

Ambassador Noah Mamet Farewell Op-Ed

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This Friday, January 20 I will board a plane to the United States after two years and four days as President Obama's representative to the Republic of Argentina. It will be an emotional goodbye to the dedicated and talented staff of the U.S. Embassy, as well as the countless Argentines that have become close friends. I will soon leave the historic Palacio Bosch, where I've been honored to host so many Argentines and distinguished guests in our countless political and diplomatic meetings, as well as events ranging from cultural and educational exchanges to business promotion and advocacy of human rights. These last two years in Argentina have been life changing for me personally; but more importantly, we have changed U.S.-Argentine relations for the better, and I will fly home to California knowing that our bilateral relationship is stronger and our friendship more profound.

When I first arrived in Buenos Aires, I immediately felt the warmth of the Argentine people and sincere interest in working together. After initially focusing much of our efforts in 2015 on science, technology, energy and educational exchanges, we now collaborate with our Argentine counterparts in the public and private sectors on a much larger portfolio of issues including trade, commerce, entrepreneurship, peacekeeping, security, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, as well as renewable energy and climate change.

Last March, as a testament to the friendship between our countries, President Obama and his family visited Argentina, which solidified our commitment to finding new and important areas of mutual self-interest. As a follow-up we launched many new economic, political and diplomatic initiatives which are already producing substantial results. We also hosted many cabinet ministers including Secretary of State John Kerry and a record number of other top U.S. officials. I believe we now have a stronger, more vibrant and positive working

relationship, one based on mutual respect and common interests. Because of our mutual efforts and recent success, earlier this week, the government of Argentina awarded me the distinction of the Order of San Martin in the rank of Grand Cross – an honor only a few Americans have ever received. I was humbled by this award and I want to express my deepest gratitude to my terrific Argentine counterparts and my outstanding embassy staff because this was truly a team effort.

In addition to government-to-government diplomacy, we have dramatically increased people-to-people exchanges, as well as travel and tourism. Our record-breaking visa issuance this past year peaked in November, when Embassy Buenos Aires issued more visas than any other embassy in the world! Americans are also traveling to Argentina in record numbers, with over 400,000 visitors in the past year, a recent increase of 16%. We also launched a unique public-private, short-term educational exchange program to send many more public university students to the U.S. to study and experience the states for the first time. Through these developments, Argentines and Americans will increase understanding and exposure to each other's countries and cultures.

Last year we became the first embassy in Argentina to create renewable energy with the installation of solar panels and this year we became the first U.S. embassy in the world to install a wind turbine (created by Argentine entrepreneurs.) U.S. and Argentine companies are working together to make renewable energy even more profitable. This is not only critical for the environment – it will spur economic growth and create new industries and good jobs for the future.

Just last month, we launched the first “Argentine-U.S. Entrepreneur of the Year” award to promote entrepreneurship with partners from various sectors of society such as technology, the church, women executives and union leaders. For two years, I have been deeply

impressed by Argentina's innovators and this unique event was a way to draw attention to the critical role entrepreneurs will play in Argentina's economy.

During my service, our overarching goal was to increase connectivity at every level. I believe we have achieved much success and have institutionalized many programs of mutual interest. I stand ready to support my eventual successor in order to continue the strong, positive momentum created over the last two years.

It has been a great honor and privilege of a lifetime to serve as Ambassador of the United States of America to Argentina. I take with me many great memories: the breathtaking glaciers of Santa Cruz; the great falls of Iguazu; the beach town of Mar del Plata; the rolling vineyards of Mendoza; the tech clusters in Cordoba; high performing schools in Rosario and Junín; the multicolored hills of Jujuy; and riding through Patagonia on my Harley-Davidson. I've enjoyed mate, asados, wine, tangos and watched some of the most exciting fútbol games of my life – especially the superclásicos.

I look forward to continuing to strengthen the economic ties between our two great countries, but in a new capacity as someone in the private sector living in B.A. The truth is Argentina has changed me. Two years ago I never thought that I would decide to live here part time, but I have come to love Argentina and its people, and I'm excited to continue living and working in my adopted Argentina. We all have a responsibility to continue to promote the spirit of friendship between our countries and find new and creative ways to work together. I will be eternally grateful to President Obama and the Argentine people for these past two intense yet wonderful years.

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