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**From:** SMART Archive  
**Sent:** 6/4/2013 2:15:22 PM  
**To:** SMART Core  
**Subject:** SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE CABLE #4: CREATION, TRANSFER, AND RETENTION OF OFFICIAL "PERSONA" ACCOUNTS

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**REVIEW AUTHORITY:** Barbara Nielsen, Senior Reviewer

**MRN:** 13 STATE 84060  
**Date/DTG:** Jun 04, 2013 / 041805Z JUN 13  
**From:** SECSTATE WASHDC  
**Action:** AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI *IMMEDIATE* ;  
 ALL DIPLOMATIC AND CONSULAR POSTS COLLECTIVE *IMMEDIATE*  
**E.O.:** 13526  
**TAGS:** KPAO, OIIP, OEXC, SCUL  
**Pass Line:** FROM UNDER SECRETARY SONENSHINE TO CHIEFS OF MISSION AND PAOS  
**Subject:** SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE CABLE #4: CREATION, TRANSFER, AND RETENTION OF OFFICIAL "PERSONA" ACCOUNTS

1. This is the fourth in a series of cables providing posts and Washington bureaus with policy guidance on the use of social media for external communications. This cable provides guidelines on the creation, retention, and transfer of official "persona" social media accounts that represent a particular Department principal or individual official spokesperson.

2. This series of policy guidance cables stems from recommendations of the "Social Media Working Group" that R and the former Senior Advisor for Innovation convened in October 2012 to identify ways to advance the Department's strategic use of social media for 21st century statecraft. The working group's report is available at the R Sharepoint site on OpenNet (<http://r.state.sbu/>) or at this direct link: <http://snip.state.gov/412>.

3. Given the reality of frequent personnel changes within the Department, missions and bureaus should carefully consider and plan for the appropriate disposition of accounts when principals or official spokespersons arrive in and depart their positions. The outcomes should, above all, serve strategic considerations concerning the accounts' audiences, purposes, and overall value to the Department's mission. Generally, any position-based "persona" account should be passed from incumbent to incumbent, with a change in username during each transition, as needed (if personal name elements were included) but still referencing the same title/position information. Principals transferring between Department postings should initiate a planning process including their former and future missions or bureaus to arrive at a mutually beneficial arrangement for the retention or transfer of existing accounts. Principal officers-designate

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should wait to launch a new "persona" account for the position until after the incumbent has departed post, regardless of whether the incumbent has been active on social media.

4. Social media accounts created for communicating officially are to be considered official outlets and must remain in the control of the associated mission, bureau, or other Department of State organizational unit when principals or official spokespersons leave the Department. When naming new accounts, missions and bureaus should be aware that some platforms, such as Facebook, restrict the ability to change account or page names, so transitions between future incumbents may be complicated. For this reason, missions and bureaus may prefer to use Facebook and other platforms as the voice of the institution but establish "persona" accounts on Twitter, which is less resource- and time-intensive for principals and also allows changes to account names, display names, and biographic information at any time. For further guidance, see para 7.

5. Personnel should be aware that repurposing an existing personal social media account as an official account may subject the account to official clearance procedures and ethics controls (such as restrictions on political or commercial content), and/or could result in the individual's loss of the account upon his/her departure, as the Department may retain such repurposed personal accounts as official accounts. Principals and official spokespersons should be aware that followers and the public at large may regard their public communications on personal social media accounts regarding matters of official concern as official communications and should handle content as such as per 3 FAM 4170.

6. Any principals or official spokespersons leaving the Department who wish to take with them a personal social media account that has been used for official communication must seek case-by-case review (see para 7). If the Department does make an exception to allow a social media account to leave Department control, the username, page title, display name, or associated biographical information must indicate that the official has no ongoing official capacity at the Department.

7. Principals, official spokespersons, or other staff seeking additional guidance on this policy or wishing to initiate a case-by-case review should contact the Office of Innovative Engagement (OIE) in the Bureau of International Information Programs at OIESupport@state.gov. OIE will consult with bureaus and offices including but not limited to the Office of the Legal Adviser, the Bureau of Public Affairs, and affected regional or functional bureaus.

8. Minimize considered.

Signature: Kerry

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