

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Subcommittee On Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia Hearing on “A Reliance on Smart Power--Reforming the Public Diplomacy Bureaucracy.”

September 23, 2008

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"A Reliance on Smart Power: Reforming the Public Diplomacy Bureaucracy"

Chairman Akaka, Ranking Member Voinovich and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today to testify on what can be done to improve Public Diplomacy's performance in achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives.

I am a retired Senior Foreign Service Officer who served 32 years with the United States Information Agency. My final assignment was as a member of the USIA Steering Committee that worked on the consolidation of USIA with the State Department in 1999.

Today I represent the Advisory Group and the Working Group that prepared a report commissioned by the American Academy of Diplomacy and researched and written by the Stimson Center entitled, " A Foreign Affairs Budget for the Future: Fixing the Crisis in Diplomatic Readiness."

In the introduction to the report, which should be issued next month, Ambassadors Ronald Neumann, Thomas Pickering and Thomas Boyatt of the Academy and Ellen Laipson, president of Stimson describe the study in the following terms:

*" This study is intended to provide solutions for and stimulate a needed conversation about the urgent need to provide the necessary funding for our nation's foreign policies. We need more diplomats, foreign assistance professionals and public diplomacy experts to achieve our national objectives and fulfill our international obligations. This study offers a path forward, identifying responsible and achievable ways to meet the nation's needs. It is our hope that the U.S. Congress and the next Administration will use this study to build the right foreign affairs budget for the future. "*

Many fine studies published in recent years have recommended institutional reorganization or offered guidance on how U.S. foreign policy could be better conducted. This report is different.

Its purpose is straightforward: determine what the Secretary of State requires in terms of personnel and program funding to successfully achieve American foreign policy objectives. Based on informed budgetary and manpower analyses, the Academy and Stimson report provides specific staffing and cost recommendations.

The Working Group on which I served conducted interviews with active duty and retired State Department officials and others, including budget, administrative and personnel specialists. The interviewees included Civil Servants, Foreign Service Officers and political appointees. The report is the result of months of internal discussions on how best to address the critical issues of staff and funding shortfalls.

My colleague Stanley Silverman, a long-time USIA comptroller, and I focused on Public Diplomacy (PD). This is what we found: despite recent increases, Public Diplomacy in the State Department is under-staffed and under-funded. The FY-2008 Public Diplomacy budget is \$ 859 million. PD's current staff of 1,332 Americans, is 24 percent less than the comparable figure of 1,742 in 1986. According to State Department data, Public Diplomacy in FY-2008 had a 13 percent Foreign Service vacancy rate.

To have a reasonable chance of achieving its goals, PD needs to cover an employment shortfall; establish additional positions; obtain greater program funding and significantly expand training. I should add that, since this study dealt only with those resources controlled by the Secretary of State, we did not examine U.S. government civilian broadcasting as conducted by the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG). Broadcasting remains an important element of public diplomacy and I personally hope that it will continue to enjoy strong congressional support

There are several interesting definitions of Public Diplomacy, but in examining the State Department's Public Diplomacy mission we prefer the following: *"To understand, inform, engage and influence global audiences, reaching beyond foreign governments to promote greater appreciation and understanding of U.S. society, culture, institutions, values and policies."*

PD practitioners in the State Department devise comprehensive strategies, develop content and select the most effective communications vehicles for reaching diverse global audiences. Here I wish to stress two points. First, there are limits to what Public Diplomacy professionals can accomplish in influencing the attitudes of foreign audiences. This is especially true during a period of lengthy, sharp policy disagreements between the U.S. and other nations. Secondly, Public Diplomacy is not like a water spigot that can be turned on or off at will to produce instantaneous results. Rather, it involves a cumulative process. The PD officer must first establish credibility over time, in many ways, on the road to trust. It involves a long-term investment of time, consistent engagement and respectful dialogue.

Two decades ago some observers believed that a strong U.S. Public Diplomacy effort was no longer needed after the fall of communism in Europe. Outside of international relations circles,

insufficient credit was given at the time to the vital role played by Public Diplomacy in winning the ideological battle with the Soviet Union. By the 1990s there was a decline in budgetary and other support to USIA and in 1999 USIA was consolidated into the State Department. Today, according to international public opinion surveys, there is extensive dissatisfaction with many U.S. global policies. Some question the U.S.'s leadership capability on major global issues and others, including many allies, simply disagree with certain U.S. decisions.

However, these negative foreign public opinion survey results don't fully convey foreign attitudes towards the United States. The fact remains that more than any other nation the U.S. is looked to for ideas, innovation and opportunity. In most of the world, the U.S. is viewed as a society that recognizes individual initiative and rewards talent. Foreign student enrollment in U.S. universities is rising and the number of foreign-born technology specialists interested in working for U.S. companies exceeds available visas. Given these factors, PD can make a difference.

In a post 9/11 world the U.S. must remain vigilant about possible international terrorist attacks, keep a watchful eye on a resurgent Russia and a China seeking to assert its influence beyond Asia. Today, unlike 20 years ago, U.S. officials and most international affairs experts concur that a robust, credible, creative and timely global Public Diplomacy capability is essential to U.S. national security.

The nature of Public Diplomacy work is such that PD personnel and the activities they design, implement and evaluate are inseparable. PD personnel stationed at embassies and consulates continue to successfully conduct traditional, successful programs such as exchanges, cultural and informational programs and media placement explaining U.S. policies and American society. These activities put PD personnel in touch with identifiable, established or rising opinion makers, people we deem important to reach with factual information and our views.

But in 2008 and beyond PD personnel--in the field and Washington--must reach out to broader audiences, the 20,30 and 40 year olds that are part of the "Internet Generation." Information on websites originating from Washington will certainly reach individuals unknown to individual country PD staffs. But this effort to reach the "Internet Generation" is vital since many of them are likely to be important to the U.S. because of their work, the people they know and their participation in national public policy debates and elections. In addition, our embassies utilize information provided by Washington on their own websites, information that is available to in-country Embassy contacts as well as self-selected audiences.

Consistently attracting and maintaining the attention of this 20-40 year old audience requires the development of credible, informative and, in many instances, entertaining Internet media. PD's multiple advocacy websites are engaging distinctive audiences. An example is the Digital Outreach Team, which involves PD staff in the Bureau of International Information Programs.

Arabic-speaking personnel, who identify themselves as U.S. Government employees, participate in chat room discussions, particularly in the Islamic world, on U.S. policies and society.

The following Academy recommendations cover the breadth of PD's operations: educational and professional exchanges; advocacy of American foreign policies; and cultural and informational program explanations about American society, culture, institutions and values. Our recommendations span five fiscal years, beginning in FY-2010 and ending in FY-2014. These recommendations, which do not constitute an all-inclusive list of worthy activities, include:

- Increase permanent American staffing by 487 and Locally Employed staff (i.e. Foreign Service National employees) by 369.
- Increase current academic exchanges by 100%; International Visitor grants involving future foreign leaders by 50% and youth exchanges by 25%.
- Expand capacity of PD English and foreign language advocacy websites aimed at experts, young professionals and youth and hire additional specialists in website design and program content.
- Establish 40 American Cultural Centers (or a mixture of ACCs and smaller Information Resource Centers) in order to broaden the U.S. daily cultural presence worldwide. The centers would only be established where suitable security conditions permit and programming interest warrants.
- Re-engage the autonomous pro-U.S. Binational Center network (of over 100 centers) in Latin America whose membership is desirous of closer U.S. ties
- Expand other programs, particularly overseas staff and operations to increase the effectiveness of Public Diplomacy.

Staffing increases will cost \$ 155.2 million annually by 2014 and program activities, \$ 455.2 million. Over-all funding increases will total \$610.4 million in 2014.

In addition, elsewhere in the report, there is a call for substantially increased training opportunities for PD personnel. PD Foreign Service Officers need more extensive training in: foreign languages and area studies; technology applications; public speaking and management of personnel and resources.

The quality of an organization depends on the skills and preparedness of its staff. Personal contact with host country nationals remains the most effective PD tool. To accomplish Mission objectives, embassy and consulate Public Affairs Officers must have appropriate staffing support and a limited administrative burden. They must be allowed to do what they came into the Foreign Service for, namely meet, cultivate, listen and learn from host country citizens while

explaining the U.S. to them. Only through this process can thoughtful dialogue result in successful communication and mutual understanding.

The American Academy of Diplomacy and the Stimson Center firmly believe that approval of the report's recommendations for personnel and funding increases will be significant factors in Public Diplomacy officers' efforts to attain greater success in achieving U.S. foreign policy objectives.

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