

Military Meeting at the Guantánamo Fence: U.S. Commander Meets with Cuban Chief of Staff



Cuban and U.S. generals in front of the U.S. base in Guantánamo (Source: [Southcom/X/KI-scaled](#))

Murder charges against Raúl Castro, threats of a U.S. invasion, a visit from the CIA director, and now a high-level military meeting: On Friday, General Francis L. Donovan, commander of U.S. Southern Command (Southcom), and General Roberto Legrá Sotolongo, First Vice Minister and Chief of the General Staff of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba (FAR), met at the border fence of the U.S. naval base in Guantánamo Bay.

According to a brief [communiqué](#) from Southcom, the meeting involved “a brief exchange on operational security issues,” during which topics such as the protection of military personnel and their families, as well as operational readiness, were discussed. The Cuban Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR) [stated](#) that the meeting took place “by mutual agreement.” Both delegations reportedly viewed the exchange as positive. It was agreed to maintain communication between the two military commands. Donovan also used the visit to personally assess the security situation along the heavily mined perimeter of the base.

Actually a Routine Contact

Direct talks between military representatives of both countries at the base perimeter are by no means a novelty. Since the U.S. naval base was established, there have been repeated technical consultations on security issues surrounding the border fence. Such meetings took place monthly for decades in a constructive manner. Fidel Castro even described them as a

“model for the way relations between Cuba and the U.S. should be.” Under the Trump administration, however, technical contacts became extremely rare.

The fact that a meeting at this level—Southcom commander on one side, Cuba’s second-most powerful military figure on the other—is now taking place is, however, unusual and, given the current situation, has a different character than in the past.

In March 2026, Donovan told the U.S. Congress that the U.S. military could set up a camp on the naval base grounds should there be a massive wave of migration from Cuba. The future of the base itself is the subject of active debate in connection with potential crisis scenarios being run through by the Trump administration.

Base non grata

Southcom described the naval base in Guantánamo as “an important operational and logistical hub that supports U.S. military efforts to counter threats to security, stability, and democracy in the Western Hemisphere.”

Cuba, however, strictly rejects the presence of the U.S. military and considers it a violation of international law. The 116-square-kilometer site was leased by the U.S. in 1903 following the Spanish-American War for an annual payment of \$4,085. The lease agreement and its renewal in 1934, however, were concluded under conditions that Havana considers coercion: The so-called [Platt Amendment](#) forced Cuba into an asymmetrical relationship of dependence on Washington immediately after independence.

Since the 1959 revolution, Cuba has regularly called on the U.S. to return the territory. As Cuban representatives repeatedly criticize, the U.S. base—along with the torture camp of the same name—not only damages the global reputation of Guantánamo Province but also prevents local fishing boats from accessing the bay. The U.S. refuses to return the base, citing a one-time initial lease payment accepted shortly after the revolution’s victory.

([Cubaheute](#))