

Second blackout in a week – and a tanker in sight?



The lighthouse at the Morro Fortress in Havana: Cuba is waiting for oil while the power grid has collapsed once again (Source: [Ricardo IV Tamayo/Unsplash](#))

Cuba's power grid [completely collapsed](#) again on Saturday evening. This is the third nationwide blackout in March alone and the second within a week. More than ten million people on the Caribbean island are without power. Meanwhile, the U.S. is keeping up the pressure on the country's energy supply as another oil tanker has been rerouted.

Cascade Effect Following Power Plant Failure

According to Lázaro Guerra Hernández, Director of Electricity at the Cuban Ministry of Energy, the collapse occurred at 6:32 p.m. local time. It was triggered by the failure of Unit 6 at the Nuevitas thermal power plant, which set off a cascade effect and took the country's remaining power plants offline one after another. The exact causes are still being investigated, Guerra Hernández explained on Cuban television.

Restoration efforts began immediately, as is standard procedure. In the province of Matanzas, 21 megawatts were available early in the morning, and the region was connected to Cienfuegos.

In Havana, seven substations and seven distribution circuits were back online by 6 a.m., restoring power to approximately 72,600 customers—about 8.4 percent of the capital. In the center of the country, Unit 3 of the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes power plant was connected to the grid. The grid operator UNE stated that restoration was proceeding gradually, with hospitals and water supply systems taking priority.

Havana Rejects Political Interference

The blackout comes amid a period of massive political tensions between Cuba and the U.S. Since January, the United States has effectively blocked all oil shipments to the island. Despite ongoing talks with Havana, U.S. President Donald Trump recently spoke of a “takeover” of Cuba, which Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel sharply [rejected](#).

Cuba’s Deputy Foreign Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío also rejected calls for interference in Cuba’s internal affairs at a press conference on Friday. “Cuba’s political system is not up for negotiation, and of course neither the president nor any other government post is subject to negotiation—neither with the U.S. nor with any other country,” [he said](#), according to the news agency *EFE*. Any attempt to undermine the island’s independence is “completely unacceptable.”

Previously, the *Miami Herald* and the *New York Times* both reported that Washington was seeking a replacement for President Miguel Díaz-Canel during the negotiations, as he is perceived as an obstacle to an agreement. Both the White House and U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio denied these reports.

However, the negotiations appear to be going anything but well: Washington has so far given no indication of even a temporary easing of restrictions, while Cuba, in response, has [banned](#) diesel imports to the U.S. Embassy in Havana. There remains the possibility that the talks—similar to the case of Iran—could merely be a stalling tactic for military intervention.

Shortly before the power outage, a coalition of international socialist groups arrived in Havana, including former British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn. They brought solar panels, food packages, and medicines. The [“Nuestra América” aid convoy](#), coming from Mexico, was delayed due to rough seas but is expected to arrive at the port of Havana on Monday.

Energy crisis escalates dramatically

Cuba has not received any stable fuel supplies since January 9. The last shipment from Mexico arrived on that day. The Mexican state-owned oil company Pemex suspended its deliveries after Washington threatened sanctions.

In 2025, Mexico was the island’s most important supplier, accounting for 44 percent of Cuban oil imports—worth around \$496 million. Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum stated that her government is exploring alternatives to resume energy aid, but did not specify any deadlines or concrete conditions.

Hope is currently being pinned on the Russian oil tanker “Anatoly Kolodkin,” which is transporting between 700,000 and 730,000 barrels of Russian crude oil and is [expected](#) to arrive at the port of Matanzas on Monday. It would be the first major fuel delivery in over three months. According to the maritime analysis platform Kpler, the cargo amounts to about one month’s supply for the island. The ship belongs to the Russian state-owned shipping company Sovcomflot and is on the sanctions lists of the U.S., the EU, and the U.K. It left the Russian port of Primorsk on March 8 and falsely listed its destination as “Atlantis, USA.”

Confrontation between Washington and Moscow off the coast of Cuba

Washington is responding with direct pressure. On March 12, the U.S. Treasury Department, through its sanctions office OFAC, issued a license that explicitly [excludes](#) Cuba from receiving Russian oil as part of the easing of sanctions against Russia. Two U.S. Coast Guard vessels were positioned off the northeast coast of Cuba to potentially intercept the ship. U.S. Southern Command confirmed it was tracking the tanker but downplayed its cargo, estimating it would last no more than two weeks.

A second tanker, the “Sea Horse,” which was supposed to transport around 200,000 barrels of Russian diesel to Cuba, [changed course on Thursday](#) and headed for Trinidad and Tobago instead. According to *Reuters* data, the change of course is directly related to the new OFAC license. Similar incidents have occurred before: The tanker “Ocean Mariner” changed course in February due to the presence of the Coast Guard, [as did](#) a tanker from Togo carrying oil that Cuba had purchased on the spot market.

Russia expressed “deep concern” and reaffirmed its support for Havana. “We are providing and will continue to provide Cuba with the necessary support, including material aid,” the Russian Foreign Ministry stated.

Whether the “Anatoly Kolodkin” actually reaches its destination port is likely to be decided in the coming hours—and could lead to a direct confrontation between Washington and Moscow off the coast of Cuba. ([Cubaheute](#))