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**DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON**

The Secretary of State presents his compliments to Their Excellencies, and Messieurs and Mesdames the Chiefs of Mission and has the honor to inform them of his expectation with respect to foreign missions maintaining and using their real property assets in the United States.

All foreign missions in the United States are required to respect and substantially comply with applicable building codes and land use regulations, including those pertaining to the maintenance and use of their real property.

The failure of certain missions to appropriately maintain their real property has significant adverse impacts on the foreign mission community as a whole, the municipality in which such properties are located, the neighboring properties, and the Department of State. Additionally, buildings that fall into such serious disrepair as to become a visual and physical blight pose a danger to the surrounding community, both through their potentially compromised structural integrity and their potential to attract crime. Neighbors have complained that blighted buildings also have a significant adverse impact on the property values of nearby buildings and the morale of the surrounding community. Further, research shows that city blocks with blighted buildings generate an increased demand for

public resources, through the need for increased police, fire, and code enforcement response.

The District of Columbia considers a blighted vacant building to be a vacant building that has been determined to be “*unsafe, insanitary, or which is otherwise determined to threaten the health, safety, or general welfare of the community.*”

Unfortunately, a number of foreign mission properties have been assigned this designation, both in Washington and elsewhere within the country.

In many cases, foreign missions that own blighted vacant properties in the United States have endeavored to misuse their diplomatic or consular status to forestall, albeit temporarily, any significant consequences resulting from their inaction to remedy the problem by such steps as renovating and reusing the subject property or selling the asset to an entity that will do so. While the Department respects all of its commitments with regard to the status of foreign missions, this does not mean that the Department views dilapidated property as acceptable.

The protection of the United States public from abuses of privileges and immunities by foreign missions and their members is one of the strategic goals and priorities of the Department’s Office of Foreign Missions (OFM). Thus, I have directed OFM to work even harder toward identifying and realizing effective solutions aimed at remedying the problem of blighted and vacant foreign mission properties. As a result, I ask that the Chiefs of Mission evaluate their mission’s

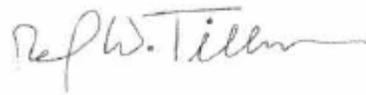
real estate holdings to ensure their current awareness of any issues that may exist in this regard. For those Chiefs of Mission that are experiencing this problem, OFM will be arranging a meeting to discuss forward actions in the near future.

For additional information about the rules and procedures associated with the Department's Diplomatic Property Program, please visit <https://www.state.gov/ofm/property/index.htm>. Questions may be referred to OFM by electronic mail at [OFMProperty@state.gov](mailto:OFMProperty@state.gov) or by telephone at (202) 647-3417.

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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rep. W. Tillman".