

YEAR TWO OF CASTRO'S BRUTAL CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENTS

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN
RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

AND THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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YEAR TWO OF CASTRO'S BRUTAL CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENTS

THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 2005

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS
AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS, AND
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE,
COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS,
Washington, DC.

The Subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 1:54 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Christopher H. Smith (Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations) presiding.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. The two Subcommittees will come to order and I want to announce that there is a vote occurring on the Floor, and my colleagues will be coming in and out, and opening statements will follow with that flow. But to expedite, knowing that our distinguished panel of guests do have schedules, we will begin the hearing and take the votes as they come.

This afternoon, we will examine Year Two of Castro's Brutal Crackdown on Dissidents in Cuba. First of all, let me thank the Chairman of our Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, Dan Burton, for agreeing to this joint hearing. I also want to thank our respective Ranking Democratic Members, Mr. Payne, my good friend and colleague from New Jersey, as well as Mr. Menendez, for their support in organizing this important hearing.

Two years ago, with the world's attention riveted on Iraq, Fidel Castro ordered his feared state security apparatus to round up at least 75 of Cuba's bravest and brightest individuals, both prominent and lesser-known dissidents. Among these were 28 independent journalists, 40 Varela Project workers, and with sickening speed, these men and women were paraded before kangaroo courts and given prison sentences ranging from 6 to 28 years. Sixty-one remain in jail.

When the Committee on International Relations met, April 16, 2003, to decry this vile abrogation of justice, I stated at that time that even some of the most outspoken leftists who once saw Fidel Castro as something to admire now admit that Castro's unbridled cruelty, thirst for blood, and extreme paranoia are indefensible. I regret that Castro is giving me no cause, or any of us, to reassess that statement or statements like it.

What were the so-called "crimes" of these brave men and women in Cuba? Advocating democracy, writing as independent journal-

ists, being men and women of faith. Their real offense was to dare to question the authority of a single man, Mr. Castro.

The Cuban revolution is really about Castro's vanity and pursuit of power, and personal power, at that. From the beginning, Castro has shot and jailed anyone, even his close friends, who have dared to get in the way of his personal agenda. Dictatorships reflecting the whims of a despot always subject their people to deprivations and absurdities. The Castro regime recently let a handful of its political prisoners out on parole, citing health reasons. The regime's callousness toward ailing political prisoners is, indeed, well documented, nevertheless.

Now, independent Cuban journalists are reporting that Cuba's prisons have been virtually emptied of medical personnel. Why? Mr. Castro decided to send them to Venezuela and to other places to advance his personal expansionist agenda.

Writing in the Spanish newspaper, *El Pais*, Nobel Prize-winner Jose Saramago, a Portuguese communist and close friend of Cuba, commented, and I quote:

“Cuba has won no heroic victory by executing these three men, but it has lost my confidence, damaged my hopes, and robbed me of illusions.”

Without anything that resembles due process, these three alleged ferry hijackers, and we all remember the case, were killed by firing squad in Cuba while the others got long jail terms.

Illusions, as Castro-lover Jose Saramago has only now begun to acknowledge, often persist despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Nowhere has this been more evident than in Cuba. Despite decades of credible reports of widespread egregious violations of human rights, including the pervasive use of torture and vicious beatings of political prisoners by the Cuban Government, some have clung to the indefensible, foolish illusion of Castro's revolution. Despite the fact that the Cuban Government systematically denies its people the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association and severely restricts workers' rights, including the right to form independent trade unions, some have, nevertheless, clung to the illusion.

Despite the fact that Castro maintains an unimaginably vast network of surveillance by thugs in his secret police and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, neighbors spying on neighbors, some continue to embrace bogus perceptions and illusions about Cuba.

In his book, *Against All Hope: A Memoir of Life in Castro's Gulag*, Armando Valladares, a courageous and amazing man who spent 22 years in Cuban prisons, wrote, and I quote him briefly:

“The Government of Cuba and defenders of the Cuban Revolution denied that incidents that I recount (in the book) ever happened. Castro sympathizers, who were more subtle, said the incidents I described were exaggerations. And there were others, well meaning, who simply could not bring themselves to believe that such horrors, crimes and torture existed in the political prisons of Cuba.

“My response to those who still try to justify Castro's tyranny with the excuse that he has built schools and hospitals

is this: Stalin, Hitler and Pinochet also built schools and hospitals, and, like Castro, they also tortured and assassinated opponents. They built concentration and extermination camps and eradicated all liberties, committing the worst crimes against humanity.

“Unbelievably, while many non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and America’s Watch have denounced the human rights situation in Cuba, there has been a continuing love affair on the part of the media and many intellectuals with Fidel Castro.”

That love affair, I say to my colleagues and to our distinguished panelists who will be testifying, seemed to crash and burn with the onset of the most recent crackdown on dissidents. The EU took action in June 2003 by limiting high-level EU governmental visits and inviting Cuban dissidents to National Day celebrations, but Europe has a short memory. In January of this year, at the initiative of the Spanish Government, the EU temporarily suspended these measures for a 6-month period, and I believe that is shameless.

Let me mention just a few of the ones who were summarily sentenced and remain in prison. Omar Rodriguez Saludes, an independent journalist for 27 years; Hector Palacios, one of the key figures promoting the Varela Project, 25 years; Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who wrote critical articles about the Cuban economy on the Internet, 25 years; the president of the independent union, United Confederation of Cuban Workers, Pedro Pablo Alvarez, 25 years; Journalist Paul Rivero and Ricardo Gonzalez Alfonso, an editor for *De Cuba* magazine, got 20 years each, and the list goes on and on.

It is a true honor to hear from Economist Martha Roque today, who will be speaking very shortly, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison and released for health reasons in 2004. We salute her courage to continue the fight on behalf of those who are still in prison.

Let me just note that, for its part, the Bush Administration has made its deep and abiding concern for political prisoners and the protection of elemental rights in Cuba abundantly clear. At the time of the crackdowns, former Secretary of State Colin Powell said, and I quote him:

“In recent days the Cuban Government has undertaken the most significant act of political repression in decades. We call on Castro to end this despicable repression and free these prisoners of conscience. The United States and the international community will be unrelenting in its insistence that Cubans who seek peaceful change be permitted to do so.”

Sadly, I would just note, parenthetically, the European Union, again at the behest of the Spanish, seemed to be waffling on that commitment as we talked.

In like manner, the Congress has consistently demanded the immediate release of all prisoners and the support of the right of the Cuban people to exercise fundamental political and civil liberties. H. Res. 179, a resolution offered by a Subcommittee Chairperson, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, in April of 2003, passed by a vote of 414 to 0, with 11 “present.”

In April 2001, I sponsored a resolution, H. Res. 91, calling on the U.N. Human Rights Commission in Geneva to condemn Cuba's human rights abuse and appoint a special rapporteur for Cuba. While it passed, there was a disturbing number of negative votes. That vote was 347 to 44, with 22 voting "present."

Shortly, during this meeting of the Subcommittees, we will have the opportunity to mark up a resolution by Mr. Menendez to show that these prisoners are not forgotten. Fidel Castro; his brother, Raul; and numerous others of Cuba's dictatorship are directly responsible for crimes against humanity, past and present. Frankly, I think they should be held to account at The Hague. Someday, these oppressors will be held to account, and the sooner, the better.

This afternoon we will learn more about the continued plight, and I reserve the balance of my time and would like to yield to a great friend of global human rights, and the suffering people in Cuba, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, the gentleman from Florida.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith of New Jersey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS

Good Afternoon. With the concurrence of Chairman Burton, this joint Subcommittee will now come to order.

This afternoon, we will examine "Year Two of Castro's Brutal Crackdown in Cuba." I want to thank the Chairman of our Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, Dan Burton, for agreeing to this joint hearing. I also want to thank our respective Ranking Democratic Members, Mr. Payne and Mr. Menendez, for their support in organizing this important hearing.

Two years ago, with the world's attention riveted on Iraq, Fidel Castro ordered his feared State Security apparatus to round up at least 75 of Cuba's bravest and brightest, prominent and lesser-known dissidents. Among these are 28 independent journalists and 40 Varela project workers. With sickening speed, these men and women were paraded before kangaroo courts and given prison sentences ranging from 6 to 28 years. 61 remain in jail.

When the Committee on International Relations met April 16, 2003 to decry this vile abrogation of justice, I stated at that time: "Even some of the most outspoken leftists, who once saw in Fidel Castro something to admire, now admit that Castro's unbridled cruelty, thirst for blood and extreme paranoia are indefensible."

I regret to report that Castro has given me no cause to reassess that statement.

What were the so-called crimes of these brave men and women? Advocating democracy . . . writing as independent journalists . . . being men and women of faith . . .

Their real offense was to dare to question the authority of a single man, Mr. Castro. The Cuban Revolution is really about Castro's vanity and pursuit of personal power. From the beginning, Castro has shot and jailed anyone—even his close friends—who has dared get in the way of his personal ambition.

Dictatorships, reflecting the whims of a despot, always subject their people to deprivations and absurdities. The Castro regime recently let a handful of its political prisoners out on "parole," citing health reasons. The regime's callousness towards ailing political prisoners is well documented.

Now, independent Cuban journalists are reporting that Cuba's prisons have been virtually emptied of medical personnel. Why? Mr. Castro decided to send them to Venezuela and other places to advance his personal expansionist agenda.

Writing in the Spanish newspaper, El Pais, Noble prize winner Jose Saramago, a Portuguese communist and close friend of Castro commented after three alleged Havana ferry hijackers were killed by firing squad in Cuba in May 2003, "Cuba has won no heroic victory by executing these three men, but it has lost my confidence, damaged my hopes and robbed me of illusions."

Without anything that resembles due process, the three alleged ferry hijackers were killed by firing squad in Cuba, while others got long jail terms.

Illusions, as Castro lover Jose Saramago has only *now* begun to acknowledge, often persist despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Nowhere has this been more evident than in the case of Castro's Cuba.

Despite decades of credible reports of widespread egregious violations of human rights, including the pervasive use of torture and vicious beatings of political prisoners by the Cuban government, some have clung to indefensibly foolish illusions of Castro's revolution.

Despite the fact that the Cuban government systematically denies its people the freedoms of speech, press, assembly, and association, and severely restricts workers' rights, including the right to form independent trade unions, some have, nevertheless, clung to illusion.

Despite the fact that Castro maintains an unimaginably vast network of surveillance by the thugs in his secret police and Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs)—neighbors spying on neighbors—some continue to embrace bogus perceptions—illusions about Cuba.

In his book, "Against All Hope, a Memoir of Life in Castro's Gulags" Armando Valladares, a courageous and amazing man who spent 22 years in Cuban prisons wrote,

"The government of Cuba and defenders of the Cuban Revolution denied that incidents that I recount (in the book) ever happened. Castro sympathizers, who were more subtle, said the incidents I described were exaggerations. And there were others, well meaning, who simply could not bring themselves to believe that such horrors, crimes and torture existed in the political prisons of Cuba."

"My response to those who still try to justify Castro's tyranny with the excuse that he has built schools and hospitals is this: Stalin, Hitler and Pinochet also built schools and hospitals, and like Castro, they also tortured and assassinated opponents. They built concentration and extermination camps and eradicated all liberties, committing the worst crimes against humanity."

"Unbelievably, while many non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and America's Watch have denounced the human rights situation in Cuba, there has been a continuing love affair on the part of the media and many intellectuals with Fidel Castro."

That love affair—that illusion—seemed to crash and burn with the onset of the current crackdown on dissidents. The EU took action in June 2003 by limiting high-level EU governmental visits and inviting Cuban dissidents to national day celebrations. But their memories are short. In January of this year, at the initiative of the Spanish government, the EU temporarily suspended these measures for a six-month period.

Let me mention a few of the ones who were summarily sentenced and remain in prison. Omar Rodriguez Saludes, an independent journalist known to ride his bicycle to news conferences: 27 years. Hector Palacios, one of the key figures promoting the Varela Project: 25 years. Oscar Espinosa Chepe, who wrote critical articles about the Cuban economy for the Internet: 25 years. The President of the Independent United Confederation of Cuban Workers (CUTC), Pedro Pablo Alvarez, 25 years. Journalist Raul Rivero and Ricardo Gonzalez Afonso, an editor at "De Cuba" magazine, each got 20 years. The list goes on and on.

It was a true honor to hear from Economist Morta Beatriz Rogue today, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison and released for health reasons in 2004. We salute her courage to continue the fight on behalf of those who are still in prison today.

For its part, the Bush Administration has made its deep and abiding concern for the political prisoners and the protection of elemental human rights in Cuba abundantly clear. At the time of the crackdown, former Secretary of State Colin Powell declared,

"In recent days the Cuban government has undertaken the most significant act of political repression in decades. We call on Castro to end this despicable repression and free these prisoners of conscience. The United States and the international community will be unrelenting in our insistence that Cubans who seek peaceful change be permitted to do so."

In like manner, the Congress has consistently demanded the immediate release of all the prisoners and support of the right of the Cuban people to exercise fundamental political and civil liberties. HRes 179, a resolution offered by Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen in April 2003, passed by a vote of 414-0, 11 present. In April of 2001, I sponsored a resolution, H.Res. 91, calling on the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva to condemn Cuba's human rights abuse and appoint a Special Rapporteur for Cuba. While it passed, there were a disturbing number of negative votes. That vote was 347-44 with 22 voting present.

We have another opportunity today to move forward a resolution offered by my Colleague, Mr. Menendez, to show that these prisoners are not forgotten. Fidel Castro, his brother Raul, and numerous leaders of Cuba's dictatorship, are directly re-

sponsible for crimes against humanity past—and present. Some day these oppressors will be held to account and the people of Cuba will live in freedom.

This afternoon, we will learn about the continued plight of Cuba's dissidents. More importantly, we will talk about the vision of a free Cuba that animates these men and women to assume risks we can only imagine.

As Roger Noriega, our first official witness has observed: the democratic transition is already underway in Cuba. Freedom always begins in hearts of a few brave men and women.

I would like to recognize my colleague Chairman Burton for an opening statement and to then recognize our Ranking Democratic Members, Mr. Payne and Mr. Menendez for their opening remarks.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Thank you, Chairman Smith. I thank you for convening this hearing. I was, upon listening to you now, reminded of one of the very brilliant sayings of the apostle of freedom of Cuba, Jose Marti. He said something that, when I look at you, I remember, I recall, Mr. Chairman. He said, "When there are many men without dignity, there are some men who have the dignity of many men," like Chris Smith.

You, today, as also Mr. Burton, who has called this meeting as well, are remembering a people who have been oppressed for 46 years, and I am told that we have on the telephone, and I look forward, as all of those many, many people here in this room and the television and radio also covering this, I look forward to hearing the words of three great Cuban leaders who will hopefully have an opportunity to speak to us shortly.

And I simply want to quote President George W. Bush. In his second inaugural address, just a few yards from where we are at this moment, when he said, so appropriately, in words that will be forever remembered as among the most extraordinarily dignified, as well as visionary, ever pronounced by a United States President, he said, and I quote:

"All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know the United States will not ignore your oppression or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you. Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know America sees you for who you are, the future leaders of your freed country."

Mr. Chairman, I look forward to hearing three of those future leaders of free Cuba, who I am told are on the telephone: Martha Beatriz Roque Cabello, Felix Bonne Carcasses, and René Gomez Manzano. The three of them, through their courage, their clarity, their transparency, their patriotism, their constancy, have already earned not only an extraordinary position in Cuban history but, without any doubt, the prestige and the moral authority that will be accompanied in the future by overwhelming support by the Cuban people when leaders like Martha Beatriz Roque and Felix Bonne and René Gomez Manzano can participate in the rule of law in a free and democratic Cuba as leaders.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this hearing. In addition to very much looking forward to listening to the director of the United States diplomacy and policy toward Latin America, Ambassador Roger Noriega, and others, I very much look forward to hearing the three Cuban leaders who we have on the telephone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Mr. Diaz-Balart, thank you for your very eloquent statement, and, again, your passion and fire is inspiring for all of us.

I do understand that—we are checking—there may be a vote on the final passage on the Floor right now. Your brother, Mario Lincoln Diaz-Balart, might want to say something in opening.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Chairman, I will be brief. I also want to echo the words of the elder Congressman Diaz-Balart when he stated his deep admiration for your love for freedom and your efforts for freedom around the world, and as you said, Mr. Chairman, the desire and the struggle for freedom in Cuba is alive and well. I also am looking forward to the testimony of these three heroes who will be testifying, Mr. Chairman, in front of your Committee via telephone.

We have to remember the struggles and the risks that these heroes go through day in and day out just because they aspire to freedom, nothing more than that, freedom, and human dignity in their country of Cuba. And like them, there are hundreds and thousands of Cubans who are, on a daily basis, working and struggling for that so elusive freedom in Cuba.

You were recalling the numbers of arrests that have taken place. This insane dictator, every once in a while, will release a couple to try to show good faith, but, at the same time, he will incarcerate, and has incarcerated, dozens and dozens of others. But we have to remember that every single Cuban is, in fact, in a prison because under the rule of this insane dictator, the entire island has become just that, a prison, a prison for all of the Cubans. But I repeat: There are heroes, Mr. Chairman, who are working with incredible odds, under the most difficult circumstances, to guarantee something that we know will happen, which is guarantee that freedom will come to the Cuban people. And I thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to participate with them, listen to them, and with that, I yield back.

Mr. BURTON [presiding]. Has the other gentleman from Florida spoken yet? Well, then I will look to my Vice Chairman on the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee and ask if he has any comments he would like to make.

Mr. WELLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do have a brief statement, which I will do my best to summarize. Chairman Burton, I want to thank you for holding this important and timely hearing on the second year of Castro's repression of Cuban dissidents. This continues to be a major human rights issue right here in our own hemisphere, and I commend you, as well as Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Mr. Menendez, for keeping the pressure on Fidel Castro and his regime and highlighting these abuses.

Let me also commend my colleagues who are here with us today and your efforts to mark up the concurrent resolution, which clearly defines the United States as the defender of freedom, democracy, as well as those who really matter, the Cuban people who have been far too long oppressed by Castro. As we know, 75 dissidents were imprisoned in Cuba in 2003 as part of Cuba's massive crack-down on journalists, labor leaders, democracy activists, each with one thing in common: Daring to challenge the current system under Castro. In Cuba, dissent is not only not tolerated; it is pun-

ished. Sixty-one of the 75 still remain in prison, but even worse, there are estimates that hundreds of political prisoners are still being held in Cuba, less than 100 miles off our shore as we speak today.

Fidel Castro has shown no interest or willingness to move to release the remaining prisoners and continues to harass others not currently imprisoned who would dare to speak out for freedom. This is a dark spot in our hemisphere, where democracy and freedom are shared by a vast majority of our countries but are put down in Cuba.

I am also concerned about Fidel Castro's increasing presence in the country of Venezuela, where an estimated 20,000 Cubans have a presence in the country today. This is a topic, Mr. Chairman, for a different hearing, one I hope that we will look into, but I did want to note my interest in this area for the record.

Again, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to speak. I look forward to our work today on this very, very important hearing.

Mr. BURTON. Well, I want to thank the gentleman. He has been very active in the entire hemisphere, and I know he is even going to be working harder in the next 2 years, and I am going to help him.

Let me just say that for many years, I and my colleagues have been aware of the repression that takes place in Castro's Cuba, and we have done everything that we possibly can to help remove him from power and to stop the repression that has been taking place. So far, we have not been successful, but I am very hopeful that one day in the not-too-distant future there will be freedom in Cuba, and the dissidents that have been arrested and put in jail without a real reason for that happening will be set free. And then we can all go down there and enjoy one of the most beautiful countries in the world.

He has ruined that country. The standard of living has been reduced. People live on as little as 5 or 10 dollars a month. They are driving cars from the forties and fifties. It is bad enough if you did not have to face the reality that if you disagree with the government at all, that you are likely to be thrown into prison and left there for an indefinite period of time.

One of the books that touched me the most was *Against All Hope* by Armando Valladares, and if those of you in the audience have not read it, I would submit to you, it is worth reading. It shows very clearly the horrible atrocities that take place in the gulags in Cuba at the hands of Fidel Castro, not to mention the people that he has murdered.

So all I can say is that we are going to do everything we can on the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee to continue to fight for freedom in Cuba, and we are going to do everything we can to keep the spotlight focused on Cuba to make sure that people who are for freedom and who have been imprisoned without cause will be set free. And with that, let me call our first panel.

Is Mr. Menendez on his way? Oh, so he is. Well, they have asked, as a courtesy to the Democrats, the Minority on the Committee, that we suspend until they get here, and I have to go vote anyhow. So why don't we stand in recess until the fall of the gavel, which

should be in about 5 or 10 minutes, and I ask your indulgence, and we will see you in just a little bit. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Burton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DAN BURTON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF INDIANA, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

As Chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere, and long-standing critic of the Castro regime, I would like to thank Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Payne for working with Mr. Menendez and I to put on this joint hearing today; and help us highlight once again the atrocious human rights violations the Cuban people continue to suffer at the hands of Castro's oppressive regime.

I believe this hearing is especially timely, for two reasons. First, we are approaching the two-year anniversary of the most brutal attempt yet by the Castro regime to crush the efforts by the Cuban people to achieve a free and democratic Cuba. By holding this hearing today we are sending a strong message to the Cuban government that the United States will not forget those people who are languishing in Cuban prisons for the so-called crime of speaking out against the injustices perpetrated by the Castro regime.

Second, as U.S. servicemen and women put their lives on the line to bring freedom and democracy to areas of the world that have long suffered in the shadow of tyranny, Cuba represents a prime example—right in our own backyard—of what can happen if any Nation shuns democracy and subjugates itself to the whims of dictatorship.

Next week (March 9th), my Subcommittee will hold a hearing to examine the overall State of Democracy in Latin America. It is the intention of the Subcommittee to determine the strengths and weaknesses of democracy in our hemisphere, and I believe that an understanding of the situation in Cuba is key to our understanding of the current state of democracy in parts of our Hemisphere.

As it stands now, Cuba is the only nation in the hemisphere that is a complete dictatorship, and since the earliest days of the regime, Castro has not only stifled efforts to promote freedom and democracy in Cuba, but he has also actively been involved in promoting communism and dictatorships around the world, most especially in Central and South America. The fall of Castro's principle benefactor, the Soviet Union, may have caused a shift in Castro's tactics but he has never abandoned his ambition to export communism. In fact, in an August 2003 policy report, the Hudson Institute offered evidence that the Cuban government was providing assistance to the Chavez regime in Venezuela in an effort to turn that democratic country into a socialist dictatorship. Tragically, it seems that their sinister efforts may be bearing fruit as just last Friday President Chavez publicly and vocally embraced socialism as his ideology of choice.

The inauguration of Uruguay's first leftist president, Tabare Vazquez, just this past Tuesday marks a continuation of South America's political shift leftward. Only hours after receiving the presidential sash, President Vazquez moved to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba.

I am very concerned about the state of affairs in the Western Hemisphere and I am convinced that there will never be true lasting peace and freedom in the region until we solve the Cuba problem once and for all; and the only acceptable solution is a free and democratic Cuba.

We cannot ignore Castro and we cannot relieve the pressure on the regime. We owe it to the thousands of Cubans who risk their lives every year to flee the communist regime by any means necessary—even attempting to brave the hazardous 90-mile crossing between the United States and Cuba on makeshift rafts—as well as those languishing in Cuban jails to further open the eyes of the world community to the true evils of the Castro regime.

Today's hearing, and the resolution we will mark-up later this afternoon, send an important message to freedom loving people in Cuba, and indeed everywhere, that the United States stands ready with them to promote freedom and democracy for all; that we will never forget them, and we will not walk away until the job is done. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.

[Whereupon, at 2:15 p.m., a brief recess was taken.]

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY [presiding]. We will resume this hearing, and the Chair recognizes Mr. Menendez.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you. I want to take a moment to speak directly to the Cuban people to let them know that we stand with

them in their fight for freedom and human rights. I would also like to thank Chairman Burton, Chairman Smith and Ranking Member Payne for holding this important hearing and, subsequently, the markup today.

Almost 2 years ago today, the Cuban dictatorship showed its true colors and began its most repressive and violent action against dissidents in recent history. The whole world was horrified as more than 75 journalists, human rights activists, and opposition political figures were arrested, given summary trials, and then sentenced to prison terms of up to 28 years. Many of the prisoners, along with other prisoners of conscience, spent over a year in solitary confinement. Some of them have been deprived of adequate medical treatment, and reports from Cuba detail beatings and harassment.

I am not fooled, for one, by the recent release of 14 dissidents, by this attempt to trick the international community. I am not fooled because I know that when they released those 14 dissidents—who should never have been in jail in the first place—they also arrested new dissidents. I am not fooled because I know that they only released these dissidents on parole, meaning that they could be arrested again at any time.

That is why I am so disturbed by the European Union's recent decision to end the diplomatic sanctions they imposed on Cuba in June 2003 after the crackdown. Unfortunately, I think they were misled by Castro's calculated release of a very limited number of dissidents. This was not a change in Castro's policy, nor does it indicate an improvement in his human rights record.

Freedom House called on the European Union to stand firm against these abuses. On December 13, 2004, Freedom House said that the European Union "should not reward the Castro Government for releasing political prisoners who were unjustly jailed. The dissidents were not set free as part of a general amnesty or political reform program. The Cuban Government has also noted that the releases are reversible parole licenses granted on health and medical grounds."

The European Union has a long tradition of taking a strong stand against human rights abuses. Under the European Union Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the EU has helped protect dissidents around the world from persecution and abuse and defended their rights. I would strongly urge the European Union, therefore, to reconsider the recent decision to end the diplomatic sanctions against the Cuban regime, and I, along with a number of other colleagues on this Committee, wrote a letter to them asking them to do so, which I would like to submit for the record, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Without objection.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Menendez and the information referred to follow:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT MENENDEZ, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

A todos mis hermanos y hermanas quienes sufren en las cárceles de Castro, bajo su régimen, a sus familias y amistades aquí en los Estados Unidos y en Cuba, les digo que el pueblo americano está con ustedes. Y, aquí en el Congreso de los Estados Unidos, vamos a defender su libertad y ganar la lucha contra la brutalidad y la opresión.

To all my friends here today who don't speak Spanish, don't worry, I won't spend the rest of my time speaking in Spanish. But I did want to take a moment to speak directly to the Cuban people to let them know that we stand with them in their fight for freedom and human rights.

I would also like to thank Chairman Burton, Chairman Smith, and Ranking Member Payne for holding this important hearing and mark-up today.

Almost two years ago today, the Cuban dictatorship showed its true colors and began its most repressive and violent action against dissidents in recent history.

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EUROPEAN UNION

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I would strongly urge the European Union, therefore, to reconsider the recent decision to end the diplomatic sanctions against the Cuban regime and I, along with a number of other colleagues on this Committee, wrote a letter to them asking them to do so which I would like to submit for the record.

UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

I know I am not the only person in the room who is horrified to see Cuba as a Member of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Even worse, the Cuban regime will try to use its membership to block any resolution on Cuba from passing.

Last year, at the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Administration only managed to get a weak resolution passed and only by one vote—at a time when Castro had committed his worst human rights abuses in recent history.

This year, the prospects are even worse. But the United States must be at the forefront of the fight to guarantee that a resolution *does* pass—and I am not talking about the watered-down version that the Administration managed to squeak through last year.

Yes, I fully understand the realities of the UN Commission and the various countries that often abstain or vote against the resolution. But now is the time for the President to show leadership on this issue and to work with our allies throughout the world.

The Administration has made it clear with the President's and the Secretary of State's recent trips to Europe that they want to forge new relationships with our allies. As they say, actions speak louder than words. And I, for one, expect this Administration to fight to pass a strong, definitive Cuba resolution at the UN.

CONCLUSION

The people of Cuba need the world's support in their fight for freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture and abuse, and most importantly, to self-determination. We cannot give in. While those who have fought

for their freedom remain imprisoned for their beliefs, we must continue to support them in both words and actions.

We have before us today three courageous men and women who have risked their own lives while fighting for freedom in Cuba. I thank them for speaking to us today and for everything they have done on behalf of the Cuban people. I look forward to hearing their testimony and those of our other witnesses today.

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 3, 2005

His Excellency
John Bruton
Ambassador of the European Union
Delegation of the European Commission to the United States
2300 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We write to express our strong opposition to the European Union's recent decision to suspend diplomatic sanctions on the Cuban regime. The European Union imposed these sanctions in June 2003 after the Cuban regime arrested 75 political dissidents, gave them summary trials, and sentenced them to prison terms of up to 28 years. We urge you not to abandon the dissidents, human rights activists, and journalists who are still suffering in Castro's jails.

Castro's calculated release of a very limited number of the 75 dissidents does not indicate an improvement in his human rights record. In fact, he has actually arrested new dissidents at the same time as he has let these few people out of jail. Even those who have been released were only released on an "extra penal license," which means they could be arrested again at any time. Right now, Castro still has over 400 political prisoners in his jail cells.

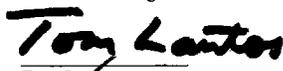
Castro's human rights record has been condemned by Amnesty International, Freedom House, and other human rights groups. Freedom House called on the European Union to stand firm against these abuses. On December 13, 2004, Freedom House said that the European Union, "should not reward the Castro government for releasing political prisoners who were unjustly jailed... The dissidents were not set free as part of a general amnesty or political reform program. The Cuban government has also noted that the releases are reversible parole licenses granted on health and medical grounds."

The European Union has a long tradition of taking a strong stand against human rights abuses and has helped protect dissidents around the world from persecution and abuse. In June 2003, the European Union took a principled stand and sent a strong message to the jailed activists that the world would support their rights as guaranteed under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. The people of Cuba need the

world's support in their fight for freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture and abuse, and most importantly, to self-determination. We urge the European Union, therefore, to reconsider the recent decision to end the diplomatic sanctions against the Cuban regime.

Sincerely,

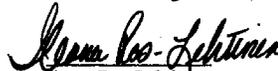

Robert Menendez
Member of Congress


Tom Lantos
Member of Congress


Lincoln Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress


Marco Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress


Dan Burton
Member of Congress


Illeana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress


Robert Wexler
Member of Congress

Mr. MENENDEZ. I know I am not the only person in the room who is horrified to see Cuba as a member of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights. Even worse, the Cuban regime will try to use its membership to block any resolution on Cuba from passing. Last year at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, the Administration only managed to get a weak resolution passed and only by one vote at a time when Castro had committed his worst human rights abuses in recent history.

This year, I believe the United States must be at the forefront of a fight to guarantee that a resolution does pass, and I am not talking about a watered-down version but a strong one that speaks to the realities of what is happening inside of Cuba. I fully understand the realities of the U.N. Commission and the various countries that often abstain or vote against the resolution, but now is the time for the President to show leadership on this issue and to work with our allies throughout the world.

The Administration has made it clear with the President's and the Secretary of State's recent trips to Europe that they want to forge new relationships with our allies. As they say, "Actions speak louder than words," and I, for one, expect the Administration to fight to pass a strong, definitive Cuba resolution at the U.N.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me just say, this hearing is about human rights violations inside of Cuba. They would be, I would hope, universally condemned, as I would condemn them in any other part of the world and as I have condemned them in any other part of the world. It is very easy in this institution to be consistently inconsistent. I would hope that we would work toward some consistently consistent efforts. The people of Cuba need the world's support in their fight for those things that we cherish so much

here: For freedom of speech and assembly, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture and abuse, and, most importantly, to self-determination. We cannot give in, and while those who fought for their freedom remain imprisoned for their beliefs, we must continue to support them in both words and actions.

We will have before us today three courageous men and women who have risked their own lives while fighting for freedom in Cuba. I thank them for speaking to us today and for everything they have done on behalf of the Cuban people. I look forward to hearing their testimony and those of our other witnesses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. The Chair recognizes my good friend and colleague, Mr. Payne, the Ranking Member of the Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations Subcommittee.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for calling this joint meeting with the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere and our new, expanded Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, and to Chairman Burton who also has a great record of fighting for the right issues, and, of course, my colleague from New Jersey, Mr. Menendez, who is the Ranking Member on the International Relations' Western Hemisphere Subcommittee. I would also like to commend all of you for calling this very important hearing on the issue of human rights and the crackdown on dissent in Cuba, which occurred in March 2003.

The human rights conditions in our hemisphere are certainly things that we should be paying close attention to, and I think that the people of Cuba need to have reform in their government. I think that the fact that the government cracks down on dissidents is something that we should not have in our hemisphere; we should allow the will of the people to speak out as they have been. But I do believe that we have a policy toward Latin America that is almost a negative policy. We do not have a clear policy of moving forward in the hemisphere.

We have put on the back burner many of the countries that we have had so much interest in during the Cold War: Guatemala and Nicaragua. We know very little about Chile and Argentina. There is still abject poverty in Latin America; however, we see very little economic development going toward that continent.

In Colombia, a 40-year war rages between the paramilitaries and the FARC, and the most vulnerable citizens are the ones who suffer the most, the indigenous people whose land has been taken, and they have been under terrible conditions, and the Afro-Colombians who live on the Pacific coast region. These communities have been victims of numerous massacres, including the Bojaya massacre of May 2002, where 119 civilians were brutally killed when the church they were taking refuge in was bombed in a cross-fire between the two groups at that time.

The Colombian military failed to protect this and many of the other occasions. This is the same military to which the United States has provided nearly \$2 billion since Fiscal Year 2000 in foreign military financing in the Department of Defense's programs and for which President Bush is requesting \$90 million for Fiscal Year 2006. Military personnel who commit crimes against human-

ity go unpunished. We have a responsibility to uphold the human rights of all, especially indigenous people and African-descent Colombians. We are giving money to that country. We are proponents of the government, and so that is a special responsibility. I think we need to continue to keep pressure on Cuba. However, we are giving money to the Government of Colombia and allowing them to do what they want to do.

In the same instance, in Haiti, the Government of Prime Minister Latortue is fostering an environment where there is violence and politically-motivated targeting of civilians. Particularly, the Lavalas supporters are being murdered, kidnapped, and abused in that country. Lawlessness is running rampant. Top Lavalas leadership, like Yvon Neptune, the former prime minister, have been imprisoned. There has been torture and kidnapping and even murder going on.

Haiti is one of the most impoverished nations in the Western Hemisphere and the fourth-poorest nation in the world. One out of every 10,000 Haitians have access to a physician, and less than 40 percent of Haitians have access to potable water. This is another country where we changed the leadership. We have a policy there. We encouraged Aristide to leave. We put in the new government. We are giving millions of dollars, and, once again, we are allowing this to just simply go down the drain.

So where is the outcry by the Administration on the horrific human rights conditions in Haiti? Again, we are falling short.

Let me just conclude by saying that there are numerous examples that I could go into in the hemisphere. As I indicated earlier, there is no hemispheric program by this country to deal with Latin American poverty, poor and inadequate lack of access to health care and education, little access to potable water, murder and kidnapping of human rights advocates and minority groups. These are all of the serious human rights conditions that go against what we here in the United States hold as basic human rights.

So while the crackdown on opponents in Cuba is wrong, we should not tolerate it, and we must urge the government to stop. We must focus on all violations of human rights that go on every day in our neighbors to the south.

Let me conclude by saying I appreciate you calling this meeting, and I look forward to hearing the witnesses.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Payne follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE DONALD M. PAYNE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY

Remarks of Ranking Member Donald M. Payne
Joint Hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and
International Operations
With the Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere
Year Two of Castro's Brutal Crackdown on Dissidents
March 3, 2005

Chairman Smith and Chairman Burton, I commend both of you for calling this hearing on the important issue of human rights and the crackdown on dissidents in Cuba that occurred in March of 2003. It is a pleasure to serve as co-ranking member along with my friend from my state, Mr. Menendez.

Human rights conditions in our hemisphere are certainly things that we should be paying close attention to and working to improve. Our credibility in the world hinges on the level of fairness and balance in our foreign policy.

In Colombia, a 40-year war rages on between the paramilitaries and the FARC and the most vulnerable civilians are the ones who suffer most, particularly Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities in the Pacific Coast region.

These communities have been victims of numerous massacres, including the Bojaya massacre in May of 2002, when 119 civilians were brutally killed when the church they had taken refuge in was bombed in the crossfire between the two groups.

The Colombian military failed to protect on this and on many other occasions. This is the same military to which the U.S. has provided nearly \$2 billion since Fiscal Year 2000 in Foreign Military Financing and DOD programs and for which President Bush is requesting \$90 million for FY 2006. Military personnel who commit crimes against humanity go unpunished. We have a responsibility to uphold the human rights of all, especially African descendant and indigenous Colombians. We are falling short.

In Haiti, the government of Prime Minister La Tortue is fostering an environment where violence and the politically-motivated targeting of civilians and particularly Lavalas supporters for murder, kidnapping, and abuse rein freely and lawlessness inhibits even the most basic of daily activities. Top Lavalas leadership like Yvonne Neptune, the former Prime Minister, have been imprisoned, tortured, kidnapped, and even murdered.

Haiti is one of the most impoverished nations in the Western Hemisphere and the fourth poorest country in the world.

Only 1 in every 10,000 Haitians has access to a physician, and less than 40% of Haitians have access to potable water.

Where is the outcry by the Administration on the horrific human rights conditions in Haiti? Again, we are falling short.

Off the coast of Cuba, reports of torture and inhumane interrogation practices in our own prisoner camp in Guantanamo Bay have raised serious questions about violations of human rights by U.S. military personnel. The Abu Ghraib scandal – a stain on our military's honor – goes without mention. Here, again, we are falling way short.

There are numerous other examples right here in our own hemisphere of human rights violations. Poverty, poor and inadequate lack of access to health care and education, little access to potable water, murder and kidnapping of human rights advocates and minority groups – these are all serious human rights conditions that go against what we here in the U.S. hold as basic human rights.

So while the crackdown on opponents to the Cuban government is wrong and should not be tolerated, we must focus on *all* violations of human rights that go on every day in our own hemisphere and elsewhere in the world.

This Administration is not doing enough, and is in fact, turning a blind eye, in places where human rights violations are occurring, particularly Haiti and Colombia.

I would also suggest that it is our own policy of isolation of Cuba that exacerbates tensions between the government and opposition.

The EU temporarily lifted its sanctions in order to negotiate the release of some of the 75 dissidents and was successful. This provides an example of how a change in our own policies can often have a positive impact on the lives of people in other countries. Our foreign policy should be fair for all.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. I thank my friend. Ms. Lee?
Ms. LEE. Thank you very much, and I, too, want to congratulate our Chairman and look forward to working with him and thank our Ranking Members, Mr. Menendez and Mr. Payne, for their leadership on so many foreign policy issues over the past few years since I have been here: On immigration, on civil rights, on human rights, on trade and investment. I just want to thank them for their leadership.

I, too, am a strong opponent to human rights violations. Freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of faith and thought; all of these are ingredients to a free society, and so the examples, of course, that we are going to hear about today are highly disturbing. But I also know that isolation will not work in terms of addressing any type of human rights violations wherever they occur in the world, and I am one who believes that there must be some consistency in our foreign policy. If we engage with China, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, then we need to use the same standards in Cuba and in Venezuela as it relates to trade and investment, human rights violations, diplomacy, international cooperation. And so I believe, while we stand firm in our opposition to human rights violations, we must be universal in our opposition.

We know that prisoner abuse has taken place at Guantanamo, we know there have been abuses in Iraq, and we also know that

our policy has been very minimal in terms of our response to these abuses as a Congress in terms of our foreign policy. So I hope as we conduct these hearings that, at least, I am going to seek for some consistency in terms of condemning human rights violations not only in one country today, as we are looking at Cuba, but throughout the world. And also what follows in terms of our foreign policy because I do not believe America could continue to have one policy of isolation toward one country and another policy of diplomacy with regard to countries that we want to do business with.

And so, with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the hearing and thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much. The Chair recognizes Ms. Diane Watson, the gentlelady from California.

Ms. WATSON. I join with my colleagues to thank you, Mr. Chair, for bringing this issue before us today. I, too, abhor the, shall I say, the atrocities that occur in Cuba, but I also feel that our attention to areas where atrocities are committed has been severely uneven.

I have traveled to most of the places that we are concerned about, and I did go with a delegation from here to Cuba. And in talking with Fidel Castro, I think that a reasonable spat of negotiated sessions with him might materialize because he took our attention back to 9/11 and said how he called to say that we could use Cuba's airstrip to land our planes. He also said that if we would join together for interdiction, we could stop the drug trade that comes up from South and Central America. But we will not, and he is only 90 miles off our southeastern coast.

I think that rather than providing incentives to other countries that we know have nuclear arms, why don't we provide, sit-down and negotiate, some incentives to Castro to stop attacking the dissidents? And I think he is at that point that we could talk.

In my conversation with him, or our conversations with him, I found him, number one, brilliant. Number two, he had a good hold on every country's political infrastructure and every country's history, and he made us realize that he was the longest-living, shall I say, head of a country in the world—43 years at that time.

So I think that on the side of diplomacy, and I, myself, am a diplomat, I would think it would be worth our time to plan strategies to talk to Fidel Castro, to work with him, to bring to him our central principles and our goals in the world, to bring democracy. At the same time, we need to clean our act up in many of the countries, and particularly down there in Guantanamo Bay. We went down there, too, and there are some things that would be very embarrassing if they got out publicly.

So I want to commend you, and I am really looking forward to hearing from Mr. Noriega, the Assistant Secretary, and I do hope that out of these hearings will come a constructive direction in dealing with the atrocities that are occurring in Cuba. My emphasis is on constructive and positive. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you.

We have on the line—and this is a very unique hearing with our friends from the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee—three of the bravest people in Cuba who are on the line from Cuba who will be speaking to us via audio hookup. Representative Lincoln Diaz-

Balart introduced them earlier when he was making his opening remarks. Felix Bonne and René Gomez Manzano will both be speaking.

We have the services of a translator, the courtesy of Wayne Miele of the Department of State, Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs. We appreciate that. Ms. Martha Edwards will be doing the translating. Ms. Edwards, thank you for being here.

Again, I want to welcome our friends from Cuba for their courage, for speaking to the Congress, to the American people via this hearing. The platform is yours.

**STATEMENT OF MARTHA BEATRIZ ROQUE, PH.D., HAVANA,
CUBA**

Ms. ROQUE. Mr. Chairman and the other Members of the Subcommittee, good afternoon. Thank you very much for this invitation, and also thanks for being concerned about what is happening in our country.

My name is Martha Beatriz Roque. I am a member of the executive board of the Assembly to Promote a Civil Society. I would like to thank in special to those Cubans that are Members of this United States Congress, and they are still fighting for the Cuban democracy. I think that this is an historical moment and a very important one for us.

I am delighted to be able to present testimony before you today and respond to any questions you may wish. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Yes. I would ask, Felix Bonne, if you would not mind giving an opening statement to the Committee.

STATEMENT OF MR. FELIX BONNE, HAVANA, CUBA

Mr. BONNE. To the Members of Congress of the United States, I would like to say that I am very thankful for this opportunity to speak to you in the name of my people and a section of the population that I believe is very representative.

The last Census showed that about 40 percent of the total population of Cuba is Black. As you can see on the page of photographs, the photo of me, I am a Black person, but our true colors are the colors of our flag, which are red, blue, and white.

As I said before, I am very happy to be here, and I am willing to answer any questions that you might want to pose to me.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much, Professor Bonne.

I would ask, Mr. Gomez, if you would speak to the Subcommittees.

STATEMENT OF MR. RENÉ GOMEZ MANZANO, HAVANA, CUBA

Mr. MANZANO. Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. My name is René Gomez Manzano. I am very pleased, and I thank the Honorable Congress of the United States and this Committee, in particular, for this opportunity that they are giving me to address the Members of these Committees and to speak our truth here in Cuba. I wish also to use this opportunity to thank the Congress of the United States for this unanimous vote against the crackdown against the dissidents here in Cuba, Mr. Chairman, about which you talked in your speech at the beginning of this hearing.

I would like to especially thank those three great Cubans—Cubans as well as Americans—Mr. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mr. Mario Diaz-Balart, and Mr. Bob Menendez for their kind words to the three of us and especially toward me. And I would also like to thank the rest of the Members of the Subcommittees that have spoken in this hearing. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much for not only your statement and your heroism, all three of you, but for your courage in speaking to us today.

I would like to ask one opening question and then ask my colleagues if they have questions, Mr. Burton, who is the Chairman, and my friends on the other side of the aisle as well. Many of us, for years, have been very concerned, and my friend from California mentioned it earlier, if we would just talk with Fidel Castro, that somehow that might lead to breakthroughs. It seems to me that the European Union, for years through its trading policies—and that goes for Canada as well—engages in seemingly limitless talk, and there is nothing at the end of the day to show in the realm of human rights.

Talk is cheap. We have made it very clear to Fidel Castro that if he would release the political prisoners and allow an opening for freedom, that there would be commensurate actions taken on the part of the U.S. Government, but to retain in captivity hundreds upon hundreds of political prisoners makes his country a gulag state.

So my question to you is: What can the international community do, especially the Europeans—we have a very clear policy—there seems to be a reversal now occurring because of what Spain is doing with its leadership at the EU—so that we can have solidarity with the pro-democracy forces in Cuba?

Ms. EDWARDS. On behalf of the panel, it is not necessary to translate into Spanish.

Mr. MANZANO. You were saying, Mr. Chairman, and you said it very right, that the United States has a very clear policy toward Cuba. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same thing about the policy of other countries or groups of countries, such as in the case of the European Union. That is a fact that I would like to express in this hearing. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Would any of the others like to respond?

Ms. ROQUE. Yes.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Dr. Roque?

Ms. ROQUE. I agree with René Gomez Manzano, and I think that you are in the right way. We are supporting what you are doing there on the policy for Cuba here because we have a lot of people suffering in the jails, and we have a lot of people suffering in this country, not only the ones that are in jail but all of our country. We need democracy, and we need that democracy comes very, very soon. We are not going to wait more because it is impossible to us to be here waiting a lot of time. Forty-six years, we are here waiting for democracy, and we need democracy now, and we need freedom for our prisoners now. We are not going to wait anymore. We have to work very hard for these things that we want. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Professor Bonne?

Mr. BONNE. Yes. I also want to say that I am completely in agreement with current United States policy toward Cuba. If it were to change, then Fidel Castro would present it as a great political victory of his, and this would be dangerous not only for Cuba and for the future of democracy in Cuba but also for the United States as a precedent of deference to a dictator.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you very much. I would just note before yielding to Mr. Menendez that human rights outrage has a very short shelf life. Particularly when a country is outraged at the beginning when people are arrested, put into stockades and small cells, and are beaten and tortured, but because the torture continues unabated, people become weary and forget their outrage doing a grave disservice to the dissidents and to the human rights activists in any country, and that goes for Cuba as well.

Mr. Menendez?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to express again my solidarity with Martha Beatriz Roque, Felix Bonne, and René Gomez Manzano. It is easy, from the United States, a bastion of freedom, to speak about freedom and democracy and human rights. For those of you who advocate inside of Cuba for peaceful change, doing it there in a totalitarian dictatorship is obviously a risky proposition and a much more arduous effort.

So I really appreciate what you do each and every day. You are a group of real courageous people, joined across the world by other courageous people in other parts of the world who are also oppressed and who, each day, try to make change in their country.

I want to just have you, if you could, give the Committee a sense of what happens to those who seek to create peaceful change inside of Cuba. We read reports from organizations like Amnesty International, Freedom House, and so many others, including our own State Department, about arrests, about beatings, about the tensions. I would hope that you, from the experiences that you and others have had, could tell the Committee what happens to those who seek to make peaceful change inside of their country.

Ms. ROQUE. We are really an example of what happened to people that wanted democracy in Cuba. We were in jail; I, myself, twice. I was released just about 8 months ago, but I would like to tell you that the President of this country is deaf. Perhaps those women that are sitting there talked to him, but he did not hear. He only hears what he wants to hear. He wants to hear what totalitarianism is. He wants to do in our country and also in Latin America—he is working very, very hard with other countries in Latin America.

He is introducing physicians in Latin America, and he is introducing also physicians in Africa in order to control both of these countries in special places like in United Nations organizations and in other organizations all over the world because he wants to control vote of the people. And we know that it is very, very difficult until you understand what is happening here, but we are suffering. We have a lot of people suffering here, and we want to change these things in our country. We want to be a democratic country like you are, and we need the support of your country to this change. Thank you very much.

Mr. MANZANO. Answering to Mr. Menendez's question, I would like to stress the fact that Cuba, in spite of the fact that it is a rather small country, has the biggest number of prisoners of conscience in the world, in absolute numbers, I mean, according to the information released by such prestigious international organizations as Amnesty International. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Chairman Burton?

Mr. BURTON. Thank you very much. First of all, let me just say that I cannot express strongly enough the admiration I have for the three of you for taking such risks like the ones you are taking today to talk to the Congress of the United States and to people in the United States and people around the world. You are real heroes, in my opinion, and I am very honored to be able to talk to you.

I really only have one question because I think you have answered, in large part, one of the questions that I had in the first place, and that is: Do you have any idea what percentage of the population of Cuba want democracy and want a change and want to see Mr. Castro and his dictatorship removed? And along with that, if you can elaborate any further on the plight and the number of people that are in the gulags down there that are prisoners of conscience who have been put in jail just for speaking their mind, I would like to know that as well.

Ms. ROQUE. We make a difference here. We say that we are not dissidents. We are members of the opposition because we think that the most great part of our country is dissident. A lot of people is against the government, but, as you know, all of the people here in Cuba work for the state, and that is like a tie in the neck because they have to do what the state wants them to do. They have to go to the places that the state wants to because they want to show the world that they have a lot of support here in Cuba, but it is not like this. They have the support that people have to do because they send people to those places, and people have no chance to do anything else that go there. That is the policy of the Cuban Government. But do be assured that our people will receive a very, very grand democracy, and we are fighting very hard, very hard for this.

Mr. MANZANO. René Gomez. Giving a concrete answer to your question, Mr. Burton, I would say that more than 90 percent of the Cuban people are against the present government. Of course, they are not able to speak their minds. They, as Martha Beatriz has just said, they are controlled totally by the state, which is the sole employer in our country. So they are not able to speak what they really think, but I am sure that that is about the proportion. More than 90 percent of the Cuban people are against the government, but they are not able to speak their minds. Thank you.

Mr. BONNE. I want to talk to you about a wonderful book that is called *The Power of the Powerless*, which tell us that it is very hard for people who have never lived or experienced totalitarianism to understand it.

Mr. MANZANO. I would like also to answer another question made to us about the total number of prisoners in our country. First of all, I must state that there is no official information about the number of prisoners in Cuba. This is secret information con-

trolled by the totalitarian state. Nevertheless, the information of different independent organizations has stated that there are about 100,000 prisoners, more or less. We can say that about 0.9 percent of the Cuban population is imprisoned in jail, and the prisoners of conscience are more than 80.

Ms. EDWARDS [completing answer of Mr. Bonne]. I wanted to say that it is very hard to understand totalitarianism when you have not lived it and experienced it. I know I am sure that you do not understand the behavior of the Cuba people sometimes because of the combination of repression and propaganda that they live under, and this book explains that combination of propaganda and repression very well. It explains that that combination makes people do and behave as they are expected to do and behave, and that is what makes it hard to understand when you see people out in the streets showing their support for the government. But this is a characteristic of many and all totalitarian governments, and I would like to remind you that in Spain, under Franco, the Opus Dei, they used to get 99.9 percent of the vote, but after Franco's demise then the Socialist Party came in, so that will give you an idea.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. The Chair recognizes Ranking Member Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. I, too, would like to commend the three of you. I just have a question regarding the new policy toward Cuba that the President has introduced, and it has been supported by a majority of the Members of the Congress. But the legislation, as you may or may not know, restricts Cuban-Americans from visiting Cuba only once every 3 years rather than every year, as it was in the past. Visitors can stay no longer than 14 days. Non-Cuban citizens cannot go at all. Educational business cannot be held. I believe that remittances have been restricted.

I guess my question is that, to me, it seems that it is a step in the wrong direction. We saw, in the Soviet Union because of visit and trips, Americans going over, students going over, then Glasnost and Perestroika started, and, you know, the father of Communism, the U.S.S.R., broke down; Russia became democratic because there were exchanges, there were people going back and forth, and there were discussions. Now, that is a clear example of where it seemed to me that simply the reverse worked to break up the Soviet domination, as you say Castro has in Cuba, and the whole question of contact became a positive thing.

Even in Mexico, we heard about, in recent reports, billions of dollars going back to Mexico where it is actually changing their government internally and communities in Mexico where people now have a little economics from Mexicans who are working in the United States. Billions of dollars have gone back, and there was a big report last week in all of the major newspapers that it is changing the local government, where people are now demanding a school. They have money. They are talking about having things go on.

So I just have a question. I do not know what the answer is. The majority of the Congress agreed with this, to have more restriction rather than what has been in the past and what has been success-

ful in Russia. I just wonder, if you understand the question, what your views are about the new policy.

Ms. ROQUE. In the first case, I have to tell you that a lot of people here wanted this money, but I think that when they have a reflection about what it means, they accept not to have this money because I do not know if you know that in Cuba, for example, the middle salary is about \$10 a month. This is a terrible thing for the Cuban people. If you are good or something more, you cannot have to work, you cannot have more salary because, there again, it is against that the people have things to live because the regime wants the people to be thinking all the time what they can do in the day, in the 24 hours of the day, 1 day, what they can do to live. And if they do that, they will have their minds occupied in order to think only about living and not in order to think about political things. This is the way that the government does things to our work people.

And there is no comparison about Mexico and Cuba because they have a democracy. They can use dollars. We cannot. They can do whatever they want. If they want this moment to make an enterprise, a little enterprise, in order to develop the civil society, they can do it, but we cannot. We are tired in hands, and we are tired in everything. The government, I say, they want to have in their pockets our minds, our development, and our children, too, because the children here in Cuba, as you know, go to the school, and they have to be pioneers—in Spanish, it is “pioneros”—I do not know exactly how to translate this, but that they must be. They want to say they are going to be in the future like Che Guevara, and why? Because Che Guevara was a terrorist. He was ascetic, and also he was from Argentina, and we are Cuba, we do not want to be terrorists, and we are not going to be ascetic.

Our children do not have to be ascetic, and why do they have to be like Che Guevara? Because the government wants, and that is what is happening in our country. They want to do everything with us, with our minds, with our money, and also with our children.

I hope that, in the future, Mr. Payne, we can resolve all of these problems, and we can have children that go to the church, that go to schools that we can pay that have good physicians, that have medicines, and also that have milk because here in Cuba we have a special sense that we call “libreta de abastecimientos.” It means that all of the food is regulated in a month, and our children have here milk only until they have 7 years. The same day that they are 8 years old, they will not have any more milk. And where are the Cuban cows? I do not know where are the Cuban cows, but I think that perhaps, like the rest of the Cuban country, they immigrate to the United States. [Laughter.]

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. On that, Mr. Weller?

Mr. MANZANO. This is René Gomez. I would like to return, Mr. Congressman, to the first question you made to us. Of course, I am aware of the fact that there are different theories or thoughts about the role played by the links between the Western countries and the Soviet Union in the falling of this totalitarian regime in the former U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe and so on, but I do not agree. I must say that, respectfully, I disagree with those thoughts, with those theories.

I think, on the contrary, the main factor that brought about the falling of the totalitarian Communist regime in the former Soviet Union, in Eastern Europe and so on was the firm stand held by the Government of the United States, and at that time, it was President Reagan, and by its allies, especially, in the first place, Margaret Thatcher's U.K., their firm stand, I repeat, against the foreign policy of these totalitarian regimes. Thank you.

Mr. WELLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, to the members of the opposition who are with us today over the airwaves, I first want to thank you for speaking out and also commend you and tell you that we stand with you.

The question I would like to ask of you is: What role do you believe the international community should be doing to demonstrate solidarity with you? I note that, in 2003, when 75 members of the opposition were imprisoned for speaking out in support of democracy, that our friends in Europe, the European Union, implemented a series of measures to curtail their relations with the Castro regime. But, recently, the new socialist government in Spain encouraged the European Union to relax the measures that were put in place in response to the imprisonment of members of the opposition.

Can you share your views of the European Union's action, as well as what role that the international community can be doing to demonstrate greater solidarity with you and others who want to speak out for human rights and democracy in Cuba?

Ms. ROQUE. Mr. Vice Chairman, democracy is something that we cannot touch, but we can feel, and it is important for us that the people that feel democracy want that the Cubans feel democracy, too. That is what we need. We need the support of the countries, especially because we are going to have a meeting next May 20, and in this meeting we want the 360 people that are members of our organization to be here in Havana. It would be impossible if people all over the world did not support this meeting.

We need the support because we need an umbrella, and what is an umbrella for us? An umbrella for us means that the government of this country will not put us in jail, and if you are supporting us, not only your country, but you have people that are your allies. You can talk to anyone to support us in order to do this that we have to do. This meeting will be the start of the new way to fight against the government. This new way is the social transition. We are going to deliver the social transition, and we need a lot of support, material support, spiritual support, a lot of support. We need people to be talking all the time about this thing that we are going to do next May. We need this in order to be free. Thank you very much.

Mr. WELLER. Thank you, and thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MANZANO. This is René Gomez. I would like to punctualize [sic] some things. First of all, when our friend, Martha Beatriz, was talking about the meeting of 360 people, I must be precise, that there are 360 people representing 360 organizations. That is one representative for each organization. Therefore, we are intending to have this count of also of our Congress, in this case, the First Congress of Cuban Democrats, following May 20th, God willing.

Answering completely to your question, I would like to state that one thing other countries could do is, for example, to do the same thing you are doing right now; that is, we are greatly honored, as I formally said, of being invited to this meeting of the two Subcommittees of the House of Representatives, and, in this case, I must state that the United States, as almost always or as always, has set the example. I think it would be wonderful if other democratic countries followed the example set right now by the U.S. Congress and also invited us to take part in their meetings. That would be a concrete example of solidarity with the Cuban democrats. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Ms. Lee?

Ms. LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Let me say, first of all, I am a firm believer in international standards of human rights and also in the rule of law, and when I travel to foreign countries, I am always interested in the constitutions of sovereign nations and their laws, and this is just a factual question I would like to ask. But in Cuba, what is the definition of "treason"? I know what it is in China, I know what it is in the United States, and I would just like just to ask that question for the record as it stands now in terms of the Cuban Constitution.

[Pause.]

Mr. BONNE. I can give you a more practical definition, and that is how Fidel Castro understands this concept and the punishment that goes with it. For him, treason is anything that anybody believes and anybody thinks that is different from his belief or what he thinks, and that notwithstanding what any written law may say. For him, law is like chewing gum. It can be molded as he chooses.

I was a professor in the university and taught electrical engineering for 30 years, and we wrote a letter to Fidel Castro requesting democracy for our country. This was in 1991. For that, we were thrown out of the university, and by using a false, a made-up, criminal justification to be used as an interpretation calling this treason, and this was treason just because we were requesting for our country what you can freely do in your own.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Mr. Diaz-Balart?

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART. Mr. Chairman, I simply want to express my deepest gratitude to, in addition to my most profound admiration and solidarity with, the three extraordinary Cubans who have honored the Congress of the United States with their participation this afternoon. René Gomez Manzano and Felix Bonne Carcasses and Martha Beatriz Roque are in the tradition of Jose Marti and Antonio Maceo and Quintin Banderas and the Cubans who gave all, their all, for the establishment of and the creation of the Cuban Republic.

These leaders, and as they have mentioned, the representatives of 300-plus other organizations, have called for, have convened, a meeting of the incipient civil society in Cuba for May 20. May 20 is the day on which all of the dreams and efforts and sacrifices and toil of the Cubans that I mentioned previously, and thousands and thousands of others throughout the entire 19th century—the day of culmination of all of their work and dreams and suffering was precisely May 20: May 20, 1902, the day that the United States with-

drew from Cuba after 4 years of occupation and handed sovereignty over to the Cuban Republic.

These great Cuban nationalists and patriots today, as I say, have honored us, have honored the Congress of the United States, have honored the American people, and have honored the Cuban people with their heroism, their courage, their dedication, their patriotism.

I simply say that I certainly will speak out, as I have already and will continue to, and urge all of my colleagues in this chamber and in the chamber across the hall in the United States Congress and in all of the parliaments of the free world to endorse the efforts of these leaders who have joined us and honored us today as they convene the great meeting of the incipient civil society of Cuba of May 20. And I simply would like to close by reiterating my admiration, my devotion, my friendship, my solidarity, and my admiration for the three great leaders who have joined us today.

Again, in the words of President George W. Bush, in his second inaugural address:

“Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know America sees you for who you are, the future leaders of your freed country.”

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. The Chair recognizes Mario Diaz-Balart.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I, first, want to start by saying how incredibly humbled and honored I am to be able to speak to Martha Beatriz Roque, Felix Bonne, René Gomez Manzano, los nuevo mambeses. These are the new freedom fighters in the cause of democracy and freedom in Cuba. It is truly humbling, from the heart and the light of freedom and democracy, to listen to these heroes from the darkness of tyranny speak as they do on behalf of freedom for their country.

Mr. Chairman, I have a two-part question, if you would allow me, to our friends who are honoring us here today. Number one is that we hear sometimes around the world, and even in the halls of this esteemed body, the United States Congress, that if only American tourists were able to go to Cuba and go to the resorts and the beaches, that that would help bring freedom to Cuba, and I would like their opinion on if that would, in fact, help bring freedom to Cuba.

And number two is, since these individuals have basically been in and out of prison quite regularly, unfortunately, if they could give us an idea of the conditions that they and other freedom-seeking heroes, like Dr. Biscet and many others, the ones that were mentioned before and others—what are the conditions that they live in in the Cuban prisons for their desire to be free? Those are my two questions, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. ROQUE. I want to tell you something that happened here in Cuba. We have an upper hate. People in Cuba that are from this country cannot go to hotels, cannot go to the beaches, cannot go to anywhere that tourists go, and if we are going to have more tourists here, we are going to increase this upper hate because we have not buses to transport people from one place to the other. The

transportation here is a very bad thing, like everything, but it is very bad. And if tourists come to Cuba, I think we will have nothing. Now, we use cycles, bicycles and another kind of cycle, in order to move. In order to be tourists here, we are not going to have cycles. We have to go by street to one place to another, even all around the country.

This is an example of it because you can use this example in everything that is happening in our country, and it is not good for us that tourists come to Cuba. Some people say, "You are going to have the Cubans in touch with democracy." No. We will have a little more prostitution because the tourists come to Cuba, and the prostitution is increasing all the time. We have a little more drugs, and we have a little more of bad things that we do not have in our country.

And why? It is happening because we do not have democracy here, and people cannot have what they want, and if they cannot have whatever they want, they need to go to foreign people to get money. They need to go to foreign people to get—for living. And then we have prostitution, we have drugs, and we have a lot of things that we did not have before 1959, and I think that it is necessary that you understand that we are not going to be in touch with democracy. We are going to be in touch with corruption because this is what people here is going to have.

Mr. MANZANO. I would like to answer to the second question of Congressman Diaz-Balart. Well, first of all, I would like to thank him for remembering in this session another great, Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. Right now, he is living in prison, unjustly. He is on his fourth year of prison, unjustly sent there by the kangaroo trials of the Communist regime.

I would simply state that the conditions in the Cuba prisons are awful. I think it is very easy to imagine, even for common people outside the prison, there is inside the big jail, which is, unfortunately, right now the whole island of Cuba. If conditions for all of those people who are not in the big jail are very difficult, you can easily imagine what are the conditions in the small jails in which they are sitting, brave and courageous people, right now, just as Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. I want to conclude this panel and express—

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, could I ask your indulgence for one very—or ask the question through you?

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. No. Go ahead.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Very briefly, and, again, we are honored by your courage. My question is, for the record here in the Congress of the United States: Do any three of you fear imprisonment as a result of your testimony here today?

Mr. BONNE. The photo that I saw recently on the monitor I just saw was a photo that was taken of me when I had just been released from prison. My wife is in it, but I warn people constantly, and I advise people all of the time, that I am nothing more than a soldier for freedom and democracy. I do not want to go back to prison, none of us do, but I would not hesitate if it was necessary to defend the right of the Cuban people. And I would just like to tell you a small anecdote about conditions in Cuban jails.

I was in Guanajay Prison, where General Ochoa and other military people are. I had lots of support from my family in terms of food because there is very little food given to us in jail. But one day, I was surprised to see a group of prisoners being brought in from a different prison, and I can tell you, they looked like the victims of the worst concentration camps in Europe, and I asked where these people were coming from and why they were being brought here. And I was told that they were being brought in to recover because the prison that they came from had virtually no food.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. So let me just conclude and thank the very distinguished witnesses for their courageous statements. A moment ago, Lincoln Diaz-Balart talked about his sense of devotion, admiration and respect for you. I want to say on behalf of Members on both sides of the aisle—Democrat and Republican, liberal, conservative, and moderate—that we are humbled and inspired by your amazing courage, by your amazing clarity of purpose, and by your amazing goodness. We are indebted to you for speaking truth to power, that is to say, the power of a dictatorship. You do not know this, but there are a large number of press here, and this transcript will be released to other news media—our hope is that the Europeans and our friends north of the border in Canada and other Latino countries will realize that we cannot have compassion fatigue when it comes to speaking out on behalf of suffering people.

One of my colleagues earlier mentioned that she was impressed that Castro has had such longevity in power. So had Stalin. So were so many other dictators throughout history, and it seems to me that longevity has nothing to do with humanity and compassion and respect for human rights. The time for freedom has come for Cuba, and you are brave freedom fighters, as my colleague said a moment ago, in that cause. These Committees, Congress, and the Senate, are very humbled by your testimony, and we thank you so much for being on the line and speaking to us.

Ms. ROQUE. Dear, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say something before finishing this conversation.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Please proceed.

Ms. ROQUE. Excuse my ignorance. I would like to ask you, if we are going to be in the act of this section, and we are going to be in the documents that you will have in this section—is this right?—

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. That is correct.

Ms. ROQUE [continuing]. Then if we are going to be there, we want also to say to you that this conversation has three parts: You, the three of us, and also the members of the Interest Section here in Cuba. They have worked very, very hard for this conversation, and I want you to write there that we appreciate very much the efforts of the people here in this Interest Section and especially the effort of Mr. Cason.

I want to tell you that Cason is a pain in the head. I will not say the dirty word, but he is a pain in the head of Fidel Castro. He is always thinking what is he going to do tomorrow, but today he is doing something, and as you can see, in our TV, the government has made some comments about Cason and that they want

to promote to the people that Cason is gay, but we are sure he is not. He is a very, very great man with very big spots in his body, and we want to say that, and we want that you have this in your record. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you.

[Discussion off the record at 3:44 p.m.]

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. The Subcommittees will come to order to reconvene for our hearing.

Mr. Noriega, thank you for being here, and I, too, want to thank Mr. Menendez for his resolution.

We are now joined by panel number two with Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega, who was nominated by President George W. Bush for Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere affairs and was unanimously confirmed by the United States Senate on July 29, 2003. Assistant Secretary Noriega is responsible for managing U.S. foreign policy and promoting U.S. interests in the region.

Roger is a veteran of the staff of this Committee, and I remember so many times being advised, and all of us being advised, by his good counsel and insight over the years. He is responsible for managing policy, like I said, in the Western Hemisphere region. He has a long history of working to free Cuba's people from tyranny.

Welcome back to the Committee, Mr. Secretary.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROGER NORIEGA, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Smith, Mr. Burton, Mr. Payne, Mr. Menendez, Mr. Mack. It is a great pleasure to be here. Let me just say that it is always an important opportunity for us to talk about measures that we can take to raise public awareness about the plight of the Cuban people during the past 45 years of dictatorship, but this has been really an historic hearing, I must say, and I know it took a lot of work to get to this point. But hearing these voices of freedom really is a special opportunity, and I commend all of you and your staffs for the work that you have put into this important effort.

We have heard the voice of freedom, really, today, three courageous opposition leaders, and these are not observers or pundits. Mr. Menendez's question gave us an opportunity to hear that these are people that have been in and out of jail and who could be marched away to a rat-infested prison at any time at Fidel Castro's whim. And as Dr. Martha Beatriz Roque just told you, in most cases, it is only international recognition and solidarity that exists to protect them, as we can, as they continue to resist tyranny, to strive for democracy, and demand respect for their most basic rights.

It was almost 2 years ago that the current regime in Cuba began one of the most brutal waves of repression in its history against the peaceful opposition since the earliest days of the revolution. More than 100 activists were arrested. Of those, 75 were summarily tried and sentenced in kangaroo courts to prison terms of almost 20 years each. The good news is that, in the last several months, more and more Cubans have begun to, again, think about life beyond the

dictatorship and have started to carry out or renew intense activities that would help bring about the profound change that Cuba desperately needs.

The friends of the Cuban people, represented by the people on this Committee on both sides of the aisle, know something that the rest of the world does not, and that is that the transition is already underway in Cuba. It is happening in the hearts and the minds of more and more Cubans every day. Pluralism is a good thing. They do not always agree with one another on every strategy or tactic, but they do agree on this important, fundamental fact, that the Cuban people must claim their God-given right to decide for themselves about how to make a better future for their children.

Another important change is that, in the past, opposition activities, even when they did occur, were ignored by the international community and received little attention or little, if any, support. Now, when the dissidents speak, people abroad listen and are lending a helping hand. This is because it is becoming an international cause like never before.

As part of our effort to generate international solidarity, the United States will offer a resolution on Cuba and the human rights situation there to the upcoming U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva. The resolution will keep the issue of Cuban human rights violations on the Committee's agenda and extend the mandate of the High Commissioner's Special Representative for Cuba, and we think that it is very important that we have broad, international support for that effort, to, at least, keep the Commission seized of the important issue of Cuba.

An important component of our Cuba strategy, which is laid out in a report of the President's Commission on Assistance to a Free Cuba, designed to hasten the day of Cuba's freedom, is a more robust and effective support for those courageous Cubans who do dare to think and act independently of the regime. To that end, we have provided an additional \$14.4 million to support the development of civil society in Cuba and the empowerment of the Cuban people in their efforts to effect positive change. Six million dollars has already been transferred to USAID to dramatically expand its work with Cuban civil society groups, which was begun under section 109 of the, as we say here, Burton-Helms Bill of 1996. In the next fiscal year, we have requested another \$15 million for this critical work.

Another component of our strategy is to break the regime's information blockade on the Cuban people and to bring a message of hope to the island. To circumvent Cuba's electronic jamming of our freedom broadcasts, Commando Solo, the C-130 aircraft equipped with a powerful electronic transmission capability, has flown on a regular basis, 22 flights at last count, beaming TV and Radio Marti signals to the island. The news that we are getting from throughout the island is that more and more that message is getting through as we degrade the Castro's regime's capability to jam.

The President has also directed an aggressive effort to identify the devious strategies by which the regime raises cash and to dry up those sources of revenue. Since initiating this effort, we have denied approximately half a billion dollars that would otherwise be

used to finance the secret police and goon squads that keep the Cuban people in bondage.

Through our solidarity with, and assistance to, these democracy, human rights, and civil society activists, we want to help ensure that when change comes to Cuba, the Cuban people will enjoy a true transition and not suffer succession, as the regime would want.

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, history will never absolve the Cuba dictator. It will not remember him as a young man who made too many promises but as a wretched, old man who told too many lies. The Bush Administration is committed to standing with the Cuban people as they write the new chapters in their history. The future is theirs, and, in short, the foundation of our Cuba policy is that Cuba should be Cuban again.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to answering any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Noriega follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ROGER NORIEGA, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF WESTERN HEMISPHERE AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the human rights situation in Cuba. Chairman Burton and Chairman Smith, I am grateful for your leadership on this important issue and your continuing efforts to raise public awareness of the fate that has befallen Cuba after forty years of dictatorship.

As you are well aware, in most cases it is only international recognition and solidarity that exists to protect, as we can, those brave individuals who continue to resist tyranny, strive for democracy, and demand respect for their most basic human rights.

Cuba, of course, is no exception.

It was almost two years ago that the current regime in Cuba began one of its most brutal waves of repression against the peaceful opposition since the early days of the Cuban Revolution. More than 100 activists were arrested; of those, 75 were summarily tried and sentenced to prison terms averaging 20 years each.

The purpose of the March 2003 crackdown was clear: to send a chilling message to all those who dare to think of democracy and respect for human rights—that if you express even the mildest criticism of the regime or try to do anything that is perceived as a threat to the government's absolute control of Cuban society, you will be swiftly and severely punished.

That what awaits you is a fetid, squalid cell far from your home, overrun by rats and cockroaches and lacking the most basic sanitation. That you will endure a paltry, inedible food ration. That your family will be interrogated, ostracized, and harassed. That they will lose their jobs or be unable to go to college. That if you suffer from severe illnesses, such as kidney failure or malnutrition, you will be denied adequate medical attention.

Such is the fate of courageous people like Dr. Oscar Elias Biscet, founder of the Lawton Center and an advocate of the non-violent philosophy espoused by Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. Biscet for months was forced to live on handouts from fellow prisoners because the prison did not permit his wife to bring in the meager rations of food and medicine that are allowed other prisoners. As a result, he lost 60 pounds and he is in poor health.

This is the ugly reality of life as a political prisoner in Cuba, and many Cubans are all too familiar with the consequences seeking democracy and respect for human rights.

Not surprisingly, the regime's crackdown succeeded in the short-term, forcing the dissident movement to maintain a lower profile for fear of the repercussions on themselves and their families.

The good news, however, is that in the last several months, more and more Cubans have begun to once again think of life beyond the dictatorship and have started to carry out activities that could help bring about a peaceful transition to democracy. Indeed, compared to just a few years ago—despite the brutally repressive nature of the regime's tactics—there are now more opposition activities throughout the island.

Although these actions are in many ways limited and fragile, I believe that we will be able to look back at them years from now and see that they were indeed significant and the precursor to a Cuban future free of misery and repression. Just as Ronald Reagan told an audience in 1983 that global communism was “a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written,” so too is the same happening in Cuba.

Last week, I told a group of Cuban American friends that each of them knows something that most of the rest of the world does not: The transition in Cuba is already under way.

It is happening in the hearts and minds of more and more Cubans every day. They may not agree on everything—and that’s okay. But they do agree on this: The Cuban people must claim their God-given right to decide for themselves about how to make a better future for their children.

As they claim that right to write their own future, we will stand with them.

I want to briefly note for the record some of those brave Cubans who are daring to write and speak about their future.

DISSIDENT ACTIVITIES

- Marta Beatriz Roque is an independent economist and the only woman of the 75 prisoners arrested in March 2003. She was released in July 2004 because of severe medical problems. She had been imprisoned because, among other things, she created a website that presented factual information on Cuba’s deteriorating economy.

In the last few months, Roque has been working on behalf of an Assembly to Promote Civil Society—comprised of numerous non-governmental organizations in Cuba—that is scheduled to meet on May 20, Cuba’s traditional day of independence.

Such courage has already irked the regime. Some Assembly members have been detained and warned that the meeting will never take place. Cuban security forces even went so far as to create and circulate a mock newspaper article dated May 19, 2005, to try to intimidate Roque, by describing how she and her supporters were arrested during the Congress.

- A different form of activity has been the quiet protest carried out by the “*Damas en Blanco*”—the “Women in White”—who are the wives of political prisoners. For months, they have met outside of a church each Sunday to walk quietly for a few blocks. A few weeks ago, they sat in protest in Revolution Square to ask for better medical treatment for one of the prisoners. Just last week, they wore T-shirts and buttons printed with photos of their husbands, and walked across downtown Havana to the dictator’s office to deliver a letter with 1,043 signatures requesting amnesty for the jailed dissidents.

This is an important symbolic gesture that was done in such countries as Argentina and Chile during their repressive eras.

- There is also the independent library movement, created a few years ago, which establish small libraries in people’s homes. Books include everything from do-it-yourself guides and manuals on childcare to works on free market economics and democratic ideals. Many independent librarians were arrested during the crackdown and are still imprisoned. Despite this, the movement continues.

- Another important effort is headed by Oswaldo Paya, winner of the European Union’s 2002 Sakharov Prize. Previously, he had led the Varela Project, a grassroots initiative to collect thousands of names for a national referendum on economic and political reforms. Paya and his supporters submitted 11,000 signatures in 2002. Although the constitution allows legislative proposals backed by at least 10,000 citizens to be submitted directly to the National Assembly, the government rejected the petitions and held mass rallies to proclaim the socialist nature of the Cuban state.

Almost a third of the 75 activists arrested in March 2003 participated in the Varela Project. In October 2003, Project Varela organizers submitted a second petition to the National Assembly with an additional 14,000 signatures, an incredible accomplishment given that people had to submit their names, addresses, and ID numbers and, in so doing, exposed themselves as potential targets for harassment.

Since then, Paya and his supporters have turned their focus to a national dialogue. Paya recently announced the formation of a Committee for National Dialogue, which encourages the participation of every Cuban citizen, on the island and in exile, who wants a free and democratic Cuba, in a discussion on means of a transition and the shape of Cuba’s future. To that end, he has

assembled more than 100 people in Cuba and abroad to help lead the dialogue. Issues include such topics as foreign relations, national reconciliation, economic policy, and the environment.

Such initiatives help focus people's attention on the future and allow them to combat the hopelessness and despair that permeate Cuban society by giving them something to support.

- Beyond these specific initiatives, one USAID grantee reports an increasing number of smaller nonviolent civic actions, which include everything from a few people meeting in a park to protest, to students refusing to participate in National Defense Day activities or mandatory political activities in the classroom, to individuals refusing to testify at the trial of a political prisoner.

Many of these types of actions commemorate significant dates: December 10, International Human Rights Day; February 24, which is both the start of Cuba's War of Independence and the anniversary of the shoot down of the Brothers to the Rescue airplanes; and July 13, which commemorates the sinking of the March 13 tugboat, which led to the deaths of dozens of refugees.

Yes, these are isolated events—but they are significant in that they are happening at all.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR DISSIDENTS

Another important change is that, in the past, these kind of activities, even when they occurred, were ignored by the international community and received little, if any, support.

Now, when the dissidents speak, people abroad listen and lend a helping hand.

One of the most notable—and heroic—examples has been the work of the Czech Republic. The Czechs, not too long ago, had their own experience with totalitarianism—in fact, during the 1980s, the Czechoslovak embassy was even the protecting diplomatic entity for the Cuban diplomatic mission in Washington.

The Czechs have spoken forcefully and eloquently on the need to support human rights activists in Cuba and for countries to stand up to the tyranny in Cuba. Vaclav Havel has written several op-eds calling for countries to be more engaged in Cuba.

The Czech NGO People in Need helped form an NGO dedicated solely to Cuba—the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba or ICDC. It counts Jeanne Kirkpatrick and Madeleine Albright as its board members, as well as such luminaries as the former president of Chile, Patricio Alwyn, the former president of Spain, Jose Maria Aznar, famed Russian activist Elena Bonner, and Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa.

Last September in Prague, dozens of current and former political leaders from around the world participated in an unprecedented 3-day event to focus international attention on Cuba. The resulting “Declaration of Prague” called for the release of all Cuban political prisoners and harshly criticized the lack of freedom in Cuba. President Havel told the press, “Cuba is a giant prison.” The ICDC organized another conference in Miami to promote international solidarity with dissidents in Cuba and to discuss transition scenarios.

Also over the past several months, a number of Latin American congressmen, under the auspices of the Joint Commission of European and Latin American Parliamentarians in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in Cuba, announced their “adoption” of Cuban political prisoners. Many of these legislators are members of Mexico's National Action Party (PAN).

The French NGO Reporters without Borders has also dedicated its efforts to making public service announcements, placing ads, and writing reports, in order to focus attention on the lack of media freedoms in Cuba.

US ASSISTANCE

The United States, for its part, is also actively engaged in helping these brave men and women create a democratic future for Cuba.

As President Bush said in his second inaugural address, “It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture. . . . All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for your liberty, we will stand with you.”

He added, “Democratic reformers facing repression, prison, or exile can know: America sees you for who you are: the future leaders of your free country.”

An important component of the strategy laid out in the report of the President's Commission on Assistance to a Free Cuba—designed to support a rapid, peaceful transition to democracy through outreach to the Cuban people.

EMPOWER CUBAN CIVIL SOCIETY

To that end, we have provided an additional \$14.4 million—of a proposed \$29 million—to support the development of civil society in Cuba and the empowerment of the Cuban people in their efforts to effect positive change. Six million dollars has already been transferred to USAID to dramatically expand its work with civil society groups.

We are also working with international partners to promote greater international involvement in helping civil society activists by channeling the remaining \$8.4 million through a new process designed to tap into the innovative ideas of democracy activists around the world and help the Cuban people implement them on the island.

We have streamlined licensing requirements so that, for the first time ever, high-speed laptop computers can be delivered to Cuban civil society groups. These deliveries have already begun.

BREAK THE INFORMATION BLOCKADE

Another key component of our strategy is to break the regime's information blockade on the Cuban people and to bring a message of hope to the island.

To circumvent Cuban jamming, Commando Solo, the C-130 aircraft equipped with a powerful electronic transmission capability, has flown on a regular basis, beaming TV and Radio Marti signals to the island. Multi-source information indicates that these TV and Radio Marti programs broadcast can be seen and heard at an unprecedented level and through a wide swath of the island.

PROVIDE MORAL SUPPORT

To document and publicize the cases of Cuba's prisoners of conscience, U.S. officials follow more than 350 cases and regularly meet with the prisoners' families and other Cuban citizens to discuss human rights concerns.

DENY RESOURCES TO THE REGIME

The President has also directed an aggressive effort to identify long-ignored regime revenue streams and move to degrade them, such as tourism, which has replaced sugar exports as Cuba's main foreign-exchange earner. We want to deny resources that the regime uses to finance its repressive apparatus that keeps the Cuban people in ideological bondage.

By reducing the amount of travel and remittances to Cuba, we estimate that by the end of the first post-CAFC year, we will have denied the regime at least *half a billion dollars*.

There are many who say that increased tourism would lead to greater opening and more freedoms in Cuba. The reality is that the regime attempts to confine foreign tourists to isolated beach resorts or in other ways minimize the opportunity for communication with Cubans other than staff hand-selected for political acceptability. The regime's security apparatus affords little opportunity for tourists to engage Cubans except in the most tightly controlled circumstances. There exists a system of "tourism apartheid," where the average Cuban citizen in fact cannot visit or stay at tourist resorts nor eat at any resort restaurant.

In fact, the Cuban government is actually in the process of limiting the amount of contact tourists can have with even workers in the tourist sector. The Cuban Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) has just passed a resolution that regulates relations between the more than 100,000 Cubans who work in the tourism industry, and "foreign personnel." Employees in the sector are forbidden to accept gifts and invitations "of a personal nature," or to take part, without the authorities' permission, in meals and parties organized by foreigners.

The first article of the Mintur resolution, passed in January, asks staff to limit relations with foreigners "to those that are strictly necessary." It also instructs them to observe a series of "ethical, moral, and professional principles," among them: "to base their conduct on loyalty to their country"; "to be vigilant at all times of any deed or attitude that could be harmful to the state"; and to refuse "remuneration, gifts, donations, accommodation or services that go against dignity and respect and create commitments that threaten the healthy spirit of collaboration" between the parties.

The document also calls upon tourism employees to “be discreet and rational in the use and transmission of information within their reach,” prohibits dealing with foreigners to obtain scholarships or invitations to travel abroad, and obliges personnel to declare, in writing to their immediate superior, all gifts received from a foreigner with whom they have work-related contact.

It is even recommended that negotiations between Cuban business people from the tourism sector and foreign colleagues be conducted, “whenever possible, in the presence of a witness.”

It is clear from such governmental decrees that easing restrictions on travel to Cuba would not, in and of itself, benefit ordinary Cuban citizens nor pave the transition to democracy. Cuba already welcomes more than a million tourists a year, mainly from Italy, Spain and Canada. Citizens of these nations are no less committed to democracy than our own, yet despite over 10 million such tourists visiting Cuba in the last decade, Cuba is no freer than it was in 1993. Indeed, one could persuasively argue that Cuba has actually become even more repressive.

Based on this experience, the most logical outcome of unrestricted U.S. travel to Cuba is that it will do little to promote democratic change and much to bolster the regime by providing it with a cash windfall of scarce hard currency and thus the means to help the regime survive.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Through his Commission on Assistance to a Free Cuba report, President Bush has made his personal, passionate commitment to Cuba’s freedom America’s commitment.

We are providing unprecedented, robust, and active support to courageous Cubans daring to think and act independently of the regime so that they can succeed in realizing their dreams:

- recovering their dignity, their rights, and their future,
- consolidating a genuine democratic transition, and
- reconciling all Cubans, wherever they may be.

Through our solidarity with and assistance to these democracy, human rights, and civil society activists we want to help ensure that when change comes to Cuba, the Cuban people will enjoy a true transition and not suffer the succession being planned by the regime.

We will be ready for that challenge—because President Bush has challenged his team to not merely wait for the day when Cuba is free, but to work for the day of Cuba’s freedom.

Messrs. Chairmen, in conclusion, history will not absolve the Cuban dictator. It will remember him not as a visionary who made too many promises, but as a decrepit old man who told too many lies.

The Bush Administration is committed to standing with the Cuban people, as they write the new chapters in their history. The future is theirs.

Thank you very much, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for your testimony and for your tremendous work on behalf of all people in the region but especially for the Cubans.

Just in follow-up, you heard some of the earlier conversation, and I think all of us are very concerned about the move in, especially with the Zapatero Government taking the lead, with the EU backing off from its earlier, very modest, but not significant, efforts in light of the post-crackdown by Fidel Castro, or in light of the crack-down.

My question to you is, just parenthetically, I also chair the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe and just got back from another parliamentary assembly meeting in Vienna and met with members of 55 countries who send their parliamentarians, often their speakers, or, at least, their foreign affairs chairmen, and I have found, over the years and especially in the last 2 years, interest but not an overwhelming amount of concern about the political prisoners in Cuba. They seem more concerned about our pol-

icy, the United States policy vis-a-vis Cuba, rather than the ongoing killing or incarceration and torture visited upon them.

I always bring up the fact that, and you might want to speak to this: Why has the ICRC not been allowed in? Why does that not cause more of an outrage on the part of people who care about prison abuse? While they were very concerned, as was I and others, about Guantanamo, where there is, at least, investigations; Abu Ghraib, where there, at least, have not only been investigations but convictions of people who have abused prisoners; here we have a systematic, ongoing abuse of prisoners, people like Oscar Biscet and others, and yet there is only a whimper of dissent from our European friends.

My question is: How do we mount a new diplomatic offensive with our European friends and our Canadian friends so that they will speak truth to the powers that be, Fidel and others, in Cuba? Again, as I said in my closing with the first panel, I am sick and tired of human rights being subjected to compassion fatigue. If you are a dictator, and you do it long enough, the democracies of the world will somehow abate in their efforts to stop it. And Cuba, except for the United States and maybe a few other notables, has gotten away with murder. I will yield to my friend.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Well, we have a diplomatic effort underway to communicate with the Europeans on what our goals are on Cuba and to ask them to join us in looking forward. We do not always agree on, for example, the embargo policy, but there are things that we can agree on in terms of support for brave men and women in Cuba who are fighting for their lives, for their future, for their freedoms. There is, unfortunately, an attitude in the European Union that they need to find a way to recover some level of communication with the regime. And the point that we make is, more than ever before, the time for engaging the decrepid regime that is on its last legs and breathing its last breath is past, and the time for engaging the Cuban people is upon us, and we are doing that in a systematic, intense, and creative way.

They need to look at creative ways to reach out to the Cuban people and not try to recover a one-way conversation with the Castro regime. One of the pities of this is that they know that this strategy has failed in the past. Appeasement always fails and sometimes makes the situation much, much worse. In this case, I believe that they understand that the regime is not going to change, but somehow they are trying to cover their bets with the Castro regime. We think that the Cuban people will note, at this hour in their history, who was standing with them and who was not.

I should note that within the European Union there are several Eastern European countries, in particular, that were fighting very strongly for a principled policy, including the Czech Republic and Poland and Romania and others, but particularly the Czech Republic. These people know from their experience with totalitarianism that you cannot appease a dictator.

What is going to be important to us now is, with this European decision, what are they really going to do to enrich their dialogue with the opposition, and then what are they going to do when the

inevitable happens, when there is a crackdown by the regime on these activists? The Europeans have to be prepared to respond in a robust way, in a meaningful way, and try to recover some of their credibility with the Cuban people.

I do not question their motives, but their judgment is really, I think, out of focus on this, that you cannot appease a dictatorship and expect different results.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Let me just ask you briefly regarding the U.N. Human Rights Commission. I was there for 3 days last year and have gone in several years past, I was there when Armando Valladares was able to secure the first Cuba resolution which resulted in a visit.

My question is, and we only won by one vote last year, are you optimistic that we can grow that vote and certainly win that vote? It is about the least we can do. All of us, I think, have become increasingly concerned that the U.N. Human Rights Commission has been a magnet for rogue states to put people on whose human rights records are deplorable. These people then turn around and run interference, work with the Chinese Government, for example, on the no-action vote. Ambassador Williamson, I thought, did a great job last year, as did Loren Craner and others who did everything they could to secure a number of resolutions, including the Cuban. Obviously, we are right at almost the beginning of that meeting. What is your sense of what is going to happen?

Mr. NORIEGA. Well, as you know, it is always close because we endeavor to get a victory, and there are a lot of countries that are, frankly, AWOL when it comes to that tough decision. But our view is that countries that are choosing to be on the Human Rights Commission should be prepared to make value judgments and not hang back and abstain when these important issues come before us.

Someone asked me recently, why is it so hard all the time to get this vote? And I stole a line from a colleague of mine who said that this U.N. Commission on Human Rights has become a commission of arsonists and not firemen. So, at bottom, we need to look at reform that will bring people who defend human rights and not violate human rights onto that Commission and then be prepared to work with them to do its basic work of promoting human rights in a proactive way.

We are going to take a leadership role on the resolution this year. We think it is important that we have a basic resolution that we then can work with the text in a reliable way, generate support, some momentum, and we are treating this as a high priority. Above all, we need to get to a victory because that is what the regime fears the most and what these brave opposition leaders really need the most, is that statement of international solidarity with the people of Cuba who are thinking about a democratic future.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. I would hope that we would include in our delegation, as we did last year, one or more dissidents who are now free. I would note, regarding the dissident who was there, the foolish placards that were put out by the Cuban diplomats in Geneva were unbelievably appalling, suggesting that he was a terrorist. I brought one of those back with me just to keep in my drawer and to look at from time to time to remember how Mickey

Mouse, and I insult Mickey Mouse when I say it, their diplomatic mission was.

And I would also point out that they also attacked Frank Calzón, who is here and will be testifying. He brought very accurate, important, and compelling information about the dictatorship to the light of diplomats, including child prostitution. Mr. Payne and I held a hearing on Tuesday about the ongoing abuse of young children in the Congo, in this case, by U.N. peacekeepers. It seems to me that when you have a travel apartheid, a mecca for sex tourism, and Europeans and Canadians are traveling down there, Mr. Calzón had some very, very compelling evidence of that, including a Johns Hopkins University study, and I read it, others read it, and for that, he was attacked in a very cowardly way. It was not a straight-up fight; they hit him when he was not looking. It just underscores the lowness. If they will do that to a diplomat, a man who was part of the U.S. mission, obviously, what will they do to an Oscar Biscet and others behind closed doors? I thank you for your testimony.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Mr. Payne?

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. There seem to be some attempts to have a dialogue in Cuba. I know the EU said it wants to develop a broader relationship with groups other than dissidents, but to have some kind of a discussion in Cuba, and I just wonder whether you think that kind of approach would be helpful or not. Also, I think Oswald Paya of the Varela Project is also sort of proposing a national dialogue initiative involving all sectors of the Cuban society. I just wonder whether the U.S. feels that these kinds of initiatives will be helpful, and would there be any interest, if possible, for any kind of participation in these two projects?

Mr. NORIEGA. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Payne. We support the concept of Cubans engaging in a dialogue among themselves about their future. That is a revolutionary act, and brave people are organizing those kinds of efforts on the island more and more. Dr. Roque referred to the meeting, that she is organizing an assembly on May 20th in Cuba. These are indigenous initiatives. I would hasten to note, they are not inspired by outsiders, but they should be supported by the international community, observed by the international community. We hope that representatives of the European Embassies will participate in these encounters and observe. That is the sort of dialogue that we think is very useful as one among Cubans about their own future.

You mentioned the Varela Project, another home-grown initiative in Cuba where tens of thousands of people have signed petitions asking for the basic rights to be consulted, to have a plebiscite on essential issues. It is a right that is accorded under Castro's own Constitution, but his response has been to simply throw them out, throw these petitions out, and the assembly refused to even recognize them. So, yet again, a demonstration of how arbitrary decisions are in that dictatorship, even in spite of constitutional rights that are supposedly accorded.

So we believe that this kind of encounter among Cubans is very, very important because it causes them to reflect on the future, on how they organize themselves, on what the issues are that they

need to confront, what is the prospect that they offer to the Cuban people in terms of the economic recovery of the country, in terms of defending basic rights, and to think about the future of democracy there.

These are extraordinarily encouraging developments that are happening on the island more and more every day.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you very much. Just one last comment. As you heard earlier, I had a question to the dissidents in Cuba regarding the policy that was overwhelmingly approved by the Congress and supported by the Administration of having less contact with Cuba, to restrict non-Americans from visiting there, to even restrict Cuban-Americans from going to Cuba once every 3 years, and restricting the amount of funds that go—all of which, to me, seem just the opposite, of course. It has won overwhelmingly, so, therefore, certainly the will of the majority, and it is not the first time that things I have said appear to be different, and I do not know if they are, therefore, wrong.

But I just wonder, and I used the example of the U.S.S.R., the strongest dictatorship, 40 years with the Warsaw Pact, had a close grip not only on Russia but on 15 other countries, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and all of the rest, as we know, who were in the Warsaw Pact, but the opportunity to travel to Russia—I went to the U.S.S.R. actually in the sixties and had an opportunity to go around the back part, down the Don River and the Volga River, 3 or 4 days on some back boat talking to people, babushka women, the old grandparents.

And I went to Cuba several years ago and, you know, sat in a restaurant and asked the person, “Well, what is going on here?” The lady said, “Well, I am tired of this government. I am well educated, but there is no job.” She did not know if I was a government agent or whatever, and I was a little surprised at the sort of openness of this person who was just frustrated. She said, “Yeah, we have got a great education. Literacy, as you know, is much higher in Cuba than it is in the United States. So what good is literacy? Everybody can read. Everybody can write. Everybody is intelligent. No jobs.”

But, you know, just talking freely like that, so I just wondered, and I started saying, you know, talking about the—in the U.S. and how you can sort of try to do what you want to do, for the life of me, I cannot understand how isolating is going to make it better. Everybody else sees it as the best thing. I know for Congressman Menendez and, of course, my Floridians, it is certainly the way to go. They, I guess, are closer to it than I am, and so they are right.

I just wonder how that helps when you restrict people from having contact with just an average sort of person like myself. How does that make it better? How does that make it better? I am sure when the Cuban-Americans go down to visit their families, they are certainly not saying Castro is great. I am sure when they send money down there, since the lady said they work for \$10 a month or a week or whatever, it helps in some of the things that they normally would not be able to get. Of course, it does create a problem because those Cubans of descent of Americans tend to get the money, and those who have nobody that was able to come here,

they do not get any, so you do have a disparity, and that is a sort of problem.

I guess I am over my time, but just quickly, how does that help democracy flourish in Cuba or help? We are trying to get rid of Castro. How does that help?

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. If the gentleman would yield, before Secretary Noriega answers that question, and I am sure he wants to, Chairman Burton wants to make a statement. He has to catch a plane.

Mr. BURTON. I think it is extremely important, Mr. Secretary, that the comments made by those people be made to the Human Rights Commission in Geneva and to Members of the Congress of the United States. I am going to try, and I am sure Chris Smith, the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, will also try to do this, to make sure that they have a different view expressed to them than the one that we have heard before.

We heard from those people, and I would like to reiterate just a little bit what they said. First of all, they said over 90 percent of the people there are tired of that government. They do not need to be enlightened. They know it is bad, and they want Castro out. That is what those people said.

When people work in the hotels on the beaches in Cuba, they may be paid \$400 a month, but that money goes to the Cuban Government, and they are paid 400 pesos a month, which is the equivalent of about \$5 a month. They cannot go to the restaurants. They cannot go to the saunas. They cannot do anything, but they can go there and work and get their 5 bucks a month while the Cuban Government gets the hard dollars.

I believe that if my colleagues all knew, and the people at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva knew, what we heard today, I believe their attitudes would change. They would realize that when you give money to the Cuban Government, you are not giving it to the people; it is going to the government, and the government will exchange that for pesos, which are not worth anything, and the people are literally starving. All you have to do, and if Mr. Payne was down there, he knows they are driving 1954, 1953, 1950 Chevrolets. They are scavenging parts so they can keep those things going.

The Cuban Government is corrupt. They have got block captains watching everybody, and anybody that complains is subject to going to the gulags, like those people we were talking about today.

The people want freedom down there, and I believe the people that are aware of the way the government is working; they do not want us sending a lot of money to the Cuban Government because all it does is enhance his ability to stay in power because he uses that money to build up his military, to build up his block captain system, and to keep these people repressed, and what money he has left over, he is using to try to foment revolution in Latin America.

Che Guevara died down there, but do not think that Fidel Castro's revolutionary activities have ceased. He is working with other governments down there trying to continue to expand revolution, and he has worked with the FARC guerrillas in Colombia in the past. I do not know if he is still doing it, but he was in the past.

So the thing is, we need to tell the people around the world to put pressure on the Castro regime, to tell them to cut off his source of revenue because it is not getting to the Cuban people anyhow, and by cutting off his source of revenue, he will wither on the vine like a flower without any water.

That is the thing I wanted to express to you and, hopefully, to the people in Geneva, which I went to, along with my colleague, in the past, to try to express this concern: The people want freedom down there. As they said, over 90 percent want freedom. They do not need enlightenment, and they do not want to see a lot of money going to Castro because all it does is buoy up his regime. They are 90 miles from our border. They want freedom, and we ought to do everything we possibly can in every single way to make sure that they get it. With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much, Mr. Burton, for your comments and thank you for the question, Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Burton, I was not talking about, you know, businesses going, flourishing, like the money going to the government. I was just talking about the people-to-people money, somebody sending it to their cousin or something. Thank you.

Mr. NORIEGA. Mr. Chairman, the President's Commission on Assistance to a Free Cuba identified sources of hard currency for the regime that the regime turns around and uses to maintain a police state apparatus to repress the people, and we made some recommendations on how we could deny the regime resources.

First and foremost, to maintain restrictions on travel with respect to tourism. We have already heard here about the tourism apartheid where the Cubans cannot go into hotels unless they work there. They cannot go onto certain beaches. Seventy percent of the hotel rooms are in isolated areas. So that kind of contact, people-to-people contact, is expressly discouraged by the regime, and then they have policies to essentially vacuum these hard dollars out of the pockets of the hard-working Cubans who get tips, for example.

In the last few weeks, the regime issued new restrictions. You cannot even take a tip anymore from a foreign tourist. You certainly cannot go into the hotels unless you are invited in, and that is all part of the sexual tourism that is the seedy side of Castro's fundraising.

Another thing is the exploitation by dividing families, sending young breadwinners and dividing families, sending a young man to risk the crossing to the United States. He is then paroled into the United States and goes to work and shovels money back to Cuba to his family. Also on that first day that they get a green card, and they can travel freely, the practice was to bundle up a bunch of clothing and other articles and cart them back to Cuba to sell them.

These were people who were relatively young. They were leaving their families behind, and, in many cases, they did not have any particular problem with the regime, so they were not leaving for political reasons. They were essentially being sent out as cash cows to shovel money back.

So we made a very tough decision, and this is a difficult decision, to limit the number of trips that a family member can take to Cuba. That is not sufficient, particularly when you are talking

about limiting contact with a family member. But it is part of a comprehensive, determined strategy to bring an end to a dictatorship so that people can come and go from Cuba as they see fit.

Seventy percent of Cubans have no one in exile sending them money. That number is closer to 90 percent among Afro-Cubans. So it is very difficult to say to these 70 percent who get no money from off of the island, or to the 90 percent Afro-Americans who get no money from off of the island, that these other folks have to get money, and you have to pay the price by the regime being propped up a little bit longer. So it is a tough decision, but we believe it is important, and it is in context with a comprehensive strategy to bring an end to the regime.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you. Before going to Mr. Menendez, I just want to note that Doug Martin, one of the best teachers in New Jersey, is here with his gallery class from Standard High School in New Jersey. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Menendez?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Secretary, thank you for your testimony.

I have tried, during this process, to just keep the focus on human rights issues, and invariably the question of how we best pursue that seeps in. I have a deep respect for my colleague from New Jersey, Mr. Payne, and I appreciate his support of our resolution through the process that we just let it go through, even though we disagree on what is the best way in which we achieve what I honestly believe is a common goal, which is to create freedom for the Cuban people.

I would just simply say, for a moment, because I do want to keep this on the human rights violations of individuals, that, as someone who has family in Cuba still, it is a constant personal challenge. But it is one that is, I think, laid bare by the view that prolonging their agony, prolonging their lack of the freedoms that we so enjoy here, prolonging their inability to worship at the altar that they choose, prolonging their inability to choose someone who will govern them as we choose those who govern us here, prolonging their inability to move around in a free marketplace, prolonging their inability to assemble, prolonging their inability to speak freely is a choice. If the regime had moved in ways in which opportunities for freedom and democracy were created outside of economic necessity, then many of us would be looking at that, because that is what we ultimately want.

But this regime, that has reduced the third-largest army in the Western Hemisphere per capita, this regime that now permits, to some degree, some international investment, this regime that accepted the most hated symbol of the revolution, the American dollar, and many other things, all of those things have happened not because of ideological change but because of economic necessity. That economic necessity has driven the regime, at least in some ways, to move in directions we think would be universally better.

So that is really the view of those of us who actually have family there and who languish with this issue each and every time. It is interesting to listen to one of the opponents—I will stand corrected for my future references that they do not consider themselves dissidents; they consider themselves the opposition in Cuba—Martha

Beatriz Roque, say in response to Mr. Payne's question that people have come to understand that the money they might accept, because the only way in which you can get some basic goods is in a dollar store controlled by the government, is something that is not desirable anymore because it ultimately prolongs the repressive regime that exists there.

I just have two questions. One is actually more of a statement that I would hope the State Department will listen to. That is, I fear for the three individuals who were courageous enough to speak before this Committee today via telephone from Cuba, and I hope that we will take their transcript, as soon as we can have it, and get it out to other capitals in the world so that we will do, and get the Europeans to do, what we used to do in Eastern Europe with Vaclav Havel and Lech Walenza and the Russian dissidents. That is create such a spotlight on them that it would be very difficult for the regime to try to imprison them again without universal consequence. I really hope that we will do that in a preemptive way, because I do fear for their freedom.

And in that regard, I want to ask: What are the Administration's efforts to get the Europeans to move in a different direction? I know the President was there. I am sure he had Iraq and Iran and other places in the world, but what are the Administration's efforts to get the Europeans to move in a direction, as they were, that understands they have a vital role in promoting human rights?

And, secondly, just to wrap it all up and then let you answer it: Are we not concerned, as we give an enormous amount of money to the Colombian Government, that the President of Colombia reaches out to Fidel Castro to be an interlocutor with the President of Venezuela? Here we are having a hearing about human rights violations, and we have the President of Colombia using a dictator to intervene and engage the President of Venezuela to resolve some of the differences between those two countries.

Mr. NORIEGA. Well, I will take the second question first, Mr. Menendez. It is a very good question. There is, unfortunately, a phenomenon that I believe some of our neighbors in the Americas, in particular, are intimidated by Castro because he plays hardball. He supports groups that destabilize governments. He has historically, and so they occasionally will seek accommodations or seek his help with terrorist groups because they understand that he has influence over them.

In the case of President Chavez, I think one of the reasons that Venezuela is taking a very dangerous, counterproductive course is that President Chavez may be the last person on earth who relies on Castro for advice about political and economic policies, and for that reason, he has some sway with Chavez. President Uribe, wanting to limit the economic damage that his country was sustaining because of the break at the border with Venezuela, sought out Castro to try to get President Chavez to be reasonable. Unfortunately, Castro has that influence. He retains that influence in the hemisphere.

In terms of what we are doing with the Europeans, we became aware of this course of action that the Europeans were contemplating with the Spanish Government certainly in the lead. You

know there has been a change in the government there and really a 180-degree turn in its attitudes toward Cuba.

We engaged them very intensely. We were using channels here and in Madrid, and we engaged other capitals and mobilized other countries within Europe to support this effort to make the case that this was a wrongheaded turn, that, as I said, when they reward regimes like Castro's for releasing innocent people from jail, they are essentially making themselves complicit in taking these people prisoner in the first place, and their experience, particularly Spain's experience, bears out that you cannot appease Castro and get positive results.

So we made that case to them. We had some Eastern European countries, in particular, that were supporting us on that, but the Spanish view prevailed, and they are temporarily suspending and will review in 5 months their policy. They are temporarily suspending this policy of inviting dissidents into their National Day celebrations. What they say, what the Europeans say, is that they will engage the opposition now in a more systematic way, in a more meaningful way. We do not know what that means, and it remains to be seen.

As I have said to them, they are going to have to be prepared for the inevitable crackdown, the backlash, as Castro takes his vengeance on these opposition leaders that the Europeans are drawing out. It is an hour of judgment for the Europeans, and we are going to hold them accountable.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Well, let me just make two comments, and then I know we have another panel. One is that, again, I hope we will get the testimony of our three witnesses from Cuba today to other capitals in the world so that we can hopefully insulate them from what, in my mind, is probable arrest, at least in any one of their individual cases. Hopefully, we can create a set of circumstances internationally that casts a spotlight upon them that guarantees—or at least insulates them, as best as is humanly possible under this regime—from not being arrested or losing their liberties simply because they chose to speak their mind here.

But I will say one thing about your answer to my question about using a human rights violator to help negotiate a situation in Latin America. If Fidel Castro were not around, Lord, then I would simply say that there would have to be another venue for this resolution. So he may be the facilitator at this moment because President Uribe thought it was a good way to move, but if he was not around and the same circumstances existed, there would have to be a different way in which to achieve a resolution with Venezuela. Choosing Fidel Castro to ultimately resolve his problem with President Chavez, is to me as someone who has supported Plan Colombia, particularly alarming.

Fidel Castro never does anything gratuitously. He does not do anything without a quid pro quo. I do not know what was in that conversation, but as we approach Plan Colombia and whatever its reiteration is for the future, I am going to have some serious questions about where all of that went. Thank you for your testimony.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you, Mr. Menendez.

Ms. Watson?

Ms. WATSON. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I was just reading through the resolution that is here in front of us, and it mentions arbitrary arrest and detention. Secretary Noriega, how do we balance the fact that we have detainees down in Guantanamo Bay who have been detained for years without a court date, without being charged, as we go after the human rights violations of Fidel Castro? How, diplomatically, do you balance that?

Mr. NORIEGA. We do that by explaining that the United States is taking steps within our judicial system. We are accountable, there is judicial review of decisions, and that certainly distinguishes us from the actions that Castro takes. I should note that that has actually persuaded members of the international community who have concerns and have expressed concerns about the detainees at Guantanamo, but they understand that our courts are operating, we have a process that is reviewing the status of those people, and that our judges have issued rulings in open court in certain cases asserting the rights of some of these detainees.

So we have an open, transparent process underway, and most of the international community recognizes that there is a distinct difference with the situation of the Cuban human rights violations.

Ms. WATSON. We attended, and some of the people here were on that code, the Organization on Security—I do not know the correct name of it—and they had a resolution, and I pleaded with the body not to vote on the resolution, allow us an opportunity to go down to Guantanamo Bay. The response back was, “We have given the United States enough time,” and they took a vote. And I was shocked to see that we became the bad guy because we had very few companies who heard that explanation. They said, “Let us go down and look, and maybe we will accept a few amendments.” Well, they did not do that. They took the vote right then and there. Because if our system is working that slowly, then justice delayed is justice denied.

We have detainees down there. Just recently, a Federal court judge said you have got to bring this person up and charge this person, or let this person go, and we do know. We saw them. We heard them down there, and I think we are saying one thing, and we are having this hearing on the violations of Fidel Castro when, on his same island, we are doing the same thing, and that does not balance with me.

We talk about freedom and justice. We want to spread it around this globe. We have got to start here at home, and we have not joined and been a signature to the International Court, and I do not know why we have not done that.

But if we are going to have hearings here on the injustices 90 miles off our shore, we ought to look at the injustices 90 miles off our shore that we are doing to people. We ought to charge them and adjudicate them. So I do not know how this balance, and I do not think your response was completely clear to me and convincing to other nations because we have talked to other nations, and they do not feel that we are operating according to what our rhetoric is. I found that out when I went to Greece this summer for the Olympics, and the Greeks allowed free passage to some of the terrorist because they felt that we were wrong. So as a diplomat, and from our State Department, I think there is a challenge here.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much. I can tell you that we have made the case that there is a judicial process underway in the case of these folks that are detained in Guantanamo, and people have accepted, those that want to deal with this issue seriously, have certainly accepted that that is a remarkable difference, and that makes all the difference in the world, quite frankly.

And then you have to count on common sense that people know the difference between the United States Government and the Castro dictatorship, a democratically-elected government and a 46-year dictatorship, and that people will also note differences between Martha Beatriz Roque and Oswaldo Paya and terrorists picked up on the battlefields trying to kill innocent people or kill our soldiers.

Ms. WATSON. Well, let me just say this, that we are talking to China. We are hoping China will help us with North Korea. They are in violation. They have human rights violations. We have all observed those. Common sense tells us they are violating the human rights of their citizens. They are not letting them worship the way they want. Common sense tells us that. Saudi Arabia, in violation of human rights. In fact, I even hear that we send some of the detainees there and look the other way because they do not have the same kind of prohibitions against torturing that we do.

So what we say is not what we really do, and even with common sense, you cannot just explain it away. People know. You know, I travel often to foreign countries, and when you talk to people, they see that the United States is trying to get them to think one way, and we are doing exactly what we are accusing other nations of doing.

I just see that there is a lot of hypocrisy going on. You do not need to even comment on that. I am making a statement right now. But I am disturbed that our State Department is not doing everything it can to prove that we are a true democracy. We have not perfected the democracy that we are trying to spread in other countries. We have not perfected it right here. So until we start performing that way, then I see a great question coming from other nations. And we talk about the Security Council, we talk about the U.N., but they are looking at us, and I have been there when these questions have been raised, and they are looking at the United States, and they are actually documenting our human rights violations.

So we have a lot of work to do, and I am hoping that the State Department will be our lead agency in bringing us back to the level of respect and appreciation that we had before. Thank you, and you do not even need to respond.

Mr. NORIEGA. Well, just very briefly, I appreciate your comments about human rights in China and other countries. We issued a *Human Rights Report* that is a very, I think, balanced, straightforward, rigorous exposition on the human rights situation in Saudi Arabia and China and other countries. The defense of our democracy and our rule of law is a shared responsibility between the various branches of government, and I count on our Judicial Branch and our Legislative Branch playing an equal role in doing that, and we thank you for everything you do to do that.

Ms. WATSON. Let me just say this, Mr. Chairman, and I will guarantee you, I will not say another word, but can we speed up

the process so we will have a little credibility out there? Can we speed up the process? Can the Department of State talk to all of these other branches of government and speed up the process?

Mr. NORIEGA. That is what I am doing right now, but I appreciate very much the opportunity—

Ms. WATSON. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. I appreciate the gentlelady's question. In very brief response, one of the things that we have done, and I have done personally on the issue of human trafficking, is the requirement of the Department of State to do its *Trafficking in Persons Report*, and for the Attorney General to look at our own country and to ensure that victims of trafficking and abuse are well taken care of by the U.S. attorneys and all law enforcement.

I would also add that the Violence Against Women Act was included in my legislation. It was attached to it back in 2000, and that is a \$3.2 billion effort to mitigate violence against women domestically.

I do think we always need to be ever vigilant. I think that is what the Secretary was suggesting, and I agree with the gentlelady, that we need to be ahead of rather than side by side, ahead of the curve so that we become that shining city on a hill.

So I thank my friend for his testimony, and I know you have an imminent meeting at the White House, so we will submit additional questions for the record.

Mr. NORIEGA. Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to comment on these issues and look forward to continuing to work with you. Of course, the State Department will respond to any questions that you submit for the record. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you so much. I would like to now ask our third panel up, and I appreciate your patience during this very important and long hearing. As, I think, the Secretary said, it truly is historic.

Beginning with Mr. Frank Calzón, who is the Executive Director of the Center for a Free Cuba, an independent, not-for-profit, human rights and pro-democracy organization founded in November 1997. The center currently administers a grant from the U.S. Agency of International Development. Mr. Calzón is a brave and resourceful friend of freedom in Cuba.

Then we will hear from Mr. Jose Cohen. Mr. Cohen served in various capacities in the Cuban Intelligence Service, including working directly against the United States. He escaped Cuba in 1994. His wife and children are still being held in Cuba against their will by the Castro regime. We heard from Mr. Cohen several years ago in the context of the Elian Gonzalez case, and he gave very compelling testimony then, and we look forward to his remarks today.

And, finally, Mr. Eric Olson, who is currently Advocacy Director for Amnesty International USA, a position he held since 2002. His work focuses primarily on human rights in the Americas and military security and police issues globally. As Advocacy Director, he represents the organization before the U.S. Government and diplomatic community. He has developed legislative proposals promoting human rights in Colombia and Mexico, testified before various con-

gressional Committees, and we are, again, very grateful to have him here as well.

Mr. Calzón, please begin.

**STATEMENT OF MR. FRANK CALZÓN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
CENTER FOR A FREE CUBA**

Mr. CALZÓN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am delighted to be here. I am pleased to appear before you again, and I am also very pleased to see, although I did go to Rutgers, I do not live in New Jersey, but, I guess, Mr. Menendez is also my Congressman, and I am also delighted, of course, to listen to Congressman Watson. I think the people of Cuba need all of the support that they can get, and I think we could probably agree on what we all want, which is human rights and democracy in Cuba.

Of course, I am speaking on behalf of the Center for a Free Cuba, as you indicated. I would like to summarize my statement, and I request that the full statement be placed in the record.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Without objection.

Mr. CALZÓN. My statement today deals with three basic issues: One is the issue of medical attention of Cuban political prisoners and the denial of such attention by the Cuban authorities. Second—as you indicated, I have raised the issue repeatedly in Geneva and elsewhere—which is the question of Cuban children, which is an important part, I think, of the human rights situation in Cuba. And, finally, I have a couple of very brief things to say about the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

On the political prisoners, let me draw your attention to the health situation of those whose lives are entirely in the hands of the Cuban authorities and who have no chance to even receive medicine brought by their families to the jails, let alone get medical treatment. I am talking about the health of the 75 prisoners from the crackdown, as well as a couple of hundred others.

Of the 75 healthy Cubans arrested in the spring of 2003, none of them were hospitalized or even bedridden when taken into the prison. Fourteen have been given furloughs, all of them for health reasons. Twelve others are in hospitals. The regime recognizes their precarious health situation. Family members of many others report health problems that do not get the appropriate attention or even recognition from the prison warden.

On March 26, 2004, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said in a press conference that all of the spring 2003 prisoners were well treated and that statements that Oscar Espinosa Chepe and Martha Beatriz Roque were very sick were simply lies. He called as witnesses two doctors from, of course, a Cuban Government hospital, Carlos J. Finlay Hospital in Havana, who certified that their patients, these two dissidents, did not have any health problems. Yet, a little while later, by November 29, both of them were released by the same Cuban Government for health reasons.

Cuban prisons, Mr. Chairman, are like people processors in which healthy and perfectly normal persons go in, and human debris comes out.

In my testimony, I provide some details about two cases. One is Marcelo Lopez, and the other one is Julio Antonio Valdez Guevara.

Neither one of them is receiving the kind of medical attention that is required.

I would like to move on to the issue of children, the situation of children in Cuba: Despite the claims of the Cuban Government and the brilliancy of Castro's statements when meeting with foreign visitors, I think you need to take into account the following. One, Cuban children are not entitled to milk under the ration cards once they turn 7 years' old. Cuban education is an exercise in political indoctrination. Cuban parents hide from their children their true feelings in order not to create problems for their kids or to deny them the possibility of higher education.

Havana's claim of low infant mortality rates is linked to the issue of very high abortion rates. Castro encourages women with problem pregnancies to abort in order to keep the infant mortality rate low.

I also, in Geneva and elsewhere, have talked about the issue of child prostitution. Anybody on the Committee interested can get a copy of a report from Johns Hopkins University that provides details on that.

On the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva that will start meeting again in March of this year, I would like simply to say that in Cuba's case the Commission has approved a resolution on the human rights situation on the island in 10 of the last 11 years. Democratic governments, especially former Communist nations, have played an important role in Geneva. Martin Palous, the current Czech Ambassador to Washington and former dissident, has said that "if the issue is the United States versus Cuba, that plays into Castro's hands. The issue, truly, is Castro versus the Cuban people."

In that regard, and to conclude, I would like to respectfully urge the Committee to plead with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to encourage democratic governments to take the lead in Geneva so that, in the words of Ambassador Palous, the resolution is "put in a broader, more international context." Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Calzón follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. FRANK CALZÓN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR
A FREE CUBA

Mr. Chairman, I am honored to appear before you and I would like to thank you and the other members who continue to focus on the ongoing Cuban tragedy which has extended now for more than 40 (forty) years.

I am speaking today on behalf of the Center for a Free Cuba, an independent non-profit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the promotion of human rights on the island. Although the Center participates in policy debates, as a 501 (c) 3 organization, it does not take a position on legislation pending before Congress. I will summarize my testimony and would like to ask that it be included in its totality in the record.

Cuba is the object of considerable ideological debate, but Cuba is more than ideology or geopolitics. There are in Cuba more than 11 million people, and there are almost two million Cubans living in exile. The human-rights situation in Cuba is dismal. One cannot talk about it without noting that, in March 2003, Fidel Castro's government arrested and imprisoned 75 dissidents all of whom are now identified as "prisoners of conscience" by Amnesty International. They included independent journalists, defenders of human rights and activists involved in the Varela Project. After summary trials, all were sentenced to long prison terms, some up to 28 years.

Although Castro, bowing to international pressure, has now released 14 on furloughs, 61 remain in prison. There are more than 200 other inmates in Castro's

prisons who are being held for attempting to exercise basic, internationally recognized human rights.

The situation, however, is different from what it once was. Many of the world's democracies, non-governmental organizations, intellectuals and international leaders now lend their voices to the cries for help from within Cuba. Former Czech President Vaclav Havel, former Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, former Chilean President Patricio Alwynn, President George W. Bush and others have called for solidarity in support for the legitimate aspirations of the Cubans.

I would like to focus my testimony on three issues:

- Denial of medical attention to Cuban political prisoners;
- Cuban children and the elderly;
- The forthcoming meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva;

Denial of medical attention to Cuban political prisoners: Let me draw your attention to the health situation of those whose lives are entirely in the hands of the Cuban authorities. Prison inmates in Cuba get little medical care and are routinely denied medications, even those brought to the prison by relatives.

All of the 75 people arrested in the spring of 2003 can be described as healthy. None were bed-ridden or removed taken from hospitals. Of those

- 14 (fourteen) have been released on furlough (*licencia extrapenal*) because of poor health;
- 12 (twelve) are now hospitalized, i.e. the regime acknowledges their precarious health;
- Family members report many of those remaining in prison have health problems that are not getting appropriate attention or that prison wardens refuse to acknowledge.

On March 26, 2004, Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque said at a press conference that all of those arrested in the Spring 2003 roundups had been well treated and that reports that Oscar Espinosa Chepe and Martha Beatriz Roque were ill were "pure lies." He called as witnesses Dr. Félix Báez Sarria, a specialist on internal medicine and the physician who attended to prisoner Oscar Espinosa Chepe, and Dr. Annette Alvarez Pérez, also a specialist on internal medicine who attended to patient Marta Beatriz Roque. Both doctors, from the Carlos J. Finlay Hospital in Havana, certified that their patients had no major health problems. Yet Roque was released on July 22 and Chepe on Nov. 29, *both for health reasons.*

Cuban prisons are not what foreign journalists were shown during the April 2004 "dog-and-pony show" visit to Manto Negro women's prison and the Combinado del Este men's penitentiary. Here is what a BBC correspondent wrote about the visit:

"We were efficiently ushered by a team of uniformed Ministry of Interior officials to the prison hospital. A tape of soothing love songs was playing in the lobby, and there was a strong smell of paint. It is a smell you rarely come across in Cuba, where paint always seems in desperately short supply. A welcoming ceremony—for our benefit—began with a passionate speech by a young man in a red shirt. 'Fidel you are great', he proclaimed."

Cuban prisons can best be described as "people-processors." Healthy and perfectly normal persons go in, and human debris comes out. Here are some cases in point:

- *Marcelo Lopez, a 41-year-old former tugboat captain and human-rights activist trying to monitor death-penalty cases.* Healthy in April 2003, Lopez was sentenced to 15 years and put in a high security prison in Guanajay. His was one of the very few cases in which the prison was relatively close to his home. (Most prisoners are sent as far from their homes as the shape of Cuba allows.) On Nov. 29, 2004, Lopez was released suffering from neurological damage, strong headaches, inability to control natural body functions, hair loss, pain in his arms and legs, insomnia, lack of appetite and depression. This is not an isolated case, but it is a case that has been confirmed by independent doctors outside the penitentiary system.
- *Julio Antonio Valdez Guevara.* Valdez Guevara was the first to be released on furlough (in April 2004) possibly because it seemed that he was about to die. He has no working kidney, is undergoing a hemodialysis every other day. The regime denies him the right to emigrate even though he has been accepted as a political refugee by the United States and the rest of his family has the necessary permits. There is also a twist to his story: In an interview during the Ibero-American Assembly of Attorney-Generals held in Asuncion,

Paraguay, that ended on Nov. 26, 2004, Cuba's Attorney General Juan Escalona was recorded saying (See ABC Color website, Asuncion, in Spanish 29 Nov 04):

Escalona: Listen, we have already released eight inmates because they were a bit sick. We gave them a doctor. One of them, one of those 75 unlucky devils, even had a kidney transplant paid for by the Cuban government. A lot of things are said that it would not be right to repeat, and I am asking you not to repeat them either. Go to Cuba first.

Ruiz Olazar: You call them "unlucky devils". Why?

Escalona: I said "unlucky devil" because he had the bad luck to have a kidney problem, but we operated on him and he had a transplant. In Cuba, health is a basic, fundamental right.

This statement is absolutely false: Julio Antonio Valdes Guevara has not had a kidney transplant and does not even get the medicines he needs most. On top of this, he is not allowed to come to the United States to seek medical attention.

Cuban children and the elderly. On this topic, I would like to include as an appendix the testimony that I presented last year to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Despite Castro's claims of providing special care to Cuba's young, Cuban children are not entitled to milk under the ration cards once they turn seven years old. Cuban education is an exercise in political indoctrination. Cuban parents hide from their children their true feelings in order not to create problems for their children or to deny them the possibility of higher education.

Havana's claims of low infant mortality rates fail to acknowledge the link with a very high abortion rate. Castro encourages women with "problem pregnancies" to abort in order to keep the infant mortality rate low. To the above, it must be added that the regime acquiesces to all kinds of prostitution. Johns Hopkins University researchers have reported that "Cuba is increasingly reported to be a major destination for sex tourists from North America and Europe . . . Tourists have contributed to a sharp increase in child prostitution and exploitation of women in Cuba." ("Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children." from *A Country-by-Country Report on a Contemporary Form of Slavery*, 2nd Ed. Johns Hopkins University. March 2002)

As for the dismal situation of Cuba's elderly: The lack of medical attention, of food and services is a desperate matter for families trying to care for their elders. It is also of great concern to the Catholic Church trying to help them.

The forthcoming meeting of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. The UNCHR will hold its annual meeting in Geneva from March 14 to April 22. Unfortunately, some of the world's worst human rights violators are members of the Commission on an almost permanent basis: China, Cuba, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Zimbabwe. They participate in its proceedings, try to impede its work, vote on the resolutions and then quickly announce that they will not comply with them if the votes are not to their liking. These problems go beyond Cuba. The U.S. Congress and the Administration ought to take into account what is happening at the Commission when reviewing U.S. support for the United Nations.

As for Cuba, the Commission has approved a resolution condemning the human rights situation on the island in 11 (eleven) out of the last 12 (twelve) years. The exception was in 1998, when a U.S. sponsored resolution was defeated. Other democratic governments, especially former Communist nations, have played important roles in pressing these resolutions. As Martin Palous, the current Czech Ambassador to Washington and former dissident, puts it, "if the issue is the United States versus Cuba, that plays into Castro's hands. The issue, truly, is Castro versus the Cuban people." (Nordlinger, Jay. "Abroad: Solidarity, Exemplified; The Amazing Story of the Czechs and the Cubans." *National Review*. March 14, 2005)

U.S. policy toward Cuba has repercussions well beyond the island; they ripple through the Hemisphere and elsewhere in the world. Castro has been fomenting anti-Americanism for many years and is now building a new anti-American coalition of which Venezuela's Hugo Chavez is a vociferous member. One cannot talk about human rights without bringing into the discussion the war against terrorism, rogue states and the pro-democracy stance enunciated by President Bush in his Inaugural Address. Yet there are U.S. policy analysts who will settle for least-effort-required implementation of the President's policies. Reminiscent of what President Reagan encountered, they seem to believe that to follow the leadership of President Bush runs the risk of failure.

In this regard, I respectfully urge the Committee to plead with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to encourage other democratic governments to take the lead in Ge-

neva so that in the words of Ambassador Palous the Cuba resolution is once more “put in a broader, more international context.”

Thank you.

APPENDIX

LIBERAL INTERNATIONAL

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Point 13: Rights of the Child

Thank you, Mr. President:

I am pleased to appear again before this Commission. I will speak on item 13, the Rights of the Child. I speak on behalf of Liberal International, a Non-Governmental Organization dedicated to the defense of freedom.

I am Cuban. As a teenager I saw the rebirth of hope in the Cuban people after the defeat of the Batista dictatorship. I have since watched hopes dim under the Castro dictatorship.

Yet if there were one thing *at which I*—and other opponents of the Cuban government—would prefer to see the government succeed, it would be at ensuring the well-being and rights of Cuba’s children. Unfortunately, the absence of civil society on the island—as demonstrated by the government’s censorship of the press, denial of free association and assembly, harassment and imprisonment of dissidents—forces Cubans of good will to raise the issue of children’s rights abroad and to seek help from the international community.

If Havana would allow this Commission’s representative to visit the island, the following would be verified:

- 1) While Cuban authorities invite thousands of foreign tourists to the island, denying them neither food nor conveniences, Cuban children on their 7th birthday are no longer entitled to receive milk rations.
- 2) With great pride Cuba’s government reports very low infant mortality statistics, but authorities also acknowledge a very high abortion rate. Cuba’s health polices strongly encourage women with “problem pregnancies” to abort.
- 3) Years after the pastoral visit by his Holiness John Paul II, the government remains unmoved by his plea to close the infamous *escuelas en el campo* (schools in the country side). Cuba’s teens are assigned to these schools, which are often far from home. Once there, the teens spend long hours working in the fields. Housing is poor. Adult supervision is inadequate, and there is a climate of great promiscuity. Given the conditions and mandatory labor, Cuba cannot rightly claim to provide free, public education.
- 4) Cuba’s schools are designed to produce Leninist “new men and women”—obedient individuals. Cuba’s children are taught to accept their leaders’ edicts unquestioningly and uncritically. Children stand at attention, raise one hand and chant an oath reminiscent of Stalin’s Russia or Franco’s Spain: *Comandante en jefe, ordene* (Commander in Chief, at your orders).
- 5) Cuba’s health system is no example of Utopian, egalitarian socialism; rather it is an example of the worst 19th Century exploitive capitalism. Despite the best intentions of Cuban physicians, the care rendered children in Cuban hospitals is frequently characterized by poor hygiene, poor diet and severe shortages of medicine. Foreigners traveling to the island under “Servimed,” Cuba’s health-tourism agency, are treated in the best of facilities where there is no shortage of medicines, diagnostic tests or equipment. Indeed, there is a well-stocked “international pharmacy” in Miramar. It will not sell medications to Cubans. Occasionally tourists take pity on Cubans and purchase pharmaceuticals for them.
- 6) Child prostitution is also a problem. Here I quote from a March 2002 report released by Johns Hopkins University: “Cuba is increasingly reported to be a major destination for sex tourists from North America and Europe . . . Tourists have contributed to a sharp increase in child prostitution and exploitation of women in Cuba.”

These facts account for why Havana refuses to allow visits by a representative of this Commission, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the PARLATINO, Latin America's Parliament. Even the International Committee of the Red Cross continues to wait for permission to visit Cuba's political prisons.

The European Union was shocked last year to hear Cuba's leader reject its humanitarian assistance because the E.U. was also raising human-rights issues.

Jose Marti, the most Cuban of all Cubans, wrote "Los niños son la esperanza del mundo," which translates, "Children are the hope of the world." I am sure that within the Cuban government there are men and women who recognize the absurdity of this continuing tragedy. I pray that they will join with other Cubans on the island and in the diaspora to build a happier country, one in which children are the hope of the world and the hope of all Cubans for a better future.

Thank you very much.
[Frank Calzon]

**STATEMENT OF MR. JOSE COHEN, FORMER CUBAN STATE
SECURITY OFFICER**

Mr. COHEN. Yes. I do not want to make any mistake in this kind of topic, it is very important for me, and I appreciate if somebody can translate for me. I would prefer to speak in Spanish. Somebody can translate? Okay. Thank you so much.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, if I may, I think the interpreter is going to have a lot to do. If we can segment it out maybe.

Mr. COHEN [through translator]. I just want to say that I came here very proudly, and I very deeply love what I represent. I am proud to share my experience. The people outside of Cuba cannot understand, and comparing Guantanamo to the dissidents in Cuba, I have to say—the problem in Cuba is not violation of human rights. There are no human rights in Cuba. You are born without rights, without freedom, without any kind of guarantees or security. There are no laws, and children are indoctrinated from the time that they are very young.

The human rights situation is worse than the economic tragedy, and we equate weapons of mass destruction with what is going on with human rights that allows groups of fanatical individuals to create an intolerable situation that is like nowhere else. The situation against humans is just as dangerous as weapons of mass destruction and chemical weapons, what they have done to the minds of people. For 45 years, they have been programming people's minds to obsessively hate and resent the United States. Castro hates the United States, and his life is a macabre obsession against the United States, and I am a witness to that fact.

I was born in 1964, and I was separated from my parents when I was 14, and that is when I was being trained in warfare against the United States.

When I entered my university studies where I was a student of math, they took me to work in cryptology to work against the United States.

When I was 24, I was the leader of a network of technology spies. We gave information to North Korea, to pre-Gorbachev Russia, to many Eastern European countries. This was a technology that was not used in Cuba but that was brought to Cuba through Mexico, and then it was given to all of the enemies of the United States Government.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, I understand the interpreter is trying to do the best job she can very quickly, but his spy ring, he says, was here.

Mr. COHEN. Yes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. We need to make sure the record reflects that. Thank you.

Ms. EDWARDS. No. I did not catch that.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Ms. EDWARDS. Thank you.

Mr. COHEN [through translator]. The world asks for reconciliation and to talk to the Castro regime when he leaves people to die in jails full of rats and cockroaches, and none of this is recognized, and they die in silence.

It is a continuous crime against 11 million Cubans, and the world sometimes seems to be indifferent. My obligation and my responsibility is to tell the world that we can no longer tolerate so much suffering. If people knew how Cuban families are suffering, they could not be indifferent. Cuba's people cannot associate. They cannot go to the press; there is no press. They act alone, and no one knows it, and they die in silence.

I know my time is up, but I just wanted to say that there are many countries in the world that would never be free if their freedom depended on their own people. Russia would not be free. People would not be free of the Nazis. People in many other countries would not be free because fascist regimes leave their own people defenseless. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Cohen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. JOSE COHEN, FORMER CUBAN STATE SECURITY OFFICER

Introduction:

The origin of all conflicts around the world have [sic] a common denominator: the existence of totalitarian regimes or dictatorships that oppress their people, subject them to a reign of terror, without rights of any kind, liberty or justice.

Democratic countries, free countries must become aware that they cannot continue living oblivious to the suffering of those people[s] subjugated by tyrants, because it is those tyrants, acting above the law, who are the ones who provoke wars, the development of lethal weapons, finance terrorism, shelter terrorists, and destabilize peace in many parts of the world.

Cuba is a typical case of what we are talking about. The Cuban regime's system of repression against its people has no limits, and I also believe that the gravity and the ruthless way in which it functions, cannot be appreciated by free countries around the world. Civilized countries, their politicians, because they have not lived a similar experience, can never imagine the suffering in silence of the Cuban family, living without rights, without a free press, without justice.

The Cuban people are defenseless hostages of this regime, which in reality constitutes a machine of terror, manipulation and disinformation, which resorts to fascist methods and absolute control to subjugate children, women, and men, without regard to race or age.

But beyond the repression carried out against its own people, the Castro regime by its gangster nature has become a source of destabilization for the Latin American region, and a protector of terrorist movements around the world.

It is very difficult for this type of regime, already established, with its machinery of repression, to be changed by an unarmed and silenced people. It did not occur in the former Soviet Union, nor among the peoples of Eastern Europe; it did not occur in Mao's China, or in Saddam Hussein's Iraq, or the Afghanistan of the Taliban. Those peoples inevitably need the help of the free countries of the world, and, in the meantime, their suffering is prolonged.

I. Violation of human rights:

In Cuba there is not the slightest respect for human rights; none of its categories is respected or taken into account by the tyrannical regime, and since there are no independent authorities, or laws, or freedom of expression, or freedom of association, or rights of any kind, human beings suffocate in their suffering in the most total silence.

The first violation of these rights occurs when one is born. Parents cannot choose the education that they are going to give their children; they cannot choose how to raise them, or the kind of religious instruction. It is the regime's patrimony to dictate how the child should be educated, what type of information will be provided to him from the "children's circle" on. Parents do not have an opportunity to take their children to an alternative school. The regime is the only one who stipulates and teaches that child what is "truth," what is a "lie," strictly in accordance with its interests, how to interpret history, what is good and bad.

Children are born directly into a system of intensive indoctrination, which obliges them to act against their will or the will of their parents. From the time they are very small, this includes hatred for the United States, preparation and military training, exaltation of the image of Castro and the values of the regime, denial of God, and disdain for spirituality.

Thus, from a very young age, the child, who later will be a youth and, later, an adult, does not have an opportunity to find his own truth, because he cannot freely consider life choices or values. The child is either a "revolutionary" and then he is accepted, or he is a child of "counter-revolutionaries" and then he is rejected, as in the case of my children, who not only are held as hostages against their will in Cuba, but who are also suppressed by their professors or not permitted to study. Because school is only for "revolutionaries."

The free and civilized world cannot live indifferent to these tragedies of millions of people subjected to the whims of criminals and ruthless tyrants. The civilized world, even for its own future and for its security, has to face up to those regimes and help their suffering people.

In Cuba, a human being cannot turn to any entity to have his rights prevail. The individual is subjected to a system of surveillance at the neighborhood level, where some inform on others, simply because of terror and fear. Distrust and simulation have been incorporated in the Cuban's daily life.

Those who dare to challenge the regime, or simply criticize it, are suppressed forcefully, they turn into zombies put in prisons and dungeons among rats and cockroaches, without the most basic living conditions.

Repressive organs use any method to poison those political opponents, inoculate them with diseases, cause cancer, malnutrition and make them so sick that they die. For these reasons, the majority of people, in their instinct to survive, prefer to survive and not denounce their miserable lives.

Youths are required to separate from their parents, and they are taken to the country to work. It is required to give scholarships for high school, far from the attention of the parents, with the sole intention that of breaking family values and converting the future citizen into property and interest of the regime.

II. Repressive machinery of the regime:

To subjugate the individual, the regime uses many systems of repression and coercion. For example:

- UPC:
Children are required to belong to the Union of Pioneers of Cuba (UPC), a political organization, which forces you to maintain a position of support for the regime. They are required to wear a neckerchief and to say: "Pioneers for Communism, we will be like Che." Its intention is indoctrination and repression from a young age, because anyone who does not belong to the UPC is subjected to isolation by the rest of the children, and teachers, and does not accumulate credits to be able to continue to study.
- CDR:
People on each block are pressured to belong to the Committee in Defense of the Revolution, and if you don't, you are classified as a Counter-revolutionary, and you do not have the right to buy anything from a bicycle to a refrigerator. Everything is made conditional on your political loyalty. If you do not belong to the CDR, or if you are informed on by your neighbors, it is very hard for you to get a good job, to buy the things that are essential for life. You are marginalized and subjugated.
- MININT (Ministry of the Interior):

Among its Departments is the CI, or political police. Its only objective is to apply extreme Stalinist or fascist methods to subjugate the population. They have a network structure around the entire country; every CI official has designated attention to a business, work center, ministry, territory, and it covers all corners of society and the family.

In each place there are informers responsible for keeping informed about their environs. So, in that way, potential desertions are constantly being identified, and they are aborted or destroyed before they begin. That system has been perfected over 40 years, and has made the individual become a social pariah, without any choice but to subject himself to the whims of the regime or death. It is for this reason that many choose to try to leave Cuba, crossing the Strait of Florida, risking death in the attempt.

You can have informers within your own family; there are no limits or ethics of any kind; their only function is to repress, silence and subjugate the civilian population by terror, blackmail, or threat of death.

There is no way to get legal protection, because there are no laws to protect the individual. There are no impartial tribunals, there are no impartial lawyers; it is a true torment for the family or the individual in Cuba.

- PNR (National Revolutionary Police):

This is the obvious repressive apparatus. The police have dogs, and it is the best-paid job in Cuba. Normally it is made up of very low-level people from the countryside, whose loyalty is bought in exchange for welfare and services, money, etc. It is a criminal mechanism of killing and abuse against the civilian population.

There are thousands more organizations created by the regime to cover the whole population, such as the FMC (women's organization), FEEM (youth), FEU (adolescents), MTT (everyone), ANAP (peasants). The idea is to get the loyalty and submission of everyone, to not permit alternative organizations, and to maintain terror over citizens to ensure that the interests of a corrupt gangster leadership prevail.

No one escapes this repressive system: Ministers are recorded; officials, even those of the CI, are in turn checked by Internal Control officials who, in turn, are checked by Military Counterintelligence officials.

Life in Cuba is a true hell and, I repeat, the civilized world must do something to stop so much suffering. It can't wait for a people living in those conditions to be able to do something for its own freedom, when they do not have the slightest rights and when dissidents are subjected to torture, infected with diseases, and made to die, without anything happening, and, in many cases, without the world's finding out.

I imagine that the same thing occurred in Iraq, Afghanistan, Stalin's Russia, Mao's China, and, as you will see, none of these peoples could do anything for their own freedom, without dying in the attempt.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you so very much.
Mr. Olson?

**STATEMENT OF MR. ERIC L. OLSON, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR—
THE AMERICAS, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA**

Mr. OLSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank you and Chairman Burton for organizing this hearing, and a very timely hearing, and also thank the Ranking Members for their role in inviting us to speak on behalf of Amnesty International, and I just want to recognize Mrs. Watson as well. I had the opportunity of testifying before her and the Government Reform Committee a couple of times in the last Congress, and it was always a pleasure to do that.

I am going to very briefly summarize my statement and would like to submit it for the record, and in the coming days, Amnesty International will also be releasing a more comprehensive report on the situation of prisoners of conscience in Cuba. That will be coming out on the 18th of March, and I would like to share it with the Members of the Committee at that time, and hopefully it can be

placed into the record as well. It will be a more comprehensive review of the status of the prisoners. But, for now, I would just like to make a few points.

As of March 1, 2005, Amnesty International recognizes 71 prisoners of conscience in Cuba. "Prisoners of conscience" is a very specific word for Amnesty International, and it refers to those who have been incarcerated simply for expressing their own beliefs, be they religious, political, economic, whatever, expressing those beliefs in a nonviolent way and, in our opinion, committing no crime.

At present, as I say, there are 71 prisoners of conscience in Cuba. Of these, 63 remain from the March 2003 crackdown and its aftermath. In addition, there are six other prisoners of conscience that were arrested between 1994 and 2002. And, finally, there are two newly declared prisoners of conscience—Raul Arencibia Fajardo and Virgilio Marante Guelmes—who we have, as I say, just in the last few days, declared prisoners of conscience. Both Mr. Arencibia and Mr. Marante were arrested on December 6, 2002, at the home of Mr. Arencibia when they were meeting with Oscar Elias Biscet, who was also arrested at that time and has been recognized as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International for quite some time.

Mr. Arencibia was released 3 months after his arrest but has needed to await trial that was postponed on three occasions. Finally, on May 18, 2004, he was sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment for public disorder, disrespect, and resistance. He is currently being held in the 1580 Prison, in San Miguel del Padron municipality, in Havana City.

The case of Virgilio Marante Guelmes is very similar. He was also arrested at the same time, as I say, and put on trial in 2003 and was also sentenced for disobedience, public disorder, and resistance and has now been transferred to the Melena 2 Prison, where he is still being held.

One of our primary concerns, in addition to trying to get these prisoners of conscience released, has been the health conditions and prison conditions of many of these prisoners. Cuban authorities carried out a medical check on all but two prisoners of conscience at the end of November and beginning of December 2004. The most recent releases, and there have been eight in all recently, were, made reportedly, on the basis of medical grounds, or the health of the prisoners. They have been granted what is known as "conditional release" [licencia extrapenal], which means that they carry out the rest of their sentences outside prison but could be detained again at any time.

Their release, of course, is welcome but insufficient or inadequate, in our estimation. We, as Amnesty International, always call for the unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, and in this case, a conditional release is unacceptable, in our estimation.

Amnesty International has received numerous allegations of ill treatment by prison guards and by other prisoners, reportedly with the complicity of prison guards. Such instances would contravene article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment while in detention."

And let me just give you a couple of brief examples of what I am talking about.

In one case, reports indicate that Prisoner of Conscience Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona was taken from his cell by three prison guards on December 31, 2003, and dragged to the floor while reportedly being struck in the face and body. Guards also allegedly trapped his legs in a door to immobilize him during the beating.

In another case, Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta, serving a sentence of 20 years in Kilo 8 Prison, Camaguey Province, was reportedly beaten on October 13, 2004 by a group of guards while handcuffed. The guards reportedly stomped on his neck, which caused him to pass out. He subsequently went on a hunger strike in protest.

There are also numerous cases of people being placed in solitary confinement for long periods of time, and these would include the case of Normando Hernandez Gonzalez, who was held in a punishment cell for 4 months as a punitive measure after ending a 17-day hunger strike to protest against his forcible relocation with common criminals in Kilo 5½ Prison. Similarly, Nelson Monline Espino was confined to a punishment cell for 60 days at Kilometer 8 Prison for refusing to eat the prison food. In July 2004, Oscar Elias Biscet Gonzalez was put in an isolation cell where he remained for 3 months.

One other issue that we have raised in the past and continue to be concerned about is the placement of prisoners far from their homes, making access to families and legal assistance particularly difficult. In the last year, nearly one-third of the prisoners of conscience have been moved to prisons near to their residence. Fewer prisoners of conscience remain imprisoned more than 600 miles away from their hometowns, but many more are in prisons more than 300 miles from their homes. These conditions can still be construed as an additional penalty imposed upon the prisoners and their families and contravenes the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons under any Form of Detention or Imprisonment.

In addition, some family members of prisoners have reportedly been harassed by the authorities due to their own dissident activity or their efforts on behalf of imprisoned family members. Such harassment has reportedly taken the form of threats, summons, interrogations, and curtailment of access to prisoners. According to reports we have received in June 2004, Mijail Barzaga Lugo's family was refused permission to see him after traveling hundreds of miles to Aguica Prison in Matanzas for the visit which had been announced officially. After protesting outside the prison for 3 days, they were reportedly told that the visit had been postponed until August.

I have a number of recommendations that we have already made known to the Cuban Government and also to the United States, but I think, in the interest of time, I will leave it at that. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Olson follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. ERIC L. OLSON, ADVOCACY DIRECTOR—THE AMERICAS,
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL USA

Chairman Smith, Chairman Burton, Ranking Members and Members of both Subcommittees, it is my pleasure to appear today before this subcommittee to discuss

the human rights situation in Cuba, and, in particular, the status of the 71 Cubans designated as *Prisoners of Conscience (POCs)* by Amnesty International.

In the coming days, Amnesty International will be releasing a new report updating the status of current POCs in Cuba. When the report becomes available I would like to share it with the Members of the Committee and ask that it be placed in to the record.

As the Members of the Committee have already heard, the Cuban government began the largest crackdown on political dissidents in recent history on March 18, 2003. The crackdown involved the arrests of more than 100 Cuban citizens. While some were released quickly, 75 faced summary trials and long prison sentences, in some cases up to 28 years. Finally, what distinguishes this crackdown from many previous examples of mass arrest is not the number, but the laws used to convict dissidents in Cuba.

This was the first time that the Cuban authorities used the so-called Law 88 in criminal proceedings. Law 88, officially known as the Law for the Protection of National Independence and the Economy of Cuba, is a direct response to perceived US aggression with the adoption in the United States of the "Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996," known as the Helms-Burton Act.

Overview of the status of Cuba's Prisoners of Conscience.

As of March 1, 2005 Amnesty International recognizes 71 prisoners of conscience in Cuba. Of these, 63 remain from the March 2003 crackdown and its aftermath. In addition, there are 6 other POCs that were arrested between 1994 and 2002. Finally, there are two newly declared POCs. One is *Raúl Arencibia Fajardo*, arrested on December 6, 2002 and subsequently sentenced to three years.

Raúl Arencibia Fajardo is a member of the Lawton Foundation for Human Rights, an organization that promotes the defense of all human rights, particularly the right to life through non-violent means. Cuban authorities do not recognize the organization. Mr. Arencibia is also a member of the Human Rights' Friends Club, and a delegate to the unofficial political group 24th of February Movement.

He was arrested on December 6, 2002 at his home when he was meeting with Oscar Elías Biscet, also arrested at the same time and recognized as a POC by Amnesty International, and Virgilio Marante Guelmes. Mr. Arencibia was released after three months, but was still awaiting trial. Apparently his trial was postponed on three occasions. Finally, on 18 May 2004, Raúl Arencibia Fajardo was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "public disorder", "disrespect" and "resistance". He is reportedly being held in 1580 Prison, in San Miguel del Padrón municipality, in Havana City.

Likewise, Virgilio Marante Guelmes is also a delegate of the unofficial political group 24th of February Movement, in Güines, south Havana. He was arrested on December 6, 2002 along with Oscar Elías Biscet and Raúl Arencibia Fajardo. He was sent to Valle Grande Prison in Havana. On March 7, 2003, he was released pending trial. According to reports, security officers detained him again on May 19, 2003 for interrogation and he was told to abandon his activities with the 24th of February Movement, and restrictions were imposed on him regarding visiting other prisoners' families. On May 18, 2004 he was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on charges of "disobedience, public disorder and resistance" and transferred to Melena 2 prison where he is still held.

Health Concerns and Recent Releases of POCs

Among the current 71 POCs, several suffer from congenital or chronic diseases that may be aggravated by harsh prison conditions.

Cuban authorities carried out a medical check of all but two prisoners of conscience at the end of November and beginning of December 2004. The most recent releases have reportedly been made on medical grounds. They have been granted a "conditional release" (*licencia extrapenal*) which means that they carry out the rest of their sentences outside prison but could be detained again at any time. Those released were:

Oswaldo Alfonso Valdés, released on November 30, 2004
Margarito Broche Espinosa, released on November 29, 2004
Oscar Espinosa Chepe, released on November 29, 2004
Edel José García Díaz, released on December 2, 2004
Marcelo Manuel López Bañobre, released on November 29, 2004
Jorge Olivera Castillo, released on December 6, 2004
Raúl Rivero Castañeda, released on November 30, 2004

Also, *Miguel Sigler Amaya* was released on January 12, 2005 after he nearly completed a sentence of two years and two months.

While these releases are welcome, they are conditional releases and do not satisfy AI's call for immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience. In addition, AI urges the Cuban government to ensure that the newly released prisoners have access to any necessary health care services.

Amnesty International has received scattered allegations of ill treatment by prison guards or by other prisoners, reportedly with the complicity of prison guards. Such instances would contravene article 4 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

In one such case, reports indicate that prisoner of conscience *Victor Rolando Arroyo Carmona* was taken from his cell by three prison guards on December 31, 2003 and dragged to the floor while reportedly being struck in the face and body. Guards also allegedly trapped his leg in a door to immobilize him during the beating.

Juan Carlos Herrera Acosta, serving a sentence of 20 years in Kilo 8 Prison, Camagüey Province, was reportedly beaten on October 13, 2004 by a group of guards while handcuffed. The guards reportedly stamped on his neck, which caused him to pass out. He went on hunger strike in protest.

In another case reported to Amnesty International, a police officer at La Bamba Correctional Centre grabbed *Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina* from behind, hit him on the head and pushed him to the ground when he was saying goodbye to a visitor in November 2004. Two other prison officers then reportedly held him down and beat him while he was handcuffed. He was then held for four days at barracks in Baracoa. He is now reportedly being held in Paso de Cuba Prison in Baracoa municipality. According to reports, proceedings to charge Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina with "resistance" and "disrespect" have been opened against him.

On September 14, 2004 *Arnaldo Ramos Lauzerique* was reportedly beaten at Holguín Provincial Prison. During a search, the prison guards took some papers and his personal diary from him. When he protested, they reportedly took him out of the cell, threw him to the floor and beat him, causing back pain for several days. On 18 September he was also reportedly pulled out of the shower and threatened with being beaten again.

In October 2004, *Luis Enrique Ferrer García*, the youngest of the 75 dissidents arrested in March 2003, was reportedly stripped and beaten by prison guards and officials in the Youth Prison of Santa Clara.

Cases of POCs held in solitary confinement for long periods of time have also been reported. Amnesty International believes that if solitary confinement is used, strict limits should be imposed on the practice, including regular and adequate medical supervision by a doctor of the prisoner's choice and the right to appeal prison authorities' decisions. Amnesty International believes that solitary confinement can have serious physical and psychological effects and in certain circumstances can constitute cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Normando Hernández González was held in a punishment cell for four months as a punitive measure after ending a 17-day hunger strike to protest against his forcible relocation with common criminals at Kilo 5½ Prison. Similarly, *Nelson Moliné Espino* was confined to a punishment cell for 60 days at Kilo 8 Prison for refusing to eat the prison food. In July 2004 *Oscar Elías Biscet González* was put in an isolation cell where he remained for three months.

In Amnesty International's report last March, we raised concern about the placement of prisoners far from their homes, making access to families and legal assistance particularly difficult. In the last year, nearly one third of the POCs have been moved to prisons nearer to their residence. Fewer POCs remain imprisoned more than 600 miles away from their hometowns, but many more are in prisons more than 300 miles from their homes. These conditions can still be construed as an additional penalty imposed upon the prisoners and their families, and contravenes the United Nations Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons under any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, Principle 20.

In addition, some family members of prisoners have reportedly been harassed by the authorities, due to their own dissident activities or their efforts on behalf of imprisoned family members. Such harassment has reportedly taken the form of threats, summons, interrogations and curtailment of access to prisoners. According to reports, in June 2004 *Mijail Barzaga Lugo's* family was refused permission to see him after traveling hundreds of miles to Aguica Prison, (Matanzas) for the visit which had been announced officially. After protesting outside the prison for three days, they were reportedly told that the visit had been postponed until August.

Recommendations:

Let me conclude by summarizing some of the recommendations Amnesty International has made to the Cuban and United States governments.

Amnesty International calls on the Cuban government:

- to order the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, including those arrested in the March 2003 crackdown as well as all other such prisoners recognized by the organization;
- to immediately and unconditionally release all those detained or imprisoned solely for having peacefully exercised their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- to provide prisoners with adequate medical care and treatment whenever necessary, as defined in the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of all Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment (Principles 24 and 26).

Amnesty International urges the United States government:

- to place human rights concerns at the center of its decision-making on Cuba. The United States should take into account the impact its policies will have on day-to-day life for average Cubans and their enjoyment of basic human rights.
- to immediately suspend decisions on any measures that would worsen humanitarian conditions in Cuba and are aimed at destabilizing the country. Political instability and humanitarian crisis place civilians at risk of further human rights violations, and should not be considered as an option.
- to look seriously at ways to reduce hostilities with Cuba and lower the tensions that contributed to the broader negative political context for the latest crackdown. Some specific steps the U.S. might take include:
 1. discontinuing official assistance programs for political dissidents out of concern that such assistance in the past has put the dissidents at risk and been the rationale used by the Cuban government to detain and imprison dissidents;
 2. building a broader and more effective coalition with European and Latin American nations to both engage and confront the Cuban government on human rights issues.

Thank you.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Mr. Olson, thank you very much. You and all of our witnesses' full statements will be made a part of the record. I can assure you, we will study it.

Just a couple of questions, and I thought, Mr. Cohen, you made a very interesting and, I think, compelling point about the obsession of Fidel Castro. I remember watching an interview with Barbara Walters, and she seemed to be in awe of Fidel Castro, and it struck me, she is talking to a mass murderer, a man who has an enormous amount of blood on his hands. Would she talk to a mass murderer in the U.S., a prisoner who maybe killed 30 or 40 people rather than hundreds with such deference? It struck me as being bizarre, and I just raise that because I, too, have tried to go to Cuba and have been turned down because my request includes a request to go to the prisons.

Frank Wolf and I have tried repeatedly and will try again because we think that U.S. Congressmen and -women and Senators, and parliamentarians anywhere in the world, need to go and speak to the prisons. As we did in Russia when it was called the Soviet Union, the Perm Camp 35 while it was still under Communist dictatorship; as we did in China at Beijing Prison No. 1, where 40 Tiananmen Square prisoners were being held—Frank Wolf and I went there; as I did when I met in a Jakarta prison with Shanana Guzmale, who is now the President of East Timor, being held by that government under Suharto.

Those dictatorships allowed us to go. The Fidel Castro dictatorship has turned us down. As a matter of fact, in one of his speech-

es, he took both Frank Wolf and I to task and said we were “provocateurs” because we had sought to do that.

I will never forget when we had—and, Mr. Cohen, you were at that hearing—Reverend Walker from New Jersey testify, and he said that his favorite scripture is Matthew 25, where our Lord said, “Whatsoever you do to the least of my brethren, you do likewise to me. When I was hungry, did you give me something to eat?” And I pointed out that that, too, is my favorite scripture, and it also says, “When I was in prison, did you visit me?”

So I asked him, “What prisoners have you visited with during your 40-odd trips to Cuba who are political prisoners?” and he said, “Many,” and I said, “Name one,” and he did not have a single name.

So it seems to me it begs the question, all of us, when we travel down to Cuba, if we do, if we are allowed in, need to go to the prisons, and all of your testimonies, the three of you, I think, make a very compelling case that we become “useful idiots,” in the words of a Communist dictator from the Soviet Union, when we are allowed to be manipulated. It is great to be with Fidel Castro, but make sure your next stop is with a dissident in a prison being held against his or her will.

I would love to meet with Dr. Biscet. His crime, and the years that he got, is an atrocity. I know for a fact, he is one of those who brought to light the fact that eugenic abortions are happening in Cuba. That is why UNICEF comes out with these glowing numbers for child mortality, or infant mortality, being low, because they killed the babies who were unborn who might have some infirmity like Down Syndrome.

But my question really goes to you, Mr. Calzón, particularly on the sex tourism issue. You might want to elaborate on that, either now or for the record, and I would ask you, all of you, if you would like: What is the current status of Cuba’s dissident community, especially in light of the repressive crackdown that has occurred? Is it coming back? Is it more underground now than ever? And in terms of the European Union, your take on their, I believe, very misguided action just a few weeks ago to resume, at least for a time period, under Spain’s initiative, the idea of having contacts again with that dictatorship.

Mr. CALZÓN. Mr. Chairman, the question of the human rights situation in Cuba, as Amnesty International, Freedom House and many other NGOs continue to document, is an ongoing tragedy. I believe that the European Union made a mistake, however, in deciding not to invite dissidents to their National Holiday. Nevertheless, the courageous stand of Vaclav Havel and others has meant that that policy will be reviewed in 5 or 6 months, and it also means that Castro will not receive development aid or any other assistance unless there is some change in Cuba.

I am sorry that Ms. Watson has left. I was going to say, because this thing about Guantanamo has come up time and again, and for some, including some Members of Congress, there seems to be a parallel in their minds. I think a big difference between Mr. Castro’s Government and the United States is that here in the United States you can have a hearing like this, and you have a civil society. You have newspaper editorials. You have labor unions. You

have people who can denounce the abuse that took place in Guantanamo.

I will be writing to her. I think that she obviously means well, and she has experience as a diplomat, and I would like to encourage her to ask Mr. Castro to allow the same group from the International Committee of the Red Cross that has done the inspections at the Guantanamo Naval Base, under American jurisdiction, to go across the fence and visit the Cuban prisons on the other side. It seems to me that if Washington, with all of these defects, is willing to accept the IRC visit to Guantanamo and these folks there, perhaps Ms. Watson could convince Mr. Castro to allow this same committee, that is obviously not a tool of the Administration, to make visits to his prisons.

Mr. COHEN [through Translator Caleb McCarry]. Basically, what I want to say is, sadly, people who go to Cuba and are in contact with the Castro regime are victims of the regime's manipulation. They are manipulated by a very able Cuban Intelligence Service, and, sadly, this has a result of influencing the vulnerabilities of a democratic system.

Based on my own personal experience, you have got to confront the Castro regime, you have got to toughen your policy, and you are going to have to tell the world there are 11 million people living in a concentration camp who are dying without hope. That is what I wish to say.

Mr. OLSON. As I understood it, there were two questions, the first being what is the situation of dissidents now? I do not know that I have a real direct answer to you, but, without question, the crackdown in March-April of 2003 was a very serious setback for dissidents and opposition voices in Cuba, and, you know, I do not think there is any way we can say that the community that has tried to express its difference of opinions has recovered yet from that. I think they are clearly weakened through that process, and the situation is quite grim and very difficult. The fact that basically 11 prisoners have been released since November is really not an indication that things are improving for them.

On the issue of the EU, again, I hesitate to say whether that is good or bad necessarily. I will say that, in our estimation, after the crackdown, the decisions that the EU took and the position they took, we felt, were quite useful and helpful, and I want to be clear about this, useful and helpful primarily because the Cuban Government felt it much more than criticism from the United States, frankly. And I am not suggesting here that the United States should not be critical, but it is one thing when your enemy criticizes you; it is another thing when your friend criticizes you, and I think that is what was happening at that time, and it was a useful step.

Now, whether that is going to be lost in the next few months is open to question, and I do not want to prejudge it, but I do think, to the extent that the European Union is viewed as somehow having a relationship with Cuba, they have the ability, if they choose to use it, to have a major impact there, and I think that is the key, to ensure that they use it effectively in their dealings with Cuba.

Mr. PAYNE. I am sorry I missed most of the testimony, but I just wondered, sort of the kind of questioning that was asked regarding

the relationship that the EU seems to have in general, I just wondered if you looked at things objectively, as you are testifying—I do not know what really created the March 2003 crackdown, but you are indicating that there have been some releases since that time, and I wonder if you feel there is any indication that the government is—any one of you can answer—is rethinking the policy or getting more lenient.

I do have to say that I was almost shocked. I did not realize that there would be three people, you know, from Cuba on a tele-communications talking about the conditions there, you know, brave people, no question about that, but I wonder, would something like that have occurred 5 years ago, 3 years ago? I mean, what does it mean? I certainly would not expect the government to be foolish enough to, therefore, take reprisals out on those people, but I wonder, does that indicate anything, or is it sort of relax a minute and then tighten up some, or is it smoke and mirrors? Why would the government allow these people who have nothing good to say about the government to testify before Subcommittees of the House International Relations Committee?

Mr. CALZÓN. Well, Mr. Payne, I think that the government has not allowed anything. I assume that the Cubans that spoke to you this afternoon were in a place in Cuba where the Cuban Government could not prevent them from speaking out. Whether they would be arrested when they left wherever they were or tomorrow, it remains to be seen. I think a lot will depend on what the Members of this Committee do.

I was very saddened, a couple of years ago, when I got a call from Cuba from the wife of a political prisoner who had just been arrested and sentenced, and this man had met with both the staff and a Member of the Senate, and, frankly, I am Cuban. I would like to get a lot of things done, but from my point of view, very little was done in that regard. I think it is a responsibility of this Committee to do everything you can to protect these folks.

On the issue of the European Union, Congressman, the world has changed, and Cuba has changed. The Cuban people have changed. With the visit of the Holy Father to Cuba, the Cubans clearly understood, perhaps for the first time in many years, that human rights were not a gift from Mr. Castro, that they are entitled to certain rights, and they began to exercise those rights.

A few months ago, I was fortunate to be invited to Prague, where I was delighted to hear a number of former heads of state, one after the other, not only President Havel of the Czech Republic, but President Ailin of Chile, who is the man who succeeded Mr. Pinochet, and President Lakai of Uruguay and Kim Campbell, the former prime minister of Canada, and several others.

So there is a growing appreciation among international leaders of the real nature of the Castro Government, and that is because of two reasons. One, he has been in power too long. It is like Stalin: After a while, people catch up with this man. And, secondly, we have a situation where the Czechs, the Hungarians, the others who suffered under Communism, have now come into the European Union, and they are telling even the Spaniards that they know better than the Spaniards what it is to live under Communism, and this has had a tremendous impact.

That is why, in my testimony, I urge the Committee to ask the Secretary of State to call on democracies around the world to take a lead in Geneva, because simply to have the United States confront Castro once again at the U.N. plays into his hands, and I think the ideal thing would be for the United States to play an important role. You cannot escape the fact that American leadership is needed, but, at the same time, there must be others who should be willing to lend their voices to the cries for help of the Cuban people, and it should not be on the first step of the American Department of State.

Mr. COHEN [through Interpreter McCarry]. Just 2 minutes. Since the Castro regime is very capable, and they are very good at projecting an image and confusing people, and you can get very easily confused from here if you do not really understand how it works, dissents in Cuba are silenced before they are born, and we never hear about that. And when you get someone like Martha Beatriz who rises above this, the regime then has an interest in demonstrating a certain tolerance. That, too, has an effect because then people get confused about what they are doing, but the reality is different. The truth is that Martha Beatriz is pursued, she is threatened, and she is repressed in Cuba, and she is not well.

My own family has been held hostage in Cuba for 10 years, only because I dissented with the regime. You know, my kids cannot go to school in Cuba. Of course, there was this huge campaign that went on during the Elian issue. I certainly have wanted to do the same with regard to my own children, but I have not been able to.

It is important to understand how this internal machinery works, to understand that Fidel understands and knows how to hide his message, but he is an enemy of freedom and of democracy.

Mr. PAYNE. I just want to make it clear that I feel that the people of Cuba certainly should be free, and, secondly, I know, growing up under oppression, that people are going to be subservient. I was active as a youngster in the thirties in this country and in the forties, so I know what oppression is. I grew up in a city where when a policeman came, you just ran, for no reason; you just did not want to be near him. So I am aware of oppression.

Now, of course, state-sponsored oppression, and I know that people sort of know their place, so to speak, so the very courageous ones are the ones that are like our Martin Luther Kings were or, you know, Fannie Lou Hamer or Emmett Till, these people. So I am not a person that is swayed by political leadership. I know that the people are under oppression.

I did not visit the prisons, but I was in Cuba for 5 or 6 days under no supervision, and I went to places where people, the jazz club or musicians, just a place where local people ate, and did ask questions. And as I have mentioned, there were people that, I am sure, what they told me was not what they would have said 10 years ago, even 5 years ago. They would have said, "I do not like him mainly because I cannot get a job. I am educated. I can read well. I can speak English, as you hear, and, of course, Spanish, but there is a dead end. There is nothing here. I am dissatisfied."

I would wander around blocks and go down alleys. You know, growing up in Newark, I have no fears, you see. So I just wandered around, and like I said, definitely people should have the right to

vote. People should be able to express themselves. It just seems that the people are more, from what I understand of the way it was and the way it is today, people are more expressive, and I would be one that would be shocked if the government had any retribution against these people.

I am one who has a different opinion than many people—I do not speak about it much—about my personal views of the people and so forth and so on. I would be one that would be very outraged if there were some consequences to these three people who spoke out, and so I would expect that there would be no negative consequence to the three individuals who we heard from earlier.

Mr. CALZÓN. Mr. Payne, I would like to ask your perhaps to consider something. Of course, we all admire you. I know a little bit about your life and your leadership on civil rights and everything. Perhaps folks like you should not wait until something happens in Cuba. Perhaps Ms. Watson and others could promptly write a letter, a private letter, to Mr. Castro saying that you had these hearings here, and it is your hope that nothing happens to these folks for simply talking to you. This is a public hearing. No state secrets were betrayed. There was media. And perhaps a quiet, diplomatic effort of a sort could be helpful.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all of you for your testimony and for staying through a rather long hearing but an important one.

I would disagree with you on one thing, Mr. Calzón. State secrets were revealed here today. The state secret of how despotic and how systematic are the violations of human rights inside of Cuba. That is a state secret, at least one that the state would like to keep. Not a very good secret, but it is nonetheless a state secret.

I appreciate my colleague from New Jersey, who has said that he would express concern if any one of those three individuals suffered a consequence simply because of their testimony here today. You know, I am reminded by some who say that events such as these are a significant change. The question is, do they portend significant change?

You know, Nelson Mandela spoke out forcefully about apartheid in South Africa. It did not mean that things got better about apartheid. Actually, he was in jail for quite a long period of time, and under house arrest for a longer period of time after that. He ultimately succeeded in breaking apartheid, and it was because the world came together in saying that this is absolutely abysmal, that it is wrong. And states like my own State of New Jersey, when I was in the legislature, I was so proud to support in making sure that pension and other funds that the State had would not get invested in institutions that invested in South Africa. But it is only when we had that collective, you know, voice that said, "This is fundamentally wrong; it is not acceptable for human history to be able to proceed down this course," that dramatic change took place.

So while there were voices out of South Africa, Nelson Mandela being, obviously, one of the most powerful ones and one that history recognizes, it did not mean that things were better there during the period of time in which his voice was made known.

I would like to take advantage of Mr. Cohen being here before the Committee because, I think, putting some things in context is

an especially unique opportunity. Mr. Cohen, you were formerly with the Cuban Intelligence Service, were you not?

Mr. COHEN. Yes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. And while you were with the Cuban Intelligence Service, you mentioned that what you did for a period of time was lead a spy ring here in the United States. Is that true?

Mr. COHEN. Yes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. And the purpose of leading the spy ring against the United States was to get technology and other information from the United States and give it to the regime for its purposes, both in Cuba and to use it in other countries. Is that true?

Mr. COHEN. Yes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Would you answer "yes" if that is—

Mr. COHEN. Yes, of course. [Through Translator McCarry.] Ten years since I arrived in this country and before leaving Cuba, I used those same contacts to enter into contact with the U.S. Government. The information that I had from my operations here, they have in detail. I was in the M-6 division, which is the industrial espionage division. There were some executives who were working with Advanced Microdevice, which is a company, and he was handing over technology through Mexico that valued in billions of dollars.

Mr. MENENDEZ. When you were being trained for Cuban intelligence, did you know of other parts of Cuban intelligence that were used to spy domestically inside of Cuba against its own people?

Mr. COHEN. One issue is that the intelligence service has the counterintelligence service, and the counterintelligence is the secret police that is in charge of repressing the opposition. But, basically, my job was to work in the intelligence service outside of Cuba.

Mr. MENENDEZ. What type of money did you receive from the Castro regime on behalf of the ring that you were operating here? Could you give us a sense of what type of money the regime gave you to operate?

Mr. COHEN. In the operations that I undertook?

Mr. MENENDEZ. Yes.

Mr. COHEN. Okay. I undertook that operation, which was through the M-6 department, where I was working, but I also undertook one through the M-1 section. But I was specifically put on the job working against your intelligence services, the CIA and the FBI.

Mr. MENENDEZ. What type of money did the Castro regime give you to operate?

Mr. COHEN. Truly, the amount of money that we used for these activities was quite small. They did not give us a whole lot of money because the terror system that they have in place keeps your family in Cuba while you are abroad. But it is my belief that the money that was given to me for operations here in the United States and, it is also my belief, the money that was used to purchase commodities here in the United States actually comes from narcotics trafficking. And the regime has invested significant amounts of money in creating spy rings here in the United States, such as the WASP ring.

Mr. MENENDEZ. So your family and children are still in Cuba.

Mr. COHEN. Still in Cuba for 11 years.

Mr. MENENDEZ. And part of the reason that they are kept in Cuba, separated from you—

Mr. COHEN. Yes. They have not released my family because they want to make an example of them for other intelligence officials.

Mr. MENENDEZ. So, I guess Castro does not believe that a child should be with his father.

Mr. COHEN. Of course not. Castro has no interest in children or in families in Cuba.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you.

Mr. COHEN. You know, the teachers who are supposed to be teaching my children; they are used to put pressure on my children to threaten me.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you very much.

And, lastly, Mr. Chairman, if I may, Mr. Olson, in your written testimony, you talked about the results of the crackdown, which is the subject of the resolution passed by the Committee. Did the opponents do anything to violate, you know, what we would consider an acceptable law for which such a crackdown took place? Did they seek to violently overthrow the government? Did they commit any acts of violence?

Mr. OLSON. No, not at all. In fact, that is why we call them “prisoners of conscience.” Their only crime, you know, if you can call it that, was to express an opinion different than that of the Government of Cuba.

We actually had access to a number of the legal documents in their cases and could see clearly the process and the legal charges against the detainees. In analyzing that, we felt like none of the charges against them were legitimate. They did not, in any way, meet any kind of international standard in terms of crimes. None of them had to do with disrespect, had to do with passing information to human rights organizations; just giving testimony. In fact, one gentleman had the misfortune of providing information to Amnesty International, and that was the basis of his being sentenced.

And in terms of violence, no. That is a criterion for being a prisoner of conscience, that they express themselves peacefully and do not call for any kind of violent action against a government. And so, in our estimation, as best as we can determine, none of the 75 prisoners of conscience committed any crime or expressed any will for there to be violence against the regime.

Mr. MENENDEZ. So, in one case, simply giving information to Amnesty International was enough to be incarcerated.

Mr. OLSON. That is exactly right. Now, that person has now been released, conditionally, not unconditionally, but, still, that was in one case. All of the other cases involved other things, offenses such as talking to foreign journalists, having in their possession materials that were given to them by the U.S. Interest Section. Those sorts of things were the basis of charging them under Law 88, and we think it is illegitimate, and they did not commit any crimes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Are you familiar with—my last question, Mr. Chairman—the three people who testified today via phone? They have been imprisoned before? I do not know if they are under a list of prisoners of conscience, but they have been imprisoned at different times.

Mr. OLSON. Right. Martha Beatriz Roque definitely has been considered a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. The other two have not. That does not mean they were imprisoned legitimately; it just means that they did not fit the exact criteria that we have. But, nevertheless, obviously, their open expression of political beliefs should never be the basis of imprisonment or harassment.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Thank you, all.

Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for the manner in which you have conducted this hearing and the ability for Members to go beyond the normal time frames. I appreciate the way that you have done it.

Mr. SMITH OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you, Mr. Menendez, for that and for your leadership on this very, very important human rights issue and for your resolution which now will proceed to the Full Committee.

I want to thank our very distinguished witnesses for your courage, for the compelling testimony you have provided, past, present, and I know you will continue to in the future.

I was just talking to my good friend and colleague, Mr. Payne, and I am sure Mr. Menendez and other Members of the Committee would agree with this: I cannot imagine, Mr. Cohen, not seeing my wife and children for 11 years. It is heartbreaking beyond words. Obviously, dissidents who are in prison suffer that same cruel separation.

We will put together a letter to Fidel Castro and get signers who support sanctions and those who do not because, obviously, we are united in the importance of family reunification and the protection of human rights. We will write that letter, and we will ask that your family be allowed, and we will watch—this will be a test—to see whether or not they will be allowed to join you here in the United States. I am not sure what the outcome will be. Maybe it will be thrown into the trash by Fidel Castro, and you will have to wait until Cuba is free.

But I think it begs the question, you know, I think, the question that Mr. Menendez put about the concern of Castro for families and for children. Certainly, he has, with Elian Gonzales, through photo opportunities and multiple statements on the island of Cuba, said he cares. This will be a test. So we will compose that letter and get it down there.

Mr. Calzón, you made a very good request with regard to a letter that ought to be sent, and Ms. Watson and others and Mr. Payne, regarding the protection of our three brave witnesses who came forward via the telephone today. I think that was an excellent suggestion. But, Mr. Cohen, we will follow up on that.

I would ask, without objection, Members will have five legislative days to revise and extend their remarks on this hearing, and, again, I thank you for your participation and leadership. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:45 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ADOLFO A. FRANCO, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, BUREAU FOR LATIN AMERICAN AND THE CARIBBEAN, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Chairman Smith and Chairman Burton, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony concerning the Castro government's continuing repression of Cuba's human rights activists, independent librarians, independent journalists. Allow me to include under this umbrella all other Cuban citizens who are routinely denied permission to exercise their most basic human rights.

The State Department's annual human rights report systematically addresses the Castro government's most recent human rights abuses. That government continues to hold more than 300 political prisoners in the most inhumane conditions—without adequate food, water, light, ventilation, or medical attention.

Many political prisoners have been kept for months in solitary confinement, in cells no larger than a broom closet. The families of political prisoners must travel hundreds of miles to see them, because they are purposely confined to prisons situated far from their homes. The Castro government does not permit the International Committee of the Red Cross or any other independent organization to inspect any Cuban prisons.

But Cuba's independent journalists continue to alert the world community to the suffering of Cuban political prisoners—people like Francisco Chaviano Gonzalez who is suffering from pneumonia in the prison of Combinado del Este. People like Adrian Alvarez Arencibia also critically ill and kept in isolation because he requested medical attention. People like Laura Pollan, the wife of the imprisoned dissident, Hector Maseda, and Dolia Leal, the wife of political prisoner Nelson Aguiar and other women who publicly demonstrated in Havana's Revolutionary Square last week. They walked, dressed in white, to Fidel Castro's headquarters where they presented a letter signed by more than one thousand Cuban citizens demanding an amnesty for all political prisoners in Cuba.

There are those who say that Cuban dissidents are brave but unimportant. There are those that say the Cuban democratic opposition is too small, too divided, too repressed to make a difference. We believe the bravery of Cuban dissidents will be vindicated and just as in the former Soviet Union, the forces of democracy will eventually prevail.

The legendary American anthropologist, Margaret Mead, once said that we should never be surprised when a small group of brave and determined people brings about great historical change. Because, she said, that is the normal way in which great historical changes are brought about.

The brave Cuban activist, Marta Beatriz Roque, released from a Cuban prison for a second time last July, has called for all of the Cuban opposition—hundreds of dissident organizations—to meet in Havana on May 20 of this year to celebrate their support for the fundamental human rights of free speech and free assembly and their intention to defend those rights for all the Cuban people.

The United States of America continues to support the legitimate desire of the Cuban people for freedom and democracy. Last year, President Bush accepted the recommendations of the Presidential Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba that was chaired by Secretary of State, Colin Powell. The Commission called for measures to empower Cuban civil society and hasten the transition to democracy.

The United States Agency for International Development last year obligated more than \$12 million in grants to U.S. organizations to help hasten the Cuban transition. This built on work USAID has supported since the passage of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996.

Over the past eight years, USAID grantees have helped provide the Cuban people with more than 12,000 short wave radios and more than a million books, videos and other informational materials. Over that same period, USAID grantees provided the families of political prisoners in Cuba with hundreds of thousands of pounds of food and medicine, and published the reports of Cuba's independent journalists via the internet and in hard-copy newsletters, for transmission to the Cuban people and to the outside world.

USAID will continue to work in close coordination with the Department of State, to expand these activities during this coming year and for as long as required, until the Cuban people achieve their historic quest for freedom.

Chairman Smith, Chairman Burton, thank you for joining the forces of these two great Subcommittees to keep this critical human rights issue in the public eye. I welcome any questions that you or other Members of the respective Subcommittees may have.

