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The Honorable Mitch McConnell
SR - 317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510 - 1702

Dear Senator McConnell,

On behalf of the American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD) and the Council of American Ambassadors (CAA), we believe the proposed magnitude of the cuts to the State Department budget pose serious risks to American security. After the military defeat of the Islamic State, intensive diplomatic efforts in Iraq and Syria will be essential to stabilization, without which the radical movements that we now contest will reappear. Afghanistan requires the same attention. As a general principle, diplomacy is far less costly than war to achieve our national purposes.

Diplomacy is most often the first line of America's defense. When the Islamic State suddenly appeared in Mali, it was our Embassy that was able to recommend action based on knowing the difference between terrorists and local political actors who needed support. When Ebola in West Africa threatened a worldwide pandemic, it was our Foreign Service that remained in place to establish the bases for and support the multi-agency health efforts deployed to stop the disease outbreak. It is to our embassies that American citizens turn for security and evacuation abroad. Our embassies' commercial work supports US companies and citizen entrepreneurs in selling abroad. This creates thousands of American jobs. Every dollar spent on this work returns hundreds in sales.

Peacekeeping and political missions are mandated by the Security Council where our veto power can ensure when, where, how many, and what kind of peacekeepers used in a mission support US interests. Peacekeeping forces are deployed in fragile, sometimes prolonged, circumstances, where the US would not want to use US forces. UN organized troops cost the US taxpayer only about one-eighth the cost of sending US troops. Our contributions to refugees and development are critical to avoid humanitarian crises from spiraling into conflicts that would draw in the United States and promote violent extremism. Budget cuts of the amounts contemplated endanger basic US security interests.

US public diplomacy fights radicalism. Educational exchanges over the years have enabled hundreds of thousands of foreign students truly to understand Americans and American culture. This is far more effective in countering radical propaganda than social media. The American Immigration Law Foundation estimates that 46 current and 165 former heads of government are US graduates.

These few examples should show why so many American military leaders are deeply opposed to the current budget proposals. They recognize that when diplomacy is not permitted to do its job the chances of Americans dying in war increase. When the number of employees in military commissaries or military bands exceeds the number of US diplomats, the current budget proposal is indeed not a cost-effective way to protect America and its interests.

The Academy, representing the most experienced and distinguished former American diplomats, both career and non-career, and the Council have never opposed all cuts to the State Department budget. The Academy's detailed study *American Diplomacy at Risk* (2015) proposed many reductions. We believe streamlining is possible, and we can make proposals to that end. However, the current budget proposals will damage American national security and should be rejected.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Pickering
AAD Chairman

Ronald E. Neumann
AAD President

Bruce S. Gelb
CAA Chairman

William J. vanden Heuvel
CAA Chairman Emeritus