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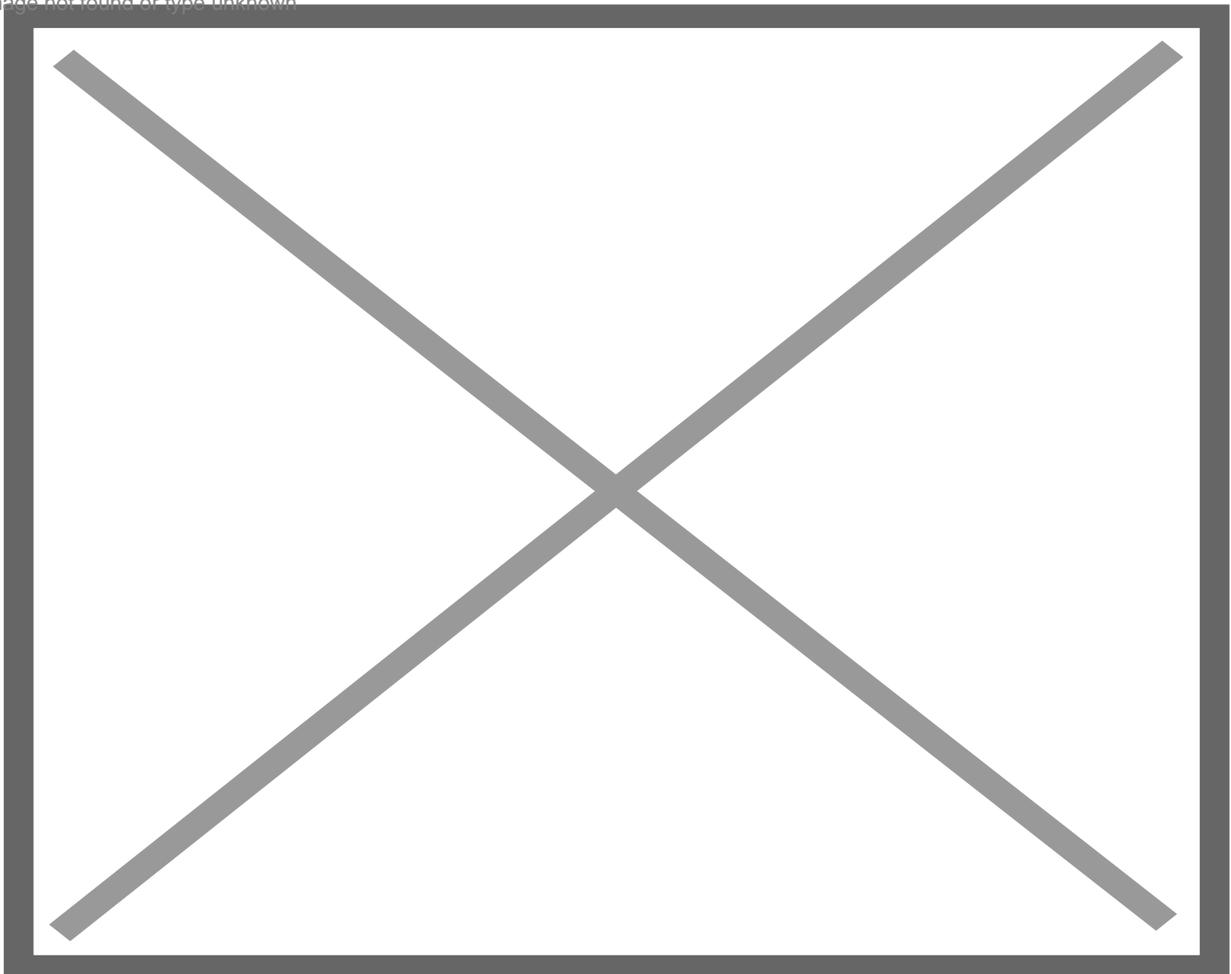
Massive Blackout Hits Puerto Rico, Leaving Nearly 1.3 Million in the Dark

A widespread blackout left over 1.3 million Puerto Ricans without electricity just days before the New Year, reigniting frustrations over the island's fragile power grid and sparking calls for accountability from utility companies and government leaders

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A power outage in Puerto Rico plunged Old San Juan into darkness in June 2021, leaving the historic district without electricity.

Early Tuesday morning, Puerto Rico experienced a widespread blackout, leaving over 1.3 million residents without power just as the island prepared to welcome the New Year. Officials estimate that full restoration could take up to 48 hours.

An Island Grinds to a Halt

The outage began before sunrise, silencing homes and businesses alike as air conditioners, appliances, and other electrical systems came to a stop. Generators buzzed to life in households equipped to handle such interruptions, while others struggled to adapt.

Luma Energy, the private company responsible for Puerto Rico's power transmission and distribution, reported that nearly 90% of the island's 1.47 million customers were impacted.

According to Luma, the blackout appears to have been triggered by a failure in an underground power line. The company emphasized that restoration efforts are ongoing and that the issue is being investigated.

The incident has reignited criticism of Luma Energy and Genera PR, which oversees power generation. Residents and officials alike have expressed dissatisfaction with both companies, calling for accountability amid longstanding frustrations over unreliable power service.

Incoming Governor Jenniffer González Colón, set to take office on January 2, has proposed creating an "energy czar" to evaluate Luma's contract and explore alternatives for managing Puerto Rico's energy infrastructure.

Current Governor Pedro Pierluisi, addressing the issue on social media, stated that he is working with both Luma and Genera PR to identify solutions. "We are demanding answers," he wrote.

The blackout disrupted daily life for many residents, forcing them to improvise.

While outages of this magnitude are uncommon, Puerto Rico's power grid has long struggled with stability. The system, already aging and poorly maintained, suffered catastrophic damage during Hurricane Maria in 2017.

In the years since, repairs have been slow, and many parts of the grid remain reliant on temporary generators provided by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Just last month, the Puerto Rican government sought permission to extend the use of over a dozen portable generators for another two years.

Further compounding the problem is the Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority's \$9 billion debt, which remains unresolved and represents the largest liability of any government entity on the island.

As utility crews race to restore service, public discontent continues to grow. Calls for significant reforms to Puerto Rico's power system, including potential changes to its operators, are gaining momentum. For now, residents are left waiting, hoping for a swift resolution to this latest challenge in an ongoing energy crisis.