

Press Releases: Interview With Andrea Aristegui of Mega TV

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Santiago, Chile
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QUESTION: Mr. Pompeo, thank you for your time. You're visiting Chile, Paraguay, Peru, and Colombia to reinforce commitment to democracy and human rights in Venezuela, and you have said that every option is on the table. Military intervention – is it still an option?

SECRETARY POMPEO: President Trump's been unambiguous. The United States stands squarely behind the Venezuelan people. We will restore democracy. We will protect the human rights. We've done so with political tools, our diplomatic tools; we've provided hundreds of metric tons of food that, sadly, we've not been able to get in. And every single tool, every single option remains on the table.

QUESTION: So the answer is yes?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The answer is yes.

QUESTION: And this is a option even when the Lima Group, including Chile, reject the military option? Are you able to hold that military option even if you don't have the support from other countries of the region?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Look, I'm here today to talk about how it is we're going to achieve a diplomatic solution here, how we're going to support the OAS, the Lima Group countries like Brazil, Peru, here in Chile to support our collective efforts to ensure that Nicolas Maduro cannot continue to kill and starve his people. That's our mission set. We've made no bones about our commitment. We're going to be here until this work is done and our efforts – our efforts to build out what is now a 54-nation coalition that understands Juan Guaido is the proper leader of his country. And we'll be with him today, we'll be with him the day that Maduro leaves, and we'll be with him in the days thereafter to begin to rebuild Venezuela.

QUESTION: Venezuela is backed by China and Russia. Do you think that the support of China and Russia to Venezuela makes Maduro's exit more complex or

even an impossible task?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Not impossible, but it makes it more difficult, there's no doubt. I think the Russian interference – you were talking a minute ago about America intervening. Well, Russia intervened. Russia intervened. They went against the leadership of the country of Venezuela. They intervened without authority. They don't have the consent of the Venezuelan people to be there. They're there as a hostile power. Juan Guaido is the duly elected leader. They came in to support Nicolas Maduro, who today is the former leader of Venezuela. So it's quite hypocrisy when nations like those in the OAS and Lima Group get accused of intervening in Venezuela when the Russians have troops on the ground, and more importantly, when you really have a state that was turned over as a security matter to the Cubans long ago.

QUESTION: Admiral Craig Faller, who leads the U.S. Southern Command, said the military is awaiting instructions from the Trump administration on military intervention in Venezuela. He said, "The crisis in Venezuela could approach that degree by the end of this year if Maduro still remains in power." It is true? Is this year, the end of this year the deadline for Maduro for you?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I hope it's much sooner than that. I hope that Maduro while we're sitting here has made the decision to do the right thing for the Venezuelan people. It's unlikely. He's never done that before, but my hope is that the – all the array of opposition to Maduro, all those leaders who were talking to the United States of America looking for a plane ticket and a passport someplace out – I hope that those leaders will all take us up on those offers. They will leave, and they will allow the Venezuelans to vote for their next leader, to have a democracy, and then get the economic support they need to rebuild what Maduro has destroyed over the past years.

QUESTION: Mr. Pompeo, you're willing hold that military option even who you don't have the support of the United Nations Security Council?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We – I don't know how many times I can answer this question. We've made clear our goal is to convince Maduro it is time to leave. We're going to leave every option on the table to use to achieve that objective.

QUESTION: Even if you don't have the support of the UN –

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've answered –

QUESTION: – and the Security Council?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ma'am, I've answered your question.

QUESTION: Like Iraq?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ma'am, I don't understand your question. Like Iraq what?

QUESTION: If you don't have the support of Security Council. That's the question.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't understand your question. We – our commitment is very, very clear.

QUESTION: You can hold the military option even if you don't have the support –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ma'am, our position is very clear. I've answered it now four times for you, and I appreciate that you've asked it seven times. Answered this question four times for you. Our work is diligent to find a diplomatic, political resolution to save the people from Venezuela from the Cubans, the Russians, and this tyrant Nicolas Maduro, period, full stop.

QUESTION: I want to ask you about what do you think about Julian Assange prison detention in London? What's the position of the United States about that?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So there's an active case in litigation. I don't have anything in particular that I can add about that. Suffice it to say America is always happy, as I think the people of Chile are happy, when those who have stolen information and put the lives of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines at risk are being brought to justice. We had Americans serving abroad whose information was stolen and then put into the public. That puts our people at risk. That's not right. That's not journalism. And I hope that anyone who engages in activity is held accountable.

QUESTION: I ask you because three years ago the President Trump said that he loved WikiLeaks.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I think we all understand this stolen information put Americans at risk. I'm confident the President of the United States, who has done more to keep America secure than any president in years, understands that too.

QUESTION: So do you think Assange's arrest a threat to the free press like some people say?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't have anything to comment about that case in particular. There's active litigation taking place there, so unfortunately, I'm not able to comment on that.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Pompeo.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you for the interview.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you.

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