

Press Releases: Interview With Gesell Tobias of Voice of America Latin America

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Buenos Aires, Argentina
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QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you very much for this opportunity with the Spanish division of Voice of America.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Gesell, it's great to be with you. Thank you for the opportunity.

QUESTION: I just want to begin asking you some thoughts about former President Bush.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I had a chance to get to know him just a little bit while I served in Congress, and then I held a job that he held as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. He was a great mentor. He was an incredibly kind man. He was a patriot of the highest order. Susan and I's sympathy go out to the entire Bush family. America will miss this amazing warrior, this amazing leader, this amazing American patriot.

QUESTION: Thank you. Now about the G20: What is the U.S. doing to find common ground with so many leaders with so many different agendas here at the G20?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So it's the case – 20 countries plus some multilateral organizations, lots of different views, but commonly we all share the intense desire to grow economies all around the world, to create prosperity for every citizen of the world, to develop rules that permit that to happen. These are common themes. Sometimes we'll argue about how best to achieve them, but everyone's headed towards the same set of objectives. We know that if we get growth, we get prosperity, we get freedom all around the world, that the lives of hundreds of millions of people will be improved, and that's the mission statement that the G20 gathers around each time it joins its hands together.

QUESTION: This is the first time President Donald Trump visits the region.

This could mean a new relationship with Latin America, taking into consideration that China is also getting new friends in the region.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes. Look, we consider our relationship with South America, Central America, Mexico to be central to American success. President Trump has been committed to that since the very beginning of his time in office. It's wonderful now that he's had a chance to get down here. He's known President Macri for a long time, and they had a wonderful meeting yesterday where they came around a set of objectives that our two countries will now begin to implement. And so we're excited about that. We think having a great, close relationship with America is really important, and we are all concerned about China and the way China enters countries. It is not always the case that when China shows up, it's with a good intention for the people of the country they are showing up to ostensibly support. It's most often about China.

QUESTION: About Venezuela, President Trump talk about Venezuela with President Macri. Are there new actions being considered or analyzed to take against Nicolas Maduro government and to help Venezuelans?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't have anything specific that I can share with you today, but we've had a number of conversations down here at the G20, and President Trump is very determined. The Maduro regime must restore democracy. They – the current situation is intolerable. The people of Venezuela are suffering and democracy must be restored, and we've done a great deal so far along with many South American countries and Central American countries. We worry. We know we've had migration into Argentina, into other countries here, people fleeing this despot, this dictator in Venezuela. And so I don't have anything specific that I can share with you today, but the determination for all of the countries in the region to join hands with the United States to restore democracy in Venezuela remains strong.

QUESTION: On immigration, hundreds of people from Central America try to enter the United States every day. What the U.S. can do to create more opportunities in Central America, in the region for Central Americans so they don't have the need to look forward for a better life in the U.S.?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Gesell, that's a great question. I've had the chance to get to know my incoming counterpart in Mexico. I've had a chance to work with the Northern Triangle countries. We are determined to do what the new government that'll be sworn in today in Mexico has talked with us about to make sure that we do create opportunities in the Northern Triangle so these people will have better lives there. After all, that's what it's really all about. It's the capacity to live their lives the way they want to with economic success and freedom. We're committed to assisting in that, and in the time that we can't get there, we're also determined to make sure the human rights of the migrants are respected, at the same time enforcing U.S. law.

QUESTION: After this trip, any new trip to visit any country in Latin America for you, Secretary Pompeo?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's very likely I'll be right back down here just right at

the first of the year, and I'm looking forward to that. Nothing to announce, but I'll be back. I've been here a number of times. I'll be back before too long.

QUESTION: Thank you very much for your time.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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