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## America's Dialogue With the World: A Comprehensive Strategy for Public Diplomacy

### Karen P. Hughes, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs

Remarks at Women's Foreign Policy Group's Tenth Anniversary Luncheon Event

The Fairmont, Washington, DC

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**MS. HUGHES:** Well, thank you so much. Thank you, Kathy (sp), for those kind words, and I hope I can consider all of you a resource, because I have to say, as I look around the room, this is an amazing group of women and very accomplished women. And I think that you all can offer me a lot of advice and guidance and direction, as I undertake this new role. It's a great honor to be here to help the Women's Foreign Policy Group celebrate its 10th Anniversary. And I also want to thank Patricia Ellis and Maxine Isaacs and Andrea Koppel for moderating today.

The Women's Foreign Policy Group has a lot to celebrate. You've raised the platform to highlight women leaders in international affairs. You have committed yourselves to leadership, development and mentoring, and wasn't it wonderful to see those young interns come in the back of the room. And you've promoted dialogue across disciplines and across the globe. Your focus on issues such as conflict and terrorism, democratization, women's rights, and fighting HIV/AIDS are all very important contributions to America's public diplomacy, which is now of course my full time job.

And I'm delighted to hear about your new focus on the role of Islam. We had -- as I travel the world, one of the things I hear over and over again is concern that Americans don't understand Islam, and one of the things we did earlier this week was we had a wonderful dialogue at the State Department to talk about Islamic culture and traditions. And we had a huge turnout. We did it not only to help educate our own employees but also, we thought, to set an example, and so I'm delighted to hear that this group is going to take that on as one of your focus.

I'm really enjoying my new role. I have to admit I'm still adjusting a little. I'll be walking through the airport or the grocery store and somebody will say "Ambassador," and I sort of look around for who they're talking to. (Laughs.) And every time I go on TV, we have a sharp spike in what my husband calls Karen sightings. But you don't have to worry about any recognition going to my head. I was on a little commuter plane in California not too long ago, and I -- it was one of those planes that was so small that you wouldn't have booked the reservation had you seen the plane before you made the reservation. (Laughs.) And the pilot, who looked way too young to be flying even this very, very small airplane,

came back, and he was so excited when he saw me, and he said "I'm so glad to see you." He said "I never thought I'd have Madeleine Albright on my airplane!" (Laughter.)

But my all time favorite recognition story - my all time favorite happened earlier this year. My family and I, we took a Caribbean cruise. My son's a baseball player, so we could never go on spring break, so we decided to take it after Christmas vacation this year. And we went down to the Caribbean, and we were getting on an elevator to go to dinner one night. And you know, if you've been on one of those ships, they have these really deep elevators, and we kept getting pushed further and further back. And at the end, two kind of elderly ladies got on the elevator, and one of them looked at me, and then she looked away. And then she looked at me and stared, and she elbowed her friend in the ribs. And in a loud stage whisper she said "Condi Rice is on this elevator!" (Laughter, laughs.) Condi loves that story and so I. (Laughter continued.)

I have to tell you that one of the great joys of my new job is the opportunity to work with Condoleezza Rice every day. I've watched her in a lot of meetings, and she manages to be both charming and tough, both respectful. And I think a lot of the ambassadors who are in the room -- and thank you all for being here today -- could testify she's both respectful of other points of view, but also very principled in talking about America's policies and convictions. And I think all Americans can be very proud to have Condoleezza Rice as our secretary of State. (Applause.)

Well, I've been on the job about two and a half months now, and I've been reminded every day of how challenging, how difficult, how fascinating, how busy it is. I'm reminded several times each day that it really is a huge challenge.

Fortunately, I do like challenges. And I keep on my desk a State Department memo that I was sent for times when I need a little bit of perspective. And I want to quote from it. It says, quote, "Anti- Americanism is resurging in the Arab world. Bombings, vitriolic public statements, diatribes and fantastic rumors in the press all testify to the rekindling of Arab animosity toward the United States. Whether prompted by Muslim extremists, whether encouraged by irresponsible journalists or by weak government officials who seek to divert attention from their own inadequacies, the current emotionalism bodes no good."

Now, that all sounds pretty familiar, but that memo was a State Department airgram dated May 1st, 1950. (Chuckles.) The more things change, the more they stay the same, right?

Of course the major challenge of that time - successfully overcome with the key help of public diplomacy -- was the long Cold War against communism.

Today we are engaged in a very different war against a diffuse network of stateless terrorists in a dramatically different communications environment. When you think about it -- and I tried to look back at the history of public diplomacy as I took on this job, and there are some lessons. But one of the things that strike you is how very different today's challenge really is. Back then we were trying to get information into largely closed societies whose people were in many cases hungry, eager to get that information. Today we're competing in a totally different environment. We're competing for attention and credibility in an exploding information world, I mean a world where there's satellite television networks where there never were before, where rumors or outright lies go round the world in seconds and reach mass audiences in seconds on the Internet. So the world we're in is very different. But the challenge we face is that once again we're engaged in a generational and global struggle that requires every aspect of our national power, especially the power of our ideals. As Prime Minister Blair said after the bombings in London, "We must fight not

just the terrorists' methods, but also their views; not just their barbaric acts, but also their barbaric ideas."

We are engaged in a fight about our most fundamental founding values: the freedom to speak our minds, to worship freely, to participate in the political process. And the president has charged me with developing a long-term strategy to make sure that our ideals prevail -- ideals, by the way, which belong not only to America, but are shared by civilized people the world over.

I developed a -- one of the first things -- before I even started this job, the president asked me to come to Crawford and brief he and other leaders in our government on my strategy. And I thought, well, you know, that's a little intimidating; before you even have day one on the job, to have to show up in Crawford, Texas, and brief the president, the vice president, the secretary of State, the secretary of Defense on your strategy. So I spent months, after I was nominated in March, meeting with people, reaching out, going to visit groups, talking with people who had been involved, former ambassadors -- I had a wonderful meeting with Frank Wisner in New York, who many of you probably know; reading all the 31-plus reports that had been written about the state of America's public diplomacy, and from that developed a strategic framework that has three components.

First, that we must offer a positive vision of hope that is rooted in our belief in freedom and opportunity for all. America must continue to serve as a beacon of hope in the world, as that city on a hill. There is no more powerful instrument of American diplomacy than our commitment to freedom, rights and opportunities for all people everywhere. We're committed to expanding freedom not because we seek carbon copies of our own democracy, but because we believe it is our common birthright, and because we welcome new members to the community of nations who protect the rights of free speech and assembly, the right to worship freely, the rule of law, and individual opportunity.

As President Bush has said, freedom is not America's gift to the world, freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in the world. Now, America has always stood, of course, for freedom and opportunity, yet we have never before made the promotion of democracy and human rights so central to our diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim world and throughout the world. Secretary Rice outlined this comprehensive new policy in a very significant speech in Cairo, where she said, "For 60 years the United States pursued stability at the expense of democracy here in the Middle East, and we achieved neither one. Now we're taking a very different course, supporting the democratic aspirations of all people."

And of course we're seeing results. Those of you who are so engaged with foreign policy, I know, on a daily basis know that fresh winds of reform and change are blowing across the world from Morocco to Kuwait. We've seen the Lebanese people demand an end to occupation, and the people of Ukraine and Georgia make their voices heard from democracy. Who can forget -- I'll never forget that morning I woke up and saw that picture on the front page of The New York Times -- the long lines of men and women in Afghanistan, standing there eager, excited, ready to go and vote. And of course the people of Iraq, turning out in the face of threats of death and terror to first choose their leaders and then turning out in even larger numbers with the participation of all of their groups to adopt a constitution.

We recognize that the pace of change will be different in different places. Yet, through my recent trip to the Middle East, I witnessed some very lively and encouraging things, and I wanted to share a couple of those with you.

In Egypt, which recently had its first contested presidential election -- it wasn't perfect. We were concerned that there were not international observers. We thought maybe some opposition candidates should have had a little broader access to the media. But nonetheless, it was a step in the right direction. And I remember -- (audio break) -- a choice on

your presidential ballot, and that's an important step, and it was an exciting moment. And we had a lively debate over lunch, where I had people who were involved in a couple of different political parties, and it was really interesting because I had a small table, and I got two pieces of advice that were completely opposite. One person said the United States needed to mind our own business. The other said we needed to speak up even more vigorously to promote free speech and greater political participation. So it was interesting that at that one lunch table I heard that debate right there unfolding before my eyes.

A fascinating event in Saudi Arabia. I went to a late-night discussion known as a "majlis." And of course usually the men gather for this discussion, and the women would gather separately. In this case, they invited both. Our host was very progressive, invited both men and women. But the moderator had a little problem with that, a little trouble. He wasn't used to calling on women, and so he kept calling on the men. And our ambassador noticed, and said, "Well, you know, maybe you might want to hear from some women." And he said, "Well, she talked" -- pointing to me -- because I had answered a couple of questions. And so the ambassador said, "Well, maybe we'd like to hear from some of the Saudi Arabian women." And at one point when he brought that up again, the moderator said, "Oh, no," he said, "the women don't want to say anything else." Well, the women at that point jumped up with their hands waving and said, "Yes, we do." People everywhere -- people everywhere want to be heard. They want to have their opinions count. They want to participate in their society. They want to live in freedom. So that's the first pillar of our strategic framework -- our support for freedom and opportunity for all.

The second part of the strategic framework is to isolate and marginalize the extremists, and expose their efforts to appropriate religion in the name of their violent agenda. Here our message, amplified by people of every nationality and faith, must be very plain and consistent: that no injustice, no wrong, no matter how legitimate, can ever justify the murder of innocent -- especially women and children.

Let's be clear about what's happening today in Iraq. Now I know there are some in this room who probably agreed with our decision to go into Iraq. There are some who probably disagreed. I was thanked by the representative of the Iraqi embassy for freedom as I came in here today, which was very nice to hear. But whether you agree or disagree with America's decision to go into Iraq and remove Saddam Hussein from power, what is happening there today is that terrorists and insurgents are engaged in indiscriminate killing of innocent fellow Muslims. A suicide bomber lured day laborers to a van and blew them up. These are men who are just trying to find work to support their families. Several weeks ago a suicide bomber attacked a mosque, a holy place, during the holy month of Ramadan, killed dozens of innocent people who were just gathered there to worship. Muslims, Christians, Jews, people of all faiths and all civilized people need to speak up, because we cannot allow these extremists to get away with murder in the name of religion.

As a mother, I see this in terms of the message that -- a mother and a communicator -- I see things in terms of messages. It drives my family crazy. But I look at the message that each side is sending to our young people, to our children. We're saying that we want a hopeful future for Iraqi and Palestinian and Israeli and all children, where they can go to school and live in safety and participate in the future of their society and live free and productive lives.

As they recruit on the Internet, our opponents have a very different message. They want young men and women to strap bombs to themselves and join them to kill more innocent people, to make -- to protest and to try to enact their agenda.

Now we saw the type of society that the extremists seek in the Taliban mistreatment of Afghanistan. As you all know, women were virtual prisoners in their home. Little girls were not allowed to go to school or go to work. Men were beaten

if their beards were not the exact, precise, right length.

I don't believe that's the type of life that most people throughout the world, of any faith or any culture, want for themselves or their families. And I think it's very important that we speak out and make that contrast.

Our third strategic pillar -- and this came from my meeting with Ambassador Wisner, who I'd mentioned -- he said, "Karen, you know, we can't have a foreign policy based just on common threats. We have to have a foreign policy based on common interests and common values." And so my third pillar is to work to foster a sense of common interests and common purpose between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths throughout the world.

People the world over want education and a better life. Mom and Dad the world over want a better life for their children. People everywhere want to live in security. They want jobs and economic opportunity and the chance to advance and to work hard and have it mean something for their future.

A vivid illustration of our connectedness, one that we witnessed several times in recent years, is our shared humanity and generosity in the face of natural disaster. America, of course, led the way in rescuing relief efforts after the horror of the tsunami that struck the Pacific late last year. We in turn were recipients of a wonderful outpouring of generosity from the world following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. And now we are providing relief and reconstruction to the victims of the horrible earthquake in Pakistan and the deadly mud slides in Guatemala. The world turns, and the sun inevitably rises on scenes of tragedy and hardship somewhere in the world, but just as inevitably, America and Americans will rise to the occasion and be there to help.

As we work to foster this sense of common interests and common values, our approach needs to be humble. Public diplomacy is as much about listening as it is speaking, and before we seek to be understood, we must first work to understand.

And that is the point of my travel. I'm asking our embassies, as I go out around the world, to set up meetings with different groups of people, with young people particularly, including people who may have never met an American government official before.

I'm listening to their concerns and their hopes, and frequently their complaints. And from that I'm learning, and I'm coming back and sharing that information with the president and the secretary of State and other policymakers. So this listening will help inform both our policy and the way we communicate about our policy.

We face great challenges, but we also have a great deal going for us. First of all, America can be confident of our ideals. We believe given a fair hearing and a free choice, people the world over will choose freedom over tyranny, tolerance over extremism, diversity over rigid conformity, and justice over injustice. Our opponents have to resort to propaganda and myths and hatespeech because they want closed minds. We want to open minds because we want people to decide for themselves. Our mission is to create the climate and the conditions that allow people to give our ideas a fair hearing, because again, we believe given that fair hearing, our ideas will prevail.

As a communicator, I like to boil things down to basics, so I've laid out a series of steps I call the Four E's -- I hope you've heard of them. My experience teaches me that about the time you get sick of hearing about them is about the

time they'll start to sink in. The Four E's are to engage, exchange, educate and empower. And of course all of those are two-way streets.

We must engage more vigorously across the world. We can't expect people to give a fair hearing to our ideas if we don't more aggressively advocate them. And of course we have to be faster, more aggressive, rapid in our response to rumors and misinformation that fly around the world in seconds on the Internet and satellite television.

The second E is exchange. Every person I met with, every person, to date, that I have met with has talked about - has told me that the most successful, the most effective public diplomacy tool over the last 50 years has been our exchanges. Americans who go overseas describe their lives as being forever changed. People who come here learn the best way possible for themselves; they see for themselves that Americans are generous, hard-working people who value family and faith. They see our society, they see our diversity. They see how people of different faiths and cultures live together in harmony. We also want more Americans to study and travel abroad. People have told me on my trips again and again, "We want more Americans to come here and learn more about us." And so we're working on several initiatives in that regard.

The third pillar is education. 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 the world, learning different languages and learning more about other countries and cultures. We're working on a Strategic Languages Initiative to encourage American young people to learn languages that will be so important in the future so we can communicate with the world. And through English language and other training programs, we can give young people valuable tools. And I love the idea of English language training because it gives young people something that helps them improve their own lives, gives them greater opportunity, and it also opens a window into our values, into a wide base of knowledge from which they can learn.

Education is especially important for women. Ask experienced aid officials and they will tell you the education and advancement of girls and women can be the investment with the highest rate of return for reducing poverty and promoting economic development. Studies show that countries that educate women will improve in almost every measure you can come up with -- from employment, to economic growth, to children's health. As we educate women, we improve not only their lives, we improve the lives of families and entire communities.

The final E is empowerment. And here -- I put that in there because we have to recognize that in this work of public diplomacy, the most powerful voices are not always our own. On my first trip, I took with me two citizen ambassadors. One was a teacher from Wisconsin that Senator Russ Feingold had recommended to me, named Bill O'Brien (sp). And he was just a wonderful guy. And at the end of the majlis that I talked about in Saudi Arabia, he stood up in front of the whole room and he just enveloped our host in a great big bear hug and he said, "I never knew Americans and Saudi Arabians had so much in common!" And the whole room burst into this spontaneous ovation, and we had a sense that we had all been able to connect in an important way.

Our other citizen ambassador is a young Muslim-American woman graduate student, who I met in my first week on the job. She's getting her Ph.D. in Arabic linguistics here at Georgetown. Her name is Karema Dulad (sp). And wherever we went, the young people -- you should have seen them flock to her, because they wanted to know what's it like to be a Muslim in America?

What's it like to practice your faith? And they really enjoyed engaging with her.

So I'm working to create a very robust citizen ambassador program so that Americans can share their unique stories and skills with people around the world. And I also want to work to partner American women with women across the world. And I'll be getting back in touch with you about some of those projects in the future because I've got some ideas and plans for next year.

Empowerment is critical because in some of this work, as I mentioned, the voice of a -- frankly -- American government official may not be the most effective or credible voice. For example, I've spent a great deal of time in the early months meeting with Muslim Americans because they have a lot more credibility to debate issues of their faith, to condemn terrorism that's being committed in the name of Islam, than I do as a Christian woman. In Indonesia and Malaysia, where leaders of those countries embrace an Islamic faith that is very tolerant of diversity and recognizes the right of others to practice their faith, I encouraged them to speak up more, to attend international conferences and to speak up more on the international stage.

Empowerment is also critical for women, especially in the Arab world. The first Arab Human Development Report by the United Nations Development Program concluded, and I quote, "Women remain severely marginalized in Arab political systems, and broadly discriminated against in both law and custom." The same report went on to say, "As women number more than half of any population, neglecting their capabilities is akin to crippling half the potential of any nation."

I was at the White House this week for a meeting with President -- President Bush met with a group of visitors -- women from Iraq. And it was a very emotional meeting, frankly, to watch them offer him their heartfelt thanks on behalf of them, and some of them talked about the things their children had said, and their family had wanted them to tell him. He told them that he believes a key force for change in the Middle East will be women speaking up for greater fairness and equality. And next week in Bahrain, Secretary Rice and my deputy, Dina Powell, will continue to focus on this issue at the Forum for the Future.

I want to close with two stories that I think sum up American's diplomacy at work in the world. Two weeks ago, I stood in Aceh, Indonesia, and I looked out at the ocean, which was very calm on the day I was there, and I tried to imagine what it would have felt like to see a 30-foot tall wave of water coming in at 60 miles an hour. And I saw hundreds of patches of cement as I stood there on the shore, and that was all that was left of the homes and buildings that had been there so close to the ocean. Yet at the same time -- so in some senses it was horrifying, yet at the same time, I saw such great signs of hope and progress. I saw, you know, neighbors meeting together, and they were working on community maps and trying to decide where fair boundaries were, and to plot these neighborhood maps as they worked on the process of rebuilding their homes and their lives. And my last meeting there was with a group of young Fulbright students, and those Fulbright scholarships were made possible by the fundraising drive in America that was led by former Presidents Bush and Clinton. And I met a young man who's coming to America - I think he's coming either to Texas or Arkansas, and I told them, you know, I'm a little partial to Texas, but I'm sure Arkansas is very nice, too. But I -- I encouraged -- he's coming to America to get a master's degree in English, and his goal is to come here, get that master's degree and then go back to Aceh to replace the English teacher who had taught him in high school and who was killed in the tsunami. And that investment, that investment in human capital is so important, not only for the future of Indonesia, but for the future of better understanding between America and Indonesia, between America and countries around the world.

And I'll never forget touring a reading program in Afghanistan and meeting a young woman there, who told me that she hoped one day to be a writer, and that she really wanted to write a book.

And at the time, I was working on my book, and I told her that, and I said, "Well, look, I'd like to say something on your behalf in my book, until you get around to writing yours." And her answer through the translator was quick and unequivocal. She said women should be able to go to work, go to school and choose our own husbands. (Soft laughter.) She was 13 years old. (Soft laughter.)

And so after we finished our conversation, as I was leaving, the translator followed me out of the room and grabbed my elbow and said, "She wants to tell you something else. Please don't forget them. Please help them live in freedom."

And I have to tell you the eyes of that little girl followed me home, and I still think about her all the time. Let us not forget: that little girl and millions of girls and boys like her, they'll -- they must walk their own path to the future, but America can certainly help to light their way. With the help of good people like all of you in the room, with the help of organizations such as this, I know that we'll continue to build the international connections and shared values that bring us together as people who celebrate our rich diversity and want to live in peace and freedom.

Thank you all so much for having me, and congratulations on your 10 years of work for a better world. Thank you so very much. (Applause.) Thank you.

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