



Home Office

**Border &  
Immigration Agency**

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

# CUBA

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25 APRIL 2007

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## 1. Preface

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- i This Country of Origin Information (COI) Key Documents has been produced by Research, Development and Statistics (RDS), Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 25 April 2007.
- ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.
- iii For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.
- iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Cuba is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the key documents listed.
- v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.
- vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional documents are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

### Country of Origin Information Service

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**Website:** [http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country\\_reports.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html)

### ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information was established under the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the Home Office's country of origin information material. The Advisory Panel welcomes all feedback on the Home Office's country of origin information material. Information about the Panel's work can be found on its website at [www.apci.org.uk](http://www.apci.org.uk).

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reviews the content of selected Home Office COI documents, but neither the fact that such a review has been undertaken, nor any comments made, should be taken to imply endorsement of the material. Some of the material examined by the Panel relates to countries designated or proposed for designation for the Non-Suspensive Appeals (NSA) list. In such cases, the Panel's work should not be taken to imply any endorsement of the decision or proposal to designate a particular country for NSA, nor of the NSA process itself.

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## 2. Background Information about Cuba

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**Full Country Name:** The Republic of Cuba

**Area:** 110,860 sq. km (42,803 sq. miles)

**Population:** 11.2 million

**Capital City:** Havana (population 2.2 m)

**People:** Ethnically mixed population (white 66%; mixed race 22%; black 12%), Chinese 1%

**Language:** Spanish

**Religion:** The State is secular in Cuba; the main religions are, Catholicism, Santeria (an informal mixture of Christianity and African religions brought over by slaves), and Protestantism.

**Currency:** Cuban Peso (Moneda Nacional and Convertible Peso (CUC))

**Major Political Parties:** Only party – Cuban Communist Party or PCC (Fidel CASTRO Ruz, First Secretary)

**Government:** Cuba has a one party system of government and is the only country in the Western Hemisphere with a Communist government. Over 47 years after the Cuban revolution, Fidel Castro remains Head of State and leader of the Communist Party. The 5th Party Congress in October 1997 reaffirmed the Revolution's political direction and named Raul Castro as Fidel's chosen successor.

**President of the Council of State:** Commander-in-Chief, Dr Fidel Castro Ruz (since 1959)

**First Vice-President of the Council of State:** General of the Army, Raul Castro Ruz

**Foreign Minister:** Felipe Perez Roque

**Membership of international groups/organisations:** Cuba's memberships include United Nations (UN), Organisation of American States (OAS – excluded from formal participation since 1962), IAEA, WHO, WTO, WO and others. [4a]

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### GEOGRAPHY

As reported by the Library of Congress in its Country Profiles of September 2006, "Cuba is located between the Caribbean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean. It is the Western most island of the Greater Antilles and the largest country in the Caribbean. Its nearest Caribbean neighbours, listed clockwise, are The Bahamas, Haiti (separated from Cuba by the Windward Passage), Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands. Cuba is separated from the southern tip of Florida by the Strait of Florida and from the eastern most tip of Mexico by the Yucatan Channel." [1a]

The same report further stated that, "A multiracial society, Cuba has a population of mainly Spanish and African origins; a majority of inhabitants, 51 percent, are mulatto or mestizo; 37 percent, white; and 11 percent, black. A small Chinese minority constitutes less than 1 percent of the total population. Cuba has two living languages. Spanish (Español) is the official and dominant language. Lucumí is an ethnic language with Niger–Congo, Atlantic–Congo, Volta–Congo, Benue–Congo, Defoid, Yoruboid, and Edekiri roots. [1a]

### MAPS

Map of Cuba courtesy of CIA World FactBook:

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html> [10a]



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## RECENT HISTORY

As reported by the Library of Congress in its Country Profiles of September 2006, “Batista’s coup d’état on March 10, 1952, had a profound effect on Cuban society, leading to doubts about the ability of the Cubans to govern themselves. It also began a brutal right-wing dictatorship that resulted in the polarization of society, civil war, the overthrow of Batista, and the destruction of the military and most other Cuban institutions. Fidel Castro Ruz, a charismatic, anti-U.S. revolutionary, seized power on January 1, 1959 following his successful revolt against the U.S.-backed Batista government. As the Castro regime expropriated U.S. properties and investments and began, officially, on April 16, 1961, to convert Cuba into a one-party communist system, relations between the United States and Cuba deteriorated rapidly. The United States imposed an embargo on Cuba on October 19, 1960, and broke diplomatic relations on January 3, 1961.” [1a] (p3)

The same report further noted that, “The collapse of communism in the early 1990s had a profound effect on Cuba. Soviet economic subsidies to Cuba ended as of January 1, 1991. Without Soviet support, Cuba was submerged in a major economic crisis... In 1996 the U.S. Congress passed the so-called Helms–Burton law, introducing tougher rules for U.S. dealings with Cuba and deepening economic sanctions. The most controversial part of this law, which led to international condemnation of U.S. policy toward Cuba, involved sanctions against third-party nations, corporations, or individuals that trade with Cuba.” [1a] (p4)

## RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

As recorded by Library of Congress, “In recent years, Cuban politics have been dominated by a government campaign targeting negative characteristics of the socialist system, such as ‘indiscipline’ (for example, theft of public and private property,

absenteeism, and delinquency), corruption, and negligence. Under the campaign, unspecified indiscipline-related charges were brought against a member of the Cuban Communist Party and its Political Bureau, resulting in his dismissal from these positions in April 2006.” [1a]

As noted by the FCO in its Country Profile of 26 February 2007, “On 31 July 2006, President Fidel Castro issued a proclamation announcing that he had undergone surgery for a severe intestinal crisis with sustained bleeding and that he was handing power to his brother Raul Castro. Raul Castro has therefore temporarily assumed the functions of First Secretary of the Communist Party, Head of the Armed Forces and President of the Council of State and Cuban Government. Since the start of Fidel Castro's health problems, his public appearances have been kept to a minimum.” [4a]

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## ECONOMY

**Nominal GDP (billion US\$):** 30.239 billion (2003 actual)

**Nominal GDP per head (US\$):** 2,695 (2003 actual)

**Inflation rate:** 6% (2004 est)

**Main industries:** tourism, sugar, nickel, tobacco, and agriculture.

As recorded by the FCO:

“The Cuban economy has experienced a gradual recovery since its 'freefall' in the early 1990s... These included the legalisation of the use of hard currency and of some private enterprises, as well as reform of agricultural production and land tenure to permit more private ownership. Nonetheless private enterprise is still heavily restricted... Shortages of basic foodstuffs and medicines, and poor public transport are all still regular features of daily life for ordinary Cubans. The national average wage is roughly \$10-15 a month at real market prices. The state provides basic rations of food; education and health are free and good by regional standards; utilities are subsidised heavily and most, if they do not 'own' their houses, pay little or no rent.” [4a]

As recorded by Library of Congress, “Cuba has a state-controlled economy with the exception of a tiny and shrinking open-market sector. Since Fidel Castro seized power, a vast and cumbersome bureaucracy not conducive to innovation, productivity, and efficiency has managed Cuban affairs...(p11 ) Prior to the Cuban Revolution, Cuba traded mostly with the United States. Since the United States imposed an economic embargo against the Castro regime in October 1960, U.S. trade sanctions against Cuba have remained in effect.” [1a] (p16)

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## HUMAN RIGHTS

The FCO country profile for Cuba stated, “Cuba's record on civil and political rights falls well below accepted international standards, and is of continuing concern. People are denied freedom of expression and assembly, and a free press. Opposition parties are prohibited.” [4a]

In their Annual Report on Human Rights 2006 the FCO stated, “No opposition to the government is tolerated and citizens are denied basic civil and political freedoms as a direct result of state policy... The Cuban authorities claim that restrictions on individual liberties are necessary due to the threat of invasion by the US... The Cuban government rejects any meaningful dialogue about its human rights record, either denying the existence of any abuses or playing down their significance.” [4b] (p27)

The US State Department (USSD) Report on Human Rights 2006 also raised concerns about the centralisation of power resulting in “The law prohibits abusive treatment of detainees and prisoners; however, members of the security forces sometimes beat and otherwise abused human rights and prodemocracy advocates, detainees, and prisoners, and did so with impunity. Although physical torture was rare, authorities beat, harassed, and made death threats against dissidents, both inside and outside of prison. Many were interrogated and pressured to sign incriminating statements or collaborate with authorities. Some detainees and prisoners endured physical and sexual abuse, sometimes by other inmates with the acquiescence of guards, or long periods in isolation or punishment cells.” [2a] (section 1c)

In their Annual Report 2006 (covering events from January - December 2005) Amnesty International (AI) highlighted “There was increasing international concern about Cuba’s failure to improve civil and political rights. In April, in a highly politicized process, the UN Commission on Human Rights condemned Cuba once again for its human rights record. The government maintained a tight control on those who criticized it, and detained several human rights defenders and political dissidents. Human rights activists, political dissidents and trade unionists were harassed and intimidated. Such attacks were frequently perpetrated by quasi-official groups, the rapid-response brigades, allegedly acting in collusion with members of the security forces” [11a]

Human Rights Watch (HRW) in their World Report 2007 stated:

“Refusing to recognize human rights monitoring as a legitimate activity, the government denies legal status to local human rights groups. Individuals who belong to these groups face systematic harassment, with the government putting up obstacles to impede them from documenting human rights conditions. In addition, international human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International are barred from sending fact-finding missions to Cuba. In fact, Cuba remains one of the few countries in the world to deny the International Committee of the Red Cross access to its prisons.” [5a]

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### 3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

<p><b>KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY</b></p>	<p>[1a] Library of Congress, Country Profiles: Cuba, updated September 2006 <a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf">http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf</a></p> <p>[2a] USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a></p> <p>[2c] USSD, Background Note: Cuba, last updated October 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm</a></p> <p>[4a] FCO, Country Profile: The Republic of Cuba (last updated on 26 February 2007) <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307</a></p> <p>[7a] BBC, Country Profile: Cuba, last updated on 23 February 2007 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203299.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203299.stm</a></p> <p>[10a] CIA, The World Factbook, Cuba, last updated 15 March 2007 <a href="https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html">https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html</a></p> <p>[10b] CIA, Chiefs of State and Cabinet Members of Foreign Governments, Cuba, last updated 26 March 2007 <a href="https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/chiefs/chiefs47.html">https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/chiefs/chiefs47.html</a></p>
<p><b>MAPS</b></p>	<p>[10a] CIA, The World Factbook, Cuba, last updated 15 March 20067 <a href="https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html">https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/cu.html</a></p> <p>[30] Perry-Castaneda Library – Cuba Map <a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia07/cuba_sm_2007.gif">http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia07/cuba_sm_2007.gif</a></p>
<p><b>HISTORY</b></p>	<p>[1a] Library of Congress, Country Profiles: Cuba, updated September 2006 <a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf">http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf</a></p> <p>[2a] USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a></p> <p>[2c] USSD, Background Note: Cuba, last updated October 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm</a></p> <p>[4a] FCO, Country Profile: The Republic of Cuba (last updated on 26 February 2007) <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket</a></p>

<p><b>HISTORY CONT'D</b></p>	<p><a href="/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307">/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307</a></p> <p><b>[7a]</b> BBC, Country Profile: Cuba, last updated on 23 February 2007 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203299.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203299.stm</a></p> <p><b>[7b]</b> BBC, Timeline: Cuba, last updated 13 December 2006 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203355.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203355.stm</a></p> <p><b>[26a]</b> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Cuba <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6947">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6947</a></p>
<p><b>POLITICS AND RECENT EVENTS</b></p>	<p><b>[1a]</b> Library of Congress, Country Profiles: Cuba, updated September 2006 <a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf">http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf</a></p> <p><b>[2c]</b> USSD, Background Note: Cuba, last updated October 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm">http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2886.htm</a></p> <p><b>[4a]</b> FCO, Country Profile: The Republic of Cuba (last updated on 26 February 2007) <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307</a></p> <p><b>[7a]</b> BBC, Country Profile: Cuba, last updated on 23 February 2007 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203299.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203299.stm</a></p> <p><b>[7b]</b> BBC, Timeline: Cuba, last updated 13 December 2006 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203355.stm">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/country_profiles/1203355.stm</a></p> <p><b>[26a]</b> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Cuba <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6947">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6947</a></p>
<p><b>HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL:</b></p>	<p><b>[2a]</b> USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a></p> <p><b>[3a]</b> Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, 1992 <a href="http://www.cubonet.org/ref/dis/const_92_e.htm">http://www.cubonet.org/ref/dis/const_92_e.htm</a></p> <p><b>[4a]</b> FCO, Country Profile: The Republic of Cuba (last updated on 26 February 2007) <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307">http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&amp;c=Page&amp;cid=1007029394365&amp;a=KCcountryProfile&amp;aid=1029494280307</a></p> <p><b>[5a]</b> Human Rights Watch, World Report 2007: Cuba January 2007</p>

<p><b>HUMAN RIGHTS - GENERAL: CONT'D</b></p>	<p><a href="http://www.hrw.org/wr2k7/wr2007master.pdf">http://www.hrw.org/wr2k7/wr2007master.pdf</a></p> <p><b>[11a]</b> Amnesty International, Annual Report 2006: Republic of Cuba (covering events from January - December 2005) <a href="http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/cub-summary-eng">http://web.amnesty.org/report2006/cub-summary-eng</a></p> <p><b>[11c]</b> Cuba: Amnesty International's human rights concerns: 29 January 2007 <a href="http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR250032007?open&amp;of=ENG-CUB">http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR250032007?open&amp;of=ENG-CUB</a></p> <p><b>[11b]</b> Amnesty International, Cuba: Further information on Fear for safety / Fear of torture / Intimidation / Harassment: 22 January 2007 <a href="http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR250012007?open&amp;of=ENG-CUB">http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGAMR250012007?open&amp;of=ENG-CUB</a></p> <p><b>[26a]</b> Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2006: Cuba <a href="http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6947">http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&amp;year=2006&amp;country=6947</a></p>
<p><b>HUMAN RIGHTS – SPECIFIC ISSUES:</b></p> <p><b>(IN ADDITION TO GENERAL REPORTS ABOVE, INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IS PROVIDED IN THE DOCUMENTS LISTED BELOW)</b></p>	
<p><b>CHILDREN</b></p>	<p><b>[2a]</b> USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a></p> <p><b>[2d]</b> USSD, Trafficking in Persons Report 2006, 5 June 2006 <a href="http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/66086.pdf">http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/66086.pdf</a></p> <p><b>[2f]</b> USSD, International Adoption – Cuba November 2006 <a href="http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_3092.html">http://travel.state.gov/family/adoption/country/country_3092.html</a></p> <p><b>[15a]</b> Child Soldiers, Global Report 2004: Cuba <a href="http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=822">http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=822</a></p> <p><b>[29a]</b> UNICEF, Info by Country: Cuba (accessed on 4 April 2007) <a href="http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/cuba.html">http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/cuba.html</a></p>
<p><b>CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONALITY</b></p>	<p><b>[2a]</b> USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a></p> <p><b>[3a]</b> Constitution of the Republic of Cuba, 1992 <a href="http://www.cubanet.org/ref/dis/const_92_e.htm">http://www.cubanet.org/ref/dis/const_92_e.htm</a></p> <p><b>[3c]</b> Citizenship Law (2002 as amended 2006)</p> <p><b>[21a]</b> United States Office of Personnel Management Investigations Service, Citizenships laws of the World,</p>

	published March 2001, Cuba <a href="http://www.multiplecitizenship.com/wscl/ws_CUBA.html">http://www.multiplecitizenship.com/wscl/ws_CUBA.html</a>
<b>CORRUPTION</b>	<p><b>[1a]</b> Library of Congress, Country Profiles: Cuba, updated September 2006 <a href="http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf">http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/profiles/Cuba.pdf</a></p> <p><b>[2a]</b> USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a></p> <p><b>[17]</b> Transparency International, Corruption Perception Index 2006 (last modified 2 March 2007) <a href="http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006">http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006</a></p>
<b>DISABILITY</b>	<b>[2a]</b> USSD, Report on Human Rights Practices 2006: Cuba, 6 March 2007 <a href="http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm">http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78887.htm</a>
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