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The Honorable Ed Royce
Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee
2170 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eliot Engel
Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee
2066 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Royce and Ranking Member Engel:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the perspective of the American Academy of Diplomacy on the ongoing State Department Budget reorganization. The Academy is an organization of the nation's most distinguished former diplomats, both career and non-career. It is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization dedicated to strengthening American diplomacy.

A strong diplomacy is essential to American security. Such a diplomacy must rest on a strong State Department. This, in turn requires a strong Foreign Service and a strong Civil Service. Promoting and protecting America's interests around the globe, from security and peace-making to protecting citizens and advancing U.S. business, demands a high functioning institution.

The Academy supports sensible streamlining and the elimination of offices and positions in order to promote effective diplomacy. We also believe this should be a process open to discussion, not just the submission of views for consideration by the Administration.

The American Academy of Diplomacy believes the Administration should reconsider the decision to declare its plan for reorganization "pre-decisional." **The Congress should ask that the plans to date and those to be considered be made available for public comment.**

As the recent report commissioned by Secretary Tillerson very properly highlighted, the Civil Service and Foreign Service employees who work for the Department are patriotic, dedicated, public servants. Many have gone in harm's way and more will do so. For nearly eight months these employees, and many of their families, have lived in a state of suspended animation, not knowing how reorganization will affect their lives and careers. In light of their sacrifices for our country, it is unfair to ask them to remain in this limbo for additional

Strengthening American Diplomacy

1200 18th Street, NW, Suite 902 • Washington, DC 20036 Tel 202/331-3721 • Fax 202/833-4555
www.academyofdiplomacy.org

months while the Administration considers in private its recommendations for change.

Keeping decisions from public view will only fuel the suspicion and low morale which now affects so many in the Department. America's diplomacy would be better served by allowing public comment. It is on this basis that we have asked that the Department and OMB to reconsider its decision.

The Academy believes certain principles should guide the reorganization.

- Change only those things which will strengthen U.S. diplomacy.

- People are more important than programs. Programs can be rebuilt quickly. Getting a senior Foreign Service takes 15 to 20 years.

- As a rule, front-line personnel should be increased, although there are Embassies where there are more people, including those from other agencies, than U.S. interests require.

Diplomacy is accomplished primarily overseas. That means the overseas presence should be maintained both for its daily mission of promoting American interests and values and to position the United States to respond to crises. It is overseas that we build the expert knowledge to make sound policy decision. It is overseas that American diplomats have to convince foreigners to reach common views of what is necessary for security. It is overseas that our embassies maintain the platforms on which many agencies of our government operate to pursue U.S. interests.

It is to our embassies that American citizens turn for security and evacuation abroad. Our embassies commercial work supports hundreds of U.S. companies and citizens in selling abroad. This supports thousands of American jobs. Every dollar spent on this work returns hundreds in sales. Neither America's security nor its economic prospects can be advanced by drastic reductions to our overseas presence and the savings from doing so are inconsequential in terms of the federal budget.

To be effective, American diplomacy must maintain a strong Foreign Service. The Congress recognized this in passing the Foreign Service Act of 1980 (the Act). One essential of a strong Foreign Service is that the annual intake of Foreign Service personnel should not be terminated nor drastically reduced. Unlike the Civil Service, the Foreign Service has an up-and-out system, aligned with military practice. Interruptions in regular Foreign Service recruitment lead to serious personnel gaps years later. The last such break in recruitment in the 1990's is one of the reasons that the Service had too limited a "bench" of highly qualified senior officers in recent years; gaps, not wars, were largely responsible for the increased hiring necessary in the last decade. Continuing to restrict hiring is a serious mistake that will injure the Service for many years.

The Foreign Service, as up-or-out service, loses about 300 - 400 FSOs and Specialists each year by selection out for low ranking, expiration of time in class, failure to pass over a promotion threshold or reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65. Only Foreign Service personnel are subject to world-wide availability. With their experience, capabilities and languages, they can be sent anywhere, anytime to meet America's foreign policy objectives. Over the last 12 years the largest personnel increases have been the additions of Civil Service personnel in State's Regional and, particularly, Functional Bureaus.

The largest increase in Foreign Service personnel in the last 16 years has been in Diplomatic Security Officers. This has been and is essential to protect our personnel in the many dangerous areas in which we work. However, the increase in DS officers should not be confused with the continuing need to have the right number of those doing the broader work of diplomacy.

Like many government departments, the Department of State can be more efficiently run. Serious streamlining will be welcomed by today's State employees. The goal for any reorganization must be effectiveness. Efficiency plays a key role in creating effectiveness but they are not synonymous.

The Academy has publicly supported the reduction in special envoys. Many of the functions performed by these offices should be placed in the regular bureaus. The Congress could be helpful by taking a flexible approach to the need for these offices and whether their tasks can be better managed elsewhere.

The Academy supported the removal of the second Deputy Secretary position. We believe it is not needed and has led to overlap and confusion with the other deputy. If the much larger Defense Department can manage with one deputy, so can State.

The number of Under Secretaries has swelled in recent years. Reductions to three or four should be considered. To manage with a smaller number of Under Secretaries, consideration should be given to combining bureaus (and therefore reducing the numbers to be supervised), particularly in the functional area, so that the responsibility increases while the structure is reduced.

The number of Deputy Assistant Secretary positions also has grown considerably. These positions can be reduced and more responsibility pushed to office directors and their staffs.

We believe the key positions of the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the Director General, and the Dean of the Foreign Service Institute should be career Foreign Service Officers. The Director General, a position established by the Act, should be appointed from those that have the senior experience and personal standing to guide the long-term future of the staff needed for effective diplomacy. **We respectfully ask that Congress get clarification as to whether it is the Department's intention to nominate an appropriately senior serving or retired Foreign Service Officer for the position of Director General.**

Every administration since President Truman's has faced unanticipated interventions overseas. Because the Foreign Service is fully deployed at all times each intervention has found State lacking in its ability to support our interests and our military colleagues with adequate numbers in the field. It is irresponsible to assume this pattern will not repeat. State needs such a surge capacity. Whether this is done through the Stabilization and Crisis Bureau (SCO), reserves, or some other mechanism, the problem needs to be addressed. **The Congress should press the Department to explain how it intends to be prepared to have the needed surge capability when unforeseen overseas crises occur.**

The challenges facing the Civil Service are different from those facing the Foreign Service. These include limited career mobility and problems with gaining a full understanding of issues involved in working abroad. These problems need to be addressed in their own right but differently from those of the Foreign Service. In our 2015 report *American Diplomacy at Risk* we proposed one idea for an excepted service within the Civil Service that would allow rotation, including overseas, in return for accepting some of the requirements of rank in person, competitive evaluation, and selection out.

State must do more to adequately educate its entering FSOs. The U.S. falls well behind other countries in training its cadre of professional diplomats. State needs an overall vision for professional workforce education at the entry, mid, and senior levels. Our study, *American Diplomacy at Risk*, made specific recommendations (see specifically recommendations [here](#)). Even if a vision cannot be funded now, it is important to establish a "road map" that can be implemented over time as funds become available. Otherwise the discussion will always turn on the difficulties of an individual budget and, accordingly, will always fail to make progress and professional education will remain deficient. **The Congress**

should ask what the Department will do to strengthen the professional education of our diplomatic staff.

State's personnel system contains a multitude of ad hoc arrangements that were designed to solve specific problems but now constitute a confusing multitude of systems within the system. State needs a comprehensive review of its personnel system including addressing the difference in roles and mission of the Foreign Service and the Civil Service. This will be a complex undertaking but there is no reason why decisions on end strength and other measures for effectiveness must wait on this lengthy review.

These and other recommendations of the Academy demonstrate that we support sensible reorganization. We do not support changes driven solely to accomplish budget objectives. Currently the Department maintains that the reorganization is being driven by employee inputs. However, there appears to be a contradiction between reform generated for improving effectiveness and reform driven by predetermined budget levels that have no apparent basis in decisions about policy priorities. **We encourage the Congress to press hard for clarity about the objectives of this reorganization process: is the goal increasing effectiveness or rationalizing budget decisions?**

The American Academy of Diplomacy appreciates the opportunity to provide these recommendations. As the Department of State's reorganization plans become clearer, the Academy would welcome the opportunity to continue a dialogue with the Committee and provide testimony when appropriate.

Sincerely,



Ronald E. Neumann
President