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FEATURED Q&A

What Did the Shield of the Americas Summit Accomplish?



U.S. President Donald Trump met earlier this month with several Latin American and Caribbean heads of state for his "Shield of the Americas" summit. // Photo: White House.

Q U.S. President Donald Trump on March 7 met in Florida with the leaders of several Latin American and Caribbean countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Panama and Paraguay. The summit for Trump's "Shield of the Americas" military cooperation initiative aimed to promote "freedom, security and prosperity in our region," White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt said before the gathering. What did Trump—and the Latin American and Caribbean leaders—achieve during the summit, and what were the most important developments? What did the summit say about how Trump is pursuing his foreign policy goals in the Western Hemisphere? What were the main messages Trump sought to convey, and how receptive were the other heads of state?

A Peter DeShazo, visiting professor of Latin American, Latino and Caribbean Studies at Dartmouth College and former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for Western Hemisphere affairs: "The 'Shield of the Americas' conference reflected the growing militarization of U.S. foreign policy in the Western Hemisphere. Organized crime and drug trafficking are serious problems, and the United States should indeed play a large role in cooperating with hemispheric partners to confront these threats. However, the overwhelmingly military approach to law enforcement envisioned at the conference is of limited value in addressing the core factor of the drug/crime problem in much of the hemisphere: weak institutions of governance. Lessons learned from U.S. cooperation with Colombia during the Plan Colombia years underscore the importance of a sustained, broad-front campaign in

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TODAY'S NEWS

ECONOMIC

Cuba Restores Power Following Island-Wide Blackout

Power was fully restored late Tuesday in Cuba after the country was hit by an island-wide blackout that lasted 29 hours. Officials warned that power shortages will continue amid U.S. restrictions on fuel imports to the country.

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POLITICAL

Petro Accuses Noboa of Bombing Inside Colombia

Colombian President Gustavo Petro on Tuesday accused Ecuador of a lethal bombing inside Colombia, near the countries' shared border. Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa denied the accusation.

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POLITICAL

Peru's Interim President Makes Cabinet Changes

Peru's interim president on Tuesday tapped Luis Arroyo, a former army general, as prime minister as part of a cabinet shuffle.

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Arroyo // File Photo: Peruvian Gov't via Flickr CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

ECONOMIC NEWS

Cuba Restores Power Following Massive 29-Hour Blackout

Cuba fully restored power service early on Tuesday evening after a blackout affected the entire island for 29 hours, Reuters reported. Cuban government officials warned in a statement that shortages of electricity will likely continue as the island's oil-fired power plants operate at reduced capacity, the wire service reported. Cuba has been subject to an effective blockade of crude oil and refined fuels since at least last month amid tightening diplomatic pressure from the administration of U.S. President Donald Trump on Cuba's top traditional suppliers of oil, primarily Venezuela and Mexico, The New York Times reported. Fuel oil-powered electrical plants normally account for more than 80 percent of Cuba's base power load, according to data from the International Energy Agency. Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel blamed the power outage on U.S. pressure in a post on social media site X on Tuesday evening. "They intend and announce plans to seize the country, its resources, its properties, and even the very economy they seek to strangle to make us surrender," Díaz-Canel said. "This is the only way to explain this fierce economic war, which is applied as collective punishment against the entire population," he added. On Monday, Trump suggested to reporters that the United States could soon attempt a takeover of Cuba. "I can do anything I want ... I do believe I will be having the honor of taking Cuba," Trump said, The New York Times reported.

Brazilian President's Economic Team Set for Changes

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's economic team is set for major changes ahead of the country's October general election, as Fi-

nance Minister Fernando Haddad and Planning Minister Simone Tebet plan to run for office, Bloomberg News reported, citing unnamed people familiar with the matter. Haddad's deputy, Dario Durigan, currently Brazil's finance secretary, is expected to replace Haddad as finance minister, the news service reported. Haddad is expected to run for governor of São Paulo state, Valor Econômico reported. Economist Bruno Moretti, who currently works in the office of Lula's chief of staff, is to become planning minister, sources told Bloomberg News. The finance and planning ministries and the chief of staff's office did not respond to requests for comment by the news service. In their expected new positions, Durigan and Moretti will need to draft next year's budget guidelines amid growing political pressure from Lula's allies to boost spending in an election year, Bloomberg News reported. Durigan, who has worked closely with Haddad, plans to tap Treasury Secretary Rogério Ceron as executive secretary, the news service reported. Daniel Leal, who currently oversees debt management, would become treasury secretary, sources told Bloomberg News. The report came as Brazil's central bank is due to release its interest rate decision today. The benchmark Selic rate has been at a 20-year high of 15 percent since last June. [Editor's note: See related [Q&A](#) in Tuesday's Advisor.]

POLITICAL NEWS

Petro Accuses Noboa of Lethal Bombing Inside Colombia

Colombian President Gustavo Petro said Tuesday that the burned remains of 27 people were found in his country near the border with Ecuador as a result of a bombing carried out by Ecuadorean forces, Reuters reported. Ecuadorean President Daniel Noboa rejected the allegation, saying he ordered attacks against drug traffickers in his own country. "I didn't give that order," Petro said in a statement posted on social media site X after leveling the accusation.

NEWS BRIEFS

Salvadoran Lawmakers Approve Measure to Allow Life Prison Sentences

El Salvador's Legislative Assembly, which is dominated by the party of President Nayib Bukele, on Tuesday passed a constitutional amendment to allow for life prison sentences, Reuters reported. Fifty-nine lawmakers in the unicameral chamber voted in support of the measure, and just one voted against it. "We will see who supports this reform and who will dare to argue that the constitution should continue to prohibit murderers and rapists from remaining in prison," Bukele said Tuesday in a post on social media site X that was published during the Legislative Assembly vote.

BHP Group's New CEO Sets Sights on Americas

Australia-based mining giant BHP on Wednesday tapped senior executive Brandon Craig as its new chief executive officer, with Craig saying the company would focus on the Americas, Reuters reported. Craig said much of the potential for the company is in Chile, Argentina and the United States, the wire service reported. Craig has spent more than 25 years of the company and succeeds Mike Henry as CEO.

Machado to Attend Energy Conference in Houston

Venezuelan opposition leader and Nobel laureate María Corina Machado will attend S&P Global's CERAWEEK conference in Houston next week, her media team confirmed to Reuters on Tuesday. The conference is scheduled to hold panels discussing Venezuela's oil sector and the ongoing political transition process following the Jan. 3 deposal of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro, Reuters reported. Machado has yet to return to Venezuela since December, when she fled the country and accepted her Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo.

Earlier in the day, Noboa rejected the assertion. “President Petro, your declarations are false, we are acting in our territory, not yours,” he said in a post on X. Noboa also added in a post that his government “is fighting narcoterrorism in all its forms” and is “bombing places that serve as hideouts for those groups, of which many are Colombian.” However, he said attacks have only been carried out in Ecuador. The dispute followed Ecuador’s launch of a military and police offensive against criminal groups in four provinces, as well as along its borders, Reuters reported. The tensions between the two countries come amid a trade war that erupted in January. That month, Noboa imposed tariffs of 30 percent on imports from Colombia, saying the neighboring country was not doing enough to fight drug traffickers and stop criminal groups from entering Ecuador, the Associated Press reported. Colombia retaliated by slapping 30 percent tariffs on Ecuadorean products. Last month, Noboa raised the duties to 50 percent, and Colombia has said it would also raise its tariffs to that level. “For residents of border regions, the conflict translates into higher prices, disruptions to the normal flow of trade and reduced income opportunities,” Angélica Herrera Muñoz, CEO and founder of Coex Corporation in Bogotá, told the Advisor in a [Q&A](#) published Feb. 23.

Peruvian President Names Ex-General as Prime Minister

Peruvian President José María Balcázar on Tuesday replaced his prime minister, appointing Luis Arroyo, a retired army general, to the post and making him the third person to hold that position in the month since Balcázar took office, Bloomberg News reported. Balcázar swore in Arroyo, who had been serving as defense minister, in a ceremony at the Government Palace in Lima. As prime minister, Arroyo replaced Denisse Miralles, a former finance minister. Miralles was prime minister for just 21 days. In a resignation letter, Miralles said she was stepping down at Balcázar’s request, Reuters reported. Peruvian news outlets re-

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establishing legitimate state authority while strengthening citizen security, the rule of law and economic development in areas beset by criminal violence. This argues for a whole-of-government approach by the United States to counter drug cartels—diplomatic, economic, law enforcement and military—and a multilateralism that goes beyond cooperation limited to regimes on the ideological right. The nonparticipation of Mexico, Colombia and Brazil—key countries in any effort to advance regional security—restricted the utility of the conference. Many questions remain. What agency will countries who signed on to the ‘Counter Cartel Coalition’ have, and to what extent will they cooperate among themselves? What resources will countries contribute to this initiative? Does the United States intend this coalition to be a vehicle to oppose China’s presence in the region, as per the coalition commitment document’s pledge to keep at bay ‘malign foreign influences,’ and how will countries respond?”

A **Florina Cristiana Matei, senior lecturer at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School:** “The Shield of the Americas summit—which assembled mostly ideologically-aligned leaders from the Western Hemisphere—has short-term benefits for its cosigners. It affords the Trump administration an avenue to restore U.S. dominance in the Americas and, accordingly, implement the 2025 National Security Strategy’s Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. President Trump, whose

ported that she did not have sufficient support in Peru’s Congress ahead of a routine vote scheduled for today to confirm her as prime minister, Reuters reported. Miralles replaced Ernesto Álvarez Miranda, who was tapped as prime minister in October by then-interim President José Jerí, whose administration lasted just four months before lawmakers ousted him in February and installed Balcázar as president. Balcázar on Tuesday also made other cabinet

message was very clear—combating drug cartels requires (concerted) military action—received reassurance from the summit signatory states of their readiness to back his agenda of safeguarding the U.S. and Western Hemisphere’s homeland defense and security, by acting jointly to eradicate

“**The summit grants the participating countries and their armed forces access to resources...**”

— Florina Cristiana Matei

organized crime and (narco)terrorism. The summit could also grant President Trump a way toward strengthened U.S.-led regional cooperation to counter China’s decades-long influence in the region and destabilize Cuba’s nondemocratic regime, which the president also articulated. By backing the United States, the cosigners appear receptive to the Trump administration’s initiative. For one thing, they will be rewarded economically and militarily. The summit grants the participating countries and their armed forces access to resources—equipment, personnel, training and intelligence—that they cannot otherwise afford, considering their limited defense budgets. It also confers these militaries a renewed *raison d’être* in a region without traditional state-on-state conflict. Cosigners may also gain legitimacy

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changes, including naming Rodolfo Acuña as the country’s new finance minister, Bloomberg News reported. Acuña had served as vice finance minister. The changes come ahead of Peru’s April 12 general election. Balcázar is serving as president in an interim capacity, and is to remain in office until the winner of this year’s election takes office in July. [Editor’s note: See related [Q&A](#) in the Feb. 27 issue of the Advisor.]

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at home if their U.S.-backed homeland security and defense efforts succeed. Long-term success involves garnering broader support, including engaging countries whose leaders are nonaligned ideologically. It also depends on enacting effective checks and balances against the use of military domestically, to avoid such grave dangers to democracy as militarism/militarization and even praetorianism."

A **Mark Ungar, professor of political science at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York:** "On one level, the Shield of the Americas lived up to its grand name. Its participants communicated and coalesced around a clear goal: a hemispheric 'commitment to using lethal military forces' against organized crime. Its most important development was to form a 'military coalition' aimed at 'knocking the hell out of' cartels through interdiction, cross-border operations and expanded coordination on migration, smuggling and money laundering. President Trump's not-very-underlying message is that this U.S.-led 'military coalition' would maximize the lethal and minimize the legal in order to destroy 'sinister cartels and terrorist networks,' with the additional advantage of rolling back China's regional footholds. Most receptive to this mission were leaders of El Salvador, Ecuador and Argentina, who

have already applied aggressive anti-crime policies at home. Others were cautious, and for good reason. Representing less than a quarter of the region's population, they were

“ Most receptive to this mission were leaders of El Salvador, Ecuador and Argentina.”

— Mark Ungar

probably aware of how flimsy the shield already is. And Trump's actions in Venezuela and Iran indicate what he thinks about their national sovereignty. At the meeting, he criticized countries for allowing gangs to take over territory. Would that be a rationale for the shield to bomb those areas? If the governing party of Honduras fell out of Trump's favor, would it be subject to military strikes to destroy the narco-state it helped build? Even aside from these concerns, the appointment of discarded MAGA warrior Kristi Noem as the U.S. envoy to the shield might be enough for them to bow out of the next meeting."

The Advisor welcomes comments on its Q&A section. Readers can write editor Gene Kuleta.

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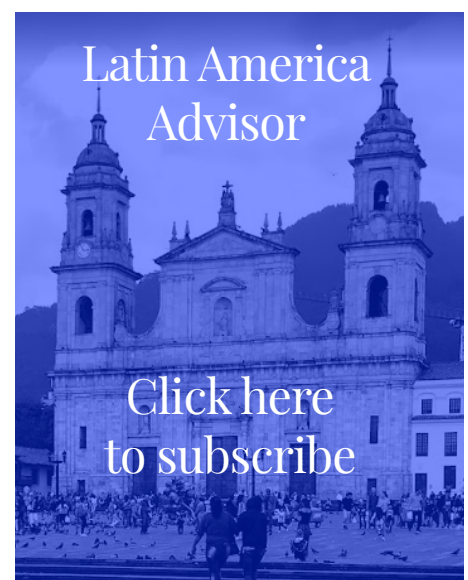
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Upcoming Event

ONLINE EVENT: Evidence in Motion – A Regional Dialogue on the Challenges of Measuring Child Development

March 25, 2026 | 11:00 a.m. ET

