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Building U.S.- Muslim Understanding and Dialog: Public Diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim Worlds

Ambassador William Rugh (retired)

Foreign Press Center Briefing
Washington, DC
March 16, 2005

1:30 P.M. EDT

MR. DENIG: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the Washington Foreign Press Center. Welcome also to journalists assembled in our Foreign Press Centers in Los Angeles and New York.

As you know, we have been having a series of briefings on American public diplomacy, a subject which has received a great deal of attention, both in the American media as well as in the American Congress, and it is a subject that is of continuing interest and much debate.

We're very pleased today to be able to present to you a longtime expert on public diplomacy, Ambassador Bill Rugh, who has served in a variety of diplomatic positions in the Middle East, including two as ambassador, and has served in significant positions in Washington as well, prior to his retirement. He is also the author of two books and you will be, I hope, the happy recipients of at least one of those at the present time.



Today's briefing will deal with the topic, "Building U.S.-Muslim Understanding and Dialogue: Public Diplomacy in

the Arab and Muslim Worlds." Ambassador Rugh will make an opening statement. After that we'll be very happy to take your questions.

Bill.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Thank you, Paul. I'm very happy to be here to talk about public diplomacy. As Paul indicated, I have spent some time in the government doing public diplomacy and, as I'm sure you know, I'm a private citizen now; I don't speak for the U.S. Government but I have retained a very strong interest in public diplomacy and I am part of a group called the Public Diplomacy Council which is based here in Washington, consisting of interested professionals who work to support the improvement of American public diplomacy in a variety of ways.

And at the outset I don't have a long prepared introductory statement. At the outset I'd just like to draw your attention to a couple of publications which go into quite a bit of detail on the public diplomacy issues that we're concerned about. One is *A Call for Action on Public Diplomacy*, which was put out by the Public Diplomacy Council very recently, and you may have already seen it. And the other is a book that I edited called *Engaging Arab and Islamic Worlds Through Public Diplomacy*. And this is really a work of a number of experts who have written chapters, essays, on various aspects of public diplomacy. And I think the special contribution of this particular volume and also of the *Call for Action*, is that they are written from the point of view of professional operational people who have been doing public diplomacy for some time, particularly in the Arab world and in the Muslim world. There have been a lot of reports, as you know: the Djerejian report and the Council on Foreign Relations and the Heritage Foundation and a lot of other people have written about public diplomacy. But these two reports try to give you a perspective from the practitioner's point of view, and particularly from the practitioners who have worked abroad in American embassies.

And the point I'd like to make is that my own bias, having been a field officer in the Foreign Service for 30 years, is that most of the real work, the day-to-day work of public diplomacy, is done in embassies abroad by public affairs officers, cultural affairs officers, information officers and the Foreign National staff who work with them, and of course Ambassadors and DCMs and Political Officers. Every day they must answer questions from people like yourselves about American policy, about American society, about American culture. And in answering those questions and trying to present a fair and balanced picture of America, which is the task of public diplomacy, they are doing public diplomacy every single day. Public diplomacy is not just speeches by the President or press conferences by the President, important as they are, but tailored discussions and exchanges and dialogue between Americans on the one hand and foreign audiences on the other. And I say Americans, not just American officials, because many private Americans are involved in public diplomacy programs. And we can get into that, if you like.

Finally, let me just say so I can keep this short and get to your questions, if there are some, and observations, I welcome the appointment of Karen Hughes as the new Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy. I think that is an inspired appointment. It is hopefully going to launch us onto a new and reinvigorated effort by the U.S. Government

to undertake public diplomacy which, for a number of reasons, has been hampered over the past decade or so and is only now being revived. There's a lot of discussion about public diplomacy from the United States but much, much more needs to be done to overcome the obstacles that are in its way.

So let me, if I may, open the floor. I can volunteer more comments, if you like, but I'd like to hear your questions.

MR. DENIG: Okay, we'll go to New York for our first question, if you can introduce yourself, please.

MS. NISBET: We actually have no questions. Thank you.

MR. DENIG: Oh, okay, very good. Let's start with us then in the front row here. If you would wait for the microphone. Thank you.

QUESTION: Raghbir Goyal, *Asia Today/India Globe*.

Sir, first of all, why this has been ignored -- public diplomacy? And second, why do they hate us or what is going on now that maybe -- Islam is a religion of peace, of course, and no religion in the world teaches hatred against any other religion or against any other individual or country. But still, number one, why they hate America and, number two, why they hate non-Muslims or non-Islamics? What is the reason behind them? Do you have any solutions because, number one, now President also talking about faithful-based organizations that he wants to help the faithless to all religion and as a second-term President religion may have played a major role also and he wants to focus that and no one should use or misuse religion for their benefit or even terrorizing the innocent or peace-loving people.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Thank you. I heard several questions in that question. Let me take them as I heard them.

I think you said at the beginning why has public diplomacy been ignored? And if that's what you're asking, I can give a quick answer to that which I can fill in if you want more details.

After the end of the Cold War, the American public and the American Congress, I think, decided that there was no more need for public diplomacy because we no longer had a threat from the Soviet Union and from international communism, so why bother to fund public diplomacy? And the staffing levels and the funding levels during the '90s declined drastically and that has never been recovered. Since 9/11 there's been a bit of a recovery.

Secondly, another obstacle in the way of effective public diplomacy has been an increase in security measures that have been taken abroad at all of our embassies, and it's very difficult to conduct a public diplomacy program abroad if you're behind a wall and behind a security barrier. And there are many examples that you can see all over the world of fortresses behind which public affairs officers must sit and their contacts aren't able to get to see them. Our

libraries are fortified and so on.

And the third reason, the third obstacle, is technology. We have a revolution in satellite television and in the Internet and in other means of communication which has brought a cacophony of words in the international sphere and it's very difficult for public diplomacy professionals to get a word in edgewise. So those are the obstacles that I see confronting public diplomacy today.

You say, "Why do they hate us?" I would challenge the premise. The word is not "hate." If you look at particularly the Arab world, but also the Muslim world in general, which is the subject of today, I think there's a great deal -- and look at the opinion polls that have been taken, I think there's a great deal of criticism of American policy and disagreement with American policy and misunderstanding about American policy. And if you look at the opinion polls that have been taken over the past few years in the Arab world, for example, the numbers in response to the question, "Do you respect American education, do you respect American technology and economy and American achievements on the cultural side and so on, American products," the numbers are still very high, as they've always been.

But on the question of American foreign policy, and particularly related to the Arab-Israeli peace process and to the intervention in Iraq, the numbers are very low. Even in the countries where they've been very high in the past, such as Saudi Arabia and Jordan, the numbers are down in the single digits. And that's, I think, primarily due to a disagreement with our policy.

Now, you asked about faith-based policies and questions of religion in this process. I think it's a misunderstanding to look at American policy as being partisan for any religious reasons. The American President has said this many times. There are other voices in America, private voices, that have expressed bigoted views about Islam and about other peoples and about other cultures, but the American Government has not and the American Government has, I think, consistently -- I don't speak for them but my reading is they have consistently talked about the fight against terrorism not as being a religious one but being one directed against terrorists.

Why do they hate us? I don't agree with the premise. I don't agree with that because they don't -- these populations whose numbers, whose poll numbers are very low on foreign policy, don't hate us in general. They don't hate American society. They don't hate American life. Many of them still want to come here to study. And you all probably know the difficulties that have been imposed on travel for foreign students. That has been an additional problem that goes along with what I mentioned a few moments ago, that there are security problems not only with embassies abroad but in visas and in travel.

So I think we can find a way to balance American security requirements with the need to have more people come to the United States as visitors and more people going abroad as visitors. I think part of the essential program requirements of a good -- a public diplomacy program is increased educational exchange. There is a line in one of the essays in this book by Kenton Keith, who was a longtime public diplomacy professional who served in many capacities in the Arab world and in the

Islamic world. He said we should say to the world we want you to send your youth to America and we want to send our youth to see you and to learn about you.

It gets back to my point about dialogue. We need to have a discussion and we need to explain. A good public diplomacy program explains to the world that we are interested in listening as well as talking. A public diplomacy program, to be effective, has to be a two-way street and a dialogue, and not a monologue.

So let me stop there. I may not have answered all of your questions, but let me try.

MR. DENIG: Okay, let's go to the right here. Khaled.

QUESTION: Yes, sir. Khaled Dawoud from Egypt's *Al-Ahram* newspaper.

I'm sure, I mean, with your long experience this question has been posed many times to you, but again, I mean, how do you -- what's your formula for getting over this feud between policy versus public diplomacy? I mean, the Arabs, as you said, I mean, most of them are very much against the U.S. support for Israel, I mean, unbalanced, and the Iraq war made things worse. So what's the formula you have in mind? How can you convince an Arab that, yes, you oppose the Iraq war, you oppose Palestine, but you still want to talk to you?

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Well, that's a central question and dealing particularly with the Arab world but with the entire Muslim world. And there's no simple solution. But I would offer the following. First of all, don't avoid the discussion. American officials need to engage with foreign audiences on the subject of American policy and not run away from it.

For example, American officials -- and this is my personal opinion -- should come to the Foreign Press Center, they should appear on Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya and the other Arab networks as much as they possibly can. They should not demonize foreign Arab satellite television and foreign media but try to make use of those media and, to the extent that they can, have discussions and interviews on those media.

And they won't convince the foreign audiences necessarily of every point. They won't make a total conversion just by having a discussion. But they will go a long way toward an effective public diplomacy if they engage in a discussion and convince the public that they are listening.

Thirdly, I think it's a fact from the last presidential election that we had, that more than half of the American public voted for the President of the United States and supported his foreign policies and his domestic policies. So I think it's part of the function of a public diplomacy official to explain why the American public in such large numbers supports the policy of the President of the United States. It is not only the duty of a public diplomacy professional to advocate and to explain foreign policy, but in talking about the American public and the public's attitude toward those policies, we can convey perhaps a better understanding. Because obviously there are differences of perception. There are foreign perceptions of our policy and there are American perceptions of our policy and many of the American perceptions are very positive. And that needs to be explained in some detail.

In addition, and finally, there is a long-term aspect to public diplomacy. Public diplomacy is not today's sound bite. It's not today's argument. It's not today's explanation of today's policy. It is a long-term exchange of persons. It's a long-term

education process. It's a long-term process of reading books, reading magazines, watching films, and most of all, interpersonal exchanges between American and foreign audiences that will help develop an appreciation of America even if they dislike our policy.

And I found in my --

QUESTION: Even if we disagree with the policy?

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Yes, absolutely.

QUESTION: I mean, that's the premise which many people find very difficult.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Absolutely. I think it's possible. I'm not discouraged. I have found in my experience as a diplomat that it's much easier for me to talk with somebody who knows America well, who has been a student here and has lived here and has returned to his or her home country than to talk to somebody who has never been to the United States, who really doesn't know much about it.

So, the long-term is terribly important. The educational exchange programs and the visits and the Americans going abroad and the foreign visitors coming here are terribly important in building a base of understanding and appreciation. And so, I don't mind as much if a foreign editor of a newspaper in a foreign country has reasonable criticisms of America's policy today if that person appreciates and understands American society and where that policy is coming from.

I'd rather have an educated, knowledgeable interlocutor than somebody who has misunderstandings and misinformation, because the misinformation needs to be cleared away before we can have any progress in public diplomacy.

MR. DENIG: All right. We'll go to the gentleman in the white coat there.

QUESTION: My name is Arshad Mahmud and I represent the *Prothom Alo* in Bangladesh.

During your talk, you said something about the terrorists, that the American government is not -- has nothing against the Islam or the religion, but I guess the terrorists -- but often, we have found these days -- this question about terrorists, who -- these are people who are fighting for a cause and they're not trying to enhance their material benefits or something.

So, how do you clear this conception and I'm sure you know, being in this field for a long time, there is a difference in this definition in the Muslim world and in the United States. Number one and number two, you are talking about the need for public diplomacy -- it has to be more intensely -- what do you think of this -- what impact it would have with the pardonment of Karen Hughes, number one.

And this -- the (inaudible) of Al Jazeera by the top Bush administration officials, how is it going to help in building this -- thank you.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): The definition of terrorism is something that academics argue about all the time and I think

perhaps too much, but it does get in the way of understanding and so, it's important to know or at least to agree, basically, on what terrorism is. My own definition, for what it's worth, is that it's a technique used by various groups. It has no particular attachment to any religion or any culture or any national group. And I think -- I don't speak for the government, but I think that the President would agree with that, that it's not Islamic, it's not un-American. You know, terrorism can happen here by Americans. That's possible. It's a technique that is used for a political purpose. So, the definition of terrorism does get in the way of rational discussion and it would be nice if we could sort of clear away that problem when we have a discussion -- a friendly discussion between Americans and others.

On the question of Karen Hughes' appointment, I am hopeful that she will take charge of public diplomacy. It's been a position that's been vacant for a while. And I'm hopeful partly because she's so close to the President. I recall when I was in the U.S. Information Agency, we had a director of USIA named Charlie Wick who was somewhat controversial, but his great achievements in public diplomacy were, to a large extent, due to the fact that he was a close, personal friend of President Reagan.

Now, maybe we have another situation like that where you have, in that position -- you know, the Under Secretary is sort of equivalent to the old director of USIA who disappeared after the merger with the Department of State and became the Under Secretary for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy. So, if Karen Hughes plays the role that Charlie Wick played in his era, in the sense that she raises to the level of the Oval Office the importance of public diplomacy and brings it to his attention and enlists him in a reinvigorated public diplomacy and focuses on the foreign audience which is people like yourselves and others abroad. Then we will get somewhere. Then we'll have some progress.

And so, I'm encouraged by the appointment in the sense that she is very close to the President, as you know; she can walk into the Oval Office any time she wants and that's unlike any of her predecessors in that particular job. And so that, that's the hopeful sign. But, you know, the jury's out, we'll see how well it works and this has to be a combined effort, not only her effort but also the Congress has to support what she wants to do, she has to get more resources, she has to mobilize all of the public diplomacy professionals and they're scattered all over the Department of State and all over the world. And get a handle on the budget, as well as staffing and improve the effort generally and if she does that we'll improve our public diplomacy.

You last asked about Al Jazeera. It's my personal view that we should participate in Al Jazeera programs; that there are problems with Al Jazeera. It's not an American television station. It's not intended to be, it will never be an American television station. We have to use what we've got. I remember one of the Cabinet members, recently, in talking about the military in Iraq, said we have to use what we've got.

I think, in this sense, we have to use what we've got and make use of Al Jazeera and the other Arab media that so effectively reach the Arab public. We have Al Hurra and we have Radio Sawa, but the ones that really reach the Arab public on a day-to-day basis effectively are channels like Al Jazeera, and instead of attacking them and regarding them as the enemy, we ought to regard them as channels that we would like to participate in to reach the Arab public. That's my opinion.

MR. DENIG: All right. Let's go to Thomas, please.

QUESTION: Thomas Gorguissian, *Al-Gomhouria*, Egypt.

Ambassador Rugh, first of all, I really am thankful for book because I read it and it's really a thoughtful and in-depth understanding,

comprehensive understanding of the public diplomacy. I mean, it's not sound byte at least like we used to about this issue.

My question is directed not what you are trying to do or how you are going to get there. Who is going to do it? I mean, most of these studies, they don't focus on the personnel or the personalities or those foot soldiers that they are going to do this public diplomacy. This my first question. If there's a kind of training to them? They are trained to do these things or not, just like because of American they can do anything? I don't know.

The other thing, which is related to the -- in the last three, four years, the focus about public diplomacy is becoming like we won't reach the mass -- the masses and always blaming that before we were doing wrong -- you were doing wrong at least, I don't know -- saying that, this was done on the elite level. Can you explain to me what's going on?

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Okay. Thank you for those perceptive questions. First of all, who is doing public diplomacy? Who should do public diplomacy? In my view, we need to make much more of an effort in training professional public diplomacy specialists in languages and in cultural studies and in studies of foreign societies than we have been doing in the past. We have a very, very small number of Arabic language speakers in the Foreign Service -- very small. The State Department should be doing a lot more, in my view, to encourage and support and get funding for increased language studies, particularly in Arabic and other languages that are potentially relevant.

The private sector is doing some of this already. My friends in the academic world in the United States tell me that courses in Arabic and in Arab history and in Arab society, all over the United States at the universities where those subjects are taught, are oversubscribed. There are more students than there are professors to teach them. We ought to bring more professors from the Arab world to teach Arabic. We ought to send more American students to the Arab to learn Arabic and to learn about Arab societies. Again, educational exchange and increasing the level of training, this takes a long time. I've been studying Arabic for 30 years and I'm still on an intermediate level. It really is a very difficult language, as you know. But it needs to be done.

It's not impossible to be an effective public diplomacy specialist if you don't know the language but it helps a lot. It helps a great deal and it opens doors. And I found, for example, when I was a Public Affairs Officer and visiting an editor, if I spoke Arabic, even if my Arabic was limited, the next time I asked for an appointment I would get an appointment because I would have to do all the work of speaking his language and he wouldn't have to do the work of speaking my language. And it's a courtesy. It shows respect. For all of those reasons, language study and cultural studies are terribly important and I think that the U.S. Government can not only do training but it can encourage the universities with scholarship aid and other incentives to do more training in language and cultural studies. It's happening but not fast enough.

QUESTION: Question of elite versus mass audience. This is a subject that -- a discussion that's been going on for 50 years. From the beginning of public diplomacy back after World War II, people were arguing about whether we should go out to an elite or a mass audience. And one USIA director said we can't reach everybody, at least not with personal contact and with books and pamphlets, except with the Voice of America and with broadcasting.

So we must focus on a more -- on the influentials, so called, and the policymakers. So we -- but we need to do both.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): I think we need a revived Voice of America Arabic program, which was cancelled, to be replaced by Radio Sawa. That was very effective, I think. It needs more transmitter power, but I think that is important to reach a mass audience. But at the same time, we need to intensify our effort on the one-to-one level and the small group level by effective public affairs officers.

MR. DENIG: Okay. I'll take the gentleman way in the back. Right in the middle, please. Thanks.

QUESTION: L.K. Sharma, *Decca Herald*. In historical perspective, both in the British Foreign Commonwealth Office as well as in the State Department, the influence of the so-called Arabists has been going down. It had started long before the end of the Cold War. I presume you consider yourself to be in that particular group. So how do you think this kind of influential voice will evolve within the policymaking circles?

Number two, leaving aside the Christian (inaudible), there are high priests South American intellectual temple, who produce books like "Clash of Civilization," which I'm sure makes the work of people like you even more difficult at the theoretical level.

And thirdly, you have enthusiastically endorsed Karen Hughes' appointment. She may be able to get funds but I wonder what kind of impetus she will have with the region because she is certainly not a woman Lawrence of Arabia. She has never had an experience of foreign policy shoes. She has never been to the region, perhaps. She has never ridden a horse in the sands of Arabia.

So from that point of view for the specific mission, apart from getting the funds, what do you expect?

(Laughter.)

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Tough questions. Yes, I accept your premise of your first question about Arabists. I think Arabists have not had a great deal of influence in this country or elsewhere, and there was a book written about Arabists a few years ago, which I think totally missed the point. But it depends on the individual. Just being an Arabist is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage, necessarily, in the policy debates in Washington. And I notice that, according to the press, there is a native speaker of Arabic in the front office of Karen Hughes -- her Deputy I believe.

MR. DENIG: Dina Powell.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Dina Powell. She, as I understand it, was born in Egypt, fluent in Arabic and has to be considered an Arabist, if you will. So that's an encouraging sign. Whether that will make a major difference remains to be seen and the same comment applies to Karen Hughes. Her performance remains to be seen, you know, we're just starting out. It's true that she doesn't know the Middle East, as far as I can tell, but Charlie Wick didn't either and Charlie Wick managed to learn from people who did know foreign countries and foreign cultures.

So it's possible to take the advantages that she has and develop them into an outstanding leader of our public diplomacy establishment. I don't know, as you don't know probably, whether she's going to succeed in doing that. But it's a good start. And if she does listen to the professionals who know the Middle East and know the rest of the world, listen to the people who have been working out there on the ground, listen to our ambassadors, her PAOs and takes their comments seriously, and listens to foreign audiences -- I hope she'll come here and talk to you all because the dialogue and listening is as important as the monologue.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Oh, thank you. "Clash of Civilizations" was, when it was published by Professor Huntington, criticized by other academics, particularly by academics who knew a lot about the Arab and Muslim worlds, who said this isn't right, and I think it's still a misguided thesis, "Class of Civilizations." However, as time goes on, for reasons unrelated to his thesis, we're seeing more and more tension between some Americans and some people in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

And I say "some" because I'm referring to the vitriolic comments that have been made on both sides by private individuals -- Americans as well as Muslim and Arabs -- criticizing each other which is unhelpful to public diplomacy. It's unhelpful to the solution of problems. It's unhelpful to a civilized dialogue.

Now that doesn't mean that we have a clash of civilizations -- not yet, anyway -- but it means that there are misinformed people, people who are bigoted, who speak out and criticize other religions and other cultures without any rational basis. And it's unfortunate that Professor Huntington, being a Harvard Professor, gave the original idea some impetus and some cachet and some legitimacy. But as I say, he was not accepted by the academics who know the world pretty well, and yet there are people who have latched on to his thesis and said, "Look, it's coming true."

I don't believe it's coming true, but there are undercurrents of mutual recrimination between people in this country and people abroad and what we need is mutual understanding. Mutual understanding is what we're aiming for in public diplomacy and the more we can bring people together and have honest dialogue we will avoid any clash of civilizations.

MR. DENIG: The gentleman up front.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

MR. DENIG: Just a minute, just a minute, please.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Rugh. If you were -- I am Mofid Deak. I am actually from the Public Diplomacy Office at the State Department.

If you were in Karen Hughes' shoes today, what would your like three or four point or part plan be to Secretary Rice and the President? And the second part of my question is, has anybody systematically looked at the effects of the merger of the USIA -- the USIA into the State Department about four or five years ago?

And if you look at the recent figures, actually, you might be inclined to think that the decline in American understanding and public image in the world has really coincided with the period, you know, at which the State Department basically took over the USIA. Has anybody just looked into that?

Thank you.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Well, on the first part of your question, what would I recommend that she ought to do? I've indicated some of my answer already. I would have recommended to her that she listen to the professionals who have been working in the field of public diplomacy, like yourself, for some time, and particularly listen to those specialists who know foreign opinion, foreign attitudes and know how to talk across the cultural divide, cultural barriers. That's a start. So rather than isolate herself and assume that she can decide what's good for public diplomacy simply because she has been appointed to the position, I think she needs to go through a learning phase, listening to a lot of people, listening to people abroad and listening to Americans who know foreign audiences.

On your second question and also related to the first, I'm going to express a personal opinion here about the merger that is not universally shared. In my opinion, the merger was detrimental to the effective management of public diplomacy because it scattered the public diplomacy specialists around the State Department. It broke a tight link that had been established under USIA between the Public Affairs Officer in the field and in headquarters. So the Public Affairs Officer in Cairo or Damascus or anywhere now reports only to the Ambassador, and while there are public diplomacy offices here in the State Department, the Public Affairs Officers really serves only one master. Public Affairs Officers used to serve two masters, that is, the ambassador and my embassy, and the director of USIA back in Washington. And that sounded like a complicated situation, but it worked and we knew that we had somebody back here in Washington who would understand what we were doing, support us, give us funding when we argued successfully for it, give us staffing, and would be our desk officer and our support back in Washington. When I talk to public affairs officers in the Middle East, at least, they tell me that they don't have that anymore, unfortunately. They don't have a single friend in Washington. It's scattered around. There are people in our bureau and there are people in the geographic bureaus and there are people in various other parts, ECA and other parts of the State Department, and that's fine but they're not consolidated.

I would recommend, if I were in charge, a reconsolidation of every public diplomacy specialist into one bureau inside the State Department, and some of us have tried to recommend that. Some of us outside retired public diplomacy types have tried to recommend that. It has not been accepted. I don't know if the Secretary of State or the President would entertain that idea. I hope they would think about it. Now, you can also reestablish USIA. That's the other option.

But short of reestablishing a new agency, which may be more difficult, it could happen that all of the public diplomacy professionals in the State Department were recombined into a single bureau so they would have cohesion and where they would have direct support from the

Under Secretary. The Under Secretary doesn't have any troops, doesn't have any soldiers, doesn't have any budget, really. They're trying to remedy that with some small remedies, but the public diplomacy professionals are all over the building and not under her direct control, unlike the director of USIA, who had control over budgets and people. And that was a very efficient system, in my opinion.

So you asked if the question has been studied. It's been studied. We haven't come up with a formula that has been accepted yet by the President and the Secretary of State but there are some proposals. There is a proposal in this "Call for Action" and I think that it's possible that with the change of leadership in the State Department they may take another look at it. I don't know. That's beyond my control, but we will continue to advocate a reconsolidation and a focus on professionalism and specialization.

In my opinion, public diplomacy is a specialty, just like being a consular officer is a specialty and it shouldn't be homogenized and turned into something that anybody can do. It needs experience and it needs a focus and it needs full-time attention.

MR. DENIG: Okay. Let's go to Philippe.

QUESTION: Philippe Gelie, *Le Figaro*.

You have said that public diplomacy is a long-term effort but I guess it's judged -- its effectiveness is judged mainly in terms of crisis, right?

I'd like to understand, in a crisis like the Iraq war, for instance, when you have entire nations opposed to such a policy and the people intending to benefit from it sending conflicting signals, to say the least, what can be done through public diplomacy to overcome such a situation?

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Well, I suppose you're right, that public diplomacy is most visible in a crisis. I wouldn't judge it only at the time of a crisis. Public diplomacy should be judged long-term, even when there isn't a crisis. I think we do have a crisis today and I think we should redouble our efforts to conduct effective public diplomacy programs because we do have a crisis but we need a long-term effort as well.

The consolidation, as I just mentioned to Mr. Deak, consolidation into a unified hole within the State Department could help a great deal in crisis public diplomacy, if you will, but it can help in long-term public diplomacy. In addition, during a crisis, we particularly need in public diplomacy effective reporting to the policymakers of foreign public opinion. I'm not sure at all that that's being done today.

If I could refer to the period just before Desert Storm in 1990, when I was involved with USIA, we had a daily bulletin that we produced in USIA that went to the Secretary of State and often to the President and to the National Security Advisor that described trends in public opinion abroad. This was an analytical piece. It showed trends around the Middle East and around the world that were important for the United States Government to be aware of, for policymakers to understand in order to be able to shape and form their policy.

Today, there is some form of foreign media reaction reporting and a little bit of foreign opinion reporting that is coming in from the field and going to policymakers. But my impression is -- I'm not on the inside -- but my impression is that this is not being given sufficient attention, that there should be much more attention given to the daily monitoring of foreign opinion, that is to say, if there is a problem of understanding of American policy that has been announced yesterday by the President, the President needs to know that. He needs to know how people are reacting to his policy that he announced yesterday or the day before and he needs to think about and he needs to have help thinking about how to respond to that misunderstanding and that criticism.

So there needs to be a very effective and efficient and quick mechanism, quick in a crisis period, quick mechanism to get that information to the President and the Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor. There is some sort of a mechanism today, but in my view, it's not at all sufficient and it should be expanded. And that's another recommendation that I would make to Karen Hughes, that she pays more attention to foreign opinion polling, to media reaction, to other forms of evaluation of foreign opinion, including conversations that the PAO has with editors.

When I was in USIA, we had a daily report from Cairo of what was in the Egyptian media because Egyptian media are terribly important. We had reports on other countries' media, too. The Cairo Media Reaction Report has been discontinued. How can Washington policymakers fully understand Arab opinion if they don't follow opinion polls, media reaction and conversations that take place? This is a terribly important but neglected aspect of public diplomacy.

QUESTION: Just a word. Are you saying that public diplomacy should help shape diplomacy?

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Absolutely, absolutely. It doesn't mean that the President should make policy solely on the basis of what foreign opinion wants to do -- we have to make our own decisions, and the President has said that over and over again. But in order to be effective, he has to be aware of foreign opinion and he has to anticipate the reaction of foreign opinion.

The day is long gone, if it ever existed, when foreign opinion doesn't matter. Some people say, "Well, these countries are authoritarian and these rulers are all dictators. They don't pay any attention to foreign opinion." That's not true. Even in authoritarian societies in the Middle East and elsewhere, they pay attention to foreign opinion. The President of the United States also has to pay attention to foreign opinion because if he's dealing with President Mubarak or President Bashar al-Assad or any of the rulers in the Middle East, he needs to know how they are dealing with their own public opinion. That's terribly important for the formation of policy; he needs to have it in mind.

He may decide to take a step that he knows in advance will not be supported by foreign opinion but he needs to know that. And even in selecting his words, even in the language he uses, he needs to anticipate how his words will be heard abroad. And that goes for not only the President but all American officials.

MR. DENIG: Let's go to the gentleman back there, followed by the gentleman on the right.

QUESTION: Sir, I'm Khalil from Associated Press of Pakistan.

My question was about (inaudible) says if, you know, it's an issue of globalization, you know. Marshall McLuhan said medium is the message, but now it has turned the other way around, you know, as if message is the medium, something -- no, I mean, what I -- unless there is a change of mindset, how can a journalist have any other reflection of his society? Of course, journalists do impact the society, the readers, but if there is certain mindset or certain demand of a society, say my country, how can -- definitely, there will be the explosion of the channels, foreign channels or the foreign media.

I'm translating from the public diplomacy thing. I'm just going to the medium as such, you know, the influence as such, as I perceive. I say it does affect the society, it does affect the readers and the people at large, but they can't -- can there be any timeframe or limit, maybe, from the public diplomacy side, you know, as to -- in how many years, possibly, there could be a change of mindset or (inaudible) of whatever presently they are being applied, you know. They are going to influence the (inaudible) societies to become (inaudible) with regards to information, I say.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Well, there's several comments there. Let me respond to some of them. First of all, there's no time limit. On some issues, opinions can change quickly and some issues, they'll never change or it will take a long time. I wouldn't put any time limit on it, and in fact, long term is usually better. If you have a long-term evolution in your opinion, it's more likely to be maintained.

On the question of media and society, people argue whether the media influences society or society influences the media. I think it's mutual. And in most countries, in my opinion, there are several factors. One is that the media tend to be market-driven, in the sense that they want to give the public what they're interested in and I think this is true with Arab satellite television, for example, because they are giving the public, in order to get more market share -- even though it's not commercial basically -- they're giving the public what they want. If Al Jazeera covers Iraq, they are talking about the Iraqi side of the story. If American media cover Iraq, they talk about the American side of the story.

It's not surprising that there are differences between Americans and Arab media in that sense or American and Bangladeshi media because they have their own constituencies. And in addition, very often, the media, particularly radio and television in the Middle East, will be influenced

or even directly controlled by the government and that that also influences the differences between American and Arab media. But I don't think it's useful to try to find out whether society influences media or the other way around. It's mutual. But I find that what I call the cultural factor, the cultural bias factor, is prevalent in every single society.

Every society is reflected in its media and in the way it covers the news and in the way it covers controversial and political issues, but I think that makes it doubly important for us to pay attention to the media as one indicator of foreign opinion. We're trying to, frankly, in public diplomacy, get into the minds of the foreign audience, people who are living in a different culture, who think differently from the way we do, and one way to get into their minds and understand how they think and try to deal with that and bridge cultures is to read what's in the press.

Now, the press is not a perfect indicator of the way they think, but it is one indicator and the freer it is, the more useful it is as an indicator -- and you foreign journalists, I'm sure, look at the American press as one source of the way Americans think. But you have to take the whole press, all of the newspapers and all of the radio and television together and not just read one newspaper and assume that it reflects American opinion.

MR. DENIG: Just time for one last question, gentleman in the back.

QUESTION: It's really good to talk about public diplomacy. My name is Mosen Vakili from Voice of America.

It's really good to talk about public diplomacy the way you mentioned earlier, but it's two years right after Iraqi invasion and average Iraqi citizens, they still do not know why the U.S. invaded their country. Was it weapons of mass destruction, was it the linkage between Usama Bin Laden and Saddam, which of course, neither of them were found? So they are open to their own speculation and interpretation. Do you have any answer for them?

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): (Laughter.) We should have stopped before that last one.

Well, you know, I'm sure you've heard the official answer from the U.S. Government. I suppose if I were in Iraq and acting in a capacity as a public affairs officer, I would encourage them to think about the future and not dwell on the past, and talk about developing their democratic system and their security as quickly as possible so that we can leave and assure them that we want to leave. There are many Iraqis who think we want to stay forever, that we want to build bases, that we want to control their petroleum. I personally don't think that's our motive and I think we ought to try to convince the Iraqi people that it's not our motive. But the way to persuade them that that is the case, that we do want to leave quickly and completely, is to have them develop their own security and their own democratic system so that we can leave. At least that would be the premise that I would base my discussion on, but it would be an interesting discussion.

MR. DENIG: Very good. Thank you very much, Ambassador Rugh. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

AMBASSADOR RUGH (RET): Thank you.



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