

# Cuban Officials Say Castro Is Recovering and the Nation Is Stable

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MEXICO CITY, Aug. 7 — High-ranking Cuban officials worked hard Monday to put out the message that [Cuba](#) was stable after the transfer of power from [Fidel Castro](#) to his younger brother last week.

Fidel Castro has remained out of the public eye since undergoing surgery a week ago for an undisclosed illness that involved intestinal bleeding. For the first time in his 47 years as Cuba's authoritarian leader, Mr. Castro relinquished power, to his brother Raúl, who is the defense minister, along with a cadre of cabinet officials. The government has said Fidel Castro's health is "a state secret."

Although no detailed information on Mr. Castro's illness or a prognosis for him has been released, the president of the National Assembly, Ricardo Alarcón, and the minister in charge of the island's economy, Carlos Lage Dávila, both said Monday that he was recovering rapidly.

Speaking in Bogotá, Colombia, where he was attending the swearing in of President [Álvaro Uribe](#), Mr. Lage said Mr. Castro would be able to return to his duties "in a short time," according to Mexico's and Cuba's official news agencies. He said the Cuban leader "finds himself well cared for in a hospital and has been conscious the whole time."

Mr. Alarcón, meanwhile, scoffed at Cuban exiles in Miami and conservatives in Washington who believe the Communist government cannot long survive without Mr. Castro at the helm.

"All those who have been dreaming, or trying to fool the world and put out the idea that something terrible would happen in Cuba, that people would take to the streets, that there would be great instability, all those,

the door slammed on them and they must have swollen hands now,” Mr. Alarcón said, speaking on the Venezuelan network Telesur.

On Friday, Cuba’s health minister, José Ramón Balaguer Cabrera, also said that Mr. Castro was “recuperating satisfactorily.” His comments came as he visited Guatemala for the opening of a hospital built with Cuban aid.

Over the weekend, other rumors swirled through Latin America about the leftist icon’s health. The Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo reported that Cuban authorities had told the Brazilian president that Mr. Castro had cancer and would not return to his duties, a reOne member of Cuba’s Council of State, or cabinet, Roberto Fernández Retamar, told reporters at a news conference in Havana that the country had set in motion a peaceful political succession. It was not clear whether he meant that the transfer of power to Raúl Castro would turn out to be permanent, but the statement was clearly meant to suggest that the Castro government was not about to crumble.

Mr. Fernández Retamar, a writer, told Reuters, speaking of American officials: “They had not expected that a peaceful succession was possible. A peaceful succession has taken place.”

President Bush, meanwhile, at a news conference in Crawford, Tex., spoke of the United States’ desire to see Cuba change from a one-party autocracy to a democracy with freedom of speech and competing political parties.

The United States has kept up an economic embargo of the island for more than four decades and the Bush administration, like nine others before it, has made it known that it would welcome democracy in Cuba. Still, American officials said last week that there were no plans to interfere with the current transition of power, nor are there plans to invade the island, something Cuba’s propaganda machine warns of constantly.

**“Our desire for the Cuban people is to be able to choose their own form of government,” Mr. Bush said. He added: “Cuba has the possibility of transforming itself from a tyrannical situation to a different type of society. The Cuban people ought to decide.”**