



By: TA | AP Brief

US commander meets with Cuban military officials



The top U.S. commander in Latin America met with Cuban military leaders Friday in a “brief exchange on operational security matters” near the U.S. Navy base in Guantanamo Bay, the latest official to visit the island nation as President Donald Trump **ramps up pressure** on its leaders.

Trump has warned that Cuba “is next” after U.S. military forces captured Venezuela's autocratic leader, Nicolás Maduro, in a January raid.

In the months since, the Trump administration has imposed an oil blockade on Cuba, maintained warships in the Caribbean Sea and indicted former Cuban President **Raúl Castro** on federal charges.

Gen. Francis Donovan, head of U.S. Southern Command, met with Lt. Gen. Roberto Legrá Sotolongo and other Cuban military officials.

Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces said in a statement that both sides viewed “the meeting positively because it addressed security issues along the perimeter separating the military enclave, and they agreed to maintain communication between the two military commands.”

Top Trump aides, including Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** and CIA chief **John Ratcliffe**, also have met with Cuban officials to explore possible improvements in relations.

But the U.S. side has come away unimpressed from those talks, leading to even more sanctions imposed on the Cuban government.

Operational readiness

Besides the meeting, Donovan also assessed the security of the U.S. naval base in Guantanamo Bay and discussed the “safety of service members and their families, and operational readiness with base officials,” U.S. Southern Command said in a post on X.

The U.S. maintains the base despite decades of friction with Cuba's socialist leaders, whom

Trump wants removed from power.

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The U.S. military has a handful of Navy ships, including at least one amphibious assault ship, in the Caribbean, a much smaller force than was present at the time of the Maduro raid.

On Friday, the Pentagon announced that a new unit of 1,300 sailors and Marines would be replacing the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit, which deployed to the region last summer.