



District of Columbia Fire & EMS Department  
 Fire Prevention Division  
 1100 4<sup>th</sup> Street SW Suite E700  
 Washington, D.C. 20024



December 4, 2019

David Grossweiler, P.E.  
 A/OPR/RPM  
 Bureau of Administration  
 US Department of State

**RE:** Fire Department Access Road Dispute between the United States Department of State and United States Institute of Peace

Dear Sir:

This written correspondence is being forwarded to your office in response to the documentation that was submitted to the District of Columbia Office of the Fire Marshal for review and comment. Base on my review, the following findings are being brought fourth:

Complaint:

The United States Institute of Piece has expressed concern as it relates to fire department access to their buildings known as Building No. 6 and No. 7 which are located south of the United States Department of State's Potomac Annex. They have further expressed concern for their employee's ability to evacuate the grounds of said buildings during an emergency. Both concerns are due to the proposed permanent fence installation by the United States Department of State.

Background:

The main access road and gate on the grounds of the United States Department of State's Potomac Annex runs west from 23rd Street NW, uphill and is dully owned by the United States Department of State. Through agreement, the Unites States Department of State has allowed use of said road to the United States Institute of Peace to satisfy fire department access requirement for their two buildings (Building No. 6 and Building No. 7) located directly adjacent to the roadway to the south. The United States Department of State is planning to install a permanent fence structure which will enclose this roadway.

What is required?

Fire Department Access

**503.1.1 Buildings and facilities.** *Approved fire apparatus access roads shall be provided for every facility, building or portion of a building hereafter constructed or moved into or within the jurisdiction. The fire apparatus access road shall comply with the requirements of this section and shall extend to within 150 feet*

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*of all portions of the facility and all portions of the exterior walls of the first story of the building as measured by an approved route around the exterior of the building or facility.*

**503.2.1 Dimensions.** *Fire apparatus access roads shall have an unobstructed width of not less than 20 feet exclusive of shoulders, except for approved security gates in accordance with Section 503.6, and an unobstructed vertical clearance of not less than 13 feet 6 inches.*

The access road located on the United States Department of State's Potomac Annex grounds in my professional opinion is meeting these two requirements at this time. Fire apparatus will be able to navigate this roadway with minimal resistance in an emergency.

However, I do find that access challenges to the United States Institute of Peace Building No. 6 and Building No. 7 would be considered compromised if the permanent gate is installed on the property line of the United States Department of State's Potomac Annex.

Additionally, based on my November 12<sup>th</sup> site visit, the temporary gate that is currently in place shows that fire department access to the fire service features of the United States Institute of Peace buildings are compromised at this time. The fire hydrant and fire department connection are blocked by fencing. These are violations of the fire code and would be ordered corrected for other buildings within the city.



**507.5.4 Obstruction.** *Unobstructed access to fire hydrants shall be maintained at all times. The fire department shall not be deterred or hindered from gaining immediate access to fire protection equipment or fire hydrants.*

**507.5.5 Clear space around hydrants.** *A 3-foot clear space shall be maintained around the circumference of fire hydrants.*

**912.3 FDC Access.** *Immediate access to fire department connections shall be maintained at all times and without obstruction by fences, bushes, trees, walls or any other fixed or moveable object.*





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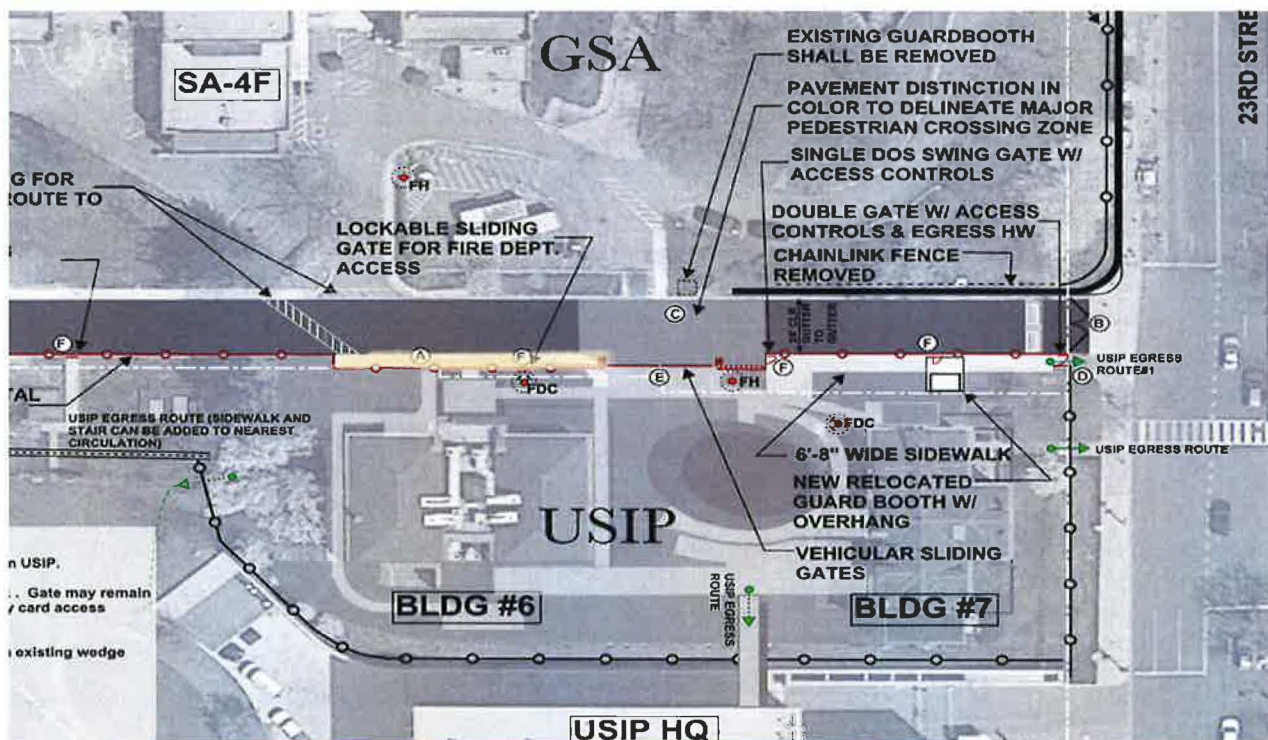
Recommended Solution:

To resolve these concerns, it is my recommendation that the United States Department of State ensure that the proposed gate is installed in accordance with the fire code section below.

**503.6 Security gates.** *Where security gates are installed across fire access roads, they shall have an approved means of emergency operation. The security gates and the emergency operation shall be maintained operational at all times. Electric gate operators, where provided, shall be listed in accordance with UL 325. Gates intended for automatic operation shall be designed, constructed and installed to comply with the requirements of ASTM F 2200. (IFC)*

The gate installed should be the type that has sliding access openings as those presented in the drawing below. This will prevent blocking any portion of the current fire department access in place upon its opening. Additionally, the gate should be designed so that the sliding access opening has the required dimensions to accommodate fire apparatus access to the grounds of the United States Institute of Peace.

Further, the gate should be constructed as to provide clear and unobstructed access to the fire hydrant and the fire department connection on the property of the United States Institute of Peace. Also, the sidewalk area in front of the FDC for Building No. 6 should be fenced in a way that makes it accessible on the United States Institute of Peace side.



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Evacuation Concern Recommended Solution:

The proposed fence installation should be installed as not to block any portion of the sidewalk area leading to the sidewalk exit point to the public way located at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street NW from the grounds of the United States Institute of Peace. This includes the sidewalk area on the inside of the proposed fence north of the United States Institute of Peace building No. 6 in the drawing above (shaded yellow). This portion of the sidewalk area is a part of their access to the public way and should not be fenced in to prevent its use by the employees of the United States Institute of Peace. Also it leads directly to the FDC access for the fire department.

**1027.5 Access to a public way.** *The exit discharge shall provide a direct and unobstructed access to a public way. (IFC)*

Even more, I recommend that the turnstile gate security gate at the sidewalk exit discharge on 23<sup>rd</sup> Street NW be replaced with a hinged swinging type security gate door housed with a push bar panic hardware type device for easy egress to the public way from the grounds should the need arise.

In closing, I have no objection to the fence configuration proposed by the United States Department of State. I strongly encourage my findings and recommendations to be taken into consideration based on the code related facts.

If you require further assistance or have question in relation to the written correspondence, please contact me in my office at (202) 727-3292.

Sincerely,

Tony L. Falwell  
 Deputy Fire Chief/ Fire Marshal  
 DC Fire and EMS Office of the Fire Marshal