

U.S. Policy Toward Cuba: Recent Developments and Congressional Considerations

February 3, 2026

On January 29, 2026, President Trump issued an [executive order](#) (E.O.) stating that, effective January 30, “the policies, practices, and actions of the Government of Cuba constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat” to U.S. national security and foreign policy. The E.O. declared a national emergency under the [National Emergencies Act](#) (50 U.S.C. §§1601 *et seq.*) and invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act of 1977 (IEEPA; 50 U.S.C. §§1701 *et seq.*) to impose a system to levy tariffs on foreign countries that “directly or indirectly” supply oil to the Cuban government. The President’s authority to impose tariffs under IEEPA is [under judicial review](#) by the U.S. Supreme Court.

Congress has long sought to influence the direction of [U.S. policy toward Cuba](#). Bills introduced in the 119th Congress reflect divergent approaches to Cuba, with some Members appearing to prefer increased engagement (e.g., H.R. 2415, S. 136) and others supporting greater pressure on the Cuban government (e.g., H.R. 450, S. 488). Press reports quote some Members [praising](#) the E.O. and [advocating](#) for intensifying economic pressure on Cuba’s authoritarian regime to force a change in government. Some Members supporting increased constraints on Cuba also [appear to acknowledge](#) that such actions may increase everyday Cubans’ suffering in the short term. Some Members have [criticized](#) the E.O. due to concerns about potential humanitarian consequences.

Policy Implications

The E.O. directs the Secretary of State, in consultation with certain other agency heads, to recommend to the President “whether and to what extent” to impose an [ad valorem](#) tariff on goods from a foreign country that “directly or indirectly sells or otherwise provides any oil to Cuba,” as determined by the Secretary of Commerce. The E.O. states, among other provisions, that the President will determine whether and to what extent to impose such tariffs and may modify the E.O. “[t]o ensure that the national emergency declared in this order is dealt with.” The Cuban government [condemned](#) the move, asserting that the U.S. government “has committed to subject [Cuba and its people] to extreme living conditions.”

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The E.O. appears aimed at curtailing Cuba's access to international oil supplies by increasing pressure on governments that facilitate oil shipments to Cuba. Following the January 2026 U.S. [capture](#) of former Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro, the Trump Administration halted Cuban oil imports from Venezuela—Cuba's primary oil supplier since the early 2000s. In a January 11, 2026, social media post, President Trump [asserted](#) that there would be “NO MORE OIL OR MONEY GOING TO CUBA.”

President Trump repeatedly has [called](#) on Cuban officials to “[make a deal](#)” with the U.S. government. Cuba's ministry of foreign affairs [rejected](#) U.S. accusations of wrongdoing, including support for terrorism, and proposed to “renew technical cooperation with the United States” in areas including counterterrorism and money laundering. On February 3, President Trump reportedly [stated](#) that the United States was in talks with “the highest people in Cuba” to negotiate a deal but did not provide details.

Mexico reportedly was a top supplier of oil to Cuba in 2025, providing both [humanitarian and commercial shipments](#). Following issuance of the E.O., Mexico's foreign ministry [stated](#) Mexico would send humanitarian aid consisting of “other essential products,” while seeking a diplomatic solution in regard to oil shipments. Any additional tariffs on Mexico could have implications for U.S.-Mexico trade relations; Mexico was the [top U.S. goods trading partner](#) between January and November 2025. Russia and Algeria [reportedly](#) have provided sporadic oil shipments to Cuba but engage in little trade with the United States.

The E.O. builds upon prior policy changes under the second Trump Administration, which has sought to increase U.S. pressure on Cuba's authoritarian regime with the [stated objectives](#) of advancing democracy, human rights, and free-market policies in Cuba. Several Trump Administration policies since January 2025 have targeted the Cuban government's economic lifelines, including by [maintaining](#) Cuba's designation as a [State Sponsor of Terrorism](#) and subjecting it to related financial restrictions; [imposing](#) visa restrictions on Cuban and foreign officials involved in Cuba's labor export program; and issuing [directives](#) for executive agency heads to “adjust current regulations regarding transactions with Cuba,” including tightening travel and remittance restrictions. The Trump Administration also has [provided](#) some assistance to support the Cuban people following natural disasters.

Some [experts, former U.S. officials, and Cuban religious organizations](#) have expressed concern about the potential humanitarian and migration ramifications of increased economic pressure on Cuba, which is experiencing an [economic crisis](#) characterized by [food, medicine](#), and fuel shortages that have contributed to [daily power blackouts](#). In late January 2026, Cuba [reportedly](#) had enough oil to last “15 to 20 days,” given current conditions. Others, including a prominent [Cuban political exile](#), have supported targeting the sources of revenue available to Cuba's authoritarian regime as the best way to bring about political and economic change in Cuba. Some experts have [expressed](#) skepticism about the likelihood of the Cuban government's collapse through purely economic means, partially due to a lack of organized political opposition in Cuba.

Congressional Considerations

The 119th Congress may consider various options to support, prohibit, or otherwise shape the Trump Administration's E.O. declaring a national emergency in relation to Cuba and the broader direction of U.S. Cuba policy. As Congress assesses the implementation and impact of the tariff system that may be imposed in response to the E.O., it might consider whether the approach advances U.S. interests and whether to endorse or otherwise seek to support or strengthen the Administration's position. Alternatively, Congress might consider a [joint resolution](#) to terminate the national emergency underlying the new tariff system imposed under IEEPA on countries that supply oil to Cuba. Congress also may monitor how the Supreme Court's [pending decision](#) regarding the President's authority to impose tariffs under IEEPA may affect the E.O.

Congress may monitor how changes in U.S. policy impact social and economic conditions in Cuba, including through hearings, requests for additional information from the U.S. State Department and other relevant U.S. agencies, directives for inspectors general or Government Accountability Office reports, and engagement with Cuban civil society and political opposition leaders, among other measures. In light of those conditions, Congress also may assess whether to modify funding levels for current foreign assistance programs for Cuba—including those aimed at promoting [democracy](#) and the [free flow of information on the island](#)—and whether to appropriate additional funds for humanitarian or emergency assistance for the Cuban people.

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