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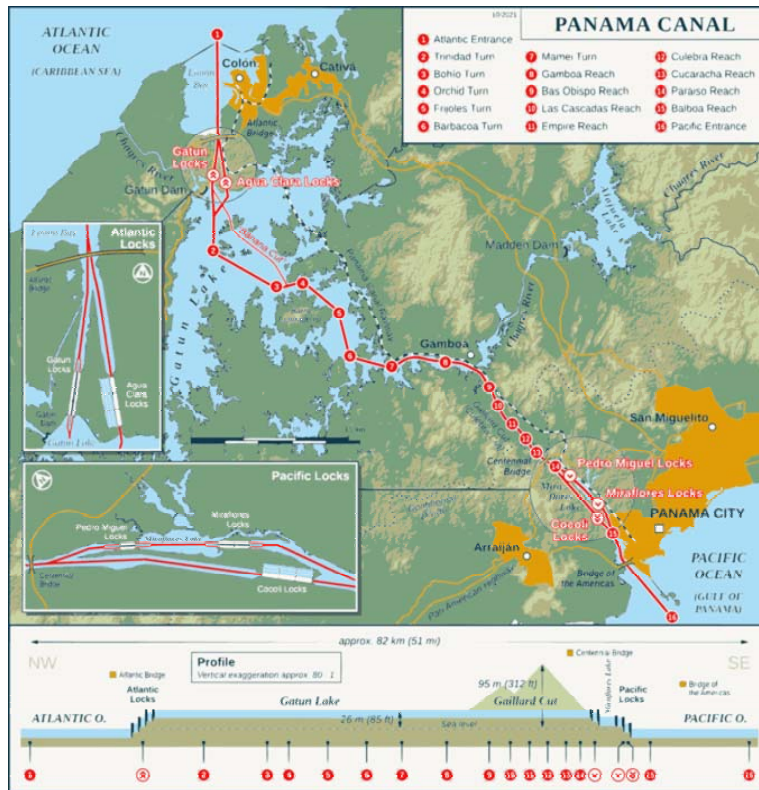
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زبانهای اروپایی

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A Man, a (Bad) Plan, a Canal, Panama



Map of the Panama Canal. Image Source: Thomas Römer/OpenStreetMap data – [CC BY-SA 2.0](#)

In 1989, US forces invaded, conquered, and occupied Panama, replacing its pet dictator, Manuel Noriega with a new regime. Then-president George H.W. Bush's justifications for the invasion included protecting US citizens in Panama and prosecuting the ill-conceived and ill-fated US war on drugs. The more likely reason is that Noriega, after many years of

obedient service to his US masters, had increasingly become his own man (not necessarily in good ways, but that wasn't the issue — he was plenty bad before, too).

In 2025, president-elect Donald Trump proposes that the US regime regain control of the Panama Canal, ceded to Panama in 1999 pursuant to a 1977 treaty proposed by then-president Jimmy Carter and ratified by the US Senate. Implementing Trump's proposal would likely require another invasion, another conquest, another occupation, and imposition of another regime change.

Trump's justifications for his proposal include his expressed opinion that the US acted "foolishly" when it ceded the canal to Panama, that the transit fees charged to move ships across it are "ridiculous," and that the Chinese regime's influence in Panama is strategically dangerous to the canal in particular and US interests in general.

Unmentioned, but worth wondering about: According to the Panamanian courts, the Trump Organization evaded, and owes, millions of dollars in taxes to the Panamanian regime. The case is currently in the US federal court system. Presumably any Trump-installed new regime would take a more forgiving attitude.

Personally, I don't care if someone avoids taxes — of any kind, in any amount, in any way, or to any regime.

But neither do the other supposed justifications hold water, if for no other reason than that attempting to re-take the canal, even if successful, would likely end up with it shut down for a significant period of time, costing US consumers far more than the "ridiculous" transit fees Trump complains of and increasing rather than decreasing Chinese influence in Central America as the region's regimes start looking for help with their own prospective defense from US predation.

And frankly, this one is personal to me.

I won't name names because I think it would be disrespectful in the context of making a political argument, but if you care to look, you can find the name of the only Marine who was killed in the 1989 invasion.

I knew that Marine. I went to boot camp with him. Because the first letter of his name was close to the first letter of my name, he slept one bunk down from me, and we sometimes stood fire watch and other details together. I won't pretend we were best friends, but he was one of the recruits I got to know better than most during a formative life experience.

I've not always been anti-war, and wouldn't have considered myself anti-war in 1989. But never, at any time, did I consider the US objectives in Panama worth his loss.

If Trump follows through with this ambition, people — American and Panamanian alike — will die. And, again, the results won't be worth that cost.

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