

US Threatens Pullout From the Universal Postal Union (UPU) and The International Telecommunications Union (ITU), Which Survived Hitler but Not Trump

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*The United States is threatening to withdraw from two international organizations that survived World Wars I and II but may not survive the retrogressive neo-conservative foreign policy of **Donald Trump**. The world's third-oldest international organization, the Universal Postal Union (UPU), founded in 1874 in Bern, Switzerland, has been informed by Washington of the US withdrawal. The United States became, under the administration of President Ulysses Grant, a founding member of the UPU.*

The Trump administration, notably the rabidly-rightwing White House trade adviser, **Peter Navarro**, is upset over foreign government subsidies for certain postal authorities, most notably that of China, which reduces international parcel mailing costs to manufacturers and consumers. Rather than negotiate revised postal rates, through the auspices of the UPU, which was established to standardize the world's postal system, Trump plans to leave the organization.

The Trump White House is also threatening US withdrawal from the second-oldest international organization, the **International Telecommunications Union** (ITU), established by the International Telegraph Convention in Paris in 1865. The United States joined the ITU in 1908, during the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt. The two presidents - Grant and Roosevelt - who ushered the United States into the UPU and ITU, respectively, were Republicans.

Trump's beef with the ITU is over the organization's management of the international radio frequency spectrum and its movement toward managing international data bandwidth. Trump's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) members, notably FCC chairman **Ajit Pai** and member **Michael O'Rielly**, both of whom are owned and operated by America's communications giants — including AT&T, Verizon, and Comcast — who want private industry, not government agencies, to set the rules for radio spectrum and bandwidth governance.

The flagrant racism of the Trump administration was on full display when the United States, for the first time in the history of its membership of the Geneva-based ITU, withdrew its candidate for chairman of the Radio Regulations Board (RRB), one of the governing bodies of the ITU. The RRB is key to the oversight and management of the global radio spectrum management, something that Trump and his business cronies want to milk for as much

profiteering as possible.

The candidate dropped for RRB chair was board vice-chair Joanne Wilson, nominated by Barack Obama in 2014 to the board's second-ranking position. Breaking with protocol, Washington not only dropped Wilson as chairman-designate but counteracted the ITU's consensus that Jean Philemon Kissangou should be elected as the director of the ITU's Telecommunications Development Bureau (BDT).

The Trump administration has threatened to cut off funding of the ITU, a move tantamount to withdrawal, unless the ITU selects **Doreen Bogdan-Martin**, a favorite of the scandal-ridden US Commerce Secretary, **Wilbur Ross**, to be the next BDT director. Ross's Commerce Department touts Bogdan-Martin as the first woman to head any of the ITU's elected leadership roles in the organization's 153-year history. However, the Commerce Department is lying. Ms. Wilson was slated to become the ITU's first woman to be elected the head of an ITU body, the RRB.

Wilson's disqualifying factor for the Trump White House is that she is an African-American. Kissangou's disqualifier for the Trump administration is that he is an African from the Republic of Congo, one of the nations that Trump previously described as a "shithole." Bogdan-Martin, who is white, had the backing of the George W. Bush administration for various positions at the ITU. The racism that is on display by the Republican Party in elections in Georgia, Florida, Texas, and other states is also fashionable in elections for international organization leadership positions in Geneva.

The UPU is also withstanding an onslaught by the Trump administration. The advent of e-commerce has resulted in discussions by the UPU to overhaul its system of postal rates. However, rather than participate in UPU negotiations aimed at reforming the current system, the Trump administration, which eschews multilateralism, decided to walk away from an international organization that survived its adjunct status with the ill-fated League of Nations and became part of the United Nations specialized agency system.

The UPU's main responsibility is to set standards for electronic data interchange (EDI), mail encoding, postal forms, international reply coupons, international postal money orders, and meters between postal authorities. It also strives to ensure that member states adhere to uniform flat rates for mailing letters to any location around the world. Another UPU standard is that stamp values be denoted in Roman numerals.

The UPU also sets regulations for the sending of biologically perishable materials via international post and the handling of both hazardous materials and disease-bearing items that could pose a danger to postal workers. In pursuit of postal safety, the UPU coordinates its activities with the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, and the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Trump administration also announced the US withdrawal from UNESCO, effective December 31, 2018. The United States maintains the horrible distinction of being the only UPU member where the postal system was used, during the George W. Bush administration, to distribute a biological warfare agent - anthrax.

The consequences of US withdrawal from the UPU will be felt immediately. According to UPU deputy director-general Pascal Clivaz, upon termination of American membership in the treaty, Americans will no longer be able to send or receive letters or packages to and from

UPU member states, including Canada and Mexico. The UPU will no longer share special codes with the US Postal Service (USPS) that are necessary to send and receive international mail. The only mechanism to send and receive international mail will be via more expensive private delivery services, such as FedEx and UPS. Trump has made no secret of his desire to completely eliminate the USPS and its employees.

US postage stamps may soon be recognized as void postal instruments, so far as the rest of the world is concerned. Postage stamps issued by Vatican City, Christmas Island, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, Pitcairn Island, Aitutaki, Tristan da Cunha, the United Nations, Madeira, the Faroes, and the British Antarctic Territory will carry more international legitimacy than a US stamp, thanks to Mr. Trump and his brigands.

The US withdrawal from the UPU will adversely affect three independent Pacific states that are in “compacts of free association” with the United States. Under the compacts, the USPS handles all mail deliveries to and from the Marshall Islands, Palau, and Micronesia. In order to ensure uninterrupted postal connections with neighboring Pacific island states, Asia, and beyond, these impoverished nations will have to establish independent postal authorities and services. In one way, Trump’s decision will allow these semi-colonial states to become more independent of Washington and, ultimately, establish foreign policies that will no longer ensure their reflexive support for the US and Israel in the UN General Assembly.

The UPU and ITU managed to weather the Nazi occupation of Europe and North Africa. The belligerent nations of World War II continued to maintain membership in both organizations. In addition, the UPU and ITU were the only two international organizations in which the Soviet Union maintained membership before and immediately following World War II. Mail between the Nazi Reich and the Allied powers, all of which remained members of the UPU, was possible via P.O. Box 506 at the Thomas Cook office in Lisbon or the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

Although belligerent nations in World War II conducted extensive wiretapping of international telegraph and telephone lines and radio connections, phone calls and telegrams could still be sent between major world capitals because the ITU’s standards continued to be maintained. Seamless digital communications may no longer be the case if the Trump administration, unlike Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, or Imperial Japan, abandons the ITU and its radio frequency management and standards criteria.

The UPU and ITU survived Adolf Hitler, but not Donald Trump. That is a legacy for which every American should feel nothing but shame and everlasting remorse.

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