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State Department Cuts 1,353 Jobs in Major Workforce Shakeup

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The United States State Department has begun implementing a significant workforce reduction, laying off over 1,300 employees as part of a long-planned effort to downsize government operations and refocus priorities.

On Friday, the State Department issued official notices to 1,353 staff members, including 1,107 civil service employees and 246 foreign service officers. The decision comes as part of the Trump administration's stated strategy to streamline certain federal operations, though no formal policy was issued to reduce the overall federal workforce by 15%.

According to senior officials, these layoffs are aimed at cutting waste and modernising the department's sprawling bureaucracy.

The reductions, known as a reduction-in-force (RIF), had been anticipated for months after the department submitted its reorganisation plan to Congress earlier this year. Just days before the layoffs, the Supreme Court authorised the administration to proceed by suspending a lower court ruling that had temporarily blocked government-wide staff cuts.

Among the most impacted divisions are offices that oversee refugee resettlement, human rights initiatives, and foreign assistance programs. Nearly all civil service staff within the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration's admissions office, responsible for relocating refugees to the United States, were dismissed. The Bureau's global programs office, which manages hundreds of grants, was also eliminated. Critics argue these cuts will diminish America's capacity to promote democratic values abroad.

However, supporters of the plan assert that the United States must prioritise efficiency over duplicative mandates. Deputy Secretary of State Michael Rigas defended the move, saying the department was "acting in the best interest of taxpayers and the American mission." Likewise, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking during an overseas trip, underscored that the restructuring was designed to ensure the State Department remains focused on essential diplomatic functions rather than sprawling special-interest initiatives.

Despite the administration's justification, the decision has drawn predictable opposition from Democratic lawmakers and union groups. All Democratic members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee denounced the move in a joint letter, claiming it would undermine national security. The American Foreign Service Association, which represents foreign service personnel, called the reductions "untethered from merit or mission."

While some employees were given the option of voluntary departure earlier this year, the majority of affected staff received notices instructing them to return government-issued equipment and clear out offices within 60 to 120 days, depending on employment classification. The plan also involves merging overlapping offices and transferring additional duties to embassies and regional desks. Officials say these measures will limit ideological bias in program funding and improve accountability.

As the State Department transitions to its new structure, leadership has pledged to handle the process with professionalism and respect for long-serving employees. Nevertheless, the

sweeping reorganisation underscores a fundamental shift in how the United States intends to conduct foreign policy, moving away from expansive bureaucracies and toward a more focused approach to international engagement.

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