

Fidel Castro stays silent on health, but not U.S.

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HAVANA --

A new newspaper column signed by Fidel Castro and published Thursday again attacks U.S. policies toward the island but does not address his health.

Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque told journalists in Brazil on Thursday that the 81-year-old Castro is determined to fully recover from intestinal surgery last year that forced him to cede power to his brother Raúl.

"Fidel is doing very well and is disciplined in his recovery process," Pérez Roque said.

Castro has not been seen in public since the emergency surgery in July 2006. The state of his health remains a "state secret" but has been the subject of repeated rumors and speculation.

The Thursday column signed by Castro said Washington's "perfidy" toward Cuba was in evidence in an Atlanta courtroom Monday when lawyers for five Cubans appealed their conviction on charges of spying for Havana and other crimes.

Cuba considers the five "hero fighters against terrorism," claiming they were spying on South Florida's exile community, not the U.S. government, to avert terror attacks on the island.

It was the fourth of Castro's so-called "reflections" in newspapers in two weeks. The last time his image was seen in public was June 5.

The column made no mention of his health. His birthday on Aug. 13 passed without any sign of the man who ruled Cuba for 47 years. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez later said he had spoken with Castro on his birthday.