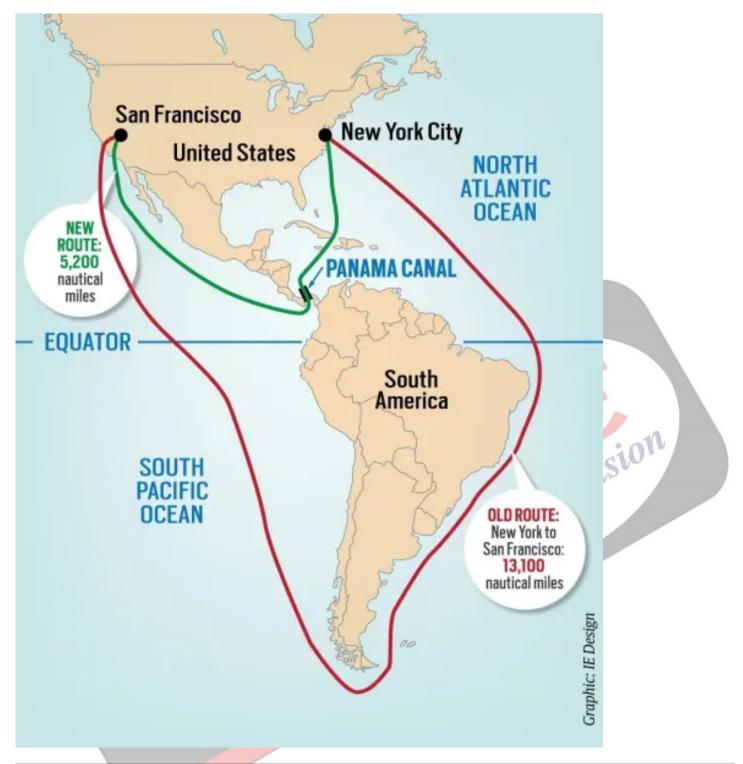


Panama Canal

Source: TH

The US and Panama have formalised a new defense and security pact aimed at countering China's expanding influence over the <u>Panama Canal</u>.

- China operates two <u>major ports</u> at the Panama Canal, raising US concerns about Chinese influence on global shipping, though Panama denies any Chinese control.
- Panama Canal: The Canal was originally constructed (1914) and controlled by the US.
 - In 1979, control of the Canal was transferred to the Panama Canal Commission, a joint agency of the US and Panama, and eventually, in 1999, full control was handed over to Panama.
- Strategic Importance: It is one of the two most strategically significant artificial waterways in the world, the other being the <u>Suez Canal</u>.
 - It connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans through the narrow <u>Isthmus of Panama</u>, significantly reducing the distance between the US east and west coasts by about 8,000 nautical miles.
- Operation/Functioning: It uses a system of locks and water elevators to transport ships from one ocean to the other.
 - This design is necessary as the Pacific Ocean is slightly higher (~20 cm) in elevation than the Atlantic Ocean.
 - The locks operate by **flooding (to raise elevation)** or **draining (to lower elevation)** and act as water elevators to lift or lower vessels.



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