

# AMERICAN DEFENSE CENTER

A PROGRAM OF THE CIVIC COUNCIL

April 22, 2010

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Dear SenatorXXXX or Rep.XXXXX,

The Panama Canal is one of the world's most strategic waterways and vital to our country's economic future.

The 14 ports in Florida alone that rely on the Panama Canal to transport goods account for 550,000 jobs and \$66 billion in generated income.

We at the American Defense Center, a nonpartisan organization, continue to have serious concerns about the increased presence and control of the Panama Canal by companies directly connected to the Chinese government.

Billionaire Li Ka-shing, who has ties with the Chinese Army, is chairman of Hutchinson-Whampoa, which owns Panama Ports Company, a company with large ports at both ends of the Panama Canal.

The China-Latin America Task Force warns that Hutchinson-Whampoa property "could potentially serve as a staging area for future operations to deny transit through this strategic chokepoint."

We at the American Defense Center believe China's influence at the Panama Canal is far too strong. We believe that the Panama Canal must remain a neutral and open passageway for uninterrupted use by the United States for economic and national interest purposes.

My hope and request of you today is that you will be a leader in pushing for enforcement of the Neutrality Treaty. Under this treaty, the U.S. retains the permanent right to defend the Panama Canal from any threat that might interfere with its continued neutral service to ships of all nations.

At a minimum, our country should have a joint force (with Panama) to secure the Canal against very real threats.

We would welcome any chance to work with you to strengthen and increase our position at the Panama Canal.

Respectfully,

Thomas Cromwell  
Executive Director