

EDWARD J. MARKEY
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:

ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

FOREIGN RELATIONS

RANKING MEMBER:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIA, THE PACIFIC,
AND INTERNATIONAL CYBERSECURITY POLICY

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND TRANSPORTATION

RANKING MEMBER:

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
SPACE, SCIENCE, AND COMPETITIVENESS

SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

CHAIRMAN:

U.S. SENATE CLIMATE CHANGE TASK FORCE

United States Senate

SUITE SD-255
DIRKSEN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET
BOSTON, MA 02203
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312
FALL RIVER, MA 02721
508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
413-785-4610

February 14, 2018

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I write to express concern that the Trump administration's restructuring of the Department of State is undermining its ability to address North Korea's rapidly advancing nuclear and ballistic missile programs. Taken together, the administration's proposed reduction in the State Department's budget, vacancies in high-level positions related to North Korea policy, and understaffed offices responsible for implementing North Korea-related diplomatic and sanctions enforcement efforts threaten to undermine America's ability to bring about peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula through direct, sustained diplomacy backed by economic pressure.

Vice President Pence has stated that the administration will pursue a dual-track policy toward North Korea that includes "maximum pressure and engagement at the same time."¹ Effectively prosecuting such an approach requires significant State Department resources, to both diplomatically engage North Korea — as well as key U.S. allies and partners — and implement the foreign policy elements of sanctions enforcement. Yet, the administration's Fiscal Year 2019 budget request proposes to cut funding for the State Department by 29 percent from 2017 funding levels.²

At the same time the administration is proposing cuts to the State Department's budget, high-level positions necessary to manage implementation of North Korea policy either remain unfilled or have been eliminated altogether. For example, last year, the administration eliminated the Coordinator for Sanctions Policy, a role specifically created to ensure high-level management in implementing cross-cutting U.S. sanctions programs.³ Despite being in office for over a year, this administration has also failed to nominate a U.S. Ambassador to South Korea, the highest-

¹ Josh Rogin, "Pence: The United States is ready to talk with North Korea," *The Washington Post*, February 11, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/pence-the-united-states-is-ready-to-talk-with-north-korea/2018/02/11/b5070ed6-0f33-11e8-9065-e55346f6de81_story.html?utm_term=.35161a55a537.

² Nicole Gaouette, "Trump admin wants to slash funding for diplomacy," *CNN*, February 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/12/politics/trump-budget-state-department-aid-cut/index.html>.

³ Robbie Gramer and Dan De Luce, "State Department Scraps Sanctions Office," *Foreign Policy*, October 26, 2017, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/10/26/state-department-scraps-sanctions-office/>.

ranking U.S. government official in that country. Finally, the decision to fold the responsibilities of the Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea into the role of the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights — a position that also remains unfilled — is inconsistent with the president's emphasis on North Korean human rights articulated during the State of the Union address. It also signals to Kim Jong Un that the United States does not intend to hold him accountable for his country's atrocities.⁴

There is also reason to doubt the State Department is appropriately increasing rank-and-file Civil and Foreign Service staff assigned to implementing the administration's stated North Korea diplomatic strategy. Growth in staffing in State Department offices — such as the North Korea unit within the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and the Economic Bureau — should be commensurate with the priority that the administration has placed on addressing threats from North Korea. This is why it is troubling to hear reports that Foreign Service Officers are being assigned to process Freedom of Information Act requests rather than being tasked with advancing policy priorities such as North Korea.⁵ Additionally, reports that the State Department's "redesign efforts" will cut staff in anticipation of multiple conflicts being resolved is concerning, given that the North Korea threat has increased rather than decreased.⁶ Furthermore, deep cuts to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) suggest that the administration is unwilling to use important, working-level diplomatic tools at its disposal — such as training on sanctions enforcement and capacity building with partner governments — to address illicit North Korean sources of revenue. This management of resources calls into question whether the State Department can effectively carry out a global pressure campaign, enforce sanctions, and credibly counter the challenges posed by North Korea.⁷

Therefore, I respectfully ask that you respond to the following questions, no later than March 9, 2018:

1. How many State Department employees, in both Washington, DC and overseas, are dedicated to carrying out the North Korean pressure campaign? Please disaggregate the numbers of Foreign Service Officers and Civil Service Officers working in the regional bureaus, the functional bureaus, and overseas. Please indicate the titles, roles, and responsibilities of the employees.
2. When does the administration intend to fill the position of Special Envoy for North Korean Human Rights, or do you intend to make permanent the assignment of these responsibilities to the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights?
3. When does the administration intend to fill the position of U.S. Ambassador to South Korea?
4. Can you please explain the delay in filling these vacant North Korea-related positions?

⁴ Josh Rogin, "Tillerson Scraps Full-Time North Korean Human Rights Envoy," *The Washington Post*, August 31, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/josh-rogin/wp/2017/08/31/tillerson-scraps-full-time-north-korean-human-rights-envoy/?utm_term=.c7ff5175d4fb (accessed September 11, 2017).

⁵ Nahal Toosi, "Tillerson's 'FOIA surge' extended in another blow to morale," *Politico*, January 18, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/01/18/demoralized-state-department-tillerson-paperwork-346850>

⁶ Graham Lanktree, "Tillerson Says State Department Cuts Will be Fine Because U.S. Will Solve More Wars," *Newsweek*, November 29, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/tillerson-explains-state-department-budget-cuts-are-because-us-resolving-725419>.

⁷ Elisa Labati, "Exclusive: Frustrated State Department Employees Hire Attorneys, Charging Political Retribution," *CNN*, January 28, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/26/politics/state-department-employees-hire-attorneys-political-retribution/index.html>.

5. What resources, both human and financial, is the State Department dedicating to North Korea sanctions enforcement? How has use of these resources changed over the course of the administration and in light of changes in North Korea policy?
6. To which office have the responsibilities for sanctions enforcement previously under the Coordinator for Sanctions Policy moved? How has the change benefitted the pressure campaign, specifically, and U.S. policy towards North Korea, generally?
7. What diplomatic tools is the State Department employing to enhance the capacity of partner governments in countering North Korea's destabilizing behavior? How many ECA-managed exchange programs have focused on sanctions enforcement, countering illicit financial flows, or customs capacity building?
8. As a component of the pressure campaign, how often are State Department officials traveling to partner countries to encourage their governments to strengthen sanctions enforcement?
9. What requests for resources or training do partner governments make of the United States in response to the U.S. pressure campaign, and how is the State Department addressing those requests?

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. I look forward to reviewing your responses. Should you have any questions about this request, please have your staff contact Zachary Hosford of my staff at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator