

## Personnel Shortfall Slows State Department

By Joe Davidson  
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Staffing shortages at the [State Department](#) are so serious that much of its work is not getting done.

The situation is so bad that State needs to increase its hiring by 46 percent -- adding more than 4,700 jobs -- between 2010 and 2014.

That's the conclusion of retired ambassadors and other foreign policy experts, who produced a report on the shortfall for the American Academy of Diplomacy.

The study, "A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future," which the academy will release Thursday, is blunt:

"Our foreign affairs capacity is hobbled . . . "

"Significant portions of the nation's foreign affairs business simply are not accomplished."

"The diplomatic capacity of the United States has been hollowed out."

There have been some personnel increases in recent years, but they were absorbed by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. State would need to boost its budget by 21 percent to get where the academy thinks the department needs to be. That would be money well spent, said Thomas Boyatt, project chairman for the report and a former ambassador to Colombia.

"If just one war per generation is avoided because of effective diplomacy, think of the savings it brings to the nation," he said yesterday. He cited North Korea as an example. It is dismantling its nuclear weapons program and allowing in [United Nations](#) inspectors. The Bush administration has removed the country from its list of terrorist nations.

It's a diplomatic victory -- and not a military victory that could only be gained by the spilling of much blood.

Yet, at the same time, the [Department of Defense](#) has played an ever-increasing role in diplomacy, much to the dismay of diplomats.

"The 'militarization of diplomacy' is noticeably expanding as DOD personnel assume public diplomacy and assistance responsibilities that the civilian agencies do not have the trained staff to fill," the report says.

Perhaps contrary to conventional wisdom, this is not a turf war the current defense secretary wants to win. [Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates](#) favors stronger State Department funding.

State Department "programs are not well understood or appreciated by the wider American public, and do not have a ready-made political constituency that major weapons systems or public works projects enjoy," he said. "As a result, the slashing of the president's international affairs budget request has too often become an annual Washington ritual -- right up there with the blooming of the cherry blossoms and the Redskin's opening game."

Basically, he's saying that compared with [the Pentagon](#), State is the [Rodney Dangerfield](#) in international matters -- it gets no, or certainly too little, respect.

"It's really frustrating for the foreign service," said John Naland, president of the American Foreign Service Association and an active-duty career foreign service officer.

That frustration goes beyond personnel shortages, to the lack of training for those who are hired, Naland said. He pointed to generals who get advanced degrees, including doctorates, on the Pentagon's tab. "Except for language training, our training is woefully inadequate," said Naland, who goes to Iraq next year.

Reduced budget and staff have made selling the U.S. abroad -- an important part of State's mission -- tough work these days. "According to international public opinion surveys there is extensive dissatisfaction with many U.S. global policies," the report says. Of course the nation's reputation abroad took such a big hit with the war in Iraq that an army of diplomats would need a magic wand to help reverse the discontent.

The diplomacy academy says the public diplomacy staff, which attempts to influence foreign audiences, now is 24 percent smaller than in 1986 and "needs a major infusion of new resources."

That's a widely held view in the foreign affairs crowd.

At a Senate hearing on public diplomacy last month, Scott H. DeLisi, the department's director of career development and assignments, counted places on his fingers as he said the United States needs to do "more in China, in India, in the Middle East, in parts of Africa, in Indonesia." He was less diplomatic than others on his panel who also testified about the shortage of public diplomacy personnel.

"It's frightening," DeLisi said.

The report Academy's can be found online at [http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/FAB\\_report\\_2008.pdf](http://www.academyofdiplomacy.org/publications/FAB_report_2008.pdf).

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