

Trump Administration's Anti-Venezuela Crusade Meets Fresh Obstacles in Brazil

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As part of a tour of several Latin American countries, US Vice President Mike Pence visited Brazil on Tuesday and Wednesday seeking “stronger action” against Venezuela. However, in bilateral meetings with de facto President Michel Temer and other Brazilian officials, Pence encountered resistance to his call for further sanctions against Caracas.

“The US has a very strong position, which does not exactly match ours,” explained Brazil’s Foreign Minister Aloysio Nunes. “For us, the topic of Venezuela is placed where it should be, which is in the OAS [Organization of American States]. Brazil does not accept sanctions. We are against unilateral decisions.”

Since the controversial 2016 ouster of leftist President Dilma Rousseff, Brazil has supported the efforts of the US and other regional right-wing governments to isolate the Maduro government in Caracas. The [South American giant is believed to have played a key role](#) in expelling Venezuela from [Mercosur](#) and [signed the Lima Group’s statement criticizing Venezuela’s May 20 elections](#). However, the Temer administration does not appear poised to follow Washington, Brussels, and Ottawa in adopting unilateral sanctions.

According to the Brazilian constitution, such punitive measures must be multilateral and follow the lead of the UN Security Council.

The Trump administration has since taking office imposed round after round of [individual](#) and [economic](#) sanctions on Venezuela. [Canada](#) and the [European Union](#) have followed suit with their own measures targeting top Caracas officials.

But sanctions were not the only point of tension between Pence and his Brazilian hosts.

During the meeting, acting President Temer made clear that the separation of parents from children among Brazilian immigrant families to the US was an “extremely sensitive” issue in his country. Images of caged children, the result of Trump’s “zero tolerance” immigration policy, have sent shock waves throughout Latin America.

Nonetheless, Pence tried to assuage concerns over the immigration controversy.

“We are working to reunite families, including Brazilian families. We will continue to work closely with [the Brazilian] government so that that happens.”

Additionally, the conservative hardliner vice president spoke of the "strategic partnership" between the two countries and pledged a million more dollars of aid for Brazil to address what he calls the "crisis" of Venezuelan migration.

Despite the apparent friction, relations between Washington and Brazil are the closest in decades. Last November, Brazil hosted the armed forces of the US and over a dozen other nations in military exercises along its shared border with Colombia and Peru, just a little over 630 kilometers south of Venezuela.

Meanwhile from Caracas, Venezuelan Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Arreaza responded forcefully to Pence's statements against his government.

Vaya ironía e hipocresía que [@VP](#) Pence , cuyo gobierno racista separa familias y enjaula niños inocentes, pretenda inmiscuirse en los asuntos de nuestra región. Venezuela y Brasil repudian la presencia de semejante violador de derechos humanos de inmigrantes latinoamericanos

— Jorge Arreaza M (@jaarreaza) [June 26, 2018](#)

"What an irony and hypocrisy that Vice President Pence, whose racist government separates families and cages innocent children, intends to interfere in the affairs of our region," Arreaza said via Twitter, adding, "Venezuela and Brazil reject the presence of such a violator of Latin American immigrants' human rights."

Pence's next stop is Ecuador before proceeding to Guatemala and then other Central American countries.

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