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Russia Sends Aid to Cuba After Anti-Government Protests

By AFP

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The cargo included food, personal protective equipment and more than 1 million medical masks **TASS / EFE**

Russia dispatched nearly 100 tons of humanitarian aid to Cuba, the Defense Ministry said Saturday, following unprecedented street protests over the communist country's worst economic crisis in decades.

The delivery was directly ordered by President Vladimir Putin, it said.

Two An-124 cargo planes carrying more than 88 tons of humanitarian support took off from a military airport near Moscow, a statement said.

The cargo included "food, personal protective equipment and more than 1 million medical masks," it said.

The United States this week imposed sanctions on Cuba's defense minister and a special

forces unit for quashing peaceful protests.

President Joe Biden warned the measure was "just the beginning" of punitive measures against Havana.

On July 11 and 12, thousands of Cubans took to the streets in 40 cities shouting "Freedom," "Down with the dictatorship," and "We're hungry."

One person has died and more than 100 have been arrested since the protests broke out.

Russia earlier this month warned against any "outside interference" in Cuba, an important Cold War ally.

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