

Russia Slams U.S. Arrest Warrant for Cuba's Raúl Castro

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Raul Castro. **Presidencia de El Salvador**

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday [condemned](#) a Florida arrest warrant for 95-year-old former Cuban President Raúl Castro over a 1996 military shoot-down of two civilian planes manned by anti-Castro pilots.

Florida Attorney General James Uthmeier [announced](#) Monday that a state judge had approved an arrest warrant charging Castro with conspiracy to commit first-degree murder.

The charges are connected to the Feb. 24, 1996, shooting down of two civilian aircraft operated by the humanitarian group Brothers to the Rescue. Castro, the younger brother of the late revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, was Cuba's defense minister at the time.

"Raúl Castro ordered the murder of four Floridians in cold blood," Uthmeier said in a statement.

Russia's Foreign Ministry expressed "categorical rejection and decisive condemnation" of the

arrest warrant.

“Bringing a baseless and contrived accusation more than 30 years later looks like nothing other than an act of vengeance by the anti-Cuban lobby in Miami,” the ministry said.

The Foreign Ministry warned that Washington’s legal actions against Cuba risked provoking wider regional instability.

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Monday’s arrest warrant comes after the Trump administration issued a federal indictment against Castro in May over the same airplane shoot-down. At the time, the Kremlin called the U.S. indictment “bordering on violence.”

The Cuban government said that the 1996 shoot-down was “legitimate self-defense” against an airspace violation. Four people died in the incident.

Cuba, an ally of Russia going back to the Soviet period, has faced widespread fuel shortages and recurring blackouts in recent months as U.S. President Donald Trump has ramped up pressure on the country, including through a blockade on fuel imports.

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.

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

Trump [said](#) at the time that he was not opposed to shipments of oil to Cuba, including from Russia, despite his own administration tightening economic sanctions on the island as part of his “maximum pressure” strategy.

AFP contributed reporting.

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