

**PUBLIC DIPLOMACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND
SOUTH ASIA: IS THE MESSAGE GETTING
THROUGH?**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

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MAY 16, 2007
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Serial No. 110-69
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Printed for the use of the Committee on Foreign Affairs



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/>

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U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

35-428PDF

WASHINGTON : 2007

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
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WEDNESDAY, MAY 16, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:12 a.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gary L. Ackerman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Good morning. The Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia will come to order.

At the end of the Cold War, there was a great desire to review and reorganize the foreign policy structures of the United States in order to better address the challenges of a world where communism had been defeated. One of the casualties of this reorganization was the United States Information Agency, which, up until 1999, was focused on promoting America's interests, culture, and policies in a variety of ways to diverse global audiences.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, public diplomacy was regarded as less important. After all, the communists were gone, so why did we need to explain ourselves?

The September 11th attacks made it painfully clear who we should be explaining ourselves to and made it equally clear that public diplomacy should always have been a priority of U.S. foreign policy.

Since USIA was abolished, there have been more than 30 separate reports and articles concerning public diplomacy, from which the Department of State has claimed it drew valuable suggestions. The 9/11 Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, The Rand Corporation, the United States Institute for Peace, the Public Diplomacy Council, the Government Accountability Office, and even the State and Defense Departments, have all issued reports and calls for action regarding the urgency of effective public diplomacy.

Many of these reports called for identifying what America stands for and communicating that clearly. Ten of the reports called for defining an overall strategy. Others called for reorganizing the public diplomacy function again.

What is most distressing is that 8 years after the USIA was abolished and 5½ years after the September 11th attacks, GAO testified last month that "the government lacked an interagency com-

munication strategy.” Like so many other foreign policy endeavors with the administration, there is no plan.

Last year, the President established a new Policy Coordination Committee on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications. Among the things this new committee is doing is developing a pilot program in 18 countries where our overseas posts will be examined. We will examine the local media and environment and identify target audiences to help develop a strategy to counter extremism.

Sounds good, but USIA used to do precisely this and more. The USIA developed a comprehensive communication strategy in each country around the world. So in not having a strategy, the administration has decided to reinvent the wheel before coming up with one. This would be funny if the mission were not so important.

No discussion of public diplomacy would be complete without some mention of broadcasting. To be sure, Radio Sawa, Alhurra, Radio Farda, and VOA’s Persian and Urdu language television play crucial roles in providing news and information to audiences in ways they would not otherwise see or hear it. While I do not doubt that broadcasting adds value, I, like others, have a hard time in quantifying that value.

Simply measuring audience size is great, but it does not tell us how much or whether our broadcasting influences those who receive it. I have heard, anecdotally, that Radio Sawa is very popular among its target audience in the Arab world, but I have also heard that those who listen to it turn it off when the news comes on because they know it is an American broadcast. If that is true, how does that help us?

There are questions of audience sampling that, with the right measurements, are ultimately knowable. More troubling is the actual content of some recent broadcasting on Alhurra. Press reports have detailed instances where Hassan Nasrallah was broadcast live, giving a speech inciting a crowd to violence and death against Israel and Israelis, in clear violation of the network’s guidelines prohibiting terrorists from using their programs as a platform.

Similarly, Alhurra broadcast Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, Hamas Leader Ismael Haniyeh discussing the Mecca Accord and, most distressingly, carried sympathetic coverage of the Holocaust Deniers Conference in Tehran. The last incident is particularly offensive. There is absolutely no doubt that the Holocaust occurred, none, and to provide news coverage in such a way as to legitimize those who suggest that it simply did not happen is outrageous.

Why are American taxpayer dollars used to spread hate, the lies and propaganda of these nuts, when our goal was to counter them?

The Broadcasting Board of Governors has provided explanations for both Nasrallah’s speech and the Haniyeh coverage. The coverage of Haniyeh, one of the parties to the Mecca Accord, I understand. I do not like it, but I understand it. The explanation for the Nasrallah speech, however, just does not stand up. Was it really a miscommunication? He spoke for more than 30 minutes live on our network, inciting violence against Israel. Doesn’t anybody watch the broadcasts are they are occurring to ensure that what is supposed to be broadcast actually is?

Notwithstanding the BBG's explanation, I can only conclude, based on the trend of the last few months, that Alhurra's new executives have decided that pandering is a way to greater audience share. I am sure many members agree with me that if this is the new direction of Alhurra, it is the wrong direction, and the American taxpayers certainly should not be made to pay for it if it continues.

I would now like to recognize members of the committee who might have opening statements and, first, Mr. Berman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

The subcommittee will come to order. At the end of the Cold War there was a great desire to review and re-organize the foreign policy structures of the United States to better address the challenges of a world where communism had been defeated. One of the casualties of this reorganization was the United States Information Agency, which up until 1999, was focused on promoting America's interests, culture and policies in a variety of ways to diverse global audiences. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, public diplomacy was regarded as less important, after all the communists were gone, so why did we need to explain ourselves? The September 11 attacks made it painfully clear who we should be explaining ourselves to and made it equally clear that public diplomacy should always have been a priority of U.S. foreign policy.

Since USIA was abolished, there have been more than 30 separate reports and articles concerning public diplomacy from which the Department of State has claimed it drew valuable suggestions. The 9/11 Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Rand Corporation, the United States Institute for Peace, the Public Diplomacy Council, the Government Accountability Office even the State and Defense Departments have all issued reports and calls for action regarding the urgency of effective public diplomacy. Many of these reports called for identifying what America stands for and communicating that clearly. 10 of the reports recommended defining an overall strategy. Others called for reorganizing the public diplomacy function, again. But what is most distressing is that 8 years after USIA was abolished and 5 and 1/2 years after the September 11 attacks, GAO testified last month that "the government lacked an interagency communications strategy." Like so many other foreign policy endeavors of this Administration, there is no plan.

Last year, the President established a new Policy Coordination Committee on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications. Among the things this new committee is doing is developing a pilot program in 18 countries where our overseas posts will examine the local media environment and identify target audiences to help develop a strategy to counter extremism. Sounds good, but USIA used to do precisely this and more. USIA developed a comprehensive communications strategy in each country around the world. So in addition to not having a strategy, the Administration has decided to re-invent the wheel before coming up with one. This would be funny, if the mission weren't so important.

No discussion of public diplomacy would be complete without some mention of broadcasting. To be sure, Radio Sawa, al-Hurra, Radio Farda and VOA's Persian and Urdu language television play crucial roles in providing news and information to audiences in ways they would not otherwise see or hear it. While I don't doubt that broadcasting adds value, I like others, have a hard time quantifying that value. Simply measuring audience size is great but it doesn't tell us much about how or whether our broadcasting influences those who receive it. I have heard, anecdotally, that Radio Sawa is very popular among its target audience in the Arab world, but I've also heard that those who listen turn it off when the news comes on because they know it's an American broadcast. If that's true, how does it help us?

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distressingly carried sympathetic coverage of the Holocaust denier's conference in Tehran.

The last incident is particularly offensive. There is absolutely no doubt that the Holocaust occurred. None. And to provide news coverage in such a way as to legitimize those who suggest that it didn't is simply outrageous. Why are American taxpayer dollars used to spread the hate, lies and propaganda of these nuts, when our goal was to counter them?

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I would now like to recognize my distinguished friend from Indiana, the Ranking Member, Mr. Pence.

Mr. BERMAN. I think, when we come to the second panel, Mr. Chairman, I will, in the context of my questions, make my statements. Many of the things you have said concern me as well, and I think I will refrain from expanding until we get to the questions of the second panel.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for having this hearing, and certainly welcome to this very distinguished panel. This is, indeed, a very important subject. It is one that is probably at the heart of our foreign policy.

Specifically, the question, is how do we win the hearts and minds of foreign peoples so that we may foster productive relationships with them and their governments to mutual benefit?

Chairman Ackerman asked the question in the title of this hearing, is the message getting through? That is certainly the key question in our foreign policy today. My answer to that question would be, seemingly not. Terrorism attacks are up worldwide, domestic and international public opinion of the United States is down significantly and, in many parts of the world, at an all-time low.

It seems that even in countries who recently have been supportive of American foreign policy, some of our natural allies, public opinion of our efforts has shifted to the negative, particularly, for example, in areas and nations where we have had very productive relationships: Germany, for example; France; even, to a measure, in Great Britain, our most staunch ally.

So it begs the question, then, in spite of all of the myriad programs that the State Department has initiated to win over foreign peoples, why does the world, the Muslim world, in particular, continue to hate us so? That is a very frank question, but it is one that goes to the heart of our foreign policy and should be the overwhelming objective as we move forward. As one who has had an opportunity to travel the various parts of the world, especially the central thrust of our Foreign Affairs Committee, improving the image of the United States abroad has to be our number one priority.

I think the answer to the question is that our broader foreign policy and, quite honestly, this administration's hawkishness has

probably influenced our efforts. In essence, the State Department is working at cross purposes. We have people like you, our panelists, who are working very hard.

I have looked at each of your backgrounds, and you are working hard as grassroots levels in many Middle Eastern nations to create a very favorable view of the United States, and I commend you for that effort, and yet we have the upper echelons of the Departments and this administration seeking to spread this democracy by force, an arrogant foreign policy that has yielded negative results and, in many aspects, the rejection of what is known as a “go-it-alone attitude” of this administration.

I think that all of this must be examined, and we must pull the covers off if we are to deal with the fundamental issue, and that is the United States of America is better than what people out there are thinking and saying we are. We owe it to ourselves and our future generations to approach this issue of how to get our image back where it needs to be, as that great nation, like a shining light on the hill, providing the future light for our generation.

It is my hope that our panel will speak candidly today about whether or not you feel that you are being hindered in your efforts by our present foreign policy design and then, quite frankly, to tell us what it is, in your opinion, that we need to be doing better.

I look forward to your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Scott. Mr. Fortenberry?

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the offer. I would prefer just to proceed straight to the testimony.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. We are awaiting the arrival of our distinguished ranking member, but, in the meantime, there is no meantime. Timing is everything. Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman. I would like to express my welcome to our distinguished witnesses as well. I look forward to your testimony.

We have a good story to tell of our country’s efforts in the Middle East and across the world, and yet we seem to struggle in advocacy of our position. On this subject, our distinguished former chairman of the House International Relations Committee, Henry Hyde, asked several years ago, and I quote: “How is it that the country that invented Hollywood and Madison Avenue has such trouble promoting a positive image of itself overseas?” How, indeed.

One witness before this subcommittee last week argued that “it is the policy, stupid.”

Mr. Chairman, I am not one who believes we should significantly reorder our policy toward the Middle East. I am proud of America’s role in the world and our values. I second Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes’ advocacy of a diplomacy of deeds. We have many deeds we can highlight, but we must assuredly do a better job of making our own case.

Mr. Chairman, sometimes we do ourselves no favors. We correctly criticize Aljazeera for unfiltered terrorist propaganda, and then we allow what seems to be unfiltered terrorist propaganda in our own product. I join the chairman and all good Americans’ outrage in the cases where it occurred at Alhurra. I applaud our witness, Mr. Blaya, for acknowledging these as “significant and unprofessional breaches.”

The task that is before Alhurra is one with serious implications for the success of our foreign policy. Just as with Radio Free Europe in the Cold War, much is put on Alhurra's shoulders to faithfully present American values to a captive audience. To that end, there is a great deal of controversy over whether it is currently meeting that requirement.

I have a number of specific concerns. Are the American taxpayers getting their money's worth? Is the diversity of U.S. opinion actually being represented? Is there whistleblower protection for Alhurra employees to report problems within? Is there transparency in decision-making, contracting, and funding, and what editorial control is there over content that goes out over the airwaves, specifically regarding the current controversies?

Is Alhurra's internal performance review the appropriate response to an isolated incident, or is it damage control, too little, too late? Why did it take several months to address this, and why will the report be another 5 to 6 months in coming?

Mr. Chairman, our oversight should be corrective and not punitive. At the same time, we must strengthen this important tool of soft power. Thank you again for calling this important hearing, and I am anxious to hear from our witnesses. I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Pence.

We will now turn to our first panel. Mr. Jeremy Curtin is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, with the rank of minister counselor. He was appointed coordinator of the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs in April 2007, having previously served as principal deputy coordinator and acting coordinator. Mr. Curtin joined the Foreign Service in 1975 and has served in Europe and Asia, as well as in Washington.

Before receiving his current appointment, he served as senior adviser and executive secretary to the Under Secretary of State for public diplomacy and public affairs from 2002 to 2005.

Mrs. Gretchen Welch is currently the director of Under Secretary Karen Hughes' Office of Resources, Policy, and Planning. She worked in this position since August 2005. Mrs. Welch joined the Foreign Service in 1980 and has served in Europe, the Middle East, and South Asia. Her most recent position was as executive director, Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, where she oversaw the management operations of the 54 United States Embassies in Europe and Eurasia.

Mrs. Welch, it is good to have you. Your able husband will be occupying one of those chairs next week, and we are looking forward to that as well, even though he might not be.

Mr. Thomas A. Farrell was named as deputy assistant secretary for academic programs in May 2002. In this capacity, he is responsible for all academic programs sponsored by the Department of State. These include the Fulbright Program, the Humphrey program, teacher exchange programs, English language programs, study-of-the-United-States programs, and programs for undergraduate students.

Mr. Farrell came to the Department of State with 14 years of experience in the private, nongovernmental arena that was concentrated on education, professional development, training, and exchange.

Ms. Alina L. Romanowski currently serves as the deputy assistant secretary for professional and cultural exchanges in the Department of State's Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs. She came to the Department of State in June 2003 to establish a new office to oversee and manage the President's Middle East Partnership Initiative and served as director. Prior to her appointment at the Department of State, she served as the founding director of Near East-South Asia Center for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University since December 2000.

Ms. Romanowski has served also in both the Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agencies.

Mr. Curtin, I understand you will be presenting the testimony, and then you and the rest of the panel will be available for questions. That makes it easier. Without objection, your entire testimony will be made part of the record, and you might proceed.

STATEMENT OF MR. JEREMY CURTIN, COORDINATOR, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. CURTIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Pence, members of the subcommittee.

As a Foreign Service officer with USIA for 25 years and now with the State Department, the subject of this hearing is very near and dear to my heart. I look forward to answering your questions.

I would like to make a few abbreviated remarks and then, as you said, put a longer statement into the record.

Public diplomacy has a global mission and the challenge is not just one of the moment, but one of years and generations. We face particularly critical challenges right now, however, in the Middle East and South Asia where violent extremists seek to spread an ideology of tyranny and hate. Conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan make our task more difficult even though we are present there at the invitation of democratically elected governments, and our involvement is critical to our own national security.

Our public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East and South Asia, like our efforts worldwide, are guided by a three-point strategy set forth by Under Secretary Hughes: First, to offer people throughout the world a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in America's belief in freedom, justice, and respect for all; second, to isolate and marginalize violent extremists and confront their ideology of tyranny and hate; and third, to foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people in different countries.

We are focusing our programs in three areas: Expanding our education and exchange programs, improving communication, and highlighting the diplomacy of deeds. We are also expanding the reach of our programs to include key influencers—women, journalists, teachers, clerics, and religious educators—who have the capacity to influence opinion more broadly within their own societies. We have placed special emphasis on youth and engaging individuals from underserved and disadvantaged sectors of society.

Our people-to-people programming, including student and professional exchanges and English-teaching programs, is one of the most effective things we can do. Participation in the last 3 years has

grown from 27,000 to nearly 39,000, and will increase to more than 42,000 with support for our budget requests.

Our flagship Fulbright Program, in Fiscal Year 2006, was at a record high of 1,300 awards to American students. The Fulbright Program in Iraq is the largest in the Middle East region. In each of the past 3 years, 35 academically well-qualified Iraqis have come to the United States for graduate-level study. Additionally, the State Department is partnering with USAID to expand the Fulbright Program in Pakistan.

Our most recent evaluation showed that the overwhelming majority of students in our English Access Microscholarship Program reported a more favorable view of America as a result of their studies. The Access program provides underserved students, aged 14 to 18 in countries with significant Muslim populations, the opportunity to study English, gain an appreciation of American culture and values, and increase their ability to participate successfully in the socio-economic development of their countries and in future study and exchanges in the United States. Since Fiscal Year 2004, the program has successfully engaged over 10,000 students, many of them from the Middle East and South Asia.

Since 2002, our International Visitor Leadership Program has invited religious educators from Saudi Arabia to participate in programs focusing on religious and public education, religious tolerance, and United States attitudes toward Islam.

It is important that people in these regions realize that our efforts against terrorism are not, in fact, a war on Islam. It is, rather, an effort to attack terrorism itself, but it is not a war on Islam.

Through the Citizen Dialogue and Strategic Speakers programs, we are sending influential American Muslims to speak with audiences in the regions. These credible voices have been a forceful corrective to widely held misperceptions of Muslim life in America. Through ECA's Faith and Community grants, we are further promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding between the Muslim world and America.

Our public diplomacy has also helped us build bridges where none have existed for nearly 30 years—with the Islamic Republic of Iran. This fiscal year, we launched the first Iranian International Visitors Program since 1979. Under the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program, young Iranian English teachers are currently teaching Persian at U.S. colleges and universities. In January 2007, 20 American athletes and coaches representing the USA Wrestling Federation competed in Iran.

The State Department's Digital Outreach Team and Arabic language Web-based programs have established a U.S. Government presence in Arabic cyberspace, ensuring that U.S. policies and values are included in the conversation about issues central to the ideological debate. Our Persian language Web site serves as a virtual embassy to Iran and allows United States officials and others to discuss issues like nuclear nonproliferation with the Iranian people.

The Rapid Response Unit monitors foreign media and provides Embassies and U.S. military commands with background and talking points. New media hubs in Dubai, Brussels, and London facilitate engagement by United States officials with Arabic and other

foreign media, especially television, in real time. Our presence on Arabic media has increased 30 percent since the hubs were established last fall.

We have developed integrated, interagency plans to combat ideological support for terrorism in key countries under the Pilot Country Initiative. These plans identify specific populations and recommend programs to reach them. We hope, with additional funding, to be able to begin implementing these programs fully. Lessons learned and best practices under the initiative will be applied to other countries around the world.

At the direction of Under Secretary Hughes, we have created a new Counterterrorism Communications Center—an interagency initiative to develop and deliver effective messages to undermine ideological support for terror and to counter terrorist propaganda. The Counterterrorism Communications Center, like the Pilot Country Initiative, the Rapid Response Unit, the Digital Outreach Team, and other programs, is an operational outgrowth of the Policy Coordination Committee on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication under Under Secretary Hughes.

We are also emphasizing the “diplomacy of deeds,” the concrete ways in which America is helping people around the world to have better lives, especially in areas people care most about: Education, health, and economic opportunity. Under Secretary Hughes has established a new office of private sector outreach that has, to date, leveraged more than \$800 million in private disaster relief, job training, and education and exchange programs through partnerships with American companies, foundations, and NGOs.

We are committed to evaluating our programs and funding those that are most effective. We have instituted a culture of measurement across public diplomacy, building on the success of our education and cultural affairs office that has had an evaluation program in place for some years. We have just completed the ten thousandth survey on a new, online evaluation system.

I would like to close by echoing remarks made by Under Secretary Hughes. We must establish a wide-ranging and frank conversation with critical regions, such as the Middle East and South Asia, and reinforce the common interests and values that bind us together as human beings so that the next generation will inherit a safer and better world. Not a more divided and dangerous one. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Curtin, Ms. Gretchen, Mr. Farrell and Ms. Romanowski follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. JEREMY CURTIN, COORDINATOR, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS, MRS. GRETCHEN WELCH, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF POLICY, PLANNING AND RESOURCES, MR. THOMAS A. FARRELL, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS, BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND MRS. ALINA L. ROMANOWSKI, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PROFESSIONAL AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES, BUREAU OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Chairman Ackerman, Congressman Pence, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you on public diplomacy in the Middle East and South Asia.

America’s public diplomacy is neither Democratic nor Republican but American, and we appreciate the bipartisan support we have received from Congress.

As members of this subcommittee well know, public diplomacy is a long-term effort that will require ongoing support for programs and personnel for years to

come—yet we are making great progress and putting in place the institutions and partnerships that are critical to our success.

We face particularly critical challenges in the Middle East and South Asia, where violent extremists seek to spread an ideology of tyranny and hate. We also recognize that many people in the region disapprove of our presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, and while we are present in both countries at the invitation of democratically elected governments, nevertheless, this attitude can make it more difficult to reach audiences with our message.

Our public diplomacy efforts in the Middle East and South Asia, like our efforts worldwide, are guided by the three-point strategy set forth by Under Secretary Karen Hughes:

- To offer people throughout the world a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in America's belief in freedom, justice, opportunity and respect for all;
- To isolate and marginalize the violent extremists and confront their ideology of tyranny and hate; and
- To foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world.

We are focusing our programs in three areas: expanding our education and exchange programs, improving communications and highlighting the diplomacy of deeds. We are also expanding the reach of our programs to include key influencers—women, journalists, teachers, clerics and religious educators, who have the capacity to influence opinion more broadly within their societies. We have placed special emphasis on youth, and engaging individuals from underserved and disadvantaged sectors of society.

Our people-to-people programming, including student and professional exchanges and English teaching programs, is one of the most effective things we can do to build better relationships around the world. Participation in these programs has grown in the last three years from 27,000 to nearly 39,000 and will increase to more than 42,000 with support for our budget requests. We are reaching key audiences in new and innovative ways.

Our flagship Fulbright program in FY06 is at a record high of 1,300 awards to American students. Last year, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) launched a new Fulbright award to bring the most talented overseas students to the U.S. for Ph.D. study in science and technology fields. The program is designed to showcase U.S. expertise in science and technology and to demonstrate that the U.S. continues to welcome international students in those fields. The Bureau also sponsored a special "From Labs to Markets" enrichment seminar in San Jose, California, for 80 Fulbright science, technology and business students from the Muslim world.

The Fulbright student program in Iraq is the largest in the Middle East region. In each of the past three years, 35 academically well-qualified Iraqis have come to the United States for graduate level studies to expand and polish their skills in critical areas such as public administration, public health, international relations, economic development, and teaching English as a foreign language. The numbers of applicants to the program continues to be strong this year, with the national merit-based recruitment closing in Iraq May 31.

In Pakistan, the Fulbright Program, through a partnership with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), sponsored 133 Pakistani Fulbright students to study in the U.S. in the fields of economics, finance, civil engineering, and computer science. The number of Fulbrighters from Pakistan has increase to approximately 175 this year.

Our new National Security Language Initiative (NSLI), is designed to increase dramatically the number of Americans learning critical need foreign languages, including Arabic, Hindi, Urdu and Farsi. From more than 4,200 applicants in 2006, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Exchanges awarded scholarships to 167 U.S. undergraduate and graduate students and 43 high school students from 43 states and the District of Columbia for intensive overseas summer language learning. In 2007 we received more than 6,000 applications and are awarding 365 scholarships.

Our most recent evaluation showed the overwhelming majority of students in our Access English language program reported a more favorable view of America as a result of their studies. The Access program provides underserved students aged 14 to 18 in countries with significant Muslim populations the opportunity to study English, gain an appreciation for U.S. culture and values, and increase their ability to participate successfully in the socio-economic development of their countries and

in future study and exchanges in the U.S. Since FY 2004, the program has successfully engaged over 10,000 students in underserved communities in 45 countries, many of them in the Middle East and South Asia.

Another program with a youth focus is YES (Youth Exchange and Study). YES was launched in 2002 to provide scholarships for secondary school students from countries with significant Muslim populations to spend up to one academic year in the U.S. Nearly 300 high school students from across the NEA region, including the 33 from Lebanon who left the country under difficult circumstances last year, are about to complete their 2006–2007 academic year.

Since 2002, our International Visitor Leadership Program has invited religious educators from Saudi Arabia to participate in programs focusing on religious and public education, religious tolerance, and U.S. attitudes towards Islam. Embassy Riyadh reports that response to the program is overwhelmingly positive. Last year, 22 Saudi imams and scholars participated in the program, bringing the total number of alumni participants to more than 120. The program in Iraq is one of the largest in the world, and in line with last year, we expect to host more than 80 up and coming young and mid-career Iraqi leaders on thematic visits to the United States to introduce them to our country, people, culture, values and core beliefs.

Through the Citizen Dialogue and Strategic Speakers programs we are sending influential American Muslims to speak with audiences in the region. These credible voices have been a forceful corrective to widely held misperceptions of Muslim life in America. For example, a Citizen Dialogue Delegation consisting of a Muslim-American cleric, a Bethesda-based business executive, a female Iraqi-American filmmaker, and an undergraduate at the University of Michigan that traveled to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Jordan a few months ago reported conversations in which Saudis, Egyptians, and Jordanians told them they had affected their views about the U.S. for the better by meeting with “their brothers and sisters from America.” Through ECA’s Faith and Community grants we are further promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding between the Muslim world and America.

Sports diplomacy is another important way to reach younger audiences by using sports as a way to teach them important life skills while exposing them to American values and culture. As part of our sports initiatives ECA brought 30 youth from 13 countries to participate in a World Cup program last summer. Through the common language of soccer, the boys and girls learned about the U.S. in their travels to D.C., New York and Nuremberg, Germany for a World Cup match. Youth from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Morocco, Bahrain and Lebanon participated.

Cultural programs often offer the most direct way to demonstrate U.S. respect for the cultures and traditions of others—as well as the importance we give to maintaining our own traditions. ECA sponsors a variety of cultural diplomacy programs throughout the Muslim world. A principal focus of our cultural diplomacy is on young artists and young audiences, especially in underserved and disadvantaged areas. Native Deen, an Arab American rap group, has traveled to Turkey, Dubai, the Palestinian Territories, Israel, Jerusalem and other countries in the region on behalf of the Department, incorporating the teachings of Islam into songs about respect and humanity. Members of the group say that at all their regional appearances they are greeted like “American superstars.”

Our public diplomacy also helped us build bridges where none have existed for nearly 30 years with the Islamic Republic of Iran. This fiscal year, we launched the first group of Iranian International Visitors since 1979. Sixteen healthcare professionals, representing geographically and professionally diverse institutions in Iran, attended a three-week International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on “Public Health and Medicine.” This group was followed by three more Iranian delegations—a second group of medical professionals, experts on disaster relief and a delegation of artists.

Under the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) program, young English teachers from Iran are currently teaching Persian at U.S. colleges or universities for one academic year.

In January 2007, twenty American athletes and coaches, representing the USA Wrestling Federation, competed in the Takhti Cup in Bandar Abbas, Iran. The Americans were greeted to a standing ovation when they arrived at the 3000-seat arena. The tournament was followed nationally in Iran with a particular interest not only in the sport, but in the fact that the U.S. government does not control sports federations. We hope to have Iranian athletes in the United States later this year.

The Department’s Digital Outreach Team and Arabic web-based programs have established a USG presence in Arabic cyberspace, ensuring that U.S. policies and values are included in the conversation about issues central to the ideological debate. Through modern technology as well as traditional means, we are “present for

the debate,” as recommended by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World headed by Ambassador Edward Djerejian. Our Persian-language website serves as a virtual embassy to Iran and allows U.S. officials and others to discuss issues like nuclear non-proliferation with the Iranian people. The Rapid Response Unit monitors foreign media and provides embassies and military commands—an email list of several thousand senior officials—with background and talking points. New media hubs in Dubai, Brussels and London facilitate engagement by U.S. officials with Arabic and other foreign media, especially television, in real time. Our presence on Arab media has increased 30 percent since the hubs were established last fall.

The Internet is central to our engagement strategy, as exemplified by the Digital Outreach Team, our Arabic and Persian electronic outreach programs, and other operations. We have increased our presence on Internet discussion forums and our webchat and other activities. We are exploring the applicability to our mission of new cyber-technologies like Second Life. Our coordination with other agencies for monitoring and analyzing Internet activity, especially in Arabic and English, has increased substantially.

We have developed integrated interagency plans to combat ideological support for terrorism in key countries under the pilot country initiative. These plans identify specific target audiences and recommend programs to reach them, and we hope with additional funding to be able to begin implementing these programs. Lessons learned and best practices under this initiative will be applied to other countries around the world.

At the direction of Under Secretary Hughes, we have now created a new Counterterrorism Communication Center, an interagency initiative to develop and deliver effective messages to undermine ideological support for terror and to counter terrorist propaganda. The Center provides leadership and coordination for interagency efforts in the war of ideas and seeks to integrate and enhance the U.S. Government’s diverse public diplomacy counterterrorism efforts.

The Counterterrorism Communication Center, like the pilot country initiative, the Rapid Response Unit, the Digital Outreach Team and other programs, is an operational outgrowth of the Policy Coordination Committee on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication headed by Under Secretary Hughes. The Policy Coordination Committee draws together numerous U.S. Government entities engaged in the fight against extremist propaganda internationally. Besides the State Department, the Defense Department, USAID, DNI, DHS and other agencies are key to the effort. Together, these agencies manage a wide array of activities, from exchanges and media training, analysis to Internet outreach.

We are emphasizing the “diplomacy of deeds”—the concrete ways in which America is helping people around the world to have better lives, especially in areas people care most about: education, health and economic opportunity. Under Secretary Hughes has established a new office of private sector outreach that has to date leveraged more than \$800 million dollars in private disaster relief, job training, education and exchange programs through new partnerships with American companies, foundations, NGO’s and private citizens. American CEOs have stepped forward to provide earthquake relief in Pakistan and to help rebuild Lebanon—and at a private sector summit earlier this year at the State Department, the business community developed 11 specific recommendations to get American businesses more involved in public diplomacy. Through a new partnership with FORTUNE Magazine’s most powerful women, American business women are mentoring emerging women leaders across the world. In partnership with the Aspen Institute and 12 American communications schools, nearly 200 international journalists are currently in America meeting with American policy makers, receiving training in professional standards of objective reporting and learning more about our country.

We are committed to evaluating our programs and funding those that are most effective. We have instituted a “culture of measurement” across public diplomacy, building on the success our education and cultural affairs office has had in evaluating its programs. Our new public diplomacy evaluation unit has initiated a “mission activity tracker” that is now being piloted and will go worldwide later this year to allow standardized tracking of our expenditures and the audience reached by activity. We are conducting focus groups and just completed the 10,000th survey in a new on-line evaluation system. What works we will expand and continue. What doesn’t, we will change, cancel or improve.

We know from nearly seven decades of exchanges to build mutual understanding and mutual respect between the people of the United States and people around the world, that we must take a long view. We are investing in the future. At any point in time our policies may be received positively or negatively in various regions of

the world, but we know that in the long run, the values that we convey through exchanges and public diplomacy tell the true story of America.

I would like to close by echoing remarks made by Under Secretary Hughes. We must establish a wide-ranging and frank conversation with critical regions such as the Middle East and South Asia, and reinforce the common interests and values that bind us together as human beings so that the next generation will inherit a safer and a better world not a more divided and dangerous one.

Thank you and we look forward to your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Curtin. Your statement lays out the three-point framework for public diplomacy articulated by Secretary Hughes, which I do appreciate.

Last month, the GAO testified that, although the strategy framework exists, the Department has still not issued any guidance to overseas posts on how to coordinate the various diplomacy activities in order to achieve the goals. Could you tell us when the guidelines will be issued and available at our various Embassies?

Mr. CURTIN. Yes. Mrs. Welch may have something more to add to that. We expect that the written plan, the written text, will be out in a couple of weeks.

I would make the point, and then ask Gretchen to comment further, we have been engaged under Under Secretary Hughes' tenure in operationalizing a strategic approach to public diplomacy globally and also in the two regions we are talking about. The programs that I mentioned briefly are a reflection of that strategy, building on our educational and cultural programs and extending into communication and also the "diplomacy of deeds." So it has been evolving in action, even as the Under Secretary has been writing it down on paper.

Mrs. WELCH. As Jeremy says, Mr. Chairman, the Under Secretary is nearly ready to release her national strategy, which she has been developing over several months, coordinating with the interagency and consulting with the private sector.

With respect to our posts, we have asked each post, and have received from nearly all of them a so-called "two-pager," kind of a basic map, guideline, of what their key activities are, and we asked them to focus them along the lines of Under Secretary Hughes' priorities. So we asked them for their target audiences, we asked for their key influencers, and we asked how they are using their programs to achieve these objectives.

We have that for nearly all of our posts, and we have it for our regions as well, and they form the basis of how we are going forward with both our budget proposals and our programs.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. It is my understanding that the interagency PCC has identified overseas posts in 18 countries with Muslim-majority populations and has developed an individual country strategy for each.

Questions: Are these strategies currently being implemented, and, if so, could you give us some highlights of the strategies for, say, Egypt and Pakistan, and, if you would, focus on communication objectives, core messages and themes, target audiences, information dissemination strategies and programs, planned evaluation efforts, and the role in-depth audience research played in each of these steps?

Mrs. WELCH. Sure. I would be happy to address that, sir.

For each of our pilot countries, we have a detailed matrix of programs that was developed by the post with an interagency focus. So, for example, the programs include not only state-public diplomacy exchange and other programs but also USAID and military programs as well. It is really what the post thought made most sense to try to target violent extremism in their countries, and that is the focus: How do we get at the roots and causes of violent extremism?

We have developed a detailed budget proposal that is being considered by the Congress right now. It is a \$50 million proposal that will allow us to really start implementing these programs in the pilot countries. We have, because Under Secretary Hughes thinks it is so important, we have jump started several of the programs, and you mentioned, specifically, Egypt and Pakistan.

In nearly all of our pilot countries, this summer we will be doing youth-enrichment, summer camp-type programs, and Under Secretary Hughes has asked our posts to target youth—it is a different reach for us—eight to 14, so a much younger audience than what we have typically done. Our posts have a variety of programs. In Egypt, most of the programs are outside of the capital in Upper Egypt, in a less-developed area. They are dealing with youth involving English language programs, sports, a variety of activities.

You mentioned Pakistan. Pakistan, this summer, will be doing a sports camp involving girls in soccer. We are hoping to get some United States women's soccer players to go to Pakistan to help us run this program. So we are really trying to reach new and different audiences through this particular program, and we are financing that out of our resources this year while hoping for more funding in the supplemental.

Your question about communications strategies; that is just an integral part of everything we do in our posts now, sir. Our communications is combined with our exchanges and our outreach. We need to reach new audiences. We need to do more on local television. We need to do more outreach through our Web sites.

One of the programs we are doing, and we have started it already in Lebanon, working closely with USAID, is an integrated media strategy that is going to highlight United States assistance programs in Lebanon. The first thing we are doing is some polling to get the basic idea of what people think and know about our programs, conduct a media campaign, and then do some polling afterwards to try to get a sense of how our assistance is viewed and recognized.

USAID has done this successfully in the West Bank and Gaza and other places, and we are very excited to partner with them. We hope to extend this to all of our pilot countries, if we can get the funding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You say you do some polling afterwards to see how much they know. Do you do polling to be able to measure how effective our message is, if our message is getting across?

Mrs. WELCH. We are doing that more and more, sir, especially as polling mechanisms become more sophisticated in a lot of the countries in which we are working. We have asked for money for that in the supplemental as well.

Mr. ACKERMAN. When you say “polling methods become more sophisticated—”

Mrs. WELCH. For example, in Egypt, when we lived there, even early—

Mr. ACKERMAN. We are not using American, sophisticated polling methods?

Mrs. WELCH. Oh, we are, sir, but now we have local partners and organizations that are able to do it for us in these countries where typically we were not able to do that so much in the past.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We are not waiting for them to develop techniques for polling, are we?

Mrs. WELCH. No, no, not at all. The question is whether we are able to do it and give access. We are very much interested in finding out how our message is resonating, what our audiences care about and are interested in, and we are actively engaging in that, as funding permitted.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And is our message getting across? What are the measurement tools you use to determine that?

Mrs. WELCH. We are doing a number of measurement tools of our public diplomacy programs. I know this was discussed in your hearing last week as well. As your witnesses indicated, there is a significant co-relation to someone who has heard a U.S. speaker, participated in a U.S. program, been exposed to one of our American programs, there is a significant co-relation and a more positive image of the United States, a better understanding of our goals and objectives.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me be more specific. Not everything we do works.

Mrs. WELCH. Correct.

Mr. ACKERMAN. In this polling or sampling, or whatever you would call it, is this measurement tool. Have we made determinations about what we have done or are doing that does not work or does not work as well as we hoped, and could you identify any of that?

Mrs. WELCH. When Under Secretary Hughes first came into office, she asked us to look at one ongoing operation we had then, which was “Hi” magazine, and our evaluation and polling indicated that “Hi” did not have a target audience, was not having the intended impact. So she asked that “Hi” magazine be terminated and that the resources be directed elsewhere.

We are looking at our American Corners. We are looking at all of our operations on our posts and are asking our posts to really measure whether they are having an impact and redirecting their programs if they are not.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Could I just ask if you could have somebody coordinate some of those and submit those for the record as to the impact the various programs are having? Thank you. Mr. Pence?

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman. Let me ask a couple of quick questions.

On the question of editorial control and targeting, I was very intrigued by the chairman’s line of questioning. I used to work in television, one of the few Republicans in Congress that has ever had anything to do with the media. I know something about this whole issue, how do you develop the audience share? I was fascinated

with the chairman asking, Who are we looking for? Who are we trying to reach? And it seems to me that two questions that I would have and would love to have anyone on the panel discuss it.

Let me just thank you for your service to the country and acknowledge that first and the sincerity of your efforts.

Number one is, in broadcasting, particularly in the Middle East, is the focus what it always is in television, which is largest audience share, just going for maximum audience share, or, alternatively, are we attempting to target, and I thought I got that a bit in your answer.

Are we attempting to target not just demographic groups by age, which I understand, by inference, the value of trying to reach young men under the age of 30 who seem to be the epicenter of most of our problems in that region of the world in terms of violent acts? But I would also say, beyond that, is there an effort to reach the educated to dissidents to elites who might be more open to our message, who, you know, might be more able to benefit by being equipped with factual information? Let me just ask that question, and then I have one follow-up question, if I may.

Mr. CURTIN. The BBG panel will be able to speak in more detail about programming in the Middle East. I would say that the first thing we try to do is to be heard, whether it is broadcasting or Internet or having our spokespeople out there talking.

So we do try to reach a broad audience, but when we are talking about our policy, talking about the United States having a system of values, having a society of values, we are very definitely trying to reach people who can then be part of the conversation and influence others in their own country—call them elite or call them educated elite—so that our message is heard, first of all. Being heard is only the very, very first step.

I think one of the great accomplishments with Under Secretary Hughes is making sure we are out there talking and engaging and being heard. Once we are heard, we carry the argument to the next step and that is to try to win the argument, recognizing though, it is not going to be a question of here are my points, you must agree. It is going to be a continuing conversation all along.

But we try to reach the educated elites, but, as the English-teaching programs and other programs indicate, we are also trying to reach younger people before their views are fully developed. We are trying to expand those programs and it is new for us. We are trying to expand them very definitely.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you. I am encouraged by the latter part of your answer and the specificity of the first part. Obviously, some of this will be more appropriate to the next panel, but I wanted to get a general sense here about—I do not know what the chairman's impetus is in calling the hearing, but my enthusiasm for the hearing has much to do with a couple of recent incidents, one where an Iranian conference denying the Holocaust was reported as straight news. I would call that "fake news." We have some of that in America today. It is usually comedy entertainment. In Iran, it is propaganda. For U.S. assets to have been used to report as straight news a conference that featured deniers of the Holocaust and David Duke is deeply offensive to this taxpayer.

The second incident was the airing of an unedited speech by the leader of Hezbollah, spewing violence and advocating hatred against Jews, again, on my nickel.

So my second and last question for this panel would be, has the purpose of American diplomacy in the Middle East been clearly imparted to those who implement our public diplomacy efforts from upper-level management to mid-level management to rank-and-file broadcasting employees and journalists and to entry-level employees? Has the purpose been imparted? By whom? And are those who implement public diplomacy efforts clearly aware of our purpose?

I know the difference between people that are in management at television stations and networks and those that are actually out putting together and producing the product on the air, and I am very troubled that while those that are in management, our Government understand what the purpose of Alhurra and other American enterprises are in this part of the world. How are we, and are we, in fact, adequately communicating to people making editorial decisions that this is not just an unbiased, objective report, both sides' news organization. It has a specific mission in the advancement of the free world.

Mrs. WELCH. Well, I think, Congressman, that, as you know, Alhurra's management has already stated that these editorial lapses occurred in the early tenure of the current vice president for news and were not acceptable.

Under Secretary Hughes, as the Secretary's representative on the BBG, one of nine members of the board, is confident that Alhurra has corrected this situation and is moving in the right direction. We will leave it to our colleagues that are coming next to describe the editorial controls that have been put in place, but I think it is clear to her and to us that they have corrected the situation at the time.

For the Under Secretary, in terms of whether she has communicated and how she has communicated to our overseas posts and our colleagues, who are really the people on the ground doing the work, she has done several things.

One, we had a global PAO conference this year. She brought our public affairs officers from all of our posts around the world to Washington, where Secretary Rice, Tony Snow, Under Secretary Burns, Karen, herself, spoke a lot about what we are trying to do in our programs and emphasizing our priorities and our goals.

For us, it has been wonderful to have her articulate the way she wants us to go and engage with foreign cultures, in particular, and I think we all know that that is what we need to be doing to improve the impression of the United States around the world.

Mr. FARRELL. Congressman Pence, if I may, I think the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, especially under our mandate to increase mutual understanding, has a very important story to impart to you and members of the committee about the coordination in the larger public diplomacy realm that Secretary Hughes and the leadership of the Department have developed.

In terms of reaching wider audiences, younger audiences, we have a consistent message within the Bureau, and program development within the Bureau, to reach younger and deeper. This is now a 4-year effort that begins with English language so that we

can not only provide the special tools that allow people to have access to correct information, our information, through global sources, but it also provides them with the ability to participate in our exchanges later on, our high school exchanges, our undergraduate exchanges, and our Fulbright Programs.

With 20 years of experience in the exchange field, I am fortunate to be here now to see this kind of coordination and reinvestment across a continuum, beginning when a child is 8 years old through her development as a Fulbright or a Humphrey scholar, and I think this kind of coordination needs to be better appreciated. We need to do a better job about that.

In addition to reaching elites, people of influence, we are also reaching out to special communities and countries, like Egypt and Pakistan, at the community college level, among teachers, journalists, and others, to bring in not only people at the margins whom we have not been able to reach before through exchanges but also, as I said, people of influence.

Mrs. ROMANOWSKI. Congressman, to add to other program aspects of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, one of the things that we have been able to do in the last few years is to reconnect and focus increased funding for cultural and sports diplomacy, which allows us to be able to reach an audience or audiences in very different ways than we were able to do previously.

So this has afforded us an opportunity to shift some of the program focus and also to reach out to much more grassroots and to a younger audience that we had not been able to do before, through, as you said, some means of Hollywood, et cetera, but we can do that with an increase in resources in these areas, and it has been very effective in engaging the younger audiences.

Mr. PENCE. Great. Thank you, Chairman. Those are all of the questions I have.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Pence. Mr. Berman?

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the issue of increasing educational and cultural exchanges with Iran, I think that is useful, but, given that we do not have a presence there, how do we select the Iranian participants? Does the Iranian Government play any role in that? Do they end up picking and choosing who participates?

Mr. FARRELL. Well, Congressman Berman, Mrs. Romanowski and I would both like to respond to this question because we have different kinds of experiences in different programs. So, if I may, I would like to talk about the academic exchange portion of those programs.

We have been fortunate, over the last several years, to have representatives of American NGOs visit Iran following all of the rubrics related to OFAC and proper regulation. For the teachers of Persian, the seven who are currently in the United States, those individuals were interviewed by American NGO leaders and identified with the assistance of representatives of Iranian universities. Then they were invited for visa interviews to Dubai.

So this really has been a true people-to-people activity for the Persian language.

Mr. BERMAN. What kind of American NGO does Iran—

Mr. FARRELL. I beg your pardon?

Mr. BERMAN. Can you give me an example of what American NGO that would be?

Mr. FARRELL. There are a number of American NGOs who have visited Iran.

Mr. BERMAN. They are not permanently located—

Mr. FARRELL. No, no.

Mr. BERMAN. They are not based there.

Mr. FARRELL. No.

Mr. BERMAN. Okay.

Mr. FARRELL. They visited Iran for the specific purpose of discussing with university leaders the potential for developing a program that would assist American universities and students better learn Persian.

Mr. BERMAN. I have one other question after that, but go ahead.

Mrs. ROMANOWSKI. In the Iranian International Visitor and Leadership program, we have focused on a number of themes that has made it easy for us to reach out and build partnerships with American NGOs that have, over the years, because of the nature of the subject, for example, disaster relief and cultural programming, have contacts, and when we have partnered with such NGOs and institutions such as the Aspen Institute, the National Science Foundation, and the medical community, we have been able to, through their support, been able to identify those who want to participate in the program.

To date, we have had close to 63 visitors from Iran, and we have found that that has been probably the most effective way of identifying it, even though we do not have a presence there.

Mr. BERMAN. One other question for whoever would be the right person.

Twenty years ago, I remember that a cynic used to say, on the student exchanges, the African student who studies in Moscow ends up very pro-Western, and the African student who studies in the United States goes back and sort of leans to the Soviets, but that was a cynic saying that.

I am curious, with respect to our American universities in places like Cairo and Beirut, can you make any generalization about their attitudes about the United States from participating in those universities in contrast with students who are going to the country's own institutions in those countries?

Mr. FARRELL. I have some firsthand knowledge of some of the institutions in the region, in Lebanon and Egypt, in particular. For instance, when one looks at the American University in Cairo and looks at the program which they developed themselves, and now, I believe, both the Middle East Partnership Initiative and USAID support, which provides scholarships to AUC for young men and women, young boys and girls, who are not members of the elite, who live outside of Cairo, the program enables them to come to AUC to study, to participate for the first time in higher education, for the first time in their families' history probably.

I have met with these students. Some of them are brought to the United States during the course of their study. They have extraordinary levels of appreciation and a more balanced view of the wider world.

So I think, in specific instances that I can speak of, these institutions, which have a tradition of American liberal education going back decades, more than 100 years in some cases, and I think the same is true at a successor institution like Bogazici College in Istanbul, those institutions are providing a unique opportunity to young people, and I see a difference in the graduates.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Fortenberry.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Clearly, this is a transformational time in the world, and it is primarily due to the rapid advance of communications technologies, and these pervasive technologies can be used for very great good or very great harm, and, as you all know, politics and policy tend to be downstream from culture. So, to the degree that these communication technologies are enhancing, challenging, changing—I will leave the judgment open because we do not know exactly where it is going to go, but changing culture.

Your work is absolutely essential and critical. I have listened as best I can. I have been a bit distracted, but, obviously, you have a patchwork of processes and policies and programs that are getting to the heart of something, and I think I would ask you that question: What is that something? What is the message?

Now, one of my first duties as a fairly new Member of Congress, one of the first official undertakings that I chose to do, was to head straight to the Middle East. It had been a number of years since I had been there, but I prioritized this. When I got into the hotel room, I turned on the television, again, related to my earlier point, to see exactly what communications technologies were up to, since they were not so pervasive when I was there previously.

The first channel that came on was a woman singing—I presume it was a traditional form of Arab lamentation. I changed the channel. The next channel was Bugs Bunny in English, and then, of course, there was CNN and the French news channel and British news channel, as well as the Germans.

So, again, these communications technologies are pervasive, and they have swooped down very rapidly on the entire world.

But back to the central point, and, again, your work is absolutely critical because it has such power, but, clearly, what is the guiding paradigm, the philosophical intent, the framework that pieces together all of these components into what hopefully is one garment, seamless garment, quilt, that makes sense in terms of—I do not want to say “reposition” but in terms of telling the best of our story so that we can enhance good relations with people and use these mediums for great good?

Mr. CURTIN. I think the essence of our approach across the board is engagement. There are so many, as you are saying, so many vehicles out there. Five years ago, if you would go into that hotel room you would get CNN. Now you get Aljazeera and an incredible number of sources.

Our objective is to do whatever we can through whatever medium, and again I would say one of the most effective, if not the most effective, is our exchange programs. Our exchange programs convey to other people the basic values that drive the United States because we believe that those values are also in their inter-

est, that we share them at the fundamental level. If they recognize what our values are they will recognize that our objectives are, in fact, common with them and in their interests.

So conveying the message of America. We used to talk about telling America's story in USIA and the Voice of America, and we are still trying to do that, but, as you are saying, the competition is much fiercer than it used to be. We cannot just pipe Radio Free Europe or Voice of America into Poland and everybody accepts it as the truth. But the U.S. Government has a very important role—to make sure that our point of view is conveyed, even while CNN is doing it and even while others are conveying opposing messages.

So our basic approach is to engage wherever we can. Engage with the mainstream, competing with the extremist message but not trying to convert the extremists because we think that they are beyond the pale. Whether it is the Internet, whether it is broadcasting, whether it is our people on the ground, or exchange programs, engage so we can let people recognize what we are thinking, where our values are, where we are coming from.

Mrs. WELCH. Congressman, I would just like to add that I would characterize, instead of saying our programs are a "patchwork," we really try to be very integrated and whole. Karen emphasizes exchanges. Obviously, we are targeting our key influencers. When they return to their countries, we want to amplify what their experience, either through media appearances, or whatever we can, using our people on the ground. We want to use our local programs to target those that we cannot get in exchange programs.

Finally, Under Secretary Hughes has emphasized communication. She wants our people out talking on local television, emphasizing all of the good works we are doing, giving an American voice on a media program.

So I think we have an integrated approach to trying reaching out, as Jeremy says, just engaging with our audiences abroad.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. "Patchwork" was not intended to be used pejoratively; perhaps "integrated approach" would have been better. Thank you for your kind, gentle admonition. I appreciate it.

Mr. FARRELL. Congressman, it has taken us a while, in the public diplomacy arena, to find an apt metaphor or simile to explain what we do. I think, in the last few years—

Mr. FORTENBERRY. That is probably the right question to ask. Let us talk about the essence, the very core you talked about, explaining the values, but unpack that very sentence right there, Mr. Chairman, if you will indulge me for a moment more.

Mr. FARRELL. The core of the mission of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which is central to our public diplomacy effort, really was established by Congress, and it is to build mutual understanding in the broadest sense. That is the core of our activity within ECA, and it is extremely complimentary to telling America's story because we do believe that, through accurate presentation and exposure to the United States, we will be able to build up, and have built up, a community of common interests in the world by people of goodwill.

We want to increase that audience, the core group of people of goodwill, and we recognize, therefore, that we have to bring people who have been at the margins, as well as elites, into our efforts

and to use our technological expertise and information to even reach wider beyond exchanges.

I believe that the core mission is represented by the mandate the Congress has given us, which is to create mutual understanding.

Mrs. ROMANOWSKI. Congressman, if I could just add a very specific example of what we are trying to say is, in the longstanding International Visitors Leadership program, which, over many, many years, the focus of that has been to allow our Embassies to identify the emerging leaders in many different areas and bring them to the United States to, in essence, have their first exposure to the United States.

I think Edward R. Murrow said it is the last three feet; it is the people-to-people contact. The areas and the way in which we have created these IV program offers exactly that opportunity. People who, in many cases, have never been to the United States and, particularly now, who may see the United States through the prism you described in the mixed media, have an opportunity to come here and spend 2 to 3 weeks, where they meet Americans, they focus on conversations and discussions with their professional counterparts, and have an opportunity to travel around the United States to see the diversity of our country and to understand firsthand what America stands for and what its values are.

So this program, in particular, is one that, I think, has gone to the core of what my colleague, Tom Farrell, has said, which is mutual understanding.

The citizen exchange programs offer us an opportunity to send Americans the other way and to build on more detailed, specific areas, but it is really the opportunity to get the people-to-people together that allows us to do that.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. One final comment, if I could, Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for your answers and your work again. It is critically important, and relationship building is absolutely central, one-to-one. You just fear that it is dominated by the more pervasive, aggressive mediums of mutual misunderstanding that can be out there, but I appreciate your work.

I would add this, that one of the key ways that we find mutual understanding is by appealing to the things that bind the entire human family, and that is, of course, our concern for children, our concern for health, education, and using these mediums, again, advanced communications technologies, to reach people we could not previously reach through one-on-one assistance and help by providing digital information, whether that be for treatment of disease or education, is another potentially very powerful tool that we can use to build that core point of mutual understanding and to do great good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Mr. Scott?

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me ask you, and, again, I commend you and the work that you are doing because I believe this is truly where the shoe meets the pavement in our efforts to improve our image in the world, and I commend you on the job that you are doing.

We do face that challenge of having to do this within the context of a broader foreign policy that is overwhelmingly rejected in the

world, especially in the Middle East, and a policy certainly that is growing in its overwhelming rejection, even right here at home.

So while we would like to, we cannot divorce ourselves from that reality, and, quite honestly, to her credit, Under Secretary Hughes recognizes this. She stated that one of her key objectives is to better integrate policy-making with public diplomacy considerations.

Do you believe that has occurred? I see you shaking your head "yes." And if so, and since you do believe that has occurred, could you give us some examples of where policy decisions were modified to reduce or implement an anticipated negative reaction from our foreign policy?

Mrs. WELCH. Mr. Congressman, I think actually the process is even more than modifying a policy decision. One of the things I think I found, as a career officer, and Jeremy can comment on this, too, public diplomacy is now part of the discussion when the policy is being developed. So we are a part of meetings on Iran policy, on Somalia, on Afghanistan, on whatever.

There is a public diplomacy component of nearly every strategy that is being undertaken by our Government. So rather than fixing the policy decision after it is taken, we are a part of the discussion.

Mr. SCOTT. Is there a specific example that you can give me of that?

Mr. FARRELL. The one that is most immediate, Congressman Scott, is the one that, in fact, I have dealt with over the last couple of weeks, and it is the one that sticks in the front of my mind. It is not South Central Asia and NEA. As we looked at the Western Hemisphere and looked at a way to convey our commitment to social justice, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, our Assistant Secretary, was asked by the Secretary of State to frame the approach.

What we were able to do, in framing that approach, which the President enunciated in his speech to the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce earlier in the spring, was to lift this concept that we are making progress with in NEA and South Central Asia about the continuum of investing first in young people, moving on through high school, moving to the community college area; in the beginning, at the principals' meeting, and, through various NSC processes, there had been a different approach that was going to be taken.

That is the most recent key example to me of our place in the policy discussion.

Mr. SCOTT. Let me follow up that with, what specific attitudes and behaviors is the United States seeking to change with its public diplomacy activities in the Middle East and South Asia? Can we talk about the attitudes, the behaviors that we are trying to change?

Mr. CURTIN. The behavior is probably the easiest part to address. That is, a fundamental goal of our public diplomacy is to make terrorism unacceptable in any society and to counter the terrorist message that attacking one group or another is somehow acceptable. And, with that, the message that we do have common interests and that we are not waging a war against Islam. Simply countering the image that we are waging such a war would be a first step in our public diplomacy and broader policy.

Mr. SCOTT. What would be, if you could share with me, specific goals? Have you set? Because we can say things, but what measurement, what specific goals have been set for achieving the desired attitude or behavioral changes, and how long do you anticipate it will take to achieve these goals?

Mr. CURTIN. Gretchen might want to add to this but, personally, I do not see it as a question of a debate where we make a point, they make a point, and at the end of the day we have won. But increasing understanding of a particular issue or increasing an understanding of who we are as a people or increasing an understanding of the relationship—that is the objective.

I believe it is something that will take years even though we do not have to wait years to see a change in attitude—for example, an attitude toward terrorism. As people in the Middle East recognize that terrorism of all kinds is wrong, suicide bombings of all kinds are wrong, as they recognize that, that would be a step in achieving our particular goals in that area.

Mrs. WELCH. I just want to add, not necessarily changing behaviors but offering opportunities. You mentioned the shining beacon. Karen talks about the positive vision of hope and opportunity.

One of the ways we are really trying to do that is through English language teaching because, as one of my colleagues put it, English language is seen as the language of social mobility and opportunity, and that is an area that Tom has really worked on and expanded because, by offering English language opportunities to youth, it opens worlds of opportunity.

Mr. SCOTT. See, I am with you on that because I just believe that we need to put more effort into diplomacy and bringing the things that are needed because there is something awfully wrong within a society that resorts to such a thing as suicide bombings. This is a phenomenon that is just of recent times, and ever since the 9/11 attacks, it has not left me as to the profoundness of the depths of either hatred or whatever it is that brings a people to have lined up, lines of their own people being lined up, willing to tie bombs to themselves.

So the attitudes and behaviors, I just commend you on, and I just encourage you to continue your hard work. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me yield first to Mr. Pence—

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. For the purpose of making an announcement and an introduction.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you. I will be very brief and recognize the gentleman from Florida, Congressman Gus Bilirakis, who is new to our committee but whose reputation has already been minted in a few short months as a thoughtful legislator who brings with him an extraordinary pedigree on Capitol Hill, family with long-term public service, and, Mr. Bilirakis, we welcome you to this committee. We are grateful for your interest, and, with that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield to you for recognition.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you for making the introduction. The chair and our side welcomes Mr. Bilirakis. You now will fill out our entire panel. We have a full complement, and we are honored that you chose to join our subcommittee.

The chair would acknowledge that there is a vote currently on the floor of the House. It would be my intention, if we could, to allow the rest of the members on the subcommittee who have not asked questions to ask questions, if we could keep them brief and the answers brief, because there might be a series of votes, and I would like to be able to dismiss this panel that has been very, very patient before we have them sit here for another half-hour as we vote, if that is okay with the members. Mr. Bilirakis.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Pence. I appreciate it, and what an honor it is to serve on this committee.

I have one question for the panel. Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty played a significant role during the Cold War in helping to bring down communism. We, as Americans, cherish the broadcasts' historical significance. I am concerned, however, about what message we are trying to put out, in a post-9/11 world, to promote democracy and bring demise to totalitarian regimes in the Middle East and South Asia.

My office has received complaints from pro-democracy, Iranian activists here in the United States who are concerned about Radio Farda's meek attempts in broadcasting anything that closely resembles America's values and ideals. For instance, while Radio Farda may be broadcasting 9 hours of daily programming into Iran, 50 minutes of each hour is dedicated to music, and only 10 minutes, from what I understand, is dedicated to serious news or information.

So this is my question: Since studies show that American popular culture is why we are widely despised in the Muslim world, why would we pump in hours of American music into Iran when we could be engaged in serious programming by broadcasting bits on American history, politics, economics, culture, and values to target key decision-makers? The question is for the panel.

Mrs. WELCH. Mr. Congressman, with all due respect, I think our broadcast experts will be on the next panel. I would ask them to address that. I really do not have the expertise to do that.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Okay. I am sorry. I had a little conflict, so I am sorry I missed your testimony. I will ask the question for the next panel. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Mr. Costa?

Mr. COSTA. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. I know you want to get on to the next panel, but two quick questions.

First, when Secretary Rice testified before us in February, I made a point of concern about lack of language proficiencies in this part of the world, which I believe is still serious and so much so that I think it has been even further confirmed, not by myself, but the GAO indicated that there are significant shortfalls, particularly in the Muslim world. Thirty percent of the language designated public diplomacy positions are filled with officers who lack the proficiency for their positions. What are we doing about this? The Secretary indicated we are trying, but I would like to know a little more than we are trying.

Mrs. WELCH. I can try to address that for you, sir. Actually, in the public diplomacy world, a couple of points to make on the language designated issue. Three-quarters of our posts in the Middle

East, in the public diplomacy section, have at least one individual who has a fluency speaking and reading in Arabic.

Mr. COSTA. Is that sufficient?

Mrs. WELCH. It is not sufficient, and we need to do a lot better.

Part of the problem we are having with our Middle Eastern assignments, quite frankly, is many of our posts now have 1-year assignments because of the hardship situation. Arabic training is 2 years. So we have to pull people out of our assignment process—

Mr. COSTA. So what are we doing to get these folks trained?

Mrs. WELCH. We are putting increased emphasis on training and putting people into language training at the expense of filling a lot of our posts overseas because we pulled them out of the assignment cycle. It is absolutely a priority, and Under Secretary Hughes has made it a priority for us, that in each of our posts there is at least one person in the public diplomacy section with Arabic capability.

Now, there are often people in the political section—the ambassador, the DCM—who have language proficiency as well, so we feel that helps us cover it.

Mr. COSTA. So do you have a strategy, a plan, in the next 6 months, the next 12 months, the next 18 months, in which you are going to ratchet up so that you can get the level of people proficiently trained in the language skills necessary to fill these positions at a level we should have them at? We have been here 4 years. I mean, this has been a priority for 20 years.

Mrs. WELCH. I think, in the Secretary's budget request, she asked for an additional, what she calls a "training float," an additional number of positions, so we have the flexibility to put people in language training for 2 years, in the case of Arabic, while we continue to cover all of our vacancies in the world. That would be our strategy.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Chairman, I would like to suggest that we ask the Department to provide a response to the subcommittee as to what their timelines are for increasing the number of proficiency change with some timelines because, you know, moving people around—

Mr. ACKERMAN. That is an appropriate request, if the panel would provide that, Mr. Curtin.

Mr. COSTA. And the last thing—I appreciate your patience—the GAO also—we talk about strategy—indicated that after 4 years, the Department still lacked an interagency communication strategy, but now you are working on that. Can you give us a timeline as to when the communications strategy will, in fact, be completed?

Mrs. WELCH. We expect Under Secretary Hughes will issue it this month. She intends to have a PCC, the Policy Coordinating Committee, meeting later this month, and we would be happy to share the strategy with you.

Mr. COSTA. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Costa. Ms. Jackson Lee?

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and recognizing the time constraints, let me thank the witnesses and try to get yes-or-no questions.

Frankly, I believe that the intent has been good of the new Under Secretary. I think the results have been very poor. I do not, frankly, see any new face of America going forward, and I request

this information. I would like the ethnic breakdown of the State Department posted staff, meaning staff at Embassies around the world: African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and others.

The real question that I think we are going up against is, of course, the major policies of this country. There are posts where the only way that the Embassy can see the head of government, and I know that—I have gone to those countries—is when Members of Congress or others go, and they go with them. That is how bad our relationships are.

So let me ask how quickly. I heard a question about when the strategic plan will come out, but how quickly are you going to get guidance to the overseas posts? How quickly are you going to get the message out to places—I will use an example—like Pakistan and like countries in the Middle East that we do more than war, that we do things like social services, the social help, micro-credits, et cetera? When are we going to put that face because I, frankly, think that we have lost a lot of ground, and I do not think we are making it up, and I do not think there have been any improvements. I am asking that quickly to—

Mr. ACKERMAN. If the panel can be brief in their yes-no answer.

Mrs. WELCH. Your question, ma'am, was, would the guidance be issued to posts? It will be issued when we issue the strategic plan.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Right. That is how long?

Mrs. WELCH. The end of this month.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me just go ahead and ask this question: What are you doing about people thinking all we do is war versus the humanitarian issues that we address?

Mrs. WELCH. I think that one of the things the Under Secretary emphasized, as you remember from her testimony, is emphasizing our "diplomacy of deeds," doing programs like micro-scholarship credits, English language education improvement, exchanges. We have active budget proposals for those and are very anxious to implement them, if the budgets are approved.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Anyone else quickly? I will just take one more answer. Anyone else?

Mrs. ROMANOWSKI. One of the ways in which we are addressing that is by forming public-private partnerships and reaching out to partner with the private sector in the United States to have them work with us overseas. Probably one that reaches to some of the themes is the work that we have done in Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, et cetera, on breast cancer, and working with the Coleman Foundation and inspiring those in the Middle East to take that issue quite seriously, and that has been a private partnership, and there are many other examples which we can send to you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The chair wishes to thank—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. I thank the chairman very much.

Mr. ACKERMAN [continuing]. Thank the panel. You are dismissed with the thanks of the subcommittee. It proved to be a lot more interesting than some of the members thought at first, and we are going to anxiously await our return, which will take, my guess is 40 minutes, for the sake of planning, of those who have to remain here, in case you want to freshen up. The committee is recessed until the call of the chair.

[Whereupon, at 1 o'clock p.m. a recess was taken.]

Mr. ACKERMAN. The committee will resume. The chair will announce that there is a problem with the monitor. Everything else is back in working order, and we will proceed.

We turn to our second panel. Mr. Joaquin F. Blaya of Miami, Florida, is chairman of Blaya Media Inc. Mr. Blaya has held a number of senior management positions with media companies, including chairman of Radio Unica, a Spanish-language radio network; and CEO of the Telemundo Group, Inc., the nation's largest Spanish-language television network. Mr. Blaya also served as president of Univision Holdings, Inc., the nation's largest Spanish-language media company.

Mr. Jeffrey Hirschberg is a partner in Kalorama Partners, a consulting firm that deals with corporate governance and risk assessment. Mr. Hirschberg retired from Ernst & Young in 1999 as vice chairman, government affairs. Previously, he worked as a private attorney in both Washington, DC, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Mr. Blaya, I understand that you will be presenting testimony followed by some remarks from Mr. Hirschberg. Thank you. Without objection, your formal statements will be placed in the record, and you may proceed, Mr. Blaya.

**STATEMENT OF MR. JOAQUIN F. BLAYA, BOARD MEMBER,
BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr. BLAYA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the programs of the Broadcasting Board of Governors as they relate to the Middle East and South Asia. You have also asked us to talk about our strategic goals and objectives, so I will begin with some remarks to illustrate our challenges and the tools and strategies we employ to address them.

My whole career has been devoted to private sector television. I am part of the team that built Univision, and I ran the company for many years. Univision is the largest Spanish-speaking company in America. I also was president and CEO of Telemundo, which is the second largest company and Univision's competitor. I also launched the first 24-hour news television network in Spanish for the Spanish world. I am pleased to bring this experience to the BBG.

International broadcasting is a critical means of reaching audiences around the world who do not have access to accurate, objective, and comprehensive information about the United States and the world. The BBG strategy has been to create credible new channels of communications, capable of reaching significant audiences in regions and countries critical to U.S. efforts to counter extremism.

Toward that goal, we have launched 24/7 radio and television channels for the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan, and we have boosted broadcasting in key countries, such as Indonesia and Pakistan, and, most recently, we initiated service for strife-torn Somalia and Sudan.

We have grown our global audiences from 100 million in 2001 to 140 million today. Almost all of that growth has come in countries with Muslim majority populations. In the Middle East and South Asia, the epicenter of the War on Terror, we now reach over 60 mil-

lion people each and every week. In my formal testimony, I have outlined a number of important goals, objectives, and tools used by the BBG to carry out our mission of advancing freedom and democracy overseas.

In the interest of time, I will not go into all of those issues now. Instead, I will address the question that seems to be most on members' minds regarding certain broadcasts of the Alhurra Television Network that have caused consternation for this committee and for all of us in the BBG.

Last November, the board appointed a new vice president for news at Alhurra. Larry Register, a veteran television journalist, was selected by the board to replace Martha Card, who had requested reassignment to the Middle East for personal reasons. Mr. Register was directed by the board to increase Alhurra news output, and he has done so. Despite reports to the contrary, he has not changed Alhurra's editorial policy. That which was unacceptable in the first 3 years of Alhurra television broadcasting remains unacceptable today.

Unfortunately, mistakes were made during this transition period. Between November 2006 and February 2007, Alhurra aired a number of reports that lacked journalistic or academic merit. These were a very small fraction of the network's broadcasting output, but, nevertheless, they are unacceptable. It is intolerable to any of us, including Mr. Register, that existing internal controls were not sufficient to prevent this.

With these program errors standing as painful indicators of the need for additional controls, we are moving forward to shore up our management structure to better ensure journalistic accountability and professionalism in all programming.

As a result of these errors, Alhurra is expediting the establishment of enhanced editorial structures to centralize editorial control, and to ensure that programming adheres to the standards under which all BBG broadcasting entities operate.

A central assignment desk has been established to provide quality control and communicate more effectively on existing reports and plans for future coverage. The assignment desk instills a work flow that makes editors accountable for monitoring news items before and while they are delivered. It creates a central point of communications in the news room and links the news producers and the teams working in the field. Staffed by three assignment editors and a chief editor, this desk is the first line of editorial control for field coverage.

The vice president for news is also creating news teams to improve consistency of reporting and an enhanced sense of mission. Comprised of senior producer, producer, writers, associate producer, production assistants, and news presenters, these teams will increase cohesiveness and a common standard among the staff. They will also foster consistent evaluation and monitoring through the news staff.

Recruitment of key managerial positions and additional highly qualified journalists is ongoing. Positions have been filled that directly affect internal editorial controls. Mr. Register has appointed a chief editor of news and a senior coordinating producer to train

and monitor the staff. Both new hires are Western-trained journalists.

Staff training is an activity that will be ongoing and rigorous. The training plan for Alhurra to enhance the skills of our employees and the quality of our programming will be implemented by the end of the fiscal year through a series of mandatory workshops.

In addition, the BBG will contract for an objective, independent review of Alhurra programming to examine the journalistic integrity and adherence to the standards and principles of the U.S. International Broadcasting Act. Our expectation is that the study will be conducted by an impartial United States center of learning with specialty in Middle Eastern studies and the field of journalism, with particular focus on the medium, environment, and practice of journalism in the Middle East. We have already commenced the process to do this.

The program segments at issue, while egregious, are examples of what we do not want to broadcast to the world and are not representative of our overall programming. They are anomalies in the thousands of hours of Alhurra's accurate, comprehensive, objective, and professional coverage. The staff at Alhurra, from top to bottom, are devoted to their broadcast mission and are anxious to work to restore confidence in all of its programming.

Many have left behind families, friends, and property to work with us, often at risk to themselves and their families. They have lost colleagues in this cause, and yet they remain dedicated to our mission. They should not be tarnished by the mistake of a few.

In my recent letter to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, I noted that the feedback I received from Israeli and Arab leaders, inside and outside of government, in my recent trip to the Middle East, I was told consistently that Alhurra is filling a void in the Middle East by providing accurate, objective information about America and by addressing issues absent on other Arab news stations, including free speech, human rights, women empowerment, and government accountability, all building blocks for freedom and democracy.

Alhurra is continuing to gain respect in the region and making a difference. The board is committed to Alhurra's achieving its important mission of allowing America to communicate directly to the people in the Middle East, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that the network is successful in accomplishing its mission.

After Jeff Hirschberg presents a few remarks, we will be happy to answer any questions you may have about international broadcasting. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Blaya follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. JOAQUIN F. BLAYA, BOARD MEMBER, BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee, we appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the programs of the Broadcasting Board of Governors as they relate to the Middle East and South Asia. You have also asked us to talk about our strategic goals and objectives, so I will begin with some remarks to illustrate our challenges and the tools and strategies we employ to address them.

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the President and Congress called on all elements of our country's public diplomacy to do more to reach out and

communicate with the world. Within public diplomacy, a critical component is international broadcasting that we on the Broadcasting Board of Governors supervise, including the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio and TV Marti, and our most recent networks, Radio Sawa and Alhurra TV.

Our broadcasters are diverse in size and focus but share the same mandate from Congress: to use the tools of objective journalism to promote freedom and democracy and enhance understanding about the United States and the world to audiences overseas.

Since 9/11, our strategy has been to create credible new channels of communication capable of reaching significant audiences in regions and countries critical to U.S. efforts to counter extremism. Accordingly, with support from Congress, we have launched 24/7 radio and TV channels for the Middle East, Iran, and Afghanistan; boosted broadcasting in key countries such as Indonesia and Pakistan; and, most recently, initiated service for strife-torn Somalia and Sudan.

As a result, we have grown our global audiences from 100 million in 2001 to 140 million today. Almost all of that growth has come in countries with Muslim majority populations. In the Middle East and South Asia—the epicenter of the war on terror—we now reach over 60 million people each and every week. While audience numbers may not be a clear measure of success in reaching hearts and influencing minds, it is a measurable index to see if audiences repeatedly tune in to the objective news and information we offer. Over time, we believe that exposure to official U.S. views, and free debate will influence thinking about freedom, democracy and tolerance. We also ask those audiences whether they believe the programming is credible. In most cases, our credibility index is high.

Central to our new five-year strategy is supporting the struggle against extremism. We pursue this struggle through the broadcast of fact-based news, objective analysis, and comprehensive ideas. We represent America—our government, society, and culture—in all its complexity. And we consistently present and responsibly discuss U.S. policy.

Our ultimate goal is change on the ground—the establishment of free, open, and democratic countries around the world. We aim today for the same result in combating extremism and authoritarianism that we achieved in the Cold War in fighting global communism. But today's global environment is not that of the Cold War. We cannot simply copy what worked then. Our strategies have to accommodate new realities.

We face today a daunting set of challenges. Governments continue to jam us on radio and television, block us on the Internet, or deny us access to local broadcasting. Deepening anti-U.S. sentiment hurts our credibility. Media outlets proliferate, fragmenting market share and offering consumers abundant alternatives. Audiences now expect product on multiple media platforms. Networked information flows grow daily, empowering citizens who increasingly demand dialogue and interactivity everywhere. In other words, they want to drive the agenda.

How do we maximize fulfillment of our mission in the new global environment? That is the broad question that we address in our new global strategy. A top priority is to enhance how we deliver programming across all media platforms. We have to ensure audiences have access to our content on the media and the channels they use most.

Coupled with better distribution, we have to continue to leverage the techniques and technologies of 21st century communications. This means refining our audience targeting, optimizing our mix of media, and modernizing our broadcasting facilities to drive multi-media products. Achieving these two priorities—first-rate distribution and communication—is fundamental to ensuring that our content finds an audience.

As major content initiatives, we are calling on our broadcast organizations to broaden and deepen the coverage of Islam and to foster intra-Islamic dialogue. Our strategy is to stimulate debate and discussion within Islam on the range of issues that concern Muslim audiences, including Islam and modernity and Islam and democracy. We can set an example of public discourse on critical, sensitive subjects and convene discussions in a host of vernacular languages that might not otherwise take place. This, we believe, will be critical to countering extremism.

We are mindful, however, that Islam is not the first concern to non-Muslim audiences. Rather, for many people in our target areas the issue is living under authoritarian regimes that censor information, deny human rights, and repress the citizenry. We have an abiding need in our programming to help our audiences understand the principles and practices of democratic, free, and just societies.

ENHANCING PROGRAM DELIVERY ACROSS ALL RELEVANT PLATFORMS

The BBG has been very successful in recent years in securing effective program delivery for new broadcasting initiatives in Iran, the Middle East, and elsewhere. But doing so for all language services remains a significant challenge. We must ensure across the board that our content is available via the media, bands, networks, channels, and stations our audiences actually use. There is no one solution—i.e., satellite TV or the Internet alone. And even as take-up rates increase for newer media and technologies in remote corners of the world, shortwave radio remains a valuable delivery means. In short, the right distribution is a market-by-market determination, and we must be prepared both to deploy traditional delivery means and cutting-edge technologies.

BUILDING OUR REACH AND IMPACT IN THE ISLAMIC WORLD

Under the 2002–2007 strategic plan, the BBG took significant steps toward this goal. We launched, among many other smaller initiatives, 24/7 broadcasting valued at more than \$100 million annually for Iran (expanded VOA TV and Radio Farda), the Middle East (Alhurra TV and Radio Sawa), and Afghanistan (RFE/RL's Dari and Pashto, then meshed with VOA's Dari and Pashto in a coordinated programming stream), and Pakistan (Aap ki Duniya and BTH). These initiatives have gained us some 40 million additional weekly listeners and viewers, boosting the BBG's global audience from 100 to 140 million weekly. However, we know we must do more to broaden the substance of our services to meet our national security needs and the needs of our audiences not only for news and information but also for debate, discussion, and dialogue.

USING MODERN COMMUNICATIONS TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES

Congress has stipulated that our broadcasts “be designed so as to effectively reach a significant audience.” We must continue to employ modern communications techniques and technologies in order to carry out this goal. Reaching a significant audience in 2008 is a far different proposition than it was in 1998 or 1988, as media competition continues to diversify and intensify, and broadcast and computer technologies leap forward. Over the next five years, audiences will be increasingly using mobile phones, podcasts, and other (as yet unnamed) means of receiving news and information. We must not just stay abreast of the emerging technologies but strive to be on the cutting-edge. At the same time, we must continue to differentiate across markets, as every market is different.

FACILITATE CITIZEN DISCOURSE

While many governments continue to stifle freedom of expression in all forms (and specifically seek to block U.S. international broadcasting), technology is nonetheless empowering unprecedented participatory discourse among ordinary citizens. We must continue to encourage and advance these discussions. BBG services have a special role to play by helping to open up new channels of communication in the relatively less well-developed information environments of our broadcast regions. We also have an important comparative advantage by often being among the few, credible news sources in many vernacular languages. Thus, we see a growing opportunity to fulfill our core mission—by not only expanding information access, but also by democratizing information exchange and discourse.

ENGAGE THE WORLD IN CONVERSATION ABOUT AMERICA

The position and policies of America in the world today inspire strong international reaction. International opinion polls and our own research suggest that dialogue, not monologue, will be among our best means of reaching people. Meeting this demand for dialogue is thus a strategic opportunity and a mission imperative. We know from the success of our call-in shows how readily our audiences respond to opportunities to talk to America. However, the strategy needs to go well beyond one particular program format and seek every opportunity possible to prompt two-way communication. At the same time, helping audiences understand clearly what America stands for, our principles, and our people is essential. Continuing to present accurate and comprehensive information to counteract misinformation and disinformation is critical. But we must also do so through improved web site interactivity, town hall exchanges linking America communities with counterparts abroad, and the use of English instruction as a unique means of engaging audiences.

RATIONALIZE THE BROADCASTING ENTERPRISE

Rationalizing U.S. international broadcasting following the end of the Cold War was an impetus behind the 1994 U.S. International Broadcasting Act. The Board has acted to consolidate global transmissions and program delivery and has eliminated or reduced lower priority language services and expanded higher priority services. The Board recognizes the necessity of continuing to evaluate options to realign the agency's resources to meet the Agency's mission most effectively and efficiently. We will continue to work toward a more unified broadcasting system that honors statutory mandates. Already, VOA and RFE/RL are producing coordinated program streams in Dari/Pashto for Afghanistan and in Farsi for Iran, while VOA and RFA are proposing a combined program stream for North Korea. RFE/RL and VOA also now share a bureau in Kabul.

Our most precious commodity is our broadcast credibility and program excellence. Credibility is key to success in broadcasting, and it is our greatest asset. If our audiences do not find our broadcasts to be credible, they will tune us out. If they tune us out, we sacrifice our mission. We know the value of our legislative mandate to broadcast accurate, objective, and comprehensive information. We must safeguard these concepts that underlie the integrity and impartiality of broadcast content. In recent weeks there has been great concern expressed regarding the quality of a number of programs broadcast by our Arabic television network, Alhurra. I will address some of these concerns later in my statement. But they emphasize our continuing need to update and enforce journalism standards on a regular basis across our broadcast spectrum, and not only sustain program reviews of all broadcast services, at least annually, to gauge overall programming quality and impact, but also to undertake ad hoc programming assessments as warranted to assess whether specific content areas are measuring up to the broadcasting principles applicable to all our broadcasts—the requirement that they be reliable and authoritative, accurate, objective, and comprehensive.

RESEARCH

Underlying the BBG's strategic process and decision-making is the rigorous use of research, both to evaluate program performance and to inform the development of more compelling broadcast formats that will resonate in competitive, but critical, international markets.

The BBG surveys every target country each year, where feasible, to ascertain audience levels, current media usage, and audience views of the credibility and quality of our programming. Research also aids broadcasters in determining the kinds of programs that resonate with audiences, and presents audience feedback for program improvement. On an annual basis, research typically takes the form of a national survey, monitoring panels consisting of both experts and audience members, on each of the broadcasters' programming in the country, focus groups and/or in-depth interviews on issues of market penetration.

Since 2002 BBG research has been managed through a single contract to encourage cost efficiency and cooperation between the IBB Office of Research and the research offices of RFE/RL and RFA, and has doubled its budget from about \$4.3m in FY02 to about \$8.5m today. Private research organizations such as AC Neilson conduct the samples or panels and focus groups on subcontract. These organizations follow the same procedures for BBG as they do for other U.S. government and non-governmental firms who do research in these target countries. But underlying these techniques, the journalistic product and integrity remain the same. BBG broadcasters provide accurate, objective, and comprehensive news and information in 57 languages around the world.

PROGRAMMING

As BBG resources have shifted from areas of the world where the local media are increasingly free and robust to the Middle East and South Asia, the profile of U.S. international broadcasting has changed. A new grantee, the Middle East Broadcasting Networks, carries Arabic language broadcasts to the Middle East. RFE/RL is now a major broadcaster to Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan. RFE/RL reaches audiences in the Muslim countries of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Azerbaijan as well as the majority Muslim populations of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan and the North Caucasus. VOA has similarly enhanced its broadcasts to Iran, Afghanistan, Indonesia, a country with the world's largest Muslim population, Pakistan, and other critical nations.

Our audiences include large percentages of opinion-makers and "elites." As important, majorities of our audiences find the news we air to be reliable. Reliability and

credibility are linked to our ability to consistently provide an authoritative source of news that is accurate, objective, and comprehensive.

Our continuing challenge is to ensure the highest degree of journalistic integrity, and to leverage the news and information power of our new channels to deepen our reach and impact with key audiences, particularly those in the Muslim world.

Let me highlight just one recent example of success. On April 12, Alhurra TV had exclusive, live coverage of the bombing inside the Iraqi Parliament. Alhurra had the story because it was already on the scene interviewing a member of parliament—something few networks do. Indeed, Alhurra in past months has stepped up its news coverage across the board, while also increasing its discussion of U.S. policies and actions.

As a member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, I believe this is the kind of effort the Board expects and that goes to the heart of what Congress calls on U.S. international broadcasting as a whole to do.

ARABIC BROADCASTING

To effectively communicate with the predominantly young audiences in the Middle East, the BBG created Radio Sawa, a 24/7 network of stations specifically designed to reach the large segment of the Arabic-speaking population under the age of 35. Radio Sawa went on the air in March 2002, attracting and sustaining a loyal audience throughout the Middle East as new transmission sites were added throughout the region. In 2007, Radio Sawa continues to offer discussion and informational programs such as the popular “Sawa Chat” interactive feature and the “Free Zone,” a weekly review and discussion of democracy and freedom as they relate specifically to the Middle East.

Radio Sawa broadcasts on FM in Morocco (Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Meknes, Marrakesh, Agadir and Fes), Jordan (Amman and Ajlun), the Palestinian Territories (Ramallah and Jenin), Kuwait (Kuwait City), Bahrain (Manama), Qatar (Doha), U.A.E. (Abu Dhabi and Dubai), Iraq (Baghdad, Nasiriya, Basra, Mosul, Kirkuk, Sulimaniya and Erbil), Lebanon (Beirut, North Lebanon, South Lebanon and Bekaa Valley) and Djibouti. Radio Sawa broadcasts on medium wave to Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and Sudan. However, Radio Sawa recently received permission from Sudan to expand its reach in that country and broadcast Radio Sawa on FM transmitters throughout Sudan.

The BBG launched Alhurra Television on February 14, 2004, covering 22 countries in the Middle East via the same satellites used by major indigenous Arabic channels. In the three years Alhurra has been broadcasting, the channel has provided in-depth coverage of historic events, such as elections throughout the Middle East including Iraq, Palestinian Territories, Egypt, U.A.E., Kuwait, Bahrain and Israel. Alhurra has been a consistent leader reporting on and analyzing new democratic trends in the Middle East, and has become a trusted source of news for its estimated 20 million weekly viewers.

Alhurra also gives its audience insights into life in America and the American system of government. During the U.S. electoral campaign in 2004 and the midterm elections in 2006, Alhurra provided daily in-depth coverage of the candidates and the issues that impacted the U.S. elections. Alhurra also dramatically increased its live news coverage of events and speeches by President Bush, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and members of Congress. Additionally, Alhurra has reporters that cover the White House, Congress, State Department and the Pentagon. Alhurra’s current affairs programs also highlight the U.S. *Inside Washington* takes viewers behind the scenes of the political process in Washington with guests such as Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, Alexander Haig and Members of Congress. The network also produced a documentary series on American culture and values. *Americans* proved to be a popular program with audiences and the Arabic press.

Current affairs programs such as Alhurra’s *Equality* continue to be unique in the region’s media, due to the limitations imposed by the countries that finance regional television networks. Hosted by a Saudi journalist, the program discusses the rights of women and tackles subjects such as young girls being forced into marriage, the right of women to drive and the rights of women in Islam. There has been remarkable feedback on this program and others, some praising the courageousness of this program and others condemning Alhurra for discussing these topics. In 2006 Alhurra also launched *Eye on Democracy*, focusing on democratic efforts throughout the Middle East and human rights abuses in the region.

Surveys show that, despite high levels of anti-American sentiment throughout the region, both Alhurra and Radio Sawa are regarded as credible sources of news and information by their audiences.

Alhurra Iraq, a special television stream containing more concentrated news and information to and about Iraq, began broadcasting in April 2004. Alhurra produced and broadcast the first televised electoral debate in Iraq's history, featuring six candidates representing the major political parties. This historic debate brought about a candid discussion among the candidates and provided a forum for the viewers to be able to compare and contrast each of the parties' candidates.

Alhurra Iraq is dedicated to challenges facing present-day Iraqis, with more than a third of its schedule devoted to issues in Iraq. Many of Alhurra Iraq programs and news reports originate from Alhurra's Baghdad bureau. Discussion programs such as "Talk of Two Rivers" give a voice to a wide range of Iraqis, from members of the government to everyday people concerned about the safety of their family. Additionally, Alhurra Iraq broadcasts two daily newscasts, "Iraq Today" and "News in Iraq," directed to the Iraq viewer.

RFE/RL's Radio Free Iraq continues to provide the Iraqi people with breaking news and in-depth coverage of developments in Iraq and the Middle East. RFI appeals to a wide spectrum of listeners in Iraq, covering the most significant political issues in the country through its extensive network of stringers reporting through its Baghdad bureau. During 2006, the editors in Prague continued to develop thematic programming focused on democracy-building, and an enhanced website has shown strong growth topping more than 170,000 page views in December. A December 2005 survey showed listening rates for RFI at a weekly level of 21.6%. VOA's Kurdish service, which has quadrupled its radio broadcasts to four hours a week since 2002, reaches an estimated 31% of the Kurdish audience in Iraq.

BBG employees and stringers working for Alhurra, Sawa, and Radio Free Iraq face dangerous duty as journalists in Iraq. In 2006, for the fourth straight year, more journalists died in Iraq than in any other country in the world. Throughout 2006, Khamail Khalaf, a popular Radio Free Iraq broadcaster with a background in television journalism, gave back to the Iraqi people with sensitive, informative reports on the culture and history they nearly lost under the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein. In early April, 2007, Ms. Khalaf was abducted, tortured and murdered in Baghdad. She is survived by three children.

On February 9, 2005, Alhurra correspondent Abdul-Hussein Khazal and his 3-year-old son Mohammed were shot outside of their home in Basra by an unknown number of gunmen. Abdul-Hussein was killed immediately. He had been a correspondent for Radio Sawa for nearly two years and joined Alhurra in April 2004.

IRAN

Broadcasting to Iran remains a key BBG priority. Pursuant to increased funding, VOA Persian television to Iran by June 2006 had essentially doubled its broadcast hours over 2005, and expanded fourfold by October 2006. This programming has been received in Iran with open arms. A December 2006 survey measures the total VOA TV audience in Iran at over 20 percent. VOA's current television lineup includes: *NewsTalk*, a discussion program with a panel of experts who examine the day's headlines; *News and Views*, VOA Persian's flagship program featuring live news coverage of the latest headlines from Iran and the world; *Roundtable*, a call-in and discussion program on politics and current affairs; *Late Edition*, a daily nightly wrap-up of the day's news, targeted to a younger demographic; and *Newsbrief*, the newest offering, featuring each day's headlines followed by History Channel documentaries highlighting the events and people who have shaped the U.S. cultural and political landscape. Over the summer, VOA Persian will launch two more hours of daily TV programs, including another *News and Views* program and *A Woman's View*, a talk show that discusses issues of interest to Iranian women.

Programming on human rights, democratic governance, freedom of speech, the rights of women and ethnic minorities, the issue of nuclear energy vs. nuclear weapon development, and news and analysis are constant features of our programming.

In the past year, Persian television featured an impressive array of prominent guests, including Undersecretary of State Nicholas Burns, Ambassador James Jeffrey, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi, jailed journalist Akbar Gandji, Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, and many U.S. senators and representatives, and covered Senate and House hearings on Iran. In February, the Persian service's *A Roundtable with You* ran a month-long series exploring the impact and legacy of the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, with programs that featured interviews with prominent journalists, historians, scholars and others, including the late Shah's son, Reza Pahlavi.

Programming has included a range of topics including the role of religion in society; perversion of religion by the Islamic Republic in pursuit of political totali-

tarianism; discussions of the use of Islam to justify the oppression of women, free speech, free association and freedom of religion and culture, generates emails and other feedback from Iran as well as from Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon.

Radio Farda is another success story. In just four years since its launch in late 2002, Radio Farda has become the most popular international radio broadcaster in Iran with a 10.3 percent weekly listenership. Radio Farda's weekly reach compares very favorably with that of Radio Liberty to the USSR during the Cold War: under conditions of heavy jamming, Radio Liberty's weekly reach in the Soviet Union oscillated around 10 percent from 1985 until jamming was ended in November 1988. In 1989–1990 it rose to 16.8 percent, its highest recorded rate.

As Radio Farda has matured, and as funding has supported the addition of larger blocks of news and information, it has done so in its tradition as a “surrogate” broadcaster, presenting news about the country to which it broadcasts. Radio Farda finds direct sources of information from within Iran in spite of the challenging environment for journalism. Radio Farda carries more news and information daily than any other international broadcaster, about nine hours daily. This includes three 30-minute daily newsmagazine programs and one daily 60-minute newsmagazine program. Programs are produced in Washington and in Prague.

Because it is a 24/7 station, Radio Farda can interrupt programming at any time to cover breaking news or carry live, extended coverage of events such as U.S. presidential press conferences where Iran is discussed. Such programming is followed soon after by analysis and discussion of the news.

The Internet will become increasingly important in the lives of Iranians seeking objective news and information about Iran and the world. Since the launch of the new Radio Farda web site, with its enhanced news and analysis and increased interactivity, there has been a 77 percent increase in page views (5,687,821 in January 2007, compared to 3,218,127 in November 2006).

Radio Farda provided thorough news coverage and analysis of the December 15 municipal elections held throughout Iran, widely considered a setback for conservative forces aligned with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. In addition to pre-election analysis and hour-by-hour coverage of the voting from correspondents in all provinces on Election Day, Radio Farda broadcast comments from both Iranian party leaders and international experts on Iran. In its human rights reporting, Radio Farda covered government attacks against women, including the Tehran police dispersing a gathering to mark International Women's Day by beating the assembled women. On December 11, within minutes of receiving word that students at Tehran's Amir Kabir University were heckling President Ahmadinejad during a speech he was giving, Radio Farda reported the news to its listeners around the country and featured photos, taken by the demonstrators, on the Radio Farda web site.

PAKISTAN

VOA introduced a new, youth-oriented, 12/7 radio station, *Radio Aap ki Duniya* (*Your World*) in 2004. The station has continued to attract a growing number of listeners to its news, information, roundtable discussions, call-in shows, interviews, features, and music. Research indicates that *Radio Aap ki Duniya's* listenership has doubled since its debut.

Stories of interest to VOA's Muslim audience are a central part of the Urdu Service's programming on radio, the Web, and television. The Service provided detailed coverage of the 2006 U.S. mid-term elections, with a particular focus on the perspectives of American Muslims, both Republican and Democratic. VOA followed the campaign and successful election of Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN), the first Muslim member of Congress, as well as his oath-taking on Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an. A five-part interfaith discussion underscored the freedom of religion in the U.S.

VOA's Urdu Service entered the television market in November 2005 with a 30-minute program, *Beyond the Headlines*, a news magazine featuring current affairs, discussions of issues behind the news, and feature stories illustrating shared values between Pakistanis and Americans. The show airs every weekday during prime time on GEO, Pakistan's most widely watched satellite TV channel. The program includes in-depth reports from VOA's Islamabad bureau on Pakistani politics and cultural issues; hard-hitting interviews with newsmakers, policy experts, diplomats and journalists; and stories examining the similarities between life in Pakistan and the United States, including Pakistani-American life and its contribution to both cultures. According to GEO-TV's market research, *Beyond the Headlines* is the most widely watched program in Pakistan during the 7:30 to 8:00 p.m. local time slot.

AFGHANISTAN

Pursuant to the Radio Free Afghanistan Act, the BBG has increased broadcasting to Afghanistan. Together, RFE/RL and VOA provide a 24-hour daily radio service in the Dari and Pashto languages that has a vast audience reach in Afghanistan. In addition, VOA provides a one-hour daily television program to state-owned Kabul TV.

An Intermedia survey in September, 2006, found RFE/RL's Radio Free Afghanistan to have the highest weekly reach of any communications medium in Afghanistan, including domestic radio and TV, at 58.0%. Afghanistan is the only country in the RFE/RL broadcast region where a U.S. government-funded broadcaster is the dominant media. With its wide audience and high level of public trust, Radio Free Afghanistan is a key media outlet in Afghanistan for both U.S. and Afghan officials.

VOA shares the 24-hour radio broadcast clock with RFE/RL, providing up-to-the-minute news and information to large Afghan audiences and achieving a 40% weekly reach. In addition, VOA has also launched new television programming to engage broad Afghan audiences. In September, VOA launched TV Ashna, a Saturday through Thursday 60-minute TV news program (30 minutes each in Dari and Pashto), broadcast directly to viewers nationwide via satellite and its affiliate Radio and TV Afghanistan (RTA). This coverage now complements VOA's 12 hours of extensive radio programming to the country. TV and Radio Ashna feature regular segments on American Muslims and Civil Rights, Islam in America, and Islam and Democracy through the segment's interviews and daily live call-in programs.

PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN BORDER REGION

In August, VOA introduced *Radio Deewa (Light)*, a new broadcast stream aimed at the 40 million Pashto-speaking people living in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region.

On March 25, VOA's Deewa Radio successfully expanded its broadcast schedule from three to six hours a day, including two new 60-minute talk shows and a 60-minute entertainment program that includes features and music. This program offers local, regional, and international news as well as features on Islam in America, including interviews with prominent Muslim leaders. VOA Pashto Deewa Radio features a daily segment called "Islam in America," and recently had live reports from Eid Celebrations by Muslims in America. Additionally, Deewa Radio focuses on the Islamic world through its daily call-in shows.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude with some remarks on the recent controversy regarding certain Alhurra broadcasts during the period of November 2006 to February 2007. We acknowledge Alhurra's error during this period in airing several reports that lacked journalistic or academic merit. These were a very small fraction of the networks' broadcasting output, but nevertheless are unacceptable. As a result of these errors, Alhurra is expediting the establishment of enhanced editorial structures to centralize editorial control and to ensure that programming adheres to the standards under which all BBG broadcasting entities operate.

Upon his arrival at Alhurra in November 2006, the new Vice President for News, Larry Register, was given the mandate to increase Alhurra's news output. Despite reports to the contrary, he has made no significant change in the editorial policy at Alhurra.

Within these first months of transition, there were significant and unprofessional breeches in Alhurra's editorial policy on the part of both contractors and employees. It is intolerable to any of us, including Mr. Register, that existing internal controls were not sufficient to prevent them. With these program errors standing as painful indicators of the need for additional controls, we are moving forward to shore up our management structure to better ensure journalistic accountability and professionalism for all programming.

Alhurra management has initiated managerial and procedural changes to centralize editorial control. A central Assignment Desk has been established to provide quality control and communicate more effectively on existing reports and plans for future coverage. The Assignment Desk instills a workflow that makes editors accountable for monitoring news items before, and while, they are delivered. It creates a central point of communication in the newsroom and links the news producers and the teams working in the field.

The Desk monitors and flags material as it is ordered and received from correspondents in the field. Staffed by three Assignment Editors and a Chief Editor, this desk is the first line of editorial control in the newsroom for field coverage.

The VP for News is also creating News Teams to improve consistency of reporting and a sense of mission. Comprised of Senior Producer, Producer, Writers, Associate Producer, Production Assistants, and News Presenters, these teams will increase cohesiveness and shared common standards among the staff. They will also foster consistent evaluation and monitoring throughout the news staff and facilitate identification of individual standards or agendas that could allow substandard or agenda-driven material to make it to air.

Recruitment of key managerial personnel and quality journalists is ongoing. Positions have been filled that directly affect internal editorial controls. Mr. Register has appointed a Chief Editor of News and a Senior Coordinating Producer to train and monitor staff. Both new hires are Western trained journalists. (One is American, fluent in Arabic, the other Egyptian.)

Staff training is an activity that should be ongoing and rigorous. A training plan for Alhurra that will enhance the skills of our employees and the quality of our programming is underway. It will stress a common understanding of production and editorial expectations. Training will be implemented by the end of the fiscal year through a series of mandatory workshops.

In addition to the steps above being taken at Alhurra, the BBG will contract for an objective, independent review of Alhurra programming to examine its journalistic integrity and adherence to the standards and principles of the U.S. International Broadcasting Act. Our expectation is that the study will be conducted by an impartial U.S. center of learning with specialties in Middle Eastern studies and the field of journalism, with particular focus on the media environments and the practice of journalism in the Middle East. We are in discussions with a number of U.S. universities to pursue this.

It is the intention of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, not only to conduct a thorough and independent evaluation of Alhurra broadcasts to the Middle East and to seek guidance and recommendations for improvement—but also, to put in place a more robust process for regularly evaluating the content and production values of broadcasts on both Alhurra television and Radio Sawa. Such a process already exists for other entities of the BBG, and it is our intention to ensure that broadcasts to the Middle East—no less than those to any other part of the world—are rigorously evaluated through our own internal quality control methods, so that it can be reaffirmed on a regular basis that MBN programming meets the requirements of our legislatively mandated mission. We believe such independent analysis will provide guidance on the need for further training and program monitoring at Alhurra, and help us take further actions to renew confidence in our ability to reach Middle East audiences with original broadcast programming that will reflect the highest standards of American journalism.

Let me stress that the program segments at issue, while egregious examples of what we do not want to broadcast to the world, are not representative of our overall programming. They are anomalies in the thousands of hours of Alhurra's accurate, comprehensive, objective, and professional coverage. The staff at Alhurra, from top to bottom, are devoted to their broadcast mission and are anxious to work to restore confidence in all of its programming.

Recently, Alhurra has significantly increased its news coverage, including of U.S. policy developments, congressional hearings, and regional news, as well as commentary and analysis. Our expanded programming goes beyond covering American policy to include insightful coverage of events and people not found elsewhere on Arabic language television, such as live coverage of a press conference of a delegation of Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders following their meeting with Secretary Rice (Jan. 29); a report of a visit to the Holocaust Museum by members of the Washington, DC Muslim community (Dec. 20); live coverage of Secretary Rice presenting International Women of Courage awards to three Arab women on International Women's Day (March 7); and an original weekly series on Islam in America which reports on topics such as the International Museum of Muslim Culture in Mississippi.

Alhurra is the only channel in the region that has programs dedicated to the discussion of the rights of women and human rights. "Musawat" (Arabic for "Equality") has recently tackled topics such as the rights of women in politics, the impact of divorce on women in the Gulf, abusive relationships and the debate over whether women should have to wear veils. Another unique talk show is "All Directions" which is a weekly round-up of the most prominent events in the Middle East and discusses these issues with guests that can give the American perspective.

In my letter to the editor of the Wall Street Journal, I noted the feedback I received from Israeli and Arab leaders, inside and outside of government. I was told consistently that Alhurra is filling a void in the Middle East by providing accurate and objective information about America, and by addressing issues absent on other

Arab news stations including; free speech, human rights, women empowerment, and government accountability—all building blocks for freedom and democracy.

Alhurra is gaining respect in the region and is starting to make a difference. We are all committed to Alhurra achieving its important mission of allowing America to communicate directly to the people of the Middle East, and we want to work with you to ensure that the network is successful in accomplishing its mission.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Hirschberg.

**STATEMENT OF MR. D. JEFFREY HIRSCHBERG, BOARD
MEMBER, BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I would like to put just a couple of things in context before we get to questions.

The first thing I would like to do is just to reiterate what the mission of the BBG is, and that can be stated in one statement: To promote freedom and democracy and to enhance understanding by broadcasting accurate, objective, and balanced news and information about the United States and the world to audiences abroad.

Personally, I think, as some of you know, I am less than thrilled to be here to discuss, with someone of my background, to discuss with Congress as to whether or not some of the information that was put out on one of our broadcasts is either anti-Semitic, anti-Israeli, or both. It is not what I thought I would be doing when I joined the Broadcasting Board of Governors.

Let me put this in perspective for you. The conduct that is in question occurred between December 6 and roughly January 20. As far as I know, there has not been additional conduct that has been called into question. I am not here to defend what was put on the air because I believe it is indefensible; however, there are two questions that I think the committee has to answer, and the BBG, in its oversight responsibilities, have to answer as well.

The first question is whether or not the conduct is systemic, and there is a systemic problem at Alhurra, and the second question is whether or not, if it is not systemic, sufficient internal controls and management tools can be placed and established to ensure that the behavior does not reoccur.

If I thought the problem was systemic, or the BBG thought the problem was systemic, that would compel one set of responses. Since we do not believe that, the steps that Mr. Blaya has outlined to you have been put in place and are put in place. The BBG is performing its oversight responsibilities, perhaps not in the manner or with the alacrity with respect to what others may prefer, but we are, indeed, performing our oversight responsibilities, and, with that, would be delighted to answer your questions.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Because of the series of things that have happened, you have garnered much attention, probably more than at any other given time. Many have concluded, maybe wrongfully, that there is a misunderstanding, or was a misunderstanding, of the mission of Alhurra; either that or nobody was watching the store.

How do you see the mission? And I know that you have some words that you have recited from your opening statement, but what is the real purpose of Alhurra?

Mr. BLAYA. The real purpose is described in the Broadcasting Board of Governors' mission statement. That is what applies to

each and every one of the U.S. international broadcasters. That is clearly our mission.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If MBN's guidelines state specifically that, and I will quote them:

“MBN will not broadcast live speeches or interviews with persons designated as terrorists unless the broadcast has been previously approved by the vice president for news or his or her designee.”

How did Hassan Nasrallah get his speech broadcast live last December? Did Mr. Register, as vice president for news, or his designee approve of that ahead of time?

Mr. BLAYA. No, he did not. Mr. Chairman, I have to go back to my statement. The structure that filters news coverage was not in place. What has taken place—

Mr. ACKERMAN. But this was in place.

Mr. BLAYA. Excuse me?

Mr. ACKERMAN. It was in place that the vice president for news has to approve any live speeches by terrorists.

Mr. BLAYA. It was not the assignment desk, which is the filtering mechanism. It was not in place.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But this does not say the assignment desk. It said it had to be approved by the vice president for news or his designee.

Mr. BLAYA. Absolutely, but you have to have a process, a flow, that was not existent in the news room.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It was not existing.

Mr. BLAYA. No, it was not.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is there a reason it did not exist?

Mr. BLAYA. Excuse me?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is there a reason it did not exist?

Mr. BLAYA. Look, I have done a few of these start-up operations, and paying tribute to the people who were able to create Alhurra, which, if we did not have, in spite of this criticism, we should be creating today.

Alhurra was created as a news and information and general purpose television station. When the emphasis changed because that was what the market demanded, to turn it into a news and information operation, and, as such, going with more live coverage and with more news.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Why was it created as that? Let us go back to basics.

Mr. BLAYA. Well, first, it was a matter—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Why did we need a news and information station?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Mr. Chairman, if you want to go back in time to 2003, roughly when Congress approved the funding for Alhurra, and we sought to put the network on the air, which went on the air on February 14, 2004, if you go back in time, Alhurra was created as an alternative to existing Arab-speaking media, which had in common a number of things, including hate-speak, disinformation, incitement to violence, government censorship and journalistic self-censorship.

In that context, in the media environment of that time, Congress felt that America needed an alternative network to broadcast our values and our policies directly to the Middle East. That was the genesis of the formation of the network.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And did not everybody in the organization understand that?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Everybody understood that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, how could it occur that in all of these, I think, three instances that we have cited by the committee, and I do not know that there are others or not, how does that happen besides mistakes being made? The mistakes do not make themselves. Somebody did not understand what the mission was, let alone the process.

Alhurra was created not just as an addition, but, as you say, an alternative with a purpose, with a motive, not to distort journalism, not to lie, not to change the truth, not to deny real facts, but to present a view that was prevented from being presented on most of the existing media that you have appropriately cited. It was not created just so that we could present both sides of the issue.

We are the other side of the issue, or that is what I believe the Congress thought at the time of establishing this. You are the equal time, and to broadcast things that treat the—if somebody wants to leave right now, except for one member, besides myself, who would stay until at least one member gets back so we can continue.

The chair will continue the hearing, and we will remain.

You are the equal time. You are the alternative voice. There is not a responsibility that you have to promote the other side as if it was legitimate. You have to provide legitimacy and not distorting anything, but the idea is to, you know, promote the American story. Is that not true?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. We share that view, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So how does it happen that terrorists take over? Is there no adult supervision?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Well, let me start by saying, before Mr. Blaya talks about the policies and procedures, that it never has been, and is not now, in the history of U.S. international broadcasting the policy of our services to provide an open, live microphone to terrorists. It should not have happened. It just should not have.

I think how it happened then or why is an issue, but the real issue is: Can we provide a set of circumstances to ensure that that conduct does not happen again?

Mr. ACKERMAN. That is what we are trying to determine, and I want to know if, indeed, you have, and I think the committee would like to know that, and I am trying to understand how it happened that it happened in the first place, if, indeed, the rules are there and written out, and I have quoted them, and you have stated them.

Tell me how this functions practically. A reporter decided what they wanted to cover and went out and covered it. There was no assignment desk.

Mr. BLAYA. He was a reporter and a producer. I am glad Congressman Pence is back in the room because he mentioned earlier today his background in broadcasting. So it would be easy for him

to understand the difficulties that Alhurra had at the time. Alhurra had no assignment desk.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How did it work?

Mr. BLAYA. Reporter, producer, and on the air.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Who are these—I do not mean the specific—

Mr. BLAYA. First of all, they are no longer there, the people that made these egregious mistakes are no longer there.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are these people familiar with the mission?

Mr. BLAYA. You would imagine they were familiar with the mission.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I would have warned that they should have been, but it is not a matter of imagining. Obviously, they were not, and my concern is, when we hire reporters and producers, that they understand what the mission is.

Mr. BLAYA. Let me backtrack a little, Mr. Chairman. Building a news operation of ethnic media has quite some difficulties. First of all, you have to hire people, as it was in this case, that have not been trained in television. They are people that have worked in newspapers or radio and have not been trained in television.

Secondly, because I have done this before—I built Univision with Cubans. It took me 3 years of headaches because the code of ethics of journalism was not there. The Western standards of journalism were not there, and so these are the difficulties when you are putting together an entity like this one that was put together in a matter of 5 months and went on the air, in spite of all of the anti-Americanism in the region, with great, great success.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I do not have a broadcast background. I have a newspaper print background, but I cannot imagine a news media without an assignment desk.

Mr. BLAYA. Neither can I, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And this happened for 3 years. People just went out and put on the air whatever they wanted.

Mr. BLAYA. I cannot imagine a news room without an assignment desk.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Was the vice president for news there at the time?

Mr. BLAYA. Excuse me?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. There was another vice president for news at the time, and he is now a consultant to us, living in the Middle East. I cannot tell you that there were not mistakes made in the last 3 years.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But Mr. Register came in. How long ago was that?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. He came in December 6, was the start date, last year.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Of last year.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Yes, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And, at the time, neither did he establish an assignment desk.

Mr. BLAYA. Well, again, when you have to hire the properly trained journalists, and you are on an ethnic media, it takes time. Unfortunately, it does.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I understand, but it is an organization structural question.

Mr. BLAYA. Of course, it is. Of course, it is.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You do not have to have a degree in journalism to figure out that you have to have an assignment desk to make the assignments. These people, as you have said, had no training or background in broadcast; they just went out and put on the air anything they wanted. It is kind of difficult to comprehend.

Mr. BLAYA. Mr. Chairman, I have to go back to my comment. I just do not know how a news room can operate, how you can have controls, without an assignment desk. We have an assignment desk in place now. We have brought the people that can take control of what goes out and what goes in.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How is that working?

Mr. BLAYA. Well, it is starting to work very well. Obviously, we have not had the circumstances that have brought us to this place today, and, at the same time, we are increasing dramatically the output of news and information that you see on Alhurra.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Who is in charge?

Mr. BLAYA. Who is in charge? Well, we have a president.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Who is in charge of the news, the top decision-maker? Is that the board, or is that the news vice president?

Mr. BLAYA. We have a president of Alhurra that reports to the board, and you have a vice president of news that reports to the president.

Mr. ACKERMAN. To the president of—

Mr. BLAYA [continuing]. Of Alhurra, MBN.

Mr. WILSON. The Mid-East Broadcast Network, MBN.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And the vice president of news, who reports to the president; he monitors the programs.

Mr. BLAYA. With the creation of this mechanism that I have described, there is monitoring of what is covered, first; what the network is going to cover; and, secondly, once it comes back, whether it goes on the air.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I want to know how it is going to work. Who monitors who? Do the directors monitor the programming. The programming is in what language?

Mr. BLAYA. Arabic.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are there English subtitles?

Mr. BLAYA. No, there are not.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Subtitles in any other language?

Mr. BLAYA. No.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do you speak Arabic?

Mr. BLAYA. No, I do not.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do you speak Arabic?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. No, sir, and I do not believe there is any other member of the Broadcasting Board of Governors that does speak Arabic.

Mr. ACKERMAN. So nobody knows what is going on. There are no English subtitles, and someone says it is going pretty well.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Like any organization, Mr. Chairman, at some point in time, you have to rely on the people that are there, whether it is the president of the organization or the management that is in place, to see that the policies and procedures that are set by the Broadcasting Board and are in the Journalistic Code of Ethics are followed. If they are not followed, that is when we get involved.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How do you know that they are not being followed if you do not know what is being said? There is a lot of faith here.

I went once to North Korea to meet with the late dictator, and he spoke with an interpreter. I brought an interpreter because I wanted to know if I was listening to a very smart interpreter, or if Kim Il-Sung was a genius or was beyond the pale. You have to know that someone who is talking to you in a different language, what they are saying.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. We do have in place where a language service under the aegis of the BBG or any of its entities undergoes a review, a program review, once a year as to what the quality of the programming is, what the substance of the programming is, whether or not—

Mr. ACKERMAN. If some independent, nonaffiliated with the organization or the network, was not monitoring this in the language that it was broadcast in, you never would have known this was happening. Right?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. I think the board would probably not have known. That is correct.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And the new vice president would not have known, and there was no assignment desk—

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Well, I cannot say that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If they do not speak the language, how would they know?

Mr. WILSON. Well, there are others in the network that do speak the language.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Who are they? What positions do they have?

Mr. BLAYA. I have to go back because—

Mr. ACKERMAN. I want to go forward.

Mr. BLAYA. I do not mean to sound repetitive, Mr. Chairman, but it is the heart of a news operation, the assignment desk. It is—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Exactly, but I would assume that the guy at the assignment desk speaks Arabic.

Mr. BLAYA. All of them do.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes, but what about—Mr. Register does not, and the board does not. We can go back all you want, and there was not an assignment desk, and I understand that, but if we are going to go forward, how do you understand what is on the air?

Mr. BLAYA. Through the review process of our programming—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Which takes place, you said, once a year.

Mr. BLAYA. By the way, Mr. Chairman, this is the formula that has worked successfully for 50 years.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It ain't working here.

Mr. BLAYA. Well, it was not working here because we did not have that desk in place, but this is the formula that Radio Free Europe worked with, that Radio Liberty, that is given credit for—

Mr. ACKERMAN. At all of the projects in which you work, Mr. Blaya, most people spoke Spanish, did they not?

Mr. BLAYA. Excuse me.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Most people spoke the language.

Mr. BLAYA. Not necessarily. I had key people in place that were English speakers, that understood clearly—

Mr. ACKERMAN. But the assignment editor spoke Spanish. You spoke Spanish.

Mr. BLAYA. Not necessarily.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You did not necessarily speak Spanish.

Mr. BLAYA. We had people, obviously, that spoke Spanish, and we had people on camera and reporting that spoke Spanish, but we had many people in the producing jobs and assignment desk that did not.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Here is a question: Did anybody in Alhurra who were Arabic speakers come to you upset, outraged, concerned that this was broadcast?

Mr. BLAYA. No.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Did they go to anybody in the organization? My concern is that if you have functionary people who are not necessarily part of the mission but part of different functions, they are not qualified to tell you that this is not in accord with the mission. These are not mission-centric people. The people at the top; that is why you have a vice president for news. That is why you have, now, an assignment editor. But somebody in top management has to understand what is going on.

My concern is it did not happen before, and I am not hearing anything now about how this gets fixed.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Blaya did go through a litany of items in his opening statement that have been put into place that we think are sufficient to take care of the problem. We understand that the problem existed, and we are—

Mr. ACKERMAN. But if the problem continues, who is going to tell you?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. I expect, if a problem exists, that the president of the organization would tell us that there is a problem.

Mr. ACKERMAN. What language does he speak?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. I am sorry?

Mr. ACKERMAN. What language does he speak?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. English.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Only? Does he speak Arabic?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. He does not speak Arabic.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How can he tell you unless someone tells him? Everybody is relying on everybody else, and nobody speaks the language, and you are reporting that everything is going hunky dory.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Mr. Chairman, I am told that our president of news has Arab-speaking people that watch the service every day and what is on the air every day and report to him.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But they did not report any of these incidents. Right?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. I do not think that is correct. I think they did report at least one of the incidents, if not two, because it was brought to our attention about the time of our January board meeting, so within a period of a couple of weeks, we knew.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And the board was informed that the president knew that these things were being broadcast?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. December, actually, the day after. He knew what was on the air the day after. If you would like our president of MBN to come up and talk to you about it, he would be delighted to.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We would be delighted to hear anybody we requested. The board actually chose, I should state for the record, both Mr. Blaya and Mr. Hirschberg.

Mr. CONNIFF. My name is Brian Conniff. I am the president of Middle East Broadcasting Networks. I oversee Radio Sawa, as well as Alhurra TV.

The checks that we have put into place, addressing your question, there are two checks that we have put in place since these things have happened. One is I have assigned a person in charge of internal review. This person reports directly to me. He does not report through the editorial chain of command. He does not report to the vice president. His job is to watch Alhurra all day long, as well as the other Arab-language networks, for feedback to me. He is my eyes and ears every day. He points out mistakes, errors, et cetera.

Mr. ACKERMAN. This is 24/7?

Mr. CONNIFF. No, but he also monitors the press alerts. It is not just a matter of watching the screen. It is also looking at assignment reports and other ways of tracking coverage.

In addition, there has been hired and assigned a person who works within the editorial chain of command who is an American who speaks Arabic, and he watches all of the newscasts every day, and he summarizes what the topics are, who the guests are, and so forth, and that is sent to me, as well as sent to Mr. Register. It is his sort of eyes and ears.

So those are two checks that we put into place. Also—

Mr. ACKERMAN. When were they put into place?

Mr. CONNIFF. A couple of months ago. I would have to check. A few months now.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And one person can monitor the content of Alhurra, which we have been told is on 24/7.

Mr. CONNIFF. No, not every word, but he can give me a sense of what is going on the air.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And the monitors all of the other Arabic-speaking—

Mr. CONNIFF. One of the things I am interested in is when Alhurra is broadcasting a particular story, frequently a story about America, is Aljazeera carrying that story? One of the things that we are interested in is what value do we add to the Middle East news environment?

One of the things that we are very interested in doing is telling the accurate, full story of America, and one of the things that we have noticed, for instance, is we will carry a Presidential address by President Bush in its entirety, and this individual, for instance, will note that Aljazeera did not cover it live, covered it maybe in an abbreviated way, and those are helpful things for us to know in programming the station.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We carry President Bush live.

Mr. WILSON. Excuse me?

Mr. ACKERMAN. You carry President Bush live.

Mr. WILSON. We carry—

Mr. CONNIFF. We carry any President live.

Mr. WILSON. We carry almost every—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Hopefully, you find that helpful to the mission.

Mr. CONNIFF. This is one of the things that actually Mr. Register has brought to the station, which is the irony that these problems have gotten all of the attention, which I understand, but we have significantly increased our coverage of America, the political process, the discussion on political issues, on foreign policy, and with the split Congress and Executive Branch, it provides a lesson in democracy that we televise every day.

These are not stories that the other stations are carrying, but we have noticed that they are starting to carry them a lot more than they used to, and we think they are doing it because they see that we are doing this.

Our research tell us that there is a tremendous curiosity and interest in what goes on in America. They may not like our policy, but they want to know, what our policy is, and I do not think they get that straight from listening to the Arab networks.

In addition, we do not want it spun. We want to give them the full, simultaneously translated speech, and then maybe we will have a Democratic response to that, or we will have people from think tanks discussing that. This is the value added of Alhurra.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are you competing for minds or media share?

Mr. CONNIFF. Excuse me?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Are you competing for minds or media share?

Mr. CONNIFF. We want to have an audience large enough to make a difference, but we will not sacrifice our mission for an audience. It has to be a combination of the two, but I would never put on something just to gain an audience if it did not have some value about America, and there is a tremendous curiosity not just about the political process but America as a country, its values, its way of life.

In fact, we were talking in the earlier panel about exchange students. We are in partnership right now with a group called Empower Peace, and they do exchanges for the State Department. What we are going to do is take some of the exchange students in a college up in Boston, and we are going to follow their life. We are going to follow their experiences in America.

So this is an exchange program, but then we are going to multiply it by demonstrating to the Arab world what actually their experiences are, the good and the bad. This is America as experienced by these people.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Would you not find it useful if you could understand the show?

Mr. CONNIFF. Yes, I would, but I do not. I do not speak Arabic. I think I bring certain managerial skills to the job, and I am compensating for it by the situation I described before, where I have two people who watch and report to me independently. We have, as the governors mentioned, we have periodic program reviews.

The real check has to be in the day-to-day editorial decision-making. That is where the real check takes place. But I have put in place, since these errors occurred, these additional checks where people report independent to me, not through the editorial chain of command, and they are sort of my eyes and ears.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do you have time to remain at the table?

Mr. CONNIFF. Sure.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a few off-the-top-of-the-head thoughts and some other ones.

One is, I think the three worst words in this situation are mistakes were made because it connotes sort of a level of passivity. We know mistakes were made because there is no way that these things could have happened if your own guidelines had been followed, if the purposes and mission of public diplomacy and public broadcasting were kept.

A second point: I was very involved, in the beginning, with Senator Biden and others in the creation of the BBG at a time when many of the exchange programs went into the State Department.

One important reason for this entity, and I still think it is quite important, and I do not want that to get sacrificed in the context of dealing with this particular problem, is we do not want our radios to be seen as instruments of the State Department, not so much because of the credibility, although that is part of it, of the broadcasts, if they are seen as an arm of the State Department, but because the State Department will have, for its own bilateral relationships, reasons not to want to air certain kinds of programming.

I am not sure that the State Department would want some shows and news about what is happening in Saudi Arabia perhaps to impact on the United States-Saudi bilateral relationship. If this gets too close to the State Department, this becomes a problem, and it causes a deviation from what I think is the appropriate mission.

The third point is this issue of Arabic speaking. It is relevant in certain ways.

Mr. CONNIFF, you have been the head of this network for a while now.

Mr. CONNIFF. One year.

Mr. BERMAN. Yes. Mr. Register's predecessor did speak Arabic.

Mr. CONNIFF. That is correct. There were some problems perhaps, but not these kinds of problems. This did not occur during the first 3 years of Alhurra. It is true I do not speak Arabic and do not monitor Alhurra, but I heard no stories of these kinds of very fundamental and damaging mistakes being made when he was the head of it.

Mr. BERMAN. So the question is, what does that mean? If you are not going to have an Arabic-speaking vice president, it seems to me you want to institutionalize certain things to make sure you, the board, the vice president for news, know what is happening. Some of them, Mr. Blaya has described: Assignment desk, Arabic speakers there, things perhaps that did not exist before.

Some other suggestions have been made. There are private bodies out there that are interested in monitoring what is going on on Arabic-language broadcasting to the Middle East. Stream Alhurra so that people who are involved in that private monitoring, for better or worse, but, in many cases, for better, and who then make translations of what happens, give another source of access to this.

A second suggestion is an ombudsman that gives the board an indirect, outside-the-chain-of-command report about what is happening.

Now, it is clear you know why this was bad. I mean, some of this makes me concerned about who gets hired as reporters. When a re-

porter doing an article on a very small sect of anti-Zionist Jews who attend this Holocaust denial conference writes, reports, and I am now reading the English translation since I do not read Arabic or speak Arabic or understand Arabic:

“The orthodox Jews are considered one of the most important Jewish sects on the world stage that support the right of the Palestinian people to establish its independent state over the historical land of Palestine.”

Basically, not the person being interviewed, not the participant; the reporter is stating as fact not a small, very small sect of anti-Zionists but orthodox Jews think Israel should not exist because that is what he means when he says “the historical land of Palestine.” There is something about the hiring practices, in terms of the reporter, that, both in terms of bias and in terms of knowledge, leave a lot to be desired. But you know that.

Mr. BLAYA. We agree.

Mr. BERMAN. I also see a danger. Some people think, just because of this, we should get a new vice president of news. This is about public diplomacy, and as one considers what to do, the notion that someone gets fired, especially if this is not recurring, one gets fired for this as a result of—in other words, that becomes a news story in itself that may undermine the mission.

So it is not so easy to figure out exactly what to do, but I just threw out some different suggestions that have come to my mind: Streaming, ombudsman, and to note that, in the first 3 years when you had an Arabic-speaking vice president of news, these kinds of things did not happen. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Does the panel want to respond?

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Just briefly, Mr. Chairman. We certainly do not have any objection to transparency, and we would be delighted to stream everything we have and archive everything we have. Right now, there is not an appropriation separate to do that outside of our operating budget, and we would not want to adversely impact the operating budget to do it. It is a judgment call. We could do some of it. We could not do all of it without an enhanced appropriation because we basically know what the costs are, and it is very expensive to do.

Mr. BERMAN. To stream?

Mr. WILSON. Stream.

Mr. CONNIFF. I know small Webcasters that are streaming—

Mr. WILSON. It is the translation.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Streaming, we can probably—

Mr. BERMAN. No, no. I do not want you to translate. I am talking about Arabic-speaking institutions’ memory is a group that I constantly get fascinating stories. They may have their own political agenda and their own biases, but their translations are accurate, and it tells me what is being said in that part of the world. I do not think that is expensive. I know little Webcasters that are streaming for pretty small comps.

Mr. CONNIFF. We have estimated that it would take about \$2 million to stream, but we are in favor of streaming because it actu-

ally could help us increase our audience. Internet penetration is increasing in the Middle East, and it will continue.

Mr. BERMAN. But you have got to remember to pay the royalties for any music you use.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Here is a concern that I have, and it goes back to language. I do not want to sound like it is the same old saw, but it is because that is where I think the problem is.

How can someone be responsible for the news content of a program or a station if he or she does not understand the news content because they do not understand the language? How can Mr. Register make a judgment, or you make a judgment, Mr. President, or you make a judgment, Mr. Director, or you, Mr. Director that the programming is good and that the assignment desk person is doing a good job instead of a bad job?

Mr. CONNIFF. Just as a clarification, we do conduct editorial business in English. Where the problem lies, as you are pointing out, is the actual content of the product when it goes out the door.

Also, just so you know, when we initiated an executive search for the vice president after Mr. Harb left, we used Heidrich & Struggle, an international executive search firm, and we had, as a criterion, a preference, Arabic speaking, Arab language skills. The search firm was unable to produce to us somebody who had journalistic skills and Arab language skills.

Quite frankly, we were told a lot of people they approached did not want to work for Alhurra. They did not want to work for a government organization. They did not want to work for what they considered something that was not truly journalism. So this is an issue that we have to deal with.

Mr. Register brings a wealth of experience in TV and knowledge of the Middle East. He speaks actually a little bit of Arabic but not enough to preview a package before it goes on the air. So we are trying to compensate, under all of the constraints that we have to live under.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Your compensation consists of one person who has to watch TV for 24 hours and 10 other stations or 30 other stations.

Mr. CONNIFF. No.

Mr. ACKERMAN. He has got to be quite a guy.

Mr. CONNIFF. There are actually two people, one who is in the editorial chain and then another person who is outside the editorial chain. It gives me two checks and balances.

We also conduct the editorial business, and we make decisions on what we are going to cover and what we are not going to cover in English.

Where the problem lies, and you are pointing it out, and I am not trying to hide from it, is when the package actually goes out the door, I do not know what it actually says, and Mr. Register. So it may have been a great idea, a great story to cover, but the way it was covered is something that we do not actually know. We are trying to put into place as many checks and balances—some of it is in the editorial decision-making.

Another requirement we have levied on the process is script approval. This is something that we have been doing now for a short period of time, that a script for a news package has to be approved

by the assignment desk. Then the actual video package comes in, and then that is previewed.

So we are trying to put in place as many of those checks as we can.

Mr. BERMAN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. I have to run and I apologize, but let me make one point. I do hope that the consequence of all of this, the changes made, but I still very much believe Alhurra, Radio Sawa are important. I have the same anecdotal evidence that you have and others, from a guy who is under house arrest in Egypt. He was a prominent jurist who is a secular opponent of the regime in Egypt. He watches Alhurra because, by far, for him it is the best programming he can get in Arabic on his satellite television, but over and over again.

In other words, I think this is an important thing for us to be doing. We need to make some changes, make some corrections, but I hope we do not end up killing this program as a consequence of real anger, which I feel, about the outrage of these mistakes.

At some level, for some people, this was not a mistake. This was intentional, and I guess those people are not there anymore, but I just wanted to add, I hope we make this stronger, not undercut it and eliminate it.

Mr. BLAYA. Thank you.

Mr. CONNIFF. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Pence?

Mr. PENCE. Thanks, Chairman. I would request, in the interest of establishing the facts, I would ask unanimous consent that the Alhurra-provided transcript of the Iranian Holocaust Denial Conference be inserted in the record at this point.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without objection.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman. Mr. Blaya, thank you for coming, and, Mr. Hirschberg, thank you for being here as well. I appreciate both of your service on the BBG.

I also want to recognize the president of the network, who has joined our broadcast in progress.

Mr. CONNIFF. Thank you.

Mr. PENCE. I am encouraged by this hearing, Mr. Blaya, and I am encouraged at a couple of levels. I thought I heard you say, before we were interrupted by the last series of votes, and I want to confirm this, that at the time of the most onerous incident in question here, there was no assignment desk. That has been remedied. Is that correct?

Mr. CONNIFF. Yes, it has.

Mr. PENCE. Now we have more command and control, more administrative and editorial control, in a more traditional context.

Mr. BLAYA. Exactly.

Mr. PENCE. I would offer that there is some encouragement in that, and having, as you graciously referred to my background in broadcast television, I have some idea for how things work. Reporters have producers, and producers have editors and assignment desks, and that is the accountability chain that ultimately responds to management. When you take out the assignment desk, bad decisions can happen.

Number two: Am I clear to understand that the people directly involved as producers and reporters in these two incidents, and I refer specifically to the Holocaust conference reporting and then the decision to broadcast the unedited speech by the Hezbollah leader; those individuals are no longer in the employ of the network?

Mr. BLAYA. That is correct.

Mr. CONNIFF. Some of those involved, yes, are no longer with the station.

Mr. PENCE. Some of those.

Mr. CONNIFF. This is another issue we have had to deal with is a lot of our correspondents—in fact, most of our correspondents are contractors, and that was the way we could get up on the air as quick as we could. When we have a problem, it does make it easy just to sever the relationship and not necessarily the employee, so, in that sense, we no longer have a relationship with them.

Mr. PENCE. When I walked into the tail end of Mr. Berman's questions, but I would associate with myself what I perceive to be the sentiment he expressed at the end, and I understand, in a 5-month run-up, less-than-perfect deployment administratively.

My objective here is not that we would put Alhurra out of business. I strongly support the vision for a station, and I think, with the proper corrective measures, the proper accountability, I think it can be an important part of the very diplomacy about which we discussed today.

A couple of specific questions. Mr. Blaya, yesterday, you wrote Congress and profusely apologized for this reporting, and I appreciate your humility and candor. Can you account for why it took 5 months for you to speak to what you have now described as a mistake? When did this come to your attention? At what point did you come to that conclusion?

Mr. BLAYA. Actually, this was brought to the board's attention in December, so we were dealing with this issue as soon as it occurred.

Mr. PENCE. So your decision on that predated your communication with Congress.

Mr. BLAYA. Absolutely.

Mr. PENCE. And you have been dealing with the issue since then.

Mr. BLAYA. Absolutely.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you. Let me ask, very specifically, were it not for the investigative reporting done by one, Joel Mobray, would the board have known about this inexcusable reporting of the Holocaust Denial Conference?

Mr. BLAYA. Actually, we did learn the day after it occurred. It was reported to us by Mr. Conniff at the board meeting in December. That was Nasrallah. I am sorry.

Mr. PENCE. That was the Nasrallah incident.

Mr. BLAYA. Yes.

Mr. PENCE. But was it essentially from the press reporting that I referred to that you learned about the reporting on this Holocaust Denial Conference?

Mr. CONNIFF. One of the committee members requested some DVDs of selected dates, and when I reviewed the DVDs, that is when I discovered it.

Mr. PENCE. Okay. Can I ask you, Mr. Blaya, why would the BBG not present news director Larry Register? Why would he not be presented at this committee for testimony? Was he requested to be here?

Mr. BLAYA. He was not requested to be here.

Mr. PENCE. Okay. Let me rephrase the question, then. Would you not have suggested or recommended that he testify to the committee, whether the majority staff requested him or not?

Mr. BLAYA. I would have not been opposed.

Mr. PENCE. Okay. Thank you.

In congressional testimony, the Secretary of State informed Congress that the infamous Nasrallah speech, which was broadcast live on Alhurra for more than an hour, lasted no more than 30 minutes. Any idea who gave her that information?

Mr. BLAYA. I do not know. There must have been six or seven different press reports of the time period of Nasrallah's speech, anything from 30 minutes up to an hour-plus, so I do not know where people got the information from.

Mr. PENCE. Now, when the BBG chairman, Ken Tomlinson—I think you may have referred to—requested a DVD of the Nasrallah speech, was that delivered to the BBG at some point? Was that ever delivered to the BBG?

Mr. CONNIFF. It is my understanding it was.

Mr. PENCE. Okay. Thank you.

Let me conclude with just a question that I actually raised with the last panel, but I had hoped that you all might be within earshot so you could think about it a little bit, and that is, having just tried to plumb the facts of this particular case, can you describe the tangible measures of oversight being taken by the BBG since this incident? You referred to now we have an assignment desk in place; therefore, we have more administrative control.

What confidence can you give the taxpayers in eastern Indiana that we have responded, we have vetted it, and we have taken corrective action, which I would hope to convey to this panel, good Americans all, who share the same goals of this committee and the same goals of this Congress, I would hope you would understand the objective here is to go forward and apply the lessons learned? Can you speak to that, Mr. Blaya?

Mr. BLAYA. Yes, Congressman. Basically, I go back to your knowledge of the broadcasting business, and the checks and balances have been put in place. Earlier on, you spoke about how stations were managed with people at different levels. That is basically what we have put in place here. That gives us a comfort level that we have.

Brian Conniff referred earlier to the people that he has watching what it is that we are outputting, but I feel more comfortable starting in the front line, which is this assignment desk that I keep referring to, that decides what it is that is going to be covered, and then when it comes in, how it is that it is going to be put on the air before it goes on the air.

Mr. PENCE. I do not know if another board member or the president want to speak to that.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Mr. Pence, if there was ever a doubt about the sensitivity of the issues, there certainly is not now, and I think

that we have done everything that we can reasonably do, including hiring additional Arab-speaking staff, to monitor what is happening to ensure that this sort of behavior will not occur in the future.

Mr. CONNIFF. And, in addition, I think we appreciate Mr. Berman's suggestions about streaming and greater transparency. It is a multilevel approach that we have to take. As Mr. Blaya said, we have to have greater safeguards within the editorial process, immediately post-broadcast, and then a longer-term evaluation of trends and program content.

Mr. PENCE. Maybe I can ask the president this specific question about, are we imparting to the rank-and-file broadcasting employees and the assignment desk the unique nature of this as a part of a diplomatic mission of the United States?

I am just very fearful. I love journalists. I have authored legislation to protect journalists' rights to keep sources confidential. You know, some of my conservative colleagues look at me askance for that. I believe in a free and independent press.

This is, however, a diplomatic mission of the United States of America, and are we communicating, in very practical ways, to employees down the line that this is not a "we report, you decide" television station. We are about promoting the truth about the free world and the United States of America in this region. Can you speak to that?

Mr. CONNIFF. I think it is a very legitimate question and concern. It is something that we have to be ever vigilant about in explaining. We cannot just do it one time.

We put out, initially, our journalistic code, which explains the missions, as well as some of the nuts and bolts. We put it out in 2005, and we just put it out again last week. We need to have training courses that explain that. We need to find as many venues within the organization as possible to remind people that this is not just straight journalism, but it is journalism with a mission, and that is something we just have to do a better job at, and we have to be more vigilant in explaining that.

Mr. PENCE. I appreciate that very much. I am going to yield back in just a second, Chairman, for other members.

I think you could write down the phrase you just used in this hearing: "Journalism with a mission." I think that is a powerful and particularly well put thought, and I appreciate that it kind of came out in your response, and it gives me greater confidence about understanding what Congress and what, I think, the American people would expect of the BBG and of the station in this case.

Let me say again, I really do believe in the power of the written word and the power of visual medium, and it is my hope that we can continue to provide the kind of constructive criticism, as well as support, for this mission because I believe that, over time, it could have an enormous impact on our ability to make the case for freedom in one of the most troubled parts of the world.

So thank you for your service to the country, and thank you for your testimony.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Wilson?

Mr. WILSON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for being here. Indeed, the atmosphere that has just been

expressed of constructive criticism; I know we are all on the same side and that we want to fulfill the prerequisites of the network for promoting freedom, democracy, and rule of law. So my interest in this is to back you up, but I am so concerned, and with your backgrounds, I am talking to experts, and, Mr. Blaya, in particular, I want to commend you on your vision and foresight in journalism.

I minored in journalism, and I was an intern reporter. I really appreciate journalism, and I agree with Congressman Pence that what we have here is journalism with a mission, and what a positive mission. On my visits to the Middle East to visit Qattar, Bahrain, Kuwait, to visit Jordan and Turkey, I have seen very dynamic countries. They, themselves, have a positive story of how economic and political reforms can be so positive.

What an extraordinary story that needs to be told of the success of Middle Eastern Americans in the United States. It is incredible. There just has to be, in every state and community virtually, a story that should be told. The efforts of the American people, by way of the United States Agency for International Development; when I visit the Middle East, I am just startled to see the good works that are being done that nobody knows about.

So that is why it is so appalling to me that there would be an abuse of being a forum for terrorists to announce that bullets need to be in the chests of Israeli troops. That is sickening that somebody would have a forum, on behalf of al-Qaeda, to announce that we need to rub America's nose on the floor. That just is so incredible. I was so disappointed.

In fact, I joined with 10 of my colleagues to send a letter—I want to give a copy of it to you. It is meant constructively, but it is expressing concern. Eleven of us wrote a letter to Secretary Rice expressing concern. I am just shocked at the coverage of the Amadejad Holocaust Denial Conference. We all know it was an outrage. The one person I am not even going to dignify who, I understood, came to the United States; what a disgrace. And then for fluff pieces to cover that, and then to totally ignore the Simon Wiesenthal Institute teleconference with extraordinary stories by Holocaust survivors.

I was very moved to read about what occurred in Lithuania because we know the Nazis kept meticulous records of their atrocities, and to think that there would be a denial, that there would be a questioning, of barbarians who were keeping records of their mass murders; that should not be a secret.

So I really tell you, constructively, and with all of your backgrounds and devotion to promoting our country and promoting freedom and democracy, I hope there is a renewed vigor of looking at how this is done. I hope Mr. Register has understood the mandate, I think, of what Congress created.

So my question, as I conclude as we get ready for another vote, is, and I know that you have already covered it largely, but the systemic situation or internal controls. Do you feel like the internal controls, beginning with Mr. Blaya, are in place?

Mr. BLAYA. We feel that we have those internal controls in place now, and we feel that this is not a systemic problem.

Mr. WILSON. Okay.

Mr. HIRSCHBERG. Congressman, I said that in my opening statement, and I still believe it.

Mr. WILSON. I was here for your statements, and both of you could not have been more sincere, and I appreciate so much your service. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I do not think there is a person on the committee that wants you either to disappear or to fail. Your failure is our failure, and that is why we are so concerned.

I think we have heard a lot of things today that are promising and encouraging. I, for one, still remain concerned. I am concerned that, in order to make changes for the better, that everybody has to understand the purpose and the mission, anybody that has anything to do with programming, anybody that has anything to do with news, and the people who do the reviews have to understand what the news is, and we do not have a mechanism right now for that to really happen.

I, too, was very concerned, as was Mr. Berman, as he stated, that mistakes were made because you cannot tell mistakes, do you understand now not to make the mistakes? The person who makes the mistakes has to know that he made or she made the mistakes and has to know what the mistakes were and has to figure out a way to correct it.

So "mistakes were made" just glosses over things, and we are now going to unmake the mistakes. There have to be people who understand and the mechanisms in place and a way to monitor and check up on that. I do not know that that exists. I have not heard, at least for me, convincingly that it does exist yet.

The language thing; you know our concern. There are a lot of ways to address it. I think it has to be addressed in a fashion and as quickly as possible.

The independent review that Mr. Hirschberg mentioned that is going to take place at the end of the year or whatever by a school of journalism; schools of journalism may not give you the highest of marks, and they may push you in a different direction, to be more fair to the other side. Real balanced and fair journalism really does that. You can be true to journalism and true to the mission, with the understanding that you know that you are the counterbalance to all of the other media that reaches people.

I do not know that you get the kind of appraisal and approval and measurement by a journalism school. I would rather get a political department of some school to evaluate whether or not you are succeeding in the mission. You are part of the government. You have something to sell, and you have a good product to sell: That is America, and that is the truth. You can do that without distortions and without exposing additional people to the wrong views.

The concern I have with the language, and also this is cultural, not to fault anybody on journalism or anything else, but when you have somebody from the region listening to a program in Arabic who has not been exposed to the full truths, who watches that program and hears the Holocaust denial things and giving credence to this minuscule, tiny, tiny, tiny religious zealot of a sect of people who consider themselves Jews but anti-Israel and anti-Zionist and portray that, that may be that person's understanding who put it on, and it might be the understanding of anybody who watches it

and speaks the language, not necessarily tuned into the nuances of what is going on in the real world from a real perspective, and that is a concern.

You, Mr. President, were able to see it because one of the directors asked for specific dates. Obviously, and I am not asking for names or anything, obviously, somebody, not one of the directors who saw it, but somebody else that was showing it to the director, said, This is what it says in Arabic, and you had better take a look at what is going on here. Without that person or source doing that, and I would doubt if it was an internal source, but somebody on the outside, and I think you need real outside people to help you, if you are going to bring in consultants to do this, to know if our message is getting across.

I do not know that you have established yet. I asked this of the previous government panel, the State Department, how they measure, and I do not know that I was fully satisfied with the answer, but, at least, they have methods in place that they think measure the effectiveness of the message. I do not know that we have moved in that direction or have the sophistication yet to develop that or even the resources. Maybe we have to provide some. But there has to be a way of testing, are we getting our message across?

In your case, the message is not America has great music. That is great in getting people's attention, but there has to be a real message once their attention is had.

You are the message; you are the messenger. I would like you to think very, very carefully about some of the things that we have raised, the answers of which were indicative of you want to do the right thing, and we appreciate that, and we do thank you for the great work that you do and for being on this mission and part of the mission with us.

If we are to win over the hearts and minds of the people in that part of the world, it cannot always be done by other government agencies. It is done by the media, and you are that face that we have to put forward. Any final comment briefly? We are done. The committee stands adjourned. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 2:18 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening today's hearing. Much has been said about winning the "hearts and minds" of the citizens of the Middle East, and today's hearing delves into the heart of these efforts. May I also thank the Ranking Member, and welcome our distinguished witnesses: Jeremy Curtin, Gretchen Welch, Thomas Farrell, and Alina Romanowski, all from the Department of State, and Joaquin F. Blaya and D. Jeffery Hirschberg, members of the board of the Broadcasting Board of Governors. I look forward to hearing each of your testimony.

Mr. Chairman, successful international diplomacy is not limited to interactions between governments. We have a wide range of tools at our disposal. Public diplomacy, which incorporates a range of ways we can communicate with the citizens of another society, is an important one of these. However, public diplomacy is only effective when it takes the form of a dialogue, and though part of any diplomatic effort is persuasion, we must also listen. I believe that public diplomacy provides an opportunity to both influence opinion overseas, and to improve Americans' understanding of other lands.

Since September 11, 2001, efforts at public diplomacy have been recognized as an integral part of our country's work to foster better relations with the people of other nations. Among other resources, we have a wide range of broadcast mediums at our disposal, and I am pleased to see that two representatives of the Broadcasting Board of Governors will be presenting on our second panel today. Through broadcast media, we have the opportunity to provide a direct insight into our American values, and to share a positive view of our nation with citizens of other countries.

Mr. Chairman, we share many common interests with members of other societies. I understand that the State Department, and in particular the office of Undersecretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes, is developing policies designed to emphasize these shared values. I look forward to learning more about the specific programs designed and implemented by the State Department, particularly those designed to target crucial sectors of society, including women and children. I would also be particularly interested in any work that has been done to reach disadvantaged or otherwise vulnerable groups, who I believe should be actively engaged and made part of any diplomatic conversations.

Additionally, public diplomacy can serve to counteract the ideologies presented by extremist groups. The Report of the 9/11 Commission cited the importance of public diplomacy, and recommended both increased funding for scholarships and exchanges, and emphasis on a clearly defined underlying message of what America stands for. Broadcast programs, together with Internet material and other programs such as educational exchanges, can provide an alternative image of America to any that might be espoused by extremists. To go a step further, these programs can make real partners and allies out of the groups that they target; groups that might otherwise only see America through the eyes of extremist ideologies. Public diplomacy provides the opportunity to build mutual respect based on true understanding between the citizens of the United States and other nations in the international community.

This is particularly crucial in the Middle East. I would again refer to the report the 9/11 Commission, which stated "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." I commend the State Department for stepping up programming targeting this region of the world, but I think we are all aware that a great deal remains to be done.

In particular, the program has been hampered by a lack of qualified personnel fluent in key languages.

As co-chair of the Congressional Pakistan Caucus, I would also hope that some attention today will be focused on South Asia. America's image in the region was bolstered by the outpouring of American aid following the October 2005 earthquake, but it has since taken some hits due to missile attacks along the border with Afghanistan. As a result, public diplomacy programs in the region remain as crucial as ever, and I am extremely pleased to see that the USAID-Fulbright scholarship program in Pakistan is the world's largest, and is expected to benefit 750 graduate students over a five year period.

Finally, I would very much like to emphasize that public diplomacy must be a dialogue. We are not looking to indoctrinate communities around the world; we are seeking to engage with them, and to listen as well as to speak. We have recognized the immense importance of public opinion and have made positive steps towards making it an integral part of U.S. foreign policy; now it is time to ensure that our efforts in this direction are beginning to reap rewards. I hope we will have the opportunity to reflect on what we have done that has been successful, and which of our public diplomacy programs have fallen short of their goals, and to adjust our overall approach accordingly.

I very much look forward to the testimony of our two panels of witnesses today, and to working with my colleagues on this committee to ensure that this vital tool is fully utilized as a part of our international diplomatic efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I yield back the balance of my time.

STATEMENT SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY JEFFREY GRIECO, ACTING ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR LEGISLATIVE AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS, UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for the opportunity to provide this statement on the U.S. Agency for International Development programs to counter violent Islamist extremism and our efforts to coordinate our public diplomacy activities with the Department of State.

The *National Security Strategy* of the United States (2006 edition) provides the foreign policy and national security guidance to the U.S. Government and the American public. It is especially succinct with regard to the measures needed to meet this nation's national security challenges in the age of global terrorism. The President has reiterated that our national security strategy is founded upon two pillars: "The first pillar is promoting freedom, justice and human dignity—working to end tyranny, to promote effective democracies and to extend prosperity through free and fair trade and wise development policies. . . . The second pillar . . . is confronting the challenges of our time by leading a growing community of democracies . . ." in the fight against pandemic diseases, terrorism, human trafficking and natural disasters around the world.

The President's National Security Strategy is emphatic in calling for a more robust role for development in our national security architecture. Development "reinforces diplomacy and defense." It reduces "the long-term threats to our national security by helping to build stable, prosperous, and peaceful societies." It is essential to bring hope and opportunity to societies subject to terrorist subversion and vulnerable to terrorist messaging. By helping "expand the circle of development" and "building the infrastructure of democracy" in these societies, we work to reduce the areas in which terrorists thrive as we marginalize their operations.

To support the strategic policy positions set forth by President Bush in both the 2002 and 2006 *National Security Strategies*, the Department of State and Agency for International Development have collaborated on publication of two *Joint Strategic Plans* (2004 and 2007 editions) which set forth the Secretary of State's direction and policy priorities for both organizations in the coming years. And to better align foreign assistance with the national security objectives of the United States, Secretary Rice has initiated the most sweeping reform of foreign assistance since the origins of USAID and the Marshall Plan. Over the last year, she has helped put in place a new framework or structure for foreign assistance and given it strategic direction under her Transformational Diplomacy agenda.

In line with these reforms, public diplomacy is undergoing equally dramatic changes designed to reverse the retrenchment in our public outreach efforts that followed victory in the Cold War

A DIPLOMACY OF DEEDS

Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen Hughes has been tasked by President Bush with leading efforts to promote America's values and confront ideological support for terrorism around the world.

Our experience shows that when people around the world know that America is partnering with them, partnering with their governments, partnering with groups in their communities to improve their lives, it makes a real difference in how they think about us. I am going to be calling on our ambassadors and our public diplomacy professionals in the field to find opportunities to work with other agencies, to work with USAID, . . . to highlight the work that America is doing in ways that are relevant to people's lives, to show that we're helping provide clean water or food for their families or to educate young people.

For the moment, I would like to draw attention to a phrase she coined as part of her communications strategy. She spoke of a "diplomacy of deeds" as among the most effective means of defusing hostile propaganda purveyed by extremist enemies of the United States and of showcasing the best of America's spirit and values.

As the principal Agency of the United States Government delivering development assistance and humanitarian aid around the world, USAID's "deeds"—day in and day out in over 80 Missions around the world—play a critical role in the diplomacy that Secretary Hughes is talking about. In working to stabilize fragile societies, mired in poverty and menaced by conflict and disease, it also plays a critical role in advancing the national security of this country. For it is mostly from such countries that the terrorist threat arises, searches for opportunities and finds support.

USAID has missions in 27 of the 49 countries that have more than 50 percent Muslim population. Significantly, approximately 50 percent of USAID funding goes to predominantly Muslim countries. This Agency has extended a lifeline to countries in the Muslim world that have been devastated by natural disasters, unprecedented droughts, tsunamis, and earthquakes.

Development funds are allocated to a wide range of programs, including health, education, and job creation.

I would like to mention one of these job creating efforts to remind us of the human dimension behind the budget numbers and bureaucratic language that broadly describes our foreign assistance programming.

Thanks to a small loan made available by USAID, Ghada Gharib of Egypt now sells beaded jewelry in a local Cairo market. She borrowed \$34 through the U.S.-funded loan program and now has a small table set up in the market to display the many beaded necklaces and other items she has made. She makes payments of only 20 pounds a week—\$3.40—as she pays off her fourth loan.

"The money came from America. I benefit because I can make a profit. I used the loan to buy materials I use in my embroidery. My mother also took a loan that she used for beadwork and sewing; my sister too." She now has two paid helpers and is using some of her profits to send her daughter to school—the cost is 200 pounds a year.

ENGAGING HUMAN RESOURCES

It may come as somewhat of a surprise to learn that most of the employees at USAID are not American citizens. Over 5,000 of our employees are what are termed Foreign Service Nationals, that is, citizens of the country where USAID has a presence. They are the backbone of our missions in Muslim countries and are regarded among its richest resources. And they often work in some of the most dangerous and forbidding regions of the world. Last year, the Agency lost two of these heroes. One was assassinated because he worked for our Baghdad mission. The other, Dr. Bijnan Acharya, worked with USAID/Nepal for more than a decade as an Environmental Officer and died when the helicopter he was traveling in crashed in the Himalayas.

These individuals often bring language skills U.S. officers sorely lack and serve as a link with the broader spectrum of these societies that we are now trying to reach. Our programming initiatives in country are indebted to the cultural sensitivity and political acumen that they bring to the table.

Many Foreign Service Nationals, or FSNs, go on to serve their countries in important government posts following service to USAID.

Ana Vilma de Escobar worked at USAID for nine years in the 1980s before she was elected vice president of El Salvador in 2004, the first woman to hold that office. While at USAID, she managed a \$50 million project that promoted non-traditional exports, encouraged foreign investment and supported the development of small- and medium-sized businesses as a tool for economic growth. She also played a critical role in USAID's support for the Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and

Social Development, a think tank whose policy recommendations helped two successive governments design the country's successful economic reform program.

Dr. Mohammed Mubaid is another example of how former USAID FSN's can achieve positive accomplishments within a society which also happen to support U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy interests. Dr. Mubaid used to work at the USAID Democracy and Governance Office at our mission in West Bank/Gaza. He then became Chief of Party of TAMKEEN, a USAID funded project focusing on democracy and rule of law issues in Palestinian society. Currently, he works at Bayan, a USAID funded legislative transparency and accountability program. Dr. Mubaid is one of the prominent ever leaders in the Palestinian civil society sector. He successfully led the largest ever civil society and democracy strengthening project in the West Bank and Gaza during a challenging and politically sensitive period. He established and worked to strengthen the capacity of 100 civil society organizations throughout the West Bank and Gaza, including the most marginalized NGOs.

Our engagement with FSNs is a "capacity building measure" of a wholly different order from specific programming in this regard. In short, USAID has been a "school" where some of "the best and brightest" in these societies have matriculated and there is a major public diplomacy benefit we cannot forget to engage, empower and support.

MESSAGING WHAT WE DO

The war on terror has many fronts and facets. Winning hearts and minds in the Muslim world is certainly a key. Post 9/11, we cannot remain indifferent to our nation's image abroad. If the "diplomacy of deeds" is to have its full amplitude, it is incumbent on us to make those deeds better known and to rescue them from the distortion of our enemies.

The Department of State has the lead in America's public diplomacy work—having the direct authority over communications vehicles to provide the full range of public affairs, international information programs and educational and cultural exchanges. USAID's authorities in this regard are more narrowly drawn, but have not been fully exploited until now. Section 641 of the Foreign Assistance Act (1961) requires us to clearly identify to audiences within the countries where we work our assistance under the act as "American Aid." USAID's role in public diplomacy has been focused on telling America's assistance story to the world.

To the degree that U.S. assistance plays a role in fostering a positive view of the United States, USAID strives to disseminate and amplify the story of that assistance in support of the United States' overarching public diplomacy goals as articulated by the Department of State. Our work is in direct support of the Department of State's overall public diplomacy goals and seeks to complement the fine work that the dedicated officers staffing the public affairs sections of our U.S. embassies do every day.

In the aftermath of 9/11—USAID expanded its activities under this authorization in several ways:

- Organized and implemented a new comprehensive U.S. branding and marketing effort across the foreign assistance landscape;
- Established a professional, trained communications field capacity; and
- Developed and produced targeted public affairs/public information campaigns in target countries which receive U.S. foreign assistance.

BRANDING AND MARKING

USAID has established detailed policies, regulations, and guidelines for marking and publicizing its assistance to ensure that U.S. taxpayers receive full credit for the foreign assistance they provide. Further, USAID has established a universal brand that conveys that the assistance is from the American people.

The 9/11 terrorist attacks amplified for us the connection between U.S. national security and the good will that could be created toward the United States if more accurate information about U.S. foreign assistance was widely known. USAID determined that we should portray more complete and accurate information about the Agency's foreign assistance. To help focus its image abroad, USAID, under the close supervision of the Administrator, developed a new brand by updating our traditional USAID logo or seal, and combining it with a new U.S. foreign assistance brand name and the tagline, "From the American People." USAID's foreign assistance branding campaign and other efforts ensure that United States foreign assistance overseas is visibly acknowledged and that the American people receive direct credit for their contributions and funding through our foreign assistance programs.

Although USAID first began marking assistance over four decades ago, it was not always systematically or effectively implemented and Agency guidance was minimal. In the not-to-distant past it was sometimes difficult for people to know that the foreign assistance they received was coming from the United States. Further, during much of that time the full set of our branding and marking rules did not apply to large amounts of USAID-funded grants and cooperative agreements. Traditionally, grantees were only required to acknowledge USAID-funding in publications and therefore the bulk of U.S. foreign assistance provided through these grants were sometimes marked with only the implementer's logos and program names (causing potential confusion to the recipients) instead of providing credit to the American people.

In 2004, the Agency took steps to clearly and statutorily communicate that U.S. foreign assistance is "From the American People." This campaign included the development of a bolder, clearer graphic identity that clearly identified U.S. aid as coming "From the American People." The Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs was designated by the Administrator as the implementer of the Agency's new branding and marking plan, and as one of its responsibilities published a comprehensive "Graphic Standards Manual" containing the new marking guidelines. This manual helped to clearly and concisely educate and guide implementers of U.S. foreign assistance both in Washington and the field. In addition, regular interactive and other in-person trainings in the field helped to ease the transition to these new requirements.

In January 2006, USAID revised its foreign assistance regulations to include new marking requirements for USAID staff and all nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) receiving funding under grants and cooperative agreements. These regulations require that all programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities partially or fully funded by a USAID grant or cooperative agreement be marked appropriately overseas with the new graphic identity of a size and prominence equal to or greater than the recipient's or other donors' logos or identities.

USAID's Food for Peace program regulations prescribe the terms and conditions governing activities under Title II of P.L. 480, including provisions for implementing the marking requirements of Section 202 of that law. The regulations require that, to the maximum extent practical, public recognition be given in the media that Title II-funded commodities or foreign assistance have been "provided through the friendship of the American people as food for peace"; cooperating sponsors, to the extent feasible, display banners, posters, and similar items at project sites containing similar identifying information; and, unless otherwise specified, bags or other containers of commodities packaged for shipment be similarly marked. The regulations also require that containers of donated commodities packaged or repackaged by cooperating sponsors prior to distribution be plainly labeled with the U.S. aid graphic identity, and, where practicable, with the legend, "Provided through the friendship of the American people as food for peace."

In addition, USAID has established regulations prescribing rules and procedures for the marking of shipping containers and commodities under commodity transactions financed by USAID. These regulations require that suppliers of such commodities be responsible for ensuring that all export packaging and the commodities carry the official USAID emblem, except where USAID prescribes otherwise in the case of commodities. The regulations also prescribe the manner in which the export shipping containers, cartons, or boxes are to be marked; how the new foreign assistance brand emblem is to be affixed to the containers; the size, design, and color of the emblem; exceptions to the requirement to affix the emblem; and waivers to the marking requirement where it is found to be impracticable.

Overall, the Agency believes that the marking and branding effort has helped to finally bring credit to the American people for their foreign assistance generosity. For example, the first wide-spread application of our new brand identity was during the provision of humanitarian supplies after the December 2004 tsunami that hit Southeast Asia. As a Pew Research Center study found: "The U.S. tsunami aid effort has been widely hailed there; 79 percent of Indonesians say they have a more favorable view of the U.S. as a result of the relief efforts." The U.S. brand was prominently displayed on all humanitarian assistance in close cooperation with our disaster response partners at the U.S. Department of Defense.

I must note that the reaction to the new branding and marking requirements from the contracting community was professional and business like. However, the Agency did initially experience hesitation among the non-profit community in this change of Agency policy. However, overtime, as we communicated with the organizations involved, their concerns were addressed. Grantees understood the urgent need to communicate the U.S. foreign assistance brand message, and have since been complying with few problems in the field.

ESTABLISHED NEW USAID COMMUNICATIONS FIELD CAPACITY

An assessment of public diplomacy in the Muslim world, issued in 2003 by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, concluded that too few people knew the extent of USAID's activities and recommended closer integration of the public diplomacy activities of agencies that administer foreign assistance.

In 2004, in order to improve public knowledge of foreign assistance in developing countries, USAID established new communications guidelines for the Agency and began building a network of over 100 communications specialists located at USAID missions around the world to help promote the Agency's foreign assistance abroad and to serve as a key humanitarian and development assistance content provider to U.S. Embassy PAOs.

These communications specialists are meant to be a comprehensive and complementary resource for information regarding USAID's work and its impact on the citizens of the host country. They oversee the Agency's branding and marking efforts in country; provide vital coordination with U.S. embassy's Public Affairs Sections; act as a content production point for the USAID mission's public information efforts; coordinate with public relations personnel hired by foreign assistance implementers; and seek to ensure that materials are consistent, well written and understandable in local languages and cultures. They also respond to inquiries about USAID programs, write speeches on relevant subjects for the Ambassador or USAID Mission Director prepare fact sheets and press advisories, and coordinate Web site updates of U.S. foreign assistance activities.

One of the Agency's new communications guidelines requires that its communications specialists develop a written "Communications Strategy" for the USAID mission that includes goals, objectives, messages, an Action Plan and budget, as well as methods to measure communications impact. In addition, USAID's "Communications Manual" encourages communications specialists to monitor local media coverage and obtain and analyze locally conducted polls as a means to measure results. These strategies are drawn-up in coordination with the relevant U.S. embassy public affairs office and are reviewed and approved by the U.S. embassy, the USAID Mission Director and the public affairs liaison officers at USAID headquarters in Washington.

Annual communications training sessions were convened, starting in 2004, to enhance the skills of USAID communications officers who handle public outreach and communications and improve coordination among USAID staff, foreign assistance implementing partners, and the embassy public affairs sections. These training sessions sought to standardize knowledge, increase skills and explain Agency policy as well as communications protocols and procedures. Perhaps most importantly, these sessions encourage the examination of best practices with a view to wider application as well as a review of efforts that have yielded less than optimal results.

The last USAID communications training session focused on public opinion polling, communications measurement and evaluation. Also, we have just recently finished a new section of our overseas communications "Survival Manual" to provide guidance on communications research instruments, primarily focused on polling. The manual includes key criteria for evaluating the quality of the research instruments and a standard set of questions to include in research instruments. Sharpening quantitative research skills was also emphasized, such as surveys as well as pre- and post-tracking studies to benchmark attitudes and behaviors.

Here are some examples of communications initiatives these specialists have carried out in the field for USAID:

- In preparation for Malaria Awareness Day on April 25, 2007, known globally as Africa Malaria Day (AMD), USAID developed "Malaria Resources" to assist communications specialists in 15 focus countries targeted by the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) and for use by all U.S. diplomatic missions across the globe in their outreach and education activities. Resource materials included: a sample news release, draft op-ed for signature by the local ambassador or mission director, a PMI fact sheet, updated country profiles, and a sample activity paper on how to get involved locally for AMD day. As a result, press coverage of Africa Malaria Day events this year was expansive and accurate in countries throughout Africa and indeed in Europe as well.
- A pilot communication campaign project in Indonesia, which was funded by USAID headquarters, involved communications officers overseeing the development and production of a radio, TV, and print advertisement campaign that focused on health care, education, and economic growth partnerships between the American and Indonesian people, especially in follow-up to the tsunami.

The purpose of this and other communication campaign pilots was to identify effective practices in foreign assistance publicity.

TARGETED PUBLIC AFFAIRS CAMPAIGNS

Another pilot activity funded by USAID headquarters was conducted by our mission in the West Bank and Gaza. In late 2004, we concluded that efforts to increase awareness of Palestinians to U.S. foreign assistance efforts could potentially achieve a measurable, positive change in the awareness of the populations of the West Bank and Gaza toward the United States.

Based on research that showed that in November 2004 only 5 percent of Palestinians were aware that the American people provided assistance to the Palestinian people, USAID designed a comprehensive public affairs campaign to:

- Increase awareness of U.S. aid;
- Tie that aid to the fact that it is being provided by the American people; and,
- Communicate the sectors of assistance where U.S. foreign assistance funding was being used and convey the results of those activities.

In a relatively few short months, USAID communications professionals in our West Bank and Gaza mission directed the development of our first-ever public affairs campaign. Using a combination of television, radio, print and billboard ads, the campaign was designed to highlight and explain American assistance and tie that assistance directly to a core theme which our focus groups showed would be positively received. We included a tag line to show the generosity of the American people by stating (in Arabic): “From One Human Being to Another . . . U.S. Aid, From the American People.”

In April and May 2005, the campaign was launched. Public opinion research conducted in June 2005 by an independent public opinion polling agency demonstrates that an effective public affairs campaign can radically improve public perception of the American people’s support for Palestinians:

- Over 46 percent of Palestinians surveyed had seen at least a portion of the campaign;
- Over 54 percent confirmed their awareness of the contributions of the American people to the well-being and development of the West Bank and Gaza;
- 33 percent could now identify the United States as the largest donor nation in the West Bank and Gaza;
- 61 percent of respondents indicated that their views toward the American people had become more positive because of the information campaign.

I should emphasize several items here:

- This was simply a pilot campaign to test whether the concept of “paid media” advertising could/would influence public opinion in a positive way in a target host country. As we see above, it did.
- As in almost all media campaigns of this duration, the changes in public opinion can be short-lived because only a concerted campaign over a sustained period of time could make permanent in-roads into the type of “attitudinal” change which would instill longer term positive perceptions of the United States.
- Public opinion is highly susceptible to other internal and external forces, perhaps even more so in developing countries. Just as learning about American foreign assistance changed stated awareness, news about certain U.S. foreign policy positions, regional conflict or other factors could reverse and mitigate positive public opinion improvements at any time. Again, this supports the need for a sustained effort to truly be effective at changing attitudes.

Several other pilots have been conducted as well. As mentioned, we funded a pilot activity in Indonesia that sought to capitalize on the well publicized U.S. humanitarian efforts after the Christmas 2004 tsunami. In the months surrounding the one-year anniversary of the tsunami, our USAID Mission in Indonesia engaged in a public affairs campaign (centered on a modest number of television, billboards and print ads) to inform the Indonesian population about the broad range of U.S. foreign assistance efforts and tie those on-going efforts to the higher profile post-tsunami humanitarian assistance work. The campaign produced results—an over 20 percent increase in the number of Indonesians aware of U.S. assistance in the health sector, and an almost 10 percent increase in awareness of U.S. education assistance. Most importantly, of those who recalled the ads, almost 82 percent reported holding “favorable” opinions of the United States.

In Jordan, following a modest public affairs campaign focused on print ads and bulk e-mails conducted in 2006 and 2007, over half of the Jordanians polled were aware of U.S. assistance, the highest recognition level of all bilateral donors.

What these modest public affairs pilots overseas have shown us is that U.S. aid efforts have a meaningful impact on public opinion toward the U.S. government and the American people. What has proved successful has been:

- Taking our cues from generally accepted commercial advertising practices;
- Tailoring public affairs campaigns to individual audiences with carefully crafted messages;
- Using local firms that know the local communications channels and cultural issues; and
- Using standard private-sector practices of monitoring, polling and focus group work.

These efforts provide credible reason to believe that this approach could be expanded to a larger group of countries with similar impact.

INCREASING CAPACITY IN WASHINGTON

Up to now, I have been talking about messaging in the field. USAID has also had a greater presence and input at the Department of State, specifically in the office of Undersecretary of State Karen Hughes and the R Bureau. To the credit of the Undersecretary, USAID's "story" has been mainstreamed into the Department's public outreach and messaging. This has been facilitated by the seconding of a USAID Public Affairs officer to key working groups there, periodic interagency meetings, and the sharing of public affairs information resources across departments and agencies.

Further, the Department of State has been pro-active at reaching out to USAID, including in key meetings, conferences and training opportunities for their public affairs staff. USAID has now participated in all of the recent Department of State regional public affairs conferences as well as the more recent world-wide public affairs conference hosted by Under Secretary Hughes for all U.S. embassy public affairs officers. These key opportunities have allowed both of us to understand each others needs, to realize the strengths and opportunities that our respective missions present and to work on coordination to take advantage of these opportunities.

Just one example here would be informative. Through a USAID partnership with Voice of America, hundreds of international broadcasters and journalists have been trained in health issues concerning reporting on child survival, HIV/AIDS, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), the worldwide effort to eradicate polio and emerging diseases like avian influenza. The success of this partnership is measured in terms of audiences reached, amounts of health programming aired on both TV and Radio, in-country training for health journalists, and costs. VOA, with a worldwide audience of over 100 million listeners worldwide, has produced over 40,000 health stories on polio, malaria, HIV/AIDS, TB, reproductive health and drug resistance over the past decade. Broadcasters have aired stories in over 30 languages. Recently, VOA has reached rural populations in Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and China with news and information about preventing Avian Influenza. VOA has also created a special website at www.voanews.com on AI with support from USAID funds.

THE NEED FOR MORE TECHNICAL EXCHANGES AS A PD TOOL

I would like to close with one recommendation for possible future focus of this committee. At a USAID Global Mission Director's Conference, our Administrator had asked Mission Directors about what they felt was one of the most successful programs to help build capacity, improve governance and develop a stronger network of pro-U.S. leaders in developing countries. The overwhelming opinion of those Mission Directors was that college and university scholarships or technical exchange programs were the most successful interventions we could do. It is estimated by USAID staff that 20,000 scholarships were given out by USAID pre-1990 (per annum). Today that number has gone down to 900 per year.

We continue to believe that bringing young government officials, civil society leaders, health officers, agricultural research scientists, communications experts, etc. . . . to the United States to further their education and return to their host country, has a profound impact on their worldview of the United States, our government and our people. One good example is on the Genetically Modified Organism (GMO) issue where many African doctors and agricultural research scientists that were trained in the U.S. helped to educate, speak out publicly and slowly roll back those who

would withhold from starving people perfectly good humanitarian food supplies from the United States. Increased exchanges and scholarships for young developing country leaders are good for America in countless ways.

Under Secretary Hughes likes to say that she views her job as “waging peace.” The word “waging” is used deliberately, she says, because she believes “we have to be very intentional about it.” I hope this testimony makes clear that USAID wages peace throughout the developing world and we are taking pro-active steps to brand, mark, communicate and inform those audiences about how humanitarian and development assistance from the American people is helping them every day. Thank you.

WRITTEN RESPONSES FROM MR. JEREMY CURTIN, COORDINATOR, BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Question:

The GAO testified last month that four years after they had first identified that the government lacked an interagency communications strategy, such a strategy has still not been released. Can you tell us when an interagency communications strategy will be completed?

Response:

The US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication was distributed on May 31, 2007 to the interagency through the PCC on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications, which Under Secretary Karen Hughes chairs. The US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications is designed to provide a unified framework for communications across the US government. Yet, it is flexible in order that diverse agencies can adapt it to meet their individual needs and responsibilities. We intend for the strategy to provide a comprehensive blueprint that brings together all interagency resources to bear on representing America as a whole. The plan is deliberately short so it will be read and used rather than placed on a shelf. The plan is guided by three strategic objectives: reinforce a positive vision of hope and opportunity; isolate and undermine violent extremists; and nurture and project common interests and values. In order to accomplish these objectives we must expand education and exchange programs, modernize communications, and promote the diplomacy of deeds. We must also focus such efforts on key strategic target audiences—youth, women and girls, minorities and key influencers.

Question:

GAO also testified that although Undersecretary Hughes had developed a strategic framework for public diplomacy, the Department still has not issued any guidance to overseas posts on how to coordinate the various public diplomacy activities in order to achieve these goals. Can you tell us when such guidance will be available to our Embassies?

Response:

Under Secretary Hughes has communicated guidance to embassies worldwide. At the global PAO conference in January 2007, Under Secretary Hughes discussed her three strategic goals and the importance of linking public diplomacy activities to these goals. The National Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications Plan has also been provided to embassies worldwide for a common strategic framework. Each embassy will focus its efforts on expanding education and exchanges, modernizing communications, and promoting the diplomacy of deeds in support of the three strategic objectives defined in the Strategy: reinforce a positive vision of hope and opportunity; isolate and undermine violent extremists; and nurture and project common interests and values. Under Secretary Hughes has also communicated the importance of focusing public diplomacy efforts on key strategic target audiences—youth, women and girls, minorities and key influencers. With this overarching guidance, each post developed a country-specific public diplomacy plan that coordinates public diplomacy activities with specific target audiences and goals.

In addition, the Under Secretary is in constant contact with posts, directly and through the three public diplomacy bureaus—PA, IIP and ECA—to provide both strategic and tactical guidance. The Rapid Response Unit providing daily talking points on key issues in foreign media, the public diplomacy internal website INFOCENTRAL offering information and advice on a wide range of operational and policy issues, and IIP Direct, a dedicated listserv to PAOs worldwide are just three

channels through which the Under Secretary stays in constant touch with posts worldwide.

Question:

In May of last year, GAO reported that 15 percent of State's worldwide public diplomacy positions were vacant. More recently, the GAO testified that the problem has worsened and now 22 percent of such positions are vacant. Not a heartening trend. What steps is the Department taking to fill these positions?

Response:

Vacancy rates for Foreign Service positions can vary from month to month, depending on the assignment cycle. As of the end of May 2007, there was an overall vacancy rate of 16 percent for Public Diplomacy positions. The shortage is most critical at the mid-level grades (FS-02 and FS-03) and is due to the lack of hiring at USIA during the late 1990s prior to integration with the State Department.

The Department is taking several measures to alleviate shortages in the Public Diplomacy cone. There is currently a surplus of entry-level Public Diplomacy officers due to increased hiring of Public Diplomacy officers over the past few years. The FY 2007 hiring plan was also recently adjusted to further increase the intake of Public Diplomacy officers. As they gain experience and meet promotion criteria, these officers will become available to fill mid-level Public Diplomacy positions. Our forecasts show that Department-wide mid-level deficits will be nearly eliminated by the FY 2009–2010 timeframe. In the meantime, Foreign Service officers with other areas of primary expertise, such as Political cone, Management cone, Economic cone, or Consular cone officers, are being encouraged to take assignments in Public Diplomacy positions. There are currently 125 officers from outside the Public Diplomacy cone that are filling Public Diplomacy positions.

Question:

GAO has also reported that there are significant shortfalls in foreign language proficiency positions around the world and that the problem is particularly acute in the Muslim world, where 30 percent of language-designated public diplomacy positions are filled with officers who lack the proficiency required for their positions. What is the Department doing to address the need for greater language skills?

Response:

Enhancing the foreign language skills of State Department employees is a core requirement of transformational diplomacy. The State Department is actively taking steps to train employees in new foreign languages and to improve the proficiency of employees with existing language skills.

The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has increased the number of language students in critical needs language training, including Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, and Korean, among others. It generally takes two years of full-time language training to reach professional proficiency in the super-hard languages, such as Chinese and Arabic.

The Department has also focused on language proficiency in the recruitment process, resulting in an increased number of new Foreign Service officers with a range of language proficiencies. Since 2003, over 80 new officers entered the Department testing at 3/3 (general professional proficiency in speaking and reading) or above in critical needs languages. By bringing in employees with existing proficiency and building on those skills, the Department can more successfully grow a cadre of employees with very advanced levels of language capability.

To increase overall capacity and help Department employees improve proficiency, we have also seen major increases in our Distance Learning (DL) instructor-led courses, from one in 1999 to over 20 today. We have distance learning programs in 12 languages, including Arabic, Chinese and Russian, and have a variety of programs, from basic to advanced. These courses, while they cannot entirely replace on-site learning, have proven very effective.

FSI includes public diplomacy elements in most of its language training (including distance learning) and has delivered advanced training in Arabic that prepares officials to play a competent role in the influential satellite media as well as other public venues.

The Department of State's programs under the President's National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) do not have a formal service requirement following the conclusion of studies under the Fulbright, Gilman and summer intensive language study programs. However, the Department's NSLI exchanges are designed to increase the overall pool of advanced speakers of critical need languages likely to seek employment in federal government or other important sectors, and one of the criteria for participant selection in our exchanges is a demonstrated plan to continue

language learning beyond the program and an intention to apply the language skills learned to a future career.

Question:

In Fiscal Year 2006, educational and cultural exchange programs received \$451 million. Can you tell us how much of that was spent in the Middle East and South Asia?

- *How does the Department measure the effectiveness of exchange programs?*
- *Do we keep in touch with past participants and do we make use of them as part of our public diplomacy?*

Response:

In FY 2006 under the Educational and Cultural Exchanges appropriation, the Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) obligated \$66.6 million in the Middle East and \$35.5 million in South Asia. In addition, ECA received funding from Economic Support Funds in FY 2006 to support various exchange programs in the Middle East and Pakistan, of which \$6.3 million was obligated in the Middle East and \$19.3 million in Pakistan.

ECA has an evaluation office staffed by professionals. The effectiveness of ECA programs is determined in a number of ways:

Independent, in-depth evaluations of major ECA programs are conducted by private firms. These evaluations draw on data from multiple countries and regions over a substantial period of time to determine if the programs are meeting their stated goals.

ECA has also developed a web-based survey function, known as E-GOALS, that allows us to rapidly identify short-term changes in the attitudes of exchange participants. We administered our 10,000th E-GOALS survey in April of this year.

In addition, all ECA grants contain a requirement that the grant recipient put a monitoring and evaluation system in place and provide reports to the program office.

Department of State exchange programs result in potential worldwide partners and allies for the United States, partners that share a global perspective and a keen interest in improving their home communities and nations. Through a variety of outreach mechanisms, the Department engages with exchange program alumni. Our ability to sustain this engagement is invaluable in maintaining a dialogue with and among alumni on key foreign policy issues and in aiding alumni in their implementation of concepts explored during their exchange programs.

Using a variety of outreach tools, Departmental and Mission staffs create and build relations with a network of alumni at the local, regional, national, and global levels. The State Alumni website is a unique networking and policy delivery tool our increasingly influential alumni use to interact with U.S. government policymakers through webchats; network with fellow alumni and share ideas learned during their exchange program; read the latest articles in leading U.S. journals; and find out about alumni association activities. At the post level, Missions nurture alumni associations who are engaged in myriad activities such as community service projects, youth mentoring, promotion of exchange opportunities, educational advising, and participation in public forums on key policy topics. Increasingly, alumni are using the expertise obtained during their exchange programs to implement concrete public diplomacy activities in their home countries and communities.

Question:

In Fiscal Year 2006 public diplomacy activities in the Department's regional bureaus received \$260 million worldwide, can you break out how much the Near East Bureau received? How about for the South and Central Asia Bureau? How does the Department measure the effectiveness of these activities?

Response:

In fiscal year 2006, the Bureau of Near East Affairs received \$23.0 million and the Bureau of South Asian Affairs received \$16.8 million in Public Diplomacy funds. (The amount for South Asia does not include the central Asian states, which were still being managed by the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs in FY 2006.)

We place a premium on being able to measure the effectiveness and impact of our public diplomacy programs, and we have put in place a comprehensive program to do just that, building on the successful evaluation program at the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

The culture of measurement is well established throughout ECA. ECA's evaluation division has been overseeing in-depth independent evaluations and surveying exchange participants for nearly a decade. Our global exchange programs have re-

ceived OMB's highest rating and ECA's scores place it in the top 1% of programs in the Department of State. We have developed an in-house web-based survey function, known as E-GOALS, that allows us to identify changes in the attitudes of exchange participants. We administered our 10,000th survey in April of this year. In addition, all ECA grants contain a requirement that the grant recipient put in place a monitoring and evaluation system and provide reports to the program office.

Early in Under Secretary Hughes' tenure, she created a Public Diplomacy Evaluation Office (PDEO) to spread ECA's "best practices" to all public diplomacy products and programs. We now measure the effectiveness of public Diplomacy programs and products in a variety of ways. We have established a set of 15 core performance indicators for Public Diplomacy activities worldwide and are phasing these into the Department's annual budget and performance exercise.

PDEO oversees independent evaluations of major public diplomacy programs. A final report, for example, on an evaluation of the English Access Microscholarship Program is imminent and a pilot evaluation of American Corners in Asia is being finalized. Preliminary data shows that both of these programs are meeting their stated goals.

The findings from these reports are used to make program and resource decisions. For example, Under Secretary Hughes requested an assessment of Hi Magazine—a youth-oriented Arabic language monthly. When the assessment found it had an ill-defined audience, no ability to track readership, and was unable to demonstrate its impact on the target audience, we terminated its publication. This decision, based on a professional evaluation, enabled me to free up resources for other initiatives.

PDEO has also piloted three ambitious new mechanisms to help assess public diplomacy effectiveness:

- A mission activity tracker to tabulate public diplomacy activities (outputs) worldwide and to capture data, in a standard format, on activities, themes and goals, and audience numbers and demographics;
- A method to quantify the impact (outcomes) of our programs and products on our target audiences; and
- A means of ascertaining the opinion of users of our overseas mission websites.

Question:

The State Department hosted a Private Sector Summit on Public Diplomacy last January. Would you describe the outcomes from this summit and is there a comprehensive strategy to engage the private sector in efforts at public diplomacy?

Response:

In January, the State Department co-hosted the Private Sector Summit on Public Diplomacy with the Public Relations Coalition, an association of more than 18 organizations that represent 50,000 senior communications professionals. This Summit brought 160 American business and government leaders together and developed 11 models for action for greater private sector support for U.S. public diplomacy efforts. These suggestions included corporate support for enhanced projects in local communities around the world, English language training, and sponsorship of scholarships and exchanges. The models can be used by our Ambassadors and embassies to solicit support from the private sector in each of their countries. One outcome of the summit was a report, detailing the 11 models and a summary of all the information provided at the summit. This report was released in the months following the Summit, and it has reached thousands, including U.S. Ambassadors, Public Affairs Officers, State Department private sector contacts, and the PR Coalition's 50,000 members. We are also working with the PR Coalition to share the summit report and models for action with the Chief Executive Officers of the top 1000 companies in the U.S. Another outcome of the Summit is the opportunity for State Department Public Affairs officers to receive professional training, growth, and global networking through a new partnership with the International Public Relations Association (IPRA), a prestigious global PR/Public Affairs professional association. The IPRA is offering membership to all government public relations and public affairs professionals including a free trial membership for six months. Also as a result of the summit, we are participating in a new one-day course offered to executives traveling abroad, hosted by Business for Diplomatic Action and Thunderbird School of Global Management. We expect relationships that were developed at the Private Sector Summit on Public Diplomacy will continue to produce new ideas and partnership opportunities in the months ahead.

Working with the private sector has been a top priority in public diplomacy since the arrival of Under Secretary Karen Hughes at the State Department. Secretary

Rice and Under Secretary Hughes understand the incredible value of working together with partners from all aspects of American society, and that public diplomacy is not the work of government alone. The public diplomacy team is reaching out to all aspects of the private sector for advice and partnerships.

To further this work of engaging the private sector, and to institutionalize that outreach for public diplomacy, Under Secretary Hughes established the Office of Private Sector Outreach in 2006 to formalize the way we engage businesses, universities, foundations, and the American people. This office is working to develop public-private partnerships that expand and enhance public diplomacy efforts around the world. Over the past 20 months, this office has launched new initiatives in areas including humanitarian assistance, women's empowerment, exchanges, and education. In just 20 months, her team has worked with more than 300 organizations to develop innovative ways for the State Department to engage the private sector in public diplomacy initiatives. This office strategically focuses on partnership opportunities in key countries and regions and that have an impact on critical audiences for change such as: women, youth, educators and journalists. Partnerships are developed and launched in a way that is institutionalized and has lasting impact.

For example, IIP has worked closely with both the private and public sectors to examine new technologies and program tools. In early 2007, we held a multi-day "crucible" session in Los Angeles with over a dozen key electronic game industry experts. These discussions informed our understanding of new trends and led to partnerships that are helping us explore new media and program possibilities. As a result of this conference, IIP is currently working closely with the University of Southern California and Linden Labs to explore program possibilities in the virtual universe of Second Life. Our experience in working with our partners at USC is helping the Department make sound and well-informed decisions about how best to move ahead in the highly visible medium of virtual worlds.

In its first year, the Office of Private Sector Outreach focused on creating and implementing new strategic partnerships with the private sector. Over the next 18 months, my team will develop training tools to assist Ambassadors, public affairs officers and other public diplomacy professionals in developing public-private sector partnerships. By working closely with ECA, IIP and the regional bureaus, these tools will share legal guidelines, best practices, partnerships models, and information on where to identify viable private sector partners in each country.

The Office of Private Sector Outreach will continue to work in a sustained and coordinated fashion to make sure that partnerships are a key component of all public diplomacy programs and outreach.

Question:

Please describe the Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Coordinating Committee. What are its functions? Who is on the committee? How frequently does it meet? What guidance has it produced for agencies and overseas posts to assist in implementing public diplomacy strategy?

It is my understanding that the interagency PCC has identified overseas posts in 18 countries with Muslim majority populations and has developed an individual country strategy for each. Are these strategies currently being implemented? Could you give us some highlights of strategies for say Egypt or Pakistan? Please focus on communication objectives, core messages and themes, target audiences, information dissemination strategies and programs, planned evaluation efforts and the role in-depth audience research played in each of these steps.

Response:

In April 2006, the NSC established the PCC on Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications led by Under Secretary Karen Hughes. The PCC is responsible for leading our strategic communication efforts and coordinating interagency activities. This is an interagency group and includes representatives from DOD, USAID, the intelligence agencies, DHS, HHS and others. It meets on a bi-monthly basis. This PCC drafted the US Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communications.

Country-specific public diplomacy strategies were developed for each of the Pilot Countries. Each post developed a strategy in which they identified target audiences, focusing on youth and key influencers; defined mission-specific strategic goals that support the second overarching public diplomacy objective to isolate and marginalize violent extremists; and requested funding to expand education and exchanges, modernize communication and promote the diplomacy of deeds. We will begin implementing these plans with the additional funding from the FY 2007 Supplemental in the coming months.

Question:

What specific attitudes and behaviors is the United States seeking to change with its public diplomacy activities in the Middle East and South Asia? What specific goals have been set for achieving the desired attitude and behavior changes and how long do you anticipate it will take to achieve these goals?

Response:

We face a difficult communications challenge in many Muslim countries. While many Muslims overseas admire and respect many things about the United States, some may also object to our cultural products and their perception of American policies and values. There is a great deal of misunderstanding in much of the Muslim world about the United States, its actions and its people. Many are surprised to find, for instance, that millions of Muslims live and worship freely in our country, that Americans value many of the same things that they value, such as family and faith, and that the United States and the American people are among the most generous people in the world. In a crowded media environment, our challenge is to combat the myths about the United States, to explain our policies and to highlight the many things we have done and continue to do to help Muslims around the world.

Directly engaging Muslim communities is essential to this effort and to our efforts to counter violent extremism. This is a long-term effort, and we have adopted a multifaceted approach emphasizing three areas: education and exchanges, communications, and the diplomacy of deeds. We are also concentrating on reaching key influencers, including women, religious leaders, and educators, who have the capacity to influence opinion more broadly across societies.

Education and English instruction are key to engaging youth. The youth enrichment programs we are launching this summer will engage a younger audience than our traditional programs have and introduce at risk youth to Americans at a much younger age. This summer several posts will be hosting local youth enrichment programs that target 8–14 year olds. We are also focused on teaching English as a way to provide young men and women with a skill to help them obtain better education and jobs, and open the door to greater understanding about America. For example, the English Access Microscholarship Program provided 10,000 scholarships in FY 2006 to high school students in 44 countries with significant Muslim populations for up to two years of English language instruction in their own communities and schools.

Enhanced engagement with the media, particularly with Arab media outlets, is critical to reaching broader audiences and countering the extremist message. We have established media outreach hubs in key cities—London, Brussels and Dubai—especially focused on enhancing our outreach to regional media and increasing our presence in these critical media markets. Since we began to measure media appearances, the presence of American spokespersons in Arab media has increased by 30 percent with more than 82 percent of the interviews in Arabic. Through IIP's Digital Outreach Team, we seek to establish a U.S. presence in Arabic cyberspace, engaging in conversations about critical issues on Arabic-language discussion forums. The new Counterterrorism Communication Center is also focused on countering extremist messages, disinformation and propaganda on the Internet.

We also seek to highlight the concrete ways in which America is helping people around the world to have better lives—the diplomacy of our deeds. For instance, after the South Asia earthquake in October 2005, the President asked five American CEOs to lead an effort to raise funds from the private sector to help the earthquake victims. This groundbreaking public-private partnership has raised more than \$120 million in cash and in-kind contributions for earthquake relief and reconstruction. We will continue to expand such efforts and to publicize these programs in partnership with USAID.

Question:

Do all the agencies that participate in our public diplomacy efforts share the same communications goals or do they vary by agency? Does each agency involved in public diplomacy have their own performance evaluation and measurement systems or are there agreed upon systems that each agency uses? How are communication goals set? Are they set by country or by region?

Response:

The public diplomacy and strategic communication initiatives of various departments and agencies are tailored to their specific missions and requirements. Metrics designed for academic exchange programs may not be suitable to foreign assistance activities and neither of these may provide actionable data for military commanders. While each agency has its own focus, the US National Strategy for Public Diplomacy

and Strategic Communication provides an overarching framework for each agency to follow. All agencies have been asked by the PCC for Strategic Communications and Public Diplomacy to submit their own agency-specific communications plan following the blueprint provided in the Strategy. These strategies are to include specific ways in which each agency will evaluate its efforts.

The Policy Coordinating Committee has established a Metrics Working Group. It has just begun its work, but its mission is to establish a culture of measurement—identifying, sharing and highlighting the efforts of the participating departments and agencies in order to examine the effectiveness and impact of their programs and products.

Question:

In recent testimony before Congress, one pollster said that public diplomacy alone might not be sufficient to “move the needle” of foreign public opinion towards the United States. Do you agree with this view? If so, what should public diplomacy efforts focus on achieving?

Response:

Public diplomacy is part of a larger process in which our public statements are aligned with our policies and actions. Public diplomacy alone cannot change public opinion towards the US. It is, however, central to America’s overall diplomatic mission. By ensuring that public diplomacy is part of the policy making process, we will take foreign attitudes into account when formulating policy. Through public diplomacy we are able to frame our policies and define our country in terms that are favorable to us and explain our actions. Public diplomacy also lays a strong foundation of mutual understanding that can transcend specific issues and supports long-term international relationships beyond the moment. Moreover, it enables us to demonstrate respect and listen to the citizens of other countries and cultures, which ultimately helps us to frame our messages more appropriately.

Question:

While State remains the lead agency for public diplomacy, in recent years DOD has been playing a larger role in public diplomacy, including the publicizing of DOD’s post-conflict and disaster-related assistance and the ongoing role of Military Information and Support Teams at embassies. What systems are in place or under development to enable the two agencies to coordinate their efforts to best utilize their departmental expertise, find program synergies, and leverage their budgets toward shared goals?

Response:

Successful U.S. public diplomacy requires a coordinated effort between all U.S. government agencies, but particularly with State and DoD. We work very hard to coordinate our efforts, find synergies, and leverage budgets both in the field at the country team and combatant commands, and also here in Washington.

We have worked closely with the Department of Defense in planning our broader public diplomacy strategy. Our military has a critical and positive role to play in advancing our public diplomacy agenda. Senior DoD officials have been active participants in the PCC on strategic communications and public diplomacy which Under Secretary Hughes chairs, and they are providing concrete support to the Counterterrorism Communication Center that is being established at the Department of State. In our missions abroad, the Chief of Mission has full responsibility for the direction, coordination and supervision of all Department of Defense personnel on official duty except those under the command of a U.S. area military commander. The Chief of Mission and the area military commander keep each other fully informed and cooperate on all matters of mutual interest. Embassy Public Affairs Officers and U.S. military also coordinate closely on the public affairs aspects of our military activity, for example, humanitarian relief, in-country.

The State Department and the Department of Defense bring distinct and complementary resources to the public diplomacy and strategic communication effort. We believe that the relationship is working well both in Washington and in the field.

Question:

In recent testimony before a House Appropriations subcommittee, Under Secretary Hughes discussed the central importance of “the diplomacy of deeds,” which involves highlighting USAID, DoD, and other government agencies’ assistance efforts around the world. GAO recently reported that the U.S. government faced several challenges in ensuring that overseas audiences are aware of the source of U.S. assistance, including the lack of government-wide guidance on marking and publicizing U.S. as-

assistance and a strategy for assessing the impact of these publicity efforts. How successful do you believe U.S. agencies have been in communicating this story to the rest of the world?

Response:

The most dramatic public diplomacy successes have occurred when the United States sent highly visible emergency relief to Indonesia following the South Asian tsunami and to Pakistan after the massive earthquake in 2005.

The U.S. Embassy in Jakarta and the Department of State worked closely with PACOM and the rest of the U.S. military establishment to highlight the crucial role the USS Abraham Lincoln task force provided in the relief effort, as well as the outstanding relief work carried out by USAID and American NGOs in easing the suffering and providing essential assistance following the tsunami. When the task force departed they were replaced by the crew of the USNS Mercy hospital ship. The immediate result was a sharp rise in positive perceptions of the U.S. in Indonesia, providing a vivid example of what cooperation between government agencies and the private sector can accomplish in telling the story of the “diplomacy of deeds.”

Within 48 hours of the Pakistani earthquake, U.S. helicopters, at the invitation of the Pakistan government, were in the skies over the affected area. Embassy staff coordinated the major relief efforts as USAID NGOs set-up schools in relief camps, taught women to sew blankets needed in the harsh winter months, and established programs that paid Pakistanis to re-build housing and construct the paths and roads that would take them home again. A December 2005 poll by ACNielsen Pakistan showed that Pakistanis with favorable opinions of the United States doubled, to 46 percent from 23 percent six months earlier.

These examples provide the starkest evidence that U.S. aid has had a dramatic positive impact on attitudes, but hundreds of other initiatives are also improving the U.S. image. The challenge is to better publicize the positive stories that our assistance and exchange programs have made possible worldwide, as we are doing through our “Partnership for a Better Life” Web site. We continue to work closely with our colleagues in USAID and in the U.S. military to deliver this very powerful message effectively. As an example, we use DoD Combat Camera images, which provide photographs of relief and other efforts, on a daily basis, and have the same access to Combat Camera footage as DoD organizations.

The State Department and USAID are committed to working together to increase the visibility of U.S. assistance worldwide.

Question:

Undersecretary Hughes has stated that one of her key objectives is to better integrate policy making with public diplomacy considerations. Do you believe this has occurred? If so, please provide a specific example where a policy decision was modified to reduce or eliminate an anticipated negative reaction from foreign publics.

Response:

Public diplomacy has a vital role to play in the policy-making process. By taking foreign attitudes into account when formulating policy, national security will be strengthened and U.S. foreign policy will be more successful. The stature of public diplomacy within the Department and beyond has been elevated to a position it has never enjoyed before. The result is that public diplomacy is at the policy table at both the most senior levels and the working level, and this has very real and operational significance. For example, exchanges are looked to on routine basis as a way to achieve specific high priority policy objectives with countries such as Iran, Iraq and Lebanon.

Question:

Are your public diplomacy programs supported by in-depth audience research that analyzes how target audience opinions are formed and the specific factors that must be addressed to shape our messages and programs accordingly? If so, please provide an illustration of such research and how it was used to develop, implement, and evaluate a public diplomacy program implemented in the Middle East or South Asia.

Response:

Public diplomacy programs are supported by public opinion polling abroad commissioned by the Department’s Office of Research. Polls are conducted to determine major factors affecting public perceptions of the U.S. and its policies, and public diplomacy themes that could resonate with foreign publics.

An important example is the multi-country study of public opinion sponsored by Under Secretary Hughes and administered through the Office of Research in the Department of State. The study surveyed public opinion in 14 countries around the

globe¹ in December 2005 and January 2006 with results revealing that despite predominantly negative views of the U.S., many people in both the Muslim and non-Muslim world remain open to changing their minds about the U.S. The study also suggested what messages would resonate deeply with those populations and offer an effective means for improving America's image among those foreign publics. The study results helped develop more effective public diplomacy, including in the pilot country program to counter ideological support for terrorism and themes emphasized in the Departments electronic outreach and other information programs.

The Public Diplomacy Evaluation Office is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of various public diplomacy programs. The following is an example of an evaluation of the English Access Microscholarship Program:

In 2006, the Public Diplomacy Evaluation Office conducted an evaluation of the English Access Microscholarship Program. This evaluation incorporated both a formative component and retrospective assessment of the Access Program in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Morocco, Lebanon and Oman. Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews, survey questionnaires, focus groups, discussion groups and classroom observations. The evaluation team surveyed 613 Access students, 137 peers of Access students, 136 parents of Access students, 35 Access teachers and 21 Access administrators.

The evaluation determined that the English Access Microscholarship Program is highly effective in providing a significant English language learning experience to non-elite 14–18 year old students. The Access Program also helps students develop a greater appreciation for U.S. culture and values, increases their self-confidence, encourages critical thinking and open-mindedness, and improves their performance in regular school classes. To date, approximately 20,000 students in 44 countries in Africa (AF), East Asia/Pacific (EAP), Europe (EUR), the Near East (NEA), and South Central Asia (SCA) have enrolled in the Program. The following are highlights from the program evaluation:

- The overwhelming majority of Access students rated the English skills they developed due to the Access Program as good or excellent in the following categories: 91.8% in reading; 85% in writing; 84% in speaking; 83.5% in understanding spoken English; and 77.7% in grammar.
- Access students reported a more favorable view of the American people due to their participation in the Access Program (87.5%).
- More than half of the Access students reported more favorable views of the U.S. Government due to their participation in the Access Program (54.3%).
- Access students reported sharing knowledge from their Access classes with family and peers (89.5%)
- Parents reported that their own English language skills improved since their child started in the Access Program (73.0%).
- Access students feel that the Access Program helped them in their regular school subjects and courses (92.7%).
- Parents said they would encourage their other children to participate in the Access Program (96.3%).

Question:

Many posts in the Muslim world are considered high or critical threat for terrorism and have limited public access to U.S. facilities thereby reducing State's ability to conduct public diplomacy. Proposed solutions include the use of American Corners (information resource centers hosted by local institutions) and American Presence Posts (single officer posts located outside national capitals).

- *What efforts are underway to balance security with public outreach?*
- *Can you elaborate on your plans for American Corners including their purpose, numbers, and costs? Has the effectiveness of American Corners been evaluated? Are they an adequate substitute for the American libraries previously managed by the U.S. Information Agency?*
- *Can you elaborate on your plans for American Presence Posts including their purpose, numbers, costs, and how security will be provided? Has the effectiveness of American Presence Posts been evaluated?*

¹The 14 countries were Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Indonesia, urban Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Response:

The rise of terrorism and post-September 11 security requirements have posed new challenges to public diplomacy, yet our people continue to make great efforts to reach out to people around the world. Access to our Embassies and information centers has been restricted in many places, and in some countries, travel outside the Embassy proper can be difficult and dangerous. In some countries, new Embassy buildings have been located away from downtown centers for security reasons, and that makes public outreach more difficult as well.

One way that we have attempted to respond is by expanding “American Corners,” which are partnerships between our Embassies and local institutions. We locate an “American corner” with Internet access, books, publications and information about America in a university, public library or similar high traffic location. The 360 American Corners worldwide allow us to continue to reach young people with information about the United States through books and other print material and also through speeches, seminars and other programs which create opportunities for direct person-to-person contact. American Corners are not substitutes for full-service Embassy Information Resources Centers, but they can advance public outreach in a way which mitigates security concerns.

Information Resource Centers, even where access is limited, maintain a steady flow of information, much of it sent electronically, between Embassy staff and key contacts, including academics, journalists, political and community leaders and other influential people. Depending on the local information environment, web-based programs can be powerful outreach tools.

More than 180 embassy libraries and Information Resource Centers still operate as an integral part of public diplomacy offices overseas and offer serious research and policy outreach to opinion leaders and decision-makers. In some countries, the Information Resource Centers continue to operate as open-access facilities.

The Public Diplomacy Evaluation Office is in the final stages of a pilot evaluation of American Corners in East Asia. This pilot evaluation found that in the eight case-study sites, the American Corners Program is effectively meeting its goals for each of its four major public diplomacy indicators.

- Audience reach: The program reaches diverse visitor audiences, including educated young adults and college students.
- Incorporation of U.S.-sponsored information and materials: The American Corners Program provides wide-ranging information and materials about the United States that are valued and used by visitors, including information on popular culture, U.S. society and values, travel, and education.
- Changes in understanding and perceptions of the United States: The program contributes to positive changes in understanding and perceptions of the United States, even among persons who have had limited exposure to the United States and Americans, and who may distrust U.S. foreign policy.
- Participant satisfaction: Visitors express satisfaction with the American Corners’ facilities, location, resources, and programs.

American Presence Posts (APPs) are part of the Secretary’s Trans-formational Diplomacy. Nearly 200 cities of over one million people have no US presence. The APPs will expand our diplomatic presence in these cities to establish a localized USG presence. They will represent the US in emerging communities of change, where opinions and attitudes about America will shape the future. In addition, they will provide greater contact with the people and public and private institutions in key countries worldwide.

APPs are designed to help shape public attitudes and outcomes, rather than just reporting them. Each will focus on one or two primary objectives, such as public diplomacy, commercial outreach, or minority outreach. APPs are an effective use of resources: they are small, lean operations, with one (maybe two) Foreign Service Officer, minimal Locally Employed Staff, are housed in a commercial office building, and they use the office as a “back room” to support outreach into the community, meeting with local authorities, students, and businesses, and their organizations

The Department has established separate standards for APPs where the US occupies a small, low-traffic space in a standard commercial office building (defined by the Overseas Security Policy Board’s standard). These standards are designed to minimize the costs of fitting out the office space while ensuring that our employees have satisfactory physical security. APPs are already in operation in Canada (Winnipeg), Egypt (Alexandria), France (Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon, Rennes, Toulouse), and Indonesia (Medan). New APPs are planned for FY 2007 in China (Wuhan) and Korea (Busan).

Question:

GAO and others have identified a number of human capital challenges including staffing shortages, field staff overburdened with administrative duties, insufficient time for public diplomacy training, and foreign language proficiency shortfalls. How is your agency addressing each of these challenges?

*Response:**Staffing:*

Vacancy rates for Foreign Service positions can vary from month to month, depending on the assignment cycle. As of the end of May, 2007 there was an overall vacancy rate of 16 percent for Public Diplomacy positions. The shortages are most critical at the mid-level grades of FO02 and FO03. This is due to the lack of hiring at USIA during the late 1990's prior to integration with the State Department. The Department is taking several measures to alleviate shortages in the Public Diplomacy cone. There is currently a surplus of Public Diplomacy officers at the entry levels due to increased hiring of PD officers over the past several years. The FY 2007 hiring plan was also recently adjusted to further increase the intake of Public Diplomacy officers. These officers are being promoted as fast as possible and over the next several years they will become available to fill mid-level Public Diplomacy positions. Our forecasts show the mid-level deficits Department-wide to be nearly eliminated by the FY 2009–2010 timeframe. In the meantime, officers from the other cones are being encouraged to take assignments in Public Diplomacy positions. There are currently 125 officers from outside the Public Diplomacy cone that are filling PD positions.

Administrative Duties:

The time spent on administrative duties is burdensome and it takes time away from undertaking valuable PD initiatives. The assistance needed to alleviate this problem varies from country-to-country. In an effort to define the nature of the problem and get information that will help us effectively address it; we are reaching out to the field to describe the nature of the problem at each post. Once we have a clear picture of what the problem is, we will work with posts to develop long-term solutions in full support of the Secretary's transformational goals and objectives.

Foreign Language Proficiency:

Enhancing the foreign language skills of State Department employees is a core requirement of transformational diplomacy. The State Department is actively taking steps to train employees in new foreign languages and to improve the proficiency of employees with existing language skills. The Foreign Service Institute (FSI) has increased the number of language students in critical needs language training, including Arabic, Chinese, Farsi, and Korean, among others. The Department has also focused on language proficiency in the recruitment process, resulting in an increased number of new Foreign Service officers with a range of language proficiencies. We have also seen major increases in our Distance Learning (DL) instructor-led courses, from one in 1999 to over 20 today. We have distance learning programs in 12 languages, including Arabic, Chinese and Russian, and have a variety of programs, from basic to advanced.

The Department of State's NSLI programs do not have a formal service requirement following the conclusion of studies under the Fulbright, Gilman and summer intensive language study programs. However, the Department's exchanges are designed to increase the overall pool of advanced speakers of critical need languages likely to seek employment in federal government or other important sectors, and one of the criteria for participant selection in our exchanges is a demonstrated plan to continue language learning beyond the program and an intention to apply the language skills learned to a future career.

PD Training:

Since 2005, we have established a training continuum for PD officers at all stages of their careers, building on and streamlining the existing entry-level courses of the past. We have also initiated a comprehensive PD distance learning plan to make online training available on topics such as speaking to, working with and monitoring foreign media; implementing various exchange programs; and strategic planning and program evaluation. Currently, the PD Training Division offers four courses online, but the PD distance learning plan calls for the design of at least ten more online courses, subject to funds being available in the next few years. As more and more PD courses become available online, this initiative will increasingly pay off as PD officers and their local staff members at post can get "training-on-demand" whenever and wherever they need it. The Department's present public diplomacy

training program has evolved to better prepare PD officers and other State Department personnel to marshal the Department's programs and resources in crafting a public outreach program that supports the national security goals of offering a vision of hope, marginalizing extremists, and fostering common values.

