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politics

havana, july 24, reuter -- cubans began celebrating a four day national holiday today in commemoration of the twenty-ninth anniversary of the attack led by twenty-seven year old fidel castro on the nation's second biggest army barracks.

the july 26, 1953 assault was aimed at setting the stage for the overthrow of cuban dictator fulgencio batista who had seized power in a military coup on march 10, 1952.

although the attack ~~was~~ failed to take the army barracks in the eastern cuban city of santiago de cuba and a smaller garrison in the nearby tow of bayamo, it succeeded in launching fidel castro's career as a popular revolutionary fighter.

after serving an eighteen month prison sentence, castro returned to his revolutionary activities and after a prolonged guerrilla war, led his rebel army to victory on january 1, 1959.

as part of the celebration, the annual post-sugar harvest carnival will take place in havana with its dozens of lavishly, decorated floats and thousands of people dancing in the streets to the tunes of more than a hundred bands and musical groups. the price of rum has been substantially reduced for the holiday and stands serve tap beer, pork sandwiches, .banana chips and the typical mixture of black beans and rice.

on monday evening in bayamo, cuba president fidel castro will deliver his yearly july 26 speech. western diplomats here expect the speech to cover domestic and foreign policy themes including cuba's relations with the united states.

--lem/reuter/lem