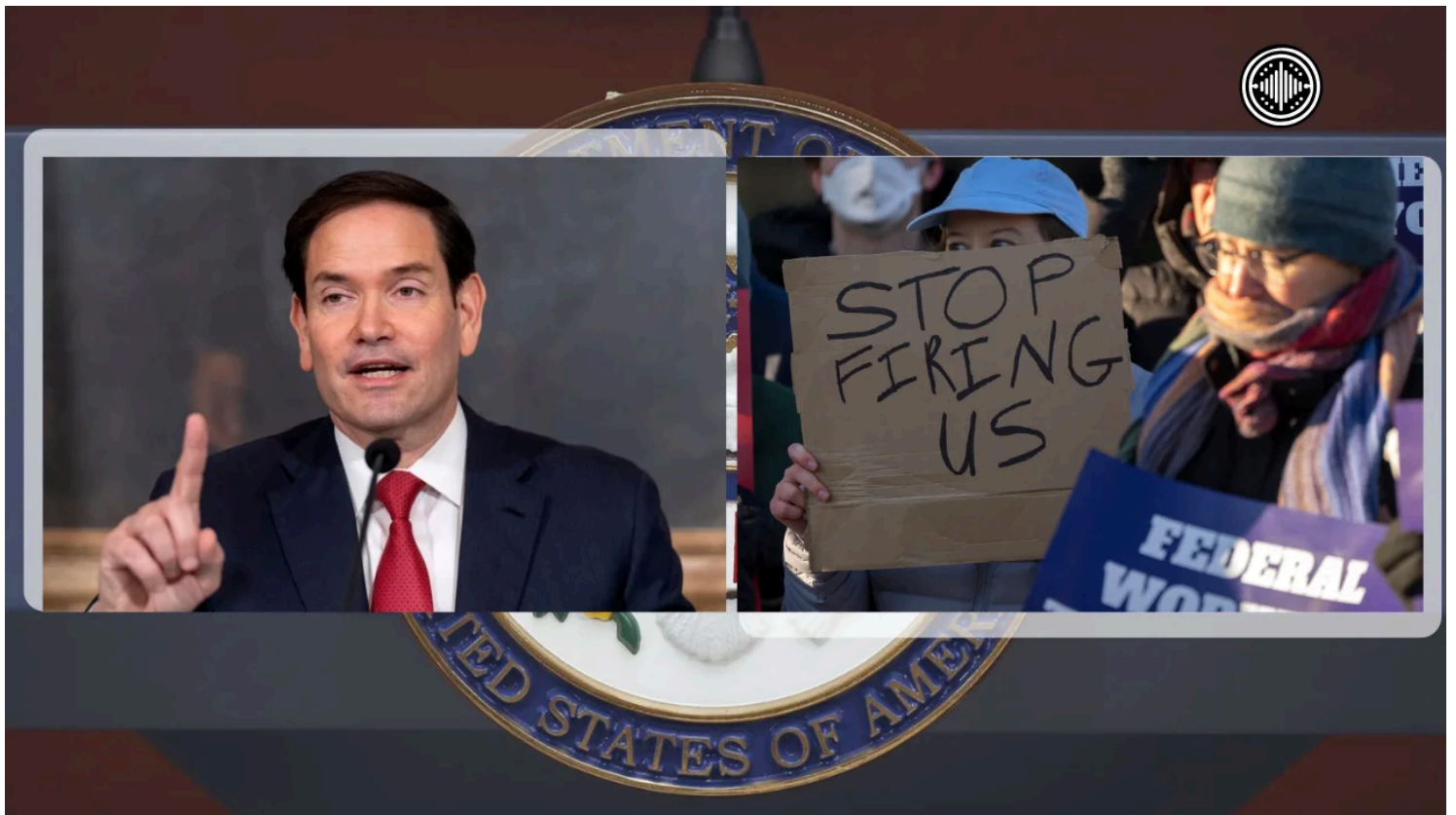


State Dept Plans 15% Workforce Cuts Amid Criticism

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The U.S. State Department is preparing for mass layoffs as part of a sweeping reorganization plan led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who has described the department as bloated, inefficient, and misaligned with the administration's America First agenda.

After a federal court injunction was lifted by the U.S. Supreme Court, department officials formally informed staff that layoff notices would begin as soon as Friday, according to Deputy Secretary Michael J. Rigas.

The reorganization plan, announced in late May, aims to cut about 1,800 domestic positions, approximately 15% of the workforce, with total impact reaching around 2,700 through additional voluntary departures under the administration's "deferred resignation" program.

While Rubio argues the reorganization will help align the department with what he describes as core American values and remove what he sees as pockets of radical political ideology, the move has prompted a fierce backlash. Many veteran diplomats and lawmakers warn that the cuts will severely damage U.S. foreign policy, especially as the country faces complex challenges abroad.

Democrats in Congress have expressed deep concern that slashing diplomatic staff now will weaken America's ability to respond to international crises and maintain global influence. In late June, dozens of House members sent an open letter to Rubio cautioning that the United States needs a robust diplomatic corps to peacefully resolve tensions in the Middle East, manage the war in Ukraine, and counter growing competition from China.

"This is a critical time for America to lead on the world stage, not step back," the letter read.

Despite criticism, department leaders say the cuts will not directly impact overseas operations for now. No embassies are slated to close immediately, though officials noted that all international activities remain under review.

As the State Department prepares to deliver the layoff notices, many employees are left facing an uncertain future. The decision underscores the sharp divide between those who see the changes as necessary reform and those who fear they will leave American diplomacy diminished at a moment when it is most needed.

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