

## Trump tightens Cuba sanctions again



*US President Donald Trump on a collision course with Cuba (source: [GageSkidmore/Commons/CC-BY-SA 4.0](#))*

Just two weeks after US President Donald Trump took office, Washington is further intensifying the tone towards Cuba. Secretary of State Marco Rubio [announced that](#) the government would [reintroduce](#) a list of Cuban institutions subject to US financial sanctions.

According to Rubio, who is himself the son of Cuban immigrants and an opponent of the communist leadership in Havana, the aim is to deprive branches of the Cuban government of the resources “that directly oppress and monitor the Cuban people while controlling large parts of the country's economy”. Rubio had the announcement published under the title [“Restoring a Tough U.S.-Cuba Policy”](#).

### **Restrictions on private remittances**

Specifically, all the institutions previously affected and removed from the list by the previous government are to be reinstated. The money transfer company Orbit S.A. is to be added to the Cuba Restricted List for the first time. Washington suspects the company of having ties to the Cuban military. Orbit was founded specifically to [re-enable Western Union to operate](#) after its predecessor Fincimex [was sanctioned](#).

The measure is likely to make it more difficult to transfer money (*remittances*) between the large Cuban-born population in the United States and their relatives living on the island. Cuban exiles transfer millions of dollars from the US every year, supporting families and the country's ailing economy. Remittances from other countries could also become more difficult, affecting both private individuals and companies.

## **Cuba: tightening of sanctions “unjustifiable”**

Cuba's Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez [condemned](#) the announcements as “unjustifiable”. The intensification of the punitive measures would lead to greater supply shortages, family separation, and increased emigration, he warned.

Immediately after taking office in January, Trump [reversed](#) the recent removal of Cuba from the U.S. terror list by the administration of his predecessor Joe Biden. The Biden administration had linked the measure to the release of prisoners, including many government critics detained during the 2021 protests.

In response, Cuba agreed to release 553 prisoners in a deal with the Vatican. Some prominent dissidents, such as the leader of the “Patriotische Union Kubas” José Daniel Ferrer, were subsequently released ([Cubaheute reported](#)). According to human rights groups, however, Cuba has since stopped the releases. This means that the deal with the previous government is in limbo and is unlikely to be implemented by Trump.

## **Trump and Rubio on a collision course**

The renewed classification as a “terrorist state” will, however, further complicate foreign investment in Cuba. The list so far includes countries such as Syria, Iran, and North Korea. “I have no doubt that they meet all the requirements to be a state sponsor of terrorism,” Rubio had declared during his nomination hearing in the Senate.

In Havana, there is concern about the prospect of a renewed tightening of sanctions by the US. The government of President Díaz-Canel had hoped that Biden would continue the cautious rapprochement that took place during his time as vice president under Obama. These hopes have been dashed once and for all by Trump's election victory. Now, new, targeted sanctions are looming again, with corresponding economic consequences for the country, which is already beset by crises. The latest tightening of sanctions is “possibly only a prelude to other announcements that the team responsible for the Cuba issue has had ready since 2017 to achieve its failed goal of subjugating us,” Díaz-Canel [commented](#) on X.

Just a few days ago, the Cuban Foreign Ministry was forced to reject another of Trump's advances. The US government plans to house 30,000 migrants on the territory of the illegally occupied [US naval base in the Cuban province of Guantánamo](#). President Miguel Díaz Canel [called the](#) corresponding Trump decree an “act of brutality”. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez stated that the accommodation of migrants in Guantánamo represents a blatant disregard for human rights and international law. It seems almost certain that this will not be the last confrontation that Washington seeks with Havana. ([Cubaheute](#))