

Cuba's heroes have returned



The honor guard convoy on its way from the airport to the city center (source: [Granma](#))

On Thursday, Cuba received the remains of 32 soldiers who were killed during the [US attacks on the Venezuelan capital Caracas](#) on January 3, which violated international law. The urn coffins, covered with Cuban flags, arrived early in the morning at José Martí International Airport in Havana.

The fallen soldiers belonged to the Cuban armed forces and secret services and were part of the bodyguard of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, who was kidnapped during the US operation.

During a military ceremony on the airport tarmac, a military band in white uniforms played the Cuban national anthem. Present were President Miguel Díaz-Canel, 94-year-old former head of state Raúl Castro, revolutionary veteran Machado Ventura, and high-ranking representatives of the Communist Party and the armed forces.

“The enemy speaks euphorically of high-precision operations, elite troops, and supremacy. We, on the other hand, speak of faces, of families who have lost their father, their son, their husband, their brother,” [said](#) Cuba's Interior Minister Lázaro Alberto Álvarez Casas in his speech at the airport immediately after receiving the remains.

He placed the fallen in the same category as the fighters during the US [invasion of the Bay of Pigs](#) and internationalist troops in [Angola](#) and elsewhere, “who proved that one can only return from a mission in foreign countries with the friendship of the brotherly people and the sacred remains of the fallen,” the minister said. “If this painful chapter in history has proven anything, it is that imperialism may have the most modern weapons, immense material

wealth, and the ability to buy the minds of the fickle, but there is one thing it will never be able to buy: the dignity of the Cuban people,” Álvarez Casas said.

The urns were then transported in a convoy to the Ministry of Defense, which had opened its doors that day for condolence visits from the public. Along Avenida Rancho Boyeros, which runs from the airport to the city center, thousands paid their last respects to the dead, waving flags and saluting. The visits to the Ministry of Defense began with the visibly moved



relatives of the fallen, who are now considered heroes in Cuba. All were posthumously promoted and [awarded the Antonio Maceo Order](#) and the Internationalist Combatant Medal.

Mass demonstration in front of the US Embassy

On Friday, tens of thousands of Cubans gathered in front of the US Embassy in Havana to protest the killing of 32 compatriots and demand Maduro's release. The demonstration on the “Anti-Imperialist Tribune” opposite the US Embassy was organized by the Cuban government.

“Humanity is experiencing something very complex, and (the US) is ruled by a president who thinks he is an emperor,” one of the participants [told](#) the AP news agency. “We must show him that ideas are worth more than weapons. This march is a message of our unity. Independence is sacred, and we will defend it with our hands and feet if necessary.”

President Díaz-Canel shook hands with participants, who were wearing jackets and scarves due to the cold weather, before addressing them. “The current US administration has opened the door to an era of barbarism, plunder, and neo-fascism,” said Díaz-Canel, who appeared in an olive-green uniform. “The current emperor of the White House and his notorious secretary of state have not stopped threatening me.”



*Demonstration and march on Friday along Havana's Malecón waterfront promenade
(Source: Presidencia/Telegram)*

Tensions between the US and Cuba had escalated this week after US President Donald Trump [called on](#) Cuba to make a “deal” with him before it was “too late.” Trump had previously declared that “no money and oil” from Venezuela would flow to Cuba anymore.

“No one here is giving up,” Díaz-Canel said at the demonstration. “Cuba does not have to make political concessions to reach an understanding between Cuba and the United States. It is important that they understand that. We will always be open to dialogue and improving relations between our two countries, but only on an equal footing and on the basis of mutual respect.”

After Díaz-Canel's speech, the demonstration turned into the “March of the Fighting People” – a tradition dating back to the time of the late head of state Fidel Castro. The march was led by a line of people carrying [pictures of the 32 fighters](#) who were killed. “Down with imperialism!” shouted the crowd. “Cuba will prevail!”

The funerals of the fallen were planned for Friday afternoon in various cemeteries after memorial ceremonies in all of Cuba's provincial capitals. The party newspaper *Granma* [reported](#) a total of around 500,000 participants at the rally in Havana. ([Cubaheute](#))