

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANIEL K. AKAKA

State Department Training: Investing in the Workforce to Address 21st Century Challenges

Hearing Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Today's hearing will examine the results of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) review on efforts currently underway at the Department of State to provide its employees the necessary skills to carry out its mission. We will also discuss key recommendations from a recent report by the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center on diplomatic professional education and training.

Advancing America's interests and safeguarding global security is becoming ever more complex. According to Defense Secretary Gates, a robust civilian capability, coupled with a strong defense capability, is essential to preserving U.S. national security interests around the world.

Today, GAO is releasing a report finding that the Department of State has developed an extensive training program for its employees. In recent years, the Department has focused on increasing staffing levels and investing in training programs. State offers a wide variety of education and training opportunities including traditional classroom as well as computer-based training.

However, GAO identified areas needing improvement. More specifically, GAO found that State does not yet comprehensively assess its training needs, track training costs and delivery, or evaluate training using outcome-based performance measures.

I urge State to work closely with GAO to implement its recommendations. In this tough budget climate, it is more important than ever for the Department to conduct the planning and evaluation necessary to fully support its funding requests and to target limited resources strategically. The House-passed budget would cut 16 percent from State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). I believe this cut is short-sighted, and could lead to greater long-term costs.

The events in the Middle East and North Africa over the past few months underscore the need for robust and agile State Department capabilities. Iraq and Afghanistan also will continue to present complex, long-term diplomatic and development challenges. Around the world, the work of the State Department helps build more stable societies, which minimizes the potential for conflict, lowering the human and financial costs of military engagement.

Meeting these critical challenges requires investment in the training and professional education needed for State Department employees to effectively advance U.S. foreign policy interests. It is essential to the

Department's operations and our nation's security to provide State with the resources to properly staff and train its most valuable asset – its workforce.

The American Academy of Diplomacy and others have recommended that State maintain a 15 percent personnel float to allow for training without hindering the Department's operations. The Department has made great strides to try to attain the staffing necessary for long-term training, but the current funding environment has created a great deal of uncertainty.

Congress must do its job to eliminate the funding uncertainty. We cannot expect Federal agencies to efficiently or effectively implement long-term strategies with short-term funding extensions.

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