

## Russian fuel on its way to Cuba



Symbolic image: Another oil tanker is on its way to Cuba. Will it be able to break through the US blockade? (Source: [Jens Rademacher/Unsplash](#))

A ship loaded with Russian fuel has set sail for Cuba. At the same time, the island is seeking diplomatic support in Europe in the face of the US energy blockade – which violates international law – while the latest ruling by the US Supreme Court thwarts Trump's tariff policy.

According to a [report](#) by the financial news agency *Bloomberg*, citing data from market analysis company Kpler, the ship, named “Sea Horse,” is loaded with around 200,000 barrels of diesel fuel, which was transferred in a ship-to-ship transfer off the coast of Cyprus. It is expected to arrive in early March.

### Chase with the US Coast Guard

It remains to be seen whether the tanker will be able to break through the US blockade. According to *Bloomberg*, the US armed forces have so far seized at least nine ships suspected of transporting fuel to Cuba. The *New York Times* has [reconstructed](#) some of these pursuits, which were carried out by the US Coast Guard, in an analysis.

At the end of January, the oil tanker *Ocean Mariner* wanted to deliver a cargo of fuel to Cuba – but the US Coast Guard intervened. The ship had left Colombia with a false destination, sailed towards Cuba for twelve days and turned back on February 11 just off the Cuban coast when the crew apparently noticed that they were being pursued. A US Coast Guard vessel then took the tanker under escort and guided it into Dominican waters, where it

remained stranded for days with a full tank. It was then escorted to the Bahamas, where the US had previously taken confiscated Venezuelan oil tankers.

[Most recently](#), however, on February 17, the Nikos I.V. became the first tanker since January to unload its cargo of unknown quantity and origin in Cuba. It remains to be seen whether the Sea Horse will be able to deliver its cargo or whether it will suffer the same fate as the Ocean Mariner.

Energy analyst Rohit Rathod estimates that the supplies received in December will last for a few more weeks. “I would say they will run out of fuel at the end of March,” Rathod told *Bloomberg*.

## Diplomatic offensive

Meanwhile, Cuba has intensified its diplomatic efforts. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla [traveled to Moscow](#), where he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday. Putin condemned the blockade and pledged his support. “We have always stood by Cuba in its struggle for independence and the right to determine its own path of development,” Putin was quoted by *Euronews* as saying. “We do not accept any of this.”

Rodríguez Parrilla had previously visited Spain, which [had promised](#) Cuba aid deliveries. On Thursday, Rodríguez met his French counterpart Jean-Noël Barrot in Paris. At the same time, Rodríguez Parrilla met with the UNESCO Secretary-General and sought international support against US economic sanctions, which he described as a major obstacle to Cuba's development.

## US customs threats without legal basis

Trump had tightened the economic screws on Cuba after the kidnapping of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro by a US military operation in early January. “No more oil or money will go to Cuba – zero!” Trump said on January 11. On January 29, Trump finally declared a national emergency by executive order and declared the Cuban government an “extraordinary threat” to the security of the United States.

The decree authorizes Washington to impose punitive tariffs on goods from countries that directly or indirectly supply oil to Cuba.

Yesterday, however, [the US Supreme Court](#) overturned Trump's tariff policy based on emergency laws by a vote of six to three, thereby removing the legal basis for the central threat against Cuba's suppliers.

Trump's January executive order—which has so far prevented Cuba's former main supplier, Mexico, from making deliveries—was also based on the IEEPA emergency law, which has now been declared unconstitutional. However, it remains questionable whether this will deter the US government from military operations by the Coast Guard and other means of pressure. ([Cubaheute](#))