

★ ★ ★

# Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo at the Counterterrorism Ministerial Plenary

## REMARKS

MICHAEL R. POMPEO, SECRETARY OF STATE

PALACIO SAN MARTIN

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

JULY 19, 2019

Share

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) We shall hear an address by the Secretary of State of the United States of America, Michael Pompeo.

**SECRETARY POMPEO:** Thank you, Foreign Minister Faurie, for those remarks and for welcoming us to your country to discuss terrorism, a true threat to the Western Hemisphere. As many of you know, my previous job was as the director of the Central Intelligence Agency. I learned in that job the importance of working together, never underestimating the threats around you, and making sure that all of the world's partners fighting against terrorism are working together.

We were proud to have the opportunity to host, in the United States, the first meeting of the ministerial, and we appreciate Argentina's leadership here today, demonstrated in building on the progress we have made together. It was truly an honor for me to be with you all in remembering the victims of the AMIA bombing of 25 years ago yesterday. It was a moving reminder that our discussion today isn't abstract. It's not theoretical. The risk from terrorism is real for each and every one of us and each and every one of our citizens.

Many countries represented here have suffered devastating attacks from local nationalist terrorist groups such as ELN, the Shining Path, and the FARC. But international terrorism, rooted in extremist Islamic ideologies, is also a persistent threat.

The roots of these terror groups may be many miles away, but their branches twist around the globe – raising funds, seeking recruits, probing for our weaknesses, challenging our defenses. Today al-Qaida and ISIS continue to seek a lasting presence in our hemisphere. A cell inspired by ISIS was arrested in Trinidad and Tobago in early 2018 as they plotted an attack on the Carnival. Additionally, homegrown terrorists, radicalized by their online propaganda, have cropped up in several of our countries.

But I want to pay special attention today to another terrorist organization, the Iran-backed Hizballah, the perpetrator of the AMIA attack. In the quarter century since that horrible day, Hizballah has been active throughout the Western Hemisphere in terrorism, drug trafficking, and money laundering. That is why I would like to commend Argentina for designating Hizballah as a terrorist organization yesterday. This action will block its access to your country's financial system and greatly diminish its capacity to fundraise throughout the region. We hope others here today will follow Argentina's lead and its example, for I think everyone in this room know that Hizballah continues to remain a threat.

In May of this year, a Hizballah member was convicted in United States court of surveilling United States targets. Another remains in custody for gathering intelligence inside of the United States and in Panama. Last year Argentina froze the assets of 14 people suspected of financing Hizballah. They operated in the tri-border area shared between Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay, an area where Hizballah and other illicit actors have long been active. Today Peru is currently prosecuting an alleged Hizballah member on terrorism charges, and a key Hizballah financier is currently sitting in jail in Brazil awaiting extradition to Paraguay.

We must not shrink in the face of these challenges and of these threats. We can never become complacent. I said at this morning's memorial that the U.S. was recommitting to the cause of justice for those killed in the AMIA bombing, and I mean it. Today I'm announcing two actions against a top Hizballah operative for his role in the attack. Salman Rauf Salman served as the on-the-ground coordinator for the AMIA bombing and remains a wanted man who continues plotting terrorism on behalf of Hizballah. The State Department's Rewards for Justice program is offering up to \$7 million for information leading to his identification or his arrest. And the United States Department of Treasury is also designating Salman as a specially designated global terrorist, which denies him access to the United States financial system.

More broadly, the Trump administration has intensified U.S. actions against Iran and its terrorism proxies worldwide. In April, I designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, including its Qods Force, as a

foreign terrorist organization. This was the first time we've ever designated part of a foreign government as an FTO. And also in April, the State Department offered up to \$10 million for information leading to the disruption of Hizballah financing.

This is all part of our broader effort to hit Hizballah in the wallet. The U.S. government has designated more than 150 entities and individuals tied to that terrorist group, including more than 50 just since 2018. We've imposed historic sanctions aimed at squeezing it out of the international financial system. We call on all nations to take similar actions. In the face of a global threat like Hizballah, it is every sovereign nation's obligation and responsibility to comply with sanctions designed to keep all of us safe.

Further, we also want to see more countries put in place the necessary tools to cut off the flow of money to terrorist groups, including through their own designations and targeted sanctions. We commend Argentina for adopting such a regime this week, and we are dedicating additional resources to assisting our partners in developing and implementing these programs. Solidarity is the antidote to the terror threat. That's why being here today, part of this ministerial, is so important. Our shared safety depends on it, and our security measures come from strength of us working together. I'm very encouraged that we've already found opportunities to cooperate in a variety of fora, including the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, the Caribbean and Latin American Financial Action Task Forces, and the OAS Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism.

In a very recent example of hemispheric cooperation, just last month, Paraguay extradited Nader Farhat, another Hizballah supporter, to the United States to face federal money laundering charges in Florida. Let's keep that cooperation going. Each of your delegations has traveled here because you recognize, as America does, that global terrorist threats are evolving every day. Our governments have vital experiences and information to share with one another, and the only way to counter the serious threat that remains is in fact by working together.

The United States is prepared to lead on this front, and part of that means continuing to learn from each of you. Terrorist groups and individuals they radicalize are constantly learning and adapting, seeking new ways to exploit our weaknesses. A single weak point can let the enemy inside of our gates. That's why protecting our own individual countries requires protecting the entire region. It requires dedicated teamwork. The United States is proud to be with you all here today. We're here to stay. We look forward to the progress that I know lies ahead. Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

**FOREIGN MINISTER FAURIE:** (Via interpreter) Once again, good morning to all of you. Before we start to say something in connection with the second Western Hemisphere Counterterrorism Ministerial conference, I would like to begin by thanking each of the foreign ministers and heads of delegation who have traveled to Buenos Aires for their kindness in joining us along with the officials of AMIA to mark the 25th anniversary of the tragedy that was the bombing of the AMIA Jewish community center. This is a very significant gesture that shows respect for memory and respect and recognition for all Argentines. I would like to thank you for having accepted our invitation after our first meeting in Washington.

The topic that we will be dealing with during the course of this morning will be how to coordinate efforts in the fight against terrorism. For many of our countries in the region, terrorism used to be something remote, something that we used to watch on television and which we regarded as a distant and abstract reality. Today terrorism is clearly a global threat, a constant threat that goes across all borders. The language of violence and hatred has a translation into all languages, and that translation is clearly suffering and pain.

Many of us at different times in our national histories have had to suffer terrorism. This has been a wakeup call that woke us up out of that false sense of security. We thought we were safe because we were not involved in geopolitical conflicts. The problem is that when the wakeup call goes off, terrorism has the sound of bombs and the roar shaking up entire cities, and its sound is the shouting and screaming of victims and the tears of many destroyed, shattered families.

This building is just 200 meters away from the place where the Israeli embassy used to stand, and the bombing of which even shook up the foundations of this building. And that day Argentina woke up to terrorism and to such a crude reality as AMIA in 1994 and 9/11 in New York in 2001. But if we look around this table, each one of our countries may probably point to an act of violence or terrorist attack that was obviously unfairly and unwarrantedly launched on their fellow citizens.

We Argentines have an expression. We say when we wake up that it's like a bucket of cold water. Now, terrorism is a bucket of blood and the tears of the people who are left behind. And this transforms nations, transforms each of our fellow citizens. This reality which we suffered – again, in 1994 – was a turning point. We lost the lives of 85 fellow citizens in addition to over 300 people injured. Argentina will not cease in its struggle to ensure that the Iranian citizens charged with the commission of this crime are brought to justice in Argentina.

The Jewish community has many symbols, and one of them is the tree of life. The tree of life is the one we need to water and protect. We, those of us who are here to protect it, must cut down the tree of death which is terrorism. Its branches are violence and tragedy. Its fruits, suffering and pain. And terrorism leaves indelible marks on the collective consciousness of our societies. Our duty as states, as governments and political officials, is to cut down the tree of terrorism. We need to dry up its roots – financing. We need to dry up its land. We need to prevent the sheltering of terrorism. We need to prevent it from producing seeds infected by its hatred. We need to especially control the use of new technologies that help disseminate these ideas of hatred and poison.

I welcome this meeting because the fight against terrorism depends on multilateral cooperation and on us all being well informed and alert and on us exchanging and sharing solutions to eradicate this bloody development of terrorism. And we are honored to host the conference here.

This is why, at the OAS, we promoted the creation of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, which Argentina will be chairing until May. We think that terrorism needs to be combated with tools within the rule of law, but with a lot of international cooperation and collaboration.

We are concerned in our region because we see individuals who are acting to keep links to terrorist organizations and other radicalized elements, and in our region they seek financing. Argentina and President Macri, interpreting the feelings of our population, of our people, made the fight against terrorism a pillar of our administration in the sphere of security, and we are seeking hemispheric and domestic cooperation.

I am joined by the highest officials of the country in these fields. We have the minister of security, representatives of the Federal Intelligence Agency, the head of the Financial Information Unit, and the attorney general as well, in addition to the deputy minister of justice and human rights. This is something that requires a joint effort by all of society to fight this scourge that hit us twice but is also spreading across the world and also wants to take root in our region.

You had meetings over the course of yesterday, and the conclusions of each of the groups we will hear about in a few moments, and we will share them with the plenary. I would especially like to thank the Secretary of State of the U.S., Mike Pompeo, for having traveled to the other end of the hemisphere to highlight the importance of this fight. And I would like to thank each of the foreign ministers of the Americas of our sister nations for the day-to-day efforts we share and for the efforts in coming here to showcase the importance of us all together fighting terrorism.

I think we all need to continue working to fight terrorism, and we need to do so for the sake of defending life, so that in doing so we show freedom, respect, and prosperity. We need to cooperate, all of us together, in order to achieve this, and in so doing, we will be able to vanquish terrorism. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

**MODERATOR:** (Via interpreter) Next we shall hear an address by the Minister of Security of Argentina, Patricia Bullrich.

**MINISTER BULLRICH:** (Via interpreter) Mr. Foreign Minister of Argentina, Jorge Faurie, Mr. Secretary of State of the United States, Michael Pompeo, foreign ministers, high authorities of all delegations present, Madam Secretary of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism, Alison Treppel, authorities and agencies of the Argentine government, and ladies and gentlemen present at this important meeting – and it is also very important that it should be taking place in Argentina on a date that is so dear to the Argentine people.

First of all, as you all know, our country suffered the irrationality of fundamentalist terrorism. And this is why, after many years, we have decided, consistent with what we said on different occasions and yesterday on panels, and the foreign minister stated this too, we have made significant progress since we decided that the radical and terrorist spirit of organizations that have hit Argentina or that may try to do so will be on this list of terrorist organizations. And the Financial Information Unit of Argentina yesterday added Hizballah.

Yesterday we talked a lot and worked a lot on our panel on regional security and law enforcement, and we were discussing the threats we have in our continent, from the North all the way to the South of our Americas. First of all, one new thing we see in our continent is the link between terrorism and related offenses like narco-terrorism, financial fraud, and asset laundering. As illustrated by Secretary of State Pompeo, the operation launched against the Barakat Clan, which was a very successful operation conducted by all three countries, Paraguay, Brazil, and Argentina, which led to the freezing of the assets and to the arrest of the individuals who were sending funds to the terrorist organization.

Our position in this regard – and I would say this was illustrated by the meeting attended yesterday by the Department of Justice of the U.S., the minister of the interior of Paraguay, the national police force of Peru, and our own security ministry – clearly noted that all of these crimes must be combated and we must work day to day to neutralize them. We know that given the new state of play in the Middle East, many have thought that the links are now weaker. But we do not see it that way. We think that we need to remain vigilant every day at all times.

Today, and this was also discussed yesterday, we see the use of different methodologies and technologies for terrorist purposes. The internet, social networks, the deep web, encrypted messaging, the different ways they use to try and succeed – also, the type of organization, by seeking safe havens using front companies that are seemingly legal and a whole training system and preparation system for which they use these new methodologies, such as lone wolves, who are actually often part of a network.

In Argentina, we've had a number of cases, and we've worked within a network of countries that provided information to us. This is why the panel we took part on set some key goals specifically to deal with the institution organizational structure. We need to ensure rapid and effective information exchanges. We need to continue to analyze migration and cross-border flows. Information can't be even one second too late as that can mean tragedy to any of the countries in our hemisphere. We need to persecute these specific cells that may be working using front companies, businesses, or other facades that attempt to conceal themselves amidst communities. This is why convergence is so important as well as coordinating information and ensuring swift information exchanges.

We must also understand that, at least as far as Latin America is concerned, we have clear links between drug trafficking and terrorism. So going after drug trafficking also leads us to the funding sources. Another important issue discussed here has been to keep an eye on the way South American citizens are attracted. We have seen this during the Olympic Games in Brazil and on other occasions, and it is important to work together and ensure that citizens from our own continent are not trained or prepared either here or in countries that prepare or train terrorism. We need to be alert and remain vigilant to prevent this kind of recruitment.

It is also very important to advance in building up all biometrics and all the data we can possibly gather, specifically looking closely at passports. In Argentina recently, we had the case of two Iranian citizens who came in on recently stolen Israeli passports. We were fortunately able to detect them, and they are now in the process of being sentenced here in Argentina.

We need to advance in the field of facial recognition, biometrics, to really have the ability to identify those who may wish to enter our country for terrorist purposes. Argentina, and obviously representing this panel, let me say that Argentina is working with great dedication to detect any potential cells, and we have sent out information to many countries in the region and have also received information, both from the region as well as from other continents.

We are proud of the work done by our government. It was very important to take this step, especially with regard to Hizballah, which hit our territory and killed Argentine citizens, then actually attacked Israeli territory – this was the bombing of the embassy which was destroyed – and so many other attacks that were being planned and that we were able to neutralize. And we must also remember the Argentines who were killed in Manhattan. That was also very sad and tough for us. And that has been the case with all those who have lost their lives. And the most brutal case our world got to witness was, obviously, 9/11, the Twin Towers, and what that meant to all countries around the world.

Let me say that Argentina is firmly committed to this fight. We will continue to protect our citizens, and we will help protect the citizens of the world, citizens in our hemisphere, to ensure that if terrorism is part of organized crime, we will organize even better and more. If crime is organized, we need to be even better organized and be smarter. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

## TAGS

[Argentina](#)[Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism](#)[Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs](#)[Countering Terrorism](#)[Counterterrorism](#)[Office of the Spokesperson](#)[The Secretary of State](#)

\*\*\*

## Related Articles

— JULY 19, 2019

**Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo at the Western Hemisphere Counterterrorism Ministerial Opening Event**

[READ MORE →](#)

— JULY 19, 2019

**Reward Offer for Information on Hizballah Key Leader Salman Raouf Salman**

[READ MORE →](#)

— JULY 2, 2019

**U.S. Applauds Italy's Foreign Terrorist Fighter Repatriation**

[READ MORE →](#)[White House](#)[USA.gov](#)[Office of the Inspector General](#)[Archives](#)[Contact Us](#)[Privacy Policy](#)[Accessibility Statement](#)[Copyright Information](#)[FOIA](#)[No FEAR Act](#)[Website Feedback](#)