

## Statement for the Record

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Today, nine in ten Americans support strong U.S. global leadership. Such leadership is unthinkable without a strong professional Foreign Service deployed around the world protecting and defending America's people, interests, and values.

American leadership is being challenged by adversaries who want to see us fail; we cannot let that happen. We need to reassure our allies, contain our enemies, and assert U.S. leadership around the globe. If the United States retreats, we leave a vacuum that will be filled by others who do not share our values or interests. Walking that back--reclaiming American global leadership--would be a daunting and uncertain task, in short, a grave risk we should not take.

American Foreign Service Association (AFSA) members are over 16,600 professionals, active and retired, from the Department of State, USAID, the Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, and the Broadcasting Board of Governors. Our members spend approximately two-thirds of their careers deployed overseas, usually in difficult and often in dangerous places. We maintain an enduring presence at 270 embassies and consulates around the world, so Americans seeking to navigate unfamiliar terrain—whether to study, adopt a child, or expand an export market—have a home base to turn to, an Embassy staffed by fellow Americans who speak the local language fluently and know how to get things done.

America's diplomats and development professionals help prevent the spread of conflict, open markets for U.S. goods, assist Americans abroad, negotiate agreements in line with U.S. goals, report on threats to the U.S. homeland, and work alongside our military colleagues on a range of missions, from stabilizing Iraq to earthquake relief in Haiti.

AFSA is extremely grateful for the expressions of support from members of Congress and from the public. The value of the Foreign Service is clearer to Americans than ever. But AFSA members, who care deeply about American global leadership, are worried. If what we're hearing about budget levels plays out, we could seriously degrade the capacity of the Foreign Service to help sustain American leadership. As members of the SFRC wrote recently, our Foreign Service is among the "most skilled, loyal, and motivated workforces of any organization on the planet." We agree, and we want to partner with our Congressional colleagues to preserve our overseas presence and our core diplomatic capabilities.

Our Foreign Service stands ready to serve. We are encouraged by these words regarding the value of funding diplomatic capability, i.e., *our people*, to execute our foreign policy priorities. We are exactly the right national security tool for the moment: a corps designed to be regularly

redeployed around the world in pursuit of the President's foreign policy priorities. Consequently, we have to ensure that our budget priorities do not cut short our critical capabilities. If we damage core diplomatic capability by cutting off the flow of new officers, we risk walking off the field and forfeiting the game to our adversaries.

Fighting ISIS is a top priority of this administration, and the Foreign Service has the skill and field experience to help with the fight. As former Chairman Rogers said to Secretary Tillerson, "We need an aggressive plan to fight ISIS and any other enemy that wishes us harm. Secretary Tillerson and I agree that this requires a comprehensive approach, including not just military engagement, but also the full and responsible use of all diplomatic tools at our disposal. While the full budget picture has yet to emerge, we intend to work closely together over the next cycle to ensure that the necessary resources are available to fulfill these goals."

The Foreign Service is the ideal workforce to execute the President's foreign policy priorities. We have regional and language knowledge, top-notch reporting skills, and sophisticated public diplomacy capabilities. We know how to get things done overseas—how to coax a partner overseas to “yes” with the lightest touch and the maximum residual goodwill.

Our annual performance ratings, by which we are rank-ordered against our peers, are judged according to how well we met mission goals. Because these rankings have real consequences—determining whether we are promoted and can continue to serve, or low-ranked and forced out—they serve as a powerful tool to ensure we are responsive to the priorities of successive administrations.

The Foreign Service is modeled on the military, in particular on the Navy. Our rigorous entry requirements and the up-or-out system ensure high performance and accountability and keep us lean. The *out* in up-or-out is real, and many if not most members of the Foreign Service are required to leave the Service long before they are ready. This amounts to a built-in annual reduction in force, something we accept as part and parcel of maintaining a high-performing, accountable workforce. But this self-renewing system depends on a steady stream of new recruits to function. If we don't hire entry-level officers this year, we won't have FS-1s (colonel equivalents) in 20 years. Flow-through is critical now--and for the future.

The next year or two will be a period of clear prioritization in the Department of State. While we certainly see the case for streamlining, which could increase diplomatic effectiveness, it has to be done carefully and with an eye to preserving core capability. We would like to partner with Congressional supporters to ensure that today, and 15 or 20 years from now, U.S. diplomats are still on the field, deployed around the world, protecting and promoting U.S. interests. We should not, in a dangerous world, abandon the field to our adversaries.

The United States has enjoyed a position of unprecedented global leadership in our lifetimes. This leadership was built on a foundation of military might, economic primacy, good governance, tremendous cultural appeal--and diplomatic prowess to channel all that power, hard

and soft, into global leadership that has kept us safe and prosperous at home. This has not happened by chance. As Secretary Tillerson said in his confirmation hearing, “America has been indispensable in providing the stability to prevent another world war, increase global prosperity and encourage the expansion of liberty.” To continue to lead the world, America needs effective diplomacy, and for effective diplomacy, we need an adequately resourced professional Foreign Service.

Thank you.