ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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SUBCOMMITTEE
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CIVIL SERVICE

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# Congress of the United States
## House of Representatives
## Washington, D.C. 20515

February 10, 2000

The Honorable Madelene K. Albright
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Suite 7226
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Albright: Madeleine

I am writing because we need your assistance to help to resolve a serious problem with embassies and chanceries. When a problem with recalcitrant embassies which refused to pay traffic tickets arose during the last Administration, I was finally forced to get remedies through the Appropriations Committee. However, you have been a longtime resident of the city, and I know you appreciate how D.C. residents feel when confronted with problems with federal agencies and personnel. I write directly to you because we have not been able to get the appropriate State Department personnel to resolve the problems. Elected officials and neighborhood residents are angered and concerned because of the inattention their problems have received from Mr. Ronald Mlotek, the assigned community liaison officer. I am requesting that you appoint a high-level State Department official who is willing to work with our residents. The issue badly needs an official of appropriate stature and commitment because the current liaison appointed to resolve problems between the diplomatic community and residents of the District has turned a deaf ear to residents' concerns. The present community liaison has informed residents that he will not accept email messages from residents and that he will not attend community meetings in the evenings. His general attitude has exhibited contempt for the concerns of residents and has negatively affected the position of the Department. We ask that he have nothing further to do with District residents.

Unable to get assistance from Mr. Mlotek, residents came to see me with their Councilmember, Jim Graham, and at-large Councilmember David Catania regarding serious concerns about the placement of inappropriate facilities in residential neighborhoods and about seriously deteriorating buildings owned by foreign governments that are scarring highly desirable residential blocks. While the great majority of foreign embassies and chanceries in the District are well maintained and appropriately located, serious problems have emerged in Sheridan Kalorama and may threaten other neighborhoods as well. The concentration of diplomatic chanceries in the Sheridan Kalorama area is having particularly negative effects on livability in

815 15TH STREET, N.W., SUITE 100
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-2201
(202) 783-5065
(202) 783-5211 (FAX)

1424 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-5101
(202) 225-8050
(202) 225-3002 (FAX)
(202) 225-7829 (TDD)
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2041 MARTIN L. KING AVENUE, S.E.
SUITE 300
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20020-5734
(202) 678-8900
(202) 678-8844 (FAX)

BZA
Case No. 16554
Exhibit No. 39

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16554
EXHIBIT NO.39

that historic residential neighborhood. The homes were not built to withstand the wear and tear of everyday or chancery use, and the use of residences as offices is awkwardly out of place and highly inappropriate in a residential neighborhood. Moreover, the presence of such chanceries is greatly aggravating an already impossible parking situation in this dense neighborhood.

Here are some of the most disturbing cases of neglect in the Sheridan Kalorama neighborhood:

- Macedonia--Its building is an historic structure that once served as the French embassy but has stood vacant for several years. Imagine the impact of a vast, neglected, dilapidated structure on a residential block. Macedonia has allowed the building to become a slum while the embassy grounds apparently have become a parking lot.

- Albania--This country maintains its embassy grounds so poorly that residents on the block have volunteered to cut the grass in the front yard of the embassy for years. The neighbors also have spent their own money to repair the leaking roof of the embassy to prevent harm to adjoining structures.

- People's Republic of China--The PRC changed the facade of its historic building illegally, ignoring the procedures prescribed for embassies and other buildings in the nation's capital, in violation of the National Historic Preservation Act.

I hope we can reestablish the relationship between residents and the Department. I will call your office shortly to find the appropriate official to begin this process.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Eleanor

Eleanor Holmes Norton

cc: The Honorable Anthony Williams
The Honorable Jim Graham
The Honorable David Catania