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Douglas Kmiec, U.S. Ambassador to Malta, resigns

by Michael Sean Winters

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U.S. Ambassador to Malta, Douglas Kmiec, has resigned. His resignation will take effect on the Feast of the Assumption, Aug. 15, allowing him to conclude several projects, including the opening of a new embassy compound this summer.

Kmiec's resignation comes in the wake of a report from the Office of Inspector General that claimed Kmiec was spending too much time on writings and speeches unrelated to bilateral relations.

In his letter of resignation to Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, noted the report, which he said was based on "the unsupported speculation that someone doing as much writing as I have done could not have also been devoted to the embassy mission. The contrary proof, Madame Secretary, is in the strength of our embassy. Our work is careful, thorough, and timely, and I am fully apprised of all of it, and of course, fully supported by men and women of great dedication and ability."

Read Kmiec's letter to Secretary of State Clinton

Read Kmiec's letter to President Obama

He also noted that the tiny embassy in Malta was one of a few deemed "essential" in the run-up to the narrowly averted government shutdown, largely because of Malta's proximity to Libya, which is its nearest neighbor, and the influx of refugees from that war-torn country.

In an April 13 letter to President Obama, Kmiec wrote, "Recently, the Office of Inspector General completed a report on my Embassy in which it expressed dissatisfaction with the extent of time during my service that I've devoted to promoting what I know you believe in most strongly ? namely, personal faith and greater mutual understanding of the faiths of others as why way toward greater mutual respect. There is little question that the only true and lasting peace will be one that incorporates sensitivity to the world's faith traditions in diplomacy.

?.If I may be forgiven a dissent from the view adopted by the Inspector General, it is that I doubt very much whether one could ever spend too much time on this subject.

?I am grateful that the Embassy that you have entrusted to me is reported to be in exemplary condition and morale by the same report.?

In an email to *NCR*, Kmiec wrote: ?I do wish to emphasize that my letters of resignation have been tendered to the President and Secretary [of State] without pressure from either one or anyone. ? My resignation is not a product of force unless one means by force ? the force of principle.?

Kmiec, 59, was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Malta on September 2, 2009. An American legal scholar and author, he has written widely on constitutional law; jurisprudence; and the importance of inter-faith understanding to successful diplomacy.

When nominated to be ambassador to Malta by President Obama in 2009, he held the Caruso Family Chair in Constitutional Law at Pepperdine University School of Law.

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Kmiec received his undergraduate degree with honors from Northwestern University in 1973 and his law degree from the University of Southern California in 1976.

Kmiec served on the faculty at University of Notre Dame Law School from 1980 to 1999, with several leaves to serve in the Office of Legal Counsel (OLC). Having served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in OLC from 1985-88, he was nominated by President Ronald Reagan and confirmed by the Senate in 1988 as head of OLC. He returned to Notre Dame in 1989, where he directed the Thomas White Center on Law & Government and founded the Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy. Kmiec then served as the Dean and St. Thomas More Professor of the law school at the Catholic University of America until he assumed the endowed chair at Pepperdine, 2003-2009.

Kmiec has often written about the interation of religion and politics.

He originally supported former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, a Republican, during the primaries in the 2008 presidential race. When Romney dropped out of the race, Kmiec switched his support to then candidate Barack Obama and wrote a book explaining how a pro-life Catholic could back the Illinois Democrat despite his support for keeping abortion legal.

He was nominated by Obama in July 2009 to serve as ambassador to Malta.

Earlier this month he was criticized by the Inspector General of the State Department for spending too much time on unofficial duties. Kmiec took the view that this was a criticism of him by some state department officials for being too willing to discuss religion in public forum.

Kmiec has written for the *National Catholic Reporter* before and after his appointment to Malta.

Kmiec is married to Carolyn Keenan and together they have five children

See *Distinctly Catholic* for more information.

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