its policy toward Cuba. That's not the right question", Gutierrez said. "This is not about US policy--this is about Cuban policy--about the Cuban regime's treatment of its own people". "Cuba is the human rights travesty of the Hemisphere. There is no place in Latin America where workers and citizens have fewer rights than in Cuba", Gutierrez said. And added: "We recognize the future of Cuba is in the hands of the citizens of Cuba. We hope that some day we can welcome Cuba into the community of democracies and into a hemisphere of freedom, hope and opportunity for all". Speaking at the same conference last year, Gutierrez proposed Cubans hold a referendum to decide if they want to live in a democracy or under a dictatorship, an idea that never went anywhere. Gutierrez himself was born in Cuba. Referring to whether the US has any military plan toward Cuba, Gutierrez affirmed that "the US does not have any military ambition in Cuba". "That has always been an alibi of the Cuban regime to keep on oppressing the Cubans". (*US Fed News, The Miami Herald, Notimex*, 20/9/07)

September 21: United States' Treasury Department has banned the export of medicines or devices made by US companies to Havana's William Soler Pediatric Hospital, opened 21 years ago by Fidel Castro primarily to treat

children with congenital heart malformations. The first sign of the recently stepped up measure to block the sale to Cuba came with the ban on sales of catheters and other devices by AGA and NUMED companies to the pediatric hospital's Cardiocenter, used by specialists to perform the technique known as interventionist catheterization. Sources from the Ministry of Public Health note that since 2006 the US Department of Commerce began to list Cuba's most important hospitals as blacklisted facilities, in a new attempt to strangle the development of medical attention on the island. "This is not a political problem," said cardiovascular surgeon Dr. Eugenio Selman-Housein Sosa, director of the "William Soler" Cardiocenter, "but an ethical humane and moral one," which in his opinion speaks poorly of the US government. (ACN, 21/9/07)

September 22: Cubans on a flimsy inflatable raft begged Carnival Cruise Line officials not to interrupt their journey to "freedom" while passengers tossed them water bottles and shot video. Adlin Sukhwani, of Kendall, was on the last leg of a seven-day cruise, about 45 miles from Key West, when she spotted the small raft on Saturday and her husband started videotaping the 10 men -- an effort to get their faces splashed in the news media and help their families identify them. Following US Coast Guard procedure, the cruise ship intercepted the raft about 45 miles off Key West, said a Carnival spokesman. Before the cruise ship crew took the men aboard, "one of the Cuban men said with despair he had risked his life and this was his fifth time being returned," Sukhwani said. The men said they were from El Cotorro, a town on the outskirts of Havana. Carnival later turned the men over to the US Coast Guard. (*The Miami Herald*, 25/9/07)

September 24: Lawrence Wilkerson, former chief of staff to US General Colin Powell, published an open letter where he denounces injustices committed against the five Cubans imprisoned in the US and calls for public protests in their support. The report published in Granma daily says Wilkerson, a retired US Army colonel and assistant to former Secretary of State Powell, said he based his courageous stance on the Five largely on his extensive knowledge of the George W. Bush administration. Wilkerson said he became convinced that defending the Five was a just cause after attending a September 12 lecture by defense attorney Leonard Weinglass at Howard University Law School. (*Prensa Latina*, 24/9/07)

September 25: US President George W. Bush, in a speech to the UN General Assembly, called for "free and competitive elections" in Cuba, saying the long rule of ailing Fidel Castro "is nearing its end." "In Cuba, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end," he told world leaders gathered at the UN, in New York, in a reference to Castro. "The Cuban people are ready for their freedom," he added, stressing as the communist-rule island enters a period of transition, "The United Nations must insist on free speech, free assembly and ultimately free and competitive elections." [[George W. Bush Address to the UN GA](#)] (AFP, 25/9/07)

September 25: Cuba's foreign minister walked out of the UN General Assembly in protest of US President George Bush's speech in which he said the "long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end" on the communist island. The Cuban delegation issued a statement saying the decision by Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque to leave was a "sign of profound rejection of the arrogant and mediocre statement by President Bush." Cuba's UN Mission said Bush had no moral standing to criticize anyone. It accused Bush of responsibility "for the murder of over 600,000 civilians in Iraq" and for "the torture of prisoners" at the US Navy base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where more than 300 men are being held on suspicion of terrorism or links to al Qaeda or the Taliban. [[Declaración del MINREX](#)] (*The Miami Herald*, 26/9/07)

September 25: Members of the Cuban Council of Churches and Cuban religious leaders of diverse denominations joined the campaign of solidarity with five Cubans imprisoned in US jails. Rev. Raúl Suárez, head of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center, told the press that the call is also a demand to afford dignified and humane treatment for the "Five Heroes" and their relatives. (*Trabajadores*, 25/9/07)

September 26: The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Kodiak Island repatriated 61 Cuban migrants, who were interdicted at sea in five separate events, to Bahia de Cabañas, Cuba. The Coast Guard was assisted in two of the five Cuban migrant interdictions by the crews of cruise ships. (*US Coast Guard News Release, 26/9/07*)

September 26: The judge presiding over a contentious international dispute over the fate of a 5-year-old Cuban girl ruled that state child-welfare lawyers failed to prove that the girl's father is an unfit parent. In the 47-page ruling, read aloud in a crowded downtown Miami courtroom, Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Jeri B. Cohen said lawyers for the state Department of Children & Families failed in proving their case against Rafael Izquierdo, a Cuban farmer who wants to return to the island with the girl. The judge ruled that state child-welfare workers failed to prove that the father had "abandoned" his daughter under Florida law. But Cohen's ruling does not immediately resolve the fate of the girl at the center of the dispute: A second chapter of the legal fight -- to determine whether the girl should stay in the Coral Gables home of Joe and Maria Cubas, where she has been living for the past 19 months -- is expected to begin in October. (*The Miami Herald, 27/9/07*)

September 26: Cuba's foreign minister launched a blistering attack on President Bush at a UN General Assembly meeting, a day after the US leader spoke of a Cuba no longer ruled by Fidel Castro. Felipe Perez Roque told world leaders that Bush "came into office through fraud and deceit" and has "no moral authority or credibility to judge anyone." He also accused the American leader of authorizing the torture of prisoners at the US military prison at Guantanamo Bay. Perez Roque, who spoke on behalf of the 118-nation Nonaligned Movement, said Bush's comments forced him to respond. "It was an embarrassing show," he said. "The delirium tremens of the world's policeman, sprinkled with the mediocrity and the cynicism of those who threaten to launch wars in which they know their life is not at stake." [[Statement by Felipe Perez Roque](#)] (*The New York Times, 27/9/07*)

September 27: A new order issued by the Fifth Circuit of Appeals of New Orleans, Louisiana, has granted the US administration another thirty days to present arguments on the case Luis Posada Carriles. According to a notice published on the US Court PACER systems, October 24 is the new deadline for Washington to appeal the decision made in El Paso, Texas by Judge Kathleen Cardone, by means of which Luis Posada Carriles was found not guilty for minor immigration charges. (*ACN, 27/9/07*)

September 28: Eighteen Cuban migrants -- three of them children -- were picked up in the Florida Keys by a trucker and dropped off overnight at a gas station in South Miami-Dade. All were seen by Miami-Dade Fire Rescue workers and seemed to be doing well. The migrants said they had departed Cuba from the port of Mariel. (*The Miami Herald, 28/9/07*)