

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 11, 2026

The Honorable Jason Evans
Under Secretary of State for Management and Resources
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Under Secretary Evans,

Thank you for your testimony at the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on March 18 entitled *Restoring Mission Focus at the State Department: Authority, Accountability, and the Role of the Foreign Service*. We write to follow up on our questions from the hearing regarding the rationale for the reductions in force (RIFs) within the State Department.

On July 11, 2025, the Department issued RIF notices to approximately 1,350 Civil and Foreign Service employees and placed them on immediate administrative leave. The rationale for these actions remains unclear, and the Committee has not received a comprehensive written metric-based justification for why these RIFs took place, nor a detailed explanation of how they were carried out and the impact of these vacancies on the Department and its mission. This is despite Ranking Member Meeks' letter sent on November 18, 2025 to Secretary Rubio requesting such clarification and other relevant information about the July 2025 RIF, which the Department to date has failed to adequately answer. Furthermore, several Administration officials have since provided contradictory testimonies and justifications when explaining the RIF process.

- On July 15, 2025, Deputy Secretary Michael Rigas testified the RIFs were conducted based on merit, saying: “people who remained actually were selected using merit systems principles to actually have ranked as higher quality in terms of tenure, in terms of experience, in terms of skills to be able to carry out the mission.”
- On July 16, 2025, Assistant Secretary for Administration José Cunningham further muddled the rationale by stating again that the RIFs were not based on an individual's skills or merit, but rather on the positions they held when the RIFs were conducted: “We did not look at names. We did not look at titles. We looked at positions that were necessary for us to carry out that America First foreign policy agenda.”
- On July 23, 2025, Under Secretary for Political Affairs Allison Hooker claimed the contrary, stating that the RIFs were based on mission alignment and structure, not merit: “This reorganization was never about individual people or positions. It was about structure and strategic alignment.”
- On March 5, 2026, Senior Bureau Official Sarah McKemey claimed that the Administration prioritizes merit and experience but testified that the RIFs were narrowly focused on function: “The reduction-in-force was a tailored effort to reduce redundant

programs and make the Department more effective. So, the way that it was put into motion across the Department was based off of the functions, the positions, and not the people.”

- On March 18, 2026, in your hearing before the Committee, you contradicted yourself by explaining that the Department “eliminated those positions, and, in the process of doing that, we eliminated the personnel that were in those positions.” You then claimed it was actually about merit, saying: “what we’re working on is making sure that we have the best people that can perform in merit-based system and that can represent the United States overseas.”

Two things cannot be true at once. Either the Department was focused on prioritizing merit, in which case you would have allowed employees in eliminated positions to apply for other jobs, or it was based on function, in which case merit would be inconsequential to your explanation. The persistent flip-flopping showcases that the Administration had no clear plan or strategy when conducting this mission-altering reduction in force. The only logical conclusion is that talented career professionals were let go arbitrarily and recklessly despite their proven commitment to serving the American people and decades of experience at the Department.

This pattern has continued. Just this week, the Department reportedly separated approximately 250 members of the Foreign Service, further compounding concerns about the Administration’s approach to workforce management. This latest action raises serious questions about whether these decisions are being made with any coherent strategy, transparent criteria, or consideration for mission readiness. The continued pattern of separations without clear justification undermines institutional expertise, weakens U.S. diplomatic capacity abroad, and exacerbates already significant staffing gaps across critical posts.

Beyond the operational impact, these separations also represent a significant financial loss to taxpayers. The costs associated with recruiting, vetting, and training new Foreign Service members—including security clearances, language instruction, and professional training—are substantial, reaching tens of thousands and possibly topping \$100,000 per officer. The Department has still not clearly justified why it is effectively discarding millions of dollars taxpayers already invested in these separated members—particularly when many of those now separated members have the skills and clearances needed to fill ongoing mission requirements.

Additionally, the administration has recalled more than 30 career ambassadors from overseas posts without prior notification to Congress. These ambassadors were replaced with hand-picked interim chargés, circumventing the normal process based. The Department risks losing these experienced public servants if they are unable to find a new position. As of today, the Department has 115 posts without confirmed ambassadors – a complete dereliction of duty.¹ Even prior to the recent ambassadorial recalls, roughly 80 ambassadorships were vacant; that number has now increased to approximately 115, affecting posts across Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and Africa. These vacancies create significant challenges, particularly in conflict zones and other strategically critical regions where a consistent diplomatic presence is essential.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/22/us/politics/trump-administration-ambassadors-posts.html>

On March 18, 2026, during the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing, you committed to providing the Committee with evidence supporting the basis for the RIFs. Specifically, we request written responses to the following questions by June 8, 2026:

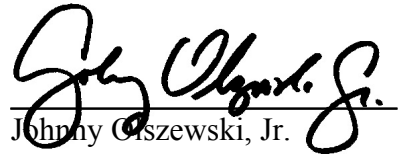
1. Given the shifting explanations for the RIFs, do you or other Department officials need to amend their testimonies before the Committee?
2. What metrics were used to determine the RIFs? If RIFs were conducted based on merit, please provide evidence supporting your assessment.
3. Did the Department conduct a legal review to ensure full compliance with applicable laws and regulations governing the termination of positions and the transfer of authorities?
4. Why was the Foreign Affairs Manual (FAM) changed to redefine competitive areas for both Civil and Foreign Service Officers in May and June 2025?
5. Why did the Department decide to go ahead and separate approximately 250 members of the Foreign Service this week? Was there any additional analysis about the needs of the Department?
6. If positions did not align with Administration priorities, was reassignment of personnel considered prior to sending the RIF notices to Foreign Service members? If not, why?
7. If, after the realignment, the Department determined it did need to retain or fill now eliminated roles, did the Department offer those positions to the RIF'd Foreign Service members who had previously occupied those positions? If not, why are separated Foreign Service generalists not being offered reinstatement if staffing needs persist at the Department?
8. How many new Foreign Service members have been hired or are in the pipeline since July 2025, broken down by cone and skill code?
9. How many additional RIFs are anticipated in 2026, and what criteria or objectives will guide these decisions? Will these actions impact staff at overseas missions?
10. According to a 2019 GAO report, approximately 13% to 14% of overseas Foreign Service positions are typically vacant. Has the vacancy rate of Foreign Service positions around the world changed significantly since 2019? More recently, how have the Foreign Service vacancy rates changed since 2024?
11. How many positions were available for members of the Foreign Service to bid on around the world in 2025 compared to 2024? How many Foreign Service positions do you expect will be available for bidding in 2026? How many positions are currently considered "frozen" or under review?

We appreciate your timely response to this inquiry.

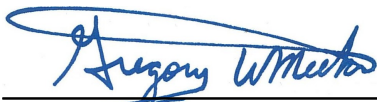
Sincerely,



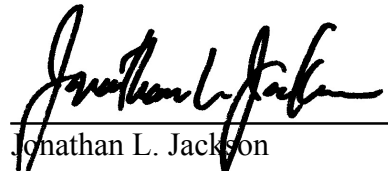
Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Johnny Giszewski, Jr.
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign
Affairs



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress



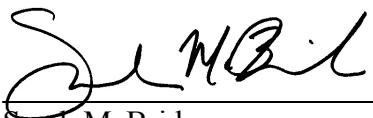
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



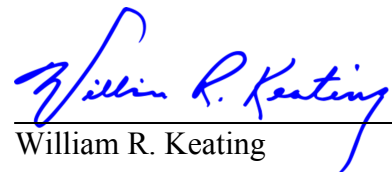
Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Brad Sherman
Member of Congress



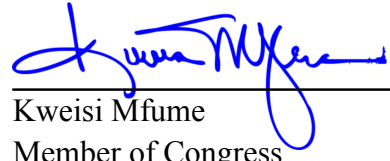
Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



William R. Keating
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume
Member of Congress



Julie Johnson
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Michael Rigas, United States Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources