

Panama rejects Pentagon chief's idea of U.S. bases on its soil

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The proposal includes U.S. troops controlling the strategic Panama Canal on a “rotational” basis

Panama City, April 11 (RHC)-- Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth has floated the idea of establishing military bases in Panama, during a visit to the Central American country. In a speech during the Central American Security Conference in Panama City, Hegseth proposed establishing U.S. military bases in

Panama, although he stated that such deployment would happen with the consent the Panamanian government.

Hegseth's proposal included American troops controlling the strategic Panama Canal on a "rotational" basis with Panama's own armed forces. The idea, however, was quickly slapped down by the Panamanian government.

"Panama made clear, through President Mulino that we cannot accept military bases or defense sites," said Panama Security Minister Frank Abrego. Hegseth also called for American warships to be given free passage through the Panama Canal.

His calls for American military presence and special privileges in Panama were accompanied by statements against China, accusing the country of capturing land in Latin America and threatening the region with its military presence.

Tensions between the United States and Panama have risen ever since the beginning of Donald Trump's second term. The new Trump administration has called for reestablishing American control over the Panama Canal.

This policy has angered Panamanians, who believe that their nation should retain full sovereignty over its territory, which includes the Panama Canal. The United States had held control over the Panama Canal from 1903 to 1979, but it was opposed by many Panamanian groups.

In 1903 and 1979, Panamanians held many protests against American presence in the country, during which more than 30 civilians were killed by US troops.

The canal was finally returned to Panama in 1979, but the United States later invaded the country in 1985, under the pretext of bringing democracy to the country. The invasion killed over 500 Panamanians.

The United States eventually ceded full control of the canal to Panama in 1999.

[SOURCE: PRESS TV and NEWS AGENCIES]

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