

[Press Releases: Deputy Special Envoy Roebuck's Travel to Iraq](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 17, 2019

Deputy Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS Ambassador William Roebuck arrived in Baghdad, Iraq today for the Global Coalition's Stabilization Working Group. Ambassador Roebuck will address the Stabilization Working Group, which is co-led by Germany, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, to highlight the importance of stabilization as a means to ensure the enduring defeat of ISIS, and encourage Coalition partners to increase their contributions for relevant programs that help consolidate recent military gains. Ambassador Roebuck plans to meet with senior Iraqi officials in Baghdad, Erbil, and Sulaimaniyah to discuss the enduring defeat of ISIS and other regional issues.

This is the first working group meeting of the Global Coalition to be hosted by the Government of Iraq and held in Baghdad – a testament to a city that five years ago was threatened by ISIS operating openly on its outskirts – reflecting the incredible progress made by the Iraqi people and the heroic Iraqi Security Forces in our shared struggle against ISIS.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Interview With Gisella](#)

Lopez of El Comercio

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Lima, Peru

April 14, 2019

QUESTION: The main topic of your visit is to discuss the situation of Venezuela. For how long is it possible to intensify the diplomatic pressure?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the main topic of my visit to South America is really twofold: first, to be with our friends, democratic countries with free markets; to make sure they understand that we're a good partner and to talk about trade relationships and the like, but also to talk about the threat to those countries from the disaster that is Venezuela, the humanitarian crisis that is Venezuela, the – caused purely by the political disaster that is Nicolas Maduro. So those were the two reasons for my visit.

As for how long this can go, I don't know how much longer the Venezuelan people will tolerate this. My guess is not much. The devastation wrought by Nicolas Maduro, the tragedy of the humanitarian situation there brought out solely by Maduro making the choice to bring in the Cubans, to allow Russians to intervene in the country – those are the things that are destroying the lives of young people in Venezuela, and I'm very hopeful that Maduro will understand that his time is coming soon.

QUESTION: But it's not only up to the Venezuelan people. It's also the – your relationships in the countries in South America and also the United States have the contribution with President Guaido – Interim President Guaido right now. But the military option is always still on the table despite this – the South American group of Lima are against this possibility?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, to your point, the Venezuelan people have spoken. They chose Juan Guaido through the National Assembly and their own constitution. So it is ultimately up to the Venezuelan people. The Lima Group, the OAS are providing enormous support. United States stands ready to continue to support them, and the Venezuelan people will ultimately convince the leadership that they must go, that there's no future for Maduro. And the military –

QUESTION: But it's taking – it's taking too long.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, I agree. It's taken years. This is not something that has happened in the last weeks or months. This is a devastation wrought by the Cubans, the Russians, and Maduro over the last years. So I agree it's taken too long. I'm very hopeful that it'll come to its conclusion quickly.

Your last question was about all options on the table. That remains the case.

QUESTION: So in the late administrations, the United States didn't seem to be so interested in Latin America political situation, but now there is a change. The Venezuela situation is the reason for that change?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, not at all. The reason for that change is that President Trump understands how important South America, Central America, Mexico, Canada, all of the Western Hemisphere are to the United States of America, so he has tasked us to be engaged, to work with those countries, develop trade between those countries. We have great democracies now. That has not always been the case in South America. We have free market economies that understand the rule of law, transparency. That has not always been the case. So we view this as an enormous opportunity, and you see. You see it in the actions of the OAS and Lima Group. They are leading to restore basic, fundamental systems – water, food systems, to provide humanitarian (inaudible) in Venezuela. This is a real opportunity for the United States to continue to engage with our friends in South America. President Trump is very focused on it.

QUESTION: So the new governments in South America is the reason you say that this is the change –

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, there's just opportunity. There's real opportunity both for those countries to sell their goods into the United States, for the United States to sell our products here, and to grow and expand. America always supports democratic institutions, the rule of law, transparency, our core value sets. These are the value sets that are continuing to grow and expand in South America. We want to encourage that and we want to partner with those nations.

QUESTION: So in your (inaudible) visiting with President Vizcarra, you congratulate him for the fight against the corruption. It's a big issue now in our country. What is the perception about Peru? It's a country with some of the former presidents in jail. What is this perception?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, from the – America's perspective, fighting corruption is an important element of what I just talked about, to have a true democracy, to have people have the representatives they choose and know that they're acting on behalf of the people and not on behalf of themselves or the business that they are a shareholder of. So fighting corruption is a central part of democratic institutions and free markets, and so I wanted to applaud President Vizcarra for the work that he has done to continue to battle against corruption.

QUESTION: But in this topic, it's not uncomfortable for your administration

to have a runaway president like Toledo two years in your country?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, I can't comment on things that relate to our judicial process.

QUESTION: I know. My question is about the situation, because this is really like two years and – ago that a former president is escaping from our justice.

SECRETARY POMPEO: We think corruption should be fought at every level. With respect to any particular case or any particular name, I can't comment.

QUESTION: But you also talk about China and Russia, and China's our main commercial partner, and also Russia has ties in our region, in Latin America for so many years. (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, there were many communist countries in Latin America for many years, but that's the great thing that's changed. This idea, this idea of the totalitarian, Orwellian state of communism is being rejected by the people of South America. It's glorious.

QUESTION: So the United States now with your administration want to change the situation and to compete with China, Russia in Latin America?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, we welcome all nations to compete in free markets openly and transparently. We always have. We're convinced that democratic values and institutions, the things that we care so deeply about – basic human rights, things that don't exist in China – I think the South American people see that. They see the horrors of a million Uighurs being held in China. They see the Orwellian information state, the police state that China is becoming. They see that communism has failed the Russian people. I think the people of South America get that they should interact with, do business with, and partner with countries that share their value sets: freedom, faith, liberty, rule of law. Those are fundamental values that are held by people right here in this country and I think all throughout South America.

QUESTION: But I think it's very hard to compete with – China's a big economy and has ties with our region for so many years, many decades.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Make no mistake, if China's here to compete and offer their goods for service through private enterprise, we welcome that. That's not problematic. United States does a great deal of commercial business with China. The challenge with China is when private entities show up, they're coming for a malign activity all too often, and that's what we've asked every country to be aware of. State-owned enterprises, companies deeply connected to the Chinese Government that want to put infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure inside of your country – we want to make sure everyone has their eyes wide open that there's real risk to the Peruvian people. If those systems are installed, if those networks are placed with Huawei technology or Chinese technology, your information is in the hands of President Xi and the People's Liberation Army in China. I don't think the people of Peru want that, and we want to make sure that everyone understands the risks when they

engage in that kind of activity with China.

QUESTION: Also it is interesting for me, that question. Is difficult for you to be the chief of the diplomacy in your country when your president doesn't – Trump is not so – doesn't use so much the diplomacy in foreign relations because he is very straight to the point?

SECRETARY POMPEO: No, I'm just like that, just as I'm with you today. I'm very straight to the point, right? It's important for diplomats, partners, with our friends, to speak the truth to them, to share with them the very real concerns and to thank them when they take real actions that are consistent with their countries' values and demonstrate a willingness to partner with the United States of America. No, I think accurate, factual, blunt talk is valued, and I will tell you that as I travel the world, my partners, whether it's my counterparts in the foreign – in the ministries around – foreign ministries around the world or when I speak with folks like President Vizcarra, they share with me their frank and blunt views, and I think that's the best way to advance our joint interests.

QUESTION: Now you're leaving Lima and traveling to Colombia. What are your expectations in Cucuta? Because you're seeing the frontier from Colombia, Venezuela, with the humanitarian –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah. So I've been to Colombia previously as the Secretary of State. Today I'll travel to a different part of Colombia, a place where the world joined together, an enormous coalition joined together to try to bring food and medicine to the people of Venezuela – medicine for the sick, food for the poor. The only people who have prevented that are the Russians, the Chinese, and Maduro. We want to talk about that. We want to make sure the world knows that the United States stands with them, that we stand with countries in South America, that we stand with the Venezuelan people. We are prepared to provide assistance to them when the time is right. We're prepared to do it today. If that food and that medicine could get in today, we would love nothing more than to help the sick and the starving.

QUESTION: What about the relationships and the relation with Peru? With – I want to talk about that, because we also have ties, not only investment and in the commercial, but also cultural relationships. I want to talk about that.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, they're deep, important, relationships, right. We signed a free trade agreement. Now 10 years on, our commercial trade has nearly doubled. I hope we will double it again faster than the next 10 years, and your point is right, too – we share deep cultural relationships as well. We share value sets. It's a special day here. Easter's a week off from today. Today is Palm Sunday. Our common set of understandings about democracy and freedom, a deep desire for liberty, are things that our two nations share, and it bodes well for our continuing strengthening relationship in the years ahead.

QUESTION: Well, I think it's – thank you so much for your time. This was a

very short time, but it's –

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yes, ma'am. Thank you for your time. No, I appreciate that. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Secretary Pompeo's Call With Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo](#)

Readout
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
April 13, 2019

The below is attributable to Spokesperson Morgan Ortagus:□

Secretary Michael R. Pompeo spoke today with Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo of Brazil. They reaffirmed the close friendship between the United States and Brazil and pledged to continue working together to address the political, economic, and humanitarian crises in Venezuela, their effects on Venezuela's neighbors, and the need for outside actors, including Cuba, Russia, and China, to stop propping up Nicolas Maduro.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an

endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

[Press Releases: Remarks With Peruvian Foreign Minister Nestor Popolizio](#)

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Palacio de Gobierno

Lima, Peru

April 13, 2019

MODERATOR: (Via translation) Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon. With the presence of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Michael Pompeo, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru, Ambassador Nestor Popolizio Bardales, we will begin with a statement to the media. Next, remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru, Ambassador Nestor Popolizio.

FOREIGN MINISTER POPOLIZIO: (Via translation) Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, friends of the press, and distinguished delegation. We just finished an extremely fruitful and cordial work meeting with my President Mr. Martin Vizcarra. And it was preceded by a meeting in the Peruvian Foreign Ministry to discuss topics of the bilateral relationship. The President of the Republic Martin Vizcarra as well as the Secretary of State Pompeo highlighted the good level of bilateral relations. Firstly, we are countries that have a positive agenda and we have innumerable coincidences and really there are indications that [inaudible] we can continue cooperating. Mention was made of the very important significance that the Free Trade Agreement has had and now, in February, with ten years in force and how this has spurred an important increase of trade between the two countries.

(Via interpreter) Peru, after 10 years since this free trade agreement entered into force, exports 50 percent more to the United States where nontraditional exports are the most important. The United States is our first destination for these types of products, and it is our second trade partner worldwide. It is an important investment partner in Peru, and it is a

permanent ally in all areas of cooperation that we get from the United States on a number of issues.

Within this context, the Secretary of State complimented President Martin Vizcarra for his leadership in the fight against corruption, and this fight against corruption is obviously not only a fight that Peru is waging alone. He mentioned the output of the eighth Summit of the Americas held in Lima last year as well as the Lima commitment, where the United States and Peru are allies to combat corruption at all levels, particularly internationally.

Also we talked about the fight against drug trafficking. This is of the utmost importance and a priority for the Government of Peru, and we have agreed that the cooperation of the United States is very important for this fight to be more efficient in a context in which we can provide comprehensive and overarching approach the Government of Peru is implementing to develop alternative development interdiction as well as eradication of coca plantations. This comprehensive approach is accompanied by shared responsibilities that some countries have in fighting against drug trafficking.

In addition to that, President Martin Vizcarra gave information on the actions Peru has taken against illegal mining, particularly in the area of La Pampa in the region of Madre de Dios. this is a task that Peru has undertaken to reaffirm the principle of authority and for us to implement development projects in this area that we are recovering. We count with the cooperation of the United States in this effort.

We also discussed a topic that is of the utmost importance for our two countries and for the region as well, the defense of democracy in the region. This means all the areas in which we agree upon to support the people of Venezuela in recovering their democracy. And recovering democracy means supporting fully the president in charge of Venezuela, Juan Guaido, so that he can consolidate his position as a transition government and so that free, fair, and democratic elections can be held in Venezuela. This obviously means that the illegitimate government of the dictator Nicolas Maduro has to exit. This we are working with the other countries of the Lima Group to further all international pressure to isolate the illegitimate government of Maduro and that we can soon see a change in Venezuela to support the Venezuelan people.

And within this context we are trying to help better the peoples of Venezuela through humanitarian aid so that it will help them in overcoming the huge difficulties they have experienced recently that have been implemented by this illegitimate government of dictator Maduro which creates a political, social, and humanitarian crisis that has become even more serious because of the blackouts and lack of water in certain parts of the country. So here we too are allies in the region to defend democracy, human rights, because in Venezuela human rights are constantly being violated, as well as the freedoms. So we're going to continue working under the scope of the Lima Group as well as with other countries to continue to isolate the illegitimate government of dictator Nicolas Maduro.

Once again, I would like to thank the Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for his

visit to Peru and highlight the great level of relationships at bilateral level and the huge area in which we continue to build our relationships in trade, cooperation, and investment.

Thank you very much, Mike. Welcome to Peru.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Next we are going to hear the remarks by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Mr. Michael Pompeo.

SECRETARY POMPEO: *Buenos tardes.* It is terrific to be here in Lima's historic city center, a stone's throw from the house where Ricardo Palma, the great historian and short story writer, was born. It is a beautiful place. It is an honor for me to be here.

Thank you to the Peruvian people for hosting me. This is the first time I've had the chance to come here as Secretary of State. Sorry that it took me so long to get here.

Now, today I had the privilege to meet with President Vizcarra as well as my foreign minister counterpart, Popolizio, to talk about the areas of cooperation between our two countries, and they are many. We had a very warm, productive discussion, and I know that we will continue to do so.

We, of course, covered the topic of Venezuela. Peru has felt firsthand the effects of the disastrous Nicolas Maduro and the pain that he has brought to the Venezuelan people. Peru has shown enormous leadership in responding to this challenge. They – the people of Peru – generously host almost three quarters of a million refugees from Venezuela. Now, they fled their home country to escape the breakdown of health services, the limited water supply, the bare bread shelves, rolling blackouts, and hyperinflation – part of the reason that the United States has provided more than \$30 million in humanitarian aid to Peru, complementing your government's efforts to provide protection to these Venezuelans. The United States commends Peru for its generosity, and we want to ensure that all – we want to ensure all Peruvians that you are not shouldering this burden alone. The international community – including, of course, the United States – stands with you.

I would also like to thank my Peruvian counterparts for their work in the Lima Group and at the UN Security Council to support Juan Guaido as the leader of the interim government during this very difficult time of transition. The United States is pleased to support this week Peru's hosting of the health ministerial this month that will focus on improving healthcare coordination among nations that are hosting large numbers of displaced Venezuelans.

Despite the gravity of the situation in Venezuela, it did not monopolize our discussions. We talked about many things. We talked, for example, about how Peru has been fighting public corruption as one of its top priorities. We saw this commitment last year during the Summit of the Americas and the signing of the Lima commitment.

Too often, we see China's predatory lending and debt diplomacy reverse

positive advances in this area. Our shared goal, our shared goal to be to resist Chinese overtures and promote transparency.

President Vizcarra deserves high praise for creating a government entity exclusively focused on safeguarding public integrity. The Peruvian Government also now requires that high-level officials report conflicts of interest. These are steps in exactly the right direction.

On a separate front, Peru has also been relentless in the fight against the production and distribution of narcotics. Last year, the Peruvian National Police and Military eradicated more than 25,000 hectares of illicit coca crops, surpassing their annual goal, seized more than 55 metric tons of illicit substances, and destroyed more than 350 drug laboratories. The United States applauds these steps by Peruvian authorities and encourages Peru to go even further.

Finally, when it comes to trade, the United States and Peru continue to reach even greater heights. As the foreign minister said, this year marks the 10th anniversary of our bilateral trade partnership agreement – trade promotion agreement, which eliminated tariffs that were hindering each of our respective economies. Since the agreement came into effect in 2009, trade between the United States and Peru has virtually doubled. In the days ahead, we look forward to spurring additional private investment under our America Crece Initiative.

In closing, I want to thank the Peruvian Government and the people of Peru for their fine hospitality. I can't wait to see what else is in store for our great nation in these areas and more as we move forward together. Thank you.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) Next, there are two media that will ask questions to the Secretary of State and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Peru. The first question will be asked by Mr. Carlos Alfredo Viguria Chavez from Newspaper 21.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Good afternoon, Mr. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. My question is more addressed on the current status of the extradition process of former President Alejandro Toledo. Where does it stand? And this process has been in place for several years now in your country, and has this been discussed in your meeting with President Vizcarra, considering that last year the fight against corruption was addressed in the Summit of the Americas? Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POMPEO: I appreciate the question. When it comes to judicial processes in our country, I can't say much. We've discussed this. We know the priority your country places on this.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter) The second question, John Hudson from *The Washington Post*.

QUESTION: Thanks very much, gentlemen.

For Foreign Minister Popolizio, what if this Western campaign that is joined by many allies around the world of economic sanctions against Maduro begins

exacerbating the humanitarian crisis and creating more refugees in Peru? Will your country consider changing strategies and other diplomatic tactics, potentially engaging with Maduro, or are you set in the policy and confident of the way forward?

And Secretary Pompeo, as you just stated, Peru has carried the burden of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Venezuela, and so have other countries on your visit. At the same time, President Trump has been urging countries to block migrants from crossing borders and even suggested dropping illegal migrants in the districts of domestic political opponents. What's your message about how countries should be treating refugees and migrants in Latin America? Should they follow President Trump's lead?

And just lastly, following the summit in Hanoi, you and Ambassador Bolton were specifically called out in a colorful statement by the North Korean diplomat, saying you created hostility in the summit. If there is a third summit, do you expect to change tactics or demeanor in any way? Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER POPOLIZIO: (Via interpreter) Thank you very much for the first question you have addressed. I have to emphasize that Peru, under the Lima Group as well as the OAS and the Security Council, has made a number of activities that focus on supplementing the measures that the United States and other countries of the European Union have already taken in economic terms, financial terms, in order to isolate the illegitimate government of Maduro.

That framework that we have in place will continue to be deepened. On Monday, we have a meeting in Santiago, Chile of the Lima Group. We are going to highlight the importance of working more intensively within the OAS. You have seen a key change in the OAS. Today, the OAS has a representative of Juan Guaido sitting in the desk of Venezuela. This is a significant change. We're going to continue working so that we continue to press the regime, not only the Maduro regime but also the military group that is supporting him, so that we may continue with this international pressure together with the domestic pressure of the Venezuelan people that's out on the street so that we can help them to recover democracy as soon as possible.

As for the second part of your question, this is related to the exodus of a magnitude that has never been seen before in Latin America. Since 2015, over 3 million – 3.5 million – Venezuelans have left to different countries, other countries. In the case of South America, there are two countries that have received the most of them are Colombia and Peru. In the case of Peru, we have received about 750,000 Venezuelans that have arrived to our country and all in all have a strong impact in the labor market, in the health system, in the education system, that has made us take a number of initiatives not only within the Andean community but also within the region and at a multilateral level so that all the countries know that this is an issue that is not regional exclusively but world, and all of us have to come together so that the host countries of Venezuelan migrants may have greater cooperation so that they can properly serve this migration that has never been seen before. We're going to continue working with these subjects within the OAS, the Group of Lima, and the Security Council of the United Nations.

SECRETARY POMPEO: So I want to echo what the foreign minister just said. Your question showed an incredible lack of understanding to have suggested that somehow the policies that Peru has taken or that the Lima Group has taken or that the United States has taken have driven these refugees. You shouldn't ask questions like that. The responsibility for these refugees lies squarely with Nicolas Maduro, not any policies that any democratic nation has taken with our deep intent to make lives better for the Venezuelan people. A hundred percent of the refugee challenge that is faced by Peru and Colombia is the direct result of the Russians, the Cubans, and Nicolas Maduro.

Second, you asked about how the American policy with respect to immigration is consistent. We in each case have exactly the same objective. Our objective is to allow people to stay in their home countries. This is President Trump's desire. We want to create conditions in these countries where they can stay in their own country and they don't have the need to migrate somewhere else from Venezuela.

It is our deep hope that we can achieve our objectives quickly, timely, so that these individuals will return to their home countries. It's what they want. I think it's what the people of Peru and Colombia and the other countries that are graciously, generously hosting and educating these people today. We want to create the conditions in every country so this migration, these refugees, don't need to travel to these places.

And with respect to North Korea, we made real progress in Hanoi. I am confident that the leadership in America will continue to make progress to solve this challenge of the nuclear threat that is posed to the world. There remain in place today the world's strongest sanctions, UN Security Council resolutions which make clear the objective: the denuclearization of North Korea. I am very confident we'll continue to move down the path of achieving that outcome.

So thank you very much for your questions.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) Ladies and gentlemen, the press conference has come to an end. We would like to thank the media for being here today. Thank you very much.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Press Releases: Interview With Gesell Tobias of VOA Spanish

Interview

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

Asuncion, Paraguay

April 13, 2019

QUESTION: Thank you, Secretary Pompeo, for another time, another opportunity to talk to you.

SECRETARY POMPEO: It's great to be with you again.

QUESTION: Thank you. Let's begin with one of the hottest topics, Venezuela. This is one of the topics you have been talking about for quite a long time already, and I would like to know how you can explain to the Venezuelan people who is the real president. We take into consideration that some Venezuelans still pay taxes to the government of Nicolas Maduro. If a government, a foreign government, needs to help their own citizens living in Venezuela, they need to get in contact with Maduro's officers. How can we explain that to the Venezuelan people?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a great and important question. The Venezuelan people have spoken. The sham election that gave Maduro the pretend authority that he has – the world has recognized. There are now 54 countries in addition to the people of Venezuela who recognize that Maduro is not a legitimate leader. He still has control of elements of power, to be sure, but the people have spoken; we know what they want.

Maduro and his henchmen have destroyed this nation. The Venezuelan people can see that very plainly. It's why they didn't want him back. They gave power to the National Assembly, now Juan Guaido, in a way that will ultimately deliver true democracy and prosperity back to Venezuela.

You know the history. This is a rich nation, a wealthy nation, a nation of people who are industrious and are prepared to work very, very hard. What they need is a leader who is prepared to help them, not be corrupt, not turn over power to the Cubans, and demand interventions to save them by the Russians. The new leadership will do that, and the United States stands ready to support not only the Venezuelan people but all of the countries in this region – we're sitting here today in Paraguay – the countries of this region

who recognize the same.

QUESTION: What about if Maduro continues to hold the military power and to hold the city? Does the U.S. have a new strategy to go – does Maduro have a deadline, for example, for the U.S. Government?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the strategy is not just an American strategy. It's the Venezuelan people's strategy. The opposition groups banded together, made clear that it was unacceptable what Maduro's regime did. They gave Juan Guaido the authority through the National Assembly to lead their nation forward. This won't be an American solution to this problem. It'll be the solution that the Venezuelan people choose.

I remark sometimes people think Maduro is winning, and yet he's handed over all of his power to the Cubans, to the Russians. This is weakness from Maduro. And so this weakness will ultimately lead to his departure, and democracy and prosperity will be restored in Venezuela. I am very confident of that.

QUESTION: And I know you already answered this question many times, but I have to ask. Are all options on the table still?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Of course. They remain on the table. We keep all options on the table because it's very important, in that we don't know how things will proceed. The Venezuelan people are entitled to the democracy that they have demanded, and we want to make sure that the resources of the United States of America aren't foreclosed from being used if that turns out to be the right thing to do.

QUESTION: Now, as you mentioned, Maduro has the support of Russia and China. Does that turn a decision against the government of Maduro more complex to take? Could this rise tensions between Washington and the Kremlin?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I always remark I'll hear some of the Maduro people talk about intervention in Venezuela. The Russians will say the Americans shouldn't intervene in Venezuela. I mean, it's almost funny to say, right? They have intervened in the most fundamental ways. The Cubans own the security apparatus. I would think if you were a Venezuelan military leader, you'd be embarrassed by that, right? The people, the people of Venezuela, want their own security. They want their own democracy. They want Venezuelans to lead their nation, not people from a small island, not people from Russia. They want their country to be led by their own people, and that's what – that's what Brazil and Colombia, the Lima Group, the OAS, here in Paraguay, that's what all the leaders of the region are demanding, and it's what the United States stands ready to support.

QUESTION: Is there any line of communication between U.S. officials and Venezuelan militaries?

SECRETARY POMPEO: I don't think there's any mistake about what America's position is with respect to the Venezuelan military. We've made clear publicly that they ought not to continue to support Maduro, that this regime

is over, it's done, its day is finished, and that a new page needs to be turned, and that those who continue to support Maduro will face their own consequences, and those who make a different decision, those military leaders that make the decision to defend the Venezuelan people, will find happier days.

QUESTION: And does the U.S. support or has given any advice to the Guaido government about giving amnesty to any Venezuelan military who turns their back on Venezuelan government?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Sure, we're talked with Juan Guaido about what a first day would look like, right? Maduro will leave, and we want to make sure that that next day that the world stands ready to support Venezuela. That will involve making decisions about how to address the transgressions of senior military leaders, those that inflicted violence, those who did harm to Venezuelans – well, they'll be held accountable. Those who made a different decision, a better decision, a decision on behalf of the democratic institutions of Venezuela, will be treated very differently.

QUESTION: With many countries in Latin America turning to the right and with the economical crisis in Venezuela at its worst, do you think the Iranian Government still have some presence in Latin America? And if it does, is it still a threat for the U.S. national security?

SECRETARY POMPEO: So the question is does the – do the Iranians? Yes. There's no doubt Iranian money remains in South America being used for malign purposes, supporting Hizballah, supporting transnational criminal organizations, supporting efforts at terrorism throughout the region. The United States is working with our partners in this area to take down those networks, to take down that risk.

IRGC – you saw the other day there was an air flight straight, straight from Tehran to Caracas. This is Iran intervening in South America. That's not in the best interest of the South American people, and the United States stands ready. We see Iran for what it is, the world's largest state sponsor of terror. That's a global threat, and we're prepared to push back against it not only in the Middle East but in South America and wherever we find that threat present.

QUESTION: Moving forward, Secretary Pompeo, yesterday you mentioned in a speech from Santiago, in Santiago, and you used Chile as an example, as a model for economical growth. But Chile also have many trades with China – \$43 billion, if I'm not mistaken – and the U.S. comes as a second partner. Can any country from Latin America have economical and diplomatic relationship with China while at the same time they do with the United States?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, of course. What we have said about China is very clear. The United States has big economic relationships with China. We want China to thrive and prosper.

Here's what we don't want, especially in South America. We don't want China to show up with bags full of money and bribe officials. We don't want China

to show up and put Huawei or Chinese technology into the infrastructure of these countries so that the citizens, the citizens of Chile or the citizens of Paraguay, have their information, their private information, stolen by the Chinese Government. We don't want corrupt activity.

China should compete. We have democracies here in South America now. This is a glorious thing where there's free markets and capitalism and opportunity. That value set of transparency, of the rule of law, that's the one the South American people are demanding. It is not what China brings.

If China shows up to compete on a commercial basis, that seems perfectly reasonable. When they show up with malign intent, to give money with strings attached, which will destroy the sovereignty of a South American nation, that's not good for the people in that country, and the United States is prepared to help those countries recognize that threat and to offer alternatives to it.

QUESTION: Changing the topic a little bit, the U.S. cut the funds for three countries in Central America – Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador. Is this a final decision, or can they make things better and gain the confidence of the U.S. Government and also the money?

SECRETARY POMPEO: Yeah, of course, they can. The United States is the most generous nation when it comes to both humanitarian and foreign assistance of any country in the world. The Trump administration has maintained that.

What we want to make sure is where we provide those resources, those dollars from the American taxpayer, that they are effective, that we get outcomes not only what we want but that those countries want as well. So President Trump's decision, we saw that those countries weren't doing what needed to be done to prevent this enormous migration challenge, this crisis that the United States has at its southern border. As those countries work to develop systems to prevent their citizens from taking this incredibly dangerous journey from Guatemala, from Honduras, or from El Salvador through Mexico into the United States, when those countries begin to take actions that stop that, we'll reconsider that decision.

QUESTION: And my last question, Secretary. This week Nicaragua will remember a year since the political and social crisis began. More than 350 people died in this crisis. The negotiations are very slow right now, and their oppression continues with people who has demonstrated publicly. Is the United States taking new steps against the government of the president in Nicaragua?

SECRETARY POMPEO: That's a great question. Here I am in Paraguay. I was in Chile. I'll be in Peru, I'll be in Colombia, before I head back to the United States. You watch most of the countries in South and Central America turning in the direction of freedom, in the direction of liberty, in the direction of democracy; and yet, you have Venezuela and Nicaragua stuck in history, stuck with dictatorships, stuck with bad leadership, kleptocrats, stealing from their own people.

Our efforts in Nicaragua are very similar to those in Venezuela. We want the

Nicaraguan people to have all the great things that they are entitled to have and that they so desperately want. And Mr. Ortega and his wife both need to change their ways in order to give Nicaragua that very opportunity.

QUESTION: Secretary Pompeo, thank you very much for your time with Voice of America's Spanish Service.

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you very much. Thank you, sir. It's great to see you again.

QUESTION: Thank you.

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.