



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 2, 2018

Trump Said to Favor Former GM CEO for Ambassador to Mexico

U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Roberta Jacobson announced via a Twitter post on March 1 that she will be leaving her position on May 5. Politico reported that it had obtained a copy of a memo that Jacobson sent to her staff in which the ambassador wrote that her decision was “difficult” and acknowledged that it came at a “crucial moment” in U.S.-Mexican relations. However, Jacobson did not explain exactly why she decided to resign, nor did she address the administration’s plans to replace her.



Multiple news sources, including the Mexican newspaper *Reforma*, which broke the story on March 1, reported that Edward Whitacre, Jr. (shown), the former CEO of General Motors and AT&T, is considered to be President Trump’s nominee to replace Jacobson. The *Washington Post* also reported that official sources in both countries had confirmed that Whitacre is the president’s choice for the ambassadorship.

Politico cited a March 1 statement from Mexico’s Foreign Ministry, which said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told Mexican officials on February 17 that Jacobson was resigning and later submitted a name to the Mexican government for its approval. This diplomatic convention is known as an *agrément* — a specialized term in the field of international affairs that refers to the agreement by a state to receive members of a diplomatic mission from a foreign country. The ministry said it granted *agrément* on February 26, but it declined to name the would-be nominee, saying that was the responsibility of the U.S. government.

“The Foreign Ministry appreciates Ambassador Jacobson’s committed and responsible diplomacy as ambassador, not only in Mexico but also for the benefit of the entire region,” the Mexican ministry said.

The *Washington Post* reported that State Department Undersecretary Steve Goldstein confirmed that Jacobson has announced her intention to retire and also that Jacobson told Secretary of State Rex Tillerson about her decision when he was in Mexico last month.

“We are grateful to her, and we are sorry to see her go,” Goldstein said.

A report in *The Hill* observed that Whitacre has deep ties to Mexico, including a friendship with the country’s richest man, Carlos Slim.

During his tenure as head of GM, Whitacre was criticized for his plans to move some production from the United States to the company’s plant in northern Mexico.

In addition to being the former Chairman and CEO of General Motors, Whitacre is also a former chairman of the board and chief executive officer of AT&T Inc., previously Southwestern Bell Corporation (SBC). He served as national president of the Boy Scouts of America from 1998 to 2000. On



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September 1, 2010, Whitacre stepped down as CEO at GM, and retired as chairman of the board at the end of 2010.

A March 1 report in the *Dallas News* noted that Whitacre is a Texas native, “a former top executive at leading U.S. corporations, including Dallas-based AT&T, and [a] friend of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.” Tillerson is also a Texas native.

The report noted that Trump’s choice for replacing Jacobson was confirmed by sources to the *Dallas Morning News*, but the sources couldn’t say whether Whitacre was interested in the post. The report also observed:

Jacobson’s pending departure comes at a critical time in U.S.-Mexico relations. Mexico will hold presidential elections July 1. Top trade negotiators for the U.S., Canada and Mexico are currently meeting in Mexico City for Round 7 of trade negotiations, which have been clouded by threats from President Donald J. Trump to tear up the North American Free Trade Agreement. Trump insists that Mexico will pay for the wall he wants built along the southern border and has vowed to deport millions of Mexicans living in the U.S. illegally.

The *News* also quoted former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Tony Garza, who served in that post from 2002 to 2009 under President George W. Bush. Garza said Jacobson “had managed to be a steady hand on the tiller and a clear voice in what sometimes seemed like a storm.”

But Garza praised Whitacre, whom he’s known for more than 30 years, as “an iconic Texan.”

“He’s plain spoken, has got tons of integrity and can get things done,” said Garza. “That, and he knows Mexico like few others — the history, culture, people and business. A really great choice.”

While the *News* noted that Whitacre is a friend of Tillerson, it is not known how much the two men’s political philosophies coincide. A profile of Tillerson in *The New American* written shortly after Trump nominated him to the top spot at State, revealed several disturbing things about him. He moved to the top of Trump’s short list for the post soon after former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited Trump Tower to urge the president-elect to consider Tillerson.

While Tillerson served as president of the Boy Scouts of America, he took a pivotal role in changing the group’s stance on homosexuality, with the left-wing Center for Strategic and International Studies (where he serves as a trustee) calling him “a key leader in helping the group come to a consensus.”

And although (unlike Rice) he is not a member of the internationalist Council on Foreign Relations, he expressed his support for that group’s agenda. Speaking at a CFR event in March 2007, Tillerson stated: “Like the Council’s founders, I believe we must choose the course of greater international engagements.”

None of this proves that Whitacre shares Tillerson’s views on such matters, and friends can disagree, but all ambassadors report to the Secretary of State, meaning Tillerson will also be Whitacre’s boss in his new job, if he accepts it.

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