

Trump Wants to Take Back Panama Canal

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Donald Trump has suggested that the U.S. should take back control of the Panama Canal, which Panama has owned since 1999. He believes Panama is charging the U.S. too much to use the canal and has raised concerns about China gaining more influence in the area. However, Panama strongly disagrees, saying that the canal belongs to Panama and denying that China has any control over it.



The Panama Canal was built by the U.S. in the early 1900s to help ships travel more easily between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Before the canal, ships had to go all the way around South America, which took months. The U.S. controlled the canal zone for many years, but by 1977,

President Jimmy Carter signed a treaty to give Panama control over the canal. The agreement said that both the U.S. and Panama would share control until 1999, when Panama would take full control.

By the time Panama took full control in 1999, tensions between the U.S. and Panama had been high for years, with many disagreements about how the canal should be managed. In the 1980s, the U.S. even invaded Panama to remove a leader named Manuel Noriega.

Since Panama gained full control of the canal, shipping through it has grown, but the canal has faced challenges like droughts, which have lowered water levels and affected its ability to function. To manage this, Panama has raised fees for ships using the canal, which Trump has criticized as too high.

Although Trump's comments have upset some people, Panama remains firm that the canal belongs to them and that it is neutral and open to all countries. Trump has also mentioned other ideas, like making Canada the 51st U.S. state or buying Greenland, but these ideas have been rejected by the other countries involved.

Comprehension Questions:

1. What is Donald Trump's concern about Panama's control of the canal?

- a) Panama is charging the U.S. too much to use the canal.
- b) Panama is not maintaining the canal properly.
- c) Panama wants to build a new canal.
- d) Panama has made the canal more expensive for all countries.

2. Which of these statements is NOT true?

- a) The U.S. used to control the Panama Canal.
- b) Panama gained full control of the canal in 1999.
- c) US and Panama shared control of the canal until 1999.
- d) China used to control the Panama Canal.

3. Why did Panama raise the fees for ships using the canal?
- a) To improve relations with China. b) To cover the costs of operating it.
c) To make the canal more profitable. d) To encourage ships to use other routes.
4. The fourth paragraph includes the word DROUGHTS. From the context, we know that this word means:
- a) Violent conflicts. b) Unfair deals. c) Too much water. d) Not enough water.
5. Why is the Panama Canal so important for international shipping?
- a) It provides a shortcut between two oceans. b) It is the only way to ship goods to Europe.
c) Trump is a partial owner of the canal. d) It allows ships to avoid pirates.
6. What does Panama claim about the Panama Canal?
- a) It is a shared resource with the U.S. b) It belongs to Panama and is neutral.
c) It is only open to U.S. Ships. d) It is managed by China.
7. What was the purpose of building the Panama Canal?
- a) To create a faster route for ships between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.
b) To prevent ships from passing through South America.
c) To promote trade between the U.S. and China.
d) To allow Manuel Noriega safe passage to Greenland.
8. What is the current situation with the Panama Canal?
- a) The U.S. controls it again. b) Panama controls the canal, and shipping has increased.
c) The canal is closed due to drought. d) China controls the canal.
9. What do we know about Panama's relationship with the U.S. regarding the canal?
- a) It has been mostly peaceful, with few disagreements.
b) The U.S. completely trusts Panama to manage the canal.
c) Panama is eager to give control of the canal back to the U.S.
d) It has been marked by tensions and conflicts.
10. What is the main idea of the article?
- a) The Panama Canal is a valuable resource for both Panama and the U.S.
b) Donald Trump wants to take control of the Panama Canal back from Panama.
c) Panama's economy depends entirely on the Panama Canal.
d) The U.S. built the Panama Canal to help ships avoid long journeys.

Speaking and Writing Activities:

- Discuss these questions with a partner or a small group.
 - Choose one topic and write a response to it. Show your writing to a classmate or teacher.
1. Do you think Trump will be successful in trying to expand the United States to include places like the Panama Canal, Greenland, and Canada? Explain.
 2. The Strait of Gibraltar, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal are used by many countries. Who should control them?
 3. If you could visit Central America, where would you go and what would you do?