
DRAMATIC DECLINE IN DIPLOMATIC & DEVELOPMENT PERSONNEL IS DANGEROUS FOR AMERICA

July 2018

The State Department **has lost 50% of its most senior career leadership, its equivalent of three and four-star generals.**

America's national security and economic prosperity are at risk due to a dramatic and damaging hollowing out of personnel at the State Department over the past year. The absence of personnel in key positions and embassies combined with proposed deep and disproportionate cuts to the International Affairs Budget is undermining our ability to advance our interests around the world.

This will be one of the first challenges faced by Secretary of State-nominee Mike Pompeo, should he be confirmed by the Senate. While every agency in the federal government has opportunities to streamline for greater efficiency, the president recognized in his National Security Strategy that "diplomacy is indispensable" and a "forward-deployed" diplomatic and development presence is critical to our ability to compete against rising powers and growing threats.

Responding to the growing concerns on both budget and personnel issues, 150+ retired three and four-star [generals and admirals](#), 1,200+ [veterans](#), 200+ [former ambassadors](#) and veteran diplomats, and a growing number of Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill are all speaking out.

HEMORRHAGING EXPERTISE

- The Department has lost 50% of its most senior career leadership – Career Ambassadors and Career Ministers, its equivalent of three and four-star generals. The Department is also promoting 50% fewer people into the Senior Foreign Service.
- As of July 20, only 1 of the 7 Under Secretaries of State and only 12 of the 22 Assistant Secretaries of State have been confirmed. In total, 15 positions at the State Department still require Senate confirmation.
- To date, over 30 ambassador posts remain open without nominations – leaving critical leadership gaps in places like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan, and South Africa.
- Over the past decade, resources for core diplomatic activities have declined by 25%. Today, there are more security personnel than political officers at the State Department.

LOSING THE NEXT GENERATION

- Although the federal hiring freeze was lifted in April 2017, the State Department has largely kept the freeze in place, affecting all levels of the Department and cutting off the next generation of diplomats.
- Hiring of new entry-level officers into the Foreign Service will have dropped from 366 in 2016 to 101 in 2018, the lowest number since at least the end of the Cold War.
- Amid the uncertainty over hiring, the number of Americans applying to take the Foreign Service exam has fallen by 30% between 2016 and 2017.

Sources: American Foreign Service Association Tracker: Current Ambassadors; and Washington Post/Partnership for Public Service Trump Administration Appointee Tracker.

REACTION FROM CAPITOL HILL

“America’s diplomatic power is being weakened internally as complex, global crises are growing externally...including emerging nuclear crises, the threat of war and outbreaks of global pandemics.”

– **Senators John McCain (R-AZ)** and **Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)**, November 2017

- “There are many lessons learned from past organizational reform efforts, including that the 1990s cuts and hiring freezes may have saved money in the short term, but led to increased personnel costs down the line. We paid this price with the diplomatic and development surges for Afghanistan and Iraq following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. As important as it is to retain those with deep experience at Foggy Bottom, ensuring a steady inflow of entry-level diplomats and aid workers is also important. Let’s not forget that today’s second lieutenants are tomorrow’s majors and colonels.”

– **Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**, Chairman of the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, in the March 2018 Foreign Service Journal

- “We are concerned...by reports of plans to cut thousands of positions at State Department and USAID and to eliminate missions worldwide.”

– **Senators Dan Sullivan (R-AK)** and **Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)**, Co-Chairs of the Senate Foreign Service Caucus, in a June 2017 letter to the Secretary of State

- “[W]e are deeply concerned about recent developments at the Department of State that are adversely affecting America’s Foreign Service and Civil Service professionals and putting our nation’s ability to carry out diplomacy at risk, including the impact of the Department’s ongoing hiring freeze, proposed budget cuts, and reorganization efforts.”

– **Senators Todd Young (R-IN)** and **Ben Cardin (D-MD)**, in a December 2017 letter to the Secretary of State

- “Supporting the integrity of the State Department is a strong, bipartisan effort. Agree w/ @LindseyGrahamSC: our diplomats are absolutely critical to addressing our global challenges. We should support our career diplomatic corps, not hollow it out.”

– **Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)** in March 2018

- “A well thought out development strategy, combined with effective engagement with Congress and the development community, will help to ensure that the tangible impacts of proposed structural changes on U.S. strategic interests are well known.”

– **Representatives Ted Yoho (R-FL)** and **Adam Smith (D-WA)**, Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus for Effective Foreign Assistance, and 67 other bipartisan members of Congress in a November 2017 letter to Office of Management and Budget **Director Mick Mulvaney**

- “I think the concerns about the State Department are bipartisan in nature...And I do think that we need to be much more focused on holding them accountable.”

– Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman **Bob Corker (R-TN)** in November 2017

- “Any proposed changes to [Foreign Service and Civil Service levels as of September 30, 2016] requires prior consultation with the Committee...The Committee notes that absent continuous recruitment and training of FSOs the Department of State will lack experienced, qualified diplomats in the mid- and long-terms.”

– Senate FY2018 Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Bill Report, released in September 2017