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## American Academy of Diplomacy Message to Secretary Rubio

*Washington, D.C.* – Last Friday, the leadership of the American Academy of Diplomacy transmitted a formal letter to the Secretary of State Rubio calling on him to preserve people to protect the ability to carry out decisions that are yet to be made. Agriculture, prosperity, and security will benefit. The full text of the letter follows below, and the original copy is attached.

February 28, 2025

The Honorable

Marco Rubio

Secretary of State

Harry S. Truman Building

2201 C. St. NW

Washington DC, 20021

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We support your call for a diplomacy that will be agile, effective, and make America “safer, stronger, and more prosperous.” Improving American diplomacy has been for 40 years the core mission of the American Academy of Diplomacy. Non-partisan and non-governmental, our members are former senior diplomatic practitioners, who have served with distinction in the Department of State and other foreign affairs, development, intelligence, and military organizations. They have witnessed the successes and failures of many policies. It is from that perspective that we offer support and advice.

We recognize and respect the right of President Trump to establish foreign policy priorities and procedures to better serve the interests of the American people and to recommend changes in law for this purpose. We acknowledge your duty and authority within the law to shape America’s diplomacy and assistance in ways reflecting those priorities. We want to help.

Our collective experience tells us that it is essential that a logical and systematic review establishes the changes you want to make before large-scale personnel reductions if you are to have any chance of making your priorities work. The tailor’s

Strengthening American Diplomacy

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adage “measure twice, cut once” reminds one that the garment will never be fit for use if the cut was made wrongly.

The Food for Peace program illustrates this larger point, which applies to many programs. Funding could be moved to the Department of Agriculture as many in Congress are proposing. But the program would still fail without the personnel who administer it in the field, negotiating with host governments, monitoring distribution, and guarding against fraudulent diversions and illegal resale. Whether they are in USAID, State, or Agriculture, you will still need them if you decide to keep the program and protect the related American jobs.

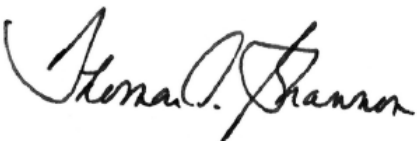
Foreign assistance has been and remains a fundamental part of diplomacy in achieving national goals. This has been true of programs with long histories of American popular support in preventing hunger, disaster relief, and nurturing the sick. America First need not mean America the Callous. Assistance programs are integral to securing access to critical minerals in Africa and rebuffing Chinese efforts to control such resources, just as they are part of diplomacy in managing counter-terrorist programs elsewhere in the world.

By all means, reevaluate which programs serve America’s interests and what needs change. But make sure that, when your evaluation is complete, you will still have the personnel essential to carry out your decisions, in foreign assistance and in other functions you deem essential. The range of knowledge and skills built up over the years cannot be quickly reconstituted if it is lost. The State Department does not have anywhere near enough people to implement assistance programs.


You might consider tasking Chiefs of Mission to report on what they need to carry out the president’s priorities. Their fine-grained level of understanding is likely to be better developed in the field than in Washington offices.

We understand that downsizing will take place. As you decide which staff are no longer needed, we urge that those no longer deemed necessary be treated in a responsible way, which shows recognition of their service to America, often at the risk to their lives, their health and that of their families. Many of them have worked on programs you and your congressional colleagues supported in the past. If the nation’s priorities have changed, that does not alter the respect, treatment, and support they deserve if they now must seek other places to use their talents. Mr. Secretary, the Academy offers an unmatched pool of experience, of lessons from peace and war, and from success and failure. If our collective experience would be helpful in your consideration of restructuring, we are at your disposal.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Shannon, Jr.  
Chairman



Alonzo L. Fulgham  
Vice Chairman



Ronald E. Neumann  
President

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