

The U.S. imposes sanctions on Cuba's president and government institutions



Miguel Díaz-Canel in 2018, the year he took office as president (Source: [Kremlin.ru/Commons/CC-BY-SA 3.0](https://www.kremlin.ru/COMMONS/CC-BY-SA%203.0))

The Trump administration has [imposed](#) sanctions on Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel, members of his family, and several Cuban institutions. Havana condemned the measures as “illegitimate” and vowed to resist them.

On Thursday, the responsible U.S. federal agency, OFAC—the Office of Foreign Assets Control—added those affected to the so-called SDN list, the list of specially designated nationals and blocked persons. The measure allows for the freezing of assets and prohibits U.S. citizens and companies from conducting any transactions with them.

Who is affected?

Placed on the SDN list were Díaz-Canel himself, his wife Lis Cuesta Peraza, and his stepson Manuel Anido Cuesta. Also sanctioned were Alejandro Castro Espín, son of former head of state Raúl Castro and a well-known key figure in the Cuban intelligence apparatus, as well as his son Raúl Alejandro Castro Calis.

On the institutional side, the measures affect the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (MINFAR), the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR)—a nationwide network of neighborhood committees—the Cuban Institute for International Friendship (ICAP), the mining company Minera La Victoria S.A., and the travel agency Amistur Cuba S.A., which is affiliated with ICAP.

Part of an escalation strategy

The current sanctions are part of a series of pressure measures that Washington has intensified against Cuba since the beginning of the year. As early as May 7, OFAC had sanctioned the Cuban military conglomerate GAESA, forcing the most important foreign investors in Cuba to withdraw. The legal basis for these designations is Executive Order 14404, which U.S. President Donald Trump [signed](#) on May 1, 2026. On May 18, sanctions followed against nine high-ranking officials, including National Assembly President Esteban Lazo and the ministers of energy, communications, and justice. On May 20, an arrest warrant was [issued](#) against former President and revolutionary leader Raúl Castro. As a result of the sanctions, credit card companies [Visa and Mastercard will also cease operations on the island](#) starting June 6.

Added to this is an energy embargo imposed by Washington—which imposes punitive tariffs on third countries that supply fuel to Cuba—as well as the threat of so-called secondary sanctions against foreign financial institutions that continue to do business with designated Cuban entities.

As early as July 2025, the U.S. had [imposed](#) visa sanctions against Díaz-Canel, meaning he has been unable to attend sessions of the UN General Assembly in New York since then.

U.S. President Trump has repeatedly told journalists that he would “take over” Cuba and did not rule out military strikes, though only after the war against Iran had been “ended.” A few weeks ago, the U.S. aircraft carrier “Nimitz” was [positioned](#) off the Cuban coast.

It is noteworthy that Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro—another grandson of Raúl Castro, known as “El Cangrejo”—who reportedly served as the Cuban counterpart in discreet negotiations between Washington and Havana, does not appear on the sanctions list.

“Imperial Aggression”

Experts point out that the immediate financial impact is limited, provided the individuals concerned do not possess identifiable assets under U.S. jurisdiction. During previous rounds of sanctions, Díaz-Canel had stated that no member of the party, state, or government leadership possessed assets under U.S. jurisdiction, and that Washington knew this because “there isn’t even any evidence that could be presented.” However, the SDN designations have an impact that extends beyond the purely financial realm: they serve as a deterrent to third-party countries and companies that do business with those on the list.

Díaz-Canel [responded](#) on the same day via the social media platform X. He described the sanctions as part of an “illegitimate list.” The measures, he said, were “aimed at intensifying the blockade and creating a conflict scenario between Cuba and the U.S.”

Díaz-Canel continued: “This political blindness adds to the coercive measures imposed on our country in recent weeks, which are designed to harm the Cuban people [...] The aggressiveness and depravity of the Yankee government will meet with our determination to confront the worst-case scenarios and withstand the imperialist attack.”

Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez joined in the condemnation and [stated](#) that the inclusion of Díaz-Canel and his family members on the list was “the latest sign of the U.S.’s interventionist plan to portray Cuba as a [threat to the national security of the United States](#).” Rodríguez Parrilla stated: “Any U.S. measure aimed at fabricating a conflict scenario between the two countries is doomed to failure. Any threat to Cuba’s independence and sovereignty will be met with greater unity and determination on the part of our people.” [\(Cubaheute\)](#)