

CUBA NEWS ROUNDUP

SEPTEMBER 2026 | KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN CUBA AND U.S.-CUBA RELATIONS

September brought new challenges for people and organizations working in and with Cuba. A nationwide power-grid collapse, severe fuel shortages, shipping disruptions, and new U.S. sanctions added to an already difficult operating environment. At the same time, trade, humanitarian assistance, and collaboration among Cuban, U.S., and international organizations continued.

SEPTEMBER AT A GLANCE

- 6 nationwide power-grid collapses since January
- Thousands of containers affected by shipping disruptions
- September 17 - new U.S. sanctions imposed
- September 29 - new U.S. regulations announced

WHAT HAPPENED THIS MONTH

U.S. sanctions expanded

On September 17, the Trump administration announced new sanctions targeting Cuban nickel enterprises, military research organizations, and senior military officials. The administration said the measures were intended to limit resources available to the Cuban government and military. Cuban officials, in response, said the expanding restrictions were making already difficult conditions harder for ordinary Cubans.

Cuba's power crisis continued

The following day, Cuba's electrical grid suffered another nationwide collapse—the sixth since January—amid severe fuel shortages and aging infrastructure. Prolonged blackouts continue to affect homes, businesses, hospitals, schools, and other essential services.

Shipping disruptions affected essential goods

The effects of the crisis extended beyond the island as major shipping companies reduced or suspended service to Cuba. Thousands of containers carrying food, medicine, solar equipment, and other goods were left stranded at ports elsewhere in the Caribbean. The disruptions have created additional challenges for organizations and businesses trying to move essential goods into Cuba.

Political tensions remained high

In his September 22 address to the United Nations, President Trump called for “fundamental change” in Cuba. Cuban officials rejected the characterization of Cuba as a failed state and said Havana remains willing to engage with Washington on bilateral issues. Reports of U.S. military contingency planning added to uncertainty. President Trump subsequently said he did not expect military force would be necessary and that he expected the two countries to reach an agreement.

New regulations further narrowed avenues for engagement

On September 29, new U.S. regulations further narrowed some avenues for travel, professional exchange, financial activity, and engagement with Cuba's private sector. For organizations working across borders, the changes add practical barriers to collaboration and exchange.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGAGEMENT

The developments this month create practical challenges for organizations working in and with Cuba:

- *Energy and infrastructure:* Power and fuel shortages continue to affect programs, operations, and essential services.
- *Access to essential goods:* Shipping disruptions are creating additional uncertainty around the movement of food, medicine, equipment, and other supplies.
- *Regulatory environment:* New U.S. sanctions and regulations may affect travel, financial transactions, professional exchange, and partnerships with Cuban entities.
- *Humanitarian needs:* Continued shortages are increasing the need for humanitarian assistance and locally led responses.
- *Cross-border collaboration:* Organizations will need to navigate a more complicated environment while maintaining relationships and identifying viable avenues for cooperation.

Despite these challenges, FOCUS Partnerships and our partners will continue working together to advance collaborative activities, support locally led initiatives, and strengthen connections between organizations in Cuba, the United States, and beyond.