

# *US Treasury Department announces new measures to tighten blockade on Cuba*

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Washington, September 25 (RHC)-- The U.S. Treasury Department on Tuesday imposed sanctions on four maritime firms and vessels transporting Venezuelan oil to Cuba amid an acute fuel scarcity provoked by Washington on the island that is forcing people to line up for gasoline and public transport.

The move comes as Washington seeks to further tighten the economic blockade on the Caribbean island, because of its solidarity with the government and people of Venezuela.

“Venezuela’s oil... should not be used as a bargaining tool to prop up dictators and prolong the usurpation of Venezuelan democracy,” Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said in a statement to justify the measure.

One of the sanctioned entities is Cyprus-based Caroil Transport Marine Ltd and three vessels it operates - the Carlota C, Sandino and Petion - for allegedly carrying Venezuelan oil and fuel to Cuba, a trade banned under previous U.S. measures.

Two Panama-based groups, Trocana World Inc and Tovase Development Corp, were sanctioned for owning the three tankers. A third Panamanian firm, Bluelane Overseas SA, was also sanctioned along with a vessel it owns called the Giralt.

“(The) U.S. government implements brutal and genocidal policy of tightening the blockade and financial persecution, in addition to obstructing oil shipments to Cuba,” said Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel over Twitter.

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday called President Nicolas Maduro a “Cuban puppet.” Venezuela’s Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza replied by saying his country would continue working with Cuba, and added that other countries in the region that recognize Guaido as leader were puppets of the United States.

“As a result of today’s action, all property and interests in property of these entities, that are in the United States ... are blocked and must be reported to the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC),” the Treasury statement said.

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