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The Academy's Vision for American Diplomacy of the Future

Washington, D.C. – The American Academy of Diplomacy (AAD) issued a statement outlining its vision for how the U.S. should strengthen its current diplomatic capacity to successfully tackle the many existing and emerging global challenges. The full statement, approved by the Academy's Board of Directors, follows below. AAD is an independent, non-profit association of former senior US ambassadors and high-level U.S. foreign policy officials whose mission is to strengthen American diplomacy.

People, Presence, Programs: Foundation for Strong American Diplomacy

The United States and the American people face a rapidly changing global order in which our interests and values will be put to the test. While some of these challenges reflect traditional great power rivalry, others reflect changing regional dynamics and power hierarchies, economic retrenchment and protection of supply chains, and a rapidly emerging multi-polarity. Still others are only now coming into focus, such as the impacts of climate change on transnational migration and regional stability, and the transformative role AI is likely to have on the global economy and for global security. Underlying all of these challenges are transformative economic and social changes driven by rapid technological advance. To prosper in this new world, the United States will require adept, expert, and far-seeing diplomacy that integrates all the elements of American power to convince other governments and international institutions to understand and support our strategic imperatives.

To conduct the diplomacy needed to meet these challenges, the Academy asserts the U.S. must strengthen its diplomatic capacity along three dimensions: people, overseas presence, and programs.

People: *Skilled and knowledgeable diplomats are America's greatest asset in foreign relations. Developing such professionals requires extensive training and on-the-job experience in languages, regional expertise, negotiations, as well as proficiency in specialized areas such as security, management, the environment, health, trade, cyber, and AI. The Department of State attracts exceptionally talented-Foreign Service and Civil Service professionals. However, decades of limited funding have meant that the Department is consistently understaffed and is unable to send all its rising professionals for needed training. The Academy believes that: 1) diplomatic staffing levels must be adequate to meet strategic priorities and over-the -horizon challenges;*

Strengthening American Diplomacy

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2) the Department should consistently receive the funding needed to hire, train, and retain the best diplomats; 3) reductions in staff should be made only after a review matching personnel to strategic priorities. Furthermore, to retain the support of the American people and the successive Administrations under which they serve, the recruitment and promotion of diplomatic staff must remain inclusive and merit-based, without any reference to politics or partisan political affiliations.

Overseas Presence: *In diplomacy, being there matters. Embassies and consulates are the front lines of America's global engagement. They protect America's interests and citizens, monitor local developments for threats to the homeland, and build support for U.S. priorities. The Academy supports having an Embassy in every capital and Consulates in important cities. Having forward deployed diplomats is also important to ensure coordination in the field with our deployed joint forces to strengthen U.S. deterrent capability. The Academy believes America's diplomatic presence overseas needs to be expanded, not reduced.*

Programs: *Diplomacy is proactive engagement. Diplomatic programs, such as facilitation of market access for American businesses, international broadcasting, media engagement, and cultural and educational exchanges, help the U.S. pursue its strategic interests. Together with humanitarian and development initiatives, these programs have been a major U.S. diplomatic asset for decades. The Academy believes international programs that strengthen respect for America and advance its strategic international priorities are essential. It urges that adjustments be made to such programs only after carefully assessing the strategic costs and benefits of proposed changes.*

Building and sustaining a strong diplomatic capacity in all three dimensions is fundamental to achieving America's global objectives. Every Administration's international priorities require robust and creative diplomacy. The Academy urges Congress and each Administration to ensure America's diplomatic capacity is ready to deal with traditional and novel global challenges, including by integrating all other elements of U.S. national power to achieve America's strategic priorities. Doing so would be an investment in American security and prosperity. The Academy is determined to continue working to bolster the nation's diplomatic resources to better serve America.

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