Here is what the executive summary says from this audit report:

Numerous employees have misused the government travel charge card. Such abuses included excessive unpaid charges, use of the card for personal purchases''—which I have just mentioned—''and questionable automatic teller machine advances. A primary reason for the abuse is a lack of management and oversight by agencies.

That is the key phrase that has prompted action on the part of some of us to try to end this drain on taxpayers' resources at a time when we are crying for tightening up the budget and making sure that we do not overspend or abuse the taxpayers' moneys in so many questionable ways.

The other portion of the report that is astounding to me is that when some of this was brought to the attention of the agencies, like in the Office of the Secretary of Commerce, the coordinator, I quote: ''The coordinator in the Office of the Secretary gave us oral explanations for some of the questionable accounts but told us that because of other pressing duties, she did not have sufficient time to provide written explanations.''—meaning that nothing was effectively accomplished to curb these abuses, buying jewelry on credit cards?

How does that help the Secretary of Commerce's jurisdiction exercise its duties? How does that help the taxpayers back in the homelands who are working hard every day to do their job and try to pay their taxes so that the Government can keep on buying jewelry with credit cards? This kind of explanation, if they do not have time to provide written explanations, has got to come forth in a series of hearings which we plan to hold on this very same subject.

One other thing that is pertinent here that should be known, also coming directly from the inspector general's report, is that the blame for all of this goes on how these credit cards were issued, to whom they were issued, what instructions were given, what controls were put in, what arrangements were made with the credit card company to make sure that jewelry and online computer services and liquor could not be purchased on the retail level, those facets of control were never put into place.

So what will these hearings have? I plan to hold one hearing or more if necessary in my Subcommittee on Commercial and Administrative Law to determine how they were issued, what controls were put on. I have introduced a bill, to start off with, to abolish the use of credit cards by Federal employees. We are going to start from there if we are successful and work back to see if any credit cards can be properly used.

THE DEBT CEILING AND WELFARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. LEVIN] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. Speaker, I want this afternoon to talk about two issues that are related. The first one is whether the Republicans are going to try to use the debt ceiling as leverage instead of passing a clean debt ceiling bill. I read this morning there were two different sets of advices coming from within the majority ranks. One was use it as leverage for what is called a change in entitlement programs. The second that came from our colleague from New Jersey, who said, ''It is playing with fire. When it comes to this Nation's financial reputation, the stakes are simply too high. We must abandon any strategy of confrontation and resolve this critical issue in the spirit of cooperation.''

I hope the majority will heed the advice of the second person. The Republican Party was badly burned by their misguided efforts to shut down the Government with the CR but more importantly the Nation was hurt when I was in the district the last several weeks, I met among others with representatives of veterans organizations who told us the appeals process was already way behind and with the shutdown it became even more delinquent, to the terrible detriment of the veterans of this country.

Second, I want to talk about one of the issues that might be tied to the debt ceiling and that relate to welfare reform. This country badly needs it. It is clear, I think, from the experience of last year, it can be achieved only on a bipartisan basis. In the last session, the Republicans tried it on a strictly partisan route. They produced a bill that did not effectively link welfare to work, and it would have hurt kids. It missed the mark by carrying out the true national interest in welfare reform, breaking cycles of dependency and helping children in the welfare system, not by punishing them but by moving their parents from welfare to work.

There was no attempt, none whatsoever, to work out differences on a bipartisan basis with Democrats in the House—we do want welfare reform—or with an administration that has been active for years on this.

A hearing was held last week in the Human Resources Subcommittee, on which I sit. Two Governors, among others, presented the NGA proposal. We discussed with the Governors a number of concerns about their proposals.

First of all, their contingency fund, it is not going to protect against a recession. In the recession of the early 1990's, AFDC funding increased over $6 billion in 3 years. The provisions of the Governors' proposal would have much less than that, in fact a third of that over 5 years.

The maintenance of effort provisions in the Governors' proposal need to be looked at further. The way they have crafted that, the result could be a far larger proportion of Federal as compared with State dollars, a substitution of Federal dollars for State moneys including in child care and overall far fewer dollars available to implement welfare reform.

Welfare reform must be driven by moving people off of welfare into work. A rebalanced partnership to achieve this does mean more State flexibility, but it must be combined with State accountability and effectiveness.

A third provision that needs much more work relates to fair and equitable treatment of families receiving assistance. There is a broad reference in the NGA proposal, but much more work is clearly needed to ensure that provisions are enforceable and that there are procedural safeguards for individual families seeking assistance.

Likely on Medicaid the Governors' proposal would sever the assurance that when families, when people move from welfare to work, there is health care coverage for their kids.

Fifth, on food stamps, the proposal of the NGA would undermine the Food Stamp Program as a safety net for the children who are covered today.

There is also a clear need to review provisions in the NGA document on child care, child welfare, SSI and, clearly, benefits for legal immigrants. These concerns and others will be spelled out in more detail tomorrow in the testimony on behalf of the administration by HHS Secretary Donna Shalala.

The Governors stated in their testimony last week, and I quote, that it is imperative that the congressional process be bipartisan. The House Republicans have a clear choice. They can make a good-faith effort to discuss concerns on a bipartisan basis and attempt to work out differences, or they can proceed as they did last year and as they are beginning to do this year acting on a strictly partisan basis.

I finish with this. If the majority searchers for a political issue, then the outlook for welfare reform is, indeed, dismal. But if the search is for a new structure that reflects where the mainstream of America is, the outlook is more promising.

CASTRO'S ACT OF MURDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, as the international community now knows, this past Saturday Cuban tyrant Fidel Castro once again demonstrated his brutal nature after his thugs shot down two United States civilian planes belonging to the humanitarian group, Brothers to the Rescue, killing four innocent young men including American citizens.

Knowing of the long track record of repression and cruelty that the Castro regime has exhibited against the Cuban

people for over three decades, this deplorable act should not surprise anyone. The Clinton administration took some positive steps, but unfortunately they are not strong enough to respond to Castro's cold-blooded act of murder. Instead of seeking an international embargo against Castro similar to the one implemented against Haiti over a year ago, the administration settled for lukewarm sanctions which will not do enough to push Castro out of power. How many more people have to be harassed, persecuted, and killed before the administration and the international community realize that Castro's tyranny deserves the same if not tougher international sanctions as the ones that were taken against undemocratic regimes in Haiti, in South Africa, in Iraq?

That is why we have asked the President to impose a naval blockade similar to the blockade that was placed against the illegitimate military regime of General Raoul Cedras in Haiti. That is why we have asked the President to go to the U.N. Security Council to get an international embargo against Castro's dictatorship.

For over three decades, a veil of sorrow and despair has covered the island of Cuba. The waters of the Caribbean and the Atlantic Ocean have been transformed by the blood of the thousands of Cubans who throughout the years have fallen prey to the brutal regime of Castro, a dictator whose appetite for power has victimized not only the people of Cuba but has held the principles of freedom and democracy hostage throughout the Western Hemisphere.

That beast, Fidel Castro, angered by displays of strong will and free thinking, by manifestations that the Cuban people are determined to defend their right to liberty, planned and executed the murder of four innocent civilians, members of that humanitarian organization, Brothers to the Rescue. There are no mitigating factors, there are absolutely no excuses that the Cuban regime can manufacture which could justify such a blatant act of aggression against innocent Americans whose only sin was to care about the welfare of those risking their lives to flee the Castro tyranny.

However, this most recent action sends a message to the Clinton administration that the United States should not negotiate with terrorists. It reinforces the notion to the Clinton administration and to foreign governments who support this policy of appeasement with Castro that democratic nations built on safeguarding the most basic fundamental rights of its citizens cannot and should not deal with pariah states.

It further emphasizes the need for further strengthening the United States embargo on Cuba through passage of the Helms-Burton legislation. The Castro regime must be further isolated. As the Castro regime's circle of friends continues to diminish, the pressure exerted by the Helms-Burton bill will be the devastating blow which could force the Castro regime to succumb to the realities of a free world.

Clearly the time to act is now. We hold one of the keys to unlocking the chains that bind the Cuban people, and that key could very well be the Helms-Burton legislation. We must not enter into a new millennium with the people of Cuba in bondage. Let us support the Cuban people in their days of struggle.

PREVENT FUTURE TRAGEDIES OF SHOT DOWN AIRCRAFT FROM HAPPENING AGAIN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SERRANO] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I first want to join all Americans in expressing my condolences and pain to the families of the pilots who were shot by the Cuban Air Force. This is a tragedy and we should all deeply regret the death of these pilots.

I also believe that the Cuban Government should have dealt with this situation in a different way. The planes, if need be, could have been grounded and not destroyed.

My purpose in speaking on this floor today, Mr. Speaker, is to try to reach a point of understanding where we can prevent these tragic issues from taking place in the future and to prevent what I believe is a confrontation that may be coming between the Cuban Government and our Government, perhaps a violent confrontation. The question that needs to be asked is what did our Government know about prior flights by Brothers to the Rescue into Cuban airspace and what did our Government do with this knowledge?

I have the statement, which is public by now, by the Cuban Government that shows in order the documentation of violations of Cuban airspace by planes registered in the United States from May 1994 to the present. In 1994 there was a violation almost every month and similar in 1995. There have been documented press reports about the dropping of anti-Castro leaflets over Cuba by planes registered in the United States.

On the 15th of this year, the French press agency reported that the Cuban Government complained that its airspace had been violated by United States-based planes which dropped anti-Castro leaflets over Cuba. In this same article it mentions that the Miami-based group Brothers to the Rescue issued a statement saying that it had dropped half a million leaflets printed over Cuba with messages against the Castro government. Both of these actions, of dropping leaflets and in some instances buzzing buildings in Havana, were known to our Government. In fact, the White House acknowledged the incident and expressed regret about it, but it is unclear what additional actions were taken. Did our Government take action?

This morning I had a conversation with the counsel's office at the Federal Aviation Administration. They confirmed that they had recommended the pilot license suspension of the leader and founder of the group Brothers to the Rescue. I am not clear whether this gentleman flew on this last mission with a license or without a license, but it was based on our understanding at the FAA that this group had in fact violated Cuban airspace at least on that last occasion, July 13, when they went over Havana.

The death of these pilots is an unfortunate tragic incident that could have been, in my opinion, prevented. We need to find out exactly what happened and how much of the responsibility our own Government bears for this incident. We need answers to prevent a similar tragedy from happening in the future.

Not long ago, we negotiated with the Castro government over the people that were coming over on rafts and came up with an immigration policy. Why not call the Castro government to the table now and hear their gripes about their airspace, present to them our feelings about the issue and try to at the minimum reach an agreement on this particular issue?

All of my colleagues know my position on our whole relationship with Cuba. I am in favor of lifting the embargo and normalizing relations. But I realize that this is not the time for that because once again, either through provocation or by accident, the Castro issue has been placed on the front burner, and Castro once again becomes the enemy we most love to hate. But we can negotiate and prevent this in the future.

When the President yesterday said no more flights to Cuba from the United States, I ask sincerely, not sarcastically, was he also talking about illegal flights that leave Miami and go to Cuba and run around their airspace or just the legal flights that we now have?

We will now support and take great joy in the fact that the United Nations condemned Cuba. But please understand that that does nothing to better the relationship between the two countries or to head off a confrontation. For years the United Nations has been condemning us for our embargo on Cuba, and it has not changed our policy toward the island.

I will do something today that is not part of being a good Democrat, I guess, and that is to ask the Republican leadership to conduct a congressional investigation into how much our Government knew about these incidents and the violation of Cuban airspace so that in the future we can prevent this confrontation and this loss of human life.

THE SUGAR PROGRAM SHOULD BE PHASED OUT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May