

# Amid dozens of spy flights over Cuba, US sanctions drive out foreign companies

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Even as the administration of Donald Trump continues its war against Iran—provoking the shutdown of the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world’s most critical commercial waterways—the Pentagon is escalating preparations for a devastating regime-change war against Cuba.

A report by CNN based on publicly available aviation data reveals a dramatic surge in US military intelligence flights around the island. “Since February 4,” CNN reported, “the US Navy and Air Force have conducted at least 25 such flights using manned aircraft and drones, most of them near the country’s two biggest cities, Havana and Santiago de Cuba, and some coming within 40 miles of the coast, according to FlightRadar24.”

The flights have included P-8A Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft designed for surveillance and reconnaissance, RC-135V Rivet Joint planes specializing in signals intelligence collection, and MQ-4C Triton high-altitude reconnaissance drones.

CNN acknowledged that prior to February “such publicly visible flights were exceedingly rare in this area,” adding that similar patterns of intensified surveillance accompanied the lead-up to military operations in Venezuela, Iran and Russia.

The aggressive posture was underscored on May 6 when Secretary of State Marco Rubio was photographed at the headquarters of US Southern Command in Doral, Florida, standing before a map of Cuba.

These flights are not routine patrols, but intelligence-gathering missions designed to map strategic targets that go hand-in-hand with the escalating measures to shut down the Cuban economy and any ability to fend off an attack.

The impact on Cuban society has been devastating. More than 55 percent of the country experiences blackouts lasting up to 24 hours per day. According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, Cuba’s economy is projected to contract by 7.2 percent in 2026 even before the latest sanctions take full effect.

On May 1, after threatening to “take Cuba immediately,” Trump issued the most aggressive sanctions yet imposed on the island. The executive order threatens to cut off from the US-dominated financial system any company conducting business with Cuba.

Under the order, Rubio announced sanctions last week against the military-commercial conglomerate GAESA, its executive Ania Guillermina Lastres Morera, and the mining company Moa Nickel. GAESA, closely linked to the Castro family, is estimated to hold stakes in roughly 40 percent of Cuban enterprises.

These latest sanctions continue the tactical shift away from

earlier licensing arrangements that had permitted US capital to penetrate Cuba through the private sector and through contacts with figures connected to the Castro family and GAESA itself. Washington is now waging all-out economic warfare while preparing broader intervention.

Washington has set June 5 as the deadline for foreign firms to terminate any operations involving GAESA, and Rubio warned that additional sanctions are imminent.

The consequences are already unfolding. Canadian mining giant Sherritt International announced Thursday that it is shutting down its Cuban operations after maintaining a presence on the island continuously since the 1990s.

The company acknowledged it faced the possibility of sanctions “at any moment,” which could sever its access to international banking networks.

The closure constitutes a severe blow to one of Cuba’s primary sources of export revenue. Nickel has remained among the country’s most important exports for years. Cuba will lose income not only from sulfide production at the Moa mine but also from refining operations in Canada and trading activities based in the Bahamas.

The repercussions may be most severe in the energy sector. Sherritt owns one-third of Energas, which supplies approximately 10 percent of Cuba’s electricity generation.

According to economist Omar Everleny Pérez, Energas does not merely provide baseline electrical output. It supplies the reserve capacity necessary to restart Cuba’s aging thermoelectric plants after blackouts.

Additional concerns center on the Turkish company Karpowership, whose floating power plants currently supply roughly a quarter of Cuba’s electricity needs. Analysts warn that these operations could also become targets of US sanctions because they directly involve the energy sector.

As Professor Paolo Spadoni observed, the United States “has done an incredibly good job of going after their sources of revenue. Now they’ve hit nickel exports; there’s very little left to go after.”

Washington’s claims that Cuba—a small island nation of fewer than 10 million people—constitutes a national security threat to the United States are transparently absurd. Allegations that Havana harbors Russian or Chinese spy bases, moreover, are propaganda devices aimed at manufacturing public support for aggression.

## Washington's global counterrevolutionary campaign

As in the cases of Venezuela and Iran, the Trump administration is waging a global counterrevolutionary campaign against any government that challenges, however partially or inconsistently, Washington's domination over world resources, markets and strategic territories. The target is not merely the Cuban government but the remaining historical legacy of the anti-colonial and social struggles of the twentieth century.

The Chinese Revolution, the Iranian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution and the Nicaraguan Revolution—all of them shaped, albeit in various distorted manners, by the immense influence of the Russian Revolution—represented blows against imperialist domination. Today, US imperialism seeks to erase every remaining social and political consequence of those upheavals.

Rubio himself has repeatedly framed US foreign policy as a crusade against what he calls “godless communist revolutions” and anti-colonial uprisings dating back to 1945. Behind the language of “democracy” and “security” lies an attempt to reimpose direct imperialist domination over the entire world.

Faced with mounting pressure, the Cuban government has responded through increasingly desperate concessions. Among the most significant measures adopted since the April 11 State Department delegation delivered an ultimatum demanding sweeping economic and political changes within “weeks,” the Cuban State Council approved a new “Migratory Status of Investors and Businesses of Cuban Citizens Residing Abroad.”

The measure creates a special migratory category allowing members of the Cuban diaspora to invest, own and dispose of property and businesses inside Cuba. It represents a major opening to private capital and a direct appeal to affluent Cuban expatriates, including layers historically aligned with coup conspiracies and terrorist attacks against the island.

Rubio dismissed the concessions outright, declaring: “Serious economic reforms are impossible with these people in charge. It cannot happen.” The statement made clear that Washington seeks not reforms, but regime change and the installation of a fully subordinate client government.

The “left” nationalist governments of Claudia Sheinbaum in Mexico and Lula da Silva in Brazil have become the key accomplices in the isolation and regime change operation against Cuba. Their response to the aggression against Cuba demonstrates that no ruling elite offers opposition to imperialist oppression anywhere. The resort to outright dictatorship and open subservience to imperialism are signs of political weakness, not strength.

At the same time, Washington is escalating its assault on Cuban migrants. While the Cuban Adjustment Act, which provided pathways to residency and citizenship in the United States, formally remains in place, the path toward legalization has effectively been shut down.

Migration attorney Willy Allen stated: “This has been the most difficult period for Cubans. The myth that Cubans were special is dead.” He noted that the annual parole program for 20,000 Cuban citizens has been eliminated, along with the 25,000 visas

previously issued yearly through Havana.

As Cuba confronts the collapse of its healthcare and energy systems and while the Pentagon maps targets for possible bombing campaigns, Cuban migrants increasingly face imprisonment and death in ICE facilities such as “Alligator Alcatraz” and other concentration camp-like detention centers across the United States.

Expressing sentiments shared by growing numbers both within Cuba and throughout the diaspora, Cuban migrant May Díaz told *El País* from Houston: “I think something will happen in Cuba, but it's not what we expect. For me, what's coming is a dictatorship with Coca-Cola. Cubans trapped in this immigration limbo are like being thrown into a coliseum with 100 lions behind us and our hands and feet tied. Right now, at this moment, I belong neither here nor there. I have no country. There is nowhere in the world that opens its arms to me and lets me breathe.”

The words of May Díaz capture with searing precision what Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky foresaw when he described capitalism in its death agony turning the entire world into a prison for growing millions.

The Trump administration's blockade and threats of military action against Havana, its bombing of fishermen in the Caribbean and Pacific, and overall onslaught against the region is part of the same strategy that places migrants in concentration camps and orders federal forces to kill protesters in US streets.

US imperialism is responding to its unprecedented crisis by seeking to transform the entire continent and world into a vast killing field, a captive market of cheap labor, plundered resources and surveilled populations administered by puppet regimes answerable not to their own people but to Wall Street.

The working class across the hemisphere, and above all inside the United States itself, must intervene as an independent political force to halt any military aggression against Cuba, to free every migrant held in American detention and to break the stranglehold of imperialism over the continent.



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