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Memorandum on Revitalizing America's Foreign Policy and National Security Workforce, Institutions, and Partnerships

FEBRUARY 04, 2021

NATIONAL SECURITY MEMORANDUM

The revitalization of our national security and foreign policy institutions is essential to advancing America's security, prosperity, and values, accelerating our domestic renewal, and delivering results for all Americans.

Our national security and foreign policy institutions are made up of remarkable professionals and patriots whose service and sacrifice are too often taken for granted and whose expertise has too often been sidelined or demeaned. For too long, we have asked our public servants to do more in an increasingly complicated and competitive world, with fewer financial resources and less support. Their experience, integrity, and professionalism have been severely tested. We have fallen short in ensuring that our national security workforce reflects and draws on the richness and diversity of the country it represents. And we have failed to ensure that our public servants have the necessary tools, training, and support to fully realize their potential.

At home and around the world, we face challenges that require us to lean forward, not shrink back. Meeting these challenges will require an unprecedented mobilization of public service, a sharpening of our priorities and tools of statecraft, and a renewed compact between Americans and their Government. This memorandum outlines my Administration's commitment to revitalizing our national security and foreign policy workforce and institutions, and the renewal of the commitment of our institutions to the American public.

Section 1. Core Principles. The following principles will guide this endeavor and should be expressed as priorities through the implementing guidance of each executive department and agency (agency):

(a) *Integrity*. The integrity and judgment of diplomats, civil servants, Intelligence Community professionals, military personnel, defense officials, development experts, and all professionals who advance the national interest are critical to informed, sound decision-making, and rigorous policy implementation. Their oath is to the Constitution of the United States, and they have the responsibility and obligation to serve the public interest by offering their expert views and judgments without regard to the political preferences of my Administration, the Congress, or interest groups, and without fear of reprisal or retribution.

(b) *Transparency*. In a democracy, the public deserves as much transparency as possible regarding the work of our national security institutions, consistent with legitimate needs to protect sources and methods and sensitive foreign relationships. The revitalization of our national security and foreign policy workforce requires a recommitment to the highest standards of transparency.

(c) *Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility*. Our institutions reflect the American public they represent, both at home and around the world. It is the policy of my Administration to prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a national security imperative, in order to ensure critical perspectives and talents are represented in the national security workforce.

(d) *Modernization*. Too many of America's foreign policy and national security institutions have lost, or are at risk of losing, their technological edge. To succeed in a competitive world, we must close mission-critical knowledge and skills gaps, compete in and win the race for talent, equip our workforce with cutting-edge technology and agile, flexible, and adaptive organizational structures, and establish incentives and rewards for innovation across the Government.

(e) *Service*. To address challenges that Government cannot solve on its own, it is imperative that we harness the ideas, perspectives, and contributions of partners, including State and local governments, universities and colleges, the private sector, and civil society. And just as our national security institutions must serve the American public, so must we seek ways to allow more Americans to engage in public service throughout their careers.

(f) *Accountability*. Revitalizing our national security and foreign policy institutions will take time and extraordinary effort. I expect executive departments and agencies (agencies) to restore the integrity and independence of inspectors general and to work closely and cooperatively with the Congress to ensure it can exercise its vital oversight role.

Sec. 2. Policy on Strengthening the National Security Workforce. Strengthening the national security workforce will be critical to accomplishing my Administration's foreign policy goals. This includes efforts to expand the pathways to recruit and hire new employees from all segments of our society, retain and support current employees and their families, improve professional development in order to close mission-critical gaps, recruit and retain technical and other specialized talent, and remove barriers that inhibit Americans from serving their country.

Sec. 3. Interagency Working Group on the National Security Workforce.

(a) There shall be an Interagency Working Group on the National Security Workforce (Working Group), to be chaired by the Principal Deputy National Security Advisor. The Deputy Director for Management of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Deputy Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and the Deputy Director of the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) for National Security shall serve as Vice Chairs.

(b) The Working Group shall consist of the Chair, the Vice Chairs, and the heads of the following agencies or their designees, and such other executive branch agencies as the President may designate:

- (i) the Department of State;
- (ii) the Department of the Treasury;
- (iii) the Department of Defense;
- (iv) the Department of Justice;
- (v) the Department of Commerce;
- (vi) the Department of Energy;
- (vii) the Department of Homeland Security;
- (viii) the Office of the Director of National Intelligence;
- (ix) the Federal Bureau of Investigation;
- (x) the United States Agency for International Development;
- (xi) the Central Intelligence Agency; and
- (xii) the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(c) The Working Group shall task agencies to undertake the following actions:

- (i) Establish a special advisory group including agencies heavily reliant on scientific and technological expertise to inform recommendations for expanding and creating programs to recruit and retain individuals with such expertise;
- (ii) Identify innovative proposals to address critical staffing needs, retain experienced personnel, surge skilled individuals during periods of crisis or other national demand, and provide additional pathways for Americans to engage in public service within national security institutions for select periods of time;
- (iii) Strengthen diversity and inclusion by sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, disability, and economic, regional, and immigrant backgrounds, including at senior levels;
- (iv) Identify lessons learned and best practices from the COVID-19 pandemic and develop agency-specific plans to resource and implement changes that build more flexibility and resiliency into the national security workforce, including through remote work options, adoption

of secure remote technology, reduction of the over-classification of materials, and flexible work arrangements;

(v) Develop proposals to more effectively retain, develop, promote, and support national security employees, such as through expanded external and interagency rotational opportunities, review of time-in-class requirements and criteria for key assignments, provision of affordable child and family care, and support for those serving overseas and their families, including those with LGBTQI+ members and with special needs;

(vi) Assess implementation of security clearance reforms and reciprocity proposals, additional reforms to eliminate bias, and ensure efficient timelines for completion of security clearance investigations;

(vii) In consultation with the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, conduct an assessment of methods to improve the ability of the national security workforce to attract and accommodate individuals who have a disability as defined in the ADA Amendments Act of 2008 or a targeted disability as defined in the regulations implementing Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act, including methods to make more judicious use of the application of the national security exemption to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act;

(viii) Review proposals made by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service to modernize veterans' preference and Veterans Recruitment Appointment, including their impact on different populations of veterans; and

(ix) Develop a proposal to create a national security education consortium consisting of the head of each national security educational institution, as identified by the head of the department or agency under which it is organized, and outside experts as appropriate, to identify and implement methods to improve national security education by strengthening coordination among these institutions on training, testing, and evaluation of capabilities, skills, and knowledge needed to address current and emerging national security threats.

(d) Within 1 year of the date of this memorandum, and annually thereafter, the Working Group shall submit to the President a report on the Working Group's progress in addressing the items under subsection (c) of this section. Additionally, the report shall provide guidance on the critical skills needed to address current and emerging national security challenges, as well as an evaluation of progress in recruiting, retaining, and developing critical skills in the national security workforce. In the interim, the Chair of the Working Group shall provide a quarterly progress report to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (APNSA).

Sec. 4. Preliminary Survey of Hiring Authorities.

(a) Within 180 days of the date of this memorandum, the Vice Chairs of the Working Group established in section 4 of this memorandum shall provide a report to the President on available authorities for hiring individuals into the national security workforce. The report shall describe:

- (i) all such authorities, including any authorities that exist to recruit individuals with critical skills, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics expertise; economic and financial expertise; critical language skills and regional expertise; and individuals with partner experience and expertise;
- (ii) the use of such authorities by agencies represented in the Working Group, and any impediments to hiring or limitations of such authorities;
- (iii) recommendations for how to make more effective use of such authorities, identifying best practices to facilitate the hiring of employees with critical skills and expertise; and
- (iv) recommendations for legislative or executive action, as appropriate, to further enhance the recruitment of experts by all agencies represented in the Working Group.

Sec. 5. Policy on Engagement and Partnerships. No nation alone can solve the world's most pressing issues. Partnering with other nations to confront shared challenges has thus long been an animating force behind United States foreign policy, and it will be under my Administration as well.

However, working with other nations is no longer enough. Technological, social, and geopolitical changes are combining to expand the power and influence of non-state and sub-national actors, making their views on a wide range of national security and foreign policy issues important and cooperation with them essential. A diverse range of these actors is needed to address the pressing problems on our Nation's agenda. Cities and States have shown they can lead on issues such as climate change; industry stands on the cutting edge of technological development and is often responsible for securing our critical infrastructure; and social movements advance larger goals by taking coordinated, grassroots action. The United States must engage with all of these actors to best achieve its national security and foreign policy goals.

It is the policy of my Administration to advance its national security and foreign policy goals by harnessing the ideas, perspectives, support, and contributions of a diverse array of partners, such as State and local governments, academic and research institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society. Specifically, my Administration will emphasize the value and importance of engagement and partnerships and seek to:

- (a) more systematically and strategically incorporate the expertise and views of partners into national-level policymaking;
- (b) improve the Federal Government's ability to mobilize and support partners, where appropriate, so that they can help the Government achieve important national objectives;
- (c) facilitate the Federal Government's ability to draw on the talent, knowledge, and perspectives of potential partners; and

(d) develop tools and processes, including through the use of emerging technologies, that allow the Government to consider a diversity of inputs into policy and implementation processes and to deepen, deconflict, and make more strategic use of important partnerships.

Sec. 6. Organizing the National Security Community to More Effectively Work with Partners.

(a) There shall be a National Security Council (NSC) Directorate on Partnerships and Global Engagement, which shall be headed by a Senior Director for Partnerships and Global Engagement. This Directorate shall be responsible for coordinating key initiatives related to how agencies engage with partners, including the initiatives outlined in this memorandum.

(b) Within 30 days of the date of this memorandum, the heads of agencies represented on the NSC, as well as heads of agencies appearing in an advisory capacity, shall designate a senior official to oversee partnership engagement, including:

(i) taking steps to encourage the inclusion of diverse partner views into agency decision-making processes;

(ii) establishing mechanisms to coordinate, prioritize, and deconflict intra-agency partner outreach, in order to understand and optimize all of the agency's partner interactions; and

(iii) coordinating with the Senior Director for Partnerships and Global Engagement on key initiatives related to how agencies engage with partners, including the initiatives outlined in this memorandum.

Sec. 7. Increasing the Efficiency and Efficacy of Partnership Engagement.

(a) To demonstrate the importance of partnerships and foster effective relationships between key partners and the Government, the heads of agencies and the APNSA are each encouraged to meet with a diverse, rotating group of partners on at least a quarterly basis, as organized by the designated agency official. Partners may include representatives from State and local governments, academic and research institutions, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society.

(b) The APNSA, in coordination with the heads of relevant agencies, shall within 180 days of the date of this memorandum provide a report to the President that provides recommendations on:

(i) new mechanisms the Federal Government may use to obtain the perspectives of partners, with a particular focus on lower-cost and more inclusive mechanisms, such as online surveys, wikis, petitioning systems, and discussion boards that allow asynchronous elicitation of advice from a broad range of experts; and

(ii) ways the Federal Government can better obtain actionable advice in a timely fashion from experts with existing connections to the Government.

Sec. 8. Implementing a Foreign Policy for the Middle Class. Our work abroad is — and always will be — tethered to our needs at home. I have committed to the American people that my Administration will prioritize policies abroad that help Americans to succeed in the global economy and ensure that everyone shares in the success of our country here at home. To coordinate this effort, I hereby direct that:

- (a) Within 60 days of the date of this memorandum, a meeting of the Deputies Committee shall be held to discuss challenges and opportunities for refocusing United States foreign policy to meet the needs of the American middle class;
- (b) Within 30 days of the date of this memorandum, the heads of all agencies represented on the NSC, as well as heads of agencies appearing in an advisory capacity, and the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Labor, the United States Trade Representative, the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, and the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy shall identify a senior official to lead execution of initiatives focused on benefiting the American middle class at each agency, and who shall serve as the agency representative and point of contact for efforts to better integrate foreign policy with domestic objectives; and
- (c) Agencies shall provide a report to the APNSA within 90 days of the date of this memorandum summarizing their agency's proposed contribution to a foreign policy agenda focused on benefiting the American middle class, and outlining specific actions that each agency will take in furtherance of this agenda.

Sec. 9. Assessment. Within 2 years of the date of this memorandum, the APNSA, in coordination with the heads of relevant agencies, shall provide to the President a report that assesses my Administration's progress in implementing the requirements of this memorandum. This report should be made public to the maximum extent possible.

Sec. 10. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this memorandum shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

- (i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or
 - (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.
- (b) This memorandum shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.
- (c) This memorandum is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person

JOSEPH R. BIDEN JR.