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BabunGroup Consulting, Inc.

CUBA CHANGE NEWS ALERT

EXCLUSIVE NEWS OF POTENTIAL INTEREST TO OUR CLIENTS & FRIENDS

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Disagreements Keep Cuba's Future in Limbo.

Our analysis

We fundamentally disagree with academia's "neat succession" theory of what is happening in Cuba. Differences between the reformers and the *inflexibles* are keeping Cuba's future in limbo. The reformers are willing to promote changes that will make the Cuban system of production more efficient, while the *inflexibles* are clinging to the revolutionary principles and convinced of the virtues of the Marxist ideology.

There are other problems: Ramiro Valdez, an *inflexible*, and the head of the Ministry of Communications, and one of the five persons assigned by Fidel Castro to lead the government during his "temporary absence" does not see eye-to-eye with Raul Castro. And Vice President Carlos Lage Davila, a reformer, and another member of the council of five, has serious problems in the current "memory bank" of the armed forces-the type that may make it difficult, if not impossible, for him to lead the country.

Additionally, problems in the housing, transportation, and food production sectors are being manifested by the more than 77,000 Cuban immigrants that have settled in the United States in the last two years. Reports of youth marches seeking independence for their universities in all the provincial capitals, and other youth's detentions for wearing a wrist band with the word "Change" can not be ignored.

The bottom line is that Fidel continues to be the key. The election for delegates to the National and Provincial Assemblies is now over. The perception of the general public that nothing will change while Fidel is alive was manifested by the results of the "elections", where 95-percent of the voters chose the recommended slate. This further accentuates Raul's caution in managing change. We concur that as long as he is alive (no matter who gets "elected" on February 24th to lead the Council of State) there will be no real succession of power.

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Business News on Cuba

Amongst the more significant business news in from Cuba in late 2007 was that State-owned Dubai Ports World had negotiated to build a container terminal in the port of Mariel. The action “feels” more like a privatization agreement of a country under transition. Report that Iran is considering providing assistance to Cuba in the exploration of petroleum in deep waters is also significant.

Other important business news includes:

- Minmet, the Irish registered public limited company with Oil & Gas, mineral, mining and exploration interests agreed to terminate all arrangements with Gold Oil plc concerning oil and gas interests in Cuba and Latin America.
- Cuba obtains an average of 2 billion U.S. dollars gross income from tourism every year and 300,000 people are employed directly or indirectly in the industry. However, by early January Cuba reported a 10 percent decline in tourism for calendar year 2007.
- At least 3,437 more Cubans left the Communist island and reached the United States between October 2006 and September 2007 than during the previous 12-month period, leading some Cuban affairs analysts to wonder whether a migration crisis is coming.
- The reopening of an oil refinery in Cienfuegos to process Venezuelan crude oil seems to consolidate the energy capacity of the island.
- Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva announced \$1 billion in investments and credit lines. Brazil's state-run energy company Petroleo Brasileiro SA (PBR), or Petrobras, announced a deal to explore for deep-water oil in Cuban parts of the Gulf of Mexico.
- Bonds of friendship with Venezuela were reinforced with the signing of thirty new cooperative agreements representing about 350 projects in agriculture, finances, transport, telecommunications mining and oil explorations.

Special Report

CUBA 2007 IN REVIEW

The following report has been crafted from intelligent sources of Babun Group, Inc. and from a series of published articles, including: The Miami Herald, *Castro is losing his last fight*, by Carlos Alberto Montaner; The El Nuevo Herald, *Cuba despide el 2007 sin Castro*, by Wilfredo Cancio Isla, and The Wall Street Journal, *Cuba's Transition Begins*, by Brian Latell.

In 2007 the Cuban population saw Castro in four videos, the last one on October 13th, and none longer than 55 minutes. The remaining “proves of life” have been limited to pictures with delegations from Brazil, China, and Vietnam, a trio of phone conversations with the Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez, and a group of articles and letters loaded with predictions on the future of humanity.

Urgent measures promised by Raúl Castro continue waiting for the “appropriate moment”. The arsenal of reformatioins" promoted by Raúl during the 2007 were reduced to a few measures authorizing the entrance to the country of DVDs and other appliances, in addition to published decrees to reinforce the need for discipline in the labor force and the punishment of corrupt officials. Economic related decrees were limited to allowing the operation of private airplanes for foreign companies, allowing payments in convertible currency to Cuban nationals employed by foreign companies, and increasing the number of holidays to include Christmas and New Year.

Official figures indicate that the Cuban economy grew by 7.5 percent, somewhat below the initial projection of 10 percent, in part due to the climatic conditions that affected the construction and the agriculture at the end of the year, according to the government sources. The government also announced that the state employment grew and that unemployment decreased to 1.8 percent.



City of Havana's Buildings

Bonds of friendship with Venezuela were reinforced with the signing of thirty new cooperative agreements representing about 350 projects in agriculture, finances, transport, telecommunications mining and oil explorations. Cuba continued to receive about 92,000 barrels of Venezuelan oil on a daily basis. National production of crude oil was reported at 2.9 million tons petroleum (about 57,000 daily barrels) and 1.2 million cubic meters of natural gas.

The reopening of an oil refinery in Cienfuegos to process Venezuelan crude oil seems to consolidate the energy capacity of the Island. Authorities boasted that this event accentuates the end of the distressing power shortages and black outs experienced in the past.

Other economic news was less stimulating. Tourism suffered a fall of 3.6 percent and forced the government to invest \$185 millions to improve facilities and promotion and stop the decline in this sector. The sugar harvest experienced their worst results since the beginning of the last century, with hardly a million tons of sugar.

The number of interdictions in the Florida Straits exceeded those in 2005, when the U.S. Coast Guard made the greatest number of interceptions since the rafter crisis 13 years ago. The number of Cuban migrants stopped by the Coast Guard was 3,197, the largest number since the balsero's crisis of 1994. A total of 3,437 Cubans were able to arrive on American territory via marine during the fiscal period that concluded in September, while 13,000 crossed the Mexican frontier with the same purpose. From October 2005 to October 2007 some 77,000 Cuban immigrants have settled in the United States.

At the end of October about 60 youths were detained by the authorities for walking through Havana while wearing a wrist band with the word "Change."

In November, Cuban police arrested an independent education activist after announcing that 5,000 signatures had been collected in support of autonomous universities in Cuba. Since the publishing of the declaration there were reports of youth marches in all the provincial capitals of Cuba. On December 4th, in an incident that a Cuban Catholic Official called "the worst attack against the Church in 45 years", witnesses said police and State Security Agents raided a church in the eastern city of Santiago, using tear gas and blows to drag 18 dissidents to jail. But at the same time 2007 was a decisive year in the strategy of correcting their international image in the topic of human rights.

On December 10, Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Felipe Pérez Roque, announced that Cuba will sign up to two major United Nations agreements on civil and political rights. Cuba will commit to allowing freedom of expression and association and the right to travel abroad, among other things.

On October 24, President George W. Bush, in a speech directed toward the people of Cuba, asserted that Washington won't accept a succession of powers in the island in exchange for political stability.



President George W. Bush

Comments & Summary

After nearly a half century of Fidel's suffocating control, the transition will be daunting. His successors are inheriting a bankrupt and broken system, a profoundly disgruntled populace, and acute economic problems. The worst of these are the dysfunctional public transportation and agricultural sectors, a housing shortage, decrepit infrastructure, unemployment and the widening

gap in living standards between Cubans with access to hard currency and the more numerous poor who must subsist on worthless pesos.

And there is Hugo Chávez. Unlike Fidel, Raúl has no personal rapport with the Venezuelan president, and surely no desire to be subordinated to another narcissistic potentate just as he is finally close to escaping his brother's grip. But Cuba has become highly dependent economically on Venezuela. The value of Chávez is mostly oil, which reached between \$3 billion and \$4 billion last year, approaching the amounts once provided by the Soviet Union. Raúl would be foolish to provoke the Venezuelan. Without his support, the Cuban economy would soon plunge into deep recession.

There is no way to know how skillfully Raúl Castro will lead and deal with inevitable crisis once his brother is gone. He clearly wants to begin rectifying economic problems but knows that, for some time at least, he cannot broadly repudiate his brother's legacy. A powerful backlash could come from the *inflexibles* or hard-liners in the leadership -- and perhaps from Mr. Chávez. In the end, however, it is the gamble Raúl will have to take.

Within the circle of power, the struggle is between the reformers and the *inflexibles*. Another way to say it (the one Fidel likes) is between the pragmatists and the *inflexibles*. The pragmatists are willing to promote changes that will make the disastrous Cuban system of production more efficient. The *inflexibles*, clinging to the revolutionary principles and convinced of the virtues of egalitarianism (even if it makes everyone equally poor), believe that the important thing is to be consistent with Marxist ideology and to insist on collectivism.

The pragmatists, dazzled by the success attained by China and Vietnam, are willing to coexist with the capitalist methods of production and to maintain good relations with the First World nations, including the United States. The *inflexibles*, led by Fidel Castro, believe that the duty of revolutionaries is to fight against the hated capitalist world, on to victory forever, *Comandante*, and they postulate the supremacy of "the policy" over "the economy."

On the other hand, the correlation of forces is very unequal. The *inflexibles* are only Fidel and a small group of acolytes willing to follow him at any cost. The pragmatists, led by Raúl Castro, account for a huge majority in the governing cupola. However, they all acknowledge Fidel's enormous weight and know that they cannot carry out the reform against the opposition of the moribund *Comandante*.



Raul Castro and Family

Fidel is right when he maintains that these reforms, though minor and intended to bring a minimum of material well-being to the population, run totally counter to his model of a perfect communist state that will be the great showcase of orthodox Marxism, and he is also right when he claims that by accepting those changes at the end of his life he would be admitting that his

governance has been a total failure. Raúl is right when he states that he has neither the authority of his brother, nor the control over the government and society that he needs to govern amid the rubble and poverty generated by a system in which almost no one believes.

Who will win this conflict? This time it will probably be the reformers (pragmatists). Why this time? Because the problem is not new: It came up in the 1970s, the '80s during the *perestroika*, the '90s after the disappearance of the Soviet Union, and is coming up again. In the previous episodes, Fidel invariably crushed the reformers. But now he is dying, can hardly move out of his bed, and has lost the ability to impose his will. To him, all this must be an unbearable punishment.

Cuba's economy at a glance:

Gross Domestic Product (GDP), purchasing power parity: \$46.22 billion

GDP real growth rate: 11.1 percent

GDP per capita: \$4,100

Labor force: 4.82 million

State sector: 78 percent

Non-state sector: 22 percent (2006 est.)

Labor force by occupation:

Agriculture: 20 percent

Industry: 19.4 percent

Services: 60.6 percent

Industrial production growth rate: 17.6 percent (2006 est.)

Exports: \$2.956 billion f.o.b. (2006 est.)

Export commodities: sugar, nickel, tobacco, fish, medical products, citrus, coffee

Imports: \$9.51 billion f.o.b. (2006 est.)

Import commodities: petroleum, food, machinery and equipment, chemicals

Source: *The World Fact Book*, Central Intelligence Agency, 2006 est.

BGC News and Consulting Activities

On Tuesday November 27th, close to 100 persons met at the Riviera Country Club in Coral Gables, Fla to discuss important business, economics, and investment issues after the Castro era. Speakers at the **Rebuilding Cuba: the critical issues** private conference addressed market entry scenarios, the capitalization of state enterprises, funding strategies, property claims, and land tenancy questions among many other emerging market entry issues. Among the key economic sectors that were reviewed and discussed were large and mid-sized business opportunities, tourism, and mining/construction.



During the conference it was noted that with the end of an era which might bring about changes in the economic and political models of Cuba, it is anticipated that with a future transition to a free market economy, considerable investment and commercial opportunities will develop for Cubans on the island. Experience in other emerging markets such as Asia & Vietnam demonstrated that those that acted early were able to share in the growth of the region by participating in opportunities before the emerging markets became totally open.

During closing remarks, Dr. Teo A. Babun said that “A post-Fidel government faces the difficult task of economic reconstruction. Cuba’s extreme dependence on Soviet bloc trade for forty years created an artificial economy, which has disappeared. Cuba does not have a viable economy of its own. As nearly every category of imports keeps shrinking, a vicious cycle of poverty grips the country. Petroleum from Venezuela’s Chavez, tourism, nickel, and remittances from Cuban-Americans are keeping the economy afloat.” He added.

**(you can read Dr. Babun’s entire remarks by linking to:
www.cubadata.com/currentevents.htm)**

During comments, conference participants concluded that once Fidel Castro is out of the scene completely, his successors are not sure what might occur. It is possible that spontaneous demonstrations could occur following the announcement of Castro’s death. The questions now remain if Fidel’s successors will be able to maintain stability in his absence, and if his brother’s revolutionary history and Carlos Lage’s legitimacy are sufficient to smoothly consolidate a successor regime, and ultimately avoid instability and violence.

BabunGroup Consulting, Inc.

Investing in Cuba's Future

Investments in the Caribbean and Future Business in Cuba
Click here or cut & paste this link: www.herzfeld.com

Cuba Geopolitical Outlook

- Babun Group Consulting (BGC) is known as a business-driven watch group that informs/updates/advises multinationals throughout the world to understand the goings on in Cuba. Our company has substantial expertise in Cuba issues; we often provide independent feasibility analysis and other business consulting and research assignments to multinational corporations. Our company has access to over 40 experts on different industries/expertise related to Cuba. **-Contact us for a full brochure.**
- BGC conducts informal discussions/briefings on Cuba issues with client's staff. The briefing sessions are general and informal business focused (not academia) presentations and discussions regarding current Cuba and US-Cuba subjects. The number and timing of the sessions is at the discretion of the client. **-Contact us for rates.**
- BGC is experienced in preparing reports to help provide a preliminary strategic plan and overview of issues related to a possible economic opening of Cuba to allow the client to conduct business operations in the emerging (future) new market. This "Analysis for Strategic Direction" could be drafted as a "Quick-Response Business Plan" in the event that things suddenly change in Cuba and it becomes permissible to do business in the Island. Our first step is to conduct a confidential meeting to help develop a scope of work at no cost to the potential client; following the scope of work we would determine the cost of such assignment. **-Contact us for an appointment.**

For More information

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BabunGroup Consulting, Inc. is regarded as one of America's largest providers of strategic services related to Cuba. Since 1991, BGC has been engaged by a number of companies who are planning to expand or who for competitive or strategic reasons need to know more about future opportunities in a post-transition Cuba.

Recent Key News

Economy, Domestic Affairs & Pulse of the Future

- From Rigzone.com- Nov. 2, 2007-**Minmet Plc terminates all Cuba & Latin American Arrangements with Gold Oil.** Minmet, the Irish registered public limited company with Oil & Gas, mineral, mining and exploration interests agreed to terminate all arrangements with Gold Oil plc concerning oil and gas interests in Cuba and Latin America, following a re-evaluation of these interests by the Company's board. In particular, as some of the oil and gas opportunities which the Company is currently reviewing are in the U.S, the Minmet board considered that opportunities in the U.S. and Cuba could not be pursued by the same company due to the longstanding U.S. embargo on doing business in Cuba.
- From The Miami Herald-Nov. 26, 2007-Oscar Espinosa Chepe, an economist and independent journalist in Cuba gave a detailed account of the **rapid rise and present danger of corruption in Cuban society.** Chepe says that "corruption could become a destructive factor in the revolution", and added that "the process of corruption does not lessen but grows unceasingly". The illegalities range from the misdirection of resources, to swindles, altered prices, the counterfitting of goods, and profiteering.
- From Reuters, Nov. 12, 2007, **Nickel Production Picks Up After Floods**-Unrefined nickel plus cobalt production was returning to normal after weeks of torrential rains in eastern Holguin province had shut down open pit mines and slowed output. "Nickel production in the province has begun to stabilize," a government newscast said, in a report on recovery efforts in eastern Cuba where flooding from Tropical Storm Noel caused \$500 million in damage.
- From Chinaview.cn, Nov. 16, 2007- Earlier this month, Cuban Tourism Minister Manuel Marrero said Cuba's tourism has increased 6.3 percent in the first 10 months from the same period of 2006. Cuba obtains an average of 2 billion U.S. dollars gross income from tourism every year and 300,000 people are employed directly or indirectly in the industry. However, by early January Cuba reported a **10 percent decline in tourism for calendar year 2007.**
- From The Miami Herald-Nov 24, 2007- **The Cuban migrant flow is approaching a milestone.** The number of interdictions in the Florida Straits may soon match or exceed those in 2005, when the U.S. Coast Guard made the greatest number of interceptions since the rafter crisis 13 years ago. As of Wednesday, the number of Cuban migrants stopped by the Coast Guard was 2,938, just 14 shy of the 2005 mark. At least 3,437 more Cubans left the Communist island and reached the United States between October 2006 and September 2007 than during the previous 12-month period, leading some Cuban affairs analysts to wonder whether a migration crisis is coming. A staff study from the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies of the University of Miami noted that "tacitly if not overtly, the Castro regime once again appears to be turning to mass migration as its policy of choice to both deflate mounting dissatisfaction at home and arguably setting the stage for more favorable negotiating terms in its relations with Washington".
- From The Miami Herald-Nov 21, 2007- **U.S. to speed visas in Cuba-** In a significant shift in Cuba migration policy, the U.S. government announced that it was creating a new program that would reduce the long delays many Cubans experience in securing visas to enter the United States. Under the new Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, Cubans granted permission to travel here by U.S. authorities will no longer have to wait in Cuba to receive permanent residency. Officials with the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services said they hope the new program will discourage Cubans from attempting to

illegally enter the United States by hiring smugglers or transporting themselves across the seas.

- From The Miami Herald-Dec. 9, 2007-Cuban police have detained 29 anti-government activists in less than two weeks, and seven remain in jail, including Rolando Rodriguez, an independent education activist who was arrested a week earlier after announcing that 5,000 signatures had been collected in **support of autonomous universities in Cuba**. Since the publishing of the declaration there have been reports of youth marches in all the provincial capitals of Cuba.
- From The Miami Herald-Dec. 6, 2007-In an incident that a Cuban Catholic Official called “the **worst attack against the Church in 45 years**”, witnesses said police and State Security Agents raided a church in the eastern city of Santiago, using tear gas and blows to drag 18 dissidents to jail.
- December 15, 2008- The reopening of an **oil refinery in Cienfuegos to process Venezuelan crude oil** seems to consolidate the energy capacity of the island, the authorities boasted that this event accentuates the end of the distressing power shortages and black outs experienced in the past.
- From AEDT- Dec 11, 2007-**Cuba to Sign UN Agreements**- Cuba is to sign up to two major United Nations agreements on civil and political rights. Cuba will commit to allowing freedom of expression and association and the right to travel abroad, among other things. The country's Foreign Minister, Felipe Perez Roque, says the communist Government will sign the agreements early next year. "In the future I can confirm that our Government will invite additional special procedures of the human rights commission." he said.

Dissidents/Repression

- From USA Today, Nov. 19, 2007, **Poll: 79% of Cubans think Castro gov't can't fix problems**. The first authoritative poll of the aspirations and attitudes of Cuba's people reveals an overwhelming desire to elect the successors to Fidel Castro, says the pro-democracy group that conducted the poll. The poll, which was secretly conducted in Cuba by the International Republican Institute (IRI), shows 79% of Cubans do not believe the current government can fix the problems facing the country and 74% want to vote on Castro's successor.
- From EarthTimes.org- Nov 23, 2007- Oswaldo Paya, a recipient of the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for human rights in 2002, has announced the creation of Citizens' Committee for Reconciliation and Dialogue here Thursday that will work for democratic change in the country. The committee, which has 300 members across the country, 'is not an opposition or dissident group, but rather a citizens' forum', said Paya.

Exiles and Community

- On December 1st the Cuba Transition Project (CTP) at the Institute for Cuban and Cuban-American Studies, University of Miami held a seminar titled **CUBA: WHAT TO EXPECT** at the Westin Colonnade in Coral Gables, Fla. Presentations were made by academics representing various U.S. universities.
- From FINalternatives, Nov. 13, 2007- Miami Firm Goes South For Maiden Hedge Fund Launch-**Miami-based Thomas J. Herzfeld Advisors looks at the Caribbean—specifically Cuba**—The firm is launching a pan-Caribbean hedge fund to capitalize on opportunities that it says will be as abundant as the region's palm trees and golden sand beaches. TJH, which advises and manages closed-ended funds, is prepping Havana Partners for launch within the first quarter. The firm hopes to attract some \$100 million for

the long/short equity fund by then. Havana will invest in equities of exchanges domiciled in Caribbean basin countries, hedging its macro exposure with short index positions. It will also allocate a portion of its portfolio to fixed-income and private placements, which will be put into side pocket allocations.

US-Cuba Relations:

- From AP-Nov. 11, 2007-**Nebraska Agricultural Industry Scores Deal with Cuba**-Gov. Dave Heineman returned to Nebraska after signing a deal for \$10 million in U.S. wheat that will be sourced from Nebraska. Nebraska has sold more than \$70 million in agricultural products to Cuba since the state's export relationship was established in 2005.
- **A prestigious Washington, DC think-tank, The Bookings Institution, is advertising for a Project Manager, US Policy toward a Cuba in Transition.** The position description is as follows "Responsible for coordinating and contributing to research, program and administrative activities for a major research project to determine the most effective US policies toward a Cuba in transition. The flagship activity will be a series of simulation exercises that bring together academic and policy experts, opinion leaders, and government officials from the US and elsewhere to work through policy options toward Cuba during this critical period."

Other Foreign Affairs:

Australia

- From the Sydney Morning Herald-Nov 1, 2007- Australia's ambassador to the UN, Robert Hill, said that the country's support for a U.N. Resolution condemning the U.S. Embargo should not be seen as an endorsement of Cuba's internal policies. "Holding political prisoners and failing to comply with international human rights standards is not an internal matter - it should be of concern to all of us," Mr Hill said. In reply, a spokeswoman for Cuba said that "accomplices" of the anti-Cuban policies of the US President, George Bush, deserved little credit. "A government like Australia has no moral authority to criticize Cuba," the spokeswoman said.

Brazil

- From Dow Jones-January 15, 2008 SAO PAULO -(Dow Jones)- Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva announced \$1 billion in investments and credit lines for Cuba, the O Estado de S.Paulo newspaper said Tuesday. Brazil's state-run energy company Petroleo Brasileiro SA (PBR), or Petrobras, also announced a deal to explore for deep-water oil in Cuban parts of the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, Brazil also will offer food and infrastructure credits through the Brazilian National Development Bank, or BNDES, for Cuba.

Russia

- From RIA Novosti, Nov. 16, 2007-Russia's lower house of parliament ratified on Friday an intergovernmental agreement on restructuring Cuba's \$166 million post-Soviet debt to Russia. Under the agreement, the debt will be restructured over a period of ten years, with a four-year grace period and a 5% rate for arrears. The debt is to be repaid in euros. The deal, signed in Havana on September 28, 2006, does not cover Cuba's debt to the Soviet Union, which is subject to separate discussions and is estimated at \$26 billion.

Dubai

- From Reuters-See Oct 19, 2007-After two years of negotiations, plans are moving forward for Dubai Ports World, a partly state-owned company in the United Arab Emirates, to invest \$250m in converting the decrepit port in Mariel, just west of Havana, into a modern container facility. A formal feasibility study has been commissioned.

The choice of Mariel, one of the closest points in Cuba to the United States, is significant. Mariel appeals to international port operators its without doubt, its proximity to the United States. "This deal isn't just about getting goods to Cuba," said one analyst who had studied the project. "It's about getting into the US market." American ports are close to capacity, and environmental restrictions make any big expansion of existing terminals unlikely. In a post-embargo world, Mariel, which is expected to be open for business by 2012, would be a well-positioned hub. Goods could be transferred from the big container ships arriving at the port to smaller vessels which could then reach dozens of harbors in the southern United States.

Dubai Ports World refuses to comment on the deal. But there can be little doubt that the company is eager to gain a foothold, if not actually in the United States, then as close as possible to it. Last year it was forced to abandon plans to operate six big ports in the United States after Congress expressed security concerns.

Iran

- From The Miami Herald-Nov.1, 2007- Scott Carmichael, a senior counterintelligence officer with the Defense Intelligence Agency, recently confirmed **continued intelligence sharing between Iran and Cuba**. Acting on behalf of Tehran, in July 2003, Cuban intelligence jammed the transmissions of the National Iranian Television (NITV), the Voice of America and three other Iran-bound broadcasts. The extended jamming coincided with Tehran's crackdown on the dissident commemoration of the historic 1999 student uprising.
- From PressTVOn Line-Nov. 5, 2007- Tehran and Havana have **agreed to establish a joint shipping line to boost Iran-Latin America trade**, Iran's finance minister says. Iran's talks with Cuban officials have yielded positive results, Massoud Mir-Kazemi said upon his return from the second trade meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement member states in Cuba.
- From EFE, Unión Radio, November 4, 2007 **Iran World Consider Joining Petroleum Exploration in Cuba**. Irán, Sayed Masoud Mir Kazemi, the Minister of Comerse of Iran said today that his country could provide its experience as assistance to Cuba in the exploration of petroleum in deep waters.

Vietnam

- Form Just-Style.com, Nov. 13, 2007, Vietnam and Cuba Closer to Textile Supply Agreement. Vietnam, which has vastly increased its apparel and footwear production in recent years, is currently looking to secure a supply deals with Cuba for the export of fiber and fabrics.

Venezuela

- Dec 15, 2008- Bonds of friendship with Venezuela were reinforced with the signing of thirty new cooperative agreements representing about 350 projects in agriculture, finances, transport, telecommunications mining and oil explorations. Cuba continued to receive

about 92,000 barrels of Venezuelan oil on a daily basis. National production of crude oil was reported at 2.9 million tons petroleum (about 57,000 daily barrels) and 1.2 million cubic meters of natural gas.

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