

# Cuban official assails Bush

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UNITED NATIONS --

Cuba's foreign minister launched a blistering attack on President Bush at a U.N. General Assembly meeting Wednesday, a day after the U.S. leader spoke of a Cuba no longer ruled by Fidel Castro.

Felipe Perez Roque told world leaders that Bush "came into office through fraud and deceit" and has "no moral authority or credibility to judge anyone." He also accused the American leader of authorizing the torture of prisoners at the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay.

On Tuesday, Bush looked ahead to a Cuba without Castro, who hasn't been seen in public since undergoing emergency intestinal surgery last year.

"In Cuba, the long rule of a cruel dictator is nearing its end," Bush said. "The Cuban people are ready for their freedom."

He also urged "every civilized nation ... to stand up for the people suffering under dictatorship," singling out "brutal regimes" in Belarus, North Korea, Syria, Iran, Myanmar, Cuba, Zimbabwe and Sudan.

The Cuban delegation walked out of the General Assembly hall Tuesday to protest Bush's remarks. During Perez Roque's attack on Wednesday, the U.S. seat was empty.

The U.S. Mission to the United Nations said the Cuban comments reflect a tragedy. "We find it tragic that the people of Cuba and Zimbabwe cannot enjoy the same freedom to speak out that their own leaders take at the podium of the General Assembly in denouncing other countries," said mission spokesman Benjamin Chang.

In his comments, Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe - whose government is frequently criticized by Western nations for alleged human rights abuses - claimed that the U.S. leader "imprisons and tortures in Guantanamo, he imprisons and tortures at Abu Ghraib, he has secret torture centers in Europe."

Perez Roque accused Bush of winning his office through fraud. "We would have been spared his presence yesterday, and we would have listened to President Al Gore talking about climate change and the risks to our species."

Perez Roque, who spoke on behalf of the 118-nation Nonaligned Movement, said Bush's comments forced him to respond.

"It was an embarrassing show," he said. "The delirium tremens of the world's policeman, sprinkled with the mediocrity and the cynicism of those who threaten to launch wars in which they know their life is not at stake."

In his speech, Bush also saluted nations "that have recently take strides toward liberty, including Ukraine, Georgia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. He said the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 60 years ago, "must guide our work in the world."

Referring to these comments, Perez Roque said, "He talked about human rights, but we know that he is lying."

"He has been the most selfish and reckless politician that we have ever seen," he said. "President Bush has no moral authority or credibility to judge anyone."