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## The Academy holds an on-the-record briefing about the U.S. Ebola response

Washington, D.C. – On June 5, the American Academy of Diplomacy convened a press briefing with retired senior U.S. diplomats and development professionals to discuss the ongoing Ebola outbreak in Uganda and its implications for American global health leadership and national security.

Panelists included Amb. (ret.) Deborah Malac, former USAID Mission Director in Uganda Daniele Nyirandutiye, former senior USAID official Susan Reichle, and Amb. (ret.) Eric Stromayer, each drawing on decades of frontline experience managing infectious disease crises, including the 2014 West Africa Ebola outbreak. The event was moderated by Amb. (ret.) Michael Ratney.

The panelists' remarks centered on a shared concern: that the dismantling of USAID and the degradation of U.S. diplomatic and interagency capacity have left the country less prepared to contain outbreaks abroad and less able to protect Americans at home.

Quotes with timestamps from the briefing are available below. The full press briefing is available to watch [here](#).

*"As you know, the current administration has essentially demolished USAID, dismissed and forced out large numbers of diplomats, including many of our most experienced officers."* – **Michael Ratney [00:01:16]**

*"We are now seeing the consequences of the decision of this administration to "throw USAID into the wood chipper," as Elon Musk declared. The US has relinquished its role as a global health leader. Rather than convening an international coalition for a robust response, as we did in 2014, our response is disjointed [...] By focusing only on how to keep Ebola out of the US, rather than stopping transmission at its source, we are making America more vulnerable."* – **Susan Reichle [00:06:57]**

*"We are now running to catch up after chopping off our right leg with the destruction of USAID and hobbling on our left leg with a weakened interagency response led by valiant civil service members."* – **Susan Reichle [00:08:12]**

Strengthening American Diplomacy

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*“What stops an outbreak is really a multisectoral response that simultaneously engages health, education, agriculture, livestock, local government, and humanitarian actors as equal partners because we all know that viruses do not respect sector boundaries.” – Daniele Nyirandutiye [00:11:08]*

*“We are going to constantly contend with these infectious diseases. And so we need to have robust infrastructure that’s in place that we can get behind and support in these kinds of situations.” – Daniele Nyirandutiye [00:17:56]*

*“You can bring in as many people, or as many supplies, or as many treatment centers as you want. But if people don’t understand what’s happening around them, if they don’t trust what people are being told, then it won’t work. And you will continue to see the spread because people will hide. They will not report; they will not show up to seek treatment, and then what you have is an uncontrolled epidemic.” – Deborah Malac [00:18:49]*

*“If you’re asking why actual diplomats, as opposed to development specialists, are part of this conversation, the reality is that it must be an intergovernmental response. You need those relationships on the government side to work with the people who are trying to respond. We’ve also demolished those relationships. So we need to figure out how we can better be prepared in the future.” – Deborah Malac [00:21:58]*

*“Contagious diseases will occur, but we need to be ready. It is a matter of our national security to be able to respond in the field and stop these things as quickly as possible when they break out.” – Eric Stromayer [00:24:00]*

*“You don’t respond to an outbreak when the outbreak happens. It’s preparedness. And this administration cut the contracts; they stopped the preparedness and the repositioning of the protective equipment. The people on the ground, the contractors, and partners [...], those relationships were fractured.” – Susan Reichle [00:33:00]*

*“It’s like a fire department that’s been disbanded. If there is a fire, they are trying to respond to it. But the fire trucks don’t have gas in them, perhaps” – Eric Stromayer [00:35:00]*

The American Academy of Diplomacy is a non-partisan and non-governmental organization of former senior diplomats including both career and non-career appointees. It is dedicated to strengthening the professionalism of diplomacy and explaining to the American people the importance of diplomacy.

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