

Hotel explosion and blackout: The Monday in Cuba

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Emergency forces in front of the cordoned off Hotel Caribbean (Source: [Cubadebate](#))

Normally, Friday the 13th is considered a day of misfortune. In Cuba this month it was a Monday when two disasters occurred at once.

Monday morning at 10:40 in Old Havana there is a bang at the Hotel Caribbean, located between the Prado and Colón Street in Habana Vieja. According to unconfirmed reports, it was a gas explosion resulting from a leak. It happened on the 5th floor of the small hotel, which was closed to guests for renovation work. The circumstances and cause are currently being investigated.

This would be the second such event within a year. Only last May, an explosion a few hundred meters away destroyed the Hotel Saratoga, and 46 people were killed then. This time, fortunately, the situation looks different. According to the latest information, only one person was slightly injured, and the structural integrity of the evacuated building is not in danger, Cuban media report. The injured person is currently being treated at the nearby Calixto García University and Trauma Hospital.



The Hotel has 38 Rooms (Source: [Cubadebate](#))

The second accident followed in the afternoon. At around 3 p.m., the state-owned electricity company reported a blackout that extended from the central Cuban province of Ciego de Ávila to the easternmost province of Guantánamo, thus affecting practically half the island. The cause was the destruction of a 220 kV power line between Sancti Spíritus and Nuevitas "as a result of a fire in a sugar cane field in the area," as the Energy Ministry [confirmed](#) a short time later. Restoring the power grid would take four to five hours, Energy Minister Vicente de La O'Levy told media representatives. By 9 p.m. local time, all provinces [were back online](#). Here, too, a recent precedent occurred during Hurricane Ian last September: a snapped high-voltage cable paralyzed the entire island's electricity supply for several days.

Luck of the draw: The consequences of both events should be able to be eliminated in the foreseeable future, and no major damage to property or personal injury is expected. However, they reveal continuing vulnerability and the need for investment in the country's technical infrastructure.

Update (19.02): [Another widespread power outage](#) occurred on Saturday, this time stretching from Matanzas to Guantánamo. Again, the power supply was restored within a few hours. The power utility UNE ruled out sabotage as the cause in light of corresponding speculation in social media. "The situation on February 18 occurred as a result of a purely human operational error. In both events, there is no evidence that they were deliberately caused," Unión Eléctrica said in a statement.