

DEATH OF FIDEL CASTRO WORLD REACTION

CASTRO WILL LIVE FOREVER
"The Chinese people have lost a good and true comrade. Comrade Castro will live forever."
Xi Jinping

END OF AN ERA
"The name of this distinguished statesman is rightly considered the symbol of an era in modern world history. Fidel Castro was a sincere and reliable friend of Russia."
Vladimir Putin

CUBA'S PRIDE
"Fidel Castro embodied Cuba's revolution in both its hopes and its later disappointments. An actor of the Cold War... he represented, for Cubans, pride in rejecting external domination."
Francois Hollande

BEACON ON INDEPENDENCE
"It is up to us to continue his legacy and carry his flag of independence."
Nicholas Maduro

HE DEFIED HARSHTEST US BLOCKED
"Fidel stood up and strengthened his country during the harshest American blockade, when there was colossal pressure on him and he still took his country out of this blockade to a path of independent development."
Mikhail Gorbachev

MOST ICONIC PERSONALITIES OF THE 20TH CENTURY
"Fidel Castro was one of the most iconic personalities of the 20th century. India mourns the loss of a great friend. May his soul rest in peace."
Narendra Modi

FIGHTER AGAINST APARTHEID
"President Castro identified with our struggle against apartheid. He inspired the Cuban people to join us in our own struggle. As a way of paying homage to the memory of President Castro, the strong bonds of solidarity, cooperation and friendship that exist between South Africa and Cuba must be maintained and nurtured."
Jacob Zuma

END OF BRUTAL DICTATOR
Today, the world marks the passing of a brutal dictator who oppressed his own people for nearly six decades.
Donald Trump

SINGULAR FIGURE IN HISTORY
"History will record and judge the enormous impact of this singular figure on the people and world around him."
Barack Obama



The first photo taken in the 60s shows Fidel Castro with Ernesto Che Guevara. The second photo, taken in 1958, shows him surrounded by the members of his guerrilla movement in the Cuban jungle.

CASTRO: RENAISSANCE MAN

AFP, Havana

His long-winded political rants were legendary. But Fidel Castro also loved burning the midnight oil, the written word, and, ironically, the sport that unites Cuba and its US foe: baseball.

Castro squeezed the maximum out of his 90 years which ended when he died late Friday, getting by on snatched rest, sustained by the passion of his interests and the revolution he nurtured for nearly half a century.

"I will never retire from politics, the revolution or the ideas I have," Castro said late in his life.

Castro's legendary late-nightismanship was a source of constant comment by journalists, biographers and the bemused.

For Castro, it was utterly normal to dine into the wee hours, then hold interviews that stretched on hours as guests slumped over in their chairs.

Some of his closest allies and friends said Castro somehow learned to rest while awake, in a sort of active down-time of chatting, swimming or reading, another passion of his.

"His devotion to the word is almost magical," wrote a personal friend, Colombian Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez. He said he was convinced that when Castro is "tired of conversing, he rests by conversing more." Garcia Marquez died in 2014.

Castro thirsted for knowledge, learning late in life to surf the Internet, even as his

government controlled access to it.

His personal library included books by Ernest Hemingway and texts on hydroponics, or growing plants without soil.

There are photos of the day when the only Concorde to visit Havana touched down, and Castro headed to the airport to pepper the pilot with questions about the sleek supersonic jet.

The youthful Castro of the 1950s was fabled for incessant cigar smoking. When he stubbed out the habit, he was awarded a prize from the World Health Organization.

Something of a gourmand, Castro collected cooking recipes which, according to Garcia Marquez, he liked to prepare "with a sort of scientific rigor." In his later years he went on diets, even as many Cubans struggled to put enough food on their own tables.

The first papal nuncio during his government, Monsignor Cesare Sacchi, taught him how to make pasta.

An inveterate risk-taker, he did not balk at political and military high stakes.

Castro did not take kindly to defeat. When Cuba failed to meet its 1970 sugar harvest target of 10 million tonnes (there were only eight) he urged Cubans to "turn misfortune into victory."

"In my next incarnation I want to be a writer," Castro was once quoted as saying. He wrote many short pieces and editorials but his books are mainly compilations of his speeches.



This file picture dated September 1973 shows Cuban president Fidel Castro looking at a rifle during a visit in North Vietnam during the Vietnam war.

FIDEL CASTRO	
1926	Born August 13 in Biran, Cuba
1945	Studies law at University of Havana
1952	Fulgencio Batista seizes power after coup d'etat
1953	Imprisoned after failed attack on a barracks
1955	Receives amnesty Exile in Mexico, meets Ernesto "Che" Guevara
1956	82 men under Castro's command land in Cuba, begin armed struggle
1959	Wins revolution becomes prime minister, begins agrarian reform
1961	Bay of Pigs: defeats anti-Castro invasion
1962	Missile crisis between USSR and USA
1976	Becomes President
1990	Collaps of USSR, start of "Special Period" in Cuba
2006	Transfers power to brother Raul due for health reasons
2008	Officially steps down as president
2015	Start of normalisation of relations between USA and Cuba
2016	US President Barack Obama visits Cuba
2016	Dies aged 90 Nov. 25



Castro: An enigma even for death

"If surviving assassination attempts were an Olympic event, I would win the gold medal," Castro liked to tell interviewers. He lived much of his long life in the spotlight -- and much of it in the crosshairs -- surviving a half century of assassination plots (634 in total) enduring 11 hostile US presidents. Over the decades Castro became one of the longest-ruling heads of state in the world, but the plots against him never abated. Here are few of the bizarre assassination attempt targeting the revolutionary leader:

- EXPLODING CIGAR:** This idea was thought up by a New York police officer and would have contained enough explosives to blow Castro's head clean off.
- HAIR REMOVAL:** Yes, really. The plan was that Castro might seem weak if all his facial hair were to fall out, so the Americans thought about trying to slip chemicals into his cigar or shoes.
- POISONED MILKSHAKE:** This was apparently the closest to taking Castro's life, but the poisoned poll destined for the drink stuck to the freezer and ripped open when the waiter-cum-assassin tried to rip it off.
- FEMME FATALE:** Marita Lorenz, one of Castro's many mistresses, is alleged to have made a deal with the CIA to feed him capsules of poison. She hid them in her face cream, but they dissolved.
- POISONED WETSUIT:** There was a plan to offer Castro a wetsuit filled with deadly spores and bacteria during the Bay of Pigs invasion, but the CIA's plot was again foiled.
- EXPLODING SHELL:** This attempt tried to take advantage of Castro's love of scuba diving by putting an explosive device in a conch shell in the sea. They made it especially attractive in the hope the Cuban leader would be drawn to it.
- ANOTHER DEATHLY CIGAR:** The CIA tried to slip Castro a cigar filled with a poisonous toxin called Botulin. They hired a double agent who chickened out of the attempt.
- DEADLY PEN:** The plan was to rig a pen with a hypodermic needle so fine that someone could prick him with it and he would never notice until he died.
- LSD:** This was more an effort to bring him down in from of his people, but the plan was to spray an LSD-like substance into a studio during a radio interview, which would make him act strangely and worry the Cuban people.

He survived more than 600 assassination bids, 11 US presidents



Castro, as seen by friends and foes

Here are some comments on Castro from his friends and foes over the years

<p>"From its earliest days, the Cuban revolution has been a source of inspiration for all those who value freedom. We admire the sacrifices of the Cuban people in maintaining their independence and sovereignty in the face of the vicious imperialist and orchestrated campaign to destroy the awesome force of the Cuban revolution. Long live the Cuban Revolution! Long live comrade Fidel Castro!"</p> <p>Nelson Mandela</p>	<p>"It didn't take much to prompt me to join a revolution against a tyrant, but Fidel struck me as an extraordinary man... He had exceptional faith that once we left for Cuba (from Mexico) we would arrive. That once we arrived we would fight. And once we fought we would win. I shared his optimism. I had to, to fight, to achieve. Stop crying and fight!"</p> <p>Ernesto "Che" Guevara</p>	<p>"Fidel, for me, is a grand master. A wise man should never die; a man like Fidel will never die, because he will always be part of the people."</p> <p>Hugo Chavez</p>	<p>"Fidel Castro is there to win. His attitude in the face of defeat, even in the most minimal actions of everyday life, would seem to obey a private logic: he does not even admit it, and does not have a minute's peace until he succeeds in inverting the terms and converting it into victory."</p> <p>Gabriel Garcia Marquez</p>
<p>"On December 18, 1956, Fidel and I were in the foothills of the Sierra Maestra, in a place called Cinco Palmas. After our first hug his first question was: 'How many rifles do you have?' I answered five. And he said, 'I have two. That makes seven. Now we can win the war.'"</p> <p>Cuba President Raul Castro</p>		<p>"Fidel Castro had Americans murdered illegally, and that was wrong, too. And I'm proud that we have a blockade against people who kill innocent Americans."</p> <p>Former US president Bill Clinton</p>	
<p>"I remember Herbert Matthews' reports on Castro before he came to power, calling him a democrat and the hope of Cuba. And to some of you who are really too young to remember this, even people around our country were calling him the George Washington of Cuba, and George rolled over in his grave."</p> <p>Ronald Reagan</p>	<p>"Castro is not just another Latin American dictator, a petty tyrant bent merely on personal power and gain. His ambitions extend far beyond his own shores."</p> <p>John F Kennedy</p>	<p>"Whatever we may think of him, he is going to be a great factor in the development of Cuba and very possibly in Latin American affairs generally. He seems to be sincere. He is either incredibly naive about communism or under communist discipline -- my guess is the former, and as I have already implied his ideas as to how to run a government or an economy are less developed than those of almost any figure I have met in 50 countries."</p> <p>Richard Nixon</p>	

FEW INTERESTING FACTS

- Fidel Castro led Cuba for five decades and was the world's third longest-serving head of state, after Britain's Queen Elizabeth and the King of Thailand. He temporarily ceded power to his brother Raul in July 2006 after undergoing intestinal surgery. The handover of power became official in 2008.
- Castro holds the record for the longest speech ever delivered to the United Nations: 4 hours and 29 minutes, on Sept 26, 1960, according to the UN website. One of his longest speeches on record lasted 7 hours and 30 minutes on Feb. 24, 1998, after the national assembly re-elected him to a five-year term as president.
- Castro claimed he survived 634 attempts or plots to assassinate him, mainly masterminded by the Central Intelligence Agency and US-based exile organizations. They may have included poison pills, a toxic cigar, exploding mollusks, and a chemically tainted diving suit. Another alleged plan involved giving him powder that would make his beard fall out and so undermine his popularity.
- Despite the plots, a US-backed exile invasion at the Bay of Pigs and five decades of economic sanctions, Castro outlasted nine U.S. presidents, from Dwight Eisenhower to Bill Clinton, stepping down while George W Bush was in office.
- Castro used to chomp on Cuban cigars but gave them up in 1985. Years later he summed up the harm of smoking tobacco by saying: "The best thing you can do with this box of cigars is give them to your enemy."
- Time Magazine in 2012 named Castro as one of the 100 most influential personalities of all time.
- Castro had nine children from five women. His eldest son Fidel Castro Diaz-Balart, who is the image of his father and is known as Fidelito, is a Soviet-trained nuclear scientist born in 1949 out of his brief marriage to Mirta Diaz-Balart. Daughter Alina Fernandez, the result of an affair with a Havana socialite when Castro was underground in the 1950s, escaped from Cuba disguised as a tourist in 1993 and is a vocal critic. Castro has five sons with his common-law wife since the 1960s, Dalia Soto del Valle. He also has a son and a daughter born to two other women with whom he had affairs before coming to power.

Pakistan gets new army chief

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday appointed General Qamar Javed Bajwa as its new military chief, the prime minister's office said, passing over the army's favourite contenders for arguably the most powerful role in the country.

Bajwa will take over from the hugely popular General Raheel Sharif, who won the hearts of millions with his bruising campaign against Islamic militants.

Pakistan's military plays an outpost role in national life, offering armed reassurance against arch-rival India that many Pakistanis see as vital to their identity.

Bajwa was chosen over the highest ranking contender, the army's Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Zubair Hayat, previously responsible for the security of the country's

nuclear programme; and over Lieutenant General Ishfaq Nadeem, commander of the strategic Multan strike corps and viewed by many analysts as favourite for the job.

Bajwa will face challenges ranging from an increasingly hostile India to the conflict in Afghanistan, growing links between homegrown militants and Islamic State jihadists, and blowback from a Trump presidency.

He will also take control of the military's uneasy relationship with the civilian government. The military has been in charge of Pakistan for more than half of its nearly 70-year history.

A senior security official told AFP on condition of anonymity that the change of command ceremony would happen in Rawalpindi on November 29.



Wisconsin agrees to recount vote

REUTERS, Washington

Wisconsin's election board agreed on Friday to conduct a statewide recount of votes cast in the presidential race, as requested by a Green Party candidate seeking similar reviews in two other states where Donald Trump scored narrow wins.

The recount process, including an examination by hand of the nearly 3 million ballots tabulated in Wisconsin, is expected to begin late next week after Green Party candidate Jill Stein's campaign has paid the required fee, the Elections Commission said.

The state faces a Dec 13 federal deadline to complete the recount, which may require canvassers in Wisconsin's 72 counties to work eve-

nings and weekends to finish the job in time, according to the commission.

The recount fee has yet to be determined, the agency said in a statement on its website. Stein said

Her drive on Wednesday for recounts in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania - three battleground states where Republican Trump edged out Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton by relatively thin margins.

Stein has said her goal is to raise \$7 million to cover all fees and legal costs.

Her effort may have given a ray of hope to dispirited Clinton supporters, but the chance of overturning the overall result of the Nov 8 election is considered very slim, even if all three states go along with the recount.

The Green Party candidate, who garnered little more than 1 percent of the nationwide popular vote herself, said on Friday that she was seeking to verify the integrity of the US voting system, not to undo Trump's victory.



While there was no evidence of tampering or voting errors in the election, only a thorough review of results from the three states at issue will reassure Americans, Stein said.

Although Trump won narrowly in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, the margins make it highly unlikely any recounts would end up giving Clinton a win in all three states, which would be needed for the overall election result to change.

The presidential race is decided by the Electoral College, based on a tally of wins from the state-by-state contests, rather than by the popular national vote. The Electoral College results are expected to be finalised on Dec 19.

that the sum was expected to run to about \$1.1 million.

She said she has raised at least \$5 million from donors since launching