RR-86-129

UU GMN BRJ
MIS:DROUGHT
CUBANS HOPE FOR MORE RAINS TO ALLEVIATE WATER SHORTAGE:
HAVANA, MAY 26, REUTER --THE FIRST MODERATE PRECIPITATIONS OF THE RAINY SEASON DURING THE PAST TWO DAYS HAVE ONLY WHETTED THE ISLAND'S DROUGHT-STRICKEN APPETITE FOR MORE AND MORE OF THE SAME.

ACCORDING TO CUBAN OFFICIALS, THE SHORTFALLS OF RAIN OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS HAVE CREATED THE MOST CRITICAL WATER SHORTAGES IN A CENTURY.

THE DROUGHT HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR SEVERE RATIONING OF WATER FOR THE CITY OF HAVANA'S TWO MILLION INHABITANTS, FOR A CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF PASTURAGE FOR LIVESTOCK AND FOR ECONOMICALLY AND ECOLOGICALLY DAMAGING FOREST FIRES.

THE OFFICIALS REORT THAT HAVANA IS RECEIVING APPROXIMATELY HALF OF THE 1,200,000 CUBIC METERS OF WATER DAILY THAT IT CONSUMED IN 1984. WATER IS RATIONED IN THE CITY BY OPENING AND CLOSING THE VALVES OF THE WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM. LARGE PARTS OF THE CITY NOW RECIEVE WATER FOR ONLY A FEW HOURS DAILY OR EVERY TWO DAYS.

THE NEWSPAPER GRANMA REORTED THAT IN THE ABSENCE OF PASTURAGE, A HALF-MILLION HEAD OF CATTLE HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO THE SUGAR CANE PLANTATIONS WHERE THEY EAT THE PART OF THE CANE PLANTS WHICH ARE LEFT AFTER THE HARVESTING.

DOZEN OF FOREST FIRES HAVE HIT THE ISLAND, THE MOST DAMAGING OF WHICH DESTROYEXIVE HUNDRED HECTARES OF TIMBER LAND AND TROPICAL BIRD HABITAT ON THE MOUNTAINOUS +LOMA DE GUANIGUA+, 300 MILES TO THE EAST OF HAVANA.
=-RTR/LEM
NNNN