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**Testimony**  
to the Committee on Government Reform  
Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International  
Relations  
United States House of Representatives

**Monday, August 23, 2004**

Chairman Shays and distinguished members of this subcommittee, I want to thank you on behalf of our Chairman Barbara Barrett, and the five other members of the bipartisan U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy for this opportunity to share my thoughts on the successes achieved by and the challenges facing U.S. public diplomacy.

The members of my commission are currently preparing the final version of our annual report for its release on September 28th. The report reviews areas of public diplomacy previously identified as challenges, recent progress, and areas that still need to be addressed. Today, I hope to present some of these challenges and advances to you and to address the recommendations presented in the 9/11 Commission report. Specifically, I will focus on five areas: broadcasting, exchanges and libraries, international youth opportunity fund, coordination of America's message, and how to measure success.

### **Broadcasting**

The 9/11 Commission report made the following recommendation on international broadcasting: "Recognizing that Arab and Muslim audiences rely on satellite television and radio, the government has begun some promising initiatives in television and radio broadcasting to the Arab world, Iran, and Afghanistan. These efforts are beginning to reach large audiences. The Broadcasting Board of Governors has asked for much larger resources. It should get them."

Bringing accurate and objective news and information to audiences in the Middle East is vital to counter myths about the United States and provide alternatives to Islamic extremism in the region. The U.S. held no effective presence in Middle Eastern media until recently. Broadcasting in the region was largely unprofitable for the private sector and undervalued by government agencies. Thus, media organizations with attitudes unfavorable to U.S. policies largely dominated the public sphere in countries where such sentiments were already widespread.

My friend Ken Tomlinson will certainly address the important issues in international broadcasting for you. I will simply highlight a few areas where the Commission has noted progress and challenges.

Radio Sawa was launched in March of 2002. Recent surveys have shown that the percentage of adults listening to Sawa on a weekly basis are: 73 percent in Morocco, 42 percent in Kuwait, 35 percent in UAE, 27 percent in Jordan, 11 percent in Egypt, and 41 percent in Qatar.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Alhurra, the new Middle East satellite network is a great advancement. Despite accusations that American broadcasting in the region was unlikely to succeed, initial surveys regarding the network are promising.

Satellite broadcasting has changed the international media landscape. Satellite technology now allows broadcasters to instantly reach audiences all over the globe even in areas that lack terrestrial broadcast infrastructures. Satellite broadcasting has seen exponential growth in the Middle East. Nilesat, the most popular satellite distributor in the Middle East doubled

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.bbg.gov/bbg\\_news.cfm?articleID=112&mode=general](http://www.bbg.gov/bbg_news.cfm?articleID=112&mode=general)

its household reach from 2003 to 2004. Where appropriate, these technologies should be further developed and employed.

Broadcasting English language programs establishes a mutually beneficial relationship with audiences that few other public diplomacy programs can match. Learning American English through programs like VOA's Special English builds psychological bonds and deeper cultural understanding while giving listeners tools they need to succeed in the world.

Yet these programs, despite being popular and efficient, are restricted by budget constraints. Despite increases in programming from 20 hours to 23.5 hours a week from FY2003 to FY2004, their budget increased only marginally.

Highly efficient initiatives, like Radio Sawa, Alhurra, and VOA English programs, should certainly receive adequate funding.

### **Exchanges and Libraries**

The 9/11 Commission report has also remarked on the sad state of our exchange and library programs, noting, "The United States should rebuild the scholarship, exchange, and library programs that reach out to young people and offer them knowledge and hope."

American exchange and library programs, though they may not show results for years, are essential to fostering support for the United States. Exchanges seek to establish the trust, confidence, and international cooperation with other countries that sustain and advance the full range of American national interests. Prominent alumni of these programs, such as Tony Blair and Hamid Karzai, are a testimony to the programs' importance.

There is an increased perception that U.S. borders are no longer open to friendly students and visitors. Populations overseas believe that waiting time for visas has increased while in reality they have decreased. Last year, the wait time for students and scholars who require special clearances averaged two months. Now, 80 percent of these visas are issued within three weeks. The U.S. needs to streamline procedures while communicating the "secure borders, open doors" message.

Physical, face-to-face exchange is also conducted through five types of American information centers: American Corners, Virtual Presence Posts, Information Resource Centers, American Presence Posts, and a few remaining American Centers or Libraries.

The remaining American Centers or Libraries are slated for closure due to heightened security concerns. In Mexico City and Casablanca, these centers see tremendous success by hosting English language programs, American films and Internet access. By reaching out to non-elite youth populations, these centers have been transformed from mere libraries into truly modern day "American dialogue centers."

Physical public diplomacy outposts staffed and owned by the United States present prime targets for terrorists throughout the globe. The Pallazzo Corpi, a former American Consulate and Library in Istanbul, Turkey, located in the city center, was targeted at least six times by terrorists until it closed last year.

Newer programs—American Corners, Virtual Presence Posts, Information Resource Centers, and American Presence Posts—provide similar functions while addressing security concerns. Over the past year, the Department of State has significantly ramped up its investment in American Corners and Virtual Presence Posts. There are now 143 American Corners in Africa, South Asia, East Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East and plans to open another 130 in 2004.

Each of these programs is the result of entrepreneurship of different State Department offices. The e-Diplomacy office administers the Virtual Presence Posts while the bureau of International Information Programs administers American Corners. American Presence Posts are designated by individual missions and must receive approval from Congress. To direct these programs with maximum effectiveness, they should be assembled under one cohesive and comprehensive task force and cumbersome procedures such as Congressional approval should be streamlined.

### **International Youth Opportunity Fund**

The 9/11 Commission also recommended that, "The U.S. government should offer to join with other nations in generously supporting a new International Youth Opportunity Fund. Funds will be spent directly for building and operating primary and secondary schools in those Muslim states that commit to sensibly investing their own money in public education."

Education in the Middle East is a tremendous challenge. Lack of teacher training, high pupil/teacher ratio and lack of access all contribute to the widespread illiteracy in the region. Deficiencies in skills and education can lead to large numbers of unemployed and unemployable, which, in turn, can lead to unstable situations that breed hate and terrorism.

USAID is the primary U.S. government agency that funds schools and teacher training. Because an American presence is not welcomed or presents too great a security risk, USAID only provides educational support in Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, Morocco, and Afghanistan. The international youth opportunity fund could overcome these challenges and may well present a great opportunity for America to work with other nations to improve educational opportunities in the Middle East.

### **Coordination and Message**

In this global, 24-hour communications environment, messages from the U.S. government to the world are not all communicated by the State Department. Messages emanate from the White House, the Department of Defense, the CIA, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, and even Congress. Without coordination of these communications, the U.S. government misses the magnifying effect that a unified message could have on overseas publics, or worse, shows inconsistencies that cost credibility.

No comprehensive inventory across agencies of all government public diplomacy programs and activities has ever been conducted. The sum of the public diplomacy budgets of these various agencies is probably in the billions of dollars. Such an evaluation might show where efforts should be expanded, combined or eliminated, particularly useful in an environment of scarce resources.

Several initiatives have attempted to better coordinate public diplomacy efforts. International Public Information Core Group, better known as the Fusion Team, provides information sharing capabilities for the varied government agencies involved in public diplomacy through a list serve and weekly meetings. Another coordinating body, the Office of Global Communications or OGC was established in January 2003 within the White House to coordinate strategic daily messages for distribution abroad, with the long-term goal of developing a National Communications Strategy. The OGC works with several hundred foreign journalists in Washington, providing them with access to White House events and briefings as well as interviews with the president and other top officials.

The public diplomacy Policy Coordination Committee or PCC was established in September of 2002 and is co-chaired by the National Security Council and the State Department. It ensures that all agencies work together to develop and disseminate America's messages across the globe. These two groups work together on strategic communications activities such as outreach to the Muslim world.

The creation of these mechanisms is not enough. They must also be more fully utilized and developed through an interagency strategic communications plan that clearly identifies messages, priorities, and target audiences.

### **Measurement**

One of the most important recommendations from the 9/11 Commission is their observations on the need for measurement in public diplomacy. "Agencies need to be able to measure success. Targets should be specific enough so that reasonable observers—in the White House, Congress, the media, or the general public—can judge whether or not the objectives have been obtained."

Understanding audiences and their views through measurement is essential to crafting effective messages. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. government spends only a tiny fraction of what the private sector does on public opinion polling: \$5 million compared to \$6 billion.

One way to assess program effectiveness might be through an evaluation of a test region. The selected region would receive increased funding for a variety of public diplomacy programs structured around a cohesive strategy and funded through supplemental funding from Congress. Using standard polling procedures as well as qualitative analysis, public perceptions would be measured at regular intervals and at the beginning and end of the initiative. If perceptions moved in a positive trajectory, the approach could be replicated in other areas and eventually expanded globally.

### **Conclusion**

As numerous reports including the 9/11 report have attested, public diplomacy needs to be a national security priority. International public opinion is influential in the success of foreign policy objectives and adequate resource allocation for public diplomacy will determine success in the areas I've mentioned today. The Commission is pleased to see this concept being recognized and looks forward to working with the Administration and Congress toward achieving a better American dialogue with the world.

Thank you, and I am now pleased to answer any of your questions.