November 16, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are deeply concerned by the exodus of more than 100 senior Foreign Service Officers from the State Department since January. The number of minister counselors in the State Department has decreased by 15 percent, career ministers by 42 percent, and career ambassadors by an astounding 60 percent. The amount of talent leaving the State Department endangers the institution and undermines American leadership, security and interests around the world.

While we understand that attrition of senior officials will ebb and flow in any administration, the departures at the senior levels should sound the alarm bells for you as Secretary of State and the Administration. Those alarm bells are already ringing for us, the Committee with responsibility for oversight of the State Department, as we imagine they would for any board-of-directors overseeing a private company.

Even more troubling, the Department is reportedly planning to offer buyouts to reduce State’s numbers even further, seemingly for no other goal than to decrease the size of the Department’s personnel. With the range of crises, war, and humanitarian disaster around the world, slashing our diplomatic corps is downright dangerous.

Congress has already rejected the Administration’s draconian proposed cuts to the international-affairs budget. But we remain profoundly concerned over what appears to be the intentional hollowing-out of our senior diplomatic ranks and the entire State Department with no clear goal. We therefore, urgently request a briefing to explain how these cuts serve United States national security interests and make the State Department more effective.
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Sincerely,

ELIOT L. ENGEL  
Ranking Member  
House Foreign Affairs Committee

BRAD SHERMAN  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific

GREGORY W. MEEKS  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats

ALBIO SIRES  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere

GERALD E. CONNOLLY  
Member of Congress

THEODORE E. DEUTCH  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

KAREN BASS  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

WILLIAM R. KEATING  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

DAVID N. CICILLINE  
Member of Congress

AMI BERA  
Member of Congress
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LOIS FRANKEL
Member of Congress

TULSI GABBARD
Member of Congress

JOAQUIN CASTRO
Member of Congress

ROBIN L. KELLY
Member of Congress

BRENDAN F. BOYLE
Member of Congress

DINA TITUS
Member of Congress

NORMA J. TORRES
Member of Congress

BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER
Member of Congress

THOMAS R. SUOZZI
Member of Congress

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT
Member of Congress

TED W. LIEU
Member of Congress