

Kerry gets his Twitter account back (Update)

February 4 2014



US Secretary of State John Kerry waves while boarding his plane at Franz-Josef-Strauss Airport in Munich, southern Germany, on February 2, 2014

A year into the job US Secretary of State John Kerry Tuesday enthusiastically relaunched his Twitter account, and appeared ready to flood the social networking site with messages.

"It only took a year but @StateDept finally let me have my own @twitter account. #JKTweetsAgain," Kerry wrote in his first tweet in some 298 days on his account @JohnKerry.

A few hours later he was trumpeting an event on Thursday, when he will drop the puck at a Washington Capitals game as a way of highlighting the US ice hockey team taking part in the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

"Do love hockey. Look forward to dropping the puck at @washcaps game Thursday. #GoTeamUSA#OlympicSpirit," wrote Kerry, who is a known hockey fan and player.

As his own hashtag #JKTweetsAgain resonated on the micro messaging site, Kerry wrote back "Thanks to all for the warm welcome back. Can't believe I stayed away so long."

He also followed one of his predecessors, former secretary of state Madeleine Albright, announced an "upcoming Asia trip" which will have climate change as a major theme, and referenced a statement on barrel bombs in Syria.

Kerry had been an avid tweeter during his Senate career, but had dropped the habit once he became the top US diplomat on February 1, 2013, although he would occasionally sign tweets on @StateDept with his initials.

On Monday he had paid tribute to US actor Philip Seymour Hoffman who died at the weekend from a suspected drugs overdose.

"Hard to believe Philip Seymour Hoffman's gone," Kerry tweeted on @StateDept, calling him an "incredible actor (who) really became Capote."

Kerry's spokeswoman Jen Psaki said: "We just determined that it was the right time, a year in, for the secretary to be able to share his own personal voice and engage with people around the world about foreign policy."

The relaunch of his own account "stemmed from the secretary's own desire to talk and engage with a public audience on foreign policy, making foreign policy less foreign," she added.

The State Department has actively embraced digital diplomacy as a means of passing its message directly around the world on social networking sites.

But there is also a tacit recognition of the hidden dangers of hastily written, ill-conceived tweets when trying to navigate difficult issues.

Ironically on the day Kerry got his tweeting mojo back, the US ambassador to Moscow Mike McFaul, who in 2012 became embroiled in a Twitter war with the Kremlin, stepped down.

In a Tweet, of course, Kerry paid tribute to McFaul on Tuesday saying "thanks for the extraordinary service."

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