

DAILY NEWS

NEW YORK'S HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER

50¢

nydailynews.com



Little has changed in Havana, three days after ailing Fidel Castro temporarily handed over power to his brother Raul.

CUBA PUSH

W: Go for democracy & foes beware

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush urged the people of Cuba yesterday to work for democratic change and warned that the U.S. would take note of Cuban officials who stand in the way.

"We will support you in your effort to build a transitional government in Cuba committed to democracy," Bush said in a statement. He also said the U.S. would watch for those "in the current Cuban regime who obstruct your desire for a free Cuba."

Bush, who left Washington yesterday for his ranch in Texas, said the U.S. was monitoring the situation.

Cuban leader Fidel Castro transferred temporary control of the country on Monday to his brother, longtime Defense Minister Raul Castro, while

undergoing surgery for intestinal bleeding.

Neither man has been seen in public since the announcement, though an official statement said Fidel Castro was in good spirits and beginning his recovery.

Meanwhile, Cuban authorities — citing what they said were decisions by Fidel Castro — announced a more collective style of governance in a country long used to a single strongman. Six trusted comrades were selected to run key projects while Raul acts as interim president and head of the Communist Party.

The division of powers gives the first solid indication of the direction the Cuban government is likely to take after Castro's death.

In a statement announcing his illness, Castro said his brother was in charge of the government, the ruling party

and the military during a recovery expected to take weeks. But Castro distributed responsibility for running and funding his pet projects among six men, including Vice President Carlos Lage, Foreign Minister Felipe Perez Roque and Central Bank President Francisco Soberon.

Raul Castro recently hinted at a shared future style of governing, noting that his 79-year-old brother was a singular type of leader and saying the party — not any individual — would be Castro's true successor.

In the event of a change in the Cuban government, Bush said the U.S. would provide humanitarian assistance as needed.

"It has long been the hope of the United States to have a free, independent and democratic Cuba as a close friend and neighbor," Bush said.