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U.S. Public Diplomacy and the War of Ideas

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Foreign Press Center Briefing

Washington, DC

July 15, 2008

11:00 A.M. EDT

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MODERATOR: Good morning, and thank you for coming to the Washington Foreign Press Center. Our briefer this morning is James Glassman, the Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs at the Department of State. Before we get started, I have two requests for our audience: first, that you make sure your cell phones are on silent, and second, before asking a question, could I remind you to state your name, news organization and country.

And now I would like to welcome to the podium Under Secretary Glassman, who will discuss and take questions on "U.S. Public Diplomacy and the War of Ideas."

Under Secretary.

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: Good morning, everyone. I want to talk to you today about the approach that I'm going to be taking as the new Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs.

As you may know, I've spent 40 years in journalism, a great deal of time also in public policy, and I'm a believer in ideas. And I also think that we live in a world in which audiences are sophisticated, they are not particularly susceptible to old



techniques of propoganda or preaching. Even if we wanted to do those things, they don't work very well.

The Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy has a big portfolio. One part of the portfolio is to be, in the words of Senator Joseph Lieberman, who introduced me at my confirmation hearings, the supreme allied commander in the war of ideas. I will be doing some concentrating on that, the war of ideas, and I want to talk about that in a second. But let me give some context.

Our aim in public diplomacy is to engage foreign publics to make it easier to achieve U.S. foreign policy goals, both short and long term. People frequently see my job as winning a beauty contest or an "American Idol" vote. I disagree with that. My job is to help achieve the national interest, not necessarily by making America more popular, although certainly popularity, or more importantly a respect and trust, those are important things. But we focus on policy goals.

The key goals today are to diminish the threat to Americans and the rest of the world posed by violent extremism and weapons of mass destruction, and to help people around the world to achieve freedom. Now, those two goals are linked. As the National Security Strategy puts it, championing freedom advances our interest because the survival of liberty at home increasingly depends on the success of liberty abroad. Governments that honor their citizens' dignity and desire for freedom tend to uphold responsible conduct towards other nations.

During the Cold War, after a slow start, the United States became good at public diplomacy, with such institutions as the Congress of Cultural Freedom, Radio Free Europe, the USIA. But starting in the early 1990s, the U.S. began in bipartisan fashion to dismantle this arsenal of persuasion. It was an act that the Djerejian group, of which I was a member, a group that examined public diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim world five years ago, called a process of unilateral disarmament in the weapons of advocacy.

Shortly after 9/11, the tide began to turn, but slowly. Today, the environment has changed. Budgets have risen. Backing is bipartisan. One of the biggest advocates of public diplomacy in government is the Secretary of Defense.

Now, our intention over the next six months and perhaps beyond, but certainly over the next six months is to help build a strong foundation for a program of vigorous public diplomacy for the next administration, a public diplomacy endowed with both adequate resources and with intellectual seriousness. At the same time, we intend to accomplish a great deal in the six months left in this administration - real, substantial accomplishments.

And before getting to the war of ideas, let me just touch on the more traditional tools of public diplomacy so that we can have a little bit of context for a discussion of the war of ideas. I want to touch on three traditional tools. Until June 10th, I chaired the Broadcasting Board of Governors, which supervises taxpayer-funded U.S. international broadcasting. Now, it's important to understand that a law that was enacted nine years ago makes the Broadcasting Board of Governors an independent agency. I now sit on that board as a representative of the Secretary of State, but the BBG is not under the aegis of the Department of State. A lot of people don't realize that, but it's an important distinction.

The state of our broadcasting effort is helping. Every week, 175 million Americans - I'm sorry, 175 million adults around the world tune in to programming of U.S. international broadcasting, in a total of 60 languages - that is more than any other international broadcaster - from the Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, Al Hurra, Radio Sawa, Radio and TV Marti, Radio Free Asia. That's a 75 percent increase in audience since 2002. And of the 75 new - 75 million new

listeners, about half are Arabic speakers. But the BBG is also having an impact in places like Tibet, Burma, Kenya, North Korea, Cuba and Iran. In Iran, VOA Persian TV broadcasts 7 hours a day and reaches more than one-quarter of adult Iranians every week by satellite. Al Hurra has a bigger audience than Al Jazeera in Iraq, and a very large audience as well in Syria and other Arab countries. And it's viewed every week by more than - as I said, by more than half the adults in Syria.

One reason that international broadcasting works is that it has a clear and limited mission. It's effective, but it's only one tool. I think two other traditional tools are these: within the State Department, the crown jewels of public diplomacy are educational and cultural exchange programs. To the rest of the world, higher education is America's greatest brand; and despite tighter visa requirements since 9/11, the school year 2007-2008 produced a record number of international students coming to the United States to study, about 600,000 of them, a dramatic recovery since 9/11. The U.S. is far and away the most desirable destination in the world for learning.

The other traditional public diplomacy effort in the State Department is the information part, where we send 800 experts in science, public policy, and other key fields abroad every year. We hold dozens of videoconferences to talk about America and its policies. We manage multilingual Web sites like America.gov. And more and more of these efforts are becoming interactive and technologically sophisticated. Our aim is not to preach, but to encourage interaction that will lead to the understanding of principles and policies of the United States. Our credo in information dissemination is summed up in the National Security Strategy: Freedom cannot be imposed, it must be chosen. And we want to encourage the conversation that leads to the choosing of freedom.

You know, the war of ideas draws on the work of traditional public diplomacy, but it's both broader and narrower. The Under Secretary of State has two jobs. I run public diplomacy, as outlined to you just now. That resides at State, that part of public diplomacy. And I also run the government-wide effort on the war of ideas, which includes coordination with the private sector as well.

In April of 2006, the President designated the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy as the interagency lead in this effort. And I had a policy coordinating committee with members from a wide variety of government agencies, including the Department of Defense, the intelligence community, Treasury, Justice, and so on.

The focus of today's war of ideas is counterterrorism. As the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism of 2006 puts it, in the long run, winning the war on terror means winning the battle of ideas. And I've heard estimates - these are just subjective - of how important the battle of ideas is compared to the kinetic war in winning the war, the overall war on terror or violent extremism. Some people say the war of ideas is 80 or 90 percent of the battle.

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

Now, unlike traditional functions of public diplomacy like education and cultural exchanges, the aim of the war of ideas is not to persuade foreign populations to adopt more favorable views of the United States and its policies. Instead, the war of ideas tries to ensure that negative sentiments and day-to-day grievances toward the U.S. and its allies do not manifest themselves in the form of violent extremism.

Let me put this another way. In the war of ideas, our core task is not to fix foreigners' perceptions of the United States.

Those perceptions are important, but America's image, indeed America itself, is not at the center of the war of ideas. Instead, we need to recognize that there is a complex, multi-sided battle going on in Muslim societies for power. This is a battle in which the United States could not be a bystander if it wanted to be. We cannot step aside and simply watch others slug it out among themselves. Instead, the battle within the Muslim world for power affects the United States directly and was responsible for the deaths of 3,000 people seven years ago.

In this battle, our main role is to support constructive alternatives to violent extremism. The effort is to help show populations that the ideology and actions of violent extremists are not in the best interest of those populations. It is the fact that the battle is going on within Muslim society that makes our role so complicated and that requires that we ourselves not do much of the fighting. The most credible voices in this war of ideas are Muslim.

So here is our ultimate goal: a world in which the use of violence to achieve political, religious, or social objectives is no longer considered acceptable; efforts to radicalize new members are no longer successful; and the perpetrators of violent extremism are condemned and isolated.

How do we achieve such a world? In two ways. First, by confronting the ideology that justifies and enables the violence. We try to remove the fake veneer on the reputation of extremists and allow publics to see the shame and hostility of life in terrorism. And we're making progress. The truth is that al-Qaida's ideology and the ideology of other violent extremist groups contains the seeds of these groups' own destruction.

We've seen, in fact, that process at work in Al Anbar province in Iraq, as well as in Jordan, in Morocco, in other parts of the Middle East. In fact, support for suicide bombing, for example, throughout the Muslim world has dropped sharply. The proportions of Jordanians with a lot of confidence in Usama bin Laden has fallen from 56 percent in 2003 to 20 percent in 2007, in Kuwait from 20 percent to 13 percent.

This is an effort that requires credible Muslim voices to work effectively, especially voices of those like Dr. Fadl, born Sayyid Imam al-Sharif, whose story was told recently by Lawrence Wright in *The New Yorker*. Dr. Fadl helped build al-Qaida ideology and now he repudiates it, as many others do, for its wanton violence.

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

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

While winning hearts and minds would be an admirable feat, the war of ideas adopts the more immediate and realistic goal of diverting impressionable segments of the population from the recruitment process. The war of ideas is really a battle of alternatives, alternative visions, and our goal is to divert recruits from the violent extremist vision. Our role is as a facilitator of choice. We help build networks and movements, put tools in the hands of young people to make their own choices, rather than dictating those choices. And again, as the National Security Strategy puts it, freedom cannot be imposed, it must be chosen.

We've already done a major reorganization both at State and the interagency to help in this overall effort, and I've listed five focal points of our programs: Muslim society, especially involving young people at the grassroots; Middle East elites who involve themselves in ideology and religious doctrine; foreign fighters who have poured into Iraq and Afghanistan; private sector expertise; and Iran.

In addition, the war of ideas must be broadly international. It has to extend beyond the Middle East. Latin America and Africa and much of East Asia must be an important focus of our attention, along with Europe, Central Asia, and other areas of high concentrations of people, whether they're Muslim or not, who might be susceptible to an extremist message.

This is a long-term effort and it is nearly impossible to pinpoint the geography of the next threat. As Senator Lieberman said, the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy is an allied commander. Europeans especially are trying to use the tools of the war of ideas to combat an insidious ideology that is an internal as well as external threat.

We work as well with partners in the Middle East. While they may disagree with some of our policies in their region, they agree that policies like diversion can make their own nations safer, and they are doing a great job. I would cite the Saudis especially in their work on diversion and on this pernicious ideology.

CIA Director Michael Hayden has said that we are doing well in the war against al-Qaida, and he cites near strategic defeat of al-Qaida in Iraq, near strategic defeat of al-Qaida in Saudi Arabia, significant setbacks for al-Qaida globally, as a lot of the Islamic world pushes back on their form of Islam. Peter Bergen and Marc Sageman are among the analysts who now believe that al-Qaida has suffered severe setbacks. This is all true. It's no accident that there's not been an attack on America in nearly seven years. Kinetic action has been working, and so, in its nascent stages, has the war of ideas.

Still, there is no one involved in this battle who thinks that the war of ideas is close to being won. There's a widespread belief in Muslim nations - about four out of five people believe this - that the United States and other Western powers are out to destroy Islam and replace it with Christianity. It's a widespread belief. And this is the root belief that underlies much of the passive support for the violent extremism of al-Qaida and similar groups. The flow of new recruits has not stopped. Our work is ahead of us.

In the end, the message of 21st century public diplomacy is to tell the world of a good and compassionate nation, and at the same time to engage in the most important ideological contest of our time. Disengagement must, by its nature, involve non-Americans as we nurture, support, and encourage them. Our goal in this war of ideas is to create an environment hostile to violent extremism. It is an urgent task.

I thank you for listening and would like to hear your questions. Thank you.

MODERATOR: I'll just remind - excuse me - everyone, please, to state your name and organization. We'll start out with Bhagya in the front row, and then we'll move to the third row after.

QUESTION: Hi, Bhagya from the *Straits Times*, Singapore. My question is how important is it to capture Usama bin Laden to win this war of ideas?

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: I don't think it's particularly important. It would be a good - it would be good

symbolically. It is clear from experts that I have talked to and things that I have read that al-Qaida central has had severe problems. And whether Usama bin Ladin himself is killed or captured, I think is not of great consequence. In fact, it is of some symbolic consequence and it would be - it would have some importance in the war of ideas. But I think that if he were killed or if Zawahiri were killed, the ideology would certainly continue to survive, and that's an ideology that we need to oppose.

QUESTION: Thank you. Hussain Abdul-Hussain with *Al Rai* newspaper from Kuwait. My question is about the non-Americans who are - who should be part of the war on ideas. News reports have shown that people who work for the VOA or MBN, some of them are anti-American such as the news director of Al Hurra, who is actually - who turns out is not a journalist and supports an anti-American coalition in Lebanon led by Hezbollah. The executive producer of Al Hurra Iraq, he too wrote a column in praise of Nasrallah. Do you think it's time for a major shakeup for the war of ideas - I mean, among the staff, of the anti-American staff (inaudible)?

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: Well, I have to say - I have to say that the news director of Al Hurra, whom I know quite well, is not anti-American by any stretch of the imagination. And he's done a very good job of building up the audience that Al Hurra has, and I think of gaining respect. So I completely disagree with that.

I would also say that certainly, Al Hurra has had its critics, many of them, by the way, competitors. But the fact is that Al Hurra has gained audience, that in - before Al Hurra was started and Radio Sawa was started, VOA broadcast in Arabic and had an audience of about three to five million. Today, the combined audience of Radio Sawa and Al Hurra is 35 million. It's a significant audience. You know, these organizations are fairly recent on the scene. It's a very competitive scene. And they're performing a very important service, and I fully support them.

MODERATOR: We move in the third row to Arshad, and then we will come over here to the far right.

QUESTION: Thank you. This is Arshad Mahmud of the Daily Prothom Alo in Bangladesh. Mr. Secretary, you have a tough job in winning the hearts and minds and transforming American image. You had two very distinguished predecessors. One of them had direct access to the Oval Office. With that kind of work, she couldn't do much and left in disgust. So - and you have come at a time which is actually a kind of lame duck administration. What do you expect to accomplish in this short period? How do you propose to implement your ideas in this short time? Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: Thank you for the question. I would start by disagreeing with you. I don't think that Karen Hughes, if that's who you're referring to, left in disgust at all. And I think that she accomplished a great deal. She got a number of programs going: our Digital Outreach Team; our Rapid Response Unit; some - our media hubs, which we now have in London, Dubai, and Brussels. She did a lot of good, and she also increased the number of exchange programs that we do. We now - we're now up from 36,000 people going abroad on exchange programs to 48,000, so that was a significant accomplishment.

As far as America's image is concerned, as I said in my remarks, America's image abroad is important. We're concerned about it. We're especially concerned not so much with likeability or, you know, whether people love us or we're winning a popularity contest, but that people respect and trust the United States. And why have these numbers gone down? And actually they've got up a little bit in recent - over the last year. But generally, they are - they're depressed in parts of the world. In other parts of the world, they're doing pretty well. In Africa, parts of Asia, countries like Brazil, Japan, and India, the United States remains a respected and trusted country. But in the Middle East, in parts of Europe, the United States is not.

Why is that? I think there are three reasons.

I think that, one, people around the world feel that we're not listening to them and respecting their opinions, even if - even though we will make our decisions in our own national interest just as Bangladesh will. But - and I think that's a legitimate concern. And I think toward that concern, I myself have done a few things. And one of them is that I've started a dewaniya, which I'm sure that the gentleman from Kuwait knows about because I learned about it when I was in Kuwait. And that is a gathering at my home on a regular basis of ambassadors and others -- people in the academic community -- to talk on an informal basis about some of the problems that they see, some of the solutions that they see. So I think listening is number - is one of the reasons that our favorability ratings have declined.

The second is I don't think we've done, completely, a successful job of explaining our policies. But third, even when we do a successful job of explaining our policies, people disagree with them. And people are going to disagree with our policies, and that's just a fact of life. We want to - we want to hear them. We want to understand what their point of view is. But sometimes, we will adopt policies that others do not agree with.

What I've said is that concentrating only on the popularity contest is a mistake, that really, to achieve our national interests, we need to push back against the ideology of violent extremism and also divert people from the path of violent extremism. So that's how I conceive of my job, which may be a little bit different from the way that my predecessors have conceived it.

QUESTION: (Off-mike.)

MODERATOR: Could you wait for the microphone?

QUESTION: -- (inaudible) to put your ideas into work in this short time when the Administration has --

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: I'm sorry I didn't address that.

QUESTION: -- entered the lame duck (inaudible).

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: Right. I'm sorry I didn't address that. We're already doing it. I mean, one of the advantages of somebody who's - who took six months to get confirmed, is that I was able to hit the ground running, so that within two weeks of being sworn in, we held a policy coordinating committee meeting, which is the group that will be supervising the war of ideas efforts. We'll be rolling out new programs. I have tremendous support in the interagency from the Defense Department, from the intelligence community, from the Justice Department. So we are - we have programs that are up and running and we're going to have more.

So, I'm going to do two things. One is to set a foundation that the next administration can inherit, and I hope will inherit. It's up to them, but I really - I realize that this did not exist in 2001 when the last administration came in. It will exist when the next administration comes in, absolutely, and that's a big change. And the second thing is to actually have programs, a significant number of programs up and running in the areas that I discussed: confrontation of the ideology and diversion.

MODERATOR: We'll go to the far right and then we will go back to Mr. Musa.

QUESTION: Thank you. Fuqing Yang from CCTV, China Central Television. My question is, theory has it that the soft power of the U.S. has been seriously reduced by the influence of some new emerging powers. Do you believe so? Are these emerging economies your major battleground of war of ideas? And how do you try to, you know, carry out, you know, the strategies and - during a war against - a war of ideas in these emerging countries? Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: You know, I don't see soft power as being a competitive field. For example, China has done very, very well in the field of soft power. I don't see us necessarily competing with China to see which is the better soft power. Instead, what we're trying to do is use soft power, at least in the war of ideas, for a specific end, which is to create an environment in which violent extremism cannot flourish. That's what we want to use soft power for. Certainly, there are other means - there are other ends for soft power and we'll be using it. But I don't see this as a competition.

I think it's a really good thing that around the world, countries such as China have adopted soft power means. It's a lot better than the alternative, that's for sure.

MODERATOR: And we were going back to the fourth row. Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Yeah, thank you. Mr. Secretary, you mention that --

MODERATOR: I'm sorry, can you --

QUESTION: My name - oh, sorry.

MODERATOR: Thank you.

QUESTION: My name is Talha Musa from *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, which is based in London. Okay, you mentioned that Al Hurra is now doing better than Al Jazeera in a lot of places and that. If there is any new plans to promote Al Hurra and Sawa so that they can be more competitive with the other Arab channels and radios? Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: Yes, is the answer to that question. We are - we do think, and I say we - I'm no longer the chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors, so I shouldn't say we. The Broadcasting Board of Governors believes that one problem with Al Hurra and Sawa is that the broadcasting is coming out of Springfield, Virginia, a Washington suburb, broadcast into the Middle East. And that - it feels as though it's an American station broadcasting to foreign publics. And what we want to do is have more of a presence in the region, and that is happening right now. Right now, there is a presence in Dubai. But there are --- there is an intention to have a significant presence in Egypt, in Lebanon, in Jerusalem, and be doing more broadcasting from the Middle East itself.

Let me just say something, though, about the premise of your question. The management of Al Hurra does not see itself as a competitor of Al Jazeera or Al-Arabiya or any other - any other pan-Arab network. It sees itself as a player, as one choice that people can make in the Arab-speaking world. We want to be in the mix. Al Jazeera is the largest news channel - pan-Arab news channel on satellite. And it's not as though we feel like we ought to knock them out and replace them. We want people who watch Al Jazeera, watch Al-Arabiya, watch other sources of news to watch Al Hurra. It is a different point of view. It's a different style.

And, you know, we think, for example, if you live in the Middle East and you want to find out about the American elections and you're tuning in to a pan-Arab satellite station, where should you tune in? Well, we think it makes lots of sense to tune in the one that really knows the most about what's happening in the United States. And we're finding that that's happening. If you want to find out about the election, this is a good place to go.

But there are improvements being made. By no means does anyone at the Broadcasting Board of Governors feel that Al Hurra or Radio Sawa is perfect and there's no need for change. Changes are necessary.

MODERATOR: We'll move right up here to the front and then we'll go back to the gentleman in the red shirt.

Yes, thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you. Guita Mirseedi, Voice of America, Persian News Network. Sir, you just touched upon Iran. You mentioned that a while ago, it was leaked out that the State Department had been, for the past couple of years, considering opening an interest section in Tehran. Today - or yesterday, last night, actually, the Iranian President somewhat welcomed it and, well, he said that Iran would consider if they did receive such an offer formally.

Since you've been in office, has this idea moved forward at all? And about the IIP programs that has been going on with Iran for the past couple of years, have you gotten any feedback from the Iranian side, from the people coming in? Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: I think that the International Information Programs are very successful. They're - so far, they're limited. We'd like to see - we'd like to see more. Recently, Educational and Cultural Affairs side has had the Iranian - the Iranian wrestling team has come here. We've had a role in that. The Iranian table tennis team was here, was just in Las Vegas. And we think that the people-to-people programs, the Public Diplomacy to people programs, are very effective.

And, you know, I myself have appeared on VOA Persian TV. I was just on, I think it was last week, on a roundtable with you communicating directly to the people of Iran. And the people of the United States have a great deal of solidarity with the people of Iran. Our government also feels that way about the people of Iran. They are saddled with an oppressive regime that does not allow them the freedoms that a great people with the kind of heritage that Iranians have deserve. I think all people deserve it, but it's a real shame. And the economy in Iran is a mess as a result of mismanagement, as a result of corruption, sending money to support Arab terrorist groups, and this extremely problematic nuclear program.

Now on the question of an interest section, I really can have no comment on that.

MODERATOR: I had promised the gentleman in the red shirt.

QUESTION: Yes, thank you. My name is Sam Rocha with RCN-TV from Colombia. Mr. Secretary, you mentioned in the opening statements that all the goals is to diminish threats to Americans. Now you mentioned in - specifically in Latin America, Cuba as a target with TV Marti and also said that Latin America and Asia must be - must have an important focus on your new approach. Specifically in Colombia, we just learned about the rescue of the three North Americans that were rescued from the FARC, this violent guerilla group. What is your approach to - or your message to these particular groups on your policy?

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: I'm glad you asked this question, because when we talk about creating an environment in which violent extremism cannot thrive, cannot even exist, we're not just talking about the violent extremism perpetrated by al-Qaida. We're talking about violent extremism perpetrated by groups like FARC. And this is a violent and pernicious, murderous group. And I was - all American people were overjoyed at the release of these hostages, and not just the Americans who were among the hostages. And I want to emphasize that.

And I talk about threats to the safety of the United States. That's absolutely important. But our other goal is to secure freedom around the world, to promote freedom and secure freedom, because free countries are less threatening to the United States, as well as free countries for moral - the most important reasons that exist, moral reasons, allow their people to thrive, to be creative, and to live good lives. So this - you bring up a very important point, that this struggle is not simply concentrated in the Middle East, in places like Afghanistan. It's around the world.

MODERATOR: We'll move to the - to Ben here and then directly behind him in the white jacket.

QUESTION: Thank you. My name is Ben Bangoura, international broadcasting - broadcasting in Washington and africalog.com. Considering the fact that diplomacy is the art of real politics, how do you expect to achieve your goal by isolating those you call here extremist group?

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: Well, you know, I really think that we're well on our way to achieving our goal, and partly because the violent extremist group that has been causing much of the trouble around the world, as I said, contains the seeds of its own destruction. It is so wantonly violent. You have a group that proclaims itself as being the true - the true keeper of the - of a religion, true believers, and they're going out and killing their co-religious. They're killing other Muslims. They're killing women and children in the most violent and wanton ways. So I have to say I think we have that going for us. And in the sense that simply by exposing what this group is doing, this is one thing that helps turn people against the group.

And we saw this in Iraq. Iraq has been a success. And how has it been a success? Well, it's been a success in the battle of ideas front, because al-Qaida has exposed itself for what it really is. And you've probably noticed recently that as a result of some of the founders of al-Qaida's ideology turning against al-Qaida, Zawahiri opened up - opened himself up to questions. He said, you know, ask questions about - about what we're doing. Well, a lot of very pointed questions came his way. And I think - I think this was a good thing.

So I think we're moving on the right path. Al-Qaida is on the decline. Now by no means does this mean that the battle of ideas is over; far from it. But I think we're moving in the right direction.

MODERATOR: I promised the third row, center.

QUESTION: Thank you. My name is Salmy Hashim-Gheblawi from Bernama, Malaysia. Mr. Under Secretary, with the U.S. facing a record budget deficit and recession - experiencing recession right now, how much resources do you have actually to carry out this war of ideas policy? And of that, how much is going to Southeast Asia, the biggest concentration of Muslims?

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: First, the United States is not in a recession, not officially, not - you know, it may - it may be later, but there was - there was - no, seriously, this used to be my field. You know, there was growth in the fourth

quarter, there was growth in the first quarter, so we don't know. We may be in - we may have started a recession in the second or third quarter. We don't know. But certainly, the economy is not doing as well as it has been and - or as well as it should. So I understand the premise of your question.

We're getting more resources. I mean, public diplomacy over the last five or six years has increased its resources on the order of 50 percent. I may have that wrong, so you should check that. But it is - we have increased our resources at a faster rate than other non-defense agencies. I think that is safe to say.

As far as Southeast Asia is concerned, it is a very important region for us. We work very closely with our posts in that region, our embassies and consulates in that region, as well as with our allies in that region. And as you know I'm sure, there have been significant successes against violent extremism in Southeast Asia. It has been an area of success in places like the Philippines. And I would also say that Indonesia has been an area of success. So it's an important focal point and you rightly point out that this is where there are large concentrations of Muslims.

MODERATOR: We have time for one long question or two short questions, so let's see where that takes us -- there in the fifth row in the back.

QUESTION: Jim Lobe, Inter Press Service. The Djerejian report, among its other conclusions, concluded that no matter how good your public diplomacy is, it's ultimately policy that makes the difference, and that you can only improve what you're trying - or you only achieve what you're trying to achieve to a certain degree, without addressing policy issues.

Do you have input on substantive policy issues? And would you describe a little bit the nexus between policy and making - getting closer to the result that you want, which is to reduce support for violent extremism? And just as an example, to the extent that the United States is perceived as putting real pressure on Israel to make the life of the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza and so on, somewhat better, how does that make your job easier? Does that - is there a relationship there?

UNDER SECRETARY GLASSMAN: First of all, just - the Djerejian report did talk about how important policy is. It made no judgment about whether policy is 80 percent or 90 percent or - certainly not 100 percent. You know, how big a portion policy is as far as determining whether people trust or respect a nation. But it's important. There's no doubt about that, and I cited it myself, as far as favorability and the United States is concerned.

Edward R. Murrow, Director of USIA, famously said that we need to be - public diplomacy needs to be in on the takeoffs, not just the crash landings. So the point is that public diplomacy needs to be in the room when policies are discussed before they're actually launched. And I have to say that I have - during my short tenure of one month, I have been in the room during these policy discussions.

Now, in the end, policy is formulated for many reasons. I would be myself very much opposed to a policy that's formulated only because of the public opinion in the world. I mean, that may be a factor, but it can't be the deciding factor. Nations need to follow their own interests, even when people are not enamored of what those interests are. One of the best examples is, you know, in the early 1980s, the United States, along with governments in Europe, made the decision to put short-range missiles into these countries. And the populations of those countries were very much opposed to it, and there was a lot of anti-Americanism as a result. But that was - it turned out to be a very good decision. A lot of people believe that that helped bring down communism. So sometimes you have to make decisions that are considered to be unpopular.

You know, I am - I would shift the focus away from this question of whether there's something we can do about particular policies to make us more popular. And instead, my focus really is on violent extremism itself, on that ideology. And that ideology, I think everyone can agree, is extremely dangerous, not just to the United States but to other people around the world. And so that's what we are focusing on.

Public diplomacy has a very important role to play in the Arab - in the Palestinian-Israeli situation. And we have mounted, along with the private sector, a U.S.-Palestinian partnership, which I - if any of you are interested in this subject, I commend it to all of you. We're happy to talk to you about what we've done in helping to bring venture capital, a lot of private sector initiatives to the Palestinians, and I think that's a very effective means.

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for coming.



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