

CRS Report for Congress

Cuba-U.S. Relations: A Chronology of Key Events, 1959 - 1996

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**CUBA-U.S. RELATIONS:
A CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS,
1959 - 1996**

SUMMARY

This chronology outlines major events in U.S.-Cuban relations, from Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959 through 1996. More detailed information is provided for events since 1993, including the dates of congressional hearings and legislative action, the migration issue, the human rights situation in Cuba, and the Cuban government's implementation of limited economic reforms. Dates are also provided for United Nations resolutions on both the U.S. embargo and the human rights situation in Cuba. For additional information on human rights issues, the State Department's annual human rights report on Cuba provides details of individual cases and trends in the human rights situation. Another excellent source of human rights information is provided in the annual report of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Cuba.

Sources for this chronology include: the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Miami Herald*, *Reuters* wireservice reports, *Facts on File*, Radio Marti's Chronologies of Cuban Events, *Cubanews* (Miami Herald Publishing Company), and the U.S. Department of State's *Background Notes on Cuba* (November 1994).

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**CUBA-U.S. RELATIONS:
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- 1959** On January 1, dictator Fulgenico Batista fled the country, and Fidel Castro's armed 26th of July Movement became the predominant political force. In the new revolutionary government that was established, Castro's supporters gradually displaced members of less radical groups. (The 26th of July Movement was named for a July 26, 1953, attack on the Moncada army barracks in Santiago, Cuba by an armed opposition group led by Castro. Castro was imprisoned after the attack, but was subsequently released in 1955 under an amnesty law. Soon after, Castro went to Mexico to help form a guerrilla group to overthrow the Batista government. In December 1956, Castro returned to Cuba aboard the yacht *Granma* with a force of 81 men. Castro's forces eventually grew to several thousand.)
- 1960** Cuba reestablished diplomatic relations and signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union. After President Eisenhower suspended Cuba's sugar quota to the United States in July, Cuba responded by nationalizing the property of U.S. citizens and companies. By the end of August, the Cuban government had expropriated all private U.S. property in Cuba.
- 1961** On January 3, the United States broke diplomatic relations with Cuba in response to a Cuban demand to decrease the size of the U.S. Embassy staff within 48 hours. In April, the United States sponsored the ill-fated Bay of Pigs invasion led by Cuban exiles to overthrow the Castro government; Castro also made his public admission on April 16 that the Cuban revolution was "socialist." In November, a U.S. covert action program was developed to assist Cuban internal opposition to overthrow the Castro government; known as Operation Mongoose, the program endured until October 1962. On December 2, Castro declared himself to be a Marxist-Leninist.
- 1962** In January, at the initiative of the United States, the Organization of American States (OAS) excluded Cuba from the organization. In February, the United States imposed an embargo on trade with Cuba. In October, the United States confronted the Soviet Union over its attempts to place offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba. After the United States imposed a naval blockade on Cuba, the crisis ended with a

Soviet decision to withdraw the missiles and a U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba.

- 1964** In July, the OAS voted to suspend diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba because of its support for subversive activities in Venezuela.
- 1966** Congress enacted the Cuban Adjustment Act (P.L. 89-732). This gave the Attorney General the right to grant permanent resident status Cubans who have been inspected and admitted or paroled into the United States after January 1, 1959, and have been physically present in the United States for one year. The objective was to give Cubans who had fled the island a preferential procedure for seeking permanent residency.
- 1973** Cuba and the United States signed an anti-hijacking agreement in February, with each side agreeing to prosecute hijackers or return them to each other's country for prosecution.
- 1975** In August, the United States modified its trade embargo on Cuba to allow U.S. subsidiaries in third countries to trade with Cuba. This change took place after the OAS approved a resolution in July allowing members to individually determine the nature of their respective economic and diplomatic relations with Cuba. On December 20, President Gerald Ford denounced Soviet and Cuban military involvement in Angola's civil conflict, stating that Cuban actions would preclude an improvement of U.S.-Cuban relations.
- 1976** In October, Cuba suspended the 1973 anti-hijacking agreement with the United States after a bomb exploded on a *Cubana* airlines flight taking off from Barbados. Cuba blamed the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency for complicity in the bombing, in which 73 people were killed.
- 1977** On March 18, the Carter Administration did not renew restrictions on U.S. travel to Cuba. (The executive order that imposed the restrictions had to be renewed every six months.) In August, Cuba and the United States signed an accord on fishing rights in boundary waters between the two nations. In September, Cuban and U.S. diplomats began serving in "interests sections," in each other's capitals.
- 1978** Prospects for improved U.S.-Cuban relations dimmed during the year because of Cuba's increasing military role in Africa. In October and November, U.S. press reports indicated that

the Soviet Union had provided Cuba with a squadron of MIG-23s, causing some to question whether the U.S.-Soviet agreement of 1962 had been violated; on November 30, President Carter stated that the Soviets had provided assurances that no shipment of arms to Cuba had violated the 1962 agreement and that the United States had no evidence of nuclear weapons in Cuba.

- 1979** The Carter Administration confirmed an announcement by Senator Frank Church of the presence of a Soviet combat brigade of 2,000-3,000 men in Cuba. (Congressional hearings later confirmed that the brigade had been in Cuba since 1962.) Cuba's encouragement for revolutionary movements in Central America and the Caribbean, including support for the leftist government of Maurice Bishop in Grenada, increased tensions between the United States and Cuba and further dimmed prospects for improved relations. By the end of the year, Cuba had freed a total of 3,900 political prisoners in a program begun in 1978.
- 1980** From April through September, around 125,000 Cubans fled their island nation for the United States in the so-called Mariel boatlift. The exodus was precipitated when more than 10,000 Cubans crowded the grounds of the Peruvian Embassy seeking political asylum after the Cuban government withdrew its guards around the embassy. Subsequently, the Cuban government opened the harbor at Mariel, encouraging a mass exodus by allowing Cuban Americans in the United States to pick up by boat anyone who wished to leave from Mariel. U.S. officials particularly objected to the fact that the Cuban government encouraged criminals and mental patients to leave.
- 1982** On February 24, the Secretary of State added Cuba to the list of countries supporting international terrorists, for its complicity with the M-19 Movement in Colombia. (Being on the list excludes Cuba from a wide range of U.S. foreign assistance programs.) In April, the U.S. Treasury Department reimposed restrictions on travel to Cuba, although it did not impose restrictions for certain categories of travelers (U.S. government officials, scholars, journalists, and Cuban Americans visiting their relatives).
- 1983** The United States intervened militarily in Grenada to protect U.S. lives, restore stability to the island, and end Cuban influence. Eighteen U.S. servicemen, 24 Cubans, and 45 Grenadians suffered casualties in the military operation.

- 1984** On December 14, the United States and Cuba signed a migration agreement for the normalization of immigration procedures. The United States agreed to issue up to 20,000 preference immigration visas each year, and to continue granting immigrant visas to Cuban residents who were close relations of U.S. citizens, but these immigrants would not be counted against the annual 20,000 limit. Cuba agreed to accept the return of 2,746 so-called excludables who had arrived in the 1980 Mariel boatlift. In addition, up to 3,000 former Cuban political prisoners would be allowed into the United States during FY1985, with the size of the program and any increases in subsequent fiscal years to be determined.
- 1985** U.S. Government radio broadcasting to Cuba (Radio Marti) began operations in May. As a result, Cuba suspended the 1984 migration agreement with the United States.
- 1987** Cuba announced that it was going to reactivate the 1984 migration agreement with the United States to allow for the repatriation of "excludables" to Cuba. Subsequently, riots broke out at a U.S. Federal prison holding these Cubans.
- 1988** Cuba signed an agreement with Angola and South Africa for a phased withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and for the independence of Namibia ending South African occupation.
- 1990** U.S. Government television broadcasting to Cuba (TV Marti) began on an experimental basis in March and regular operations began in August.
- 1991** The breakup of the Soviet Union resulted in the loss of annual Soviet assistance and subsidies to Cuba that U.S. officials estimated at about \$4.5 billion each year. On March 6, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved a resolution requesting the appointment of a U.N. special representative to examine the human rights situation in Cuba.
- 1992** On March 3, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved a resolution (by a vote of 23 to 8, with 21 abstentions) expressing concern about the numerous reports of violations of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba and urging Cuba to cooperate with the U.N. special representative on Cuba.
On April 18, President Bush issued an executive order that implemented several provisions of the Cuban Democracy Act that was still pending before Congress. This included a prohibition on ships from docking in U.S. ports within six months of having docked at a Cuban port.

In September, Cuba announced the suspension of construction of Cuba's nuclear power plant at Juragua that was being built with Russian assistance.

On October 23, President Bush signed the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 into law (P.L. 102-484, Title XVII), which included provisions to tighten the embargo and measures of support for the Cuban people.

On November 24, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (59 in favor, 3 opposed, and 71 abstaining) on the need for the United States to lift its embargo on Cuba.

On December 18, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (69 in favor, 18 opposed, and 64 abstaining) calling for Cuba to cooperate fully with the U.N. special representative (now known as the Special Rapporteur) on Cuba and to adopt measures recommended by the Special Rapporteur to improve the human rights situation.

1993

- March 10 The U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved a resolution (by a vote of 27 to 10, with 15 abstentions) calling upon Cuba to permit the Special Rapporteur to carry out his mandate and to carry out the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur to improve the human rights situation.
- June 29 The Clinton Administration slightly amended restrictions on U.S. travel to Cuba, adding persons seeking to travel to Cuba "for clearly defined educational or religious activities" and "for activities of recognized human rights organizations."
- July 1 In Cojimar, Cuban Border guards opened fire on a boat of Cubans attempting to flee to the United States; three people were killed. The incident led to protests by several hundred Cubans in Cojimar; the Cuban military dispersed the protesters.
- July 23 The Clinton Administration issued guidelines for improved telecommunications between Cuba and the United States as provided for in the Cuban Democracy Act.
- July 26 Cuba announced that its citizens would be allowed to own U.S. dollars and would be allowed to shop at dollar-only shops previously limited to tourists and diplomats.
- July 29 The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence held an open hearing on the prospects for democracy in Cuba.
- August 4 The House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs held a hearing on recent

(1993 cont.)

developments in Cuba policy, including telecommunications and the dollarization of the Cuban economy.

September The Cuban government announced two economic reforms. First, regulations were issued authorizing self-employment in more than 100 occupations, mostly in the service sector. Second, cooperative farms were given more autonomy and private citizens were allowed to farm unused state land to create cooperatives.

October A group of 174 U.S. citizens of the Committee for Freedom to Travel defied U.S. travel restrictions and traveled to Cuba to protest U.S. restrictions. While some passports were confiscated when the travelers returned from Cuba, the Justice Department did not prosecute any of the travelers.

November 3 The U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (88 in favor, 4 opposed, and 57 abstaining) on the need for the United States to lift its embargo on Cuba.

November 18 The House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittees on Economic Policy, Trade, and Environment and Western Hemisphere Affairs and on International Operations held a joint hearing on U.S. policy and the future of Cuba. The hearing focussed on the Cuban Democracy Act and U.S. travel to Cuba.

December 20 The U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (74 in favor, 20 opposed, and 61 abstaining) calling on Cuba to cooperate with the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Cuba in investigating Cuba's human rights situation.

1994

March 9 The U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved a resolution condemning Cuba's violations of human rights and its failure to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. The resolution was approved by a vote of 24 to 9, with 20 abstentions.

March 17 The House Ways and Means Committee's Subcommittees on Select Revenue Measures and on Trade held a hearing on H.R. 2229, the Free Trade with Cuba Act. The hearing featured testimony by Members of Congress, the Administration, and outside witnesses.

March 24 The House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on H.R. 2578, "The Free

(1994 cont.)

and Independent Cuba Assistance Act of 1993." The hearing featured testimony by Members of Congress, the Administration, and outside witnesses.

- April 22-24 Cuba hosted a conference of Cuban exiles entitled "Emigration and the Nation" which included the participation of some Cuban Americans who favor a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba. (Subsequently, in late April a videotape of a conference reception featuring a Cuban American exile greeting Castro warmly was broadcast on Florida television, and incensed many in Miami's conservative Cuban American community.)
- April 29 According to U.S. officials, the Cuban Border Guard rammed and sank a private vessel, the "Olympia," which had fled Cuba and was about 25 nautical miles offshore. Three of the 21 Cubans on board drowned, including two six-year old children.
- May 1-2 Cuba's National Assembly approved a measure giving the government broad authority to implement an economic adjustment program.
- The Cuban government issued a decree-law providing for the confiscation of goods and assets obtained through illegal enrichment.
- May 19 **The House Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Foreign Agriculture and Hunger held a hearing on the agricultural implications of renewed trade with Cuba. The hearing featured testimony by Members of Congress and outside witnesses.**
- June 23 **A group of about 200 U.S. citizens organized by the Committee for Freedom to Travel arrived in Cuba. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Controls had recently frozen the group's bank account that was to be used for the trip, but the group managed to raise alternative funds. (Subsequently, in October 1994, the Treasury Department released the money after the group submitted statements that the funds were not controlled by Cuban interests and would not be used for unlicensed travel to Cuba.)**
- July 13 **According to U.S. officials, approximately 40 Cubans (many of whom were children) drowned when the tugboat "Trece de Marzo" -- stolen by a group of Cubans attempting to flee Cuba -- sank after being rammed by a Cuban Border guard vessel. President Clinton later condemned the sinking as "an example of Cuban**

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brutality." The Cuban government maintained that the tugboat sinking occurred when a pursuing Cuban vessel collided with the tugboat causing it to sink. Cuban officials blamed the incident on the United States for an immigration policy that encouraged Cubans to leave the island illegally.

July 22

The Senate approved an amendment to H.R. 4603 (the FY1995 State Department appropriations bill) which expressed the sense of the Senate condemning the sinking of the tugboat by the Cuban government on July 13.

August 3

Cuba's National Assembly approved a new tax law to take effect in 1995. The measure would initially begin taxing self-employed people, but would be extended to salary earners when the nation's current economic crisis was over.

August 5

Castro threatened to unleash an exodus of Cubans if the United States continued to encourage Cubans to leave illegally. In response, U.S. officials reiterated statements that the United States would not allow a replay of the 1980 Mariel boatlift and stated that Castro would not dictate U.S. immigration policy.

Press reports indicated that several thousand Cubans rioted in a seafront Havana district and adjacent downtown area after Cuban security forces attempted to prevent Cubans from hijacking boats to flee the country; 35 Cubans, including 10 policemen, were reportedly injured in clashes with police.

August 7

More than a half million Cubans gathered in Havana to show support for the Cuban government and to pay tribute to a policeman killed in an attempted ferry hijacking on August 4.

August 15

The Cuban government stopped preventing Cubans from fleeing to the United States by boat. The change in Cuban policy led to a surge of migration to the United States, the largest since the Mariel boatlift of 1980.

August 19

With escalating numbers of Cubans fleeing to the United States, President Clinton abruptly changed U.S. migration policy toward Cubans and announced that, instead of welcoming Cubans fleeing their island nation, "illegal refugees from Cuba" would not be allowed to enter the United States. Instead, the Coast Guard was directed to take refugees

(1994 cont.)

rescued at sea to the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo while the Administration explored the possibility of other "safe haven" nations in the Caribbean Basin region.

- August 20 President Clinton announced four measures against the Cuban government. First, cash remittances to Cuba would no longer be permitted. Previously, U.S. citizens could provide up to \$300 quarterly to their relatives in Cuba. Second, charter flights between Havana and Miami would be restricted to those designed "to accommodate legal migrants and travel consistent with the purposes of the Cuban Democracy Act." Restrictions on travel to Cuba were tightened, prohibiting family visits (except in cases of terminal illness or severe medical emergency) and requiring professional researchers to apply for a specific license, whereby in the past they could travel freely under a general license. Third, the United States would use all appropriate means to increase and amplify its broadcasts to Cuba. Fourth, the United States would continue to bring before the U.N. and other international organizations evidence of human rights abuses in Cuba.
- August 22 The first Cuban refugees interdicted at sea were brought to the U.S. base at Guantanamo.
- August 24 Cuban officials announced that Cuba was ready to talk with the United States about the migration crisis, but indicated that the United States must be willing to discuss the "true causes" of the exodus, including the trade embargo.
- August 25 President Clinton offered a resumption of talks on the issue of immigration, but stated he had no interest in expanding the talks into a broad discussion of issues between the two countries.
- August 25 The Senate Committee on Armed Services held a hearing on the escalating numbers of Cubans fleeing Cuba for the United States. The hearing featured testimony by the Department of Defense and the Department of State.
- August 27 The Clinton Administration announced that it would participate in limited talks with Cuba dealing with "issues related to the promotion of legal, orderly and safe migration."
- September 1 U.S.-Cuban talks on migration issues began in New York.
- September 4 Panama agreed to accept up to 10,000 Cubans to be housed on U.S. military bases for not more than six months.

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- September 9 The United States and Cuba signed a migration agreement that stemmed the flow of Cubans fleeing to the United States by boat. Under the agreement, the United States and Cuba would facilitate safe, legal, and orderly Cuban migration to the United States, consistent with a 1984 U.S.-Cuba migration agreement. The United States agreed to ensure that total legal Cuban migration to the United States would be a minimum of 20,000 each year, not including immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. The United States agreed to discontinue the practice of granting parole to all Cuban migrants who reach the United States (consistent with the Administration's August 19, 1994 policy change), while Cuba agreed to take measures to prevent unsafe departures from Cuba.
- September 17 Cuba announced that all farmers would be allowed to sell part of their produce on the open market.
- October 5 The Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution held a hearing on the constitutional right to international travel featuring testimony by a Member of Congress and outside witnesses.
- October 12 The U.S. State Department announced it would hold a visa lottery for about 6,000 Cubans pursuant to the migration accord of September 9, 1994.
- October 24-26 Cuban and U.S. officials held talks in Havana to review the implementation of the September 9, 1994 agreement on immigration issues. Dennis Hays, Director of the State Department's Office of Cuban Affairs, headed the U.S. delegation, while Ricardo Alarcon, President of the National Assembly of People's Power, headed the Cuban delegation.
- October 26 For the third consecutive year, the U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution on the need for the United States to lift its embargo on Cuba. The vote was 101 to 2, with 48 abstentions. Israel joined the United States in voting against the resolution.
- November 25 Direct dial long distance service between the United States and Cuba began. Companies offering the telephone services were AT&T, IDB Worldcom, LDDS Communications, MCI, Sprint, and Wil-Tel.
- December 7-8 Over 200 U.S. military personnel were injured in riots by more than 1,000 Cuban refugees at U.S. camps in Panama.

(1994 cont.)

The Cubans were protesting their prolonged detention amid continuing uncertainty regarding their final destination.

December 13 The U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (by a vote of 65 to 23 with 70 abstentions) calling on Cuba to end all violations of human rights and to cooperate with the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Cuba.

1995

January 18-19 U.S. and Cuban delegations met in New York for a second round of talks reviewing the 1994 migration accord. The U.S. delegation, headed by State Department official Dennis Hays, announced that 20,000 visas would be issued by September.

January 25 The House International Relations Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held hearings on the sinking of the "March 13th Tugboat." (See entry for July 13, 1994.)

February 1 Since the agreement to house Cubans on U.S. bases in Panama was scheduled to expire March 6, 1995, and Panama indicated that it would not be renewed, the Department of Defense began to transfer the Cubans in Panama back to Guantanamo. The transfer, dubbed "Operation Safe Passage," was completed by late February 1995.

February 9 Senator Jesse Helms introduced S. 381, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act, a comprehensive initiative designed to: strengthen international sanctions against the Castro government in Cuba; develop a plan to support a transition government leading to a democratically elected government in Cuba; and protect American property rights abroad.

February 14 In the House, Representative Dan Burton introduced, H.R. 927, the House version of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act.

February 23 The House International Relations Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on Cuba and U.S. policy, featuring a Member of Congress and outside witnesses.

March 7 The U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved a resolution (by a vote of 23 to 8 with 23 abstentions) calling upon Cuba to end all violations of human rights, including permitting freedom of peaceful expression and assembly and

ending immediately the detention and imprisonment of human rights defenders. The resolution also extended the mandate of the U.N. Special Rapporteur for one year and called upon Cuba to permit the Special Rapporteur the opportunity to carry out his mandate in full by allowing him to visit Cuba.

- March 16 The House International Relations Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act and on the U.S. embargo on Cuba, featuring testimony by Members of Congress, the Administration, and outside witnesses.
- March 22 The House International Relations Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere marked up H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act and reported the bill to the full committee.
- March 25 Cuba signed the Tlatelolco Treaty, a Latin American regional nuclear non-proliferation regime.
- April 5 The European Union issued a statement protesting the proposed Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, stating that its provisions would violate international law and the rules of the World Trade Organization.
- April 17-18 U.S. and Cuban delegations, headed by State Department official Dennis Hays and Cuban official Ricardo Alarcon, met in New York for a third round of talks reviewing the September 1994 migration agreement. Hays noted that the September 1994 agreement was working and that both sides expressed commitment to maintain it.
- April 21 Cuban dissident and human rights activist Francisco Chaviano was sentenced to 15 years in prison for falsifying documents to help people obtain visas to the United States. In an April 24, 1995, statement, the U.S. State Department called on the Cuban Government either to dismiss the charges against Mr. Chaviano and release him or to present the charges in open court in accordance with internationally recognized standards of jurisprudence. These included representation by a lawyer of his own choosing, access to the evidence against him, and the capability to present exculpatory evidence and witnesses in his own defense.
- April 27 Canada and Mexico agreed to work together to oppose the passage of U.S. legislation to impose sanctions on countries that trade with Cuba.

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- May 2 The United States and Cuba reached a new migration accord that would build upon the September 1994 U.S.-Cuban migration agreement. Under the new accord (which was negotiated outside of the regular rounds of talks reviewing the September accord), the United States would parole those Cubans housed at Guantanamo into the United States, but would intercept future Cuban migrants attempting to enter the United States by sea and would return them to Cuba. Cuba and the United States would cooperate jointly in the effort, and according to the Administration, "migrants taken to Cuba will be informed by United States officials about procedures to apply for legal admission to the United States at the U.S. Interests Section in Havana." Both countries also pledged to ensure that no action would be taken against those migrants returned to Cuba as a consequence of their attempt to emigrate illegally.
- May 18 The House International Relations Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on the Clinton Administration's change in U.S. immigration policy toward Cuba, featuring Administration and outside witnesses.
- May 22 The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere and Peace Corps Affairs held a hearing on the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act that featured testimony by Members of Congress and the Administration.
- May 23 A French human rights group, France-Libertés (which visited Cuba between April 28 and May 5, 1995, interviewing political prisoners held in eight prisons) announced that Cuba would release six political prisoners, including two prominent dissidents. Those released by late May 1995 were: Sebastián Arcos Bergnes and Yndamiro Restano, both sentenced in 1992; Augustín Figueredo; Pedro Antonio Castillo Ferrer; Ismael Salvia Ricardo; and Luis Enrique González Ogra. A seventh prisoner, Omar del Pozo Marrero, was to be hospitalized, but not released.
- May 25 Pastor Orson Vila Santoyo, a Pentecostal minister in Camagüey province who refused to refrain from holding religious services in his home, was arrested, charged with "illicit association," and tried and sentenced on the same day. *Human Rights Watch Americas* also noted that scores of "casas culto," or evangelical meeting places operating out of homes, were closed by Cuban authorities in late May 1995, indicating that the Cuban government was worried by the

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- increasing popularity of evangelical Christianity. (see entry of April 22, 1996 for Santoyo's release).
- June 7 A Cuban nuclear energy official, Miguel Serradet Acosta, stated that an international team was expected to recommend that construction be renewed on the Juragua nuclear plant.
- June 8 U.S. officials stated that Cuban authorities arrested Robert Vesco, a U.S. fugitive who fled the United States more than 20 years ago to escape fraud charges.
- June 13 The Cuban government added 19 new job categories to the list of some 130 self-employment occupations that have been legalized since September 1993.
- June 14 The Cuban government legalized the operation of private food catering, including the operation of home restaurants or "paladares" that already had sprung up in cities across Cuba. The new regulations reportedly include large monthly licensing fees that could force some operations out of business.
- June 14 The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere and Peace Corps Affairs held a second hearing on the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act that featured testimony by Members of Congress and outside witnesses.
- June 14 Eloy Gutierrez Menoyo, an opponent of the Cuban government who spent 22 years in prison and now leads a moderate Cuban American organization known as *Cambio Cubano*, visited Cuba on a ten-day trip and met with Fidel Castro.
- June 26 As reported in the Federal Register, the U.S. Treasury Department, effective June 21, 1995, designated four joint-venture companies owned by Sherritt Inc. (a Canadian mining company) and the government of Cuba as Specially Designated Nationals of Cuba. The four companies were: Cobalt Refinery Co. Inc. and International Cobalt Co. Inc., both of Alberta, Canada; and General Nickel S.A. and Moa Nickel S.A., both of Cuba. The action meant that the companies' products would be barred from sale in the United States, and that U.S. firms would be prohibited from engaging in transactions with these companies unless specially licensed by the Treasury Department. (Some 463 companies worldwide were already listed as Specially Designated Nationals of Cuba, including 7 others in Canada that were already on the list)

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- June 30 The House Committee on Ways and Means' Subcommittee on Trade held a hearing on "The Economic Relationship between the United States and Cuba after Castro," which featured testimony by Members of Congress, the Administration, and outside witnesses.
- July 11 Twenty-five Members of Congress asked Secretary of State Christopher to deny a visa to Fidel Castro, who reportedly planned to attend ceremonies in New York for the 50th anniversary of the U.N. in October.
- July 11 The House International Relations Committee approved, by a vote of 28-9, H.R. 927, its version of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act.
- July 9 Cuba held elections for over 14,000 seats in 169 municipal assemblies. About 97% of eligible voters participated, although estimates of opposition (as demonstrated by abstention and blank or spoiled ballots) ranged from 14% by the Cuban government to 25% by opposition sources.
- July 13 According to press reports, a Cuban Border Guard vessel rammed at least one boat in a flotilla of boats carrying Cuban Americans attempting to enter Cuban territorial waters to protest the Cuban government's sinking of a tugboat on July 13, 1994. In addition to the boats, six small aircraft entered Cuban airspace. The Cuban government condemned the incursion, and maintained that it did not ram the boat, but simply maneuvered to keep it from entering Cuban waters. The U.S. State Department noted that the United States deeply regretted the incident, although it did reiterate that when Americans enter the airspace or territorial waters of another country, they are subject to the rules and laws of that country.
- July 17-18 U.S. and Cuban officials held a fourth round of talks in Havana reviewing implementation of the U.S.-Cuban migration agreements. The U.S. delegation, headed by Anne Patterson, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, raised the issue of the high hard-currency fees of \$950, including airfare, being charged by the Cuban government to Cubans wishing to migrate legally to the United States. Subsequently in August 1995, the Cuban government lowered the fees to \$850.
- August 1 The House International Relations Committee's Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere held a hearing on

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- the yet to be finished Juragua nuclear plant near Cienfuegos in Cuba. The hearing featured testimony by a Member of Congress, the Administration, the General Accounting Office, and outside witnesses.
- September 2 One small boat sank (with one rescued man dying from a heart attack) and two dozen others were forced back by rough seas as a flotilla of Cuban Americans attempted to sail to Cuba's territorial waters to protest Castro's rule.
- September 5 Cuba's National Assembly of Peoples Power approved a new foreign investment law which allows fully owned investments in Cuba by foreigners in all sectors of the economy, with the exception of defense, health, and education. The new law allows Cubans living abroad to invest in Cuba, although this provision had been criticized during debate because it discriminates against Cubans living in Cuba who cannot invest.
- September 9 Cuba announced that its citizens would be able to open savings accounts in hard currency or Cuban convertible currency at the National Bank of Cuba and the Popular Savings Bank.
- September 21 The House approved H.R. 927, its version of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, by a vote of 294 to 130. As approved by the House, some of the bill's sanctions were softened and a third-country sugar sanction was deleted altogether. The bill retained a number of provisions designed to increase pressure on Cuba, including a property rights provision allowing U.S. nationals to sue in U.S. Federal court anyone that traffics in property confiscated in Cuba.
- October 6 President Clinton announced measures to ease some U.S. restrictions on travel and other activities with Cuba, with the overall objective of promoting democracy and the free flow of ideas. The new measures included: authorizing U.S. news media to open news bureaus in Cuba; licensing U.S. nongovernmental organizations to provide assistance to Cuban nongovernmental organizations; and authorizing general licenses for transactions relating to travel to Cuba for Cuban Americans to visit close relatives once a year in humanitarian cases. At the same time, the President stated that his Administration would tighten the enforcement of the embargo to sustain pressure for reform.
- October 18 The State Department announced that it would grant Castro a visa to attend the United Nations 50th anniversary

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celebration. The visa was granted in accordance with rules governing the U.S. role as host of the U.N. headquarters in New York.

- October 19 The Senate approved its version of H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, by a vote of 74-24. After two unsuccessful attempts to invoke cloture on the measure (on October 12 and October 18), Senator Helms agreed to delete Title III of the bill, the property rights provision that would allow U.S. nationals to sue in U.S. Federal court those persons who traffic in property confiscated in Cuba. The agreement to drop Title III led to a unanimous vote to invoke cloture, and led to Senate approval of H.R. 927.
- October 21 Cuba authorized the establishment of currency exchange houses run by a new entity called Casas de Cambio S.A. (CADECO). The exchange houses began by buying dollars at a rate to 25 pesos to one dollar.
- October 21-25 President Castro arrived on a five-day visit to New York to participate in the U.N.'s 50th anniversary activities. He addressed the United Nations General Assembly on October 22, and, in a reference to the U.S. embargo of Cuba, condemned "ruthless blockades that cause the death of men, women and children, youths and elders, like noiseless atom bombs." Among his other activities, Castro also was warmly welcomed at the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem where he addressed a crowd of supporters; and met with journalists, media executives, and business leaders.
- October 23 The New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) noted that Cuban government surveillance and harassment had increased against three independent journalist groups (The Bureau of Independent Press in Cuba; Habana Press; and Cuba Press) as the groups have gained importance abroad.
- November 2 The U.N. General Assembly, for the fourth consecutive year, approved a resolution on the need of the United States to lift its embargo on Cuba. The resolution was approved by a vote of 117 to 3, with 38 abstentions. Israel and Uzbekistan joined with the United States in opposing the resolution.
- November 3-6 The Cuban government held a second conference on Cuba and emigration with the participation of Cuban exiles, including Cuban Americans.

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- November 22 Sherritt, Inc., a Canadian mining company with joint ventures with Cuba, announced that it would create a separate public company, Sherritt International Corp., to hold its Cuban assets. (See June 26, 1995 entry for more on Sherritt.)
- November 27 A new umbrella dissident organization of about 100 groups known as the *Concilio Cubano* (formed in October 1995) issued an official declaration of four goals: 1) to work toward an absolutely peaceful transition toward a democratic, law-abiding state that has no place for violence, hatred or revenge; 2) unconditional amnesty for political prisoners; 3) changes in the judicial system to guarantee respect for human rights; and 4) the participation of all Cubans, without exclusion, in the peaceful transition.
- November 27-28 Cuban and U.S. officials met in New York for a fifth round of talks to review the implementation of the bilateral migration accords. The United States urged Cuba to cut the \$850 fees (including airfare) imposed on emigrants to the United States. No agreement on the fee was reached.
- December 22 The U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (by a vote of 66 to 22, with 78 abstentions) again calling on Cuba to cooperate fully with the U.N. Special Rapporteur, regretting profoundly the numerous violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Cuba, and urging Cuba to ensure freedom of expression and assembly, and the freedom to demonstrate peacefully.

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- January 1 Cuba began implementation of an income tax on hard currency income, with tax rates ranging from 10 to 50 percent.
- January 14 Four independent Cuban journalists were detained and questioned by Cuban authorities after a Miami-based exile group flew over Havana and dropped leaflets on January 13, 1996, calling on Cubans to exercise their political rights and engage in peaceful civil resistance. The detentions were denounced by the Inter-American Press Association and a French press rights group known as Reporters Without Frontiers.
- January 16-19 Representative Joseph Moakley visited Cuba with a delegation of businessmen, humanitarian aid specialists, and religious leaders. The group met a group of dissidents including human rights activists Gustavo Arcos and Elizardo Sanchez.
- January 17-20 In a trip to Cuba, Representative Bill Richardson met with dissident leaders and top Cuban officials, including President Castro. As a result of Richardson's trip, the Cuban government agreed to reduce the price of exit documents, from \$600 to \$300 (not including about \$250 in airfare) for 1,000 cases of Cubans emigrating legally to the United States. Moreover, the Cuban government reportedly agreed to cut the costs in each future year for 1,000 emigrants who can show financial hardship.
- January 31 The U.S. Department of Defense announced that the last of some 32,000 Cubans intercepted at sea and housed at Guantanamo had left the U.S. Naval Base.
- February 10 The Cuban government released three political prisoners after Representative Bill Richardson secured their release after a meeting with President Castro a day earlier. The United States welcomed the release of the prisoners and called on Cuba to release all political detainees.
- February 15 The Cuban government began a crackdown on members of the *Concilio Cubano*, an umbrella dissident organization that had applied for permission to hold a national meeting on February 24, 1996 (see November 27, 1995 entry on the *Concilio*). The crackdown included arrests (with two members sentenced to long prison terms), harassment, and intimidation. The U.S. Department of State criticized the crackdown on the *Concilio Cubano* on February 21 and noted in a statement that "this wave of repression dramatically demonstrates the Castro

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regime's unwillingness to engage in a process of political reform and its determination to maintain absolute control over Cuban society."

February 24 Cuban Mig-29 fighter jets shot down two U.S. private airplanes, Cessna 337s, in the Florida Straits flown by members of the Cuban American group, Brothers to the Rescue. Four crew members were killed in the attack. U.S. officials asserted the incident occurred over international waters. U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher called the attack on civilian planes a blatant violation of international law. President Clinton immediately condemned the Cuban action and ordered F-16 fighter jets to the site of the shooting to protect Coast Guard rescue teams searching for survivors.

February 25 Cuban officials asserted that the two U.S. planes were shot down inside Cuban airspace, between 5 and 8 miles of the Cuban coast. They asserted that the pilots flying the planes had been warned by air controllers of the risk they were putting themselves in, and were justifiably shot down.

February 26 President Clinton condemned the downing of the two U.S. aircraft as a "flagrant violation of international law." He announced that the United States was pressing the Security Council to impose sanctions against Cuba until it respected civilian aircraft and compensated the families of the victims. In addition, the President announced the following unilateral measures: he asked Congress to pass legislation permitting immediate compensation for victims' families from blocked Cuban accounts in this country; he pledged to work with Congress to secure passage of the Helms-Burton bill (H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidary Act); he promised to expand Radio Marti broadcasting; he imposed additional travel restrictions on Cuban diplomats in the United States and limited visits by Cuban officials; and he suspended all charter flights to Cuba indefinitely. The President also stated that he would not rule out any additional steps in the future if required.

In Cuba, Ricardo Alarcon, the President of Cuba's legislative body, blamed the United States for the shooting incident, asserting that the United States allowed Cuban exile groups to run rampant. Cuban state television broadcast an interview with a former Brothers to the Rescue pilot, Juan Pablo Roque, who maintained that the group planned to smuggle arms into Cuba to assassinate Cuban leaders. Roque, who mysteriously returned to Cuba before the downing of the Cessnas, was a former Cuban air force Mig fighter pilot who

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defected from Cuba in 1992. Roque denied accusations that he was a Cuban agent who infiltrated the Brothers to the Rescue and asserted that he returned to Cuba because he was disillusioned with people who claim they love Cuba, but then try to attack it. (On February 28, the Federal Bureau of Investigation stated that Roque worked as an informant for over 2 years for information about Cuban American groups that might be violating U.S. law in their activities against Cuba.)

February 27

The U.N. Security Council approved a statement strongly deploring Cuba's actions in shooting down the U.S. civilian airplanes. The statement noted that international law requires that states must refrain from the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight and must not endanger the lives of persons on board and the safety of aircraft. It also requested the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to investigate the incident and reports its findings to the Security Council as soon as possible. Cuba opposed the Security Council's action and Cuban Foreign Minister Robert Robaina claimed that the Security Council action was taken before he was able to arrive in New York to speak to the Security Council.

The Clinton Administration provided transcripts of radio conversations in which the Cuban Mig pilots joked while firing at the two Cessnas.

February 28

A House-Senate conference committee approved H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, after reaching a compromise with the Clinton Administration on a property rights provision in the bill. The provision would provide a right of action for U.S. citizens to file suit in U.S. Federal courts against those involved in the "trafficking" of expropriated property in Cuba. The conference accepted a change that would allow the President to delay implementation of the provision for six month periods on the grounds of national interest and expediting a transition to democracy in Cuba. The Administration also conceded ground on two provisions, one that would make mandatory a ban on entry to the United States of aliens involved in the trafficking of expropriated U.S. property abroad and a second that would codify the existing economic embargo of Cuba, including the Treasury Department's Cuban Assets Control Regulations (under part 515 of title 31, Code of Federal Regulations). No presidential waiver would be provided for any codified embargo provision. Cuban Foreign Minister Robert Robaina again stated that Cuba was justified in shooting down the

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two U.S. civilian planes. Instead of presenting its side to the U.N. Security Council, Robaina stated that Cuba would confer with representatives of the 110-nation Non-Aligned Movement about the possibility of calling a special meeting of the U.N. General Assembly to hear Cuba's side of the dispute.

February 29

The Clinton Administration announced that the President would issue orders making clear that the unauthorized entry by U.S. aircraft and vessels into Cuban territory is prohibited and that firm legal action will face those who violate this prohibition. The President also approved a strong warning to the Cuban government not to violate basic norms of international conduct, and that the United States will not tolerate the loss of American lives. The President took these actions in light of a planned a ceremony by Cuban Americans on March 2, 1996, commemorating the four civilians killed near the site where the two planes were shot down. The Cuban government stated that it would take whatever measures it needs to prevent a violation of its territory, but a Cuban spokesman noted that there should be no problems if the participants remain in international waters.

In testimony before the House International Relations Committee, State Department official Peter Tarnoff stated that the two Cessnas that were shot down when they were 5 and 16 nautical miles respectively from Cuba's 12-mile territorial waters.

March 1

President Clinton declared a national emergency and authorized and directed the Secretary of Transportation to make an issue rules and regulations to prevent unauthorized U.S. vessels from entering Cuban territorial waters.

The conference report (House Report 104-368) to H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, was filed in the House.

March 2

Escorted by the U.S. Coast Guard, a Cuban-American flotilla attempted to sail to the place where the four civilian airmen were shot down by Cuban fighters. Because of rough seas, a brief memorial service was held 26 miles from where it had originally been scheduled. In the evening, a memorial service was held for the downed pilots in the Orange Bowl in Miami. An estimated 50,000 were in attendance.

March 5

The Senate approved the conference report to H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidary Act, by a 74-22 vote.

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The European Union condemned the Helms-Burton bill. "We condemn in the strongest possible terms specific provisions of the bill which run the risk of putting non-American companies investing in Cuba on the wrong side of American justice," a European Commission spokesman stated.

The governments of Canada and the 14-member Caribbean Community (CARICOM) expressed their objection to the Senate approval of the Helms-Burton bill in a joint statement which expressed their "strongest objection to the extraterritorial provisions" that were "inconsistent with...international law..."

March 6

The House approved the conference report to H.R. 927, the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, by a vote of 336-86.

The Mexican Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning the Helms-Burton bill. The Ministry promised to challenge several provisions of the bill under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

In speaking before the U.N. General Assembly, Cuban Foreign Minister Roberto Robaina claimed that the February 24th incident was the direct result of the failure of the United States to control the repeated violations of Cuban airspace by Brothers to the Rescue, which he called a "terrorist" organization. U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Madeleine Albright, replied that Cuba, in its diplomatic exchanges with the United States, had never alleged that Brothers to the Rescue was a terrorist organization or that it had planned terrorist violence. She stated that Cuba violated international law by using weapons against civilian aircraft, and that the United States could not allow the Cuban government to "transfer blame" to the victims.

In Montreal, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) unanimously adopted a resolution "strongly deploring" the February 24th incident and ordered an investigation to be completed within 60 days. Earlier in the day, Ricardo Alarcon, President of the Cuban National Assembly and delegate to the ICAO meeting, stated that Cuba could suspend the access of U.S. airlines to Cuban airspace in response to what is seen as "repeated violations of Cuban territory and sovereignty."

March 8

The 14-member Rio Group of Latin American nations condemned the Helms-Burton bill. According to an Argentine Foreign Ministry statement, the Rio Group expressed their

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most "energetic rejection towards the approval of this legislation that violates the principles and norms of international law."

March 12 President Clinton signed the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, H.R. 927, into law (P.L. 104-114).

March 23 The Cuban Communist Party's Central Committee approved a report presented by Army head Raul Castro that signaled an ideological crackdown on reformers in Cuba. The report warned against "so-called nongovernmental organizations" in Cuba that serve as "a Trojan horse to foment division and subversion." The report singled out Cuba's Center for the Study of the Americas for criticism.

April 22 The European Union issued a statement in which they expressed "deep concern" over the effects that the Helms/Burton legislation could have on transatlantic trade. The EU stated that the law "...is contrary to international law and to the interest of the EU concerning trade and investment."

Amnesty International reported that Pentecostal minister Orson Vila Santoyo was conditionally released from prison (see entry of May 25, 1995 for Santoyo's arrest).

April 23 The U.N. Commission on Human Rights approved a resolution (by a vote of 20 to 5, with 28 abstentions) calling on Cuba to bring its observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms into conformity with international law, and to end all violations of human rights. The resolution, which deplored the detention and harassment of members of *Concilio Cubano*, again called on Cuba to permit the Special Rapporteur to visit Cuba.

May 05 The EU requested formal talks with the US over the Helms-Burton law, on the grounds that the law could possibly violate World Trade rules.

May 28 The Rio Group of Latin American and Caribbean countries formed a special commission to analyze the Helms-Burton Act.

In implementing Title IV of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (P.L. 104-114), the State Department began out advisory letters to foreign companies thought to be trafficking in U.S. properties confiscated in Cuba. Three companies received letters: *Sherritt International*, a Canadian mining company; *Grupos Domos*, a

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- Mexican telecommunications company; and *STET*, an Italian telecommunications company. The letters advised the companies that they may fall under the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act's provision that denies U.S. visas to those aliens and trafficking in U.S. properties confiscated in Cuba.
- June 4 The OAS adopted a resolution denouncing the Helms/Burton legislation on Cuba, and ordered the Inter-American Juridical Committee to examine the legislation and to reach a conclusion as to whether it is valid under international law. The resolution criticized the law for "extra-territorial effects that damage other countries' sovereignty...and affect freedom of trade and investment."
- June 6 Cuba's Foreign Investment Minister announced that the government planned to create free trade zones and industrial parks on the island in order to encourage foreign investment.
- June 14 The State Department completed writing guidelines to enforce Title IV of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act dealing with the denial of visas to aliens trafficking in U.S. property confiscated by the Cuban government. The guidelines stipulated that the admission sanction would not apply to persons solely having business dealings with those excludable under the title's provisions.
- June 27 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) released its report on the investigation into the February 1996 downing of the two civilian planes which concluded that the two Cessnas had been flying in international waters. The ICAO's Council also adopted a resolution condemning "the use of weapons against civil aircraft as being incompatible with the elementary considerations of humanity and the rules of international law."
- July 7 Cuban military officer, Lt. Colonel Jose Fernandez Pupo hijacked a commercial flight originating in Santiago de Cuba, and forced the plane to land at the U.S. Navy base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he requested political asylum. President of the Cuban National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcon, calls for the hijacker to be returned to Cuba, citing U.N. international hijacking agreements and the May 1995 U.S.-Cuba migration accord.
- July 10 In implementing Title IV of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (P.L. 104-114), the State Department sent out letter to nine major shareholders and

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senior executives of *Sherritt International*, a Canadian mining company, stating that they would be excluded from admission to the United States, effective in 45 days (also see entry for May 28, 1996).

July 16 As provided for in the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (P.L. 104-114), President Clinton announced that he would allow Title III of the law to go into force on August 1, 1996, but at the same time he announced that he was suspending for a six-month period (until February 1, 1997) the right of individuals to file suit against those persons trafficking in U.S. property confiscated in Cuba.

July 26 In a followup to the ICAO's June 27 report on Cuba's downing of two civilian aircraft, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution (with 13 votes and two abstentions) condemning Cuba's action and reaffirming the principle that shooting down civilian planes violates international law.

July 30 The Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere and Peace Corps Affairs held a hearing on the implementation of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act and its consistency with international law.

August 16 President Clinton announced that he had appointed Stuart Eizenstat, Department of Commerce Undersecretary for International Trade, as a special envoy to engage U.S. allies over the next six months on concrete measures to advance democracy in Cuba.

A plane hijacked by three Cuban men outside of Havana crashed into the Gulf of Mexico, 30 miles off the southwest Florida coast. The three Cubans requested political asylum while the pilot requested to return to Cuba.

August 19 The State Department announced in a written statement that in the previous week Cuba had revoked the visa of a U.S. diplomat Robin Meyer, who was the human rights officer for the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. Meyer had close contacts with Cuban dissidents and human rights activists, and Cuba accused her of giving advice and support to the Cuban dissidents, including the distribution of anti-government literature. In response to Cuba's action, the Clinton Administration expelled a Cuban diplomat in Washington, Jose Luis Ponce.

In implementing Title IV of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (P.L. 104-114), the State

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- Department sent out letters to six executives of *Grupos Domos*, a Mexican telecommunications company, stating that they would be excluded from admission the United States, effective in 45 days (see entry for May 28, 1996).
- August 27 U.S. fugitive Robert Vesco was sentenced in Cuba to 13 years in prison for economic crimes involving a scheme to market an alleged drug effective against cancer and AIDS. His Cuban wife was sentenced to nine years in prison.
- August 28 The Inter-American Juridical Committee of the OAS concluded that the Helms/Burton legislation on Cuba was not in conformity with international law.
- September 2 The State Department submitted a report to Congress on the "Settlement of Outstanding United States Claims to Confiscated Property in Cuba," required by section 207 of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (P.L. 104-114). The report estimated that in addition to the 5,911 claims against the Cuban government certified by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission (and valued currently at approximately \$6 billion), there could be an additional 75,000 to 200,000 claims by Cuban Americans generated under the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act, with value estimates of tens of billions of dollars.
- October 1 Mexico's Congress approved blocking legislation to counter the Helms/Burton legislation on Cuba.
- October 16 The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued its final report on Cuba's July 13, 1994 sinking of the "13th of March" tugboat. The report concluded that Cuba violated the American Declaration on the Rights and Duties of Man and that Cuba was legally obligated to indemnify the survivors and the relatives of the 41 individuals who died.
- October 17-18 Hurricane Lili struck Cuba, destroying thousands of homes and damaging agricultural crops. Subsequently, disaster assistance poured in from other countries, including the United States, where Catholic Relief Services flew two planeloads of supplies to Cuba. These were the first direct U.S.-Cuba flights since President Clinton suspended direct flights in the aftermath of Cuba's shootdown of two U.S. planes in February 1996.
- October 28 The EU approved blocking legislation to retaliate against the Helms-Burton legislation on Cuba and against another U.S.

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- law sanctioning U.S. companies for investing in Iran and Libya.
- November 7 Cuba announced that it had approved the establishment of a Cable News Network (CNN) bureau in Havana, which would be the first U.S. news bureau there in over 30 years. The Clinton Administration stated that it would study the request to see if it conforms to U.S. regulations regarding contact with Cuba.
- The Canadian Senate approved legislation blocking judgements from the Helms/Burton legislation on Cuba from being recognized in Canada. The legislation also permits Canadians to recover in Canadian courts any amounts awarded under the Helms/Burton legislation.
- November 11 At the sixth annual Ibero-American summit, the leaders of Latin America, Spain, and Portugal issued a statement criticizing the Helms/Burton legislation on Cuba which they said "ignores the fundamental principle of respect for the sovereignty of states." In the same statement, the leaders asserted that "Freedom of expression, association and assembly, full access to information, and free, periodic and transparent elections are essential elements of democracy." Fidel Castro signed the statement, although there had been much speculation that he would not.
- November 12 The U.N. General Assembly for the fifth consecutive year approved a resolution criticizing the U.S. embargo of Cuba. The resolution was approved by the largest margin so far, 138 to 3, with 28 abstentions.
- November 19 Fidel Castro met with Pope John Paul II in Rome. The pope accepted an invitation to visit Cuba sometime in 1997, although the trip was subsequently postponed until January 1998 because of scheduling problems.
- November 20 EU members agreed to create a dispute settlement panel in the World Trade Organization to examine the third country provisions of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act.
- December 2 The European Union adopted a resolution setting forth a common policy on Cuba. The resolution stated that the objective of EU relations with Cuba "is to encourage a process of transition to pluralist democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as sustainable recovering and improvement in the living standards of the

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Cuban people." It also stipulated that full EU economic cooperation with Cuba "will depend upon improvements in human rights and political freedom.."

- December 4-6 In Havana, Cuba and the United States held its sixth round of migration talks to review the implementation of the bilateral migration accords. John Hamilton, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, led the U.S. delegation, while Cuban National Assembly President Ricardo Alarcón headed the Cuban delegation. The Cuban delegation called for the return of four hijackers from two incidents in the summer of 1996 for prosecution in Cuba; all four face criminal trials in U.S. courts. The Cuban delegation also raised the issue of dozens of Cubans who have not been returned to Cuba since the May 1995 migration accord. The U.S. delegation raised the issue of excessively high fees charged by Cuban authorities for medical exams and documents for those Cuban legally migrating to the United States. Another issue discussed was Cuba's acceptance of so-called "excludables," those Cuban convicted of criminal acts either prior to arriving in the United States or while living in the United States.
- December 5-10 Representatives Xavier Becerra and Esteban Torres traveled to Cuba on a factfinding mission.
- December 6 In the aftermath of the U.S.-Cuban migration talks, some confusion occurred when press reports indicated that the United States would return to Cuba those Cubans who manage to arrive illegally in the United States. In response, a State Department spokesman issued the following statement on Dec. 6, 1996: "Any Cuban who is determined to be a refugee or found to have a valid claim to asylum in the United States will not be returned to Cuba. The United States Government is not contemplating repatriation of individuals who are already established within our borders."
- December 9-14 Representatives Toby Roth and Jon Christensen traveled to Cuba with four former members of Congress on a factfinding mission sponsored by the U.S. Association of Former Members of Congress.
- December 12 The U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami announced that the Cuban government handed over to U.S. authorities more than six tons of cocaine seized from a Colombian freighter that drifted into Cuban waters in October.

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The U.N. General Assembly approved a resolution (by a vote of 62 to 25, with 84 abstentions) again calling on Cuba to cooperate fully with the U.N. Special Rapporteur, urging Cuba to ensure freedom of expression and assembly and the freedom to demonstrate peacefully, and calling on Cuba to release the numerous persons detained for political activities.

December 14 In a EU summit meeting in Dublin, the EU maintained that it would lend its support to progress towards democracy, including the possible negotiation of an economic cooperation agreement. The EU noted, however, that any cooperation agreement would contain a suspension clause in the event of a serious breach in human rights in Cuba.

December 24 In implementing Title IV of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (P.L. 104-114), the State Department sent out advisory letters to an Israeli agricultural company, *B.M. Group*, and a Panamanian company, *Motores Internacionales*, warning that the companies were thought to be dealing in U.S. properties confiscated in Cuba. Under that title, executives or major shareholders of foreign companies trafficking in U.S. property confiscated in Cuba may be denied admission to the United States.

Cuba's National Assembly of People's Power approved a law on the "Reaffirmation of Cuban Dignity and Sovereignty" which, among other provisions, declares the Helms-Burton Bill "illegal, inapplicable and without value or legal merit"; excludes any U.S. person or corporation that attempts to utilize the provisions of the Helms-Burton legislation from any possible future negotiations with Cuba on compensation for nationalized properties; and declares unlawful "any form of collaboration, direct or indirect, which favors the application" of the Helms-Burton legislation. The law also offers Cuban government support to foreign companies that want to hide their investments in Cuba to avoid potential U.S. sanctions.