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FOCUS AREAS

Strategic Advisory
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LOCATION

Washington, D.C.

A three-time Ambassador, most recently to the Republic of Bulgaria, **Ambassador Kenneth Merten** attained the rank of Career Minister at the United States Department of State. From January 2019 to January 2021, Merten was the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Office of the Director General of the Foreign Service. He held the responsibilities of Acting Director General of the Foreign Service from January 2021 to October 2021, after which he served as Chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Haiti for six months.

From January 2017 until November 2018, he was the Acting Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, with responsibility for Canada, Haiti, Caribbean Affairs, and the Office of Policy, Planning and Coordination. He was the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Croatia from 2012 to August 2015. Before this, he served as the United States Ambassador to Haiti from 2009 to July 2012. He also served as Deputy Executive Secretary to U.S. Secretaries of State Clinton and Rice. He was awarded the 2011 Ryan C. Crocker Award for Outstanding Leadership in Expeditionary Diplomacy for his extraordinary leadership in the wake of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. In serving as Ambassador to Haiti, Merten oversaw the United States Government's on-the-ground efforts to provide immediate relief after the earthquake through the presence of 8,000 U.S. military personnel. In the days after the earthquake, he also oversaw the largest evacuation of American citizens since World War II.

Ambassador Merten's overseas assignments include the U.S. Embassy in Paris, the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels, the U.S. Embassy in Bonn during German unification, and four tours at the U.S. Embassy in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Merten's Washington experience includes two assignments in the State Department Operations Center, which supports the daily work and travel of the Secretary of State. He has also served in the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs and on the Cuba Desk, and worked for the Special Advisors on Haiti from 1993 to 1994.

He holds a B.A. from Miami University in Ohio and a Master of Public Administration from American University in Washington, D.C. Studies at the Université d'Aix-Marseille in France and at Karl Franzens Universitaet in Austria complement his other academic work. In July 2012, Ambassador Merten was decorated by Haiti's President with the Grande Croix of Honor and Merit, the fourth foreign diplomat to receive that honor in over 200 years of Haiti's independence. In January 2018, Merten was awarded the Shandling Humanitarian Award by Sean Penn and his relief organization, CORE (Community Organized Relief Effort), for his work in Haiti.