

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee  
on Science, State, Justice, and  
Commerce, and Related Agencies,  
Committee on Appropriations, House of  
Representatives

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April 2005

# U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

## Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy



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# Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-05-323](#), a report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies, House Appropriations Committee

## Why GAO Did This Study

The war on terrorism has focused attention on the important role U.S. public diplomacy plays in improving the nation's image. The United States has undertaken efforts to "win hearts and minds" by better engaging, informing, and influencing foreign audiences; however, recent polling data show that anti-Americanism is spreading and deepening around the world. GAO was asked to examine (1) to what extent U.S. public diplomacy efforts have been coordinated and (2) whether the private sector has been significantly engaged in such efforts.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that (1) the Director of the Office of Global Communications fully implement the role mandated for the office in the President's executive order, including facilitating the development of a national communications strategy, and (2) the Secretary of State develop a strategy to guide department efforts to engage the private sector in pursuit of common public diplomacy objectives. The State Department, Broadcasting Board of Governors, and U.S. Agency for International Development generally concurred with the report's conclusions and recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-323](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-323).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4128 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

## U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

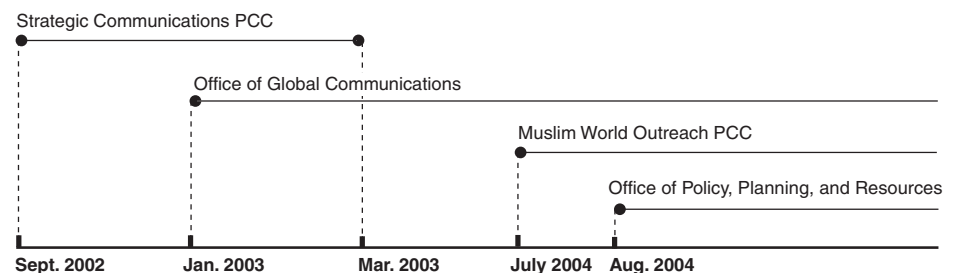
# Interagency Coordination Efforts Hampered by the Lack of a National Communication Strategy

## What GAO Found

The White House has launched several recent initiatives designed to promote the coordination of U.S. public diplomacy efforts, but the government does not yet have a public diplomacy communications strategy. In 2002, a Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC) was created to help provide central direction to communication efforts. The committee drafted a national communication strategy, but the committee was disbanded in 2003 and no strategy was issued. In 2003, an Office of Global Communications was created to facilitate White House and interagency efforts to communicate with foreign audiences. According to a recent report by the Defense Science Board and comments by agency officials, the office has not implemented this role. Although a national communications strategy has not yet been developed, the White House established the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee in 2004 to coordinate public diplomacy efforts focused on Muslim audiences. The group is in the early phases of drafting strategic and tactical communications plans. In addition to White House efforts, the State Department created an Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources in 2004 to help coordinate and direct the department's wide-ranging public diplomacy operations. Further, the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Defense are redefining their public diplomacy roles and operations in response to the increased attention given to U.S. outreach efforts.

The State Department has had some success involving the private sector in the area of international exchanges. However, other efforts to engage the private sector have met with limited success. For example, in 2003 State formed a panel of outside advisors to recommend areas where the department and the private sector could coordinate their efforts. The panel's July 2003 report suggested a number of possibilities; however, none of these suggestions was acted upon due to a lack of resources, bureaucratic resistance, and limited management commitment.

### Key White House and State Initiatives Launched to Improve Public Diplomacy Coordination



Source: GAO, based on White House and State Department data.

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**Abbreviations**

BBG	Broadcasting Board of Governors
DOD	Department of Defense
OGC	White House Office of Global Communications
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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United States Government Accountability Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

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April 4, 2005

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice,  
and Commerce, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

The 9/11 Commission highlighted the important role U.S. public diplomacy plays in improving the image of the United States abroad, particularly in the fight against terrorism. Despite U.S. efforts to better inform, engage, and influence foreign audiences, recent polling data show that anti-Americanism is spreading and deepening around the world. Such anti-American sentiments can increase foreign public support for terrorism directed at Americans, impact the cost and effectiveness of military operations, weaken the United States' ability to align with other nations in pursuit of common policy objectives, and dampen foreign publics' enthusiasm for U.S. business services and products. Countering these downward shifts in foreign public opinion requires the coordinated effort of both the government and the private sector.<sup>1</sup> Government agencies have a strategic edge with regards to knowledge of foreign policy objectives, in-depth intelligence on regional and local conditions, and a worldwide network of broadcast resources and public affairs officers. The private sector enjoys an advantage when it comes to marketing and public relations skills, perceived independence and credibility, and resources.

Prior reports by GAO and a number of other groups suggest that U.S. public diplomacy efforts conducted over the past several years have generally not been successful in responding to growing negative sentiments directed

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<sup>1</sup>The private sector includes nonprofit and for-profit organizations, academia, and the American people.

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towards the United States.<sup>2</sup> Lack of interagency coordination and limited involvement of the private sector have been highlighted as key problems in some of these reports.<sup>3</sup> You asked that we update these earlier findings by reviewing the status of White House, State Department, Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and Department of Defense (DOD) activities. As agreed with your staff, this report examines (1) to what extent U.S. public diplomacy efforts have been coordinated and (2) whether the private sector has been significantly engaged in such efforts.

To accomplish our objectives, we reviewed key documents and reports and met with officials from relevant government agencies, interagency coordinating entities, and private sector representatives. White House officials declined requests to meet with us to discuss their coordination role; however, we were able to gather sufficient information on their activities by speaking with agency officials and reviewing published data and reports. We did not include psychological operations or covert information operations conducted by the Department of Defense or the intelligence community in our review. We performed our work from May 2004 through February 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Detailed information on our scope and methodology appears in appendix I.

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## Results in Brief

The White House has launched several recent initiatives designed to promote the coordination of U.S. public diplomacy efforts, and agencies are working to improve public diplomacy operations, but the government does not yet have a national communication strategy. Two of the White House initiatives were designed to broadly facilitate the coordination of all U.S. strategic communication efforts, but they have not been fully implemented. In September 2002, the National Security Council created a Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee to facilitate

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<sup>2</sup>Prior GAO reports have examined the public diplomacy activities of the State Department and Broadcasting Board of Governors. See *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges*, [GAO-03-951](#) (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 4, 2003) and *U.S. International Broadcasting: New Strategic Approach Focuses on Reaching Large Audiences but Lacks Measurable Program Objectives*, [GAO-03-772](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 15, 2003).

<sup>3</sup>Appendix II provides a listing of major reports issued since 2001 and their summary findings.

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interagency public diplomacy efforts. The committee drafted a national communication strategy to help address a range of messaging and program issues; however, the committee disbanded in 2003 and did not issue this strategy. In January 2003, the President formally established the Office of Global Communications (OGC) to facilitate and coordinate the strategic direction of White House and individual agency efforts to communicate with foreign audiences. This office has not developed a national communication strategy. Moreover, according to a recent report by the Defense Science Board and senior agency officials, the office has not facilitated the development of strategic guidance, which would serve to promote the effective coordination of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. The White House and other agencies have also made efforts to coordinate communications on a smaller scale. In July 2004, the National Security Council created a Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee and tasked this group with developing strategic and tactical plans to help guide and coordinate U.S. communications with Muslims around the world. According to senior officials at State, the group has drafted a communications strategy and is developing a tactical plan to implement this strategy. The State Department, USAID, and DOD are seeking to improve and evolve their public diplomacy operations in recognition of the increased importance attached to U.S. outreach efforts. State has formed an office to help the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs guide and coordinate the agency's diverse public diplomacy efforts. USAID and DOD are defining expanded public diplomacy roles for themselves. The Broadcasting Board of Governors continues to implement the largely independent role mandated by Congress for international broadcasting, while focusing its coordination efforts on policy-level discussions with the State Department.

State has engaged the private sector in U.S. public diplomacy efforts, primarily in the area of international exchange programs. State Department data indicate that three of the department's top exchange programs received roughly one-quarter to one-half of their funding from nongovernment sources. However, other efforts led by State's Under Secretaries for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to engage the private sector have not yielded significant results. In 2003, the then Under Secretary sponsored the formation of a panel of outside advisors to review and recommend areas where the department and the private sector could coordinate their efforts. The panel issued a report in July 2003 with a number of suggested areas of cooperation; however, none of these suggestions was acted upon due to a lack of resources, bureaucratic resistance, and a lack of management commitment. Current engagement

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efforts by the Under Secretary's office are limited to periodic contacts and small-scale initiatives with the private sector.

This report recommends that the Director of the Office of Global Communications fully implement the role envisioned for the office in the President's executive order, including facilitating the development of a national communications strategy to help guide and coordinate the diverse public diplomacy efforts of the State Department, USAID, BBG, and DOD. We also recommend that the Secretary of State develop a strategy to promote the active engagement of the private sector beyond international exchanges. In commenting on a draft of this report, State, USAID, and BBG generally concurred with our findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We have reprinted their comments in appendixes III through V. We also incorporated technical comments from DOD, State, and BBG where appropriate. The White House declined to comment on a draft of this report.

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## Background

According to State Department officials, the goal of public diplomacy is to increase understanding of American values, policies, and initiatives and to counter anti-American sentiment and misinformation about the United States around the world. This includes reaching beyond foreign governments to promote better appreciation of the United States abroad, greater receptivity to U.S. policies among foreign publics, and sustained access and influence in important sectors of foreign societies. Public diplomacy is carried out through a wide range of government programs and activities that employ person-to-person contacts and attempts to reach mass audiences through print, broadcast, and electronic media. Coordinating these various efforts is critical to the short- and long-term success of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. As noted by the Defense Science Board<sup>4</sup> in its 2001 review of U.S. public diplomacy efforts,<sup>5</sup> coordinated information dissemination is an essential tool in a world where U.S. interests and long-term policies are often misunderstood, where issues are complex, and where efforts to undermine U.S. positions increasingly

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<sup>4</sup>The Defense Science Board, composed of civilian officials, advises DOD on scientific, technical, manufacturing, acquisition process, and other matters of special interest to the department.

<sup>5</sup>*Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Managed Information Dissemination* (Washington, D.C.: October 2001).



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appeal to those who lack the means to challenge American power. Effective communications strategies and well-coordinated information systems can shape perceptions and promote foreign acceptance of U.S. strategic objectives.

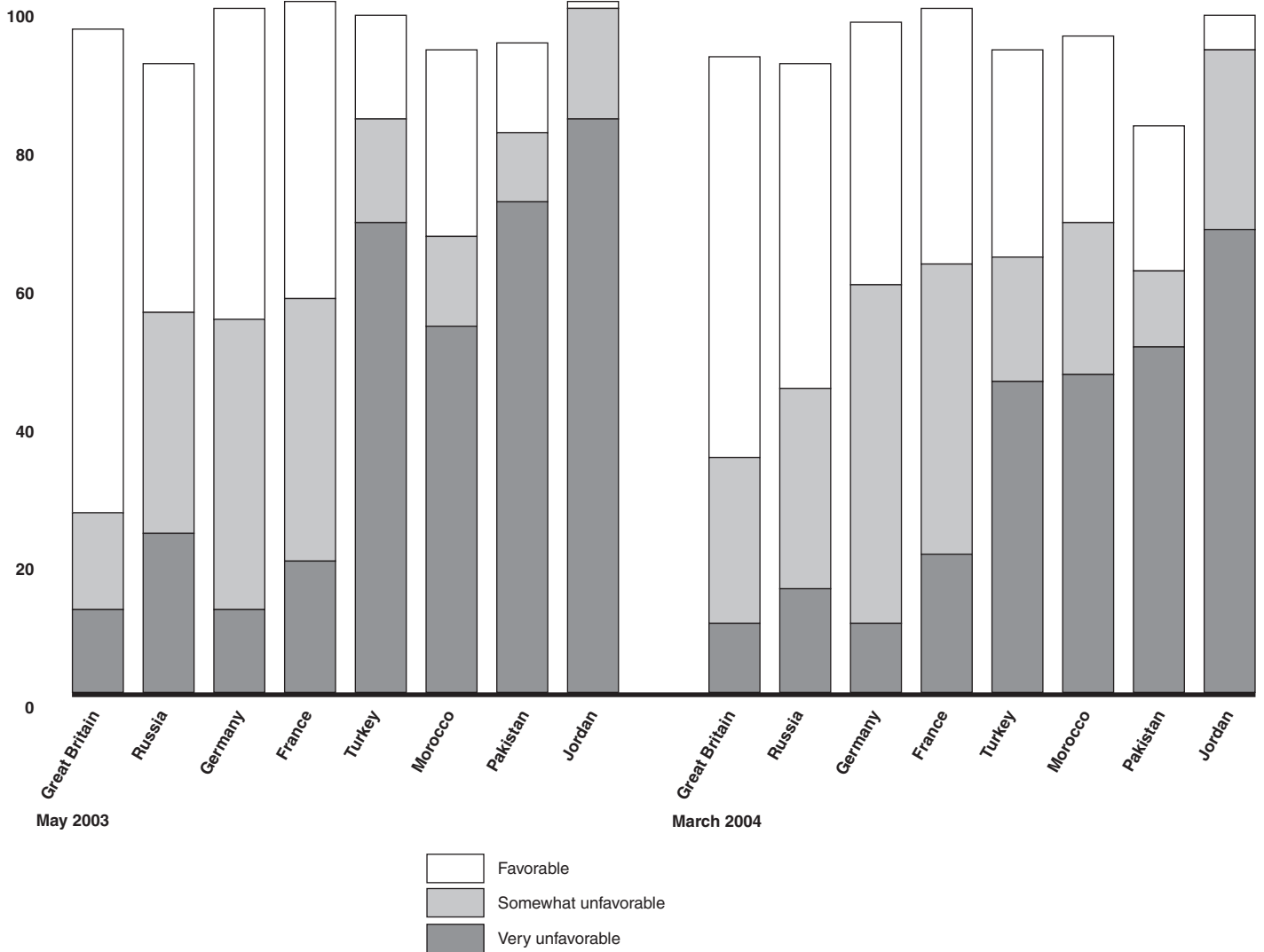
Since 2001, GAO and others have issued several reports on public diplomacy. These reports have called for a transformation in public diplomacy efforts, noting its renewed importance in the post-9/11 world. According to these reports, U.S. public diplomacy efforts face several challenges, including the lack of a national communication strategy and insufficient resources. To overcome these challenges, the reports have recommended, among other things, increased presidential leadership, structural changes at the White House and other agencies, and closer coordination of public diplomacy activities.

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## Foreign Public Opinion of the United States Remains Highly Negative

Recent foreign public opinion polling data conducted by such entities as the Pew Research Center for People and the Press and Zogby International indicate that the United States faces a chronic and widespread image problem. Although a host of factors can explain negative attitudes, the data document that a problem exists and provide general insights on the success or failure of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. As shown in figure 1, anti-American sentiments are not limited to the Muslim world; however, the relative depth of negative sentiments in this area of the world is pronounced and noteworthy.

**Figure 1: Foreign Public Opinion of the United States**



Source: Pew Global Attitudes project.

Note: Data exclude “don’t know/refused to answer” responses.

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According to a number of sources, unpopular U.S. foreign policy decisions, such as U.S. military actions in Iraq, are a major root cause of anti-American sentiments. In addition, research conducted by Business for Diplomatic Action<sup>6</sup> suggests additional causes for anti-American sentiments, including: (1) a feeling of exclusion from the globalization movement led by U.S. business expansion, (2) resentment regarding certain elements of popular U.S. culture, and (3) negative views of the behavior of individual Americans.

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## U.S. Public Diplomacy Involves Multiple Entities

U.S. public diplomacy efforts are distributed across several entities, including the White House, State, USAID, BBG, and DOD. U.S. public diplomacy program funding is concentrated in the State Department and BBG, which shared a combined annual budget of almost \$1.2 billion in fiscal year 2004. USAID and DOD have relatively small budgets explicitly devoted to public diplomacy activities.

### The White House

The President created the Office of Global Communications in January 2003 to facilitate the strategic direction and coordination of diverse outreach efforts by multiple government entities. The National Security Council oversees the creation and management of policy coordinating committees that provide a key means for coordinating and directing interagency efforts.<sup>7</sup> The Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee, established in July 2004, was formed to address the administration's most pressing strategic communications challenge and is cochaired by the National Security Council and the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The committee replaced the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee, which was active between September 2002 and March 2003.

### State Department

With a budget of over \$620 million in fiscal year 2004, the State Department has lead responsibility for implementing U.S. public diplomacy efforts, including international exchange programs, which account for more than

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<sup>6</sup>Incorporated in January 2004 by interested private sector leaders, Business for Diplomatic Action seeks to counter anti-American sentiments that can harm U.S. business interests by helping to coordinate the outreach efforts of U.S. multinational companies.

<sup>7</sup>Established by the current administration to replace coordination mechanisms established by earlier Presidents, National Security Council policy coordinating committees are responsible for the management of national security policies and are the main day-to-day forums for interagency coordination of national security policy.

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half of the department's public diplomacy spending. State's efforts are directed by the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, who oversees the operations of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the Bureau of International Information Programs, and the Bureau of Public Affairs. The Under Secretary's efforts are supplemented by public diplomacy resources located in the regional and functional bureaus and by a worldwide network of public affairs officers. State also plays a leading role in two interagency coordination bodies: the Interagency Strategic Communication Fusion Team and the Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training. The fusion team, which was established to support the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee and later the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee, continues to meet weekly and brings together program-level officers to discuss ongoing and proposed public diplomacy initiatives across the federal government. The interagency working group meets quarterly to coordinate the exchange and training activities of 12 federal departments and 15 independent agencies.<sup>8</sup>

#### USAID, DOD, and BBG

Each supporting agency has a distinct role to play in promoting U.S. public diplomacy objectives. USAID's role in public diplomacy is 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, the efforts of other assistance agencies, such as the Middle East Partnership Initiative, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Peace Corps are also part of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. Historically, DOD has been reluctant to define any of its activities in public diplomacy terms, though the department has begun to develop a "defense support for public diplomacy" strategy, which acknowledges that the department has a role to play in this arena. For example, DOD, State, and USAID humanitarian and relief efforts in response to the recent tsunami disaster in Asia have significant public diplomacy implications for the United States (see fig. 2).<sup>9</sup> Overall, the BBG's stated mission is to promote the development of

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<sup>8</sup>The Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training was established by an executive order of the President in 1997 and legislated by Congress in 1999. Among other activities, the interagency working group has been tasked with developing a database on U.S. exchange and training programs, promoting greater understanding and cooperation among government agencies, identifying areas of program overlap and duplication, and developing a coordinated and cost-effective program strategy for government agencies to follow.

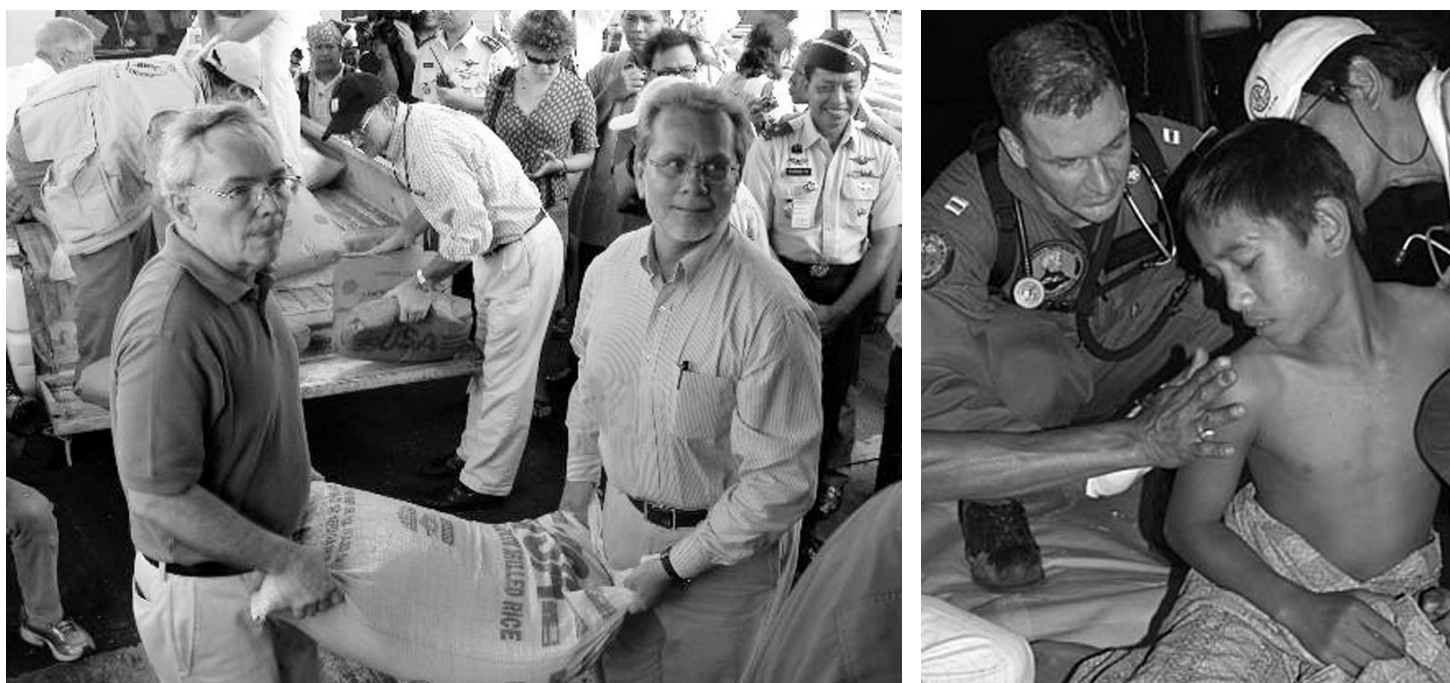
<sup>9</sup>In March 2005, a report by State's Office of Research concluded that Indonesian views of the United States had improved following tsunami relief efforts.

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freedom and democracy around the world by providing foreign audiences with accurate and objective news about the United States and the world. The BBG pursues this mission through the collective efforts of the Voice of America, Radio/TV Marti, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, Radio Sawa, and the Alhurra satellite television network. BBG broadcast efforts are required by law to present a balanced and comprehensive projection of American thought and institutions, as well as to present the policies of the United States clearly and effectively.

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**Figure 2: State, USAID, and DOD Officials Participate in Tsunami Relief Efforts in Indonesia**



Source: Departments of State and Defense.

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## Government Public Diplomacy Coordination Efforts Lack Strategic Direction

The White House has launched several recent initiatives designed to promote the coordination of U.S. public diplomacy efforts, while other agencies are also working to improve public diplomacy operations. The Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee was established in 2002 and drafted a national communication strategy; however, the committee disbanded in 2003 and did not issue this strategy. In 2003, the White House established the Office of Global Communications to facilitate coordination of the United States' global public diplomacy efforts, but the office has not fulfilled the strategic role envisioned by the President. The Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee was formed in July 2004 to facilitate U.S. outreach efforts to the Muslim world, but this effort is still in the early stages of development. The State Department recently created an Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources in the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs to help direct and coordinate its diverse public diplomacy operations. While it is still too early to determine the effectiveness of this office, it is designed to play a major role in coordinating the delivery of U.S. public diplomacy efforts. USAID is evolving its operations to respond to the new prominence the administration has given to development assistance. DOD has begun to work on a defense support for public diplomacy strategy, which is being actively debated by various offices in the department. Finally, mechanisms have been established to coordinate policy-level discussions between the BBG and State; however, some agency officials said that the BBG is not effectively coordinating with other agencies with regard to program content.

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## First Attempt at Interagency Coordination Terminated

In September 2002, the National Security Council announced the establishment of the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee. This group was charged with coordinating interagency activities to ensure that all agencies work together and with the White House to develop and disseminate the President's message to foreign audiences. As part of this effort, the group drafted a national communication strategy. However, the strategy was never released because the group's activities terminated with the departure of the then Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, who cochaired the group, and the onset of the war in Iraq.

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The absence of a national strategy complicates the task of conveying consistent messages and thus achieving mutually reinforcing benefits. The absence of a strategy also increases the risk of making communication mistakes and diminishing the overall efficiency and effectiveness of governmentwide public diplomacy efforts. As suggested in the Defense Science Board's latest report on strategic communications,<sup>10</sup> this strategy should originate at the White House level. The report notes that a unifying vision of strategic communications starts with presidential direction and that only White House leadership, with support from cabinet secretaries and Congress, can bring about needed changes. The report suggests that transforming U.S. government communications efforts is critical to protecting U.S. national security interests and must match the strength of commitment made to traditional diplomacy, defense, intelligence, law enforcement, and homeland security.

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## The Office of Global Communications Has Not Assumed a Strategic Coordination Role

The OGC has not assumed its intended role in facilitating the strategic direction and coordination of U.S. public diplomacy efforts as provided in the President's executive order, which established the office in January 2003.<sup>11</sup> The OGC's mission is to advise the President, offices within the Executive Office of the President, and the heads of executive departments and agencies on the most effective means for the U.S. government to promote the interests of the United States abroad, prevent misunderstanding, and build support for and among coalition partners of the United States. To carry out this mission, the President tasked the OGC with several responsibilities, including

- facilitating the development of a communications strategy among appropriate agencies for disseminating messages about the United State;
- assessing the methods and strategies used by the U.S. government to deliver information to audiences abroad and coordinating with

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<sup>10</sup>*Report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Strategic Communication* (Washington, D.C.: September 2004).

<sup>11</sup>The Office of Global Communications is the successor to the Coalition Information Centers established in Washington, London, and Islamabad during the early stages of U.S. military operations in Afghanistan in 2001. These centers were created to provide a rapid response capability to counter inaccurate portrayals of U.S. actions and optimize reporting of news favorable to the United States.

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appropriate agencies messages that reflect the strategic communications framework and priorities of the United States;

- ensuring message consistency to promote the interests of the United States abroad, prevent misunderstanding, build support for and among coalition partners, and inform international audiences; and
- coordinating the creation of temporary teams of communicators for short-term placement in areas of high global interest and media attention.

According to a recent report by the Defense Science Board and officials from the key agencies responsible for implementing U.S. public diplomacy efforts, the OGC has not facilitated the development of strategic guidance to direct and coordinate interagency activities. The Defense Science Board met with officials from the OGC and concluded in its September 2004 report that the office has “evolved into a second-tier organization devoted principally to tactical public affairs coordination.” The board added that the OGC has been ineffectual in carrying out its intended responsibilities relating to strategic communication planning, coordination, and evaluation. We were also told by DOD officials that the board’s 2001 and 2004 reports on strategic communications represented an attempt by the department to fill the planning void left by the lack of strategic direction from the White House.

State and USAID officials we spoke with supported the report’s conclusions. According to senior State Department officials, the Office of Global Communications has not facilitated the development of a strategic communications plan for the United States, provided guidance on the need for regional or country-specific action plans tailored to local conditions, pushed for an analysis of the root causes for anti-American sentiments and the best means to address such root causes, or encouraged the development of mechanisms to increase private sector involvement in U.S. outreach efforts. According to these officials, the OGC has focused on tactical level activities, such as preparing message briefs and holding a daily conference call with relevant agency staff.<sup>12</sup> A senior State official told us the OGC is primarily an information provider and does not provide

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<sup>12</sup>According to State officials, one of the office’s main efforts is the development of the daily “Global Messenger,” a one-page fact sheet sent worldwide to disseminate key points and daily activities on global issues.



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any long-term strategic planning for public diplomacy. According to another official at State, the OGC's planning horizon generally extends only a couple of days in advance, and its services are purely tactical. The Executive Director of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy said that the OGC has tremendous potential, but this potential remains unfulfilled.<sup>13</sup> According to a senior official at USAID, the office has not adopted the role of coordinator, despite its responsibility to coordinate the formulation of messages that reflect the strategic communications priorities of the United States. In contrast to the other comments we heard, the Chairman of the BBG noted that the BBG has had an excellent relationship with the Office of Global Communications and was satisfied with both the strategic and tactical guidance it provided.

This lack of leadership has led agencies to define and coordinate public diplomacy programs on their own. For example, several senior State Department officials told us that the department has had to coordinate its public diplomacy activities with other agencies on an ad hoc basis. This ad hoc coordination increases the risk of program overlap and duplication and diminished program impact because limited resources may be dispersed over too many or even conflicting program objectives.

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### Effectiveness of Muslim Outreach Committee Remains to be Determined

In July 2004, the National Security Council created the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee to replace the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee. This initiative is still in its formative stage but, according to officials at State, it has already developed a communication strategy to direct and coordinate agency outreach efforts to the Muslim world. According to a senior State official, the group is working on three specific activities. To date, the committee has collected ideas from embassies in Muslim-majority countries, developed a strategic plan for communicating with the Muslim world, and is drafting a tactical paper to operationalize the strategy. In its poll of embassies, the committee collected information on outreach activities to Muslim audiences. According to an official at State familiar with the committee's activities, the committee then developed a strategy to address the problems

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<sup>13</sup>The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy is a bipartisan panel created by Congress and appointed by the President to provide oversight of U.S. government activities intended to understand, inform, and influence foreign publics. It is responsible for assessing public diplomacy policies and programs of the U.S. State Department, Broadcasting Board of Governors, other government agencies, and the private sector.

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faced by the public diplomacy community and outlined two broad goals: working with moderate Muslims and countering extremism. The committee is finalizing this strategy, which emphasizes the role of regional partnerships and the need to tailor programs to specific countries, and plans to present it to the National Security Council in early 2005. Following approval, the strategy and tactics papers will be sent to embassies around the world. State expects the implementation of this strategy to begin in early 2005.

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## State Creates a New Office to Tackle Public Diplomacy Coordination and Evaluation Issues

State's Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources was created in August 2004 in response to earlier recommendations by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World and a call by the Deputy Secretary of State to fix the department's public diplomacy apparatus. The advisory group's October 2003 report<sup>14</sup> identified the need for such an Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources to set a new strategic direction for public diplomacy efforts in the region. The report recommended that such an office should coordinate the development of a strategy, oversee the process of producing country-specific implementation plans, monitor the execution of these plans, and assist in the allocation and management of both financial and human resources. With the exception of overseeing the development and implementation of country-specific plans, the report's recommendations appear to have been addressed. However, it remains to be seen whether the department devotes sufficient resources to this new office, whether the office successfully implements its various mandates, whether future Under Secretaries continue to support the office's operations, and whether bureaus outside of the Under Secretary's direct control support the office's efforts to coordinate across bureau lines.

The memorandum establishing the office outlines a broad agenda, including

- assisting the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs with developing a long-term, wide-ranging strategic vision for public diplomacy for the department and communicating this vision to department principals, affected staff overseas and in relevant bureaus, the interagency community at large, and the private sector;

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<sup>14</sup>Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, *Changing Minds Winning Peace* (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 1, 2003). The group was formed in June 2003 at the request of Congress and submitted its findings to the House Appropriations Committee.

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- coordinating with all affected bureaus within the department and developing resource allocation recommendations to support the Under Secretary's strategic vision and priorities;
  - providing a focal point for public diplomacy and public affairs personnel issues;
  - serving as the Under Secretary's clearinghouse for all public diplomacy and public affairs issues that cut across bureau lines;
  - developing performance evaluation indicators that can be applied to the department's public diplomacy and public affairs activities; and
  - analyzing the results of such evaluation efforts to determine the impact of public diplomacy and public affairs programs and identify what program adjustments or changes might be indicated.

The Director of the Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources noted that her office is currently drafting a strategic plan to guide and coordinate State's public diplomacy efforts—although a specific release date for the strategy has not yet been established. The plan will include guidance on how to develop realistic measures of the effectiveness of the department's public diplomacy and public affairs activities. Toward that end, the office has created a public diplomacy evaluation council, which brings together evaluation staff from across affected bureaus to develop a unified and rigorous approach to collectively assessing the department's activities. State is considering broadening the membership of the council to include other agencies, providing the possibility that the effectiveness of public diplomacy efforts may ultimately be assessed across agency lines.

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## USAID and DOD Roles and Responsibilities Are Evolving

Historically, USAID and DOD have had limited roles in U.S. public diplomacy efforts, but recently both agencies have made efforts to coordinate their activities with the broader interagency community. USAID has begun to work closely with State and has established a new position to publicize U.S. assistance efforts at each of its posts. DOD has designated the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy as its lead on public diplomacy and is defining a role for defense support for public diplomacy.

## USAID is Seeking to Increasingly Tell America's Assistance Story

In the past, USAID's role in U.S. public diplomacy activities has been limited, according to agency officials, to discrete efforts to publicize specific development projects. These past promotion efforts have not met

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with great success. For example, we noted in our last report on U.S. public diplomacy efforts that according to U.S. embassy officers in Egypt only a small percentage of Egyptians were aware of the magnitude of U.S. assistance—despite the fact that Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. assistance in the world.<sup>15</sup> This idea is echoed by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, which notes that much of USAID’s work is “public diplomacy at its best;” yet, according to USAID officials, development work has little public diplomacy value to the American people unless the agency communicates it.

The President’s National Security Strategy, which elevated the role of development in foreign policy, led USAID to develop a joint strategic plan with State to better tell America’s humanitarian and development assistance story. One of the plan’s strategic goals is public diplomacy, which emphasizes communicating with younger audiences, countering propaganda, and listening to foreign audiences. The State–USAID Policy Council was created to support the joint strategic plan by helping both agencies coordinate more closely on foreign policy and assistance issues. A Public Diplomacy Working Group was created under the joint policy council to improve coordination between State and USAID in areas such as information outreach, exchanges and training, interagency communication, and funding for public diplomacy programs.

In September 2004, USAID established a position to help embassies, USAID missions, and implementing partners publicize U.S. assistance activities. These newly established Development Outreach and Communications Officers are expected to act as a one-stop resource for information regarding USAID’s work and will collaborate with the public affairs officer at post to maximize exposure and understanding of U.S. assistance efforts.<sup>16</sup> USAID plans to have one of these officers in each of its 84 missions around the world by September 2005.

**The Department of Defense is Working to Better Define its Role**

The Department of Defense recognizes that it plays a supporting role in public diplomacy and has made recent efforts to define its role in the U.S. public diplomacy apparatus. According to an October 2001 report by the

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<sup>15</sup>[GAO-03-951](#).

<sup>16</sup>According to a senior USAID official, Development Outreach and Communication Officers will handle information related to USAID projects as well as other agencies’ projects that are being implemented by USAID. USAID does not plan to handle assistance projects emanating from other sources, such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

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Defense Science Board, DOD's public diplomacy efforts consist of actions such as combined troop training and exercises, official visits, and defense contacts with foreign officials.<sup>17</sup> During crises, DOD communicates to foreign audiences through military spokespersons, news releases, and media briefings. For example, the U.S. military supported relief efforts for the Asian tsunami, deploying approximately 13,000 personnel to deliver food and medical supplies. These activities provide U.S. public diplomacy and public affairs channels with the content and context to foster goodwill toward the United States.

In October 2003, DOD issued an Information Operations Roadmap, which discusses the roles and responsibilities of DOD's public affairs, public diplomacy, and information operations and how these elements should work together and with other government agencies to communicate strategically with foreign audiences. This document refers to a strategy for defense support for public diplomacy, but it does not outline such a strategy. According to DOD officials, the strategy is still being actively debated by various groups within the department and remains to be formally issued.

DOD has also made structural changes to better define its role in U.S. public diplomacy activities. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy has been designated as DOD's lead for public diplomacy activities. DOD officials told us that the department drafted a directive in September 2004 directing the Under Secretary to develop and oversee DOD strategic communications efforts and to serve as DOD's focal point for strategic communications efforts. Additionally, within the Under Secretary's office, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs has assumed responsibility for coordinating and overseeing defense support for public diplomacy. In September 2004, the Defense Science Board recommended the creation of a new Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs to coordinate all activities associated with defense support for public diplomacy.

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<sup>17</sup>DOD also uses public affairs activities and military psychological operations to communicate with foreign audiences.

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## Broadcasting Board of Governors Coordination Largely Tied to Policy-Level Discussions with State

Congress has defined a role for the Broadcasting Board of Governors that is designed to maintain the independence and credibility of U.S. broadcast efforts while ensuring that such efforts are consistent with the broad foreign policy objectives of the United States. We found that BBG, as required by Congress, is coordinating with the State Department at the policy level through a variety of means. BBG officials stated that they work cooperatively with other agencies to develop and broadcast suggested program ideas and content that BBG deems appropriate to its mission. However, some USAID and DOD officials commented that BBG has not been receptive to considering suggestions on programming content.

Under BBG's statutory authority, a so-called "firewall" was established between policy makers and broadcasters to ensure that U.S. broadcast efforts are perceived as credible and unbiased. Separating the State Department and BBG provides deniability for the department when other governments voice complaints about specific broadcasts. However, BBG is also subject to an explicit requirement for policy-level coordination between BBG and the State Department. Several mechanisms exist to help ensure such coordination. First, the Secretary of State or his/her designee serves as a member of the BBG and provides it broad policy advice. Second, BBG's Office of Policy works closely with State to produce the government-labeled editorials that the Voice of America is required to carry. Third, BBG seeks input from State officials for its annual language service review process, which determines where and how many broadcast services are pursued.

Concerns exist regarding BBG's coordination with other agencies on program content. BBG officials indicated that they are open to receiving other agencies' programming suggestions that support BBG's news and information function. One BBG official noted that such requests do not represent a violation of the firewall, although he added that care must be exercised in deciding whether and how to incorporate such content to avoid the appearance of becoming a government mouthpiece bent only on promoting U.S. interests. While State officials said that their daily, ad hoc coordination with BBG includes content and delivery issues, officials at USAID and DOD indicated that BBG has not been receptive to content suggestions. For example, USAID officials told us that they have approached BBG officials with stories to promote their attempts to "tell America's assistance story," but BBG did not respond positively to these suggestions. In addition, a senior DOD official noted that combatant commanders have asked BBG to carry public service announcements illustrating DOD's assistance to foreign publics but met with a similar lack

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of success. In commenting on a draft of this report, BBG officials indicated a willingness to consider establishing a more formal channel of communication for programming suggestions.

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## State Department Efforts to Engage the Private Sector Have Met with Mixed Results

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, State has attempted to increase its engagement with the private sector to improve the image of the United States overseas. These efforts have focused on student and visitor exchanges, where some success has been achieved in leveraging private sector resources. More recent attempts by the department to form public-private partnerships have met with limited success.

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## State's Exchange Programs Engage the Private Sector

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the primary focus for public-private sector partnerships within State and has, according to State officials, demonstrated an ability to engage the private sector. These partnerships involve nongovernmental organizations, volunteer communities, and influential individuals in the United States and overseas. For example, Sister Cities International receives funding from State, USAID, and private corporations to support and strengthen the sister cities network between U.S. and international communities. According to the Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training, three of the Bureau's top exchange programs received roughly one-quarter to one-half of their funding from nongovernment sources.

Analysis prepared by the Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training suggests that a number of benefits and challenges are associated with the use of such public-private partnerships. Table 1 summarizes the group's analysis.

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**Table 1: Benefits and Challenges of Public–Private Partnerships**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leveraging of government funds</li><li>• Sharing of technical and professional expertise</li><li>• Cross-pollination of ideas and approaches</li><li>• Dialogue, cooperation, and synergy leading to more effective combined programs</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tensions over jurisdiction and program ownership</li><li>• Problems relating to diverse goals, values, and perspectives</li><li>• Burden on program staff who must implement partnership arrangements</li></ul>

Source: Interagency Working Group on U.S. Government-Sponsored International Exchanges and Training.

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## Other State Department Attempts to Engage the Private Sector Have Met with Limited Success

Aside from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, State has been unable to leverage the private sector to any significant degree.<sup>18</sup> In 2003, the then Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs sought to identify specific suggestions on how the private sector could be significantly engaged to better support U.S. public diplomacy efforts. She helped form a Subcommittee on Public–Private Partnerships and Public Diplomacy under the auspices of State’s Advisory Committee on International Economic Policy.<sup>19</sup> The subcommittee concluded in its June 2003 report that the U.S. private sector can and should play an important role in supporting ongoing U.S. government outreach to foreign audiences in a manner that can help build long-term friendships and advance U.S. interests abroad. The report made a number of recommendations, several of which address the root causes for anti-American sentiments, including the need to

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<sup>18</sup>Some private sector groups may be reluctant to coordinate with the U.S. government due to concerns over a loss of credibility. For example, a representative of Business for Diplomatic Action told us that any direct collaboration between her group and the U.S. government was unlikely given the government’s lack of credibility with target audiences.

<sup>19</sup>The advisory committee consists of representatives of American organizations and institutions, including business, labor, environment, academia, legal consultancies, and other public interest groups. It reports to the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs. Within this bureau, the Office of Commercial and Business Affairs serves as State’s primary point of contact for all issues dealing with the private sector.



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- create an inventory of current government programs specifically designed to promote the image of the United States abroad;
  - encourage public and private support for multilingualism and cross-cultural education starting at the corporate level and working down to the foundation of our educational system;
  - increase funding for English language training abroad and provide incentives for the private sector to carry out this activity;
  - encourage private sector support for American studies programs abroad by developing curriculum, texts, and internet support materials;
  - encourage U.S. media outlets to dub their programming into Arabic and make it available for distribution throughout the Middle East; and
  - encourage the private sector to expand social investment programs abroad through such models as USAID's Global Development Alliance.

The head of State's Office of Commercial and Business Affairs noted that the subcommittee was disbanded after its report was issued and that none of its recommendations was ever implemented.

In January 2004, the Under Secretary's successor promoted greater private sector involvement by designating a member of her immediate staff as a special advisor to help facilitate interactions between her office and outside parties. This individual continues to serve this role for the current Under Secretary, facilitating outreach efforts by serving as a point of contact with the private sector and coordinating the Under Secretary's attendance at key outside meetings. Examples of actions taken by the advisor include State's efforts to assist the Wheelchair Foundation by publicizing its activities through posts overseas and its role in persuading Steinway and Sons to donate a piano to the Iraqi National Symphony in Baghdad. While these efforts have some merit, their impact may be limited if not backed by a more robust action plan or senior-level commitment to further engage the private sector. A commitment of additional resources would also be necessary to engage the private sector in more meaningful ways.

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Finally, in October 2004, State's Policy Planning Staff submitted a proposal to the White House calling for the creation of a clearinghouse titled the Center for Partnership and Human Dignity.<sup>20</sup> This proposal defines a new model for conducting public diplomacy and calls for a dramatic expansion of the private sector's role. The proposal suggests that the government should concentrate on explaining U.S. foreign policy while the clearinghouse focuses on coordinating private sector-led outreach efforts (in such areas as sports, cultural activities, and medical assistance) with the strategic input and advice of State and other relevant agencies. According to one official, the new Secretary of State has been briefed on this proposal and its potential.<sup>21</sup>

USAID has engaged the private sector through its Global Development Alliance. USAID reports that the alliance leveraged over \$2 billion in private sector contributions in fiscal years 2002 and 2003, using about \$500 million in USAID funding. The Global Development Alliance represents the agency's commitment to changing the way it implements assistance and currently represents one of the four pillars of U.S. economic assistance.<sup>22</sup> The Global Development Alliance mobilizes the ideas, efforts, and resources of governments, businesses, and civil society by forging public-private alliances to stimulate economic growth, develop businesses and workforces, address health and environmental issues, and expand access to education and technology. The Global Development Alliance business model is designed to leverage unique private sector assets, such as foreign direct investment, experience with leading business practices, and technological innovations. According to USAID, the agency has established

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<sup>20</sup>This proposal was submitted without the prior review or approval of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. The Under Secretary explained that she saw potential merit in the idea; however, she was worried that creating a new entity would take scarce resources away from existing programs.

<sup>21</sup>This proposal incorporates elements of similar suggestions regarding the establishment of quasi-independent entities to promote public-private partnerships by the Defense Science Board and the Council on Foreign Relations. In its September 2004 report, the Defense Science Board recommended the establishment of a Center for Strategic Communications modeled on federally funded research and development centers such as the Rand Corporation or National Endowment for Democracy. In its report entitled "Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy" (New York, N.Y.: June 2003), the Council on Foreign Relations recommended that an independent, not-for-profit Corporation for Public Diplomacy be established to facilitate public and private sector interchange.

<sup>22</sup>The four pillars are: (1) Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance; (2) Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade; (3) Global Health; and (4) the Global Development Alliance.

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alliances in over 45 countries in the developing world, involving over 150 private sector partners.

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## Conclusions

Coordination of public diplomacy activities is hampered by the lack of a national communication strategy. An initial effort, the creation of the Strategic Communications Policy Coordinating Committee in 2002, did not result in an overall strategy. The Office of Global Communications has been charged by the President with facilitating White House and interagency strategic planning and coordination efforts; however, a recent study and several officials at affected agencies indicated that the Office of Global Communications has not facilitated the coordination of agency efforts by providing needed strategic direction. In addition, the office has not developed a national communication strategy. As a consequence, agencies have developed their own roles and missions and coordinated their activities on an ad hoc basis.

The White House and other agencies have initiated efforts to improve coordination on a smaller scale. The National Security Council created the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee, which, according to senior State officials, has developed a strategic communications plan for Muslim audiences and is drafting a tactical plan to implement this strategy. BBG has coordinated its efforts at the policy level, while State, USAID, and DOD continue to evolve and improve their public diplomacy operations and strategic planning efforts.

State recognizes the importance and significance of engaging the private sector in U.S. outreach efforts wherever feasible; however, the department has never developed a strategy to make this goal a reality. Past efforts by the department have focused on exchange programs, while other attempts have met with only limited success. More successful engagement of the private sector will require, among other things, seeking venues to actively solicit private sector support and removing potential obstacles to partnerships.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

To better ensure that the United States' public diplomacy efforts are adequately coordinated, we recommend the Director of the Office of Global Communications fully implement the role defined for it by the President's executive order, including facilitating the development of a communications strategy, assessing the methods and strategies used by the

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U.S. government to communicate with overseas audiences, and coordinating the delivery of messages that reflect the strategic communications framework and priorities of the United States.

To help ensure that private sector resources, talents, and ideas are effectively leveraged and utilized, we recommend that the Secretary of State develop a strategy to guide department efforts to engage the private sector in pursuit of common public diplomacy objectives.

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## Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided State, BBG, USAID, DOD, and the White House with a draft of this report for comment. State, BBG, and USAID provided us with written comments that are included in appendixes III through V. They generally concurred with the report's findings and conclusions. State strongly endorsed our recommendation that the department develop a detailed strategy for engaging the private sector more effectively and indicated that working with the private sector will be a priority for the department's new leadership. BBG and State said that our report did not accurately reflect the nature of their coordination on suggested programming content and provided further evidence to support their positions. We modified our findings regarding BBG coordination with State. BBG said it would explore the establishment of a more formal, transparent channel of communication for programming ideas. In addition, BBG, along with State and DOD, provided technical comments, which have been incorporated throughout the report where appropriate. DOD and USAID said that developing a public diplomacy strategy is insufficient without addressing the content of U.S. public diplomacy activities.

The White House declined to comment on a draft of this report.

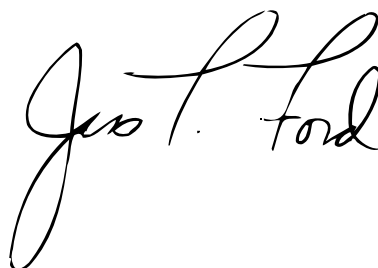
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We are sending copies of this report to other interested Members of Congress. We are also sending copies to the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Director of the White House Office of Global Communications. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>. If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4128 or [fordj@gao.gov](mailto:fordj@gao.gov).

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Staff contacts and other key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VI.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jess T. Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a distinct "T" and "F".

Jess T. Ford  
Director, International Affairs and Trade

# Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

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The Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Science, State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies asked us to examine (1) to what extent U.S. public diplomacy efforts have been coordinated and (2) whether the private sector has been significantly engaged in such efforts. Our review focused on the efforts of the Department of State, the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DOD). We did not include psychological operations or covert information operations conducted by DOD or the intelligence community in our review.

To determine how U.S. public diplomacy efforts have been coordinated across agency lines, we met with senior officials in State's Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, the Bureau of International Information Programs, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, and a regional bureau. We also interviewed officials at BBG, USAID, and DOD, as well as representatives from the private sector. We reviewed planning, program, and other documentation from the relevant agencies and examined recent studies from the Defense Science Board, the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, the Council on Foreign Relations, and others. Officials at the White House Office of Global Communications declined to meet with us to discuss their role in interagency coordination activities; however, we were able to develop a basic understanding of the office's operations by reviewing published data and by speaking with government officials familiar with White House coordination efforts.

To assess the extent to which the private sector has been effectively engaged in U.S. public diplomacy efforts, we discussed outreach efforts with officials at State and USAID, including State's Bureau of Commercial and Business Affairs and USAID's Global Development Alliance. We also met with representatives from the private sector, including Business for Diplomatic Action, as well as nonprofit organizations, academia, and the media. We reviewed State documents detailing the department's private sector outreach efforts, as well as a proposal that State's Policy Planning Staff submitted to the White House calling for expanded public-private partnerships. We also examined recent data from polling organizations and reviewed a Business for Diplomatic Action analysis of root causes of anti-Americanism.

We performed our work from May 2004 through February 2005 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

# Related Reports and Testimony

**Table 2: GAO Reports on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting**

Report title	Date	Selected conclusions
<i>U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges</i> ( <a href="#">GAO-03-951</a> )	September 2003	State has expanded its public diplomacy efforts in Muslim-majority countries since September 11, 2001. State needs a comprehensive strategy that integrates all of its public diplomacy activities. State is not comprehensively measuring progress toward its public diplomacy goals.
<i>U.S. International Broadcasting: New Strategic Approach Focuses on Reaching Large Audiences but Lacks Measurable Program Objectives</i> ( <a href="#">GAO-03-772</a> )	July 2003	The Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG) has initiated several projects designed to attract larger audiences in priority markets. BBG's plan lacks program objectives designed to measure the success of its new approach to broadcasting. BBG has not established a strategic vision for how many languages should be pursued.

Source: GAO.

**Table 3: Related GAO Testimony**

Testimony title	Date	Comments
<i>U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department and Broadcasting Board of Governors Expand Post-9/11 Efforts but Challenges Remain</i> ( <a href="#">GAO-04-1061T</a> )	August 23, 2004	Based on <a href="#">GAO-03-951</a> , <i>U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Expands Efforts but Faces Significant Challenges</i> , and <a href="#">GAO-03-772</a> , <i>U.S. International Broadcasting: New Strategic Approach Focuses on Reaching Large Audiences but Lacks Measurable Program Objectives</i>
<i>U.S. International Broadcasting: Challenges Facing the Broadcasting Board of Governors</i> ( <a href="#">GAO-04-711T</a> )	April 29, 2004	Based on <a href="#">GAO-04-374</a> , <i>U.S. International Broadcasting: Enhanced Measure of Local Media Conditions Would Facilitate Decisions to Terminate Language Services</i> ; <a href="#">GAO-03-772</a> ; and <a href="#">GAO/NSIAD-00-222</a> , <i>U.S. International Broadcasting: Strategic Planning and Performance Management System Could Be Improved</i>
<i>U.S. International Broadcasting: Challenges Facing the Broadcasting Board of Governors</i> ( <a href="#">GAO-04-627T</a> )	April 1, 2004	Based on <a href="#">GAO-04-374</a> , <a href="#">GAO-03-772</a> , and <a href="#">GAO/NSIAD-00-222</a>
<i>U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department and the Broadcasting Board of Governors Expand Efforts in the Middle East but Face Significant Challenges</i> ( <a href="#">GAO-04-435T</a> )	February 10, 2004	Based on <a href="#">GAO-03-951</a> and <a href="#">GAO-03-772</a>

Source: GAO.

**Appendix II  
Related Reports and Testimony**

**Table 4: Selected Reports on Public Diplomacy**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Report title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Selected conclusions</b>
U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy	<i>2004 Report</i>	September 2004	The agents and structures of public diplomacy need coordination. Public diplomacy messaging must become more strategic and responsive. Public diplomacy should be a national security priority, requiring an aggressive strategy and increased resources. The public and private sectors need to work together to face public diplomacy challenges.
Defense Science Board	<i>Strategic Communication</i>	September 2004	Strengthening and coordinating strategic communications requires presidential leadership. Structural changes are necessary within the National Security Council, State, and DOD to transform strategic communications. A quasi-governmental entity should be created to provide information and analysis and facilitate private sector involvement in public diplomacy.
National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States	<i>The 9/11 Commission Report</i>	July 2004	The U.S. government must define its message and what it stands for. The United States needs to defend its ideals abroad through increased broadcasting efforts and rebuilt scholarship, exchange, and library programs.
Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World	<i>Changing Minds Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim World</i>	October 2003	Public diplomacy requires a new strategic direction, led by the President and Congress and adequately funded and staffed. Structural changes at the White House, the National Security Council, and State are necessary. USAID and DOD must be incorporated in the new strategic direction. Public diplomacy should engage the full range of American civil society, including the private sector and nongovernmental organizations.
Council on Foreign Relations	<i>Finding America's Voice: A Strategy for Reinvigorating U.S. Public Diplomacy</i>	June 2003	Lack of political will and the absence of an overall strategy have hindered public diplomacy programs. Public diplomacy should be considered in the formulation of foreign policy. The U.S. public diplomacy coordinating structure needs strengthening, leadership, and increased resources. An expanded private sector role would help public diplomacy deliver more bang for the government buck.
U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy	<i>Building America's Public Diplomacy Through a Reformed Structure and Additional Resources</i>	September 2002	Public diplomacy requires structural reform, including presidential leadership, the integration of Congress in public diplomacy efforts, and the involvement of the private sector. Public diplomacy should be redeveloped by building its resources.



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**Appendix II**  
**Related Reports and Testimony**

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*(Continued From Previous Page)*

<b>Author</b>	<b>Report title</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Selected conclusions</b>
Defense Science Board	<i>Managed Information Dissemination</i>	October 2001	The U.S. government requires a coordinated means to speak with a single voice abroad. Presidential leadership is required to strengthen the United States' ability to communicate with foreign audiences and coordinate public diplomacy, public affairs, and information operations. Structural changes at the National Security Council, State, and DOD are required to coordinate public diplomacy activities.

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Source: GAO.

# Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

*Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer*

*Washington, D.C. 20520*

MAR 18 2005

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers  
Managing Director  
International Affairs and Trade  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: Communications Strategy Needed to Improve Interagency Coordination Efforts," GAO Job Code 320283.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Elizabeth Whitaker, Director, Office of Policy, Planning and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, at (202) 647-0553

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Burnham", written over a large, sweeping flourish.

Christopher B. Burnham

cc: GAO – Mike Tenkate  
R – Tim Isgitt  
State/OIG – Mark Duda

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report U.S. Public  
Diplomacy: Communications Strategy Needed to Improve  
Interagency Coordination Efforts  
(GAO-05-323, GAO Code 320283)**

Thank you for allowing the Department of State the opportunity to comment on the draft report "U.S. Public Diplomacy: Communications Strategy Needed to Improve Interagency Coordination," which addresses the status of coordination among agencies in reaching out to foreign publics.

Coming as another in a series of reports from the public and private sector on public diplomacy, the GAO report is the most up-to-date we have seen, and we appreciate the recognition of the Department's efforts over recent months at re-establishing its interagency leadership in public diplomacy through the Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee.

With regard to coordination between the Department and the BBG, the report correctly identifies the formal channels of policy coordination, but makes no mention of daily *ad-hoc* coordination between the two entities, concerning broadcast content and delivery, as well as other interagency coordination. Right now for example, the Department's International Women's Issues Office is working with Alhurra to identify speakers and program ideas, which appeal to women in the Middle East. The Department's EUR and OBO bureaus have been working closely with RFE/RL for the last two years to help them identify an alternate location for their headquarters within Prague that poses less of a security risk. WHA and OCB are working together to improve the effectiveness -- in both content and delivery -- of the Radio and TV Marti broadcasts. EUR and SA are working with IBB engineering to make sure a transmitter -- bound for Tajikistan -- is making it through customs in the 8 countries it has to travel through from Paris. The BBG and NEA have been working hand-in-hand for over a year to secure transmitter rights for Radio Sawa in Egypt. Every day, policy questions are explored and vetted through the Department's country desks. There are many, many examples of daily, positive and active, albeit informal, coordination between the Department and the BBG (and its entities) that should be mentioned.

We believe the description of the BBG's reaction to suggestions on broadcast content, specifically the promotion of *Hi* magazine in exchange

for promotion of the BBG's efforts, is misleading. While this interaction did happen, the BBG never formally excluded the idea of cross-promoting State's products, including *Hi* magazine. At the time, there were concerns on BBG's part about the content on fledgling broadcasts to the Middle East. In recent days, however, these discussions have begun again, and look promising, and we look forward to working with the BBG to address this issue.

During this transition period between the first and second Bush Administrations, we will follow with interest the reaction to the GAO's recommendation to the White House that the Director of the Office of Global Communications fully implement the role mandated for that office.

We heartily endorse the GAO's recommendation to develop a detailed strategy for the Department on better engaging the private sector in mutually reinforcing efforts to reach out to foreign publics. As new players take their places within the Department, how to build on and consolidate the Department's accomplishments in working with the private sector will be one of the areas for early focus.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the draft provided to us.

# Comments from the Broadcasting Board of Governors



BROADCASTING BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

March 15, 2005

Mr. Jess T. Ford  
Director  
International Relations and Trade  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ford:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the GAO's draft report entitled, "U.S. Public Diplomacy: Communications Strategy Needed to Improve Interagency Coordination Efforts."

We are pleased at the GAO's finding that the BBG coordinates with the State Department at the policy level through a variety of means. The Board maintains close ties with the Office of the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs and enjoys a mutually supportive working relationship with that office.

The GAO report also states, however, that "some agency officials asserted that the BBG is not effectively coordinating with other agencies with respect to program content," and provides several examples where BBG entities declined to pursue program suggestions or air content from other agencies. In considering these examples, it is important to keep in mind the BBG's legislative mandate and the journalistic nature of BBG programming. The legislation under which we operate is clear that the final decision on what is broadcast lies in the hands of our journalists. The U.S. International Broadcasting Act requires that both the Secretary of State and the Board shall respect the professional independence and integrity of the broadcasting services. While the Board is open to suggestions related to broadcast content, and is happy to pass these ideas along for broadcast consideration, it cannot and should not require the journalists to implement these suggestions.

The GAO report also indicates that the Board would be open to receiving requests to broadcast "other agency content." While the Board has welcomed suggestions for programming, we do not mean to imply that the BBG would serve as a broadcast platform for programming created by other government agencies.

The Board has not been aware of any specific instance when a suggestion on program content was not considered by a BBG broadcast entity. Furthermore, the Board has not received any specific complaints from the State Department in recent years with respect to programming.

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Appendix IV  
Comments from the Broadcasting Board of  
Governors

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BBG entities have been receptive to program suggestions from U.S. Government officials. For example, at the suggestion of U.S. Embassy Beijing, VOA recently produced a special program commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Sino-U.S. Cooperation during World War II when U.S. Army engineers worked to restore ground transportation between China and the outside world. With interviews with U.S. Embassy officials in Beijing, the story highlighted the tremendous loss of American lives in completing this route that helped alleviate the suffering of Chinese people during the war's final months.

In general, BBG programming is shaped by its journalists who track the news and develop the program content with an eye toward the program's relevance to the audience. BBG journalists are also mindful of their broadcast mission to represent America and its policies. Programming provides a focus on U.S. policy concerns and an emphasis on a product that is a tool to support the development of freedom and democracy. For example, each of the broadcast entities of the BBG used coverage of the confirmation hearings for Secretary of State Rice to both introduce the Secretary-designate to the world and to showcase the U.S. confirmation process, in which one branch of government vets the proposals and decisions of the other. Several broadcast entities broadcast nearly gavel-to-gavel coverage. Others used portions of the hearing to illustrate U.S. policies to particular parts of the world.

Through their regular contact with U.S. Government officials and coverage of major policy speeches and Congressional hearings, our journalists present Administration and Congressional views on high priority issues that constitute "front page" news. To the extent that policymakers make themselves available for comment and that BBG journalists are made part of the press pools accompanying Administration officials on official travel, program content is greatly enhanced.

The anecdotal reports collected by GAO that indicate frustration from State Department officials regarding the suggestion of program ideas, indicate that a more formal channel of communication for such ideas should perhaps be established through the Board. The Board will explore the establishment of a more transparent avenue of communications. However, as the Board is the firewall between the policymakers and the journalists, and must protect against government pressures to skew the content of the programming, such requests must be handled carefully. Establishment of a formal channel through which program ideas may be communicated should not create the expectation that all program ideas will be implemented.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Y. Tomlinson  
Chairman

# Comments from the U.S. Agency for International Development



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

MAR 25 2005

Jess T. Ford  
Director  
International Affairs and Trade  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Ford:

I am pleased to provide the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) formal response on the draft GAO report entitled U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY: Communications Strategy needed to Improve Interagency Coordination Efforts.

I have enclosed a short paper from the Agency's Bureau of Legislative and Public Affairs regarding comments and suggested language that might assist you in improving the overall report.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the GAO draft report and for the courtesies extended by your staff in the conduct of this review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Wisecarver".

Steve Wisecarver  
Acting Assistant Administrator  
Bureau for Management

Enclosure: A/S

U.S. Agency for International Development  
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20523  
[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

## DRAFT GAO REPORT ON U.S. PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Comments from USAID's Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA)  
March 21, 2005

The following suggested addition is being provided by USAID staff members in the Legislative and Public Affairs Bureau who had an opportunity to review GAO's Draft of its upcoming report on U.S. Public Diplomacy.

Page 16, bottom of the page:

This GAO study obviously is about public diplomacy and engaging the private sector in State and other agency's public diplomacy efforts – not specifically about public-private partnerships. While there are several paragraphs about public-private partnerships, there is almost no mention of the Global Development Alliance (GDA) business model wherein we reach to both non-traditional partners in the US, and to non-traditional partners in throughout the world. An additional paragraph on page 16 might provide a positive example of successful efforts being made to date with public-private partnerships:

**Suggested addition: “One promising example of public-private partnerships has been USAID’s Global Development Alliance. The Global Development Alliance is a USAID-wide initiative to promote public-private alliances among government, the private and the non-profit sectors that was launched by former Secretary of State Colin Powell in 2001. The GDA is akin to a joint venture model in the private sector – a joint venture in which all the partners have an enlightened self-interest in improving some aspect of the quality of life for people in one or more countries in which both USAID and partner companies operate. The GDA business model is to leverage businesses to bring unique assets to developing countries such as foreign direct investment, experience with leading business practices (especially related to environmental and workers’ issues), technological innovations, and the ability to use buying power to affect change along supply chains.**

**GDA prods USAID and its private partners to collectively define and pool their talents and resources to have greater impact on a development problem than any one of the partners could have alone. Since it’s inception in 2002, almost 300 alliances have taken form Agency-wide – roughly \$1 billion in USAID funds have leveraged over \$3.0 billion in partner resources. Alliances have been established in over 45 countries in the developing world and over 150 private business partner organizations are now involved.”**

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# GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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## GAO Contact

Diana Glod, (202) 512-8945

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## Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the person named above, Michael ten Kate, Robert Ball, Loren DeJonge, and Joe Carney made key contributions to this report. Martin de Alteriis, Ernie Jackson, and Mark Speight provided technical assistance.

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