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The Mission of Public Diplomacy

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Nominee for Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

Testimony at confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Washington, DC

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Thank you, Chairman Lugar, Ranking Member Biden, and distinguished members of this committee. I thank Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison and Senator John Cornyn for their friendship and support, and for the outstanding job they do representing our beloved state of Texas.

My husband, Jerry, is with me today, and I thank him for his support. I'm sorry our children couldn't be here; our daughter is picking our granddaughter up at camp, and our son is – story of our life – at a baseball tournament in Texas. They're very supportive. When I asked my son whether he thought I should take on this great challenge he said yes. I asked why, and he said, "Because you really care about it, Mom – and it's really important for my generation."

I am honored and humbled that President Bush and Secretary Rice have asked me to lead America's public diplomacy at this historic time because it is vitally important for all of us and for the next generation, not only here in America but for precious children everywhere.

I believe there is no more important challenge for our future than the urgent need to foster greater understanding, more respect and a sense of common interests and common ideals among Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world. The mission of public diplomacy is to engage, inform, and help others understand our policies, actions and values – but I am mindful that before we seek to be understood, we must first work to understand.

During one of my visits to Afghanistan, I heard an old Afghan proverb that I believe sets a good standard for our public diplomacy. The proverb counsels: "It takes two hands to clap." As Secretary Rice has said, public diplomacy is a conversation, not a monologue.

If I had the opportunity to say just one thing to people throughout the world, it would be: I am eager to listen. I want to learn more about you and your lives, what you believe, what you fear, what you dream, what you value most. Should I be confirmed, I plan to travel and reach out to both citizens and leaders of other countries, and I plan to mobilize our government to do more listening.

And as I travel, I am eager to share the story of the goodness of the American people. Our country, while far from perfect, has been a tremendous force for good, liberating millions and bringing help and hope to countless lives.

I recognize that the job ahead will be difficult. Perceptions do not change quickly or easily. We are involved in a generational and global struggle of ideas – a struggle that pits the power of hate against the power of hope. As Prime Minister Tony Blair said after the horror of the London bombings, "This is a battle that must be won, a battle not just about the terrorist methods but their views. Not just their barbaric acts, but their barbaric ideas."

In the long run, the way to prevail in this battle is through the power of our ideals; for they speak to all of us, every people in every land on every continent. Given a fair hearing, I am sure they will prevail. People the world over want to be able to speak their minds, choose their leaders and worship freely. People the world over want to be treated with dignity and respect. People everywhere want to feel safe in their homes; parents want a better life for their children. Our adversaries resort to propaganda, myths, intimidation and control because they don't want people to decide for themselves. In contrast, we want to create the connections and conditions that allow people to make up their own minds, because we are confident that given a fair hearing and a free choice, people will choose freedom over tyranny and tolerance over extremism every time.

I will be guided by four strategic pillars that I call the four "E's": engagement, exchanges, education and empowerment.

We need to engage more vigorously. We cannot expect people to give a fair hearing to our ideas if we don't advocate them. And research shows, when people know that America is partnering with their governments to improve their lives, it makes a difference in how they think about us. America must improve our rapid response, and, as Secretary Rice has said, we must do much more to confront hateful propaganda, dispel dangerous myths, and get out the truth.

The second E is exchanges. People who have the opportunity to come here learn for themselves that Americans are generous, hard-working people who value faith and family. I want to recognize our new Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Dina Habib Powell, who will be my deputy if I'm confirmed. She is justifiably proud of her rich Middle Eastern heritage and will bring that valuable perspective to our work every day.

Our exchange programs are responding to the new realities of the post-911 world, reaching out to critical new participants such as clerics and community leaders. We need to make our exchange programs even more strategic, attracting teachers, journalists, youth leaders and others who have the ability to influence a wide circle. We want more American young people to study and travel abroad. And I have a special message for young people across the world: we're improving our visa process, and we want you to come and study in America.

The third pillar is education – for we know education is the path to upward mobility and greater opportunity – for boys and girls. Americans must educate ourselves to be better citizens of our world – learning different languages and learning more about other countries and cultures. And through English language training programs, we can give young people a valuable tool that helps them improve their own lives and learn more about our values.

The final "E" is empowerment – people cannot give a fair hearing to our ideas if they are unable to consider them. We will take the side of those who advocate greater participation for all, including women. We will create relationships with those who share our values and we will help amplify the voices of those who speak up for them – like the brave young Pakistani woman who spoke out to say that rape is a terrible crime – not a matter of honor.

Members of the committee, if confirmed, I will seek and I will need your help. I know many of you care deeply about public diplomacy. America's public diplomacy is neither Democratic nor Republican but American – and who better to represent our

values than those of you who represent us every day. I will call on you – for input, for ideas, and to represent our country overseas.

I am also indebted to the many citizens who have given a great deal of thought and work to nearly 30 comprehensive reports on public diplomacy. Many leaders of those efforts have taken time to meet with and advise me. I am indebted to them, and I will need their continued help. They have made important suggestions for strengthening public diplomacy. The State Department has responded by increasing our outreach to younger and broader audiences, by inviting more women and representatives of the Arab and Muslim world to visit our country – and we have much more to do.

After this thoughtful and thorough analysis, now is the time for action and implementation. Members of the committee, I welcome your ideas as we go forward and I want to share some of my priorities.

First, almost every report cited the critical need to reinvigorate the interagency process. President Bush and Secretary Rice have asked me to lead that effort from the State Department, to identify and marshal all the communications and public diplomacy resources of our different government agencies and provide leadership to make our efforts more coordinated and more strategic.

Numerous reports also cited the vital need to more fully integrate policy and public diplomacy. Secretary Rice and I learned from working together at the White House that, in today's world, the two are almost inextricably linked. Secretary Rice has told me that, if confirmed, she intends for me personally and public diplomacy institutionally to play a key role in policy development.

To do that effectively, we must invest in our people. I will work to reinvigorate public diplomacy as a vibrant, vital career path. Our professionals in the Foreign Service, the Civil Service and the Foreign Service National cadre are incredibly dedicated; they do important, difficult, often dangerous work around our world. I will do all I can to support and empower them with strategic and policy guidance and the training and tools they need to carry out their mission on the front lines of diplomacy. I intend to serve as the advocate for a reinvigorated public diplomacy community in the State Department.

We also must develop effective ways to marshal the great creativity of our private sector. American companies, universities, private foundations, our travel industry all have extensive contact with people throughout the world. Our music and film industries, artists and entertainers create powerful impressions – sometimes good, sometimes bad, but always powerful. I welcome ideas to more fully engage the private sector because I believe this engagement is critical to our success.

I will also seek to involve and empower our most important national asset: our citizens. Since the announcement of my nomination, I have received heartfelt letters from my fellow Americans who want to help share our story with the world. Through the Internet, through video-conferencing, through our citizen ambassador program, I will seek ways to foster greater communication between foreign publics and the people of America.

America's public diplomacy has a proud and successful history; today we face new and different challenges. During the Cold War, we were trying to get information into largely closed societies whose people were hungry for that knowledge. Today, we are more often competing for attention and credibility in the midst of an information explosion. We need to be more creative in our communications, using new technologies, and we need to strengthen our use of research and the evaluation of our programs to determine how to be most effective.

President Bush recently told one of our new ambassadors: "Your job is primarily public diplomacy." At a time when rumor and myth reach mass audiences in seconds, communicating with foreign publics is vital to the success of our foreign policy and it is the job of all of us, from public diplomacy and public affairs professional to ambassador, to Cabinet Secretary, to Senator, to President, to every individual American.

Distinguished Senators: I feel particularly privileged to have been asked to serve at this time in our nation's history, when Secretary of State Rice has called for a new transformational diplomacy to advance President Bush's agenda of freedom and dignity for all people everywhere.

I'll never forget meeting a young woman in Afghanistan who told me of her belief that women should be able to go to school and work and choose their husbands. As I was leaving, she asked the translator to stop me: "Please don't forget us," she said, "please help us live in freedom."

I hope that through this work, together we can help many more people live in freedom. I promise I will always speak from the heart, and I will always stand for what the President has called the non-negotiable demands of human dignity: the rule of law, limits on the power of the state, respect for women, private property, free speech, equal justice and religious tolerance.

We do not expect instant results. This struggle of ideas will span generations. But I am confident our ideals will prevail. As President Bush said, "There is only one force of history that can break the reign of hatred and resentment, and expose the pretensions of tyrants, and reward the hopes of the decent and tolerant, and that is the force of human freedom."

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would be happy to answer any questions.

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