

Cuba “hanging by a thread”: Trump sees leverage exhausted



US President Donald Trump currently considers the means of exerting pressure on Cuba to be exhausted (source: [Gage Skidmore/Commons/CC-BY-SA 3.0](#))

US President Donald Trump said Thursday that his administration had exhausted nearly all available means of pressure against Cuba. The Cuban government is “hanging by a thread” due to recent developments in Venezuela, Trump said in an [interview](#) with conservative commentator Hugh Hewitt.

“I don’t think you can have much more pressure other than going in and blasting the hell out of the place,” Trump replied when asked if he was planning a naval blockade against Cuba.

Dependence on Venezuela as a weak point

In another [interview with the New York Times](#), Trump responded to a question about restrictions on his authority to use military force worldwide: “Yes, there is one thing. My own morality. My own mind. That’s the only thing that can stop me. I don’t need international law.”

However, the US president avoided threatening direct military intervention – rather, he seems to see the severing of relations between Cuba and Venezuela as the completion of his “policy of maximum pressure” that he began in his first term: “Their entire lifeline, their entire life was Venezuela. They had the oil, the money from Venezuela,” Trump said. This relationship collapsed after the arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

According to Trump, Cuba lost “many soldiers” in the military operation to kidnap Maduro on January 3. The Cuban government [had previously announced](#) that 32 Cuban citizens had

been killed in the attack, which violated international law, and declared two days of national mourning. According to Havana, they were military personnel who were part of Maduro's bodyguard at Venezuela's request.

“They’re tough, strong people. They’re great people”

Trump expressed his conviction that the Cuban government could soon be overthrown, but at the same time praised the resilience of the Cuban people. “Yes, Cuba is hanging by a thread. Cuba is in serious trouble,” he said, describing Cubans as “tough people, a great people.”

Although there has been talk of a crisis on the island for decades, Trump now believes that the country is “very close” to a turning point caused by the internal situation. “Cuba’s been in trouble for the last 25 years. And you know, they haven’t quite gone down. But I think they’re pretty close of their own volition,,” he added.

In a sense, he agrees with Fidel Castro's assessment from 2005, who said in a [famous speech](#) at the University of Havana at the time: “This revolution can destroy itself, but they [the US] can never destroy us; we can destroy ourselves, and that would be our own fault,” Castro said at the time.

Unclear prospects

The US economic blockade against Cuba, in place since 1961, has intensified significantly since Trump's return to the White House in January 2025. As [one of his first acts](#) as president, he once again placed Cuba on the unilateral US list of countries that allegedly support terrorism, reversed the few relaxations made by his predecessor Joe Biden, and [imposed new sanctions](#).

Cuba and Venezuela have maintained a close alliance since the early 2000s, initiated by then-presidents Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez. Its economic core is the supply of discounted oil, which is used to pay for medical personnel. At its peak in the early 2010s, Venezuela supplied up to 100,000 barrels per day for the services of around 30,000 Cuban medical professionals. Most recently, deliveries stood at around 35,000 barrels per day, while an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 Cuban doctors remain in the country.

It remains to be seen how the latest US attack and Trump's demands that Caracas sever ties with Havana and other allies will affect this relationship. Most recently, the Cuban Ministry of Health reported that medical personnel in Venezuela [were fully operational](#), but at the same time announced that “regular repatriation” would [resume](#) after airspace was cleared due to “vacations and the end of missions.” ([Cubaheute](#))