

other items from this western region. We just have to expand our governmental and private sector's trade with neighboring countries and facilitate the work of economic attachés.

In this context, to what extent is the role of relations with neighboring countries, particularly Turkey, significant in neutralizing the impact of such sanctions?

Iran and Turkey share 500 kilometers of common border, consisting of the Bazargan border crossing, the Razi border crossing through which a railway line also passes and which constitutes the closest route to the city of Van from the city of Khoy, as well as the Sarv border crossing situated near the city

of Urmia. So, along the Turkish route, we possess four entry and exit crossings, both rail and road, a rarity globally.

In truth, Iran is Europe's chokepoint, and Europe's trade route to the East and the Far East passes through Iran. Via the terrestrial borders of Iran and Turkey, we have 500 trucks entering and 500 to 700 trailers exiting daily. If we multiply the numbers of trailers by 22 tons (the cargo capacity per trailer), we have 11,000 tons entering and 11,000 to 15,000 tons exiting daily. If these routes operate on a 24-hour basis and customs operations is maintained, we can satisfy many of our necessities via Europe, the Mediterranean Sea basin, and North Africa. On the other hand, in northern

Iran, we possess extremely extensive commercial relations with the Russian Federation both via sea (the Caspian Sea, the Port of Astrakhan, and the northern ports of Iran) and via land (through Nakhchivan). Furthermore, through Turkey and the Turkish Express railway line, which is near the Razi border, we can connect to Europe.

In northeastern Iran, via the Bagjiran border, the Lotfabad border crossing at the Turkmenistan border near Ashgabat, and the exits toward Central Asia, we can both supply and receive necessities, especially foodstuffs. In the Turkmenistan region, meat and livestock products are very prominent. From Turkey itself, we also possess latitude in the protein domain.

Additionally, from Afghanistan, we can procure livestock materials.

Are you saying that, in the realm of supplying essential commodities, even under conditions of a maritime blockade, no difficulty shall arise?

One must be realistic; a maritime blockade is not without effect. After all, we are a nation possessing the longest maritime lines along the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, which connect to global routes (via the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, or Bab-el-Mandeb). A maritime blockade will not be without effect, especially in domains such as the export of oil and petrochemical products, which is conducted predominantly from the south-

ern ports. However, the crucial point is that this effect is not of such magnitude as to drive the country into an impasse. Iran can, via terrestrial routes and engagement with neighbors, satisfy a substantial portion of its necessities, particularly essential commodities.

Moreover, commercial interconnections with nations such as Russia, China, and India also furnish diverse pathways for importation and exportation. Observe the map of Iran right now; everywhere, there are border crossings for exit and entry. In the oil domain, we may encounter issues in the sale or purchase of petroleum, but concerning public necessities, we can fulfill our needs from every region and border crossing of the country.

In the energy domain, particularly oil and gas condensates, does the possibility exist to circumvent maritime restrictions?

In the energy domain, restrictions are more severe, but, again, solutions exist. A portion of transport can be effectuated via pipelines or terrestrial and rail routes, although these methods are more complex and costly compared to maritime trade.

Furthermore, exploiting the capacity of countries such as Turkey for the transfer of energy to Europe, and utilizing alternative routes toward the East, are among the strategies that can be effective in this regard and can, to some extent, compensate for these restrictions.

Trump likes a naval siege

But Iran presents major differences from Venezuela, Cuba

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PERSPECTIVE

US President Donald Trump has turned to naval blockades to pressure the governments of Venezuela, Cuba and now Iran to meet his demands, but his preferred tactic is confronting a very different reality in the Middle East than in the Caribbean. Unlike Cuba or Venezuela, Iran choked off a crucial trade route for energy shipments, meaning the longer the standoff persists, the more the global economy will suffer. Tehran also poses a greater military threat than those two adversaries in America's own hemisphere and requires a sustained military presence far from US shores.

Iran's leverage over the Strait of Hormuz gives it power during a shaky cease-fire because the widening economic risks, especially higher US gas prices in an election year, could force the Republican president to end the blockade on Iran's ports and coastline, experts say.

"It's really a question now of which country, the US or Iran, has a greater pain tolerance," said Max Boot, a military historian and senior fellow for national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The effectiveness of Trump's use of the world's most powerful navy to block the trade of Iran's sanctioned oil and other goods is very much up for debate. But it certainly appears to be intensifying as the war grinds on.

The US military on Thursday announced the seizure of another tanker associated with the smuggling of Iranian oil, a day after Iran's Revolutionary Guards took control of two vessels in the crucial waterway.

Trump also announced he has ordered the US military to "shoot and kill" Iranian small boats laying sea mines in the strait.

But the situation in Iran is not exactly analogous to what is playing out with the US operations in Venezuela and Cuba.

Some experts say Trump's success in Venezuela likely had more to do with the US military raid that captured leader Nicolás Maduro than American warships seizing sanctioned oil tankers to enforce US control over the South American country.



Venezuela's interim president Delcy Rodríguez (L) and Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Padilla attend a ceremony honoring Venezuelan and Cuban military and security personnel who died during a US operation to capture Venezuela's President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, in Caracas, Venezuela, on January 8, 2026.
● FERNANDEZ VILORIA/REUTERS

A US oil embargo on Cuba, meanwhile, has caused the island's most severe economic crisis in decades. While US and Cuban officials have met recently on the island for rare talks, the financial strangulation has failed to produce the Trump administration's stated goal of leadership change.

"I do think that the success of the Maduro mission in Venezuela has probably emboldened the president," said Todd Huntley, director of Georgetown University's National Security Law Program. That does not make the situations in Venezuela and Iran similar — geographically, militarily or politically. "There are some

major differences," said Huntley, a retired Navy captain and judge advocate general.

While the blockade against Iran has delivered a severe blow to its economy, including stopping freighters from importing various supplies, the country has still been able to move some of its sanctioned oil, ship tracking companies say.

Iran has rejected Trump's demands to reopen the strait, where 20% of the world's oil normally flows, and it has fired on ships again. Stalled shipments through the strait have sent gasoline prices skyrocketing far beyond the region and raised the cost of food and a

wide array of other products, creating a political problem for Trump before the November's elections.

"Blockades are usually just one tool of a mechanism used in a conflict," said Salvatore Mercogliano, a maritime history professor at Campbell University in North Carolina. "They can be important. But it's only one element. And I don't think it's going to be enough to convince the Iranians."

Effectiveness of US blockade called into question

Adm. Brad Cooper, head of US Central Command, claimed last



Iranian ships have several ways to sneak through the blockade, including spoofing their location tracking data or traveling through Pakistani territorial waters, Mercogliano said. He also noted that the sheer volume of shipping traffic the military needs to screen is a challenging task.

week that "no ship has evaded US forces." The command overseeing the Middle East said it has directed 31 ships to turn around or return to port as of Wednesday.

Merchant shipping groups are skeptical.

Lloyd's List Intelligence said "a steady flow of shadow fleet traffic" has passed in and out of the Persian Gulf, including 11 tankers with Iranian cargo that have left the Gulf of Oman outside the strait since April 13.

The maritime intelligence firm Windward said last week that Iranian traffic continues to flow "via deception".

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Blockades require patience to work

The last time the US mounted a blockade similar to the one focused on Iranian ships was during the Kennedy administration in the early 1960s, against Cuba, Huntley said.

"And it wasn't even called a blockade," he said. "We called it quarantine."

Some naval blockades over the course of history have had an impact, such as Britain's blockade on Germany during World War I. "But they tend to be very long-term impacts, whereas Trump is looking for short-term, quick results," according to Boot, the military historian.

He said Trump probably saw the blockade on sanctioned oil tankers tied to Venezuela as playing a large role in the success of leadership changes in that country. But Boot said it had more to do with the US ousting Maduro and the subsequent cooperation from his vice president, Delcy Rodríguez, who is now the acting president.

"There is no Delcy Rodríguez in Cuba or Iran," Boot said. "I think his success in Venezuela led him astray, thinking that this was a template that could be replicated elsewhere. He sees it as a huge success at little cost. And, in fact, it turns out to be a unique set of circumstances."

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This US Navy handout photograph released on April 21, 2026, shows US forces patrolling the Arabian Sea near Touska, an Iranian-flagged cargo ship, on April 20, 2026.
● US NAVY