

CIA director's trip to Havana paves way for regime change operation

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CIA Director John Ratcliffe traveled to Havana on Thursday and met with Raúl Castro's grandson, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, Interior Minister Lazaro Alvarez Casas and the head of Cuba's intelligence services, according to statements made by a CIA official to *The Miami Herald*.z

The purpose of the trip, he said, was "to personally deliver President Trump's message that the United States is prepared to seriously engage on economic and security issues, but only if Cuba makes fundamental changes."

The political significance of welcoming the CIA director to Havana cannot be overstated. The agency owes much of its nickname—Murder Inc.—to its record of organizing relentless terrorist attacks on Cuba.

Almost exactly 65 years ago, the CIA was the organizing force behind the April 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion, when approximately 1,511 CIA-trained Cuban exiles launched a failed assault on Cuba's southern coast to overthrow Fidel Castro's government. Under Operation Mongoose, the agency continued assassination plots involving exploding seashells, contaminated diving suits and poison pens, alongside acts of economic sabotage, including the deliberate spread of viral diseases among Cuban livestock.

While the visit is not entirely without precedent—CIA Director John Brennan secretly traveled to Cuba in 2015, meeting with Raúl Castro's son Col. Alejandro Castro Espín—what is entirely unprecedented is that the CIA and the US Embassy in Cuba publicly posted photographs of Thursday's visit and had their officials describe the details in real time to the media. The entire affair was for public consumption.

The broadcasting of such a trip by the CIA can only be seen as smoke-and-mirrors to manufacture a narrative: Cuba bears responsibility for whatever comes next. The sporadic offers of minimal aid and dialogue from Washington are aimed at providing the pretext that the Cuban government rejected these well-meaning US gestures.

The fraudulent character of these gestures, however, was made unmistakably clear within hours of Ratcliffe's departure. US officials told *USA Today* that the US Justice Department is moving to indict former Cuban President Raúl Castro, now 94, in connection with the 1996 shooting down of two planes operated by Brothers to the Rescue. This was a CIA-connected organization whose pilots conducted repeated hostile overflights of Cuban territory, on occasion buzzing Havana and dropping leaflets calling on Cubans to revolt.

The planned indictment is a transparent threat that Washington may move against Castro in a manner similar to the abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro following his fraudulent drug indictment—an operation in Caracas in which US Special Forces killed

32 Cuban security personnel and scores of Venezuelans.

Ratcliffe warned Cuban officials to take Trump seriously and told them they should be "under no illusions that Trump will not take action to enforce red lines." The direct demand was raised that "Cuba can no longer be a safe haven for adversaries in the Western Hemisphere."

While the demand that Cuba sever ties with China and Russia was not spelled out, the context leaves no ambiguity that what is being referred to.

A population already under siege

These maneuvers are unfolding against the backdrop of a catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Cuba, inflicted deliberately by Washington.

"The system has, once again, been left without any fuel reserves," Cuba's Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy told reporters on Wednesday. "There's absolutely nothing."

Cuba's state electric company said Thursday that the collapse had stripped power from all eastern provinces. De la O Levy acknowledged blackouts lasting between 20 and 22 hours per day in some areas of Havana.

The United States has cut off the island from virtually all fuel imports since January, allowing only a single Russian tanker through. That ship, which docked in late March carrying 730,000 barrels of oil, provided only temporary relief. A second Russian-flagged vessel, the *Universal*, carrying diesel for Cuba, shifted course several weeks ago.

The fuel blockade constitutes a crime of collective punishment, pure and simple. Blackouts have caused reduced working hours and widespread food spoilage. Hospitals have canceled surgeries. Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Eduardo Rodríguez Parrilla has stated that infant mortality has doubled, and 12,000 children are waiting for operations. On Wednesday and Thursday, protests broke out across Havana, following blackouts lasting up to 48 hours in some neighborhoods. The demonstrations spread to at least 12 municipalities, including Guanabacoa, Marianao, Playa, San Miguel del Padrón, Vedado and Havana del Este. Protesters chanted "Electricity and food!"

On May 1, Trump announced new sanctions, targeting any company doing business with the Cuban economy. Cuba's main foreign investor, Canada-based Sherritt International, has already shut down its nickel mining and electricity generation operations on the island.

The \$100 million propaganda gambit

Pentagon contingency plans for a military operation have already been drawn up at Trump's request. According to CNN's analysis of flight data, US surveillance and reconnaissance missions off the coast of Cuba have increased markedly since February.

Amid military exercises on the Florida Keys—directly facing Cuba—the US Southern Command declared that a “hybrid fleet is ready.”

Meanwhile, White House officials have made it increasingly clear that they seek regime change. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has declared that Cuba's economic system “cannot be fixed” and that those in power in Cuba are incapable of solving it. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, in a recent congressional hearing, designated Cuba a threat to US national security. Trump himself has personally stated that “Cuba is next” after Iran.

Ratcliffe's visit was preceded by an earlier State Department delegation that issued Cuba an ultimatum, giving it “weeks” to implement changes and release prisoners. The demands included the replacement of President Miguel Díaz-Canel, the release of political prisoners, the settlement of claims on US property confiscated by the Cuban government and the operation of Starlink satellite systems on the island.

In this context, the offer of \$100 million in US aid—directed not to the Cuban government but to Catholic charities—must be understood for what it is: a Trojan horse. The figure amounts to roughly \$10 per Cuban. Rubio and other US officials immediately and falsely announced that Cuba had rejected the offer, using the manufactured controversy as a pretext to portray the Cuban government as indifferent to its own population's suffering.

President Díaz-Canel responded on social media accepting the aid as long as it is delivered “in full conformity with universally recognized practices for humanitarian assistance.”

The \$100 million figure is a wholly manufactured number for propaganda purposes. It functions as a distraction to shift blame for US policies starving the Cuban people and decades-long plans for regime change.

The prostration of the Cuban government and regional “left”

US maneuvers have thoroughly exposed the political bankruptcy of the Cuban leadership, even beyond the capitulation of welcoming the CIA director. At no point has the Castro regime appealed for the independent mobilization of workers in Cuba, the United States, or across the Americas to stop an aggression that carries the historical significance of a counterrevolutionary retribution for the 1959 Cuban Revolution.

After insisting that Cuba harbors no foreign military or intelligence bases and supports no hostile activity against the United States, the Cuban government issued a statement expressing its interest in developing cooperation between law enforcement agencies to enhance “the security of both nations, as well as regional and international

security.” The Cuban leadership has also signaled its willingness to hand economic control to US imperialism so long as the privileges and power of the Castroite ruling elite are preserved.

All nominally left-wing governments in Latin America have been entirely complicit in Cuba's suffocation. Brazil's Lula da Silva traveled to the White House last week to kiss Trump's ring, emerging to lend full credibility to Trump's claims that he has no plans for war against Cuba. Mexico's Claudia Sheinbaum responded to Ratcliffe's Havana visit by saying, absurdly: “Hopefully an understanding and agreement will be reached recognizing the sovereignty of the Cuban people”—an effective endorsement of the process underway.

Colombia's Gustavo Petro and Venezuela's remaining Chavistas have equally refused to take any concrete action to break the fuel blockade.

Regarding Cuba's other main international partners, China's President Xi Jinping refrained from raising the question of Cuba at all in his summit with Trump in Beijing. Russia, for its part, has made empty promises of aid while diverting its oil tankers from Cuba whenever they face US pressure.

Within the US political establishment, opposition to US aggression has remained entirely toothless. Democratic Representative Jonathan Jackson told *USA Today*: “I do anticipate the United States will have military action in Cuba. These violent words precede violent actions. There's a pattern here that the administration has engaged in. When they say they're ready to negotiate, that means they're ready to invade.” Jackson made these remarks following a trip to Havana in early April alongside Representative Pramila Jayapal to meet with President Díaz-Canel.

Yet despite entirely acknowledging that Trump's Cuba policy is built on lies and that the military threat against an impoverished island of 10 million people is real, Jackson, Jayapal, and the broader Democratic caucus have limited their “opposition” to official letters and failed congressional resolutions to pressure the fascist Trump and the Republican majorities in Congress. These steps amount to the channeling popular outrage behind the bipartisan consensus undergirding Washington's drive to secure its imperial hegemony in the hemisphere.

Workers cannot afford to place any confidence in any section of the capitalist establishments, including in the United States, Cuba and across the Americas. The threat of a military operation against Cuba—a counterrevolutionary settling of accounts aimed at the international working class—demands the independent and international mobilization of workers to end the economic blockade and military preparations against Cuba and the source of imperialist war: the capitalist profit system.



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