

Trump is apparently ordering preparations for military strikes against Cuba



U.S. President Donald Trump with Secretary of War Pete Hegseth (left) and Secretary of State Marco Rubio (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Commons/CC-BY-SA 4.0](#))

Even with its hands full in an unpopular, costly and deadly war in Iran, the Trump administration seems to be ramping up preparations for military action in Cuba following weeks of relative calm between the two countries.

On Tuesday, news outlet Zeteo reported that “officials at the Pentagon and elsewhere in the US government were quietly given a new directive that came straight from the Trump White House (to)...ramp up preparations for possible military operations against Cuba.”

Citing two sources familiar with the matter and another briefed on it, Zeteo reported that President Trump has grown increasingly frustrated with Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel's open defiance of threatening remarks from U.S. officials amid a near-total oil blockade imposed by Washington. This has led Trump to consider abducting some members of the Cuban leadership in an operation akin to the one that ousted Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro in January.

This, according to Zeteo, would be the presumed end result of the Justice Department's broad-ranging inquiry into Cuban government leaders for “drug, immigration, economic and violent crimes, with a goal of bringing fast indictments,” the New York Times recently reported.

The Zeteo scoop comes after Trump told reporters at the White House on Monday that “we may stop by Cuba after we're finished with this,” in reference to the U.S. war with Iran. This, despite the denial by a top Pentagon official last month that the administration was “rehearsing for an invasion of Cuba or actively preparing to militarily take over the island.”

Soon after the Zeteo report was published, Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) [told](#) El Nuevo Día that he was planning to line up a War Powers Resolution vote in the Senate sometime next week to [prevent](#) the administration from taking military action against Cuba that is not explicitly authorized by Congress.

Kaine, who said that “regime change in Cuba should not be a U.S. priority,” [sent](#) a letter signed by 51 other members of Congress to Trump earlier this month condemning the ongoing U.S. fuel blockade of Cuba. “By engineering an accelerated energy collapse,” the letter asserted, “your administration has shifted responsibility for Cuba’s suffering away from the Cuban government and squarely onto the United States.”

Diaz-Canel, for his part, has recently gone on a U.S. [media blitz](#), mostly reiterating his preference for dialogue and cooperation with Washington while also declaring that Cuba plans to fight if the U.S. launches a military attack. “If we need to die, we’ll die,” he told Kristen Welker on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

Meanwhile, the pretexts for continued U.S. escalation against the island seem to be mounting, with Axios [reporting](#) Tuesday that the Trump administration has informed Congress that it believes the Cuban government has been complicit in supplying [Russia](#) with up to 5,000 troops for its war in Ukraine, an accusation that the island’s authorities vehemently [deny](#).

“The public record does not prove Havana officially dispatched all Cuban fighters,” the administration’s five-page unclassified report stated. “However, there are significant indicators that the regime knowingly tolerated, enabled, or selectively facilitated the flow.”

The narrative that Cubans — who amid an ongoing humanitarian crisis have sought economic opportunities abroad, including through visa-free travel to Russia — are fighting in the [Ukraine war](#) was [wielded](#) by U.S. diplomats last October to garner opposition to an annual U.N. resolution condemning the 66-year-old U.S. trade embargo. The report is expected to be brought up in a much-anticipated House Foreign Affairs Committee [hearing](#) on Thursday featuring the State Department’s top official for [Latin America](#), Michael G. Kozak, sources tell RS.

The alleged preparations for military operations in Cuba follow an apparent easing of bilateral tensions in late March, when the U.S. [decided](#) to allow a Russian oil tanker to dock at Cuba’s Matanzas port with 730,000 barrels of crude, providing the island with temporary relief from its energy crisis. Cuba subsequently [released](#) 2,010 prisoners in the largest mass amnesty in over a decade.

After Cuba [authorized](#) U.S. embassy officials in Havana to import fuel for their own operations, another Russian oil tanker — the U.S.- and EU-sanctioned *Universal*, which belongs to the state-owned Sovcomflot — [set sail](#) for the Caribbean. The ship passed through the English Channel last week and is estimated to arrive in Cuba on April 29.

On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov [told](#) reporters in [China](#) that his country is committed to continue sending oil to Cuba as humanitarian aid. That fuel is already being used to [resume](#) electricity generation through two Turkish powerships

operating off Cuban coasts. They had left the island last year due to high operating costs and the lack of available fuel, according to operator Karadeniz Holdings.

The agreement to permit Russian fuel shipments came on the heels of moves by the U.S. to [authorize](#) fuel sales to Cuba's private sector and [boost](#) humanitarian aid to the country's hurricane-stricken eastern region. Cuba, for its part, [released](#) political prisoners through Vatican mediation, [loosened](#) restrictions on private enterprise, and [authorized](#) Cuban Americans to own and invest in businesses on the island without residing there.

At the same time, Cuban officials [reiterated](#) on multiple [occasions](#) that they invite the U.S. to be involved in Cuba's economic transformation. Toward those ends, Cuba recently announced the [liberalization](#) of the state agricultural system, the [decentralization](#) of public administration, and increased [access](#) to hard currency through state-owned financial institutions, although further details on the implementation and scope of these decisions remain to be seen.

Citing Trump administration officials, U.S. government [media](#) outlet Martí Noticias [reported](#) this week that the grandson and bodyguard of former Cuban president Raúl Castro, who met with State Department envoys in February, even tried to deliver a letter on official Cuban government letterhead to President Trump last weekend through a private-sector [emissary](#) who was allegedly returned to the island given his lack of official accreditation.

The failed effort, which has not been reported in English-language media, reportedly sought direct access to Trump by circumventing Secretary of State Marco Rubio, a longtime proponent of regime change in Havana who has [said](#) that Cuba's announced reforms are not sufficient, [demanding](#) instead wholesale political and economic transformation on the island.

As diplomatic advances between the two countries seemingly stall, renewed threats of U.S. military action against a small island off U.S. coasts could become a useful distraction for an administration dealing with a quagmire of its own creation in the [Middle East](#), which has resulted in the [death](#) of over a dozen U.S. servicemembers, [soaring](#) gas prices during an election year, and a [downgraded](#) economic growth forecast that could trigger a global recession.

While Trump has reportedly not yet made up his mind on military action in Cuba — and it remains unclear what exactly the administration's long-term strategy on the island might be — some members of Congress are not waiting until after a strike is launched.

"If another nation were blocking U.S. access to oil, as the Trump administration is doing with Cuba, Americans would see it as an act of war," Kaine [said](#). "These wars, including any new attack against Cuba, are illegal without a vote in Congress."

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