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Kremlin Vows 'Total Solidarity' With Cuba and Condemns U.S. Threats Against Island

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The entrance of a repair workshop in Havana, Cuba. **Yamil Lage / AFP**

Russia vowed Thursday to continue providing "active support" to Cuba and expressed "total solidarity" with the island nation after the U.S. indicted its former president on murder charges and deployed a naval carrier strike group to the Caribbean amid reports President Donald Trump is weighing military action against the government in Havana.

"We reaffirm our total solidarity with Cuba," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement in which she condemned U.S. "intimidation, unilateral restrictive measures, threats and blackmail."

"We will continue to actively support the brotherly Cuban people during this incredibly challenging time. Havana has already been briefed on the specific details and core aspects of this support," Zakharova added.

On Wednesday, U.S. federal prosecutors announced criminal charges against former Cuban President Raúl Castro in the 1996 downing of civilian planes flown by Miami-based exiles.

The indictment follows Trump's threats of military action in Cuba, which is facing severe blackouts, food shortages and economic collapse after the White House ordered a blockade that choked off fuel shipments to the island.

In March, Russia sent an oil tanker to Cuba to provide what it called humanitarian assistance, effectively defying the U.S. blockade.

Zakharova said Thursday that the Trump administration's "attempts to tighten the sanctions noose around Cuba, combined with a decades-long trade, economic, financial, humanitarian and now energy blockade, directly reflect Washington's intolerance for dissent."

"It is a cynical embodiment of a revived Monroe Doctrine," she said.

Trump has vowed to conduct a "friendly takeover" of Cuba if authorities in Havana do not undertake a series of sweeping political and economic reforms that would greatly favor the United States.

Adding to tensions, U.S. Southern Command announced Wednesday the deployment of the aircraft carrier Nimitz and its escort warships in the southern Caribbean Sea, further fueling speculation that Trump may order a Venezuela-style operation to overthrow the Cuban regime.

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