

U.N. will slam trade embargo, Cuban predicts

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WASHINGTON - (AP) -- American hostility toward Cuba has reached "unprecedented levels" under the Bush administration, a senior Cuban official said Tuesday. He predicted that the U.N. General Assembly will deliver a sharp rebuke of U.S. policies in a resolution next month.

Cuba's chief diplomat in Washington, Dagoberto Rodríguez, said the world assembly will denounce the U.S. trade embargo against Cuba, as it has each year since the early 1990s.

"The longest running and most ruthless blockade ever known to mankind will be rejected again," Rodríguez said, noting that 182 countries voted to end "this cruel and genocidal policy" last year.

He said the United States pursues regime change in Cuba and seeks to annex the island.

The Bush administration says it is seeking, through a policy of economic denial and other means, a peaceful transition to democracy on the island.

In response to a question about the possible reinstatement of Fidel Castro, Rodríguez said, "His health has been improving every day. He will soon be assuming his duties as president."

A month ago, Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque said Castro will take charge on Dec. 2. He relinquished power to his brother, Raúl, on July 31 after reportedly undergoing intestinal surgery.