Cuba suffers grid collapse, as US sanctions block humanitarian and critical supplies

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Cuba's national electrical grid collapsed again on Friday afternoon, cutting off power to more than 9 million people. It was at least the sixth island-wide blackout since the Trump administration imposed a blockade barring all fuel shipments to Cuba in January.

A failure in high-voltage transmission lines in the west brought down the system as far east as Matanzas, after which the eastern grid disconnected. By nightfall, power had reached 5 percent of Havana's 862,000 customers, mostly around hospitals.

The collapse came one day after the US State Department announced a new round of sanctions, targeting eight Cuban entities and three individuals. Four are military research enterprises and their directors; the rest operate in nickel mining, the island's largest export industry.

The State Department's press statement declares that "the ultimate goal of sanctions is not to punish, but to bring about a positive change in behavior."

The record refutes this claim. Cuban authorities put the accumulated damage from the blockade at more than $8 billion between March 2025 and February 2026, and the UN projects the economy will contract 6.5 percent this year, the steepest fall in the region.

The asphyxiation of the Cuban economy is part of an unprovoked US war against 9 million people, waged to reduce the island once again to a semi-colony of the United States. It is moreover a punishment of historical character, aimed at obliterating all social gains that the working class and the anti-colonial movements of the 20th century wrested from imperialism.

At the same time, CBS News has reported that the Trump administration has quietly examined options for military action against Cuba, including an Army-led air assault. A population stripped of power, water, fuel and medicine is being threatened with a far bloodier catastrophe.

More than 7,000 containers bound for Cuba are stranded across the Caribbean and beyond, Rodolfo Benítez Verson, Cuba's ambassador to the UN in Geneva, told the Human Rights Council last week. They include dozens of containers bought by United Nations agencies attempting to ship food, medicine and other aid.

Two shipping lines—the German Hapag-Lloyd and the French CMA CGM, which between them carried at least half of Cuba's imports and most of its food—stopped sailing to the island after secondary sanctions took effect in June.

Aid for the Caribbean, a charity directed by the Cuban doctor Valia Rodríguez, loaded a container with resuscitation kits, intravenous tubing and colostomy bags worth more than $500,000. It reached the port of Mariel on June 4, one day before the measures came fully into force.

Hapag-Lloyd refused to unload it and carried it back to Panama, where the charity has since paid over $6,000 in storage fees. "Right now, people in Cuba are using supermarket bags, because there are no colostomy bags," Rodríguez told the *New York Times*.

The World Health Organization has cancelled deliveries of cancer drugs, and thousands of donated vials of the chemotherapy agent doxorubicin never arrived after airlines stopped flying to Cuba. People's Forum, a New York-based organization, has 1,000 solar panels meant for hospital intensive care units stranded in Mexico.

Washington insists that food and medicine are exempt, but Francisco Pichón, the UN humanitarian coordinator in Cuba, explained:

> We are facing something very real, which is a phenomenon called "overcompliance." Overcompliance is a really excessive precaution on the part of companies so as not to expose themselves to sanctions.

The Cuban government reports 100,000 patients awaiting surgery, among them 12,000 children. UN agencies found in May that some 5 million people with chronic illnesses face interruption of treatment, including more than 16,000 requiring radiation therapy and 12,000 undergoing chemotherapy.

Outages of 20 hours and longer have forced hospitals to suspend operations and shut down refrigeration. Diesel shortages have grounded ambulances and buses, leaving workers unable to reach their workplaces.

Pumping stations cannot deliver potable water, and UN

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agencies warn of the spread of mosquito-borne dengue and chikungunya. Without fuel, the harvest and transport of crops have come to a near standstill.

Food prices rose 60 percent between January and August, according to Cuban economist Omar Everleny Pérez Villanueva. A carton of 30 eggs now costs $11, more than the average monthly wage.

Carmen Carballo García, 66, waiting at a Havana soup kitchen with her five-year-old granddaughter, told the *Times:* "The doctors tell me she is underweight. She needs milk, but there is none."

The September 17 sanction designations were issued under Executive Order 14404 of May 1, whose decisive provision is aimed not at Cuba but at the world. Any foreign company operating in Cuba's energy, defense, mining, financial or security sectors is, in the order's words, "at risk of sanctions."

Sherritt International, the Canadian miner in Cuba for three decades, announced on May 15 that it would dissolve its nickel and cobalt joint venture and surrender its stake in the Energas power business.

The Spanish chain Meliá Hotels International completed its exit on July 24, abandoning 34 hotels after 36 years, once Washington blacklisted Cuba's Ministry of Tourism. Iberostar severed its contracts with the military-run Gaviota group. Arrivals fell 55.8 percent in the first four months of the year.

Air Canada, Air France, Iberia and Russia's Rossiya have suspended flights for lack of jet fuel. Up to two-thirds of container shipping capacity to the island has disappeared, according to Gordon Wilmsmeier of the Universidad de los Andes.

The recolonization of the hemisphere

Cuba is one front in an offensive by US imperialism to recolonize the hemisphere, as a base for world war. Following the US abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro in January, the Pentagon has taken a stake in Venezuelan oil fields, becoming a shareholder in the plunder of the country it invaded.

In March, Washington founded the Shield of the Americas, a hemispheric military coalition, and has announced joint military operations with Ecuador, Colombia, Honduras and Guatemala. On Friday, the day Cuba went dark, Trump announced a deal with Denmark granting the United States "permanent control over security" in Greenland and a "large Military presence" there.

The trade war against Canada has driven Ottawa to impose tariffs of up to 50 percent on more than 700 American products, with analysts warning of 100,000 job losses. Prime Minister Mark Carney declared in August that his country is "at war" with the United States.

Workers are already paying for the US war against Iran, facing steep increases in oil and food prices. Plants are closing and workers are being laid off as a consequence of the trade and military wars.

What is being inflicted on Cuba portends the logical conclusion of this process and the fate US imperialism reserves for the population of any country seen as obstructing its redivision of the world.

Against this aggression, the Cuban ruling elite has no answer except for concessions to imperialism to secure its privileges. According to a recent *Miami Herald* report citing official sources, the Trump administration secretly offered oil and US investment in exchange for the privatization of the state energy company CUPET, American investor control over it, and the departure of Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel. The proposal was carried in February to Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, grandson of Raúl Castro.

Havana's answer was that Cuba could accept the economic changes, but that Washington could not dictate changes in government. Its objection was not to handing the island's energy industry to American capital. It was to the demand that the ruling clique give up its offices.

Having failed to sell CUPET, Díaz-Canel now appeals to a wing of the same ruling class that is strangling the island. On Saturday he publicly thanked Democratic Representative Maxine Waters for confronting Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, praising "the dignified North Americans who denounce the crime."

The Democratic Party enforced the blockade for six decades and has approved the budgets used to fund the Pentagon's siege on Cuba and its operations across the hemisphere.

The Cuban working class cannot be defended by the Castroite ruling elite or by any wing of the American bourgeoisie. They must turn consciously to the international working class—the dockers who handle the stranded containers, the autoworkers thrown out of the plants by the trade war, and all workers in the United States itself—and fight for the independent political mobilization of workers throughout the hemisphere against capitalism, which produces war. This is the perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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