

GAO

Report to the Ranking Minority
Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives

March 2007

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Actions Needed to Better Assess the Impact of Agencies' Marking and Publicizing Efforts



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Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-07-277](#), a report to the Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The negative perceptions of the United States associated with U.S. foreign policy initiatives have underscored the importance of the United States presenting a complete portrayal of the benefits that many in the world derive from U.S. foreign assistance efforts. Congress has expressed concerns that the United States has frequently understated or not publicized information about its foreign assistance programs. As requested, this report (1) describes the policies, regulations, and guidelines that agencies have established to mark and publicize foreign assistance; (2) describes how State, USAID, and other agencies mark and publicize foreign assistance; and (3) identifies key challenges that agencies face in marking and publicizing foreign assistance.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of State, in consultation with other U.S. executive agencies, (1) develop a strategy, which appropriately utilizes techniques such as surveys, to better assess the impact of U.S. marking and publicity programs on public awareness, and (2) establish interagency agreements to facilitate implementation of governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. State provided comments and concurred with the report's recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-277.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Jess T. Ford at (202) 512-4268 or fordj@gao.gov.

FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Actions Needed to Better Assess the Impact of Agencies' Marking and Publicizing Efforts

What GAO Found

Most of the agencies we reviewed involved in foreign assistance activities have established some marking and publicity requirements in policies, regulations, or guidelines. USAID has the most detailed policies and regulations relating to marking and publicity. USAID has also established a network of communications specialists at its missions to publicize its assistance efforts and has issued communications guidelines to promote that assistance. According to State officials, its policy is to allow its program managers and ambassadors to use their discretion when determining which programs and activities to mark or publicize. USDA, DOD, HHS, Treasury, and MCC have also established some policies for marking and publicizing assistance, though these policies vary in their level of formality and detail.

To increase awareness of U.S. assistance abroad, key agencies that we reviewed used various methods to mark and publicize some of their activities and exercised flexibility in deciding when it was appropriate to do so. These agencies used different methods of marking, or visibly acknowledging, their assistance. In addition, agencies generally used embassy public affairs offices for publicizing information about the source of their assistance and, in some cases, augmented these efforts with their own publicity methods.

We identified some challenges to marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance, including the lack of (1) a strategy for assessing the impact of marking and publicity efforts on increasing the awareness of U.S. foreign assistance and (2) governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. First, although some agencies conduct surveys in recipient countries that primarily capture information on public opinion of the United States, little reliable work has been done to assess the impact of U.S. assistance on foreign citizens' awareness of the source of U.S. provided assistance. Second, while the newly appointed Director of Foreign Assistance has begun to address the issue of developing a governmentwide policy for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance, it is unclear to what extent this policy will be implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority.

USAID Marking of Health Clinic in Indonesia



Source: GAO.

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Abbreviations

AusAID	Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DFA	Director of Foreign Assistance
DFID	Department for International Development
DOD	Department of Defense
EU	European Union
FAA	Foreign Assistance Act
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
ICEIDA	Icelandic International Development Agency
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MEPI	Middle East Partnership Initiative
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
OTA	Office of Technical Assistance
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture

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United States Government Accountability Office
Washington, DC 20548

March 12, 2007

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives

Dear Mrs. Ros-Lehtinen:

The negative perceptions of the United States, associated with U.S. foreign policy initiatives, have underscored the importance of the United States presenting a complete portrayal of the benefits that many countries in the world derive from U.S. foreign assistance efforts. A recent worldwide survey by the Pew Research Center¹ and our reports have noted that negative perceptions of the United States increased² in recent years in response to U.S. foreign policy initiatives, particularly in the Middle East.

The United States is one of the largest donors of foreign assistance to countries around the world; however, many of the recipients of this aid are unaware that it is provided by the United States. In fiscal year 2005, the United States provided about \$20 billion in humanitarian and development assistance throughout the world to, among other things, relieve suffering, educate children, feed the hungry, promote economic opportunity, and support democracy and human rights. Congress has expressed concerns that the United States has frequently understated or not publicized information about its foreign assistance programs and, as a result, the generosity of the people of the United States has not been fully understood abroad.

¹The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, *America's Image Slips, but Allies Share U.S. Concerns Over Iran, Hamas*, Pew Global Attitudes Project (June 13, 2006). Pew interviewed 16,710 people in Great Britain, China, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Turkey, and the United States from March 31 through May 14, 2006.

²GAO, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Persistent Challenges*, [GAO-06-707T](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 3, 2006). GAO, *U.S. Public Diplomacy: State Department Efforts to Engage Muslim Audiences Lack Certain Communication Elements and Face Significant Challenges*, [GAO-06-535](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 3, 2006).

According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), marking of foreign assistance refers to using methods such as applying graphic identities or logos to program materials or project signage to visibly acknowledge contributors and identify organizations supporting the work. Publicity of assistance is the dissemination of information about assistance to generate interest and create positive perceptions in citizens of foreign countries. Marking and publicity are complementary communication tools, but with different goals. Marking can raise the awareness about the source of assistance with individuals who come in contact with the assistance sites or materials, whereas publicity can potentially communicate more detailed information about assistance to broader audiences.

As requested, this report focuses on the efforts of key U.S. agencies³ to mark or publicize U.S. foreign assistance. It (1) describes the policies, regulations, and guidelines that agencies have established to mark and publicize foreign assistance; (2) describes how the Department of State (State), USAID, and other agencies mark and publicize foreign assistance; and (3) identifies key challenges that agencies face in marking and publicizing foreign assistance. In addition, as requested, we describe selected public sector and foreign government organizations' marking and publicity practices.

To meet these objectives, we reviewed legislation forming the statutory basis for marking and publicizing assistance, and obtained and analyzed related agency documents. We also met with representatives from USAID, the Departments of State, Agriculture (USDA), Defense (DOD), Health and Human Services (HHS), Justice, the Treasury, and Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). In addition, we met with representatives of nongovernmental organizations, host governments, international assistance organizations, and with executives working in the advertising industry. We conducted fieldwork in Washington, D.C.; New York City; Indonesia; Liberia; Montenegro;⁴ Peru; Serbia; and South Africa. In this review, we excluded the following foreign assistance: contributions to

³Key executive branch agencies that administer foreign assistance are USAID and the Departments of State, Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Justice, and the Treasury, as well as the Millennium Challenge Corporation.

⁴Our fieldwork in Montenegro and Serbia occurred shortly after the May 21, 2006, Montenegro referendum on independence from Serbia that resulted in Montenegro's separation from Serbia. However, since this event was so recent, the conditions we reviewed essentially reflected prereferendum conditions.

multilateral organizations, military assistance that is related to acquisition of U.S. military equipment and training, programs related to peacekeeping operations, antiterrorism programs, and programs related to weapons proliferation. We also excluded foreign assistance programs that provide economic support payments to Middle East countries.

We conducted our work from December 2005 through January 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Appendix I contains a more detailed description on our scope and methodology. Appendixes II and III contain information on public sector and other donor key marking and publicizing practices.

Results in Brief

Most agencies we reviewed that are involved in foreign assistance activities have established some marking and publicity requirements in policies, regulations, or guidelines. USAID, which has the most detailed policies and regulations, requires that the agency and its implementers ensure that all programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities be marked, except where waivers or presumptive exceptions are granted. USAID also has established a network of communications specialists at USAID missions worldwide to publicize the agency's assistance efforts and has issued communications guidelines to promote that assistance. State has not established agencywide assistance marking or publicity requirements; but, according to State officials, the department's policy is to allow its program managers and ambassadors to use their discretion when determining which programs and activities should be marked or publicized. USDA, DOD, HHS, Treasury, and MCC also have established some policies for marking and publicizing foreign assistance, though these policies vary in their level of formality and detail.

To increase awareness of U.S. assistance abroad, key agencies that we reviewed used various methods to mark and to publicize some of their activities and exercised flexibility in deciding when it was appropriate to do so. These agencies used different methods of marking, or visibly acknowledging, their assistance, including applying graphic identities or logos on such things as publications and project signage. In addition, agencies generally used embassy public affairs offices for publicizing or disseminating information about the source of their assistance and, in some cases, augmented these efforts with their own publicity methods. USAID has developed the most extensive and formalized requirements for marking its assistance, and its identifying mark communicates that the agency is a U.S. entity and identifies the American people as the source of the foreign assistance. Other agencies' marking efforts are not as extensive

or as formalized as those of USAID. For example, State's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) developed two versions of a logo; however, State did not specify which logo implementing organizations should use—which, at times, created confusion with project implementers regarding the appropriate use of the MEPI logo. Further, in the countries we visited, we saw various marks used by agencies to identify U.S. foreign assistance—such as the use of the U.S. flag in combination with host country flags as well as program logos. Only USAID and Treasury's Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) have established a process for determining when marking requirements can be modified or suspended to allow for differences in the nature of foreign assistance projects and special circumstances that could include safety and security concerns. Embassy public affairs offices are responsible for publicizing activities of all U.S. agencies, through press releases, Web sites, speeches by U.S. officials, and other means. These efforts are augmented by other agencies efforts, such as USAID—which has established a global network of communications specialists to publicize its programs, while DOD public affairs staff publicize information about some DOD activities, such as tsunami relief assistance.

We identified some challenges to marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance, including the lack of (1) a strategy for assessing the impact of marking and publicity efforts on increasing the awareness of U.S. foreign assistance and (2) governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. First, although some agencies conduct surveys in recipient countries that primarily capture information on public opinion of the United States, little reliable work has been done to assess the impact of U.S. assistance on foreign citizens' awareness concerning the source of the assistance. For example, although State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research conducts approximately 120 surveys per year in about 80 countries, according to a State official, these surveys focus on tracking trends in the foreign public's perception of the United States to serve U.S. public diplomacy efforts and do not assess public awareness of U.S. foreign assistance activities or the effectiveness of those activities. Second, we found that USAID missions, federal agencies, and presidential initiatives providing assistance overseas have not received clear and consistent direction on marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. For example, of the five countries we visited, the embassy strategic planning document of three countries—the Mission Performance Plan—did not identify increasing awareness of U.S. assistance as part of the country strategy, nor did any of the embassies receive specific guidance on this issue. While the newly appointed Director of Foreign Assistance (DFA) has begun to address the issue of developing a governmentwide

policy for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance, it is unclear to what extent this policy will be implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under DFA's direct authority.

We are making two recommendations to the Secretary of State to enhance efforts to mark and publicize U.S. assistance. Specifically, we recommend that the Secretary of State work in conjunction with other executive agencies to (1) develop a strategy, which appropriately utilizes techniques such as surveys and focus groups, to better assess the impact of U.S. marking and publicity programs and activities on public awareness and (2) establish interagency agreements to facilitate implementation of State's planned governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance.

We received written comments on a draft of this report from State (see app. V) indicating that it concurred with our recommendations. We also received technical comments on this draft from USAID, State, DOD, and MCC, which we incorporated where appropriate.

Background

For the purposes of this report, foreign assistance is any tangible or intangible item provided by the U.S. government to a foreign country or international organization, including but not limited to any training, service, or technical advice; any item of real, personal, or mixed property; any agricultural commodity, U.S. dollars, and any currencies of any foreign country that are owned by the U.S. government. Foreign assistance has grown in complexity in recent years as the United States, through the efforts of a wide spectrum of U.S. agencies, has used foreign aid to address transforming events such as the end of the Cold War; the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001; and the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This report focuses on bilateral foreign assistance⁵ that includes development foreign assistance programs to promote sustainable economic progress and stability; economic foreign assistance in support of U.S. political and security goals; and humanitarian foreign assistance, which primarily addresses immediate humanitarian emergencies.

⁵In this review, we excluded contributions to multilateral organizations, military assistance that is related to acquisition of U.S. military equipment and training, programs related to peacekeeping operations, antiterrorism programs, and programs related to weapons proliferation. We also excluded foreign assistance programs that provide economic support payments to Middle East countries.

Table 1: Key Agencies That Provide and Manage the Majority of Foreign Assistance

Agency	Description of foreign assistance related activities
USAID	Implements the largest portion of bilateral development and, with State, economic foreign assistance programs, including technical assistance and capacity building, training and scholarships, food aid and disaster relief, infrastructure construction, and small enterprise loans.
State	Administers economic and humanitarian foreign assistance programs such as narcotics control, international law enforcement, and refugee relief. State implements some of its foreign assistance programs through other agencies such as USAID, HHS, and Justice. Further, the U.S. ambassador, as chief of mission, has authority over all U.S. government activities in a foreign country.
Agriculture	USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service provides U.S. agricultural commodities to assist millions of people in needy countries through direct donations and concessional programs.
DOD	Provides deployments of U.S. military personnel to plan, oversee, and conduct specific humanitarian projects and activities including assistance to host nation civilian authorities in disaster preparedness, mitigation and response, such as search and rescue and provision of humanitarian daily rations. Also provides training in identification, removal techniques, safety, and education in awareness and risk of explosive remnants of war. Additional assistance includes the donation of nonlethal excess DOD property and other relief supplies to nations in need, transportation of privately donated relief materials, and training and material assistance to host nations’ HIV/AIDS and Avian Influenza prevention programs.
HHS	Several offices conduct assistance programs and activities abroad supporting activities such as the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and promotes global health in many areas, including providing training to health specialists in epidemiology, surveillance, U.S. regulatory requirements, and management.
Justice	Implements training and technical assistance programs, funded primarily by State, that include law enforcement, prosecutorial development, international narcotics control, and financial crimes.
Treasury	OTA provides financial advice around the world, primarily through advisors who work directly with foreign government officials to support their efforts to improve their financial systems.
MCC	Provides foreign assistance to developing nations with a demonstrated commitment to political, economic, and social reforms.

Sources: The Departments of Agriculture, Defense, HHS, Justice, State, and the Treasury; USAID and MCC.

Provisions in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (FAA), and Public Law 480 (P. L. 480), are the statutory basis for existing regulations and policies for marking and publicizing most U.S. foreign assistance. Specifically, Section 641 of the FAA provides that “programs under this Act shall be identified appropriately overseas as ‘American Aid.’” Section 202 of P.L. 480 requires that, to the extent practicable, commodities provided under that act be clearly identified with appropriate markings in the local language as being furnished by “the people of the United States.” In addition, section 403(f) of P.L. 480 requires that foreign countries and private entities receiving P.L. 480 commodities will widely publicize “to the extent practicable” in the media that the commodities are provided “through the friendship of the American people as food for peace.” However, a major foreign assistance agency, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, which is authorized and funded under legislation other than the FAA or P.L. 480, is not subject to explicit statutory marking or publicity requirements. The 2004 Intelligence Reform Act, in establishing

broad public diplomacy responsibilities for the Department of State, assigned State a coordination role regarding marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance and called for closer cooperation between State and USAID in these efforts. Appendix IV provides more detailed information on the statutory provisions and agencies' policies, regulations, and guidelines for marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance.

To better coordinate U.S. foreign assistance activities, the Secretary of State appointed a DFA in January 2006, who is charged with directing the transformation of the U.S. government approach to foreign assistance. The DFA serves concurrently as USAID Administrator, ensuring that foreign assistance is used as effectively as possible to meet broad foreign policy objectives. The DFA:

- Has authority over all USAID and most State foreign assistance funding and programs, with continued participation in program planning, implementation, and oversight conducted by the various bureaus and offices within State and USAID, as part of the integrated interagency planning, coordination, and implementation mechanisms;
- Develops a coordinated U.S. government foreign assistance strategy, including multiyear country specific assistance strategies and annual country-specific assistance operational plans;
- Creates and directs consolidated policy, planning, budget, and implementation mechanisms and staff functions required to provide overarching leadership to foreign assistance; and
- Provides guidance to foreign assistance delivered through other agencies and entities of the U.S. government, including the MCC and the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator.

Most Agencies Have Marking and Publicizing Policies, Regulations, and Guidelines

Most of the agencies we reviewed involved in foreign assistance activities have established some marking policies, regulations, and guidelines. USAID has established the most detailed policies, regulations, and guidelines for marking and publicizing its assistance. State has also established marking and publicity policies for two presidential initiatives, MEPI and PEPFAR. However, USDA, DOD, HHS, Treasury, and MCC efforts in this area have been more limited. Since Justice does not have independent authority to conduct foreign assistance but implements politically sensitive programs for State and USAID, it has not established departmentwide marking or publicity policies, but allows its component

agencies to determine when it is appropriate to mark and publicize their activities. Appendix IV provides the statutory provisions and agencies' policies, regulations, and guidelines for marking or publicizing U.S. foreign assistance.

USAID Has Established Detailed Policies, Regulations, and Guidelines

To ensure that U.S. taxpayers receive full credit for the foreign assistance they provide, USAID in 2004 undertook a campaign to clearly communicate that USAID foreign assistance is from the American people. This campaign included publication of a Graphic Standards Manual containing new marking guidelines and the development of a new Graphic Identity.⁶ In January 2006, USAID revised its foreign assistance awards regulations to include new marking requirements for USAID staff and all nongovernmental organizations (NGO) receiving funding under grants and cooperative agreements.⁷ The regulations require that all programs, projects, activities, public communications, and commodities partially or fully funded by a USAID grant or cooperative agreement be marked appropriately overseas with the Graphic Standards Manual's Graphic Identity of a size and prominence equal to or greater than the recipient's or other donors' logos or identities. The regulations provide for presumptive exceptions and waivers to the marking requirements.⁸ USAID's final guidance for contractors, ADS 320, issued January 8, 2007, includes more comprehensive information on the process for preparing and approving marking plans and branding strategies in contracts and also eliminates the use of the USAID brand on NGO's and contractors' business cards.

⁶In this report, we will refer to the new USAID graphic identity as the USAID brand.

⁷The revised regulations for marking assistance provided under grants and cooperative agreements are at 22 C.F.R. 226.91. AAPD 05-11 (Dec.13, 2005) implements the marking requirements of 22 C.F.R. 226.91. Also, see USAID policy at ADS 320 and its acquisition regulations at AIDAR Clause 752.7009 (Jan. 1993) regarding marking guidance for USAID contractors. Grants and cooperative agreements are legal instruments for the transfer of money, property, or services to the recipient to accomplish a public purpose. Under grants substantial involvement of the granting agency is not anticipated, whereas under cooperative agreements, the donor agency anticipates it will have substantial involvement in the implementation of the agreement.

⁸The intent of the USAID marking requirement is that programs and projects are marked, not people. Marking of vehicles, offices, and other administrative items for internal use by the recipient is not required.

Also, USAID's Food for Peace program regulations⁹ prescribe the terms and conditions governing activities under Title II of P.L. 480, including provisions for implementing the marking requirements of section 202 of that law. The regulations require that, to the maximum extent practical, public recognition be given in the media that Title II-funded commodities or foreign assistance have been "provided through the friendship of the American people as food for peace"; cooperating sponsors, to the extent feasible, display banners, posters, and similar items at project sites containing similar identifying information; and, unless otherwise specified, bags or other containers of commodities packaged for shipment be similarly marked. The regulations also require that containers of donated commodities packaged or repackaged by cooperating sponsors prior to distribution be plainly labeled with the USAID emblem, and, where practicable, with the legend, "Provided through the friendship of the American people as food for peace."

In addition, USAID has established regulations prescribing rules and procedures for the marking of shipping containers and commodities under commodity transactions financed by USAID. These regulations require that suppliers of such commodities be responsible for ensuring that all export packaging and the commodities carry the official USAID emblem, except where USAID prescribes otherwise in the case of commodities. The regulations also prescribe the manner in which the export shipping containers, cartons, or boxes are to be marked; how the USAID emblem is to be affixed to the containers; the size, design, and color of the emblem; exceptions to the requirement to affix the emblem; and waivers to the marking requirement where it is found to be impracticable.

To publicize its foreign assistance, in 2004, USAID established communications guidelines and a network of over 100 communications specialists located at USAID missions around the world to promote the agency's foreign assistance abroad. The guidelines for communications specialists delineate their role, which is to be a comprehensive resource for information regarding USAID's work and its impact on the citizens of the host country, and provide guidance on the activities the communication specialists may undertake to fulfill this role. These outreach functions include responding to inquiries about USAID programs, collaborating with the embassy public affairs office on strategies, speech

⁹22 C.F.R. 211.

writing for the USAID mission director and others, preparing press releases, and coordinating Web site updates.

State Policy Allows Program Managers and Ambassadors Discretion for Marking and Publicizing Assistance

According to State officials, State's policy provides that department program managers and country ambassadors use their discretion to determine when it is appropriate to mark and publicize U.S. foreign assistance. As a result, some programs mark and publicize activities while others do not. For example, State has established guidelines for project implementers to acknowledge State's support for two presidential initiatives that State manages: MEPI and PEPFAR. The MEPI guidelines require NGOs that implement MEPI programs to include, in all public programs and publications, standard language acknowledging the support of MEPI and State. For PEPFAR, the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator has instructed its implementing agencies to place the PEPFAR logo on all materials procured as part of the PEPFAR initiative. However, more sensitive Department of State activities are generally not marked or publicized. For example, according to State officials, in Peru, it is embassy policy to decide on a case-by-case basis, in close consultation with the host government, the appropriate type and extent of publicity to give counter-narcotics foreign assistance activities done in partnership with the host government. In addition, State officials noted that other assistance programs, such as those focusing on counter-terrorism and weapons proliferation, are not generally marked, but these efforts may be publicized.

Most Agencies Have Established Some Requirements or Guidance for Marking and Publicizing Foreign Assistance

Agencies' efforts in establishing requirements or guidance for marking and publicizing their foreign assistance include the following:

- USDA has issued regulations¹⁰ for its Foreign Agricultural Service that establish labeling requirements for commodities donated under its program for international food for education and child nutrition. The regulations require containers of commodities packaged or repackaged by a cooperating sponsor to indicate that the commodities are furnished by the people of the United States of America; if the commodities are not packaged, the cooperating sponsor must display such items as banners or posters with similar information. The Foreign Agricultural Service also has included standard language in all its food aid agreements with its

¹⁰Regulations issued at 7 C.F.R. Part 1599.

implementing partners requiring them to highlight their programs in local media in the recipient country, identify USDA as the funding source in the media and to program participants, and to recognize USDA in all USDA-funded printed material.

- DOD has established policy and program guidance for publicizing overseas humanitarian activities to ensure their maximum visibility and publicity. The policy and guidance provides that project planners and implementers will coordinate appropriate public affairs activities with embassy and combatant command public affairs officers, and, where appropriate, provide some tangible or visible marker of DOD involvement at the site of the activity.
- HHS has established its own policies related to marking and publicizing HHS activities. HHS officials told us that the agency's departmentwide grants policy, as required by its annual appropriations acts, provides that all HHS grants recipients must acknowledge U.S. assistance when publicly describing a project. Also, HHS health projects are generally marked with the logos of HHS and the other HHS units such as the Centers for Disease Control or the National Institutes of Health that are involved in implementing the foreign assistance. HHS carries out foreign assistance programs under PEPFAR and the President's Malaria Initiative; HHS officials stated that the Office of the U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator has instructed HHS and its operating divisions to place the PEPFAR logo on all materials procured as part of the PEPFAR Initiative.
- Treasury officials said they were not aware of agencywide policy on marking and publicizing foreign assistance activities. However, OTA issued its own marking policy, effective December 7, 2006, for certain types of foreign assistance provided by that office. This policy requires that the foreign assistance must be identified with the seal of the Treasury and the tagline: "From the American People." The policy covers any material, goods, or equipment provided by OTA to foreign government agencies or central banks; any public communications intended for distribution to foreign government officials; and any training courses or conferences sponsored and financed by OTA for the benefit of foreign government officials. In addition, the policy contains presumptive exceptions for waiving the marking requirements.
- While MCC's organic legislation, the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003, does not contain an explicit marking or publicity requirement for the foreign assistance it authorizes, MCC provides for such a requirement in its country compacts. MCC has distributed a marking and publicity policy that, according to agency officials, requires recipient countries and

accountable entities to provide marking and publicity requirements to acknowledge the foreign assistance from MCC as being from the American people.

- However, Justice officials said they rely on individual Justice agencies to determine when it would be appropriate to mark and publicize their activities. Justice officials said they have not issued guidance on assistance marking and publicity, and added that most of the agency's foreign assistance is not marked because of its sensitive nature. Some Justice officials said that they follow embassy guidance on when to mark and publicize the agency's foreign assistance activities. For example, Justice program managers in Indonesia and Serbia told us they had received no guidance from Justice headquarters on marking and publicizing agency activities, and the program manager in Indonesia said he follows embassy guidance in determining what to mark and how to do so.

Foreign Assistance Marking Efforts and Publicity Have Varied

To increase awareness of U.S. assistance abroad, key agencies that we reviewed used various methods to mark and to publicize some of their activities and exercised flexibility in deciding when it was appropriate to do so. These agencies used different methods of marking, or visibly acknowledging, their assistance, including applying graphic identities or logos on such things as publications and project signage. In addition, agencies generally used embassy public affairs offices for publicizing, or disseminating information about, the source of their assistance and, in some cases, augmented these efforts with their own publicity methods.

Agencies Marking Efforts Vary

USAID has established the most detailed processes of uniformly marking its assistance activities, while other key agencies either mark their assistance activities in some way, or they provide reasons for not marking some assistance. USAID has established a universal brand that conveys that the assistance is from USAID and the American people. Other agencies either use multiple logos, and in some cases, they use logos that do not convey that the agency is a U.S. entity or that the United States is the source of the assistance.

USAID Using New Brand to Mark Its Foreign Assistance Activities

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks, recognizing the connection between national security and the good will toward the United States that could be created if more accurate information about U.S. foreign assistance was widely known, agency officials determined that they should portray more complete and accurate information about USAID foreign assistance. To

help focus its image abroad, USAID developed its new brand by updating a former USAID logo, and combining it with the agency brand name and a tagline, “From the American People.”

Although USAID first began marking assistance over four decades ago, agency officials acknowledged that it has not always systematically or effectively marked its foreign assistance. USAID had existing standards that specified that its foreign assistance activities were to be marked, but these standards were not consistently enforced; and at times, U.S. foreign assistance was marked with the implementer’s logos and program names instead of the agency logo. Agency officials told us that it was often difficult for people to know that the foreign assistance they received was coming from the United States. USAID officials said they viewed the multiple brands used by USAID implementers as potentially confusing to recipients. However, in the past, some USAID staff believed that spending money on marking foreign assistance could take away funds from other foreign assistance activities, and therefore were reluctant to incur these costs.¹¹ Also, USAID staff and implementers were concerned that communication about foreign assistance could potentially draw unwanted attention to the projects and make staff vulnerable. Figure 1 illustrates changes of USAID’s brand over time, and figure 2 illustrates the use of USAID’s current brand.

Figure 1: Changes of USAID’s Brand



Source: USAID.

¹¹A number of representatives of assistance organizations told us that it was not difficult or very costly to mark assistance.

Figure 2: USAID Sign with New USAID Brand at a Health Clinic in Indonesia



Source: GAO.

Other Agencies' Marking Efforts Vary

While other departments and agencies also mark the foreign assistance that they provide, these efforts vary. In some cases, the markings used do not convey that the donor is a U.S. entity or that the United States is the source of the foreign assistance.

State Department Marking Efforts

State gives discretion to its department program managers and ambassadors to determine when and how it is appropriate to mark and publicize U.S. foreign assistance. Marking decisions are made at each U.S. embassy to account for the sensitive nature of the foreign assistance and the local conditions in country. State officials told us that, because State's foreign assistance addresses a wide range of issues—such as narcotics control, international law enforcement, terrorism, weapons proliferation, non-U.N. peacekeeping operations, refugee relief, the Global AIDS Initiative, and economic support—they did not see any benefits from using a single visual image or mark. Therefore, embassies have used a number of

symbols to mark their foreign assistance, including program logos, a bureau seal or unit name, the Department of State seal, or an embassy logo.

State manages MEPI, and has agreements with its project implementers on how MEPI assistance, which can include publications, products, and services, is to be acknowledged. State generally leaves most decisions on when to use the program logo to its implementing organizations but specifies that, if used with logos of other cofunding organizations, the MEPI logo should not be smaller than the others. Additionally, State has developed more than one version of the MEPI logo, one of which does not include the name of either the United States or the Department of State (see fig. 3).

Figure 3: MEPI Logos



Source: The Department of State.

The lack of clear marking requirements has at times created confusion with project implementers regarding the appropriate use of the MEPI logo. For example, in one instance a project implementer copied the logo without the U.S. tagline—“U.S.-Middle East Partnership Initiative”—from the MEPI Web site and used it on promotional materials, when the logo with the tagline would have been more appropriate, according to MEPI officials. In addition, a small portion of MEPI projects are implemented by

USAID, and these projects follow USAID branding policy, according to an agreement between State and USAID.

In other State marking efforts that clearly identified the U.S. government as the source of foreign assistance, there were differences in appearance from one mark to another. For example:

- In a Peruvian police training academy that prepared recruits to support narcotics eradication teams, a computer room provided by State's Narcotics Affairs Section was marked with the unit's initials and the U.S. and Peruvian flags (see fig. 4).

Figure 4: State Marking at Peruvian Police Training Academy



Source: GAO.

- In Montenegro, a U.S. foreign assistance site was marked with a sign that included the Department of State emblem and the emblem of Serbia-Montenegro with a description of the project in English and the local language.
- In Serbia, State foreign assistance was marked with an embassy-developed logo in which the U.S. and Serbian flags were joined to form a bridge (see fig. 5).

Figure 5: U.S. Embassy/Serbia-Developed Flag Logo Marks an Environmental Project



Source: The Department of State.

USDA, DOD, and HHS Marking Efforts

Other agencies generally determine how to mark their foreign assistance on a program-by-program basis. For example:

- USDA specifies marking requirements in the programs' grants and cooperative agreements. USDA's food aid agreements require that the U.S. government is identified as the sources of the foreign assistance, while USDA grants and cooperative agreements that provide technical foreign assistance specify that printed materials include an acknowledgement that the United States is the source of the foreign assistance (see fig. 6). For Title II food programs managed by USAID, the USAID mark is used.

Figure 6: USDA Food Aid Marking



Source: USDA.

- DOD marks its humanitarian foreign assistance products and sites. For example, DOD's humanitarian daily ration packages were marked with a U.S. flag and a statement that the food gift was from the people of the United States. In South Africa, a sign for a DOD humanitarian foreign assistance project was marked with the U.S. and South African flags (see figs. 7 and 8).

Figure 7: DOD Marking of Humanitarian Daily Rations



Source: USAID.

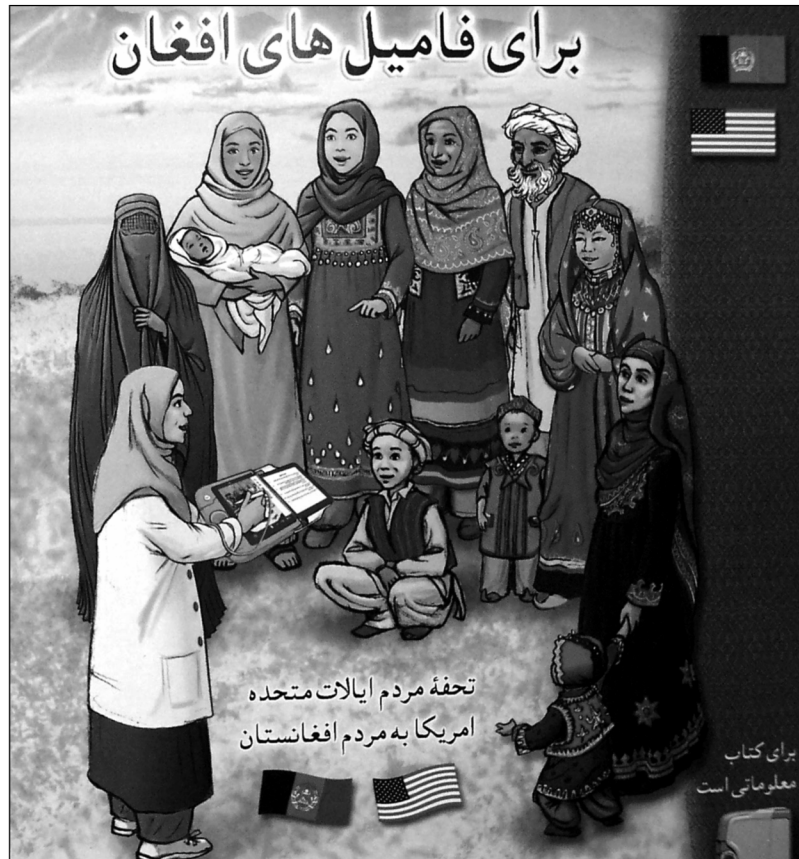
Figure 8: DOD Marking of School Constructed in South Africa



Source: GAO.

- HHS' health projects are generally marked with the HHS logo and those of other HHS units involved in implementing the foreign assistance. For example, an HHS-developed book—which was written for use in Afghanistan and provided information on HIV/AIDS—used U.S. and Afghani flags to mark the material. It also included a recorded message in two local languages stating that the book was being provided by U.S. taxpayers (see fig. 9).

Figure 9: HHS Marking of Talking Book in Afghanistan



Source: GAO.

Agencies Exercise Flexibility in Making Decisions on When to Mark Foreign Assistance

The agencies we reviewed stated that when making decisions on whether or how to mark foreign assistance, they exercise flexibility to allow for variations in the nature of foreign assistance, risks to implementers, or other special circumstances that foreign assistance activities may entail. Some of these activities are more readily marked than others. Moreover, circumstances may occur when U.S. foreign assistance marking may need to be modified or withheld due to safety, political, or other concerns, such as concerns associated with advising high-level government officials or providing foreign assistance in volatile issue areas such as narcotics control. Also, at certain times, such as before elections, marking of foreign assistance activities may be suspended to remove any association of U.S. foreign assistance with certain issues—such as the connection between funding a health clinic and the issue of reproductive health. In other cases,

marking may be withheld to ensure the local government's ownership of the programs is not called into question.

USAID and OTA have established a process for determining when to modify its marking requirements to allow for the differences in the nature of foreign assistance projects and special circumstances that may be related to foreign assistance implementation. USAID's marking regulations identify a number of conditions under which the agreement officer can consider approving exceptions to marking requirements.¹² For example, in Serbia, in order to not compromise the perceived neutrality of program activities and diminish the credibility of materials produced during the course of the project, USAID approved exceptions to marking requirements for certain activities associated with a civil society project in public policy advocacy and reform. USAID regulations also allow for the possibility that, political, safety, or security conditions could warrant a request to the mission director or the most senior USAID officer at the mission for a full or partial waiver of the marking requirements. For example, in Indonesia, the mission director approved a waiver of the marking requirements for a project designed to demonstrate democracy's compatibility with Islam because of threats from religious fundamentalists to the safety of the individuals involved in the project. In December 2006, OTA had formalized its guidance on determining when marking requirements for a particular project should be modified or suspended. While this guidance states that much of OTA's work that includes oral advice or technical assistance provided to foreign governments and central banks is not marked, its rules for marking any commodities, public communications, or training courses provided by OTA may be waived in writing by the OTA Director or designee for conditions that include safety or security concerns, adverse political impact, and potential compromise of the intrinsic independence of a program or materials such as public service announcements.

¹²Rationales for withholding marking requirements include marking that would compromise the intrinsic independence or neutrality of a program, diminish credibility of assistance products, undercut country ownership of assistance products, incur excessive cost or be impractical for marking certain products, and violate international laws.

Embassies' Public Affairs Offices Generally Publicize Most U.S. Assistance

The U.S. ambassador, as chief of mission, has authority over all U.S. government activities in a foreign country, and the embassy public affairs office publicizes U.S. foreign assistance activities through press releases, Web sites,¹³ and speeches by U.S. officials. To enhance publicity of its foreign assistance programs, USAID has also, as mentioned earlier, established a network of communications specialists to increase awareness of these programs in the host country. At the time of our field visits, the public affairs officers and USAID communication specialists were still defining their roles in publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. For example, the ambassador in Liberia and the public affairs officer in Indonesia expressed the opinion that all U.S. foreign assistance should be publicized by the embassy public affairs sections and did not see the need for separate USAID communications specialists.

U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Foreign Assistance Publicity Efforts

Following are some examples of foreign assistance publicity efforts conducted by the embassy in the countries we visited.

- In Indonesia, in fiscal year 2003, the public affairs office developed a program to enhance media coverage of U.S. assistance and publicized 11 assistance projects. In February 2006, the embassy issued a press release on the distribution of books and school supplies funded by the United States to Indonesian school children. The distribution, done in cooperation with two leading Islamic organizations, supported the mutual goal of improving education and highlighted shared values between the two countries.
- In Liberia, in June 2006, the embassy issued a press release on the launching of a USAID funded radio teacher training program.
- In Peru, in June 2006, the public affairs office issued a press release on joint U.S.-Peruvian military exercises, which included DOD humanitarian foreign assistance to construct health clinics, done in conjunction with the exercises. These efforts were publicized to dispel citizens' anxiety over U.S. military exercises in that country. However, because of the sensitivity of some other activities in Peru, according to State officials, it is embassy policy to decide on a case-by-case basis, in close consultation with the

¹³The Bureau of Public Diplomacy in Washington prepares articles on U.S. policies, society, and assistance that are translated into seven world languages (Arabic, Chinese, French, Persian, Russian, Spanish, and English) and made available to embassies to include in their Web sites if they choose to do so.

host government, the appropriate type and extent of publicity to give counter-narcotics foreign assistance activities done in partnership with the host government.

- In Serbia, the embassy public affairs office has issued press releases on U.S. foreign assistance provided by USAID, State, USDA, DOD, Justice and other agencies. For example, in April 2006, the embassy issued a press release on a Justice-implemented program to support the organized crime and war crimes specialized institutions.
- In South Africa, the public affairs office has issued press releases on U.S. foreign assistance provided by USAID, State, HHS, MCC, and other agencies. For example, in January 2006, the embassy issued a press release on a HHS -implemented HIV vaccine research initiative.

USAID Foreign Assistance Publicity Efforts

In 2004, USAID established and trained a network of development outreach and communications specialists¹⁴ to enhance the skills of officers who handle public outreach and media and improve coordination among USAID staff, foreign assistance implementing partners, and the embassy public affairs sections. An assessment of public diplomacy in the Muslim world, issued in 2003 by the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, concluded that too few people knew the extent of USAID's activities and recommended closer integration of the public diplomacy activities of agencies that administer foreign assistance.¹⁵ The communications specialists are responsible for publicizing USAID foreign assistance (1) by developing public outreach and media materials and strategies and (2) by providing general communications support through writing, media relations, Web site development, and review of foreign assistance proposals. These specialists also work with public relations staff hired by foreign assistance implementing organizations to support them in addressing community relations issues and publicizing their projects. USAID has now placed these specialists at most missions; a few large missions have been assigned more than one communication specialist, while at a few small missions, program officers have been asked to perform these tasks. The communication specialists' resources vary based on individual USAID missions' decisions on how to fund their work

¹⁴There were 102 communications specialists working in 73 countries as of September 20, 2006.

¹⁵Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, *Changing Minds, Winning Peace: A New Strategic Direction for U.S. Public Diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim World* (Washington, D.C.: Oct. 1, 2003).

and whether USAID headquarters has provided additional funds for communication pilot activities.

Following are examples of initiatives communications specialists have carried out.

- A pilot¹⁶ communication campaign project in Indonesia, which was funded by USAID headquarters, involved communications officers overseeing the development and production of a radio, TV, and print advertisement campaign that focused on health care, education, and economic growth partnerships between American and Indonesian people. The purpose of this and other communication campaign pilots was to identify effective practices in foreign assistance publicity.
- In Peru, communications specialists worked with implementing organizations to develop and distribute—for eventual broadcast on regional television stations—a video of a major U.S. alternative development¹⁷ foreign assistance project, which involved building a road in northern Peru to provide farmers with greater access to markets. On another project, a communication officer was contacted by television producers who were preparing a video about an ecological project that had received USAID foreign assistance funding. At the communications officer's suggestion, the producers interviewed the USAID mission director to highlight how USAID supported the project. The final film was shown on television.
- In Serbia, two newly hired communication specialists redesigned a Web site and, subsequently, developed questions on public awareness of USAID's foreign assistance activities that were incorporated into the embassy's public opinion poll.

¹⁶In 2005 and 2006, USAID, Bureau for Legislative and Public Affairs funded pilot communication campaigns in Jordan and West Bank, Gaza, in addition to Indonesia. A more limited campaign was also implemented in Lebanon. In Egypt, Legislative and Public Affairs has started to identify messages and themes with a nationwide survey to define audiences and develop strategies for future communication campaigns in the country; and in Colombia, Legislative and Public Affairs helped develop a survey to establish a baseline to evaluate the USAID outreach strategy.

¹⁷The Alternative Development Program supports the reduction of illegal coca crops in targeted areas of Peru. The program (1) helps families to increase their income from legal crops and other income generating activities, (2) improves access to markets for legal goods and services, (3) improves living conditions for citizens, (4) strengthens local governments, and (5) raises awareness of the environmental and social damage caused by drug production and use.

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- According to mission officials in South Africa, the outreach efforts of the communications specialist there have resulted in an improved perception among the local population of USAID/South Africa programs, which were previously hampered by negative comments made by high-level South African government officials in the late 1990s. In addition, the communications specialist conducted five training workshops, primarily for PEPFAR partners, on how to write stories of successful projects. The workshops resulted in more than 40 stories submitted by implementing partners, which were posted on various U.S. government Web sites and in publications. This effort was also sanctioned by the embassy public affairs section.

Challenges to Marking and Publicizing May Result in Missed Opportunities to Increase Public Awareness of U.S. Foreign Assistance

We identified some challenges to marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance that may result in missed opportunities to increase public awareness of U.S. foreign assistance. First, little reliable work has been done to assess the impact of U.S. assistance on foreign citizens' awareness of that assistance. Second, although the newly appointed DFA has begun to develop governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance, it is unclear to what extent this policy will be implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under State's direct authority.

Agencies Conduct Some Research on Impact of U.S. Foreign Assistance Activities, but Lack Clear Guidance for Such Research

State conducts some research¹⁸ on public perceptions of the United States and its foreign assistance activities. State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research conducts approximately 120 surveys per year in about 80 countries, according to a State official. However, these surveys focus on tracking trends in the foreign public's perception of the United States to serve U.S. public diplomacy efforts and do not assess public awareness of U.S. foreign assistance activities or the effectiveness of publicity activities. Some individual embassies perform surveys of public attitudes and awareness relating to U.S. foreign assistance activities. For example, the surveys commissioned by the embassy in Serbia and Montenegro attempt to measure public awareness of foreign assistance programs in addition to measuring public perception of the United States. However, the surveys do not attempt to link any foreign assistance programs to the level of

¹⁸Research instruments include surveys and focus group discussions.

awareness, but instead track changes in the level of awareness for a given period of time.

Multiagency Marking and Publicity of Tsunami Assistance

According to USAID, U.S. humanitarian foreign assistance provided following the December 2004 tsunami contributed to increasing favorable public opinion about the United States in Indonesia. USAID foreign assistance provided to victims of the tsunami disaster in Indonesia was marked with the new USAID brand. The USAID Mission in Indonesia encouraged its implementing agencies to use the newly developed brand even before its use had been mandated. Other U.S. aid—such as U.S. military humanitarian foreign assistance, which included visits by U.S. military ships; the U.S. Naval Ship Mercy to provide medical care and supplies and the USS Abraham Lincoln to provide humanitarian support; and USDA disaster food donations—was also well marked. According to embassy officials, in addition to the extensive marking of U.S. foreign assistance, the foreign assistance efforts were widely publicized. The embassy sent an information officer to the disaster area to work as a press spokesperson, and the military U.S. Pacific Command sent public affairs staff to Indonesia to publicize the military effort. Embassy and USAID officials said that the clear attribution of the source of U.S. foreign assistance, nature of the foreign assistance, the publicity effort, and the immediacy of the response were significant factors that helped improve the U.S. image in Indonesia, where favorable public opinion of the United States had been at about 15 percent prior to the tsunami disaster, in 2003; increased to 38 percent soon after the tsunami; and in 2006, decreased to 30 percent.

USAID also conducts some research. The agency requires that its communications specialists develop a communications strategy that includes methods to measure impact, and USAID's communications manual encourages communications specialists to monitor local media coverage and obtain and analyze locally conducted polls as a means to measure results. The agency has contracted with polling firms to conduct eight public opinion surveys in various locations overseas—including one survey in Egypt, two in Indonesia, one in Jordan (along with a focus group), one in Colombia, and three in the West Bank and Gaza. According to a USAID official, these surveys were designed to test different methods for conducting broad-based public affairs campaigns. The surveys included questions to assess (1) the extent of awareness of USAID and U.S. foreign assistance; (2) attitudes toward USAID and U.S. foreign assistance among recipients of that foreign assistance; and (3) which communication sources, ranging from billboards and magazines to television and the Internet, may be most effective in reaching target audiences. Although each of the USAID surveys we reviewed provide information about the extent of awareness of USAID and U.S. assistance, the surveys in Colombia, Egypt, Jordan, and the West Bank and Gaza were not designed to compare pre- and post-campaign levels of awareness. A USAID official agreed that pre- and post-branding measurement of public opinion was important to measure the impact of USAID's branding activities, know which branding activities were most effective, and use the lessons learned to improve USAID's branding activities.

Recently, USAID has begun to provide some guidance to communications specialists responsible for managing research programs. USAID hired a contractor to train communications specialists on public opinion polling. The training instructs communications specialists on issues such as the importance and benefits of polling, types of polling, the most effective ways to deliver messages, principles of sampling in polling, and how to hire a qualified agency to conduct the polls. Also, USAID officials said they are developing a manual to provide guidance on communications research instruments, primarily focused on polling. The manual will include key criteria for evaluating the quality of the research instruments and a standard set of questions to include in research instruments.

Ad Council¹⁹ executives whom we met with emphasized that successful quantitative research, such as surveys, to measure results of efforts are key practices they use in their public service campaigns. Also they conduct pre- and post-tracking studies to benchmark attitudes and behaviors. In addition, they examine best practices, including areas where the practice has worked well and learned how to emulate them. In addition, these executives examine cases where their efforts have yielded poor results and implement some policies that could alleviate the situation. See appendix II for additional key practices identified by the Ad Council executives.

The United States Lacks Governmentwide Guidance for Marking and Publicizing Its Assistance

While some agencies have established policies, regulations, and guidelines on marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance, we found that USAID missions and all federal agencies and presidential initiatives providing assistance overseas have not received clear and consistent direction on marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance. During our field visits to five countries between May and August 2006, we found that three of the five embassies lacked specific guidance that addresses assistance publicity. Embassy Mission Performance Plans are the means by which an embassy aligns its plans, programs, and resources with the U.S. government's international affairs strategy, including publicizing foreign assistance. Only one Mission Performance Plan—for Serbia and Montenegro—listed foreign assistance publicity as an embassy priority and established that the embassy would increase its outreach activities and aggressive advertising of U.S. foreign assistance by (1) improving media coverage, (2) coordinating public diplomacy activities at the mission to improve synergy and publicity of foreign assistance programs, and (3) using polling and focus group information to help direct these efforts. The embassy was also planning to expand exchange programs that would bring individuals from Serbia and Montenegro to the United States. The ambassador said that he became aware that U.S. foreign assistance was not widely known in Serbia and Montenegro after he arrived at the mission and saw that implementing partners often used project logos that

¹⁹The Ad Council is a private, nonprofit organization that marshals volunteer talent from the advertising and communications industries, the facilities of the media, and the resources of the business and nonprofit communities to deliver critical messages to the American public. The Ad Council produces, distributes, and promotes thousands of public service campaigns on behalf of nonprofit organizations and government agencies in issue areas such as improving the quality of life for children, preventative health, education, community well being, environmental preservation, and strengthening families.

did not clearly communicate that the foreign assistance was from the United States. He identified a need to more clearly portray U.S. foreign assistance and made it a priority for the embassy. In addition, the Mission Performance Plan for Liberia called for publicizing U.S. efforts to rebuild security services and promote respect for human rights.

In the five countries that we visited, we also found that assistance is publicized by public affairs officers on an ad hoc basis and, as a result, embassies may miss opportunities to publicize their foreign assistance activities. For example, in Indonesia, the USDA attaché told us that an exchange program that brings agricultural specialists to the United States for training has not been publicized by the embassy because the public affairs officer was not aware of it. Also in Indonesia, the public affairs officer almost missed a publicity opportunity when the officer was initially opposed to issuing a press release on an event to promote a teacher-training program that was attended by representatives of an NGO and 15 Indonesian institutions, because communicating about the program was not an embassy priority. The public affairs officer later reconsidered and issued a press release.

Moreover, agencies at embassies may receive conflicting guidance on marking their assistance activities when an agency's headquarters position on marking differs from an embassy's position. After USAID headquarters developed its logo in 2004, the Serbia and Montenegro embassy developed a logo (featuring the American and Serbian and Montenegrin flags) and encouraged all agencies to use it. Most agencies used the logo to mark and publicize their foreign assistance activities, and the logo was also used on the embassy Web site. Subsequently, the USAID mission developed and used a logo that combined the embassy logo and USAID's logo. Although the USAID mission's logo was different from the embassy logo, the ambassador agreed to the compromise, and USAID used that logo to mark and publicize its assistance activities. However, in June 2006, USAID headquarters told the mission that this new logo violated USAID standards and required the mission to discard that logo and use USAID's standard logo.

DFA Faces Key Challenges in Coordinating Marking and Publicizing Efforts

The DFA has acknowledged that the lack of governmentwide guidance on marking and publicizing foreign assistance activities limits agencies' ability to make recipients aware of the extent of U.S. assistance. In July 2006, the DFA requested that his office and the Bureau for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs work together to ensure that U.S. embassies, USAID missions, and all government agencies receive clear and consistent guidance on marking and publicizing U.S. assistance. Also, the DFA

recommended that all foreign assistance be unified under one agency-neutral brand that would ensure that the assistance is recognized and associated with the United States. The DFA and the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy are currently developing a proposal to provide guidance to all federal agencies in 2007.

Despite these efforts to develop governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance, it is unclear to what extent this guidance will be implemented by agencies whose foreign assistance programs are not under the DFA's direct authority. According to DFA officials, the DFA has budget authority over USAID, most State foreign assistance activities, and activities of agencies funded by State or USAID. Also, the DFA will have authority to coordinate the activities of some foreign assistance activities managed by other agencies, because, according to DFA officials, any activities funded by USAID or State that are implemented by other agencies will fall under the authority of the DFA. For example, the DFA will have the authority to coordinate some of the technical foreign assistance and training programs administered by the Department of Justice that are funded by State. However, according to DFA officials, the director's office will not have authority over about 20 percent of all U.S. foreign assistance. This includes some of State's programs, such as State's Office of U.S. Global AIDS Coordinator, which is funded separately from the Department of State budget—though DFA officials told us that the DFA's office has reached an oral agreement with the AIDS Coordinator to coordinate their activities. In addition, DFA has no authority over, for example, DOD, HHS, USDA, Treasury, and MCC activities that are funded by sources other than State or USAID.

Conclusions

Some key U.S. agencies providing foreign assistance have established policies, regulations, and guidelines on marking and publicizing U.S. foreign assistance, and some have used varied methods to implement these requirements. Despite these efforts, the United States lacks reliable information to assess the impact of marking and publicity on increasing awareness of U.S. assistance. According to U.S. public service awareness campaign executives with whom we met, quantitative research that includes pre- and post-tracking studies—as well as drawing from lessons learned regarding which types of approaches are working more effectively than others—are key practices that they use in measuring the impact of their awareness campaign. Although State's public opinion polls measure general public opinion trends, they do not specifically provide information on the impact of the U.S. government's overall efforts to increase public awareness of U.S. foreign assistance activities. USAID has only completed

a limited number of surveys to measure public awareness of U.S. assistance, including a public opinion survey of U.S. post-tsunami efforts in Indonesia. According to USAID officials and USAID surveys, marking and publicizing the source of U.S. foreign assistance following the December 2004 tsunami likely contributed to increasing favorable public opinion about the United States in Indonesia. USAID has begun to develop guidance on measuring the effectiveness of its publicity efforts.

In addition, the DFA acknowledges that because there is no governmentwide guidance on marking and publicizing assistance, there may have been missed opportunities to increase recipient awareness of the extent of U.S. foreign assistance. To address this issue, the DFA plans to establish marking and publicizing guidance for all U.S. agencies providing assistance abroad in 2007. However, obtaining the cooperation of those agencies implementing foreign assistance programs not under the DFA's direct authority is critical to a successful U.S. governmentwide marking and publicizing approach and remains a challenge.

Recommendations for Executive Action

To help the United States ensure that recipients of its foreign assistance are aware that this assistance is provided by the United States and its taxpayers, we are making two recommendations.

- To enhance U.S. marking and publicity efforts, and to improve the information used to measure the impact of U.S. marking and publicizing programs, we recommend that the Secretary of State, in consultation with other U.S. executive agencies, develop a strategy, which appropriately utilizes techniques such as surveys and focus groups, to better assess the impact of U.S. marking and publicity programs and activities on public awareness.
- To facilitate State's effort to implement its planned governmentwide guidance for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance programs and activities, we recommend that the Secretary of State, in consultation with other U.S. executive agencies, establish interagency agreements for marking and publicizing all U.S. foreign assistance.

Agency Comments and Our Evaluation

We provided a draft of this report to USAID, State, Agriculture, DOD, HHS, Justice, the Treasury, and MCC. We obtained written comments from State (see app. V). State concurred with our recommendations and indicated that a Policy Coordination Committee formed by the Under Secretary of

State for Public Diplomacy in the National Security Council plans to develop a governmentwide Strategic Communications Plan that will address assessment of marking and publicity programs and will develop governmentwide marking and publicity guidance. We also received technical comments on this draft from USAID, State, DOD, and MCC, which we incorporated where appropriate.

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees, USAID, the Departments of State, Agriculture, Defense, Health and Human Services, Justice, the Treasury, and Millennium Challenge Corporation. We will also make copies available to others upon request. In addition, the report will be available at no charge on the GAO Web site at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-4268. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made major contributions to this report are listed in appendix VI.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jess Ford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" and a distinct "Ford" at the end.

Jess Ford, Director
International Affairs and Trade

Appendix I: Scope and Methodology

To determine the regulations and policies that agencies have established to mark and publicize foreign assistance, we analyzed legislation establishing the statutory basis for marking and publicizing foreign assistance, including legislation providing funding for foreign assistance activities, and organic legislation establishing the various foreign assistance agencies. We reviewed major foreign assistance legislation including the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and Public Law 480. We also reviewed the Intelligence Reform Act of 2004, which assigns the Department of State (State) a coordination role in publicizing foreign assistance, as well as legislation that authorized foreign assistance programs separate from the Foreign Assistance Act, such as the Millennium Challenge Act of 2003 that established the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC). We discussed these laws with agency officials at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), State, the Departments of Agriculture, Defense (DOD), Health and Human Services (HHS), Justice, the Treasury, as well as MCC who are responsible for their implementation as it applies to marking and publicizing their foreign assistance activities. In addition, we reviewed regulations these agencies had established to implement legislative marking requirements related to agencies' policies and other relevant documents. We also discussed the agencies' regulations and policies with cognizant officials at each agency.

To determine how USAID, State, and other agencies are marking and publicizing their foreign assistance activities, we discussed their activities with cognizant officials at their headquarters in Washington, D.C. We also met with representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and contractors in the Washington, D.C., area—such as Food For The Hungry, National Democratic Institute, the American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative, Chemonics, and Development Alternatives, Inc.—who implement many of the agencies' foreign assistance activities. In addition, we traveled to U.S. embassies and USAID missions in Indonesia, Peru, Serbia, Montenegro, and South Africa. In those countries, we (1) met with agency officials at the embassies and missions and representatives of NGOs and contractors who implement foreign assistance activities; (2) collected and analyzed agency documents, regarding their foreign assistance marking and publicizing efforts; and (3) visited several sites in each country to observe marking and publicizing activities of U.S. agencies and their implementing organizations. In particular, we visited various recipients of U.S. foreign assistance in Belgrade, Serbia; Podgorica, Montenegro; and Pretoria, South Africa. We also traveled to Banda Aceh, Indonesia, and several locations in Serbia, Montenegro, and Peru, to observe marking and publicizing activities and

discuss those activities with U.S. government officials, representatives of implementing organizations, and recipients of foreign assistance. We also traveled to Liberia and met with embassy and USAID mission officials.

To determine the challenges the United States faces in marking and publicizing foreign assistance activities, we met with cognizant agency officials in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. embassies and USAID missions in Indonesia, Peru, Serbia, Montenegro, and South Africa. We also analyzed agency documents, including Mission Performance Plans and other policy and guidance documents at headquarters, U.S. embassies, and USAID missions in Indonesia, Peru, Serbia, Montenegro, and South Africa. In addition, we analyzed surveys and polls conducted for USAID and State, communications manuals, and training materials used as part of USAID's and State's efforts to determine foreign audiences' opinions about the United States and their awareness of U.S. foreign assistance activities. Further, we discussed those surveys and polls with cognizant agency officials in USAID and State.

To determine foreign government organizations' marking and publicity practices, we held discussions with representatives of international foreign assistance organizations, including the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program (AusAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU) assistance implemented through the European Agency for Reconstruction, German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). We also reviewed relevant documents provided by these organizations on their marking and publicity practices, including guidelines on marking and communications.

We included in the scope of this review foreign assistance programs administered or implemented by USAID, State, Agriculture, DOD, HHS, Justice, the Treasury, and MCC. Among these entities, we included programs in the following categories—bilateral development foreign assistance; humanitarian assistance; and economic assistance in support of U.S. political and security goals, with the exception of payments to support countries involved in the Middle East Peace Process, including countries of importance in the war on terrorism, and programs that address issues of weapons proliferation. We excluded from the scope of this review multilateral economic contributions or payments that are combined with funds from other donor countries to finance multilateral development projects of international organizations that include the

United Nations, the World Bank, and other multilateral development banks. We also excluded military foreign assistance provided to help selected countries acquire U.S. military equipment and training. We conducted our work from December 2005 through January 2007 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

Appendix II: Key Marking and Publicity Practices Used in the Public Sector

Ad Council executives with whom we met with identified key practices that they use to guide their public service campaigns. These practices relate to areas that we assessed as part of our examination of U.S. government efforts to mark and publicize foreign assistance. Specifically, the key practices identified include the following:

- Determine what is appropriate to be marked. It is important to maintain flexibility and conduct research to ensure that efforts do more good than harm. Be mindful of potential unintended effects of branding.
- Maintain a simple message. Conduct research regarding sensitivity of wording and language.
- Articulate the universal truth or message differently, as appropriate for specific demographics and international backdrops. It is critical to separate programs from political issues to prevent programs and policies from being linked together.
- Use targeting or tailoring to help create connection with audience. Examine best practices, identify where the practices have worked well, and learn how to emulate them. Also examine cases where branding has been ineffective and implement some policies that could alleviate the situation.
- Conduct quantitative research, such as surveys, to measure results of efforts. Conduct pre- and post-tracking studies to benchmark attitudes and behaviors.

Appendix III: Other Governments' Donor Organizations and the GTZ Marking and Publicity Practices

While other governments' donor organizations and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) generally mark and publicize their assistance, none of these organizations have undertaken a campaign to develop a mark for their foreign assistance abroad on the scale that USAID has to date.¹ Like the United States, other governments' organizations generally use marking to gain recipient recognition for their contributions. We found that the six donors and the GTZ generally had some form of marking implementing policies and procedures. However, unlike most U.S. foreign assistance publicizing efforts, other government organizations' efforts to communicate about foreign assistance were more targeted toward their own constituents rather than host country citizens. These organizations generally do not formally monitor or measure their marking or publicity efforts.

Other Governments' Donor Organizations and the GTZ Use Marking to Gain Recognition for Their Contributions

Other governments' donor organizations and the GTZ that we studied generally use marking to gain recognition or maintain domestic support for their contributions. Donor organizations and the GTZ that we contacted identified a number of practices for marking, including adapting such efforts for each host country, and ensuring high-level stakeholder cooperation to facilitate implementation of these marking efforts. Additionally, in some countries, to ensure marking consistency, governments require all organizations, including bilateral donors, to use the national symbol along with the organization's logo. For example, the Australian Government's Overseas Aid Program (AusAID) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) marks include the national symbols of Australia and Canada, respectively, and assistance provided by the European Union (EU) are generally marked with the EU logo. Other organizations, including the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom, GTZ, the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA), and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have their own unique organization logos. In addition, some donors are more flexible than others with their marking requirements. For example, according to representatives of ICEIDA, their marking procedures are not mandatory, but implementing partners often use their marks on publications. Conversely, AusAID requires its partners to mark all of its assistance. Figure 10 illustrates each of the selected organizations' marks.

¹The GTZ is an implementing agency that works on behalf of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Figure 10: Logos of Other Governments' Donor Organizations and the GTZ



Sources: AusAID, CIDA, DFID, EU, GTZ, ICEIDA, JICA.

Other Governments' Donor Organizations and the GTZ, to Varying Degrees, Have Marking Procedures or Guidance

The marking efforts for the six donors and the GTZ that we reviewed have some form of procedures or guidance for implementation. The following provides a brief description of each organization's procedures or guidance.

- AusAID's standard mark is used on its foreign assistance. The organization's written guidelines apply to all contractors and implementing partners to ensure marking consistency. The Australian government has also developed a unique mark and design manual for its Indonesia program.
- CIDA has a corporate identity logo, and grant and contribution agreements require recipients to recognize CIDA's contribution with acknowledgments or use of CIDA's logo in their publications, advertising, and promotional products.
- DFID has a standard mark, which is guided by its Identity Standards Manual. The mark is used mostly for project-based foreign assistance and not budgetary support programs or activities. Humanitarian assistance is branded with the United Kingdom Emergency Aid logo. This branding applies to DFID staff and to large nonperishable items. It will not be used

when it may detract from humanitarian operations or increase risk to staff or beneficiaries.

- The European Union has Visibility Guidelines specifying how technical foreign assistance, supplies and equipment, and infrastructure projects are to be marked.
- GTZ uses a standard logo and a tagline, "German Technical Cooperation" on its information material in partner countries. An optional slogan, "Partner for the Future. Worldwide" may be used. Although not required, the tagline is frequently used on project information, brochures, products, and presentations, and, in partner countries, the name of the country is included.
- ICEIDA uses a standard logo on all of its publications. Although not required, implementing partners often include the mark on their publications.
- JICA has a logo that is to be used on publications, business cards, envelopes, and vehicles. JICA also has a slogan, "For a better tomorrow for all.", and has translated this into English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian. A Corporate Identity Design Manual was produced in 2003 that provides color, font, and usage guidance.

Other Donors' and the GTZ Publicizing Efforts Generally Target Domestic Constituents Rather Than Host Country Recipients

According to representatives of most of the organizations with whom we spoke, domestic constituents and not foreign audiences are the target of their communications about foreign assistance efforts. In contrast to marking intended to ensure that governments receive recognition for their contributions, these organizations' publicizing efforts generally focus on informing the general public in their respective countries about their initiatives to enhance the reputation of the aid agencies, engage the public, create interest among civil society, and highlight success stories. According to ICEIDA, for example, it is required by law to publicize its foreign assistance efforts domestically. The organizations implement these efforts by, among other things, coordinating publicity activities between implementers' and donors' information units; constructing project Web sites; and through other communication mechanisms such as special events, press releases, conferences, publications, Web pages, and plaques.

Two of the organizations required that their projects have a communications plan targeting recipient countries. For example, CIDA requires a communications plan on how to inform the public in the recipient country of their projects prior to approval.

Other Donors' and the GTZ Generally Do Not Formally Monitor or Measure Marking or Publicity Efforts

Only one of the organizations, AusAID, told us that it monitors implementation of its marking and publicity efforts domestically and internationally. AusAID monitoring is done through (1) domestically focused community awareness research and (2) a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures, including press releases, special events, correct markings or signage, and newsletter subscriptions. AusAID also attempts to determine the quality of its relationships with its partners and assesses who the assistance is reaching and how often. Representatives from CIDA and DFID told us that they conduct public opinion surveys, but these surveys are intended to gauge public opinion about the agency or support for assistance in general and not to measure marking or publicity efforts.

Appendix IV: Statutes, Policies, Regulations, and Guidance for Marking or Publicizing Foreign Assistance

Statutory marking or publicizing provision	Content of marking or publicizing provision	Key agencies with covered programs	Key agencies' policies, regulations, and guidance
Section 641 of the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) of 1961, as amended	Provides that "programs under this Act shall be identified appropriately overseas as 'American Aid.' "	HHS Justice State Treasury/OTA USAID	<p>HHS: Follows State policy on placing PEPFAR logo on all materials procured by HHS; policy memorandum on the appropriate use of logos on conference material; policy on marking health projects.</p> <p>Justice: Relies on individual component agencies to determine appropriateness of marking or publicizing activities.</p> <p>State: State Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, Part II, Attachment 1-MEPI.</p> <p>Treasury: OTA Instruction 4035.1—guidance for marking certain types of assistance.</p> <p>USAID: 22 C.F.R. Part 226, sec. 226.91— regulations prescribing marking requirements for grants and cooperative agreements; 22 C.F.R. Part 201, sec. 201.31(d)—regulations regarding marking shipping containers and commodities; AIDAR Clause 752.7999—standard clause in contracts regarding marking of foreign assistance; ADS 320-policy directives and procedures on marking USAID-funded activities; AAPD 05-11—policy directive regarding acquisition and assistance regulations and procedures.</p>
Section 202 of Public Law 480 (P. L. 480)	Requires that, to the extent practicable, commodities provided under that act be clearly identified with appropriate markings in the local language as being furnished by "the people of the United States."	USDA USAID	<p>USDA: 7 C.F.R. Part 1599, sec. 1599.12(b)— regulations on labeling of commodities donated under USDA's international food education and child nutrition program.</p> <p>USAID: 22 C.F.R. Part 226, sec. 226.91— regulations prescribing marking requirements for grants and cooperative agreements; 22 C.F.R. Part 211, sec. 211.5(h)—regulations prescribing marking and publicity requirements for USAID's Food for Peace program; 22 C.F.R. Part 201, sec. 201.31(d)— regulations regarding marking shipping containers and commodities.</p>
Section 403(f) of Public Law 480 (P. L. 480)	Requires that foreign countries and private entities receiving P.L. 480 commodities will widely publicize "to the extent practicable" in the media that the commodities are provided "through the friendship of the American people as food for peace."	USDA USAID	<p>USDA: 7 C.F.R. Part 1599, sec. 1599.12(b)— regulations on labeling for commodities donated under USDA's international food education and child nutrition program.</p> <p>USAID: 22 C.F.R. Part 211, sec. 211.5(h)—regulations on marking and publicity requirements for USAID's Food for Peace program.</p>

**Appendix IV: Statutes, Policies, Regulations,
and Guidance for Marking or Publicizing
Foreign Assistance**

Statutory marking or publicizing provision	Content of marking or publicizing provision	Key agencies with covered programs	Key agencies' policies, regulations, and guidance
Section 7109 of Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004	Directed the Secretary of State to coordinate the public diplomacy activities of federal agencies and called for cooperation between State and USAID to ensure that information related to U.S. foreign assistance is widely disseminated.	State USAID	State: None USAID: None
Established pursuant to agency policy rather than statutory provision		MCC DOD	MCC: Standards for Global Marking—guidelines on the use and placement of MCC logo or other appropriate logos. DOD: Policy and Program Guidance for Overseas Humanitarian, Disaster, and Civic Aid Activities—policy and guidance for overseas humanitarian, disaster, and civic aid activities and assistance.

Sources: The Departments of Agriculture, Defense, HHS, Justice, State, and the Treasury; USAID and MCC.

Appendix V: Comments from the Department of State



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

FEB 21 2007

Ms. Jacquelyn Williams-Bridgers
Managing Director
International Affairs and Trade
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20548-0001

Dear Ms. Williams-Bridgers:

We appreciate the opportunity to review your draft report, "FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: Actions Needed to Better Assess the Impact of Agencies Marking and Publicizing Efforts," GAO Job Code 320386.

The enclosed Department of State comments are provided for incorporation with this letter as an appendix to the final report.

If you have any questions concerning this response, please contact Frances Marine, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of the Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance at (202) 647-2627.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bradford R. Higgins".

Bradford R. Higgins

cc: GAO – Zina Merritt
F – Amb. Randall L. Tobais
State/OIG – Mark Duda

**Department of State Comments on GAO Draft Report
Foreign Assistance: Actions Needed to Better Assess the Impact of
Agencies' Marking and Publicizing Efforts,
(GAO-07-277, GAO Code 320386)**

The State Department appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report, "Foreign Assistance: Actions Needed to Better Assess the Impact of Agencies' Marking and Publicizing Efforts."

1) **General Comment—Recent Improvements in Interagency**

Collaboration: This GAO report highlights several examples of the need to better define roles between State Department Public Affairs Officers (PAOs) and USAID Development Outreach & Communications Specialists (DOCS). For instance, on the bottom of page 23, the report cites State Department officials in Liberia and Indonesia who seemed to hold the opinion that there is no need for separate USAID communications specialists. Such examples do not reflect various steps already taken to improve interagency collaboration in general, and State/USAID cooperation in particular, including:

- a. ***Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) on Public Diplomacy & Strategic Communications:*** In 2006, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes formed a new policy coordinating committee. Its secretariat is housed at the National Security Council and members are top public affairs officials from across the interagency, including State, USAID, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Department of Defense, Department of the Treasury, Department of Health & Human Services, Department of Justice, and Department of Agriculture, among others.
- b. ***Worldwide PAO Conference:*** Held last month, the conference brought together more than 170 PAOs from around the world and interagency colleagues in Washington. It included two sessions on Coordinating and Expanding Communications with USAID and one session on the Public Diplomacy Implications of Foreign Assistance Reform. These sessions specifically highlighted the need to leverage resources and speak with one voice on U.S. foreign assistance. They also provided a forum for PAOs who work well with DOCs to share best practices with their colleagues.

- 2) **Response to First Recommendation—Strategy to Assess Impact of U.S. Marking & Publicity Programs:** The PCC on Public Diplomacy & Strategic Communications is working on a government-wide Strategic Communications Plan, in which a strategy to assess marking and publicity programs could be incorporated. In addition, tools to measure the effectiveness of public diplomacy programs will be considered as the State Department continues to revamp its own strategic planning and performance evaluation processes.
- 3) **Response to Second Recommendation—Government-Wide Guidance for Marking & Publicizing U.S. Foreign Assistance:** The PCC on Public Diplomacy & Strategic Communications likewise provides an ideal forum for continued development and eventual issuance of government-wide marking and publicity guidance.

Appendix VI: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

GAO Contact

Jess Ford, (202) 512-4268 or fordj@gao.gov.

Staff Acknowledgments

Zina Merritt served as Assistant Director responsible for this report, and Maria Oliver was the Analyst-in-Charge. In addition to those named above, the following individuals made significant contributions to this report: Virginia Chanley, Lauren Geetter, Ernie Jackson, and James Strus. The team benefited from the expert advice and assistance of Joe Carney, Etana Finkler, Lessie Burke-Johnson, Cynthia Taylor, and Wilda Wong.

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