

**Opening Statement of Senator George V. Voinovich, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia
“A Review of Diplomatic Readiness:
Addressing the Staffing and Foreign Language Challenges Facing the Foreign
Service”
September 24, 2009**

Chairman Akaka, thank you for calling today’s hearing to discuss the State Department’s efforts to meet key workforce challenges.

Last year, the Subcommittee held several hearings examining the impact chronic understaffing had on our diplomatic readiness. At the time, one out of every five employees held a job designated for a more experienced person and one-third of language designated positions were occupied by staff who did not meet language requirements. State had identified a training and readiness gap of 1,030 positions, about 15 percent of its workforce.

Shortly after the hearing, Congress received the American Academy of Diplomacy’s report, A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future, which found the State Department lacked the people, competencies, and funding to meet U.S. foreign policy demands effectively. That report, which I shared with Secretary Clinton before her confirmation, called for an increase of more than 4,000 employees by 2014, accompanied by a significant investment in training. As Secretary Gates observed, we faced a situation that could no longer be ignored because of our reliance on hard power.

The Commission on Smart Power emphasized the fact that our success in public diplomacy depends in large part on building long-term, people to people relationships. Nine months in office, the Administration, through the leadership of Secretary Clinton and General Jones, is rightly focused on strengthening our smart power. Our best military strategies will do little to meet new realities and emerging challenges without the personnel to improve our global posture through diplomacy.

Congress heard the message and I believe will continue its efforts to provide for an increase in personnel and enact a permanent solution to the pay gap facing junior employees assigned to

overseas posts. I applaud Secretary Clinton's commitment to rebuilding the diplomatic corps and know our nation will benefit from the men and women who have joined the Foreign Service motivated by the ideals of public service. I am pleased that she recognized the importance of the Deputy Secretary for Management position, and I am encouraged by Jack Lew's efforts.

Many of the 21st century challenges we will face are ones we have not anticipated, however, and additional resources are only part of the solution. Our increased investment and growing overseas presence requires more careful attention be given to the type of strategic planning required to make measurable progress in our diplomatic readiness. Though it may be tempting to rush personnel to post, the opportunity to rebuild the Foreign Service doesn't come along too often. Otherwise, we diminish our ability to foster democratic principles that will affect both our children and grandchildren.

Each of us are gathered in this room today because we know that strengthening our diplomatic corps is critical to ensuring American national security and economic vitality. While some might tire at the thought of crafting a meaningful strategic plan, we all know that which gets measured gets done.

I'm tipping my hat at the end of next year, so my questions will focus on the State Department's blueprint to strengthen our diplomatic readiness and its plan to meet GAO's latest recommendations. The State Department faces tough decisions and I look forward to a productive conversation about the State Department's strategy for achieving its goals.