



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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American Academy of Diplomacy Opposes Administration's Budget

*Washington, D.C. – On May 1, 2019, the **American Academy of Diplomacy**, a non-partisan, non-profit association of former senior U.S. ambassadors and high-level government officials, went on record to express its opposition of the Administration's proposed 2020 budget for the U.S. Department of State.*

Identical letters were sent to members of the Senate Committees on Foreign Relations and Appropriations, as well as the House Committee on Foreign Affairs and Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs, urging them to reject the proposed budget because it weakens American diplomacy and poses serious risks to American security. The full text of the letter is included below.

On behalf of the American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD), we write to urge you to reject the budget proposed by the Administration for the State Department. The proposed 24 percent cut from last year's appropriation poses serious risks to American security by further weakening a crucial element of our national strength: American diplomacy. The Administration's request ignores the repeated, bipartisan view of the Congress that more, not less, diplomatic resources are needed to promote and protect America's interests.

People are the State Department's most important and precious resource. We should be expanding our staffing overseas, where the real work of diplomacy is done, not cutting back. The Iraq War and the subsequent surge in Afghanistan stripped personnel out of many posts. This so called "Iraq tax" has never been made good. The 8 percent cut in funding State Department staff and the 7 percent cut in USAID staffing compared to 2019 enacted levels go in the wrong direction. Given the security threats in many parts of the world, and GAO longstanding security recommendations that remain unaddressed, the reductions in diplomatic security (8 percent) and embassy security (23 percent) are neither justified nor comprehensible. The Academy will shortly make more detailed proposals to reinforce core diplomacy, which we look forward to sharing with you for your consideration.

Diplomacy should be seen as the first line of America's defense. We support a strong military, but war must remain a last resort. It is to our embassies that American citizens turn to for security, help, and even evacuation if required. Our embassies work to convince foreign governments to support American goals and priorities. The commercial work done at our embassies supports US companies and citizen entrepreneurs selling abroad, creating and sustaining millions of American jobs across our great country. As the Chinese ramp up their presence and their commercial efforts, we need a strong diplomatic force to compete and support US companies.

US public diplomacy fights radicalism. For example, educational exchanges over the years have enabled hundreds of thousands of foreign students truly to understand Americans and American culture. This is a proven, effective way to counter violent extremism. A budget cut of 56 percent from 2019 enacted level will hobble this crucial effort.

UN peacekeeping and political missions are mandated by the Security Council where our veto power can ensure when, where, how many, and what kind of peacekeepers used in a mission support US interests. Peacekeeping forces are deployed in fragile, sometimes prolonged, circumstances, where the US would not want to use US forces. UN organized troops cost the US taxpayer only about one-eighth the cost of sending US troops. Given these realities the 27 percent cut to UN peacekeeping compared to the 2019 budget request is a serious mistake.

Our contributions to refugee resettlement and economic development are critical to avoid humanitarian crises from spiraling into conflicts that would draw in the United States and promote violent extremism. If the United States is to lead the world in finding solutions to the migration flows that destabilize so many states, we must have a budget that allows us to exercise influence commensurate with our interests. The 34 percent cut in this area from the 2019 enacted level is counterproductive.

Many America's military leaders are deeply opposed to the current budget proposals. It is not a cost-effective way to protect America and its interests.

The Academy, representing the most experienced and distinguished former American diplomats, both career and non-career, does not oppose all cuts to the State Department budget. All government departments can be run more efficiently. Streamlining is possible, and we have made and will make proposals to that end. However, the sweeping nature and depth of the proposed budget cuts will surely damage American national security and should be rejected.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Pickering
Chairman

Ronald E Neumann
President

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