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Impending Strike Will Paralyze Panama Canal Expansion

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The notice of a strike over wage claims from Wednesday that will paralyze the Panama Canal expansion, today holds in tension the construction consortium, waterway authorities and workers.

Alarms are triggered after the declaration of the Single Union of Construction Workers and Similar (SUNTRACS) that about six thousand workers would stop the work on the implementation of the third set of locks from next August 12, because that would imply new arrears at the launch, scheduled for April 2016.

We remain in dialogue with Grupo Unidos por el Canal (GUPC) to reach agreements, but if not achieved, early on Wednesday we declare unemployed, told Prensa Latina Hector Hurtado, a spokesman for SUNTRACS.

The project will stop entirely, so the locks of the Pacific and the Atlantic, Hurtado said while recognizing that the Channel is important in the country, but the conditions of the workers are above all, he remarked.

Saul Mendez, secretary general of SUNTRACS, told reporters Sunday that the salary increases for non-performed last July, according to the Collective Agreement signed between the Panamanian Chamber of Construction and the Union and after two months of negotiations, is GUPC He refuses to execute.

He also summoned the administrator of the Panama Canal Authority (ACP), Jorge Luis Quijano, to rule on the matter and said that it shows a 'stubborn attitude when wage increases'.

For its part, the consortium said in a statement GUPC builder 'requested support for ACP, owner of the work so that together reach a cost-effective solution compatible with Union demand.

'However, the intransigent and negative attitude of ACP, did it not made possible to reach an agreement to find a solution to this impending strike affecting the delivery schedule, the document said.

This was responded by the Canal Authority with other text that urged 'GUPC to honor the terms and conditions of the Contract that remain in force and cease its attempts to pierce responsibilities that do not belong. "

It reiterated that meet the wage demands and everything related to labor relations of workers of the construction company, are unique obligations of the contractor.

Finally urges the parties to resolve this conflict as soon as possible, especially when the works already recorded 93 percent complete.

Also the minister Labor and Workforce Development (Mitradel), Luis Ernesto Carles, called for dialogue, noting that the effects caused by the announced strike could result in \$ 250,000 a day in losses to the state, to the daily newspaper La Prensa.

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