

The "Guiteras" ignites: News on the energy situation in Cuba



The "Antonio Guiteras" power plant in Matanzas, built in 1988 (Source: [Cubadebate](#))

"This mixture of joy and anticipation... proof that challenges can be overcome: At 3600 revolutions, 90 days of work are decided, involving almost 2000 workers, technicians and engineers," energy journalist José Miguel Solís [writes](#) on his Facebook wall about the launch of the "Guiteras" in Matanzas, along with images of white smoke rising from the chimneys of the Soviet plant. "Habemos corriente," we have power, one almost wants to say, but testing is not yet complete. Cuba's most powerful large-scale power plant, with a capacity of 280 megawatts, is one of the most important building blocks for the country's security of supply. Without the electricity from the Guiteras, the country is once again threatened with a summer of planned shutdowns ("apagones") lasting several hours, and without the Guiteras, the current fuel crisis cannot be ended either, as electricity must then be generated as a substitute via smaller diesel generators - whose fuel is lacking at the gas stations.

The good news is still only a few hours old, but Solís is cautiously optimistic that the 90 days of intensive maintenance and overhaul work under the guidance of Cuba's Energy Minister Vicente de la O Levy have not missed their mark. As a reminder, although the Guiteras, built in 1988, is Cuba's newest power plant, a lack of foreign currency has meant that urgent maintenance work has been postponed in recent years. The result was a series of accidents last year, in which the Guiteras was forced back online again and again after far too short emergency repairs. With another floating power plant ship from Turkey (people in Havana were therefore not entirely unhappy about Erdogan's re-election), the necessary reserves could be created to initiate the now completed three-month maintenance.

The generation deficit is still 300 to 500 megawatts per day, and the lines in front of the gas stations are still long. However, should the Guiteras feed in stably soon, the situation could finally begin to improve.

Just a few days ago, the minister provided information on the current situation and plans for the summer. As announced a few months ago, May was already "on edge" from the beginning in order to make Cuba's power plants fit for the intensive summer operation with higher consumption momentum. O Levy explained:

Starting in February, we increased the maintenance load even more and took units like Céspedes and Felton offline to achieve this goal [preparing for summer]. Under these conditions and with these basic units off the grid, the average number of outage hours was less than three hours, and we were able to rotate the planned units every four days.

Supply outages and unexpected extra consumption by the transport sector have cost the power grid 400 megawatts of power from April. Despite the energy crisis of recent weeks, however, "all planned maintenance work for the summer has been completed," O Levy listed:

The maintenance of Felton Unit 1, the restoration of Mariel Unit 6, the maintenance of the Cienfuegos Thermal Power Plant, the restoration of engine power at the Mariel and Moa Power Plants, the increase of gas-based power generation from Energas to 300 MW, the restoration of more than 600 MW in distributed generation (diesel power plants), and the installation of new fuel oil engines (100 MW).

As [reported](#) by Cuban media, only recently electricity generation via domestic natural gas has increased with the commissioning of a new gas field in Puerto Escondido (in the north of Mayabeque province). The field produces about 200,000 cubic meters of gas per day, through which 30 additional megawatts of electrical energy can be generated so far. "Although the amount may seem small, it allows the company to tap previously untapped resources," explained the head of the Boca de Jaruco natural gas plant, Oniel Tápanes. Two more wells are expected to double the additional gas production to 400,000 cubic meters. In total, Cuba currently generates 300 megawatts of electricity from domestic natural gas.

Energy Minister O Levy announced that an accident occurred during drilling last Sunday, as a result of which Havana's natural gas supply was temporarily limited. O Levy stated that "gas supply has been restored and the full 300 megawatts will also be back on stream by next week," adding, "If these two problems-Guiteras and Energas-are resolved by the end of May, we expect a significant decrease in impairments and better conditions for the summer months."

That's assuming the white smoke remains over the Guiteras. ([Cubaheute](#))