December 6, 2013

This Week in Washington: President Obama Reaffirms Strong Relationship With Colombia

On Monday evening, President Juan Manuel Santos and First Lady María Clemencia Rodríguez de Santos arrived at Andrews Air Force Base for their two-day visit to Washington, DC.

On Tuesday, President Santos met with President Barack Obama at the White House to discuss a wide range of issues on the bilateral agenda, including the historic peace talks underway with FARC; expanding cooperation on education, technology and energy, among other issues; and the U.S.-Colombia Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

President Obama stated:

“We have had an excellent conversation I think reflecting on the deepening of what have already been very strong bilateral ties between our two countries. Not only do we continue to excel in security cooperation that has I think helped to facilitate the tremendous progress that’s taken place in Colombia over the last decade, but precisely because of the success on the security front, we’ve also been able to widen our discussion to a whole host of issues: how we can improve education and economic opportunity in Colombia; how we can work together on energy projects that are vital to the region; how we can take advantage of new technologies to expand the ability for a rural child to be exposed to the world; and how we can work in partnership together on many of the key regional challenges that take place.”

President Santos stated:

“The relations of our two countries find themselves at their best moment ever. And as a result, the agenda that we have discussed this morning is much broader than it’s ever been. We have gone well beyond the usual items that we used to discuss, like security, like drug trafficking, and we are now expanding it to topics like education, energy, and mutual cooperation – what we can do regionally.”

Click [here](#) to read the full remarks.
On Tuesday, President Santos met with Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives John Boehner and U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi.

Speaker Boehner commended President Santos for his administration’s efforts to advance Colombia’s progressive agenda and his efforts to implement the U.S.-Colombia FTA.

“I want to welcome President Santos to the United States Capitol. Colombia has made great strides over the last decade, one of our real allies in the region. And without his help and without our relationship with President Santos, the free trade agreement that was passed over a year ago would not have happened,” Boehner said.

President Santos, on Wednesday, provided a readout on his meeting with President Obama to “Morning Joe” co-hosts Mika Brzezinski and Joe Scarborough. President Santos also discussed the Colombia-U.S. relationship, trade and investment, the historic peace talks underway, the World Cup and more.

Click here or on the image to watch.

On Wednesday, President Juan Manuel Santos delivered remarks at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce – the world’s largest business federation and a strong supporter of the Colombia-U.S. commercial relationship – on Colombia’s leadership role in the global economy. Before the event, President Santos had a private lunch with U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Thomas J. Donohue.
Donohue commended President Santos for his leadership in driving economic development in Colombia and the region, stating:

“President Santos is defining a new reality of growth and prosperity for Colombia and a new pathway for global competitiveness for the Americas. Over the past decade, Colombia has undergone an extraordinary transformation in terms of improved security, economic growth, and social development. We look forward to continuing to work with the Santos administration and the Colombian business community to seize our shared opportunities and to address our common challenges.”

Additionally, Donohue highlighted Colombia tourism, stating:

“And today more than 1.6 million foreign tourists visit Colombia every year, most of them American, and many staying at U.S.-owned and operated hotels. Despite this monumental change, the U.S. government continues to warn Americans about travel within Colombia. While we appreciate the caution, it’s worth noting that things have changed immensely for the better, and that going forward Americans should increasingly be able to enjoy Colombia just as they do the world’s other beautiful places.”

Colombia’s Economic, Political and Social Transformation Were the Key Topics of President Santos’s ‘Newsmaker’ Speech at the National Press Club

On Tuesday, President Santos delivered remarks on Colombia’s economic, political and social transformation during a ‘Newsmaker’ event at the National Press Club. His remarks were followed by a question-and-answer session. Click here or on the image to watch.

President Santos Holds Meeting With Officials from the Organization of American States, Inter-Development Bank, World Bank and International Monetary Fund

President Santos, on Tuesday, participated in a Protocolary Session at the Organization of American States (OAS), where he presented a comprehensive report on the peace process taking place in Colombia. OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza expressed the OAS’s support for the peace talks and admiration for Colombia’s increased economic development.
Additionally, officials from the Inter-Development Bank, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund met with President Santos on Wednesday to discuss ways to further the Partnership for Peace and Prosperity initiative in the region and advance the Pacific Alliance – an economic and trade integration platform that includes Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru.

Colombian Community in Washington Meets With President Santos

While in Washington, DC, President Santos and First Lady María Clemencia Rodríguez de Santos had the opportunity to meet a group of young Colombian local residents on Tuesday. Additionally, on Wednesday, President Santos delivered remarks to the Colombian community in Washington, highlighting his administration’s progressive agenda and policies aimed at moving Colombia forward.

In Case You Missed It…

- President Santos began his visit to the United States in Miami on Monday, where he spoke at the University of Miami and received the University’s President’s Medal for service to society.

- After concluding his visit to Washington, DC, President Santos delivered remarks at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, VA.

- The new Colombian Ambassador to the United States, Luis Carlos Villegas, presented his credentials to President Barack Obama at the White House on Tuesday. President Santos appointed Ambassador Villegas on August 16, 2013.

- President Santos authored an op-ed that appeared in POLITICO titled, “A New Alliance for Progress and Peace.”

- While in Washington, President Santos also held a meeting with Microsoft, where a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed aimed at increasing cooperation between Colombia and Microsoft to create new government programs in cybersecurity, education and innovation.

- Ahead of President Santos’s visit, the U.S. Department of Energy and the Colombian Ministry of Mines and Energy signed a MOU to establish a framework to promote sustainability and environmental protection and address climate change. Colombian Vice Minister of Mines and Energy Orlando Cabrales and U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy Daniel Poneman signed the MOU during a ceremony in Washington, DC, on Monday.

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