



EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES  
**LONDON • UK**

<a href="#">U.S. Embassy</a>	<a href="#">American Citizen Services</a>	<a href="#">Visas to the U.S.</a>	<a href="#">Current Issues</a>	<a href="#">Ready Reference</a>	<a href="#">What's New</a>	<a href="#">A - Z Index</a>
<a href="#">Consulate General, Belfast</a>		<a href="#">Consulate General, Edinburgh</a>		<a href="#">Welsh Affairs Office, Cardiff</a>		

## About the Embassy

You Are In: [Home](#) > [About the Embassy](#) > [Public Affairs Section](#)

### ▼ Public Affairs Section

:: [Press Releases](#)

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION

### Press Release

**11 September 2008**  
**The New Age of Public Diplomacy**

**James K. Glassman, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs**  
**Chatham House**  
**Delivered at the Geographical Society**

Related: -

[AUDIO](#) Listen to audio (MP3, 8.6Mb)

[Ambassador and Mrs. Tuttle Lay Wreath for Victims of 9/11](#) (includes photo gallery)



Glassman: "The war of ideas ... uses the tools of ideological engagement - words, deeds, and images - to create an environment hostile to violent extremism."  
Embassy photo)

We gather today, September 11, on the seventh anniversary, almost to the minute, of attacks on the United States which, in a matter of a few hours, killed 3,000 people.

It is the nature of the 21st century that those 3,000 people included citizens of more than 90 nations, including this one. Sixty-seven British lives were extinguished - "the worst single terrorist atrocity ever visited on this country," as one of your newspapers put it.

In a speech three weeks later, Tony Blair would use an apt metaphor: "The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us re-order this world around us."

Today, the pieces that were flux seven years ago are still in flux. They have not settled yet.

To "re-order this world around us," as Blair put it, is a huge undertaking, perhaps even a hubristic one. But what is our choice?

It makes sense today, on this anniversary, to look at how well the project is proceeding and how we can achieve success. I want to focus on one element of that endeavor -public diplomacy.

### Any Questions?

Quick reference assistance available from the [Information Resource Center](#) between 10.00 a.m. and 12 noon, Monday to Friday, on **020-7894-0925**.

Further research services are provided to U.K. media, government departments and academics.

Public diplomacy is, very simply, diplomacy aimed at publics, as opposed to officials. While some people associate public diplomacy with commercial marketing - that is, with building a national brand -- the truth is that public diplomacy, like official diplomacy and like military action when it becomes necessary, has as its mission the achievement of the national interest. Public diplomacy performs this mission in a particular way: by understanding, informing, engaging, and persuading foreign publics.

So our aim in public diplomacy is to engage foreign publics to make it easier to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals.

The key goals today are to diminish the threat to Americans and the rest of the world posed by violent extremism and weapons of mass destruction and to help people around the world achieve freedom. These goals are linked, according to our National Security Strategy: "Championing freedom advances our interests because the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad."



*The audience listens to Under Secretary Glassman talk about U.S. efforts to combat extremism. (Embassy photo).*

Not only does political and civil freedom reduce threats, it also advances the cause of social justice. When people have freedom, they tend to direct their governments toward choices that are responsible and just.

These national strategic goals, safety and freedom, are also global strategic goals. They're not just American; they are international.

Public diplomacy has a great tradition. During the Cold War, after a slow start, the United States became very good at it, with such institutions as the Congress of Cultural Freedom, USIA, and Radio Free Europe. But starting in the early 1990s, the U.S., in bipartisan fashion, began to dismantle this arsenal of persuasion. Why? Because the kaleidoscope had settled into what appeared to be a pleasing pattern.

But not for long.

In the 1990s, the threats had changed, but they had not disappeared. With 9/11, they became manifest. We had entered what the columnist David Brooks called "the grueling decade, the Hobbesian decade. Americans have had to acknowledge dark realities that it is not in our nature to readily acknowledge."

As the decade went on, we learned not only that there were forces that did not obey the rules of civilization but that there were limits to the use of military force to deter those forces.

As the American Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said recently, "Over the long term, we cannot kill or capture our way to victory. Non-military efforts - ...tools of persuasion and inspiration - were indispensable to the outcome of the defining struggle of the 20th century. They are just as indispensable in the 21st century - and perhaps even more so."

This is a statement that helps define the new age of public diplomacy. And, as the words of the Pentagon's master reflect, there is now a broad consensus in Washington that public diplomacy is essential to defeating the violent extremist threat, to promoting freedom and social justice - to reordering the pieces of the kaleidoscope. In fact, I would argue - and many in the Pentagon would agree - that, in this struggle, ideas are more important than bullets.

There are four parts of our public diplomacy effort:

- Education and cultural affairs, mainly exchange programs, our crown jewels. This year, despite tighter visa requirements, a record 600,000 foreign students will come to the U.S. to study. The United States is still by far the most popular learning destination in the world. Yesterday, at 10 Downing Street, I had the honor of marking another anniversary -- the 60th birthday of the US-UK Fulbright Commission, which has presided over exchanges involving 27,000 British and American citizens. Globally, the Fulbright program operates in 150 countries, and more Fulbrights have won Nobel Prizes than graduates of any other program. The late Senator J. William Fulbright, mentor to Bill Clinton, wanted others to have the same experience he had when he came here from Arkansas as a Rhodes Scholar after World War I and spent much time traveling in a devastated Europe. He believed that such exchanges - in all directions - broaden international trust and understanding. Today, Fulbrights are only one of more than 60 educational programs we manage. Some of our most important programs are based abroad, including Access Microscholarships, which provide English teaching after school to thousands of disadvantaged teenagers, mainly in Muslim societies.
- Next, international information programs, which tell America's story through speakers, publications, and a robust Internet presence. Our aim is not to preach but to encourage interaction that will lead to understanding of American principles and policies; we see ourselves as facilitators of a grand conversation, which we convene because we have the confidence that it will lead, ultimately, to the adoption of universal values of freedom, toleration, and justice.
- Third, U.S. international broadcasting, which is directed by an independent board that I used to chair and that, over the past eight years, has increased its weekly audience by 75 percent. Our mission since 1942 has been to broadcast in the vernacular - currently in 60 languages, into countries that have limited freedom of the press, or none at all.
- And, finally ideological engagement -- the war of ideas, as opposed to the war of bombs and bullets.

The Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy wears two hats: I run the part of public diplomacy that resides at State, and, by presidential directive, I lead the government-wide effort on the war of ideas - which includes coordination with the Defense Department, the Intelligence Community, other agencies, and the private sector as well. Senator Joe Lieberman, in introducing me at my confirmation hearing, said I was the "supreme allied commander in the war of ideas." In fact, of course, we don't command the allies, but I can tell you that we work closely with them.

The focus of today's war of ideas is counter-terrorism. As the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism of 2006

puts it: "In the long run, winning the War on Terror means winning the battle of ideas."

So let me be specific. Our mission today in the war of ideas is highly focused. **It is to use the tools of ideological engagement - words, deeds, and images - to create an environment hostile to violent extremism.** We want to break the linkages between groups like Al Qaeda and their target audiences.

Is this a change in Washington? Yes. Much of the public diplomacy effort in the past has focused on our image, on how we are seen by others.

Our challenge today is to ensure that negative sentiments and day-to-day grievances toward the U.S. and its allies do not manifest themselves in the form of violent extremism.

Yes, foreigners' perceptions of the United States are important - and through longer-term programs like exchanges, we are trying to improve those perceptions.

Certainly, animosity toward the U.S. makes it harder to achieve our national goals. That animosity should not be overstated. In places like Africa, Asia, and much of Latin America, in countries like India and Japan, people remain favorably disposed toward the United States.

Most of the animosity toward us is centered in Europe and the Middle East, and it is related to disagreements with our policies, especially in Iraq and toward Israelis and Palestinians. But, as far as ideological engagement is concerned, these policy differences should not hinder our efforts. Even countries and people who disagree with us on Iraq cooperate with us in reducing the threat of violent extremism - which challenges them as much as, or more than, it challenges us. In this, we have common cause.

What we and our allies recognize is that there is a complex, multi-sided battle going on in Muslim societies for power. This is a battle in which we cannot be bystanders if we wanted to. This struggle within Muslim societies affects the United States directly and was responsible for the deaths of 3,000 people seven years ago. In this battle, our main role is to support constructive alternatives to violent extremism, to promote moderation, critical thinking, and democratic values.

More and more credible Muslim voices are speaking out - and they are having an impact. Last year, one of bin Laden's most prominent Saudi mentors, Salman al-Oadah, publicly reproached him for spreading mayhem. "How many innocent children, elderly people, and women have been killed in the name of Al Qaeda?" asked al-Oadah, in a refrain that is echoing widely.

Most dramatic, perhaps, are the many gatherings of community, religious, and national leaders rising to confront and challenge violent extremism. We have seen major pronouncements by credible voices in India, Turkey, Jordan, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and more. And, of course, in Iraq, where we have seen a dramatic turnaround.

Al Qaeda is a death cult. It contains the seeds of its own destruction. Analyst Peter Bergen noted in congressional testimony last year that Al Qaeda has four strategic weaknesses. It keeps killing Muslim civilians. It has not created a genuine mass movement. Its leaders have constantly expanded their list of enemies. It has no positive vision. As Orwell asked in response to the Bolshevik saying about having to break eggs to make an omelette: "But where's the omelette?"

It's all broken eggs. Bombings in Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia have taught this lesson. Meanwhile, kinetic action has seriously damaged the Al Qaeda leadership and infrastructure, as President Bush noted just yesterday when he congratulated "our coalition partners on their historic accomplishments in Iraq, and for maintaining their resolve during the dark days."

Fewer Muslims view suicide bombing as justified. The proportion supporting such murderous activity dropped, between 2002 and 2007, from 43 percent to 23 percent in Jordan, 26 percent to 10 percent in Indonesia. In a typical decline, the proportion of Jordanians with "a lot of confidence in Osama bin Laden" has fallen from 56

percent in 2003 to 20 percent in 2007.

But by no means is the threat of violent extremism over, or even dramatically reduced. Even in Iraq, where the number of violent incidents per week has fallen by more than 80 percent, a desperate Al Qaeda is resorting to young female suicide bombers and a strategy of targeted attacks on each of Iraq's major ethnic-sectarian communities: on July 28, the Kurds; on Aug. 8, the Turkmen; on Aug. 14, Shia pilgrims; on Aug. 17, Sunni patriots. Their goal appears to be to drag Iraq back to the dark days of 2006. And, of course, as it fails in Iraq, the central front of their war with America and its allies, Al Qaeda is, in President Bush's words of yesterday, "stepping up...efforts on the front where this struggle first began - the nation of Afghanistan."

So here is our ultimate goal in this war of ideas against a violent extremist enemy:

A world in which the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or social objectives is no longer considered acceptable; efforts to radicalize and recruit new members are no longer successful; and the perpetrators of violent extremism are condemned and isolated.

How do we achieve such a world?

Two ways:

First, by confronting the ideology that justifies and enables the violence. We try to remove the fake veneer on the reputation of violent extremists and allow publics to see the shame and hypocrisy of life in terrorism. This is an effort that requires credible Muslim voices to work effectively, but we should not shrink from the truth even if we aren't Muslim. We should defend and advance universal values of social justice and liberty.

Second, we achieve our goal by offering, often in cooperation with the private sector and using the best technology including Web 2.0 social networking techniques, a full range of productive alternatives to violent extremism.

The shorthand for this policy is diversion - **powerful and lasting diversion**, the channeling of potential recruits away from violence with the attractions of entertainment, culture, literature, music technology, sports, education, business and culture, in addition to politics and religion.

While winning hearts and minds would be an admirable feat, the war of ideas adopts the more immediate and realistic goal of diverting impressionable segments of the population from the recruitment process. Ideological engagement comes down to a contest of alternative visions.

Going beyond diversion, we seek to build counter-movements by empowering groups and individuals opposed to violent extremism - movements (using both electronic and physical means) that bring people together with similar, constructive interests, such as women opposed to violent extremism (built on the MADD, or Mothers Against Drunk Driving, model), believers in democratic Islam, entrepreneurship, and technology.

Our work is ahead of us. There is a widespread belief in Muslim nations that the United States and other Western powers want to destroy Islam and replace it with Christianity. This root belief underlies much of the passive support for the violent extremism of Al Qaeda and similar groups. The flow of new recruits has not stopped.

Have we been slow to react, to get it right? Yes, indeed. "Sometimes it is the case that democracies don't really organize themselves

until there's a real wakeup call," said my boss, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. "Now this country and, I would say, the international community are better organized to deal with this threat."

In the end, the American mission in this new age of public diplomacy is to tell the world of a good and compassionate nation and at the same time to engage in the most important ideological contest of our age.

So, on this seventh anniversary of 9/11, the stair of being rearranged. In the new age of public diplomacy emerges from this work in progress is one of peace the United States; Britain, our partner and proger have now engaged vigorously. We will succeed.

Thank you



Under Secretary Glassman discusses U.S. outreach efforts with Chatham House members.  
(Embassy photo)

[back to top ^](#)