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President Bush and President Vázquez of Uruguay Participate in Joint Press Availability

Visitors Center
Anchorena Park, Uruguay

[President's Trip to Latin America](#)

11:53 A.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT VÁZQUEZ: (As translated.) Mr. President of the United States of America, Madam Secretary of State, members of the delegation visiting us, the Minister of State, the Ambassador of the United States of America in Uruguay, the Ambassador of Uruguay in the United States of America, ladies and gentlemen journalists.

Mr. President, I would like to welcome you together with the very prestigious delegation that is with you. Mr. President, you represent a people that is a friend of the Uruguayan people. We have historical and friendly relations uniting these two countries, these two peoples. These are firm, respectful relations with solidarity.

In this sense, I would like to give an example with two elements which I think are of significance. First of all, Mr. President, thousands of Uruguayan citizens live in the United States of America and have found in that country a standard of living that they did not have in our country and that forced them to migrate. They bettered themselves there, they have their own families, their work, they have studied, they have health and education for their children. Therefore, this is a very clear element of what the United States people have given to the Uruguayan people.

Undoubtedly, there are many Uruguayans who are waiting, pending legalization of the situation in this country,

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but I believe your solidarity will help our citizens to be able to live legally in your country.

And the second example I would like to mention is something that we Uruguayans recall very well. When we underwent the most severe economic crisis of our history, where Uruguay was living a very moving and very serious condition, your country, and you, in particular, Mr. President, gave us a hand to help Uruguay to leave that situation in which it was and fought for a way to recovery that we are now trying to consolidate.

Sixteen years ago another President of the United States visited our country -- it was 5 December 1990, and this President was your father. At that time I was the mayor of the city of Montevideo, and I handed him the keys of the city of Montevideo. We had a brief exchange with President Bush, your father, and I recall a statement: "Let us," he said, "leave aside our differences, as we do have certain differences, and let us follow the path of agreement and coincidences that we also have." The defense of democracy as an organization and as a functioning of our societies, but rather as a style of life; the defense of freedoms and the determined struggle to improve the standards of living of our people, giving them work, education and health, are common elements that permit us to think that we may continue working beyond our differences, Mr. President.

With these words I would like to say that the path we have followed and the dialogue we had today with the President of the United States is precisely this one: to try and increase our trade exchanges, the possibility of placing the fruits of our worker in the markets of the United States of America; try and increase the scientific, technological, cultural exchange with our brother country, and see how together we may have a better standard of living for our people.

Mr. President, members of the U.S. delegation, I hope you may feel at home here. Most welcome.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you, Mr. President. I feel very much at home. You know, it's -- in my state of Texas, when you invite somebody to your estancia, it's a sign of respect. And I thank you very much for this warm gesture of hospitality, but after all, you are Tejano. (Laughter.)

We've had -- this is our second meaningful dialogue. I remember so well your visit to the Oval Office. You were very articulate about your desire to improve the lives of all people in your country. I was impressed then by your compassion and your care.

I was expecting to see a beautiful country when I came here, and that is precisely what I have seen. Your capital city is magnificent. The architecture is really beautiful. And then, of course, we come up to this beautiful place that is so peaceful, and reminds me of the great natural resources that your country has.

We discussed a lot of subjects. First of all, Mr. President, I completely agree with the spirit of our conversations, that we will find common ground and we will advance that common ground for the benefit of our respective peoples.



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One place we have common ground is the respect for human rights and human dignity, respect for rule of law; we welcome a free press -- most of the time. (Laughter.) No, all the time. We honor elections. And Uruguay is a strong example of the stability that can come with democracy. But you also recognize that which I recognize, that you can't take democracy for granted, that the people have to see tangible benefits.

And so on my trip to South America and Central America, I want to remind people that the United States and its compassionate people care deeply about issues such as education and health, issues that you're concerned about. We spent a lot of time talking about education, and I suspect most Americans don't know that we're actively involved in helping the President institute a program for youngsters to become more literate, particularly in English. We want to continue helping.

We spent time talking about how we can exchange students in a more -- in a better way. We talked about exchanging ideas, that our experts sit down at the same table to discuss issues such as alternative fuels. In my trip to Brazil yesterday we spent time talking about alternative fuels and the need for the United States and Brazil to work together -- it's the same conversation we had in Uruguay.

We talked about the fact that -- or at least I talked about the fact -- the President is a modest man, but I talked about the fact that the Uruguayan economy is growing at -- estimated at 7 percent. And I congratulate you, sir, on creating the conditions so that people feel comfortable making investments that cause economies to grow, and that we want to work together to continue to advance the progress we have made on trade and investment at a pace that both our peoples will be comfortable with.

I want to thank you very much for your commitment to democracy and peace in our neighborhood. I congratulate you and the people of Uruguay for providing peacekeepers to Haiti and to the Congo. It is a gesture of a strong nation to reach out to help others realize the benefits of a free society. And you've sent a strong and powerful message.

Finally, I do want to say something about immigration in the United States. The President has spoken eloquently to me about the need for there to be a immigration policy that upholds the values of America. I explained to him that it is my interest to get a comprehensive immigration bill out of the United States Congress as soon as possible. I look forward to working with both Republicans and Democrats, Mr. President, to do what is right to uphold the laws of the United States, but at the same time, recognize that, on the one hand, we can't grant automatic citizenship, nor on the other hand, can we kick people out. And so, therefore, there's got to be a rational way forward.

And I pledge to you, as a man who is concerned about people from your country that may be living in the United States, that I will work as hard as I can to have a compassionate and rational immigration law that respects the rule of law, but also respects the great traditions of the United States, a tradition which is a



welcoming society, a tradition that says that we welcome our diversity because we believe in our diversity. We can find the strength of our nation.

And so I've been -- I'm really looking forward to this trip. I'm especially looking forward to the asado. I appreciate the -- I appreciate your willingness to cook some Uruguayan beef. You've told me all along how good it is, and after we answer a few questions, we're about to find out.

So, Mr. President, thank you for your hospitality.

Q My question is addressed to President George Bush. Bearing in mind the regional context governed by Presidents such as Vázquez or Chavez, especially, what similarities and what differences do you find amongst them? And what is your opinion about President Vázquez and Uruguay?

PRESIDENT BUSH: The temptation is to try to get people to talk about their differences. I want to talk about our commonalities. We share respect for each other. We respect our countries, we respect our history and traditions, and we share a great respect for a government that -- where the people decide who's in charge.

Interestingly enough, we both have gotten rid of colonial powers in our past, and it is -- I think it is that heritage that makes Uruguay and the United States such natural partners. We talk about the need to invest and to grow economies through investment. That's a common ground that leads to a positive relationship.

We both recognize that education is vital for the success of our respective countries. When we find illiteracy in the United States, that's where we find poverty, oftentimes. And, therefore, education policy is focused on improving the lives of all by giving people the skills necessary to compete in the 21st century.

I think many people in my country don't know that Uruguay is the leading exporter of software in South America. It means that one of the great assets of this country is the brain power of the country. Oftentimes when you think of a country like Uruguay, you think of natural resources -- fantastic farms, a lot of cows, and lambs, and blueberries -- which, by the way, came up today in our conversation. But I think it is hopeful for both our countries to know that a friend is a leading exporter of something that requires the ingenuity and brainpower of its citizens. And so we find common ground there as to how to work together.

This is a -- I would call this meeting very constructive and very hopeful and very positive. And the reason why is because we've got so much in common. There's a lot more that unites us than divides us, Mr. President, and I appreciate the chance to visit with you.

Tony.

Q President Bush --

PRESIDENT BUSH: Bret Baier. So the guy -- I'm 60 years old and he thinks I can't hear. (Laughter.)

Q Sorry about that. Mr. President, the FBI acknowledged that some agents used post-9/11 powers to demand

personal information on Americans. What do you say to people who are concerned about the use of these national security letters? And in the wake of how these letters were used, do you still have confidence in Attorney General Gonzales and FBI Director Mueller?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I was briefed by the Attorney General and the Director of the FBI on this subject last week. We spent a lot of time talking about the IG report. First of all, I want to compliment the IG for good and necessary work. They brought the findings of this good work to my attention. My question is, what are you going to do to solve the problem and how fast can you get it solved?

And I was pleased by Director Mueller's answer, that he had already begun to address some of the problems, but there's more work to be done. I thought his testimonies the other day were very good; he took responsibility, as he should have. And I have confidence in Director Mueller, as I do in the Attorney General.

I want to remind you, Bret, and others that the IG report, which justly made issue of FBI shortfalls, also made it clear that these letters were important to the security of the United States. And so we'll address the problems in the report, and those problems will be addressed as quickly as possible.

Q Good afternoon. The first question is addressed to President Bush. You recognize the protectionist obstacles in your government. How flexible may your administration be on making progress in a trade agreement with Uruguay, and what agreement has been reached today?

And the second question for both Presidents. President Vázquez, did you ask President Bush to intercede in the differences that Uruguay and Argentina have --

PRESIDENT BUSH: We spent a lot of time talking about how to address Uruguayan concerns about market access for certain products. The President talked about a variety of issues when it comes to trade. He felt like the quotas on certain items, such as cows and sheep, was not fair, and I told him I would absolutely consider requests he made.

You thought I was teasing about blueberries, but I wasn't. It turns out Uruguay produces a fantastic blueberry. And the fundamental question is, will that blueberry -- will the blueberry grower be able to sell product into the United States?

So we talked about a variety of produce. And I told the President, I said, you can't solve problems unless you put the problems on the table, and that where we could help, we would, and where we couldn't, I would give an explanation as to why not.

Now, you brought up protectionist tendencies, and I'm concerned about protectionist tendencies, not only with our own country, but around the world. I happen to believe a world that trades freely and fairly is a world that is more likely to be able to address poverty. And therefore, I'm a strong supporter of completing the Doha Round of the WTO.

I shared with the President about our strategies as to advance the Doha Round. I spent a lot of time with President Lula -- he was most interested in our conversations, and I shared our conversations. I didn't betray any confidences, of course, but I talked to him about how we need to advance the Doha Round. The United States is fully prepared to reduce agricultural subsidies, as I explained to the President. We just want to make sure there is market access for our products. And that's what I told President Lula, that's what I've told the Europeans, and that's what I shared with the President.

I'm optimistic we can get a deal done. As a matter of fact, our Trade Minister is -- Susan Schwab has remained in São Paulo to talk to her Brazilian counterpart, all aiming at continuing to make progress toward what is a complicated, but necessary deal.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT VÁZQUEZ: As an answer to your first question, I fully agree with what has just been expressed by the President of the United States. We have created a plan starting with this meeting, where our experts, our ministers are going to discuss and make progress on issues of bilateral relationships.

Now, concerning the general multilateral situation, Uruguay has made clear its position in the defense of free trade and tried to have a drop of tariffs and subsidies, which hinder the sale of our great cultural products, particularly. But we have also analyzed the possibility of making progress with the GSP, particularly on certain issues that are going to be considered in the coming weeks.

As to the second part of your question, I have not talked about the problems we have with the republic of Argentina with the President of the United States, amongst other things, because in a few days from now -- in a few weeks, and thanks to the conciliation of His Majesty, the King of Spain, we are going to get closer. We're not going to negotiate. We're going to have a dialogue between the two governments in order to find a friendly way out. We're going to try to come to an understanding and to be able to solve the very sad differences that we have with our brethren of Argentina.

Q Thank you, Mr. President and Mr. President. For President Bush, Hugo Chavez suggested that you are afraid to mention his name. So, are you? And how much of a threat is he to the United States' interests in the hemisphere?

And, President Vázquez, can you discuss at all your position between trying to broaden ties to the United States in terms of trade, but also indicate to your own neighbors that you are -- want to remain integrated in South American trade?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I've come to South America and Central America to advance a positive, constructive diplomacy that is being conducted by my government on behalf of the American people.

My message to the people in our neighborhood is that we care about the human condition and that we believe the human condition can be improved in a variety of ways -- one, investment. And so the question is, how can we have constructive dialogue with our neighbors as to how to spread the benefits of investment?

I also am reminding people that the United States taxpayer is most generous when it comes to bilateral aid. Since I've been the President, we've doubled the amount of annual bilateral aid to Latin America from \$800 million a year to \$1.6 billion a year. And most of the money is aimed at social justice programs, programs like education and health care.

I also know full well that -- and I saw this firsthand yesterday in Sao Paulo -- that many American NGOs and faith-based groups and individuals express their concern about the plight of the poor through programs and activities all aimed at giving people a chance. Yesterday in São Paulo we went to a pretty wealthy neighborhood, but it was surrounded by a favela. And there we found in the midst of hopelessness there was a little center of love. And some of the program money had been raised as a result of concerts in the United States, where citizens, average citizens contribute to make sure this program remain viable.

And so the trip is a statement of desire to work together with people in our neighborhood. I've been to Central and South America a lot since I've been the President, because I fully understand a prosperous and peaceful neighborhood is in the interest of the United States of America.

I would call our diplomacy quiet and effective diplomacy -- diplomacy all aimed at helping people, aimed at elevating the human condition, aimed at expressing the great compassion of the American people.

And, Mr. President, I appreciate you giving me a chance to come and visit with you, have a dialogue about how we can advance our interests and the interests of our neighborhood.

PRESIDENT VÁZQUEZ: Concerning your question, the strategy for international insertion of Uruguay is quite well defined and quite clear. We are in favor of an open integration process. We are strongly in favor of the regional process. We are where we are and we don't want to leave this place. And the trade we have and the cultural, historical relationships that we have with our brethren countries in the region are very solid, very strong. But we don't want a close integration process, but an open integration process.

This Mercosur should be able to integrate to other blocks or other countries of the world and also each of the members of this process -- for example, Uruguay -- might be able to exercise its sovereign right of developing bilateral relations with other integration processes or other countries. It is in this sense that we are working, and it is in this sense that we are holding with the President of the United States.

Thank you, Mr. President.

END 12:18 P.M. (Local)



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