

Washington escalates aggression against Mexico in bid to impose rule over the Americas

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3 February 2026

In the New Year, the United States has attempted to reassert its power and strategic influence over the entire Latin American region, which includes its Mexican neighbor. In its existential conflict with China, which is heavily invested in the region, US imperialism seeks control over the region's critical resources, such as rare earth elements, lithium, gold, oil and natural gas. On an even grander scale, Trump sees the Americas in their entirety as subject to US domination and control.

Washington is ramping up aggression against Mexico. This is reflected along three axes: its war proclaimed against Mexican drug cartels, its push for Mexico to abandon its longstanding relations with Cuba, while pressuring Mexico as to its oil production, and an aggressive stance over renewing its trade pact with Mexico.

The US war on Mexican drug cartels

A year ago, the Trump administration designated six Mexican cartels as "foreign terrorist organizations," a move Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum then criticized as threatening Mexico's sovereignty.

In November, NBC News reported that the US military was already training for ground operations in Mexico. On January 8, in the wake of the January 3 US invasion of Venezuela and abduction of its president, Trump said that the United States was "going to start now hitting land, with regard to the cartels," a remark that increased expectations that a US military strike on a cartel target in Mexico was forthcoming.

Trump said, "it's very sad to see what has happened to that country, but the cartels control the country and kill between 250,000 and 300,000 people every year," making up these numbers as he went along.

Around that same time, the digital news outlet Código Magenta reported that US operations might even target past and present Mexican politicians with alleged links to drug cartels.

After a lengthy phone call on January 12 with Trump,

Mexico's President Sheinbaum purported to "rule out" US "military action" in Mexico, claiming that Trump had said only that the United States could provide "additional assistance" to combat cartels if Mexico requested such help.

At the same time, Sheinbaum called for "stronger coordination" with the US on maritime security. She said, "we want to continue working as necessary to further strengthen coordination within the framework of defending our water sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Mexico."

Soon thereafter, on January 22, alleged drug trafficker Ryan Wedding, a 44-year-old former Olympic snowboarder wanted on US drug trafficking and murder charges, was apprehended in Mexico City under murky circumstances. Sheinbaum claimed that Wedding turned himself in at the US Embassy in Mexico City. His lawyer disputed the surrender narrative.

A *Wall Street Journal* exclusive published on January 28 cited US and Mexican officials who described the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team involvement as to Wedding in a foreign law enforcement agent operation that Mexican law explicitly forbids. FBI Director Kash Patel, who was in Mexico City during the arrest, called it a "zero-margin, high-risk operation" executed by FBI teams "alongside our Mexican partners."

Trump and Sheinbaum had another lengthy 40-minute call on Thursday January 29. She was accompanied during the call by Mexican Foreign Affairs Minister Juan Ramón de la Fuente, Deputy Foreign Minister for North America Roberto Velasco and Security Minister Omar García Harfuch.

The conversation came nine days after the Sheinbaum administration sent 37 cartel figures to the United States, the third large transfer of prisoners since the current Mexican government took office. Sheinbaum said that Trump was "totally aware" of the latest transfer.

At her usual "mañanera" (morning public conference) after the Trump call, Sheinbaum termed the call a "very good conversation." Trump also referred to the call in positive terms, writing on social media that it was "very productive" and "went extremely well for both countries."

According to Sheinbaum, she told Trump about a 40 percent reduction in homicides (in December 2025, compared to the

final month of her predecessor Andrés Manuel López Obrador's presidency), the destruction of clandestine drug laboratories and thousands of organized-crime related arrests that she claimed had been made during her administration.

Sheinbaum also said that they spoke about the reduction in the trafficking of fentanyl from Mexico to the United States—as indicated by a reduction in fentanyl seizures by US authorities at the border—and the decline in overdose deaths in the US.

Sheinbaum said that Trump had acknowledged Mexico's security efforts, but told her that "more can be done." She says she responded that "Yes indeed, we can do a lot more, but we're working, and the important thing is to maintain this relationship of respect ... and continue collaborating," noting that a bilateral security meeting would take place later in January. Sheinbaum claimed that the Wedding apprehension the week before was not discussed.

US pressures Mexico to abandon relations with Cuba

As to trade talks with the United States, Sheinbaum told reporters on January 29 that "there's nothing concrete yet, but things are progressing very well."

Mexico is seeking relief from tariffs the Trump administration has imposed on a range of Mexican goods, including steel, aluminum and vehicles.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer met on Wednesday, January 28 with Mexican Secretary of Economy Marcelo Ebrard to discuss bilateral trade relations and the upcoming USMCA (US-Mexico-Canada) "Joint Review." According to Greer's office "both sides recognized substantial progress in recent months and agreed to continue intensive engagement to address non-tariff barriers."

Sheinbaum is advocating for maintenance of the current trilateral trade pact. She said she discussed Canada during her January 29 call with Trump, and that she spoke in favor of "maintaining the USMCA with the three countries."

Canada's growing distance from the US was on display at Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent World Economic Forum address, where he called on middle powers to unite in a clear rebuke of the current US administration. Since then, Carney has reached out to China on trade issues, and he would undoubtedly welcome Mexico to follow his lead.

Trump has floated the idea of entering into bilateral trade pacts separately with each of its neighbors.

Even if Mexico, the United States and Canada don't agree to extend the USMCA during this year's review process, the pact by its terms would not be terminated for 10 years, until 2036. Trump, however, is fully capable of blowing up those terms and the pact.

Amid these controversies and geopolitical tensions over trade,

the Mexican economy delivered a record export performance that barely prevented a recession after the economy shrank 0.3 percent in the third quarter. December saw exports climbing 17.2 percent compared to the previous year, so exports reached \$664.8 billion in 2025, a 7.6 percent increase, the strongest growth since 2022.

This created Mexico's first trade surplus since 2020—a modest \$771 million that nonetheless contrasts sharply with 2024's \$18.5 billion deficit. Capistrán Carmona told *Forbes* that exports will once again be Mexico's economic engine in 2026, forecasting growth above 5 percent. But that is wishful thinking at best.

Regardless of the ruling Morena party's populist guise, the interests of the Mexican ruling class foreclose any response that rallies Mexicans in defense of democratic and social rights. It instead requires that the Mexican working class continue to supply cheap labor for finance capital. And if growth stagnates, there will be growing pressures by creditors to cut Morena's limited social programs and pensions.

At the same time, the Mexican ruling class as a whole is fearful that opposition to the government will grow over its subservience to Trump, exposure of corruption and planned social cuts.

Under these conditions, the trajectory is further class struggle, economic oppression and US depredations and piracy.

The slide of US imperialism toward further violence in Mexico, and throughout Latin America, requires a class response: the united movement of the working class across the Americas and internationally, to bring to an end to the capitalist nation-state system.



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