US announces new sanctions against Cuba with Chinese companies targeted for first time

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On November 5, the US State Department announced a new round of sanctions against Cuba, for the first time including Chinese companies among its targets. These new sanctions represent an escalation of the Trump administration's campaign of economic strangulation, which UN human rights experts have warned could turn the island into a "silent Gaza," as it seeks to topple the Castroite government and reimpose unfettered US domination over the island.

The new sanctions target several companies involved in the transport of crude oil and other petroleum products. Other Cuban state enterprises included in the new round are CUBAELECTRONICA, which imports electronics and communications systems, and TECNOSIME, which exports goods and services in the metalworking sector, organizes marketing events for Cuban industry and functions as the employer for a variety of foreign-owned and mixed-capital companies, including many operating in the Mariel Special Development Zone.

The two Chinese companies that were sanctioned, both state-owned, are China National Electronics Import & Export Corporation (CEIEC) and Beijing H&C Technologies, a subsidiary of China Electronics Technology Group Corporation. Both were accused of supplying equipment to Cuba's military through a Cuban procurement firm.

The day after the sanctions were announced, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun denounced them as illegal and an exercise in "long-arm jurisdiction." Foreign Minister Wang Yi later met with Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez in Beijing on Wednesday, November 11, and an official summary of the meeting reported Wang as saying, "China is willing to strengthen communication and coordination with Cuba in multilateral affairs, continue supporting and cooperating with each other in multilateral forums, and jointly oppose power politics and unilateral actions."

Washington is aiming at the commercial and political ties between China and the island, which have become one of the last remaining props keeping the Cuban economy and power grid running. The charge that runs through the State Department's announcement, that Cuba is the forward base of a hostile foreign coalition plotting against the "American homeland," serves as a pretext for installing a puppet regime in Cuba and criminalizing opposition inside the United States as "foreign influence."

The sanctions announcement also promised more to come. According to the State Department, the Director of the Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), which maintains the sanctions list, issued a "determination" authorizing further sanctions against "any foreign person operating or having operated in the manufacturing, technology, electronics, and marine sectors of the Cuban economy."

Taken together with previous rounds of sanctions, practically nothing would be left that is not subject to sanctions, except perhaps limited humanitarian trade. As Cuba is an island, nearly all its imports arrive by sea. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) forecast a 10.3 percent decline in GDP for 2026.

Pedro Monreal, a Cuban economist living in Spain, estimates that GDP could contract by as much as 15 percent, comparable to the 14.9 percent contraction of 1993 during the "Special Period" following the collapse of the USSR.

The US sanctions campaign has produced catastrophic results. Infant mortality on the island has doubled, to 9.9 per 1,000 births, according to the UN human rights office, and the national grid has collapsed at least eight times this year. In August, UN human rights experts warned that the island could become a "silent Gaza," its population destroyed not by bombs but by the deliberate deprivation

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of fuel, food and medicine.

The sanctions came six weeks after Chinese President Xi Jinping's state visit to Washington, where the two governments extended their trade truce until January 10. The Chinese embassy in Washington promised to "firmly protect Chinese businesses' legitimate and lawful rights and interests," but Beijing has named no countermeasures. The Chinese regime defends the interests of Chinese capital and weighs any ties with Cuba against its trade with the United States.

Washington's methods have grown increasingly brazen. Following news reports that the Pentagon was drawing up plans for invading and taking over the island, in October Secretary of State Marco Rubio used his official account to post what amounts to a classified ad for spies. The CIA followed with a Spanish-language video and a seven-step guide for prospective informants to apply. The US Southern Command's top officer, General Francis Donovan, joined the appeal, denouncing "an elite class that lives in luxury while citizens are ignored," a remarkable statement from a general serving a cabinet of billionaires.

In early November, Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne revealed on his weekly radio program that the country was threatened by the United States over its vote on the October 28 United Nations resolution calling for an end to the US embargo against Cuba. Browne said the country initially planned to vote in favor of the resolution but received a call from the State Department warning that voting in favor would "undermine the negotiations" between the two countries over visa restrictions the US imposed in January. Browne instructed his ambassador to abstain, and the country was ultimately recorded as absent from the vote, which has been conducted annually for the past 34 years and passed this time around 130-17 with 25 abstentions.

On November 10, Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier announced his office was issuing a subpoena to the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) over whether it accepted support from "foreign sources of concern," including the Cuban and Chinese governments. Uthmeier previously secured a state arrest warrant for former Cuban president Raúl Castro over his alleged role in the shooting down of two planes belonging to the Miami-based, anti-Castro Brothers to the Rescue, which had staged the provocation in order to produce a US retaliation.

Uthmeier's subpoena follows the Trump administration's May targeting of streamer Hasan Piker, CODEPINK co-founder Medea Benjamin, and some 40 others who traveled to Cuba on a humanitarian and journalistic mission, bringing medical supplies to pediatric hospitals and reporting on conditions produced by the blockade. As the WSWS noted at the time, right-wing operatives are permitted to travel to Cuba to produce anti-communist propaganda, while anti-war activists who bring medical aid are targeted for federal investigation.

In line with its political history as a faction of the Democratic Party and an adjunct of American imperialism, the DSA's most prominent figures in Florida have scrambled to distance themselves from any association with the island. The case of Angie Nixon, the Florida DSA member who lost the November 3 US Senate special election to Republican Ashley Moody, 48.0 percent to 50.9 percent according to the Associated Press, is instructive.

During the campaign, Nixon was asked in a CBS interview whether Cuba was a dictatorship. She first demurred, saying she had never visited the country. Then, under pressure from both parties, she capitulated entirely, describing Cuba as a "failed system" and a "dictatorship" at a rally with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

The power to stop the strangulation of Cuba and the US government's plans for its military takeover lies with the working class, not with the Castroite regime or Beijing. However, the unification of workers in the United States, Cuba and across the Americas in that struggle can be achieved only through a break with the pseudo-left, which express the deepest interests of American imperialism. What is required is the building of a socialist and internationalist leadership that has absorbed the lessons of the International Committee of the Fourth International's struggle against Pabloite revisionism, which hailed the Castro regime as a workers state and petty-bourgeois guerrillas as a substitute for revolutionary parties of the working class.

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