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Highlights

Domestic Affairs: Cuban authorities release some jailed dissidents, including poet and journalist Raúl Rivero.

Economy: The US dollar is withdrawn from circulation in Cuba. The governments of Cuba and China sign a long list of cooperation accords affecting key areas of the island's economy, including nickel production.

Foreign Affairs: The European Parliament responds to indications from the EU's executive that Brussels might pursue a rapprochement with Cuba's regime by opposing such a move. China's President Hu Jintao arrives in Cuba. Cuba restores normal diplomatic relations with Spain. Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi visits the island.

Security: Cuban Defense Minister, Raul Castro, meets North Korean Vice Marshal Kim Yong Chun, chief of the general staff of the Armed Forces of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

US-Cuba Relations: US agricultural goods exported to Cuba reach \$298 million. The 43 Cuban members of a theatrical production in Las Vegas seek asylum in the US. The Treasury Department prepares new guidelines for the growing food sales to Cuba.



Domestic Affairs

November 1: Fidel Castro is healing nicely after shattering a kneecap and breaking an arm in an accidental fall, his older brother Ramon said, adding that their family has always enjoyed good health and longevity. "It seems that we have a good genetic mix," Ramon Castro, 80, said after the opening of a weeklong International Fair of Havana. He said he expected that his brother Fidel, 78, would be walking again soon. (*Canadian Press*, 1/11/04)

November 1: The health of jailed Cuban dissident Raul Rivero has deteriorated following the appearance of cysts in his kidney, his wife Blanca Reyes said. "His kidney has multiple cysts, seven cysts, one of them measures 20 millimeters (3/4 inch)," the wife of the journalist and poet told the press. Reyes noted that Rivero suffers from emphysema, which "is not receiving proper treatment in jail." Rivero, 59, was sentenced in 2003 to 20 years behind

bars in a summary trial following the arrests of 75 pro-democracy advocates accused of conspiring with Washington against the Cuban state. The writer is serving his sentence in Canaleta prison, some 460 kilometers (285 miles) east of Havana. (*EFE*, 2/11/04)

November 2: Prominent Cuban dissident, Oswaldo Payá, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement (MLC), denounced the "massive torture" practices against imprisoned dissidents in the island, and asked the international community to join together in a petition of amnesty for all political prisoners in Cuba. Payá expressed his concern for the "systematic cruelty applied" to "the prisoners of the Cuban Spring", the 75 dissidents sentenced in 2003, and further denounced "particular sadism in the actions of the prison authorities". "The physical and psychological damage the prisoners suffer should not leave Cubans and the international community in silence and insensitive", pointed out Payá in a press release issued from Havana. (*EFE*, 3/11/04)

November 3: Two people died and 62 were injured when a bus overturned near the eastern Cuban city of Holguín. The accident, the cause of which is still under investigation, occurred on the road that links the city of Holguín with the town of Mayarí, the National Information Agency reported. Two people were killed and 40 people remained hospitalized with injuries of varying degrees, although their lives were reportedly not in danger. (*EFE*, 3/11/04)

November 3: Cuba continues perfecting organ and tissue transplants as a procedure to improve the quality of life of those affected by different diseases. The eastern city of Santiago de Cuba is second nationally in this important activity with over 900 kidney and nearly 100 cornea transplants. Preparations are also being created for future heart and liver transplants. Transplant coordinator Dr. Manuel Rodríguez Beltrán told reporters that Santiago de Cuba has effective technical infrastructure as well as qualified personnel and multidisciplinary groups created to advance in the field. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 3/11/04)

November 3: Mirta Villanueva Almeida, a 68-year-old Cuban lady was brutally beaten in her own home by Luis Batista Tamayo, a former agent of the Cuban Interior Ministry. Mrs. Villanueva is the mother of the former Cuban political prisoner Camilo Pérez Villanueva, recently released from the prison Combinado del Este after serving a 12 year prison term. "As my mother was entering our home through the rear porch, she was physically attacked by Luis Batista Tamayo, a former member of the Cuban Interior Ministry, presently with SEPSA, acronym for an organization that provides security and protection for the Cuban Government. The beating was so brutal that she was hospitalized for 4 days in the Fructuoso Rodríguez hospital, in the Vedado municipality," Mr. Pérez denounced to the press. (*Puente Informativo*, 9/11/04)

November 4: Headed by Olympic javelin-throw champion Osleidys Menéndez, a group of Cuban athletes started training aiming for the Olympic Games of Beijing 2008. Menéndez, also the holder of a world record in her discipline, started training in the Pan-American Stadium of Havana, to prepare for the 2005 season, which will have its zenith in the World Championship of Helsinki. (*Xinhua*, 4/11/04)

November 4: A proposal for a peaceful transition to democracy, "A Transition Project by Cubans, for All The Cubans and for a Free and Democratic Cuba", has been circulating amongst representatives of dissident organizations in the Isle of Youth. The project is the result of an exchange of ideas amongst the Consejo por la Libertad de Cuba (Cuban Liberty Council), Mujeres Anti Represión en Cuba MAR por Cuba (Women Against Repression MAR for Cuba), and "Plantados" por la Libertad (Plantados por la Libertad). (*Puente Informativo*, 4/11/04)

November 6: Although no executions have been carried out in Cuba in the last 18 months, a human rights organization has denounced that Cuban authorities' continue to ignore international requests for a ban on capital punishment on the island. According to a special report by the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN), the last executions on record were those of three individuals accused of hijacking a ferryboat and taking those on board hostage in April 2003. "Presently, there are 40-50 people on death row," said the organization, whose

estimates place the number of executions by firing squad in the last 4 decades on the island between 5,000 and 6,000. (*Sun Sentinel*, 6/11/04)

November 6: In its latest edition released in Havana, the catholic magazine Palabra Nueva (The New Gospel) issued an appeal to replace the culture of violence in Cuba with one based on good faith, trust and social accountability. According to the publication, Cuban society "is not a compassionate society; supportive, yes, but not compassionate. Not even at its higher levels. There is talk of peace but the actions are not peaceful or compassionate." The magazine, published by the Archdiocese of Havana, pointed that "(...) social and political intolerance is a form of violence that generates further violence and intolerance; a poison that permeates our lives, making us accept the idea that acting tough and authoritarian, and saying no and being inflexible is the only way to obtain success and respect in this world." (*AFP*, 6/11/04)

November 7: Political prisoner Fabio Prieto, jailed in Kilo 8 prison, Camaguey, denounced what he calls "never ending beatings" against political prisoners by prison authorities. Prieto specially denounced beatings against Daniel Ferrer Martínez, Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta and other prisoners, locked in the torture area known as "Major Severity". Prieto said that the prison guards broke the telephones, mostly to avoid news getting out of the prison. Prisoners refused to stand up for the morning "count" as a form of protest, causing extreme anger to the State Security guards who then authorized the brutal beatings in retaliation. (*Puente Informativo*, 7/11/04)

November 7: In a letter sent to Fidel Castro, Dolia Leal Francisco, the wife of political prisoner Nelson Aguiar Ramírez, denounced the abuses against her husband by prison guards at Combinado de Guantánamo facility. "Today I received the terrible news from Guantánamo that my husband Nelson was a victim to another beating", the letter says. Nelson is 69 years old and suffers from several illnesses all of which have been aggravated in jail. "How can such an ill, peaceful and defenseless individual be brutally beaten? Why such terror? Isn't it enough to keep him in jail? Is it that they want to kill him?," Dolia asked in her letter to Castro. (*Puente Informativo*, 7/11/04)

November 8: Intellectuals from 20 countries are participating in an international congress in Havana to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier. The international congress, titled "The Century of Alejo Carpentier," was inaugurated at Casa de las Américas cultural institute. At the inauguration, Casa de las Américas president Roberto Fernandez Retamar emphasized the universality of Carpentier, author of among other works "The Consecration of Spring," and his contributions to both literature and journalism. (*EFE*, 8/11/04)

November 9: After being more than 60 days in a punishment cell at the Kilo 8 prison, Pinar del Río, political prisoner Nelson Moline Espino was transferred to a unit with criminal prisoners, at Kilo 5 ½ prison. "They had him locked in a punishment cell for over 60 days for refusing to follow military orders, and for refusing to eat the food served in prison", Moline's wife, Kirenia Guerra Lugo said. Moline Espino was sentenced to 20 years in jail, during the March 2003 repression against dissidents. He has been recognized prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. (*Puente Informativo*, 9/11/04)

November 9: Recognized by Cuban authorities for their excellent medical quality, the Sisters of Mercy at "St. Vincent de Paul" religious order are celebrating 150 years of labor in the National Dermatology Institute. These religious women have been working since 1954 in the hospital, located in the outskirts of the town known as El Rincón -19 miles southern Havana-, sharing life, reality and sorrows with leprosy patients. The institute is carrying out a program to control leprosy with multi-drug treatments, with the objective of not prolonging this disease. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/04)

November 9: Cuban communist authorities convicted two dissidents on "vandalism" charges and sentenced them to prison terms of three years and four months, a human rights organization said. The two - Alexis Triana Montesinos and Jose Lorenzo Perez Fidalgo - are members of the Cuban Liberal Movement, which is banned by authorities on the island, said the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, also not officially recognized. The

pair were arrested in July and accused of breaking windows at an exchange house and a computer club. "Triana, 25, and Perez Fidalgo, 49, "are members of the Cuban Liberal Movement, an opposition group that in no way promotes acts of that kind," said the Commission, headed by dissident Elizardo Sanchez. (*EFE*, 9/11/04)

November 11: Spokespersons for the Cuban Party for Human Rights informed that members of that organization initiated an open-ended fasting period, demanding that incarcerated dissident René Montes de Oca be given proper medical attention. (*AFP*, 11/11/04)

November 13: The City of Havana is celebrating its 485th anniversary by receiving delegations from some 30 countries for the 12th annual Meeting of Solidarity and Cooperation of City Halls with Havana. Local authorities from all 15 municipalities in Havana participated in welcoming the foreign guests who joined more than 1, 200 people in a ceremony in the city's Gran Teatro to mark the founding of Villa de San Cristóbal de la Habana in 1519. Havana's mayor, Juan Contino, and city historian Eusebio Leal were the guest speakers. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 13/11/04)

November 14: Tropicana is closing the racy show that has entertained foreigners since the communist government began courting tourists in the 1990s. It will be replaced with "Tambores en Concierto" -- "Drums in Concert" -- a spectacle that, while retaining the spirit of Cuban sensuality, will drop some of the more blatant skin-baring. 'It's time to make some changes,' says Tomas Morales, a dancer, choreographer and director who created the show that takes the stage in April. The new show will be more theatrical, with increased emphasis on stage sets and technology, Morales said. The show will guide the audience through different music and dance acts, "taking you to the roots of Cuba," he said. (*Chicago Sun Times*, 14/11/04)

November 14: Following a procession through the streets of the city's historic district, religious figures and Cuban government officials laid down the first stone of what will become the island's first-ever Russian Orthodox church. The church will constitute "a monument to Cuban-Russian friendship," said Metropolitan Kirill, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church's foreign relations department. He traveled to Cuba from Moscow for the consecration. The church will also pay homage to the thousands of Russian workers, soldiers and technicians who cooperated with communist Cuba for three "glorious" decades before the fall of the Soviet Union, he said. "The past can reunite with the present, with the result being a common future," Metropolitan Kirill said. "Russia will again be a great power (...) that supports and defends its friends." (*AP*, 14/11/04)

November 15: Dagoberto Valdés Hernández, director of both the Civic and Religious Education Center and Vitral Magazine, published by the Archdiocese of Pinar del Río, has received the Jan Karski Award for Valor and Compassion. Valdés Hernández, an agronomist, has been appointed by Pope John Paul II to the Holy See's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (*AFP*, 15/11/04)

November 16: The members of the Villa Clara delegations of the Cuban Party for Human Rights, which is affiliated with the Andrei Sakharov Foundation, have joined an open-ended fast organized in support of the Party's incarcerated secretary general, René Montes de Oca Martija. The fast is being held in demand of proper medical care for Montes de Oca. (*Puente Informativo*, 16/11/04)

November 16: In the Isle of Youth, a region of an estimated 56 thousand inhabitants, inefficiency in state-run-companies has provoked a widespread dissatisfaction among residents. Deficiencies in public health services, sewer and community systems, gastronomy, and agriculture has been denounced in more than 100 neighborhood assemblies of the People's Power. The lack of physicians, crisis of public bus services, instability in food products, and lack of drinking water, have been the center of popular denounces. The local government has placed the blame on the embargo, and on damages caused by the hurricanes Isidoro and Lilly, which affected this territory on October and November of 2003. (*Puente Informativo*, 16/11/04)

November 17: Two people were killed when fire destroyed the former Club Casino de Banes, which had belonged to the United Fruit Company. Upon being nationalized in 1959, the club - also known in the old days as the American Club - and surrounding land in Holguin province were given to the Ministry of Education. Lately the facilities had been operated by the University of Banes. The victims had entered the building to retrieve some of their possessions. Three fire engines from Banes were unable to save the neoclassical structure. (*Cubamet*, 24/11/04)

November 18: A group of dissidents and wives of political prisoners attended a Mass, in Havana which they said was dedicated to "the freedom of Cuba." "It's simply something to demonstrate our desire for Cuba to be free soon," said dissident and former political prisoner Martha Beatriz Roque as she left the service at the capital's Church of Our Lady of the Rosary. Other attendees included Rene Gomez Manzano and Felix Bonne, Roque's colleagues in the Assembly to Promote Civil Society, and the wives of jailed dissidents Oscar Elias Biscet, Angel Moya, Adolfo Hernandez and Arnaldo Ramos. The Mass followed the drafting and dispatch of a letter to leaders meeting at the Ibero-American Summit in Costa Rica asking them to press Fidel Castro's regime to free political prisoners. (*EFE*, 18/11/04)

November 22: Cuba's Communist regime edges out China's when it comes to censoring the Internet, according to a study released by Reporters Without Borders (RWB) to coincide with a meeting between those countries' leaders in Havana. The comparison is based on 10 categories, in four of which Cuba ranks "worst" compared to three in which China receives bottom billing. In the other three, the two countries are judged to be virtually tied. It should come as no surprise, then, that in a section titled "Governmental position toward the Internet," the RWB report notes that Hu Jintao's China says the Internet must be "developed and controlled," while Fidel Castro's Cuba says it must be "above all, controlled." In that same chapter, Beijing is reported to consider the Internet "indispensable for economic development, an instrument of propaganda and a 'subversive' force," while Havana calls it "the great malaise of the 21st century," RWB said. Cuba also ranks last in the number of Web surfers, having "tens of thousands of selected Internet users," since governmental authorization is required to buy a modem. [[Internet under surveillance](#)] (*EFE*, 22/11/04)

November 22: Laura Pollán Toledo, wife of prisoner of conscience Héctor Maseda Gutiérrez, incarcerated in La Pendiente prison in the province of Villa Clara, denounced that her husband remains "plantado" (refusing privileges and/or duties, in protest) since last September. According to Pollán, Maseda Gutiérrez has been the victim of arbitrary decisions on the part of the prison staff and, in protest, since last September 14 he refuses to accept neither family or conjugal visits, nor the food packages he is allowed to receive from his family every 3 months. (*Cubamet*, 22/11/04)

November 22: According to the illegal Christian Workers' Union, self-employed citizens in Downtown Havana were targeted by a large operation during which fines of up to 1,500 *pesos* were imposed for alleged price-gouging practices and sales of unauthorized products. Large amounts of merchandise were confiscated while offenders were threatened with operating license suspensions. (*Info Lux Press*, 34/11/04)

November 24: Thanks to assistance provided by Aid to the Church in Need, Cuba's bishops are evangelizing the country using small comic books on the lives of Father Felix Varela and Our Lady of Charity. ACN financed the printing of 80,000 copies of the comic book, "Father Felix Varela, the Cuban Saint," which is being distributed among young people in order to introduce them to "one of the most important men from Cuba." The Secretariat of the Bishops Conference of Cuba said that the comic books are intended to spark interest in knowing more about "that person who knew how to respond, with truth and love founded upon his Christian commitment," to the challenge of the times in which the Cuban nation and the "dream of freedom" were born. Cardinal Jaime Ortega of Havana, president of the bishops' conference, said, "The Cuban Catholic is inheritor of the Christian and patriotic thought of Father Felix Varela, of his zeal for independence, of his love for Cuba, of his faithfulness to the Church." (*Catholic World News*, 24/11/04)

November 24: Independent journalist Manuel Vazquez Portal, one of the 75 dissidents rounded up and jailed by the Fidel Castro regime in April 2003, told the press that the Cuban government has authorized him to emigrate to the United States. Vazquez Portal said he has just been given the green light by Cuban migration authorities to leave the

Communist-ruled island, accompanied by wife Yolanda Huerga and 10-year-old son Gabriel. Vazquez Portal said that upon his release a State Security agent told him leaving the country would be his best bet. "What made me decide to leave is the Cuban government's stubborn attitude toward the request made by Europe and the world for democratic changes, openness, the possibility of honorably exercising my profession within a legal framework," he said. Faced with the government's attitude, Vazquez Portal said, "The Cuban people have two options: massive migration or rebellion". (*EFE*, 24/11/04)

November 24: The UNAIDS Specialized Office recognized the low AIDS/HIV level in Cuba and said that the island represents the exception in the Caribbean, according to a report made public in Havana. The UN office claims the credit to the policy of taking patients into specialized centers (sanatoriums) since the 1980s and the later treatment with antiretroviral medicines. Estimates by the Cuban Public Health Ministry says that the highest level of AIDS/HIV is in the people between 35 to 44 years, followed by people from 20 to 24 years as people between 15 to 19 have maintained a stability in the last few years. (*Prensa Latina*, 24/11/04)

November 26: The Rector of the University of Havana was appointed president of the Union of Latin American Universities (UDUAL) at the closing of the 15th Rectors' General Assembly that began in Havana with record attendance. Dr. Juan Vela Valdés was selected to occupy the top UDUAL post by unanimous vote of the 85 delegates from 51 Latin American higher education institutions. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 26/11/04)

November 26: Cuban authorities have transferred 13 imprisoned dissidents, journalist-poet Raúl Rivero among them, from facilities around the island to Havana, a move the opposition hopes signals their imminent release. All were part of the "Group of 75," peaceful dissidents who were sentenced to up to 28 years in prison after summary trials in the spring of 2003. The prisoners were told that they would be transferred to Havana for medical checkups, a procedure usually undertaken prior to release, said Elizardo Sánchez of the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation. Among the transferees is Raúl Rivero, who was serving a 20-year sentence at Canaletas, 280 miles from Havana. (*EFE*, 28/11/04)

November 29: Cuban authorities began releasing some jailed dissidents, including independent economist Oscar Espinosa Chepe. Espinosa was granted parole on his 64th birthday for health reasons and returned to his Havana home. Espinosa said the Cuban government made "a very serious mistake" when it jailed 75 dissidents in the spring of 2003, and the releases came because authorities "should be reconsidering (the issue)." Despite the difficulties he suffered in jail, Espinosa Chepe said he had no intention of leaving Cuba. "I feel Cuban and I want to die in my own country," he said. Also freed were dissidents Marcelo Lopez and Margarito Broche. The three prisoners released (Oscar Espinosa Chepe, Marcelo Lopez and Margarito Broche) were the most ill among 10 prisoners whose health was delicate. (*EFE*, *Notimex*, *CNN*, 29/11/04)

November 29: Cuban opposition activist Elizardo Sanchez considered the release of several of the 75 dissidents who were incarcerated for long prison terms as a false message to the international community. "The government lacks the will to change," was the opinion of the president of the dissident Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation (CCDHRN) In statements to the press, he expressed his view that these are "useful decisions on the part of the Cuban government which have two objectives: that they should not die in prison under its care (the sick dissidents) and to send false messages of change to international public opinion. In Sanchez's opinion, these releases are no different from the ones carried out several months ago "for reasons well classified as poor health", the grounds for which they received permits to leave prison. (*Notimex*, *EFE*, 30/11/04)

November 30: Cuba has freed one of the country's best-known dissidents, the acclaimed poet and journalist Raul Rivero. The 59-year-old was among 75 people arrested in a huge government crackdown last year and given long prison terms. He said he was in good health and attributed his release to international pressure and in particular efforts by the Spanish government. "I thought I might be released because they told me they were moving me to Havana, but

they didn't make anything clear until today," Rivero said, explaining that he had been paroled indefinitely and that, during the last few minutes, "the treatment was very cordial." Rivero insisted his intention was to "continue writing and doing what I've always done." He would not say if he planned to stay in Cuba or leave over the next few months. "I believe this is a time to wait. I'm going to see what's happening, how much movement I'm allowed and how much work I can do," he told the press. According to Rivero, the release of dissidents over the past few hours indicates "a desire to correct certain positions" on the part of the Cuban government, although "I don't know if they realize it was a mistake to jail the 75 dissidents." (*BBC, EFE, The Globe and Mail*, 30/11/04)

November 30: Though the releases from prison of poet and journalist Raul Rivero and dissident Oswaldo Alfonso were applauded by Cuba's internal opposition, opponents of Fidel Castro's regime nonetheless continued to demand that all political prisoners be released from the island's jails. "Raul is the most emblematic Cuban political prisoner for most of the world, but I think that the government is providing ammunition for the Spanish government's agenda," activist Elizardo Sanchez, of the banned Human Rights Commission, told the press. "Raul is the crown jewel, but there are still more in the prisons, and the Cuban government has presented foreign governments with political prisoners in some fashion over all these years," said Sanchez, who recalled that Havana released 3,500 such inmates in 1978-79 as part of an effort to forge a dialogue with the United States. Sanchez also expressed concern that many of the nearly 20 political prisoners who, such as Rivero, were recently transferred to prison hospitals in Havana would return to jail after undergoing medical exams. Vladimiro Roca, spokesperson of the opposition group Todos Unidos, said Rivero's release "changed nothing ... (and) the government is not giving any positive signs with respect to human rights." Roca was critical of the government's parole system, noting that the released prisoners' freedom is "reversible" and may be revoked at the discretion of authorities. "They put the sword of Damocles over their heads and are showing that the petitions by Spain and the European Union are a despicable request," he said. Marta Beatriz Roque, one of the released members of the "Group of 75," said Rivero's parole is directly related to the maneuverings of the Spanish government. (*EFE*, 30/11/04)

Economy

November 1: The Cuban Central Bank issued new convertible-peso bills in denominations of five and 10 pesos, the currency that will replace the US dollar on the island starting November 8. The press reported that the new currency will bear the legend "Banco Central de Cuba" and the bank's logo. The watermark will be the portrait of the apostle of Cuban independence, Jose Martí. The bills have a five-pointed star on the front along with a security ribbon bearing the popular revolutionary slogan "Patria o Muerte - Venceremos." The five-convertible-peso bill is green and has a picture of the monument to national independence hero Antonio Maceo. The 10-peso bill is brown and bears a picture of the monument to Maximo Gomez, a Dominican general who fought for Cuban independence. The bank said the previous issue of convertible pesos from 1994 was still legal tender. The convertible Cuban peso, known officially as the "CUC" (Convertible Unit Currency in English) and popularly as the "chavito," will replace the dollar, to which it is pegged, as of November 8, according to an announcement made last week by Fidel Castro. (*EFE*, 1/11/04)

November 1: More than 1,000 companies from 45 countries are participating in Havana's 12th International Fair (FIHAV), the most important business event in Cuba. Spain once again boasts the fair's heaviest foreign representation, followed by Latin America and the United States, organizing-committee president Abraham Maciques told the local press. Strong foreign presence in the fair, which runs through next Sunday, "once again ratifies interest in the Cuban market, the sense of security it gives (to foreign companies) and the prospects they see for doing business on the island," Maciques said. In addition to developing the local market, FIHAV is also "an opportunity for Cuba to showcase products that could be exported to third countries," he said. According to Cuba's Foreign Trade Ministry, eight official delegations headed by ministers, deputy ministers and presidents of official institutions from China, Vietnam, Venezuela, Argentina, Mexico, Belgium, Germany and South Africa are participating in the event.

Meanwhile, governments and business delegations from Germany, the Czech Republic, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Mexico and Peru are sponsoring pavilions on the grounds. According to the Cuban government, this year's participation in the fair from Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Bahamas and the United States signifies an increase in trade negotiations between Cuba and other Western Hemisphere countries. (*EFE, Prensa Latina*, 1/11/04)

November 1: Chinese Chamber of Commerce vice president Gao Yang said her current visit to Cuba is aimed to increase bilateral trade links. Gao, who participated in the opening of her country's pavilion at the 22nd Havana International Fair (FIHAV 2004), stated that the Asian exhibition area will mainly present producers of electrical appliances, a sector of great exchange between both states during the last four years. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/11/04)

November 1: Cuba and Brazil are studying future transfers of technology developed on the island to the South American giant in order to boost the production of sugarcane derivatives. Renato Caporali, head of the International Division of SEBRAE, a Brazilian institution that supports small and medium-sized businesses, took part in the 4th Bilateral Technical Cooperation Commission Work Group that wrapped up its sessions over the weekend. He reported that his organization signed a cooperation agreement with Cuba's Research Institute for Sugarcane Derivatives (ICIDCA). (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 1/11/04)

November 2: During a visit to the 22nd International Trade Fair in Havana, Foreign Trade Minister Raúl de la Nuez informed that, in comparison with the same period last year, in the first three quarters of this year, Cuban exports grew by 34% while imports grew by a mere 15%. (*IPS*, 2/11/04)

November 3: Cuban Sugar Minister Ulises Rosales del Toro said mills would open late for the coming harvest, in the latest indication that drought damaged the crop, the official news agency Prensa Latina reported. "The harvest will start in January, and not in December as usual, to give more time for cane to mature and increase industrial efficiency," Prensa Latina quoted Rosales as saying in an exclusive interview. Around 20 of 85 mills were not expected to operate during the coming harvest, provincial media and sources indicated. Vice President Carlos Lage recently said 26 of those mills would not open until February. The harvest ends in May. (*Reuters*, 3/11/04)

November 4: Sherritt International Corp.'s earnings doubled in the third quarter, results showed, on the back of higher nickel and cobalt prices and strong sales. The company, which has power, oil and nickel investments in Canada and Cuba, earned \$40.2-million or 26 cents a share in the three months ended September 30. That compared with \$20.7-million or 11 cents in the same quarter a year ago. Sherritt said that sales of nickel, a metal used to produce stainless steel, increased by 5 per cent in the fourth quarter to 8.3 million pounds. Sales of cobalt, which is mined with nickel, were 900,000 pounds, up slightly over the prior-year quarter. (*The Globe and Mail*, 5/11/04)

November 4: Due to the huge demand to dispose of the US bills that were legal tender in communist Cuba for a more than a decade, the Central Bank gave Cubans an extra week to exchange the American greenback for a local currency tied to the dollar. The need to extend the two-week transition period indicated that economic planners in Cuba underestimated how many US dollars had accumulated on the island since they were made legal tender as a temporary measure to capture hard currency after the loss of Soviet aid and trade. (*AP*, 4/11/04)

November 4: Mexican businessmen have asked the Mexican and Cuban governments to help to improve trade relations between the two countries, given that diplomatic disagreements during the last year have had a negative impact on trade. The National Chamber of Manufacturers (Canacintra) has reported that 2004 has been one of the worst years for trade with Cuba, mainly because of the Ahumada case, which resulted in a temporary recall of the diplomatic representatives of both countries. According to data from the Economy Secretariat, Mexico exported 74m dollars' worth of goods and services to the island between January and June this year, in contrast to the 294m, dollars' worth exported during the same period 10 years ago. Before the 22nd International Fair in Havana, Canacintra Secretary-

General Rene Ortiz said that the Caribbean island constitutes a major business opportunity for Mexican manufacturers that has not been developed sufficiently. (*El Financiero*, 4/11/04)

November 5: Tobacco in the eastern province of Pinar del Río - - the biggest producer of tobacco in Cuba -- is recovering from the damage caused by Hurricanes Charley and Ivan, which hit the area in August and September. According to authorities in the province, following weeks of clean-up operations and efforts to repair downed power lines, workers are striving to boost production of export-quality cigars. Four tobacco factories in Pinar del Río have extended their work day in order to fulfill production goals. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 5/11/04)

November 7: The 22nd Havana International Fair FIHAV 2004, Cuba's largest trade fair, concluded with more than \$193 million worth of contracts and letters of intent for deals, organizers said. Cuban Foreign Trade Minister Raul de la Nuez told local television stations that the organizing committee was "pleased" with the number of contracts signed. He said that \$26.6 million of the \$193.7 million was for export contracts in industries such as alcohol, seafood products and machinery. The largest contract penned this year was a more than \$60 million agreement with a rice company in Vietnam, Cuba's largest rice supplier, the foreign trade minister said. Letters of intent totaling more than \$7 million in exports were also signed and should be finalized in the coming months. "I believe this fair has been characterized by its results," the official said. Cuban state-owned food company Alimport alone signed agreements totaling more than \$135 million. Alimport head Pedro Alvarez said more than \$65 million of the total contracts were with US companies. (*EFE*, 8/11/04)

November 7: Strains of Cuban sugar cane are to be utilized in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic to generate electricity and serve as stakes for certain fruit and vegetable plants, an official at the National Sugar Cane Research Institute (INICA) said. Dayami Campo Guerra, who represents a business group affiliated with the island's Sugar Ministry, told local reporters that these varieties will be used not only for creating energy, but also as stakes for such plants as plantain. INICA-developed strains with similar characteristics have been used by Mexican farmers as stakes for keeping tomato plants upright, Campo Guerra said. (*EFE*, 7/11/04)

November 8: Cuban experts advised to give priority to crops resistant to drought in eastern Cuba as a reliable measure to deal with the lack of water caused by the unfavorable climate conditions in the country in the last 10 years. Adolfo Rodríguez, chief of the National Group of Urban Agriculture, called agriculture workers to ration the use of the water in the irrigation of fields, work with efficiency and quality and make an adequate cultivation plans. The local authorities must guarantee the transportation of irrigating systems to other favorable areas -in case the reserves are exhausted- if there are not conditions to solve the problem in a short term, Rodríguez said. It is expected an increase in the production of urban agriculture in 2004 despite the current difficulties, he added. (*Prensa Latina*, 8/11/04)

November 8: The US dollar disappeared from stores, hotels and restaurants in Cuba in what Fidel Castro has called a move to counter US attempts to stifle the island's economy. Cuban businesses can now only accept the "convertible peso" which has a face value equal to one dollar but which is worthless outside the country. The coloured notes have become known as "chavitos", or "monopoly money", by the local population. Now there will be the local peso and the convertible version. Rene Lazo, deputy chairman of the Cuban central bank, said the use of the dollar prohibited attempts to estimate the amount of money in circulation, the *Trabajadores* newspaper reported. He said that now the central bank will be able to "maintain an adequate balance between monetary circulation and the offer of goods and services." The official press has called the currency change "a new victory over imperialism" saying that Cuba was regaining its "monetary sovereignty". (*AFP*, 8/11/004)

November 8: In some areas of large public attendance in Havana, such as the busy produce markets, some "cambistas" (black market currency traders) are offering up to \$32.00 pesos per US dollar, nearly 20% more than the government-run exchange offices. Some analysts maintain that the rise of a black market for US dollars was an almost "natural" reaction, to be expected following the recent ban on US dollar-based transactions, while other experts forecast that this

type of parallel economic activity is only transitory and should not prosper if the local convertible "peso" remains stable. (EFE, 8/11/04)

November 8: Havana will permit the exchange of Japanese yen, Venezuelan bolivars and Mexican pesos for Cuban convertible pesos starting next week, authorities announced in Havana. Central Bank of Cuba (BCC) President Francisco Soberon denied that the Cuban government is considering extending the use of the euro on the island, because "the convertible peso has come to stay, it is our currency." Nonetheless, he recognized that the use of the euro could grow in some tourism centers, but "in no way is it valid to say that we are considering the introduction of the euro," he said. The Central Bank of Cuba president also denied that a black market in dollars was likely to emerge on the island because "owning dollars is not prohibited." He also rejected any possible impact on the remittances that Cubans receive from family members in the United States, adding that the measure has been well received by foreign businessmen operating in the country. (EFE, 8/11/04)

November 8: The Cuban government has placed orders with Mexican manufactures for 50 new products to be introduced in the Cuban market, said Cuauhtémoc Martínez, president of the National Chamber of the Transformation Industry (Canacindra). These products to be imported monthly by Cuba will include 500 thousand candles, industrial-rated footwear – 2,500 pairs--, two containers worth of flooring and tiles, as well as 2 thousand surgical robes. (Notimex, 8/11/04)

November 10: The South African government has signed a framework agreement with Cuba to help boost the country's plans of providing proper shelter for the poor. Housing Minister Lindiwe Sisulu and Cuban Deputy Minister of Construction, Rene Mesa signed the agreement in Pretoria. Speaking after the signing ceremony, Western Cape MEC for Housing and Local Government, Marius Fransman said the Cubans would be deployed to aid with the People's Housing Process. "That agreement will talk to technical assistance to be rendered by Cuban architects and engineers to support the low cost housing process in South Africa." (AllAfrica, 10/11/04)

November 11: Cuba's state-owned utility said that it is well on the way to remedying the supply problems that have caused blackouts of up to 12 hours throughout the island since May. "The situation of the electric system, if no other unexpected problems arise, will continue to improve once the maintenance cycles are restored" at the Antonio Guiterras plant in the western province of Matanzas, Union Electrica said in a communique, adding that it will soon be able to meet demand for electricity 24 hours a day while maintaining "an indispensable reserve." Union Electrica noted that the rolling blackouts will have to continue for a while and that some of those outages may be longer than originally announced. (EFE, 11/11/04)

November 12: According to the Cuban daily *Granma*, the first 145 Turkish tourists ever to visit the island arrived in Cuba aboard the maiden flight of a new Turkish Airlines' charter service between Istanbul and Havana. (AFP, 12/11/04)

November 11: Russia's leading bus manufacturing group, Russian Buses, has shipped 50 buses to Cuba, the company said in a statement. Cuba's Transport Ministry planned to use them as school buses, according to the statement. Russian Buses has also signed a dealership agreement with Cuba's Rusia Automotriz, SA, to sell at least 100 buses a year in Cuba. (Tass, 11/11/04)

November 14: The department of transport in Mpumalanga, South Africa, will be seeking expert engineers from Cuba to beef up its capacity after a long battle to find suitable candidates locally. Roads and Transport MEC Fish Mahlalela said he belied soliciting the help of Cuban experts would help solve the shortage of civil engineers in the province. (AllAfrica.Com, 14/11/04)

November 15: A 10% tax on the exchange of US dollars has come into force in Cuba. The measure was originally planned for November 8, but was deferred for a week to allow people to change their dollar reserves into Cuban pesos. The move will affect Cuban citizens who receive money from relatives overseas as well as foreign visitors. (*BBC*, 15/11/04)

November 15: Delegates from 15 countries attending the 2nd International Symposium on Agro-Ecological Stockbreeding have visited several central Cuban provinces. The program -- which began in Las Tunas -- is moving west and slated to wind up in the Cuban capital. Ecologists and researchers from the United States as well as countries from Latin America, Africa and Europe are exchanging experiences with Cuban stockbreeders and farmers who produce food from natural resources. The meeting is being sponsored by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Ibero-American Network for Sustainable Agriculture, the Latin American Agro-Ecological Movement, and the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 15/11/04)

November 15: Britain's largest trade mission ever to visit Cuba arrived in Havana, one day ahead of a key EU meeting in Brussels on future European relations with the communist island. The 40 visitors include potential investors in tourism, biotechnology, agriculture, education and energy, said Lord Colin Moynihan, the head of the UK-Cuba Initiative. The size and scope of the British trade mission clearly shows the strength of ties between Havana and London, said Moynihan upon arrival. (*AFP*, 15/11/04)

November 16: Fidel Castro appeared on TV along with the director of the Central Bank of Cuba, Francisco Soberón to discuss the progress of the de-dollarization of the economy. With more than 2.5 million transactions in the 18 days since the measure was announced until its full application, and with more accounts opened during that time than in the total in the last ten years, Soberón considered the change-over to be a success. Castro declared that the recent monetary measures implemented on the island seek, among other things, to "devalue the United States' national currency." While giving an update on the impact of the ban on US dollar-based transactions, Castro said that the other objective of this measure is to respond to Washington's attempt to block Cuban deposits in international banks of any amounts in US currency derived from Cuban transactions abroad. (*Radio Habana Cuba, Notimex*, 16/11/04)

November 16: Agreements signed during next week's visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao should allow Cuba to double production of nickel from its current level of 75,000 tonnes a year, according to Fidel Castro. "These are big, big investments," Castro said in a four-hour televised address. He said the Chinese investments would eventually mean that "nickel production, which is now of 75,000 to 76,000 tonnes (annually) -- will double." He stressed that Cuba would retain 51 percent ownership of companies created with Chinese capital. (*AFP*, 17/11/04)

November 18: The drought affecting Cuba's East for several years now has spread to the central and western territories, Cuban experts informed. According to the Climate Center studies, rainfall in October, the last month of the rainy season, was very low across the nation. Thus, unfavourable conditions are predicted for the November-April season, which only accounts for 20 percent of the annual rainfall accumulation. Data of the Climate Control Bulletin term the rain deficit "excessively below the usual", causing "the drought expansion to the central and western regions." The country's 241 reservoirs are currently at 43% of their total capacity, according to specialists Margarita Fontova and Francis Rodríguez from the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources (INRH). For nine of the provinces, this is the lowest quantity of stored water since 1993. The only provinces not lacking stored water are Cienfuegos in the center of the island and, in the far west, Pinar del Río and the Isle of Youth, areas that were hit by the rain associated with Hurricane Ivan and which has aided their supplies. (*Prensa Latina, Granma International*, 18/11/04)

November 18: Cuba is offering technical assistance to the Dominican Republic in order to strengthen that country's irrigation systems. A commission from the Cuban Hydraulic Research Center has arrived in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. Engineers will provide collaboration that includes technical assistance and help in

designing plans for underground irrigation basins. The Cuban delegation will also carry out research and design hydraulic works systems. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 18/11/04)

November 19: A pipeline constructed to bring water from the Cauto River, Cuba's largest, to the drought-stricken city of Holguín is finally up and running and should help bring relief to the more than 300,000 inhabitants of this major urban centre in eastern Cuba. "It's working well and transporting the 500 litres of water a second that it was designed to handle," engineer Rafael Aguilera, the director of the pipeline construction project, told the local newspaper *Ahora*. According to *Ahora*, attempts to put the pipeline into use were frustrated a full 25 times, as a result of breakages in the Italian-made pipes, which could not withstand the water pressure required. But since last week, the authorities say, the flow of water has been stabilised. Aguilera noted that a project of this scope would normally take up to three years to complete, but the state of emergency declared in the city 15 months ago in response to the drought made it essential to complete the pipeline in the shortest possible time. (*IPS*, 19/11/04)

November 20: All Cuba's provincial capital cities will boast digital telephone service. The eastern cities of Bayamo and Las Tunas will join the rest of the island's provincial capitals in offering much improved digitized phone service to residents and businesses. Cuba's telephone company, ETECSA, also announced that at the beginning of 2004 the province of Las Tunas was 8.2% digitized and by the end of the year officials expect the area to be 60% covered. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 20/11/04)

November 20: Iran is to carry out two industrial projects to supply water and electricity to Cuba. Iran's Export Development Bank Manager Norouz Kohzadi and Cuban Minister of Government Ricardo Cabrisas concluded the agreement to that effect in Cuba, according to the Iranian embassy in Havana. During a meeting, Kohzadi outlined aspects of the current banking cooperation between the two countries and expressed Iran's readiness to provide the necessary financing for the projects at medium rate of return. (*IRNA*, 21/11/04)

November 22: Chinese companies signed agreements to invest in the production of Cuban ferro-nickel and form a joint venture to explore nickel reserves, in a major move into the island's nickel industry. State-owned Minmetals Corp. signed a memorandum of understanding that will allow Cuba to start up the unfinished Las Camariocas plant in eastern Holguin province, which has been mothballed since the demise of the Soviet Union more than a decade ago. State-run nickel monopoly Cubaniquel will own 51 percent of the plant and Minmetals 49 percent. The venture will produce 22,500 tonnes of ferro-nickel, with financing coming from the China Development Bank and guarantees from Sinosure, the Chinese Export and Credit Insurance Corp. An executive of Minmetals Corp.'s nonferrous unit said China was interested in other projects in Cuba's nickel industry located in Moa, Holguin province, where Cuba has a joint venture to produce nickel with Canada's Sherritt International. "We will be very active in Moa. China needs the resources. It is good for both countries," said Pen Pu Gang, vice president of China Minmetals Nonferrous Metals Co. (*Reuters, The Toronto Star*, 22/11/04)

November 22: The governments of Cuba and China signed a long list of cooperation accords affecting key areas of the Communist island's economy. The agreements were signed in the context of Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Havana, the last leg of his Latin American tour. Hu and Fidel Castro presided over the ceremony to sign the accords, which were designed to stimulate economic cooperation and trade in a host of areas, including petroleum, nickel production, biotechnology, education, telecommunications and tourism, among many others. The pacts do not set a figure on Chinese investment in Cuba, but experts expect Chinese funds to flow into the nickel sector, in particular. China also agreed to postpone for 10 years Cuban payments on Havana's financial obligations due on Chinese loans to the island between 1990 and 1994. Hu will conclude his visit to Cuba with a meeting with Defense Minister Raul Castro, and he will also deliver a speech to about 200 Chinese businessmen and Cuban officials. (*EFE*, 22/11/04)

November 22: Biotechnological cooperation between Cuba and China continues to move forward with the conclusion in Havana of clinical tests of a humanized monoclonal antibody created by Cuban scientists. According to Dr. Joaquín

Villán, the second phase of clinical trials of the TheraCIM h-R3 recently ended successfully. Dr. Villán, a Cuban scientist participating in this technological transfer, noted that registration of the medicine for production and trade in the Asian nation could be given by the State Administration of Food and Medicine of China before the end of this year. TheraCIM h-R3 is an antibody used in a treatment combined with radiotherapy on patients with advanced cancer in the head and neck. The antibody has been created and produced by scientists from the Cuban Molecular Immunology Center, with patents in several countries including the United States. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 22/11/04)

November 23: The first Iran-Cuba economic conference was held in the Cuban capital. An Iranian delegation comprising private sector officials and Cuban businessmen and industrialists attended the conference, the Iranian embassy in Havana announced. Speaking at the conference, the president of Iran's Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines, Ali Naqi Khamushi, described the trend of commercial ties between the Islamic Republic of Iran and [the] Republic of Cuba as "good". (*IRNA*, 23/11/04)

November 25: Malaysia and Cuba should strengthen bilateral co-operation in biotechnology, biomedicine and agricultural research and development, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said. Speaking to the Malaysian Press after bilateral talks at the Cuban Palace of the Revolution, Abdullah said these areas had also interested Fidel Castro. Several agreements, especially on biotechnology and production of vaccines, have been signed between Cuban research and medical institutes and Malaysian companies during the Prime Minister's visit. (*New Straits Times*, 25/11/04)

November 25: Low energy supplies and equipment breakdowns that have forced some power plants to shut down could increase the number and frequency of blackouts around the island, Cuba's state-run Union Electrica said in a press release. The company noted that "electric service has been negatively affected by energy leaks at key generating units in the nation's power system." The same day, an official television newscast said several generators are out of service for maintenance purposes. "The level of technical interruptions is high. Insufficient reserves and unexpected leaks may impair electric service," the communique warned. Union Electrica also noted that scheduled rolling blackouts would remain in place, and occur more often than previously planned. (*EFE*, 25/11/04)

November 28: Full digitalization of telephone systems in the 14 Cuban provincial capitals was called a step forward in communications, after respective works were finished in Bayamo and Las Tunas, in the island's East. The two modern plants substitute analogical ones, and will also benefit people from Puerto Padre and Manzanillo, the second cities of Las Tunas and Granma provinces, respectively, the Juventud Rebelde daily reported. (*Prensa Latina*, 28/11/04)

November 29: The Guatemalan minister for the Economy, Marcio Cuevas, visited Cuba seeking more trade exchanges with the island. The Minister stayed for three days in Havana, where he met with the Cuban minister for External Trade, Raúl de la Nuez, and the Cuban minister for Internal Trade, Bárbara Castillo. (*EFE*, 29/11/04)

Exile Community

November 2: Mel Martínez became the first Cuban American in the US Senate. Martínez defeated Democrat Betty Castor to win the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Senator Bob Graham. He is the first Cuban-American ever elected to the US Senate. He was also the first Cuban-American to serve in a presidential cabinet. (*AP*, 3/11/04)

November 4: Newly elected senator Mel Martinez brought his victory tour to Miami, thanking supporters and pledging to be a US senator who represents everyone, "no matter who they voted for." "Florida gets to have only two senators and I'm one of them, and I'm going to represent all Floridians," Martinez, a Republican from Orlando, told an adoring crowd crushed into his Miami-Dade campaign headquarters on Coral Way. Speaking in Spanish and English, Martinez,

who left Cuba in the Pedro Pan exodus when he was 15, also thanked those who helped him "achieve this historic landmark" -- a reference to his becoming the first Cuban-American US senator. "It's a very special moment in history, and it's a blessing," said Elly Chovel, founder of the Operation Pedro Pan Group, an alumni association for the 14,000 unaccompanied children sent to the United States during the early years of Cuba's revolution. (*The Miami Herald*, 5/11/04)

November 4: Cuban clarinetist and saxophonist Paquito D'Rivera is one of seven recipients of the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Jazz Masters Fellowships for 2005. This is the highest award a jazz player can receive in the United States. (*AP*, 5/11/04)

November 15: A young aide to outgoing Miami-Dade Mayor Alex Penelas was named executive director of the Cuban American National Foundation, a prominent advocacy group that is at the center of seismic changes in the country's exile politics. Alfredo Mesa, 29, a senior advisor who began working for Penelas 12 years ago as a high school intern, will head the foundation, which was formed in 1981 by the late Jorge Mas Canosa to push for US policies aimed at undermining Fidel Castro's rule in Cuba. Mesa replaces Joe Garcia, a controversial figure in the traditionally Republican-leaning community, who had accused President Bush of failing Cuba and left the post in August to campaign against the Republican president. (*The Miami Herald*, 15/11/04)

November 17: A Miami Hispanic radio station had its fine reduced, but still must pay for a 2003 prank call to Cuban leader Fidel Castro. The Federal Communications Commission agreed to lower the fine of \$4,000 to \$3,500 against Spanish Broadcasting System 's WXDJ for the stunt on June 17, 2003. That day, morning hosts Enrique Santos and Joe Ferrero placed and recorded a telephone call to Fidel Castro and impersonated Venezuela President Hugo Chavez and another Venezuelan government official and insisted they needed to speak to Castro, who eventually took the call. (*UPI*, 25/11/04)

November 29: The Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), the most influential Cuban exiles' organization, described as a "political scheme" the unexpected release on health grounds of political prisoners in Cuba. "It is the Cuban government's old tactic of recycling political prisoners to manipulate public opinion" said Omar López Montenegro, Executive Director of the Foundation for Human Rights in Cuba. The Madrid-based Spanish association Cuba in Transition, expressed joy for the release of independent journalist and poet Raúl Rivero although it warned that the legal mechanism Fidel Castro's regime resorted to -- the so-called "extrajudicial license" -- allows for a swift "return to prison" of any of the released dissidents. (*Notimex, Europa Press*, 30/1/04)

Foreign Affairs

November 1: Cuban mass media highlighted the victory of left-wing candidate by Encuentro Progresista-Frente Amplio-Nueva Mayoría (EP-FA-NM), Tabaré Vázquez, in Uruguay's presidential elections. "Granma" newspaper lead the news in its front page, with some reports from foreign agencies supporting Vázquez and his partner Rodolfo Nin with more than 51 percent of votes. The daily also announced a special TV program on elections in Uruguay and Venezuela, which elected governors and mayors with victory of the sectors supporting President Hugo Chavez. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/11/04)

November 1: Our people will warmly welcome the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Uruguay and Cuba, said Urugayan Senator Reinaldo Gargano. We bade farewell to the Cuban ambassador with a feeling of sorrow, but after relations between the two countries are reestablished, we will welcome him with joy, in accordance with the friendship and affection Cubans inspire in us, added Gargano. In his condition of president of the International

Relations Commission of the Uruguayan Parliament, Gargano refuted statements by the Uruguayan foreign minister about the reasons that led to breaking relations with Cuba. (*Prensa Latina*, 1/11/04)

November 1: Bringing Cuba closer to the Latin American community through dialogue befits the rationale behind the Río Group (G-Río), said a ranking Brazilian diplomat. Marcelo da Silva Vasconcelos, a G-Río coordinator with the Pro Tempore Secretariat told the media that Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim's proposal to allow Cuba to enter the mechanism, rejected for lack of quorum, was consistent with the Group's principles. Da Silva Vasconcelos denied that the initiative was aimed at an immediate Cuban inclusion in the G-Río, but rather at establishing mechanisms for dialogue. (*Notimex*, 1/11/04)

November 2: The Belarusian minister met with the president of the People's Power National Assembly (the parliament) Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada. The parties discussed the prospects of further intensification of the inter-parliamentary contacts between the two states and exchanged their views on the international situation. Within the framework of the visit, Sergei Martynov held negotiations with foreign minister Felipe Perez Roque. The chair of the Belarusian foreign ministry handed a message from the president of the Belarusian state, Alexander Lukashenko, to Fidel Castro. (*Belta*, 2/11/04)

November 2: A Russian Orthodox church will be built in the center of Havana and its groundbreaking ceremony should be held in mid November, the Foreign Church Relations Department (OVCS) of the Moscow Patriarchate said. Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexy II and Eusebio Leal, a deputy of Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power (parliament) and a well-known historian, discussed the construction at St. Daniel's Monastery in Moscow. "On behalf of head of the Cuban state Fidel Castro, Professor Leal presented the Holiest Patriarch church project," the OVCS said. The project was developed at Mr. Leal's architecture office and is based on Moscow architect Vorontsov's drafts. The project includes housing for clergymen and areas for parish work. (*Novosti*, 2/11/04)

November 2: Jaime Canfux Gutiérrez, coordinator of the Adult Literacy and Education Chair at the Latin American and Caribbean Pedagogical Institute (IPLAC) informed Granma International that eight Cuban specialists are in New Zealand working as consultants to the Greenlight Learning for Life program. According to Canfux, Greenlight Learning for Life is an alternative Cuban literacy program via television and video classes entitled "Yo sí puedo" ("Yes, I Can"), suited to the conditions of this bilingual nation, where English, known as Kiwi English and with its very own pronunciation and structure, and Maori are the two official languages. (*Granma International*, 2/11/04)

November 2: It was reported that the American University Washington College of Law, Dean Claudio Grossman, Chief of Staff of the Center for a Free Cuba, Felipe Sixto, and a group of (WCL) students and alumni brought a case to the OAS' Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The case is on behalf of three Cuban nationals, executed in 2003 without due process of law, and in violation of the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948). "This case is an egregious violation of due process of law," said Claudio Grossman. "It is important that the Commission hold Cuba accountable for violations of the American Declaration, to which it agreed more than 50 years ago. At WCL we will continue to take cases like this, in which we can offer our expertise to promote and protect human rights. We reject the notion that we should be silent spectators of such outrageous violations." (*Center for a Free Cuba, Press Release*, 2/11/04)

November 2: The governor of the Mexican state of Coahuila, Enrique Martínez, has expressed interest in expanding relations with Cuba. The Mexican official is visiting the island and attending Havana's 22nd International Trade Fair that opened in the Cuban capital. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/11/04)

November 2: Chinese President Hu Jintao will pay state visits to Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Cuba from November 11 to 23. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Zhang Qiyue made the announcement in Beijing at a routine press briefing. (*Xinhua*, 3/11/04)

November 3: Eleven Cuban rafters, among them three doctors, arrived on Honduras' Caribbean coast, police said. National Police spokesman Leonel Saucedo told the press that the rafters, who were fleeing Cuba in a small boat, washed up on the beach at Trujillo. "All of them are men, but I don't know their identities," Saucedo said. (*EFE*, 3/11/04)

November 4: A group of EU lawmakers ended a two-day visit to Havana aimed at breaking the logjam in communist Cuba's relations with the European Union. It was a chance for a dialogue "with the main parties involved to try to move forward from a blocked situation that we see as very unfortunate," said Miguel Angel Martinez of Spain, who leads the group of Cuba "friends" in the European parliament. An EU delegation of Martinez, two Britons, a French lawmaker and a Belgian, met with Vice President Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, National Assembly speaker Ricardo Alarcon, and Roman Catholic cardinal Jaime Ortega, NGO representatives and EU ambassadors in Havana. The EU lawmakers however did not meet with dissidents, representatives of the outlawed Cuban opposition. (*AFP*, 4/11/04)

November 4: Cuba and Laos have reconfirmed their bilateral relations during a workshop in the Cuban capital, organized by the Havana-based Center of Studies on Asia and Oceania. The gathering was attended by former Cuban ambassadors to Laos and Vietnam, members of the Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee, Foreign Ministry officials and representatives from several Cuban institutions. Also present at the workshop was a delegation headed by Chaleune Yiapaoheu, member of the Central Committee of the People's Revolutionary Party of Laos. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 4/11/04)

November 4: Spanish executives doing business in Cuba are urging Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero to "do what he can" to normalize political and economic relations between Spain and the Communist-ruled island. "The Spanish business community in Cuba has been completely deprived of political support," due to a lack of understanding between Madrid and Havana, Victor Moro, the president of the Association of Spanish Business Leaders in Cuba, said Wednesday night at the organization's annual dinner. Moro, one of the most influential Spanish business leaders on the island, had warned last year that the deterioration of ties between the government of Spain's then-premier, conservative Jose Maria Aznar, and the regime in Havana would have economic repercussions. (*EFE*, 4/11/04)

November 4: Canada World Youth celebrated the 10 year anniversary of its international educational programs with the Cuban Department of Education at Government House in Halifax. These programs have provided more than 500 young people from Canada and Cuba with the opportunity to live and work in a cross-cultural setting. (*CWY E-News*, 17/11/04)

November 5: Celso Amorim, the Brazilian foreign minister, has defended a greater rapprochement of the Rio Group with Cuba and increased dialogue with the island. "Cuba must be attracted to a higher level of dialogue within the region. Some people would like to previously define the terms of that dialogue, but we believe that Cuba would prefer to have an integral part in talks," he noted. According to the foreign minister "that is the objective that Brazil will continue to pursue, although it will do so at the most appropriate time." (*Granma International*, 5/11/04)

November 5: According to Kim Campbell, secretary-general and vice-president of the Club of Madrid, a forum in support of democratic transition that brings together 43 former Heads of State, that organization has not yet decided how it will respond to overtures for its participation in projects linked to Cuba and Afghanistan. She said that it would be interesting but the Club would rather avoid redundancy and its members only go where they are invited. In Cuba's case, "it is still too soon," she said and revealed that the only initiative in that sense had originated with former Czech President Vaclav Havel, who founded the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) and invited Campbell herself to participate in its latest conclave in Prague. (*Europa Press*, 5/11/04)

November 7: Mexican President Vicente Fox expressed opposition to the creation of the so-called Group of Friends of Cuba, as his country already is a friend of the Caribbean nation. In a press conference, with regards to the Brazilian initiative to establish a Group of Friends of Cuba, Fox rejected the idea on the grounds that Mexico and Cuba are already long-time friends. He added, however, that "democracy and human rights are essential to any society." (*NTX*, 8/11/04)

November 8: Fidel Castro appears to be recovering well after shattering his left kneecap and breaking his right arm in a fall last month, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said after visiting the Cuban leader. Cuban television showed Chavez talking with a relaxed-looking Castro, who was in a wheelchair and had his right arm in a sling. His left leg was elevated and appeared to be resting on a pillow. "We've spent some time soul-sharing," Chavez said after the meeting, which began Sunday evening and lasted through the night. He praised the 78-year-old Castro's "extraordinary" strength, health and "clarity." The meeting with Castro also included Vice President Carlos Lage, Central Bank President Francisco Soberon and Foreign Investment Minister Marta Lomas, Cuba's Communist Party youth newspaper reported. (*AP*, 8/11/04)

November 8: During a press conference in Spain, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder said that current conditions in Cuba do not favor a warming of the semi-freeze European Union nations adopted regarding Cuba in the wake of the Communist regime's harsh 2003 crackdown on peaceful dissent. Schroeder made the comments at a joint press conference in León with Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, the EU's major proponent of expanding dialogue with the Castro government. Schroeder, on an official visit, said that given the right conditions, he would favor improving relations with Havana, but insisted that those conditions "had yet to be created." "But this doesn't mean we can't progress through patient negotiations and attempts to convince," the German chancellor added. (*EFE*, 8/11/04)

November 8: The First Bilateral Meeting Cuba-Britain on Nanotechnology got underway in Havana with the participation of prominent experts in the field. The meeting, organized by Cuba's Science, Technology and Environment Ministry (CITMA) and the British Council, includes nine British post doctorate scientists who will discuss recent advances in nanotechnology with their Cuban colleagues. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 9/11/04)

November 8: Two Cuban opposition fronts, Asamblea para Promover la Sociedad Civil en Cuba and Todos Unidos, sent a letter to the Heads of State meeting at the 8 th Ibero American Summit in San José, Costa Rica. In the letter, the dissidents request the liberation of political prisoners in Cuba. [[A los Jefes de Estado y de Gobierno](#)] (*MAR por Cuba*, 18/11/04)

November 9: Cuba has denounced the growth of racism, discrimination and xenophobia in Europe and the United States. During a debate held at a special commission of the United Nations General Assembly that examined the agreements of the World Conference Against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa in 2001, Cuban representative Jorge Cumberbatch said that anti-Semitism and discrimination against Arabs is running rampant in Europe. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 9/11/04)

November 9: Following the 4 th Session of the Joint Intergovernmental Commission in Havana, Cuba and Guatemala announced the adoption of a bilateral agreement comprising 30 cooperation projects for the 2004-2006 two-year period. According to local media reports, sectors that will benefit the most from this accord will include agriculture, scientific research, health care, sports, etc. (*Notimex*, 9/11/04)

November 9: Lesotho Foreign Affairs Minister, Kenneth Mohlabi Tsekoa, wound up a three-day visit to Cuba, which was aimed at expanding bilateral links. Before traveling to his country, the African diplomat signed the protocol of the 3rd Session of the Inter-Government Joint Commission in health and education, as well as foster the technical support

in engineering, information technology and tele-communications, sport sector and training the staff from that nation. (*Prensa Latina*, 9/11/04)

November 9: Twelve Cubans – eight men and four women --, fleeing Cuba aboard a small boat, reached the Atlantic shores of Honduras, said local authorities. (*AP*, 9/11/04)

November 9: In Brussels, Cuban Rev. Raúl Suárez, minister of the Baptist Church of Marianao, in Havana, advocated resuming the dialogue between the European Union (EU) and Cuba on the basis of “mutual respect” and “without preconditions.” “We would wish for a process based on mutual respect and an international climate conducive to dialogue; for both parties to agree on an agenda without preconditions and for an improvement in relations between Cuba and the EU,” said the Baptist minister at a press conference. (*EFE*, 9/11/04)

November 10: Uruguay’s President-Elect, Tabaré Vázquez, announced that his administration will re-establish diplomatic relations with Cuba, which were severed by outgoing the chief of State, Jorge Batlle, in April 2002. The president-elect stated this decision after a meeting with main leftwing Broad Front (FA) leaders, saying that the re-establishment of relations with Cuba will be on March 1, 2005, the date he will take power. (*Prensa Latina*, 10/11/04)

November 11: Mexican undersecretary for Latin America and the Caribbean, Miguel Hakim, confirmed the replacement of Ambassador Roberta Lajous from the Mexican Embassy in Havana with Melba Pría, who is awaiting authorization from Fidel Castro’s government. (*Notimex*, 11/11/04)

November 11: Cuba said the death of Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat was a "cause for dismay in the international community." The communist island's newspapers featured photos of the deceased leader giving a "V" for victory sign, and hailed Arafat for his efforts to create a Palestinian state. The Cuban Council of State decreed an official mourning period of three days and announced that a book of condolences will be open to the public at the Palestinian Embassy in Havana. In 1973, Cuba broke diplomatic ties with Israel in a move of solidarity with the Palestinian people. A year later it established formal relations with the Palestinian Liberation Authority headed by Arafat. [[Fidel Castro’s condolence message to Rauji Fatuh](#)] (*UPI, Radio Habana Cuba*, 11/11/04)

November 11: Polish Foreign Minister Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz said in Madrid that his government leans towards supporting “Cuban democrats” but understands the position of Spain. Cimoszewicz reminded that, in the case of Poland, “the moral and political support” received from many European countries “was very important.” Therefore, he believed that “no effort should be spared to show respect for the Cuban democrats.” However, he felt that, with regards to sanctions, “caution should be exercised” since they sometimes “only make matters worse” for the general population. (*AFP*, 11/11/04)

November 12: Cuba honored the memory of the President of the Palestine National Authority, Yasser Arafat, with a ceremony on the Plaza de la Revolución attended by the Cuban Vice President Raúl Castro, the President of the Cuban Parliament Ricardo Alarcón, the Palestinian Ambassador to Cuba, Imad Jada, Cuban ministers and members of the Central Committee and many of the diplomatic corps in Cuba. Fidel Castro was unable to attend due to his recent accident. The Cuban leader signed the book of condolences for Arafat, opened by the Palestinian Embassy in Havana. On the first page of the book Castro wished "honor and eternal glory to the unforgettable and heroic fighter, Yasser Arafat." "Nothing will be able to erase his name from the history of great fighters for people's liberation," he wrote. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 12/11/04)

November 14: A group of Cuban dissidents urged the European Union to maintain current sanctions against Cuba's communist government, few days before a debate in Brussels to decide future policy toward the Caribbean island. "Our experience is that every time a foreign government gives in to the pressures of the totalitarian government in Havana, repression is intensified," dissidents including Martha Beatriz Roque and Vladimiro Roca said in a letter sent to the

international press. "For us, a policy of any country saying it is in favor of democracy and human rights that at the same time accepts the demands of a government that systematically violates democratic principles would be incomprehensible," the letter said. [[Carta abierta a los gobiernos de la UE](#)] (AP, 14/11/04)

November 14: Fidel Castro met with Metropolitan Kiril, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church's foreign relations, who laid the first stone for the construction of a Russian orthodox church in the island. During his stay in Cuba the metropolitan of Smolensk and Kaliningrad officiated a religious service at Saint Francis of Assisi's Minor Basilica, in Old Havana, as well as met with Caridad Diego, chief of the Religious Affairs Office at the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, and Havana's historian Eusebio Leal. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/11/04)

November 14: Rio de Janeiro Mayor Cesar Maia told the press that the goals of his first visit to Cuba "are being met" and that, so far, the trip had been a "positive surprise." Maia is one of the mayors invited to festivities celebrating the 485th anniversary of the Cuban capital's founding and the 12th annual Meeting for Cooperation and Solidarity of City Halls with Havana. Since his arrival in Havana, Maia has been meeting with island officials to discuss the possibilities for cooperating in several areas, including culture and physical education. (*EFE*, 14/11/04)

November 15: Over one hundred mayors and vice mayors from over 35 countries are attending the 12th Meeting of City Council Cooperation and Solidarity with Havana. Havana's conference Center hosted friends of Cuba, including mayors of Quito (Ecuador), Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Guadalajara (Mexico), Ankara (Turkey), New Delhi (India), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), Brazzaville (Republic of Congo), among others, who also gathered as part of the celebration of the city of Havana foundation. Local governors visited collaboration projects in this capital, which are supported by mayor's offices, city councils, provinces and non governmental organizations. Deputies, city councilors, mayors and aldermen visiting the Island also met with top government officials from the 15 Havana City municipalities, as well as People's Power delegates and community members. (*Prensa Latina*, 15/11/04)

November 16: A display on advances within the Cuban educational system was opened in San José, Costa Rica, as part of the 14th Ibero-American Summit. The display included the launching of a book by Cuban writer and poet, Roberto Fernandez Retamar. Fernández Retamar's book "Cuba Defendida" (Cuba Defended) is a compilation of essays, articles and conferences that gives a general overview of the island's history. (*Prensa Latina*, 16/11/04)

November 15: The President of Vietnam, Tran Duc Luong, paid a brief visit to Cuba to inquire about the health of Fidel Castro. The Vietnamese leader was on his way to Chile when he made a quick morning stop-over to meet with the Cuban leader. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 15/11/04)

November 16: Representatives of the EU's 25 member states have reviewed the EU's policy towards the Caribbean Communist island at the request of Spain's new Socialist government, keen to end the row with the island. No decision was taken on whether to continue inviting dissidents to official receptions, so the policy remains unchanged for the moment, a spokesman for the EU's Dutch presidency said. One suggestion to stop holding National Day receptions at all was quashed, diplomats said. "The concrete result this morning is that chiefs of mission in Havana have been asked to come up with proposals to make this dialogue with dissidents and civil society in Cuba more effective," the spokesman for the presidency said. Envoys will report back next month and the recommendations will have to go to EU foreign ministers for any policy change. One Brussels diplomat said the EU was divided between a group including Spain, France, Britain and Italy which wanted to take the initiative to improve ties with Havana, and others such as Germany, Hungary and the Czech Republic which argued Fidel Castro should make the first move by releasing political prisoners. (*Reuters, CNN*, 16/11/04)

November 16: The European Union's indication that it might soften its diplomatic stance toward the Communist government produced varied reaction here among dissidents, with higher-profile opponents of the regime saying such a move would be a mistake. Dissident Elizardo Sanchez opined that "in no way is Castro thinking about changing the

repressive mood that has characterized him these past several years." Sanchez told the press that the EU proposal "would be very positive if it produced some visible and practical fruit, but I very much doubt that the government will respond positively to these goodwill gestures." Marta Beatriz Roque of the Assembly to Promote a Civil Society, criticized the EU's stance because "it's an opportunity for the Cuban government, and they shouldn't be given the chance to win any fight." "The Cuban government is deaf to dialogue," noted Roque, who predicted that Brussels "will look bad if it gives in to pressure" by Havana. Vladimiro Roca of the All United Movement does not support the EU's strategy either, because "the Cuban government has not given any real signs of change," and the conditions that prompted the EU to adopt the political sanctions last year still continue. Some moderate dissidents, such as Manuel Cuesta Morua, of the Progressive Arch, or Cuban Change leader Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, say the present tension does not favor democratic Cubans, and they see in the EU's position an opportunity to resume a "critical dialogue." Oswaldo Paya, a 2002 laureate of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize, urged the EU not to change its common position. In a letter to the heads of Parliament and Commission Mr Paya said that the position of some governments would be understood, but that a change of EU policy is not in Cuba's interests. (*EFE, EUObserver*, 16/11/04)

November 16: The wife of Cuban dissident author and journalist Raúl Rivero, serving out a 20-year prison sentence, asked the heads of states participating in the 14 th Ibero-American Summit to demand that the Cuban government release all political prisoners. Oswaldo Payá, leader of the Christian Liberation Movement (MCL), also made public a declaration regarding the Latin American conclave. However, in his case, it was a denunciation of the lack of Summit support for the Cuban opposition. [[Carta de Blanca Reyes](#)] (*EFE*, 16/11/04)

November 16: Dozens of Costa Ricans blocked what the Cuban government has called "an anti-Cuban maneuver" in the legislative assembly, by preventing the celebration of a meeting organized by the International Forum for Democracy on Cuba. Convened by organizations and former Latin American leaders to denounce Cuba's violations of human rights, the forum was suspended minutes after it began as a result of its repudiation by members of groups of solidarity and friendship with the Cuban government. Barely two speakers had finished when a large group began to shout slogans of support for Cuba and to demand an end to the forum, organized in the context of the 15th Ibero-American Summit. Cuban Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, Rafael Daussá, called the organization of the forum an "insult" to his country. "I am convinced that all the participants have received money from the US government", he said to the press [[Declaración oficial del MINREX](#)] (*AFP, Granma Internacional*, 16/11/04)

November 17: Costa Rican President Abel Pacheco decried the demonstrations for or against the Cuban government and asked all Costa Ricans concerned "not to interfere with the development of the Ibero-American Summit. However, he said that his country was a "democratic" state and that "it comes as no surprise" that this type of controversy should arise, since Costa Ricans – he admitted – have the right to express support for, or disagreement with, the Cuban government." (*ANSA*, 17/11/04)

November 17: Cuba Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said that Cuba's high morale will assist the Caribbean island in its defense of the Revolution's achievements at the 14th Ibero American Summit in Costa Rica. Pérez Roque told the press that Cuba has the right to participate in the summit despite pressures and maneuvers as the farce and pathetic action financed by Washington in its frustrated attempt to organize a so-called "Forum for Democracy". The diplomat recalled that the representatives of "the Miami mafia", "the Czech satellites" and "Costa Rican bootlickers" had to leave the Costa Rican legislative assembly. (*Prensa Latina*, 17/11/04)

November 17: The European Parliament responded to indications from the EU's executive that Brussels might pursue a rapprochement with Cuba's Communist regime by passing overwhelmingly a resolution opposing such a move. The European Union should maintain its firmer posture toward Cuba until the government of Fidel Castro frees all political prisoners and respects human rights, said the text lawmakers approved by a vote of 376-281 with 26 abstentions. The conservative European Popular Group authored the resolution, which garnered support from most of the centrist legislators, while the chamber's left wing - comprising Socialists, Communists and Greens - introduced an alternative

proposal, which was rejected. Voting on the resolution followed a heated debate that carried on until almost midnight, with 18 Euro-lawmakers - an unusually high number - taking the floor. Passage of the resolution came one day after the EU took a first step toward reviewing the tough stance, including diplomatic and political sanctions, that the bloc took against the 45-year-old one-party state last year. [[European Parliament Resolution on Cuba](#)] (EFE, 17/11/04)

November 18: Cuban Vice President, Carlos Lage, is leading this country's delegation to the 14th Ibero-American Summit, to be held in San Jose, Costa Rica. The main topic of Ibero-American countries will be "Education for Progress," and participants will analyze the critical situation of this geographic area in this sphere, as well as different ways to overcome the crisis. The Cuban delegation is composed by, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, Deputy Foreign Minister and Ibero-American National Coordinator for Cuba Rafael Daussa, Deputy Minister for Foreign Investment and Economic Collaboration Raul Taladrid, and other officials from the island Chancellery. (*Prensa Latina*, 18/11/04)

November 17: Reporters Without Borders appealed to heads of government attending the Ibero-American Summit meeting in San José, Costa Rica, to press Fidel Castro to release 26 journalists he has imprisoned. "The summit must uphold the principles it swears by," the worldwide press freedom organisation said. The 21 government heads at the last summit, in Santa Cruz (Bolivia) last November, said they would encourage the promotion and protection of human rights. Since then, 11 journalists have been killed in the 21 participant countries, 24 arrested and 336 threatened or physically attacked. Twenty-six journalists are in prison, all of them in Cuba, where Castro's regime has a monopoly of all news. [[Cuba and Colombia: A nightmare for journalists](#)] (*RWB Press Release*, 17/11/04)

November 18: Cuba has won approval of a broad anti-terror draft resolution at the 21-nation Ibero-American Summit that condemned a Panamanian pardon for men accused of trying to kill Fidel Castro. Foreign ministers or ranking diplomats from Spain, Portugal and 19 Latin American nations polished a declaration for their leaders to endorse when the summit itself gets underway after a morning filled with side meetings. The biggest sticking point came over a Cuban call to criticize former Panamanian President Mireya Moscoso for the pardon in August of four Cuban exiles who had been accused of plotting to assassinate Fidel Castro at the 2000 Ibero-American Summit in Panama. It also criticized the United States for taking in three of the men. The measure was approved unanimously, but only after extensive editing of the harsh original language, said Costa Rican Foreign Minister Roberto Tovar, the meeting's host and spokesman. Tovar said the text presented to the presidents said the pardons were incompatible with the fight against terrorism. Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque called it "an important result" and said "Cuba feels satisfied." (*AP*, 18/11/04)

November 18: The president of the Spanish government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, said that Fidel Castro's regime must make immediate and firm changes to bring democracy to the island. "Spain has an important commitment of economic investment in Cuba," he said in an interview with the press. "What we want to do is help the changes, encourage them and demand them if necessary from a political standpoint and from the conviction we have that Cuban regime has to change thoroughly," he added. "I believe Fidel Castro should listen to us, knowing that we only want the best for Cuba." (*EFE, Herald Tribune*, 18/11/04)

November 18: Cuban dissidents hailed Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero's statements regarding the need for change in Cuba, but say they are skeptical Madrid's strategy will bear fruit. Elizardo Sanchez, who heads a human rights group banned by Cuban authorities, said Cuba must offer "some sign" in response to "the Spanish government's multiple efforts." "Let's hope that at some time that sign will come, but I doubt it, because the Cuban government, instead of opening its doors, or at least opening its windows, seems to be hunkering down even more in its own ruinous bunker," said Sanchez. Vladimiro Roca, of the opposition group All United, praised Zapatero's remarks, but said "they are not congruent with the policy he's promoting for Cuba." Marta Beatriz Roque of the Assembly to Promote a Civil Society also agreed it is necessary to request changes from the Cuban regime, but she criticized the Spanish administration's efforts to rely on "dialogue" while removing even symbolic sanctions. (*EFE*, 18/11/04)

November 18: The Foreign Minister of Equatorial Guinea, Pastor Micha Ondó Bile, has begun an official visit to the island at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, Felipe Pérez Roque. Relations between Havana and Malabo were established in December 1972. Since then, bilateral cooperation has grown and relations between the two countries are excellent. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 18/11/04)

November 18: The foreign minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, criticised the steps taken by the European Union to redefine its policy regarding dialogue with the government of Fidel Castro and the political opposition. Pérez Roque said the EU was sending out 'timid signals' of intent. Pérez Roque said that only if the EU recognized its error in inviting "paid mercenaries of the US government" to official receptions would the new policy be well received by the government. (*Latin News*, 18/11/04)

November 19: Agenda Cuba and Net for Cuba International denounced to the international community the abuses and human rights violations committed against Cuban refugees retained at the Carmichael Detention Center in Nassau, Bahamas. "The group of 48 Cubans, among them 7 members of the Democratic Party November 30 "Frank País", a group of the Cuban internal opposition, and 2 children and 6 women, are extremely pale, thin and extremely anxious", Mayra Enriquez, a member of Agenda Cuba who visited the detention center, said. (*Netfor Cuba*, 19/11/04)

November 21: John Paul II said the Church's social doctrine could serve as a guide for Cuba's future. The Pope made that suggestion in a message sent on the occasion of the country's 9th Catholic Social Week, held in Camaguey. John Paul II's message, sent on his behalf by Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano, appealed to "all the sons and daughters of the Church in Cuba for a renewed and profound commitment to study, assume and put into practice" the "social Gospel." In light of Cuba's four decades of Communist government, the Holy Father suggested "fostering the presentation of Christian social thought in keeping with the fundamental features of the Cuban people's identity, which can be communicated in language that is comprehensible to its fellow citizens, and thus illuminate human life and the social reality." "Without a doubt, this will foster a conversion and style of social relations based on respect, and the defense and promotion of the dignity and inherent rights of every human person," the papal message stated. (*Zenit*, 21/11/04)

November 22: Nearly 100 representatives of regional universities are attending the 4th Latin American Health Research Conference in the Cuban capital. The meeting, which got underway in Havana, brings together researchers to discuss joint work with health officials. The secretary general of the University Programs of Health Research in Latin America (PUISAL), Rolando Callado of Mexico, told reporters that the regional conference was very important. In addition to issues concerning health care, delegates at the two-day conference will also discuss financing and university management. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 22/11/04)

November 22: China's President Hu Jintao arrived in Cuba on his first visit as Chinese leader to offer the Western Hemisphere's only communist state closer political and economic ties. Hu praised the "heroic Cuban people" and urged them to continue building socialism under the leadership of Fidel Castro, 16 years his senior and in power since 1959. "We sincerely wish the Cuban people do not let up in their advance on the road of socialist construction," Hu said in a written greeting on his arrival from an Asia-Pacific summit in Chile. He was met by Castro's younger brother and designated successor, Raul Castro, who broke his knee in a fall in October, received his visitor sitting in a wheel-chair as they met for talks at the government headquarters, the Palace of the Revolution. The visit is being seen in the Cuban media as a display of solidarity from a faithful ally, years after the collapse of Cuba's former benefactor, the USSR. But, despite both being officially communist the two states are moving in opposite directions. President Hu is pushing privatisation, while Cuba is seeing recentralisation. It is not expected that differences in style or ideology will be stressed by either side in the coming days. (*BBC, Reuters*, 22/11/04)

November 22: A recent bilateral diplomatic spat now a thing of the past, Mexican President Vicente Fox declared that relations with Cuba are back to normal and that Cuban President Fidel Castro has been a leader of "great importance." Fox told the media that, "with Cuba, our relations are good. The ambassadors are back at their posts." (*AP*, 22/11/04)

November 23: Chinese president Hu Jintao and Cuban First Vice President Raul Castro held a friendly meeting in Havana, discussing the results already achieved in Hu's visit to Cuba. Cuban Communist Party Political Bureau member Jose R. Machado Ventura, Vice President Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque, as well as ambassadors from both countries and some members of the Chinese delegation also attended the meeting. (*Prensa Latina*, 23/11/04)

November 23: Chinese President Hu Jintao left Cuba after signing a raft of deals in a 29-hour trip that gave a big political and economic boost to the island's leader, Fidel Castro. "We have a solid base on which to deepen our relations, thanks to our many shared common politics. We both choose a socialist path to our development," Hu said earlier in the day. Castro heaped praise on China's progress but made it clear, with Hu looking on, that Cuba would not adopt China's capitalist path to economic growth. "Socialism will remain in the end the only real hope for peace and the survival of our species," said Castro, at the Palace of the Revolution. Castro said Cuba and China share "the ideals of socialism," and that China "objectively speaking has become the most promising hope and the best example for all developing countries." "I do not hesitate to say that it is now the main engine of world economic growth," Castro added. Yet the Cuban leader, whose government has backtracked on the few concessions to capitalism with which it has experimented, said: "Each people must adapt its revolutionary strategy and goals to the specific conditions of its own country." (*AFP*, 23/11/04)

November 24: More than 100 journalists are currently imprisoned for nothing other than doing their jobs and Reporters Without Borders is pushing to change that. Tanya Churchmuch, the group's president, is calling for the release of Raul Rivero from a Cuban prison, where he has been held since March 2003. The head of the independent Cuban Press was sentenced to 20 years in jail on charges of acting to the detriment of Cuban independence, operating in a group of three or more people and operating for profit. "They went so far as to have people pose as journalists to infiltrate these groups and testify against them," Churchmuch said, adding Rivero is not politically motivated in his work. "People like Raul Rivero are not saying (Fidel Castro) is some kind of monster; they're talking about the expression of free thought." (*Canadian Press*, 24/11/04)

November 24: The South African Department of Health is currently considering whether or not to endorse a group of Cuban doctors seeking permanent residence in South Africa. It has received requests from at least 17 Cuban nationals requesting it to endorse their applications for permanent residence. Spokesperson for the department Sibani Mngadi said the doctors were requesting certificates confirming their employment at provincial departments of health for a period of five years and above and therefore qualify to apply for a permanent residence. "We are considering these requests in line with the Immigration Act which allows for foreign nationals who have been in South Africa for a minimum of five years on valid work permit to apply for permanent residence," he said in a statement. (*Bua News*, 24/11/04)

November 24: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi arrived in Havana in conjunction with the celebration to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Malaysia and Cuba. Malaysian ambassador Datuk Kamal Yan Yahaya said Abdullah was making an official visit to Cuba at the invitation of Fidel Castro. The Cuban leader and Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi analyzed bilateral relations and exchanged viewpoints regarding international issues. The same day, the Cuban government decorated its guest with the Jose Marti Order, the highest award granted by the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba. This is also Abdullah's first official visit to a country in this region. (*The Star.Com, Prensa Latina*, 25/11/04)

November 25: Cuba restored normal diplomatic relations with Spain that soured last year when the European Union began inviting dissidents to its National Day receptions. "We met at the Spanish embassy (...) and we have re-established official contact with the Spanish ambassador in Havana," Perez Roque said in an impromptu press conference at the foreign ministry, where he was joined by Spanish Ambassador Carlos Alonso Zaldívar. Perez Roque praised the Spanish government, in particular Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, for its efforts to improve relations with Cuba. (*Reuters, AFP, 25/11/04*)

November 25: Spain's foreign ministry stressed Madrid's desire to see normal relations between the whole of the European Union and Cuba. "The foreign ministry notes the announcement by the Cuban authorities and signals that its objective is the normalization of contacts between the Cuban authorities and all the embassies of the European Union, not just specific embassies," a ministry statement read. "Spain will continue working with all its EU partners to achieve this normalization with a view to reaching the objectives fixed by the common (EU) position adopted in 1996," the ministry added. [[Comunicado de la Cancillería española](#)] (*AFP, 25/11/04*)

November 25: Namibia's President-elect Hifikepunye Pohamba says that relations with Cuba are excellent and based on strong ties of brotherhood. The 65-year-old African leader -- who will be sworn in as president in March 2005 -- said that the Namibian people will never forget the Cuban soldiers who fought alongside them in the struggle for independence. (*Radio Habana Cuba, 25/11/04*)

November 26: Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wrapped up a two-day official visit to Cuba, during which he exchanged views with Fidel Castro and other Cuban leaders. Badawi was seen off at Havana's Jose Marti international airport by General Raul Castro, who had also welcomed the Malaysian premier when he arrived in Cuba. (*Channel New Asia, 26/11/04*)

November 26: European Union member states want to renew their diplomatic contacts with Cuba, the Dutch EU presidency said, after Spain became the first in the bloc to re-establish links with the island since sanctions were imposed 17 months ago. "Our common goal is to have contacts between all the member countries with the authorities on the island," said spokesman Frits Kemperman. (*EUBusiness, 26/11/04*)

November 26: Responding to a request from Cuban authorities, Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister, Felipe Pérez Roque, held a meeting with the French Ambassador to Havana, Sylvie Alvarez. A day before, a similar meeting had taken place between Pérez Roque and the Spanish Ambassador to Havana, Carlos Alonso Zaldívar. The meeting has been kept in secret, and it is the first formal contact between a representative from the Cuban government and a French high diplomat since the European Union imposed political sanctions against the island, on June 5, 2003. (*European Press, 26/11/04*)

November 26: Cuban experts and workers of the Ho Chi Minh Construction Group which was set up to help Viet Nam carry out Cuba-funded projects, gathered at a ceremony in Havana to celebrate 30 years of the group's foundation. The group had teamed up with their Vietnamese counterparts to build Thang Loi (victory) hotel in Ha Noi, Dong Hoi hospital (central Quang Binh province), Xuan Mai road (northern Hoa Binh province), Moc Chau dairy farm (northern Son La province), and Luong My chicken farm (northern Ha Tay province). (*VNA, 26/11/04*)

November 27: The President of the Cuban Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation (INDER) Humberto Rodríguez and the Sports Secretary of the Argentinean Chamber of Ministers Claudio Morresi signed a major cooperation agreement in Havana. Cuba will offer technical training in boxing and rhythmic gymnastics, will assist in the preparation of large sporting events and will send a sports methodologist to Argentina. For his part, the Argentinean sports official offered to send football trainers to Cuba. (*Radio Habana Cuba, 27/11/04*)

November 29: International rights groups welcomed Cuba's surprise release of three dissidents jailed last year in a broad crackdown, and called on Fidel Castro's government to free another 65 still behind bars. "Cuba's release of these political prisoners is a welcome move, but many more remain incarcerated in violation of their fundamental rights," said Jose Miguel Vivanco, Americas director at Human Rights Watch. "We call on the Cuban authorities to release all of them." The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists said it was gladdened by the release of Espionsa Chepe, one of more than two dozen independent Cuban journalists held behind bars on the communist-run island. "Their only offense was doing their jobs," said the committee's Executive Director Ann Cooper. "We again call on Cuban authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all imprisoned journalists, and to allow them to work freely." (*AP*, 29/11/04)

November 30: Reporters Without Borders said it was "delighted" at the release from prison of Cuban journalist Raúl Rivero, calling it "the end of a huge injustice towards a renowned journalist and writer" and his family. It repeated its call for the release of 24 other journalists detained in Cuba since spring last year. "Rivero's release is great news for democrats everywhere, but it must not be forgotten that Cuba's human rights record remains worse than it was before his arrest and that the regime still controls the media and the country with an iron hand," it said. (*RWB Press Release*, 30/11/04)

November 30: The Dutch Foreign Relations Minister and current president of the EU's Council of Ministers, Bernard Bot, said that the release of journalist and poet Raúl Rivero "is encouraging". He added that Cuban authorities should give similar treatment to the rest of the 75 dissidents still in jail. "I find this very encouraging, but don't forget there are still 75 political prisoners in jail, and we have asked for the release of all of them." "This is a good sign, and I encourage the Cuban authorities to keep on this track", Bot added. (*Europa Press*, 30/11/04)

November 30: Bolivian Foreign Minister Juan Ignacio Siles del Valle started a visit to Cuba to ratify friendship and cooperation relations between both countries, according to Cuban Foreign Ministry sources. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/11/04)

November 30: Some 7,623 Venezuelan patients have received treatment for free in 45 Cuban health care centers as part of the agreements signed by both nations in the sector. The health care project -that started four years ago- is benefiting patients with low income wages. Patients from 23 Venezuelan states have traveled to the island to receive the treatment they need. Pedro Llerena, coordinator of the project in Cuba, showed the press some statistics of the number of cases treated by Cuban specialists. The cases include nervous, ophthalmologic, osteomuscular and skin diseases. (*Prensa Latina*, 30/11/04)

November 30: The Permanent Commission of the Uruguayan Parliament approved by a majority vote a declaration denouncing the situation of political prisoners in Cuba and expressed concerns with regards to their mistreatment and health condition. In a seven point declaration, the Commission, which holds its sessions during a break in legislative activities in Uruguay, alluded to reports by UN organizations, Amnesty International and Reporters Without Borders, as well as denunciations from the prisoners' families and human rights organizations. (*EFE*, 30/11/04)

November 30: The president of the Inter American Press Association (IAPA), Alejandro Miró Quesada, expressed his satisfaction over the release of independent Cuban journalist and institution director, Raul Rivero, and asked that the release be extended to all the others who were sent to jail in March 2003 following summary trials. "Undoubtedly this news was a very pleasant surprise for the entire world and we are very delighted because it is a significant victory for the cause of freedom of expression and of the press in Cuba," said IAPA president and publisher of *El Comercio* newspaper in Lima, Peru. "However, it is not enough – he warned – since nobody should remain behind bars under the pretext of having committed a crime for the sole reason of expressing his or her ideas or for criticizing the government of Fidel Castro." Twenty-eight journalists are still in jail in Cuba. (*IAPA*, 30/11/04)

Security

November 15: Current issues of international security and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction are the focus of a Russian-Cuban scientific seminar that opened in Havana. The PIR center for political studies in Russia and the Cuban Foreign Affairs Ministry's Institute of International Relations are the organizers of the seminar, which is being held for the first time since the 1990s. "Cuba and Russia share similar approaches to the key aspects of international security," PIR-Center Director Vladimir Orlov said in his opening address to the seminar. They are discussing the key issues and challenges related to disarmament and prospects for it in the light of the current developments in the world politics. Cuba "is calling on all countries of the world to make an effective contribution to the total disarmament under international control," said a representative of the Cuban Center for the Study of Disarmament and International Security Issues. He said the resources released as a result of the disarmament process should be channeled to support the development of third-world countries. (*ITAR-TASS*, 15/11/04)

November 22: North Korea's top military officer Kim Yong-Chun is heading a delegation that began an official visit to communist-led Cuba, according to an official statement. Vice Marshal Kim, chief of the general staff of the Korean People's Army, and his delegation will visit the Revolutionary Armed Forces Ministry headed by Fidel Castro's younger brother, Raul Castro, according to the statement released in state-run newspapers. The North Korean delegation will also visit Cuban military units on the Caribbean island. (*AFP* 22/11/04)

November 24: Vice Marshal Kim Yong Chun, chief of the general staff of the Armed Forces of the People's Democratic Republic of Korea (PDRK), held official talks with Cuban Army General Alvaro Lopez Miera at the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). The North Korea's army chief of staff toured Cuban army units and observed training exercises during a five-day visit to Cuba, Cuban state media said. State television showed Kim watching Cuban soldiers firing rifles during infantry exercises. Cuba and North Korea are "in the front trench of the fight against North American imperialism and for the defense of socialism," Kim said in statements published by Cuba's ruling Communist Party daily, *Granma*. Kim praised Cuba for its resolve in "resisting threats of aggression" from the Bush administration, *Granma* said. (*Prensa Latina, Reuters*, 24/11/04)

November 26: Defense Minister Raul Castro, second only to his brother Fidel in the Cuban government hierarchy, met with North Korean Vice Marshal Kim Yong Chun and other members of the military delegation he leads. In a "friendly atmosphere that characterizes relations between the armed forces of both countries," according to the local press, Raul Castro, younger brother of Fidel Castro, together with other high-ranking Cuban and North Korean military, spoke about their respective efforts to strengthen their national defenses. (*EFE*, 27/11/04)

US-Cuba Relations

November 1: Cuba signed contracts to buy \$10 million of US wheat and meat products, and \$300 million of American dairy cattle, launching a new round of deals for US farm products projected to reach \$150 million. "We're all committed to cooperation," said rancher John Parke Wright, of J.P. Wright & Co. "What we represent are good relations, fellowship and free and open trade." Wright's Naples, a Florida company will ship the cattle to Cuba from Vermont. The \$10 million deal was with Louis Dreyfus of Georgia for wheat, chicken and pork. The deals were announced at the weeklong International Fair of Havana, also attended by companies including Archer Daniels Midland of Illinois, Tyson Foods of Arkansas, and Cargill Inc. of Minnesota. (*AP*, 1/11/04)

November 1: Agricultural goods produced in the United States and exported to Cuba have reached \$298 million, more than double than in 2003, according to a Texas Cooperative Extension economist. "Sales could exceed \$400 million for

2004, ranking Cuba the 25th largest market for US agricultural exports," said Dr. Parr Rosson, Extension economist and director of the Center for North American Studies at Texas A&M University. "Growth in the Cuban market has become especially important as the US agricultural trade surplus has narrowed over the last two years." Importantly for Texas, Rosson said, rice was the top export to Cuba for the first eight months of 2004 with sales reaching \$64 million. (*Agnews*, 1/11/04)

November 1: Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón has said that US President George W. Bush has gone too far in recent anti-Cuba declarations in Florida. Alarcón spoke with reporters at an activity organized by US businesspeople to celebrate the 80th birthday of Ramón Castro, Fidel Castro's older brother. The island's top legislator said that Bush's recent statements that he will 'free Cuba' went a bit too far -- kind of like "tightening the screw so much that it strips the threads." Ricardo Alarcón noted that Bush made his declarations in Miami, "before an audience that wanted to hear exactly that." (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/11/04)

November 2: The head of the US legation in Havana, James Cason, held a reception at his residence to watch early election returns and organized a mock ballot for the Cubans attending. Local opponents of the island's Communist regime voted for US president and immersed themselves in the electoral process, wearing buttons with the names of their favorite candidates and following election results on American television. Among those attending the reception were, Vladimiro Roca, of the Todos Unidos movement, and Marta Beatriz Roque, recently released from jail. (*EFE*, 3/11/04)

November 2: The US Treasury Department has ordered federal charges dropped against three members of a Methodist church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin who were accused of spending US dollars during a visit to Cuba. At a news conference called by the Wisconsin Coalition to Normalize Relations with Cuba, attorney Art Heitzer said that Washington will end nearly six years of threats and legal prosecution of the Methodist 3, as they became known in Milwaukee, without requiring any fines or other penalties. They were among six members of Milwaukee's oldest Methodist Church, Central United Methodist, who visited their sister church in Havana to help celebrate its 100th anniversary. Earlier this year, they were charged with spending between 40 and 70 dollars each, resulting in government demands for penalties totaling \$22,500. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 2/11/04)

November 3: Cuba's state television said that George W. Bush won the US presidential election by manipulating voters' fears of future terrorist attacks. On the island's nightly televised "Round Table" discussion program, host Randy Alonso said Bush's win was due to a successful strategy "to cultivate fear among (U.S.) citizens" and "present himself as the great leader of the fight against terrorism." With Bush's victory, Alonso said Cubans should expect little change in the US hard line policy toward the communist-run island. "Nothing has changed for us," he said. "And for the Americans, four more years of darkness could be ahead." (*AP*, 3/11/04)

November 4: Cuba agreed at an international trade fair in Havana to buy nearly \$30 million in food products from the United States. The products will include \$600,000 worth of cooking oil from a company in Miami. The latest numbers represent deals made through the weeklong fair. Pedro Alvarez, chairman of the Cuban food import company Alimport, said he expects Cuba to sign agreements totaling some \$150 million by the fair's end. The latest deals with US companies totaled more than \$7.5 million. (*AP*, 4/11/04)

November 4: The United States has denounced Fidel Castro's communist government in Cuba for repeated and persistent human rights violations, putting Havana on notice that the situation on the island remains a US priority. The State Department said Washington had not forgotten that scores of Cuban dissidents arrested in a widespread crackdown in March 2004 were still languishing in prison and repeated demands for their immediate release. [[Cuba: Human Rights Situation](#)] (*IOL*, 4/11/04)

November 4: Public opinion in Cuba with regards to what a second administration for President George W. Bush could mean for the Caribbean island nation ranges from extreme pessimism to indifference and even a slight glimmer of optimism. Although they do not hope for miracles, some analysts predict that a new Bush administration will take a more moderate stance towards Cuba. However, the government of Fidel Castro does not believe there is any chance of a change for the better. While Cubans on the street could be heard expressing disappointment or resignation, Granma, the official newspaper of the ruling Communist Party, made no editorial comment on the results of the US elections. Academics and representatives of moderate dissident groups, meanwhile, do not rule out the possibility of a slight easing of tension between the two countries, now that Bush has safely won four more years in the White House. (*IPS*, 4/11/04)

November 5: Cuba struck back at the United States, calling it the world's worst human rights offender two days after the US State Department criticized the island nation for continuing to imprison scores of dissidents rounded up more than 1 ½ years ago. "The government of the United States doesn't have the minimum moral authority to accuse Cuba," the island's Foreign Ministry said in an official note published in the Communist Party daily Granma. "It's the government of the United States that is the worst violator of human rights in the world," the note said, pointing to alleged abuses of prisoners in Iraq and terror suspects at the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The foreign ministry also said the US trade embargo against Cuba "is a cruel, inhuman and genocidal blockade that over more than four decades has violated the human rights of all the Cuban people." [[Official Statement](#)] (*AP*, 7/11/04)

November 5: Two moderate Cuban oppositionists wrote letters to recently re-elect US President George W. Bush, requesting that, during his new term in office, his administration's policy toward Cuba be revised with a stress on exploring new dialogue options and the reassessment of sanctions against the island. Former Revolutionary Commander Eloy Gutiérrez Menoyo, leader of Cuban Change, and *Arco Progresista*'s spokesman Manuel Cuesta Morúa expressed their support for renewed dialogue efforts and a review of political sanctions against Cuba. (*AFP*, 5/11/04)

November 6: With \$65 million worth of contracts for the sale of US farm products to Cuba signed this week, purchases by the Communist-ruled island since Washington authorized such sales in 2001 have topped the \$1 billion mark. "With what was signed today, we hit \$1 billion since negotiations began" in 2001 for sales to Cuba of food and agricultural products, the president of the state-run purchaser Alimport, Pedro Alvarez, told reporters. Purchases this week totaling more than \$65.5 million were made at the Havana International Fair. (*EFE*, 5/11/04)

November 6: The United States repatriated 108 illegal Cuban migrants intercepted in seven separate groups, the Coast Guard said. Most of the deportees sent back to Cabañas, Cuba, were apprehended off the Florida coast on vessels crewed by presumed alien smugglers. A total of 68 migrants were traveling on three fast boats that developed engine problems, two of which were adrift in the Florida Strait. Another boat manned by alleged people traffickers was halted with 30 Cubans on board, while 13 other illegal immigrants were rescued by the Coast Guard aboard three rafts. Of the Cubans taken into custody, three will be turned over to the authorities at the US Naval Base at Guantanamo, Cuba. Meanwhile, nine persons suspected of alien smuggling are in custody and are being questioned by US law enforcement authorities. (*EFE*, 8/11/04)

November 8: Vermont's agriculture secretary has returned from a successful trade mission to Cuba. Steve Kerr said he hoped to work out a contract to sell Cuba 2,000 bushels of Macintosh apples valued at \$40,000. He also said he had made substantial progress on the sale of 3,000 metric tons of powdered milk with an estimated value of \$6 million. He added that New Zealand, a major powdered milk supplier, also is competing for the contract. (*AP*, 9/11/04)

November 9: The Dallas Morning News, one of just four US media companies with a coveted bureau in Havana, will close its operation in Cuba by the end of the year for economic reasons, the paper's managing editor confirmed. The Havana pullout comes as the Texas daily copes with financial losses from circulation overstatements that resulted in

millions of dollars in overpaid advertisements that must be compensated. The Havana bureau, opened in 2001, has been an expensive venture that could no longer be justified. "It's been a significant cost," George Rodrigue, the managing editor, told *The Herald* in a telephone interview. "We need to close the bureau but we don't plan to close out our coverage in Cuba." (*The Miami Herald*, 9/11/04)

November 9: Fidel Castro's tumble to the ground last month and an increasingly difficult economy have prompted many Cubans to begin contemplating the island's future, the top American diplomat in Havana said. "All over the island people are discussing the future, of what they want it to be," James Cason, chief of the US Interests Section, told a gathering of Cuban Americans and Cuba-watchers in Coral Gables. "The lonely voices in the opposition are getting less lonely by the day." "Cubans are increasingly losing patience with Castro," Cason said. "In the weeks since Castro's well-publicized fall, more and more regime supporters are now saying it is time for Castro to step down." "Most Cubans on the island today have known nothing but communism -- 70 percent were born after the revolution," Cason added. "Simply plunking down a genuine electoral system won't be sufficient in the future. It will take at least a generation to acquire the habits of democracy on the island." (*The Miami Herald*, 10/11/04)

November 15: In what appears to be the largest mass defection of Cuban performers to date, Cuban members of a theatrical production in Las Vegas sought asylum in the United States, leaving families behind and defying their government, the show's founder and creator said. The 43 performers, including dancers, singers and musicians, submitted their requests at the federal courthouse in Las Vegas, said Nicole "N.D." Durr, who also directs the "Havana Night Club" show. Durr said seven additional cast members, who are currently in Germany, also are seeking asylum. They are expected to arrive in the US within the week. Another three members have decided to return to Cuba, she said. (*NYT, CNN*, 15/11/04)

November 15: The President of Cuba's Parliament, Ricardo Alarcon, said in Havana, that Washington's plan to destroy the Cuban Revolution is part of a US policy for all Latin America. Speaking at the closing session of the 12th Havana Meeting of Cooperation and Solidarity of Town Halls, Alarcon stressed that despite the increasing of Washington's hostilities, Cuba will always be free and independent. (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 16/11/04)

November 15: Washington's four-decade-old economic embargo against Cuba will be lifted next year, former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe Gonzalez said in Paris, implying that he was privy to some inside knowledge on the issue. "I am convinced the embargo will be liquidated next year and I have a certain level of information" to that effect, Gonzalez said at a seminar on Latin America organized by the French newspaper *Le Monde*. Asked by the daily's editor, Edwy Plenel, whether he was sure the administration of US President George W. Bush was going to reverse its position on the trade ban, the Spaniard answered categorically: "Yes, that's what I'm saying." (*EFE*, 15/11/04)

November 16: Cuba had completed its promised purchase of \$10 million in Montana agricultural products, Senator Max Baucus said, and another deal is possible. The Democrat is scheduled to visit the island nation next month. In September 2003, Baucus traveled to Cuba with state agriculture producers and business officials and secured a deal in which Cuba would buy \$10 million in farm products. The country wound up buying \$10.4 million in wheat, dry beans and peas, he said. "We're all very excited here about the potential for this sale to help our agricultural economy and create jobs on main streets across Montana," Baucus said. (*AP*, 16/11/04)

November 16: The Bush administration has delayed some Cuban payments to US food exporters to investigate compliance with rules governing sales to Cuba under an exception to the four-decade trade embargo, trade sources said. They said the US Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which enforces sanctions against the Communist nation, is preparing new guidelines for the growing food sales to Cuba. Nerves are frayed on both sides of the Florida Straits with exporters and importers worried the Bush administration, which has stepped up actions aimed at depriving Cuba's government of hard currency, may introduce more stringent payment procedures. "The US banks have been delaying some payments as Treasury checks cargo status and other requirements," a source deeply involved in the food

trade said. "They sometimes rule a company is not in compliance, but issue a special license allowing the payment to go through," he said, asking his name not be used. A US Treasury Department spokeswoman declined to comment on the payments issue involving food trade with Cuba. (*Reuters*, 16/11/04)

November 16: Fidel Castro said the emergence of an Osama bin Laden videotape just ahead of the US presidential election seemed to have been "arranged" to help President Bush. In his first public comments about Bush's re-election, the Cuban leader said, "We have seen too much (...) trickery and shamelessness to sustain the belief that this wasn't something arranged." Speaking on the communist-run island's nightly televised "Mesa Redonda" discussion program, Castro added, "Bin Laden makes the documentaries that decide elections." He did not give any detail on how the tape could have been timed to the election. (*AP*, 17/11/04)

November 16: Fidel Castro warned the country will respond to any aggression from the United States, such as Washington's recent outrageous attempt to block Cuba's international transactions with US dollars. Castro said that Cuba decided to stop the circulation of the US dollar and use the convertible pesos instead to counteract the "treacherous action". The Cuban leader said that the White House tried to prevent Cuba from using the dollar in its international trade with "the bare-faced lie that Cuba was laundering US dollars in foreign banks". (*Prensa Latina*, 17/11/04)

November 16: DaimlerChrysler, the German car manufacturer, has been fined by the US for breaking the embargo on Cuba. US Treasury officials told the press that DaimlerChrysler was guilty of "exporting goods to Cuba". The case was settled last month, after the company paid a fine thought to be \$30, 000 US. The penalty was imposed on DaimlerChrysler North America Group, the US subsidiary of the company, because of exports by DaimlerChrysler Vehiculos Comerciales, the Mexican subsidiary of the German manufacturer. (*Financial Times*, 16/11/04)

November 18: Vermont's Agriculture Secretary, Steve Kerr, said that he has completed a deal to sell six million dollars in powdered milk to Cuba. Cuba has agreed to purchase powdered milk through DairyAmerica, a California-based marketing cooperative. Part of the order would come from the Saint Albans Co-op and Agri-Mark, Vermont's two major dairy cooperatives. Kerr, who returned from Cuba, expects the state will sign a contract for the milk next month. (*World Now*, 18/11/04)

November 18: A woman in the US has been awarded more than \$80m after suing Fidel Castro and his government for allegedly executing her father. CIA pilot Thomas Pete Ray took part in the failed Bay of Pigs invasion to overthrow Mr Castro in 1961. The pilot was captured by Cuba shortly after his plane was shot down during the botched invasion by Cuban exiles, backed by the US. Ray's body, with a gunshot wound to the right temple, remained in a Havana morgue until 1979, when Cuba finally returned it to the US. A judge in Miami ruled that he was the victim of an extra-judicial killing. Cuba did not offer a defence in the trial, heard without a jury. According to American law, Janet Ray will be paid out of Cuban assets frozen in the US. Speaking after the award was given in her favour, Ms Ray said her intention was to do nothing more than honour her father. (*BBC*, 18/11/04)

November 18: Cuban Vice-president Carlos Lage declared in Costa Rica that, coming from the United States, Cuba always expects the worst, regardless of who the incumbent Secretary of State may be. Referring to President George W. Bush's recent reelection, Lage said, "Other than the blockade and aggressive measures, we never expect anything else from the United States, and we are always ready for the worst – even a military aggression." (*Notimex*, 18/11/04)

November 23: The Corcoran Gallery of Art abruptly postponed a cultural program it planned to sponsor in cooperation with Cuban diplomats. "The timing two days after the Thanksgiving weekend is not optimum. We are postponing it," said Margaret Bergen, chief communications officer for the city's oldest private museum. Even though the Corcoran had sold only 41 tickets, the event drew the attention of the State Department and several groups who have been fighting the government of Fidel Castro and its policies. Among the questions raised were where the money

would go and the appearance of being open-minded about conditions in a country in which poets and writers are jailed. The program was billed as "An Evening at the Cuban Interests Section." (*The Washington Post*, 24/11/04)

November 23: Some companies that sell food and agricultural products to Cuba are reporting that payments are not being credited to their bank accounts in the United States, according to a representative of a group that tracks business between the two countries. John Kavulich, president of the US-Cuba Trade and Economic Council Inc., said that fewer than half a dozen companies have contacted his organization recently about such problems. He said banks have confirmed receipt of payments from Cuba but have not credited the accounts of exporters on instructions from the US government. A spokeswoman for the Treasury Department said its Office of Foreign Assets Control, which enforces the economic embargo against Cuba, is looking into the matter. OFAC, she said, has been asked to clarify the government's policy regarding payments. She wouldn't say who requested the clarification. (*AP*, 24/11/04)

November 23: The Venceremos Brigade has received a Requirement to Furnish Information (RFI) notice from the US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC). According to a news release issued by the Brigade, the letter is the first phase in the enforcement of laws that restrict travel to Cuba. The Venceremos Brigade (VB) says that the OFAC letter calls the organization a "travel service provider" -- but the VB clearly states that it is not a travel service provider. The Venceremos Brigade is "an anti-imperialist education project that works to develop friendship with the Cuban people". (*Radio Habana Cuba*, 23/11/04)

November 24: The Treasury Department has begun issuing licenses to several companies doing business with Cuba to allow those exporters to receive payments from the island that had been frozen, pending a federal review of Cuba trade policies. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control, which enforces the existing US embargo and travel restrictions to Cuba, is not expected to make a decision about whether to change the business practice until after the holiday weekend. But in order to clear any deals that had already been paid for, OFAC began issuing licenses for each individual transaction. "U.S. financial institutions interdicted a handful of transactions due to confusion among some agribusinesses about the types of payments authorized for Commerce-licensed agricultural sales to Cuba," said a statement from a Treasury spokeswoman. "Thus, OFAC has adopted an interim specific licensing policy for exporters whose Cuban payments have been interdicted pending further guidance on the payment policy for shipping agricultural goods to Cuba, pursuant to licenses issued by the Commerce Department. OFAC is working directly with these exporters and is currently issuing specific licenses to unblock their payments". (*Sun Sentinel*, 24/11/04)

November 25: There are close links among Cuban and Venezuelan counterrevolutionary groups operating freely in the US territory, denounced Cuban Parliament President Ricardo Alarcón. Talking with reporters, Alarcon said the situation in Venezuela is becoming similar to that in the 1960s in Cuba. The terrorist actions against Cuba at that time by groups based in Miami and other US cities reached a particular violence, with the consent and support of United States intelligence services, the Parliament leader said. "Venezuelan counterrevolutionary groups are also based in Miami and closely linked to fascist groups of Cuban origin," Alarcón emphasized. Alarcón recalled that the ex Venezuelan President Carlos Andrés Pérez, who is living in Miami, publicly called for violence, the assassination of Chavez and the coup. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/11/04)

November 25: Record failures by successive US administrations trying to destroy the Cuban Revolution is the factor triggering current US aggressiveness, said Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban Parliament. This is a singular moment of threats and aggression risks for Cuba, he added. Alarcón described the offensive unleashed by George W. Bush after his reelection, promoting actions included in the Plan for a Free Cuba. Before specialists and scholars attending the Scientific International Seminar on the 45th Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution, the head of the Cuban parliament indicated that Washington has allotted 59 million dollars a year to organize mercenaries at their service. (*Prensa Latina*, 26/11/04)

November 28: Miami Archbishop John C. Favalora led a delegation of 12 religious leaders to Cuba to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of Santiago -- a diocese Florida had been associated with nearly 500 years ago. In a ceremony at the Cathedral of Santiago de Cuba attended by thousands, Favalora said, "I found a church very, very alive. Their hearts were full of fervor. You could see it in the way they prayed." Favalora, however, also experienced the religious and humanitarian restrictions of the Cuban government. The group had taken 21 suitcases filled with donated rosaries and such medicines as insulin, antibiotics, vitamins and decongestants. They were stopped at the airport by Cuban government agents. (*The Miami Herald*, 30/11/04)

November 29: In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher welcomed the release of three political prisoners in Cuba, but said the detainees never should have been imprisoned in the first place. "We continue to condemn the unjust incarceration of dozens of other prisoners of conscious in Cuba," Boucher said. "We hope that they can return to their work to build a truly just and open Cuban society," Boucher said. (*AP*, 29/11/04)

November 29: President Bush nominated as his new commerce secretary a onetime Cuban refugee who now runs a business empire that includes American kitchen cabinet staples Pop Tarts, Frosted Flakes and Cheez-Its. Carlos M. Gutierrez, the CEO of Battle Creek, Michigan-based Kellogg Co., is "a great American success story," Bush said at a news conference introducing his nominee. "He will be a strong, principled voice for American business and an inspiration to millions of men and women who dream of a better life in our country," Bush said. (*Chicago Sun Times*, 30/11/04)

November 30: The US State Department spokesman, Richard Boucher, did not recognize the role of the Spanish diplomacy in the release of Cuban journalist Raul Rivero. Asked during a press daily briefing about the mediation of Spain and the European Union with the Cuban government, Boucher answered that, he couldn't describe the Cuban decision "as being the result of any specific nation or upcoming meeting or anything like that". "I don't know if the Cubans will say that's why they did it, or this is why they did it or not, and whether they'll be speaking the truth anyway". Boucher added that, "the Europeans have been, in recent years, partly because of our work with them, a bit more insistent on human rights aspects in Cuba and raising these issues". (*El Mundo*, 30/11/04)