
US to help 'legitimate Latin American govts' to PREVENT protests from 'morphing into riots' – Pompeo

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US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has said that the US will help "legitimate governments" in Latin America in order to prevent protests from "morphing into riots."

Pompeo made the comments while delivering remarks at the University of Louisville on Monday.

He declared that US policy in Latin America is based on *"moral and strategic clarity,"* meaning Washington *"cannot tolerate"* regimes it deems unsatisfactory in the region.

Pompeo said that protests in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia and Ecuador reflect the *"character of legitimate democratic governments and democratic expression"* and that governments in the region should respect that.

We'll work with legitimate governments to prevent protests from morphing into riots and violence that don't reflect the democratic will of the people.

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Pompeo added that the US will *"continue to support countries trying to prevent Cuba and Venezuela from hijacking those protests."* He also accused Russia of *"malign"* influence in Latin America and of *"propping up"* the democratically elected Venezuelan government of Nicolas Maduro.

The eyebrow-raising comments come in wake of the November coup in Bolivia, which saw

socialist President Evo Morales ousted while violent protests and attacks on politicians forced him to leave the country. Opposition leader Jeanine Anez has since declared herself an *"interim president."* The opposition-led protests began over alleged election irregularities.

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Pompeo's distinctively frank comments are an admission of sorts that the US will encourage violent protests and regime change where it deems a government to be illegitimate, but will work to quash anti-government sentiment in countries it sees as obedient allies.

While the US wholeheartedly supported the Bolivian coup, as well as coup attempts in Venezuela earlier this year, it has all but ignored anti-government protests in Chile, where it blames *"malign"* Russian and Chinese influence.

In both Venezuela and Bolivia, Washington supports the unelected self-declared *"interim presidents."*

Pompeo concluded by saying there remains an *"awful lot of work to do"* in the region, referring to Latin America as the US's *"back yard."* He also warned against *"predatory Chinese activities"* in the region, which he claimed can lead countries to make deals that *"seem attractive"* but are *"bad"* for citizens.

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