

The Honorable Charles Schumer Majority Leader United States Senate Room S-221, The Capitol Washington, DC 20510

Senator Bob Menendez Chairman U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 423 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510 The Honorable Mitch McConnell Minority Leader United States Senate Room S-230, The Capitol Washington, DC 20510

Senator James E. Risch Ranking Member U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 423 Dirksen Senate Office Building Washington, DC 20510

October 28, 2021

We write as senior national security professionals to express our alarm over the dangerously slow pace of Senate confirmations of State Department and USAID officials over the past ten months. The resulting vacancies have damaged U.S. national security and our ability to address international threats. We ask for your urgent attention to resolving this situation.

The United States cannot afford to be absent at this time of strategic competition with China. Yet, at this moment, 100 Ambassadorial positions are unfilled with 60 awaiting Senate action. As President Biden prepares to meet with world leaders at the G20 summit, the Senate has confirmed just two of the president's Ambassadorial nominations to G20 member states. As the world works to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the United States lacks both an Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs and a USAID Assistant Administrator for Global Health. Of the 17 world leaders known to be attending the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow in November, only one has had the opportunity to coordinate in advance with a confirmed U.S. Ambassador. Nearly half of Ambassadorial posts on the African continent have nominees stalled in the Senate. The sum total of missed opportunities is staggering.

In addition to placing the United States at a strategic disadvantage, Washington has sent an unfortunate message of neglect and indifference. We currently lack Representatives to both NATO and the European Union, to ASEAN, and to the Organization of American States. In Canada, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, the lack of confirmed U.S. Ambassadors neglects historic allies. Despite our significant interests in the Middle East and the threats posed by Iran, the United States currently has neither an Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs nor an Ambassador to Israel. As we call for a free and open Indo-Pacific, the United States lacks an Ambassador not only to China, but to Australia, Bangladesh, India, Japan, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

In Washington, widespread leadership vacancies and stopgap appointments have resulted in an overstretched workforce and unacceptable risks. As conflicts and natural disasters spur population displacement unseen since World War II, the United States has neither an Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration nor an Assistant Secretary of State for Conflict and Stability Operations. President Biden's nominee for Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs, whose nomination was announced on April 23rd, was not confirmed until September 13th, well after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The State Department is planning to host a global Summit for Democracy in December, but does so without an Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. Countless other vacancies have resulted in unsustainable workloads, undermining morale and retention.

As you are aware, the Senate has thus far confirmed only two of President Biden's Ambassadorial nominees, and just eleven Assistant Secretaries of State. At USAID, only two appointees requiring Senate confirmation have been approved. Of the 235 Senate-confirmed State Department positions, only 24 have confirmed occupants, while 83 are at the Senate awaiting confirmation. This is well below the number of nominees confirmed at similar points in the first terms of Presidents Trump, Obama, and George W. Bush.

We note with particular regret that individual Senators have blocked the confirmations of exceptionally qualified nominees for reasons completely unrelated to their credentials. There is no question that this practice, which has been employed by members of both parties, has eroded America's global leadership and contributed to a perception among our friends as well as our adversaries that the United States is in decline.

The steady atrophying of our diplomatic capacity poses an unacceptable risk to U.S. national security. We urge you to exercise decisive leadership to swiftly facilitate committee hearings and votes for all pending State Department and USAID nominees. If unanimous consent agreements cannot be obtained to expedite votes, we ask that you once again dedicate the floor time necessary to approve these nominations by regular order.

Sincerely,

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Brigadier General (Ret.) Steven M. Anderson Former Director Army Logistics Operations and Readiness

Ambassador (Ret.) Frank Almaguer

Former U.S. Ambassador to Honduras

Ms. Wendy R. Anderson

Former Deputy Chief of Staff, Secretary of Defense

Major General (Ret.) Joseph T. Anderson

United States Marine Corps

Major General (Ret.) Marcia M. Anderson Former Deputy Chief Army Reserve **Brigadier General (Ret.) Ricardo Aponte**

Former Director of Innovation, U.S. Southern Command

Honorable Bernard Aronson

Former Special Envoy to the U.S. Colombian Peace Process

Ambassador (Ret.) Liliana Ayalde

Former U.S. Ambassador to Brazil; Civilian Deputy to the Commander, Southern Command

Ambassador (Ret.) Daniel Baer

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE)

Ambassador (Ret.) Robert Cushman Barber

Former U.S. Ambassador to Iceland

Ambassador (Ret.) Adrian A. Basora

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Czech Republic and Czechoslovakia

Ambassador (Ret.) Leslie Bassett

Former U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay

Ambassador (Ret.) Robert M. Beecroft

Former U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay

Honorable Rand B. Beers

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Ambassador (Ret.) Colleen Bell

Former U.S. Ambassador to Hungary

Mr. John B. Bellinger III

Former Legal Advisor of the Department of State

Ms. Jenna H. Ben-Yehuda

Former Senior Military Adviser

Mr. Robert J. Berg

Former Director of Evaluation at U.S. Agency for International Development

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Former U.S. Ambassador to the OSCE

Ambassador (Ret.) John R. Beyrle

Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia and Bulgaria.

Dr. Hans Binnendijk

Vice President National Defense University

Ambassador (Ret.) Clyde Bishop

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Marshall Islands

Ambassador (Ret.) James Bishop

Former U.S. Ambassador to Somalia, Liberia, and

Niger

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Robert R. Blank

Former 39th Army Surgeon General

Ambassador (Ret.) Jeff Bleich

Former U.S. Ambassador and Chair of the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board

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Former U.S. Ambassador to Libya, Nepal, and

Malawi

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Ambassador (Ret.) Michele Thoren Bond

Former U.S. Ambassador to Lesotho and Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs

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Former U.S. Ambassador to Cyprus, IAEA, and the United Nations; Founding Director U.S. National Counterproliferation Center

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Ambassador (Ret.) Steven Browning

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Former U.S. Special Representative of the President for Nuclear Nonproliferation

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Former Coordinator for Counterterrorism and former U.S. Ambassador to India, the UN, and Sri Lanka

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Former U.S. Ambassador to Kenya and Guatemala, Dean of Leadership & Management School, Foreign Service Institute

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Former Director of Operational Planning, Policy, & Strategy, U.S. Air Force

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Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia

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Deputy J5, U.S. Army

Ambassador (Ret.) Gerald Feierstein

Former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs and U.S. Ambassador to Yemen

Brigadier General Robert Felderman (Ret.)

North American Aerospace Command, U.S. Northern Command Deputy, J5

Ms. Ilsa Ferro

Former Chief, Equal Opportunity, and Diversity Management, Defense Intelligence Agency

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Former Senior Foreign Service Officer and Minister Counselor, U.S. Mission to the European Union

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Ambassador (Ret.) Eileen A. Malloy

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Former Deputy Commanding General, U.S. Army Cadet Command

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Former Naval Surface Forces, Pacific

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Ambassador (Ret.) Wanda Nesbitt

Former U.S. Ambassador to Namibia the Ivory Coast, and Madagascar, Dean, School of

Language Studies, FSI

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Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for

Defense Trade Controls

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Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State

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Former Secretary of the Navy

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and Pakistan

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General, U.S. Foreign Service

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Former Ambassador to Central African Republic, Deputy Secretary of State for African Affairs

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Former Commander, 12th Air Force, Air Force

South

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Republic

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Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian

and Pacific Security Affairs

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Former Executive Director STEM Initiatives, U.S. Department of Education

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Former U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait

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Former Central Intelligence Agency SIS

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Former President, Board of Inspection and Survey, U.S. Navy

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Former Land Component Commander, MA National Guard

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Former U.S. Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Senior Advisor, Department of State

Ambassador (Ret.) Sylvia Stanfield

Former U.S. Ambassador to Brunei Darussalam

Honorable Gregory Starr

Former Assistant Secretary for Diplomatic Security

Honorable Clifford L. Stanley

Former Under Secretary of Defense Force

Major General (Ret.) Howard D. Stendahl

Former Chief of Chaplains, United States Air

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Mitchell Herman

Stevenson

Former Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics,

HQDA

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Vincent Stewart

Former Deputy Commander, Cyber Command

Rear Admiral William S. Stokes

Former Assistant Surgeon General, U.S. Public

Health Service

Ambassador (Ret.) Cynthia Stroum

Former U.S. Ambassador to Luxembourg

Dr. Gordon Sumner, PhD

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and National Director, Employee Support of the

Guard and Reserve

Ambassador (Ret.) Teddy Taylor

Former U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea,

Solomon Islands and Vanuatu

Ambassador (Ret.) Harry Thomas

Former U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Philippines, Bangladesh, and Director General

of the Foreign Service

Mr. Jack Thomas Tomarchio

Former Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Homeland Security for Intelligence

Ambassador (Ret.) Timothy Towell

Former U.S. Ambassador to Paraguay

Dr. Gregory F. Treverton

Former Chair, National Intelligence Council

Major General (Ret.) F. Andrew Turley

Former Deputy General Counsel, Fiscal, Ethics and Administrative Law, Department of the Air Force

Dr. Michael H. Van Dusen

Former Chief of Staff of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the U.S. House of Representatives

Ambassador (Ret.) Alexander Vershbow

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, Russia, and NATO

Ambassador (Ret.) Melanne Verveer

Former U.S. Ambassador for Global Women's Issues

Ambassador (Ret.) Marcelle M. Wahba

Former Foreign Policy Advisor to USAF Chief of Staff & Ambassador to the UAE

Ambassador (Ret.) Jake Walles

Former U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia

Brigadier General (Ret.) George H. Walls, Jr.

Former Commanding general for the 2nd Force Service Support Group

Brigadier General (Ret.) Steve Warnstadt

Former Assistant Adjutant General, Iowa National Guard

Ambassador (Ret.) Alexander Watson

Former U.S. Ambassador to Peru and Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs

Brigadier General (Ret.) Marianne Watson

Former Director Manpower and Personnel National Guard Bureau

Ambassador (Ret.) Linda E. Watt

Former U.S. Ambassador to Panama

Ambassador (Ret.) Earl Anthony Wayne

Former U.S. Ambassador to Mexico

Honorable Andy Weber

Former Assistant Secretary of Defense for Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defense Programs

Honorable William H. Webster

Former Director of Central Intelligence Agency and Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation

Lieutenant General (Ret.) Jack Weinstein

Former Deputy Chief of Staff, Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration

Ambassador (Ret.) Allan Wendt

U.S. Ambassador to Slovenia

Mr. Louis M. Werdebach

Former Defense Intelligence Agency, Senior Executive Leader-Cyber

Ambassador (Ret.) Alexa Wesner

Former U.S. Ambassador to Austria

Ambassador (Ret.) David Bruce Wharton

Former Acting Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe

Ambassador (Ret.) Kevin Whitaker

Former U.S. Ambassador to Colombia

Ambassador (Ret.) Barry B. White

Former U.S. Ambassador to the Kingdom of Norway

Ambassador (Ret.) Pamela White

Former U.S. Ambassador to Haiti

Mr. Jon A. Wiant

Former Assistant Inspector General for Security and Intelligence Oversight, Department of State

Ambassador (Ret.) Bisa Williams

Former U.S. Ambassador to Niger and Senior Advisor on Africa, USUN

Major General (Ret.) Michael Wilson

Former Mobilization Assistant to 3rd Air Force Commander

Ambassador (Ret.) Frank G. Wisner

Former U.S. Ambassador to India

Brigadier General (Ret.) Kevin B. Wooton

Former Principal Deputy Director, Operations, Air Force Space Command

Captain Pamela Jean Wynfield

Former Head, Space and Communications, N6F1, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations

Ambassador (Ret.) Kenneth Spencer Yalowitz

Former U.S. Ambassador to Georgia

Ambassador (Ret.) John M. Yates

Former U.S. Ambassador to Cape Verde, Benin, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea Ambassador (Ret.) Stephen M. Young

Former Consul General, Hong Kong

Ambassador (Ret.) Marie L. Yovanovitch

Former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan

Honorable Joseph Zengerle

Former Assistant Secretary, U.S. Air Force

Honorable Jane B. Zimmerman

Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor