

Summit provides a look at Raúl Castro as Cuba's acting leader

Addressing leaders from developing nations, Raúl Castro has diligently stood in for his iconic sibling at the Nonaligned Movement summit, giving a glimpse of his own leadership style.

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HAVANA - Raúl takes center stage

Acting President Raúl Castro is giving Cubans and the world a preview of how he may lead if his brother Fidel does not return to power: efficiently and with little fanfare.

Addressing leaders from developing nations, Raúl Castro has diligently stood in for his iconic sibling at the Nonaligned Movement summit this weekend.

DILIGENT STAND-IN

Speaking with gravitas but with none of Fidel Castro's passionate gestures, he repeatedly exhorted them to unite against "imperialist" U.S. policies.

"With this summit the world has discovered more about who Raúl Castro is," Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said.

Raúl Castro has been much more visible at the summit, his first real opportunity to appear as a statesman since his 80-year-old brother fell ill in late July.

And while he seemed a bit stiff on Thursday while presiding over the Group of 15 meeting on the summit sidelines, he soon settled into the businesslike operating style he's long been known for as defense minister.

"Of course Raúl must be congratulated" for successfully managing the gathering of more than 100 nations, Panamanian President Martín Torrijos told The Associated Press Saturday. "The way the event has gone shows that he has been on top of things."

Raúl Castro, 75, had mostly avoided public statements since Fidel temporarily ceded power after undergoing intestinal surgery. "He appears in public when he considers it necessary, and no more," Pérez Roque said.

Staying home in his pajamas, Fidel Castro has met privately with foreign visitors, including U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and Presidents Hugo Chávez of Venezuela and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria.

LARGER THAN LIFE

In his stead, it's Raúl who has become larger than life this week as his face, bespectacled and with a mustache, was splashed across the huge screens on both sides of the stage in Havana's convention center.

Physically, Raúl compares unfavorably to his older brother.

He's a head shorter and lacks Fidel's Romanesque profile, athletic physique and rebel's beard.

His dull speech-giving style can't compete with Fidel's oratory flourishes.

But he gets the job done.