

Car making cooperation with Russia: Cuba produces the “UAZ Patriot”



The first “UAZ Patriot” assembled in Cuba (source: [Rober Noa Frómeta/X](#))

Cuba and Russia are continuing to expand their cooperation in the transport sector. According to [reports](#) by the state news agency ACN, the first vehicle assembled in Cuba by Russian off-road and commercial vehicle manufacturer [UAZ](#), founded in 1941, was unveiled last week.

Robust off-road vehicle “Made in Cuba”

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Chernyshenko attended the ceremonial [presentation in Havana](#), describing the vehicle as a “milestone” in strengthening industrial relations between the two countries. Chernyshenko “symbolically cut the red ribbon and drove the new UAZ model for a short time,” according to the report.

The assembly of UAZ vehicles in Cuba dates back to an agreement signed in 2023. The specific contract was signed in June 2024 during the “Cubaindustria” trade fair between the Cuban state-owned automotive services company EISA and the Russian company ECHO-Export SRL.

In the first phase, the “[Patriot](#)” model (also as a pickup version) will be produced, with the assembly of light commercial vehicles from the “Profi” series planned for later. So far, there is no information on what the assembled UAZ vehicles will be used for – in addition to sales to private individuals, use in tourism and in state institutions (e.g., in agriculture and forestry) is conceivable.

The Patriot model was introduced by UAZ in 2005. It is a robust off-road vehicle that competes with the Lada Niva but is more powerful. Just like the Lada, the UAZ comes with four-wheel drive as standard. The fuel consumption of the 2.7-litre petrol engine, which has

an output of 150 hp, is a generous 11.5 litres per 100 kilometres. The top speed is 150 kilometres per hour. The Patriot sprints from zero to 100 km/h in 12.7 seconds with a curb weight of 2.1 tons. Since 2017, the Patriot has been equipped with airbags and the ESP driving safety system as standard. The off-road vehicle is also available with automatic transmission as an option. In Russia, the basic version is [sold](#) for the equivalent of around 16,000 Euro.

In Cuba, imported Patriots are used, for example, by the tour operator Ecotur for Jeep safaris in the east of the country. Due to the poor road conditions in Cuba, they are very popular (not only) with rental car customers, but have been almost unavailable until now.

Nothing is known about the exact production methods in Cuba. As Cuba does not have a complex vehicle industry, production using “[knock-down kits](#)” seems likely. This involves individual components and assemblies being delivered and assembled on site. This saves costs compared to importing fully assembled vehicles and, in the event of free sale, would also eliminate the [customs tariff for vehicle imports](#) that would otherwise be payable.

Taxi project with Moskvich in preparation

During his visit to Cuba, where he also met with President Miguel Díaz-Canel, Chernyshenko announced further plans for Russia on the Caribbean island. These include a project to modernize public transport, with Moscow planning to provide 50 Moskvich cars for a new taxi fleet.

This plan, which was first leaked last year, was also confirmed by Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin. According to Sobyanin, the taxi project will be carried out by the Russian capital, and the new service will be offered in Havana and the seaside resort of Varadero – both major destinations for Russian tourists in Cuba.

Both UAZ and Moskvich vehicles are not unknown in Cuba. Many models of Soviet and Russian brands are still on the road on the socialist island. In 2017, Cuba [imported](#) a fleet of modern [Lada Vesta](#) sedans, which are also used as taxis. Plans for local production already existed at that time, but they did not materialize.

After the collapse of the USSR, the French car manufacturer Renault took over the Moskvich plant and the patent rights. However, Renault returned both to the Russian state around three years ago after Western sanctions were imposed following the invasion of Ukraine. ([Cubaheute](#))