



By: TA | AP Brief

Argentina's Milei escalates Falklands dispute



Argentine President Javier Milei escalated his country's dispute with Britain over the Falkland Islands, vowing new measures to halt an oil project near the British-controlled archipelago and praising U.S. President Donald Trump for saying Washington could reconsider its neutral stance on the islands' sovereignty.

Milei cast Trump's comments as proof that his close relationship with the U.S. president — criticized by political opponents as overly deferential — was paying dividends.

"The United States is considering this change in position because it knows that Argentina has a reliable partner, aligned with Western values, in a strategically important position that can be a valuable ally in the decades to come," Milei said in a nationally televised speech.

The Argentine leader then announced sweeping actions aimed at stopping the development of the deep-sea Sea Lion oil project, about 220 kilometers (140 miles) north of the islands, where British company Rockhopper Exploration and Israel's Navitas Petroleum plan to begin drilling in the coming months and start pumping oil in 2028.

Argentina considers the project an illegal exploitation of resources in waters it claims as its own.

He threatened tougher sanctions against companies involved in the offshore drilling and announced new funding for a naval base in Argentina's southernmost province of Tierra del Fuego to bolster the country's military presence near the islands, known in Argentina as the Malvinas.

"Argentina will not stand idly by," Milei said. "Any further advance on the Malvinas Islands will be considered a violation of our national security."

Political divides

Milei's effort to refocus attention on the

Falklands are a striking turn for a leader who has **faced criticism** at home for warming ties with Britain and professing admiration for Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister detested in Argentina for leading the campaign to retake the archipelago during the 1982 Falklands War.

The **two-month conflict**, which killed 649 Argentine troops, 255 British service members and three islanders, remains a sore point in Argentina over four decades later.

The sovereignty claim is enshrined in Argentina's constitution and frequently invoked as an expression of national identity, from banknotes to **World Cup soccer chants**.

He wants to use the legitimate sovereignty claim over the Malvinas Islands to regain ground ahead of the election year - Nicolás del Caño

It is also one of the few causes that cuts across the country's stark political divides, giving Milei, who is up for reelection next year, a welcome political opening as his **approval ratings** slip and the **economy sputters**.

"We can argue about my style. We can disagree over fiscal or exchange-rate policy," Milei said. "But there are causes that rise above any political difference. The Malvinas is one of them."

Some were skeptical.

"He wants to use the legitimate sovereignty claim over the Malvinas Islands to regain ground ahead of the election year and serve U.S. interests in its dispute with Britain," said Nicolás del Caño, a leftist opposition lawmaker.