

AMERICAN DEFENSE CENTER

A PROGRAM OF THE CIVIC COUNCIL

February 12, 2009

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Dear SenatorXXXX or CongressmanXXXXXX,

With so much attention focused on the new Administration and a myriad of national and international issues, I am writing to you today to bring attention back to American interests at the Panama Canal.

My hope and request of you today is that you will be a leader in pushing for a Concurrent Resolution to publicly reaffirm America's position at the Canal and our strong belief that the Canal must remain a neutral and open passageway for uninterrupted use by the U.S. for economic and national interest purposes.

A major concern is the decreased American presence at the Panama Canal and the increased presence and control of the Canal by companies with close ties to the Chinese government.

Additionally, United States and Israeli officials have recently confirmed that Latin America is becoming a major base for terrorism.

For example, in January, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates accused Iran of "subversive activity" in Latin America that dwarfs any threat posed by Russia during the Cold War era.

Panama has no army to deal with threats to the Canal. Both President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Al Qaeda terrorists have expressed an interest in the Canal, the former to "protect" it, the latter to blow up a lock, an act that would result in months of closure, if not worse.

The Panama Canal is one of the world's most strategic waterways. As you know, the importance of American access to and unhindered passage through the Canal for military and economic reasons is vital. A Chinese company (Hutchinson Whampoa) controls the ports at both ends of the Canal, and may be involved in the planned expansion of the Canal, further deepening its influence over the Canal.

I am asking you to be a leader in pushing for a Concurrent Resolution that will reaffirm our position as a guarantor of the Canal's neutrality. At a minimum, our country should have a joint force (with Panama) to secure the Canal against very real threats.

Because we are a non-partisan organization, the American Defense Center welcomes any and all opportunities to assist members of the Congress from both parties in furthering our goal of strengthening our national and economic security.

We would welcome any chance to work with you in drafting a Concurrent Resolution to strengthen and increase our position at the Canal.

Respectfully,

Thomas Cromwell
Executive Director