

## ACERE FACT SHEET

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# Is Cuba a National Security Threat?

### SOME FACTS ABOUT CUBA & U.S. CUBA POLICY

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The Trump administration has declared Cuba an "unusual and extraordinary" national security threat to justify the broadest and most impactful expansion of U.S. sanctions and economic warfare in decades, yet it has not presented evidence supporting that determination. Unconfirmed —and even outright rejected— reports of alleged Chinese and Russian intelligence bases, and Iranian drones more recently, have been repeated as proven facts without any scrutiny, evidence or oversight. Former senior U.S. national security, intelligence and counterterrorism officials, military experts, Members of Congress who recently visited Cuba, and even the administration's own intelligence and military cooperation with Havana disown claims that Cuba poses an imminent threat to the United States. Furthermore, evidence on the impact of U.S. Cuba policy indicates that it is deepening Cuba's humanitarian crisis, increasing regional instability and migration pressures, straining relations with U.S. allies, and ultimately undermining—not advancing—American national security interests. Escalating confrontation while dismantling productive security cooperation (in counternarcotics, counterterrorism, migration, border security, and law enforcement) does not make the United States safer.

### The Trump administration is laying the ground for unlawful military action against Cuba

The Alliance for Cuba Engagement and Respect (ACERE) warns that **the Trump administration is using sweeping, unsubstantiated and false national security claims to justify an unprecedented escalation of its campaign against Cuba**, raising serious concerns that these allegations could be used to support wholly illegal military action without adequate public scrutiny, oversight or congressional authorization.

**After more than six months of an extremist “maximum pressure” Cuba policy, it has failed to bring regime change. But it has contributed to a severe humanitarian crisis just ninety miles from U.S. shores, while reducing opportunities for cooperation on migration, counternarcotics, law enforcement, and regional security.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, domestic and international opposition to the Trump-Rubio’s Cuba policy is growing**, as its unlawful extraterritorial reach continues to expand impacting even some of our closest allies. In July, the United Nations overwhelmingly rejected —yet again— the collective punishment of the entire Cuban people by the U.S., and the High Commissioner on Human Rights has consistently called for a lifting of all U.S.-imposed sanctions which are directly causing prolonged civilian suffering, illness and death.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ACERE Statement: “ACERE Stresses That U.S. Policy Is Causing Blackouts and Deaths in Cuba,” July 14, 2026, <https://acere.org/acere-stresses-that-u-s-policy-is-causing-blackouts-and-deaths-in-cuba/>

<sup>2</sup> ACERE Statement: “ACERE Welcomes Long-Overdue Congressional Oversight of U.S. Cuba Policy,” July 15, 2026, <https://acere.org/acere-welcomes-long-overdue-congressional-oversight-of-u-s-cuba-policy> and ACERE Press Release: “U.N. Emergency Debate Highlights Global Opposition to U.S. Fuel Blockade and Sanctions Against Cuba, as Humanitarian Crisis Deepens,” July 7, 2026, <https://acere.org/u-n-debate-highlights-global-opposition-to-u-s-fuel-blockade>

**Recent reporting and analysis suggest that the Trump administration is planning a military action in Cuba—including a targeted attack with missiles and drones, but also an Army-led air assault involving thousands of U.S. soldiers—in the near future,** possible this summer or before the midterm elections.<sup>3</sup> This follows reconnaissance missions and naval operations, reiterated threats by President Trump and Secretary Rubio, and obscure polls and reports that can be used to justify a military action against Cuba.<sup>4</sup> Thus far, there has been a near total absence of media and Congressional scrutiny of the claims made by the Trump administration to justify its Cuba policy of maximum pressure and regime change.

### **Layers of executive orders, sanctions, reports, statements and declarations, all fail to provide actual evidence**

Following the U.S. military operation in Venezuela in January, the administration rapidly intensified its pressure campaign against Cuba. It invoked extraordinary emergency powers through Executive Orders 14380 and 14404, **declaring Cuba an "unusual and extraordinary threat" to U.S. national security and foreign policy. Such a determination is among the most serious that a President can make under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act and therefore demands compelling evidence. Yet the executive order, the accompanying White House fact sheets, and the subsequent official statements fail to present intelligence assessments, investigative findings, or other factual documentation demonstrating that Cuba poses an imminent or extraordinary threat to the United States.** Instead, the administration relies largely on broad assertions concerning Cuba's relationships with Russia, China, Iran, Hamas, and Hezbollah, as well as allegations of domestic repression, without publicly substantiating how these claims justify a national emergency under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.<sup>5</sup>

On July 11, 2026, Secretary Rubio accused Cuba of promoting terrorism in the U.S. and the region in a State Department statement. The short statement accused the Cuban government of “presenting a serious national security threat to our nation by hosting hostile foreign military, intelligence, terror, and operations less than 100 miles from our homeland and supporting dangerous subversive and terror networks in the United States itself.”<sup>6</sup>

On July 20, 2026, **the State Department released a report titled *Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism*<sup>7</sup> that reads less like a national security assessment than an ideological manifesto intended to rally political support for continued escalation—even military**

<sup>3</sup> “Senior defense officials looking at Cuba military options,” July 15, 2026 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cuba-military-options-pentagon/>;

<sup>4</sup> ACERE Policy Insight: “A Military Action Against Cuba Seems Imminent,” ACERE Newsletter Issue No. 26 - April 2026, <https://acere.org/acere-insights-issue-no-26>

<sup>5</sup> Executive Order 14380, *Addressing Threats to the United States by the Government of Cuba* (January 29, 2026) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/01/addressing-threats-to-the-united-states-by-the-government-of-cuba/>; Executive Order 14404, *Imposing Sanctions on Those Responsible for Repression in Cuba and for Threats to United States National Security and Foreign Policy* (May 1, 2026) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2026/05/imposing-sanctions-on-those-responsible-for-repression-in-cuba-and-for-threats-to-united-states-national-security-and-foreign-policy/>; and accompanying White House Fact Sheet on EO 14380 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2026/01/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-addresses-threats-to-the-united-states-by-the-government-of-cuba/> and White House Fact Sheet on EO 14404 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2026/05/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-imposes-sanctions-on-cuban-regime-officials-responsible-for-repression-and-threats-to-u-s-national-security-and-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Five Years After the July 11 Demonstrations, Cubans Deserve A Better Future,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio Press Statement, July 11, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2026/07/five-years-after-the-july-11-demonstrations-cubans-deserve-a-better-future/>

<sup>7</sup> “Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism,” State Department Report, July 20, 2026, <https://www.state.gov/cuba-the-capital-of-21st-century-communism>

**intervention—against Cuba.** This State Department's report offers an unpersuasive justification for the maximum-pressure policy long championed by Secretary Rubio, yet widely rejected by national security and intelligence experts. Far from demonstrating that Cuba constitutes an "unusual and extraordinary threat" under the IEEPA, the report blames Cuba for whole social movements, Left organizations and even elected officials in Latin America and the U.S., based entirely on ideological arguments reminiscent of McCarthy-era persecution campaigns rather than any verifiable evidence.

### Contradictions within the Trump administration itself

The Trump administration's own actions also contradict its central claim. If Cuba truly represented an extraordinary threat to U.S. national security, it is difficult to explain the following:

- **The most recent SOUTHCOM Posture Statement from March 2026 does not conclude that Cuba possesses either the capability or the intention to attack the United States.** From a military intelligence perspective, a threat requires both capability and intent, and Cuba presents neither. In fact, the report focuses on the activities of external powers like Russia and China operating in the region—it does not indicate that the Cuban military poses a threat.
- **Recent high-level intelligence and military contacts demonstrate that channels for security cooperation remain open—an unusual posture toward a country purportedly posing an extraordinary threat requiring emergency powers.** CIA Director John Ratcliffe traveled to Havana in May to discuss economic stability, intelligence cooperation, and law enforcement with senior Cuban officials, who defended their willingness to cooperate on matters of mutual security and that Cuba poses no threat to the United States. U.S. Southern Command chief, General Francis Donovan, met Cuban military senior officials near Guantanamo Bay Naval Base to discuss operational security at Guantanamo's perimeter also in May.
- **State Department reports, Congressional Research Service analyses, presidential directives, and other official U.S. government documents demonstrate that U.S. national security agencies have historically viewed cooperation with Cuba as serving American interests in areas such as counternarcotics, counterterrorism, migration, border security, and law enforcement.** The State Department's own *Country Reports on Terrorism* recognized bilateral working groups on counterterrorism, counternarcotics, border security, human smuggling, and financial crimes, while describing Cuban law enforcement and border security as effective partners against security threats. The Congressional Research Service likewise reports that U.S.-Cuba counternarcotics cooperation expanded significantly after diplomatic relations were restored, including direct coordination between the U.S. Coast Guard, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and Cuban authorities. Cuba has shared real-time intelligence on suspected drug-trafficking vessels, assisted U.S. criminal prosecutions, and maintained operational communication with the U.S. Coast Guard because both countries share a vital interest in preventing narcotics trafficking, terrorism, migrant smuggling, and transnational crime in the Florida Straits and Caribbean basin.<sup>8</sup>

### Experts and former officials agree that Cuba is not a threat

The weakness of the Trump administration's case is underscored by experts with direct responsibility and experience for U.S. national security policy.

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<sup>8</sup> Congressional Research Service Report R45657 "Cuba: U.S. Policy in the 116th Congress and Through the Trump Administration" by Sullivan, 202, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45657>

Alleged national security threat by Cuba is based on claims that are vague, unproven or bluntly false, and there is no indication that Cuba is a threat of any kind to the U.S.<sup>9</sup> Fulton Armstrong, a former national intelligence officer and the U.S. intelligence community's most senior subject-matter analyst for Latin America said that **"...there has never been, in 63 years since the Cuban missile crisis, any evidence of Cuba [having] offensive intentions against the United States or southern Florida or Guantanamo."**<sup>10</sup>

Alleged Russian and Chinese intelligence facilities in Cuba have frequently been presented in political speeches and media reports as established facts. Yet, many of these reports rely on anonymous sources or infer conclusions that extend beyond the underlying evidence;<sup>11</sup> even when **the original report is not conclusive about its findings and it would be very difficult for Cuba to hide such activities.**<sup>12</sup>

Alleged Cuban plans to attack the U.S. using Iranian drones have been reported by media organizations and influential politicians as facts; but the original report is by a journalist close to Secretary Rubio whose sources are "anonymous officials."<sup>13</sup> **Even if Cuba had acquired 300 drones, there is no evidence that there is a plan to attack U.S. territory and it would be "suicidal."**<sup>14</sup>

Alleged sponsoring of terrorism is a claim that started in the first Trump administration. Jason M. Blazakis, who directed the State Department's Office of Counterterrorism Finance and Designations from 2008 to 2018, argues that **the decision to return Cuba to the State Sponsors of Terrorism list was driven primarily by politics rather than evidence of terrorist activity.** That designation has served as the legal foundation for many of the administration's harshest sanctions, severely restricting Cuba's access to international finance, investment, and tourism while imposing substantial costs on the Cuban people, foreign companies and humanitarian organizations.<sup>15</sup>

Alleged internal influence in the U.S. is a dangerous claim that **contradicts the administration's own portrayal of Cuba as a "failed state" by simultaneously attributing to Havana an extraordinary capacity to shape political developments throughout Latin America and the U.S.** "The report vastly overstates Cuban influence in the United States," stated Ricardo Zuniga, a

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<sup>9</sup> "Fact-Checking the Flimsy Case for Trump's Economic War on Cuba," Blake Burdge & Reed Lindsay, July 3, 2026, <https://www.bellyofthebeastcuba.com/trumps-flimsy-case-for-economic-war-on-cuba>

<sup>10</sup> "Does Cuba Really Have Iranian Drones? Experts say Trump is laying the pretext for U.S. military action against the island," *Foreign Policy*, July 17 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/07/17/cuba-iran-drones-trump-venezuela-us-military/>

<sup>11</sup> "New satellite images capture 4 suspected Chinese spy bases in Cuba," *CBS*, July 2, 2026 <https://www.cbsnews.com/video/new-satellite-images-suspected-chinese-spy-bases-cuba/>; and "U.S. Warns of Growing Russian and Chinese Spying in Cuba: New findings on signals-intelligence facilities bolster case for the Trump administration's pressure campaign against Havana" *WSJ*, May 22, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/national-security/u-s-warns-of-growing-russian-and-chinese-spying-in-cuba-a99059dd>;

<sup>12</sup> "China Spy Bases: Rumors, Speculation and Bad Analysis," Reed Lindsay, August 12, 2024, <https://www.counterpunch.org/2024/08/12/china-spy-bases-rumors-speculation-and-bad-analysis/>; "New Activity at Possible Chinese Intelligence Facilities in Cuba," June 18, 2026, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-activity-possible-chinese-intelligence-facilities-cuba>; "Secret Signals: Decoding China's Intelligence Activities in Cuba," July 1, 2024 <https://features.csis.org/hiddenreach/china-cuba-spy-sigint>

<sup>13</sup> "Exclusive: U.S. eyes attack-drone threat from Cuba," by Marc Caputo, *Axios*, May 17, 2026, <https://www.axios.com/2026/05/17/us-military-drones-cuba>

<sup>14</sup> "Does Cuba Really Have Iranian Drones? Experts say Trump is laying the pretext for U.S. military action against the island," *Foreign Policy*, July 17, 2026, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/07/17/cuba-iran-drones-trump-venezuela-us-military/>

<sup>15</sup> "The Pretext behind the Trump Administration labeling Cuba a State Sponsor of Terrorism", Jason M. Blazakis, *Just Security*, May 29, 2026, <https://www.justsecurity.org/140246/trump-administration-cuba-terrorism/>

former U.S. diplomat who handled direct negotiations with Cuba and considered an expert on the island nation.<sup>16</sup>

Likewise, Members of Congress who recently conducted a fact-finding mission to Cuba—including Representatives Mark Pocan, Teresa Leger Fernández, Delia C. Ramirez, and Maxine Dexter—reported that they found no evidence supporting the administration's depiction of Cuba as a national security threat. Two months prior, Representatives Pramila Jayapal and Jonathan Jackson, both on the House Committee of Foreign Affairs, visited Cuba and arrived at the same conclusion. After meeting with Cuban officials, private entrepreneurs, civil society representatives, ordinary citizens with diverse political views, and diplomats from allied countries, Representative Pocan concluded succinctly: **"We have seen no proof. Congress needs to demand it."**<sup>17</sup>

### Such consequential claims require evidence and scrutiny

Allegations used to justify extraordinary emergency powers—or potentially military action—should be supported by publicly available evidence, not political rhetoric or leaks by anonymous sources to sympathetic journalists.

**No respected military, intelligence, or defense analyst has publicly concluded that Cuba poses a military threat to the United States.**

**The burden of proof rests with the administration— What justifies yet another senseless military intervention that put our soldiers in danger while undermining U.S. interests?**

### The real threat to U.S. national security is our current Cuba Policy

The available evidence demonstrates not that Cuba poses an extraordinary threat to the United States, but that **current U.S. Cuba policy is undermining American interests**. The administration's fuel blockade and expanding sanctions have **resulted in a humanitarian crisis** (marked by prolonged blackouts, shortages of food, medicine, electricity, and clean water, economic paralysis), while increasing migration pressures, straining relations with allies, and weakening Cuba's emerging private sector.

**Rather than enhancing U.S. security, these policies risk creating greater instability only ninety miles from American shores while reducing opportunities for cooperation on migration and regional security.** Escalating confrontation while dismantling productive security cooperation (in counternarcotics, counterterrorism, migration, border security, and law enforcement) does not make the United States safer. Weakening these channels of cooperation undermines one of the few areas in which both governments have consistently found common ground in protecting the American homeland.

**The claims used by the Trump administration are so vague and unsubstantiated that the most logical conclusion is that it is preparing the ground for an eventual military action it feels advances domestic political interests, particularly prior to the 2026 midterm elections.**<sup>18</sup> In fact, Cuba scholar and academic William M. LeoGrande has warned that escalating rhetoric portraying Cuba as a security threat, combined with expanding sanctions and legal actions

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<sup>16</sup> "Iran hedges as it escalates," Politico, July 20, 2026, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2026/07/20/iran-hedges-as-it-escalates-01005148>

<sup>17</sup> Joint Press Release "Reps. Pocan, Dexter, Leger Fernandez, and Ramirez Return From Cuba Fact-Finding Mission," July 13, 2026, <https://mailchi.mp/b45f382b4008/release-rep-pocan-to-introduce-xxx-bill-18257207>

<sup>18</sup> "Does Cuba Really Have Iranian Drones? Experts say Trump is laying the pretext for U.S. military action against the island," *Foreign Policy*, July 17, 2026, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/07/17/cuba-iran-drones-trump-venezuela-us-military/>

against Cuban leaders, risks creating the conditions for a dangerous military confrontation while abandoning decades of diplomacy that served both countries' interests.<sup>19</sup>

### **Demand diplomacy over war, evidence over bogus claims, and accountability for Cuba policy**

ACERE calls on journalists, Members of Congress, and the broader policy community to subject the administration's national security claims to rigorous scrutiny rather than repeating them uncritically.

ACERE urges Congress to demand that the Trump administration produce the evidence necessary to justify its extraordinary national emergency declaration, demand Congressional approval for any further escalation toward military action, and to demand accountability from the State Department for the impact of its Cuba policy.

ACERE also cautions all of the danger of returning to a dark page in U.S. history that has been widely condemned, when government officials engaged in the open persecution of individuals and social movements based on their disagreement with official U.S. policies that pushed aggression, military intervention or escalation, isolationism and collective punishment on civilian populations.

ACERE exhorts all to demand from their representatives they choose diplomacy over further escalation, which is leading us towards another unnecessary war.



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<sup>19</sup> "Is the United States on the Verge of Military Intervention in Cuba?", William M. LeoGrande, *Foreign Policy*, May 22, 2026, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2026/05/22/cuba-war-trump-united-states-castro-indictment/>