Grand Rapids Press Coverage of Latin America
February 1 – July 31, 2007

Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRIID)
www.mediamouse.org/griid
Methodology

The Grand Rapids Institute for Information Democracy (GRIID) looked at all stories in the Grand Rapids Press about news in Latin America for a six-month period, from February 1 through July 31, 2007. GRIID did not include stories about US Immigration policy, since those policies do not exclusively deal with Latin America, nor did the study include sports page stories. GRIID took all local and wire service stories on Latin America that appeared in section A, the Region section, and the business section. This included full stories and shorter stories usually referred to in the Press as “Briefs.”

All stories are included in Appendix A and the Briefs are in Appendix B. You will notice that many of the stories have some text that is italicized, which signifies that this was part of the original wire service story that was not included in the Grand Rapids Press version.

GRIID looked at the amount (153) of stories/Briefs and where they appeared in the paper. We documented which countries were reported on and categorized the stories by theme (economic, conflict, disaster, etc.). GRIID also looked at how stories were framed, and who was sourced in the stories. Sources cited can be found in Appendix C in chronological order and all other data can be found in Appendix D.

Content Analysis

There were a total of 68 news stories that ran in the Grand Rapids Press during our 6-month survey. There were also 85 Briefs, short summaries that were only a few sentences long, but we will only look at the content of the full news stories.

There were a number of stories (21) that dealt with disasters, both natural and human. In fact, in the last 10 days of the study the Press ran 4 stories and several Briefs just about a plane crash in Brazil. Comparatively, most serious news stories did not receive that kind of follow up after an initial incident. Even the Roman Catholic Pope’s visit to Latin America in May only garnered 5 stories in the Press. There were also 11 stories that are labeled as “Fluff,” since they dealt with items such as the Anna Nicole Smith saga in the Bahamas (Feb. 19) or the 14.5 lbs. baby in Mexico (Feb. 1). There were also 11 stories with an environmental/archeological theme that tended to focus on scientific finds that relied primarily on US-based spokespersons.

Topics that generated more coverage were drugs, trade/economic policies, political violence, and the Bush visit to Latin America between March 8 and March 14. With the stories on drugs or the so-called “drug war” most of them dealt with isolated arrests. Not one story mentioned or evaluated the US funding of the “war on drugs” in the Andean region, nor the drug crop eradication program. Stories with a political violence theme tended to report on isolated actions or human rights violations, but again no substantive reporting on US military aid to the region and its use.

Economic themes were reported in stories/briefs a total of 22 times, but again the stories were mostly of isolated economic outcomes without much context or examination of policy. For example, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) are never mentioned in the coverage even though these trade agreements involve 7 Latin American countries. The very first story in the study is a good indication of how economic issues were reported on. The February 1 article reports that thousands of Mexicans were protesting the increased cost of tortillas, but the story provides little information on the reasons for the increase in cost or how the organizers of the protest understood this issue. The Grand Rapids Press version of the AP story excluded most of the protestors’ positions, but even the original full-length story did not include any economic policy context.

President Bush’s visit to Latin America in the second week of March was reported on in 7 articles during the study. In several of the stories it is reported that Bush was meet by protestors. The first story that ran in the Grand Rapids Press was on March 8 and included these comments from Bush, “The trip is to remind people
that we care,’” Bush said in an interview Wednesday with CNN En Espanol. “I do worry about the fact that
some say, ‘Well the United States hasn’t paid enough attention to us,’ isn’t anything more than worried about
terrorism.’ And when, in fact, the record has been a strong record.” The reporter never verifies Bush’s claims
that the US indeed has a “strong record” on caring about the people of Latin America. Most of the reporting on
the Bush visit also tended to frame them as Bush vs. Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. The headline of
March 8 reads “Chavez plans to bedevil Bush on Latin tour,” March 10 “Bush, Chavez duel amid protests,” and
March 12 says, “Chavez pushes for socialist counterattack against US.” In these stories the primary sources
used were Bush and other Latin American heads of state, rather than the individuals and popular movement
groups that organized the protests.

In looking at which countries received the most attention in the study, Mexico is first with 35 stories/Briefs,
followed by Cuba (27) and Venezuela (25). The Mexico stories covered a variety of topics – economic, drugs,
immigration and President Calderon’s policies, but the stories on Venezuela and Cuba tended to focus on the
leaders of those countries – Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro. Many of the stories on Castro (14) were updates on
his health, but there were also stories that were critical of the economic conditions in that country. Some
examples were an April 29 story headlined “Life in Cuba long, not always good,” and a June 10 headline that
read, “Cuban meals include rations.” The June 10 article was to announce a plan by the AP reporter to see how
it is like to live on a fixed Cuban income for a month. The question to raise here is why do this experiment just
in Cuba? Why didn’t the Associated Press have reporters do the same thing in countries like El Salvador, Haiti
or Colombia? The way that Cuba and Venezuela were reported on in this 6-month period is in line with the
current US State Department’s position towards Cuba and Venezuela. Does this mean that the Associated Press
does not act independently of US policy or did the Grand Rapids Press decide to run stories that were reflective
of the government position?

Lastly, there were a limited amount of sources used in stories, with the emphasis on government spokespersons
and people in other official capacity – scientists, business people, and entertainers. When citizens of Latin
America were cited it was either in isolated instances of trivial matters or as people protesting government
action. Rarely did the perspectives of women, workers, indigenous people, people who work the land, human
rights workers, and those involved in popular movements. This is worth noting, especially since there is a
tremendous amount of civic engagement throughout Latin America with popular movements participating in
everything from worker run factories in Argentina, to indigenous organizing in Bolivia, or the Landless
Workers Movement in Brazil. If one were to rely on the Grand Rapids Press as the primary source for reporting
on Latin America they would have a very limited and somewhat biased understanding of the region and its
relationship to the US. We encourage people to communicate with the Grand Rapids Press about these findings
and have included a list of recommendations for future reporting on international news in Appendix E.
Mexicans protest over tortilla prices

(AP) - Some 75,000 unionists, farmers and leftists marched to protest price increases in basic foodstuffs like tortillas, a direct challenge to the new president's market-oriented economic policies blamed by some for widening the gulf between rich and poor.

Since taking office Dec. 1 after a disputed election, President Felipe Calderon has drawn his greatest criticism for failing to control the largest price spike in tortillas in decades. Tortillas are a staple of poor Mexicans' diet.

The national uproar has put him in an uncomfortable position between the poor and some agribusiness industries hoping to profit from the surge in international corn prices, driven mostly by the sudden explosion of the U.S. ethanol industry. A free-market advocate, Calderon has said he does not want to return to direct price controls enforced by many former Mexican presidents.

During Wednesday's march, protesters carried one banner that read "Calderon stole the elections, and now he's stealing the tortillas!" Others waved handfuls of the flat corn disks and chanted "Tortillas si, Pan no!" a play on the initials of Calderon's National Action Party, the PAN, which also means "bread" in Spanish.

The marchers are angry about tortilla prices that have doubled over the last year to roughly 45 cents a pound, causing hardship among the millions of poor Mexicans for whom they are a staple.

In a press statement, Calderon's office said the president shares the protesters' concerns and pledged to "continue taking all necessary actions to maintain price stability for basic goods and services, (and) punish all types of hoarding and speculation in the markets."

But it was also a setback for his archrival, leftist leader Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, who protest organizers prevented from speaking at the demonstration in Mexico City's Zocalo plaza. He held his own rally afterward, and most of the crowd stayed to hear him.

"Mexico needs a transformation of the magnitude of the Mexican Revolution," said Lopez Obrador, who demanded wage increases, subsidies and fixed prices for basic foods, and the cancellation of a clause in trade agreements that would lift restrictions on imports of corn and beans starting in 2008.

Marchers had mixed opinions about whether the protest against rising food prices should have any connection to Lopez Obrador, who has declared himself Mexico's "legitimate president" after losing last year's presidential race by less than 1 percentage point.

Some bore placards of Lopez Obrador wearing the presidential badge of office.

"El Peje is the obvious leader of the poor," said housewife Carmen Rosete, 50, calling Lopez Obrador by his nickname, a reference to a combative fish from his home state of Tabasco.

Corn farmer Servando Olivaria saw it another way. "This is a spontaneous people's movement, with no political affiliation," Olivaria said. "Lopez Obrador can participate, but he should not head the march. He should not..."
even speak about it."

The fiery former Mexico City mayor was known for his ability to mobilize millions in support of his allegations that the July 2 election was rigged. But since Calderon has taken office, Lopez Obrador's self-declared alternative government has almost faded from view.

The leftist leader tried to make a major public comeback by offering to lead the tortilla march, but was forced to back down.

"The idea is that we concentrate on the general objectives of the march and not on personalities," Gerardo Sanchez, president of the Permanent Agrarian Council, said on W Radio Tuesday.

There was no official report on crowd size available, but reporters on the scene gave an estimate of 75,000, based on protesters filling about three-quarters of a plaza that holds about 100,000.

On Jan. 18, Calderon signed an accord with business organizations to try to limit tortilla prices to about 35 cents a pound. But many of the independent tortilla sellers have ignored the rate, essentially a gentlemen's agreement with no legal backing.

High tortilla prices put some Mexicans in danger of being malnourished.

The poor eat an average of 14 ounces of tortillas daily, giving them 40 percent of their protein, according to Amanda Galvez, who runs a nutrition research institute at Mexico's National Autonomous University.

With the new prices, workers earning the minimum wage of about $4 a day could spend a third of their earnings on tortillas for their family.

"Some people can switch to more unhealthy alternatives. Others just go without," Galvez said.

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Big baby weighs 14.5 pounds

He is called "Super Tonio," and at a whopping birth weight of 14.1 pounds, the little fellow is causing a sensation in this Mexican resort city.

Cancun residents have crowded the nursery ward's window to see Antonio Vasconcelos, who was born early Monday by Caesarean section. The baby, who weighed 14.5 pounds Wednesday, drinks 5 ounces of milk every three hours, and measures 22 inches in length.

"We haven't found any abnormality in the child, there are some signs of high blood sugar, and a slight blood infection, but that is being controlled so that the child can get on with his normal life in a few more days," Narciso Perez Bravo, the hospital's director, said on Wednesday.

In Brazil, a baby born in January 2005 in the city of Salvador weighed 16 pounds, 11 ounces at birth. According to Guinness World Records, the heaviest baby born to a healthy mother was a boy weighing 22 pounds, 8 ounces, born in Aversa, Italy, in September 1955.

Antonio's mother, Teresa Alejandra Cruz, 23, and father, Luis Vasconcelos, 38, said they were proud of the boy, and noted that Cruz had given birth to a baby girl seven years ago who weighed 11.46 pounds.
Castro gathering not a party, Miami says

MIAMI (AP) City leaders said Wednesday that they aren't going to throw a party when Cuban president Fidel Castro dies; they compare their plans to open the Orange Bowl to preparing for a hurricane.

The stadium will be a safe place for the Cuban exile community to gather peacefully and can accommodate overflow crowds in the event of Castro's death, they said.

``The same way we plan for a hurricane, we have to plan for an event such as this,'' said Peter Hernandez, Miami city manager.

Reports that Miami was planning an official celebration of Castro's death drew international media attention and the anger of some Cuban-Americans who said rejoicing over anyone's death was in bad taste.

Other Cuban-Americans were incensed that the city would try to limit their ability to celebrate Castro's death wherever and however they wanted.

The city has said that the only tax dollars spent on the event will be for public safety needs, but that a volunteer committee appointed to plan the event hopes to provide musical groups, political and religious speakers and poetry.

Chavez gives Bolivia coca production assist

CARACAS, VENEZUELA — Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez has found a novel way to dispense foreign aid: by promising to underwrite coca production in Bolivia.

Officials here confirmed Wednesday that Venezuela would buy whatever legal products Bolivia could make from coca leaf, as part of that central Andean nation's attempt to wean farmers from the cocaine industry.

Chavez's promise could finance the production of about 4,000 tons of coca in Bolivia, Venezuelan officials say.

Possible coca-based products include soap, bread, herbal teas, toothpaste, unspecified medicines and cooking oils. No dollar amount for Venezuela's support has been announced. Three factories are under construction in Bolivia with Venezuelan financial and Cuban technical support, and production could begin this summer.

First announced last month by Venezuela's ambassador to Bolivia, Julio Montes, the deal is being finalized this week in Caracas during meetings of the two countries' foreign ministers.

The pledge is the latest in a series of foreign aid promises in Latin America as Chavez tries to expand his influence and promote his "Bolivarian Revolution."

Among his foreign aid programs is a promised refinery for Nicaragua, cut-rate fuels for Ecuador and continuing bond purchases from Argentina.

Chavez's promise is a big step in Bolivian President Evo Morales' efforts to legitimize the production of coca leaves, a crop Morales once grew.

The announcement comes as the United States government is scaling back its anti-drug funding to Andean
nations, including Bolivia and Ecuador.

Chavez has long supported Morales' efforts to find commercial markets for coca-based products.

Indigenous communities in Colombia and Peru, who claim the leaf is sacred, have attempted to promote commercial, non-cocaine uses of coca in soft drinks, cookies and anti-arthritis ointments. Botanists have extolled the nutrients that the leaf contains.

But such projects have been opposed by the U.S. government, which sees the export of any coca product as a violation of the Vienna Convention, an international accord whose signatories agree the coca leaf is a dangerous substance that should be banned.

Morales announced in December that he intended to expand legal production of coca in Bolivia to 50,000 acres from 30,000 acres by 2010. The United States protested, saying that Bolivia needed only a fraction of that acreage to supply domestic needs.

The coca deal will do nothing to lessen the animosity between the Bush administration and the Chavez government. That hostility was evident Wednesday at a congressional hearing in Washington during which Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice said democracy and human rights were under attack in Venezuela.

"I do believe that the president of Venezuela is really, really destroying his own country, economically, politically," Rice told lawmakers.

But the Venezuelan and Bolivian governments made it clear that U.S. objections would not affect their plans. Venezuelan Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro, appearing Tuesday before reporters with his Bolivian counterpart, David Choquehuanca, said the two nations were working on projects to "value and dignify the coca leaf."

Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia recently signed the so-called People's Trade Treaty, outlining cooperation and about $1 million in investment on coca production research.

February 18  Page A12

Melting glaciers trouble for Peru

Peru's "White Mountain Range" may soon have to change its name.

The ice atop Cordillera Blanca, the largest glacier chain in the tropics, is melting fast because of rising temperatures, and peaks are turning brown. The trend is highlighting fears of global warming and, scientists say, is endangering future water supplies to the arid coast where most Peruvians live.

Glaciologists consider the health of the world's glaciers an indicator of global warming and they warn that what is happening in the Andes signals trouble ahead.

"To me it's the rate of ice loss that's a real concern," because when melting accelerates, the ice cannot replenish itself, said Lonnie Thompson, a leading glacier expert at Ohio State University.

Thompson, a geologist monitoring glacier retreat on the Andes, Himalayas and Kilimanjaro, said tropical glaciers are melting all over the world because of rising temperatures "and where we have the data to prove it, the rate of ice loss is actually accelerating."
Quelccaya in southern Peru, the world's largest tropical ice cap, is retreating at about 200 feet a year, up from 20 feet a year in the 1960s, Thompson said.

Melting is also visible in the other Andean countries — Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia.

In Peru, home to 70 percent of Earth's tropical glaciers, the Andes mountains have lost at least 22 percent of their glacier area since 1970 and the melt is speeding up, according to Peru's National Resources Institute, INRENA, a government agency.

Rock shows through lavishly snow-covered mountains throughout the Peruvian Andes. The Broggi glacier has disappeared altogether. Ice caves once popular with tourists are gone.

On Cordillera Blanca, which has 35 percent of Peru's glaciers, Marco Zapata, head of INRENA's glaciology unit, trudges up a barren, rocky mountain slope that until recently was covered by a centuries-old layer of ice. He points to a small, white mound on the retreating Pastoruri glacier, 17,000 feet above sea level.

A month earlier, that mound was an ice cave — Pastoruri's last — until the cavern's crystalline arch collapsed under an unseasonably warm sun. The remnants are melting into a newly formed lagoon.

The number of ice caves varies from year to year as temperatures rise and fall. But Pastoruri's ice cap shrunk nearly 40 percent between 1995 and 2005, and Zapata, who has studied Peru's glaciers for 36 years, says postcards of the caverns should be taken off the market.

Meanwhile, the melt is causing long-term fears of a water shortage.

Glaciers feed the rivers that feed the sprawling cities and shantytowns on Peru's bone-dry Pacific coast. They also serve agriculture and hydroelectric plants that generate 70 percent of the country's power.

Two-thirds of Peru's 27 million people live on the coast, where just 1.8 percent of the nation's water supply is found. Shantytowns spring up virtually overnight in the steep, sandy dunes around the capital, Lima, and providing them with water is extremely costly, says Julio Garcia of the National Environment Council, CONAM.

President Alan Garcia believes the rush of melted water could provide abundant hydroelectric energy to Peru and its neighbors, and CONAM's Garcia agrees it's feasible, but doesn't think the water bonanza will last beyond 2050.

Zapata says the warming of Cordillera Blanca combines with four years of below-average rainfall. "There is no regularity in terms of seasons," he said on a blindingly sunny day in what is traditionally the Andean rainy season. "The farmers are completely confused."

Farmers growing potatoes, wheat and artichokes depend entirely on the glacier runoff from the Cordillera Blanca during the dry season, and on rainfall during the wet season, and they say this is changing.

"There's less now, not like before," Claudia Villafan Ramos, a farmworker, said of the snows atop the mountain in her native Santa River valley. The peaks are now spotted with bare brown patches.

Villfan, whose weathered hands and face make her look older than her 42 years, said it means fewer jobs and "there is nothing to eat."

February 19  A8
Official caught in photo with Smith resigns

NAUSSAU, Bahamas (AP) — Photos of the Bahamas' immigration minister embracing Anna Nicole Smith forced the official to resign amid speculation the Playboy Playmate received special treatment when applying for permanent residency on the island nation. Photos recently appeared in a Bahamas newspaper showing Immigration Minister Shane Gibson on a bed with Smith — both fully clothed — and embracing her.

"I want to apologize to all persons who may in any way have been offended by anything that I have said, done, or perceived to have said or done," Gibson said on state TV Sunday night. "To the extent that my beloved country has in any way suffered ... I want to apologize to the Bahamian people as a whole."

However, Gibson, who fast-tracked Smith's application for residency, denied any wrongdoing and said he did not have a sexual relationship with Smith.

Smith died on Feb. 8 in Hollywood, Fla. She had based her residency application upon her claimed ownership of a waterfront mansion in the Bahamas. However, the ownership of the property is disputed.

Prime Minister Perry Christie said he had accepted Gibbon's resignation.

"However sad Shane's decision to resign may be, I also believe, as does he, that it is the correct course of action for him to take in all of the circumstances," the prime minister said on TV.

Gibson stated emphatically during a special broadcast on the national television station that although he was stepping down, he was not admitting to any of the allegations against him, calling them "vicious and wicked lies."

"I unconditionally deny that I ever abused my ministerial office by granting Anna Nicole Smith any permit of which she was undeserving or for which she was not qualified under the laws of the Bahamas," he said.

The Tribune of Nassau on Feb. 12 published two photos on its front page showing Smith and Gibson embracing on a bed decorated with pink flowers and a white ribbon. The newspaper said the photographs were taken in Smith's bedroom and that it obtained the pictures from an unidentified source.

G. Ben Thompson, a South Carolina developer who once dated Smith, has said he had not given Smith the Bahamas house as a gift as her lawyers have asserted. Thompson is attempting to reclaim the $900,000 waterfront mansion.

Howard K. Stern, Smith's companion, has been living in the house with her daughter, Dannielynn, who was born in September in a Bahamas hospital.

Days after the baby was born, Smith's 20-year-old son Daniel Smith died under mysterious circumstances in a Bahamas hospital room while visiting his mother. A coroner hired by Smith's family said Daniel died from a lethal combination of drugs, including methadone. An inquest into his death is scheduled to begin here on March 27.

Several men claim to have fathered the baby girl, who could potentially inherit a multimillion-dollar fortune. Since the death in 1995 of her 90-year-old husband, Texas oil tycoon J. Howard Marshall II, Smith had been waging a court battle over his estate.

A birth certificate lists Stern as the girl's father. But Smith's former boyfriend Larry Birkhead has gone to court in Florida in pursuit of DNA testing to prove he is the father.
And Prince Frederic von Anhalt, the husband of the actress Zsa Zsa Gabor, has said he had a decade-long affair with Smith and will file his own paternity challenge.

February 28  Page A6

Castro: “I am gaining ground”

Cuban leader Fidel Castro called into Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez’s radio talk show, saying he felt "more energetic" and was enjoying his convalescence in his first live comments since falling ill seven months ago.

"I'm gaining ground. I feel more energetic, stronger and have more time to study. I've become a student again," he told Chavez over the phone Tuesday in a soft but steady voice.

"I can't promise that I'll go over there soon," Castro said, but added, "I feel good and I'm happy."

Until Tuesday, Castro only had been heard in pre-taped comments on videos released by the Cuban government, which quelled speculation that he was deathly ill but failed to give an immediate sense of his health.

In Havana, Castro loyalists were elated Wednesday.

"The tone of his voice is perfect," said a 46-year-old computer worker who gave her name as Santa Elena, saying she thought Castro would make a public appearance "any moment."

A 50-year-old trash collector named Cebeno, who also declined to give his last name, said Castro's live conversation "confirms that he is well" and that "he will appear again."

"I think he can continue as president," said 22-year-old journalism student Juan Manuel. "The whole world knows the strength he has."

Castro's words to Chavez were spoken slowly — and he appeared to catch on a few words — but he was in good spirits.

"My God! It's Fidel," Chavez said with obvious surprise at the unexpected call and asked his close friend in English, "How are you?"

"Very well," Castro replied in English, prompting a chuckle from Chavez.

"You don't know how happy we are to hear your voice and know that you're well," Chavez said.

During the 30-minute conversation, Castro touched on various topics, including a reference to a plunge in U.S. and Chinese stocks earlier in the day that he said should be a cause for worry for the U.S. government.

The 80-year-old leader transferred control of Cuba's government to his brother Raul, 75, after undergoing intestinal surgery in July and dropped out of public view, fueling speculation about his condition.

Cuba's communist government has kept Castro's condition and exact ailment secret, and Chavez acknowledged that he has become an "emissary" for news of his close friend and ally's health.

Castro thanked Chavez for keeping people informed but complained that his supporters have "the habit, the
vice” of expecting daily updates and asked for patience, saying he is not the long orator he once was.

"Totally mute. I can't talk every day. I ask everyone for patience, calm ... the country is marching along, which is what is important," he said.

"And I ask for tranquility also for me so that I can fulfill my new tasks," he said.

The conversation was not aired live in Cuba but, shortly afterward, Cuban state television broke into the regular nightly news program to broadcast the exchange.

In Miami, Alfredo Mesa, spokesman for the Cuban American National Foundation, said Castro is already part of the past and encouraged others to stop following the minute details of his illness.

"We need to stop worrying about Fidel Castro's health and focus more on the people in positions of power today that can bring about change for the Cuban people," Mesa said. "It's no longer about Fidel Castro."

Cuban officials have denied U.S. government reports that Castro suffered from cancer. A Spanish newspaper reported last month that he had diverticular disease, a weakening of the walls of the colon.

The Cuban government has sought to reassure Cubans after Castro ceded power for the first time in 47 years, saying his health is stable and the defense of the island guaranteed. It released a new video on Jan. 30 of Castro looking stronger than in previous images as he met with Chavez.

Chavez ended his conversation with his mentor telling him: "We will win time and win the battle for life."

"Fatherland or death. We will prevail!" the two leaders repeated after each other.

March 1 A5

“Beautiful Anna Nicole send-off” is set

Anna Nicole Smith will be buried in a custom-made gown next to her 20-year-old son following an "over the top" memorial service with a tightly controlled guest list, said a friend helping to organize the memorial.

The memorial service, with about 300 guests at an undisclosed church, will feature many pink flowers, her favorite color, and songs from a well-known performer whose name organizers aren't ready to disclose, said the friend, Patrik Simpson of Beverly Hills, Calif.

"It will be a very beautiful, Anna Nicole send-off," Simpson told The Associated Press in an interview Wednesday night in the Bahamian capital of Nassau. "Of course it will be over the top because it's Anna Nicole."

Simpson's partner, Pol Atteu, has designed more than a dozen gowns for Smith, including the one in which she was to be buried in a "very elegant" casket that will most likely be closed, he said. He declined to describe the dress.

Smith's body will be flown to the Bahamas by private plane early Friday and the funeral will take place hours later, said lawyer Richard Milstein, the court-appointed advocate for Smith's 5-month-old daughter, Dannielynn.

Smith, 39, died in a Florida hotel on Feb. 8 setting off a battle over her burial and for custody of Dannielynn.
between her partner, Howard K. Stern, her mother, Virgie Arthur, and ex-boyfriend Larry Birkhead.

Arthur had wanted to bury Smith in her native Texas. But Stern insisted the former Playboy Playmate wanted to be buried next to her son, Daniel, who died of apparent drug-related causes as he visited his mother three days after she gave birth to Dannielynn in the Bahamas.

The wrangling over Smith's body ended Wednesday when a Florida appeals court upheld a judge's ruling that allowed Smith to be buried in the Bahamas and Arthur decided not to appeal that decision.

Wayne Munroe, the Bahamian attorney for Smith's estate, said the Florida court ruling was "common sense."

"Everyone in this whole saga knows what her wishes were about every aspect of her affairs custody, property, everything," Munroe told the AP. "But people are steadfastly trying to get their wishes met and not hers. Nobody seems to care about this woman's wishes."

A Bahamian court has scheduled a hearing in the custody dispute for mid-March.

Smith married Texas oil tycoon J. Howard Marshall II in 1994 when he was 89 and she was 26. She had been fighting his family over his estimated $500 million fortune since his death in 1995, and her baby daughter could inherit millions.

Simpson said each "faction" Stern, Arthur and Birkhead had to submit a guest list in advance and each would be limited to 100 people at the church service.

"It will be something very beautiful, very private, very over the top and very pink," he said.

The burial at Lakeview Memorial Gardens & Mausoleums will be much more intimate, with about 30 people, he said.

At Daniel's funeral, Smith and Stern erected a large green tent that blocked the media and other spectators from the service. Organizers of the former pinup's service are expected to do the same.

Simpson, a 38-year-old model talent scout who was friends with Smith for the past five years, said he and his partner plan to place photos of themselves with their 15-year-old daughter, who sang at Daniel's funeral, inside her casket, and other close friends also will likely add photos.

He recalled Smith as a warm and generous person who always remembered their daughter's birthday and other special events.

"She was just a good friend, a good mother, a great person," Simpson said. "She had a heart of gold and would give you the shirt off her own back."

March 8 A8

"What I want is to enjoy the sun"

A man who once weighed well over a half-ton left his house for the first time in five years Wednesday - wheeled outside on his bed to greet neighbors and see a mariachi band.

"The sky is beautiful and blue and what I want is to enjoy the sun," said Manuel Uribe, who had once been certified by doctors as weighing 1,235 pounds.
Though still unable to leave his bed, Uribe has lost 395 pounds since he began a high-protein diet a year ago. He now weighs about 840.

To celebrate the milestone, six people pushed Uribe’s wheel-equipped iron bed out to the street as a mariach band played and a crowd gathered. Then a forklift lifted him onto a truck, and the 41 year old rode through the streets of San Nicolas de los Garza, a Monterrey suburb.

“It fills me with joy to see he’s getting better and getting a little sun,” neighbor Guadalupe Guerra said. “I would go crazy if I had to be inside my house for so many years.”

Uribe, who drew world attention with a plea for help on national TV in 2006, turned down offers for a gastric bypass. He says he will stick to his Zone diet until he is down to 265 pounds.

“My goal is to leave the house on my own but I know that will be a long process,” he said. Doctors say it may take three to four years.

March 8 A8

Chavez plans to bedevil Bush on Latin tour

President Bush is challenging a widespread perception in Latin America of US neglect that has helped fuel leftist leader Hugo Chavez's rising influence in America's backyard.

Bush, who leaves today on a five-nation tour, will argue that strong democratic governments hold the promise of prosperity. He hopes his journey will resonate with the one in four Latin Americans who live on less than $2 a day and wonder, whether democracy will ever deliver them a better life.

“The trip is to remind people that we care,” Bush said in an interview Wednesday with CNN En Espanol. “I do worry about the fact that some say, ‘Well the United States hasn’t paid enough attention to us,’ isn’t anything more than worried about terrorism.’ And when, in fact, the record has been a strong record.”

But Bush, with just two years left in his presidency, has a weak hand. Anti-Americanism and Bush’s poor image tainted by the war in Iraq, have only fueled Chavez’s influence in the region and beyond.

The fiery leader of oil-rich Venezuela, who has labeled Bush “the devil” and dismisses him as the “little gentleman from the North,” plans to play to this discontent. He has called for protests during Bush’s stay and is leading a rally in Argentina when the president visits neighboring Uruguay.

March 9 A4

Biofuels on agenda for Bush in Brazil

The beginning of President Bush's five-nation Latin American tour sparked protests across the region, with thousands of demonstrators and police clashing in Brazil and students in Colombia lobbing explosives at authorities.

More than 6,000 students, environmentalists and left-leaning Brazilians held a largely peaceful march through the heart of Sao Paulo before police fired tear gas at protesters and beat them with batons. Hundreds fled and ducked into businesses to avoid the chaos, some of them bloodied.

Authorities did not disclose the number of injuries, but Brazilian media said at least 18 people were hurt and news photographs showed injured people being carried away.
Protesters said scuffles broke out when some radical demonstrators provoked officers and threw sticks and rocks at them — but said police overreacted. A police officer who declined to give his name in keeping with department policy confirmed that extremists appeared to cause the confrontations.

After the clash, the protest continued peacefully but with far fewer people. The marchers waved communist flags and railed against Bush, the war in Iraq and the ethanol proposal. Almost all had departed by sundown and streets were calm several hours later when Bush arrived in Sao Paulo.

In the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, more than 500 people yelled "Get Out, Imperialist!" as they marched to a Citigroup Inc. bank branch and burned an effigy of Bush. Protesters also targeted the U.S. Consulate in Rio de Janeiro, splattering it with bright red paint meant to signify blood.

In Colombia, about 200 masked students at Bogota's National University clashed with 300 anti-riot police carrying shields and helmets, spray-painting anti-U.S. slogans on walls and shouting "Out Bush!"

Police fired water cannons and tear gas, and the students hurled back rocks, fireworks, a few Molotov cocktails and dozens of "potato bombs" — small explosives made of gunpowder wrapped in foil. There were no immediate reports of injuries or arrests.

The Colombian demonstrators called for the scuttling of a U.S.-Colombia free trade agreement signed in November and currently stalled in U.S. Congress, and accused Washington of meddling in the South American nation's internal affairs by sending some $700 million a year in mostly military aid.

Colombia is beefing up security in the capital for Bush's visit Sunday, the first by a sitting U.S. president since Ronald Reagan in 1982. About 21,000 security agents will patrol the capital.

Meanwhile, Colombia's police chief said authorities have foiled leftist rebel plans for terrorist acts to disrupt Bush's visit, but offered no details.

Asked about the protests, White House spokesman Gordon Johndroe said Bush "enjoys traveling to thriving democracies where freedom of speech and expression are the law of the land. He has a positive agenda here that we believe the people of Brazil and the rest of the Americas will benefit from."

Some protesters in Brazil carried stalks of sugarcane — which is used to make ethanol — and a banner reading: "For every liter of ethanol produced, 4 liters of fresh water are consumed, monoculture is destroying the nation's greatest asset."

"Bush and the United States go to war to control oil reserves, and now Bush and his pals are trying to control the production of ethanol in Brazil. And that has to be stopped," said Suzanne Pereira dos Santos of Brazil's Landless Workers Movement.

Activists from the environmental group Greenpeace warned that increased ethanol production could lead to further clearing of the Amazon rain forest as well as cause social unrest, since most sugarcane-ethanol operations are run by wealthy families or corporations that reap most of the benefits while the poor are left to cut the cane with machetes.

Bush has spoken approvingly of Brazil's ethanol program, which powers eight out of every 10 new cars. The proposed accord is meant to help turn ethanol into an internationally traded commodity and to promote sugarcane-based ethanol production in Central America and the Caribbean.

Brazil is mounting what has been described as its biggest security effort ever in Sao Paulo. About 4,000 agents
— including Brazilian troops and FBI and U.S. Secret Service officers — will be on hand during Bush's almost 24-hour visit. Graffiti reading "Get Out, Bush! Assassin!" appeared on walls near locations in Brazil where Bush will drive past on his tour, which also includes stops in Uruguay, Guatemala and Mexico.

However, there were no visible signs of protesters along Bush's motorcade route in the nearly hourlong drive from Sao Paulo's airport to his hotel.

In Mexico, which Bush is scheduled to visit Tuesday, about two dozen demonstrators gathered in front of the U.S. Embassy in the capital chanting slogans against the U.S. project to construct border fences and Bush's visit.

Carmelo Ramirez Reyes showed up in a devil's mask, carrying a placard reading "My name is George Bush, killer of Mexicans."

March 10 A7

Bush, Chavez duel amid protests, anti-US sentiment in South America

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez launched another verbal assault on President Bush Friday as he led some 20,000 supporters in an anti-American rally.

Nearly 20,000 fans gathered at a stadium in Buenos Aires - not to watch soccer but to hear Hugo Chavez bash George W. Bush. And the Venezuelan leader didn't disappoint them.

For two hours Friday night, Chavez heaped scorn on the American president. He called him a "political cadaver" and said Bush was on his way to becoming "cosmic dust." At one point Bush was the "little gentleman from the North." At another, he was an "imperial boss" who had no business in the "heroic lands of our America."

Shouts of "Gringo go home!" erupted in the stands.

"We are here to show our support of Chavez and our repudiation of Bush and imperialism," said Claudio Hernandez, a Chilean in the crowd. "We are against Bush because of his oil wars and his other policies, which go against the people of the world."

As Chavez was railing against U.S. policy in Argentina, Bush arrived in neighboring Uruguay, the second stop on a five-nation swing that began earlier Friday in Brazil.

Here, too, anti-American sentiment was running high.

Bush demonstrators scuffled with bystanders and shattered windows at an American fast-food restaurant in Montevideo, the capital.

"Exterminate the Empire!" a masked woman spray-painted on a business facade.

But so far the biggest protest against Bush's visit has been in Sao Paulo, Brazil, where riot police fired tear gas and clubbed some protesters after some 6,000 people held a largely peaceful march Thursday. Brazil's streets were calmer Friday, though 150 protesters burned a Bush effigy with a swastika on its shirt and a Hitler mustache penciled on its face.

In Asuncion, Paraguay, a few dozen pro-Chavez supporters turned up outside the U.S. Embassy Friday to
denounce Bush - even though the U.S. leader was not stopping there.

Police put down violent protests in Colombia in advance of Bush's visit there, and in Guatemala, Mayan leaders said Indian priests will purify the sacred archaeological site of Iximche to eliminate "bad spirits" after Bush visits there Monday.

"That a person like (Bush), with the persecution of our migrant brothers in the United States, with the wars he has provoked, is going to walk in our sacred lands, is an offense for the Mayan people," Guatemalan activist Juan Tiney said.

Protesters also demonstrated Friday outside the U.S. Embassy in Mexico, where Bush wraps up his trip next week.

In Buenos Aires, Chavez said he didn't intend to "sabotage" Bush's visit. It was just a coincidence, he said, that he and his rival were touring the region at the same time.

Chavez is using Venezuela's oil wealth to reach out to ordinary Latin Americans and to court other leftist leaders.

While Bush is in Colombia, Chavez plans also to be in the Andean region with another his Bolivian protege, President Evo Morales.

And as Bush heads to Guatemala in Central America, Chavez will be touring the nearby Caribbean to meet leaders in Haiti on Monday.

Chavez told his sympathizers in Argentina that Bush's five-nation swing would fail to improve America's image and dismissed his pledges of U.S. aid as a cynical attempt to "confuse" Latin Americans.

"I believe one has to give the president of the United States a medal for hypocrisy because he has said he is concerned about poverty in Latin America."

The Venezuelan leader said it was U.S. free-market policies that had impoverished the region, along with Washington's tolerance of right-wing dictatorships in decades past.

March 10      D6 (Religion)

Chavez calls for Christian-inspired socialism

President Hugo Chavez calls Jesus a guiding light for his self-styled socialist revolution.

But his relationship with the Roman Catholic Church is complicated and sometimes strained. Even as the leftist leader has invited Catholic priests to share their ideas on transforming Venezuela into a socialist state, he has clashed with some priests who are critical of him _ and in one case declared that a Venezuelan archbishop is bound for hell.

Nonetheless, Chavez says he wants the best relations with the church and has recently spoken by phone with some supportive priests during his near-daily radio broadcasts. The church leadership's tone toward Chavez has varied over the years from cordiality to open hostility.

"The Catholic Church, its priests at all levels, (should) take a step toward the forefront of the debate... You are welcome in the debate on building socialism, our socialism," Chavez said in his radio address on Tuesday.
Chavez has lashed out, however, at Monsignor Roberto Luckert, who has warned that Venezuela is headed for communism and that the shift could infringe on freedoms. In a January speech, Chavez accused Luckert, the archbishop of Coro, of telling lies and living an ungodly privileged life.

Chavez said the priest is doomed to go to hell _ to which Luckert responded: "It seems he's going to hell, too."

The Venezuelan leader peppers his speeches with Bible verses and often describes his political movement as a struggle between good and evil, such as when he famously called U.S. President George W. Bush "the devil" in a speech to the United Nations last year.

At home, Luckert has been one of the most outspoken critics of Chavez. The archbishop recently told Venezuela's Union Radio that, while Chavez gives sermon-like speeches, his government is spending money lavishly. Just as Chavez urged him to live more humbly, Luckert replied that "I invite him to take a dugout canoe (instead of the presidential jet) and go to Nicaragua."

Chavez said Tuesday that despite Luckert's hostility, "he isn't going to get us fighting with the Catholic Church." He added: "We are true Catholics and friends of the majority of priests and bishops."

Most Venezuelans are Catholic and the church wields tremendous influence among parishioners, giving particular sting to the barbs exchanged periodically between Chavez, Luckert and some other church leaders.

"There has to be respect," said churchgoer Cesar Milano, who visited Caracas' San Francisco Church to pray while passers-by paused to cross themselves at the doorway. "I hope they reach an understanding for the good of us all."

Leading bishops in the Venezuelan Episcopal Conference have called for a style of socialism that upholds free speech, tolerates opposing views and respects religious education.

Chavez assures them they have nothing to fear.

"Christianity is essentially socialist, so no one _ no Christian, no Catholic _ should be alarmed," said Chavez, who was once an altar boy and says his brand of socialism will not copy Soviet or Cuban communism despite his close friendship with Fidel Castro.

Chavez says if he had not entered politics, he would have loved to be a priest. He calls Jesus an exemplary revolutionary and often recalls the Bible passage that declares it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God.

Chavez, who was first elected in 1998, has promised a renewed drive to create a socialist system and help the poor following his re-election in December.

The entirely pro-Chavez National Assembly granted him sweeping powers in January to pass laws by decree for 18 months in areas from the economy to defense. While Chavez has since moved to nationalize electrical and phone companies and take majority control of several privately-run oil projects, he also has insisted private property and personal freedoms will be respected.

He snapped at church leaders in January when they expressed concern about a government decision not to renew the broadcast license of opposition-sided TV channel RCTV.
Chavez pointedly told top Vatican representative Cardinal Jorge Urosa Savino in one speech: "The state respects the church. The church should respect the state."

Urosa and other bishops say they want a respectful dialogue that allows for disagreement. And Urosa has bristled at the suggestion that Jesus was a pioneering socialist.

"His purpose on earth was not to establish or institute systems _ whether socialist, republican, democratic _ nor much less was he a precursor of socialist ideas. That confusion should end," Urosa was quoted as saying by the newspaper El Nacional.

Meanwhile, some priests have increasingly been speaking up in favor of Chavez's ideals.

Monsignor Edgar Doria said he thinks Chavez shares Christian principles like social justice and equality, and that the church can be a key ally in social programs for the poor.

Bishop Mario Moronta wrote in a recent letter, widely published in Venezuelan media, that the church has a role to play in discussing the "21st Century Socialism" espoused by Chavez.

"We are called to participate in just efforts to overcome poverty," Moronta wrote. "Every Catholic and person of good will has much to contribute."

March 11   A15

Mexican president aims to lower exodus

Mexican President Felipe Calderon won't be fighting for migration reform when he meets with President Bush next week. Instead, he will be spelling out what he intends to do to keep Mexicans at home.

Calderon, who was inaugurated on Dec. 1, has pledged to take 100 actions in his first 100 days in office, many of which represent the first steps toward "curing" Mexico's long tradition of illegal migration to the U.S.

If implemented, his proposals could help transform Mexico from a labor-exporting country with relatively low growth, productivity and wages into an investment-rich, job-producing economy with better living standards for its 107 million people, nearly half of whom still live in poverty.

"We are laying the foundation for a more just, healthy society with better and more equal opportunities for all," he said.

Even a modicum of success for Calderon would improve on the record of his predecessor Vicente Fox, who failed to persuade the United States to accept Mexican guest workers and also could not put in place proposed reforms.

Like Fox, Calderon faces powerful Mexican monopolies and oligopolies, union leaders and old-school politicians who have resisted changes to a system that concentrates power and wealth in a small number of hands and blocks attempts to improve competition, lower consumer prices and open the job market to more people.

Unlike Fox, Calderon has shown he can rally lawmakers and others behind his plans: Congress unanimously passed his 2007 federal budget and he has united state governments behind a nationwide crackdown on drug trafficking.
Among other things, he has proposed labor, energy and judicial reforms to encourage investment, promote competition and create jobs; improved tax collection to generate more revenue to fight poverty and improve education; universal health care and support for small and medium-size businesses.

"Curing" migration will take many more than his six years in office, Calderon says. With this in mind, he set the goal of boosting Mexico's per-capita income from the equivalent of about $8,000 today to around $30,000 by 2030.

"It won't be easy. It won't be fast, but yes, it is possible," Calderon said.

Calderon and Bush will meet in Merida, the capital of Yucatan state, on March 13 and 14. Officials have not disclosed in detail the talks' agenda, but in addition to migration, the two are expected to discuss drugs and unresolved trade disputes over trucking rights and agricultural products.

U.S.-bound migrants include not only poor and poorly educated unskilled laborers, but also middle-class entrepreneurs, college graduates and professionals. Many actually have jobs in Mexico, but the salaries don't match their talents and experience, and workplace discrimination is widespread.

"I think he's on the right track, but migration is a long-term problem," said Jorge Chabat, an international affairs expert at Mexico City's Center for Economic Research and Instruction.

Jose Antonio Perez, a 27-year-old college graduate from the oil-rich Gulf coast state of Veracruz, has a degree in mechanical engineering, but no real career prospects in Mexico.

His jobs have included a five-month, unpaid engineering internship at a boat-repair company; a two-year job with a telephone company that offered no benefits and no chance of advancement; and his current teaching job, which requires little of his engineering skills and offers no insurance benefits, vacation, or job security.

Perez works 12 hours a day Monday through Friday teaching high school mathematics and computers - a post that pays $12,000 a year. He supplements his income with odd carpentry and bricklaying jobs, or selling clothing and even cars.

"I sleep four hours a night," he said. "I can't even think of having a family until I get something more secure."

More than a year ago, when several of Perez's friends were working illegally in the United States, they earned as much as $26,300 a year pumping gas or working in carpentry.

The friends have since returned, but their stories have inspired Perez. If his situation doesn't improve in six months, he plans to cross the border as well.

"I could be a carpenter or a locksmith," he said.

Calderon - who often notes that he has relatives in the United States, although he has not revealed their legal status - says he is well aware of the difficulties Mexicans face trying to live and work in their own country.

He recently told the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico: "The ideal situation for Mexico is not to have Mexicans migrate."

March 12 A8
Chavez pushes for socialist counterattack against US

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez called Sunday for a socialist counterattack against the American "empire," taking his campaign to upstage President Bush's Latin American tour to a packed gymnasium in a poor, indigenous Bolivian city.

Speaking for over an hour in El Alto, which sits on a cliff above the capital, La Paz, Chavez repeated accusations that the U.S. was trying to assassinate him and close ally Bolivian President Evo Morales. The U.S. has denied the allegations.

Chavez donned a traditional Andean poncho and a wreath of coca leaves, and tried on a Bolivian miner's helmet and a traditional Quechua hat looped in neon thread while professing his love for the country named after his idol, the 19th-century South American revolutionary Simon Bolivar.

He and Morales signed a series of agreements strengthening ties between the two nations, pledging closer integration of their petroleum industries and officially naming Bolivia a member of Banco Sur, a South American development bank Chavez sees as an alternative to the International Monetary Fund.

Chavez held an anti-Bush rally in a soccer stadium Friday in the Argentine capital, then headed to flood-ravaged Bolivia to tout his pledge of $15 million in flood relief — 10 times the amount sent by the U.S.

"The empire is in counterattack, with the head of the empire himself leading the attack," Chavez said of the U.S. "And why? Because they realize that the popular Latin American offensive is for real."

He said now was the time for Latin America's newly socialist countries to fight back. "We have resisted for a long time. But no one wins a battle always staying on the defensive," he said. "This is no longer a time for defense. This is a time for attack. Let loose the charging cavalry!"

Chavez arrived in Nicaragua late Sunday, warmly greeting his ally and former U.S. foe President Daniel Ortega. The two then traveled to the city of Leon, where they announced that Venezuela would build a new oil refinery nearby.

Cheered by thousands of supporters, Chavez said Bush's tour was a failure. "Latin Americans are telling you: 'Gringo, go home!' " he said.

On Monday, the Venezuelan leader plans to head to the Caribbean nations of Haiti and Jamaica.

Bush met with conservative Colombian President Alvaro Uribe, his strongest ally in the region, in Bogota on Sunday and traveled to Guatemala that night.

While Bush has declined to even mention Chavez's name during appearances this week in Brazil and Uruguay, Chavez has peppered his lengthy speeches with jabs at Bush.

March 13  A6

Mexican leader urges Bush to do more

Mexican President Felipe Calderon has a tough message for President Bush: The United States must do more — "much more" — to solve thorny issues of drug-trafficking and immigration.

At the last stop on his Latin American tour, Bush must convince Calderon on Tuesday that he's committed to
soothing strained U.S.-Mexico relations, which only got worse when Bush signed a law calling for construction of more than 700 miles of new fencing along the long border the two countries share.

Many Latin Americans see the fence as evidence that America is ripping up its welcome mat.

The welcome mat here for Bush's talks with Mexico's newly elected leader is muddied with anti-American sentiment, particularly over the war in Iraq.

Security is extremely tight in Merida, a city on Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula. Schools are closed. The area around the hotels where Bush and Calderon are staying is guarded by police and surrounded by metal barriers. Before Bush's arrival Monday evening, about 200 people marched through the streets, carrying Mexican flags and chanting "Bush is a murderer and he's not welcome!"

When he first became president, Bush promised that Latin American would vault to the top of his agenda. But after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the administration's focus was riveted on South Asia and the Middle East. That left many Mexicans feeling neglected by their northern neighbor, and some view Bush's trip as a case of too little, too late.

Bush and Calderon's two days of talks are meant to better the U.S.-Mexico relationship, not yield dramatic announcements. The two have some things in common. Both went to Harvard University. Both are conservative and pro-business. Each wants to stem illegal immigration. Yet Calderon has a more wonkish and less charismatic personality than his predecessor Vincente Fox, who like Bush, owned a ranch.

The two are expected to discuss port security and modernizing customs on both sides of the border to speed trade. Immigration and narcotrafficking — an issue Bush thinks needs to be tackled regionally — likely will dominate their discussions.

Bush's five-nation tour of Latin America is acting as a counterweight to Hugo Chavez, Venezuela's leftist leader who is carrying the flag for the leftward shift in Latin America. The Mexican leader has said he's not interested in being Bush's front man for battling Chavez' rising influence.

Calderon, a conservative who narrowly won the contested July election, is under pressure from a strong leftist opposition to alleviate poverty affecting half of Mexico's citizens, and refrain from being a subordinate to the more powerful United States.

Gerardo Fernandez, a spokesman for Mexico's leftist Democratic Revolution Party, arrived in Merida on Monday with a bag of toy soldiers he wanted to leave at Bush's hotel so he could "play war and leave the world alone." When he couldn't get through security, he climbed a rusty metal barrier and threw the plastic troops into the secured area.

Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia and Guatemala were the first four stops on Bush's trip that began last week. He returns on Wednesday to Washington, reinvigorated to press Democrats and Republicans to overhaul U.S. immigration law. Bush is hoping that a measure will materialize by August — before spending bills begin to crowd the legislative calendar.

The biggest hurdle, Bush said, is figuring out what to do with the 12 million illegal immigrants already in the United States. The president has proposed a guest worker plan that would allow legal employment for foreigners and give some illegals a shot at becoming American citizens. Critics say this rewards unlawful behavior.

"There will not be amnesty, automatic citizenship," Bush said Monday in Guatemala before a short flight to
Mexico. "It's just not going to happen. Nor is it feasible to try to kick everybody out of our country. That's not possible. And so I'm going to work with members of both parties to find a rational middle ground."

Calderon has lambasted the U.S. decision to build the new border fence — a mix of physical barriers and high-tech virtual fencing. He likens it to the Berlin Wall, and argues that both countries need to improve Mexico's economy to lessen the desire to seek work in the United States.

Calderon also is critical of the Bush administration's efforts to stem the flow of drugs into the United States. The Mexican president says threats his administration has received from drug traffickers will not stop the government's nearly nationwide military crackdown, and he is calling on the United States to do more to help.

"We are, at the end of the day, putting our lives on the line in this battle, and the United States has to come up with something that is more than symbolic gestures, much more," Calderon said in an interview Saturday with The Associated Press.

"Mexico can't diminish the availability of drugs while the U.S. hasn't reduced its demand."

March 14 A8

**Bush today wraps up tumultuous Latin tour**

Violent Protests dogged President Bush on a visit to Mexico, with demonstrators lobbing concrete blocks at his hotel, smashing up a nearby town hall and battling riot police outside the US Embassy in the Mexican capital.

The Tuesday disturbances were only the latest clashes during Bush’s five-country tour of Latin America, where many blame him for tougher US immigration policies and opposition runs deep against the war in Iraq.

Bush’s meeting with President Felipe Calderon in this colonial town in southeastern Mexico is the last stop before he returns home today. But first, he planned to deliver a message to the Mexican people and to Congress.

“I’m going to keep repeating it while I’m here in Mexico, that I know our country must have comprehensive immigration reform,” he said.

But Bush could only promise that he will work hard for passage of his guest worker program.

On Tuesday night, about 100 protestors marched to Bush’s hotel for the second night in a row carrying Mexican flags and calling the US president a “murderer.”

The protestors pounded on high metal security barriers outside the hotel in an unsuccessful attempt to bring them down and hurled chunks of concrete from sidewalks over the barrier at riot police lining the other side. Bush was away from his hotel having dinner with Calderon.

In Mexico City, several hundred demonstrators burned US flags and waved banners with slogans such as, “Bush you are not welcome in Mexico. Go to hell.”

“We are in disagreement with the war policy,” of Bush, said Guadalupe Fernandez, 64, a craftswoman who was protesting but not involved in the violence. “Bush is desperate because Latin America is moving toward the left.”

March 16 A3
Drop ‘Coca’ from the Cola? It can’t be real

Always Coca-Cola? Not if Bolivia's coca growers have their way.

The farmers want the word "Coca" dropped by the U.S. soft drink company, arguing that the potent shrub belongs to the cultural heritage of this Andean nation, where the coca leaf infuses everyday life and is sacred to many.

A commission of coca industry representatives advising an assembly rewriting Bolivia's constitution passed a resolution Wednesday calling on the Atlanta, Ga.-based company to take "Coca" out of its name and asking the United Nations to decriminalize the leaf.

The resolution demands that "international companies that include in their commercial name the name of coca (example: Coca Cola) refrain from using the name of the sacred leaf in their products."

The commission, which met for three days in Sucre, 255 miles southeast of La Paz, is part of an effort led by President Evo Morales to rehabilitate the image of plant, used in the Andes for millennia but better known internationally as the base ingredient of cocaine.

Coca-Cola released a statement Thursday saying their trademark is "the most valuable and recognized brand in the world" and was protected under Bolivian law.

The statement repeated the company's past denials that Coca-Cola has ever used cocaine as an ingredient — but was silent on whether the natural coca leaf was used to flavor their flagship soda.

"They need to understand our situation," said David Herrera, a state government supervisor for the coca-rich Chapare region. "They exported coca as a raw material for Coca-Cola, and we can't even freely sell it in Bolivia."

The Bolivian government regulates the sale of coca to prevent use by the drug trade.

In its natural state, the green leaf is only a mild stimulant. In Bolivia's white-collar offices, coca tea is served instead of coffee, and the country's farmers, miners and longhaul truckers chew the leaf to get through a long work day.

The government wants the U.N. to decriminalize trade in coca-based products to promote its exports.

*Morales, a former coca grower, believes an international market for coca-derived products such as tea, flour, liquor, and even toothpaste would draw some of the country's estimated 65,500 acres of coca away from the drug trade.*

*But the United States, which funds a Bolivian coca-eradication program, is adamantly opposed to the policy, saying it only encourages more coca production.*

March 19 A8

Giuliani defends his law firm’s work for Venezuela’s Citgo

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — Republican presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani on Sunday defended his law firm's role in representing Citgo Petroleum Corp., which is ultimately controlled by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, saying it was helping protect American jobs.
Giuliani acknowledged though, that his opponents will try to exploit the news that a lawyer with Bracewell & Giuliani of Houston has been representing Citgo before the Texas legislature.

The firm has had a contract with Citgo since before Giuliani joined it.

"Oh, they'll exploit everything," Giuliani said in an interview. "There are things that make sense and things that don't make sense and that doesn't make any sense. It was one of those political attacks where you have nothing to do with it, you're not involved in it and so it doesn't really worry you very much. What they're doing is lawful and honorable and helping to protect jobs for more than 100,000 Americans."

Although Citgo Petroleum is a U.S.-based company, it was bought in 1990 by Petroleos de Venezuela, the national oil company of Venezuela. It employs 4,000 people in Texas and other states, and Giuliani said indirectly more than 100,000 people have jobs because of the company.

Chavez has been an outspoken critic of President Bush and is close to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. Because of that, Citgo has become unpopular with some Americans.

Giuliani was in Florida raising money at a New York Yankees spring training game. After the fundraiser, the former New York mayor watched the game from a front row seat directly behind Yankees manager Joe Torre. He discussed Chavez during the game, saying he is one of the reasons why the United States needs to develop alternative fuels and become energy independent.

"As the president I would make that my number one priority, the way Eisenhower and Kennedy made getting to the moon the number one priority of the American government. It has to consume a tremendous amount of our attention," Giuliani said.

If the country had done so in the 1970s, the nation would be more secure now, he said.

He called Chavez dangerous and said the United States needs to use concerns about him to build relations with Latin American countries.

"We've got to learn how to play Chavez. There's a lot of concern in America about Chavez; there's even more concern in South America. We have to sort of use that to bring them to the United States," he said.

March 29  

Castro’s brother says Fidel ‘in 1 piece’

HAVANA (AP) - Ramon Castro said Wednesday his younger brother, Cuban President Fidel Castro, is doing very well almost eight months after surgery but jokingly dodged reporters' questions about whether the leader will soon appear in public.

"He's in one piece," the 82-year-old Ramon said of 80-year-old Fidel as he toured a cattlemen's fair and rodeo with his friend John Parke Wright, a Florida cattleman.

"These Castros are strong!"

Ramon Castro is a longtime farmer and rancher who has never served in a major government position. Wearing a white guayabera dress shirt, brown slacks and a cowboy hat, he looked a lot like his younger brother Fidel.

Puffing on a cigar as reporters trailed him at the fair, Ramon joked when asked if Fidel would appear in public
"Calm down; don't make wrinkles that no one is going to iron out later!" the elder Castro said, eliciting laughter.

Bolivian President Evo Morales said this month he expects Castro will soon return to public life - perhaps even the presidency - by April 28, when a meeting of several regional leaders is planned in Havana.

Castro temporarily ceded power to his younger brother Raul, the 75-year-old defence minister, on July 31 after announcing he had intestinal surgery. He has not appeared in public since.

Castro's health condition and his exact ailment are state secrets but he is commonly believed to suffer from diverticular disease, a weakening of the walls of the colon common in older people.

March 31 A10

Argentina presses claim on Falklands

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina - Twenty-five years after hostilities ceased, Argentina is opening a new front in the Falklands War.

Rather than jets and mortar rounds, however, this salvo involves diplomats appealing for help at the United Nations and the government reasserting long-standing claims to the island chain where far more sheep than people huddle against the forbidding South Atlantic winds.

London, however, maintains its hold on the island, which Argentina invaded 25 years ago this Monday.

Many Argentines — especially the left-wing power base of President Nestor Kirchner — see the war as a huge mistake pursued by the nation's discredited military dictators. But Argentines still universally call the Falklands — known in South America as the "Malvinas" — as their own. And in this election year, Kirchner appears poised to gain support by pushing hard against Britain's firm refusal to negotiate on the islands' fate.

"Argentina has never consented to the United Kingdom's claim of rights to the territory," Eduardo Airaldi, Kirchner's top official in charge of the South Atlantic region, said as he described Kirchner's position in an interview with The Associated Press.

Kirchner's predecessors didn't do as much to press Argentina's claims to the islands. Former President Carlos Menem restored diplomatic ties with Britain in 1990 after agreeing to shelve the sovereignty question.

In contrast, Kirchner declared the archipelago's recovery to be "a permanent and irrevocable objective of the Argentine people." His government expressed irritation when Britain protested the presence of an Argentine ship near the islands and challenged changes to fishing rights made by Falklands administrators. In January he sent his foreign minister to lobby U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to support new sovereignty talks.

Argentina on Tuesday said it scrapped a deal Menem had signed with the British to explore for oil and natural gas around the Falklands. The joint venture yielded no major discoveries, but was long on symbolism, since it represented an Argentine acknowledgment of British rights to the sea floor. Britain's Foreign Office called the end of the deal a "regrettable action" that "will not in any way help Argentina in its claim for sovereignty of the Islands."

Just before the Argentine invasion on April 2, 1982, diplomats from both countries had been talking about an eventual Hong Kong-like handover of the colony Britain had occupied since 1833, despite the idea's unpopularity in London and among the 3,000 or so British-descended residents of the island, known as
"kelpers."

But the invasion changed all that.

"We will not discuss sovereignty unless and until the Islanders so wish. At present they do not," a British Foreign Office spokeswoman told the AP on condition of anonymity in line with department policy. "In this respect, 1982 changed everything."

Britain reacted quickly to the invasion, summoning the Queen Elizabeth 2 cruise ship to carry 3,000 troops and mobilizing an armada that included Prince Andrew to sail some 8,000 miles south.

British artillery pounded the Argentine draftees who had dug foxholes in the rocky soil. Humbled by the onslaught, the South American nation surrendered that June 14, after 649 Argentine and 272 British troops were killed.

_The two countries share a long history — the British helped build Argentina's railroads and promoted its beef industry. A large British community still lives in Argentina, served by an English-language daily paper in the capital._

But the Falklands dispute remains an open wound. Many public schools, streets, small businesses and taxi stands are proudly named for the Malvinas. Billboards that read "The Malvinas are ours" are a common sight.

_Kirchner has sought to avoid offending either the left or the right in Argentina by focusing on the idea that Britain acted illegally when it expelled an Argentine military garrison from the islands in 1833, a nationalist tone that analysts say won't hurt him this election year._

_So Argentines were outraged recently when British Prime Minister Tony Blair compared the British retaking of the islands to the Kosovo air war that led to the overthrow of Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic._

_"I have got no doubt it was the right thing to do," Blair said in a podcast on his Web site. "But for reasons not simply to do with British sovereignty but also because I think there was a principle at stake which is that a land shouldn't be annexed in that way."_

_Many Argentines initially supported the war as well, but came to blame the ruling military junta for picking a fight the country had little hope of winning, and sending conscripts to their deaths._

_The greatest legacy of the 74-day war for Argentines is that the defeat hastened the fall of the dictatorship a year later in 1983, said Riordan Roett, a political scientist at Johns Hopkins University._

April 1 A2

Venezuelan president imposes Easter alcohol sale ban

For beer and whiskey-loving Venezuelans, Easter this year won't be an alcohol-soaked drinking fest.

President Hugo Chavez has imposed a ban on alcohol sales during Holy Week in an attempt to reduce accidents and crimes, prompting a run on liquor stores.

The decree prohibits alcohol sales on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday next week. A more limited ban, restricting sales to between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., including at restaurants and bars, went into effect Friday and will last through April 9.
The sudden, unprecedented measure confused many Venezuelans who raced to stash up before Friday, thinking that would be their last chance to buy for more than a week. "People are desperate, above all because the majority found out at the last minute," said Jose Manuel Fernandes, a liquor store owner in Caracas, as he struggled to meet the demands of dozens of customers yelling for bottles and cases of their preferred drink.

Industry figures show that Venezuela is among the top producers and consumers of beer in Latin America, while whiskey and rum are also popular spirits. Despite laws that prohibit the consumption of alcohol in public areas, Venezuelans can often be seen drinking on street corners or sometimes even driving with a beer in hand.

Close to a hundred deaths and thousands of injuries are reported every year during the Easter holiday, which authorities attribute largely to alcohol consumption.

Chavez has a tendency to enforce his views on the public: enraged by the sight of children unloading beer crates in the slums, he ordered beer trucks off the street last year. Some suspected the latest measure has more to do with Chavez's friendly ties with Iran, where Islamic law forbids alcohol.

"I got nervous. I thought Chavez had prohibited the sale of liquor, seeing how he talks about Cuba, socialism and the [Iranian] ayatollahs," Enrique Salazar, 67, said Friday after buying three bottles of whiskey to last him through the holiday. "I don't drive so I'm not a danger to anybody," Salazar said. "Instead of prohibiting [sales], they should throw drunks who drive in jail."

Police rarely crack down on public alcohol consumption or screen drivers for drinking. The majority of Venezuelans show strong support for Chavez, who has said he wants to lead a socialist revolution in the country. But they have been less enthusiastic about his attempts to curb drinking, including his announcement in October banning the beer trucks that sell alcohol directly on the street.

Chavez reassured the public at the time he had no plans to forbid alcohol in Venezuela, but he passionately warned about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption, blaming it for a degeneration of society.

April 1 A12

Bridge gives hikers backdoor entry to ruins

LIMA, Peru - A village near Peru's Machu Picchu has built a bridge over a turbulent river to open another route for backpackers trekking to the lofty Inca ruins.

The bridge was inaugurated Saturday in the village of Santa Teresa despite the objections of government cultural experts, who fear increased tourism could threaten the UNESCO World Heritage site as hostels and restaurants spring up to serve travelers.

They also say more tourists could imperil rare flora and fauna in the highland jungle surrounding the ruins, which are dramatically perched on a ridge 300 miles southeast of the capital Lima.

But authorities in Santa Teresa, less than 10 miles from Machu Picchu, are hoping the bridge over the Vilcanota River will help the local economy get a piece of the tourism pie. Most travelers would likely spend the night in the village before continuing on to Machu Picchu.

The site, a complex of stone buildings built by the Inca empire that controlled the area when the Spanish conquistadors arrived in Peru in 1532, has been reachable by train from Cuzco and via a days-long hike on a mountain footpath.
The new route, involving a daylong bus ride through twisting dirt roads and a seven-mile hike along railroad tracks, targets thrifty backpackers who want to avoid the pricey train tickets.

"It's a door to our development and all the people are happy," Santa Teresa Mayor Reynaldo Vargas told The Associated Press by telephone. "Three or four years ago in Santa Teresa it was a novelty to have five or six tourists, but now we are receiving 200 tourists a day."

An average of 2,000 tourists a day visit Machu Picchu, with a maximum set at 2,500. Some archaeologists say the limit should be much lower, arguing that large numbers of visitors trekking over the stone steps will eventually damage the ruins.

UNESCO has expressed concern over rapidly expanding tourism to Machu Picchu, and will send a delegation in April to determine whether the new bridge threatens the ruins.

April 1 A14

US farmers help feed Cuba

Since 2003, one country has been the main supplier of food to Fidel Castro's Cuba: the United States.

Surprised? You have good company.

Many Americans think their government's 45-year-old embargoblocks all trade with the communist government, but the United States is the top supplier of food and agricultural products to Cuba. Many Cubans depend on rations grown in Arkansas and North Dakota for their rice and beans.

Since December 1999, governors, senators and congressmen from at least 28 U.S. states have visited Cuba, most to talk trade. They keep coming: Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman was flying in Sunday with a farm delegation. Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter of Idaho plans a visit next month.

Washington's sanctions choke off most trade with Cuba, but a law passed by Congress in 2000 authorized cash-only purchases of U.S. food and agricultural products.

Cuba agreed to take advantage of the law after Hurricane Michelle in November 2001 cut into its food stocks.

Since then, Cuba has paid more than $1.5 billion for American food and agricultural products, said John Kavulich, senior policy adviser at the U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council of New York.

The $340 million in exports in 2006 represented a drop of about 3 percent from 2005, which was down from nearly $392 million in 2004. Kavulich said the decline was caused mostly by generous subsidies and credits from Venezuela and China.

But the U.S. remains on top. Its main exports to Cuba include chicken, wheat, corn, rice and soybeans -- much of it doled out to Cubans on the government ration. The United States also sends Cuba brand-name cola, mayonnaise, hot sauce and candy bars, as well as dairy cows.

Kirby Jones, founder of the U.S.-Cuba Trade Association in Washington, said Cuba's food import company Alimport has an entire department dedicated to U.S. purchases.

Jones was in Cuba this month with Arkansas chicken exporters, Nebraska bean growers and officials from the Port of Corpus Christi.

"Hundreds and hundreds of American executives have come down here," he said. "[Cuban officials] know how to talk to us."

An assistant to Pedro Alvarez, Alimport's chairman, said the company could not comment without authorization from Cuban press officials.
But Cuban parliament speaker Ricardo Alarcon has said Havana does not expect the U.S. embargo to be eased under President Bush. The current administration tightened restrictions in 2004.

Don Mason of the Iowa Corn Growers Association agreed, saying he was "less than optimistic" that Washington will make it easier to trade with Cuba any time soon. He said the association ships on the order of 450,000 metric tons of corn to the island each year.

Any significant change in U.S. policy would be difficult under the 1996 Helms-Burton law, which prohibits normalization of relations with Cuba as long as 80-year-old Fidel Castro or his brother Raul is in charge. Fidel temporarily ceded power to Raul after emergency intestinal surgery in July.


Some believe that American interest in Cuba's new oil exploration efforts could change the political tide.

The island plans deep-water drilling, searching for deposits of crude oil less than 100 miles from Florida's coast. U.S. law prevents American firms from taking part, but Sens. Larry Craig, R-Idaho, and Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., introduced a measure this month that would open Cuban waters to U.S. oil and natural gas companies.

"If that passes, the embargo goes out the window," Jones said. "We're not talking about mayonnaise now. We're talking about million and millions of dollars."

April 5 A7

Castro chides Bush, Brazil

HAVANA (AP) -- Ailing leader Fidel Castro returned to the public debate - if not view - for the second time in less than a week Wednesday with a column in the Communist Party newspaper denouncing U.S. promotion of using food crops for biofuels.

Castro chided the Bush administration for its support of ethanol production for automobiles, a move that the 80-year-old leader said would leave the world's poor hungry.

It was his second article on the issue in less than a week, indicating he is increasingly anxious to have his voice heard on international matters, eight months after stepping down as Cuba's president because of illness.

Castro also gently chided leftist ally Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva for his country's ambitious plans for ethanol production and his cooperation with Bush in promoting it.

"It is not my intention to harm Brazil, nor get mixed up in affairs related to the internal politics of that great country," Castro wrote in the article, titled "Reflections of the Commander in Chief: The Internationalization of Genocide."

But, he said, key questions remained unanswered following weekend talks between Silva and Bush.

"From where and who will they supply the more than 500 million tons of corn and other cereals that the United States, Europe and the rich countries are going to need to produce the quantity of gallons of ethanol that the big companies of the United States and other countries demand in return for their many investments?" he asked in the column published in the daily Granma.

The issue has created a genteel tension in Cuban relations with the government of Silva, a former labor union organizer who has a long history of friendly ties with Cuba's communist leaders.
Brazil's foreign minister, Celso Amorim, last week responded to Castro's earlier criticism of biofuels by expressing personal respect but saying, "he has some ideas that are outdated."

Silva's top aide on international affairs, Marco Aurelio Garcia, said Wednesday the Brazilian president had no intention of transforming the country's ethanol plans into an ideological debate. Silva remains "obsessed" with the idea of biofuels and his belief that income from their production can benefit Brazil's poor, Garcia said.

Cuba itself has experimented with using sugar cane for ethanol production.

*But now that the United States has embraced the idea, Castro and his Venezuelan ally Hugo Chavez have expressed concern that rich countries will buy up the food crops of poor nations to meet their energy needs, threatening millions with starvation.*

*Brazil is a major ethanol producer, while Venezuela has the hemisphere's largest oil reserves. On Wednesday, Brazil and Ecuador signed agreements for the two countries to jointly produce biofuels and explore for oil in Ecuador.*

*The issue could arise again when Silva and Chavez meet for an energy summit on Venezuela's Margarita Island April 16-17. Other South American leaders have been invited, but have not yet confirmed.*

Meanwhile, Castro - who senior officials say is on the mend - seems ever more likely to chime in from the sidelines.

*On July 31, he temporarily ceded his functions to his brother Raul, the 75-year-old defense minister, after announcing he had undergone emergency intestinal surgery. Castro's condition and exact ailment remain a state secret, but he is widely believed to suffer from diverticular disease, a weakening of the walls of the colon that can cause sustained bleeding.*

*Cuban officials have given increasingly optimistic reports about his health, and there is a growing expectation on the island that he could soon make his first public appearance since falling ill.*

**April 7 D7**

**El Salvador honors slain archbishop**

Hundreds of Salvadorans last week marked the 27th anniversary of the slaying of Roman Catholic Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero during the nation's bloody civil war.

Romero was gunned down March 24, 1980, a day after calling on the military to halt its repressive tactics. The Vatican is considering him for sainthood.

A Mass was celebrated March 24 at the same hospital chapel where Romero was slain with a single bullet. Worshippers then walked through the streets singing hymns, clutching roses and carrying placards with photos of the archbishop. The procession concluded at the Metropolitan Cathedral, where Romero is buried.

During El Salvador's 12-year civil war, the military was blamed for forming death squads that killed thousands of suspected guerrillas and leftist opponents of the military-led government.

The day before he was killed, Romero criticized the army.
“In the name of God and this suffering community, I beg you, I beseech you, I order you, in the name of God, to cease the repression,” he said.

A U.N. truth commission concluded that Maj. Roberto D'Aubuisson, a death squad leader who went on to found the current ruling party, the Nationalist Republican Alliance, had ordered Romero’s killing. The United States backed the Salvadoran government during the war. D'Aubuisson died in 1992.

April 12 A10

On richest list, he’s No.2

Mexican telecom magnate Carlos Slim has quietly overtaken investor Warren Buffett as the world's second-richest man and is close to wresting the top spot from Bill Gates, Forbes magazine reported Wednesday.

In the two months since Forbes calculated its 2007 wealth rankings, the 67-year-old Slim's fortune rose $4 billion to $53.1 billion, while Buffett's holdings slipped to $52.4 billion as of March 29.

In an article on its Web site, Forbes attributed part of Slim's "amazing run" to a 15 percent increase in the stock price of Carso Global Telecom, part of a larger rally in Mexican stocks. Slim's America Movil cell phone company also soared on news of a possible acquisition of Telecom Italia.

In the 2007 rankings released March 8 but prepared almost a month earlier Forbes had listed Slim as the world's third-richest man and estimated Gates' fortune at $56 billion.

Slim said shortly afterward that he wasn't concerned about his ranking or taking over the top spot, but he expressed differences with Buffett, the chairman of Berkshire Hathaway Inc., and Gates, the chairman and co-founder of Microsoft Corp.

"It's not about having who knows how many bonds, to spend them on whatever one wants or live it up all year," said Slim, an engineer who wears modest suits and whose main indulgence appears to be expensive cigars. "I don't have apartments abroad. I don't have a house abroad."

Slim, who owns Mexico's dominant phone company and has holdings throughout Latin America, said his vision of a businessman's role in the world is at odds with that of Buffett, who announced last year he would donate $1.5 billion every year to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

"It's very interesting, because he leaves those who are running his affairs the responsibility of being very profitable," Slim said of Buffett. "If they're inefficient or don't get real-term returns, they're not going to be running anything."

"Our concept is more to accomplish and solve things, rather than giving that is, not going around like Santa Claus," Slim said. "Poverty isn't solved with donations."

April 15 A16

Many can’t afford burial in Haiti

Life has always been a struggle for Haiti's poor. These days, death isn't much easier.
The city morgue is under-refrigerated, jammed to capacity with unclaimed corpses and so short of funds that workers don't have paper masks to ward off the stench.

Deforestation has inflated the price of coffin wood, and hundreds -- possibly thousands -- of deaths in street violence are pushing up the price of funerals. Robbers plunder graves for coffins to resell, and families try to thwart them by smashing the coffin before it is covered with earth.

Some bereaved families are taking out high-interest "funeral loans," falling deep into debt to send off relatives with the dignity many were deprived of in life. Others have to abandon their dead on a dusty field known as Titanyen, a Creole word meaning "less than nothing," on the edge of the capital, Port-au-Prince.

A funeral now costs around $540 -- more than most Haitians earn in a year. Cremation is only for the wealthy.

Haiti's largest public morgue, built to hold 390 cadavers, often has nearly 500, many strewn on the cement floor for lack of space. The dead include shooting victims, AIDS victims, and babies who never saw their first birthday.

It costs a relative $27 just to pick up a body if it was dropped off at the morgue, and $47 if the morgue had to collect it off the street. As a result, few bodies are ever claimed by relatives. They end up in a common grave outside the capital, along with those dumped at the Titanyen field.

"If the families don't have money to claim the bodies, they simply never show up," said morgue director Sergo Castor.

Marie Nicola's son was found dead in the street, his skull bashed in by unknown assailants in the taxi he was driving. The 62-year-old unemployed mother said she does not know if she will be able to afford a decent burial.

"After you pay the morgue, you have to buy clothes for the body, a coffin, and pay the church and the cemetery. We don't have anything so it's very hard," Nicola said outside the morgue as relatives consoled her.

Outside the morgue, freelance undertakers with beaten-up old hearses stand ready to haggle over a funeral price. It's an entirely uncontrolled market.

"Sometimes you can see the economic situation of the person and you can negotiate a lower price. I'm human, too, so it affects me when people want to bury a relative but can't pay," said Carl Fanfan, an undertaker.

The Rev. Rick Frechette is a Catholic priest with the Illinois-based charity Friends of the Orphans, which runs an orphanage and a children's hospital in Haiti.

Trying "to do something a little more human for those that have died," the group makes coffins from papier-mâché instead of wood and provides free burials for about 40 people a month, Frechette said.

Nicola said she'll ask relatives to chip in for her son's burial.

"If it's not enough, then we will sell what we can," she said softly. "I will give him a good funeral if I'm able to."

April 25 A6

Mexico mixed over legal abortion
MEXICO CITY (AP) - Mexico City lawmakers voted to legalize abortion Tuesday, a decision likely to influence policies and health practices across Mexico and other parts of heavily Roman Catholic Latin America.

The proposal, approved 46-19, with one abstention, will take effect with the expected signing by the city's leftist mayor. Abortion opponents have already vowed to appeal the law to the Supreme Court, a move likely to extend the bitter and emotional debate in this predominantly Catholic nation.

"Decriminalizing abortion is a historic triumph, a triumph of the left," said city legislator Jorge Diaz Cuervo, a leftist social democrat who voted for the bill. "Today, there is a new atmosphere in this city. It is the atmosphere of freedom."

Nationwide, Mexico allows abortion only in cases of rape, severe birth defects or if the woman's life is at risk. Doctors sometimes refuse to perform the procedure even under those circumstances.

The new law will require city hospitals to provide the procedure in the first trimester and opens the way for private abortion clinics. Girls under 18 would have to get their parents' consent.

The procedure will be almost free for poor or insured city residents, but is unlikely to attract patients from the United States, where later-term abortion is legal in many states. Under the Mexico City law, women having an abortion after 12 weeks face punishment of three to six months in jail. Those performing abortions after that period would face one to three years in jail.

Mexico City is dominated by the leftist Democratic Revolution Party, at odds with President Felipe Calderon's conservative National Action Party, which opposed the abortion measure.

"We go to great lengths to protect (sea) turtle eggs," said city lawmaker Paula Soto, a member of Calderon's party. "Lucky turtles! It appears they have more people willing to defend them than some unborn children."

The law alarmed Calderon's party and prompted authorities to send ranks of riot police to separate chanting throngs of opposing demonstrators outside the city legislature.

A crowd of abortion-rights supporters chanting "Yes, we did it!" gathered at a monument to 19th-century anti-clerical reformer Benito Juarez in downtown Mexico City after the vote.

"I feel happy, because this is a step forward, not backward, for a woman's right and freedom to choose ... about her body and her life," said demonstrator Gabriela Cruz, 36.

The Roman Catholic church has protested the measure and Mexico City Cardinal Norberto Rivera led a march through the capital last month in opposition. The Archdiocese said Tuesday that it would "evaluate the moral consequences of the reforms" and said Rivera would have no public comment on the vote until Sunday.

The only countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with legalized abortion for all women are Cuba and Guyana. Most others allow it only in cases of rape or when the woman's life is at risk. Nicaragua, El Salvador and Chile ban it completely.

The New York-based Center for Reproductive Rights, the legal arm of the reproductive rights movement globally, applauded the Mexico City law as "historic."

"This will serve as a model to get abortion accepted not only nationwide, but also in Latin America and the Caribbean, where women who interrupt their pregnancies are still sent to jail," said activist Elba Garcia, 24, who rode a flatbed truck in an abortion rights caravan through downtown Mexico City on Monday.

Recent newspaper polls showed that a majority of Mexico City residents support legalized abortions, at least in the first weeks of pregnancy.
The proposal has created an emotional confrontation in a country where the majority of people are Roman Catholic.

Calderon has opposed the proposal, and church leaders have led protests that pushed the limits of Mexico's constitutional ban on political activity by religious groups.

Opponents argue that life begins at conception and say the law would violate the Mexican Constitution's protection of individual rights. Supporters say the law would save the lives of thousands of women.

The city and its suburbs are home to about one-fifth of the country's population, and many Mexicans travel to the capital for medical treatment. Opponents fear the local law could attract women across Mexico seeking abortions.

An estimated 200,000 women have illegal abortions each year in Mexico, based on the number who show up at hospitals later seeking treatment for complications, said Martha Micher, director of the Mexico City government's Women's Institute.

Botched abortions using herbal remedies, black-market medications and quasi-medical procedures kill about 1,500 women each year and are the third-leading cause of death for pregnant women in the capital, Micher said.

April 27 A5

Colombia’s electrical grid fails

Colombia's electrical grid collapsed Thursday, causing a nationwide blackout that briefly halted stock trading, trapped people in elevators and left authorities struggling to determine the cause.

President Alvaro Uribe told journalists in the southern city of Cali that the blackout, which began at midmorning, "appears to have affected the entire country."

Luis Alarcon, manager of state-controlled electricity distributor ISA, issued a statement that the power outage apparently began with an undetermined technical glitch at a substation in Bogota and quickly spread to the rest of the country.

He said work crews had re-established power to about 20 percent of the country and hoped to reconnect the rest in a few hours.

Bogota's stock exchange resumed trading around noon as power returned. It said trading would be extended for an hour to make up for the suspension.

RCN television reported that power had returned to central Bogota, and to parts of the city's northern districts, where many companies have their headquarters.

Rosa Ortiz, who runs a cigarette stand at a busy intersection in Bogota, said that with traffic lights knocked out, "we've seen a few near accidents, but so far the drivers seem to be adapting to the situation."

There was no indication of a terrorist attack, though leftist rebels routinely sabotage electric transmission lines as part of their four-decade old campaign to overthrow the government.

April 27 A5

Mexican migrants will hit virtual wall
A high-tech "virtual wall" will detect more than 95 percent of illegal crossings at the busiest jumping-off point along the U.S.-Mexican border, the U.S. Border Patrol chief said Thursday.

In a videoconference with reporters in Mexico, David Aguilar predicted the so-called virtual wall of lights, ground sensors and cameras, reinforced by more agents, will essentially halt illegal crossings along the Arizona border, the busiest section for clandestine entries.

Officials expect to complete 28 miles of the high-tech system in Arizona by June, and by next year, it should run into New Mexico and parts of Texas.

Eventually, the integrated system will cover sections along the entire border, from San Diego to Brownsville, Texas.

"We will be able to identify, detect and classify more than 95 percent of illegal entries with the virtual wall," Aguilar said.

Detentions along the U.S.-Mexican border have dropped by 30 percent from October 2006 to this week, compared with the same period last year, Aguilar said, a reduction officials attribute to fewer attempted crossings. In 2006, 1.1 million migrants were detained.

He attributed the decline to President Bush's deployment of 6,000 National Guard members to the border, the addition of more than 700 Border Patrol agents this fiscal year and new strategies.

Along a 210-mile stretch in western Texas, detentions have dropped 65 percent since the start of a federal project called Operation Streamline, which jails and prosecutes any illegal immigrant caught there.

Aguilar said far fewer immigrants have been seen at traditional staging points in Mexico and that agents have not seen a shift to new crossing areas along the border.

Congress has approved 700 miles of fence for the border and has allowed officials to decide whether to build metal fences or virtual walls.

Aguilar expects most of the distance will be covered by the virtual barrier, with metal walls kept to a minimum.

The US government is adding 70 miles of metal walls this year and 225 miles next year – primarily in Arizona, which has seen the largest flow of illegal immigrants since a US crackdown in Texas and California more than a decade ago funneled people into its remote desert.

Mexican President Felipe Calderon has likened the barriers to the Berlin Wall.

April 27   A6

Abortions become legal for some

A new measure legalizing abortions in Mexico City was published into law on Thursday, allowing doctors to almost immediately begin terminating pregnancies in their first trimester.
City Health Secretary Manuel Mondragon said early term abortions will be legal starting Friday for women who are nearing the 12-week limit and cannot wait. Women whose pregnancies are less advanced must wait until the law's regulations are published. Authorities have 60 days to publish them, but are expected to do it next week.

He also said that except in cases of medical emergency, women will have to prove residency in the capital, a city of 9 million addressing the widespread belief that the law would make the capital a magnet for women across Mexico seeking abortions. Girls under 18 would need parental consent.

The law also allows gynecologists with moral objections to refuse to perform abortions.

The procedure will be free and available at 14 of the 28 city hospitals. Mondragon said each facility will be able to carry out seven abortions a day. Officials said it was not immediately clear if private hospitals would have to offer the abortions.

The country's leading anti-abortion group has said it may block entry to clinics performing abortions and to publicly identify abortion doctors. President Felipe Calderon's conservative National Action Party also plans to challenge the new law before the Supreme Court, which could suspend its practice until a ruling is issued.

The law, backed by Mexico City's leftist government, is historic in a region with a heavy Roman Catholic majority.

In all of Latin America and the Caribbean, only Cuba and Guyana permit legal abortions, and the rest of Mexico allows it only in cases of rape, severe birth defects or if the mother's life is at risk.

Under the Mexico City law, women receiving an abortion after 12 weeks would be punished by three to six months in jail, and anyone performing an abortion after the first trimester would face one to three years in jail.

April 29 G5

Life in Cuba long, not always good

“Fidel: 80 More Years,” proclaim the good wishes still hanging on storefront and balcony banners months after Cubans celebrated their leader’s 80th birthday.

Fidel Castro may be ailing, but he’s a living example of something Cubans take pride in — an average life expectancy roughly similar to that of the United States.

They ascribe it to free medical care, mild climate, and a low-stress Caribbean lifestyle, which they believe make up for the hardships and shortages they suffer.

“Sometimes you have all you want to eat and sometimes you don’t,” said Raquel Naring, a 70-year-old retired gas station attendant. “But there aren’t elderly people sleeping on the street like other places.”

Cuba’s average life expectancy is 77.08 years — second in Latin America after Puerto Rico and more than 11 years above the world average, according to the 2007 CIA World Fact Book.

It says Cuban life expectancy averages 74.85 years for men and 79.43 years for women, compared with 75.15 and 80.97 respectively for Americans.
Most Cubans live rent-free, and food, electricity and transportation are heavily subsidized. But the island can still be a tough place to grow old.

Homes that were luxurious before Castro’s 1959 revolution are now falling apart and many cramped apartments contain three generations of family members. Food, water and medicine shortages are chronic.

But most prescription drugs and visits to the doctor are free and physicians encourage preventive care.

“There’s a family doctor on almost every block,” said Luis Tache, 90 and blind from glaucoma but still chatty and up on the news.

Tache lived in New York for six straight summers starting in 1945, paying $8 a month for a furnished apartment at 116th Street and Broadway. An English teacher, he retired 30 years ago.

Sitting in a rocking chair in his breezy living room in Havana’s Playa district, Tache said Cuban communism “is both good and bad,” while the high cost of living in capitalist societies “must be very stressful.”

A relaxed lifestyle, which prizes time spent with family over careers, helps keep Cubans healthy, Tache said.

“It’s bad for production, bad for the nation,” he said. “But it’s good for the people.”

The government runs residence halls for seniors with no family to care for them, though space is severely limited. Community groups make sure older people look after one another.

“It's a very happy society. There aren’t so many worries and problems and that helps,” said Alida Gil, 57, leader of a community group in Old Havana known as “Circle of Grandmothers 2000.”

Shortly after 8 a.m. every weekday, Gil leads two dozen elderly women through 40 minutes of calisthenics on the windowless, water-damaged ground floor of a state-owned building adorned with photos of Castro and his brother, Raul.

Raul Castro, 75, took over in July after the president underwent intestinal surgery. Officials offer increasingly upbeat reports about his progress, but his condition and ailment remain state secrets.

One of Fidel Castro’s personal physicians, Dr. Eugenio Selman, in 2003 helped launch the “120 Years Club,” an organization of more than 5,000 seniors — many 100 or older — from several countries including the United States. They hope to reach the 120-year mark through healthy diet, exercise and a positive outlook.

April 29 A19

Haitian loyalists hope for Baby Doc’s return

Haitians danced in the streets to celebrate the overthrow of dictator Jean-Claude Duvalier, heckling the tubby, boyish tyrant as he was driven to the airport in a black limousine and flown into exile in 1986.

Most Haitians hoped the rapacious strongman known as "Baby Doc" had left for good, closing a dark chapter of terror and repression that began under his late father, Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier.

But now, a handful of loyalists are campaigning to bring Duvalier home from exile in France, launching a foundation to improve the dictatorship's image and reviving Duvalier's political party in the hopes that one day he can return to power democratically.

His backers concede life in Haiti could be brutal for Duvalier's opponents but are nostalgic for the relatively
stable period the country experienced, compared to the upheavals of recent years.

"Since Jean-Claude left, there's no work, no food, no nothing. Only burning tires, people getting killed and kidnappings," Jesus DuVernois, 71, said at a gathering last week to mark Papa Doc's 100th birthday. "Without Duvalier, there is no country."

Dozens attended the gathering in a house in a leafy suburb of the Haitian capital, including ex-military officers, a leader of the Duvalier regime's ruthless militia and Baby's Doc's French fiancee, Veronique Roy. They sipped fruit punch, tapped their canes to old Haitian compa tunes and pined for the past while looking at black and white photos from the Duvalier era.

"I'm going to die a Duvalierist, but I hope Jean-Claude comes back before that happens," said Yvette Jean Phillipe, 63, who prays for Baby Doc's return.

But hatred for the former regime runs so deep in Haiti that it is highly unlikely the 55-year-old would ever be voted into power. Victims of the Duvalier regime are offended even by the suggestion.

"The only reason he should come back is to go to jail for all the money he stole and the people he killed," said Bobby Duval, a former soccer star who was starved and tortured while locked up for 17 months under the Duvalier regime for speaking out against human rights abuses.

The younger Duvalier was named "president for life" at age 19 following his father's death in 1971. An estimated 60,000 people were killed during the 29-year father-and-son dictatorship, while many others were maimed by the dictatorship or forced into exile. If Duvalier returns, many Haitians believe he would be arrested and charged with murder and misappropriation of $120 million in public funds _ allegations he has denied.

*His supporters founded the Francois Duvalier Foundation late last year to promote positive aspects of the dictatorship, including the creation of most of Haiti's state institutions and increased access to education for the country's black majority. Loyalists also offer pro-Duvalier lectures for youths and want to start a Duvalier-themed library and Web site.*

Duvalier's National Unity Party was recently reconstituted and plans to enter candidates in December's Senate race. That would mark the party's first participation in a national election since Duvalier was toppled 21 years ago.

The party hopes he can one day democratically reclaim power. But while Duvalier announced in 2004 his intention to return to Haiti, he has denied plans to run for president.

*Haiti has embraced democracy since the Duvalier regime, but the transition has been rough. The country has suffered through repeated coups, a brutal right-wing military regime and a bloody 2004 uprising that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide.*

*Today, U.N. peacekeepers provide the only real security. Haiti has only a few thousand police for a country of 8 million. Unemployment and despair are rife, leading thousands of Haitians to flee to the United States in rickety boats each year.*

*The democratically elected government of President Rene Preval, a one-time anti-Duvalier crusader who was elected last year, has struggled to stamp out street violence.*

*Duval, the ex-soccer star who now runs the L'Atletique d'Haiti sports academy for poor youths, said Duvalier's return _ however improbable _ would only deepen Haiti's turmoil.*
"If you really want to polarize this society, bringing back Baby Doc would do it," he said.

May 2  A10

No Castro on May Day?

Fidel Castro was a no-show on May Day, missing his third straight major public event and disappointing hundreds of thousands of marchers who were forced to settle for an appearance by his stodgy younger brother and a message in the form of a wandering essay about ethanol.

Top officials in Cuba and throughout the region have long insisted that the island's "maximum leader" is recuperating from emergency intestinal surgery, and has even reassumed some of the duties he left when he temporarily stepped aside on July 31.

But nine months and counting without a public appearance has some wondering whether repeated assurances that Castro's health is improving are aimed more at reassuring the 80-year-old patient and his supporters than accurately depicting his condition.

And, even if Castro is no longer at death's door, will he ever be well enough to be seen in public again — much less be up to running a country?

"We are still where we were," said Wayne Smith, the former head of the American mission in Havana. "They say his recovery is satisfactory. But all these months later he cannot even make an appearance on May Day."

Smith said that it "now seems more unlikely than before that he will fully resume the presidency."

"And the more time that passes, the more unlikely it seems," he added.

Tuesday marked just the third time since leading the Cuban revolution in January 1959 that Castro missed his country's sweeping International Workers' Day festivities, where a sea of marchers in red and white T-shirts flooded Havana's Revolution Plaza.

But it was also the third big event Castro has missed since last summer, when he announced his illness and ceded power to a caretaker government led by his brother Raul, the 75-year-old defense minister.

It was Raul who presided over the Nonaligned Summit in September and a major military parade — that doubled as a late celebration of Fidel's 80th birthday — in December.

Wearing his typical olive-green uniform, the younger Castro was the reluctant center of attention again Tuesday, standing stiffly and smiling on a platform beneath a towering statue of Cuban independent leader Jose Marti.

He occasionally waved as marchers streamed past, clutching plastic Cuban flags, portraits of both Castro brothers and banners denouncing U.S. "imperialism." They protested the recent decision to free on bond anticommunist militant Luis Posada Carriles, pending his trial on U.S. immigration charges. Havana accuses the Cuban-born Posada of orchestrating a 1976 airliner bombing that killed 73 people — a charge he denies.

Signs and banners everywhere Tuesday demanded "Prison for the Executioner" and accused the U.S. government of a double standard on terrorism in the Posada case.

Marchers also clamored for the release of five Cuban spies imprisoned in the U.S. for being unregistered foreign agents, calling them heroes who were merely protecting their country from violent exile groups.
Cuba’s top union leader Salvador Valdes signaled at the start of Tuesday’s festivities that Castro wasn’t coming.

"A speedy recovery and lots of health, dear Fidel," Valdes said. Castro has looked on his way to recovery — appearing stronger in recent photos and videos released by government news outlets — and his close friend and ally, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, said Sunday that he was "back in charge."

But Castro released a rambling and seemingly off-topic statement Monday night, his fourth in recent weeks which laid into a U.S. plan to use food crops to produce ethanol for American cars. He spent more words dismissing a perceived growing feud between himself and the leftist government of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva than May Day.

Although Cuban life is little changed under Raul, loyalists missed the energy Fidel brought to events like May Day.

"Everyone wanted to see him, but it's good that he recovers completely. Now the revolution is continuing with Raul," said 68-year-old hotel worker Victor Reyes, who was among the marchers.

Phil Peters, Cuba specialist for the Lexington Institute, a Washington-area think tank, said Castro could still make a public appearance soon — but one that doesn't revolve around an hours-long parade in the hot morning sun.

"My guess is that, given how long it has been, that his first appearance would be indoors," Peters said.

Whether Castro appears soon in public or not, the question seems to be less pressing for some Cubans than it once was — as the idea of major events without their former leader sinks in further.

"He is not here at the Plaza," worker Gloria Neme said Tuesday, "but he's present here in our hearts."

May 2 A10

Chavez takes over last private oil fields

President Hugo Chavez's government took over Venezuela's last privately run oil fields Tuesday, intensifying a power struggle with international companies over the world's largest known single petroleum deposit.

Newly bought Russian-made fighter jets streaked through the sky as Chavez shouted "Down with the U.S. empire!" to thousands of red-clad oil workers in the Orinoco River Basin, calling the state takeover a historic victory for Venezuela after years of U.S.-backed corporate exploitation.

"The nationalization of Venezuela's oil is now for real," said Chavez, who declared that for Venezuela to be a socialist state it must have control over its natural resources.

Chavez accused foreign oil companies of bad drilling practices due to their hunger for quick profits, and said Venezuela could sue them for causing lasting damage to oil fields.

While the state takeover had been planned for some time, BP PLC, ConocoPhillips, Exxon Mobil Corp., Chevron Corp., France's Total SA and Norway's Statoil ASA remain locked in a struggle with the Chavez government over the terms and conditions under which they will be allowed to stay on as minority partners.

All but ConocoPhillips signed agreements last week agreeing in principle to state control, and ConocoPhillips said Tuesday that it too was cooperating.
The companies have leverage with Chavez because experts agree that Venezuela's state oil company, Petroleos de Venezuela SA, cannot transform the Orinoco's tar-like crude into marketable oil without their investment and experience.

"They're hoping ... that as time passes Chavez will realize he needs them more than they need him," said Michael Lynch, an analyst at Winchester, Mass.-based Strategic Energy and Economic Research. He predicted most oil companies - with the possible exception of Exxon Mobil - would stay.

Patrick Esteruelas, an analyst at the New York-based Eurasia Group, said the companies are likely to stay, but in the meantime, the turmoil could cause production to fall at the operations, which export much of their output to the United States and other countries.

State-run PDVSA "is going to be assuming control as an inefficient and cash-starved company and is probably going to drag production down," he said.

Multinationals pumping oil elsewhere in Venezuela, one of the leading suppliers of oil to the United States, submitted to state-controlled joint ventures last year because they were reluctant to abandon the profitable operations.

Esteruelas said since those takeovers, Venezuela's overall output has declined by close to 4 percent, or 100,000 barrels a day, with some companies complaining they have not been paid for the crude they have been pumping. "I expect to see a repeat of that in the Orinoco," he said.

Venezuela denies production problems and says it is on track to lift output in the coming years.

Chavez says the state is taking a minimum 60 percent stake in the Orinoco operations, but he is urging foreign companies to stay and help develop the fields. They have until June 26 to negotiate the terms.

The stakes are high for both sides. The Orinoco River basin, though not yet fully explored, is recognized as the world's single largest known oil deposit, potentially holding 1.2 trillion barrels of extra-heavy crude.

If Venezuela is able to recover much of that, it would surpass Saudi Arabia as the nation with the most reserves. If the big oil companies were to leave, Chavez says state firms from China, India and elsewhere can step in, but industry experts doubt they are qualified.

Pulling out would be damaging for the companies. They have invested more than $17 billion in the projects, now estimated to be worth $30 billion. Venezuela has indicated it is inclined to pay the lesser amount for taking over control - with partial payment in oil and, some experts suspect, tax forgiveness.

Chevron's future in Venezuela "will very much be dependent on how we're treated in the current negotiation," said David O'Reilly, chief executive of the San Ramon, California-based company. "That process is going to have a direct impact on our appetite going forward."

Venezuela may still prove enticing because three-quarters of the world’s proven reserves are already controlled by state monopolies.

Nationalization of the oil industry has been tried in Venezuela before, though with a different tack. Venezuela shut companies out of the oil sector completely between 1976 and 1992 before beginning a series of partial privatizations, which Chavez is now rolling back.
Chavez is also nationalizing electricity companies and the country's biggest telecommunications company, and has threatened to take over private hospitals if they continue raising prices for care. He says radical changes are needed to help the poor.

U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack said Tuesday that Venezuela's negotiations with oil companies "will proceed as they will" but said Chavez's broader actions - including a move to pull out of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund - were digging Venezuela into a hole.

"I think he's digging a hole for the Venezuelan people," McCormack told reporters in Washington. "You can't take the shovel out of the man's hand. He just keeps on digging. And sadly, it's the Venezuelan people who are victimized by this."

May 6 A18

Mexican drug smugglers use migrants to bait feds

Mexican druglords are taking over the business of smuggling migrants into the United States, using them as human decoys to divert authorities from billions of dollars in cocaine shipments across the same border.

U.S. and Mexican law enforcement officials told The Associated Press that drug traffickers, in response to a U.S. border crackdown, have seized control of the routes they once shared with human smugglers and in the process are transforming themselves into more diversified crime syndicates.

The drug gangs get protection money from the migrants and then effectively use them to clear the trail for the flow of drugs. Undocumented aliens are used "to maneuver where they want us or don't want us to be," said Alonzo Pena, chief of investigations for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Arizona.

Gustavo Soto, a spokesman for the U.S. Border Patrol in Tucson, Ariz., said smugglers are carrying drugs along paths once used primarily by migrants. New fences and National Guard troops have helped seal the usual drug routes, and vehicle barriers are forcing traffickers to send more drugs north on the backs of cartel foot soldiers, he said. "We have been able to seal many of the drug routes by adding technology and more agents," Soto said. "We're seeing a tremendous amount of drugs being seized."

The advent of drug-trafficking extortionists along the border may also be responsible for much of the drop in illegal immigration that U.S. officials have attributed more directly to better enforcement, Mexican officials and analysts say.

The new order became clear in December when heavily armed men stopped 12 vans packed with 200 migrants on a desolate desert road just south of the border. Local officials say they ordered everyone out, doused the vehicles with gasoline and set them ablaze.

Nobody was hurt, but the charred carcasses of the vehicles remain an unmistakable message to the thousands of migrants traveling north on the border's top people-smuggling route.

Since then, members of the powerful Sinaloa drug cartel have consolidated control of most of the main routes into Arizona, using teams of gunmen to set up the haggard border-crossers as decoys for U.S. security, U.S. and Mexican officials said.

Just south of the Arizona border, near the key people-smuggling waystation of Sasabe, armed men at a gas station stop vans full of migrants heading north, charging them $90 each and dictating when and where they can cross, migrants and local officials told the AP.
At times, the migrants are pooled and sent across in large numbers at one time of the day, clearing the route for a drug shipment a short time later. Smugglers also direct migrants away from successful drug routes in hopes of minimizing the manpower U.S. authorities assign to the area.

``The drug traffickers won't allow migrants to enter because the area will 'heat up' and the U.S. Border Patrol will be on alert,'" one local Mexican official said, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of retribution. ``They want control so they can 'cool off' the area and go in with their cargo.'"

While the Sinaloa cartel controls the Arizona border, its main rival, the Gulf cartel, has become involved in the people-smuggling business along the Texas border, according to Noe Ramirez, a Mexican deputy attorney general. Ramirez described the development recently as he announced the detention of five people who allegedly moved drugs and migrants into the U.S. for the Gulf cartel.

Federal police have seen the same trend. ``Drug smugglers are shifting toward people- and arms-smuggling,'" said Patricio Patino, a top Mexican security official.

People-smuggling is only part of the cartels' new efforts to diversify.

The Mexican border is providing a less reliable profit stream for drug smugglers, analysts and law enforcement officials say. The U.S. seized 20 percent more cocaine and 28 percent more marijuana along the border in the past six months, compared with the same period a year earlier. And last month, Mexican police made the world's largest seizure of drug cash - $207 million neatly stacked inside a Mexico City mansion - allegedly for a methamphetamine factory that would have produced 3 million pills a day for the U.S. market.

The cartels now collect protection money from all manner of businesses, much like traditional U.S. mafia organizations. In many parts of Mexico, the cartels now dictate everything from who shines shoes on street corners to who is chosen as police chief.

President Felipe Calderon vowed two weeks ago to intensify his crackdown on the cartels in response to violence. Headless or tortured bodies turn up in public places nearly every day, many with notes threatening local authorities. On April 16 alone, some 20 bodies were discovered across Mexico, all believed to be victims of drug violence.

The border has become especially bloody, and some of the violence appears to be connected to people-smuggling. On Monday, police found the gagged and bullet-riddled bodies of two men near Sasabe. The wife of one of the victims, Enrique Sotelo Gonzalez, said he had complained of having to pay ``fees" to armed men for the right to drive migrants to the border, according to state police.

Mexican officials say the violence is scaring would-be migrants.

In the 10 months since the arrival of National Guard troops, 271,195 people have been detained along the Arizona border, an 18 percent drop over the period a year ago, according to the Border Patrol.

``Now migrants are facing two sets of controls: the U.S. Border Patrol and criminals," a Mexican immigration official said on condition of anonymity. ``But the criminals are scaring them away because they return to their towns and tell people how bad things were for them.''

At the gas station in the town of Altar, drug traffickers collect their fees along the sandy, 60-mile road that migrants in vans and buses take to Sasabe before continuing north on foot, officials and migrants say.

Andrea Aguilar, a 41-year-old from southern Mexico, said she was stopped with 26 other migrants at the gas station.
station, where the men demanded $45 from each migrant and another $45 each from their smuggler.

Her group was allowed to cross hours later, walking in the dark along sandy paths where the Border Patrol chased them down. She tried twice more by crawling under a metal fence and was sent back each time.

``After everything I lived through,” she said at a migrant shelter on the Mexican side, “I won't risk my life again.”

May 9 A6

CIA linked terror suspect released

Days before the immigration fraud trial of a Cuban militant was set to begin in El Paso, a federal judge threw out the indictment accusing him of lying to immigration authorities.

U.S. District Judge Kathleen Cardone said in a ruling Tuesday that the government manipulated Luis Posada Carrión’s naturalization interview. She said that the interpretation of the April 2006 interview “is so inaccurate as to render it unreliable as evidence of defendant’s actual statement.”

Jury selection was set to begin Friday for Posada’s trial on immigration fraud charges.

Posada, a 79-year-old former CIA operative and fierce opponent of Fidel Castro, was accused of entering the U.S. illegally and was detained in May 2005. Authorities said he later lied about how he entered the country when he sought to become a naturalized U.S. citizen.

He was released on bond last month. An immigration judge has ruled that Posada be deported, but not to Cuba, where he was born, or Venezuela, where he is a naturalized citizen, because of fears that he could be tortured.

Cuba and Venezuela want Posada extradited for the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner, but the United States has refused to send him to either country. Posada has denied involvement in the bombing that killed 73 people.

In Caracas, Venezuela, President Hugo Chávez did not address the ruling during his nightly TV program. An official with the Foreign Ministry said they don’t expect to issue a statement Tuesday night.

Defense attorneys argued in their motion to dismiss the case that the interview was just a way for the government to get more information about the ongoing investigation against him.

Cardone agreed in her ruling, saying the naturalization interview was a pretext for the criminal investigation. She dismissed the indictment after granting a motion by Posada’s attorneys to exclude all transcripts and tapes of statements he made during the interview.

Justice Department spokesman Dean Boyd said prosecutors were reviewing the ruling.

In her 38-page ruling, Cardone said the transcript was imprecise, omitted key elements of the interview and appears to have been transcribed by several different people of varying skill. Cardone also said the Spanish language interpreter the government provided for Posada during his naturalization interview was incompetent.

May 9 A6
Pope to target poverty in trip to Brazil

Pope Benedict XVI departs today on his first pilgrimage to Latin America – a test of the 80-year-old pontiff’s stamina and how he intends to deal with pressing challenges to his church in the region.

The Vatican is promising he will deliver a tough message to politicians on poverty and crime during the five-day visit to Brazil – the world’s most populous Roman Catholic country – as well as try to strengthen a church battling to retain its leading role in the region.

The German-born pope plans to lay out his strategy when he opens a once-a-decade meeting of bishops from throughout Latin America in the shrine city of Aparecida, near Sao Paulo, Brazil, South America’s largest city.

The Vatican’s number two official said Benedict will issue a “strong message” on poverty, social inequality, drug trafficking and violence and on the exodus of Catholics joining Protestant evangelical churches.

“We hope these messages are heard, not only in the Catholic communities but by the political class,” Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Vatican’s secretary of state, told reporters.

Benedict’s predecessor, John Paul II, visited Mexico and addressed Latin American bishops just three months after assuming the papacy. Benedict has waited two years for his first trip to a region where nearly half the world’s 1.1 billion Catholics live.

The Vatican recently defended the pope, saying he was as concerned about poverty in the developing world as much as his predecessors. “It’s not true that he’s ‘Eurocentric’ as some claim,” said Vatican spokesman the Rev. Federico Lombardi.

Benedict, who visited Brazil as then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger in 1990, will celebrate several open-air Masses including a canonisation ceremony for Brazil’s first native-born saint, and visit a church-run drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre.

But the focus will be on countering secular trends, such as the recent legalisation of abortion in Mexico City, as well as the growing influence of evangelical Protestant groups, which the Vatican considers “sects” but have attracted millions of Latin American Catholics in recent years.

Filmmaker’s trip to Cuba may have been a no-no

Academy Award-winning filmmaker Michael Moore is under investigation by the U.S. Treasury Department for taking ailing Sept. 11 rescue workers to Cuba for a segment in his upcoming health-care documentary "Sicko," The Associated Press has learned.

The investigation provides another contentious lead-in for a provocative film by Moore, a fierce critic of President Bush. In the past, Moore’s adversaries have fanned publicity that helped the filmmaker create a new brand of opinionated blockbuster documentary.

"Sicko" promises to take the health-care industry to task the way Moore confronted America's passion for guns in "Bowling for Columbine" and skewered Bush over his handling of Sept. 11 in "Fahrenheit 9/11."

The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control notified Moore in a letter dated May 2 that it was
conducting a civil investigation for possible violations of the U.S. trade embargo restricting travel to Cuba. A copy of the letter was obtained Wednesday by the AP.

"This office has no record that a specific license was issued authorizing you to engage in travel-related transactions involving Cuba," Dale Thompson, OFAC chief of general investigations and field operations, wrote in the letter to Moore.

In March, Moore took about 10 ailing workers from the Ground Zero rescue effort in Manhattan for treatment in Cuba, said a person working with the filmmaker on the release of "Sicko." The person requested anonymity because Moore's attorneys had not yet determined how to respond.

Moore, who scolded Bush over the Iraq war during the 2003 Oscar telecast, received the letter Monday, the person said. "Sicko" premieres May 19 at the Cannes Film Festival and debuts in U.S. theaters June 29.

Moore declined to comment, said spokeswoman Lisa Cohen.

In a statement Thursday, "Sicko" producer Meghan O'Hara said the Treasury investigation might be an attempt to undermine the film.

"Our health-care system is broken and, all too often, deadly," O'Hara said. "The efforts of the Bush administration to conduct a politically motivated investigation of Michael Moore and `Sicko' will not stop us from making sure the American people see this film."

After receiving the letter, Moore arranged to place a copy of the film in a "safe house" outside the country to protect it from government interference, said the person working on the release of the film.

Sept. 11 rescue workers "risked their lives searching for survivors, recovering bodies, and clearing away toxic rubble," O'Hara said. "Now, many of these heroes face serious health issues, and far too many of them are not receiving the care they need and deserve."

Treasury officials would not comment specifically about Moore's case. But department spokeswoman Molly Millerwise said OFAC is "required to investigate potential violations of these programs. In doing so, OFAC issues hundreds of letters each year asking for additional information when possible sanctions violations have occurred."

The letter noted that Moore applied Oct. 12, 2006, for permission to go to Cuba "but no determination had been made by OFAC." Moore sought permission to travel there under a provision for full-time journalists, the letter said.

According to the letter, Moore was given 20 business days to provide OFAC with such information as the date of travel and point of departure; the reason for the Cuba trip and his itinerary there; and the names and addresses of those who accompanied him, along with their reasons for going.

Potential penalties for violating the embargo were not indicated. In 2003, the New York Yankees paid the government $75,000 to settle a dispute that it conducted business in Cuba in violation of the embargo. No specifics were released about that case.


A dissection of the U.S. health-care system, "Sicko" was inspired by a segment on Moore's TV show "The Awful
Truth," in which he staged a mock funeral outside a health-maintenance organization that had declined a pancreas transplant for a diabetic man. The HMO later relented.

At last September's Toronto International Film Festival, Moore previewed footage shot for "Sicko," presenting stories of personal health-care nightmares. One scene showed a woman who was denied payment for an ambulance ride after a head-on collision because it was not preapproved.

Moore's opponents have accused him of distorting the facts, and his Cuba trip provoked criticism from conservatives including former Republican Sen. Fred Thompson, who assailed the filmmaker in a blog at National Review Online.

"I have no expectation that Moore is going to tell the truth about Cuba or health care," wrote Thompson, the subject of speculation about a possible presidential run. "I defend his right to do what he does, but Moore's talent for clever falsehoods has been too well documented."

The timing of the investigation is reminiscent of the firestorm that preceded the Cannes debut of "Fahrenheit 9/11," which won the festival's top prize in 2004. The Walt Disney Co. refused to let subsidiary Miramax release the film because of its political content, prompting Miramax bosses Harvey and Bob Weinstein to release "Fahrenheit 9/11" on their own.

The Weinsteins later left Miramax to form the Weinstein Co., which is releasing "Sicko." They declined to comment on the Treasury investigation, said company spokeswoman Sarah Levinson Rothman.

May 10 A9

Pope talks tough on abortion

Benedict XVI arrived in Brazil on Wednesday, starting his first papal trip to Latin America with strong words against abortion, and roiling a Catholic continent increasingly divided by the issue.

On the plane from Rome, Benedict appeared to go further than the Vatican had before on the contentious issue of Catholic politicians who favor abortion rights. He seemed to suggest that Mexico City legislators who recently voted to allow abortion in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy had excommunicated themselves.

"Yes, the excommunication isn't something arbitrary — it's part of the code" of church law, the pope said in Italian, in response to a question during the first full-fledged news conference of his two-year pontificate. "The killing of an innocent human child is incompatible with going into communion in the body of Christ."

The pope's spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, quickly issued a clarification that played down his words, but then issued a statement approved by the pope that seemed to confirm a new gravity on politicians who allow abortion.

"Legislative action in favor of abortion is incompatible with participation in the Eucharist," the statement said, and politicians who vote that way should "exclude themselves from communion."

The deeply divisive issue has surfaced in Italy, Spain, Britain and the United States, where in the 2004 presidential election, several bishops said that Senator John Kerry, the Democratic candidate and a Catholic, who supports abortion rights, should not receive communion.

According to church law, those who play a material role in an abortion should not receive the sacrament of holy communion. In effect, they have automatically excommunicated themselves from sharing in communion.
(Much rarer, and more complicated, is an active declaration by the church of excommunication.)

Inside the church, that automatic excommunication is understood to apply to women who undergo abortions and medical personnel who perform or assist in them. But there is a debate inside the church over whether that also applies to politicians who support abortion laws.

Father Lombardi’s initial clarifying statement said the pope had intended to refer to current Vatican policy, as expressed in a document on the Eucharist that Benedict issued in December. In that document, Benedict said that certain values, including protecting human life from conception to natural death, were "not negotiable" and that Catholic politicians had a "grave responsibility" to promote such laws.

On Wednesday afternoon, Benedict, who is 80 years old, arrived here in São Paulo, the largest city in South America, for the start of a four-day trip, his first as pope to Latin America, where nearly half the world's Catholics live. Under chilly gray clouds, his chartered Boeing 777 landed here after a 12-hour flight from Rome.

He was greeted by President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who is weathering his own abortion maelstrom.

The controversy began Monday, when Da Silva gave an interview to Roman Catholic radio stations in which he said he was of two minds on abortion. Though personally opposed, he said, as president he believes that "the state cannot abdicate from caring for this as a public health question, because to do so would lead to the death of many young women in this country."

Except in very limited and specific circumstances, abortion is against the law in Brazil, which has more Roman Catholics than any other country. Nevertheless, estimates of the number of illegal abortions performed annually here, in clandestine clinics known in Brazilian slang as "angel factories," run between one million and two million.

But the minister of health, José Gomes Temporão, suggested in March that legislation calling for prison sentences of up to three years for women convicted of having illegal abortions should perhaps be altered. He called for a national referendum, which led to attacks from pulpits across the country and to a protest march on Tuesday in Brasília, the capital.

And on Tuesday, after the president’s initial remarks, Temporão described abortion as "a theme that should be treated delicately," and complained that "some sectors of the church have made declarations that are very aggressive and quite distant from the teachings of Jesus."

That drew a caustic rejoinder from a spokesman for the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops. Temporão’s job is to be "the minister of health, and not of death," said the spokesman, Bishop Angélico Sândalo Bernardino.

But the minister of women’s affairs, Nilcéa Freire, weighed in to support her colleague. "I think it is important that the church or religious or fundamentalist groups not act as censors of a discussion that society needs to have," she said.

The Brazilian church’s senior cleric, Cardinal Geraldo Majella Agnelo, also condemned government policies on reproductive health, which have won praise from international public health groups. He singled out sexual education and condom-distribution programs, which have helped cut AIDS transmission rates.

"This is inducing everyone into promiscuity," Cardinal Majella, who is the departing president of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, said in an interview with the Portuguese-language service of the BBC. "This is not respect for life or for real love. It’s like turning man into an animal."
Da Silva is scheduled to meet here with the pope on Thursday. The president's press spokesman, Marcelo Baumbach, said that while abortion was not on the government's agenda, whether the matter is broached "is going to depend on the dynamic of their private conversation."

For Da Silva, a 61-year-old former labor leader, abortion has been an extremely sensitive issue.

He is the second youngest of seven children of a poor peasant family, has eight other half-brothers and sisters, according to local press accounts, and had to drop out of school at the age of 12 to go to work to help support his family.

Later, as a factory worker here, he fathered a daughter out of wedlock.

When he first ran for president in 1989 as candidate of the left-wing Workers' Party, the mother of the girl went on television to say that he had encouraged her to have an abortion, an accusation that is thought to have contributed to his defeat in the runoff vote that year.

"No one is in favor of abortion," Da Silva said Tuesday, as the controversy was intensifying. "But the question is: should a woman be imprisoned? Should she die? It's necessary to look at the woman as a human being."

May 12 D8

Pope has an editor

The pope, it turns out, has an editor.

Fallout from comments Benedict XVI made Wednesday about abortion and excommunication has been so intense that the Vatican has simply changed the record.

It all began when the pope, in a news conference aboard his flight to Brazil, appeared to endorse the excommunication of Roman Catholic politicians who vote to legalize abortion.

His spokesman then made several clarifications, leading reporters to understand that the pope meant to say that these politicians had in effect excommunicated themselves (a lesser penalty) and could not receive Holy Communion.

But when the transcript of the news conference appeared Thursday on the Vatican's official website, the pope's comments had been altered.

Nothing extraordinary about that, said the papal spokesman, Father Federico Lombardi.

"Every time the pope speaks, improvising, the [Vatican] Secretariat of State reviews and cleans up his remarks," Lombardi said.

The changes in this case involved only a couple of words, but they significantly altered the meaning.

In the 25-minute news conference, Benedict was asked if he agreed with excommunication for Mexican lawmakers who last month legalized abortion in Mexico City. "Yes, this excommunication is not something arbitrary," he answered, before going on to explain that such punishment is part of church law.

The transcript on the Vatican website removes the "Yes, this" and begins, "Excommunication is … " — making his remarks seem more generic and unconnected to the case in Mexico.
The Vatican apparently wanted to tone down a potentially explosive statement by the pontiff on a highly sensitive subject. But judging from the headlines across Latin America on Thursday, it might be too late.

May 13 A2

**Pope warns drug dealers**

Drug traffickers will face divine justice for the scourge of illegal narcotics across Latin America, Pope Benedict XVI warned Saturday, telling dealers that "human dignity cannot be trampled upon in this way."

Traffickers must "reflect on the grave harm they are inflicting on countless young people and on adults from every level of society," Benedict said.

"God will call you to account for your deeds," he said before a cheering crowd of 6,000 on a sprawling lawn outside the "Fazenda de Esperança," or "Farm of Hope," a drug treatment center founded by a Franciscan friar.

Brazil is the world's second-largest consumer of cocaine, after the United States, according to the State Department, and big cities across Latin America's largest nation are plagued with drug violence.

While surveys show cocaine use has been relatively stable in Brazil for years, drug-related violence is a huge problem, driven by gangs that control street-corner dealing and the shipment of drugs to Europe and the United States from elsewhere in South America.

In Rio de Janeiro's teeming slums, gangs recruit children and engage in near-daily shootouts with police that frequently kill bystanders.

The violence is endemic in other Latin American countries, including Colombia, and Caribbean nations. In Mexico, gangs battling over billion-dollar smuggling routes into the United States leave a daily body count from beheadings, grenade attacks and execution-style killings.

The treatment center the pope visited claims an 80 percent success rate, giving addicts spiritual guidance as they milk cows, tend apple orchards and work as beekeepers.

*Benigno donated $100,000 to the treatment center and told more than 1,500 recovering addicts wearing white shirts with yellow sleeves, representing the Vatican's flag, that they must become "ambassadors of hope."

"The Lord has given you this opportunity for physical and spiritual recovery, so vital for you and your families," the pope said. "In turn, society expects you to spread this precious gift of health among your friends and all the members of the community."

Addicts who listened to the pope said his visit was important because Brazilian drug users are often ostracized and left to beg on the streets for drug money.

"We are excluded from society, but we are the ones the pope is coming to see," said Diego Cleto, a 19-year-old who started using drugs at age 13.

But some doubted whether the pope's message to traffickers will have any impact.

"What the pope said is important for drug users, but religion doesn't matter to the dealers," said Felipe Kenji, 27, who has been under treatment at the center since December. "They'll only stop selling drugs when they die."

The Guaratinguetá treatment center was founded by Friar Hanz Stapel in 1983. There are now 31 similar
centers in Brazil and 10 more abroad -- in Argentina, Germany, Guatemala, Mexico, Mozambique, Paraguay, the Philippines and Russia.

The center is near the shrine city of Aparecida, where Benedict on Sunday will open a Latin American and Caribbean bishops' conference aimed at reversing the erosion of the church in the region.

Benedict on Friday lamented "difficult times for the church" in Brazil amid "aggressive proselytizing" by born-again Protestant congregations.

Brazil's census shows the percentage of citizens characterizing themselves as Catholics fell to 74 percent in 2000 from 89 percent in 1980, while those calling themselves evangelical Protestants rose to 15 percent from 7 percent.

Aparecida, 100 miles east of Sao Paulo, is home to the mammoth Basilica of Aparecida -- as well as the 3-foot-tall statue of a black Virgin Mary, called "Our Lady Who Appeared," the patron saint of Brazil.

The statue was pulled from a river in the 18th century by poor fishermen who were not catching any fish, and then caught loads in their nets. Miracles were subsequently attributed to the statue, and so many pilgrims flocked to Aparecida that the church built the basilica and inaugurated it as a shrine in 1955.

May 14 A5

Pontiff goes on the attack as Latin American trip ends

Pope Benedict XVI ended his first pilgrimage to the Americas much as he began it: with a searing attack on diverse forces, from Marxism and capitalism to birth control, that he believes threaten society and the Roman Catholic faith.

And in comment likely to generate controversy in Latin America, the pope said indigenous peoples, "silently longing" for Christianity, had welcomed the arrival of European priests who "purified" them. Many indigenous rights groups regard the conquest ushered in a period of disease, mass murder, enslavement and the shattering of their cultures.

A notably low turnout Sunday at his final Mass, held at Brazil's most popular religious shrine, underscored the very problems he came here to address: a Catholic Church in decline.

Wrapping up five days in the world's most populous Catholic country, the pope inaugurated a major conference of bishops from Latin America and the Caribbean, telling them they had to do a better job of building up the church.

"One can detect a certain weakening of Christian life in society overall and of participation in the life of the Catholic Church," he said.

The pope came to this region to shore up a deeply divided church that is losing multitudes of followers to Protestant denominations, secularism and apathy. The trip also was seen as a test for a pope often considered European-centric and aloof to the more populous bases of his far-flung church. On that score, he did not appear to have made much headway.

Only about 150,000 people came to this rural Brazilian town for Benedict's final Mass. The open-air celebration took place at the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Aparecida, a shrine to a black Virgin Mary who is the country's patron saint.
The pope told the crowd that only faith in God and the church can give them hope: "Not a political ideology, not a social movement, not an economic system."

Flags from various Latin American countries dotted the crowd, which was boisterous but a small fraction of what organizers had predicted. Nuns in dark habits held aloft icons of the Madonna and entire families wore matching T-shirts blazoned with pictures of saints. And this being Brazil, there were plenty of bare mid-rifts, low-cut tank tops and tight pants.

During Benedict's five days in Brazil, many watching him saw and heard not so much an embracing and accessible pontiff as of the man he was before become pope: the dogmatic Joseph Ratzinger, a professorial theologian dedicated to guarding and purifying the faith.

It might be something of an irony that he came to a country with a reputation for hedonism to rail against sex, drugs and lax morals. Or that might have been the point.

"We are not used to him yet," said Ana Cortes, 42, from Montepatria, Chile, who traveled to Aparecida to see the pope and preserved fond memories of his charismatic predecessor, John Paul II.

"We see him as far away still," said Cortes, a mother of two who was wrapped in a large Chilean flag. "But I think in time his words will reach us."

"I don't think many people are listening to him," said her friend, Nilse Barraza, 47.

The 80-year-old pope did not focus on poverty to any great extent during this trip, nor did he orchestrate any of the grand gestures that endeared John Paul to his followers. When John Paul visited Brazil in 1980, he gave his gold cardinal's ring to the residents of a Rio de Janeiro slum. Benedict did not go to a slum nor did he meet with poor people, save for the briefest of accidental encounters outside the Sao Paulo cathedral.

Speaking to the bishops Sunday, he said the "preferential option for the poor" is implicit in faith in Christ, adding that the people of the region "have the right to a full life, proper to the children of God, under conditions that are more human" and free from the threats of hunger and violence.

Sunday's speech to the bishops was the centerpiece lecture of the Brazil trip. It kicked off the fifth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, a 19-day policy meeting that is held more or less every decade.

Some analysts said the exposure of the Brazilian public to Benedict will help make him a more familiar and appreciated figure.

"The country knows a new image of the pope, an image they didn't know before," Fernando Altemeyer, a theologian at the Pontifical Catholic University in Sao Paulo, told Folha Online, a Brazilian newspaper Web site.

But others suggested the gulf might be too wide for this pope to narrow.

"There is this real disconnect between what the pope says and the reality among Catholics in Brazil," said David Fleischer, a political scientist at the University of Brasilia. "You hear some church leaders in Brazil aping or copying the statements from the Vatican, but for many rank-and-file bishops and priests, their attitude is: 'We'll wait 'til the pope goes home, and then we'll go about doing what we were doing.' "

May 16     A8
A Brazilian rancher was convicted Tuesday of ordering the killing of an American nun and rain forest defender in a case seen as an important test of justice in the largely lawless Amazon region. A judge sentenced him to 30 years in prison.

A jury voted 5-2 to convict Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura of masterminding the shooting of 73-year-old Dorothy Stang on February 12, 2005, deep in the rain forest that she had been working decades to defend.

Judge Raymond Moises Alves Flexa said Moura "showed a violent personality unsuited to living in society," adding that the "killing was carried out in violent and cowardly manner." The sentence is the maximum in Brazil, which does not have the death penalty.

Stang's brother David, who flew to Brazil for the two-day trial, trembled and wept after the verdict. "Justice was done," he said. He expressed hope that another rancher accused of ordering his sister's killing, Regivaldo Galvao, might soon be tried. Galvao is free on bail while his lawyers file motions to avoid prosecution.

Stang, a naturalized Brazilian originally from Dayton, Ohio, helped build schools and was among the activists who worked to defend the rights of impoverished farmers in the Amazon region. She also attempted to halt the rampant jungle clearing by loggers and ranchers that has destroyed some 20 percent of the forest cover.

Tuesday's verdict came even though three other men convicted in connection with the killing -- a gunman, his accomplice and a go-between -- recanted earlier testimony that Moura had offered them $25,000 to kill Stang in a conflict over land he wanted to log and develop.

Human rights defenders said the trial was a key measure of whether the powerful masterminds behind land-related killings can be held accountable in the Amazon state of Para. Of nearly 800 such killings during the past 30 years, only four masterminds have been convicted and none are behind bars.

"The sisters are thrilled because it means it's possible to find justice and we want to make it possible for the many more people who were killed to find justice," said Betsy Flynn, a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, the same order as Stang.

About 200 settlers from the jungle town of Anapu, in the region where Stang worked, celebrated the verdict at their makeshift encampment across from the court.

"I'm happy because she was a great woman and didn't deserve to be killed," said Eliete Prado, an elderly woman who made an 18-hour bus trip over dirt roads from Anapu to attend the trial.

Moura denied ordering the killing during the trial, and his lawyer mounted a lengthy anti-American tirade in his closing arguments, calling Stang "the fruit of a poisoned tree."

Accusing the United States of crimes ranging from atom bombs dropped on Japan during World War II to the treatment of prisoners at its Guantanamo Bay detention center in Cuba, defense attorney Americo Leal said Stang "shares this DNA of violence, the DNA to kill."

David Stang expressed dismay.

"The trial's about Bida, Dorothy was the victim," Stang said, referring to Moura by his nickname. "So this fantasy world the defense lawyers are trying to create only maintains this cycle of killings."
On Monday, Moura said he did not even know the nun, who had been organizing poor settlers around the jungle town of Anapu for 23 years.

"This thing about money isn’t true. This thing about me and Bida talking isn’t true," Clodoaldo Carlos Batista said Monday, in recanting his earlier testimony implicating Moura.

Batista, who was sentenced to 17 years in prison as an accomplice to gunman Rayfran Neves Sales, claimed he had been coerced into implicating Moura by two American FBI agents who traveled to Brazil shortly after the murder to monitor the police investigation.

Both Batista and Sales, who was sentenced to 27 years in prison, claimed the agents threatened to send them to the United States, where they could face the death penalty if they did not cooperate. Brazil does not have the death penalty and the most a convict can serve at a single stretch is 30 years.

The judge said Moura must remain imprisoned pending appeal.

May 17 A9

Colombian captive free after 8 years

A police officer who fled to freedom after eight years as a hostage of leftist rebels said Wednesday that he was held until late last month with a former presidential candidate and three American military contractors.

Jhon Frank Pinchao told reporters he last saw the three Americans - Marc Gonsalves, Tom Howes and Keith Stansell - and former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt on April 28, the day of his escape from a jungle camp.

Pinchao said Gonsalves was suffering from hepatitis, but he provided no other details about the Americans, Betancourt or the other eight politicians and police officers held with him at the time of his escape.

Pinchao said he fled his captors, guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, near the southeastern town of Mitu, where he had been taken hostage during a rebel attack.

He said he had to walk, swim and crawl for 17 days through Colombia's remote Amazon jungle before running into an anti-narcotics police patrol on Wednesday.

At a news conference with Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos, Pinchao told reporters that he slept tied to another prisoner, with a thin metal chain tightened around his neck.

Holding up a chain similar to the one he said was used, he said he took advantage of a lapse by his captors to escape from the jungle camp.

"I hope it's not my fault that the others face difficulties now," Pinchao said, breaking into tears.

The three Americans were captured in February 2003 by FARC when their plane went down during a surveillance mission in southern Colombia.

Betancourt, a congresswoman who campaigned against corruption, was kidnapped on Feb. 23, 2002 while campaigning for president in the south. A dual French-Colombian citizen, she has become a cause celebre in Europe.

Pinchao, who missed the birth of his child during his long captivity, said he and the other hostages were moved every three or four months to new camps. In one of those jungle marches, he came across Clara Rojas,
Betancourt's campaign manager, who he said gave birth to a child named Emmanuel.

Betancourt and the Americans are among some 60 political prisoners the FARC is using as political pawns to negotiate an exchange for the release of hundreds of jailed rebels.

Pinchao was kidnapped in November 1998, when 700 rebels attacked and held the frontier Amazon town of Mitu for three days, killing 53 people and taking another 61 hostage, Cantillo said. All but seven of the hostages had been released.

May 17 A9

Miss Mexico puts on dress with new look

A dress to be worn by Miss Mexico Rosa Maria Ojeda Cuen in the Miss Universe pageant has been changed to show landscapes and pre-Hispanic themes, after the original design — adorned with bullets and sketches of hangings — drew accusations of poor taste, a pageant official said.

"Esthetically, the dress is beautiful," Lupita Jones, a former Miss Universe who now runs Miss Mexico operations, said Wednesday. "It is the same model, the only thing we have changed are the decorations, which pained some people."

The original floor-length dress, cut from a traditional cotton called manta, was decorated with scenes from Mexico’s 1926-29 Cristero war. Tens of thousands of people were killed during the uprising by Roman Catholic rebels against anti-clerical laws.

The modified dress will depict landscapes of corn and cactus fields and decorative elements from Indian cultures. Also gone is a bandolier of bullets that served as a belt.

Organizers had pledged to change the dress after it unleashed a storm of criticism when it was first shown in March. Critics said the design opened old wounds and was not appropriate.

Designers who helped select the new dress from among 30 entries said they had wanted something that represented the nation's culture and history, especially since Mexico City is hosting the pageant this year.

The pageant culminates May 28.

May 20 A3

Haiti buries capsizing victims

The remains of dozens of Haitian migrants who died when their boat capsized off the Turks and Caicos Islands were returned to their homeland Saturday and buried in a common grave, angering relatives who were not given a chance to identify their loved ones.

Family members clutching photographs of victims wept as the 59 bodies - wrapped in black bags and marked "John Doe" or "Jane Doe" - were unloaded from a cargo ship in Cap-Haitien's seaport, two weeks after one of the deadliest disasters to hit Haitians in years. Officials said the bodies were badly decomposed and could not be readily identified.

"God will welcome each one of you, our compatriots. You should not have had to take to the seas and leave your country," Rev. Hubert Constant, the archbishop of Cap-Haitien, said after blessing the 28 male and 31
female victims.

More than 160 migrants were aboard the overcrowded sloop when it capsized May 4, flinging them into choppy, shark-filled waters.

The bodies of 61 migrants were recovered and more than a dozen were missing and presumed dead. Some had been eaten by sharks. Two bodies were buried in Turks and Caicos.

The 78 survivors have accused a Turks and Caicos patrol boat of ramming their vessel as they approached shore and towing them into deeper water.

The Turks and Caicos government is investigating but has said the migrants were being towed toward shore when their boat overturned in rough seas.

The deaths provoked an outpouring of grief in Haiti and underscored the peril migrants face when they take to the seas in rickety boats.

During a brief memorial ceremony at the seaport, a church choir sang hymns as the bodies were placed in simple wooden coffins and loaded onto trucks. As the coffins were driven to the cemetery, sobbing relatives ran alongside, yelling out their names.

The coffins were later buried in a common grave, stacked one on top of another in Cap-Haitien's St. Philomene cemetery as hundreds of people looked on from rooftops.

Georgemain Prophete, an official in the northern Haitian city, said many of the bodies were unrecognizable and were buried immediately "to spare relatives the emotional burden" of having to try to identify them.

Haiti's government declared a period of mourning and announced a crackdown on illegal migrant smuggling in response to the disaster.

May 22 A6

Robot explores deepest sinkhole

U.S. researchers have begun testing an underwater robot at a Mexican sinkhole lake as part of a NASA-funded project to develop techniques for exploring possible signs of life on other planets.

The bright orange, bubble-shaped vehicle was lowered Tuesday into the Zacaton lake in the Gulf coast state of Tamaulipas, which at about 1,000 feet deep is believed to be the world's deepest sinkhole.

It is designed to sense, adapt to and investigate its surroundings - without being connected to its operators - and is equipped with sonar sensors.

According to NASA's Web site, the project aims to create a comprehensive 3-D map of Zacaton and collect water samples to learn about its chemistry and biology - many of the same tasks it might perform on one of Jupiter's moons.

"We started the project in April 2004, but the NASA officials have been preparing for this part of the research for more than a decade," said project leader Bill Stone of Stone Aerospace of Austin, Texas, the manufacturer of the Deep Phreatic Thermal Explorer, or DEPTHX. "The main idea is to send a space vehicle to Europa, which is a moon of Jupiter."
Scientists believe a huge ocean lies beneath Europa's thick, frozen crust, and some say it may be capable of supporting life.

"With luck we could launch in 2015, and it takes two years to get there (Europa), another year of preparations to reach and map the deep sea," Stone said. "By 2019, we might have information on life beyond Earth."

Other autonomous underwater vehicles have been used to map the ocean floor, but DEPTHX is the first with the sensitivity and maneuvering ability to make detailed maps of irregular confined spaces like Zacaton, NASA said on its site.

The Colorado School of Mines, the University of Texas at Austin and Carnegie Mellon University also participated in the project.

**May 24 A14**

**Castro feels good**

Fidel Castro's recovery from intestinal surgery 10 months ago was delayed because the first of several operations he had went badly, the communist leader said in a statement that gave the most detailed account of his health since August.

Castro, 80, said in the Wednesday statement that he is now eating solid food and improving after "many months" of intravenous feeding. It was the most information released about Castro's condition since his Aug. 13 birthday, when he asked Cubans to be optimistic but not rule out possible "adverse news."

"It was not just one operation, but various," Castro wrote in the statement that the government sent to international media by e-mail. "Initially it was not successful and that had a bearing on my prolonged recuperation."

Expected to be published in state newspapers and read on radio and television broadcasts on Thursday, the statement did not say when Castro might appear in public again or resume Cuba's presidency.

"Today I receive orally everything my recuperation requires," the convalescing leader wrote.

Castro stunned Cuba and the world on July 31 when he was announced he had undergone intestinal surgery for intestinal bleeding and was temporarily ceding power to his 75-year-old brother Raul, the defense minister.

He has not been seen in public since and his condition and exact ailment have been state secrets, though top officials have insisted he is recuperating steadily. He is widely believed to suffer from diverticular disease, a condition that forms sacs in the intestine that can become inflamed and bleed.

**May 30 A9**

**Chavez defends yanking TV license**

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez defended his decision not to renew the license of a popular opposition-aligned television network and warned Tuesday he might crack down on another TV station, accusing it of trying to incite attempts on his life.

Chavez said his refusal to renew the license of Radio Caracas Television, which went off the air at midnight Sunday, is "a sovereign, legitimate decision."
He said another station Globovision -- one of the few channels that is still harshly anti-government -- had encouraged attempts on his life and could also face sanctions.

"I recommend (Globovision) take a tranquilizer, that they slow down, because if not, I'm going to slow them down," Chavez said in a speech.

Chavez did not elaborate, but said some broadcasters and newspapers are conspiring to spark unrest and warned that radio stations should not be inciting violence by "manipulating" public sentiment.

"A new destabilization plan is under way," Chavez said, calling for his supporters to be "on alert" and ordering officials to closely monitor media coverage.

Globovision's legal advisor Perla Jaimes told The Associated Press that Chavez had no legal basis to sanction the channel and said it would not be intimidated by the warnings.

"Globovision is not going to change its editorial line," Jaimes said. "We cannot stop transmitting the news. We cannot self-censor. We have to broadcast everything that is happening in the country."

Thousands -- both Chavez supporters and opponents -- staged separate marches in Caracas on Tuesday. The Chavez opponents chanted "freedom!" while government supporters said they were in the streets to reject an opposition attempt to stir up violence.

Information Minister Willian Lara on Monday accused Globovision of encouraging an attempt on Chavez's life by broadcasting the chorus of a salsa tune -- "Have faith, this doesn't end here" -- along with footage of the 1981 assassination attempt against Pope John Paul II.

Globovision director Alberto Federico Ravell denied wrongdoing, calling the allegations "ridiculous." Globovision replayed footage of the assassination attempt during a retrospective of news events covered by RCTV during its 53 years on the air.

The government turned over RCTV's license to a new state-funded public channel, which showed a documentary on explorers in Antarctica, a children's program and exercise programs, interspersed with government ads repeating the slogan "Venezuela now belongs to everyone."

Chavez says it is a move to democratize the airwaves. He accused RCTV of helping incite a failed coup in 2002, violating broadcast laws and "poisoning" Venezuelans with programming that promoted capitalism.

International press freedom groups, the European Union, the Chilean Senate, Human Rights Watch and others have expressed concern about the move against RCTV. The State Department on Tuesday called on the Chavez government "to reverse policies that limit freedom of expression."

While Chavez made his speech Tuesday, thousands of students and opposition supporters marched to the offices of the Organization of American States, where they urged the body to take a stand chanting, "This is a dictatorship!"

Scattered protests were held in affluent parts of Caracas, as well as eastern Anzoategui state and central Carabobo state.

Thousands of government supporters held a rival march to the presidential palace accusing the opposition of trying to foment instability.

"RCTV was rubbish. Its programming was horrible, banal. Not even (the opposition) watched it," said Elena Pereira, an English professor at a state-funded university. "They want a reason to overthrow the
government."

There were no reports of violence Tuesday, though on Monday police firing tear gas clashed with protesters in Caracas.

Chavez did not mention CNN, accused by Lara on Monday of seeking to smear Venezuela. In a statement, CNN denied any campaign to discredit Venezuela and said it has "a long history of consistently balanced coverage" of the country.

June 2 A9

Pilots charged in Brazil air disaster

A federal judge indicted two U.S. pilots and four Brazilian air traffic controllers Friday on charges equivalent to involuntary manslaughter in connection with Brazil's worst air disaster, court officials said.

Judge Murilo Mendes accepted the charges filed by a prosecutor last week in a federal court in Sinop, a small city near the Amazon jungle site where a Boeing jetliner last year plunged into the rain forest after a collision with an executive jet. All 154 people aboard the jetliner died, while the executive jet landed safely.

"The judge accepted the charges and now the criminal process begins," court spokesman Fabio Paz said by telephone. He said the American pilots have been called on to give preliminary depositions on Aug. 27 and the flight controllers have been called to testify a day later.

Prosecutors last week asked the judge to indict pilots Joseph Lepore and Jan Paul Paladino, both of New York state, with exposing an aircraft to danger resulting in death. The charge is similar to involuntary manslaughter and punishable by one to three years in prison, Paz said.

A lawyer for the pilots said the charges were unfounded.

"The pilots' conduct was completely competent throughout the flight and cannot be fairly characterized as criminal," Joel R. Weiss said. "The allegations against the pilots are inaccurate, and the pilots are innocent."

He added: "The fact is that air traffic control placed and approved these two aircraft on a collision course, on the same airway, and altitude traveling toward each other. That is the overwhelming, obvious root cause of this accident."

Though the Brazilian judge wants the pilots questioned in Brazil, lawyers for Lepore and Paladino previously suggested that could happen in the United States. They have declined to speculate on whether the pilots would return to Brazil if convicted.

Lepore, 42, and Paladino, 34, were flying an Embraer Legacy 600 executive jet when it collided on Sept. 29, 2006, with a Boeing 737 operated by Gol Linhas Aereas Inteligentes SA, sending the passenger jet crashing into a remote swathe of the jungle.

One of the four controllers was indicted with the more serious crime of knowingly exposing an aircraft to danger — similar to manslaughter — while the others face the same charges as the pilots.

Mendes in his ruling accepted the prosecutors' arguments that the air traffic controllers could be tried in civilian courts. Before the prosecutor asked for the indictments, Brazilian officials consistently said the military controllers could only be charged in military courts.
Under Brazilian law, judges — not grand juries — issue indictments.

The two pilots were detained for two months after the crash. They were allowed to leave the country after promising to return for any court proceedings.

**June 4**

**Castro: Lookin better**

Talking at length, grinning for cameras and even cracking jokes, Fidel Castro looked stronger and more vibrant Sunday as the first TV images of the ailing Cuban leader in four months appeared to confirm official reports he is feeling better.

The two-and-a-half-minute clip appears to show Castro in the same red track suit with black and white trim that he wore in past official images. At times, the 80-year-old shakes his fist and waggles a finger for effect while talking to Vietnamese Communist Party chief Nong Duc Manh, who met with him on Saturday.

The pair are later shown smiling and embracing warmly. An upbeat Castro even draws laughs when he compliments a translator on how well he speaks Vietnamese and Spanish.

"Vietnam is a country that we will never forget," Castro says.

Toward the end of the meeting, Manh says: "I don't want to go, but I want you to rest to get better." Manh also invites the convalescing leader to visit Vietnam's capital of Hanoi. *Castro visited the Asian country in 1973, when the U.S. was backing South Vietnam in a war with the communist north, which eventually won.*

The clip ends with a round of applause from those accompanying Castro and Manh. A few seconds later, Castro is shown enthusiastically clapping with the others as the image fades out.

Photos of Castro standing with Manh also appeared on the front page of the Communist Youth newspaper Juventud Rebelde on Sunday. Some Cubans lined up at newsstands to buy a copy.

"He's always animated, but now he's healthier," Havana resident Marvis Lescay said. "It is very satisfying for me to see him getting better."

It was the first official videotape of Castro released since he met in Havana with his friend and ally Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in January, and the first still photos of him since he met with the Chinese Communist Party leader Wu Guanzheng in April.

According to an official statement, Castro and Manh met for two hours.

"I'm very happy, very happy that during this visit I have had a meeting, a deep exchange of ideas of all kinds, with comrade Fidel Castro," said Manh, adding he was excited to see Castro happy and upbeat.

Castro has not been seen in public since he announced on July 31 that he had undergone emergency intestinal surgery and was temporarily ceding power to his brother Raul, the defense minister.

Raul Castro turned 76 on Sunday, but it was unclear how he spent his birthday. The government did not say whether he planned to appear in public.

The elder Castro's exact ailment and condition remain state secrets, but he is widely believed to suffer from
diverticular disease, which forms sacs in the colon that can become inflamed and bleed.

Senior Cuban officials have repeatedly said Castro is on the mend, even "practically fully recovered," and the government has occasionally released photographs and videotapes showing off his progress.

Raul Castro and Manh signed several accords on Friday, including one that makes Vietnam Cuba's latest partner in oil exploration in the Gulf of Mexico.

June 10 A18

Cuban meals include rations

The ration book that determines most Cuban diets - and that will briefly rule mine - fits in my palm. Thick brown pages list amounts of foodstuffs to be checked, signed and stamped at "la bodega," the local government distribution center.

In my eight years as Havana bureau chief for The Associated Press, I've developed great friendships and deep respect for the Cuban people. But as a foreigner paid in U.S. dollars, I've never lived the way most Cubans do, using their ingenuity to make sure there's enough to eat at month's end.

The foundation of the Cuban diet is the communist government's ration book, or "libreta," and as a foreigner, I'm not entitled to one. Cubans, meanwhile, are barred by law from selling or trading their deeply subsidized rations, which cost 33 Cuban pesos a month, about $1.30. That's roughly 10 percent of the average government salary of 350 Cuban pesos, about $16.

But food is so central to life and culture that I won't fully appreciate the Cuban experience until I eat as they do. So I've decided to spend June eating nothing but the rations and other food that Cubans earning an average salary can buy at farmers' markets using Cuban pesos.

High in carbohydrates, the ration is a safety net for basic food needs, providing just 10 to 15 days of monthly nutritional requirements, depending on eating habits. My plan is to eat only the amounts and kinds of food listed in a friend's "libreta," plus whatever extras most Cubans buy at approved stores and markets.

My project comes amid debate over the 45-year-old universal food ration. Many say it's unfair to give all Cubans the same allotment irrespective of income. Even Fidel Castro has said Cuba is "creating conditions for the libreta to disappear."

To make sure I consume the same products Cubans get as rations, a friend gave me part of his monthly allotment - coffee (4 ounces), vegetable oil (2 cups), rice (6 pounds) and dried legumes (10 ounces), including the black beans Cubans love and the split peas they hate.

My friend won't sell me his rations or trade them for what I could buy elsewhere - technically illegal but relatively common practices that are increasingly criticized in Cuba. For instance, Cubans who don't drink coffee or like fish will often sell or trade their rations for something they need, such as more yogurt for a child or extra rice.

My friend also cannot sacrifice the five pounds of sugar his wife uses for family desserts, or spare his monthly animal protein: 10 eggs, a half-pound of chicken, 10 ounces of fish, and about a pound of other meat including a mix of hot dogs, more chicken, a ham-like product called "jamonada" and "picadillo texturizado" - a bland ground beef-type mixture of mostly soy.

I'll have to buy the most similar products I can find at the "shopping" - an overpriced government supermarket
with prices in Cuban convertible pesos - and do my best to make such things as vegetarian chili using only the ingredients average Cubans can get. I'll also need to find substitutes for other rations my friend can't spare - the half-pound of dried pasta, pound of crackers and four pounds of potatoes. (My friend does promise to give me his daily bread rolls - one for each day.)

Because potatoes are almost impossible to get without buying them "por la izquierda," or "under the table," I'll substitute boniato - Cuban sweet potatoes bought with regular pesos at farmers' markets known as agros. I'll also shop at agros for fresh produce, eggs and more dried legumes, spending only what the average Cuban can afford.

Rations aside, Cubans also eat a lot of other government-subsized food, such as sizeable hot lunches at workplace dining rooms for less than 1.20 regular pesos, or 6 U.S. cents. And while most schoolchildren go home for lunch, kids with working parents get a hot meal as well.

During this month of living on the libreta, I'll track my spending and post the results in an AP blog. I hope to develop healthier eating habits out of necessity: cutting down on red meat and dairy products, planning meals ahead, buying fresh produce at the agros.

But come July 1, I'll also be ready for a big, juicy steak.

June 20 A6

Child rapist to appeal flogging

A Bahamian man who is to be flogged 10 times with a whip for raping a 6-year-old girl will appeal that part of his sentence, his lawyer said Monday.

Andrew Bridgewater was sentenced to the flogging and seven years in prison for attacking the girl. He will not seek to reduce his prison sentence but should be spared corporal punishment, defense attorney Wayne Watson said in an interview.

The whipping - from a whip made of nine, knotted cords - would come in two sessions spread over two weeks.

"Seven years was enough under law, but the cat-o'-nine tails is harsh and inhumane," Watson said, noting that his client has shown remorse.

Prosecutors had sought a 14-year sentence last month in addition to flogging after Bridgewater pleaded guilty to unlawful sexual intercourse with the child. The girl was hospitalized for more than two weeks after she was raped and left in an abandoned car last year.

Some Bahamians deplore the cat-o'-nine-tails as a legacy of slavery. The Grand Bahama Human Rights Association has denounced it as a "vicious, obscene and sordid invention by white slave masters" that should be abolished.

Flogging was abolished in the 1980s but lawmakers voted unanimously to bring it back in 1991. The punishment has since been carried out on only two occasions.

Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham said during his first term in 1994 that corporal punishment makes the country seem barbaric: "The same tourists who come here and make sure that we have a good living, you will be amazed as to how many of them will regard us as savage people, as bush people, because we seek to get
revenge."

Ingraham, again serving as prime minister, has not made any public statements about the Bridgewater case.

In October 2002, the London-based Privy Council, the highest appeals court for the former British colony of 300,000 people, ruled that while corporal punishment is degrading and inhumane, it is permitted under the Bahamian constitution.

Another Bahamian convict, Altilus Newbold, faces eight strokes of a rod - the only alternative form of corporal punishment in the Bahamas - in addition to 16 years in prison following his conviction for burglary and attempted rape of an 83-year-old woman. He has already filed an appeal.

June 21 A9

Hey, where did the lake go?

A five-acre glacial lake in Chile's southern Andes has disappeared — and scientists want to know why.

Park rangers at Bernardo O'Higgins National Park said they found a 100-feet-deep crater in late May were the lake had been in March. Several large pieces of ice that used to float atop the water also were spotted.

"The lake had simply disappeared," Juan Jose Romero, head of Chile's National Forest Service in the southernmost region of Magallanes, said Wednesday. "No one knows what happened."

A group of geologists and other experts will be sent to the area 1,250 miles southeast of Santiago in the next few days to investigate, Romero said.

One theory is the water disappeared through cracks in the lake bottom into underground fissures. But experts do not know why the cracks would have appeared because there have been no earthquakes reported in the area recently, Romero said.

A river that flowed out of the lake was reduced to a trickle.

June 21 A11

Archaeologists uncover gunshot victim

Peruvian archeologists have identified the earliest documented gunshot victim in the Americas, an Inca warrior who was shot by Spanish conquistadors in 1536 in the aftermath of a battle now known as the siege of Lima.

The body, of one of 72 apparent victims of the uprising, was found in a cemetery in the Lima suburb of Puruchuco during excavation for a new road, researchers reported Tuesday.

Many of the victims, including women and children, showed signs of extreme trauma, having been hacked, torn or impaled, said archeologist Guillermo Cock of Peru's National Institute of Culture.

Spanish records indicate the battle, which occurred near the area known as Lati Canal, took place Aug. 14, 1536, as a small group of conquistadors tracked down a group of Incas who had fought them the day before.

The records maintain that a few hundred conquistadors, led by Francisco Pizarro, used their superior weaponry
and their horses to repel an attack by tens of thousands of Incas led by Manco Yupanqui. After breaking the siege, the Spaniards tracked down and killed many of the Incas who had attacked, including the group at Puruchuco.

But the evidence casts the conquistadors in a less heroic light, Cock found. The archeological evidence makes it clear that the Spaniards were accompanied by a large group of Indians who were fighting the Incas to escape subjugation.

Although as many as three of the Inca warriors were clearly shot and others had injuries apparently made by the Spaniards' metallic weapons, most of the 72 victims apparently were bludgeoned with more primitive stone weapons wielded by other Indians.

"The great siege must have taken place in a very different manner than we have been told," said Efrain Trelles Arestegui, a historian at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru in Lima, who was not connected with the research. Only now, he added, are researchers revealing "the great cover-up that took place in the 16th century."

The tale of the Puruchuco Inca "is a remarkable detective story," said UCLA archeologist Christopher Donnan, who was not involved in the find. "Many archeologists might have missed [the gunshot] or assumed it was an anomaly."

The find, announced by the National Geographic Society and to be featured in a PBS special on Tuesday, "has enormous symbolic value," said explorer Keith Muscutt of UC Santa Cruz. "We all have a mental image of indigenous people being destroyed by superior European technologies, and here it is — tangible remains."

The Inca warrior was undoubtedly not the first native shot by Spaniards in the 44 years between Christopher Columbus' arrival and the Inca's death. But the odds of finding such a victim are small, and the odds of finding a victim who could be linked so closely to documentary evidence are extremely low.

"Putting together all the evidence, we don't have a doubt about what happened," Cock said. "Sometimes we have to speculate in order to connect evidence and event. Here we found archeological evidence and the written record to connect it."

The site is only half a mile from the Lima shantytown where, in 2002, Cock reported the discovery of more than 2,200 Inca mummies and more than 60,000 artifacts, the largest trove ever unearthed in Peru.

Cock and archeologist Elena Goycochea of the institute were asked to investigate the new Puruchuco site in 2004 by Lima's government, which planned to build a road there. A preliminary trench on the site showed that it was a graveyard, and Cock immediately sought funding from the city and the National Geographic Society to excavate it.

"It was unlooted — had never been excavated by grave-robbers — which is really, really rare in Peru," he said. "But it was at risk because it was too visible and looters would destroy it."

They have so far excavated more than 500 skeletons from the site, all dating from the Inca period. The bulk of them exhibit classic Inca burials. The skeletons are posed in a crouched position, carefully wrapped and buried facing east toward sunrise, ready for their rebirth.

But 72 of the skeletons were different. They were not crouched but had been tied up or hastily wrapped; their graves were unusually shallow, and they had been buried without offerings. Most of them showed evidence of violence — many quite severe.
One of the skeletons, in particular, had what appeared to be a bullet hole in its skull. Cock initially thought the male was the victim of a modern crime. Then, when it was clear that the bones were ancient, he feared that someone had been shooting into the ground at the site, damaging the skeletons.

But researchers also had the plug that had been knocked out of the skull by the projectile's entry, and analysis showed that the force of the impact was not caused by a modern weapon, but was consistent with the muzzle velocity of the arquebuses, or muzzleloaders, used by the Spanish during that period.

"I saw the skull a year or so ago and was pretty convinced that it was a gunshot entry wound, with the classic clean entry hole and irregular fracturing and beveling on the internal table of the skull," said archeologist John W. Verano of Tulane University in New Orleans.

Cock's team took the skull and other bones to a hospital and had a CT scan done but could find no trace of metal.

Undaunted, Cock called in forensic scientists Tim Palmbach of the University of New Haven in West Haven, Conn., and Al Harper, executive director of the university's Henry C. Lee Institute of Forensic Science.

They examined the skull and bone plug under a scanning electron microscope and found both were impregnated with iron, which was commonly used in Spanish musket balls.

"We were skeptical that it was a gunshot wound. We sought to disprove that," Palmbach said. However, he said, "there is nothing we have found or evaluated that is inconsistent with a gunshot wound."

The team has since found what appear to be bullet holes in two of the other skeletons. Wounds on many of the bodies could only have been produced by steel weapons, the team found, indicating that conquistadors must have been involved in the battle.

But more of the skeletons showed evidence of massive damage not produced by modern weapons. After examining Inca weapons at museums, Palmbach and Harper concluded that these injuries were most likely caused by the stone-headed clubs used by natives.

The bodies were hastily buried, Cock speculated, because the Inca, in the midst of their uprising, had no time to bury their dead in the appropriate traditional manner.

**June 26**

**Peru once land where giant penguins roamed**

Giant penguins roamed what is now Peru more than 40 million years ago, much earlier than scientists thought the flightless birds had spread to warmer climes.

Best known for their formal attire and presence in Antarctica, penguins today live in many islands in the Southern Hemisphere, some even near the equator.

But scientists thought they hadn't reached warm areas until about 10 million years ago. Now, researchers report in this week's online edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences that they have found remains of two types of penguin in Peru that date to 40 million years ago.

One of them was a 5-foot giant with a long sharp beak. Paleontologist Julia Clarke, assistant professor of marine, earth and atmospheric sciences at North Carolina State University, said she was surprised at the new
"This is the same age as the earliest penguins from South America. The only other record from the continent of that age is from the southernmost tip of the continent," she said. "The new finds indicate they reached equatorial regions much earlier than anyone previously thought."

The big bird is larger than any penguin known today and the third largest known to have ever lived, she added.

It is particularly unusual for such a large penguin to have been living in a warm climate, she noted. "In most cases, the larger individuals of a species or among related species are correlated with colder climes and higher latitudes."

The beak of the large penguin—*Icadyptes salasi*—"looks remarkably spearlike," she said. But the researchers don't know its exact feeding style.

The second new species—*Perudyptes devriesi*—was approximately the same size as a living King Penguin—2 1/2 to 3 feet tall—and represents a very early part of penguin evolutionary history, the researchers said.

**June 28 A3**

**US, Mexico, Canada agree to protect monarch**

The U.S., Mexico and Canada agreed to work together to protect the monarch butterfly, threatened in Mexico by illegal logging destroying its winter nesting grounds.

Meeting in the central Mexican state of Michoacan, where millions of butterflies spend the winter months, the three-nation Commission for Environmental Cooperation, or CEC, formally pledged Wednesday to support conservation initiatives for the monarch, according to a commission statement.

The statement did not offer details on the initiatives.

The monarch butterfly is not listed as endangered, but scientists say deforestation could threaten its existence.

The monarchs' annual 3,400-mile journey from the forests of eastern Canada and parts of the United States to the central Mexican mountains is considered an aesthetic and scientific wonder.

The nations also agreed to joint efforts to aid the vaquita marina, a gray porpoise native to the Gulf of California. They are sometimes caught in fishing nets and their habitat is damaged by shrimp boats that trawl the sea floor.

**June 28 A7**

**Border Patrol agent tried to save drowning man**

An illegal immigrant drowned in a canal Wednesday after a U.S. Border Patrol agent trying to rescue him was hit in the head with a rock thrown by a suspected human smuggler, Border Patrol officials said.

The agent, who was not identified, fired at least one shot at the suspected smuggler and another would-be immigrant, who fled back into Mexico, patrol spokesman Patrick Berry said. The agent suffered a 3-inch gash in his head, but the injury was not life-threatening.
Agents watching video feed from a border camera saw at least three men coming through a hole in a border
circle east of downtown El Paso shortly after noon, Berry said. As agents arrived, an immigrant fell into the
mocha-colored canal water and was quickly dragged under by the swift current, Berry said.

While one agent tried to help the drowning man, the suspected smuggler started hurling rocks, hitting the agent
in the head at least once. The agent then fired, and the suspected smuggler and the other man fled, Berry said.

It was unclear whether either of the fleeing men were shot.

The drowned man's body was found in the canal about 4 miles east of where he underwater, Berry said. The
shooting is under investigation.

July 2  A5

Mexican officials cry blackmail

It was the largest seizure of cash in the history of drug enforcement: $207 million, mostly in crisp $100 bills,
stuffed into walls, closets and suitcases in the Mexico City home of a Chinese-born businessman.

Zhenli Ye Gon told The Associated Press that most of the money belonged to Mexico's ruling party. He said
party officials delivered it last summer in duffel bags stuffed with $5 million apiece and threatened to kill him
unless he guarded their cash.

In a statement Sunday night, the Mexican government called his tale "a perverse blackmail attempt" aimed at
getting himself off on drug, weapons and money-laundering charges and at blunting President Felipe Calderon's
war on drugs, which has mobilized the army and extradited a record number of top-level traffickers.

The government says Ye Gon made millions supplying traffickers with the raw material to make a pure, highly
addictive form of methamphetamine that has flooded U.S. markets, and said his story "is not only false, it is
ridiculous."

The statement from the attorney general's office, which was a response to a letter sent by Zhenli's U.S. lawyer to
the Mexican Embassy in Washington, said the lawyer demanded special treatment for Ye Gon and suggested he
would go public with his accusations against the National Action Party.

"These lawyers are unscrupulously and uselessly seeking to blackmail the Mexican government with absurd and
unbelievable accusations, in an attempt to discourage the government from bringing all the weight of the law to
bear against Mr. Zhenli Ye Gon," it said.

Eleven people, including several of Ye Gon's relatives, have been charged with drug trafficking and organized
crime in Mexico.

Ye Gon met with the AP recently at his lawyer's New York office. The 44-year-old calmly recounted his version
of events, complete with mysterious guards and blood-chilling threats. Most of his story about his alleged
relationship with the ruling party hinges on claims that are hard to prove.

Ye Gon said he had no prior relationship with the National Action Party and has no idea why he was chosen to
hold the cash. And the name he gave as his main campaign contact doesn't match that of anyone who worked on
Calderon's national campaign team.

Born in Shanghai, Ye Gon migrated to Mexico in 1990 and became a citizen in 2002. He imported textiles,
clothing and shoes, and made a fortune as a reseller of commodities seized by Mexican customs.
He founded a pharmaceutical company, Unimed, in 1997. He said he became one of the nation's largest importers of pseudoephedrine, an ingredient in cold medicines that is also used to make methamphetamine. After 2004, however, Ye Gon said he stopped importing pseudoephedrine because of the controls placed on the chemical by the Mexican government.

He said he has never sold illegal drugs and doesn't even know what meth looks like.

Mexico says otherwise. Agents intercepted a ship from China last year that purportedly carried more than 19 tons of pseudoephedrine acetate, all of it illegally imported by Ye Gon, according to the government. Officials say he was building a massive factory in Mexico to process the component into a form usable to traffickers. Mexican labs already supply about 80 percent of the meth in the U.S. market.

Ye Gon said the substance on the ship was another, proprietary chemical used in cold medicines, and that Mexican officials botched the laboratory analysis. He supplied AP with reports from two American chemists, including a former official with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, who said the testing procedures were severely flawed.

What isn't in dispute about Ye Gon is that he lived the life of a high roller.

The married Ye Gon squired his mistress around in a Lamborghini. During frequent trips to Las Vegas, he said he bet $150,000 a hand in baccarat, his favorite game. He was such a treasured customer that one of his favorite haunts, The Venetian Resort Hotel Casino, gave him a Rolls-Royce.

And no wonder: Between 1997 and 2006, Ye Gon lost nearly $41 million while gambling in the U.S., according to a police affidavit filed in Las Vegas.

Ye Gon's high-rolling ways have been curtailed dramatically since the raid on his home. He said all of his bank accounts, including those in Hong Kong and the U.S., are frozen. He is staying with a friend in the United States but wouldn't say where.

"I don't want to live like that," he said. "I want to make things clear as soon as possible. If the DEA tomorrow asks me, I will go with them, cooperate with them, or FBI, or CIA. I'd like to talk with them."

July 9        A6

Monster a myth? Ask dwellers of Amazon

Perhaps it is nothing more than a legend, as skeptics say. Or maybe it is real, as those who claim to have seen it avow. But the mere mention of the mapinguary, the giant slothlike monster of the Amazon, is enough to send shivers down the spines of almost all who dwell in the world's largest rain forest.

The folklore is full of tales of encounters with the creature, and almost every Indian tribe in the Amazon, including those that have had no contact with one another, have a word for the mapinguary (pronounced maping-wahr-EE). The name is usually translated as "the roaring animal" or "the fetid beast."

So widespread and so consistent are such accounts that in recent years a few scientists have organized expeditions to try to find the creature. They have not succeeded, but at least one says he can explain the beast and its origins.

"It is quite clear to me that the legend of the mapinguary is based on human contact with the last of the ground sloths," thousands of years ago, said David Oren, a former director of research at the Goeldi Institute in Belem, at the mouth of the Amazon River. "We know that extinct species can survive as legends for hundreds of years. But whether such an animal still exists or not is another question, one we can't answer yet."
Oren said he had talked to "a couple of hundred people" who had said they had seen the mapinguary in the most remote parts of the Amazon and a handful who had said they had direct contact.

In some areas, the creature is said to have two eyes, while in other accounts it has only one, like the cyclops of Greek mythology. Some tell of a gaping, stinking mouth in the monster's belly through which it consumes humans unfortunate enough to cross its path.

But all accounts agree that the creature is tall, 7 feet or more when it stands on two legs, that it emits a strong, extremely disagreeable odor, and that it has thick, matted fur, which covers a carapace that makes it all but impervious to bullets and arrows.

"The only way you can kill a mapinguary is by shooting at its head," said Domingos Parintintin, a tribal leader in Amazonas State. "But that is hard to do because it has the power to make you dizzy and turn day into night. So the best thing to do if you see one is climb a tree and hide."

Geovaldo Karitiana, 27, a member of the Karitiana tribe, said he saw one about three years ago, as he was hunting in the jungle near an area that his tribe calls "the cave of the mapinguary."

"It was coming toward the village and was making a big noise," he said in a recent interview on the tribe's reservation in the western Amazon. "It stopped when it got near me, and that's when the bad smell made me dizzy and tired. I fainted, and when I came to, the mapinguary was gone."

Karitiana's father, Lucas, confirmed his son's account. He said that when his son took him back to the site of the encounter, he saw a cleared pathway where the creature had departed, "as if a boulder had rolled through and knocked down all the trees and vines."

Though the descriptions of the mapinguary may resemble Sasquatch of North America or the yeti of Himalayan lore, the comparisons stop there. Unlike its counterparts in the Northern Hemisphere, the creature is said not to flee human contact, but to aggressively hunt down the hunter, turning the tables on those who do not respect the jungle's unwritten rules and limits.

"Often, the mapinguary gets revenge on people who transgress, who go where they shouldn't go or harvest more animals or plants than they can consume, or set cruel traps," said Marcio Souza, a prominent Brazilian novelist and playwright who lives in Manaus, in the central Amazon, and often draws on Amazon history and folklore in his works.

Souza counts himself among those who believe the mapinguary is a myth. The deforestation of the Amazon has accelerated so rapidly over the last generation, he argues, that if the creature really existed, "there would have been some sort of close encounter of the third kind by now."

Partly for that reason, most zoologists scoff at the notion it could be real. The giant ground sloth, Megatherium, was once one of the largest mammals to walk the earth, bigger than a modern elephant. Fossil evidence is abundant and widespread, found as far south as Chile and as far north as Florida. But the trail stops cold thousands of years ago.

"When you travel in the Amazon, you are constantly hearing about this animal, especially when you are in contact with indigenous peoples," said Peter Toledo, an expert on sloths at the Goeldi Institute. "But convincing scientific proof, in the form of even vestiges of bones, blood or excrement, is always lacking."

Glenn Shepard Jr., an American ethnobiologist and anthropologist based in Manaus, said he was among the skeptics until 1997, when he was doing research about local wildlife among the Machiguenga people of the far western Amazon, in Peru. Tribal members all mentioned a fearsome slothlike creature that inhabited a hilly, forested area in their territory.

Shepard said "the clincher that really blew me away" came when a member of the tribe remarked matter of
factly that he had also seen a mapinguary at the natural history museum in Lima. Shepard checked; the museum has a diorama with a model of the giant prehistoric ground sloth.

"At the very least, what we have here is an ancient remembrance of a giant sloth, like those found in Chile recently, that humans have come into contact with," he said. "Let me put it this way: Just because we know that mermaids and sirens are myths doesn't mean that manatees don't exist."

July 11 A4

Man falls into sinkhole

A giant sinkhole swallowed a stretch of street on Mexico City's east side, with one man feared dead and 30 families evacuated, authorities said Monday.

Even in a city where historic buildings regularly lean, crack, collapse or sink below sidewalk level due to excessive water extraction and unstable soil, the 45-foot-deep sinkhole - which measures about 15 yards in diameter - came as a shock.

It began as a giant crack late Saturday in the eastern Iztapalapa borough and rapidly worsened. The ground collapsed, swallowing a car, the facade of a one-story brick building and pavement.

A young man who was watching the spectacle also fell in, and emergency workers were digging with hand tools to try to recover his body, authorities said. His age was not immediately known.

"It is very highly unlikely" that the victim could still be found alive, said Mexico City Civil Defense Secretary Elias Moreno. "But as long as that possibility exists, we are digging very carefully to avoid hurting him if he is alive."

Fissures from the sinkhole extend outward for about 500 yards, raising the danger of additional collapses. Thirty families that live near those cracks were taken to shelters.

Moreno said are using cement to try to fill about 200 other cracks, fissures and sinkholes in Iztapalapa.

He blamed them on the city's triple problem of earthquakes, which cause cracks; the excessive extraction of ground water, which causes sinking, and heavy torrential rains, which make surface soil more likely to collapse.

Mexico City sinks an average of 3 to 4 inches each year.

July 14 D2

Vatican upset bishop is running for Paraguay presidency

A charismatic leader dubbed the "Bishop of the Poor" is an early favorite to make history as the first man to serve as a Roman Catholic bishop, then be elected president of his country - in this case, Paraguay.

The Vatican is not pleased, and it's not alone: Fernando Lugo's candidacy not only tests the church's strict prohibition on clergy seeking political office, it also challenges the established elites in Paraguay. The nation's poor majority feels disenfranchised after 60 years of unbroken rule by President Nicanor Duarte's Colorado Party.

Although there's a long way to go before next April's presidential election, polls show Lugo has support from
nearly 40 percent of voters, 10 percentage points ahead of his closest rival. Thousands turn out at his rallies.

Like many Paraguayans, Lugo blames the Colorados for the struggling economy, rampant corruption and politics that favor rich elites in the landlocked, agrarian nation.

"I believe the official party is responsible for the poverty, the corruption and the dishonesty in this country," Lugo said, stroking a trim gray beard. "We need a country that's more just and more equitable."

Lugo, who resigned as bishop in December to sidestep Paraguay's constitutional ban on clergy seeking office, sees politics as a solution to the problems of his former flock in the San Pedro region. He spent nearly 11 years there, ministering to hungry peasants who toil in cotton and soybean fields of rich landowners.

"We did everything possible there to help the people out of poverty and misery," he said.

Lugo used his pulpit to rally the poor to help themselves. He hasn't said exactly what he would do as president, but he said recent travels indicate people want agrarian reform, industrial production and more jobs. And he insisted that he's nothing like Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez.

"Chavez is a military man and I have a religious background," Lugo told reporters. "My candidacy has arisen at the request of the people; it was born in a different way than Hugo Chavez's."

Lugo's upstart campaign gained significant organizational support when he agreed last month to accept a running mate from the Authentic Radical Liberals, Paraguay's main opposition party, which has spent decades challenging Colorado rule and can help finance and mount a nationwide campaign.

Nonetheless, several smaller opposition parties have not said whether they would unite behind Lugo, and his bid could be derailed in court. Duarte has yet to file a legal challenge, which must be declared before a Nov. 28 registration deadline, but the president has repeatedly criticized Lugo while backing former education minister Blanca Ovelar as the Colorado's candidate.

"That candidacy is unconstitutional," said Duarte, who as a sitting president is constitutionally barred from seeking immediate re-election. "Lugo is a member of the clergy who doesn't know if he's a bishop or what."

Lugo said such statements show the political establishment's fear.

"If I had only 2 or 3 percent in the polls, nobody would be challenging me," he said. "I believe the Colorado Party, not wanting to leave the perks of power, is going to throw up any arguments it can to stop this candidacy."

The Vatican has refused to accept Lugo's resignation, sayingbishophood is "for life," and the head of the Paraguayan Bishops Conference has suggested Lugo risks excommunication if he keeps up his campaign.

*The Vatican came down hard against Haiti's first democratically elected leader, Jean Bertrand Aristide, a leftist priest and strong advocate of liberation theology who was expelled by his conservative Salesian order for preaching class struggle.*

*Also, Pope John Paul II famously admonished a Jesuit priest appointed Nicaragua's culture minister with a wag of his finger. And Jesuit priest Robert Drinan represented Massachusetts in the U.S. Congress for 11 years until the Vatican officially said he should not hold the post, and he stepped down.*

*"Merely seeking a job in government causes problems for the Vatican, let alone running for president," explained Georgetown University theologian Thomas Reese. "This is way outside the bounds of what the Vatican wants clergy to do."*
Pope Benedict XVI weighed in during his trip to Latin America, telling a bishops conference that the "political task is not the immediate competence of the Church." Benedict also has taken a hard line against liberation theology, a Catholic movement that remains strong in Latin America, which holds that Christianity's central mission is to free the poor from oppression.

Lugo said liberation theology is just one of many influences on his thinking, and noted that former popes have called responsible politics a "healthy and just activity."

"I have freely and in good conscience renounced my priestly ministry," he said. "What I have freely decided to do cannot be judged by others."

_Dozens of peasant, farm, labor, Indian and leftist groups back Lugo, but he resists ideological labels, saying for example that he embraces "socially responsible" capitalism._

"I am not of the left, nor of the right. I'm in the middle as a candidate sought by many people," he said.

Paraguayan political analyst Alcibiades Gonzalez Delvalle characterizes Lugo as a moderate, more pragmatist than ideologue.

"There are people on the left around him but he doesn't yield to that tendency too much," Gonzalez said. "Lugo has lived in a very poor area where many gripping situations unfolded, and that has made a deep impression."

**July 18 A3**

**Pilots criticized short runway**

Rescue crews pulled dozens of bodies today from a Brazilian airliner that crashed and burst into flames at Brazil's busiest airport, as the number of people feared dead rose to 195.

The TAM airlines Airbus-320 was en route to Sao Paulo from Porto Alegre in southern Brazil on Tuesday when it skidded on the rain-slicked runway in Sao Paulo, barreled across a busy road and slammed into a gas station and TAM building.

Today, the airline raised the number of people aboard the plane by four to 180 and officials said the chance of anyone surviving was near zero. Sixty-six badly charred bodies had been pulled from the wreckage by Wednesday, Globo News television reported.

A Sao Paulo public safety official who spoke on condition of anonymity because of department policy said 15 bodies had been recovered from the ground. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva declared three days of national mourning following Brazil's second major air disaster in less than a year. In September, a Gol Aerolinhas Inteligentes SA Boeing 737 and an executive jet collided over the Amazon rain forest, killing 154 people in what had been the deadliest air disaster to date.

Emergency workers had recovered that 56 bodies from wreckage of the TAM airliner by early Wednesday as well as the TAM airlines Airbus-320's "black box" flight data recorder, according to the Web site of O Estado de Sao Paulo newspaper. Sao Paulo state Gov. Jose Serra said the hopes of finding any of the 176 people aboard alive "are practically nil," since the temperature inside the plane reached 1,830 degrees Fahrenheit.

Eyewitness Elias Rodrigues Jesus, a TAM worker, told The Associated Press he was walking near the site when he saw the jet explode in between a gas station and a Tam building. "All of a sudden I heard a loud explosion, and the ground beneath my feet shook," Jesus said. "I looked up and I saw a huge ball of fire, and then I smelled the stench of kerosene and sulfur."
The runway at Sao Paulo's Congonhas airport has been repeatedly criticized for being too short, and two planes slipped off it in rainy weather just a day earlier, though no one was injured in either incident. Pilots sometimes refer to Congonhas as the "aircraft carrier." They say they are instructed to touch down in the first 1,000 feet of runway, or do a go-around if they overshoot the immediate landing zone.

The Congonhas runway is 6,365 feet, compared with a 7,003-foot runway at New York's LaGuardia Airport, which accommodates similar planes, according to the Federal Aviation Administration.

**July 19 A5**

**Critics blame government for Brazilian plane crash**

Critics condemned the government for failing to invest in safety measures adopted by other urban airports, as officials confirmed that a plane crash killed all 186 people onboard, the nation's second major air disaster in less than a year.

Firefighters on Wednesday pulled at least 171 charred bodies from the site where the Airbus-320 crashed Tuesday, igniting in a 1,830-degree fireball.

The plane slammed into a gas station and a TAM Airlines building after narrowly clearing the airport's perimeter fence and rush-hour traffic on a surrounding highway. Three people on the ground also died and another 11 were hospitalized.

Armando Schneider Filho, director of engineering for the nation's airport authority Infraero, said the runway would remain closed for 20 days.

The crash came less than a year after 154 people were killed in the September collision of a Gol Airlines Boeing 737 with a small jet over the Amazon rainforest.

"It's been 10 months since the last worst air accident in Brazilian history and now we've had an accident worse than that," said David Fleischer, a political scientist at the University of Brasilia. "If you look at what's happened since September, the answer is nothing."

"It was a tragedy foretold," said political commentator Lucia Hippolito. "The government has done nothing because of administrative inefficiency and simple incompetence."

For months, air safety concerns have been aired in congressional hearings, and pilots and traffic controllers have worried for years about the short, slippery runways at Brazil's busiest airport.

Landing on the 6,362-foot-long runway at Sao Paulo's Congonhas airport is so challenging that pilots liken it to an aircraft carrier -- if they don't touch down precisely within the tarmac's first 1,000 feet, they're warned to pull up and circle around again. The ungrooved runway becomes even more treacherous in the rain when it turns into a slick landing surface.

The runway appears to have been a key factor in Tuesday's crash.

President Luis Inacio da Silva has been unable to wrest control of the civil aviation system from the military, which oversees Brazil's air traffic controllers and has filled top positions at the national aviation agency with political appointees with little or no experience.

Defense Minister Waldir Pires warned people not to point fingers.
"It's a moment for caution, and until the results of the investigation are known, it's better to maintain sobriety and avoid quick judgments," Pires said.

July 20 A3

Plane's thruster was off

One of the two reverse thrusters on an airliner carrying 186 people that crashed in a fireball was turned off when the plane landed, the jet's owner said, as officials tried to determine why it raced down a runway instead of slowing down.

However, the airline insisted late Thursday that the thruster, used by jets to slow down just after touching down, had been deactivated earlier in accordance with proper maintenance procedures.

Brazil's Globo TV reported earlier Thursday that an unidentified problem in the Airbus-320's right reverse thruster emerged four days before the crash and was under investigation by authorities.

TAM, the airline, did not provide details about the problem but the company told Globo TV that Airbus maintenance rules approved by Brazilian aviation officials say the type of problem found must be inspected within 10 days and that the planes can fly in the interim.

Meanwhile, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva was expected to finally address Brazil's deadliest air tragedy in a televised speech to the nation Friday evening.

His government has come under fire for failing to deal with the nation's air travel safety problems. His only comment since the plane exploded Tuesday night was a brief statement of condolences issued hours later.

The opposition Social Democratic Party complained in a statement that Silva "hasn't appeared publicly to express his sorrow, or to give solidarity to the families of the victims and explain what measures are being taken" to prevent similar accidents.

The TAM Linhas Aereas SA jet had 186 people aboard and at least three people died on the ground after it slammed into a building owned by the airline, causing explosions and a fire that was still smoldering two days later.

By late Thursday, 188 bodies had been retrieved, but forensic examiners had identified only 25.

The crash came less than a year after 154 people were killed when a a Gol Airlines Boeing 737 collided with a small jet over the Amazon rainforest in September. That crash had been the country's deadliest.

Federal prosecutors asked a federal judge to "temporarily paralyze" Congonhas airport - a move that could disrupt air travel in Latin America's largest nation. The judge could issue a decision as early as Monday on the airport's fate.

July 21 A9

Disconnected part could have caused Brazil crash
A disconnected thrust reverser emerged as a possible factor in a Brazilian jetliner overshooting the runway, but the political heat intensified Friday after an official expressed relief that blame for the deadly crash might shift away from the government.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's administration came under wide criticism after the accident at Sao Paulo's Congonhas airport killed 191 people Tuesday night.

Critics accuse officials of failing to address long-standing air travel safety problems including deficient radars, underfunded air traffic control systems and the short, slick runway at Congonhas, Brazil's busiest airport.

Silva, who had been largely silent about Brazil's worst air disaster, promised in a televised address Friday night to take "all measures within our reach to diminish the risk of new tragedies."

He announced a series of measures to remedy the situation, including limiting the number of flights and restricting the weight of planes traveling into Congonhas. He also announced plans to construct a new airport in Sao Paulo, whose location would be chosen within 90 days.

"Our aviation system, in spite of the investments we have made in expansion and modernization of almost all Brazilian airports, is passing through difficulties," Silva said in a televised address. "Its biggest problem today is the excessive concentration of flights to Congonhas."

Earlier in the day, the Cabinet-level Civil Aviation Council announced 10 measures to reduce traffic at Congonhas. The measures include banning charter flights and executive jets from the airport, and airlines were given 60 days to stop using it as a hub for connecting flights.

On Friday night, the airline added one more name to the list of people aboard its doomed plane, saying it had learned co-pilot Maros Stepansky was on the flight as a "non-working" member of the crew.

All 187 people on the TAM Linhas Aereas Airbus A320 and at least four on the ground died when the plane raced down the tarmac in a heavy rain, skipped over a crowded highway just beyond the runway and exploded in a fireball that was still smoldering three days later.

Silva, a president known for his frequent and lengthy speeches, had holed up in the capital since then, huddling with advisers and canceling public appearances.

"Where is the president who loves to give speeches?" political commentator Lucia Hippolito asked.

The political heat increased when a TV network showed one of Silva's aides, Marco Aurelio Garcia, making an obscene gesture that was widely interpreted as a reaction of glee as he watched a report that one of the jet's two thrust reversers had been deactivated four days before the crash.

The reversers throw the force of jet engines forward to help planes slow while landing. While it's not unusual for twin-engine planes to use only one reverser when the other is disabled, Brazilian aviation consultant Elias Gedeon said "it is possible that the thrust reverser could have played a role" in the crash.

Brazilian, French and U.S. investigators say it is too early to say what caused the crash. Recorded cockpit conversations are being analyzed in the United States and first results are not expected until next week.

Nevertheless, Garcia quickly issued a statement that he was "offended" when he learned of the mechanical problem, not only because so many people died but because "important sectors of the media didn't hesitate to blame the government for the tragedy in Sao Paulo only a few hours after the accident."
Brazilian media and opposition politicians insisted Friday that Garcia's gesture, broadcast repeatedly on Brazilian television, showed the aide was pleased that political heat might be deflected away from Silva's government.

"This attitude is unacceptable and offends all Brazilians while they are still distraught over the nation's worst aviation tragedy," said Tarso Jeiressati, president of the Social Democratic Party.

Shares of TAM fell 2.4 percent on Sao Paulo's Bovespa exchange Friday. Hours after Globo TV revealed the thrust reverser problem, TAM confirmed it had been properly deactivated and that government procedures allow jets in such condition to fly if they are inspected within 10 days.

**July 25  A6**

**Americans earn MDs in Cuba**

Eight American students graduated from a Cuban medical school on Tuesday and said they planned to put six years of education paid for by Fidel Castro’s communist government to use in hospitals back home.

The four New Yorkers, three Californians and a Minnesota native, all from minority backgrounds, began studying in Havana in April 2001. They are the first class of Americans to graduate from the Latin American School of Medicine since Castro offered free training to U.S. students seven year ago following meetings with members of the Congressional Black Caucus.

“I’ve learned that medicine is not a business,” said Toussaint Reynolds, a graduate from Massapequa, New York. “I will be a better doctor in the United States for it.”

*The 80-year-old Castro has not been seen in public since last July 31, when he announced that emergency intestinal surgery was forcing him to step down in favor of a provisional government headed by his younger brother Raul.*

On Tuesday, about 2,100 students from 25 countries graduated from the medical school, including some 1,200 medical doctors, as well as dentists, nurses and medical technicians. More than 10,000 students attend the school that opened in 1999 to provide free training to foreign students from disadvantaged families.

Washington’s 45-year-old embargo prohibits most Americans from traveling to Cuba and chokes off nearly all trade between the countries. But the State Department has not opposed the medical school program, saying U.S. policy hopes to encourage contact between ordinary Cubans and Americans.

U.S. authorities have suggested it is unclear whether Americans who receive medical training in Cuba can meet licensing requirements in the United States. *The graduates must pass two exams to apply for residency at U.S. hospitals, and then a third test, much like students who received medical degrees in other countries.*

The six U.S. women and two men who graduated Tuesday all received degrees in medicine.

While they are the first graduating class of Americans, a U.S. student who began studying in the United States then transferred to the Cuban school graduated two years ago. He recently began his residency at a hospital in New York City.

*Kenya Bingham, who graduated Tuesday and is from Alameda, Calif., said some might think less of a Cuban medical degree.*
“Do I think there will be prejudices against us when we go back to the states and are looking for residences? Yes, I think there will be just due to the simple fact that there are political differences between the two countries,” Bingham said. “But I’m definitely confident that the eight of us are very well prepared clinically.”

The Rev. Lucius Walker, of the U.S. nonprofit Pastors for Peace, has worked closely with the graduating U.S. students and said that about 100 other Americans are enrolled at the school, and another 18 are scheduled to start next month.

July 28 D4

Some Mexican poor worship crime saint

Darkness descends on the street corner in Colonia Doctores, a Mexico City neighborhood named for the lords of its hospitals but known best for its blocks of stolen auto parts dealers.

Pressed against a wall, a woman stokes coals beneath a battered silver pot. A crowd begins to form around her, their hands tucked into pockets, shoulders hunched, eyelashes sweeping away a light drizzle of rain. The air smells of epazote, the pungent Mexican herb that Maria Alicia Pulido stirs rhythmically as her pot of water reaches a pitched boil.

All eyes are fixed hungrily on the roiling pot until a younger woman, dressed in black, flashes out of a doorway. She balances two fake skulls in her right hand and clasps a skull-topped walking stick in her left. It’s 7:55 p.m. in Colonia Doctores -- time to pay homage to Jesús Malverde, the patron saint of Mexico’s narco-traffickers.

Malverde lives in legend in Mexico. He was darkly handsome, his admirers say, a true macho Mexican man with thick black eyebrows and an even thicker mustache. In the chaotic years before the Mexican Revolution of 1910, he was said to steal from the oligarchs and distribute his loot to the poor. He was Mexico's beloved Robin Hood, until one day he was caught and hanged.

In the century since his death, Malverde has morphed into a potent symbol, especially for poor Mexicans who saw crime as the only way to overcome the corruption and repression that kept them in misery. In modern times, Mexico's drug dealers have come to love Malverde's image -- drug runners have been caught wearing scapulars, small cloth necklaces, bearing his likeness.

Malverde worship, common in northern Mexico, is new to Mexico City. Pulido erected a shrine to Malverde near her family's Colonia Doctores home about a year ago to thank the narco-saint for answering her prayers and speeding the recovery of her son, Abel, after a car accident.

By 8 p.m., more than two dozen worshipers gather, some drifting away from Pulido's sidewalk kitchen to kneel before the shrine her family built. It stands more than 10 feet tall, a glass box the size of a large outhouse. Lantern-style lights illuminate the life-size statues inside.

Worshippers gaze on the plastic portrayals of Malverde, a blue bandanna peeking out from beneath a cowboy hat jauntily perched on his head, and La Santísima Muerte, the skeletal patron saint of death. La Santísima Muerte, who carries a scythe a la the Grim Reaper, wears a frilly white wedding dress. They look like a couple about to say their vows.

"Fatty," Pulido calls out to her 16-year-old son, Abel, whose nose bears a jagged scar from the car accident that inspired his family's shrine. "More coals." The crowd begins to fidget.
"When do we start?" a woman asks Abel's brother, Hector.

"At 8," he says.

A confused look crosses the woman’s face. She glances at her watch. It is 8:15.

A few steps away, Abel’s sister, Ivon Valdez Pulido, preps her daughter, Lizzuli Santo. Lizzuli is 9 years old but has the poise of a young woman twice her age. She stands regally as her mother sets an ostrich feather headdress on her neatly combed, long brown hair. Mother and daughter tie a leather band to her ankle fitted with rows of bells made of dried lime husks.

"Don’t be nervous," Valdez tells her daughter. "When we start the music, start jumping." The crowd forms a semicircle around the shrine at 8:30, clearing an opening for little Lizzuli, who stands alone. From behind the shrine, a heavy electronica beat pounds out of a boombox. "Go, go, go!" Valdez hollers.

Lizzuli responds instantly, jumping in place, swooping down to the ground, shimmying her shoulders.

"I am the Devil. Dance with me," the recorded voice shrieks. "I can give you sex. I can give you drugs. I can give you house." The audience watches, transfixed. Some carry statues of La Santísima Muerte and peer at the whirling young girl under the blade of the saint’s sickle.

The music crescendos. Lizzuli kneels before Malverde and La Santísima Muerte. She windmills her arms, a fake skull in each hand, finally bringing the motion to a stop and extending the skulls toward the shrine as an offering.

The music seems to have called forth the neighborhood. More than 200 people are here now, spilling off the sidewalk and into the street. A giant bread truck, unable to pass through the audience, daintily cuts over the center divider, pulling into the opposite lanes of traffic and going along its way. More than two-dozen cars and trucks have passed during Lizzuli’s frenetic dance, but only one has dared to honk in protest.
Appendix B – Briefs

February 3  Page A7

Castro video ‘spoiled’ party

A video featuring a healthier-looking Fidel Castro "spoiled the party" planned by Cuban exiles in Miami when the 80-year old Cuban President dies, the Communist Party newspaper Gramma said Friday. The video showed Castro chatting with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Miami authorities are planning to allow use of the Orange Bowl by the Cuban exile community when Castro dies. But they said it was simply to provide security. Even so, a committee appointed by the city commission has discussed a theme to be printed on T-shirts, what musicians would perform and the cost.

February 4  Page A3

Miners killed in explosion

An explosion tore through a coal mine in remote northeast Colombia on Saturday, burying at least 31 miners in tunnels filled with deadly gases, a rescue official said. "There is a lot of gas inside and we're in the process of trying to get it out to see if rescue crews can go inside," Rosales told the Associated Press from outside the mine. Rosales said the 31 missing miners were buried in two separate tunnels. The morning explosion in the remote hamlet of San Roque, about 410 kilometres northeast of Bogota was caused by "some spark and the gas that was inside" the mine, he said.

Rosales said hopes of finding the miners alive was "discouraging" because of the extensive damage and the trapped gases. "There is a lot of gas inside and we're in the process of trying to get it out to see if rescue crews can go inside," Rosales told the Associated Press from outside the mine. Rosales said the 31 missing miners were buried in two separate tunnels. The morning explosion in the remote hamlet of San Roque, about 410 kilometres northeast of Bogota was caused by "some spark and the gas that was inside" the mine, he said.

One of Colombia’s most violent states, the area overrun by leftist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary groups who often battle each other for control of lucrative drug smuggling routes across the border with Venezuela. Many mines in this Andean nation are makeshift affairs with few or no safety procedures.

February 5  Page A5

Miners’ bodies recovered

Colombia – Crews battling dangerously high levels of methane gas have recovered the bodies of 30 coal miners killed in an explosion in northeast Colombia, an official said Sunday. Initial efforts to remove the bodies trapped more than 1,300 feet underground by Saturday’s explosion were hampered by toxic gases. Fernando Rosales, director of civil defense in Norte de Santander state, said 31 miners died inside the makeshift mine, while another managed to escape after the explosion but died at a hospital.
February 6  Page A6

Missionary Kidnapped

Gunman seized an American missionary as he left a church near Haiti’s capital and have demanded a ransom for his release, UN police said Monday. Nathan Jean-Bieubonne, a US citizen of Haitian descent, was absucted Sunday as he and three others drove home from church, police said.

February 7  Page A6

Mexico’s Calderon gets good marks

Nearly six in 10 Mexicans approve of President Felipe Calderon’s first two months in office, according to a poll published Tuesday. The pro-business conservative won office last year with just 0.6 percent more of the vote than rival Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. The poll did not shed light on which of his policies are popular.

February 7  Page A6

Woman named bishop

The Episcopal Church has named a woman as bishop in Cuba, its first such appointment. The Rev. Nora Cot Aguilera,69, was named suffragan bishop. Sunday in the Cuban city of Matanzas, said the US based denomination. There are about 10,000 Episcopals in Cuba, overseen by the US, Canadian and W. Indian archbishops.

February 7  Page A6

FBI aids family

FBI negotiators are in Haiti to help secure the release of a kidnapped American missionary, special agent Judy Orihuela said. She said the family of Nathan Jean Dieudonne, 58, requested help after the kidnappers demanded a ransom.

February 8  Page A9

Alleged druglord headed to US

Cuba will deport reputed drug kingpin Luis Hernando Gomez Bustamante to Colombia, which plans to extradite him to the US, a government official said Wednesday. Gomez, an alleged top boss of Colombia’s Norte del Valle cartel, is wanted in New York on drug trafficking, racketeering and money-laundering charges.

February 9  Page A10

Fidel does well

Acting Cuban President Raul Castro said Thursday his ailing brother Fidel is getting better and is consulted on all important issues. “He’s exercising much. He has a telephone at his side and uses it a lot,” Raul Castro said.

February 15  Page A8

Chavez eyes food industry
Accusing private companies of hoarding beef and other foods, President Hugo Chavez threatened Wednesday to nationalize supermarkets and food warehouses found in violation of price controls. Chavez warned he was ready to do so as soon as food merchants gave him “an excuse.”

February 15   Page A8

Haiti mission extended

The Security Council will extend the UN 8,800-strong peacekeeping force in Haiti for eight months following an agreement between the US and China diplomats said Wednesday.

February 16   Page A3

New currency planned

President Hugo Chavez announced Thursday that a new currency will be introduced into Venezuela next year in order to combat inflation. Chavez said three zeros will be stripped from the Bolivar, and banknotes and coins for the “new Bolivar” would enter into circulation in early 2008.

February 17   Page A9

Bounty hunter loses

A federal court has cleared the way for TV bounty hunter Duane “Dog” Chapman to be extradited to face charges in Mexico, but the decision can still be appealed. Norma Jara, a spokesperson for the second district court in Guadalajara, said there was no reason not to try him on charges he illegally arrested Max Factor heir and convicted rapist Andrew Luster in 2003.

February 19   Page A5

Castro said to be “stupendous”

Fidel Castro’s niece said Sunday he was recovering well from surgery and would likely be “very active” again in Cuba’s government. “Fidel is stupendous,” said Mariela Castro Espin, daughter of acting president Raul Castro, who took over in July after his older brother underwent surgery. Fidel, 80, has been seen only occasionally in videotaped meetings with foreign visitors.

February 19   Page A5

Drug crackdown expands

The Mexican government will expand its anti-drug raids to two states across the border from Texas, deploying more than 3,000 soldiers, sailors and federal police, officials said Sunday. The raids in Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas states will include the city of Nuevo Laredo, across the border from Laredo, Texas, which has been bloodied by turf wars between gangs.

February 21   Page A7

Two guilty in slaughter
A three-judge tribunal on Tuesday found two members of the Mara Salvatrucha gang guilty of killing 28 people in a 2004 shooting attack. The charges would mean 560 years in prison each for Juan Carlos Miralda and Darwin Alexis Ramirez, but Honduras’ maximum total is 30 years.

February 23  Page A3

US can inspect trucks

US officials will be allowed to examine Mexican trucks and check drivers’ papers before they enter the country, it was announced Thursday. Transportation Secretary Mary E. Peters and her Mexican counterpart, Luis Tellez, said the deal would remove the last barrier to the long-delayed opening of US highways to Mexican truckers.

February 23  Page A4

Chavez sees US threat to oil

President Hugo Chavez warned that the US government, allegedly frustrated by failed assassination plots against him, was now planning to sabotage the oil-producing country’s economy. Chavez, speaking Thursday on his new talk show, predicted “one of the fiercest battle fronts” was coming ahead as Washington readied to destroy Venezuela economically.

February 26  Page A5

Suspect cops killed

Four imprisoned Guatemalan policemen were killed in their cells Sunday while being held in connection with the deaths of three Salvadoran politicians, police said. Rioting inmates also took the warden and other prison official hostage, but it was not clear whether there was a connection.

February 28  A7

Six Cubans finally make it to US

Six Cubans who were deported last year after landing on an abandoned Florida Keys bridge reached Key West in a 24-foot wooden boat Tuesday, the Border Patrol said. It is said the six, who first tried to gain entry in January 2006, were being processed. Cubans who reach dry land in the US usually are allowed to remain, while those caught at sea are sent back. The six, along with nine others, failed in their earlier attempt because the old bridge no longer touches land.

February 28  A7

HIV soldiers win case

Mexico’s Supreme Court ruled Tuesday that the armed forces cannot kick out HIV-positive members because doing so is discriminatory and unconstitutional. The court, with an 8-3 vote, ordered four HIV-positive soldiers returned to duty but said that the military still may expel members with full blown AIDS. The defense department has been asked to provide figures on how many HIV service members have been expelled.

March 1   A8
Cuba to receive envoy

Honduras named its first ambassador to Cuba in 45 years Wednesday, completing the restoration of diplomatic ties with the communist-run island that was severed during the Cold War. President Manuel Zelaya said he will send Juan Ramon Elvir as envoy.

March 5 A5

Chavez indicts CIA

President Hugo Chavez on Sunday said he believes enemies including the CIA are out to kill him, and called US diplomat John Negroponte a “professional killer.” Chavez said Venezuelan officials have intelligence that associates of jailed Cuban anti-communist militant Luis Posada Carriles also are involved in plotting to assassinate him.

March 13 A6

Cuba touts Castro recovery

Fidel Castro is stronger, obviously improving and increasingly getting back to work, Cuba’s foreign minister said Monday. In Paris for a meeting with UNESCO, Felipe Perez Roque spoke of the 80-year old Castro’s steady recovery. “It’s not good news for President Bush, nor for the government of the United States,” he said. Ten US presidents have served since Castro led the Cuban revolution in 1959.

March 17 A7

Wanted: Banana executives

Outraged Colombians called Friday for the United States to extradite American banana executives after the Cincinnati-based fruit giant Chiquita acknowledged paying money for protection to illegal groups that carried out killings. Chiquita settled a US Justice Department probe by agreeing Wednesday to pay a $25 million fine and admitting its subsidiary Banadex paid $1.7 million to for-right paramilitaries labeled terrorists by the United States. Chiquita also admitted funding Colombia’s two main leftist rebel groups. Chiquita portrayed itself as a victim of Colombian violence.

March 19 A3

Rescuers lose 7 whales

Seven pilot whales that came ashore on the Galapagos Islands died Sunday, despite efforts of rescuers who dug makeshift pools in the sand to keep them from dehydrating. Five other whales were returned to the ocean from on Isabela Island, the largest of the Galapagos.

March 26 A3

Abolition Anniversary

People in the 15 Caribbean Community nations bowed their heads for a moment of silence at noon Sunday to mark the 200th anniversary of the end of Britain’s trans-Atlantic slave trade, which claimed millions of lives and shaped the region’s history. The anniversary also was marked in Africa and by about 3,000 marchers in London on Saturday. While an 1807 law ended the slave trade, Britain did not abolish slavery in its territories until
March 27 A4

Asylum for Venezuelans?

Five Republican congressman – four from Florida – asked President Bush on Monday to provide temporary legal status to Venezuelans here illegally for what they contend is an increase in political persecutions under Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. They asked Bush to halt deportation or to grant expedited asylum and work-permit requests as was done for Nicaraguans who left their country after the leftist Sandinista government took power in the 1980s.

March 29 A10

It’s a burning question

Pilots of a Chilean jetliner spotted flaming objects falling past their plane as it headed for a landing in New Zealand, airline officials said Wednesday. US experts contradicted reports the objects were pieces of a falling Russian spacecraft, suggesting meteors were more likely. LAN Chile airline said the “pilot made visual contact with incandescent fragments” several miles away Monday.

April 2 A3

Beheading on YouTube

A video purportedly showing the beheading of a drug cartel hit man appeared on video-sharing Web site YouTube, and its makers called on Mexicans to kill more members of the gang. The video appeared as rival gangs wage a bloody battle for trafficking routes, and President Felipe Calderon is sending thousands of troops to take on organized crime.

April 8 A5

Amazon swim complete

After 3,272 miles of exhaustion, sunburn, delirium and piranhas, a 52-year-old Slovenian successfully completed a swim down the Amazon river Saturday that could set a world record for distance – one he has broken three times already. After nine weeks, Martin Strel arrived near the city of Belem, the capital of the jungle state of Para, ending a swim almost as long as the drive from Miami to Seattle. Strel averaged about 50 miles a day since beginning his odyssey February 1.

April 10 A5

Teachers strike in Argentina

Thousands of teachers walked out of public schools Monday across Argentina in a daylong strike to demand higher pay and justice for a high school teacher slain last week during confrontations with police. About 30,000 teachers, labor groups and human rights activists marched in Buenos Aires.

April 11 A8

Waves kill 2 in El Salvador
Unusually high Pacific waves battered beaches from El Salvador to Mexico and carried people out to sea, prompting authorities in some places to order swimmers out of the water Tuesday. At least two people were killed. Waves topping 10 feet swept away a dozen swimmers near La Libertad on Monday, 10 of whom were plucked from the water by boats and a helicopter, emergency worker Jose Larin said. A 35-year old man and a 16-year old boy were killed.

April 13 A4

Big Quake, light damage

A strong earthquake hit Mexico early today, knocking out power in parts of Mexico City and sending frightened residents into the streets of Acapulco. Civil defense officials in Mexico and the Pacific coast state of Guerrero, where the quake was centered, said there were no reports of any deaths, serious injuries or major damage.

April 18 A8

Cuban militant to be freed

An appeals court Tuesday denied the US government’s latest bid to keep anti-Castro Cuban militant Luis Posada Carriles jailed until his May trial on immigration fraud charges. The US 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans reversed a decision last week temporarily.

April 20 A5

Cuban suspect released

Cubans were outraged Thursday at the release of anti-communist militant Luis Posada Carriles from US custody pending a May immigration trial. Posada, an ex-CIA operative, faces a May 11 trial on immigration fraud charges, but he also has been accused in the 1976 bombing of a Cuban airliner that killed 73 people. Posada, freed on $350,000 bond from a New Mexican jail, is to stay at his wife’s house in Miami and wear an electronic tether.

April 20 A5

Ton of cocaine spills

A truck loaded with cocaine flipped after taking a curve too fast, spilling nearly a ton of the drug across a Colombian highway. Police said the drugs were hidden in the truck’s walls and roof, which ripped open Thursday when the vehicle overturned in Medellin. The driver escaped injury but was quickly arrested.

April 30 A5

Chavez to sell refineries

President Hugo Chavez said Sunday that Venezuela hopes to gradually sell off its refineries in the United States and build new refineries in Latin America, part of a plan to offer his allies a stable oil supply. He was host to a summit of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, a leftist bloc that includes Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia and Nicaragua.
Cocaine stash shrinks

The Colombian navy said Tuesday a buried cache of cocaine found along the Pacific coast was much smaller than initially believed and not the nation’s largest drug haul.

Mexico losing more to US than to death

Mexico has lost more people to migration to the US than death since 2000, the government said Thursday. Mexico’s demographics agency found an average 577,000 people went to the US each year from 2000 to 2005, compared to 495,000 deaths each year. In 2006, 559,000 left, and there were 501,000 deaths. Mexico had 104.9 million residents last year, up 6.4 million since 2000.

Chavez threatens banks

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez on Thursday threatened to nationalize the country’s banks and largest steel producer, accusing them of unscrupulous practices. It was not clear if Chavez was only referring to Venezuelan banks or major international banks with subsidiaries in the country, such as Citigroup Inc., as well.

Dozens dead after Haitians’ boat capsizes

The perils of the sea became gruesomely apparent Friday when a crowded boat of Haitians trying to flee their country to the US capsized, flinging occupants into shark-infested waters. Hours after the sailing vessel overturned a half-mile from shore, rescuers had recovered more than a dozen bodies – some with savage bite wounds – and were searching for about 60 missing people. A Turks and Caicos police boat picked up 78 survivors and a US Coast Guard helicopter spotted 10 more clinging to the overturned vessel and guided in another boat to get them, said Petty Officer Third Class Barry Bena.

Drug suspects slain

Four purported drug smugglers were killed in a shootout Monday with soldiers in western Mexico’s Michoacan state, authorities said. The remote region is the target of an anti-drug offensive. Last week, five soldiers and one suspect were killed.

Pope Counsels Youth

Pope Benedict XVI on Thursday used a stadium appearance before 40,000 young Catholics to offer moral instruction, notably concerning sexual conduct. But the 80-year-old pope also warned against drug use, violence, corruption and temptations of wealth and power. “Seek to resist forcefully the snares of evil that are found in many contexts,” he said.
May 13 A3

Penguin’s long swim

A “disoriented” Magellanic penguin swam ashore on Peru’s coast, 3,100 miles north of his home in the frigid waters of southern Chile. The penguin got lost while looking for food, Peru’s National Resource institute

May 15 A4

Drug fighter slain

The new head of a drug intelligence unit in the Attorney General’s office was killed Monday in the capital, dealing a blow to President Felipe Calderon’s campaign against drug traffickers. Officials said several gunmen trapped Jose Nemesio Lugo Felix’s SUV on a narrow street.

May 15 A4

Shooter changes story

The gunman convicted of killing Dorothy Stang recanted previous testimony and claimed the rancher on trial for giving orders to kill the American nun and rainforest defender did not offer him money to do it. Testifying for the defense Monday, Rayfran das Neves Sales said he acted out of rage when he shot Stang six times on a muddy road in the Amazon in February 2005. Prosecutors now expect witnesses against Vitalmiro Bastos de Moura and fellow rancher Regivaldo Galvao will drop their story that the two arranged the killing.

May 16 A8

Venezuela bans smoking

A ban on smoking in bars and restaurants will take effect May 31, Venezuelan Health Minister Erik Rodriquez said Tuesday, but he backed away from earlier comments that the nation would stop tobacco production.

May 19 A8

Hostage reportedly chained

Former presidential candidate Ingrid Betancourt is forced to sleep chained by her neck as punishment for having tried to escape from her rebel captors five times, an escaped hostage told family members of the dual French-Colombian citizen. Deploiring these “concentration camp” conditions, President Alvaro Uribe ordered his military to intensify efforts Friday to free Betancourt and three American military contractors held by leftist rebels in an Amazon jungle camp.

May 19 B1

TV license expires

Venezuela’s Supreme Court has dismissed a challenge by an opposition-aligned television station seeking to remain on the air despite the government’s decision not to renew its license. The Supreme Court of Justice declared inadmissible the challenge by Radio Caracas Television and its top executive Marcel Granier. The ruling is a setback for RCTV, which is due to go off the air May 27.
May 19      A3

Police commander killed

Assailants shot dead a police commander in a wealthy Monterrey suburb Saturday. Mario Sanchez, 47, was killed by gunmen wielding automatic rifles after he finished a night shift in San Nicolas de los Garza, one of Mexico’s most affluent municipalities, Mexican media reported. Gunmen linked to drug trafficking gangs have been increasingly targeting police and soldiers as President Felipe Calderon wages a national offensive against drug cartels, who make billions of dollars smuggling cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine and heroin into the US.

May 21      A4

Rebel captive escapes

A Colombian woman kidnapped this week along with her Swedish husband escaped following a gun battle between her captors and police, and was said to be in good health Sunday. Diana Patricia Pena, 36, was abducted Wednesday with her husband, Roland Erik Larson, at their farm in northern Colombia. Larson, 68, was still missing. Troops shot to death two of their alleged captors, authorities said.

May 23      A9

Adoption standards raised

Guatemala has ratified an international adoption treaty that commits it to making sure babies are not bought or stolen. The government plans to tighten its oversight of notaries, who act as brokers who recruit birth mothers, handle paperwork and complete foreign adoptions in less than half the time it takes other countries. More than 4,000 babies from Guatemala were adopted by US parents last year, second only to China.

May 26      A7

Eight survive plane crash

A government flight that linked Peru’s isolated jungle communities crashed in a storm, officials said, and at least 8 survivors among the 20 people on board were rescued Friday after helicopters spotted a fire some had set. The Twin Otter plane was declared missing Thursday evening after leaving Orellana, some 360 miles northeast of Lima, the Defense Ministry said. Regional officials said a three-man air force crew and 17 civilian passengers were on board.

May 28      A3

TV station forced off air

Television personalities embraced, wept and broke into chants of “freedom” before the cameras Sunday as Venezuela’s most widely watched channel prepared to go off the air at midnight under a decision by President Hugo Chavez that opponents called an assault on free speech. Chavez refused to renew a broadcast license for Radio Caracas Television, the sole opposition-aligned TV station nationwide reach.
Abortion case advances

Mexico’s Supreme Court said Tuesday it will hear a legal challenge to a landmark Mexico City abortion law, while the capital’s mayor promised hospitals would carry on performing abortions until the justices rule. Supreme Court Justice Sergio Salvador Aguirre said arguments that abortions violate the constitutional right to life were strong enough to warrant a full review.

May 29 A3

Abortion by hundreds

About 700 women have requested abortions at public hospitals in the Mexican capital in the month since city legislators legalized the procedures April 24, and hundreds more sought them at private clinics, government officials and abortion rights groups said. Women’s groups praised city officials for quickly putting the law into effect.

May 30 A8

US lover slain

A pregnant Nicaraguan teenager allegedly shot her 53-year old American lover and enlisted her siblings, ages 14 and 19, to help dismember the body, police said Tuesday. The 17-year old girl, who is eight months pregnant told human rights officials in Esteli that she shot her live-in boyfriend Kenneth A. Kinzel, on May 12 because he threatened to kill her.

May 31 A8

Big cocaine lab found in jungle

Police found a laboratory in the southern Bolivian jungle capable of producing 245 pounds of cocaine daily. They arrested six Colombians and two Bolivians on Monday and seized 35 pounds of cocaine along with more than 22 tons of processing chemicals. US satellite photos revealed the location of the lab.

May 31 A8

TV protests continue

A top opponent of President Hugo Chavez demanded the release of jailed protestors Wednesday as university students poured into the streets for a third day to protest the removal of a leading opposition TV station from the air. Former presidential candidate Manuel Rosales said the protest show that “freedom cannot be negotiated nor bargained.”

June 1 A4

Argentina shivers…. 

A cold snap in Argentina led to electricity and natural gas shortages this week, idling factories and taxis and causing sporadic blackouts in the capital. Beset by the coldest May since 1962, millions of residents fired up space heaters, straining Buenos Aires’ electrical grid and prompting authorities to cut back the power supply.

June 4 A4
TV protests continue

Thousands of government opponents waving Venezuelan flags marched through the capital on Sunday to protest a decision by President Hugo Chavez to pull the plug on an opposition-aligned TV station. Demonstrators delivered to the People’s Defender’s office, which monitors human rights, a petition saying Chavez is restricting freedom of expression by not renewing Radio Caracas Television’s broadcast license.

June 6 A8

Castro talks at length

A healthier looking Fidel Castro appeared Tuesday on Cuban TV, speaking slowly and focusing on memories in his first lengthy appearance since he gave up power last summer. “I tell my compatriots, I’m now doing what I should be doing,” Castro told host Randy Alonso on the government’s nightly “Round Table” program. “There are no secrets.” Castro did not address international issues or plans to return to governing Cuba.

June 7 A10

Taiwan loses

President Oscar Arias announced Wednesday that Costa Rica has broken diplomatic ties with Taiwan and established relations with China, delivering a blow to the Asian island’s fragile international standing. Arias said Costa Rica needed to strengthen ties with China to attract foreign investment.

June 12 A8

Chavez, Castro huddle

Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez met for six hours behind closed doors Tuesday with Cuba’s Fidel Castro, and the close allies discussed energy issues during an emotional visit, state TV reported. The pair also talked about the socialist regional pact they created, the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas.

June 14 A10

Is prostitution next?

The leftist party that has already legalized gay unions and abortion in Mexico City wants to make prostitution legal in the capital of this overwhelmingly Roman Catholic country. Legislator Juan Bustos of the Democratic Revolutionary Party, who submitted the bill on Tuesday, said the move is necessary to protect prostitutes from abuse and regulate the sex industry.

June 14 A10

Quake rattles Guatemala

A powerful earthquake shook Guatemala and parts of El Salvador on Wednesday, causing some residents of the capital cities to rush into the streets for safety, officials said. The 6.8 magnitude quake snarled traffic in Guatemala City, but there were no reports of major damages or injuries. Aid workers reported only minor damages to homes in a couple of rural communities.
June 17 A20

American charged

An American and nice other suspects have been charged with attempting to traffic more than 2.2 tons of cocaine through a Venezuelan airport, the government said Saturday. Venezuelan police arrested the gang June 9. Those charged in the drug bust were Robert Charles Gagnon, identified as an American, two Mexicans, a Congolese man and six Venezuelans, the public ministry said in a statement that did not say what state or city the American came from.

June 19 A3

Castro’s sister-in-law dies

Vilma Espin Guillois, the wife of acting President Raul Castro, 77, died Monday, the Cuban government announced. She was Cuba’s de facto first lady for decades because Cuban leader Fidel Castro is divorced. She assumed the role shortly after the 1959 revolution and filled it for more than 45 years.

June 25 A4

Chavez braces troops for ‘war’

President Hugo Chavez urged soldiers Sunday to prepare for a guerrilla-style war against the United States, saying Washington is using psychological and economic tactics aimed at derailing his government. Chavez spoke inside Tiuna Fort – Venezuela’s military nerve center – before hundreds of uniformed soldiers. “We must think and prepare for the resistance war every day,” Chavez said. US officials rejected his military claim.

June 25 A4

Beachgoers bombed

A bomb ripped through a popular beach outside Colombia’s largest port Sunday, killing a 2-year-old and one other person. Police said explosives were hidden in a tractor used to transport revelers at Buenaventura, which experienced a wave of bombings Friday that left 23 people injured. Authorities blame the blasts on leftist rebels.

June 30 A9

Cocaine stashed in dentures

A sharp-eyed airport inspector foiled a plot to ship 20 pounds of cocaine to Panama when he discovered the drugs stuffed inside sets of false teeth. The boxes of druggy dentures seized Friday at Bogota’s El Dorado airport contained about $300,000 worth of pure cocaine, Colombian police said in a statement. In an effort to stay one step ahead of the law, traffickers in the world’s No. 1 cocaine producing country have long found creative means of camouflaging their drugs for export.

June 30 A9

US issues travel warning

The United States Embassy is warning that leftist rebels may be targeting Americans at a popular resort town as the rest of Colombia prepares for a three-day weekend. A message from the embassy’s warden, dated June 28,
said the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia may be preparing an unspecified plan against US citizens in Melgar, 45 miles southwest of Bogota.

July 5 A3

Rio Live earth concert canceled

A Brazilian judge has cancelled Saturday’s Live Earth concert in Rio because police said they do not have enough officers to guarantee crowd safety. Organizers of the free show on Rio’s Copacabana Beach said Wednesday they were trying to overturn the order to prevent Latin America from being left out of the worldwide music fest aimed at stopping global warming.

July 6 A3

Live Earth concert back on

A Brazilian judge ruled Thursday that South America’s Live earth concert could go ahead as planned after organizers convinced her there would be adequate security at the event. Chances for the gig got a boost from police, who said they could guarantee security for the show.

July 6 A5

Jet inferno kills 9

A private cargo jet blew a tire during takeoff Thursday at the Cuilacan airport and crashed through a runway fence into a busy intersection, and the resulting inferno killed all three people aboard and six more on the ground. The 43-foot Sabreliner jet skidded down a runway after a landing wheel punctured, authorities said.

July 6 A5

32 die in landslide

Hundreds of rescuers dug frantically Thursday to reach victims of an avalanche Wednesday that swept down a Mexican mountainside and buried a bus carrying up to 60 passengers. Thirty-two bodies were recovered as hope waned of finding survivors. Soldiers and rescue workers braved threats to additional slides to pull victims from the bus, which had been traveling along a remote winding road. The state’s chief of ambulance services, Salvador Bianchi, said “all are dead,” but did not explain how he knew that.

July 12 A4

Pipeline attack stops business

Kellogg, Honda, Hershey and other multinational companies temporarily shut down their factories Wednesday in western Mexico after rebels attacked a key natural gas pipeline. A small, left-wing guerrilla group claimed responsibility for the explosions and vowed to continue the attacks, while the Mexican government scrambled to increase security at “strategic installations.” Security analysts and energy experts called the attacks relatively small and mostly symbolic.

July 12 A4

TV station revives
An opposition TV station forced off the air by President Hugo Chavez said Wednesday it will take its programming to cable and satellite. Radio Caracas Television, or RCTV still is waging a legal battle to reclaim its broadcast license that Chavez refused to renew May 27. Cable and satellite cost roughly $20 a month – more than many families can afford – and reach about 30 percent of homes.

July 17 A4
Economy minister quits

President Nestor Kirchner’s economy minister resigned Monday after a prosecutor ordered her to testify about $64,000 in cash that was found in a bag in her office bathroom, the government said. Kirchner appointed economist and industry Secretary Gustavo Peirano as her replacement, to be sworn in today.

July 18 A5
He’s their biggest fan

Convalescing Fidel Castro said in an essay Tuesday that he has been so engrossed with Cuba’s performance at the Pan American Games in Brazil that he forgets to eat and take his medicine. Castro mentioned the women’s volleyball game against the United States “in which our players did everything perfect.” He also praised the women’s and men’s handball teams - “What speed, what force” he wrote. Cuba has won 20 medals so far, including 9 gold.

July 22 A7
Brazil grounds planes, plans air safety steps

A radar failure over the Amazon forced Brazil to turn back or ground a string of international flights Saturday. Authorities also announced they had mistaken a piece of the fuselage from Tuesday’s crash for the flight recorder and sent it to a laboratory for analysis. President Luiz Ignacio Lula da Silva tried to calm the nation Friday night by announcing new safety measures and saying authorities will build a new airport in Sao Paulo, where an Airbus A320 operated by Tam Airlines crashed, killing 191 people.

July 26 A6
Air chief ousted

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva fired his defense minister Wednesday in response to a jet crash last week that killed 199 people, bringing to a head anger over safety concerns and scheduling breakdowns in the military-run air system. Waldir Pires was replaced by former Supreme Court President Nelson Jobim.

July 30 A5
Brazilians blame government for crash

More than 5,000 teary-eyed Brazilians marched Sunday to the site of a July 17 plane crash that killed 199 people, blaming the government for the nation’s deadliest aviation disaster. At the front of the group was a man who wore a T-shirt with a picture of his 22-year medical student who was aboard TAM airlines Flight 3054 when it speed of a runway and slammed into an air cargo building. “Corrupt and incompetent officials killed my daughter,” his banner read.
Appendix C – Sources Cited

Mexican hospital spokesperson – 1
Mexican resident – 1
Mexican neighbor - 1
Miami City spokesperson – 1
Glacier expert – 1
Peruvian farm worker – 1
Bahamas government official – 2
Fidel Castro – 3
Anna Nicole Smith’s lawyer – 1
George W. Bush – 3
White House Spokesperson - 1
Chilean supporter of Chavez – 1
Hugo Chavez – 6
Guatemalan Mayan Activist – 1
Venezuelan Archbishop – 1
Mexican President Calderon – 2
Mexican International Affairs expert – 1
Mexican protesting Bush – 1
Colombian state government official – 1
GOP candidate Giuliani – 1
Ramon Castro – 1
Argentine government official – 1
Argentine President Kirchner – 1
British official – 1
Peruvian Mayor – 1
U.S.-Cuba Trade Association spokesperson – 1
Mexican Billionaire Carlos Slim – 1
Haitian morgue director – 1
Haitian mother – 1
Haitian undertaker – 1
US Priest in Haiti – 1
Mexico City legislator – 2
Mexican anti-abortion protestor – 1
Colombian street vendor – 1
Mexican government official – 1
Senior Cuban Citizen – 2
Duvalier supporter in Haiti – 2
Haitian torture survivor under Duvalier- 1
Former head of the American mission in Havana – 1
Chief of investigations for U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement in Arizona – 1
US Border Patrol spokesperson – 1
Mexican Border official – 1
Mexican Security official – 1
US District Judge – 1
Brazilian Catholic Cardinal – 1
Vatican spokesperson – 3
US Office of Foreign Assets Control – 1
US film producer – 1
US Treasury official – 1
Catholic Pope – 4
Chilean Catholic – 2
Brazilian Judge – 1
Brother of murdered nun – 1
Colombian Military spokesperson – 1
Former Miss Mexico – 1
Haitian Catholic Priest – 1
NASA official – 1
Brazilian Court spokesperson – 1
US Lawyer – 2
Chile's National Forest Service spokesperson – 1
Peruvian historian – 1
US archeologist – 2
US Explorer – 1
US Scientist – 1
US Paleontologist – 1
Goeldi Institute spokesperson – 1
Amazonian tribal leader – 1
Brazilian Novelist – 1
US Ethnobiologist – 1
Mexico City Civil Defense Secretary – 1
Paraguayan Presidential Candidate – 1
Current Paraguayan President – 1
Brazilian plane crash witness – 1
Brazilian University Professor – 1
Brazilian Defense Minister – 1
Brazilian President Lula – 1
Brazilian political commentator – 1
President of the Social Democratic Party in Brazil – 1
US Med Student in Cuba - 1
Appendix D – Stories by Country and Theme

Total # of Stories – 68
Total # of Briefs - 85

Total # of stories/briefs by Country (alphabetical)

Argentina – 4
Bahamas – 3
Belize
Bolivia – 3
Brazil – 21
Chile - 2
Colombia – 13
Costa Rica - 1
Cuba – 27
Dominican Republic
Ecuador – 1
El Salvador - 2
Guatemala - 3
Haiti – 7
Honduras – 2
Jamaica - 1
Mexico – 35
Nicaragua – 1
Panama
Paraguay - 1
Peru – 6
Uruguay
Venezuela - 25

Stories/Briefs by theme

US Foreign Policy - 21
Internal politics - 36
Conflict/violence - 26
Fluff - 11
Drug War - 16
Right/Left framing – 19
Disaster – 21
Religious – 11
Trade/economic policy – 22
Environmental/Scientific – 11
Immigration – 13
Tourism – 1
Adoption – 1
Entertainment - 3
Appendix E – Recommendations for International News Coverage

1. When covering international issues always cite sources.

2. Use a variety of sources to ensure balance & provide perspectives outside of "official sources" - not just politicians or people with economic, political or military power.

3. Utilize a variety of local sources for international news coverage - university educators, human rights activists, representatives from migrant/refugee communities, business community and worker rights organizations. See www.mediamouse.org/progdir/

4. Investigate more of the local connections to international news stories - economics & trade relations, local refugees, human rights campaigns, sister city relations, and local Congressional voting records on foreign policy.

5. Avoid presenting complex issues like war, famine, displacement and international politics in black & white terms.

6. Always provide a context when reporting on international issues, particularly as it relates to the historical role US Foreign Policy has played in a particular country or region.

7. Minimize violence or disaster-based stories, particularly when they are out of context.

8. Provide post-crisis coverage - not just coverage of a current "hot spot," but follow-up coverage, especially if the US maintains direct involvement in particular countries or regions.

9. Avoid being a cheerleader for US economic & military campaigns abroad. Provide objective journalism, not pro-US or pro-any nation coverage.