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July 13, 2020

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The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As our nation reckons with long standing racial issues, moving forward in unity will require seizing this moment to expand diversity, equity, and inclusion within our public institutions, including the Department of State.

The American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD) strongly supports the ideals of diversity and inclusion in the State Department's career and non-career ranks. Efforts to make the foreign and civil services more representative of the American people, including those sponsored by the Director General, require renewed momentum. An AAD Working Group is currently developing a set of proposals to further diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts at State which we look forward to sharing with you.

We are writing to address one acute issue: the deeply troubling pattern in the mistreatment of Black, Hispanic and other minority officers crossing U.S. border/entry points. By their own testimony, many State Department officers have endured regular and persistent discrimination and harassment by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol officers. Problems include CBP officers not accepting standard diplomatic documents; placing Black and Hispanic officers in secondary examination without cause; and repeated hostile questioning and delays. This is made even more glaring when they travel with Caucasian colleagues who pass through with the same documentation. This pattern became so persistent that it reportedly led to the 2018 resignation of a Black officer posted to Mexico. In the June 11 issue of Foreign Policy Magazine, this officer reported raising the issue with supervisors and was met with relative indifference. Another officer reported problems and continued delays, even after being issued a letter by a supervisor explaining her official status.

Mistreatment of State Department personnel by U.S. CBP is not new. We have learned that such incidents have often disrupted the official travel of Black, Hispanic and other officers. While in the past, some incidents came to the attention of Department leadership, the continued reports, including from our most senior members, suggest that such mistreatment lives on and too often goes unaddressed. We hope you concur that any perception of tacit acceptance

Strengthening American Diplomacy

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of such practices or indifference to the reports by Department officials or other Federal officials is unacceptable and warrants action.

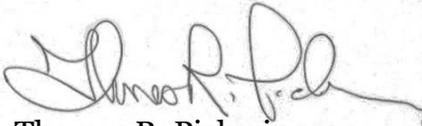
We would like to suggest some steps to address and hopefully halt the mistreatment of Black and other minority staff, indeed all State Department staff, by law enforcement at border entry posts:

- A Department-wide review, ordered by you, regarding the specific incidents reported by officers and consideration of measures that can be taken within State both to intervene immediately in such cases and ensure equal treatment at the border of all staff in Mexico and worldwide;
- A review of the issue at a senior level with the Department of Homeland Security, specifically the U.S. Customs and Border Protection, to ensure such practices cease; and
- Make clear to all Department employees that you regard such mistreatment as unacceptable, that you expect reported cases to be addressed overseas and domestically, as appropriate, and that you will follow up regularly with the Director General and relevant senior officials at State and other agencies.

The American Academy of Diplomacy strongly supports a diverse, inclusive, well-resourced, and high-impact State Department. Further progress toward this objective will require sustained effort at the most senior levels to ensure that all Department officers get the respect and dignity from US law enforcement officials, which every American is entitled to at the border and international entry points, especially while on official duty.

We are confident you share our concern regarding the debilitating effects on the morale of our Black, Hispanic and other minority officers that this systemic discrimination from staff of another US Government agency has and that you undertake every effort to end it.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Pickering  
Chairman



Ronald E. Neumann  
President

cc: The Honorable Stephen Biegun  
Deputy Secretary of State

The Honorable Brian Bulatao  
Under Secretary of State for Management

The Honorable Carol Perez  
Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Global Talent