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Russia Sends Oil and Gas Tankers to Crisis-Hit Cuba, Defying U.S. Blockade – FT

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Russia has dispatched two tankers carrying oil and gas to Cuba as the island grapples with a deepening energy crisis exacerbated by a U.S. oil blockade, the Financial Times reported Wednesday.

The ships would be providing the Caribbean island nation with its first energy shipments in three months. Fuel shortages have pushed Cuba into one of its most severe economic crises in decades, with widespread blackouts and disruptions to basic services.

The Hong Kong-flagged tanker Sea Horse, which is believed to be loaded with around 27,000 tons of gas, is expected to arrive in Cuba in the coming days after diverting its course last month, Samir Madani, co-founder of maritime intelligence company TankerTrackers, told the FT.

A second vessel, the Russian tanker Anatoly Kolodkin, is carrying between 725,000 and 728,000 barrels of oil and is due to reach Cuba in early April, he said.

Related article: Moscow Reaffirms Support for Havana After Trump Says He Will Have 'Honor' of 'Taking Cuba'

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday said he believes he would have the "honor of taking Cuba."

"Whether I free it, take it, I think I could do anything I want with it... They're a very weakened nation right now," Trump told reporters at the White House.

The next day, the Kremlin said Moscow remains committed to helping authorities in Havana.

"Of course, we are ready to provide all possible assistance, and all these issues are being worked out with our Cuban counterparts," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

He said Moscow and Havana are maintaining "expert and working levels" of contact during the energy crisis.

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