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AAD Stands with the Oath of Office and the Diplomats Who Follow It

Washington, D.C. – The American Academy of Diplomacy stands with the diplomats who have recently followed their oath of office and appeared before Congress despite orders not to do so.

The women and men of the State Department, as well as our military and intelligence colleagues, take a solemn oath both as they begin their careers and then reaffirm it many times after during their service to our great nation.

The key words of that oath, which is established in law, are worth quoting here: “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.” The oath is taken “freely and without mental reservation.” Senior leaders put their left hand on a bible (or an equivalent of another faith) and with right hand raised ask their God to help them meet this commitment.

The oath compels many things, but key among these are a belief in the rule of law and a belief that the purpose of the exercise of power and diplomacy is to promote, protect and defend the interests of the United States of America.

Happily, most who take this oath never face the choice of following the law or following a contradictory order from their leaders. That was no longer true for some of our former colleagues. They met their responsibilities by honoring subpoenas to appear before the Congress even when reportedly told not to do so by the State Department. We admire their bravery and courage.

This matters for two reasons:

First, Foreign Service and Civil Service employees at the State Department, like our military colleagues, make sacrifices to serve. It is crucial that they and all who take the oath of office believe in the legality and justice of their service. The oath is their guide to what it means to serve.

Second, U.S. foreign policy is most effective and best executed when nations around the world know that it is based on the rule of law. The oath is the beacon that lights this path.

That is why the American Academy of Diplomacy stands with the oath of office and rejects the advice that serving officers should just “get over it.” The Academy supports those who have stepped forward, despite the challenges, to fulfill their solemn commitment to the Constitution and through it to the people and interests of our country.

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