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It is part of the public record that a suitcase of Chavez-cash heading to Mrs. Kirchner in Argentina was accidentally intercepted by authorities before reaching its intended destination.

Castro has purchased advocates through the years via the always present threat of blackmail after trips to totalitarian Cuba where the regime tapes visitors in "compromising" situations, as confirmed by Interior Ministry defector Roberto Hernandez del Llano and Cuban Counter-Intelligence defector Major Roberto Ortega.

Castro also serves as a "banker" for illicit money possessed by those who seek to avoid detection by the anti-laundering mechanisms set up by the international community. It matters not if the money's source is political corruption or narco-trafficking.

Hugo Chavez's absolute dependency on Fidel Castro for every major decision, even for his phrases and gestures in international forums, is unprecedented. While the Soviet Union used to send Castro economic aid and also orders and instructions, Chavez sends Castro billions of dollars and receives orders from him.

What the world witnessed at this last weekend's Summit of the Americas was a culmination of years of preparation in the purchase and cultivation of advocates by Fidel Castro. The goal of the advocates: mass American tourism with its billions of dollars a year and U.S. trade financing, so that the U.S. taxpayer ultimately bails out and bankrolls Fidel Castro.

Castro's advocates know very well that article III of the Charter of the Organization of American States requires the existence of representative democracy in all the countries of our hemisphere, and that the Inter-American Democratic Charter of 2001 even spells out the collective steps to be taken when an American republic's democracy is usurped.

They know that Cuba, under Castro, was the only country in our hemisphere where free elections have not been held in over 50 years, and where dungeons are full of nonviolent political prisoners. They know that under Castro, Cuba is a personal island-estate, a ranch, a personal land holding or homestead, a totalitarian fiefdom, owned by one man, with a brother who enjoys the title of head of state and carefully carries out his brother's orders.

Any goods the people on the island purchase must be purchased in the island fiefdom's "company stores" and with worthless "vouchers" called "convertible pesos" sold by the regime. Castro takes 30 percent of all hard currency "off the top" at the time island residents purchase the "vouchers," and all hard currency must be spent with purchased "vouchers" in his "company stores."

The inducement for child prostitution on the island-fiefdom is unparalleled in the world, because no matter

how hard island residents work, only foreign "hard" currency allows them to purchase the "vouchers," the "convertible pesos," for use in the stores that sell everything, from food to clothes to soap to toothpaste.

Equally, only foreign "hard" currency allows residents to purchase medicines. The shelves in the old stores and pharmacies where residents used to be able to purchase Soviet-bloc supplies with their ration cards are simply empty since there is no money to be made there by the dictator.

The Castro advocates at the weekend "Summit" knew all this, like when Mrs. Kirchner called for the U.S. to make amends with "our sister republic, Cuba." Or when Mr. Ortega condemned the U.S. for organizing the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. Somehow they knew that President Obama would refer to Castro's totalitarian fiefdom as "Cuba." Somehow they knew that President Obama would not respond to Mr. Ortega that at the Bay of Pigs, Cubans bravely fought to spare their country half a century of totalitarian oppression. President Obama said, "I'm grateful President Ortega did not blame me for things that happened when I was 3 months old." Somehow they knew President Obama would not make clear that, as per U.S. law, the U.S. embargo will go away when all of Castro's political prisoners are freed and when there is freedom of expression and multi-party elections scheduled in Cuba. Of course they knew. President Obama had just unilaterally granted the fiefdom's owner hundreds of millions of dollars a year, in exchange for nothing.

#### A LITTLE BIT OF OPTIMISM ABOUT OUR ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. INGLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. INGLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to report on a telephone conversation that I had and actually then an in-person conversation I had with a fellow who was talking to me about his great concern about the economy. And of course, I started the conversation by saying, yes, I share that concern. But he could tell that I had a little bit of optimism about where we are. And he asked why? How could you be optimistic? And I told him two reasons to be optimistic that are immediately apparent with the economy, I think. One is, you know, crisis creates opportunity to fix things. And it could be that we can use this current financial problem that we've got and the incredible spending that we're doing here in Washington, to finally focus on change to the crucial programs like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security. Until we're talking those programs, we're not talking balancing the budget.

But in the midst of the crisis created by our wild spending, perhaps we can bring our attention to the underlying

problem, the problem that's not new, that's been going on in Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. So that's one reason for optimism.

Another, I told him, is that really we've got an incredible opportunity to grow our way out of this current problem by solving the energy challenge. If we address the energy security question, we can grow out of this problem.

You know, I was here in the Congress during the nineties and served on the Budget Committee. Part of our balancing act in getting to balance in 1999 and 2000 was fiscal restraint, and that's because of Republicans taking control of the House and having some fiscal restraint.

But it's also true that what was really happening is there was a massive expansion of the economy because of the tech boom. Because of the advances in PCs and the Internet, the productivity that came with those, and, therefore, growth without inflation, we were able to expand our economy. That economy threw off revenue to the Federal Government and, as a result, we reached balance.

Now we have an opportunity to do the same thing, just energy being the next step up in a plateau of economic development. We climbed up onto the plateau of the tech boom. Now we've got the opportunity to climb up onto another high plateau of energy security. If we do that successfully, I believe that we can generate economic growth that will, in turn, generate revenues for this Federal Government. And the result is that we will, once again, balance the budget if we pursue fiscal restraint in coming out of this crisis, together with economic growth that will come from addressing our energy security challenge.

Mr. Speaker, in the weeks and months to come, I hope to speak more about a very specific proposal that can do just that, with an elegant price signal sent throughout our economy about new energy technologies; and with that price signal, I think we can get about solving this fiscal problem by economic growth and, of course, also addressing the underlying problem of out-of-control entitlement spending that needs to be brought under control.

So, Mr. Speaker, tough times; but it's also true there's every reason to be optimistic.

#### PRAYER CAUCUS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mrs. BACHMANN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BACHMANN. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the last few weeks, President Obama made the statement while in a foreign country that we are not a Christian Nation, that we are not a Jewish Nation or a Muslim Nation. He said we are citizens with shared values.

Upon President Obama's return to the United States, he went to Georgetown University, a great Catholic