

helping this nation establish itself. The Iraqis want a secure country. They're moms and dads just like you all are. They want to live in a peaceful, hopeful place. The marketplaces are burgeoning. The entrepreneurial spirit is growing. And they'll start taking over their own security. By the end of next year, we'll have 40,000 militia trained so they can deal with the thugs and the criminals and the Ba'athists who long for Saddam Hussein.

I talked to Bernie Kerik, the police chief of New York City, who was the commissioner there during 9/11. He went over there in the midst of chaos and set up a 37,000-person police force in Baghdad. No, it's different. We're making progress. This country is growing. I readily concede it's still hard work. There's thugs and killers who can't stand the thought of freedom. Freedom makes them nervous. And so, they're going to try to intimidate. See, you've got to understand, their goal is to try to frighten the United States of America. They want us to leave early. They want to inflict damage so that we run. They don't understand our country. We don't run from a challenge. We understand the stakes. We will stay the course, not only for our own security but for the peace of the world.

I've received great support from the United States Congress on this initiative. Ernie Fletcher understands the stakes. He understands the historic nature of what we are doing. He understands this war on terror. It will be good to have him as your Governor. He has got a vision.

I also know what he knows, that the true strength of this country is not our military might, however, or it's not the size of our wallets. That's not the true strength of America. The true strength of this country is the heart of the American people. We're a compassionate, decent nation. It's very important that you have a Governor who knows that Government can hand out money, but it cannot put hope in a person's heart or a sense of purpose in a person's life. That comes when loving citizens put their arm around somebody who hurts and says, "I love you. What can I do to help you? How can I make a difference in your life?" You need to have a Governor who knows that amidst the plenty of this great State, there are people who hurt. There are people who cry for help. There's

homeless people. There's battered women. There's addicted people. And the best way to solve that is to rally the armies of compassion. Whether it be at the Federal level or at the State level, elected officials should never fear rallying faith, no matter what the religion, to help people in need.

No, the greatest strength of this country is the fact that there are thousands and thousands of people who have heard the universal call, whether they be Christian or Jewish or Muslim, to love a neighbor just like you'd like to be loved yourself. Problems will be solved one person at a time, one person—one conscience at a time, when our country gathers up the true strength, those who have heard the call, and help them provide the services that will save lives.

Ernie Fletcher understands that the people are the strength of this State. There's no doubt in my mind he'll make a great Governor. And it's my high honor to come and stand by his side and urge the good people of this State to vote him into office.

May God bless you all, and may God bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:11 p.m. in Heritage Hall at the Lexington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Glenna A. Fletcher, wife of candidate Ernie Fletcher; Lyudmila Putin, wife of President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Ruth Ann Pence, wife of candidate Steve Pence; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and Bernard B. Kerik, former commissioner, New York City Police Department.

Remarks on Cuba

October 10, 2003

Hola. Sientese. Thank you for coming. Welcome to the Rose Garden. It's my honor to host you for an important policy announcement.

I'm proud to be joined by our great Secretary of State Colin Powell and a son of Cuba, a graduate of the Pedro Pan program, Mel Martinez. I'm also pleased to be joined with other members who will be—of my administration who will be charged with implementing policy. From the Department of Homeland Security, Under Secretary Asa

Hutchinson is with us today. From the Treasury Department, Rick Newcomb, Director of the Office of Foreign Asset Control, is with us today. Rick, thank you for coming. Assistant Secretary for the Western Hemisphere Roger Noriega is with us today. *Y por fin*, from my staff, Envoy Otto Reich.

As well we're honored to have distinguished Members of the Congress with us, starting with the very capable and able Senator from the State of Virginia, George Allen—*bienvenidos, Jorge*—[laughter]—from the State of Florida, Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart; *y su hermano*, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart; Ileana Ros-Lehtinen; and Porter Goss. Thank you for coming. I'm honored you all are here.

The Secretary mentioned to me that Bob Dole is with us. Bob Dole is not with us.

One hundred and thirty-five years ago today, the struggle for Cuban freedom began at a sugar mill near Manzanillo. Carlos Manuel Cespedes, known as the Father of the Homeland, led an uprising against colonial rule. Today, the struggle for freedom continues—it hasn't ended—in cities and towns of that beautiful island, in Castro's prisons, and in the heart of every Cuban patriot. It is carried on by brave dissidents like Oscar Elias Biscet, Marta Beatriz Roque, Leonardo Bruzon Avila.

Last year in Miami, I offered Cuba's Government a way forward, a way forward toward democracy and hope and better relations with the United States. I pledged to work with our Congress to ease bans on trade and travel between our two countries if and only if the Cuban Government held free and fair elections, allowed the Cuban people to organize, assemble, and to speak freely, and eased the stranglehold on private enterprise.

Since I made that offer, we have seen how the Castro regime answers diplomatic initiatives. The dictator has responded with defiance and contempt and a new round of brutal oppression that outraged the world's conscience.

In April, 75 peaceful members of Cuban opposition were given harsh prison sentences, some as long as 20 years. Their crimes were to publish newspapers, to organize petition drives, to meet to discuss the future of their country, Cuba's political prisoners sub-

jected to beatings and solitary confinement and the denial of medical treatment. Elections in Cuba are still a sham. Opposition groups still organize and meet at their own peril. Private economic activity is still strangled. Non-government trade unions are still oppressed and suppressed. Property rights are still ignored. And most goods and services produced in Cuba are still reserved for the political elites.

Clearly, the Castro regime will not change by its own choice, but Cuba must change. So today I'm announcing several new initiatives intended to hasten the arrival of a new, free, democratic Cuba.

First, we are strengthening enforcement of those travel restrictions to Cuba that are already in place. U.S. law forbids Americans to travel to Cuba for pleasure. That law is on the books, and it must be enforced. We allow travel for limited reasons, including visit to a family, to bring humanitarian aid, or to conduct research. Those exceptions are too often used as cover for illegal business travel and tourism or to skirt the restrictions on carrying cash into Cuba. We're cracking down on this deception.

I've instructed the Department of Homeland Security to increase inspections of travelers and shipments to and from Cuba. We will enforce the law. We will also target those who travel to Cuba illegally through third countries, and those who sail to Cuba on private vessels in violation of the embargo.

You see, our country must understand the consequences of illegal travel. All Americans need to know that foreign-owned resorts in Cuba must pay wages—must pay the wages of their Cuban workers to the Government. A good soul in America who wants to be a tourist goes to a foreign-owned resort, pays the hotel bill; that money goes to the Government. The Government, in turn, pays the workers a pittance in worthless pesos and keeps the hard currency to prop up the dictator and his cronies. Illegal tourism perpetuates the misery of the Cuban people. And that is why I've charged the Department of Homeland Security to stop that kind of illegal trafficking of money.

By cracking down on the illegal travel, we will also serve another important goal. A rapidly growing part of Cuba's tourism industry

is the illicit sex trade, a modern form of slavery which is encouraged by the Cuban Government. This cruel exploitation of innocent women and children must be exposed and must be ended.

Second, we are working to ensure that Cubans fleeing the dictatorship do not risk their lives at sea. My administration is improving the method through which we identify refugees and redoubling our efforts to process Cubans who seek to leave. We will better inform Cubans of the many routes to safe and legal entry into the United States through a public outreach campaign in southern Florida and inside Cuba itself. We will increase the number of new Cuban immigrants we welcome every year. We are free to do so, and we will, for the good of those who seek freedom. Our goal is to help more Cubans safely complete their journey to a free land.

Third, our Government will establish a Commission for the Assistance to a Free Cuba, to plan for the happy day when Castro's regime is no more and democracy comes to the island. This commission will be cochaired by the Secretary of State, Colin Powell, and the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Mel Martinez. They will draw upon experts within our Government to plan for Cuba's transition from Stalinist rule to a free and open society, to identify ways to hasten the arrival of that day.

The transition to freedom will present many challenges to the Cuban people and to America, and we will be prepared. America is not alone in calling for freedom inside of Cuba. Countries around the globe and the United Nations Human Rights Commission increasingly recognize the oppressive nature of the Castro regime and have denounced its recent crackdowns. We will continue to build a strong international coalition to advance the cause of freedom inside of Cuba.

In addition to the measures I've announced today, we continue to break the information embargo that the Cuban Government has imposed on its people for a half a century. Repressive governments fear the truth, and so we're increasing the amount and expanding the distribution of printed material to Cuba, of Internet-based informa-

tion inside of Cuba, and of AM-FM and shortwave radios for Cubans.

Radio and TV Marti are bringing the message of freedom to the Cuban people. This administration fully recognizes the need to enhance the effectiveness of Radio and TV Marti. Earlier this year, we launched a new satellite service to expand our reach to Cuba. On May 20th, we staged the historic flight of Commando Solo, an airborne transmission system that broke through Castro's jamming efforts. Tyrants hate the truth. They jam messages. And on that day, I had the honor of speaking to the Cuban people in the native language.

It's only the beginning of a more robust effort to break through to the Cuban people. This country loves freedom, and we know that the enemy of every tyrant is the truth. We're determined to bring the truth to the people who suffer under Fidel Castro.

Cuba has a proud history of fighting for freedom, and that fight goes on. In all that lies ahead, the Cuban people have a constant friend in the United States of America. No tyrant can stand forever against the power of liberty, because the hope of freedom is found in every heart. So today we are confident that no matter what the dictator intends or plans, *Cuba sera pronto libre*.

De nuevo, Cuba libre. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:03 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Senator Bob Dole and President Fidel Castro of Cuba. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

October 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.