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Jul 15, 2025 by [Andrew Dubbins](#)

Public Diplomacy in the News: State Dpt. Mass Layoffs, Bayeux Tapestry on Tour, and Shohei Ohtani's Olympic Dream ^[1]

“Public Diplomacy in the News” is a CPD Blog series by Andrew Dubbins that spotlights noteworthy stories on public diplomacy topics such as cultural diplomacy, nation branding, exchange programs, international events and conferences, digital diplomacy, and strategic global communications.

Mass State Department layoffs shake U.S. diplomacy. A sweeping reorganization at the U.S. State Department forced more than 1,300 employees out of their jobs on July 11, shocking veteran diplomats and civil servants who described the process as abrupt,

disrespectful, and deeply damaging to America's diplomatic corps. Laid-off staff—including experts in counterterrorism, human rights, and emerging technologies—warned that the cuts undermine U.S. foreign policy by erasing decades of institutional knowledge and critical global relationships. As departing colleagues left offices with boxes in hand, hundreds of remaining employees gathered to applaud their service in a poignant show of solidarity, while many decried the long-term harm to diplomacy, science, and advocacy for democratic values worldwide.

Abigail Williams / NBC News

Art and artifacts as instruments of diplomacy. Cultural gifts have long played a central role in diplomacy, serving as tools of persuasion, goodwill, and sometimes subtle coercion. The recent loan of the Bayeux Tapestry (pictured above) to Britain in exchange for Sutton Hoo treasures exemplifies how art can strengthen ties and convey messages beyond words. Throughout history, rulers and diplomats have leveraged gifts—from mechanical clocks in Japan to Rubens' paintings in England and the Statue of Liberty in the U.S.—to influence negotiations, symbolize alliances, and bridge cultural divides. Yet such gestures can also misfire, as shown when a camel gifted to France was mistakenly eaten. This enduring tradition underscores how art and artifacts remain potent instruments of international relations.

Patrick Wintour / The Guardian

MLB hesitation threatens to dim baseball's Olympic spotlight. Bill Shaikin of the *LA Times* highlights Major League Baseball's reluctance to commit its players to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, even as the NFL has embraced the opportunity to showcase flag football on the global stage. Despite superstar players like Shohei Ohtani, Aaron Judge, and Bryce Harper expressing enthusiasm for competing, MLB remains mired in logistical concerns, media contracts, and hesitation to interrupt the season. Olympic organizers argue the event offers an unmatched platform to elevate baseball's international profile, but unless MLB acts, Shaikin warns, the league risks being overshadowed while lesser rosters represent the sport on its home turf.

Bill Shaikin / Los Angeles Times

Flattery becomes the currency of global diplomacy. World leaders have increasingly embraced public flattery as a strategy to influence President Trump, though its effectiveness remains uncertain. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu recently nominated Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize in a highly publicized gesture, joining a pattern of leaders—including Canada's Mark Carney, NATO's Mark Rutte, and Ukraine's Zelensky—who have learned to "play the man" with praise to maintain good relations. Analysts note this shift reflects a more performative, ego-driven diplomacy, where private negotiations have given way to camera-ready tributes. However, such flattery has not resolved ongoing conflicts in Gaza or Ukraine, and critics question whether accolades like Netanyahu's can overcome Trump's unpredictable decisions or deliver lasting peace.

Michael D. Shear / New York Times

UN climate motion passes after fossil fuel language dropped. The U.N. Human Rights Council unanimously passed a climate change motion after the Marshall Islands withdrew an amendment explicitly calling for a fossil fuel phase-out, Reuters' Emma Farge reports. The

compromise avoided a contentious vote by softening language to a footnote on “defossilizing” economies, following objections from oil-producing nations like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. While the decision maintains global momentum on climate and human rights, critics lament its failure to directly address fossil fuels, even as extreme heatwaves underscore the urgency of stronger action.

Emma Farge / Reuters
