

Brazilian president arrives in U.S. for official visit

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Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva arrives at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, USA on February 9, 2023. (Photo: @ricardostuckert/Twitter)?

Washington, February 10 (RHC)-- Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva arrived at the Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland on Thursday evening, beginning his official visit to the United States.

According to reports, Lula will meet Friday with Sen. Bernie Sanders as part of the recently inaugurated leftist leader's visit to the United States, his first official foreign trip. A statement issued in Brasília said that Lula will meet with Sanders at Blair House in Washington, D.C. at 12:30 p.m. local time, five hours before President Joe Biden hosts Lula at the White House.

Media reports say Biden "extended an invitation as a sign of support after Bolsonaro's supporters stormed the country's Congress, Supreme Court, and presidential palace" last month in an echo of the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol by supporters of then-President Donald Trump.

Lula is also scheduled to meet with Democratic members of Congress and representatives of the AFL-CIO union. He is accompanied on the trip by numerous members of his cabinet.

As the Brazilian statement detailed:

Two of the world's largest democracies, Brazil and the United States face similar challenges linked to political radicalization and hate speech in virtual space. Also at the center of the agenda: the reactivation of the Brazilian commitment to environmental conservation and the search for a greater engagement of developed countries in fulfilling their financing commitments in the climate area.

In the economic sphere, efforts are being made to boost investments, particularly in energy transition and clean energy generation, and greater integration of production chains. The United States is Brazil's second-largest trading partner and the main destination for our exports of industrialized products.

Special attention should also be given to promoting the human rights agenda, in particular on topics such as the fight against hunger and poverty on a global scale, the rights of Indigenous peoples, and the fight against racism, in addition to the integration of the two million Brazilians who live in the United States, our largest overseas community.

Sanders was an outspoken advocate for Lula's release after the former president—he also served from 2003-2010—was jailed on what critics called politically motivated corruption charges in 2018. Lula was freed in November 2019 and in 2021 a Brazilian Supreme Court justice annulled his criminal convictions, restoring his political rights and opening the door for his remarkable comeback last year.

Lula and Bolsonaro will be in the U.S. at the same time. Last month, Bolsonaro applied for a six-month tourist visa as his legal woes, including an investigation of his role in the January 8th insurrection, mount.

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