

**Prepared Statement of
Chairman Thomas Kean and Commissioner Jamie Gorelick
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States
before the Subcommittee on National Security,
Emerging Threats and International Relations
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
August 23, 2004**

Chairman Shays, Ranking Member Kucinich, distinguished members of the Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations: We are honored to appear before you today. We want to thank you and the leadership of the House of Representatives for the prompt consideration you are giving to the recommendations of the Commission. We are grateful to you, and to the leadership of the House.

The Commission's findings and recommendations were strongly endorsed by all Commissioners—five Democrats and five Republicans. We share a unity of purpose. We call upon Congress and the Administration to display the same spirit of bipartisanship as we collectively seek to make our country and all Americans safer and more secure.

We cannot succeed with one tool alone

Terrorism is the number one threat today to the national security of the United States. Counterterrorism policy must be the number one priority for this President, and for any President, for the foreseeable future.

We cannot succeed against terrorism by Islamist extremist groups unless we use all the elements of national power: military power, diplomacy, intelligence, covert action, law enforcement, economic policy, foreign aid, homeland defense, and —yes—public diplomacy. If we favor one tool while neglecting others, we leave ourselves vulnerable and weaken our national effort. This is not just our view: it is the view of all policymakers. We cannot succeed against terrorism with one tool alone.

-- Secretary Rumsfeld testified and told us: He can't get the job done with the military alone. For every terrorist we kill or capture, more

rise up to take their place. He told us the cost-benefit ratio is against us.

-- Cofer Black told us: You can't get the job done with the CIA alone.

What became clear to us is that the U.S. government remains geared to cold-war threats, great power threats. Our government – still today – is not geared to deal with the threat from transnational Islamist terrorism. The threat to us today is not from great armies. The threat to us comes from the beliefs that propel 19 young men to take their own lives in a desire to inflict grave harm upon us.

The military struggle is part of the struggle we face, but the far greater struggle we face is the war of ideas. As much as we worry about Bin Ladin and al Qaeda – and we do – we worry far more about the attitudes of tens of millions of young Arabs and hundreds of millions of young Muslims.

Those who sympathize with Bin Ladin represent, in the long-term, a far greater threat to us. They represent the well-spring to refresh the doctrine of hate and destruction, no matter how many al-Qaeda members we capture or kill. For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, we welcome the opportunity this afternoon to address the question of public diplomacy.

Engage the Struggle of Ideas

The United States is heavily engaged in the Muslim world and will be for many years to come. This American engagement is resented. Polls in 2002 found that among America's friends, like Egypt—the recipient of more U.S. aid for the past 20 years than any other Muslim country—only 15 percent of the population had a favorable opinion of the United States. In Saudi Arabia the number was 12 percent. And two-thirds of those surveyed in 2003 in countries from Indonesia to Turkey (a NATO ally) were very or somewhat fearful that the United States may attack them.

Support for the United States has plummeted. Polls taken in Islamic countries after 9/11 suggested that many or most people thought the United States was doing the right thing in its fight against terrorism. By 2003, polls showed that “the bottom has fallen out of support for America in most of the Muslim world. Negative views of the U.S. among Muslims, which had been largely limited to countries in the Middle East, have spread. . . . Since last

summer, favorable ratings for the U.S. have fallen from 61% to 15% in Indonesia and from 71% to 38% among Muslims in Nigeria.”

Many of these views are at best uninformed about the United States. At worst, they were informed by cartoonish stereotypes, the coarse expression of a fashionable “Occidentalism” among intellectuals who caricature U.S. values and policies. Local newspapers and the few influential satellite broadcasters—like al Jazeera—often reinforce the jihadist theme that portrays the United States as anti-Muslim.

The small numbers of Muslims who are fully committed to Usama Bin Ladin’s version of Islam are impervious to persuasion. It is among the large majority of Arabs and Muslims that we must encourage reform, freedom, democracy, and opportunity --even though our own promotion of these messages is limited in its effectiveness simply because we are its carriers. Muslims themselves will have to reflect upon such basic issues as the concept of jihad, the position of women, and the place of non-Muslim minorities. We can promote moderation, but cannot ensure its ascendancy. Only Muslims can do this.

The setting is difficult. Forty percent of adult Arabs are illiterate, two-thirds of them women. One-third of the broader Middle East lives on less than two dollars a day. Less than 2 percent of the population has access to the Internet. The majority of older Arab youths have expressed a desire to emigrate, particularly to Europe.

In short, the United States has to help defeat an ideology, not just a group of people, and we must do so under difficult circumstances. How can the United States and its friends help moderate Muslims combat the extremist ideas?

Defining our message

As a Commission, we believe the United States must define its message. We believe we must define what we stand for. We should offer an example of moral leadership in the world, committed to treat people humanely, abide by the rule of law, and be generous and caring to our neighbors. America and Muslim friends can agree on respect for human dignity and opportunity.

To Muslim parents, terrorists like Bin Ladin have nothing to offer their children but visions of violence and death. America and its friends have a crucial advantage—we can offer these parents a vision that might give their children a better future. If we heed the views of thoughtful leaders in the Arab and Muslim world, a moderate consensus can be found.

Our vision of the future should stress individual educational and economic opportunity. Our vision includes widespread political participation and contempt for indiscriminate violence. It includes respect for the rule of law, openness in discussing differences, and tolerance for opposing points of view.

Where Muslim governments, even those who are friends, do not respect these principles, the United States must stand for a better future. One of the lessons of the long Cold War was that short-term gains in cooperating with the most repressive and brutal governments were too often outweighed by long-term setbacks for America's stature and interests.

American foreign policy is part of the message. America's policy choices have consequences. Right or wrong, it is simply a fact that American policy regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and American actions in Iraq are dominant staples of popular commentary across the Arab and Muslim world. That does not mean U.S. choices have been wrong. It means those choices must be integrated with America's message of opportunity to the Arab and Muslim world. Neither Israel nor the new Iraq will be safer if worldwide Islamist terrorism grows stronger.

The United States must do more to communicate its message. Reflecting on Bin Ladin's success in reaching Muslim audiences, Richard Holbrooke wondered, "How can a man in a cave out-communicate the world's leading communications society?" Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage worried to us that Americans have been "exporting our fears and our anger," not our vision of opportunity and hope.

Just as we did in the Cold War, we need to defend our ideals abroad vigorously. America does stand up for its values. If the United States does not act aggressively to define itself in the Islamic world, the extremists will gladly do the job for us.

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.

The United States should rebuild the scholarship, exchange, and library programs that reach out to young people and offer them knowledge and hope. Where such assistance is provided, it should be identified as coming from the citizens of the United States.

An Agenda of Opportunity – Education

The United States and its friends must stress educational and economic opportunity.

The United Nations has rightly equated “literacy as freedom.” The international community is moving toward setting a concrete goal—to cut the Middle East region’s illiteracy rate in half by 2010, targeting women and girls and supporting programs for adult literacy.

Help is needed to support the basics, such as textbooks that translate more of the world’s knowledge into local languages and libraries to house such materials. Education about the outside world, or other cultures, is weak.

For example, there is very little emphasis in Arab education systems on American history, European history, or Chinese history. There needs to be a broader understanding of cultures outside the world of Islam. (We should add that Americans, too, need to understand better the world of Islam. Our own education system in this respect also needs improvement.)

More vocational education is needed, too, in trades and business skills. The Middle East can also benefit from some of the programs to bridge the digital divide and increase Internet access that have already been developed for other regions of the world.

Education that teaches tolerance, the dignity and value of each individual, and respect for different beliefs is a key element in any global strategy to eliminate Islamist terrorism.

We recommend that the U.S. government should offer to join with other nations in generously supporting a new International Youth Opportunity Fund. Funds should 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.

An Agenda for Opportunity – Economics

Economic openness is essential. Terrorism is not caused by poverty. Indeed, many terrorists come from relatively well-off families. Yet when people lose hope, when societies break down, when countries fragment, the breeding grounds for terrorism are created. Backward economic policies and repressive political regimes slip into societies that are without hope, where ambition and passions have no constructive outlet.

The policies that support economic development and reform also have political implications. Economic and political liberties tend to be linked. Commerce, especially international commerce, requires ongoing cooperation and compromise, the exchange of ideas across cultures, and the peaceful resolution of differences through negotiation or the rule of law.

Economic growth expands the middle class, a constituency for further reform. Successful economies rely on vibrant private sectors, which have an interest in curbing indiscriminate government power. Those who control their own economic destiny soon desire a voice in their communities and political societies.

The U.S. government has announced the goal of working toward a Middle East Free Trade Area by 2013. The United States has been seeking comprehensive free trade agreements (FTAs) with the Middle Eastern nations most firmly on the path to reform. The U.S.-Israeli FTA was enacted in 1985, and Congress implemented an FTA with Jordan in 2001. Both agreements have expanded trade and investment, thereby supporting domestic economic reform. In 2004, new FTAs were signed with Morocco and Bahrain, and are awaiting congressional approval. These models are drawing the interest of their neighbors. Muslim countries can become full participants in the rules-based global trading system, as the United States considers lowering its trade barriers with the poorest Arab nations.

A comprehensive U.S. strategy to counter terrorism should include economic policies that encourage development, more open societies, and opportunities for people to improve the lives of their families and to enhance prospects for their children's future.

Conclusions

Mr. Chairman, we want to sum up by coming back the question you put to us, about the successes achieved by, and the challenges facing, U.S. public diplomacy efforts.

In short, public diplomacy faces enormous challenges and, frankly, has had few successes in recent years.

We are convinced that we cannot win the war on terrorism unless we also win the war of ideas. We need to win hearts and minds across the great swath of the globe, from Morocco to Malaysia.

We need to understand public diplomacy in the proper sense of the word. Public diplomacy is not just the mechanics of how we deliver the message. What matters most, by far, is the message itself. People in the Arab and Muslim world need to know that America is on their side – that America stands for political participation, personal freedom, and the rule of law; that America stands for educational and economic opportunity.

We cannot take on the responsibility for transforming the Arab and Muslim world. It is up to courageous Muslims to change their own societies. But the people of the Arab and Muslim world need to know that we are on their side, that we want better lives for them and their children and grandchildren. America's message to the Arab and Muslim world must be a message of hope.

We would be pleased to respond to your questions.