

**Assistant Secretary José Cunningham**  
**Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary (M) for Management**  
**Testimony**  
**Before the HFAC MENA Subcommittee**  
**Regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget**  
**July 16, 2025**

Chairman, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the Fiscal Year 2026 budget for the U.S. Department of State's management family bureaus. Thank you to Chairman Lawler and Ranking Member Cherfilus-McCormick – I look forward to speaking with you today. As Assistant Secretary of Administration at the State Department and performing the duties of the Under Secretary for Management, I am honored to present our budget priorities, which are designed to ensure the Department fulfills its mission and that every dollar we spend and every action we take results in measurable, positive outcomes for the American people.

The Department's overall FY 2026 budget request of \$28.5 billion reflects the Administration's commitment to cutting the federal deficit, while improving the return on investment for the American people. This budget aggressively realigns resources toward objectives that will make America stronger, safer, and more prosperous.

Every day, the 13 bureaus and offices that make up the Department's Management (M) family play a critical role in supporting our domestic and global workforce, logistics, facilities, and security that underpin core diplomatic functions and ensure the Department of State is equipped to deliver its mission effectively and efficiently. Of the \$28.5 billion total, the Department is requesting \$11.3 billion for Diplomatic Engagement resources to fund the Department's principal operating accounts, and to provide necessary protection for the Department's people, property, and data. For years, the Department's organizational structure expanded in size and costs with offices and positions that were not fiscally sustainable. The request includes sufficient funding to pay and train a streamlined and effective workforce, in a manner consistent with the Department's statutory requirements. If enacted, it will advance key national

security priorities. In alignment with the Administration's commitment to fiscal responsibility, our budget request takes into account savings from Department-wide contracts and grants reviews. I commit to you that resources will be directed toward the Administration's highest priority initiatives.

Through our main operating accounts, M family bureaus and offices enable operations for all Department bureaus and offices and over 275 posts worldwide. Abroad, our embassies around the world are the front lines of diplomacy, representing the United States of America to the world while providing critical information and identifying opportunities and challenges long before they reach Washington, D.C. Empowering these missions is essential to creating a more nimble and effective Department that delivers results for the nation. Our requests for Worldwide Security Protection and Embassy Security, Construction, and Maintenance seek to ensure the continued security of our personnel operating in challenging environments. With FY 2026 funding, we will continue to deliver secure, resilient, and modern technology globally in support of the Department's diplomatic mission and workforce with a state-of-the-art federated IT and cybersecurity service model. The FY 2026 request also aims to consolidate USAID's real property footprint with State's.

The M family is reviewing and reforming our operational capabilities and is focused on quality, speed, and efficiency to streamline and focus on the global workforce. A good example of this is the Department's continued commitment to our review of high threat, high risk posts through the SCORE process – weighing decisions on how and whether to maintain the U.S. diplomatic presence in dangerous locations against the policy rewards of being there. Another example is how the M family is using AI and data-driven tools, most recently to aid the Middle East taskforce in identifying risk and protecting critical assets and data. Our Office of Foreign Missions within the M family employs reciprocity to help ensure our personnel abroad are treated fairly and equitably by receiving states and works to protect Americans from abuses of privileges and immunities by foreign diplomats in the United States all while safeguarding our critical national interests at home. I am also personally working with our interagency partners to maintain comprehensive and effective Continuity of Government capabilities.

Taxpayers deserve a State Department that serves the American people and champions the safety, security, and prosperity of our nation. In addition to our

request for appropriated resources, the Department plans to use \$5.5 billion collected in consular fees for enhanced visa process vetting and passport enhancements. As Secretary Rubio has stated, a visa is not a right; it is a privilege. Individuals seeking entry into the United States must demonstrate that their presence will not harm our national interests. We anticipate 21.8 million Americans to apply for passports in 2026. To ensure the needs of the American people are met, Consular Affairs seeks to advance its information technology infrastructure, including streamlining passport applications through the highly successful Online Passport Renewal platform. In addition to its 29 Passport Agencies and Centers around the country, Consular Affairs also intends to open six new passport agencies domestically to expand capacity, reduce in-person wait times, and expedite the issuance of U.S. passports and passport cards. Consular Affairs is well-equipped as we prepare for major events like the FIFA World Cup in 2026, the 2028 Olympics, and America250, along with the anticipated 12.4 million nonimmigrant visas in FY 2026. At the same time, we continue to address global challenges, as demonstrated by providing information and assistance to over 27,000 individuals during the Israel-Iran conflict. These efforts underscore our commitment to both domestic and international priorities.

M family bureaus are critical to the successful transition of USAID foreign assistance programs to the Department. Our request reflects the planned transition of USAID personnel and systems to the Department. In addition to personnel, IT, and facilities resources, we have requested a new general provision that would provide the Secretary with broad flexibility to realign residual USAID programs, funding, and responsibilities to the Department. This provision is essential to optimizing operations and enhancing the Department's ability to manage foreign assistance with accountability and efficiency.

I look forward to working with Chairman Mast, Ranking Member Meeks and the entire committee on the State Department authorization bill. The Secretary has already begun the essential initiative of restructuring the Department to align our resources with policy priorities. This effort will eliminate redundant functions, enhance accountability, and empower our people to deliver results. Every bureau and office will have a clear responsibility and mission.

The FY 2026 budget request reflects our commitment to advancing the national interests of the United States. It prioritizes safety, strength, and prosperity while ensuring that the M family bureaus and offices are equipped to deliver on the Department's mission.

I look forward to answering your questions and hearing the Committee's thoughts, particularly as you are writing your State Department authorization bill. Thank you for your time and attention.