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Just like old times! Putin embraces Fidel Castro during 87-year-old Cuban leader's first public appearance in months as old Cold War allies cozy up again

- Russian President makes official visit to Havana at start of Latin America tour
- Analysts claim visit is Moscow reacting against sanctions over Crimea
- Putin and Raul Castro announce trade deals as Russia writes off \$35bn debt Cuba owed from Soviet-era days

By [Jessica Jerreat](#) and [Associated Press Reporter](#)

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Vladimir Putin dropped in on one of Russia's old Cold War allies on Friday, as he began a six-day tour of Latin American with a state visit to Cuba.

The tour included a rare public appearance with the country's revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, who has been seen in public since the start of the year.

Putin and the 87-year-old leader met to discuss international relations and the economy, as Moscow sought to strengthen ties with its old friend.

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Old allies: Putin smiles as he holds on to Fidel Castro's arm during a meeting with the revolutionary leader



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Talks: Fidel Castro and Putin spent about an hour together discussing the economy and international politics

[New Cold War? Putin cosies up to Castro on Cuba trip](#)



The Russian president was also pictured embracing Fidel Castro's younger brother Raul, who took over leadership in 2008.

The meetings have been seen by analysts as further attempts to snub the West over its Ukraine sanctions.

Cuba and the other countries Putin is due to visit on the trip have been sympathetic or not overly critical of Moscow over the Ukraine crisis.

In Cuba, the state-run papers have tended to portray it as a struggle against right-wing extremism that has been threatening ethnic Russians living in Ukraine.

Earlier this year, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez criticized U.S. and European Union sanctions imposed on Russians and pro-Russian Ukrainians.

'In the international arena, we agree with the current policy of strength and political intelligence that the Soviet Union - I mean Russia - is carrying out,' Castro said.



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Old friends: Russia's president Vladimir Putin embraces Cuba's leader Raul Castro in Havana



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Backing: Putin and Castro at a ceremony in Havana on Friday. Moscow is strengthening economic ties with Cuba

Before leaving for his Latin America tour, Putin also made remarks on cyber-espionage, saying: 'This is not just blatant hypocrisy in relations between allies and partners.'

According to the [Business Recorder](#) Putin, whose country provided asylum to Ed Snowden, said: 'It is also direct infringement of a country's sovereignty and a breach of human rights, an invasion of privacy.'

His comments came as the CIA chief based in Berlin was asked to leave over allegations that the U.S. spied on Germany's Angela Merkel.

In Cuba, Castro and Putin strengthened their ties, using the official tour to sign about a dozen accords in energy, industry, health and disaster prevention.

Shortly before the visit, Moscow wrote off more than \$35 billion of Cuba's Soviet-era debt.

Speaking about the debt agreement, which clears 90 percent of what Cuba owes, Raul Castro said it was 'another great, tangible generosity of the Russian people toward Cuba.'

In a further sign of Putin turning his back on the West, the Cuban government website announced that Russian companies are to take part in petroleum projects around Boca de Jaruco on Cuba's north coast, and that cooperation will extend to offshore oil deposits.



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Show: The visit to Latin America is seen by analysts as sign of Putin snubbing the West over sanctions imposed over the Ukrainian crisis

Another agreement covered infrastructure at a new port project that Cuba hopes will become a regional shipping center and attract much-needed foreign investment.

'We are talking about the possibility of creating in Cuba a grand transportation hub with a possible modernization of the maritime port of Mariel and the construction of a modern airport with its respective cargo terminal,' Putin said, according to an official Spanish translation of his remarks in Russian.

According to the Russian news agency ITAR-TASS, Putin spent about an hour with retired revolutionary leader Fidel Castro.

The men are said to have discussed a range of topics including international affairs, the economy and Russian-Cuban relations.

The Cuba visit included official duties, in which Putin and Raul Casto took part in a ceremony at Havana's Memorial to the Soviet Internationalist Soldier.

Putin also used the visit to reiterate Russia's opposition to the 52-year-old U.S. embargo against Cuba, which was enforced to isolate the communist-run state.



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Allies: Putin and Castro on Friday. The visit came as Moscow announced plans to write off 90 percent of Cuba's Soviet-era debt

Havana and Moscow have a shared history dating to the Cold War, when they were united by ideology and opposition to U.S. influence.

They drifted apart in the 1990s, however, as the collapse of the Soviet Union ended billions of dollars in trade and subsidies for Cuba.

After leaving Havana, Putin is due to travel to Argentina, whose President has accused the U.S. and Britain of having double standards.

In March, Cristina Fernandez rebuked the countries for criticizing a pro-Russian secession vote in Crimea while backing a status referendum in the Falkland Islands.

From Argentina, Putin will travel to Brazil, which was among several countries that opposed Russia being excluded from the G20 summit in Australia.

'We are grateful to South Americans for the support of our international initiatives, including outer space demilitarization, strengthening international information security and combating the glorification of Nazism,' Putin said in an interview before the trip.



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Power talk: The Russian leader's tour takes in many countries that have been sympathetic to Moscow over the Ukraine crisis



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Support: Putin used the visit to criticize the U.S. embargo on Cuba that has been in place for 52 years

Russia said in February that it was looking to expand its worldwide military presence, including asking permission for its navy ships to use ports in Cuba and elsewhere in Latin America.

A Russian intelligence-gathering vessel has docked in Havana on multiple occasions in recent months.

Putin plans to attend a presidential summit of the BRICS group of nations in Fortaleza, Brazil, in the coming days.

He is to be in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday for the World Cup final and ceremonial handover of host duties for soccer's marquee tournament, which next takes place in Russia in 2018.

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[stevehessle](#), Hessele, 3 hours ago

Lets see if Putin will try to Annexe Florida now. He might try as the International reaction to the Crimean fiasco was pathetic and he probably thinks at best there would just be lame sanctions imposed.

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[1](#)

[joebloggs](#), redhill, United Kingdom, 3 hours ago

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Let's hope America learns to keep it's nose out of other peoples business....Most people's opinion now is, certainly who I know, it's America that should be sanctioned and cut off from the rest of the world.

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[9](#)

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[Danton](#), London, United Kingdom, 4 hours ago

I wonder if Castro said "just dont steal any of the silver, its all we've got left."

8
2

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[mahatmacoatmabag](#), timbuktu, United Kingdom, 5 hours ago

If the Unions had not declared a go slow at the Royal Mail our very own Red Ed would have got his invitation to attend on time

5
6

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[scdixon](#), emporia, 5 hours ago

Someone should advise Fidel about how he dresses. Just because he's old doesn't mean he can't put on a dress shirt and jacket.

35
5

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[Mr. Merkel](#), Berlin, Germany, 5 hours ago

Socialism doesn't work because capitalism doesn't let it, the men with the money have too much to lose We'd all be better off apart from the super rich and royals.

10
22

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[John Ball](#), London, United Kingdom, 4 hours ago

A bit simplistic. It really depends what you mean by Socialism. A form of Socialism worked for many years in the Scandinavian countries. Communism is not the same as Socialism.

2
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[Danton](#), London, United Kingdom, 4 hours ago

If socialism worked it wouldnt need anyone's permission to work, it would surge ahead and everyone would stand back in amazement. The fact that it fell at the second hurdle is enough to conclude it wasnt fit for purpose

7
1

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[MJF](#), Brighton, United Kingdom, 6 hours ago

Monsters Ball, Blair is arriving soon

11
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[Aholl Urang](#), London, United Kingdom, 7 hours ago

Look at what Uncle Sam does to his friends.

5
16

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[Game over](#), New York, United States, 7 hours ago

Like it or not, Castro is a legend and Putin is a smart leader! unlike our Obozo!

[12](#)
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[John Ball](#), London, United Kingdom, 4 hours ago

Are you a Communist?

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[Tony](#), Wigan, United Kingdom, 4 hours ago

Probably is a commie lol but living it large on western life. Such hypocrites those people are.

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[3](#)

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[Sandy Brown](#), London, 8 hours ago

Horrible man. Castro is a monster.

[85](#)
[11](#)



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[Game over](#), New York, United States, 7 hours ago

"Castro is a monster" he's not GWB or Obozo!

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[yznc94](#), Amman, Jordan, 7 hours ago

Just because he is Anti-American doesn't make a monster. Talk about tony Blair and George Bush first

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[Kacey](#), devon, United Kingdom, 8 hours ago

the enemy of my enemy is my friend

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