

Press Releases: One Team, One Mission: Introducing Our Ethos

Remarks

Michael R. Pompeo

Secretary of State

State Department

Washington, DC

April 26, 2019

SECRETARY POMPEO: Well, good morning, everyone. It's great to see you all. Especially glad to see our newest diplomats with the 75 members of our A-100 class. Where are you all at? Congratulations. (Applause.)

So one year ago today, I stood almost exactly – some of you are going, one year. I can see it in your faces, yes. (Laughter.) That day, I – literally, I left here, I jumped on a plane to Brussels. And I remember how much work I knew had gone into preparing for that, work I had not been a part of, work I'd not had a chance to see, and I saw the great work. I landed. Everything was ready – the paper, the plane, all the team around me. It was truly remarkable. The success I had that day – I still hear good things about my

visit to Brussels that first time. The foreign ministers around the world were marveled – were amazed at the fact that I was there just a few hours after having been sworn in. And in fact – you all know this – all the credit goes to you, to our team, and not to me.

I think this year has been an enormous success, and I'll talk for a minute about why I think that. But most importantly I have to tell you how proud I am to be a colleague of yours, to have been able to have this year working along the most important cabinet agency there is, an agency that is now almost 230 years old. (Applause.)

Now, I'm looking around to see if there's any of my fellow cabinet members who won't be happy with that statement. (Laughter.) But I have to tell you I believe it. I believe it with all my heart. There's no agency that can deliver America's foreign policy and keep Americans safe like the agency that we are a part of. When we do our job right, the soldiers don't have to deploy; they don't have to put themselves at risk. And we get the outcomes that we want, that America needs, by executing our diplomatic mission.

I went back and I watched the remarks I made that day. I made several commitments. I want to talk about those – some complete; some we still have work to do. But I made a handful of commitments to you all. One was that we would, in fact, be the premier agency delivering on behalf of the President of the United States. We've made that happen. You have made that happen. (Applause.)

A second one was I promised you that day I would communicate to you, that you wouldn't – it wouldn't be somebody holed up on the seventh floor, who you never saw or heard from, that didn't have any idea what the heck he was doing or what his team was doing. I've had a chance to get to meet so many of you at embassies around the world. Just this week, we had another "Meet with Mike." The first 60 people to respond to an email came and got a chance to ask me great questions, important questions, provide me their feedback, tough questions. I hope that you've all seen that. Whenever I go on a trip, even if it's just to Rosslyn, I write a little email that talks about "Miles with Mike," talking to you about the things I was doing, why I did them, what we hoped to have gained from that gathering.

I also told you that we would get the team back on the field. And I remember where this agency was a year ago, and I told you that we needed everyone in their place, working on the mission, if we were going to achieve this mission on behalf of the President, on behalf of the United States. We've lifted the hiring freeze. We've got new senior leadership; 59 people confirmed since my first day. More work to do there for sure. We've recognized four seniors, David Hale, Phil Goldberg, Michele Sison, Dan Smith as career ambassadors, a truly remarkable team and a very telling thing for the President to have designated them about the importance of what we're doing. Promotion rates in the Foreign Service, which now – which had been cut by 40 to 50 percent – we're now growing again. You can see this in the big group of young people down here in this current A-100 class. We've got new Foreign Service officer classes, specialist classes. I've done lots of the swearing-in ceremonies. It's a lot of fun, and it also reminds me how old I am. (Laughter.)

And I've also taken it as an important part of our mission to take trips here in the United States to tell the story of American diplomats to the people here at home, the people we represent, our first client, and to talk to them about the promise of this place, the work that we do, the importance it has to them in their everyday lives. And I've also used a moment there to make sure we continue to do what you all have seen this organization do so well, is to make sure we bring in the most talented people who are interested in a life of service to come be officers here in the State Department.

I also promised – I made a third promise that there wouldn't be any tribes here. I've welcomed debate. I've engaged with multiple State Department leaders with whom there are disagreements. We don't have a process that's controlled by a handful of people here in the State Department. We create an idea, "One Team, One Mission, One Future." And Deputy Secretary Sullivan spoke about this when Dan Smith was sworn in to lead the Foreign Service Institute, which I'll return to in a moment. Our mission is too important to have a fragmented State Department.

So now today, one year on, I want to take the next step, something we've been working on for a while. My experience leading organizations tells me that it's incredibly important that we have a common set of understandings about the expectation for every individual, be they a Foreign Service officer, a locally employed staff, Civil Servant. And that's what I'm going to unveil here in just a minute is the new Ethos initiative. It's a statement. You'll see it.

We want to define the Ethos of people who have given their lives to serve in this incredibly important place. It's an effort to make sure that – the effort – the work that we do has a really strong foundation, to make sure we've all got the same idea about the way we go about doing our jobs. And it's about reinvesting in the Department of State to make sure that you all have the resources and the training and the skills and the colleagues to deliver our diplomacy effectively.

So beginning really last fall, after listening to you all at a town hall meeting, we set about this course. We had conversations with Civil Servants; I toured a few embassies. And I could see the incredible strong culture of integrity inside the State Department, and I wanted to make sure we spread that. I wanted to make sure, too, that we were an organization that was thoughtful, that we didn't shoot first and ask questions later; we did the hard work that goes with executing our diplomatic mission.

These principles – these will now be the operating principles of our department. They're a guide for each and every one of you. And it's what we can be proud of right off the bat: having a professional Ethos is unique to the State Department. It's tailored to our unique mission and our distinctive role in the American government.

We've put it down. You'll see it in just a moment, in an inspirational, aspirational and unifying statement that captures the attitude that I hope will become part of the State Department DNA. And so without further ado, I'd like to unveil it here. (Applause.)

For those of you with vision as good as mine, I'm going to read it to you. (Laughter.) It goes as follows:

I am a champion of American diplomacy.

My colleagues and I proudly serve the United States and the American people at the Department of State, America's first executive department.

We support and defend the Constitution of the United States.

We protect the American people and promote their interests and values around the world by leading our nation's foreign policy.

As a member of this team, I serve with unfailing professionalism, in both my demeanor and my actions, even in the face of adversity.

I act with uncompromising personal and professional integrity.

I take ownership of and responsibility for my actions and decisions.

And I show unstinting respect in word and deed for my colleagues and all who serve alongside of me.

Together, we are the United States Department of State. (Applause.) Thank you.

I want to be clear. There was a lot of work, a lot of time spent to defining and crafting this statement. Many of the folks responsible for the hard work are standing up here, right behind me. I know many of you here participated in the effort as well. We pored over every single word of this and made extensive consultations in writing it. You are staring at draft 30-something. (Laughter.)

I want to talk about just eight words – eight words that form the core of this Ethos.

The first is champion – intentionally chosen. We need to have the competitive mentality of a team trying to win a championship. Inside the department, we should have a healthy competition of ideas in which the best idea is victorious. And outside of it, we need to win the battle of competing ideologies. Our mission is to champion the American way of life.

The second word is diplomacy. It almost goes without saying, but we needed definitely to say it. It's our DNA; it's who we are. It's why we come to work every day. We need to keep this at the forefront of everything that we do.

The third is actually two words – American people. Never forget who it is that we work for. Their interests, not ours, not yours, not those with whom we're interacting, unless they're Americans – the American people are whose interests we must protect.

And of course every one of us, when we were sworn in, took an oath to the Constitution. It sets forth the foundational principles of American life. It

guarantees our rights. It must guide our work. We have to support and defend it in everything that we do.

The fifth idea contained in the Ethos is professionalism – adhering to a set of common commitments to be best. Professionalism isn't dependent on position or salary. It's about disagreeing without being uncivil, and building up our institution, not tearing it down, marching forward as a team.

Six is integrity. This goes for all of us, every single one. Honesty and trust are absolutely essential to everything that we do, and a high-performing team has never existed without a deep understanding of a common effort to have integrity in everything that we do.

Responsibility. I hope you've seen this. We're putting a awful lot of effort into ensuring a new focus on personal accountability. Let's do the job right, let's hold ourselves accountable, each and every one of us, and hold others around us accountable for their efforts as well.

And finally, I'd like to talk about respect. I actually think we do this well. We need to make sure we show unfailing respect for each other, simply because we are all human beings created by God. And if we don't, our mission will splinter. It'll fall apart.

Okay, so you're all standing here saying, "Hey, what's the million-dollar question? What is this? What will happen differently as a result of this Ethos?" Look, I must say, I already see a great deal of this – many of these concepts you all know. You came here because they were part of who you are. But I think by highlighting these principles and this Ethos, we can encourage each other and hold each other responsible to these standards and take it to the next level.

You should recognize too there are a huge array of different jobs and responsibilities. There are – we tackle so many different mission sets. But the Ethos gives us a common foundation for all of the work we do across this broad spectrum of our mission sets. I hope, too, this starts a chain reaction. Greater respect and accountability will continue to boost our *esprit de corps*, and a greater team spirit will build our confidence, the swagger I spoke about a year ago, with a major positive impact on our capacity to deliver around the world.

So a few ideas that I've heard along the way and that I'm confident we will now begin to further unleash: First, a common training for everyone. This is something that the State Department can do much better. We have different categories of people: Foreign Service, Civil Service, locally employed staff, political appointees. I appreciate those distinctions; it's appropriate. But we must be on the same page in our mission, so we're going to have a common set of training in addition to what is already given. Dan Smith behind me and his team are already developing this training package, and I think we'll have a training set, a pilot ready to roll out in the months ahead.

We've also developed a new Ethos award, one unique department award given to one person a year who best embodies what it is I've been talking about this

morning. And you will see more concrete mechanisms rolled out by Dan and by Carol at DGHR. Many of them will be performance-based and aligned with the Ethos initiative that we've been speaking about this morning.

I said earlier that we're a special agency. I bragged about our greatness and our importance. It's not an original thought. Franklin, Madison, Jefferson, Adams created our department first. They did it before they created the department that works with money, Treasury, or the department prepared to fight America's battles, the Department of Defense. They believed that diplomacy should come before battle and before money. And we know that if we do this well, we can improve every outcome for the American people.

In a handful of weeks we'll have the chance on July 29th to celebrate 230 years as a State Department institution. We're going to make it really special, because we are a very special team and this is an incredibly special place. I want you all to be your very best, and I'm confident that your – you, our country, will stay the best in the world if we can all execute against this.

Thank you for being here this morning. Dan and Carol are each going to say a few words, and I really appreciate you taking on board this professional Ethos. Thank you. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Secretary. There is nothing like being asked to follow the Secretary of State in an event like this.

I want to underscore the importance of the mandate that the Secretary has given us to create what we are calling at the Foreign Service Institute the "One Team" course. That course, which will rest first and foremost on the Ethos statement, will introduce our new employees – Foreign Service, Civil Service, and non-career employees, political appointees – to the role and unique history of this proud institution, as well as to our principles and the behavior we expect of all of us with regard to one another and our professional conduct.

The training will supplement, particularly in the case of the Foreign Service, but not supplant our existing training. But with regard to Civil Service and non-career staff, it will represent an important departure from the past insofar as many of our Civil Service and non-career colleagues receive no training upon entry into the State Department.

As the Secretary noted, we will be unveiling this pilot of this "One Team" course later this summer. You'll look forward for more introductions, more announcements related to that, but we're also going to be looking for other ways that we can reach important constituencies of the Department of State, and in particular our new locally employed staff, who are a critical component of our overseas presence.

As I say, this is an important departure from the past. It will be, as we say in the bureaucracy, a heavy lift. We are eager to meet the challenge the Secretary has given us. I think it's a great opportunity for the Foreign Service Institute, but also for the Department of State, and it will help

realize the Secretary's vision of "One Team, One Mission, One Future." Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

AMBASSADOR PEREZ: Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for letting me be here as part of your first birthday party, and thank you also to Ambassador Smith.

We also in HR are delighted to work with the Secretary and all of you on how to make sure that the Ethos is a part of our culture and our ideals. It already is, as the Secretary mentioned. The qualities, the words that were chosen mean so much. They are who we are and how we do our work every day. I'd like to remind you that diversity is important, so the Secretary talked about Foreign Service, Civil Service, career, non-career, family members, contractors, locally engaged staff.

From HR's perspective, we also are going to do something that's new, and that is the Ethos award, which we will be rolling out later this summer, which will be eligible to everybody. We are looking for a person who embodies the spirit of the Ethos. And we have so many people that do this every day, and some of them are contractors and are generally not eligible for awards of this magnitude.

So we are looking to recognize our colleagues who really care about this institution, who support the institution, who support these ideals, and respect the institution and the culture. As the Secretary said, we are "One Team, One Mission," and the Ethos is a way for us to recognize those members of our team that are supporting this one mission. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

SECRETARY POMPEO: Thank you, everyone. Have a great day. (Applause.)

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department. External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.