



Today's Paper | America250 | Local News | Puzzles | Archives | N >

Trump focuses attention on Guyana

Country's bauxite, oil reserves are deemed vital to interests of US, China

May 17, 2026 by BERT WILKINSON and ANNA-CATHERINE BRIGIDA

The Associated Press



0 Comments



GEORGETOWN, Guyana -- The U.S. announced Friday that it is turning its attention toward Guyana's abundant bauxite and other resources for business opportunities at a time when the Trump administration is increasingly eyeing Latin American energy and minerals.

U.S. Under Secretary for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg held talks this week with top Guyanese officials, including President Irfaan Ali, in the South American country experiencing an oil boom.

The country's mass oil reserves discovered in the last decade have increased Guyana's geopolitical importance, which has been further amplified by a global energy crisis caused by the Iran war. Its bauxite reserves are critical for producing aluminum.

The Trump administration has more aggressively focused on Latin America's resources, from pushing to expand oil production in Venezuela after the U.S. military invasion in January to pursuing cooperation with Brazil over critical minerals.

In a region where energy production seemed to be declining, Latin America is now seeing a reversal of that trend, according to Benjamin Gedan, senior

fellow and director of the Stimson Center Latin America program.

"In times of global energy scarcity, there's a great deal more focus on Latin America as an alternative stable source of supply," Gedan said. "And Guyana is the leader of that story."

The visit comes amid concerns in the U.S. government about the Chinese government and larger companies cashing in on multimillion dollar state contracts at the expense of U.S. firms.

Guyanese officials have argued that the U.S. firms have not been as aggressive as the Chinese, who often offer financing and cater to labor needs for large projects.

Helberg told officials that the benefits of the bauxite reserves are already known, so the U.S. will be interested in that sector. Currently, Chinese operator Bosai Minerals is the dominant player in the local bauxite sector.

"Generally speaking, we both understand that Guyana is a country with a lot of natural resources," Helberg said of the bilateral talks.

He suggested that the U.S. can also assist Guyana in conducting high-tech surveys to determine what other minerals lie under the surface for other developments later on.

The U.S. is looking to learn from past mistakes of allowing China to gain a foothold in the region, according to Jason Marczak, vice president and senior director for the Adrienne Arsht Latin America Center at the Atlantic Council.

While Guyana is likely trying to diversify its trade relationships, including with China, the visit shows that the country remains a strong U.S. partner in the region.

"President Ali in particular is very close to the United States and in general recognizes the importance of the U.S. as a key partner for Guyana," Marczak said. "That's reflected by Helberg's visit to Guyana."

Guyana's Foreign Secretary Robert Persaud told The Associated Press on Friday that Guyana is interested in attracting U.S. investors to the mineral, oil- and gas-rich country in the coming months.



Sleek 2026 SUVs Turning Heads

SearchInfoHub



"The U.S. is our strategic partner and we made that clear to them but we would want value added to bauxite and other products. We are interested in processing and with improvements in energy generation," he said.

Information for this article was contributed by Anna-Catherine Brigida of The Associated Press.

