

## **Russia's Military Drills in The Caribbean: Amidst Increasing Military Support For Ukraine**

Between 12-17 Jun 2024, Russia is preparing to deploy aircraft and naval vessels to the Caribbean Sea to conduct its first military exercises in the Western Hemisphere in five years. The military drills will include port calls at Havana and Venezuela. In 2019, before the full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, Admiral Gorshkov, the naval carrier, docked at the Havana port as part of the usual port of call.

White House national security spokesperson John Kirby stated that nuclear weapons would not be at play during the exercises, even though the submarine *Kazan*, which is deployed, is nuclear-powered. Although the latest drills are part of Russia's regular military exercises, the timing is significant, especially since the US has explicitly granted permission to Ukraine to use its weapons on Russian territory.

It is important to note that Cuba is a key ally of Moscow in the Latin American region. The partnership between both countries has grown significantly in recent years. Support from Cuba, which has also been bearing the brunt of US sanctions, makes it a crucial partner as Russia faces several sanctions from the West. If the deployment takes place, it will likely exacerbate US-Russia relations and could heighten tensions between the US and Cuba and/or Venezuela if they participate in the exercises.

During the exercises, Russia, Cuba, and/or Venezuela might establish no-sail zones, compelling cargo and passenger ships to reroute, causing minor delays in supply chains and travel. The possibility of aviation delays due to temporary airspace closures during the exercises cannot be ruled out as well.