

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

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Buenos Aires, Argentina
December 1, 2018

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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[Press Releases: Iran Test Launches Ballistic Missile Violating UN Security Council Ban](#)

Press Statement
Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Washington, DC
December 1, 2018

The Iranian regime has just test-fired a medium range ballistic missile that is capable of carrying multiple warheads. The missile has a range that allows it to strike parts of Europe and anywhere in the Middle East. This test violates UN Security Council resolution 2231 that bans Iran from undertaking "any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology . . ."

As we have been warning for some time, Iran's missile testing and missile

proliferation is growing. We are accumulating risk of escalation in the region if we fail to restore deterrence. We condemn these activities, and call upon Iran to cease immediately all activities related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons.

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[Press Releases: Interview With Wolf Blitzer of CNN](#)

Interview
Michael R. Pompeo
Secretary of State

Buenos Aires, Argentina
December 1, 2018

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, thanks so much for joining us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Wolf, it's great to be with you.

QUESTION: Let's talk about the late President George H.W. Bush. How do you see his legacy?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's a remarkable American legacy, and they don't make them like that very often. I had the chance to get to know him when I was a member of Congress first and then I held a job that he held at one point, and I remember talking to him just after I was nominated to be the CIA director. He said you'll be great, you'll be awesome. In fact, it was the second-best job I ever had, and he loved that group of people, that talented espionage agency so much. America is worse off today. I want to extend my and Susan's heartfelt sympathy to the entire Bush family.

QUESTION: What lessons can politicians today learn from the life he led?

SECRETARY POMPEO: It was a true life of service. He was also committed to his faith and he was (inaudible) work really hard. Maybe those would be the three things – if you work at it, if you keep your faith, and you have this commitment to serve, good things can happen. Not only to him – he had a remarkable life – but you’ll do good work for your fellow man as well. President Bush certainly did that.

QUESTION: He was an amazing man and I was blessed myself to have interviewed him on several occasions. I know if he were here, he’d want us to get to substantive issues, so in his memory, let’s talk about some of the major national security issues facing the U.S. right now.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Saudi Arabia. Do you believe the Saudi explanation that the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, did not know about the murder of Jamal Khashoggi?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Wolf, I’ve spoken about this a lot. I continue to work on this issue. President Trump and this administration sanctioned 17 people that we came to learn were connected to the murder – heinous murder – of Jamal Khashoggi. All across the United States government we continue to investigate, to try and learn, to make determinations about what happened, and we’ll continue to hold those responsible accountable. We’ve been very clear, very clear about that since literally the very beginning.

We also, Wolf – and this is important – are doing everything we can to make sure that we get it right for America, that we keep the strategic relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and protect the American people. Those two things can both be done and we’ve done it very effectively.

QUESTION: Because you have said that – and you’re a former CIA director, so you understand how U.S. intelligence analysis works – you said there’s no direct reporting connecting the crown prince to order the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. Can you confidently tell his four children that he was not involved in that order?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, obviously, sitting in an unclassified setting, here’s what I can say: I have read every piece of intelligence that is in the possession of the United States government, and when it is done, when you complete that analysis, there’s no direct evidence linking him to the murder of Jamal Khashoggi. That is an accurate statement, it is an important statement, and it is the statement that we are making publicly today.

QUESTION: Did the CIA conclude with high confidence that he was involved?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I can’t comment on intelligence matters or CIA conclusions. I didn’t do it when I was director; I’m not going to do it now.

QUESTION: Because you’ve seen all the reports in the media about it.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I've seen lots of reports in the media, Wolf. They often are untrue.

QUESTION: So the bottom line is that the U.S. is going to continue to maintain the same relationship, strategic or operation, with Saudi Arabia right now, irrespective of what may have happened?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Today we're working with the Saudis in Afghanistan, we're working with the Saudis to push back against Ayatollah Khamenei, who killed hundreds of Americans, Wolf, and they are an enormous support to us. They are a relationship that has mattered for 70 years across Republican and Democrat administrations alike. It remains an important relationship and we're aiming to keep that relationship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

QUESTION: Because you're losing support in Congress, even – including among Republicans right now for – to continue U.S. support for the Saudi operation in Yemen. Even Lindsey Graham voted against your position. There were 14 Republican senators who voted against you the other day in the Senate.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Secretary Mattis and I and the President have made very clear we're working to end the hostilities in Yemen. The humanitarian crisis there is of epic proportions, millions of people at or near starvation. This administration has put almost a billion dollars into stopping that humanitarian crisis. The Saudis have put even more money in of theirs. The Iranians, Wolf, have put zero dollars in to stopping that humanitarian crisis, and we are determined to fix the problem of the humanitarian crisis while ensuring that we don't end up with a Hizballah organization on the southern edge of Saudi Arabia.

QUESTION: So U.S. military support for the Saudis in Yemen will continue?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The program that we're involved in today we intend to continue.

QUESTION: Let's talk about Russia, another critical issue. Why did the President decide to cancel what was supposed to be a two-hour face-to-face meeting with the Russian leader?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I can actually answer that. I was there. He canceled it because the Russians behaved in a way that is deeply inconsistent with international law and is outrageous. To have held the Ukrainians that they took in the strait needs to be changed. The President wanted to send a clear, unambiguous message that we find that type of behavior unacceptable, and so he canceled the meeting.

QUESTION: But the Russians – well, the Russians – the Russians have done other awful things and the President went ahead in Helsinki and met –

SECRETARY POMPEO: This happened hours, days before – the series of events unfolded days –

QUESTION: But wouldn't it be a good time for him to have a face-to-face –

SECRETARY POMPEO: (Inaudible) hours and days, Wolf, hours and days before, and the President made the decision that the right thing to do was tell the Russians return the sailors, return the Ukrainian equipment, it's theirs. The people need to be returned to their families, and he wanted to send an unambiguous message that the Russians needed to change that act.

QUESTION: It had nothing to do with the announcement that came just an hour earlier before he boarded Air Force One to fly here to Argentina that Michael Cohen was cooperating with Mueller and all these new information – details about a supposed Trump Tower project in Moscow?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Ludicrous. Washington parlor game.

QUESTION: Well, explain, because it –

SECRETARY POMPEO: I was involved in the decision, Wolf. I can explain (inaudible).

QUESTION: You were aboard Air Force One.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I was aboard Air Force One.

QUESTION: And nobody discussed Michael Cohen?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Wolf, this is the thing that the American people need to understand about Washington, D.C.: It makes stuff up that is wholly unfounded. I was involved in the decision-making process. We evaluated it – we considered the opportunity to speak with him, we considered the message we would send. President Trump made the decision this was the right approach based on the activity that had taken place in the lead-up to the G20 summit.

QUESTION: So is there going to be an opportunity down the road for the President to meet with Putin?

SECRETARY POMPEO: President's made clear the conditions for that meeting.

QUESTION: What are the conditions?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We want the sailors returned, we want the ships returned.

QUESTION: And once the Russians do that, there will be a summit?

SECRETARY POMPEO: President has said he wants to meet. He wants to have a conversation with President Putin. There are lots of things that we need to find paths forward on together, lots of places Americans are at risk. He's trying to find a way to move forward with Russia, and now this jumped in the middle of a time when they could have begun to have a discussion where we might have made some progress. We regret that, but the Russians caused this meeting to be canceled by their behavior in the Kerch Strait.

QUESTION: When is the President going to meet again with the North Korean leader?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't know. I hope it'll happen pretty soon. We're working hard at it. I think it'll happen shortly after the first of the year but I don't have any additional information to share with you this morning, Wolf.

QUESTION: What's the problem right now with the North Koreans?

SECRETARY POMPEO: The progress – yes. Well, the progress we've made has been good.

QUESTION: No, what's the problem?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, the progress we've made has been good. We're not having missiles launched, there haven't been any nuclear tests. We continue to have conversations about the right next step – that is the right substantive next step, not the process next step of meetings. We're working with partners all across the world – South Koreans, the Japanese. Remember, Wolf, these are global sanctions put in place by the United Nations Security Council which deny North Korea the capacity to improve their economy. That's not going to change, unlike previous administrations that when they got to a point that became difficult wrote checks for tens and hundreds of millions of dollars and let the North Koreans off the hook in that sense. We're determined to fulfill the commitments that were made by Chairman Kim in Singapore and we're working hard at it.

QUESTION: A final question on Mexico. It looks like U.S.-Mexican relations are improving, right? You're off to Mexico for the inauguration of the new president, and the President – President Trump signed together with the leaders of Mexico and Canada the U.S.-Mexico-Canada new trade agreement. But there's still a lot of tension along the border and there's a lot of uproar about whether or not the U.S. should go ahead and build a new wall, spend all that money. What ever happened to the President's commitment for so long during the campaign that Mexico would pay for the wall?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That wall's going to get built. I have already developed a good relationship with my counterpart, Marcelo Ebrard, the incoming foreign secretary of Mexico. We've met a number of times already. I'm unfortunately not going to make the inauguration, as it's taking place today in Mexico, but he'll travel to Washington on what I guess would be his second day in office and we're going to continue to develop this relationship.

It's not just focused on the migration issues that draw all the headlines. There are many economic issues between our two countries and other commercial – we have transnational criminal organizations that we work on together. It's a broad set of relationships. We're going to work to help build the Mexican economy in the southern part of their nation, work with the Northern Triangle countries too. Those are important elements of what we're trying to accomplish, and soon-to-be Foreign Secretary – I guess within hours – Ebrard and I are working hard at it.

QUESTION: And Mexico paying for the wall?

SECRETARY POMPEO: We're going to get the wall built, Wolf.

QUESTION: But will Mexico pay for it?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Wolf, we're going to get the wall built.

QUESTION: I'll leave it on that.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, sir.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you've got a busy schedule ahead of you. Thanks so much time for spending some time with us.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, Wolf. Have a great day.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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[Press Releases: United States, Mexico, and Canada Conclude Trilateral Agreement on Environmental Cooperation](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 30, 2018

Today the United States of America, Mexico, and Canada finalized a new environmental cooperation agreement (ECA). The Agreement will take effect upon entry into force of the USMCA and builds on the long history of trilateral cooperation among the three countries to reduce pollution,

strengthen environmental governance, conserve biological diversity, and sustainably manage natural resources.

The ECA supersedes the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which has resulted in two decades of achievements relating to cross border environmental issues. The United States will continue to play a leadership role and will participate in the trilateral environment Council.

The text of the ECA can be found here:

<https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/287944.pdf> and <https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/commission-environmental-cooperation-cec>

For more information, contact OES-PA-DG@state.gov and follow the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs on Twitter @StateDeptOES.

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[Press Releases: U.S. Delegation to the 24th Session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
November 29, 2018

The 24th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP24) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will take place in Katowice, Poland,

December 2-14, 2018. Judith Garber, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs (OES) at the Department of State, will serve as the U.S. head of delegation. U.S. Ambassador to Poland Georgette Mosbacher will represent the United States at the World Leaders Summit on December 3. The U.S. delegation will also include officials from the White House, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Energy, the Department of Treasury, the Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

The Administration's position on the Paris Agreement remains unchanged. The United States intends to withdraw from the Paris Agreement as soon as it is eligible to do so. The United States is participating in ongoing negotiations, including those related to the Paris Agreement, in order to ensure a level playing field that benefits and protects U.S. interests.

During the Conference, the U.S. delegation will share successful strategies in growing the economy while providing affordable, abundant, and secure energy to Americans, promoting jobs, protecting the environment, and reducing emissions. U.S. energy-related CO₂ emissions have fallen by 14 percent since 2005, even as the U.S. economy has grown by 19.4 percent. This world-leading achievement has been possible because of innovation and entrepreneurship that has led to the development and commercialization of innovative technologies across the entire U.S. energy portfolio.

For press inquiries, please contact ClimateComms@state.gov.

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