

US foreign policy**Donald Trump calls for more US military action in Latin America**

President announces Shield of the Americas coalition of regional allies that excludes Brazil, Colombia and Mexico



Trump attends the Shield of the Americas Summit in Miami on Saturday © Reuters

Steff Chávez in Doral and **James Politi** in Washington

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Donald Trump has announced a military coalition with a dozen Latin American countries to combat drug cartels, as the US president pushed regional allies to allow more military action from Washington inside their borders.

Trump also took a swipe at Mexico for rejecting his offer to use the US military to pursue cartel leaders and facilities, and said that the US would “soon be coming to Cuba” which was teetering “very much at the end of the line” without money or oil.

The president’s comments at a summit with Latin American leaders held at his Doral resort in Florida came in the middle of his week-old war against Iran, the most significant US military intervention overseas since the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

They also demonstrated Trump's efforts to assert US dominance in the western hemisphere, from Greenland to South America, as one of the cornerstones of his second-term foreign policy.

In January, US forces launched a daring raid in Caracas to topple and capture Venezuelan revolutionary socialist leader [Nicolás Maduro](#), following a campaign of air strikes against alleged drug boats in the Caribbean Sea and eastern Pacific. Trump has said that he would turn his focus back to Latin America once the war in the Middle East was finished, though US officials have warned it could last for weeks.

At Doral, Trump signed a proclamation establishing the Shield of the Americas, flanked by the leaders of Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guayana, Honduras, Panama, Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago, as well as the president-elect of Chile.

Trump told the gathered nations that they had "tremendous potential", but to fulfil it, "we must smash the grip of the cartels and criminal gangs" to "truly liberate our people".

Mexican President [Claudia Sheinbaum](#), Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Colombian President Gustavo Petro were not invited.

Trump encouraged the leaders in Doral to use their militaries to combat drug cartels, but also urged them to call on the US to conduct joint operations in their countries.

"The only way to defeat these enemies is by unleashing the power of our militaries. We have to use our military. You have to use your military," he said.

Trump acknowledged that not all leaders would want the US military operating in their nations, but "if you need help, you're going to let us", he said, as he offered the use of US missiles.

While Trump said that Mexico's Sheinbaum was "a beautiful woman" with "a beautiful voice", his frustration with her was on display.

"We must recognise the epicentre of cartel violence is Mexico", he said. Trump complained that whenever he has offered Sheinbaum help to "eradicate" the criminal groups in Mexico, she has said "no, no, no, please'."

Sheinbaum told reporters she was keeping “a cool head” when asked about Trump’s remarks on Saturday.

The US supplied Mexico with intelligence for its operation last month that killed [Nemesio Oseguera](#), known as “El Mencho”, the former head of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, but did not contribute forces.

Trump has threatened to use military force in Mexico unilaterally, and appeared to renew such warnings on Saturday.

Mexican cartels “are fuelling and obviously getting much of the bloodshed and chaos in this hemisphere. The United States government will do whatever is necessary to defend our national security,” Trump said.

The Pentagon on Tuesday announced it had launched a military operation in Ecuador alongside the country’s own forces, claiming they had taken out a supply complex, as it worked to dismantle “narco-terrorist” networks.

The US has now taken military action inside seven countries since the president returned to the White House in January 2025. He had campaigned on a promise to end America’s foreign military entanglements.

US defence secretary Pete Hegseth said on Thursday that the Pentagon would devote more resources to US Southern Command, which oversees American military operations in most of Latin America. He said the US was “prepared to take on these threats and go on the offence alone, if necessary”, but that it was Washington’s preference for countries in the region to work with the administration.

Additional reporting by Ciara Nugent in Mexico City

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