

100 Days of an America First State Department



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One hundred days ago, America's borders were open, while China could close the Panama Canal at a time of Xi Jinping's choosing. Our leaders seemed content to allow violence to become the permanent norm, from Ukraine to Gaza, to our own college campuses and southern border. From every post abroad, and office in Washington, memos poured in describing what we must do, what we couldn't do, but not what it was possible to do.

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Only one hundred days later, change has come. From reorganizing the Department to meet the challenges of the 21st Century, to bringing transparency to foreign assistance, to ensuring Panama's exit from the Belt and Road Initiative, and working hand in hand with regional partners to deport illegal immigrants and designate vicious cartels as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, our team has proven it is possible not merely to admire problems, but to solve them.



(White House/Molly Riley)

Secretary Rubio (second from left) at President Trump's February 26 Cabinet meeting (White House/Molly Riley)

In the process, [the State Department is becoming a leaner machine](#), eager to deliver for the taxpayers. Gone are offices like the former Global Engagement Center, which sought to censor the American people. Gone are tens of billions of dollars in contracts to NGOs at home and abroad that often undermined the interests and foreign policy of the United States. And gone are the days when merit took a back seat to radical, anti-American ideologies. By consolidating offices, eliminating bureaucracy, and ensuring a culture where the State Department's many talented voices can be heard, our impending reorganization will leave the United States with a foreign policy that is less expensive and more effective.

The State Department has begun, once more, to speak for our citizens' interests abroad. Our hemisphere is our neighborhood, and we cannot allow it to be conquered by an adversary. In my first hundred days, I undertook three trips to our hemisphere, including central America and the Caribbean where I stressed that Chinese efforts to gain control of critical infrastructure threaten the United States, and secured an agreement to terminate Beijing's management of the Panama Canal.

I brought a similar message to our friends in Europe, making clear that our extensive shared interests, especially in resisting Chinese aggression and Islamic extremism, are precisely why the United States cannot afford to shoulder the burden of every conflict

imaginable in Europe. At the recent NATO summit I attended, our allies recognized the need to increase defense spending not to 2 percent as requested in 2017, but to 5 percent, following the lead of nations like Poland. There was a shared understanding that ending the war in Ukraine is in the interests of both the combatants, and the entire Transatlantic alliance.

While in Europe, I also made clear that while we are bound by a common history, faith, culture, and economic interests, friendship is not a one-way street. It requires honesty when reciprocity is lacking, and not just in the realm of defense spending. Efforts to regulate, exclude or censor US companies directly concern the United States, and raise questions about just how common our values may be. Europe's energy policies also directly affect the United States as they left the continent dependent on Russian gas, and exposed "green" supply chains to Communist China control.

In Africa, America needs a policy of trade, not aid, and over the past hundred days the State Department has replaced handouts with firm diplomatic engagement aimed at ending conflicts and expanding opportunities for American companies. Last week, the Foreign Ministers of Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo joined me here at the State Department to sign a Declaration of Principles to end a war that has dragged on in one form or another for over twenty-five years. In Africa, and around the world, our message is that while USAID may be closed, America is open for business.

There is no more immediate American interest than the protection of our nation's borders. Both during my trips to the region, and across dozens of bilateral engagements, I have made clear that the arrival of millions of foreign nationals at our border is unacceptable. Foreign nations have a responsibility to prevent their citizens from illegally entering the United States and possess a duty to assist us in removing those already here. We are working with regional allies in Latin America to secure agreements to take back both their own illegal aliens, but also those from third nations. And we have made it clear to less friendly nations such as Venezuela that a refusal to take back their nationals constitutes a hostile act. Partnership is valued, but hostility will be punished.

Critically, the State Department has now made clear that a visa is a privilege, not a right. Under the Biden Administration's "Catch and Release" policy, illegal aliens were often provided with a get-out-of-jail-free card after arrests for criminal activity including domestic violence, and assault. There is now a one-strike policy: Catch-And-Revoke. Whenever the government catches non-U.S. citizens breaking our laws, we will take action to revoke their status. The time of contemptuously taking

advantage of our nation's generosity ends.

This extends to the thousands of foreign students studying in the United States who abuse our hospitality. When Hamas, one of the world's most notorious terrorist organizations, launched its barbaric October 7, 2023, attack on Israel, brutally murdering more than 1,200 innocents, and parading the dead bodies of murdered babies through the streets of Gaza, the Biden Administration did very little to protect our Jewish citizens and the American people at large from foreign terrorist sympathizers in their midst. They allowed campus buildings to be overrun by violent thugs, and Jewish students to be excluded from classrooms.

No more. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act, any alien who "endorses or espouses terrorist activity or persuades others to endorse or espouse terrorist activity or support a terrorist organization" is inadmissible to the United States, and henceforth that law will be enforced to the letter. The State Department now reviews law-enforcement information about student visa holders and when we find those who have supported terrorists or otherwise abused our hospitality, their visas are instantly revoked.

Terrorists are on the run not just in America but around the world. With the unyielding support of the United States Department of State, Israel has crippled Hezbollah in Lebanon, and shattered Hamas in Gaza, leaving the terrorist group facing destruction if they do not release their hostages and lay down their arms. We have re-designated the Houthis as what they are – a foreign terrorist organization and made clear that those who disrupt the freedom of navigation and trade in the Red Sea will meet the fate of pirates throughout history. Iran, having seen the consequences its proxies have faced after challenging the new Administration, is now pursuing an agreement that will allow them to save face while surrendering their nuclear capabilities.

I am honored by the trust President Trump placed in me and I am proud of the work the Department of State has done over the past hundred days to implement his agenda and put the American people first. With an impending reorganization that will unleash the Department's talent from the ground-up, the State Department is set to continue to play a pivotal role in ensuring the safety, security and prosperity of the American people over the next four years.

Marco Rubio was sworn in as the 72nd secretary of state on January 21, 2025. The secretary is creating a Department of State that puts America First.

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Well done, Secretary Rubio. Peace through strength. No neocon endless wars.

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Excellent summary: more department heads and key administration personnel would be wise to produce similar updates of substantive progress.

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