

# Castro's feeling well, his big brother says

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**HAVANA** - Ramón Castro, the older brother of leader Fidel Castro, said Saturday that his sibling is steadily improving after intestinal surgery that has left their younger brother Raúl temporarily in charge of the country.

"He's much better," Ramón said of Fidel. "He works savagely and that has a cost."

Ramón Castro, who turns 82 in October, is a lifelong farmer who has stayed out of national politics. He indicated he had not yet read his brother Raúl's interview with the Communist Party newspaper Granma, which was published Friday and constituted his first public comments since assuming provisional power July 31.

The eldest Castro brother, who bears a striking resemblance to 80-year-old Fidel with his Romanesque profile and white beard, spoke at the international airport awaiting the arrival of Florida cattleman John Parke Wright IV, with whom he has formed a strong friendship during the American's frequent visits to the island.

The specifics of Castro's ailment and the nature of the surgery he underwent have been treated as a state secret.

The leader blamed his heavy work and travel schedule for causing sustained intestinal bleeding, which prompted the need for emergency surgery.

Recent government photographs and video of the leader showed him conscious, coherent and in good spirits.