



DID YOU KNOW?

PUBLIC DIPLOMACY AT HOME AND IN EUROPE

PRESIDENT BUSH ANNOUNCES NEW SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

“A while ago I announced that I would be naming a Presidential Envoy to the Organization of Islamic Conference, and I am pleased to announce it's Sada Cumber. He's a very successful businessman, a person who knows the Islamic world, and has agreed to serve in that capacity. Sada, I want to thank you very much.

We just had a discussion about his mission, and the core of his mission is to explain to the Islamic world that America is a friend -- is a friend of freedom, is a friend of peace, that we value religion -- that, matter of fact, we value it to the point where we believe that anybody should be able to worship the way they see fit, and we respect that,” said President Bush.

President George W. Bush [names](#) the new Special Envoy to the Organization to the Islamic Conference.



President Bush meets with U.S. Envoy to the OIC Sada Cumber in the Oval Office, February 27, 2008. [White House photo by Chris Greenberg]

U.S. SECRETARY OF STATE INTRODUCES NEW SPECIAL ENVOY TO THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE

“This appointment is one part of a much larger effort that our government has undertaken to increase our engagement with Muslim communities worldwide. We in the United States recognize that we have a lot to learn about the more than 1 billion people across the world who live and practice the faith of Islam. Our new Special Envoy to the OIC will enable us to further our understanding of the community of Islamic nations through a positive and mutually respectful exchange.

This appointment is also an opportunity for the United States to expand our cooperation with Muslim communities worldwide to defend and promote the principles that we hold dear: human rights and human dignity, social justice and equal opportunity, liberty and the rule of law. These are not American values or Western values. They are universal values, values that are lived and practiced by the majority of Muslims in the world, many of whom are citizens of democracies,” said Secretary Rice.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice [introduces](#) the new Envoy to the OIC.



Secretary Rice and U.S. Envoy to the OIC Sada Cumber during a reception in his honor at the U.S. Department of State, March 10, 2008. [Getty Images by AFP/Getty Images]



As Special Envoy, Mr. Sada Cumber will serve as representative to the OIC, and will seek to promote mutual understanding and dialogue between the United States and Muslim communities around the world. *Bio of Mr. Sada Cumber [here](#).*

NOWRUZ CELEBRATED AT THE WHITE HOUSE



A traditional Haft Sin table celebrating Nowruz set in the White House. [White House photo by Chris Greenberg]

Mrs. Laura Bush welcomed guests to a tea at the White House, in honor of Nowruz. Nowruz is a holiday celebrating the New Year and the coming of spring for several cultures, including Persian and Kurdish. The Haft Sin table has seven items symbolizing new life, joy, love, beauty and health, sunrise, patience and garlic (to ward off evil).

For President Bush's message on Nowruz Celebrations, please go [here](#).



The First Lady welcomes guests in honor of Nowruz, March 19, 2008. [White House photo by Shealah Craighead]

SENIOR ADVISOR FARAH PANDITH DISCUSSES MUSLIM ENGAGEMENT IN EUROPE



Senior Advisor Farah Pandith meets with a group of EU Parliamentarians, January 31, 2008. [Ryan Ballow, USEU]

For more information about Muslim Engagement in Europe, please go to: <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rt/c24593.htm>

Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), representing three different countries from three different parties, committed to working together to help dispel the ignorance and bigotry surrounding the topic of Muslim youth in Europe. The MEPs met with Senior Advisor Farah Pandith to discuss a report that came out in late 2007 titled "Islam in the European Union: What's at Stake in the Future?" and to develop ways to implement the recommendations of the report. The MEPS at the meeting had sponsored the study. Pandith is working with the MEPs and others to advance some of their key suggestions.

CITIZENS DIALOGUE PROGRAM BUILDS BRIDGES!

Three Muslim Americans, 'Islam for Dummies' author Sohaib Nazeer Sultan, former Brookings Institute Intern Aalaa Abuzaakouk, and Public Advocacy Program Coordinator Zeenat Rahman explored Islam in the U.S. and integration issues with 100 French Muslims in Lyon, France. The speakers were brought to France as part of the U.S. State Department's **Citizen Dialogue Program**. The Citizen Dialogue Program sends small, diverse groups of Muslim Americans to share their experiences with a range of audiences in foreign countries. The goals of the program include taking part in an open dialogue about life in America and Islam in America, and developing new, lasting links among diverse communities. **If you would like to participate in a Citizen Dialogue Program, build international contacts and enhance your perspective on the issues facing Muslims in other parts of the world, please contact the Bureau of International Information Programs (IIP) at CDP@state.gov for more information.** The focus of this effort is primarily on local Muslim communities, religious leaders, government officials, NGOs, business leaders, and civil society. Participants share their first-hand experiences of life in the United States and also talk with the media. Particular attention is given to young people in these communities. The Department of State is launching a special effort in Europe in 2008.



U.S. Consul Harry Sullivan with Citizen Dialogue participants and volunteers at the Grand Mosque, December 2007. [Alain Beullard, APP Staff]

FINLAND: RECEPTION DELIGHTS FINNISH-SOMALI COMMUNITY LEADERS



U.S. Chargé d'Affaires to Finland, Amy Hyatt, hosted a reception for local Finnish-Somali community leaders at her home to discuss issues related to the Somali immigrant community. In attendance was Ambassador Kaija Ilander of the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs' Human Rights Unit, representatives of Kulttuuriasiainkeskus Caisa, including Director Ahmed Akar, and Ambassador Yusuf Mohamaed Ismail, the Somali ambassador to Switzerland. Somali Chargé d'Affaires Ali Qassim was instrumental in coordinating this event.

Above: Chargé Amy Hyatt and guests share a light-hearted moment, November 2007. [Heidi Day, U.S. Embassy Helsinki]

SLOVAKIA: EMBASSY GRANT PROMOTES DEMOCRACY-BUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

With a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Slovakia, the Slovak non-governmental organization (NGO) "On Your Side," solidified the establishment of democratic institutions in Afghanistan. The NGO sent a group of Slovak journalists to share their hard-earned reporting skills with Afghan journalists. Through their efforts 12 journalists, including anchors, reporters, cameramen, and editors were trained for a total of 11 days. In 2005 and 2006 the first round of this training took place to impart professional skills including training in state-of-the art digital video production and post-production technology in order to strengthen regional media development. As part of the project, a group of six Afghan journalists and cameramen came to Slovakia for a two-week long course aimed at sharing ideas on freedom of information, balanced and fair news production, and the relationship between local media and local government.



Slovak regional TV reporters and Afghan counterparts look over coverage in Kunduz, as part of training module, December 2007. [Miroslav Majer, "On Your Side"]

SPAIN: U.S. MUSLIM WOMEN PROMOTE TOLERANCE AND UNDERSTANDING



American Muslim Afeefa Syeed is interviewed by a student for the school paper, November 6-8, 2007. [Macarena Moreno, U.S. Embassy Madrid]

American Muslim Afeefa Syeed was invited by the U.S. Embassy in Madrid to share her views on issues such as diversity, cultural identity, and social responsibility. Ms. Syeed, a diversity consultant and multicultural trainer based in Northern Virginia, participated in an international seminar hosted by the Ortega y Gasset Foundation entitled "How to Prevent Violent Radicalization among Muslims" and gave talks to several groups, including high school students at a bilingual school, students at an Islamic school, teachers, and mediators. During her talks, Ms. Syeed shared her own experiences as an American Muslim of Kashmiri origin and challenged students to think about positive ways they can contribute something to their communities and make a difference. In an inspirational session with 30 public school teachers, Ms. Syeed shared ideas and activities on how to teach students to value diversity and how to make learning more relevant and experiential.

NORWAY: AMERICA'S FIRST MUSLIM CONGRESSMAN CONFRONTS STEREOTYPES



Congressman Ellison (on the right) in dialogue with guests, January 2008. [Kirk Samson, U.S. Embassy Oslo]

In the midst of an active visit to Norway, Congressman Keith Ellison (D-MN) presented a vigorous defense of U.S. culture to a group of young immigrant and Muslim leaders at the U.S. Embassy in Oslo. Ellison is a strong proponent of American political culture and is himself, he said, a product of voter acceptance of those of other faiths and races. Ellison, who was elected in a traditionally Norwegian-American constituency with only a 2% Muslim population, answered questions from the crowd after a short presentation, challenging attendee stereotypes on the U.S. Government's approach towards Muslims and the views of Americans towards integration and diversity. He also touched on the importance of open and free political discourse in this election year and promoted study and travel to the U.S. as a good way to combat stereotypes and encourage intercultural dialogue.

TURKEY: TURKISH YOUTH MAKE FRIENDS IN NEW YORK CITY THROUGH MUSIC

The Carnegie Hall's Weill Music Foundation connected 500 high school students in Istanbul with 400 students in New York City for an exciting simultaneous concert broadcast. The concert, supported by the U.S. Department of State and the *Citi Foundation*, was facilitated by the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul and Bogazici University. Turkish youth danced to the jazz sounds of John Hollenbeck and the Claudia Quintet, while Turkish clarinet star Hüsni Şenlendirici and the New York Gypsy All-Stars brought the house down in New York.



Right: Audience cheers to Husnu Senlendirici and the New York Gypsy All-Stars, December 5, 2007. [Ates Oner, U.S. Consulate Istanbul]

ROMANIA: BUILDING BRIDGES TO ROMANIAN MUSLIMS



Dr. Kavakci addresses high school students in Constanta on Muslim life in America, November 26-28, 2007. [Kathy Kavalec, U.S. Embassy Bucharest]

North Texas Islamic Association President Dr. Yusuf Kavakci visited Romania's Dobrogea area at the invitation of the U.S. Embassy in Bucharest, as part of their Muslim engagement program and at the initiative of the local Romanian mufti. During meetings with members of youth organizations from the Democratic Unions of the Turks and Tatars in Romania (UD'TR and UD'TTMR), Dr. Kavakci, a Turkish immigrant to America, answered questions (in Turkish) on important topics such as the relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims and the ways in which non-Muslim cultural habits and values are part of diverse societies. Dr. Kavakci also spoke at a major interfaith symposium on the role of religion in modern society, which drew an audience of 150, including leading religious leaders, academics and students from the Theology and Law Departments of the Ovidius

University in Constanta. He discussed how Islam is practiced in America by Muslim youth and answered audience questions on suicide, extremism, and theological issues in Islam. Dr. Kavakci had the opportunity, on the last day of his visit, to meet with the two Muslim deputies who represent the Turkish and the Tatar communities in the Romanian parliament and learn about the initiatives geared toward the Muslim communities, including the Tatar Deputy's unique achievement of the official recognition of December 13 as Romanian Tatars' Day.

MALTA: REACHING OUT TO ISLAMIC COMMUNITY IN MALTA

U.S. Ambassador to Malta Molly Bordonaro gave a speech, "Islam in America," to launch a series of public lectures hosted by the Malta Branch of the World Islamic Call Society. The Ambassador shared several of the ways in which Muslim-Americans have successfully integrated into and contributed to American life and how these serve as powerful reminders that when common values and purposes are shared, ethnic and racial differences need not divide a nation. The large crowd was comprised of diplomats from the Arab world, the public, government officials, and Catholic and Islamic religious leaders, including Imam El-Sadi, General Secretary of the Society Mr. Wagdi Nashnosh, and Mario Farrugia, a member of the Society.



Students simultaneously translate a poem from Arabic to English as Ambassador Bordonaro and Imam El Sadi listen attentively, January 23, 2008. [Cynthia Ehrlich, U.S. Embassy Valletta]

GERMANY: BREAKDANCING WITH THE AMBASSADOR



U.S. Ambassador to Germany William R. Timken Jr. invited young Germans to learn more about America. In addition to visiting Turkish centers, hosting dinners for minorities and initiating the exchange program "Windows on America," the Ambassador enlisted a professional American musician to teach singing and dancing to disadvantaged youth, which led to a U.S. Embassy in Berlin-supported musical production in 2007. These activities have helped build bridges with communities and improve participants' attitudes toward Americans.

Above: Minority youth breakdance at Ambassador Timken's residence during a December reception honoring "The Streets of Wedding" musical participants, December 2007. [© Der Tagesspiegel]

GERMANY: PARTICIPANT IN INTERNATIONAL VISITOR PROGRAM SERVES AS VOICE OF MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Lamya Kaddor, August 2007 participant of the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, "Religion and Citizenship in a Democratic Society," made a big impact on her community and the U.S. Consulate in Dusseldorf, Germany. The German weekly newspaper *Der Spiegel* carried a two-page report on Ms. Kaddor, describing her work as a teacher of Islamic studies in German in Dinslaken and also mentioning her new book "The Koran for Children and Adults," just released by C.H. Beck publishing house. Ms. Kaddor wrote the book because she could not find any suitable translation of the Koran for the classroom. The continued media interest in Ms. Kaddor is evidence of her effectiveness as a modern and enlightened voice in the Muslim community.



International Visitor Lamya Kaddor with U.S. Consul General Boyse, March 2008. [Bernd Herbert, U.S. Consulate Düsseldorf]

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