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Ending Collective Bargaining Rights for National Security Agencies Is a Profound Mistake

Washington, D.C. – The American Academy of Diplomacy issued the following statement in response to the President’s Executive Order issued on March 27, 2025:

“We, the members of the American Academy of Diplomacy, oppose the Executive Order issued on March 27, 2025, ending collective bargaining rights for employees of national security agencies, including the Department of State. The American Academy of Diplomacy is a non-partisan organization of retired United States Ambassadors and other national security professionals dedicated to protecting American interests and promoting American values through diplomacy. We have all served under the 1978 Civil Service Reform Act and the 1980 Foreign Service Act establishing collective bargaining rights for federal employees. We strongly believe, as the latter law states, that “a career Foreign Service, characterized by excellence and professionalism, is essential in the national interest to assist the President and the Secretary of State in conducting the foreign affairs of the United States.”

Many of us are or were members of unions that are the collective bargaining units for our former agencies, including the Foreign Service Officers of the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and others. From our own experience, we know that these unions, and the collective bargaining processes through which employees engage with federal management, created stability and discipline in the workplace and enhanced the ability of our diplomats and national security professionals to carry out the directives of each and every president since these Acts were approved by the Congress. The effort to rescind these rights, and violate the clear requirements of law, far from enhancing the ability of the president to conduct foreign policy, will undermine that ability by withdrawing the protections and guarantees that have represented the respect and commitment of the American people for the important and often dangerous work of our national security professionals. The rescission of these rights and the legal actions the Executive Order invites misdirect attention that would be better placed on advancing our national interests around the world. Opening the federal workforce to intimidation, harassment, and mistreatment, and attempting to politicize a professional workforce that has been a faithful and nonpartisan partner of our elected leadership for over 100 years since the establishment of the Foreign Service, is a profound mistake. We urge President Trump to rescind this executive order.”

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Strengthening American Diplomacy

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