



GULF OF MEXICO – GEOGRAPHY

NEWS: *Donald Trump announced his intention to rename the Gulf of Mexico as the “Gulf of America,” citing a desire to assert U.S. dominance in the region.*

WHAT’S IN THE NEWS?

1. On his first day as the 47th President of the United States, Donald Trump outlined plans for immediate action, primarily through a series of executive orders.
2. Trump’s statement aligns with a history of provocative rhetoric toward neighboring nations, including earlier claims about taking control of Greenland, the Panama Canal, and referring to Canada as the “51st state” of the U.S.

Reactions from Mexico and Historical Context

1. Claudia Sheinbaum, the President of Mexico, responded humorously to Trump’s proposal, suggesting that North America could be renamed “Mexican America” as a counterargument.
2. During a press briefing, Sheinbaum referenced historical maps from the 17th century and displayed a 1607 map that labeled the body of water as the "Gulf of Mexico."
3. The New York Times highlighted that the name “Gulf of Mexico” dates back to Spanish maps from the 16th century, long before the establishment of the United States.

International Naming of Maritime Areas

1. The Associated Press reported that renaming the Gulf of Mexico would not be solely under U.S. jurisdiction, as international consensus would not necessarily be required.
2. John Nyberg, director of the International Hydrographic Organization, stated that there is no formal global protocol or agreement governing the naming of maritime areas.
3. **Governance on Naming: International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)** (US and Mexico are members), ensures uniformity but allows domestic alternative names, with **no formal renaming protocol**.
 1. Mexico and Cuba aren't bound to the new name, and international agreements still use the **Gulf of Mexico**.
4. **Gulf of Mexico:** It is the world’s largest gulf, bordered by **Cuba, Mexico, and the US**, connects to the Atlantic via the **Straits of Florida** and to the **Caribbean** via the **Yucatán Channel**.
 1. The Gulf of Mexico supplies 14% of US **crude oil**, 5% of **natural gas**, and hosts 48% of the US **petroleum refining capacity** and 51% of the **natural gas processing capacity**.



5. **Mount McKinley: Mount McKinley, the highest peak in North America, is located in Alaska and was renamed Denali in 2015 to honor the indigenous Koyukon people.**
 1. Reverting to Mount McKinley honors **President William McKinley (1897-1901)** for his leadership in the **Spanish-American War and US economic growth.**
6. **Similar Global Disputes: The "Persian Gulf" vs. "Arabian Gulf" between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the "Sea of Japan" vs. "East Sea" between Japan and South Korea, and territorial naming disputes in the South China Sea.**

Geographical and Ecological Importance of the Gulf of Mexico

1. Geographical Overview

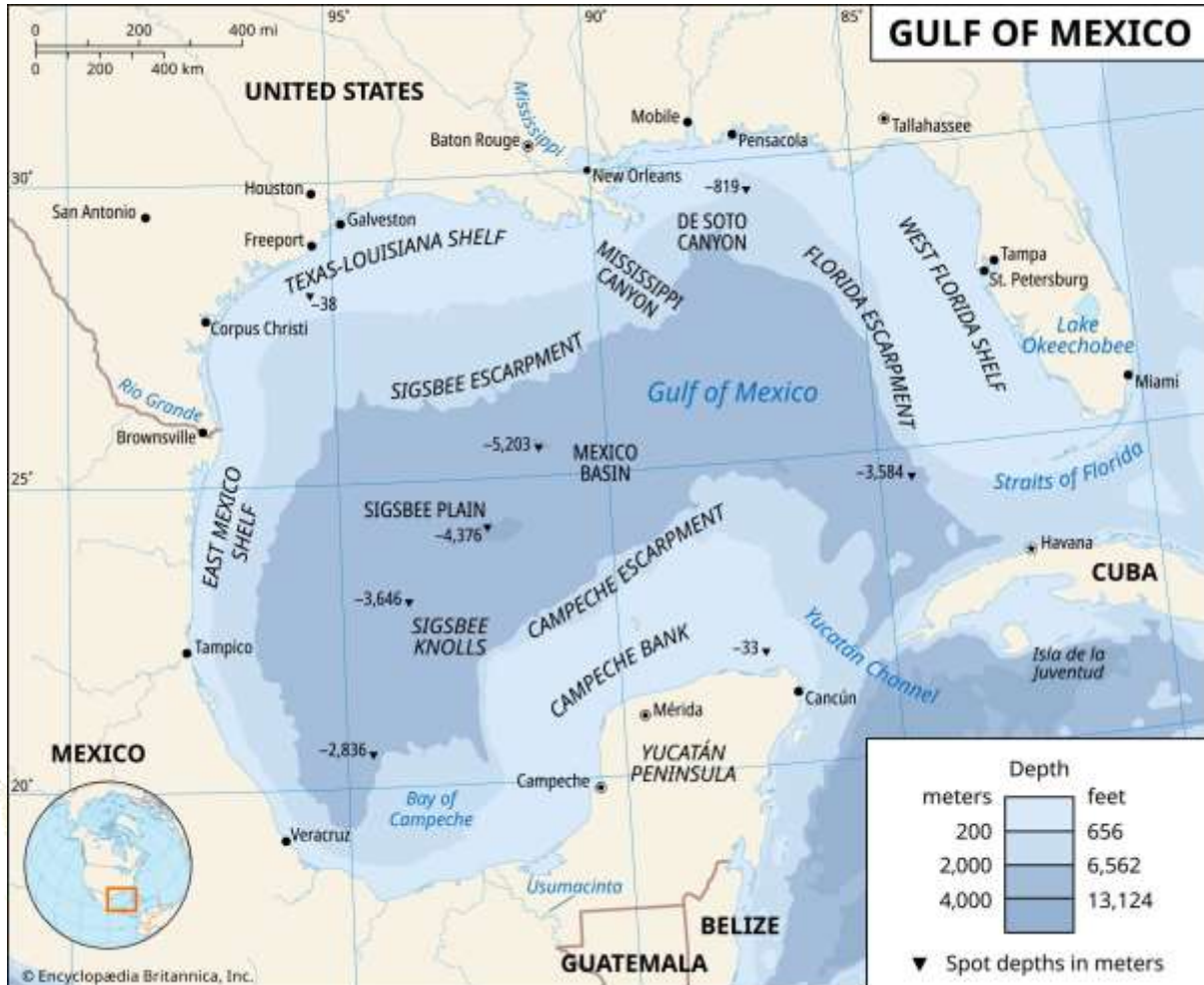
- The Gulf of Mexico is bordered by Cuba, Mexico, and the United States and is recognized as the world's largest gulf by surface area.
- It connects to the Atlantic Ocean through the Straits of Florida (between the Florida peninsula and Cuba) and to the Caribbean Sea via the Yucatán Channel (between the Yucatán Peninsula and Cuba).

2. Ecological Importance

- The Gulf is globally recognized as a productive waterbody, supporting one of the most biodiverse marine ecosystems in the world.
- It provides essential habitats for a variety of species, including fish, migratory birds, and other wildlife, contributing significantly to global biodiversity.



- Coastal wetlands in the Gulf span over five million acres (roughly half of the U.S. total), which are vital for species like waterfowl, seabirds, wading birds, and fisheries.



3. Economic Significance

- The Gulf supports crucial ecosystems that contribute to the economies of the five Gulf Coast states and the broader U.S. economy.
- It plays a central role in shaping the natural and cultural heritage of the region, highlighting its economic and ecological interconnectedness.

Greenland: Geopolitical and Strategic Importance

1. Renewed Interest by the U.S.

- Donald Trump reiterated his desire to acquire Greenland, a semi-autonomous territory of Denmark.
- Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen emphasized that Greenlanders hold the decision-making power regarding their future.

2. Strategic Importance



- Greenland's location is strategically significant for U.S. military operations, especially due to its role in NATO through Denmark and the ballistic missile early-warning system.
- The shortest route between Europe and North America runs via Greenland, enhancing its geopolitical relevance.

3. Geographical Overview

- Greenland, the world's largest island, is situated in the Arctic and is the most sparsely populated territory.
- It is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean to the south and the Arctic Ocean to the north, with Kaffeklubben Island marking the northernmost point of land globally.

4. Economic and Resource Wealth

- Greenland is rich in minerals, including large deposits of traditional resources like gold, nickel, and cobalt, as well as rare earth minerals such as dysprosium, praseodymium, neodymium, and terbium.
- Of the 34 classified rare earth elements, Greenland is estimated to have about 23, attracting interest from prospecting mining companies worldwide.

5. Historical and Political Context

- Greenland has been under Denmark's control for around 300 years, despite being geographically part of North America.
- In 1953, Greenland was fully integrated into the Kingdom of Denmark, granting Greenlanders Danish citizenship.
- A 1979 referendum introduced home rule, allowing Greenland to manage most internal policies while Denmark retained authority over defense and foreign affairs.

6. Economic Overview

- The island's economy is heavily reliant on fishing, which is its main source of income.
- Subsidies from the Danish government account for about 20% of Greenland's GDP, supporting its economic stability.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-essentials/knowledge-nugget-of-the-day-gulf-of-mexico-greenland-us-trump-upsc-9788773/>

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