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# **National Security, Emerging Threats and International Relations**

**By**

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I experienced September 11, 2001, and all that has come afterwards from the perspective of living and working in an Arab Muslim country in North Africa. In Morocco, a strong ally of the United States and a nation of thirty million Muslims, regrettably, as in many nations today, too many of their citizens have a different view of the United States than we would desire. Much of what I learned about foreign views of our country was from listening, engaging and interacting with Moroccans from all walks of life, and much of what I learned was troubling and disturbing. I would never have known how our country is really viewed both the positives and the negatives had I not been serving overseas for the last two turbulent years.

In the two months that I have been serving as the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, I have gained a greater understanding and appreciation of what the Under Secretary's office, our three bureaus, the public diplomacy offices of the regional bureaus, and our overseas posts do in the field of public diplomacy. Over the past two years, much has been written and debated about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the U.S. government public diplomacy activities and programs overseas. Helpful and responsible reports by Ambassador Ed Djerejian's Advisory Group, Dr. Abshire's Center for the Study of the Presidency, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Heritage Foundation 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, especially in the Middle East and South East Asia, 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 or a simple plan. 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. I believe our strategic goals are clear. We need to continue to focus on those areas of the world where there has been a deterioration of the view of our nation. That deterioration is most stark in the Arab and Muslim world. At the same time, we must work equally as hard in those areas where the opinion of the United States has not changed to date.

We should listen more, not only to foreign audiences, but to our own public diplomacy personnel overseas. Shortly, all public diplomacy officers will be able to communicate and share new ideas amongst ourselves and across all regions through a new interactive website devoted to the concerns of public diplomacy. Effective policy advocacy remains a priority, and 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 U.S. policy, goals, and initiatives. We can all, of course, do better. We must do a better job of reaching beyond the traditional elites and government officials. We have not placed enough effort and focus on 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.

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We only have to look at the outreach activities of many U.S. corporations overseas to see the value of being present and engaged in neighborhoods that we in government have for too long neglected. 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. Developing effective mechanisms for evaluating program impact and effectiveness is a priority. We must continue to pursue new initiatives and improve older ones in the hopes of reaching younger, broader and deeper audiences. 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.

As Under Secretary, I would like to see us expand our exchange programs however we can. Last year, the State Department directly sponsored over 30,000 academic, professional and other exchanges worldwide. Exchange programs constitute the single largest part of the State Department public diplomacy budget, \$316,633,000 in fiscal year 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.

Allocation of exchange resources already reflects the priority of the Arab and Muslim world. Twenty-five percent of funding for exchanges will go to programs in the Middle East and South Asia in fiscal year 2004, compared to 17 percent in fiscal year 2002. We have restarted the Fulbright program in Afghanistan after a twenty-five year hiatus. Twenty Afghan Fulbrighters will arrive next month. Just a few days ago, twenty-five Iraqi Fulbright students arrived here for orientation prior to beginning their regular studies.

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

In addition, 70 undergraduate students — men and women — from North Africa and the Middle East will come to the U.S. beginning next month for intensive English language training prior to their enrollment in university degree programs. In other forms of engagement, since September 11, 2001, the Bureau of Public Affairs has organized over 1,000 digital video conferences 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.

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. Print and broadcast media covered the address extensively. One national radio station carried the entire broadcast live, reaching millions in this predominately Muslim nation. These are exactly the kinds of initiatives I believe we should be pursuing. A new initiative which I am exploring is the idea of micro-scholarships for English learning and to attend our American Schools overseas. The U.S. 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?

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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 constitutes partnerships between our embassies and local institutions like libraries, universities and chambers of commerce. These corners are a source for information outreach at the grassroots level. We currently have more than 100 American Corners around the world. In fiscal year 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 fifteen in Iraq. Just last month, we opened two new American Corners in Bosnia, Herzegovina, in Zenica and Tuzla, cities with sizeable Muslim populations and religious teaching centers.

Virtual consulates, could be another tool for reaching wide audiences. The virtual consulate concept is a commitment by personnel in a U.S. mission overseas to periodically travel to a chosen outlying district in order to make live personal presentations and informally mix with the people of the visited region. The travel is supported by a special website that celebrates connections between the Americans and the people and institutions of that region.

- **English Teaching:** To strengthen English teaching programs, ECA is devoting an additional \$1,573,000 to these programs. 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 excellent example of meaningful outreach.

- **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:** We have created a new position 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. We know from past experience that an effective outreach to youth is through sports activities. 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 co-operative programming with local broadcasters and exploiting new distribution channels and technologies to create a fuller, more accurate picture of the U.S. for general audiences abroad. Over the past two years, we have funded several hundred foreign journalists both 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. However we do it, we must engage, listen and interact especially with the young. They are the key to a future peaceful world.

Interagency coordination is essential to the effectiveness of public diplomacy. The President's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), whose mission is to support economic, political and educational reform in the Middle East and North Africa, integrates policy, public diplomacy, development and technical assistance programs throughout the region. We will continue working with the White House to insure close coordination of our messages. The White House coordinates a daily conference call on public diplomacy vis-a-vis Iraq.

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The new State-USAID Joint Policy Council and the State-USAID Management Council are intended to improve program coordination in public diplomacy, as in other areas, and help ensure the most effective use of program resources in both the Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. 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 insuring that the U.S.'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. 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 Department of State 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.