

Regime change through a naval blockade? Trump increases pressure on Cuba



Washington is currently considering a naval blockade against Cuba (source: [US Navy/Commons/CC-BY-SA 4.0](#))

The US government under Donald Trump is continuing to increase pressure on Cuba – and is apparently working on a strategy to overthrow the socialist government before the end of this year. According to a *Wall Street Journal* [report](#), the US and its intelligence services are looking for “insiders within the Cuban government” who could help negotiate a “deal” to overthrow the socialist system.

The blueprint for this is the intervention in Venezuela on January 3, which violated international law.

Naval blockade in the pipeline

However, it seems questionable whether this “model” can be replicated in the case of Cuba. The island has much more stable institutions, and the power structure of the Communist Party is considered to be closed.

According to three people familiar with the plans, this is probably why the Trump administration is also considering imposing a total naval blockade on oil imports to Cuba, as reported by the Politico website.

Such a measure would go beyond Trump's announcement on January 11 to merely stop Venezuelan oil deliveries.

Unsurprisingly, the plans have received strong support from US Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The descendant of Cuban immigrants has been one of the most radical “Cuba

hawks” in Washington politics for years. Although a final decision has not yet been made, the signs point toward escalation.

The last time a naval blockade was imposed on Cuba was in October 1962 by then-US President John F. Kennedy in the wake of the [missile crisis](#) – at that time, the world was on the brink of a third world war.

Drones off the coast of Mexico

Mexico has become Cuba's most important oil supplier following the de facto halt of Venezuelan deliveries, and is thus coming under Washington's scrutiny. According to a [report](#) by the Reuters news agency, citing three government sources, the left-wing Mexican government of President Claudia Sheinbaum is currently conducting an internal review of whether oil supplies to Cuba can continue.

Sources say there is growing concern within Sheinbaum's cabinet that the supplies could lead to retaliatory measures by the US. Between January and September 2024, Mexico supplied Cuba with 17,200 barrels of crude oil and 2,000 barrels of refined products worth approximately \$400 million per day, according to information provided by the state-owned oil company Pemex to the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). Most recently, deliveries amounted to around 7,000 barrels per day.

According to the three sources, there are fears within the Mexican government that a complete oil embargo could plunge Cuba into a humanitarian disaster and trigger mass migration to Mexico. For this reason, some members of the government are pushing to maintain at least partial fuel supplies.

The three *Reuters* sources also reported growing concern about an increased presence of US Navy drones over the Gulf of Mexico. The same reconnaissance aircraft were spotted off the Venezuelan coast in December, a few days before the US took action against the South American country, they said.

Oil tanker suddenly changes its destination

Cuba recently [managed to purchase](#) around 300,000 barrels of oil in Togo, West Africa. The ship “Mia Grace,” sailing under the flag of the Marshall Islands, was supposed to arrive in Havana on February 4. However, according to the ship tracking service Marine Traffic, the port of arrival was recently [changed to](#) Rio Haina in the Dominican Republic, suggesting US influence.

This practice is not new. During the Covid pandemic in 2020, the US [quickly diverted](#) a shipment of protective masks that was actually destined for Germany. At the time, Berlin called it an act of “modern piracy.”

Given the increasing pressure from the US, the energy situation in Cuba could worsen further. Most recently, the [electricity deficit](#) remained relatively stable at just under 1800 megawatts, around half of the country's demand. If the US were to divert further ships or even carry out its threat of a military naval blockade, there would be a risk of a complete and permanent collapse of the power grid – with massive and unforeseeable humanitarian consequences.

On January 11, Trump called on the Cuban government to make a “deal” with him “before it's too late.” For his part, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel has repeatedly affirmed his willingness to engage in talks with the US “on an equal footing and on the basis of mutual respect” in recent weeks. ([Cubaheute](#))