

PRENSA LIBRE CUBA

WEEKLY SUMMARY

AUGUST 30–SEPTEMBER 5, 2026

This week's top news stories about Cuba and 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.

U.S. Resumes Processing Immigrant Visas for Cubans Following Federal Court Ruling

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2026, 9:45 P.M. |
[CUBA](#), [UNITED STATES](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The resumption of the process means that Cuban applicants should check the current status of their cases. Photo: U.S. Embassy in Havana © PLC

U.S.-CUBA VISAS

Miami. PLC | A U.S. federal judge's decision to overturn the suspension—which had blocked the issuance of immigrant visas for citizens of 75 countries, including Cuba, since January 2026—has reactivated thousands of cases that had been in administrative limbo. The ruling requires the State Department and USCIS to immediately resume the normal pace of evaluation, interviews, and security checks for all affected cases. For Cubans with pending applications, the measure represents a substantial change: cases are moving forward again, but automatic approval of any application is not guaranteed.

The suspension had halted the processing of immigrant visas for citizens of countries deemed “high-risk” by the Trump administration, leaving thousands of applicants—including Cubans who had already undergone interviews, submitted documents, or had family petitions approved—unable to receive a final decision.

With the ruling, consulates must resume reviewing each case and individually assess whether it meets immigration requirements—an obligation that also includes reconsidering applications previously denied under criteria now deemed illegal. Univision confirmed that Judge Janeth Vargas ruled that the measure exceeded the State Department's authority and ordered the immediate resumption of immigrant visa processing for the affected countries, including Cuba.

The resumption of the process means that Cuban applicants must check the updated status of their cases, follow any pending instructions, and prepare to complete the usual steps: documentation, medical examination, consular interview, and security checks. According to Asere, U.S. authorities will implement more extensive screening, including reviews of personal and employment histories, before determining eligibility for each visa. The lifting of the suspension also does not automatically speed up processing times, which will depend on the availability of appointments and the backlog at consulates.

For Cuban families awaiting reunification—whether they had approved petitions or had already completed part of the process—the court ruling reopens a path that had been closed for months. But the warning is clear: the resumption of processing does not guarantee approval. Each case will be evaluated under current immigration criteria, and the authorities retain full authority to approve or deny applications based on the information submitted.

The court's decision restores a procedure that directly affects thousands of Cubans and brings predictability back to a system that had been paralyzed by a measure now declared illegal. The process is up and running again, but the responsibility to meet every requirement and follow every instruction rests, as always, with the applicants.

U.S. Control Over Venezuelan Oil Jeopardizes a Multibillion-Dollar Loan to China

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2026, 2:58 P.M. |

[CHINA](#), [UNITED STATES](#), [LATEST NEWS](#), AND [VENEZUELA](#)



For years, Beijing financed the Venezuelan government through loans backed by crude oil shipments. Social media photo of U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright alongside Delcy Rodríguez during the signing of oil agreements in Caracas

CHINA-U.S.-VENEZUELA OIL

Stockholm. PLC | The agreement granting the United States majority control over more than 65 billion barrels of Venezuela's proven reserves has opened a new geopolitical front that transcends the bilateral relationship between Washington and Caracas. According to [Bloomberg](#), the deal—described by the White House as “the largest oil deal in history”—directly threatens the structure of the oil-backed loans that China has granted to Venezuela for more than a decade.

For years, Beijing financed the Venezuelan government through loans backed by crude oil shipments. Although the exact amount of the debt is not public, Bloomberg reports that in 2025 alone, the loans totaled about \$10 billion, still outstanding and to be repaid with pledged oil. The United States' entry into strategic oil fields—17 fields with concessions lasting up to 100 years, according to the agreement's fact sheet—disrupts that flow and puts China in a vulnerable position: if Washington controls production and exports, shipments intended to pay off the Chinese debt could be reduced, delayed, or renegotiated.

The pact, negotiated by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, grants the U.S. Strategic Capital Office a 35% stake in the parent company that will manage the oil fields. The White House states that the agreement

will allow for the replenishment of the U.S. Strategic Petroleum Reserve, strengthen energy supply chains, and displace Russian and Chinese influence in the Venezuelan oil sector.

For China, the risk is twofold. On the one hand, the loss of preferential access to Venezuelan oil jeopardizes the recovery of billions in loans. On the other hand, the U.S. move is part of the global competition for strategic raw materials, in which Venezuela—the country with the world’s largest proven reserves—is a critical asset. Bloomberg warns that this scenario could become a new source of tension between the two powers, although China’s reaction has been moderate so far, and it is unclear whether the issue will be addressed during Xi Jinping’s visit to Washington scheduled for late September.

The oil agreement has also sparked concern within Venezuela. Interim President Delcy Rodríguez maintains that the pact will generate more than \$209 billion in revenue over 25 years and that each barrel produced will contribute \$19 directly to the country. However, the Venezuelan opposition and various analysts have warned that ceding control to the United States revives fears of energy colonialism and compromises sovereignty over strategic resources.

In this context, China watches as a historic partner is reshaped under Washington’s influence, while its own financial interests are left exposed. Venezuelan oil, now a central pillar of U.S. energy strategy, is also becoming a potential source of friction between the world’s two greatest powers.

Russia Takes Cuba to Court: The End of Leniency and the Beginning of Consequences

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2026, 7:41 A.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), AND [RUSSIA](#)



Ark Technic is claiming 541 million rubles—about \$6.2 million—for aircraft maintenance services provided to the Cubana de Aviación fleet. Photo © PLC

RUSSIA-CUBA

Berlin. PLC | The lawsuit filed by Ark Technic with the Moscow Arbitration Court against Cubana de Aviación and the Cuban Aviation Corporation (CACSA) marks a turning point in the economic relationship between Havana and Moscow. For the first time in decades, a Russian company is taking legal action to collect a debt from

and is seeking the seizure of assets belonging to Cuban state-owned entities—a move that confirms the era of Soviet subsidies is definitively over.

Ark Technic is claiming 541 million rubles—about \$6.2 million—for aircraft maintenance services provided to the Cubana de Aviación fleet. The lawsuit, filed on August 3, 2026, includes a request for a preliminary attachment of assets belonging to both entities, and the preliminary hearing is scheduled for October 28. The Voronezh-based company has annual revenue of around 550 million rubles, meaning that the Cuban debt is practically equivalent to its entire annual income.

The litigation did not arise out of nowhere. CACSA confirmed that it had signed two agreements with Ark Technic to restore the fleet's airworthiness, including the supply of spare parts, component repairs, the presence of Russian technicians in Cuba, and technical inspections. The lawsuit suggests that the Cuban regime failed to make the payments required under those contracts—a pattern that is repeated in other sectors: in 2025, Havana publicly acknowledged that it had accumulated debts with multiple Russian companies and requested a rescheduling of sovereign loans totaling \$277.2 million through 2040.

Cubana de Aviación's situation is critical. In early 2026, it operated just four aircraft—one ATR 42-500, two ATR 72-200s, and one Ilyushin Il-96-300—a reflection of decades of deterioration, lack of investment, and dependence on foreign suppliers. The airline has lost international routes due to nonpayment, as happened in 2024 when YPF refused to sell it fuel in Argentina.

The Ark Technic case reveals a structural shift: Russia no longer grants financial leniency to Cuba. It extends credit, demands payments, and, when Cuba defaults, its companies take legal action. The bilateral relationship has shifted toward a strictly commercial framework, where non-payment carries legal consequences and where Russian companies act like any other international creditor.

For Cuba, the trial in Moscow is more than just a contractual dispute: it is a sign of financial vulnerability, operational decline, and the loss of historic privileges. For Russia, it confirms that its relationship with Havana is no longer based on ideological affinities, but on contractual obligations that must be fulfilled. The asset freeze requested by Ark Technic, if granted, would set an irreversible precedent in the economic relationship between the two countries.

Cuba's New Economic Opening: More Private Businesses, Same Political Control

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2026, 7:23 A.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The legal status of non-state actors—their ability to litigate, protect their assets, and enforce contracts against discretionary decisions by the administration—continues to depend on a judicial system subordinate to political power. Photo © PLC.

CUBA-ECONOMY

Havana. PLC | The publication in the [Official Gazette of the Republic of Cuba](#) on September 3, 2026, of the legal regulations implementing the so-called Economic and Social Transformations regarding foreign investment, foreign trade, and tourism marks, on the surface, one of the most ambitious shifts in the Cuban economic model since the 1990s. For the first time, the door is explicitly opened for emigrants to establish private companies on the island; companies with more than 100 employees are authorized; rules for foreign investment are relaxed; and opportunities for partnerships between foreign capital and non-state actors are expanded. But beneath this rhetoric of openness, structural limitations persist that constrain both the economic viability and the legal certainty of these new actors.

Decree-Law 128, issued by the Council of State and published in [Official Gazette No. 73](#), amends Law 118 on Foreign Investment of 2014. Among the most significant changes is the elimination of the requirement that foreign investors hire their staff exclusively through state-run employment agencies, leaving this option up to their discretion, and the removal of the requirement for prior authorization from the Central Bank of Cuba to open bank accounts abroad. Several articles of Law 118 are updated, and provisions of Decree 325—its implementing regulations—are repealed, with the stated objective of “making the management of foreign investment modalities more flexible.”

At the same time, resolutions have been approved by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security regarding the labor regime applicable to foreign direct investment; by the Central Bank regarding the opening of accounts abroad; and by the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment (MINCEX) regarding the procedure for granting import and export authorizations and classifications. MINCEX Resolution 126 defines the requirements for legal entities to engage directly in foreign trade and establishes the list of products whose import and export are prohibited or restricted, representing approximately 9% of the subheadings in the Harmonized System currently in force in Cuba.

The regulatory package also includes Decree-Law 130, which amends the Civil Code (Law 59) to allow the granting of real property rights for terms longer than those previously established, which directly affects the real estate sector and the possibility of developing larger-scale, longer-term projects. Policies are being updated to facilitate partnerships between foreign companies and non-state entities, expand real estate activities, allow greater participation of foreign capital in trade, and promote investment in areas prioritized for conservation and heritage sites. In the tourism sector, specific regulations have been approved for travel agencies, tourist transportation, and tour guides, accompanied by tax incentives for ecotourism projects.

However, the very way this package is presented reveals an underlying tension between the discourse of modernization and the persistence of bureaucratic practices and legal uncertainty. In the summary in the Official Gazette, Decree-Law 128 is listed as amending “Law 18” instead of Law 118, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment is listed as responsible for “Foreign Investment,” with a “c.” These errors are not merely typographical oversights: in a context where investor confidence depends on regulatory precision and institutional credibility, such a sloppy entry for a package that purports to offer “greater security” sends a contradictory signal.

The authorization for emigrants to establish private businesses on the island fits into this ambivalent logic. On the one hand, it de facto recognizes the economic

weight of the diaspora and its potential as a source of capital, knowledge, and commercial networks. On the other hand, it occurs in an environment where key questions remain unanswered: Who is going to buy what you're going to sell? How will you finance your business? Domestic demand is weighed down by low wages, inflation, and consumption restrictions; access to credit remains heavily constrained by state-owned banks and external sanctions; and foreign trade continues to be overseen by MINCEX, which retains the authority to grant, modify, and revoke import and export classifications and to determine which products may or may not enter and leave the country.

The authorization of private companies with more than 100 workers—and the possibility for these companies to set their employees' wages and partner with foreign capital—seems, in principle, to be a significant step forward compared to the model of heavily regulated micro and small private enterprises. However, the legal framework maintains the state as the ultimate arbiter of the existence, scope, and continuity of these companies. The legal status of non-state actors—their ability to litigate, protect their assets, and enforce contracts against discretionary decisions by the administration—continues to depend on a judicial system subordinate to political power. The expansion of property rights in the Civil Code does not, in and of itself, guarantee respect for private property in the face of expropriations, policy changes, or administrative pressure.

In the labor sphere, the elimination of the requirement to hire through state-run employment agencies opens the door to more direct relationships between investors and workers, but it does not alter the general framework governing union rights, collective bargaining, or the independence of workers' organizations. The Ministry of Labor and Social Security retains the authority to define the labor regime applicable to foreign investment, which could result in flexible arrangements that benefit capital without necessarily strengthening worker protections.

In foreign trade, MINCEX Resolution 126 establishes a detailed procedure for granting authorizations and temporary permits, but maintains a high degree of administrative discretion. The list of prohibited or restricted products, although limited to 9% of subheadings, may include strategic goods, sensitive technologies, or key inputs for certain sectors, leaving new companies dependent on political decisions regarding what is considered “priority” or “permitted” at any given time.

The result is a scenario in which formal openness coexists with substantive control. Havana offers emigrants and foreign capital the chance to join the game, but without relinquishing the power to decide the rules for each move. The question of who will buy what is produced and how new companies will be financed points to a deeper problem: without comprehensive reform of the institutional environment, without guarantees of regulatory stability, and without an independent justice system,

economic transformation amounts to nothing more than an adjustment of instruments within the same political framework.

From a liberal perspective, the key lies not only in the wording of the decrees but in the power structure that underpins them. Expanding opportunities for the private sector, easing restrictions on foreign investment, and engaging the diaspora may be necessary steps to pull Cuba out of its economic stagnation. But as long as the state retains the ability to amend, reinterpret, or revoke these opportunities without effective checks and balances, legal uncertainty will remain the primary limitation on the law. Under these conditions, openness runs the risk of becoming an invitation to take economic risks in a political landscape that remains unchanged.

Venezuelan Oil Returns to the Eye of the Political Storm

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2026, 6:49 A.M. |
[UNITED STATES](#), [LATEST NEWS](#), AND [VENEZUELA](#)



Machado argues that the energy pact, which grants the United States access to more than 20% of Venezuela's crude oil reserves, was signed without transparency, without clarity on who is making commitments on behalf of the country, and without the participation of the people. Photo: Facebook screenshot

VENEZUELA

Panama City. PLC | [María Corina Machado's](#) reaction to [the oil agreement signed between the United States and Delcy Rodríguez's interim government](#) has opened a new front in the already complex dispute over the legitimacy and control of Venezuela's strategic resources. Her message, released after several days of calculated silence, combines popular outrage, institutional warnings, and an explicit defense of the alliance with Washington—but under conditions that, she asserts, do not currently exist.

Machado argues that the energy agreement—which grants the United States access to more than 20% of Venezuela's crude oil reserves—was signed without transparency, without clarity on who is making commitments on behalf of the country, and without the participation of the people. “The natural resources of our land do not belong to an illegitimate regime; they belong to the Venezuelan people,” she stated, emphasizing that the decision was made “in our name, without consulting us”—a pattern of discontent she identifies as recurring throughout Venezuelan history.

The opposition leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate avoided directly confronting Washington and reiterated that the United States is “the key partner Venezuela needs to fully realize its strategic value.” But she warned that an alliance of this magnitude can only be sustained on the basis of “absolute transparency, legality, and efficiency”—principles that, in her view, cannot be guaranteed under the current administration. “The enemies of the United States in Venezuela are in Miraflores today,” she said, distancing herself from the interim government and questioning its ability to commit strategic resources without democratic legitimacy.

Machado insisted that the oil sector is merely one piece of a much broader national reconstruction effort. Venezuela, he asserted, requires colossal investments, but also the country’s comprehensive functioning: operational value chains, sufficient electricity generation, functional ports, legal certainty for investors, and personal safety for citizens. In a country with “institutional fragility,” no sector can function in isolation.

The oil agreement, presented by Washington as historic, grants control over 65 billion barrels across 17 fields and projects benefits for Venezuela totaling \$209 billion over 25 years. But for Machado, the problem is not the scale of the agreement, but rather who signs it and under what conditions. The democratic transition, he asserted, “has not yet taken place,” and without it, any strategic pact lacks stability and guarantees for the future.

His message, directed at both the public and the international community, seeks to establish a clear political stance: Venezuela needs allies, it needs investment, and it needs reconstruction, but none of that can be sustained without democratic legitimacy. Oil, he insists, belongs to the Venezuelan people, and any decision regarding it must be made with the country, not behind its back.

The Banco Exterior de Cuba and Raúl Castro's grandson are included in new U.S. sanctions.

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2026, 9:18 P.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), [UNITED STATES](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The economic impact of these sanctions is significant. All properties and interests of those designated under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen, and any transactions with them are prohibited. Photo © PLC of the Banco Exterior de Cuba.

CUBA-U.S.-SANCTIONS

Washington. PLC | The United States has launched a new package of sanctions that intensifies pressure on Cuba's ruling elite and on strategic sectors of the island's economy. The State Department announced the designation of five state-owned entities and Fidel Ernesto Castro Calis, Raúl Castro's grandson, under Executive Order 14404, a tool created to punish individuals and organizations linked to repression and economic networks controlled by the regime.

The sanctions directly affect the **Banco Exterior de Cuba**, a key player in the regime's international financial operations, and four state-owned enterprises that support the exploitation of natural resources and the energy infrastructure:

Nicarotec, which provides geological and mining support; **Cexni**, responsible for importing machinery and raw materials for the nickel and cobalt industries; **Abapet**, a subsidiary of CUPET in charge of procuring supplies for the oil sector; and **Comercial CUPET S.A.**, the state-owned oil company's negotiating arm for agreements and joint ventures.

The State Department maintains that these entities are part of a network designed to ensure that the country's resources remain under the control of a small power circle linked to the Castro family and the repressive apparatus of the Ministry of the Interior and the Armed Forces. According to Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the Cuban regime continues to pose "a profound and multifaceted threat" to U.S. national security and hemispheric stability.

The designation of Fidel Ernesto Castro Calis tightens the noose around the Castro family. His father, Alejandro Castro Espín, and his brother, Raúl Alejandro Castro Calis, had already been sanctioned in June. Washington argues that these figures are part of family networks that prop up the regime's repressive and economic architecture, benefiting from privileges while the population faces power outages, shortages, and a rapid deterioration of basic services.

The economic impact of these sanctions is significant. All properties and interests of those designated under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen, and any transactions with them are prohibited. Furthermore, foreign banks and companies that maintain ties with these entities are subject to secondary sanctions, which increases Cuba's financial isolation and hinders its ability to operate in international markets.

These measures are part of the Trump administration's strategy to cut off Cuba's access to oil and the resources that sustain its state apparatus. The UN has warned that the energy blockade could lead to a humanitarian crisis, as the island faces prolonged power outages and a collapse of its electrical infrastructure. Although Washington attributes the crisis to the regime's economic model, Havana insists that the sanctions are intended to provoke an internal collapse.

The new sanctions package confirms that U.S. policy toward Cuba has entered a phase of maximum pressure, aimed not only at punishing the ruling elite but also at dismantling the financial and logistical mechanisms that sustain its power. For the regime, the message is unequivocal: the network of economic control built over decades is now under direct attack. For the Cuban population, the immediate future is even more uncertain, caught between a " " state that fails to guarantee basic services and an international environment that tightens its restrictions day by day.

The economic impact of these sanctions is significant. All properties and interests of those designated under U.S. jurisdiction are frozen, and any transactions with them are prohibited. Photo © PLC of the Banco Exterior de Cuba.

The Cuban economy is collapsing at an unprecedented rate and is far surpassing the worst year of the Special Period

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2026, 4:31 P.M. |

[CULTURE](#), [ECONOMY](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



Monreal's calculation is based on a key figure: the PEBS fell by 13.4% in the first half of 2026 compared to the same period the previous year. Photo: Havana agricultural market. © PLC.

CUBA-ECONOMY

Havana. PLC | Cuban economist [Pedro Monreal's](#) warning, based on recently published official data on State Production of Goods and Services (PEBS), paints a picture that leaves no room for euphemisms: In 2026, Cuba is experiencing the greatest economic contraction in its contemporary history. According to his estimate, GDP could fall this year by between 26% and 31%, a figure that **doubles** the contraction of 1993—the most critical year of the Special Period—and **triples** ECLAC's forecast for 2026, which stands at 10.3%.

Monreal's calculation is based on a key piece of data: the PEBS fell by 13.4% in the first half of 2026 compared to the same period the previous year. Based on that

figure— —and considering two possible inflation scenarios—a deflator of 15% or 20%—the economist projects a GDP contraction of between 26.4% and 30.7%. In both cases, the decline far exceeds the 14.9% plunge recorded in 1993, which until now had been the lowest point in the Cuban economy since 1959.

Monreal emphasizes that a recession “is no longer part of the forecasts.” For years, the Cuban economy has been mired in a structural crisis marked by low productivity, misallocated investments, fiscal imbalances, a collapsed power grid, and incomplete or failed reforms. However, the recent worsening of the situation stems from an external geopolitical shock: the tightening of U.S. sanctions in 2026, which has cut off access to fuel, driven out airlines and hotel chains, and blocked payment channels essential for the inflow of foreign currency.

The result is a humanitarian crisis that, according to Monreal, exceeds the one experienced in the 1990s in several respects. The decline in tourism, fuel shortages, and the loss of foreign revenue have accelerated the deterioration of vital services, widened inequality, and deepened social despair. Hunger, prolonged power outages, a healthcare collapse, and mass exodus are already visible consequences of an economic contraction that not only shatters official forecasts but also redefines the scope of the contemporary Cuban crisis.

Although the exact GDP figure has not yet been statistically confirmed, the trend is unequivocal: there are no signs of improvement in the second half of the year. The private sector, which is becoming increasingly significant, still lacks official data, but the trajectory of the state sector—historically dominant—sets a pattern that is unlikely to be reversed for the remainder of the year.

Monreal’s conclusion is as forceful as it is disturbing: Cuba faces not only a deep recession but an economic collapse that surpasses the Special Period in both magnitude and complexity. The current crisis, he asserts, is more “intractable” than that of the 1990s because it combines accumulated structural failures with an external shock that has dismantled the country’s energy and financial pillars.

If you’d like, I can prepare a shorter version for the front page, a more technical one for the business section, or a feature story focusing on the social impact within the island.

Rubio Harsens His Assessment of Cuba and States That the Island Is Now “a Failed State”

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2026, 3:52 P.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), [UNITED STATES](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced yesterday the imposition of sanctions on five entities and eight individuals associated with the Cuban regime. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Department of State

U.S.-CUBA

Washington. PLC | Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s statements in his [interview with Brian Kilmeade](#) have marked a new turning point in Washington’s rhetoric on Cuba. Rubio, one of the most influential figures in U.S. policy toward the island, described the country as “a failed state” and argued that the current crisis is not a consequence of U.S. policy, but rather of the structural collapse of the Cuban economic model and the end of free oil supplies from Venezuela.

Rubio explained that for years the Cuban regime received Venezuelan crude oil at no cost, fuel that—he claimed—was not used to alleviate the population’s plight but was instead resold on the international market to obtain liquidity that ended up “in their pockets.” The capture of Nicolás Maduro in January 2026 and the sanctions that cut off traditional oil flows from Venezuela and Mexico left Cuba without its main energy source. Although U.S. companies have sent shipments destined for the Cuban private sector, these barely cover a few days of national consumption and do not compensate for the loss of the historic supply.

The Secretary of State insisted that the power outages currently paralyzing the island are not a new phenomenon nor are they attributable solely to a lack of fuel.

According to Rubio, Cuba's electrical grid has been deteriorating for years, operating with equipment from the 1940s and 1950s and without significant investment due to an economic model incapable of sustaining the country's basic infrastructure. "Their system doesn't work; it hasn't worked for five or seven years," he stated.

Rubio also noted that U.S. policy toward Cuba is defined by law, not by the will of an administration. He cited the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, which stipulates that there can be no full normalization between the two countries without verifiable progress toward a functioning democracy. "Policy toward Cuba is codified. It does not depend on political desires; it depends on the law," he emphasized.

During the interview, Kilmeade asked how long the current Cuban government might remain in power and what significance a transition to a representative system would have for the United States. Rubio avoided setting specific timelines but was categorical in his assessment: the only way forward for Cuba is to embark on an "irreversible" path toward becoming a functional and, over time, democratic state. Washington, he assured, is willing to play "a productive role" in that process.

The secretary of state's remarks come at a time when Cuba's energy, economic, and social crises are deepening, and as the region undergoes significant political changes. Rubio noted that several Latin American countries are moving toward more representative systems, while Cuba—isolated from its former suppliers and trapped in an outdated model—faces an extreme situation.

The interview with Kilmeade does not mark a radical shift in Rubio's stance, but it does reinforce a narrative that is gaining traction in Washington: Cuba is not facing a temporary crisis, but rather a structural collapse that demands profound transformation. For the U.S. government, that transformation cannot occur without real political change. For Havana, the Secretary of State's remarks are an unequivocal signal that its room to maneuver is narrowing.

Rubio details the oil agreement with Venezuela and links it directly to the democratic transition

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2026, 8:33 P.M. |

[UNITED STATES](#), [LATEST NEWS](#), AND [VENEZUELA](#)

U.S.-VENEZUELA OIL AGREEMENT

Caracas-Washington. PLC / Marco Rubio, U.S. Secretary of State, explained in an interview with Venezuelan journalist Sergio Novelli the key points of the oil agreement announced by Washington, which involves the development of 17 fields with more than 65 billion barrels of proven reserves. According to Rubio, the agreement is not a pact with the Venezuelan interim government, but rather an operation designed in collaboration with a private company, North American Blue Energy Partners (NABEP), which will serve as a model to attract new investments and normalize the functioning of the Venezuelan economy.

Rubio stated that he participated directly in the negotiations and that the agreement is part of a broader strategy to revive the country's energy industry and lay the groundwork for a future democratic transition. He insisted that Venezuela needs an economic system that operates under clear rules, free from corruption networks and looting schemes such as those that, according to him, characterized the Chavista years, with oil delivered to Cuba, China, and Russia under terms unfavorable to the country.

Regarding NABEP, a company linked to Venezuelan businessman Alejandro Betancourt, Rubio assured that the United States conducted exhaustive background checks and that there is no open investigation against the businessman on U.S. soil. He explained that the selection of the company was based on criteria of technical capacity and the need to professionalize the oil industry, increase production, and establish strict controls against corruption.

The agreement provides for long-term concessions that could last up to 100 years and an equity participation structure that includes the U.S. Department of Defense. Washington hopes this model will attract investments exceeding \$100 billion and help stabilize the Venezuelan economy before democratic elections are held. Rubio avoided setting a date for those elections but reiterated that "they must take place" and that figures such as nd María Corina Machado have the right to return to the country and participate in political life.

Rubio directly linked economic recovery to institutional reconstruction. He noted that a future legitimate government must inherit a functioning country, not a

paralyzed economy, and that the resources generated by investments must benefit the Venezuelan people and a democratic government, not power networks. In his view, the oil agreement is a key element in dismantling the system of corruption that, according to him, has dominated the industry for decades and in opening the door to a viable political transition.

Ortega and Murillo Deal Another Blow to Democracy in Nicaragua

BY FRANK ABEL ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2026, 8:20 P.M. |
[LATIN AMERICA](#) AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



*Congress President Gustavo Porras stated at the end of the session: “Unanimously approved.”
Instagram photo of Daniel Ortega and his wife, Rosario Murillo*

NICARAGUA

By Frank Abel - Prensa Libre Cuba

Havana, PLC | The Nicaraguan Congress approved a constitutional amendment yesterday that prohibits opposition parties from participating in elections and extends the presidential term from six to seven years. The measure also extends the terms of the co-president and other elected officials, as well as those of the heads of the Army and the Police, which will likewise be extended to seven years. The amendment must be voted on again on January 18, as the law requires that constitutional changes be approved in two legislative sessions.

The vote took place in the city of León, 90 kilometers northeast of Managua, and the amendment was approved unanimously. According to DW, the president of Congress, Gustavo Porras, declared at the end of the session: “Approved unanimously.”

Daniel Ortega, 80, who has governed the Central American country since 2007, has shared the presidency with his wife, Rosario Murillo, 75, since 2025, when she was appointed co-president. On July 19, during the anniversary of the Sandinista guerrilla victory that first brought him to power, Ortega stated: “There will be no more elections.”



Frank Abel

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

Cuban tourism is collapsing, leaving the island's hotel industry virtually paralyzed

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2026, 6:34 A.M. |

[CUBA](#) AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The impact is evident in the hotel infrastructure. 73% of the country's hotel rooms remain closed. Screenshot/Facebook

CUBA TOURISM

Stockholm. PLC | Between January and July 2026, the island received only 419,863 foreign visitors, a 63% drop compared to the same period the previous year. The figure—which in the past would have been unthinkable for a destination that once attracted more than four million tourists annually—reflects a decline that is accelerating month by month and has left the country operating at barely a fraction of its historical capacity.

The impact is evident in the hotel infrastructure. Seventy-three percent of the country's hotel rooms remain closed, according to data confirmed by international operators and travel agencies. This standstill is not solely due to the drop in demand, but also to the mass withdrawal of foreign chains that for decades sustained Cuba's tourism industry. The departure of these players has hollowed out the sector's operational structure and left the island without the service standards demanded by the global market.

Blue Diamond Resorts, until recently the fastest-growing foreign chain in Cuba, abandoned its 62 hotels after months of operating under conditions the company described as unsustainable. Iberostar closed 12 of its 18 properties and completed its withdrawal in July. Meliá, the brand that for years was synonymous with Cuban tourism in Europe, shut down its 34 hotels on July 24, after posting significant losses associated with its presence on the island. The departure of these companies

coincides with the imposition of U.S. sanctions against the military- conglomerate GAESA, which owns most of the hotels managed by international firms. The sanctions have limited access to fuel, disrupted air connectivity, and increased operational risks for any company linked to the sector.

The collapse of the Canadian market—historically the main source of tourists to Cuba—illustrates the magnitude of the decline. Between January and July, Canada sent 350,737 fewer visitors than in 2025. The drop cannot be explained solely by economic factors or competition from other Caribbean destinations. Travel advisories issued by Ottawa and London—which recommend avoiding non-essential travel to Cuba due to the supply crisis and operational instability—have had a direct impact on demand. Reduced flight schedules, a lack of fuel for domestic operations, and prolonged power outages have damaged the destination’s reputation and undermined the country’s ability to maintain a minimally competitive tourism product.

The decline in tourism has effects that extend beyond the sector. The reduction in foreign exchange earnings undermines the government’s ability to finance essential imports, affects employment in major tourist areas, and weakens the supply chain that depended on the hotel industry. The withdrawal of major international chains has left a void that cannot be filled by local operators, whose logistical and financial capacity is limited in the current context.

Tourism, which for decades served as Cuba’s economic showcase and one of its main engines of growth, now faces a scenario marked by a lack of air service, fuel shortages, deteriorating infrastructure, and a loss of business confidence. The combination of these factors has pushed the sector into a phase of retrenchment that is redefining the country’s economic landscape and raising questions about its ability to recover in the short and medium term.

Germany Accuses Russia of Drone Attack in Leipzig and Announces Diplomatic Retaliation, While Moscow Speaks of “Planted Evidence”

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, 9:20 P.M. |

[EUROPE](#), [RUSSIA](#), [UKRAINE](#), AND [THE EUROPEAN UNION](#)



Since then, other incidents have reinforced Berlin's suspicions. On August 21, a clandestine weapons cache was discovered near the German capital, which, according to leaks to the press, is linked to the Russian security service. File photo

Berlin. PLC | On Tuesday, Germany took the step it had been hinting at for weeks: it directly blamed Russia for the drone attack that occurred on August 4 at the Leipzig airport—an incident that put NATO on high alert and which Berlin considers one of the most serious acts of hybrid warfare against its territory in years. Interior Minister Alexander Dobrindt stated that the German investigation has identified “clear similarities” with previous operations linked to Russian intelligence services. Although he avoided elaborating on those similarities, the political message was unequivocal: Berlin is no longer referring to a “foreign power,” but to Russia.

The August 4 attack sparked an immediate reaction in Germany. A drone carrying explosives appeared just a few meters from a Ukrainian cargo plane parked at Leipzig Airport, which serves as a logistics hub for military shipments to Ukraine. The situation became even more puzzling when it emerged that the drone went undetected by authorities for four hours and that it was a truck driver who found it and, according to his own account, kicked it down. The incident fueled concerns about the vulnerability of Germany's critical infrastructure and about Russia's ability to operate within European territory.

Since then, other incidents have reinforced Berlin's suspicions. On August 21, a clandestine weapons cache was discovered near the German capital, which, according to leaks to the press, is linked to the Russian security service. This Tuesday, explosive devices were found at a power plant in the eastern part of the country, a facility that previously belonged to Vattenfall. For the German government, the pattern is clear: Russia is intensifying its sabotage campaign on European soil.

Germany's response was swift. Foreign Minister Johan Wadephul announced the closure of the Russian Consulate General in Bonn and the Russian House in Berlin, a cultural institution that Berlin considers to be manipulated by Moscow. In addition, Germany will tighten entry requirements for Russian citizens. The move has sparked immediate reactions across Europe. Ursula von der Leyen stated that she will discuss the incident with NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, who declared that Russian attempts to intimidate Europe "will fail." Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson expressed solidarity with Germany and described the attack as an act of Russian hybrid warfare.

Moscow responded furiously. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova called the accusations "absurd" and "unprecedented" and promised retaliation. The Russian Embassy in Berlin claimed that Germany is "fabricating an artificial escalation." President Vladimir Putin went even further: he accused Germany of having "planted evidence" to incriminate Russia and argued that Berlin is using the incident to divert attention from Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz's decline in the polls. According to Reuters, Putin insinuated that the German government is exploiting the attack to resolve internal problems.

Tensions between Berlin and Moscow are escalating at a time when Europe is facing a wave of hybrid attacks targeting critical infrastructure, digital networks, and logistical operations linked to military support for Ukraine. Leipzig Airport is one of the key hubs for that support, and the August 4 attack is seen as an attempt to disrupt the flow of weapons to Kyiv. For Germany, the incident marks a turning point: it is no longer a matter of suspicion, but of a formal accusation against Russia.

SCHOOL IS BACK IN SESSION, BUT THE CRISIS IS ALSO ENTERING THE CLASSROOMS

BY ANTONIO SUAREZ FONTICIELLA ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, 9:04 P.M. |

[CUBA](#) AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The problem isn't just that students are returning to school. The real challenge lies in the conditions under which they are returning. Image generated by artificial intelligence / ASF

By Antonio Suárez Fonticiella – Prensa Libre Cuba

Havana, PDF | September 1, 2026. — Today marks the official start of the 2026–2027 school year in Cuba. More than 1.5 million students are returning to the classroom, but for many Cuban families, the new school year begins under conditions far removed from what a child, teenager, or young adult should experience upon returning to school.

The reality for thousands of households is quite different: prolonged power outages, nights of unbearable heat, mosquitoes, difficulties in obtaining food, and families juggling to secure the basics before sending their children to school.

What's the point of talking about a new school year if many students arrive in the classroom after spending practically the entire night awake due to a lack of electricity?

How can a child concentrate in class when there is no food at home and the basic conditions for rest are lacking?

The problem isn't just that students are returning to school. The real challenge lies in the conditions under which they are returning.

While there is talk of education, the future, and the development of new generations, thousands of parents face a much more immediate struggle every day: finding food, enduring power outages, and figuring out how their children can study amid a crisis that drags on.

Cuba cannot ask its students to build the future while their families are barely managing to survive the present.

This September 1 marks more than just the start of a new school year. It also marks the start of yet another ordeal for Cuban families.



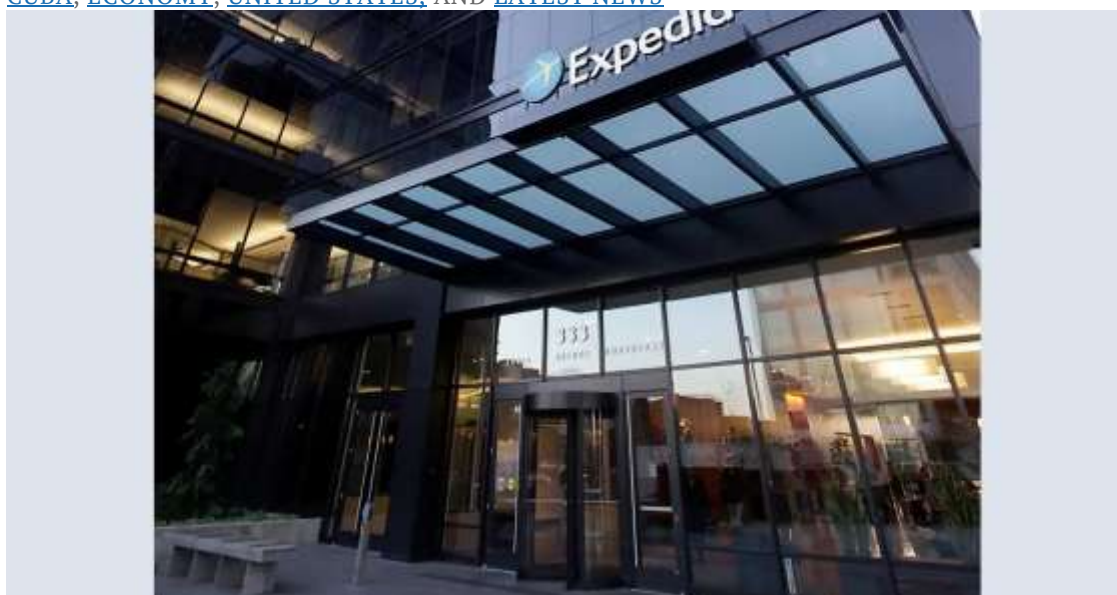
[Antonio Suarez Fonticiella](#)

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

USA Today Interview: Cuba's Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade Promotes Reforms Without Dismantling the Control Apparatus

Miami Jury Acquits Expedia: A Defeat for Cuban Exiles and a Blow to the Enforcement of the Helms-Burton Act

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, 8:37 A.M. |
[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), [UNITED STATES](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



For exiled families, the outcome is an emotional and legal blow. The lawsuit represented not only an attempt to recover lost assets but also a moral vindication in the face of decades of dispossession. Social media photo of the building housing Expedia in Bellevue, Washington.

CUBA-EXPEDIA

Miami. PLC | The verdict handed down in Miami against the families of Cuban exiles who sued Expedia marks a turning point in the judicial interpretation of the Helms-Burton Act and in the real prospects for property restitution for those who lost their properties following the confiscations of 1959. The case, closely followed by the U.S. press and reported by [The New York Times](#), concluded with a resounding victory for

Expedia after the jury determined that the plaintiffs failed to prove ownership of the land where several hotels in Cuba currently operate.

The lawsuit was based on Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which took effect in 1996 and allows U.S. citizens—including naturalized citizens—to sue companies that “traffic” in property confiscated by the Cuban government. The plaintiffs alleged that Expedia facilitated reservations at five hotels built on land that belonged to their families before the revolution. However, the jury concluded that there was insufficient evidence of ownership or official documents proving the specific confiscation of those properties. This lack of documentary evidence was decisive: since ownership could not be proven, all other legal arguments were dismissed.

The ruling comes amid a complex legal landscape. In 2025, another landmark case—Mario Echevarría v. Expedia over land in Cayo Coco—had initially resulted in a \$29.8 million verdict, but it was later overturned by a federal judge. The court determined that the plaintiffs failed to prove that Expedia acted “with knowledge and intent”—a central requirement of the law—and that the parent company could not be held liable for the actions of its subsidiaries.

The current case against Expedia reflects the same trend: courts are applying strict standards regarding the burden of proof, particularly with regard to proving ownership and the “intentional trafficking” requirement. Expedia argued that its operations in Cuba were conducted under travel licenses authorized during the Barack Obama administration, and although the jury did not get to evaluate that point, the lack of evidence regarding ownership made it unnecessary to delve into the legality of the bookings. The company hailed the verdict as a confirmation of its position.

For exiled families, the outcome is an emotional and legal blow. The lawsuit represented not only an attempt to recover lost assets but also a moral vindication in the face of decades of dispossession. The plaintiffs’ attorney alleged that Expedia “used these properties in alliance with Cuban communist partners,” but the jury remained strictly within the framework of the evidence.

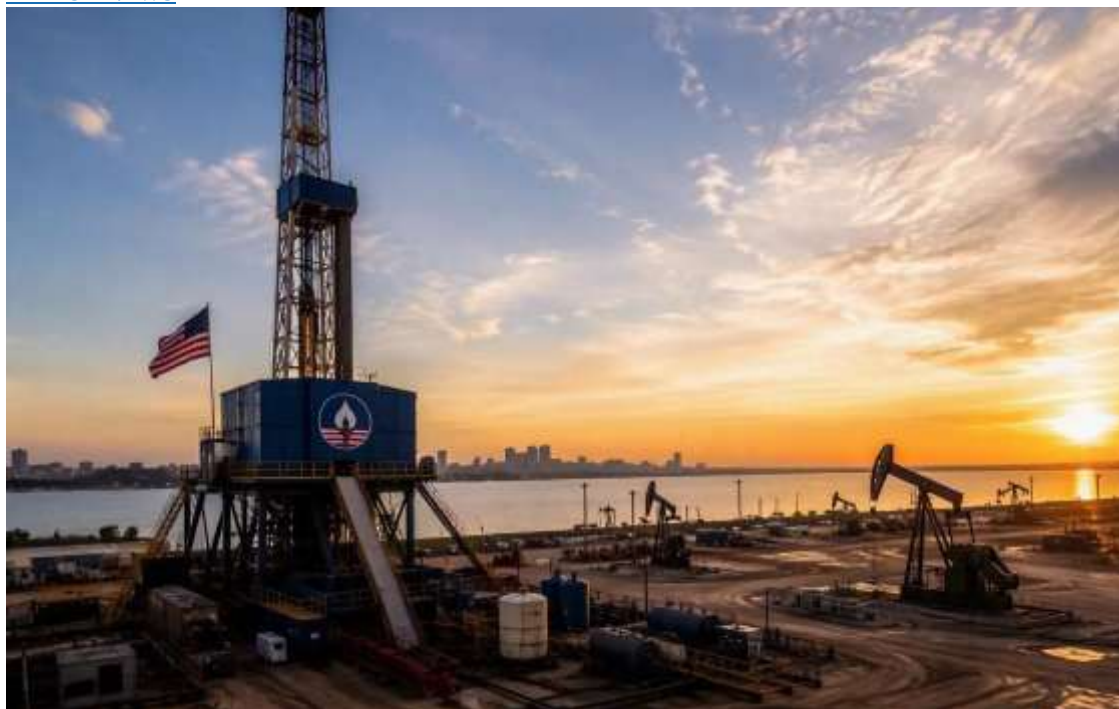
The verdict also has broader implications. Since Title III of the Helms-Burton Act was activated, dozens of lawsuits have sought to establish a path to civil liability against companies operating in Cuba. However, the courts have been reluctant to accept claims without solid documentation and have insisted that the law requires clear evidence of ownership and intentional trafficking. The decision in Miami reinforces this line of case law and lowers the prospects for success in future similar lawsuits.

For Prensa Libre Cuba, this case confirms an uncomfortable reality: the U.S. justice system is imposing evidentiary standards that many Cuban families—stripped of their property without documentation and expelled under emergency conditions—can hardly meet. The legal defeat does not erase the historical legitimacy of their claims, but it does show that the legal path in the United States is narrowing. The ruling in favor of Expedia not only closes a legal chapter but also redefines the battlefield for those seeking redress for the Cuban regime's confiscations.

The Century of Crude: How Washington and NABEP Are Rewriting Venezuela's Oil Architecture

BY PLC ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, 8:11 A.M. |

[LATEST NEWS](#)



The pact is not a simple commercial agreement. It is an architecture of power designed to secure a strategic supply for the United States for a century, while Venezuela is integrated into an energy governance framework administered from Washington. Image generated by artificial intelligence

U.S.-VENEZUELA OIL

Washington. PLC | The White House's confirmation of the "privatization" of Venezuela's oil sector through a 100-year contract marks a historic turning point in U.S.-Venezuela relations and redefines the hemisphere's energy balance. The agreement, officially unveiled on August 31, 2026, grants North American Blue Energy Partners (NABEP)—a private company owned by Venezuelan Alejandro Betancourt, who is under investigation in Switzerland and Spain for alleged money laundering linked to PDVSA—the concession for 17 oil fields with a combined 65 billion barrels in proven reserves.

The operation is not merely a commercial agreement: it is a structural reconfiguration of the continent's energy power dynamics. According to the State Department's fact sheet, the agreement grants the United States majority control

over those reserves, expanding its proven territorial reserves from 46 billion to more than 110 billion barrels. Washington presents it as “the largest oil deal in world history” and as a guarantee of its energy dominance for the next century, at no cost to the American taxpayer.

The pact’s structure reveals an architecture of political, military, and economic control. NABEP grants the Pentagon, through the Office of Strategic Capital, a 35% stake in its parent company, ensuring potential dividends of hundreds of billions of dollars for the United States. The State Department obtains the right to purchase, at cost, a guaranteed 20% of all current and future NABEP production, in addition to a preemptive option on the remaining 80%. This allows Washington to replenish its Strategic Petroleum Reserve—currently at historic lows—and secure supply for military uses and “other sensitive purposes.”

The agreement also stipulates that any appointment to NABEP’s board of directors may be vetoed by the U.S. government, and that the entire agreement falls under the exclusive jurisdiction of U.S. courts. The company commits to investing up to \$100 billion in oil infrastructure within Venezuela, an industry devastated by years of operational collapse.

The political dimension is inevitable. The interim government of Delcy Rodríguez—installed after Nicolás Maduro’s capture by U.S. forces in January—presents the agreement as a path to economic recovery. But analysts cited by *El País* warn that it will take years for the Venezuelan industry to operate at the scale required by the agreement, and that a future government could repudiate it. They also point to the shadows surrounding Betancourt, whose presence at the center of the continent’s largest oil deal adds an element of legal and reputational uncertainty.

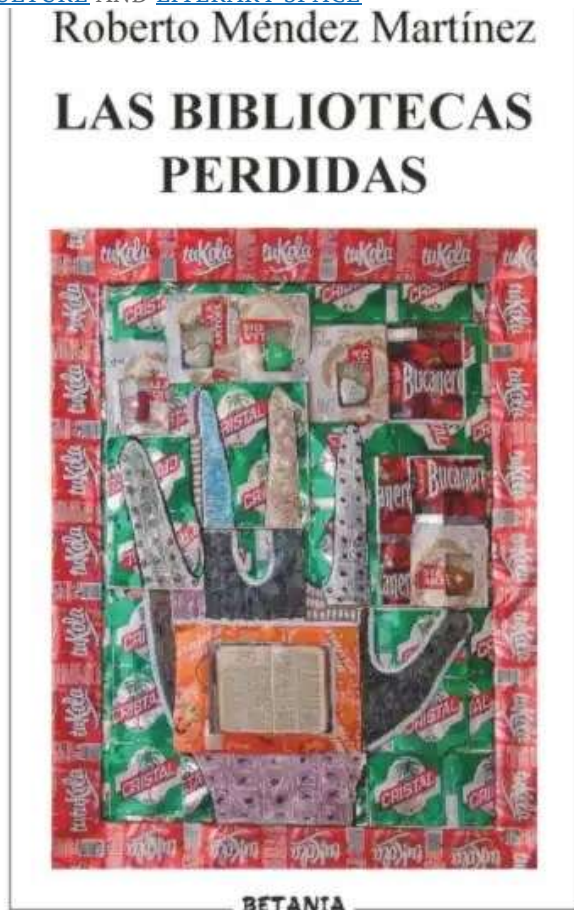
The United States secures a strategic supply in its hemisphere, displaces extra-regional actors, and consolidates an energy governance structure that transcends political circumstances. Venezuela, for its part, remains tied to a scheme of oil dependency administered from Washington, with a private company—owned by a controversial tycoon—acting as an intermediary for its most critical resource.

The pact ushers in a century of oil under U.S. tutelage. Its economic, legal, and geopolitical implications are only just beginning to unfold. But it is already clear that this is not merely an energy agreement: it is the establishment of a new oil order on the continent, with Venezuela as a strategic territory and NABEP as the instrument of a reconfiguration that will shape regional politics for decades to come.

NOSTALGIC PARISIAN SONGS BY AN EXILED CUBAN POET

BY JACOBO MACHOVER ON SEPTEMBER 1, 2026, 7:43 A.M. |

[CULTURE](#) AND [LITERARY SPACE](#)



Betania Editorial Photo

By Jacobo Machover | Paris. PLC Literary Space

A recent collection of poems by Roberto Méndez Martínez captivated me. It's titled [*Las bibliotecas perdidas*](#) and is published by [Betania](#).

I don't know the author personally, but I feel a connection to him through his brief reflections on exile (he was born in Cuba in 1958 and apparently lives in Extremadura). But above all, through his nostalgia for Paris. About what has become our adopted city, he has written "Ten Parisian Songs and a Fugue," included in this collection, from which I offer two excerpts below.

The first concludes with a reference to the painter Maurice Denis, one of the leading members of the "Nabis" group (a term meaning "Prophets"— —in Hebrew), along with Pierre Bonnard, Édouard Vuillard, Paul Sérusier, and others—a post-

Impressionist movement that marked the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries.

It turns out that this summer, we had the pleasure of discovering not the artwork but the house-museum of Maurice Denis, located in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, on the outskirts of Paris. The place is well worth the trip, since it's not easy to get there. It was a revelation for me—not so much because of the “Nabis” works, which I had seen several times at the Musée d'Orsay, but because of the paintings and sculptures the artist had collected—sculptures by Aristide Maillol and Antoine Bourdelle, particularly Bourdelle's moving **Dying Centaur**—which adorn a spectacular garden. And, above all, because of the mystical aspect of his entire body of work. “The ineffable Maurice Denis,” as the poet Roberto Méndez Martínez calls him, had built his own chapel, painting its stained-glass windows and creating large-scale Christian frescoes, before his “retour aux sources”—the salutary “return to the sources,” those of the Nabis.

I suppose it is the Catholic aspect that most interests the author of the “Parisian songs,” who proclaims his faith with delicacy and passion.

And with nostalgia—a desperate nostalgia for Paris, to which he “may never return.” Perhaps... Yet he knew how to evoke, like few others, with an erudition spanning from Blaise Pascal to Toulouse-Lautrec and so many others—philosophers, painters, musicians...—the artistic magic of this city, which, unfortunately, is being lost to a great extent, just like the libraries.

“The pine tree on Paulin Méry Street
is happier than I am
because, tied to the shade
of its narrow street
it is protected from the weather
drizzle, dawn, and oblivion.
The tree
that is barely known
lunatics and rentiers
is no happier than I am:
no surprise
can startle
his innocent refuge,
the limbo
that passes by every morning
and greets them with a cloud-hat,
as in the frescoes of the ineffable
Maurice Denis.”

“If I were to return to Paris,
 if I were to return,
 I’d sit at the Mogador
 and have a bowl of onion soup
 that tastes of bay leaves and tears,
 and for dessert, a summer-colored beret.
 If I were to return,
 which is unlikely,
 I’d go to gaze at a harlequin
 still carrying the scent
 of Spanish paprika.
 I’d take pictures of the schoolchildren
 or beg for mercy
 for the underground musicians
 and blind musicians.
 If I were to return to Paris,
 I’d buy a ticket
 for the carousel in the square
 just as the moon turns red.
 Maybe I’ll never return,
 but if I dared,
 I’d hug the pine tree on Paulin Méry Street
 and we’d cry together
 for the things we never experienced
 or simply the ones we’ve forgotten.”

(Roberto Méndez Martínez)



Jacobo Machover

*Jacobo Machover (Havana, 1954) is a writer, journalist, and university professor who has lived in France since 1963. A central figure in the Cuban exile community, he has dedicated himself to documenting the repression under the Castro regime, debunking official myths, and preserving the memory of the victims. Author of seminal works such as **The Hidden Face of Che** and **The Black Book of Castroism**, he is one of the most respected voices in Europe on Cuba and totalitarianism on the island. His novel **Memory of Centuries** has recently been reissued by Betania Publishing.*

Member of the editorial team at *Prensa Libre Cuba*.

The Criminalization of Darkness: The Regime Turns Its Energy Failure into a Criminal Case

BY PLC ON AUGUST 31, 2026, 8:44 P.M. |

[CUBA](#) AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The Prosecutor's Office statement describes thefts of dielectric oil, the removal of angle brackets, cut cables, and damage to high-voltage towers. These are real incidents, but they are not the cause of the blackouts or the energy crisis. Image generated by artificial intelligence

CUBA-CONVICTIONS

Havana. PLC | The figure is as revealing as it is grotesque: more than 460 criminal cases opened in Cuba for alleged crimes against the electrical grid between 2025 and the first half of 2026. The Attorney General's Office has announced sentences ranging from nine to twenty years in prison, asset forfeitures, confiscations, and pretrial detention for 87% of the defendants. Granma celebrates this on its front page as if it were a moral victory. But what this punitive crackdown truly reveals is the regime's desperate attempt to frame its own structural failure as a problem caused by "criminals," "saboteurs," and "internal enemies."

[The Attorney General's Office statement](#) describes thefts of dielectric oil, the removal of angle brackets, cut cables, and damage to high-voltage towers. These are real events, but they are not the cause of the blackouts or the energy crisis. They are the consequence of living in a country where the infrastructure is neglected, where poverty drives people to dismantle whatever they can sell, and where the state has

ceased to fulfill its basic function. A transformer without oil can affect a neighborhood; a cut power line can shut down a circuit. But none of these incidents explains why Cuba has suffered twelve nationwide blackouts in two years, seven of them in 2026 alone. No “vandal” causes a 45-year-old thermoelectric plant to catch fire, a turbine to collapse, or a distributed-generation engine to shut down due to a lack of fuel.

The regime knows this. That is why it needs a narrative that frames the crisis as an attack, not a failure. Since May 2025, the Supreme Court has ruled that any damage to the electrical infrastructure can be considered “sabotage,” punishable by up to thirty years in prison or even death. It is a semantic leap designed to justify repression and to avoid the question the government does not want to answer: Why does Cuba have an electrical system that crashes every week? Why does the island endure blackouts lasting twenty, thirty, or forty hours? Why are the power plants in ruins?

The answer is uncomfortable for those in power: because for decades the regime failed to invest in infrastructure. Because the thermal power plants operate with Soviet-era technology and lack spare parts. Because the transmission grid is a patchwork network that cannot meet demand. Because GAESA siphoned off resources that should have been allocated to modernizing the country. Because hotels were built instead of power plants. Because the priority was never the daily lives of Cubans, but rather the political survival of the elite.

The rhetoric of sabotage is the perfect alibi for refusing to admit this truth. Granma speaks of a U.S. “energy blockade,” but fails to mention that the Cuban electrical system had already collapsed before the oil embargo. It speaks of “criminals,” but fails to mention that the population is protesting because they have gone days without electricity, water, or gas. It speaks of “the full force of the law,” but fails to mention that the law is being used to punish desperation, not to correct state negligence.

The mass criminalization of the energy crisis is a symptom of something deeper: the regime has lost the ability to govern the country and retains only the ability to punish. It cannot guarantee electricity, but it can guarantee prison. It cannot repair the thermoelectric plants, but it can manufacture culprits. It cannot light up the island, but it can obscure the truth.

Cuba is not in the dark because of 460 people. It is in the dark because those in power never bothered to light it up. And every new criminal trial is a reminder that the regime would rather imprison its people than admit its own failure.

The Collapse of Spanish Business in Cuba

BY PLC ON AUGUST 31, 2026, 10:30 A.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), [LATEST NEWS](#), AND [EUROPEAN UNION](#)



The collapse of Spanish business in Cuba is, in reality, a symptom of a larger phenomenon: the implosion of the Cuban economic model and the regime's inability to sustain alliances that depended on a minimum level of institutional functionality. Image © PLC generated by artificial intelligence

SPAIN-CUBA BUSINESS

Madrid. PLC | For more than three decades, Spain was the most stable and influential economic partner within the Cuban regime's business ecosystem. No other European country achieved such a deep presence or such a functional relationship with the island's political leadership. Spanish hotel chains dominated tourism, exporters occupied strategic niches, and companies like Vima became essential cogs in the import system controlled by GAESA. That network, which for years generated profits and privileged access, is now crumbling. The collapse of Spanish business in Cuba is a direct reflection of the country's economic collapse and the exhaustion of a model that no longer guarantees either stability or profitability.

Vima is the clearest example of this trajectory. Since the 1990s, the Spanish company has become one of the main suppliers of food and agricultural products to Cuba. Its presence on the island was far from marginal: it operated from industrial zones controlled by GAESA, supplied dollar-denominated stores, hotels, and military

warehouses, and created specific subsidiaries to centralize operations. For years, Vima thrived in a captive market where competition was minimal and where the regime guaranteed exclusivity in exchange for commercial loyalty. The Spanish company adapted to the Cuban system with an efficiency that few foreign companies achieved, becoming a strategic partner of the military conglomerate.

But Cuba's economic decline has hit even the most deeply integrated players. The drop in purchasing power, the collapse of the peso market, the energy crisis, and the state's inability to sustain logistics have drastically reduced Vima's profitability. The company has had to resort to exports from the United States—taking advantage of the embargo's agricultural exemptions—to maintain its trade flow, and recently hired a lobbying firm in Washington linked to figures in the Trump administration and Marco Rubio's inner circle. This move reveals the fragility of the business: Vima needs political protection in the United States to continue operating in Cuba, and it needs to maintain its relationship with GAESA to retain access to a market that can no longer guarantee payments or stability.

Tourism, another pillar of the Spanish business, is undergoing an even deeper crisis. Meliá, Iberostar, Barceló, and other chains that for years controlled more than 70% of Cuba's hotel capacity are now operating at a constant loss. Occupancy rates are minimal, power outages paralyze basic services, infrastructure is deteriorating, and the regime cannot guarantee supplies or fuel. The decline in international tourism, combined with the internal crisis, has turned hotel operations into an exercise in endurance rather than a business. Several chains have begun closing hotels, scaling back operations, and abandoning projects that were once presented as strategic.

Foreign trade has not escaped the collapse either. Spain has exported billions of euros worth of goods to Cuba over the past five years, but the regime has accumulated unpaid debts exceeding 300 million. GAESA controls imports, distribution, and payments, and its lack of liquidity turns every transaction into a risk. Inflation, the devaluation of the peso, and the energy crisis have rendered even traditionally stable sectors—food, machinery, and beverages—unviable. Profitability is disappearing, and uncertainty has become the norm.

Added to this economic deterioration is a decisive political factor. For years, Spain acted as a barrier within the European Union to prevent sanctions against the Cuban regime. Governments of various political stripes defended the continuation of dialogue and cooperation, even as political repression intensified. That “ ” stance protected Spanish business interests and allowed Havana to retain a margin of international maneuver. But Cuba's economic collapse has undermined that logic. Today, Spain can no longer guarantee stability or profits for its companies, and the EU faces growing pressure to revise its policy toward Cuba. The old balance has been

broken: the regime no longer offers economic security, and Europe can no longer indefinitely sustain a relationship that yields no results.

The collapse of Spanish business in Cuba is, in reality, a symptom of a larger phenomenon: the implosion of the Cuban economic model and the regime's inability to sustain alliances that depended on a minimum level of institutional functionality. Companies like Vima, which for decades thrived within GAESA's militarized system, now need to lobby in Washington to survive. The hotel chains that once dominated tourism are operating at a loss. Exporters face chronic non-payment. For decades, Spain was the partner that bet the most on Cuba. Today, it is the partner that stands to lose the most.

The collapse is not merely a business failure. It is evidence that the Cuban regime can no longer sustain even the relationships that were most favorable to it. And in that vacuum, the island finds itself more isolated, more impoverished, and more dependent on actors who seek not cooperation, but strategic influence.

Cuba's Black Sunday

BY PLC ON AUGUST 31, 2026, 9:45 A.M. |
[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



Starting early this morning, the island entered a cycle of power outages that affected more than 70% of the country, leaving millions of people without electricity for more than twenty consecutive hours in Havana and up to three days in several inland provinces. Photo from social media.

CUBA-CRISIS

Havana. PLC | Yesterday, Sunday, August 30, was marked as one of the darkest days of the Cuban energy crisis. Starting early this morning, the island entered a cycle of power outages that affected more than 70% of the country, leaving millions of people without electricity for more than twenty consecutive hours in Havana and up to three days in several inland provinces. The Electric Power Union acknowledged that available generation capacity was insufficient to meet even one-third of national demand, and that the system was operating on the brink of technical collapse.

Havana was at the epicenter of the unrest. In Vedado, residents of Calle N took to the streets with pots and pans and shouts after going more than a day without electricity. In El Fanguito, about fifty people, mostly women, protested again as they had done weeks earlier, when they blocked Avenida 23 after two days without power, water, or gas. In Lawton, Circuit A465 suffered outages lasting nearly 48 hours, and just three hours after service was restored, the area was plunged into darkness once

again. The sequence of blackouts and failed reconnections fueled frustration and a sense of abandonment in neighborhoods where protests have become a recurring occurrence since March.

The social consequences were immediate. In neighborhoods across Havana, trash that had piled up for days without collection began to burn on street corners where residents lit makeshift bonfires to illuminate the streets. In the interior of the country, blackouts lasting more than 72 hours paralyzed businesses, hospitals, and basic services. The economy, already battered by a prolonged contraction, suffered another setback: without electricity, there is no production, no transportation, and no commerce. “Black Sunday” made it clear that the energy crisis is now the main trigger of social unrest in Cuba.

The government responded with its usual playbook: a police presence in protest zones, official statements attributing the crisis to the U.S. embargo, and promises of recovery that are not backed by technical data. The public, however, perceives the crisis as structural and believes that the announced solutions—new solar farms, partial repairs, and international donations—are insufficient to reverse a system that is crumbling. The recent arrival of thousands of photovoltaic systems donated by China, while useful for essential services, does not change the reality of a country whose power grid depends on obsolete plants and scarce fuel.

The Secret Bridge Between Berroa and Washington: Vima, GAESA, and Lobbyists Linked to Trump and Rubio

BY PLC ON AUGUST 31, 2026, 8:02 A.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), [UNITED STATES](#), [EUROPE](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



Vima USA Ltd, headquartered in New York and Miami, operates precisely within this framework: it purchases U.S. products and exports them to Cuba through the state-owned companies controlled by GAESA. Photo © PLC created by artificial intelligence.

CUBA-VIMA-GAESA

Stockholm. PLC | The presence of Vima Foods in Cuba is one of the most revealing examples of how the regime has, since the 1990s, established an economic system in which foreign companies operate within a military network that controls imports, distribution, and retail trade. Far from being an anomaly, the case of Vima shows how GAESA's structure has turned food into a strategic business and how private European and U.S. companies have found room to thrive in a market that, officially, remains under embargo.

Vima began operating in Cuba during the Special Period, when the government opened selective loopholes to attract foreign capital that could sustain critical sectors. Over time, the Spanish company became one of the main food suppliers to dollar-denominated stores, hotels, and military-controlled retail chains. Its operational headquarters in Berroa, an industrial zone under GAESA's control, is a symbol of that integration: no foreign company can thrive in that space without the military conglomerate's consent.

The relationship with GAESA was cemented by the expansion of stores operating in freely convertible currency—a system designed to attract foreign exchange and which excluded the peso market. Vima became a preferred supplier to these stores, managed by Tiendas Caribe and Cimex, both under military control. The creation of Vima Caribe, a wholly foreign-owned subsidiary, allowed for the centralization of operations and deepened the regime's dependence on its imports. In 2024, the company reported more than 49 million euros in revenue from Cuba—nearly half of its global turnover—a figure that reveals the scale of the business.

The key question is how Vima manages to export food from the United States to Cuba without violating the embargo. The answer lies in the legal framework created by Washington since 2000, when the Sanctions Reform Act allowed agricultural and medical exports to Cuba under strict conditions. These sales must be paid for in advance, no credit may be extended, and they must be destined for authorized entities. Vima USA Ltd, headquartered in New York and Miami, operates precisely within this framework: it purchases U.S. products and exports them to Cuba through the state-owned companies controlled by GAESA. The regime charges for logistics, Vima makes a profit, and Washington maintains the narrative that agricultural sales do not directly strengthen the repressive apparatus. In practice, however, these operations fuel the military-commercial network that monopolizes the distribution of food purchased with foreign currency.

Vima's most recent move—hiring the lobbying firm Continental Strategy LLC—adds a political dimension to the business. The contract, signed in July for \$30,000, includes activities in trade, the food industry, and foreign relations, as well as the search for opportunities in Latin America. What is significant is not only the content of the contract but also who makes up the lobbying team: Francisco Petrirena, Carlos Trujillo, and Eric Farnsworth—figures linked to President Donald Trump's administration and Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Trujillo served as ambassador to the OAS and was one of the architects of Trump's hemispheric policy; Farnsworth has been an influential figure in relations between Washington and Latin America; Petrirena has worked in organizations close to the Republican Party.

The presence of these names suggests that Vima is seeking more than just technical advice. In a context where the Trump administration has tightened sanctions against GAESA and increased pressure on foreign companies doing business with the military conglomerate, Vima needs intermediaries capable of navigating the complex intersection of law, politics, and business. The Spanish company depends on Cuba as a market, but it also depends on the United States as a supplier. Its survival requires that both worlds continue to communicate, even as bilateral relations become more hostile.

Vima's case illustrates how the Cuban economy functions as a militarized system where foreign companies operate under supervision and where U.S. law—far from completely blocking trade—allows for niches that the regime exploits to sustain its financial structure. It also shows how European companies turn to U.S. lobbyists to protect business dealings that, while legal, fall into the gray area of Washington's foreign policy.

For GAESA, Vima is another piece in its strategy of absolute control over food imports and distribution. For Vima, Cuba is a captive market where the company can reap high profits thanks to the absence of real competition and the country's structural dependence on imports. For Washington, these operations serve as a reminder that the embargo has never been an airtight wall, but rather a system of valves that open and close depending on the political climate.

Taken together, this web of connections reveals an uncomfortable truth: the Cuban economy, even in its most basic aspect—food—is deeply intertwined with military interests, foreign companies, and political decisions made in Washington. Vima operates within this triangle, and its history offers a window into how economic power truly functions on the island.

Havana in Putin's War: The Regime Facilitates the Dispatch of Cubans to the Ukrainian Front

BY PLC ON AUGUST 30, 2026, 4:03 P.M. |

[CUBA](#), [RUSSIA](#), [UKRAINE](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The regime's involvement is driven by geopolitical and economic considerations. Russia is currently Cuba's main financial and political backer, and participation in the war offers Havana a way to strengthen that alliance at a time of extreme internal crisis. Social media photos of Cuban soldiers recruited by Russia for the war against Ukraine.

RUSSIA-CUBA MERCENARIES

Stockholm. PLC | Cuba has become the main hub for recruiting Latin American fighters for the Russian army in the war against Ukraine. What began as an irregular flow of young people lured by economic promises has, according to recent investigations, transformed into a structured phenomenon in which the Havana regime not only tolerates but actively facilitates the departure of citizens to Russia to join military units deployed on the front lines. The scale of the phenomenon—estimated at thousands of recruits—reveals a political dimension that goes beyond the official narrative of “human trafficking” and places the Cuban state at the center of an international war operation.

Reports from Ukrainian intelligence, the [International Federation for Human Rights \(FIDH\)](#), and various journalistic investigations agree that Cuba is currently the largest source of foreign fighters for Russia in Latin America. The figures range from 5,000 to 20,000 Cubans recruited since 2023, many of them through contracts promising salaries of \$2,000 to \$3,500 per month, one-time bonuses, and the possibility of obtaining Russian citizenship. However, an analysis [by the Institute of Global Affairs at the University of Navarra](#) adds a crucial element: the Cuban government's direct involvement in the logistics, facilitation, and political cover for these deployments.

The study notes that the recruitment structure could not operate without the consent of Cuban authorities. The expedited issuance of passports, the absence of immigration controls, tolerance toward recruitment agencies and networks operating openly on the island, and coordination with Russian institutions point to a level of state involvement that contradicts Havana's official version. The article emphasizes that "the Cuban state apparatus has permitted, facilitated, and covered up the departure of citizens to Russia for military purposes," and that the "human trafficking" narrative serves as a diplomatic shield to avoid international accountability.

The accumulated evidence reinforces this interpretation. Recruits travel with valid documentation, facing no obstacles at Cuban airports, and many of them have stated that they were told they would be participating in civilian work in Russia. Once on Russian territory, their passports are confiscated, they are issued uniforms, and they are sent to combat zones with minimal training. Ukrainian intelligence estimates that the life expectancy of these fighters is around 150 days and that dozens of Cubans have died on the front lines, although Havana has not officially acknowledged any casualties.

The regime's involvement is driven by geopolitical and economic considerations. Russia is currently Cuba's main financial and political supporter, and participation in the war offers Havana a way to strengthen that alliance at a time of extreme internal crisis. Furthermore, sending young people abroad reduces social and economic pressure within the country, against a backdrop of mass emigration and the rapid deterioration of living conditions. Havana benefits from its relationship with Moscow without publicly bearing the political cost of sending citizens to fight in someone else's war.

The phenomenon also has profound consequences for Cuban society. The departure of thousands of young people of working age exacerbates the demographic crisis, while the lack of government transparency leaves families without information about their children's fate. The absence of protective mechanisms, institutional

opacity, and the exploitation of poverty turn this recruitment into a form of transnational exploitation in which the Cuban state acts as a facilitator.

Cuba thus appears not only as a territory vulnerable to Russian recruitment but also as an active player in supplying combatants for a war that is not its own. The regime's involvement transforms the phenomenon into a matter of state and raises questions about Havana's international responsibility for its indirect participation in a conflict that has redefined the European order. In practice, thousands of Cubans are being sent to a distant war while the government denies its role and the population faces a crisis that is pushing many to accept contracts that end up on the Ukrainian front.

Cuba is reorganizing its domestic trade, but the reform is hampered by structural limitations

BY PLC ON AUGUST 30, 2026, 7:20 A.M. |

[CUBA](#), [ECONOMY](#), AND [LATEST NEWS](#)



The update aims to simplify procedures, recognize the growing influence of non-state actors, and digitize processes that for decades have been mired in rigid bureaucracy. Photo: MINCIN building—PLC

CUBA-DOMESTIC TRADE

Havana. PLC | The regulatory package presented on Friday by the Ministry of Domestic Trade (Mincin)—Decrees 167 and 168 and several complementary resolutions—marks the most ambitious attempt in years to reorganize the Cuban commercial sector. The update seeks to simplify procedures, recognize the growing influence of non-state actors, and digitize processes that have been bogged down in rigid bureaucracy for decades. However, despite the rhetoric of modernization, the new regulations run up against the same constraints that have stalled previous reforms: a market plagued by shortages, a hyper-regulatory state, and an economy lacking the real capacity to sustain the announced transformation.

Decree 167, “On Domestic Trade,” is the conceptual cornerstone of the reform. According to the Official Gazette, it aims to systematize a fragmented legal

framework and update regulations dating back to the 1980s and 1990s, incorporating principles of transparency, sustainability, and the public interest. Consumer protection is presented as a priority, in line with constitutional provisions guaranteeing access to quality goods and services. However, the regulation does not address the central problem: the lack of supply. In a country where the retail sector operates with minimal inventory, where the food service industry is in crisis, and where prices are skyrocketing without effective control, consumer protection remains merely a declarative statement.

Decree 168, which regulates the Central Commercial Registry, introduces digitization as a key tool. Registration will be mandatory for all entities—both public and private—and a “sworn statement” is required to commence operations. It also stipulates that establishments that do not bill in the national currency must pay for their licenses in foreign currency, and it establishes an updated penalty system. In theory, this should bring order to the commercial ecosystem and reduce administrative discretion. In practice, it entails new costs for private businesses, many of which already operate on tight margins and face an economic environment marked by inflation, shortages, and regulatory instability.

Complementary resolutions—such as the classification system for businesses and the fee schedules in national currency and foreign currency—round out the framework. But the problem is not a lack of regulations: it is the government’s ability to enforce them. The announced digitization requires technological infrastructure that is not guaranteed, stable connectivity that does not exist throughout the country, and trained personnel that Mincin itself acknowledges as insufficient. Furthermore, mandatory registration and the new penalty regime may become a mechanism of control rather than a tool for regulation, especially in a context where non-state actors have grown without the government managing to keep pace with that growth through coherent policies.

The regulatory package comes at a critical moment: domestic trade is one of the sectors hardest hit by the economic crisis, and the population is facing a rapid deterioration in access to basic goods. The reform attempts to address this reality, but it does so without addressing the structural factors that cause it: the de facto dual currency system, the lack of business autonomy, the absence of a functional wholesale market, and the persistence of a state model that continues to prioritize control over efficiency.

Ultimately, Decrees 167 and 168 represent an effort to modernize the legal framework for domestic trade, but their impact will depend on something that regulations cannot mandate: the state’s actual capacity to guarantee supply, regulatory stability, and an economic environment where private actors and state- s can operate without being stifled. Without these elements, the reform runs the risk

of becoming yet another exercise in legal reform with no tangible effects on the daily lives of Cubans.

Washington Takes One-Fifth of Venezuela's Oil: An Unprecedented Agreement Full of Unknowns

BY PLC ON AUGUST 30, 2026, 6:51 A.M. |

[UNITED STATES](#), [LATEST NEWS](#), AND [VENEZUELA](#)



Trump claims the deal will double U.S. oil reserves, lower gas prices, and cost taxpayers nothing. However, the contractual details remain unclear. File photo.

U.S.-VENEZUELA OIL AGREEMENT

Washington/Caracas PLC / The oil agreement announced by Donald Trump and confirmed by Venezuela's interim president, Delcy Rodríguez, abruptly redefines the relationship between the two countries and opens up an unprecedented geopolitical scenario in the hemisphere. According to official statements, the United States will gain majority control over more than 65 billion barrels of Venezuelan oil—approximately one-fifth of the world's largest proven reserves—through a pact that Trump has described as “the largest oil deal in world history.”

The announcement comes just months after Nicolás Maduro's capture by U.S. forces on January 3, an event that marked a complete reversal of bilateral policy. Since then, Washington has lifted sanctions, normalized relations, and negotiated directly with Rodríguez, who now presents the agreement as an opportunity for the country's economic “rebirth.” The agreement calls for the development of 17 strategic oil fields, private investments exceeding \$100 billion, and a projected revenue stream of more than \$209 billion in taxes for the Venezuelan government.

Trump maintains that the operation will double U.S. oil reserves, lower gasoline prices, and come at no cost to taxpayers. However, the contractual details remain unclear: the governance conditions, oversight mechanisms, and the actual scope of the “majority control” that Washington would obtain over the oil fields have not

been disclosed. Chevron and Halliburton are among the companies involved, according to U.S. media reports.

In Caracas, the reaction has been mixed. Rodríguez insists that Venezuela “retains ownership and sovereignty” over its resources, but the lack of clarity has raised doubts even among government supporters. The population, battered by years of crisis and the devastating effects of June’s earthquake, views the agreement with a mixture of hope and mistrust. “We don’t know who will benefit from this,” says one citizen quoted by AFP.

The harshest criticism comes from political and academic circles. Economist Ricardo Hausmann believes the interim government lacks the legitimacy to sign an agreement that could require a constitutional amendment. In the United States, both Democrats and Republicans have demanded explanations regarding the destination of the investments and the role of Congress, which may have to approve part of the funding if public funds are used.

The agreement also has geopolitical implications. For Washington, it represents an opportunity to displace Chinese influence in Venezuela’s energy sector and secure long-term supply. For Venezuela, it means opening its oil industry to unprecedented foreign intervention at a time when its infrastructure is severely deteriorated and requires massive investments before any barrels can be extracted and sold. Experts agree that it will be years before the United States can fully benefit from the oil covered by the agreement.

Despite the magnitude of the pact, uncertainties remain: its duration—Rodríguez speaks of 25 years, while some media outlets mention 100—its constitutionality, Venezuela’s actual capacity to absorb investments, and the political stability needed to sustain an agreement of this scale. What is clear is that oil is once again at the heart of a bilateral relationship marked by power, economic urgency, and geopolitical ambition.

See you next week!

The Editorial Staff of Prensa Libre Cuba

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