

Cuba resists economic strangulation

written by Cheryl LaBash
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Restoring people's eyesight is one of the benefits of Cuba-Venezuela economic solidarity. Photo: Operation Milagro

A Sept. 16 [Business Insider headline](#) alerted readers: “Grocery stores would run out of food in just 3 days if long-haul truckers stopped working.” Scary thought? But what if they stopped working because they had no fuel — and they had no fuel because a powerful neighbor had blocked oil and gasoline deliveries?

Isn’t that what Cuba is facing today? On Sept. 24, the U.S. Department of the Treasury doubled down on its economic war against the Republic of Cuba by blocking four shipping companies based in Cyprus and Panama—countries outside of the United States—and four tanker ships that deliver fuel to Cuba.

The Treasury Department press release used heavily coded wording to assert the source of the oil shipments is Venezuela, another independent, sovereign country suffering from Washington-instigated coup plots and U.S. economic, political and even threatened military assaults.

On the same day, at the United Nations, the U.S. representative again and again lauded defense of sovereignty as a supreme goal while shamelessly undermining and assaulting Cuba’s sovereign right to trade without extraterritorial interference.

Why Cuba buys oil from Venezuela

Cuba and Venezuela initiated the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our America-Trade Treaty of the People ([ALBA-TCP](#)) in 2004 as a “political, economic, and social alliance in defense of independence, self-determination and the identity of peoples comprising it.”

An offshoot of the ALBA-TCP cooperative association is [PetroCaribe](#), a program to “provide low-interest oil sales to nearby countries facing expensive imports” from imperialist-dominated oil monopolies.

Can Cuba buy oil from the United States? No, by U.S. law, Cuba can only buy food and medicine from the U.S. Even those purchases are often impossible because

international banks are fearful of being fined for conducting legal financial transactions.

What about other Western Hemisphere oil producers? Mexico, Brazil and Colombia all depend on business relationships with the U.S. Even if they had the will to sell oil to Cuba, their partnership with U.S. multinational corporations prevents it.

Cuba's oil deliveries will continue to arrive. Because of the unilateral U.S. economic, financial and commercial blockade, the fuel will cost more, taking resources from other needs of the Cuban people.

Behind U.S. government slanders

Big Oil wants to keep prices high and seeks to control Venezuela's oil and other natural resources to keep it that way. But for Venezuela, promoting a solidarity economy by providing low-cost oil to small neighbors, and giving voices and inclusion to the Indigenous, Afro-descendants, workers, women and poor farmers, is important.

By building and providing 2.8 million homes so the poorest Venezuelan families have dignity, while in the U.S. developers gentrify cities and force working families to live on the street, Venezuela shows another world is possible.

Working with Cuba's advanced medical capabilities and development brings Cuban doctors to Venezuelans who had never had health care, and builds medical schools to train more doctors. It includes partnering with Cuba to restore sight to [nearly 50,000 people](#) through Operation Milagro surgeries.

It means teaching everyone to read. Illiteracy was eliminated in 2005, as certified by UNESCO.

Venezuela's oil profits partnered with Cuba's medical and educational strength have

helped millions of people lead better lives.

The corporate press uses code words like “dictator,” “corruption” and “tyrant” to hide these truths that can be very appealing to workers and oppressed nations inside the U.S., where, for many, life is not so great, and getting worse.

The union adage “an injury to one is an injury to all” and “solidarity” live in Cuba and Venezuela. But in the U.S., schools teach self-marketing and individual achievement, plus the false wonders of a “free market” where wealth and benefits go to the already wealthy.

The climate catastrophe threatening all life on earth moved hundreds of thousands of youth into the streets on Sept. 20. Many already understand that the profit-before-people capitalist system perpetuates climate deniers and blocks changes that are needed now, not later. International cooperation and socialism, where humanity is the priority, are becoming a realistic and necessary alternative in the eyes and hearts of many.

Solidarity and unity are Cuba’s secret weapons. Solidarity is Venezuela’s shield against the multiple U.S.-inspired coup attempts this year alone. Both of these sovereign and independent countries are resisting the economic war waged by the huge U.S. economic bully that is cruelly attempting to starve people into embracing capitalism. We have only to look at Haiti and Puerto Rico to see the real “wonders” promised by capitalist exploitation.

On Nov. 6 and 7, Cuba’s resolution to end the U.S. blockade will come before the United Nations General Assembly. The people of the world will vote to #UnblockCuba as they have annually since 1992.

It is up to us in the U.S. to #UnblockCuba. Plan now to come to New York or organize in your community. Together we can do it.

