

Trump renews call for acquisition of Canada, Greenland, Panama Canal

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In a demonstration of megalomania that is not merely personal but a symptom of the US billionaire class as a whole, President-elect Donald Trump has renewed his calls for the United States to take control of Greenland, Canada and the Panama Canal Zone, while stepping up threats to use military force to secure his “national security” objectives.

Trump made a series of posts Christmas Day on his social media site Truth Social in the course of which he announced his nominee for US ambassador to Panama, Kevin Marino Cabrera, currently a member of the Miami-Dade County Commission. The nominee’s principal qualification is that he was Florida state director for the 2020 Trump presidential campaign and is vice chairman of the Florida Republican Party.

The fascist president-elect denounced Panama as “a Country that is ripping us off on the Panama Canal, far beyond their wildest dreams.”

One lengthy post combined tirades against Panama, Canada, Greenland, China and “Radical Left Lunatics” in the United States, by which he means anyone who opposes his reactionary and anti-democratic politics.

He began by sarcastically wishing, “Merry Christmas to all, including to the wonderful soldiers of China, who are lovingly, but illegally, operating the Panama Canal (where we lost 38,000 people in its building 110 years ago), always making certain that the United States puts in Billions of Dollars in ‘repair’ money, but will have absolutely nothing to say about ‘anything.’”

It is tedious but necessary to unpack the number of deranged lies contained in this single paragraph. There are no Chinese soldiers in Panama, nor are Chinese personnel of any kind operating the Panama Canal. CK Hutchinson Holdings, based in Hong Kong and incorporating the former British-owned Hutchinson Whampoa Ltd. firm, owns container terminals in Colon and Panama City, at each end of the Canal Zone. Other terminals there are owned by US, Singapore and Taiwan-based firms.

CK Hutchinson Holdings is a massive global corporation, with interests in transportation, infrastructure, retail shops

and energy distribution. According to its Wikipedia description, “As the world’s leading port investor, developer and operator, the Group’s ports division holds interests in 52 ports comprising 291 operational berths in 27 countries, including container terminals operating in six of the 10 busiest container ports in the world.”

These include terminals on the US West Coast, at Felixstowe in Britain, and in the Middle East, Africa, South and East Asia, as well as Latin America. This is part of the development of an interconnected global economy in which national borders are increasingly irrelevant. A Chinese version of Trump’s ultra-nationalism and frothing ignorance would denounce airplanes produced by Boeing as instruments of the US government to be banned from the skies.

Trump’s claim that “we lost 38,000 people” building the Panama Canal has been repeatedly debunked. The death toll in the construction project was about 5,000, mostly of laborers recruited in Panama and throughout the Caribbean. About 300 Americans died, mainly of yellow fever, during the lengthy excavation.

As for his talk of billions for repairs, the Panama Canal Authority finances all construction and maintenance from tolls and fees, with no contribution from the US Treasury. The authority is controlled by the government of Panama but is financed separately and consistently makes a profit. Operational problems this year have stemmed from an extensive drought, which has affected Gatun Lake, part of the Canal waterway, but also the main source of drinking water for Panama.

The general response in the American corporate media has been to dismiss the significance of Trump’s threats, portraying them as mere attention-getting bluster. The *Wall Street Journal* editorialized, “Forgive us if we missed it, but we don’t recall Donald Trump campaigning to invade Panama and retake its famous canal. But there was the President-elect on the weekend, threatening our Central American ally with punishment if it doesn’t meet his demands.”

Panama's President José Raúl Mulino has rejected Trump's claims of Chinese influence in Panama and his threat to "take back" the Canal, pointing out that treaties signed by the United States "also established the permanent neutrality of the Canal, guaranteeing its open and safe operation for all nations, a treaty that has obtained the adherence of more than 40 States. Any contrary position lacks validity or support on the face of the earth. ... Our Canal has the mission of serving humanity [and] its commerce."

Mulino and his predecessors have collaborated fully with Washington to harass and block immigrants crossing the Darien Gap from South America and seeking to trek through Central America and Mexico to the US border. But when he pledged to defend Panama's right to the canal which bisects the country, Trump replied on Truth Social with menace: "We'll see about that."

Trump went on to reiterate his "offer" to Canada to merge with the United States, referring to the country's prime minister as "Governor Justin Trudeau of Canada, whose Citizens' Taxes are far too high, but if Canada was to become our 51st State, their Taxes would be cut by more than 60%, their businesses would immediately double in size, and they would be militarily protected like no other Country anywhere in the World."

Canada is, of course, a member of NATO and therefore part of an alliance that supposedly provides it military protection. The reality is that Canada plays a supporting role for American imperialism all over the world, including the Asia-Pacific region, the Caribbean, Africa, and Eastern Europe, as well as North America. A Canadian general headed the US-NATO attack on Libya in 2011.

Trump continued with his string of Mafia-style "offers you can't refuse," writing, "Likewise, to the people of Greenland, which is needed by the United States for National Security purposes and, who want the U.S. to be there, and we will."

In a discussion with Republican National Committee Chair Michael Whatley broadcast Monday, Fox News pundit Brian Kilmeade estimated that Greenland would cost about \$1.5 trillion to buy but "probably will pay off."

Kilmeade asked Whatley why Trump was interested in Greenland. The RNC chair replied, "Well, I think from a national security ... perspective, as he said, you know, certainly a place that is very rich in minerals, and, you know, is geopolitically important for him." The world's largest island has vast mineral and fossil fuel deposits, most now buried under miles of ice, but as the ice cap melts due to global warming, corporate interests are slaving over the profit possibilities.

Trump's musings are anything but a joke. They were combined with a bitter denunciation of his political

opponents, and particularly the 37 federal death row prisoners whose executions were halted last week by President Joe Biden. While Trump, predictably, lied again, claiming the prisoners were given pardons, their sentences were actually commuted to life imprisonment. It was less a gesture of mercy than an effort by Biden to avoid the black eye for American imperialism from putting to death its own citizens, when the vast majority of the world has repudiated capital punishment as a vestige of the Middle Ages.

Moreover, while Trump vents about his desire to acquire vast new territories, his appointments indicate strong support for the use of violence against the neighboring countries he is targeting with his social media barrage. In particular, there is mounting concern in Mexico that Trump is prepared to act on a threat he made frequently during the presidential campaign to send US troops into Mexico, supposedly to stop migrants and wage war against the drug cartels.

Trump's selection of former CIA officer and Green Beret Ronald D. Johnson to be ambassador to Mexico has given credence to this concern. In the first Trump administration, Johnson was US ambassador to El Salvador and avidly supported the authoritarian violence of the country's president, Nayib Bukele, who remains in power today. Johnson previously worked with right-wing death squads in El Salvador during the country's civil war in the 1980s.

According to a report in the *Los Angeles Times*, when Bukele was inaugurated last June to a second term in violation of the country's constitution, Johnson was part of an unofficial Trump delegation supporting him, which included Donald Trump, Jr., fascist ex-Fox News host Tucker Carlson and former Representative Matt Gaetz.



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