

CIA World Factbook–Style Country Report

Republic of Cuba (República de Cuba)







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Republic of Cuba

Flag: National Flag of Cuba (*recommended placement: upper-right corner of first page*)

Introduction

Cuba is the largest island nation in the Caribbean and occupies a strategically significant position between the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean Sea, and the Atlantic Ocean. Located only 145 km (90 miles) south of Florida, Cuba has historically occupied an outsized role in hemispheric politics, Cold War strategy, migration, and regional security.

Following the 1959 Cuban Revolution, Cuba established a socialist one-party state that remains in power today. Although the Cold War ended decades ago, Cuba continues to maintain close strategic relationships with countries such as Russia, China, Venezuela, Iran, and Nicaragua while remaining subject to a long-standing U.S. economic embargo.

ATLAS assesses Cuba as a country experiencing prolonged structural economic decline while maintaining a highly stable internal security apparatus.

Quick Facts

Category	Information
Official Name	Republic of Cuba
Capital	Havana
Largest City	Havana
Population	~11 million
Area	109,884 km ²
Official Language	Spanish
Government	Socialist one-party republic
Currency	Cuban Peso (CUP)
Time Zone	UTC -5
Coastline	3,735 km

Geography

Cuba consists of the main island together with more than 4,000 smaller islands and cays.

Its strategic position controls maritime access between:

- Gulf of Mexico
- Caribbean Sea
- Florida Straits
- Atlantic Ocean

Terrain consists primarily of rolling plains interrupted by several mountain ranges.

Major mountain systems include:

- Sierra Maestra
- Escambray Mountains
- Sierra del Rosario

Highest point:

Pico Turquino — 1,974 meters

Climate

Tropical maritime.

Characteristics include:

- Wet season: May–October
 - Dry season: November–April
 - Hurricane exposure from June through November
 - Increasing drought frequency in eastern provinces
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Administrative Divisions

15 Provinces plus the Special Municipality of Isla de la Juventud.

Major provinces include:

- Havana
 - Santiago de Cuba
 - Holguín
 - Matanzas
 - Camagüey
 - Villa Clara
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Population

Estimated population:

Approximately 11 million

Population trends:

- Aging rapidly
- Declining birth rate
- High emigration
- Significant labor shortages

Life expectancy remains relatively high compared to many Latin American nations due largely to universal healthcare.

Ethnic Composition

Predominantly:

- Mixed European-African ancestry
- European
- African

Religious affiliations include:

- Roman Catholic
 - Afro-Cuban religions
 - Protestant
 - Increasing secular population
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Government

Government Type:

Socialist republic

Political system:

- One-party rule
- Communist Party of Cuba

- Strong centralized executive authority

National Legislature:

National Assembly of People's Power

Administrative system remains highly centralized.

Economy

Overview

Cuba possesses one of the least market-oriented economies in the Western Hemisphere.

Major challenges include:

- Low productivity
- Chronic shortages
- Limited foreign investment
- Weak industrial output
- Large state sector
- Currency distortions
- Aging infrastructure

Recent reforms have modestly expanded private enterprise while maintaining state control over strategic sectors.

Major Industries

- Tourism
- Biotechnology
- Pharmaceuticals
- Tobacco
- Sugar
- Nickel mining

- Medical services exports
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Agriculture

Major products include:

- Sugarcane
- Tobacco
- Citrus
- Rice
- Coffee
- Livestock

Food imports remain substantial.

Energy

Electricity generation remains vulnerable due to:

- Aging power plants
- Fuel shortages
- Infrastructure deterioration

Blackouts have become increasingly common.

Primary fuels:

- Imported petroleum
 - Domestic crude
 - Natural gas
 - Renewable energy (limited)
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Transportation

Road infrastructure:

Fair to poor outside major cities.

Rail:

Limited modernization.

Ports:

- Havana
- Mariel
- Santiago de Cuba
- Cienfuegos

Airports:

International service centered on Havana with several regional airports.

Communications

Internet access has expanded substantially during the past decade but remains:

- Slow
- Expensive relative to income
- Government monitored

Mobile phone usage continues to increase.

Education

Literacy:

Approximately 99%

Universal education remains one of Cuba's strongest institutions.

Higher education emphasizes:

- Medicine
- Engineering
- Sciences

Healthcare

Universal healthcare system.

Strengths:

- Preventive medicine
- High physician density
- Medical education

Weaknesses:

- Equipment shortages
 - Medicine shortages
 - Infrastructure deterioration
 - Personnel emigration
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Military

Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR)

Components:

- Ground Forces
- Revolutionary Navy
- Air and Air Defense Force

Estimated Active Personnel:

~50,000

Reserve forces:

Large mobilization system.

Equipment

Much equipment remains Soviet-era.

Principal systems include:

- T-55 tanks
- BMP infantry fighting vehicles
- MiG-21 fighters
- MiG-29 fighters (limited)
- SA-series air defense systems

Modernization has been constrained by economic limitations.

Internal Security

Organizations include:

- Ministry of the Interior
- National Revolutionary Police
- State Security

These organizations maintain extensive domestic intelligence and internal surveillance capabilities.

Foreign Relations

Cuba maintains diplomatic relations with most countries.

Key strategic relationships:

- China
- Russia
- Venezuela
- Iran
- Nicaragua

Relations with the United States remain limited despite periodic diplomatic engagement.

Intelligence Assessment

Strategic Importance

Cuba's geographic position provides significant control over:

- Florida Straits
- Caribbean shipping lanes
- Gulf of Mexico approaches

Although no longer a major military power, Cuba continues to possess strategic intelligence value due to:

- Geographic proximity to the United States
- Intelligence cooperation with selected foreign partners
- Influence in portions of Latin America and the Caribbean

National Security Assessment

Category	Assessment
Political Stability	High
Economic Stability	Low
Military Capability	Moderate-Low
Internal Security	High
External Threat Level	Low
Infrastructure Resilience	Moderate-Low
Energy Security	Moderate-Low
Cyber Capability	Limited-Moderate

Risk Assessment

Category	Risk
Economic Crisis	High
Mass Migration	High
Civil Unrest	Moderate
Natural Disasters	High
Political Collapse	Low
Military Conflict	Low

ATLAS Intelligence Assessment

Overall Strategic Assessment: Moderate Strategic Importance

Cuba no longer represents the major conventional military threat it posed during the Cold War. However, its geographic position, centralized security institutions, and enduring relationships with Russia, China, Iran, and Venezuela ensure that it remains strategically relevant in the Western Hemisphere.

The country's principal vulnerabilities are economic rather than military. Chronic shortages, deteriorating infrastructure, demographic decline, and continued outward migration will likely shape Cuba's trajectory over the coming decade. While localized public dissatisfaction may increase during periods of acute economic stress, the government's well-established internal security apparatus continues to provide a high degree of regime stability.

From an intelligence perspective, Cuba should be viewed primarily as a strategic observation platform and geopolitical partner for extra-regional powers rather than as an independent military actor. Its proximity to the United States and location astride critical maritime approaches ensure that developments on the island remain of enduring interest to regional security planners.

ATLAS Overall Risk Level: Moderate