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America's Dialogue With the World

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Statement before the House International Relations Committee

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Thank you, Chairman Hyde, Ranking Member Lantos, distinguished members of this committee.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss a subject we all care deeply about: America's dialogue with the world. When I accepted this challenging new role, I promised to reinvigorate America's public diplomacy efforts. I've been on the job now for 87 days - and I suspect that on many of them, our staff thinks I've reinvigorated a little too vigorously given our growing list of new or expanded projects.

We have a lot underway, we're just beginning and our work is critically important. In today's world of instant communications across much of the globe, America's dialogue with foreign publics is essential to a successful foreign policy and to our national security.

President Bush recognized its vital importance when he said public diplomacy is a job for all of us -- ambassadors, foreign service officers, Cabinet officials, members of Congress as well as our public diplomacy professionals. Along with every member of this committee, the President recognizes that the global and generational challenge we face is at its core a contest of ideas and values. As the President said recently, "By standing for the hope and freedom of others, we make our own freedom more secure."

All my efforts are guided by three strategic imperatives. First, that America must offer a positive vision of hope and opportunity to people throughout the world, a vision rooted in our enduring commitment to freedom. We promote the fundamental rights of free speech and assembly, freedom to worship as one chooses, rights for women and minorities, the rule of law, limits on the power of the state not because we seek copies of American democracy- but because these are the universal human rights of all people, men and women, everywhere.

Our second strategic imperative is to isolate and marginalize violent extremists, and undermine their efforts to exploit

religion to rationalize their acts of terror. We must work to amplify a clear message from people of every nationality and faith: That no injustice, no wrong - no matter how legitimate - can ever justify the murder of innocents. We must stress that the victims of terrorist violence today are people of every nationality, ethnic group and religious faith, and that most of the people being targeted and killed by terrorists and insurgents in Iraq are innocent Muslims. We must contrast the society that people of good will around the world are working toward -an expanding circle of freedom and opportunity where diversity is respected and celebrated - with the kind of society the terrorists seek - a restrictive, repressive conformity. We witnessed that society in Afghanistan under Taliban rule when women were virtual prisoners in their homes and little girls couldn't go to school or even learn to read. I don't believe that's the type of life most people throughout our world want for themselves and their families and it's important that we make that contrast.

Our third strategic imperative is to foster a sense of common interests and common values between Americans and people of different countries, cultures and faiths across our world. We share so much. People the world over want education and better lives for our children, people everywhere want to live in security, we all want jobs and economic opportunity.

As we foster these common interests and values, our approach must be humble. Public diplomacy is a dialogue, as much about listening as it is about speaking. That's why my early trips have been styled as listening tours. I tell our embassies that I want to reach out to people who may have never met an American government official before, I'm listening and reporting back to the President, Secretary Rice and other senior officials so that what I hear is taken into account as we develop and communicate public policies. President Bush is asking Cabinet Secretaries and other high level officials to reach out to foreign publics during their travels and I hope members of Congress will do so as well - and participate in local television and newspaper interviews to help us reach broader foreign audiences.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to highlight several of the other specific initiatives we are pursuing through tactics that I call the four "E's:" Engage, Exchange, Educate and Empower.

We must engage more aggressively, explaining and advocating our policies in ways that are fast, accurate and authoritative. We have set up a new rapid response office at the state department. It monitors global news and issues a one page report each morning with alerts as needed so that busy policy makers focus not only on the news environment in Washington or America, but also around the world. This has already proven to be an effective early warning system that helps us respond quickly to misinformation or emerging stories. We are asking ambassadors and public affairs officers to speak out on major issues, to do more speeches and television interviews, and my office is providing tools and guidance to help them do so in ways that are clear, concise and coordinated. We're proceeding with plans to set up regional public diplomacy platforms to expand our television presence, and make programs such as our speaker's bureau more targeted and strategic. We are at work on a technology initiative to make greater use of web chats, graphics, streaming video perhaps even text messaging to help amplify our message and make it relevant to younger audiences.

Our second "E" is exchanges, which many foreign policy professionals regard as the single most successful public diplomacy initiative of the past 50 years. We are increasing exchanges, making them more strategic and working to amplify the exchange experience through creative use of media such as a radio program in Indonesia - with an audience of more than a million -- that is currently chronicling the American experience of two Indonesian students studying in Colorado.

We are focusing on key groups that are influential within their own societies and vital to our interests - among them, religious leaders, teachers, journalists, women.

We are creating new public private partnerships. Dina Powell, who serves as assistant secretary for educational and cultural affairs, also serves as my deputy and is a leader in all our efforts. Earlier this week, she announced a new program we have created: the Fortune/State Department Women Entrepreneurship Internship. This program will give emerging women business leaders from around the world the opportunity to participate in three-week internships during which they will work with and learn from senior executives in Fortune 500 companies.

On the third "E," education, we have redirected money to expand one of our most effective and eagerly sought programs, English language teaching. Learning English gives young people a skill they want, a skill that improve their opportunities in life, while also opening an important window on our values - and we plan to make English teaching a priority.

Americans must also educate themselves to be better citizens of the world - and so I am working with Secretary Rice on a strategic languages initiative to encourage more American students to study languages such as Chinese and Arabic.

In January, we will convene a University President's Summit. America now faces competition from many other countries to attract foreign students. We must be more effective in encouraging them to come here, and we have to work to dispel lingering perceptions from the year after September 11th about students visas. We've made great improvement in overcoming delays and we want young people across the world to know we welcome them and want them to come to America.

Our fourth pillar, empowerment, recognizes that the voices of government officials are not always the most powerful nor the most credible voices to deliver the anti-terrorist message. This is one reason I have spent a great deal of time reaching out to Muslim Americans, traveling to Muslim-majority countries and meeting with both political and religious leaders who advocate respect for people of different faiths and greater inter-faith dialogue and understanding. A Muslim has far more credibility to say that Islam does not allow the murder of innocents than I do.

I'm also working to empower our best natural resource: our fellow Americans. My very first trip, I traveled with two citizen ambassadors, a teacher from Wisconsin named Bill O'Brien and a graduate student here in Washington, Kareema Dauod and I wish you could have witnessed the powerful connections they were able to make. We are building on that start and plan to create a robust program to help our citizens share their skills and stories with people across the world.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to close with three initiatives that are helping us accomplish all these goals.

First, we are integrating policy and public diplomacy at the State Department. Either I or a member of my staff participate in Secretary Rice's key policymaking meetings, from partnering with the Palestinian Authority as they develop institutions to planning for avian flu. From the day of the devastating earthquake in Pakistan and the flooding in Guatemala, America's response has been formulated with public diplomacy at the planning table. Next week, I will travel to Pakistan with key business leaders that President Bush recruited to lead a significant private fundraising effort because it is the right thing to do - and it also demonstrates the generosity and compassion that are at the heart of our great country.

Second, we have relaunched the interagency strategic communications process. I lead a high level group of policy and communications professionals. We have already had several productive meetings and are at work on specific plans

to further the freedom agenda and win the war of ideas. I'm also working with Andrew Natsios and visiting USAID projects as I travel to highlight the many ways the American people are helping people throughout the world to improve their lives - from immediate help in times of disaster and crisis, to long-term development of stronger economies and civil society institutions.

Third, we are reinvigorating public diplomacy as a strong, rewarding career path within the state department. We are working to restore the management links that were severed during the USIA merger. We have elevated public diplomacy in the regional bureaus, adding a deputy assistant secretary who dual reports to the head of the bureau and to me, giving me direct links with the bureaus and field operation. We are making public diplomacy a part of every officer's job description and developing ways to evaluate and reward success. We are instituting a culture of results - we are restructuring the evaluation of all of our programs, based on the successful model used in our educational and cultural affairs division.

If some of these ideas seem familiar, they are. We took the best thinking from more than 30 groups over the last several years that reviewed America's public diplomacy and made recommendations to improve it. Many foreign policy and public diplomacy experts gave generously of their time to develop these proposals and we are acting to implement them. I want to highlight one that I have not yet mentioned that I discussed recently with Congressman Lantos. Many of the reports recommended creating some sort of private foundation for public diplomacy to strengthen our partnership with the private sector and to encourage those who might not want to work directly with government to get involved. This foundation could do a number of things: make grants to produce quality television programming and make it available to the multiplying number of local and regional television stations across the world; fund translations of great works of literature; work to increase interfaith knowledge and understanding. I have a working team looking at this idea and believe it has the potential to make a long-term difference for America's public diplomacy.

All of this work is just a beginning, but I am very proud of what a great team of people has set in motion in a very short time. I welcome ideas and expertise from members of this committee and all our partners in the United States Congress. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

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