



Mr. Secretary:

This letter is to inform you that I am resigning from the Foreign Service effective December 8, 2017. I left the private sector to join the U.S. government in 2010 in order to promote U.S. interests and values overseas: advancing democracy, promoting human rights, and establishing a more secure global order for the American people. In Somalia, South Sudan, Poland, and Washington over the past seven years, I was confident I was contributing to these goals. This is no longer the case under current leadership.

I leave with a heavy heart because I know the potential of the State Department to protect U.S. citizens' interests and advance our core values. I saw us at our best in South Sudan in December 2013, when civil war broke out quickly and violently in the streets of Juba. As our sole Consular Officer, I led a small interagency team that evacuated nearly 1,000 people to safety, including 440 U.S. citizens – many of them traumatized victims and witnesses to the brutal violence. I have never been prouder of my colleagues or my work. I have also seen firsthand the positive impact of the Department's diplomatic engagement on democracy. In February this year, in a crowded hangar on the Mogadishu International Airport compound, I watched with pride as the new Somali parliament voted out corruption and bribery and embraced opportunity and change. I had witnessed a historic moment that State – and my own work – had helped deliver through persistent engagement to ensure Somalia's presidential election process was credible and inclusive.

In Warsaw, Poland, in 2012, we worked closely with NATO allies to promote support for the multilateral mission in Afghanistan. The Embassy brought a delegation of women leaders from Afghanistan to Poland to participate in an international women's congress. The women's stories about the importance of NATO's mission in their fight for basic human rights and security had a powerful impact on public opinion, which helped boost support for our joint efforts in Afghanistan. I felt privileged to be part of our soft power in action.

Over the past 10 months, our government has failed to demonstrate a commitment to promoting and defending human rights and democracy. President Trump's dismissive attitude toward human rights was no surprise following his campaign, but your May 3 remarks to Department staff shocked many as you called into question the utility of advancing human rights when it proves inconvenient. As a foreign policy professional, I understand better than most that we must balance competing interests, but human rights and democracy are fundamental elements of a safer world for our people.

The Department's position within the interagency has also diminished, as we have ceded to the Pentagon our authority to drive U.S. foreign policy, at the behest of the White House but to our detriment as a nation. The trend in this direction will accelerate further with the budget and staffing cuts you are championing. In these challenging global times we should be seeking to conduct more diplomacy with more resources, not less with less. Top career leadership in the Department has been gutted, leaving few empowered to make hard foreign policy decisions. With dozens of vacant positions and so many officials in acting capacities [REDACTED] it is little wonder we lack direction. The cost of this is visible every day in Mission Somalia, my current post, where State's diplomatic influence, on the country and within our own interagency, is waning.

The Department is a durable and vital institution. I am sure it will endure and ultimately overcome this period of marginalization, but the consequences will affect our global leadership and status abroad for many years to come.

I have deep respect for the career Foreign and Civil Service staff who, despite the stinging disrespect this Administration has shown our profession, continue the struggle to keep our foreign policy on the positive trajectory necessary to avert global disaster in increasingly dangerous times. With each passing day, however, this task grows more futile, driving the Department's experienced and talented staff away in ever greater numbers. I would urge you to stem the bleeding by showing leadership and a commitment to our people, our mission, and our mandate as the foreign policy arm of the United States. If you are unable to do so effectively within this Administration, I would humbly recommend you follow me out the door.

Sincerely,


Signature

4/7/2017
Date

Elizabeth Shackelford
Print Name