

US allows Russian oil tanker to dock in Cuba even as Trump threatens military action

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Washington has allowed one Russian oil tanker to dock in Cuba as the Trump administration moves to impose starvation fuel rations on the island of about 8 million people.

The tanker *Anatoly Kolodkin*, carrying 730,000 barrels of crude from Primorsk, reached the Cuban port of Matanzas on Monday after being escorted through European waters by a Russian warship sanctioned by the US, the European Union, the UK, Australia and Ukraine.

Trump simultaneously boasted on Friday that “Cuba’s next” for US military intervention, underscoring that the regime-change operation against the island is accelerating, not easing.

The ship’s arrival may offer Cuba a brief breathing space but only that. Jorge Piñón, an expert at the University of Texas Energy Institute, says it could take up to 25 days for the crude to be processed in Cuba’s decrepit refineries, yielding only about 180,000 barrels of diesel—enough to meet roughly nine to ten days of demand.

Havana had already acknowledged that no fuel tanker had arrived for three months and that the energy grid was nearing collapse.

Cuban officials have also warned of rising mortality risks tied to the fuel shortage, including a backlog of almost 100,000 “non-urgent” medical procedures, while contacts speaking to the *World Socialist Web Site* have described relatives dying because care and transport are being rationed.

One Havana resident, Francis Hernández, told *El País*, the daily blackouts have become routine: “What we have now are no longer blackouts, but only little flashes of light from time to time.”

This is a textbook case of the international crime of punitive restrictions against a population or collective punishment as defined under the Geneva Conventions. Trump’s decision to permit one tanker while blocking

others does not soften that reality; it is not relief, but a controlled drip of fuel to keep the Cuban economy from total collapse while Washington presses ahead with a regime-change operation.

Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow was glad the shipment had arrived and noted that the issue had been discussed in advance with US counterparts.

Trump, meanwhile, told reporters: “If a country wants to send some oil into Cuba right now, I have no problem with that.” However, he added:

It doesn't bother me much. It is not going to have an impact. Cuba is finished. They have a bad regime, they have a very bad, corrupt leadership, and whether they have a boat of oil it is not going to matter.

The Russian government has vowed to continue sending oil to Cuba, and Washington has temporarily relaxed sanctions on Russian oil *already aboard ships* in the context of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz as a result of the US-Israeli war of aggression on Iran.

Just days earlier, Washington forced another vessel, the Hong Kong–flagged *Sea Horse*, to divert course before reaching Cuban waters by tightening sanctions rules on Russian oil shipments to the island.

The White House said it will make decisions on a “case-by-case basis” but has not changed its sanctions policy and maintains the threat to seize ships.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum effectively confirmed that Mexico is still being drawn into this framework, refusing to respond as to whether fuel exports to Cuba are being permitted, stressing instead food aid and vague trade arrangements with Havana.

The limited allowance for the *Anatoly* designed to buy time for a broader assault on Cuba, leaving the regime with just enough fuel to keep the lights flickering while the pressure for capitulation intensifies.

This is only one front in a far wider escalation. The US war on Iran, the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, and the drive by US imperialism to impose hemispheric hegemony over Latin America are all converging as the first stages of a global war.

Even as he openly states his intent to expand his genocidal war on Iran to “take the oil,” Trump said in a forum during the weekend: “I built this great military. I said you’ll never have to use it. But sometimes you have to use it. And Cuba’s next by the way. But pretend I didn’t say that please.”

The entire political establishment has lined up behind this agenda. The *New York Times*, speaking for the Democratic Party, published a piece last week echoing the administration’s claim that mere suspicions of Russian and Chinese “spy outposts” justify denying Cubans access to the essentials of a modern society.

Republican Representative Carlos Gimenez’s claims that Chinese sites in Cuba are “one of the most brazen intelligence operations ever attempted near the American mainland,” adding that supposed targets include a US military facility in Florida that is “the only training range that actually can simulate battle in the Taiwan Straits.”

The *Washington Post* editorial board spitefully denounced participants in the “Nuestra América” humanitarian aid flotilla, dredging up the McCarthyite era anti-communist slur of “useful idiots,” while implying that they are accomplices in state “terrorism.”

The Trump administration is following the regime-change playbook used in Venezuela, where the Treasury Department selectively handed licenses for companies to sell Venezuelan oil to gain leverage over sections of the ruling elite. This facilitated the January 3 operation that captured Nicolás Maduro, helping turn Caracas into a semi-colonial outpost for US imperialism.

Since the blockade was launched in January, the US has allowed roughly 30,000 barrels of fuel into Cuba’s private sector through individual sales arranged through Miami and Texas, often via social media, according to Reuters.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has openly admitted that these exports are intended “to put the private sector and individual private Cubans—not affiliated with the government, not affiliated with the military—in a privileged position.” That is, Washington is consciously

Kolodkin cultivating a capitalist class on the island as a lever against the state and against the working class.

Cuba’s bourgeois nationalist regime has responded with major concessions. It has expanded the role of private business, opened the door wider to public-private partnerships, courted exile capital in Miami, invited FBI “experts” to the island, and entered into talks with the Trump administration over fuel and “security cooperation.”

These steps further strengthen the social layers most closely tied to US imperialism and prepare the ground for a more direct assault on the remaining nationalizations and other gains of the 1959 revolution.

In other words, the regime’s concessions are enabling the very forces that seek to recolonize Cuba, while the population pays the price in blackouts, shortages and preventable deaths.

The drive to recolonize Latin America and the assault on Cubans’ right to food, medicine, transport and energy are inseparable from the broader war program of US imperialism. At the same time, the unanimous accommodation to Trump by the Cuban, Venezuelan and other “pink tide” governments confirms that imperialism cannot be opposed on a national basis under bourgeois leaderships.

The “No Kings” mobilization Saturday, the largest single-day protest in American history, testifies to mass opposition in the working class against war and dictatorship in the United States and internationally.

What is required is a conscious, political break with all nationalist and pro-capitalist parties and union bureaucracies and the construction of an international movement of the working class against imperialist war and capitalist rule.



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