PRENSA LIBRE CUBA

WEEKLY SUMMARY

AUGUST 23–29, 2026

This week's top news stories from Cuba and around the world.

This weekly summary in PDF format is part of Prensa Libre Cuba's commitment to Cubans' right to be informed. In a country where official media outlets conceal, distort, or silence the truth, we offer this service so that citizens can access verified news and independent analysis. Since the PLC website cannot be viewed in Cuba due to censorship, we have chosen to distribute this PDF version so that the information reaches—unblocked—those who need it most.

More than six decades later, the name *Prensa Libre* is coming back to life. **Prensa Libre Cuba** was launched online with a purpose that honors that republican tradition: to offer a space for information, analysis, and debate that accompanies citizens at a decisive moment in our history.

Our goal is not only to report on the daily reality of Cuba—its challenges, its tensions, its hopes—but also **to open a broad and pluralistic forum on the country's future**. We want to be a place where ideas are discussed, perspectives are compared, and proposals are developed for a **democratic transition** that is already part of the collective imagination of millions of Cubans both on and off the island.

School Is Back, but the Crisis Follows the Students

BY ANTONIO SUAREZ FONTICIELLA ON AUGUST 29, 2026, 7:05 A.M. |
CUBA AND LATEST NEWS



The first question worth asking is simple and stark: What does it really mean to start a school year when a large portion of Cuban families struggle every day just to survive? Image generated by artificial intelligence /ASF

CUBA-EDUCATION

By Antonio Suárez Fonticiella – Prensa Libre Cuba

Havana. PLC Analysis | The 2026–2027 school year will officially begin in Cuba on September 1. Nearly 1.4 million students will return to the classroom, but they will do so amid a reality that bears little resemblance to the traditional image of the start of the school year: worried families, rising prices, shortages of basic goods, power outages, transportation difficulties, a shortage of teachers, and not enough school uniforms to go around.

The first question worth asking is simple and stark: What does it really mean to start a school year when so many Cuban families struggle every day just to survive?

For a Cuban family, going back to school isn't just about taking the child to school. It means finding shoes, a backpack, notebooks, pencils, clothes, a snack, money for transportation, and, above all, ensuring that the child can eat properly during the school day. The problem is that all these expenses compete with other, far more basic needs: rice, beans, oil, eggs, milk, medicine, and essential items for daily life.

That's why, for many parents, the back-to-school season becomes an impossible equation: Do I buy the uniform or buy food? Do I pay for transportation or buy shoes? Do I buy school supplies or save the money to deal with a power outage, gas bills, or any other emergency? Education may be free in formal terms, but raising a child has never been completely free for a family.

One of the most revealing statistics concerns school uniforms. The Minister of Education herself acknowledged that the industry barely managed to produce about 12% of the uniforms required for elementary school, and that coverage for middle school is also insufficient. The official response has been to relax the requirements: students may attend without the full uniform, and schools must ensure that no child is prevented from attending because they lack the required clothing.

The measure is necessary and humane, but it also paints a picture of the situation. The extraordinary is beginning to become the norm. A few years ago, debating whether there would be enough uniforms might have seemed like an administrative problem; today it is part of a much deeper crisis: a lack of electricity for production, difficulties transporting raw materials, problems importing fabrics, and financial constraints. The energy crisis ultimately affects everything.

Perhaps one of the most serious problems is less visible than the uniform issue: the shortage of teachers. The teacher coverage announced for this school year is barely 73 percent, according to the minister. To fill the remaining positions, the government will rely on college students, retirees, and professionals from other sectors. In Havana, there are even plans to transfer around 3,000 teachers from other provinces to try to alleviate the shortage.

It is worth pausing here. An educational system cannot be sustained solely by buildings, books, and blackboards. It is sustained, above all, by teachers. And when a society loses its teachers, it faces more than just an employment problem: it jeopardizes the education of future generations. Cuban teachers also have to live in this country—they must eat, get around, clothe themselves, pay for their basic needs, and face the same power outages and shortages as the rest of the population. For this reason, the teacher shortage cannot be analyzed separately from the broader economic crisis.

Another key factor will be electricity. The authorities have acknowledged that school schedules and operating procedures will have to be adapted to the energy, transportation, and food supply conditions in each region. This poses a huge contradiction: How can we guarantee a modern education in a country where schools have to organize their operations around power outages? Electricity isn't just for turning on a light; it powers workshops, laboratories, computers, cooling systems, kitchens, water pumps, and much of the infrastructure necessary for a school to function. When the power fails, education suffers as well.

Behind every student is an exhausted family. A mother looking for a place to buy a notebook. A father trying to find a pair of shoes. A grandparent contributing what they can. A family that must decide which need can wait until the next paycheck. Inflation and shortages have turned many everyday purchases into difficult decisions. A recent article by IPS Cuba noted that the start of the school year puts additional pressure on families, who are forced to cover the costs of school supplies, clothing, and shoes amid inflation and shortages. That's why the challenge of the school year doesn't begin at the school gate—it begins in the kitchen of every home.

There is a phrase that should accompany any analysis of this new school year: opening a school is not the same as guaranteeing a quality education. Of course, it is important for children to return to the classroom. But it also matters how many hours of instruction they will receive, how many teachers will be available, what conditions the schools will have, what meals students staying for extended school days will receive, how students will get to their schools, and what resources teachers will have to teach. The Ministry of Education itself has acknowledged that current conditions will affect the overall quality of educational services and that different approaches will need to be implemented depending on each region.

Perhaps that is where the real challenge lies. In Cuba, we have learned to talk about numbers: one million students, a certain percentage of teachers, a certain number of schools. But behind every number there is a person. A child who needs to learn. A teenager who needs to prepare for their future. A teacher who needs decent working conditions. And a family that needs something as basic as the peace of mind that sending their child to school does not mean sacrificing another essential need.

The new school year will begin on September 1. But the real test won't be on that day. The real test will be determining whether the country can restore the conditions that allow education to once again be more than just a matter of enduring, improvising, and adapting to the crisis. Because a society can get used to power outages, lines, shortages, and even buying less and less with the same salary. But it should not get used to its children receiving fewer and fewer opportunities.

That is, perhaps, the real problem Cuba must face head-on when its schools reopen their doors.



Antonio Suarez Fonticiella

Havana. Independent journalist, member of the editorial team at *Prensa Libre Cuba*.

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Cuba on the Brink: 94% of Cubans Live in Extreme Poverty

BY PLC ON AUGUST 28, 2026, 8:54 P.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, AND LATEST NEWS



Hunger has become a widespread and persistent phenomenon. Eight out of ten Cubans have skipped breakfast, lunch, or dinner at least once in the last six months due to lack of money or food shortages. Photo © Cuban Human Rights Observatory (OCDH)

CUBA-POVERTY

Stockholm. PLC | The social and political picture emerging from the most recent studies on Cuba depicts a country that has crossed a historic threshold: extreme poverty affects 94% of the population, and public disapproval of the government stands at 95%. This is not a temporary downturn, but rather the consolidation of a structural crisis that combines economic collapse, institutional erosion, and unprecedented political erosion.

Data from the Cuban Human Rights Observatory (OCDH), based on 1,318 interviews conducted across all the country's provinces, show that 68% of households live on an income of less than 20,000 Cuban pesos per month—about $30—a figure that does not cover even a fraction of the cost of basic necessities. According to the World Bank's threshold, a household of three would need 171, -dollars per month to avoid

falling into extreme poverty; in Cuba, the vast majority do not even reach one-fifth of that minimum.

Hunger has become a widespread and persistent phenomenon. Eight out of ten Cubans have skipped breakfast, lunch, or dinner at least once in the last six months due to lack of money or food shortages. Among those over 61, the proportion rises to nine out of ten. Food insecurity, which was already severe in 2025, has worsened to the point of becoming an indicator of a humanitarian emergency.

Added to this is the energy crisis. Power outages—sometimes lasting more than 20 hours a day—are cited by 70% of respondents as the country's main problem. Electricity, which supports access to drinking water, food refrigeration, and hospital operations, has become an intermittent resource. According to 95% of citizens, the power grid is the country's worst-rated infrastructure.

The healthcare crisis, another pillar of this deterioration, manifests itself in a lack of medications, supplies, and treatment capacity. Thirty-four percent of Cubans identify public health as one of their central concerns—a statistic that debunks the regime's long-standing narrative about the strength of its healthcare system.

At the same time, insecurity and violence have increased. In July 2026, Cubalex recorded the highest monthly number of homicides since it began monitoring such data and documented nearly 1,900 human rights violations in the first half of the year—a 48% increase compared to the previous period. The social crisis is thus manifesting itself in a rapid deterioration of the social fabric and the expansion of repressive practices.

The political impact is equally profound. The administration of Miguel Díaz-Canel and Manuel Marrero receives a positive rating of just 3%. Eighty-four percent of citizens do not believe that the announced economic reforms—176 measures that include the creation of small agricultural businesses, the ability to open bank accounts abroad, and the expansion of private-sector activities—will improve the country's situation. Distrust of the government is widespread and has become a structural reality.

The regime attributes part of the deterioration to external factors, especially the "maximum pressure" policy implemented by the Donald Trump administration since January 2026, which included an oil embargo and new sanctions. The drop in crude oil supplies led to flight cancellations, the closure of hotel chains, and a 58% plunge in tourism during the first half of the year. But even when taking that impact into account, reports agree that the root of the crisis is internal: an unproductive,

centralized, and dependent model, incapable of guaranteeing food, electricity, medicine, or decent wages.

The combination of extreme poverty, hunger, power outages, deteriorating healthcare, insecurity, and repression creates a humanitarian emergency. Nine out of ten families are living on the brink of survival. Mass emigration, which has already emptied entire neighborhoods, is both a consequence and a symptom: millions of Cubans have concluded that the only way out is to leave the country.

The picture that emerges is not that of a temporary crisis, but of a system that has lost the capacity to sustain the daily lives of its people. The widespread demand for profound transformations—political, economic, and social—indicates that the social consensus on the current model has broken down. Cuba is thus entering a historic phase in which material survival and political legitimacy have become incompatible with the continuation of the regime as it exists today.

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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Team

U.S. Exports Fuel to Cuba's Private Sector: The Rift That Exposes the Duality of the Model

BY PLC ON AUGUST 28, 2026, 5:43 P.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



The fuel does not go to state-owned enterprises or the Electric Union, but rather to private entities authorized by specific licenses from the U.S. Department of Commerce. Photo © PLC from a gas station in Havana.

UNITED STATES-CUBA

Washington. PLC | The United States has exported $96 million worth of fuel to Cuba's private sector amid the most severe energy crisis the island has faced in decades, according to El Nuevo Herald. The figure, which at first glance might seem like a technical foreign trade statistic, actually lays bare a profound transformation: while the state is mired in power outages, collapsing services, and a shortage of foreign currency, an emerging private economy is sourcing supplies directly from the country that officially maintains a sanctions regime against Havana.

The fuel does not go to state-owned enterprises or the Electric Utility, but rather to private entities authorized by specific licenses from the U.S. Department of Commerce. This flow creates a parallel circuit: on the one hand, the Cuban government, with obsolete thermoelectric s, semi-paralyzed refineries, and an

electrical grid on the verge of collapse; on the other, a private sector that can move goods, provide services, and sustain businesses thanks to an energy supply imported from the "historic enemy." The paradox is stark: the country that blocks the Cuban state has become a key supplier to the economy that the state itself claims to tolerate, though it refuses to recognize as capitalism.

For Washington, these exports are part of a strategy of selective pressure: punishing the state apparatus and companies linked to political power, while making room for private actors who, in theory, could invigorate society and reduce dependence on the state. For Havana, however, the situation is ambivalent. On the one hand, the regime needs the private sector to alleviate shortages, create jobs, and reduce social unrest. On the other hand, every liter of fuel that enters through the private sector reinforces an uncomfortable reality: the state is no longer capable of guaranteeing either energy or basic supplies.

The figure of $96 million in fuel cannot be viewed in isolation. It comes amid a context where the power grid has suffered total collapses, where entire provinces have gone days without electricity, and where the government has had to improvise power and cooking stations in shipping containers. Meanwhile, the private sector—restaurants, transportation, logistics, small industries—has become a space of relative resilience, capable of continuing to operate thanks to commercial agreements that the Cuban exile community has already begun to question, calling for a review of licenses to prevent any operation from indirectly benefiting the regime.

The economic duality is becoming increasingly visible: a state-controlled Cuba—impoverished and dependent on oil imports from political allies such as Russia and Venezuela—and a private Cuba that connects with Western markets, receives fuel from the United States, and operates according to the logic of business survival. This divide is not only economic but also political. El Nuevo Herald has documented how, even as licenses to export fuel to the private sector are expanded, pressure from the U.S. Congress is growing to review all operations with Cuba and ensure they do not prop up the repressive apparatus.

For the regime, the risk is clear: if the population perceives that electricity, transportation, and certain services function only where there is private initiative and external ties, the state's legitimacy as the central provider erodes even further. For Washington, the challenge is a delicate one: how to support a private sector that can be an engine of change without the fuel ultimately feeding state or mixed structures that remain under the control of the Communist Party.

At its core, the $96 million in fuel is more than just a number in a headline: it symbolizes a Cuba split in two. One part remains trapped in the state-controlled

model, with power outages, shortages, and political control; the other is trying to breathe through an oxygen tube connected to the international economy—even through a country that maintains sanctions against the island. If this tension deepens, it could become one of the most significant drivers of change—or conflict—in the coming years.

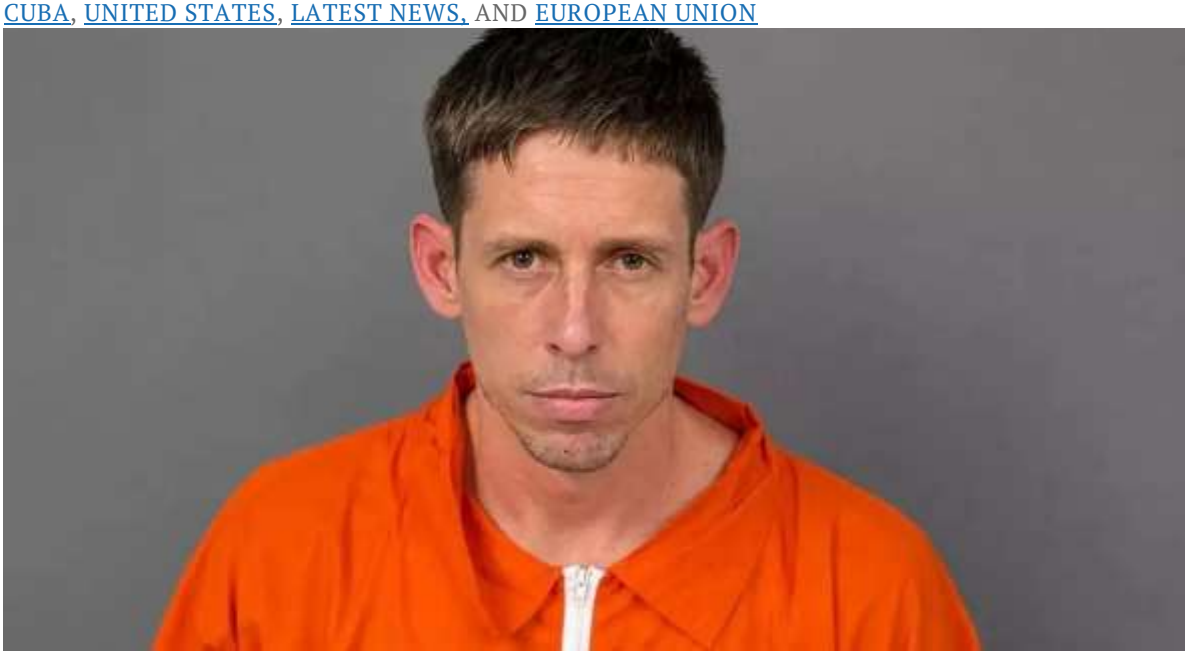


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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Team

The Cuban network that charged up to $40,000 to smuggle migrants into the U.S. operated for four years and handled more than $18 million

BY PLC ON AUGUST 28, 2026, 6:30 A.M. |
CUBA, UNITED STATES, LATEST NEWS, AND EUROPEAN UNION



The operation generated more than $18 million in revenue for the organization, according to official documents. Authorities describe the scheme as one of the most sophisticated immigration fraud operations detected in recent years in Florida. Photo by Lima Santos on Facebook.

U.S.-CUBA MIGRANT SMUGGLING

Miami PLC | The conviction of Yuniel Lima Santos, a 31-year-old Tampa resident, exposes the true scale of a migrant smuggling network that, according to the Department of Justice, encouraged and smuggled thousands of Cubans into the United States through illegal routes, immigration fraud, and a financial scheme designed to hide millions of dollars. Lima Santos pleaded guilty to migrant smuggling, asylum fraud, and money laundering—crimes for which he faces up to 20 years in prison.

U.S. authorities identify Lima Santos as one of 12 members of an organization that operated between January 2021 and June 2025. The operation functioned under the guise of Asesoría y Servicios Migratorios LLC, a shell company registered in Florida with no employees or reported income, but used to move illicit funds and manage smuggling operations. The network promoted its services on social media and WhatsApp groups, where it offered everything from clandestine routes to fake documents simulating European citizenship to fraudulently access the ESTA program, from which Cubans are excluded.

The court file details that the traffickers charged between $1,500 and $40,000 per person, depending on the route and services. In some cases, they even chartered private planes to transport entire groups of migrants. Financial records show expenditures exceeding $2.5 million on flights and more than $7 million channeled through payment apps such as Zelle. Between 2021 and 2024, Lima Santos transferred more than $600,000 from the United States to purchase airline tickets intended to transport migrants to and within the country.

The network also trafficked unaccompanied minors. In one of the documented cases, a teenage girl was instructed to pose as a lifelong friend of an unrelated adult while crossing the border. Authorities have videos obtained from Instagram where traffickers posted eye-catching ads accompanied by images of migrants being smuggled into U.S. territory.

Lima Santos played a central role: she coordinated logistics from Havana to Tampa and supervised other members of the network located in Florida, Texas, and Tennessee. Among them were Miguel Alejandro Martínez Vasconcelos, Luis Emmanuel Escalona Marrero, Layra Libertad Treto Santos, Gisleivy Peralta Consuegra, Erik Ventura Castro, Walbis Pozo Dutel, Lázaro Alain Cabrera Rodríguez, Emanuel Martínez González, and Liannys Yaiselys Vega Pérez. Several of them kept a low profile because they were in the country illegally.

Lima Santos also admitted to transporting Cuban women who ended up working in strip clubs to pay off their travel debts—a practice that authorities describe as exploitation linked to human trafficking. She also acknowledged helping to smuggle five migrants into the country alongside co-defendant Frandy Aragón Díaz.

The operation generated more than $18 million in revenue for the organization, according to official documents. Authorities describe the scheme as one of the most sophisticated immigration fraud operations detected in recent years in Florida, combining clandestine routes, document forgery, the use of shell companies, and a digital recruitment network that reached thousands of Cubans both on and off the island.

The sentencing of Lima Santos will mark the legal conclusion of a network that turned migrants' desperation into a multimillion-dollar business and which, according to the Department of Justice, put adults, vulnerable women, and minors at risk in their attempt to reach the United States.

The Uncertain Summer of Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara

BY PLC ON AUGUST 27, 2026, 8:07 P.M. |
CUBA, CULTURE, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



But the NYT report suggests something deeper than a series of controversies. Otero Alcántara arrives in Miami, where generations who have never set foot on the island coexist with newcomers who bring with them the essence of today's Cuba. Photo courtesy of Noticias Martí

EXILE IN MIAMI

New York PLC | Some arrivals seem designed to draw applause, yet they end in an uncomfortable silence. Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara's arrival in Miami was one of them. The *New York Times* reconstructed his journey from a Cuban prison to a safe house by the sea, where State Security agents shared beer and Chinese whiskey with him. That detail, recounted almost as a curiosity, opened a crack through which doubts, interpretations, and old reflexes seeped—those of a community living between memory and suspicion.

The artist arrived in exile with the energy of someone who has survived something that should never be repeated. But in Miami, where the epic nature of exile coexists with the routine of daily life, his presence raised questions that were not always phrased with tact. Some thought he looked too healthy to have spent five years in a Cuban prison. Others wondered how he could have painted so much, how he managed to produce so many works, and how it was possible for a political prisoner to have access to paintbrushes, canvases, and time. And when he spoke candidly about sex in an interview with an 87-year-old former political prisoner, the gesture

was interpreted as an unnecessary provocation, an lack of tact, or simply as the expression of someone who has never lived under the unspoken rules of exile.

But the NYT article suggests something deeper than a series of controversies. Otero Alcántara arrives in Miami, where generations who haven't set foot on the island in decades coexist with newcomers who bring with them the texture of today's Cuba. He belongs to the latter category: Black, from a humble background, the son of a welder and an office worker from El Cerro. His biography does not fit the classic narrative of the white, professional exile educated in Republican Cuba. And that difference—through no one's fault—introduces a dissonance that is immediately perceptible, though rarely openly acknowledged.

It's not that the exile community rejects him. In fact, his arrival was met with gestures of support: Marco Rubio welcomed him enthusiastically, artists from Orishas celebrated his freedom, and hundreds came to see his work at the Torre de la Libertad. But between those warm welcomes and the criticism on social media lies an ambiguous space—a territory where the community struggles to understand who this man is, arriving with a different story, a different language, and a way of being in the world that doesn't conform to inherited norms.

These contradictions are nothing new. Miami is a place where freedom is celebrated with fervor, yet where authenticity is scrutinized under a magnifying glass. Where every newcomer is welcomed with hope, but also with the caution of those who have witnessed too many betrayals. Where the epic narrative of exile coexists with the need to protect an identity built over decades. Against this backdrop, Otero Alcántara serves as a reminder that the Cuba that continues to produce dissidents is not the same Cuba that many exiles remember, and that this difference can cause confusion through no one's fault.

Otero Alcántara's Summer in Miami is not just the story of an artist trying to find his place. It is the story of a community that, in looking at him, sees itself. A community that discovers that the struggle for freedom takes place not only on the island, but also in the way exile grapples with its own ghosts, expectations, and wounds. And that, sometimes, the arrival of a new face forces us to reexamine old certainties.



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The NGO Cubalex reported 17 deaths in Cuban prisons in 2026 due to lack of medical care

BY PLC ON AUGUST 27, 2026, 4:20 P.M. |
CUBA AND LATEST NEWS



In a country where official information is opaque and the independent press is persecuted, Cubalex's documentation becomes one of the few sources that allow us to understand the magnitude of the problem. File photo of a Cuban prison.

CUBA-PRISONS-DEATHS

Havana. PLC | The year 2026 has starkly exposed a reality that the Cuban regime tries to hide: the country's prisons and detention centers have become places where detainees' lives depend more on chance than on state protection. Monitoring conducted by the NGO Cubalex documented 19 deaths in custody linked to a lack of medical care or negligent care, 17 of which occurred in eight prisons across the country. Far from being isolated incidents, these figures reveal a pattern of neglect, malnutrition, and poor detention conditions that exacerbate illnesses and endanger the lives of those held in state custody.

The Las Tunas Provincial Prison, known as El Típico, accounts for the highest number of documented deaths, with four cases, three of which occurred in the past week. The Combinado del Este and the Boniato Prison each recorded three deaths, while the Combinado de Guantánamo reported two. In all facilities, Cubalex describes a situation marked by shortages of food, poor-quality rations, a lack of drinking water, and the absence of timely medical care. At El Típico, in response to complaints about the lack of food, authorities told inmates to "drink plenty of water." The afternoon snack was eliminated, and the main meal consists of a flour

paste containing worms and emitting a foul odor. In a context of severe malnutrition, these conditions are not only undignified—they are lethal.

Among the deceased is Yoandry Cutiño Oliva, 34, who died in August in a critical state of malnutrition, standing 1.78 meters tall and weighing just 32 kilograms. Authorities reported that the cause of death was cancer, but his extreme physical deterioration points to a combination of illness and neglect. José Rivero Consuegra, 63, also died after suffering a heart attack two days earlier without receiving adequate care. Another inmate, who has not yet been identified, also died of malnutrition. These cases are not exceptions: they are symptoms of a prison system incapable of guaranteeing the bare minimum for survival.

Cubalex also documented deaths in custody outside of prisons. In Mayabeque, Ferrer Ortiz, 37, died after spending more than 17 hours at a police station without receiving medical attention, despite having visible injuries from an accident. His death from head trauma could have been prevented with basic medical intervention. In Cienfuegos, Arelis Pérez, a woman in her late 50s, died at the Psychiatric Hospital after allegedly being beaten by another patient. Relatives reported that the assailant suffered from severe mental instability following a rape, raising questions about supervision and safety in state-run healthcare facilities. Also included is the case of Roberto Álvarez Ávila, a member of a boat from Florida that was attacked by border guards in February. Álvarez died in a hospital under state custody without his family ever receiving a clear explanation of what happened.

The organization emphasizes that the state's obligation to protect the lives and physical integrity of individuals in custody remains in effect even when they are transferred to hospitals. The lack of independent and transparent investigations, coupled with allegations of medical negligence, prevents the deaths from being clarified and those responsible from being identified. In a country where official information is opaque and the independent press is persecuted, Cubalex's documentation becomes one of the few sources that allow for an understanding of the magnitude of the problem.

The physical deterioration of inmates, malnutrition, lack of drinking water, absence of medical care, and conditions of confinement are not isolated failures: they are the result of a prison policy that prioritizes control over life. The situation at El Típico, where a combination of hunger, abandonment, and negligence has led to multiple deaths in just a few days, demands an immediate response. But experience shows that the Cuban government rarely takes action to correct these failures, and that impunity within the prison system is structural.

The deaths documented in 2026 reveal a pattern that should alarm any society: people in state custody are dying from preventable causes. The state's responsibility

is inescapable. Guaranteeing dignified conditions of confinement, adequate food, safe drinking water, and timely medical care is not a humanitarian gesture—it is a legal and moral obligation. When the state fails in this obligation, prisons cease to be institutions of custody and become places where life slowly fades away—without oversight, without transparency, and without justice.



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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Team

Washington's Warning to Moscow: Ratcliffe Warns About NATO While Trump Downplays the Mission

BY PLC ON AUGUST 27, 2026, 3:15 P.M. |
UNITED STATES, EUROPE, RUSSIA, UKRAINE, LATEST NEWS, AND EUROPEAN UNION



The warning comes at a particularly sensitive time. Diplomatic efforts to move toward a peace agreement have stalled. Image generated by artificial intelligence

UNITED STATES-RUSSIA

Washington. PLC | CIA Director John Ratcliffe's visit to Moscow has sparked unusual concern in Western capitals. Although President Donald Trump has tried to portray the trip as part of efforts to end the war in Ukraine, U.S. media reports indicate that the talks were much broader and touched on international security issues that go beyond the conflict. According to The *Wall Street Journal*, Ratcliffe issued a direct warning to Russian officials: do not attack any NATO country. The concern in Washington is based on intelligence analyses suggesting that Moscow might attempt, in the coming years, to test the alliance's cohesion through a limited attack designed to gauge the Western response.

CBS News confirmed the existence of this warning and added that the situation in Iran was also discussed during the visit, including the possibility of new sanctions if the Strait of Hormuz remained closed to navigation. The inclusion of this topic reveals that Ratcliffe's mission was not limited to Ukraine but was part of a broader

exchange on global stability and the red lines that Washington considers non-negotiable.

Trump, however, downplayed the mission during an interview with conservative broadcaster Glenn Beck. He described the visit as "semi-routine" and primarily linked to U.S. efforts to bring an end to the war in Ukraine. His attempt to normalize the trip contrasts with the gravity of the warnings conveyed by Ratcliffe and with the geopolitical context in which it took place. The war continues without significant diplomatic progress, and Russia has intensified its ballistic missile attacks on Kyiv and on critical infrastructure throughout the country, increasing pressure on Europe to strengthen its defense systems.

The Kremlin confirmed that Ratcliffe met with representatives of the Russian intelligence services, though not with Vladimir Putin. Russian officials noted that the president was subsequently briefed on the talks, indicating that the visit carried enough weight to reach the highest levels of power. The CIA, for its part, has a long tradition of maintaining contacts with Moscow even during times of extreme tension. In November 2021, then-Director William Burns traveled to Russia to warn of the consequences of an invasion of Ukraine. The agency has also participated in negotiations on prisoner exchanges, demonstrating that intelligence channels remain a functional means of communication when formal diplomacy is at a standstill.

The warning regarding NATO is particularly significant because it strikes at the heart of Europe's security architecture. Article 5 stipulates that an attack against one member is an attack against all, but leaves each country free to decide how to respond. That flexibility, which has historically been a diplomatic tool, becomes a point of vulnerability if Moscow decides to test the alliance's limits. A limited attack, calibrated to create ambiguity, could force the allies to demonstrate their cohesion at a time when Europe faces internal divisions and simultaneous strategic challenges.

Ratcliffe's visit, therefore, was not a routine gesture. It was a reminder that the war in Ukraine is unfolding on a broader stage, where every move has implications for global security. The warning about Iran adds another layer of complexity, showing that Washington is attempting to manage multiple potential crises simultaneously. While Trump insists that the mission was part of efforts to stop the war, intelligence reports and diplomatic reactions suggest that the United States is concerned about a broader scenario: the possibility that Russia might seek to redefine the limits of its confrontation with the West.

The Island Frozen in Time: Gerontocratic Power and an Aging Nation

BY PLC ON AUGUST 27, 2026, 7:23 A.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, AND LATEST NEWS



Amid this widespread decline, there is one sector that does not age: the repressive apparatus. The police, State Security, and special forces remain operational, funded, and renewed. Image generated by Artificial Intelligence.

CUBA-SOCIETY

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | Cuba today is an aging country in more ways than one. Not only is its population aging—marked by a mass exodus of young people and a demographic decline—but so is its power structure, sustained by a gerontocratic leadership that clings to control of the state as if immobility were a political virtue. At the pinnacle of this power structure stands the nonagenarian Raúl Castro, a figure who, beyond his formal positions, continues to exert a decisive influence over the country's course. The paradox is evident: while the leadership ages and entrenches itself, Cuba is losing those who could renew it.

Three million Cubans have left the island in less than a decade, and most of them are young. The nation has been stripped of its future. Factories, thermal power plants, urban and rural infrastructure—everything seems to bear the label "past its prime." This is not merely a matter of physical deterioration, but of a structural exhaustion that permeates every sphere of national life. The country is aging because it is

running out of young people, and it is running out of young people because it offers no prospects whatsoever.

Amid this widespread decline, there is one sector that does not age: the repressive apparatus. The police, State Security, and special forces remain operational, funded, and renewed. They are the only sphere where obsolescence is not tolerated. While hospitals lack resources, schools lose teachers, and neighborhoods fall into disrepair, the machinery of political control is zealously preserved. It is the only system that functions without blackouts, shortages, or improvisation. Its mission is to guarantee that the ruling caste can continue to enjoy the privileges accumulated over decades, shielding its permanence and ensuring that its departure from power is as peaceful as its time in it.

The Cuban gerontocracy does not merely manage the present—it also manages its own demise. The entire country seems doomed to accompany it in that process. The lack of political, economic, and social renewal has turned the island into a place where time stands still, where each day is a repetition of the one before, and where hope has become a luxury that exists only beyond the nation's borders. The young people who are leaving are not fleeing solely from poverty or a lack of opportunities; they are fleeing the feeling of being trapped in a country that will not change as long as those who govern it remain clinging to a power they can no longer exercise effectively—yet are unwilling to relinquish.

The Cuban tragedy is not just the economic crisis, nor the shortages, nor the endless power outages. It is the impossibility of imagining a future within the island. A country that is aging in its demographics, infrastructure, and leadership is a country approaching a point of no return. The gerontocracy that rules Cuba has achieved something few dictatorships manage: to stop time. But in this attempt to freeze history, it has also frozen the nation, dragging it toward a slow, certain, and collective death.



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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Team

The Absurdity of Evictions: When an Empty Building Is Worth More Than a Homeless Family

BY ANTONIO SUAREZ FONTICIELLA ON AUGUST 27, 2026, 6:24 A.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, OPINION, AND LATEST NEWS



Cuba's housing problem did not begin with the current crisis.

CUBA – SOCIETY

By Antonio Suárez Fonticiella | Havana. Prensa Libre Cuba

Introduction: The Contradiction No One Explains

Cuba has abandoned state-owned buildings and properties, yet there are also families with nowhere to live. The question is why some remain empty until they fall into disrepair, while others are evicted when they try to turn them into a home. The contradiction is evident, and yet it still lacks a coherent explanation.

Thousands of families live in overcrowded conditions, in homes at risk of collapse, in shelters, or in conditions that can hardly be considered dignified. At the same time, there are closed state-owned properties—former stores, warehouses, offices, and other facilities—that remain unused for years.

When a desperate family occupies one of these spaces, the usual response is not to turn the property into a housing solution. It is eviction.

The question is simple: **What is more important—keeping a government-owned property vacant or giving it a social purpose when a family needs a roof over their heads?**

A Crisis with Deep Roots

Cuba's housing problem did not begin with the current crisis. In 2018, the government unveiled a policy to eliminate the housing deficit within ten years. The plan called for building **527,000 new homes** and renovating **402,000**.

The reality that followed was very different.

- In 2023, **16,065 homes** were built.
- In 2024, only **7,427** were built—**55%** of the annual target.
- The official housing shortage cited at that time stood at **856,500 homes**.

As the need grows, construction capacity declines. And an inevitable question arises: **If the government cannot build enough housing, why doesn't it make better use of the buildings that already exist?**

The Empty Building and the Evicted Family

The problem takes on a human face when specific cases are examined.

- **Santa Clara, 2022:** The government evicted four occupants from state-owned properties and announced further evictions.
- **Sagua de Tánamo, Holguín, 2023:** A mother and her two children were evicted from a state-owned property they had occupied after their home collapsed.

This is not about justifying illegal occupations. It is about asking what the state does after evicting a family that admits it has no alternative housing.

Eviction solves an administrative problem. It does not solve the housing problem. It merely shifts it elsewhere.

Why wait for the house to collapse?

Cuba's housing stock is aging and deteriorating. A 2026 analysis, based on official data, shows that the number of completed homes fell from **32,874 in 2020** to **7,427 in 2024**.

The problem isn't just building; it's maintaining, rehabilitating, and managing what already exists.

This raises another question: **Why can a state-owned property remain closed until it falls into ruin, but a family trying to convert it into a home is considered the problem?**

An abandoned building also deteriorates:

- an unrepaired roof collapses,
- an unmaintained electrical system becomes inoperable,
- an unused structure ends up costing much more to restore.

When demolition comes, an opportunity that could have become a housing solution disappears.

Promises and Reality

For years, official rhetoric has presented housing as a social priority. Díaz-Canel has insisted on leveraging local capabilities and construction potential.

The problem isn't recognizing the need. The problem is the results.

After years of plans and meetings, the response to citizens remains the same: **there are no resources, wait, fill out the paperwork, wait some more.**

Meanwhile: the years go by, children grow up, families are crammed into small spaces, buildings age, and collapses continue.

When the State Chooses to Demolish

Demolition is necessary when there is a real structural danger. What is debatable is **what happens afterward**.

If a building cannot be preserved, why not first explore the possibility of restoring part of its structure? If an old store can be converted into housing, why not do it? If a warehouse can be turned into apartments, why not evaluate that option?

Not every building can be converted into housing. But neither is demolition the only fate for all abandoned buildings.

New Legislation and a Paradox

In 2026, the new legal framework expands access to housing and provides mechanisms for managing abandoned properties. AP reported that the legislation allows individuals to own two urban residences and one vacation home, in addition to preserving properties owned by emigrants.

The Housing Bill also provides for the state to reclaim abandoned homes and make them available to municipalities.

In other words, the legislative debate itself acknowledges that abandoned properties can be part of the solution.

So why isn't that logic applied more forcefully to vacant state-owned properties?

The problem isn't just building—it's managing

Cuba needs:

- a public inventory of vacant state-owned properties,
- information on how many can be renovated,
- to determine which ones can be converted into housing,
- to publish which ones will be demolished and why,
- to explain why a family occupying an abandoned property must be evicted without an alternative housing solution.

Only then would we move from a policy of **"eviction and closure"** to one of **"redevelopment and solutions**."

The Human Cost of Waiting

Statistics do not capture the price paid by a family that waits ten years for housing:

- overcrowding,
- generations sharing a single room,
- children with no space,
- elderly people living in dilapidated homes,
- mothers who don't know where their children will live,

- young people who conclude that to have decent housing, they must emigrate.

A 2026 report shows how homelessness influences family and migration decisions. When a country loses its young people due to a lack of opportunities, it loses its future.

The question that remains on the table

This is not about defending illegal squatting. Nor is it about claiming that any abandoned building can be turned into housing.

It is about demanding **common sense, transparency, and social priorities**.

Before demolishing a government-owned building, basic questions should be answered:

- Can it be restored?
- Can it be converted into housing?
- How many families in that municipality need a home?
- How much would it cost to renovate it compared to building a new one?
- Why has it stood vacant for years?

And if it must be demolished: **Where is the plan to replace the housing units that could have been provided by that building?**

A society with hundreds of thousands of people waiting for housing cannot afford to waste spaces that could be turned into homes.

Conclusion

The failure isn't just that a family is occupying a government-owned property. The failure begins when a property stands empty for years—no one uses it, no one repairs it, no one converts it into housing—and it is eventually demolished while a family continues to wait for a roof over their heads.

Cuba doesn't just need to build more. It needs to stop wasting what can still be put to good use.

The most uncomfortable question is this: **How many homes could have been created if some of the abandoned state-owned properties had been converted into homes in a timely manner?**

That answer should be part of any serious debate about the Cuban housing crisis.

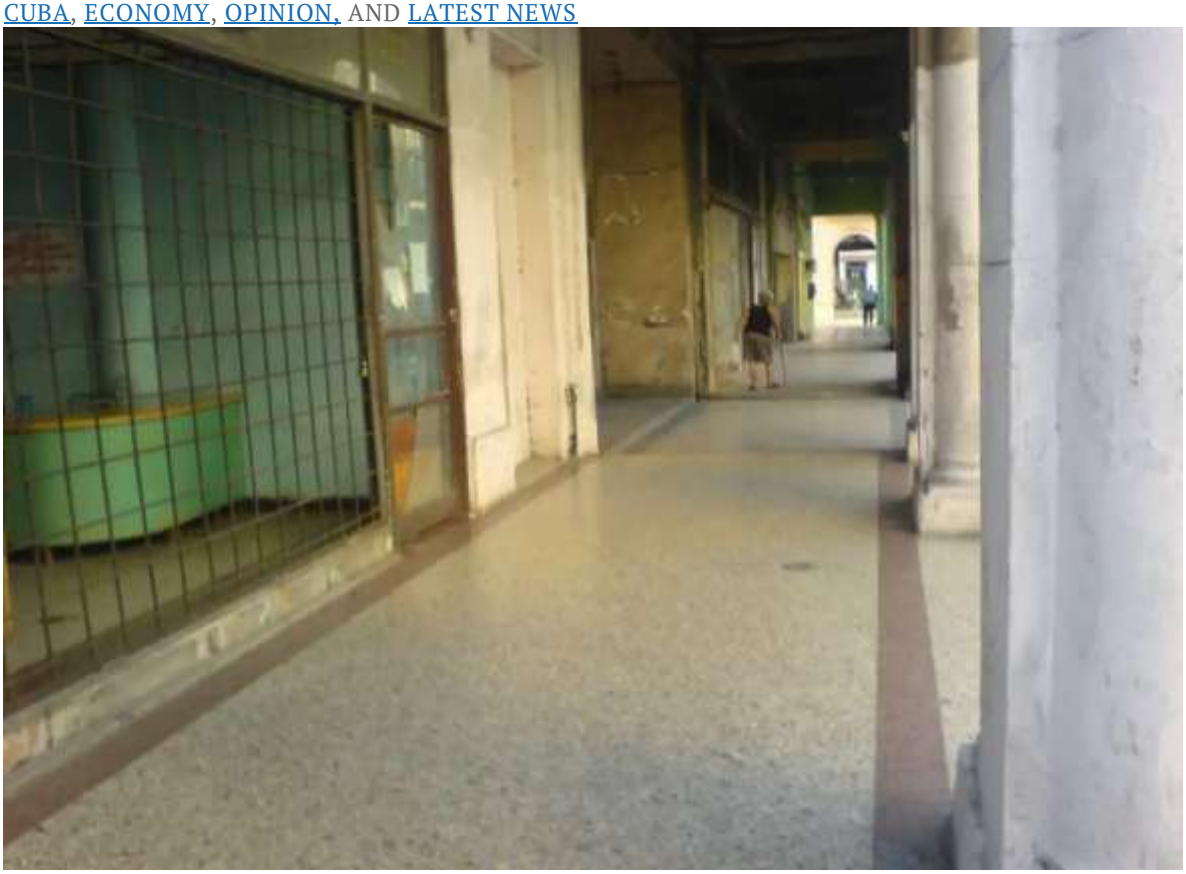


Antonio Suarez Fonticiella

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Cuba, the country where the crisis ceased to be an exception and became the norm

BY PLC ON AUGUST 26, 2026, 8:57 P.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, OPINION, AND LATEST NEWS



Cuba today lives in a state where absurdity has become the norm. Photo © PLC

CUBA-SOCIETY

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | Cuba today lives in a state where absurdity has become the norm. The energy crisis, which began years ago and worsened with the U.S. oil embargo, is no longer reported as a national emergency but as a daily forecast, similar to a weather report. Every morning, Granma publishes the "expected impact" as if announcing scattered showers: availability, demand, deficit, units out of service, units under maintenance, solar farms, and power plants out of service. Darkness is no longer news; it is the country's political and social climate.

The normalization of the energy collapse is just one piece of a larger picture. Cuba, an island with fertile soil, a favorable climate, and an agricultural tradition, now imports 80% of the food it consumes—primarily from the United States, the "historic enemy" that official rhetoric accuses of genocide. The paradox is so evident that it borders on the surreal: while the government denounces the embargo, it buys chicken, wheat, oil, medicines, and basic goods on the U.S. market, because it cannot

produce them or acquire them from other markets without credit or financial standing. The ration book, in effect since 1962, no longer guarantees even half the calories needed for a minimal diet.

The crisis has become the norm. Power outages lasting 12, 18, or 24 hours are part of daily life. Cubans sleep in doorways, parks, or on staircases because their homes are like ovens with no ventilation. Universities organize blended learning courses because there is no electricity or transportation. Hospitals operate on backup generators that frequently fail. Schools adjust their schedules based on fuel availability. The country is functioning at half capacity, and the government presents this as if it were normal.

Added to this is repression, which has also become normalized. President Miguel Díaz-Canel insists that "there is no repression in Cuba," but the facts contradict him. Protests over power outages have resulted in arrests, interrogations, and police surveillance. Activists, journalists, and ordinary citizens are summoned, warned, or imprisoned for posting criticism on social media. Spontaneous marches are broken up by rapid-response brigades. Communication and state security laws allow for the punishment of almost any dissenting expression. The repression is not widespread, but it is constant, selective, and sufficient to maintain fear. It is low-intensity repression, but highly effective.

The economy, for its part, is operating in survival mode. Inflation is devouring wages that are no longer enough to buy rice, oil, or eggs. Public transportation has collapsed. Agricultural production plummeted between 2018 and 2023 to levels that would be unthinkable in any country not at war: 95% less pork, 87% less rice, 70% fewer beans, and 58% less milk. The sugar industry, once a source of national pride, now produces less than it did in the 19th century. Fishing, on an island surrounded by the sea, is negligible. State investment prioritizes hotels while the countryside relies on oxen and machinery from the 1970s.

The demographic crisis adds another layer of absurdity: more than two million Cubans have emigrated in recent years, leaving the country without young people, without a workforce, and without a future. The government calls it "mobility," but it is an exodus. The streets are full of elderly people; the schools, empty; the families, torn apart. Cuba today is a country that is fading, emptying, and impoverishing itself all at once.

Cuban surrealism is not literary; it is political. A country that could be self-sufficient in food depends on the outside world. A country that could produce its own energy lives in constant blackouts. A country that proclaims social justice fails to guarantee the basics. A country that denies repression imprisons those who protest. A country that presents itself as medical powerhouse has no medicines. A country that claims

to be sovereign depends on purchases from the United States. A country that declares itself socialist invests more in hotels than in agriculture. A country that claims to be in resistance lives in resignation.

The crisis is no longer a single event; it has become a system. The exhausted population has learned to survive in the darkness, amid scarcity, and in silence. The government, unable to resolve structural problems, has chosen to manage and normalize them. And the entire country oscillates between the routine of absurdity and the hope for a change that has yet to arrive.

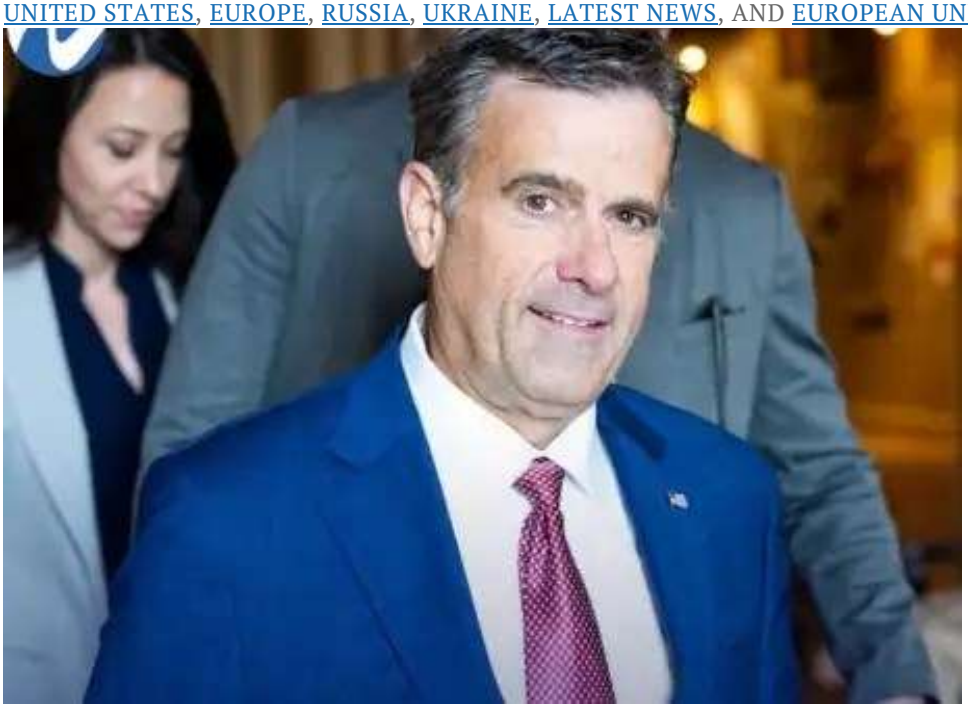


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The CIA director's secret visit coincides with classified decrees in Moscow and opens a channel of unprecedented diplomatic tension

BY PLC ON AUGUST 26, 2026, 3:19 P.M. |
UNITED STATES, EUROPE, RUSSIA, UKRAINE, LATEST NEWS, AND EUROPEAN UNION



Sources cited by The Wall Street Journal indicate that Ratcliffe delivered a serious warning based on new U.S. intelligence. According to these assessments, the Kremlin may be preparing a provocation directed against a NATO member country. Photo of CIA Director John Ratcliffe, social media

U.S.-RUSSIA

Washington. PLC | The presence of CIA Director John Ratcliffe in Moscow on August 25—his first trip to Russia since the start of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine—was already an extraordinary event. But the fact that it coincided with Vladimir Putin's signing of three classified decrees that same day has elevated the visit to a level of geopolitical concern that few analysts are overlooking. The Kremlin confirmed the arrival of the senior U.S. official, though it insisted there was no meeting with the Russian president. According to Dmitry Peskov, Ratcliffe held meetings only with representatives of Russian intelligence services, in a format reminiscent of the most sensitive contacts during the Cold War.

The sequence of decrees signed by Putin adds an element of opacity. Documents 608, 609, and 610, which were officially published, are described as routine administrative procedures, according to *The Moscow Times.* However, the three immediately preceding decrees—605, 606, and 607—remain under absolute secrecy.

n omission is striking because it comes right after Decree 604, which authorized the government to take control of private assets that were not protected against drone attacks—a measure that had already raised concerns among Russian business leaders and international observers. The timing of Ratcliffe's visit and the signing of these classified decrees fuels the perception that Moscow was preparing sensitive decisions it does not wish to disclose.

The reason for the meeting has not yet been publicly confirmed, but sources cited by *The Wall Street Journal* suggest that Ratcliffe issued a serious warning based on new U.S. intelligence. According to these assessments, the Kremlin may be preparing a provocation directed against a NATO member country or seeking to test the alliance's cohesion at a time of internal tensions and political upheaval in Europe. The possibility of a calculated incident, designed to gauge the Western response, has been mentioned by several analysts since early summer, and the CIA director's visit appears to fit into that pattern of strategic deterrence.

Peskov, for his part, has sought to defuse tensions, describing contacts between intelligence services as "a positive process," even during the most difficult moments in bilateral relations. The spokesperson recalled that Putin has emphasized the importance of maintaining open lines of communication to prevent dangerous escalations. However, the insistence that there was no meeting with the president and the lack of details regarding the content of the meetings reinforce the idea that these were high-stakes discussions, likely focused on security scenarios that neither side wishes to discuss publicly.

The day was also marked by another unexpected diplomatic development: the arrival in Moscow of Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, the Vatican's Secretary for Relations with States. Gallagher met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and expressed Rome's willingness to contribute to a peace process. "We are willing to offer our good offices in every possible way," he stated, noting that both sides had found common ground. The coincidence of the CIA mission and the Vatican's visit suggests that Moscow is receiving simultaneous messages from very different actors, each with its own objectives but all aware that the war in Ukraine has entered a critical phase.



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Cuba’s Food Crisis: A Fertile Country That Can No Longer Feed Itself

By PLC on August 26, 2026, 10:53 a.m. |

Latest News



The problem is not just historical—it is structural. Cuban agriculture operates under a state-run model that discourages production. Photos © PLC

CUBA-FOOD CRISIS

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | Cuba has fertile land, a favorable climate, abundant rainfall, and a population of just nine million. On paper, it should be one of the countries best able to produce its own food. However, the reality is the opposite: Cuba imports about 80% of the food it consumes and spends some $2.4 billion a year doing so, according to the World Food Program (WFP). That dependence, which was already structural, has become a critical problem as domestic production plummets year after year. Between 2018 and 2023, the country produced 95% less pork, 87% less rice, 70% fewer beans, and 58% less milk—figures that the W s (WFP) itself cites

in its most recent analysis. “The average household’s diet provides less energy than is needed and lacks variety and nutritional quality,” the agency warns.

The history of this crisis is long and complex. For decades, Cuba built its economy around sugar. The country produced and exported sugar—first to the United States, then to the Soviet Union—and used that revenue to import much of the food it needed. “Trade agreements made it very profitable to produce sugar and import other foods,” explains agricultural economist William A. Messina. That specialization worked as long as there was a stable buyer and a steady flow of inputs from the socialist bloc. But when the USSR collapsed in 1991, Cuba lost its main market, its supply of oil and fertilizers, and the preferential trade conditions that sustained its model. The sugar industry plummeted from 8 million metric tons in 1989 to less than 150,000 in the 2024–2025 harvest season—the worst result in over a century. Along with sugar, the country’s ability to import food also declined, and it never managed to rebuild an agricultural system capable of replacing those imports.

The problem is not just historical—it is structural. Cuban agriculture operates under a state-run model that discourages production. The state-owned company Acopio sets quotas, buys at prices that often do not cover costs, and promises inputs that it does not always deliver. “The government has instituted economic controls that have not worked,” notes economist Pável Vidal. Producers, caught between mandatory quotas, price caps, and a lack of autonomy, operate in an environment where producing may be less profitable than reselling inputs or abandoning the land. Seventy-nine percent of agricultural land is state-owned, and a large portion of the cooperatives function as extensions of the state, not as autonomous entities. Land under usufruct, which should revitalize the countryside, comes with restrictions that prevent it from being transferred, leased, or fully exploited.

Added to this is decapitalization. In 2024, the Ministry of Agriculture acknowledged that the sector received barely 10% of the necessary fuel and that only 7% of agricultural land had irrigation. State investment prioritizes tourism: in 2024, 37.4% of public spending went to hotels and hospitality, compared to 2.7% allocated to agriculture. Machinery is obsolete, transportation is insufficient, refrigeration is scarce, and power outages paralyze irrigation and the cold chain. The demographic crisis exacerbates the situation: more than two million Cubans have emigrated in recent years, many of them young people who worked in the countryside.

Fishing, which should be a natural resource for an island surrounded by the sea, has also collapsed. The state-run fleet, which caught 100,000 metric tons annually between 1976 and 1990, disappeared due to a lack of investment and fuel.

Navigation restrictions designed to prevent people from fleeing the country limit private fishing and further reduce the availability of marine protein.

The U.S. embargo is an additional factor, but not the main one. The oil embargo imposed by the Trump administration in 2026 has exacerbated the energy crisis, reducing the use of tractors, paralyzing irrigation, and complicating the transport of crops. But even experts most critical of Washington agree that the fundamental problem is internal. “The embargo has an impact, but the structure of the system is the central problem,” says Messina.

The government has announced reforms: 176 measures that include expanding usufruct rights, allowing cooperatives to import fuel, and attracting foreign capital. Some could have an impact, such as granting land leases for 99 years, which “would practically amount to private ownership,” according to Vidal. But implementation is uncertain, and the agricultural sector is too deteriorated to recover quickly. Even successful projects, such as the rice paddy managed by a Vietnamese company in Pinar del Río that yielded 7 metric tons per hectare compared to the local average of 1.6, show that the potential exists, but it requires investment, autonomy, and technology that the country currently lacks.

Cuba’s food crisis is, in essence, the result of an economic model that has stifled private initiative, discouraged production, and prioritized sectors unrelated to food security. The island that once exported sugar to the world now imports rice, beans, milk, chicken, and even sugar.

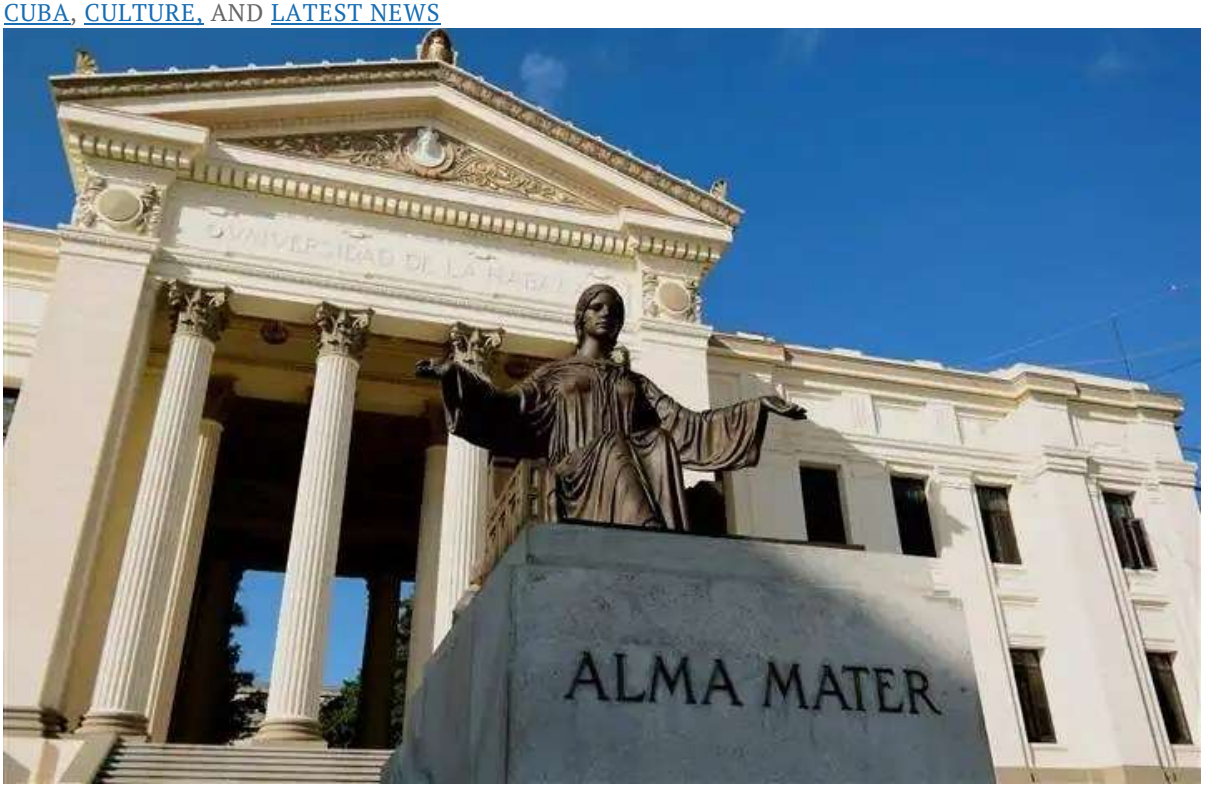
Cuba could produce far more than it consumes. It has the land, climate, and agricultural tradition. What it lacks is a system that allows producers to work freely, with incentives and resources. Until that model changes, the island will continue to depend on foreign sources for food, trapped in a paradox that defines its crisis: a fertile country that can no longer produce its own food.



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Cuban universities are preparing for an academic year marked by the energy crisis and structural instability

BY PLC ON AUGUST 26, 2026, 7:56 A.M. |
CUBA, CULTURE, AND LATEST NEWS



The Ministry of Education (MES) has confirmed that all universities in the country will reopen, but academic normalcy remains far from being achieved. Photo: University of Havana / Screenshot from Escambray

CUBA-UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR

Havana. | The start of the 2026–2027 academic year in Cuba, scheduled for September 1, is overshadowed by an energy crisis that has forced the Ministry of Higher Education (MES) to completely redesign the academic structure. Higher education institutions will operate under a hybrid model combining in-person and distance learning, with significant regional decentralization, due to the worsening fuel shortage affecting the country.

The MES has confirmed that all universities in the country will reopen, but academic normalcy remains far from being restored. The fuel shortage necessitates reducing travel, so enrollment, re-enrollment, and registration processes will be conducted in the students' home regions, with support from Municipal University Centers (CUM) and Municipal University Branches (FUM). These procedures may be completed in

person or online , a measure designed to avoid unnecessary travel amid prolonged power outages and transportation shortages.

Instruction will be organized using the same structure as in the previous semester: distance learning as the primary method, with in-person sessions only when conditions permit, especially for students in the daytime program. In-person activities will take place at the universities' main campuses, at the CUM and FUM centers, or at local businesses and service providers in each community. For the "meeting-based" course—applicable to both advanced technical programs and university degree programs—at least one in-person meeting per month will resume to provide guidance and evaluate learning assignments. The distance learning course will continue as usual.

The academic reorganization is a response not only to the energy crisis but also to the need to keep institutions functioning despite power outages, technological limitations, and deteriorating infrastructure. In this context, the Ministry of Education (MES) insists that students must participate in socioeconomic initiatives in their municipalities as part of their well-rounded education—a practice the government has reinforced in recent years to address gaps in local services and strengthen community structures.

The official narrative attributes the situation to U.S. sanctions policy, but everyday reality reveals a university system operating in a state of permanent emergency.



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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Staff

Cuba imports 80% of its food and relies on purchases from the U.S. “enemy”

BY PLC ON AUGUST 26, 2026, 7:29 A.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



The result is that, despite official rhetoric about the “genocidal blockade,” the U.S. market has established itself as one of the most important channels for Cuba’s food security. Photo © PLC / Image generated with Artificial Intelligence

CUBA-UNITED STATES FOOD AND MEDICINES

Havana. PLC | Cuba, a country that once dreamed of being self-sufficient in sugar, tobacco, and staple foods, now depends on the outside world to put food on the table: nearly 80% of what Cubans eat comes from imports. That figure, cited in reports by international organizations and academic studies, is not merely a technical statistic; it is a symptom of a collapsed agricultural economy, a production model that has stifled private initiative for decades, and a structural vulnerability that makes food a hostage to geopolitics. In this landscape of dependence, the United States occupies a central and paradoxical position: it is both the country that has maintained an embargo for more than sixty years and one of the island’s main suppliers of food and medicine.

Since the passage in 2000 of the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act (TSRA), Washington has made a specific exception within the embargo to allow the direct export of agricultural products, food, and certain medical supplies to Cuba, always under strict “ ” payment conditions: “cash in advance” or letters of credit managed by banks in third countries, with no U.S. financing or credit extended to the Cuban buyer. This legal loophole has been consistently exploited by Havana,

which purchases frozen chicken, grains, oils, processed foods, agricultural supplies, and commonly used medications from the United States, taking advantage of the geographical proximity, production scale, and competitive prices. The result is that, despite the official rhetoric about the "genocidal blockade," the U.S. market has established itself as one of the most important channels for Cuba's food security.

Recent trade figures confirm this. According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. exports of goods to Cuba reached $585.4 million in 2024 and have already totaled more than $525 million in the first six months of 2026, with Cuban imports into the U.S. market amounting to virtually nothing. The balance is overwhelmingly one-sided: Cuba buys, the United States sells. Within this flow, food and agricultural products account for a substantial portion. Reports from the U.S.-Cuba Trade and Economic Council show that in May 2026 alone, U.S. exports of food and agricultural commodities to Cuba totaled more than $42 million, including fresh eggs, hatching eggs, sugar, vehicles, and parts related to Cuba's reemerging private sector. Added to this are shipments of medicines, hygiene products, and humanitarian donations channeled through various regulatory frameworks.

The paradox is stark: a country that declares itself socialist, with a rhetoric of resistance against the "empire," depends on that very same "empire" to secure a large portion of the animal protein, grains, and medicines that reach its pharmacies and markets. The official narrative attempts to resolve this contradiction by presenting purchases from the United States as a "victory of resistance" that forces the adversary to sell food, but the reality is harsher: Cuba buys wherever it can, from whoever will sell to it, and the United States is, for logistical and price reasons, one of the most efficient suppliers. This dependence is not limited to Washington; the island also imports from Brazil, Mexico, the European Union, and other countries, but the U.S. supply chain carries disproportionate weight in key categories such as frozen chicken, which has become the primary source of animal protein for millions of families.

The root of the problem lies in the decline of domestic production. For decades, the Cuban agricultural model has been marked by state control, a lack of incentives, shortages of inputs, technological obsolescence, and legal uncertainty for producers. The initial agrarian reform, which promised to democratize land ownership, resulted in a concentration of decision-making in the hands of the state and a bureaucracy that has discouraged productivity. The creation of cooperatives, the granting of land in usufruct, and tentative openings to private actors have not managed to reverse the trend: production of rice, beans, pork, and milk has fallen steadily, while the population demands more and better food. As a result, the country is forced to import what it once produced, paying in foreign currency it does not have and remaining subject to the volatility of international markets.

The political message is clear: Washington maintains the embargo as a tool of pressure but does not want to bear direct responsibility for a famine; that is why it preserves the humanitarian exception while using selective sanctions to target the state apparatus and strategic sectors.

The domestic political dimension cannot be ignored either. The regime uses the embargo as a sweeping explanation for the crisis, attributing responsibility for shortages, power outages, and the deterioration of public services to the United States. However, the coexistence of a "genocidal blockade" narrative with the reality of massive purchases of food and medicine on the U.S. market erodes the credibility of that narrative. The population perceives that the problem is not only the embargo, but also the system's inability to generate wealth, incentivize production, and efficiently manage available resources. Dependence on foreign countries—and in particular on the United States—thus becomes an uncomfortable mirror reflecting the structural shortcomings of the Cuban model.

Organizations such as the FAO and ECLAC have warned in various reports about the island's food vulnerability and the need for profound reforms to restore agricultural production, improve efficiency, and reduce external dependence, although these recommendations clash with the regime's resistance to structural changes that would involve relinquishing control.

The diagnosis is clear: as long as Cuba does not regain economic freedom, legal certainty, and the capacity to produce what it consumes, it will continue to depend on massive imports and, therefore, on decisions made by others. The fact that a large portion of that food and medicine comes from the United States is not merely anecdotal, but evidence that ideology has been defeated by reality. The solution lies not only in demanding an end to sanctions, but also in dismantling the model that has turned Cuba into a chronic importer of its own survival.



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Trump Strengthens the Legal Framework of the Embargo at a Time of Greatest Strain for Cuba

BY PLC ON AUGUST 26, 2026, 6:59 A.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



The extension of the Trading with the Enemy Act does not introduce immediate changes to travel, remittances, or financial transactions by Cuban and Cuban-American citizens, but it does keep alive the legal basis that allows Washington to impose new sanctions. Photo: President Trump / White House X

UNITED STATES-CUBA

Washington. PLC | Donald Trump's decision to extend the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act—the legal instrument that has sustained the U.S. embargo since 1962—for another year does not alter the current regulatory framework, but it does consolidate the framework that allows Washington to maintain and expand sanctions against the Cuban regime at a time of extreme economic vulnerability for the island. The memorandum, signed on August 20 and published this week in the Federal Register, extends presidential authority to enforce the law—which was set to expire on September 14, 2026—until September 14, 2027. Trump justified the measure as a matter of "national interest" for the United States, in line with the annual practice that all presidents have followed since 1978, regardless of their political affiliation.

Havana's reaction was immediate and furious. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez described the extension as a "genocidal policy" and denounced it as not merely an administrative formality, but rather confirmation that Washington seeks to "strangle an entire nation." According to the Cuban government, the extension comes at the "cruelest moment" of the U.S. offensive, marked by an unprecedented oil and financial blockade: sanctions against shipping companies and insurers that transport crude oil, fines against foreign banks, and pressure on companies from third countries operating in strategic sectors such as energy and tourism.

The extension of the Trading with the Enemy Act does not introduce immediate changes to travel, remittances, or financial transactions by Cuban and Cuban-American citizens, but it does maintain the legal basis that allows Washington to impose new sanctions, such as those enacted on August 20 against officials linked to the Castro regime's international propaganda machine and against mining and construction companies.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio has defended the strategy as a way to push Cuba toward a future that is "prosperous, secure, and aligned with Washington," and has assured that before Trump's term ends, the island will be "irreversibly" on the path toward a different scenario. At the same time, he accuses the regime of "pretending to implement reforms" while seeking ways to evade sanctions. In contrast, Miguel Díaz-Canel maintains that dialogue with Washington is "stalled" and that the United States "has no moral authority" to demand concessions.

The extension also comes amid an adverse diplomatic climate for Havana. Although Cuba submits a resolution against the embargo to the UN every year—backed by the majority of countries—the text is nonbinding and does not alter Washington's ability to maintain its policy of pressure. Organizations such as ECLAC have pointed out that the embargo is the main obstacle to Cuba's full integration into the global economy, while the Cuban government estimates annual losses exceeding $7.5 billion. Trump's move, seemingly routine, thus takes on greater political significance at a time when Cuba's internal crisis is reaching unprecedented levels and the U.S. administration is intensifying its "maximum pressure" strategy. For the regime, the extension confirms that Washington will not back down; for the White House, it is an indispensable tool for sustaining a policy that seeks to force structural changes on the island. Amid power outages, shortages, and rapid social deterioration, the extension of the embargo not only prolongs a policy that has lasted more than six decades—it deepens the confrontation at the worst economic moment Cuba has faced in decades

Washington takes its eyes off Havana: the Castro regime takes advantage of the strategic distraction while the historical responsibility falls on the Cuban people

BY PLC ON AUGUST 25, 2026, 2:49 P.M. |
CUBA, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



But there is one essential point that must not be lost sight of: the responsibility for overthrowing the Castro regime lies with the Cuban people. Photo © PLC

CUBA-UNITED STATES

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | U.S. policy toward Cuba is undergoing a cooling-off period that stems not from a doctrinal shift but from geopolitical saturation. With the war in the Middle East escalating into a high-risk regional conflict and the Russian offensive in Ukraine showing no signs of abating, the Trump Administration is operating under strategic pressure that consumes attention, resources, and room to maneuver. In this scenario, Cuba is no longer an immediate priority. Washington is not in a position to open a new front when it is already facing two wars that directly affect its national security and global economic stability.

The Castro regime knows this. The ruling elite interprets this distraction as a window of opportunity and is refining its survival strategy. Havana is committed to managing the internal crisis, strengthening mechanisms of social control, intensifying its reliance on circumstantial allies, and projecting an image of stability while the world looks toward other fronts. The official narrative insists that the United States has "more urgent problems," a message directed both at its own population and at its international partners.

But there is one essential point that must not be lost sight of: the responsibility for overthrowing the Castro tyranny rests with the Cuban people. The United States can help—and has done so for decades, from diplomatic pressure to support for civil society—but no foreign power can substitute for internal will. No country can liberate another if that country does not demonstrate that it is willing to liberate itself. The history of democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Africa confirms that the catalyst is always internal, even though the international community can accelerate or accompany the process.

The lack of priority in Washington does not imply abandonment, but it does lead to a clear conclusion: change in Cuba will depend on the ability of Cubans to demonstrate that they can overthrow the Castros. External pressure may weaken the regime, but only internal pressure can bring it down. Havana has survived for decades because it has managed to administer weakness, control shortages, and channel discontent toward emigration. Breaking that cycle requires a society willing to assume the historic leading role that is its due.

The dilemma for the United States is clear. The Cuban crisis remains a regional problem, but it does not rival the urgency of two wars that are redefining the international order. For the Castro regime, this distraction is a temporary respite. For Cubans, it is a reminder: no one is going to do the work for them. Cuba's freedom will not be the result of a decision in Washington, but of a decision in Havana, in Santiago, in Santa Clara, in every neighborhood where people have lost their fear and where the rift between the state and society is already irreversible.

The question is not whether the United States will turn its attention back to Cuba, but whether Cubans will be ready when it does. Because on the day international attention returns, the world will want to see one fundamental thing: that Cubans have proven they are capable of overthrowing the Castros.

PLC

Germany Investigates a Hybrid Attack on Ukrainian Military Logistics as Ukraine Celebrates Its Independence

BY PLC ON AUGUST 25, 2026, 1:47 P.M. |
EUROPE, RUSSIA, UKRAINE, LATEST NEWS, AND EUROPEAN UNION



The investigation has revealed that the plan was broader than initially believed. Photo: social media.

GERMANY-UKRAINE

Stockholm. PLC | On August 24, Ukraine commemorated another anniversary of its independence from the Soviet Union, flanked by European heads of state and delegations eager to underscore their support in the midst of the war. But while Kyiv celebrated, Berlin was confronted with increasingly solid evidence of an attempted sabotage against the infrastructure supporting the European airlift to Ukraine.

In early August, a drone armed with explosives was found near four Ukrainian cargo planes parked at the Leipzig/Halle airport, a strategic hub for transporting military supplies to Ukraine. The device contained an explosive charge and a detonator but was not activated. That same day, another drone reportedly collided with a DHL cargo plane, forcing it to abort its landing and subsequently divert to Hanover. German authorities described the incident as a "new dimension of threat," amid growing fears of sabotage operations and hybrid warfare attributed to hostile actors, particularly Russia.

The investigation has revealed that the plan was broader than initially believed. On August 14, investigators located a third drone in a field near the airport, along with about 50 grams of hexogen, a high-powered military explosive. The Federal

Prosecutor General's Office has remained silent, but intelligence sources cited by NDR, WDR, and Süddeutsche Zeitung point to the possible involvement of Russian intelligence services. The target is believed to have been a Ukrainian Antonov cargo plane used to transport military equipment. The attack failed because the detonator did not go off, but the presence of multiple drones and explosives suggests a coordinated sabotage attempt against Ukraine's military logistics on German soil.

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz has vowed that "they will pay for this," without yet naming those responsible, while the government works with security agencies to present its findings. The suspicion of a hybrid attack targeting an airport critical to NATO and to shipments to Ukraine reinforces the perception that Germany has become a prime target for covert operations. The discovery of drones, explosives, and damage consistent with collisions involving civilian and military aircraft points to a deliberate attempt to disrupt the flow of weapons to Kyiv at a symbolic moment: the anniversary of Ukrainian independence.

PLC

Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Staff

Botswana Funds and Supports the Enslavement of Cuban Doctors: New Documents Reveal the Government's Collusion with the Havana Regime

BY PLC ON AUGUST 25, 2026, 11:40 A.M. |
CUBA, INTERNATIONAL, AND LATEST NEWS



The Botswanan government is not a passive actor: it participates in the economic framework that enables exploitation, is aware of the actual figures, and maintains the flow of funds that sustains the scheme. Photo © Prisoners Defenders

CUBA-DOCTORS-SLAVERY

Stockholm. PLC | Prisoners Defenders has documented an exploitation scheme that debunks any narrative of health cooperation between Cuba and Botswana. The Botswana government not only knows about the mechanism that strips Cuban doctors of most of their salaries, but also supports, finances, and implements it with full knowledge. The evidence gathered in this investigation confirms that Botswana actively participates in a system of forced labor affecting dozens of healthcare professionals sent by Havana.

The current agreement, signed in 2024 and concealed behind confidentiality clauses, stipulates that Botswana pays 3,500 euros per month for each Cuban specialist—$4,094.65 at the official exchange rate—while the professional receives only 1,000 .

In other words, the Cuban regime withholds 75.58% of the contractual fee. For a contingent of 90 doctors, the annual bill exceeds $4.2 million, of which only a tiny fraction reaches those who actually do the work.

In April 2025, the Botswana Parliament confirmed the official rates: 3,500 euros per specialist and 2,800 euros per support staff member. It also acknowledged cumulative payments to Cuba totaling $31.3 million over the previous decade. What it deliberately concealed is that these funds are not intended for the professionals, but for the Cuban state. The agreement requires Havana to issue monthly invoices that explicitly separate the portion corresponding to the doctors from the portion transferred to the regime. Botswana is aware of this breakdown, accepts it, and implements it.

State collusion becomes even more evident in the internal regulations imposed on Cuban doctors in Botswana. On July 3, 2026, the head of mission, Dr. Pablo Ricardo Betancourt Álvarez, signed a mandatory set of regulations restricting travel, visits, friendships, overnight stays, use of vehicles, freedom of expression, and social life. It is a disciplinary regime that replicates, outside the island, the mechanisms of political control characteristic of the Castro regime. Botswana does not merely host these professionals: it deploys, supervises, and monitors their conduct, and may request replacements when it deems necessary.

Administrative documents from Princess Marina Hospital, including the one dated March 9, 2020, and subsequent ones, record stipends of up to $800 for 18 positions held by specialists and coordinators. These payments are submitted to the financial administration with a copy sent to the Ministry of Finance. The Botswanan government is not a passive actor: it participates in the economic framework that enables the exploitation, is aware of the actual figures, and maintains the flow of funds that sustains the scheme.

In August 2026, Prisoners Defenders confirmed through direct sources that Cuban doctors receive only $1,000 per month. The Botswana government informed Parliament that the contractual rate amounts to 3,500 euros. The discrepancy is not an administrative error: it is at the heart of the system of modern slavery that both states sustain. Botswana pays, Cuba withholds, and the professionals are trapped in a mechanism of servitude that violates international standards on human rights and decent work.

The evidence gathered demonstrates that Botswana is neither a deceived third party nor an uninformed partner. It is an actor that finances, is aware of, and carries out a labor exploitation scheme affecting Cuban doctors on its territory. Modern slavery is sustained not only from Havana but also from Gaborone.

Washington Faces the Cuban Maze: Why External Pressure Only Works When It Coincides with Internal Divisions

BY PLC ON AUGUST 25, 2026, 10:52 A.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, UNITED STATES, AND OPINION



The fundamental question is whether the United States can bring about political change in Cuba. The answer is uncomfortable but obvious: no external strategy works unless it aligns with internal dynamics that the regime cannot control. Photo © PLC

CUBA-UNITED STATES CRISIS

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | U.S. policy toward Cuba is undergoing a structural exhaustion. For more than six decades, Washington has alternated between sanctions, isolation, financial restrictions, and partial openings without altering the power structure in Havana. The regime has survived not through strength, but by turning precariousness into a method: it manages crisis as a political system, uses scarcity as social discipline, applies repression surgically, and channels discontent toward emigration. In this scenario, U.S. policy repeats itself without producing strategic results.

Economic pressure weakened the state but did not destabilize it. It impoverished the population but did not erode the power structure. And it fueled a migrat y flow that

reduces internal tension. Negotiated openness, for its part, is politically toxic in the United States: any gesture toward Cuba is interpreted in Florida as a concession to the Castro regime. Obama tried it without altering the internal balance; Trump intensified the pressure without producing decisive results. The dilemma persists: tightening the screws changes nothing, nor does easing up.

The fundamental question is whether the United States can bring about political change in Cuba. The answer is uncomfortable but obvious: **no foreign policy strategy works unless it aligns with internal dynamics that the regime cannot control**. Change in Cuba will not come through sanctions or bilateral negotiations, but rather through the convergence of an adverse international environment and an internal fracture that overwhelms the state's capacity to contain it.

That fracture already exists, although it has not yet reached its point of no return. The economy is entering a phase where its deterioration is no longer manageable; society has lost its fear and its belief in the regime's myth; the diaspora is acting as a political and financial force beyond state control; the regime's international legitimacy has eroded; and within the power apparatus itself, tensions are emerging between a military elite that controls the economy and a civilian bureaucracy that manages the crisis. When these factors align, the regime loses its ability to manage its own weakness.

The only viable policy for Washington would be **to support that internal fracture without attempting to replace it**. It is not a matter of lifting sanctions or tightening them, but rather of designing a strategy that combines pressure with incentives, sanctions with diplomacy, hemispheric coordination with Europe and Latin America, and an internal consensus that transcends Florida's electoral cycle. External pressure will not topple the Castro regime, but it can hasten the moment when the internal crisis becomes unmanageable.

Meanwhile, Cuba remains under the control of the same elite that has managed the shortages for more than six decades. And the United States remains trapped in a policy that no longer works, yet it does not dare to replace it. The dilemma is not what to do with Cuba, but how to abandon a strategy that ceased to produce results long ago. The island's future will depend on when international pressure and internal divisions converge—and on whether that convergence manages to create the space for a long-delayed democratic transition.



Díaz-Canel Facing the Mirror of Cuban Reality

BY ANTONIO SUAREZ FONTICIELLA ON AUGUST 25, 2026, 7:09 A.M. |
CUBA, OPINION, AND LATEST NEWS



The central issue is not merely what Díaz-Canel said, but what mechanisms exist to verify whether those statements truly reflect the will of the majority of Cubans. Photo captured from social media

An analysis of his statements in light of the reality faced by the people

By Antonio Suárez Fonticiella

Havana. PLC | The statements made by Miguel Díaz-Canel in the extensive interview he granted to journalist Mônica Bergamo of Folha de S.Paulo allow for an analysis that goes deeper than the words of a leader: they reveal how Cuba's political leadership interprets and presents to the outside world the relationship between the state, the Party, the citizenry, and society.

The central issue is not merely what Díaz-Canel said, but what mechanisms exist to verify whether those statements truly represent the will of the majority of Cubans. And here an essential question arises from a political science perspective: when a leader claims to speak on behalf of "the people" but does not provide an independent measure of public opinion to verify this, the claim remains a political statement, not sociological evidence.

1. "The people would not allow a capitalist restoration"

This is probably one of the statements that lends itself most readily to analysis. Díaz-Canel argues that the Cuban people would not allow a return to capitalism because they recognize the benefits of the Revolution.

But there is an institutional contradiction worth noting.

The Cuban Constitution establishes that the socialist system is irrevocable and recognizes the Communist Party as the supreme political leadership of society and

the state.
Therefore, there is an important difference between saying:
“The people do not want to change the system”
and saying:
“The system cannot be changed constitutionally.”
These are two different things.
The first is a conclusion about the will of the people.
The second is a legal provision.
To find out what the population really thinks, we would have to ask them through an independent, scientific, and representative survey.

2. The question Díaz-Canel did not answer: How do we know what the people want?
This is one of the central points of the analysis.
If the government claims that the majority of Cubans support socialism and would not allow a transition to another model, there is a relatively simple way to verify this:
by asking the public directly.
An independent national survey could ask, for example:
“If you could freely choose between different political and economic models for Cuba, which would you prefer?”
The options could include:
– Single-party socialism.
– Socialism with a multi-party system.
– A market economy with a multiparty democratic system.
– Another model.
– Don’t know/no answer.
A second question could be:
“Do you believe that Cuban citizens should be able to decide, through free and competitive elections, which political system they want?”
And a third:
“Do you believe the government should submit its major economic and social policies to binding public referendums?”
That kind of research would make it possible to replace political assertions with data.

3. “There is no repression in Cuba”
This claim can also be tested against the facts.
The interview presents the idea that protesters are heard by the institutions and that there is no repression for speaking out.
However, there are reports documenting arrests, surveillance, and restrictions targeting opposition figures, activists, independent journalists, and protest participants.
A report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights noted, among other issues, surveillance and restrictions on movement targeting activists and relatives of

political prisoners, as well as protests related to prolonged power outages and water shortages.
More recently, Folha reported that Cubalex recorded 766 protests during the first half of 2026 and 1,894 human rights violations, according to its own monitoring. The same report indicates that repression affected 919 people. These figures come from a human rights organization and should be understood as data from its documentation system, not as an official government census.
Therefore, the assertion that "there is no repression in Cuba" cannot be analyzed solely on the basis of the presidential statement. It must be weighed against the available evidence regarding detentions, surveillance, and actions taken against protesters.

4. "People voice their grievances to the Party because they trust it"
Here another methodological problem arises.
The fact that a citizen files a complaint with a state institution does not necessarily prove that they have political trust in it.
They may file a complaint because:
– it is the only institutional avenue available;
– they need to resolve a specific problem;
– they have no other options;
– they fear consequences if they protest publicly;
– or you truly trust that institution.
These are different possibilities.
To find out which one is true, we would have to ask the public.
A survey might ask:
"How much do you trust the Communist Party of Cuba?"
And provide a scale:
Very much / Quite a bit / A little / Not at all / Don't know.
The response would make it possible to measure what a political statement cannot demonstrate.

5. "Millions of Cubans would give their lives for the Revolution"
This statement calls for even greater caution.
Díaz-Canel raises the question of what "millions" of Cubans would be willing to do to defend the Revolution.
But it is one thing to assert that there is political support and quite another to claim that millions of citizens would be willing to die for a system.
There is no poll in the interview to quantitatively support that claim.
From a political science perspective, a claim of this magnitude requires equally substantial evidence.
A survey might ask:
"Would you be willing to fight personally to defend the current Cuban political system?"

And another, completely different question:
“Would you be willing to defend Cuba militarily against a foreign invasion, regardless of your political stance toward the government?”
The difference is fundamental.
A person may be willing to defend national sovereignty while, at the same time, not supporting the government.
Confusing the two can lead to a misreading of public opinion.

6. The Economic Crisis and “Concessions” to the Private Sector
Here a particularly interesting contradiction arises.
Díaz-Canel acknowledges that the government is making “concessions” to the private sector and explains that these do not represent an ideal of socialism, but rather a temporary necessity.
This shows that the government itself recognizes the need to use economic mechanisms associated with the private sector.
The question is not simply whether this amounts to “capitalism” or “socialism.”
The question is:
To what extent is the crisis forcing the Cuban system to modify its economic mechanisms without altering its political structure?
This phenomenon can be analyzed as a separation between:
limited economic openness + the maintenance of a political monopoly.
In other words, there may be greater private participation in certain areas of the economy without there necessarily being political pluralism.

7. Foreign-Currency Stores and Inequality
When the existence of foreign-currency stores is questioned, Díaz-Canel’s response is that they also exist in capitalist countries.
The argument, however, does not fully address the question raised.
The question is not simply:
Are there foreign-currency stores in capitalist countries?
The real question is:
What effect does partial dollarization have on inequality within Cuban society?
In a society where one segment of the population receives remittances or has access to foreign currency and another relies primarily on income in pesos, the currency used to purchase certain goods can become a factor in inequality.
Therefore, simply comparing the existence of foreign-currency stores with those in other countries does not, on its own, allow us to measure the social impact of this mechanism in Cuba.

8. The Energy Crisis: The Problem That Can No Longer Be Explained by Rhetoric Alone
The energy situation offers another example of the contrast between rhetoric and reality.
In July 2026, Cuba suffered another nationwide blackout—the eighth in 24 months,

according to El País. The same report described a severe generation deficit, with numerous thermoelectric plants out of service and fuel shortages.
This is important because electricity is not exclusively a political issue.
When blackouts drag on, the problem ceases to be solely an energy issue and becomes a systemic social problem.

9. "If my time comes, so be it"
Díaz-Canel's statement about not fearing a fate similar to that of Nicolás Maduro and being willing to fight has an obvious political and symbolic component.
It seeks to project an image of resolve in the face of a potential external threat.
But there is a different question that should be asked from the perspective of the citizenry:
What does it mean to defend the Revolution when the main daily challenge for millions of Cubans is not war, but securing electricity, water, food, medicine, and fuel?
National security and human security are not necessarily the same thing.
A state can speak of military defense while the population perceives much more basic issues as immediate threats: power outages, water shortages, inflation, transportation, food, and the deterioration of public services.

10. "We have our military secrets"
This statement is impossible to verify from the outside and, precisely for that reason, cannot be used as evidence of a specific military capability.
From a communications standpoint, it works differently: it conveys strategic uncertainty and seeks to project deterrent capability.
It is a political statement, not a military demonstration.

11. The Concept of Democracy
Díaz-Canel rejects the notion that the absence of competitive, multiparty presidential elections implies that Cuba is not a democracy.
Here again, it is necessary to distinguish between concepts.
Cuba has electoral institutions and voting processes. But the question is what characteristics this electoral system has and what political alternatives are available to citizens.
The Constitution explicitly establishes the Communist Party's supreme leadership role and declares the socialist system to be irrevocable.
Therefore, a rigorous discussion of Cuban democracy should analyze, among other elements:
political pluralism, electoral competition, alternation of power, freedom of association, freedom of expression, institutional independence, and citizens' effective ability to change their leaders.
Simply comparing electoral procedures with those of other European countries does not, in and of itself, answer these questions.

12. The Central Paradox of the Interview
The interview contains a political paradox:
Díaz-Canel constantly speaks on behalf of the people, but his assertions about what the people want are not backed by any independent measure of that will.
“The people would not allow capitalism.”
“The people trust the Party.”
“Millions would defend the Revolution.”
“There is no repression.”
These are claims that can be subjected to scrutiny.
And here is precisely the proposal that could turn this discussion into something different:

LET’S ASK THE CUBAN PEOPLE
Instead of the government constantly speaking on behalf of Cubans, we should find out directly what the people think.

Conclusion
The most important aspect of this interview isn’t necessarily found in a single isolated statement.
It lies in a much deeper question:
Who has the right to speak on behalf of the Cuban people?
The government maintains that it knows what the majority thinks.
But understanding the opinion of a society should not depend solely on what its leader says.
It must be measured.
And it must be measured through transparent procedures, scientific methodology, and questions that allow citizens to express both support and opposition.
The Cuban Constitution states that sovereignty resides in the people.
That is precisely why the final question should be simple:
If the government is convinced that the majority of Cubans support its system, why not ask them directly and let the results of an independent survey speak for themselves?
Because in politics, there is a fundamental difference between claiming to have the people’s support and proving it.



Antonio Suarez Fonticiella

Havana. Independent journalist, member of the editorial team at *Prensa Libre Cuba*.

Cuba Loses Half Its Tourists, and the Regime Runs Out of Its Last Argument for Stability

BY PLC ON AUGUST 24, 2026, 7:59 P.M. |
CUBA, ECONOMY, AND LATEST NEWS



The regime faces a dilemma it cannot resolve with slogans. Tourism was one of the few relatively stable sources of foreign currency. Photo © PLC

CUBA-TOURISM

Havana. PLC | Between January and May, Cuba received just 359,491 international visitors, less than half the number from the previous year. In June, the number was so low that many operators are comparing it to the toughest months of the pandemic. Canada, the market that for decades sustained the high season, reduced travel to levels no one could have imagined. Russia, which Havana presented as a strategic alternative, also saw a decline. Even Cubans living abroad, who typically travel for family reasons, have cut back on their visits. Tourism has become a shadow of its former self.

The social impact is immediate. Thousands of workers have lost their jobs or have been reassigned to positions that pay less and demand more. In Varadero, Trinidad, Guardalavaca, and Cayo Coco, employees report going weeks without pay, with hotels operating with only a fraction of their staff and wages that no longer suffice to

cover basic needs. Tourism is not just an industry: it is a lifeline that sustains families, informal businesses, transportation providers, artisans, and entire communities. When the flow of visitors stops, the entire ecosystem suffers.

The regime faces a dilemma it cannot resolve with slogans. Tourism was one of the few relatively stable sources of foreign currency. Without it, the economy runs out of oxygen. Imports decline, inflation accelerates, and shortages deepen. The decline in tourism is not an isolated phenomenon: it is the most visible symptom of a country running out of tools to sustain its economic model. Havana insists that new partnerships and hotel projects will allow the sector to recover, but reality contradicts this rhetoric. There is no fuel, no connectivity, no stability, and no international confidence.

What is happening in tourism reveals a broader reality: Cuba is entering a phase where the old formulas no longer work. The island bet on a model that depended on foreign visitors, but failed to create the conditions to sustain it. The infrastructure has aged, the energy crisis has become chronic, and state management has been unable to adapt to an increasingly competitive global market. Cuban tourism is not in crisis—it is in retreat.

The question that remains is what the country will do when tourism ceases to be the lifeline it has been for decades. The Cuban economy has no immediate substitute. The export of medical services faces international pressure, remittances depend on an exodus that cannot be sustained indefinitely, and domestic production is paralyzed. Tourism was the bridge between Cuba and the world. Today, that bridge is empty.



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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Team

From Florida to a Country at War: Cubans Deported to Africa Denounce ICE's Neglect and Deception

BY PLC ON AUGUST 24, 2026, 2:32 P.M. |
CUBA, UNITED STATES, INTERNATIONAL, AND LATEST NEWS



Most of these deportees left Cuba illegally, abandoned official missions, fled before 2013—when the criminal offense of "illegal departure" still existed—or were classified as "permanent emigrants" without meeting the requirements to return. Screenshot from Facebook showing deportees boarding a plane.

U.S. DEPORTS CUBANS TO THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Miami. PLC | The deportation of Cubans to African countries without prior notice has become one of the most baffling and opaque episodes in recent U.S. immigration policy. Testimonies gathered by CBS News, EFE, Telemundo, and independent media outlets reveal a disturbing pattern: people with no criminal records, with ongoing immigration proceedings, and even valid work permits were detained by ICE, transferred between multiple detention centers, and finally sent to the Central African Republic (CAR)—one of the most dangerous countries in the world—without knowing their destination until the plane landed.

The case of 31-year-old Yasmany Moreno de Armas epitomizes the brutality of the process. He lived and worked in Florida, had only traffic violations on his record, and had never even heard of the CAR. He discovered his destination five hours after takeoff, when the plane was already descending over Bangui. From there, he stated

that they are not allowed to leave the building where they are being held, have no documents, face violence in their surroundings, and miss their families on an unfamiliar continent. The State Department maintains a Level 4 travel warning for the CAR due to armed conflict, armed groups, and extreme insecurity.

Their story mirrors that of other Cubans: Arístides Fernández, Omar Rodríguez, Almario Moreno, and Daniel Lázaro Fuente—all deported without a clear explanation, all repeatedly transferred between detention centers, all with no criminal records, and all surprised to discover they were not going to Cuba, but to Africa. In several cases, ICE agents told them they "didn't know" why they were being sent there and that if they didn't board the plane, they would be beaten. The flight lasted 21 hours, with stopovers in Senegal and Nigeria before arriving in Bangui.

Once in the CAR, the Cubans were confined to a hotel under surveillance. Local authorities prohibited them from leaving and offered them a temporary visa without clarifying their legal status. The UN provides them with food, but—according to their accounts—it doesn't know what to do with them either, because the agreement that brought them there was negotiated directly by Washington with a country that has no relationship whatsoever with Cuba or with the deportees. "It's like a kidnapping," said Fernández. "We're at our wits' end—without family, without anything, without an identity," added Moreno.

The U.S. administration has justified these deportations as part of a legal mechanism to expel migrants whose countries of origin refuse repatriation flights. Here lies the crux of the matter: Cuba is indeed receiving deportation flights from the United States, but only for people whom the regime considers "eligible for repatriation." The Cubans sent to Africa do not fall into that category. It's not that Cuba doesn't want them: it's that if it were to take them in, it would have to imprison them.

Most of these deportees left Cuba irregularly, abandoned official missions, fled before 2013—when the criminal offense of "illegal departure" still existed—or were classified as "permanent emigrants" without meeting the requirements to return. In all these cases, the regime imposes criminal or administrative penalties: ranging from severe fines to imprisonment for "abandonment of mission," "evasion of responsibilities," "desertion," or "illegal departure." Cuba has imprisoned doctors, athletes, and government workers who abandoned their missions, and maintains an immigration system that punishes those who "betray their commitments to the state."

That is why Cuba does not accept them: taking them in would mean prosecuting them criminally, and that would spark a diplomatic conflict with Washington and an international scandal. In contrast, Cuba does accept other deportees who have no

pending charges or ties to state missions, and who can be reintegrated without political consequences.

When a country refuses to accept a deported national, ICE can resort to a mechanism called “third-country removal”: finding a third country willing to accept them, even if that country has no connection to the deportee and even if the deportee has never been there. This is how the Central African Republic—one of the poorest and most unstable countries in the world—agreed to accept them as part of a discreet bilateral agreement with Washington.

The result is a legal and human limbo: Cubans who cannot return to the island because they would be imprisoned, who cannot remain in the CAR because it is a country at war, and who cannot return to the United States because they were expelled without a transparent process. People without legal identity, without diplomatic protection, and without a future, trapped on a continent they did not choose and did not know.

The question that remains is simple and devastating: How can a democratic country justify sending human beings to one of the most dangerous territories on the planet without warning, without due process, and without assuming any subsequent responsibility? The stories of Moreno, Fernández, and the other Cubans reveal an immigration policy that has crossed a profound ethical line, turning deportation into an act of extreme abandonment.

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Prensa Libre Cuba Editorial Staff

Theft of Streetlights Leaves Santiago de Cuba's Main Avenues in Darkness

BY FRANK ABEL ON AUGUST 24, 2026, 6:54 A.M. |
CUBA AND LATEST NEWS



According to Radio Mambí, Garzón Avenue, Céspedes Avenue, Plaza de Marte, and Avenida de las Américas, among others, remain completely dark at night due to these criminal acts. Photo by Frank Abel

CUBA-CRIME

By Frank Abel

Havana. PLC | The main avenues in the city of Santiago de Cuba have once again been left in darkness, despite the fact that new streetlights were installed last month along the main thoroughfares of this city in the eastern part of the island. According to state-controlled media, the cause has been the theft of the installed lamps, most of which were powered by solar energy. So far, neither the Electric Company nor the National Revolutionary Police have commented on the matter.

According to Radio Mambí, Garzón Avenue, Céspedes Avenue, Plaza de Marte, and Avenida de las Américas, among others, remain completely dark at night due to these criminal acts. What is most concerning is that these crimes were committed in broad daylight on public streets, some of them in the most central areas of Cuba's second-largest city. While it is evident even in broad daylight that committing crimes with impunity is commonplace on the " " island, the incidents mentioned here demonstrate that safety on Cuban streets is steadily declining.

Worse still, the authorities are doing little or nothing to reverse the situation. Most of their actions serve more as propaganda than as effective measures in the fight against crime.



Frank Abel

Havana. Independent journalist, member of the editorial team at *Prensa Libre Cuba*.

China Enters the Bidding War for Moa's Nickel, Complicating Plans by the Huddleston-Glencore Consortium

BY HUMBERTO LOPEZ Y GUERRA ON AUGUST 23, 2026, 3:45 P.M. |
CHINA, CUBA, UNITED STATES, AND LATEST NEWS



The outcome of this story will say a lot about the role Cuba will play in the new landscape of the energy transition. Photo: PLC/IA

CUBA-NICKEL

By Humberto López and Guerra – Prensa Libre Cuba

Stockholm. PLC Analysis | For decades, nickel and cobalt from Moa have been a largely technical matter, confined to mining reports and Sherritt International's financial statements. In a matter of months, that same complex has become the epicenter of a geopolitical dispute involving sanctions from Washington, Chinese appetite for critical minerals, London hedge funds, the Swiss giant Glencore, and an enigmatic American investor who, according to various sources, could be the Texas tycoon Albert Huddleston. The result is a battle for control of Cuba's leading nickel and cobalt producer, with direct implications for the regime's economic future and for the security of supply in global battery supply chains.

Sherritt International, founded in 1927 and now specializing in nickel and cobalt through hydrometallurgical processes, has been operating the Moa deposit in

Holguín since the 1990s as a 50-50 joint venture with the Cuban state-owned General Nickel Company. That presence made it one of the largest foreign investors on the island, but also a direct target of the new U.S. sanctions offensive against Cuba's energy and mining sectors. In May 2026, an executive order by Donald Trump expanded the authority to penalize foreign companies operating in Cuba; a few days later, the State Department imposed sanctions on Moa Nickel S.A., Sherritt's joint venture with the Cuban government. Although the Canadian company was not formally designated, the effect was devastating: suspension of operations in Cuba, withdrawal of personnel, the resignation of the chief financial officer, the auditor, and several board members, a shutdown of the Fort Saskatchewan refinery in Alberta, and explicit warnings that the company could run out of liquidity to continue operating.

That financial vacuum opened the door to two U.S. investment groups that are now competing to acquire at least 55% of Sherritt—that is, effective control of the company and, by extension, of its stake in Moa. The first move was made by Gillon Capital LLC, the *family office* of Texan Ray Washburne, former head of the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation during Trump's first term. In May, Gillon reached a preliminary, non-binding agreement with Sherritt for a private placement of warrants that would allow it to acquire up to 55% of the company. This is not a direct purchase, but rather an instrument exercisable in nine months, with a price set at a discount to the approximately 0.11 Canadian dollars per share that Sherritt was trading at in mid-May. In other words: no immediate cash flow for the company, but the promise of future control at a discounted price for the Texas investor.

The reaction was swift. In late June, a second consortium quietly submitted an alternative offer to Sherritt's board, which was made public on August 10. That group includes Kyma Capital, the London-based fund that is already Sherritt's largest economic stakeholder; commodities giant Glencore; veteran investor Trifon Natsis; and a "prominent" U.S. investor whose identity has not been officially revealed. Various media outlets and industry sources point to Albert Huddleston, known for his investments in energy and natural resources, as the possible "anchor investor" for this consortium, although neither the company nor the participants have confirmed his name.

The difference between the two proposals is crucial. While Gillon offers deferred control with no immediate cash outlay, the Kyma–Glencore–U.S. anchor consortium puts money on the table from day one: a new share issuance at 0.12 Canadian dollars per share, at no discount to Sherritt's "unaffected" price, and with subscription rights for existing shareholders under the same conditions. There is no external financing requirement: the consortium members commit to providing the capital with letters of commitment already in place, and the structure seeks a credible path to securing the support of bondholders, who are essential to any recapitalization.

The market reacted immediately: on the day the offer was announced, Sherritt's shares rose by about 24%.

Kyma, which controls about 13–15% of the equity and a substantial portion of Sherritt's notes, has turned this dispute into an open battle over corporate governance. The fund accuses the board of having "orchestrated" the annual meeting schedule to protect its exclusivity with Gillon through October, preventing shareholders from voting on the board's composition before the negotiation window with the Texas-based *family office* expires. Sherritt, for its part, has rejected the call for an extraordinary meeting in September and argues that the December 15 date is necessary to move forward with the potential transaction with Gillon and the appointment of a new auditor. The dispute has escalated to the courts, while the company warns that Kyma's public campaigns could jeopardize efforts to navigate the liquidity crisis caused by the sanctions.

In this scenario, Glencore brings more than just capital to the table. The Swiss group is one of the world's largest *traders* of copper, nickel, and other critical minerals, with a stated strategy of expanding into metals for the energy transition and extensive experience managing complex operations under regulatory scrutiny. Its executives have recently emphasized that increased regulatory scrutiny of mergers in the mining sector—particularly in copper and critical minerals—is not an insurmountable obstacle, but rather another variable to manage within the operational framework. Glencore's entry into the consortium seeking to take control of Sherritt suggests that it views Moa and the Alberta refinery as a strategic platform to strengthen its presence in the North American nickel and cobalt market, at a time when demand for batteries and stainless steel is skyrocketing and governments are seeking to reduce their dependence on China.

And that's where the other major silent player comes in: China. Beijing has spent years securing supplies of nickel, cobalt, and other critical minerals through investments in Indonesia, Africa, and Latin America. In the case of Cuba, diplomatic and mining industry sources indicate that Chinese companies are in talks with the regime to secure preferential access to nickel and cobalt from Moa, whether through long-term purchase agreements, infrastructure financing, or indirect participation in the value chain. For Havana, the influx of Chinese capital offers an alternative to the pressure of U.S. sanctions and the uncertainty surrounding Sherritt's future; for Beijing, it is a matter of securing an additional supply of key metals amid strategic rivalry with Washington.

If China manages to secure supply contracts or even some form of influence over production at Moa, the asset's appeal to Western investors changes in nature. For Glencore, which has already had to accept specific supply conditions for Chinese customers in previous transactions, Beijing's presence on the Cuban scene can be

both an opportunity and a constraint: access to a massive market, but under rules dictated by China's security of supply. For Kyma and the U.S. investor in the consortium, the question is whether they can present to Washington and U.S. regulators a project that, in addition to rescuing Sherritt, helps "repatriate" part of the nickel and cobalt value chain to North America, thereby reducing dependence on China.

In this context, the role of the U.S. tycoon takes on political significance that goes beyond financial engineering. If, as various sources suggest, the consortium's "anchor investor" is Albert Huddleston, his role would not be limited to providing capital: he would become the face of the first major U.S. mining operation in Cuba since the confiscations of 1960, on land whose expropriation was certified by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission as resulting in losses exceeding $88 million at the time. The narrative of "recovering" confiscated assets, combined with the rationale of securing minerals critical to U.S. industry, could offer the White House and Congress a political justification for easing certain aspects of the sanctions regime—provided the operation is presented as part of a broader economic security strategy.

But none of this happens in a vacuum. The Cuban regime, which has historically used Sherritt's presence as proof of its ability to attract foreign investment despite the embargo, now faces the possibility that the main operator of Moa will come under U.S. capital control, at a time of extreme economic and energy vulnerability. Havana will have to decide whether it prefers a Western partner subject to pressure from Washington but with proven technological and financial capabilities, or a network of agreements with Chinese companies that guarantee long-term purchases and financing, at the cost of deepening its dependence on Beijing.

For Glencore, Kyma, and the U.S. investor, China's entry into the equation is a reminder that the battle for Sherritt and Moa is not just a corporate rescue operation, but another chapter in the global competition for critical minerals. If the consortium manages to prevail over Gillon Capital and close a recapitalization deal that grants it control of Sherritt, it will have to negotiate not only with bondholders and regulators, but also with a Cuban government that is playing both sides and with a Chinese player that is unwilling to cede ground in the race for nickel and cobalt.

Ultimately, the outcome of this story will say a great deal about the place Cuba will occupy on the new map of the energy transition. If Moa becomes a hub in a North American supply chain bolstered by Glencore and U.S. capital, the regime will have accepted a form of "opening" conditioned by the geopolitics of minerals. If, on the other hand, the balance tips toward preferential agreements with China and toward more opaque control structures, the country will consolidate its role as a satellite in Beijing's orbit. In either case, Moa's nickel and cobalt will remain the metallic heart

of a dispute where historical memory, sanctions, tycoons' ambitions, and the global race for the resources that power 21st-century batteries all intersect.

To view the image



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Humberto López y Guerra is a Swedish-Cuban writer, journalist, and filmmaker, author of **El otro espía** and other spy novels, and the Latin America representative for the PEN Swedish Writers in Prison Committee. As editor-in-chief and managing director of *Prensa Libre Cuba*, he combines political analysis, investigative journalism, and active advocacy for freedom of expression in Cuba.

After days of silence, ETECSA acknowledges that it was the source of the seismic alert that brought the country to a standstill

BY FRANK ABEL ON AUGUST 23, 2026, 7:45 A.M. |
CUBA AND LATEST NEWS



The response finally came on August 21, when ETECSA admitted that the false alarm originated within its own infrastructure. Photo courtesy of ETECSA/Cubadebate

CUBA-COMMUNICATIONS

By Frank Abel – Prensa Libre Cuba

Havana. PLC | The afternoon of August 18 left the country on edge. Thousands of Cubans rushed out of buildings, workplaces, and homes after receiving an earthquake alert on their phones warning of an imminent quake. Civil Defense had to interrupt television programming to assure the public that no seismic event had occurred, while the National Center for Seismological Research confirmed that the country's 24 stations were recording completely normal conditions. For three days, the question circulating on social media, in the news, and in private conversations was the same: Where did the alert that sparked nationwide panic come from?

The answer finally came on August 21, when ETECSA admitted that the false alarm originated within its own infrastructure. According to the state-owned company, the message was sent due to "a technical-human error" committed by specialists conducting internal tests on the telecommunications network. The explanation, though brief, confirmed that the incident was unrelated to Google or to Android's

seismic alert system, which had initially been identified as a possible cause. The company stated that it had launched an investigation, taken action against those involved, and issued a public apology for the chaos caused.

The official statement coincided with information provided by a source linked to ETECSA's senior management, as cited by Martí Noticias, who described the origin of the incident as a test conducted at the company's Technology Center, located at 19th and B in El Vedado. According to that account, the test was supposed to be carried out in a controlled environment but ended up being transmitted over the national mobile network. The technical leak was corroborated by records published by CellMapper Cubano, which show that an Android device first received an "ETWS Test Message" and, one minute later, the earthquake alert that triggered the spontaneous evacuation of thousands of people.

The incident exposed a profound vulnerability: the country's telecommunications infrastructure—highly centralized and dependent on a single state-owned company—lacks safeguards capable of preventing an internal error from turning into a national alarm. The public reaction was immediate and revealing. The population, accustomed to a lack of information and institutional transparency, assumed the alert was real. Civil Defense had to step in to deny it, and the National Seismological Service reiterated that no earthquake had occurred, describing the warning as "completely false."

The political backdrop to the incident is equally significant. In a country where official information is managed vertically and communications are under state control, a technical error becomes a political problem. ETECSA's belated admission, three days after the incident, came only after Google publicly denied any responsibility. The sequence of events reveals a tension between the official narrative and external pressure: the state-owned company could not sustain the initial hypothesis of an external failure and had to acknowledge that the source lay within its own network.

The episode also raises questions about the security of Cuba's alert systems. The ETWS, designed to issue emergency messages simultaneously, demonstrated that an internal failure can trigger a crisis protocol without adequate oversight. The lack of details regarding the "measures taken" and the absence of precise technical explanations fuel the perception that the system operates without independent audits or robust controls.

The false earthquake alert was not merely a technical error. It was a demonstration of how a failure in state infrastructure can trigger an episode of national panic and, at the same time, reveal the fragility of a system that combines extreme centralization, lack of transparency, and technological dependence. In a country

where public trust has been eroded, a poorly issued message can become yet another symptom of an institutional model that can no longer sustain its own narrative of control.



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Cuba is in turmoil amid endless blackouts and growing protests over the energy crisis

BY PLC ON AUGUST 23, 2026, 6:57 A.M. |
CUBA AND LATEST NEWS



Official figures confirm that the country is going through one of the most critical moments in its recent energy history. Photo of a protest on Villegas Street, Old Havana. Cubanet/Facebook

CUBA—ENERGY CRISIS

Havana. PLC | Old Havana once again became a barometer of the nation's exhaustion. On Saturday afternoon, residents of a building at 409 Villegas Street, between Teniente Rey and Muralla, decided to close the street and block vehicular traffic. This was neither an impromptu nor an isolated act: it was the culmination of weeks of power outages, phases dropping out without warning, deteriorating internal wiring, and an incident that epitomizes the precarious situation—the building's circuit breakers caught fire, and yet no technician came to repair them. The protest, documented by independent media, is the most recent manifestation of a pattern that is now spreading across the entire island.

That same day, hundreds of kilometers away, Cienfuegos witnessed another tense scene. Dozens of residents, including mothers with children, gathered in front of the Provincial Government building to demand explanations and solutions. "We've been without power, food, or medicine day and night," activist Raúl González denounced

in a video broadcast from the scene. This statement encapsulates the link between the blackout and daily life: electricity has ceased to be a mere service and has become the dividing line between survival and domestic collapse.

Official figures confirm that the country is going through one of the most critical moments in its recent energy history. The Electric Union reported an availability of just 1,090 MW for that day, compared to a demand of 3,300 MW. The 2,210 MW shortfall is not an anomaly—it is the norm. During August, Cuba has only managed to meet between 32% and 35% of peak-hour demand, leaving entire communities with power outages lasting more than twenty hours a day. On August 5, another record was broken, with a deficit exceeding 2,400 MW. The statistics no longer describe a technical problem, but rather a process of disintegration.

Against this backdrop, social unrest has skyrocketed. The Cuban Conflict Observatory recorded 1,415 protests, complaints, and expressions of criticism in July—a 40% increase over the previous year. Most of these are concentrated in Havana, but the geography of the unrest is expanding: Isla de la Juventud reports verbal attacks against electric utility workers; in Santiago de Cuba, newly installed solar streetlights are disappearing; and in working-class neighborhoods of the capital, such as El Fanguito, residents have blocked avenues after more than 48 hours without electricity, water, or gas. Villegas's protest is not an isolated incident: it is yet another link in a chain that is growing and diversifying.

The energy crisis also reveals internal fractures within the state apparatus itself. The Electric Company has admitted that workers have been involved in thefts of oil and photovoltaic equipment—a phenomenon that exacerbates the system's instability and exposes the erosion of control mechanisms. Technical precariousness is intertwined with institutional precariousness: when the state fails to guarantee service, it also fails to protect the resources that sustain it.

The deterioration has become so profound that protests are no longer limited to demanding repairs or the restoration of service. In Old Havana, residents demanded not only electricity but also a presence, a response, and accountability. In Cienfuegos, families asked not only for power but also for food, medicine, and care. Electricity is the trigger, but the discontent is structural.

The scene at Villegas 409—a block blocked off by its own residents, tired of waiting for a technician who never arrives—is a metaphor for a country operating in the dark. As the electrical system crumbles, Cuban society is entering a phase of exhaustion that is no longer expressed in silence. Every prolonged blackout is a political spark. Every blocked-off street is a message. And every protest, no matter how small it may seem, is a reminder that the energy crisis has ceased to be a

technical problem and has become the centerpiece of a national crisis that is advancing unchecked.

See you next week!

The Editorial Staff of Prensa Libre Cuba

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