



Trump slaps tariffs on Colombia after it turns back migrant deportation planes

ReutersBy Phil Stewart and Oliver GriffinBy: Reuters | Jan 26 2025 at 08:25 PM | [International Trade](#)

President Donald Trump said on Sunday he would impose sweeping retaliatory measures on Colombia, including tariffs and sanctions, after the South American country turned away two U.S. military aircraft with migrants being deported as part of the new U.S. administration's immigration crackdown.

Trump's swift retaliatory action appeared aimed at making an example of Colombia to dissuade other countries from defying him on deportation flights. It also showed a renewed willingness to use the might of the United States to force other countries to bend to his will.

Trump said the refusal by Colombian President Gustavo Petro to accept the flights jeopardized U.S. national security and he has directed his administration to take retaliatory measures.



Migrants board a C-17 Globemaster III aircraft for a removal flight, Fort Bliss, Texas, January 23, 2025. Dept. of Defense/Handout via REUTERS

They include imposing emergency 25% tariffs on all goods coming into the United States, which will go up to 50% in one week; a travel ban and visa revocations on Colombian government officials and its allies; fully imposing emergency treasury, banking and financial sanctions. He said he would also direct enhanced border inspections of Colombian nationals and cargo.

"These measures are just the beginning," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "We will not allow the Colombian Government to violate its legal obligations with regard to the acceptance and return of the Criminals they forced into the United States!"

The U.S. president declared illegal immigration a national emergency and imposed a sweeping crackdown since taking office Monday, directing the U.S. military to help with border security, issuing a broad ban on asylum and taking steps to restrict citizenship for children born on U.S. soil.

Colombia's refusal to accept the flights is the second case of a Latin American nation refusing U.S. military deportation flights.

Petro condemned the practice, suggesting it treated migrants like criminals. In a post on social media platform X, Petro said Colombia would welcome home deported migrants on civilian planes, saying they should be treated with dignity and respect.

"The U.S. cannot treat Colombian migrants as criminals," Petro wrote, noting that there were 15,660 Americans without proper immigration status in Colombia.

Mexico also refused a request last week to let a U.S. military aircraft land with migrants.

Trump did not take similar action against Mexico, its largest trading partner, but has said he was thinking about imposing 25% duties on imports from Canada and Mexico on Feb. 1 over illegal immigrants and fentanyl crossing into the U.S.

The United States is Colombia's largest trade and investment partner, the State Department says, and Colombia is also the U.S.'s third-largest trade partner in Latin America.

"Petro's finding out that tweets have consequences. He's not faced a U.S. counterpart that looks at Colombia through a strategic lens, as a key ally, but as a country to make an example of," said Sergio Guzman, director of consultancy Colombia Risk Analysis, who added that financial sanctions could be potentially economically crippling.

GROWING DISCONTENT

Petro's comments add to the growing chorus of discontent in Latin America as Trump's week-old administration starts mobilizing for mass deportations.

Brazil's foreign ministry late on Saturday condemned "degrading treatment" of Brazilians after migrants were handcuffed on a commercial deportation flight. Upon arrival, some of the passengers also reported mistreatment during the flight, according to local news reports.

The plane, which was carrying 88 Brazilian passengers, 16 U.S. security agents, and eight crew members, had been originally scheduled to arrive in Belo Horizonte in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais.

However, at an unscheduled stop due to technical problems in Manaus, capital of Amazonas, Brazilian officials ordered the removal of the handcuffs, and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva designated a Brazilian Air Force (FAB) flight to complete their journey, the government said in a statement Saturday.

The commercial charter flight was the second this year from the U.S. carrying undocumented migrants deported back to Brazil and the first since Trump's inauguration, according to Brazil's federal police.

Officials from the U.S. State Department, Pentagon, U.S. Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement did not immediately reply to requests for comment.

The use of U.S. military aircraft to carry out deportation flights is part of the Pentagon's response to Trump's national emergency declaration on immigration on Monday.

In the past, U.S. military aircraft have been used to relocate individuals from one country to another, like during the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021.

This has been the first time in recent memory that U.S. military aircraft were used to fly migrants out of the country, one U.S. official said.

U.S. military aircraft carried out two similar flights, each with about 80 migrants, to Guatemala on Friday.



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