

# Public Diplomacy: Reaching Beyond Traditional Audiences

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Chairman Wolf, Congressman Serrano and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. Your interest and commitment to public diplomacy is greatly appreciated, and I look forward to working with this Subcommittee.

In less than two months that I have been serving as the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, I have gained a much better sense and appreciation of what the Under Secretary's office, as well as our three bureaus, the public diplomacy offices of the regional bureaus, and our overseas posts do in the field of public diplomacy.

Over the last two years, much has been written and debated about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the United States (US) government's public diplomacy activities and programs overseas. Helpful and responsible reports by Ambassador Ed Djerejian's Advisory Group, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Heritage Foundation, and the Center for the Study of the Presidency, have served to help us examine that which our government does well and that which can be improved. Many of their insights and recommendations we can all agree upon.

As we all know, unfortunately our country has a problem in far too many parts of the world today—a problem we have regrettably developed over many years through both Republican and Democratic administrations, and a problem that does not lend itself to a quick fix or a single solution. Just as it has taken us many years to get into this situation, so too will it take many years of hard focused work to get out of it.

We need to continue to focus on those areas of the world where there has been a deterioration of the view of our nation and, at the same time, work equally as hard in those areas where the opinion of the United States has not changed to date.

We need to support those programs and activities that go to the bottom line of halting and reversing this deterioration. We need to constantly ask ourselves, "Is this activity or program still effective in today's world?" If it is, we should keep it. If it is judged to no longer contribute, then we should let it go.

We should listen more, not only to foreign audiences, but to our own personnel overseas. We will shortly be able to communicate and share new ideas amongst ourselves and across all regions through a new interactive Web site.

I believe we basically do a good job of advocating our policies and explaining our actions. Audiences may not agree or like what we say and do, but we are communicating our policies to governments and influential elites, including in the foreign media. Our

senior officials, Ambassadors and Embassy staff are out there explaining US policy, goals and initiatives. However, we can all do better.

In addition, we must do a better job of reaching beyond the traditional elites and government officials. Where we have not placed enough effort and focus is with the non-elites who, today much more so than in the past, are a very strong force within their countries. This must be a priority focus now and in the future. We only have to look at the outreach activities of many US corporations overseas to see the value of being present and engaged in neighborhoods that we in government have for too long neglected.

We must continue pursuing new initiatives and improving older ones in the hopes of reaching younger, broader and deeper audiences.

For instance:

- ◆ The Bureau of Public Affairs worked with our Embassy in Jakarta to broadcast this year's State of the Union Address live, with simultaneous interpretation in Bahasa Indonesian. One national radio station carried the entire broadcast live, reaching millions in this predominately Muslim nation.
- ◆ In China, growing numbers of media outlets, including official government media, are carrying material distributed via the International Information Bureau's Chinese-language Web site and Embassy information outreach.

I believe we can all agree that programs that bring Americans and foreigners together, whether in person or even in a video or press conference, create greater understanding. Last year, the State Department directly sponsored over 30,000 academic, professional and other exchanges worldwide.

Since 9/11, we have organized over 1,000 digital videoconferences between American officials and experts and foreign audiences. In the past year, we facilitated nearly 500 interviews and press conferences with senior officials from the Department of State for foreign media outlets.

As Under Secretary, I would like to see us expand our exchange programs however we can. Exchange programs constitute the single largest part of the State Department public diplomacy budget, \$316,633,000 in FY 2004, which regrettably is \$28,713,000 less than the President's request including a rescission of \$3,367,000. Within this amount, we must set priorities.

Through our School Internet Connectivity Program, 26,000 high school students from the Middle East, South Asia, South East Europe, Central Asian and the Caucasus currently collaborate in online projects on current affairs, entrepreneurship, health, and civic responsibility with US students.

Expanding the circle of opportunity is the concept behind Partnerships for Learning (P4L), an initiative of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), which seeks to extend our exchange programs to undergraduate college students and also high school students. P4L has initiated our first high school exchange program with the Arab and Muslim world. Today, 170 high school students from predominantly Islamic countries are living with American families and studying at local high schools. Another 450 high school students from the Middle East and South Asia will come here in 2004 for the next academic year. In addition, 70 undergraduate students, men and women, from North Africa and the Middle East will come to the US beginning next month for intensive English language training prior to their enrollment in university degree programs.

These are the kinds of initiatives I believe we should be pursuing. A new initiative which I am exploring is the idea of micro-scholarships for learning English and for attending our American Schools overseas. The US has been incredibly successful with micro-credits for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Why not take that same concept and apply it to education and English-language learning?

However we do it, we must engage, listen, and interact—especially with the young. They are the key to a future peaceful world.

Reaching out to the Arab and Muslim world is a top priority. With regard to exchanges, 25 percent of ECA's funding will go to programs in the Middle East and South Asia in FY 2004, compared to 17 percent in FY 2002. We have restarted the Fulbright program in Afghanistan after a 25-year hiatus. Twenty Afghan Fulbrighters will arrive next month. Just a few days ago, 25 Iraqi Fulbright students arrived here for orientation prior to beginning their regular studies.

Of course, the Muslim world extends beyond the Middle East and South Asia. We are mindful that programs in Africa, East Asia, and Eurasia are also priorities in this context. In addition to the Arab and Muslim world and reaching out to young audiences, some of the program priorities we hope to pursue include many recommended by Ambassador Ed Djerejian and others.

For example, we are taking steps to improve interagency coordination. The new State-US Agency for International Development (USAID) Joint Policy Council and State-USAID Management Council is intended to improve program coordination in public diplomacy as in other areas and help ensure the most effective use of program resources at USAID. Regrettably, all too often, our important and meaningful assistance to developing countries is going unnoticed and unappreciated, while other nations' assistance to these same countries is widely known and appreciated. This must change. Government-wide, we have to do a much better job of ensuring the US's efforts are widely known well beyond the foreign government officials. We can no longer afford for recipients overseas to have no idea that the people of the United States provide assistance to their country.

Another program which holds promise is American Corners. In recent years, we have had good results from our American Corners program, which, as you know, are

partnerships between our Embassies and local institutions like libraries, universities, and chambers of commerce. These corners are a source for information outreach at the grass-roots level.

The Bureau of International Information Programs is working with the Near Eastern Affairs and South Asia bureaus to establish 43 more American Corners in those regions in FY 2005. We currently have more than 100 American Corners around the world. In FY 2004, we are planning on opening 194 more in 64 countries. Of these 194, we will establish 58 in the Middle East and South Asia, including ten in Afghanistan and 15 in Iraq.

Virtual consulates, targeted Web-based outreach to cities where we lack an actual presence, may also offer a powerful tool for reaching wide audiences with general information about the United States, as well as specific information about commercial, visa and other issues. Virtual consulates can also provide links between foreigners and counterparts in the US with whom they might want to do business.

**English Teaching:** To strengthen English teaching programs, ECA is devoting an additional \$1,573,000 to these programs, creating five new Regional English Language Officer positions in FY 2005, bringing the total to 20. This is not enough, but it is a start. Whether through direct teaching or training instructors, English-language programs offer great scope for advancing public diplomacy objectives. For example, over the past five years, Embassy Damascus estimates that it has trained over 9,000 of Syria's 12,000 English-language teachers, a terrific example of outreach to the successor generation in Syria.

**Book Programs:** The Department has developed "book sets" about American history, culture, and values for younger audiences around the world. Embassies donate the "book sets" to local libraries and primary/secondary schools. As of September 2003, Embassies worldwide had distributed over \$400,000 worth of book sets. We are examining our overseas book buys and journal publications as well.

**Private Sector Cooperation:** I have created a new unit in my office to explore ways to draw on the expertise of the private sector to advance our public sector objectives. We can expand public-private partnerships, initially focusing on key industries such as technology, health care, and education. There is much more we can do in the field of sports and the arts, and I intend to pursue this.

Through ECA's new Culture Connect program, America's cultural leadership directly communicates with elite and non-elite foreign youth about our country and values. We currently have ten Culture Connect Ambassadors, and we are going to expand the program this year.

Television offers a powerful tool for public diplomacy and public affairs. We are using cooperative programming with local broadcasters and exploiting new distribution channels and technologies to create a fuller, more accurate picture of the US for general

audiences abroad. Over the past two years, we have funded several hundred journalist tours for broadcast and print media overseas, more than half of which have been in Muslim majority countries. We intend to increase these types of journalist tours.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, let me say again that we all know that there is much work to be done. We all know that our public diplomacy programs, those I have mentioned and others, must advance our national interests and do a better job of explaining not only our policies, but also who we are as a people.

In a world of finite funding, we must ensure that our public diplomacy resources are used as effectively as possible. We must prioritize and ask ourselves, "Is the activity I am doing getting the job done?" We must listen to our field force. Today the State Department has approximately 1,200 employees working in the field of public diplomacy. I maintain that every American, regardless of agency or department, has to make an extra effort to communicate, listen, and engage with not only our traditional audiences, but to audiences to whom we previously have not given as much effort and time. We must move beyond the walls of our Embassies overseas and foreign government offices.

I am realistically optimistic that we can achieve over time a better, healthier, and much more accurate impression of our nation and people. No one, most especially myself, underestimates the challenge and the difficult task at hand. The public diplomacy officials I work with are reaching, questioning, and searching for more effective ways to enunciate our policies and have our values understood. We will continue to make some mistakes but I truly believe we will ultimately get there. We have no choice. We must.

Thank you.\*

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\* *Editor's Note: Under Secretary of State Margaret Tutwiler delivered this testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and the Judiciary on February 4, 2004.*