

Russia pledges further aid to Cuba



Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Ryabkov with Cuban President Díaz-Canel (Source: [MFARussia/X](#))

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov met with President Miguel Díaz-Canel at the Palace of the Revolution in Havana last Thursday. Moscow reaffirmed its support for the island, ten days after a Russian oil tanker had supplied Cuba with crude oil for the first time in months.

The visit comes amid significant tensions between Havana and Washington. Cuba is suffering from an energy blockade after the U.S. seized Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3. Since then, oil purchases on the world market have also been intercepted or diverted with the help of the U.S. Coast Guard.

It was not until March 31 that the Russian-flagged tanker Anatoly Kolodkin managed to break through the blockade with 730,000 barrels of crude oil, marking Cuba's first oil delivery since January 9.

Díaz-Canel expressly thanked Russia for the delivery during the meeting: "On behalf of the Party, the government, and the Cuban people, I would like to thank the Russian Federation for the fuel it has sent us." The delivery was "of great significance and highly symbolic"—"a sign that Cuba is not alone." Díaz-Canel also conveyed greetings to Russian President Vladimir Putin via Ryabkov.

Ryabkov, for his part, emphasized the special quality of the relations between Moscow and Havana. Russia stands "100 percent in solidarity" with Cuba, he said at the meeting, despite the difficulties the country is facing.

Speaking to Russian news agencies, Ryabkov made it clear that the support would go beyond the oil delivery so far: "We cannot betray Cuba. That is out of the question. We cannot leave it alone." At the same time, he clarified: "Russia does not plan to withdraw from the Western Hemisphere, no matter what Washington may say."

Ryabkov had traveled to Cuba to attend a bilateral foreign ministers' meeting, which he described as "very fruitful." Various topics were discussed in detail during the meeting.

In his first television interview with a U.S. broadcaster, Díaz-Canel [told NBC News](#) on the same day that he would not resign under U.S. pressure. "We have a free, sovereign state. We have self-determination and independence, and we do not submit to the plans of the United States," said the 65-year-old. The U.S. government has "no moral basis to demand anything from Cuba." The idea of giving up is foreign to us: "The concept that revolutionaries give up and step down is not part of our vocabulary." ([Cubaheute](#))