



THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DIPLOMACY

Principles for Reorganizing the Department of State

Prepared by the American Academy of Diplomacy

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The American Academy of Diplomacy is an organization of highly experienced former career and non-career diplomats dedicated to non-partisan strengthening of American diplomacy. Since 2008 we have produced a series of reports examining issues of staffing, professional education and training, and the need for greater work force management and career development for both Civil Service and Foreign Service.

We believe that American diplomacy must be strong to promote and protect US interests in this dangerous world. Only a robust State Department can play its part in this mission, along with the intelligence, defense and assistance communities. A strong State Department must have a strong Foreign Service and a strong Civil Service. It must be well-managed, efficient and funded in a way that makes the institution and its people ready to meet tomorrow's challenges as well as today's.

It is possible to streamline staff and enhance American diplomatic performance and strength. However, unless budget reductions, reorganization, streamlining and reductions in force are strategic and targeted, they will not meet the Administration's objectives.

Below we have laid out principles that we believe should guide a reorganization. The most important recommendations include links to our more detailed studies that have examined many of these problems in depth.

Principles

- Change only those things which will strengthen US diplomacy.
- People are more important than programs.
- Domestically assigned personnel should bear the brunt of any reduction in force (RIF). As a rule, front-line personnel should be increased, although there are Embassies where there are more people, including those from other agencies, than US interests require.
- The intake of Foreign Service personnel should not be terminated nor drastically reduced. Unlike the Civil Service, the Foreign Service has a flow-through up-and-out system, aligned with military practice. Interruptions in

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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.

Should a reduction in force be considered, there are certain facts that need to be understood:

- Every year about 300 - 400 FSOs and Specialists leave the Foreign Service 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. This amounts to an annual RIF of FSOs and Specialists.
- Foreign Service personnel are subject to a RIF procedure established by the Foreign Service Act of 1980 and different from the Civil Service. According to law, RIF rules are subject to negotiation with the American Foreign Service Association (AFSA). Civil Servants at State are subject to relevant OPM rules.
- Only Foreign Service personnel are subject to world-wide availability. They can be sent anywhere, anytime to meet shifting Foreign Policy objectives. As a Service they have the experience, capabilities and languages for such mobility.
- 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 FS 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.
- Two thirds of State Department employees (50,104 of 75,231) are Locally-Engaged Staff, that is, local national and third-country employees who provide critical support to American Embassies overseas.
- 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.

Recommendations

1. There are now 54 special envoys, coordinators, and ambassadors, and 68 if one includes the various categories of special and senior advisor. These offices consume hundreds of staff positions. While those dealing with specific crises have a separate justification (see the Academy and USIP study of this issue [here](#)) many of the functions performed by these special offices duplicate the work of other offices. These functions should be placed in the regular bureaus. These positions and most of

their staffs should be eliminated, schedule C and B personnel removed and any GS and FSOs reassigned.

2. The second Deputy Secretary position should be permanently eliminated. The number of Under Secretaries has swelled in recent years. Reductions to three or four should be considered.
3. To manage with a smaller number of undersecretaries, consideration should be given to combining bureaus (and therefore reducing the numbers), particularly in the functional area, so that the responsibility increases while the structure is reduced.
4. The number of Deputy Assistant Secretary positions has grown considerably. These positions can be reduced and more responsibility pushed to office directors and their staffs.
5. The positions of Political and Management Under Secretaries, the Director General and the Dean of the Foreign Service Institute should be career Foreign Service Officers. The Director General should be appointed from those that have the personal gravitas for the only position explicitly determined by the Foreign Service Act of 1980.
6. Any RIFs that are carried out should apply to contractors and schedule B & C (political appointees) personnel in the same numbers as RIFs of GS and Foreign Service personnel.
7. 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](#) 10e, 11, 13a, 13c, and 14 for Foreign Service and recommendations 16, and 21 for Civil Service). 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.
8. Every administration since 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.
9. The Civil Service needs greater career mobility. We have 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. See ([here](#) page 46) for specifics.

10. 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.