

# Castro: Cuba will thwart Bush, U.S.

**In a front page editorial, ailing leader Fidel Castro told President Bush and the people of the United States that the country `will never have Cuba.'**

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HAVANA --

Recuperating Fidel Castro vowed that the United States "will never have Cuba," saying in an essay published Monday that nearly a year after emergency surgery left him "between life and death" the island's communist system is strong and will stay that way.

The essay, titled *You will never have Cuba*, filled the front page of the Communist Party daily Granma and other official newspapers.

Castro accused President Bush of plotting to send troops to Cuba since 2002 and to "install a direct imperial administration."

The 80-year-old's exact condition and ailment are state secrets, but life on the island has remained little changed since he fell ill.

In recent weeks, Castro has signed a series of editorials, most of them on international topics such as a U.S.-backed plan to use food crops for biofuels.

But Monday's was one of just two that have focused on Cuba, noting that nearly a year had passed since July 31, 2006, when he was "between life and death."

"Cuba will continue developing and perfecting the combative capacity of its people, including our modest but active and efficient arms industry, against any invader that it comes across, no matter what weapons they have," Castro wrote in the article, which was signed Sunday afternoon.

Cuba has repeatedly said its citizens are armed and prepared to beat back any U.S. attempt to take advantage of Castro's health problems and invade.

Castro has not been seen in public since last July, when he announced that illness forced him to temporarily cede power.

His brother Raúl, the defense minister, now heads the government.

Paraphrasing the statement in which he turned over power, Castro said, "I don't have any doubt that our people and our revolution will fight until the last drop of blood."

"You shouldn't doubt it either, Mr. Bush!" Castro added. "I can assure you, you will never have Cuba!"

Castro blamed Washington's 45-year-old trade embargo and travel ban against Cuba for widespread hunger and malnutrition over the years.

"Our people are about to reach 50 years of cruel blockade. Thousands of children have died or been mutilated as a consequence of the dirty war against Cuba," he wrote.

He also said that a U.S. policy of allowing most Cuban migrants who reach U.S. territory to stay was "another cause of death for Cuban citizens, including women and children" apparently because it encourages thousands to make dangerous attempts to reach Florida by boat.

Castro said when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, costing Cuba billions of dollars in annual subsidies and reducing the island's food supply, the U.S. embargo contributed to cutting "proteins and calories" on the island by 40 percent, while also causing widespread medicine shortages.

"Everyone awaited, some with sadness, some with jubilation, the collapse of the Cuban revolution," he wrote.

Suffering through an era dubbed the "special period," Cuba took small steps to open the economy to some foreign investment and bolster tourism, which increased the influx of hard currency.

The moves brought Cuba's economy back from the brink, but Castro wrote that foreign cash "caused much damage to social consciousness" by giving many Cubans a taste of capitalism and material wealth.

Castro's close friend and ally, socialist Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, has recently bolstered Cuba's economy further by selling the island oil at favorable prices.

That "meant important relief and opened new possibilities," Castro wrote.