

# *Panamanians march in protest as Pentagon chief promises to take back the Panama Canal*

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Panama City, April 10 (RHC)-- China has accused the Trump administration of blackmailing Panama with repeated threats of seizing the Panama Canal to diminish Chinese influence in the region. China's Embassy in Panama said on social media relations between the two countries is a "sovereign decision of

Panama ... and something the U.S. doesn't have the right to interfere in."

The remarks came after U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth visited Panama Tuesday for a ribbon cutting ceremony of a new U.S.-financed dock at the Vasco Núñez de Balboa Naval Base.

The Pentagon chief, Pete Hegseth, said: "Together, we will take back the Panama Canal from China's influence." Hegseth also met with Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino. Protesters took to the streets of Panama City in response, condemning Mulino as a traitor for meeting with Trump officials.

One of the protest organizers, Saúl Méndez, told reporters: "Both Trump, Rubio and now Pete Hegseth have indicated that they are going to take the canal, and obviously the Panamanian people cannot accept this. And that is why we, a handful of patriots, are on the street today, rejecting the presence of the 'secretary of war' in Panama and repudiating Mulino, the traitor, who behind the people's back is giving away our sovereignty and our self-determination."

[ SOURCE: DEMOCRACY NOW ]

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