



## American Foreign Service Association

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November 29, 2007

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you begin to finalize the details of your Fiscal Year 2009 budget submission to Congress early next year, I would like to draw attention to an urgent diplomatic necessity that, if not immediately addressed, will be deeply harmful to our nation's ability to advance its highest priorities, greater peace and prosperity, around the globe.

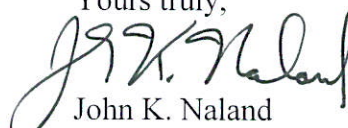
I refer to the deep staffing shortage that exists within our nation's diplomatic corps. You have noted before the talent, courage and professionalism of the men and women of the U.S. Foreign Service. We don't lack ability in our diplomatic ranks; what we lack is bench strength. Simply put, we need to expand the circle of talent and devote appropriate funding to hiring and training additional personnel.

In an extremely thoughtful speech delivered in Manhattan, Kansas, on November 26, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates declared that the United States must "strengthen our capacity to use soft power." To achieve that laudable goal, however, the federal budget must provide the resources required to significantly enhance our nation's diplomatic capacity. We cannot continue transferring positions from one important diplomatic post to another vital post without the system breaking under the weight of new requirements. The load will simply become too great and our nation's global diplomatic efforts will pay a price.

The warning signs already exist. A blue-ribbon panel report released on October 15 by the Center for Strategic & International Studies cites the Department of State's own estimate that the Foreign Service is currently 1,015 personnel short of what is required to staff existing positions. It goes on to document the immediate need for an additional 1,079 Foreign Service positions to meet expanded training and related requirements. Thus, today's total deficit is actually 2,094 Foreign Service positions – and it continues to grow. As a point of reference, there are only about 12,700 active-duty Foreign Service positions at the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development combined.

We ask for your leadership in narrowing the huge staffing deficits in the Foreign Service as part of your Fiscal Year 2009 budget request. This problem is genuine and swift action is needed. Thank you for your attention.

Yours truly,



John K. Naland  
President