

Raúl sits in at big party

Cuba officially celebrates Fidel Castro's 80th birthday today, but the leader may be too sick to attend the ceremony.

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Raúl Castro on Friday turned up at a ceremony marking brother Fidel's 80th birthday amid conflicting reports that Fidel is not suffering from cancer but is still too sick to attend the main event today

Raúl's daughter told the Reuters news agency in Havana that Fidel is unlikely to show at the main event celebrating his birthday, a military parade in Havana today.

'He's not going to the festivities, because everybody is telling him, 'We don't want you to move.' We're going to celebrate, but he should stay away and take it easy,' " Mariela Castro told Reuters.

"My impression as an ordinary Cuban is that we are going to have him in another role, as the wise 80-year-old leader that now is going to take care of himself," she said.

CBS Evening News, citing no sources, meanwhile reported Friday from Havana that Fidel does not have cancer. U.S. officials have said they believe the Cuban leader has terminal cancer and will not live past 2007.

Raúl Castro made his first appearance at the weeklong birthday events Friday, a gathering of some of the foreign dignitaries in Cuba for the celebrations.

Raúl sat at the head table near President Evo Morales of Bolivia and Nicaragua's president-elect Daniel Ortega at the last of the events sponsored by the Guayasamín Foundation, a group that supports Fidel Castro. He did not speak.

But there remained intense speculation about whether Fidel would make an appearance at the massive military parade in his honor today.

"Fidel recovers! We shall have him among us!" Vice President Carlos Lage said Friday night, without specifically referring to the military parade. ``He will continue to lead us! We shall ask him to do so for several more years!"

Fidel did not attend the opening event for the week's activities, but sent a statement saying that his doctors had determined that he was too sick to attend.

Some 1,500 people have been attending a string of events initially scheduled four months ago, when Castro announced he was so sick that he needed to delay his Aug. 13 birthday celebrations until today -- the 50th anniversary of the start of the revolution.

Among other guests are Haitian President René Prével and Colombian Nobel prize-winner author Gabriel García Márquez.