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FEATURED Q&A

What Did Guaidó Accomplish on His International Tour?



Among Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó's stops on his recent international tour was Washington, where he met with U.S. President Donald Trump. // Photo: White House.

Q Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó returned to his home country on Tuesday following a weeks-long international tour with stops in the United States, Britain, Spain and Davos, Switzerland. Last week, Guaidó met with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House and attended Trump's State of the Union address, at which Trump referred to Guaidó as "the true and legitimate president of Venezuela" and also blasted President Nicolás Maduro as "a tyrant." How significant was Guaidó's appearance during Trump's address and subsequent visit to the White House? Has the Trump administration doubled down on its support for the opposition leader, or is the United States at the same time planning for alternate ways to handle the Maduro regime? Did Guaidó effectively garner international support during his tour, and to what extent does it help his cause?

A Donna Shalala, member of the U.S. House of Representatives (D-Fla.): "Inviting interim President Juan Guaidó to the State of the Union and the White House was a significant gesture to bolster his credibility as the legitimate interim president of Venezuela. Perhaps even more significant was his subsequent meeting with Speaker Pelosi and other Democratic members of Congress. Taken together, these meetings are a clear indication that Mr. Guaidó has secured bipartisan support from the U.S. government—support that is unlikely to waver no matter the results of the November elections. That said, symbolism can only go so far. Venezuela is now the epicenter of the

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TODAY'S NEWS

POLITICAL

Scuffles Break Out as Guaidó Returns to Venezuela

Scuffles between government supporters and opponents broke out at Simón Bolívar International Airport as Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó returned home after a three-week international trip.

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BUSINESS

Pemex, Talos Dispute Delaying Production: CEO

A dispute between Talos Energy and Mexican state oil company Pemex has slowed talks to develop a major oil discovery in the Gulf of Mexico, said Talos' CEO.

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ECONOMIC

Argentina Delays \$1.47 Bn Principal Payment on Bond

Argentina's government has delayed the principal payment until Sept. 30, Economy Minister Martín Guzmán announced. The move preceded the start of talks today between Argentine officials and the International Monetary Fund.

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Guzmán // File Photo:
@Martin_M_Guzman via Twitter.

POLITICAL NEWS

Scuffles Break Out at Airport as Guaidó Returns to Venezuela

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó, whom dozens of countries recognize as the Andean nation's legitimate president, returned to his home country on Tuesday, ending a world tour that included stops in Europe and the United States. Guaidó had slipped out of Venezuela last month in defiance of a Venezuelan Supreme Court ban on his travel outside the country. He arrived back in Venezuela just after 4:30 p.m. Tuesday at Simón Bolívar International Airport in Maiquetía on a commercial flight from Lisbon, The Washington Post reported. Despite Guaidó's defiance of the travel ban, authorities did not detain him, and he was allowed to pass through customs and into an arrivals hall. There, opposition lawmakers; supporters of his rival, President Nicolás Maduro; and journalists swarmed him, The Wall Street Journal reported. Scuffles broke out in the airport's main terminal and outside on the street where pro-Maduro activists attacked Guaidó supporters and journalists. As he stood at passport control, a state employee showered Guaidó with a liquid, called him a traitor and

repeatedly shouted "Fatherland! Fatherland!" Guaidó smiled and waved to supporters and got into a car to head to a rally in Caracas. "I bring the commitment of the free world, which is willing to help us recover democracy and freedom," Guaidó wrote in a posting on Twitter just after landing.

Argentina Delays \$1.47 Billion Principal Payment on Bond

Argentina has delayed a \$1.47 billion principal payment on the country's AF20 bond until Sept. 30, Economy Minister Martín Guzmán said on Tuesday, a move that could potentially complicate a broader debt restructuring program, Reuters reported. The payment had been due this Thursday. In a statement, the Argentine government said it would continue making scheduled interest payments on the bond. However, the decision, made without consulting bondholders, may still hurt investor confidence. Argentina's over-the-counter bonds fell an average 1 percent following the news, while the country's risk spread widened 100 basis points to 1,982 over safe-haven U.S. Treasuries, according to JP Morgan's Emerging Markets Bond Index Plus, Reuters reported. The announcement came a day before meetings between officials

NEWS BRIEFS

Head of Honduran Nat'l Police Arrested on Money Laundering Accusations

Honduran authorities on Tuesday arrested the head of the national police, Leonel Luciano Saucedo, and his wife, Patricia Sbeltlana Estrada, accusing them of money laundering, the Associated Press reported. Authorities also seized two cars and financial documents from their home in Tegucigalpa, according to a statement. Saucedo, who joined the national police in 1992, was appointed head of police just two weeks ago. The couple's lawyer expressed confidence that the case would be nullified in court, saying evidence will show his clients' innocence.

Bukele Vows to Abide by High Court Order to Stop Pressuring Lawmakers

Salvadoran President Nayib Bukele said Tuesday that he will abide by a Supreme Court order that he stop pressuring lawmakers to pass a \$109 million loan he is seeking to strengthen the country's fight against gangs, the Associated Press reported. The president said in a statement that he did not agree with the court. Bukele over the weekend in a show of force deployed the military and police to Congress, sparking national and international criticism and calls for Bukele to respect democratic institutions.

Colombia's Davivienda Raises \$203 Million Via Bond Issue

Colombian bank Davivienda has raised 700 billion pesos (\$203.4 million) via a bond issue that was doubly oversubscribed, Reuters reported Tuesday, citing the country's stock exchange. Davivienda received offers for 1.47 trillion pesos' worth of the bonds. The bank issued five-year, seven-year and 12-year bonds.

FEATURED Q&A / Continued from page 1

most acute humanitarian crisis in the history of the Western Hemisphere, and the Maduro regime shows no signs of abandoning the reins of power. Over the course of Trump's first term, the rhetoric from the White House has grown increasingly stale. The Venezuelan people deserve more than gestures. There are three steps that the administration could take to immediately affect the situation in Venezuela. First, President Trump could sign an order granting Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Venezuelans currently residing in the United States. Second, the administration can and should direct more aid to the region to help manage the

refugee crisis that is straining the resources of our regional partners and allies. Third, and probably most importantly, the White House could implement a real, concrete strategy to stem the flow of 'blood gold' and counter Russia's and Cuba's support for the Maduro regime, thereby working to solve this crisis and help restore democracy to Venezuela."



Maria Velez de Berliner, managing director of RTG-Red Team Group, Inc.: "Images of Guaidó

uniting both houses of Congress in applause, and his later appearance at Trump's side, had high public relations

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from the International Monetary Fund and the Argentine government began in Buenos Aires. President Alberto Fernández's administration faces a challenging negotiation as it seeks to restructure \$100 billion of debt while maintaining his leftist Peronist coalition's support in Congress, the Financial Times reported. Growing tensions between the coalition surfaced over the weekend, when former President and current Vice President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner called for a "substantial" haircut to Argentina's \$44 billion debt with the IMF. Guzmán, who just days earlier held talks with IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva, has made no mention of a possible haircut, the Financial Times reported. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in Friday's issue of the Advisor.]

BUSINESS NEWS

Pemex, Talos Spat Is Delaying Production in Zama Field: CEO

A dispute between U.S.-based Talos Energy and Mexican state oil company Pemex has slowed down talks to develop a major discovery in the Gulf of Mexico, Talos CEO Timothy S. Duncan told Reuters, the wire service reported Tuesday. The covert dispute over the nearly 700-million-barrel offshore discovery has come to light, as both Pemex and a Talos-led consortium claimed to hold the majority of the Zama deposit, as it is called, and ultimately the right to operate it. Zama, which was discovered in 2017, was the largest find in decades by a private company in Mexico. It is also seen as a test for Mexico's investment climate under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, as the case represents the first time the public and the private sectors will have to work in a joint oil reservoir since the 2013 energy reforms, according to the report. An agreement on who will operate the field as well as the initial split of the participation between Talos and Pemex is necessary before the project can go forward with regulators' approval.

TECH BRIEFS

Consortium Reportedly Looking to Buy Majority Stake in Telefónica's Latin America Operations

A group of Latin American businessmen from several countries is looking to acquire a majority stake in Spain-based multinational telecommunications company Telefónica's Latin American operations, excluding Brazil, El Mundo reported Jan. 20. The consortium is proposing to create a multinational holding company to acquire the majority stake in Telefónica Hispam and has already made a tentative offer of at least 10 billion euros (around \$11 billion) for the stake, according to the report. Telefónica would retain a stake of between 20 percent and 25 percent in the operations. The business group has hired the Colombian unit of Spanish law firm Cremades & Calvo Sotelo to negotiate on its behalf, El Mundo reported. Telefónica declined the newspaper's request for comment.

Tubi Announces Strategic Partnership With TV Azteca, Launch in Mexico

Tubi, the world's largest free ad-supported video on demand service, will launch its service in Mexico later this year in partnership with TV Azteca, one of the top global producers of Spanish-language television programming, Tubi said in a statement Jan. 24. "We're thrilled to collaborate with a world-class partner and, together with TV Azteca, launch a new free streaming home to some of Mexico's most celebrated television franchises," Farhad Massoudi, chief executive officer of Tubi, said in the statement. Under the deal, TV Azteca will offer advertising sales for Tubi in Mexico and encourage the use of Tubi's services via online and other platforms, and some of TV Azteca's most popular shows will be made available for free to Tubi customers in the Latin American country, according to the statement. "Our expansion into Latin America is just the beginning and we look forward to announcing additional territories in the future," Massoudi added.



Massoudi // File Photo: Tubi TV.

Nigerian Digital Payments Start-Up to Expand in Mexico This Year: CEO

Nigerian digital payments start-up Paga will launch its payment products in Mexico this year, said Chief Executive Officer Tayo Oviosu, TechCrunch reported Jan. 22. The move comes nearly a year after Paga raised \$10 million in a Series B round and Oviosu announced the company's intent to expand globally during a tech news conference, Disrupt San Francisco, in California. The start-up also recently acquired Apposit, a software development company based in Ethiopia, which Paga said it would leverage to support its advancement into the Latin American market, according to the report.

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value, as did Guaidó's meetings in Europe. Guaidó showed Maduro would be a fool if he moved against Guaidó with actions beyond boisterous threats. But public relations success cannot mask that Guaidó has, so far, failed to unseat Maduro and unify Venezuela's opposition behind him. Trump's punishing sanctions against leading figures in Maduro's inner circle and, most importantly, Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) have succeeded in aggravating the privation of many Venezuelans while opening the door to increased support of Maduro from Russia, China, Iran and Turkey. Maduro's de facto dollarization of the economy via remittances

“Guaidó recognizes that today, without direct intervention by the United States, he cannot unseat Maduro.”

— Maria Velez de Berliner

of \$3.7 billion in 2019, earnings from 'blood gold' from the Mining Arc, and the gains of the Cartel of the Suns from trafficking drugs, people, food and arms, have strengthened Maduro's hold on all the levers of state power, aided by the control Diosdado Cabello, Vladimir Padrino and Remigio Ceballos have over the military. Guaidó recognizes that today, without direct intervention by the United States, he cannot unseat Maduro. Barring direct intervention, for which there is no political will in Latin America or Europe, the United States could help Guaidó through back-channel negotiations that, if successful, would guarantee Maduro and his inner coterie safe and financially secure passage to a neutral country and legal immunity anywhere but in any U.S. jurisdiction. Absent that success, Maduro will continue in power for now, and Guaidó will continue to face

fractious divisions within his own opposition, periodically requesting promised but undelivered aid in removing Maduro.”

A **Anna Ayuso, senior researcher at the Barcelona Center for International Affairs:** “More than a year after the proclamation of Juan Guaidó as president in charge of a democratic transition, Nicolás Maduro's regime continues to resist. Maduro even tried to elect a new National Assembly president without the necessary quorum and blocked the opposition majority from entering the chamber. This was a new challenge from Maduro to the more than 50 countries, including the United States, that recognize Guaidó as Venezuela's legitimate president. External support is vital both for Guaidó, who has no effective power at home, and for Maduro, who needs to confront growing international isolation. Putin's support for Maduro became strategic by helping Maduro get around the U.S. oil blockade. With Norway's mediation process interrupted, the direct support of the White House and major world leaders that Guaidó received raises the question of how far they are willing to go to back him. While the European Union maintains its support for Guaidó, it is reluctant to increase multilateral sanctions. It is foreseeable that the United States will increase pressure on other countries and companies that still do business with Venezuela in order to further isolate Maduro's government. However, the countdown has begun toward Venezuela's announced 2020 parliamentary elections, which, if carried out without democratic guarantees, will expel the opposition from the institutions and blow up the scenario of a negotiated solution.”

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